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“The Kids Are Alright”: Examining Generational Differences with Social Media Behaviors and Psychological Distress

Taylor Kizer

ABSTRACT

Studies have recently examined associations between social media and psychological distress. Although Facebook use is related to lower psychological distress, few studies have examined the cumulative impact of social media use on psychological distress across multiple social media platforms. According to Erikson’s (1968; 1983) psychosocial theory of development, the relationship between social media and psychological distress may depend on age, specifically comparing young adulthood to middle adulthood. The goal of this study is to examine the relationship between social media behaviors, such as posting or monitoring, on different social media platforms (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter) and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, while also examining age as a moderator. Data comes from participants from a small city in the Midwest and an urban city in the Southwest that completed a daily online survey for 10 consecutive days that addressed how much time and what behaviors participants engaged in across social media platforms and daily reports of symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (i.e., psychological distress). Results from linear regression analyses found little support for the independent effects of behaviors on social media platforms for psychological distress. However, some support was found for differences between participants who were between 18 and 23 and participants who were between 24 and 40 with Facebook, SnapChat, and Twitter and psychological distress. For middle adults, using Facebook

and SnapChat was predictive of psychological distress compared to younger adults, and the reverse was found for Twitter. These results reflect that middle adults may use social media for social comparison as represented by the generativity versus stagnation stage of Erikson's (1968; 1983) psychosocial development theory, which has implications for psychological distress.

Recommendations and future directions will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Pew Research Center (2018), approximately 3/4 of young adults check social media daily. Given these high usage rates, it is likely that social media use is associated with psychological distress. Some studies have shown that social media use, particularly Facebook, is associated with lower distress (Primack et al., 2017; Berryman, Ferguson, & Negy, 2017; Kross et al., 2013). However, few studies have examined multiple social media platforms, such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. Additionally, one recent study has found that spending time on social media may not necessarily be associated with changes in interpersonal and relational well-being, but rather, the types of behaviors that individuals engage in (Seidman, Langlais, & Havens, 2018). Theoretically, behaviors that promote belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), such as messaging or communicating directly with individuals over social media, should be associated with benefits for well-being. On the other hand, social media behaviors involving one-way communication, such as monitoring others' social media content, which does not promote belongingness, would hypothetically be negatively associated with psychological distress. Another factor that may predict if social media is associated with psychological distress is age. Based on Erikson's (1968; 1983) psychosocial theory of development, the relationship between social media and psychological distress may depend on the type of conflict an individual may experience at each stage of life (e.g., intimacy versus isolation during the young

adult stage, generativity versus stagnation during middle adulthood). Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine the relationship between social media behaviors on different social media platforms and psychological distress, while also examining age as a moderator.

This study advances research on social media in many ways. First, we focus on multiple social media platforms as other studies mainly examine Facebook. Although there are some similarities across the major social media platforms, there are plenty of differences that make each of these platforms unique, which means each platform could have varied effects on psychological health. Second, we collected data from a community sample of participants, which is more reliable than a college student sample. Third, this study uses longitudinal data (social media use over a period of 10 consecutive days) to achieve the goals of this study, as many studies have only collected data at one point in time. This is advantageous because it provides a more precise and valid measure of social media behaviors and psychological distress. Next, we discuss research concerning social media use and behaviors in the context of psychological distress. Second, we introduce age as a potential moderator for the relationship between social media behaviors and psychological distress.

Social Media and Psychological distress

Social media is incredibly popular among teenagers and adults, with many having regular routine access to multiple social media networks. According to the Lenhart (2015) and Vannucci et al. (2016), about 90% of young adults in the U.S. use social media and most visit these sites at least once a day. Most social media use is concentrated in teenagers and young adults. According to the Royal Society for Public Health (2017), 91% of 16-24 year olds in the UK use the Internet for social networking. One study found that adolescent participants were very active on social media with 82.1% reporting having had social media accounts for at least a year, 92.9% had an

account on at least one social media platform, and 68.1% reporting checking their social media accounts at least once a day (Barry et al., 2017). Additionally, most adults appear to access social media through their phones. According to one study, 92% of teenagers and young adults own a smart phone (Twenge et al., 2018), which illustrates the affordances of social media access for this population. Given how common it is to use social media, it is important to understand its implications for individuals' psychological distress.

Many studies have begun to explore the relationship between social media and psychological distress, typically finding a negative association between the two variables. Facebook was one of the first social media platforms to be examined in terms of psychological distress, and many studies illustrate that spending time on Facebook is associated with lower levels of psychological distress. One study found that too much time on Facebook was associated with lower cognitive well-being (Kross et al., 2013). Another study demonstrated that individuals who "like" more material on Facebook are likely to report lower levels of psychological distress (Ginsberg & Burke, 2017). Other studies have examined social media broadly, without specifying a social media platform, which provides support for a negative relationship between social media and psychological distress. For instance, Primack et al. (2017) found that social media use was positively associated with depression and anxiety among young adults. Vannucci and colleagues (2017) found that higher daily use of social media was associated with more frequent and intense experiences of anxiety, particularly for males. Twenge and colleagues (2018) found a correlation between social media screen time and depressive and suicidal symptoms. One study explained the reason behind some of these effects is that individuals tend to compare themselves to others, which leads to negative self-comparison (Ginsberg & Burke, 2017). Other studies have demonstrated a negative association between social

media use and physical health. Woods and Scott (2016) found evidence that too much social media use is associated with less sleep quality, low self-esteem, and high levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, particularly for teens and adults. Overall, there appears to be a negative relationship between using social media and psychological distress.

There is theoretical support for why social media use is likely to be linked to psychological distress. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), all people have a need to belong and one way to meet this need is to connect with other people over social media. For instance, on Facebook, people can feel connected by commenting on other people's posts and "liking" others' content. On Instagram, individuals can comment on others' photos, which is likely to help them feel like they are a part of others' lives. Snapchat allows people to send pictures as a form of constant communication. Generally, social media provides individuals opportunities to connect to others. However, if there is a lack of connection between individuals and their social network or if social media is used passively, such as simply viewing others' content, individuals' belongingness needs may not be met. For instance, Siedman et al. (2017) found that passive activities, such as monitoring other's Facebook content, was related to lower relational well-being. These authors also found that excessive social media behaviors, such as posting pictures on one's romantic partner on Facebook too much, was related to lower relationship quality. Based on findings from previous studies, social media seems likely to negatively impact psychological distress, particularly if the behaviors are passive.

Based on this theoretical rationale, there is a need to focus on various behaviors across multiple social media platforms. Although there is evidence that Facebook is associated with lower psychological distress, it may vary by the type of social media behavior and which platform these behaviors are being enacted. Based on research on Facebook, communicating

directly with others as opposed to interacting passively is beneficial for interpersonal health (Seidman et al., 2017). Yet, there is less research concerning behaviors on other social media platforms. For example, on Instagram, people can post a variety of photos, which can increase people's feeling of connectedness with others by the number of likes that they get. Liking someone's photo on Instagram can be viewed as a direct behavior. Not getting likes, which represents a passive behavior, can lead to negative psychological distress because it does not promote connectedness and belonging. Another example can be applied to Twitter. Retweeting or commenting on someone's tweets, which are direct behaviors, may be beneficial for psychological distress given that it promotes connection. Simply viewing content is a passive behavior which may also be negatively related to psychological distress given that it does not create connectedness. Based on this rationale, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Facebook will be positively associated with psychological distress (depression, anxiety, and stress).

Hypothesis 1b: Monitoring on Facebook will be negatively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2a: Posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on SnapChat will be positively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2b: Monitoring on SnapChat will be negatively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 3a: Posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Instagram will be positively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 3b: Monitoring on Instagram will be negatively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 4a: Posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Twitter will be positively associated with psychological distress.

Hypothesis 4b: Monitoring on Twitter will be negatively associated with psychological distress.

Another potential variable that could help explain the association between social media and psychological distress is age. Based on Erikson's (1968; 1983) theory of psychosocial development, adolescents and adults experience different developmental conflicts. According to this theory, adolescents and young adults aged 18 to 24 experience the stage of intimacy versus isolation. The central focus of this stage is the need for intimacy. Individuals in this stage try to avoid feeling alone in the world and work hard to form intimate relationships with others. Therefore, young adults may be more likely to use social media as a way to communicate and form relationships with other people. This stage differs from the stage of generativity versus stagnation that people ages 25 to 40 typically experience. During this stage, people want to feel as though they have contributed to the world in some way. If they do not feel a high level of generativity, they are likely to experience lower levels of psychological distress due to this conflict. When they use social media, they tend to compare their life contributions to what others have done and this can lead to low self-esteem and poor psychological distress. On social media, individuals commonly share their accomplishments. Often on social media, only the best or idealized versions of individuals are shared (Michikyan, Subrahmanyam, & Dennis, 2015), meaning that users are primarily fixated on the positive aspects of their social network's lives. Therefore, if middle adults see the accomplishments of their social network, even if they are idealistic, middle adults may feel less of themselves as a means of social comparison. They may feel that they have not accomplished as much as their peers given what is shared on social media.

Studies have often found that social comparison is associated with declines in psychological distress (Hanna et al., 2017; Jang, Park, & Song, 2016). As a result, middle adults may experience stagnation, which would be associated with lower levels of psychological distress. Adolescents may not be as likely to compare successes with their social network given their focus on the development and maintenance of intimate relationships. According to this information, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Age will moderate the association between social media use and psychological distress. In other words, middle adults will be more likely to experience a negative relationship between social media use and psychological distress compared to younger adults.

METHODS

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from two areas in the United States, a small city in the Midwest ($n = 180$) and an urban city in the Southwest ($n = 81$), resulting in a sample of 261 participants. Approximately 77% of participants were female and the average age of participants was 26.76 ($SD = 10.36$; range: 18-40). The majority of participants identified their race as white (82.0%), with others identified as Hispanic (7.3%), Asian American (4.6%), African American (1.5%), and other (4.2%). Additionally, 92.7% of participants described themselves as heterosexual, 5.7% identified as bisexual, and 1.1% identified as homosexual. Additionally, 53 of the participants listed their relationship status as single, 16 as casually dating, 106 as seriously dating, and 76 as married.

Given that our sample was recruited from two regions in the United States, we examined differences in demographics across these two samples. Participants from the urban city in the

Southwest were significantly younger ($M = 23.99$, $SD = 5.90$) compared to participants from the small city in the Midwest ($M = 27.83$, $SD = 11.56$; $F(2,260) = 3.54$, $p < .05$). Additionally, there were statistically higher numbers of ethnic minority participants from the urban city in the Southwest compared to the small city in the Midwest ($\chi^2(4) = 13.88$, $p < .001$). Besides age and ethnicity, there were no other statistically significant differences in terms of demographics based on location, nor were there significant differences in any of the independent or dependent variables by location of recruitment. Because one of the primary goals of this study is whether age moderates the relationship between social media use and psychological distress, descriptive statistics for study sample by age group (ages 23 and lower versus ages 24 and older) are presented in *Table 1*.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through advertisements on local Facebook pages in a small city in the Midwest and a large city in the Southwestern United States. Advertisements stated the study goals, participation requirements (having at least one social media platform and being at least 18 years old), remuneration, and a contact e-mail address for them to reach out to if they wanted to participate. Interested participants were instructed to send an e-mail to the research team confirming their eligibility and interest in the study. A research assistant responded to the volunteers detailing the study procedures and requirements for participation.

From these posts, 296 participants sent an e-mail stating an interest in the study. The research team responded to these e-mails by describing the process for participation and remuneration. Specifically, participants were informed that they will receive an e-mail with a link to an online survey around 9:00 pm CST for 10 consecutive days starting on a specified date. Participants were instructed to complete the survey as soon as they received it. Participants

were also told that the first online survey took approximately 30 minutes and then nine consecutive daily online surveys took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Although all of these participants were eligible to participate, only 261 opted to participate in the study. Participants were paid \$5 in Amazon gift cards for completing the baseline survey, and \$5 more in Amazon gift cards for every two additional surveys they completed. Participants completing all 10 daily diaries received a \$25 Amazon gift card. Retention rates for each day ranged from 91.6% to 77.0% across the study, with 91.5% providing at least three different days of data.

Measures

Social media behaviors. Participants answered questions regarding the frequency of five social media behaviors (posting photos or videos on social media, posting updates that were not photos or videos on social media, writing comments on social media, monitoring others social media content, and private messaging on social media) on each daily survey on Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, and Twitter. An example question was, “How many photos or videos did you post publicly on [social media platform] today?” with responses being a quantitative open-ended response. Averages for each behavior across each social media platform are presented in *Table 1*.

Psychological distress. Psychological distress was captured on each daily online survey through the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS-21; Henry & Crawford, 2005). This 21-item scale poses 7 items per measure of well-being: depression, anxiety, and stress. Examples include “I felt down-hearted and blue” (depression), “I felt I was close to panic” (anxiety), and “I tend to over-react to situations” (stress). Responses ranged from 0 (*did not apply to me at all*) to 3 (*applied to me very much, or most of the time*). Internal consistency was acceptable for all three measures for each day (Cronbach’s alpha ranges: depression = .85 – .89; anxiety = .80 – .84;

stress = .85 – .88).

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using linear regression analyses. This approach investigates the relationship with multiple predictor variables for a dependent variable in order to see which variables contribute to changes in the dependent variable. This approach also provides the opportunity to control for potential outside factors and to ensure that changes in the dependent variable are a result of the predictor variables, rather than the control variables. Thus, for all analyses, control variables were entered in Step 1 (age, education, sexual orientation, relationship status, and ethnicity [dichotomized]). For each hypothesis, separate models were conducted to examine three different measures of psychological distress: depression, anxiety, and stress. Independent variables were entered in Step 2 of the linear regression analyses. For the first hypothesis, the five Facebook behaviors were entered in Step 2. For the second hypothesis, the five Snapchat behaviors were entered in Step 2. For the third hypothesis, the five Instagram behaviors were entered in Step 2. For the fourth hypothesis, the five Twitter behaviors were included in Step 2. For the fifth hypothesis, multiple models were conducted. First, the same analytical approach as hypotheses one through four was used only with participants who were between 18 and 23. Next, this same approach was used to examine the relationship between social media behaviors and psychological distress for participants between 24 and 40. In other words, the analyses examining Facebook behaviors and psychological distress were conducted separately for young adults and middle adults, and so on with the other social media networks. For all analyses, we examined changes in R^2 between Step 1 and Step 2 for each model to measure variance beyond the control variables. Additionally, the mean of each social media

behavior across all 10 days of the study was used for the independent variables and the mean of depression, anxiety, and stress was used for the dependent variables.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 stated that posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Facebook would be positively associated with psychological distress, whereas monitoring would be negatively associated with psychological distress. Results for these analyses are presented at the top of *Table 2*. Based on these analyses, none of the Facebook behaviors were associated with psychological distress. However, the models for depression and anxiety were significant based on R^2 . Between 4.5 and 4.7% of the variance for depression and anxiety was explained by behaviors on Facebook.

Hypothesis 2 stated that posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on SnapChat would be positively associated with psychological distress, whereas monitoring would be negatively associated with psychological distress. Results for these analyses are presented in the middle of *Table 2*. Based on these analyses, none of the SnapChat behaviors were associated with psychological distress. Additionally, none of the models were significant based on R^2 .

Hypothesis 3 stated that posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Instagram would be positively associated with psychological distress, whereas monitoring would be negatively associated with psychological distress. Results for these analyses are presented in the middle of *Table 2*. Based on these analyses, posting photos on Instagram was positively associated with depression. However, none of the models were significant according to R^2 .

Hypothesis 4 stated that posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging on Twitter would be positively associated with psychological distress, whereas monitoring would be negatively associated with psychological distress. Results for these analyses are presented at the

bottom of *Table 2*. Based on these analyses, posting on Twitter was positively associated with anxiety. However, none of the models were significant based on R^2 .

Hypothesis 5 stated that age would moderate the relationship between social media use and psychological distress. Results for these analyses are presented in *Table 3*. There appears to be some support for a generational difference based on Facebook use. Behaviors on Facebook were not related to the psychological distress of participants ages 23 and younger. For middle adults, posting photos on Facebook was negatively associated with all three measures of psychological distress. However, posting Facebook comments was positively associated with stress and Facebook monitoring was positively associated with anxiety. The variance explained for the middle adults ranged from 10.4 to 14.8%. Next, there is also some support for a generational difference based on SnapChat use. Behaviors on SnapChat were not related to psychological distress of participants ages 23 and younger. For middle adults, SnapChat monitoring is positively associated with anxiety. However, private messaging on SnapChat is negatively associated with anxiety. None of the models were significant according to R^2 . Subsequently, we did not find support for a generational difference on Instagram. For these models, none were significant based on R^2 . Last, there was some support for a generational difference for Twitter use. Twitter use was not associated with participants ages 24 and older. However, posting on Twitter was positively associated with anxiety and stress for young adults. The model predicting anxiety for young adults was significant, explaining 10.3% of the variance.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between social media behaviors on various social media platforms and psychological distress with a special focus on age, comparing participants 23 and younger (young adults) to participants 24 and older (middle adults). It was

found that behaviors on Facebook and SnapChat were not associated with psychological distress, whereas posting photos on Instagram was positively associated with depression and posting on Twitter was positively associated with anxiety. Additionally, social media use was negatively associated with middle-aged adults' psychological distress, but not significantly associated with young adults' psychological distress. Information gleaned from this study may be used to promote psychological distress, particularly for middle adults.

The first four hypotheses predicted that passive behaviors such as monitoring on each of the four social media platforms (Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram and Twitter) would be negatively associated with psychological distress whereas active behaviors such as posting photos, posting, commenting, and private messaging would be positively associated with psychological distress. Our results found partial support for the hypotheses regarding Instagram and SnapChat. However, the associations were in the opposite direction as what was predicted, with posting media on Twitter and posting photos on Instagram being negatively associated with psychological distress. One possible explanation for these findings stems from the motivation for social media behaviors. For instance, people may post tweets or pictures in order to gain support from others. If their post does not get as much attention as they think it deserves, then it may predict an increase in their psychological distress. Although posting is an active behavior, not getting a response from others may elevate psychological distress. Future studies should examine the influence of reciprocity to better understand this finding. Additionally, examining motivations for using Twitter and Instagram would be helpful in understanding the study results. For instance, if individuals are motivated to use these social media applications to receive positive attention, when the attention is not received, psychological distress is likely to be impacted.

Additionally, we did not find any direct effects of passive behaviors for mental health. There are a few explanations for these null findings. The first, which will be discussed later, is that age moderates this relationship, meaning that passive behaviors may be more relevant for individuals who are in middle adulthood. Second, people may use social media in order to distract from other tasks. Scrolling through social media can serve as an escape or relief from the tension of school or work. Third, passive behaviors on social media seem to have become normalized. This means that some people get on social media because they feel that is what everyone does when they are bored. In today's technology-based society, pulling out one's phone to check social media has become a reflexive behavior for many people. Additionally, when people monitor others' content on social media, they are not always fully engaged in what they are doing or seeing. If they are using social media as a way to pass the time, they may not be taking in all the information they are seeing and, therefore, don't engage themselves enough to compare what they are posting to what others are posting.

We also did not find a relationship between Facebook and Snapchat and psychological distress. One possible explanation for the null findings concerning Facebook is that the time people are spending on Facebook is declining while the use of other social media like Instagram and Snapchat is increasing. Since Facebook has existed for over a decade, it is likely that it has started to lose its novelty. As individuals decrease their exposure to Facebook, individuals may spend more time on other social media platforms. For Snapchat, content is ephemeral, meaning it disappears shortly after being viewed. People may put less effort and thought into sending snaps because they will only be seen for a few seconds. There is likely less concern for the consequences of posts that quickly go away. Another explanation concerning findings with Snapchat is that the action of sending a snap is similar to texting. For the most part, Snapchat is

comprised of a constant, back-and-forth communication between people. Actively engaging with others in this way is representative of text-messaging, which is not linked to changes in or lower levels of psychological distress (Murdock, 2013). To explain the congruent findings of both Facebook and SnapChat, the explanation is similar to what was discussed in the previous paragraph about normalized behavior. Since Facebook and SnapChat are the most commonly-used social media platforms, behaviors on these social media platforms have become normalized to the point that individuals may not even recognize that they are engaging with these social media networks.

The second goal of this study was to examine if age moderates the relationship between social media and psychological distress. We predicted that using social media would be more detrimental for middle adults compared to younger adults. This hypothesis was supported by previous studies and Erikson's (1968; 1983) psychosocial theory of development. According to this theory, young adults are in the intimacy versus isolation stage, where the focus is forming and maintaining intimate relationships as opposed to connecting and communicating with others on social media. Middle adults are in the generativity versus stagnation stage, where they are more susceptible to social comparison. As a result, middle adults may experience lower satisfaction with themselves when they compare their own lives to what is presented by their peers on social media.

We found that middle adults' passive behaviors on Facebook and Snapchat were associated with increased anxiety. However, posting photos on Facebook and private messaging on Snapchat were associated with higher levels of psychological distress for middle adults. In addition to theoretical support for this hypothesis, there are other possible explanations for why age would moderate the relationship between psychological distress and social media use. Social

comparison may be a normalized behavior for middle adults. When middle adults are on social media, they may be more engaged in the material compared to those of the younger generation, as younger adults are more likely to report social media fatigue (Bright, Kleiser, & Grau, 2015). They spend time taking in all the information they are seeing instead of “scrolling” through their feed to pass the time like younger adults are likely to do. Allowing oneself to get too engaged in what others are posting on social media can lead to more self-comparison and increased psychological distress. This can also be applied to the reason for the positive association that was found between posting photos on Facebook and psychological distress for people ages 24 and older. Because of their higher investment in social media, middle adults may attempt to alleviate low levels of psychological distress by posting photos to show off their accomplishments. Bragging to others about one’s recent tropical vacation or new car can boost self-esteem and make middle adults feel better about themselves and the things they have accomplished in their lifetimes.

Information from this study can be used to promote interpersonal well-being. Counselors, clinicians, and other practitioners can use this information to help their clients reach their fullest potential. Based on these findings, professionals should recommend that their clients limit their time spent on social media as increased time on social media may be associated with more anxiety and stress as mentioned in this study. Yet, an important takeaway for assisting clients is that it is not necessarily how much they are using social media that contributes to their mental health, but what they are doing on social media. If patients choose to spend time on social media sites, clinicians should encourage them to be active on the sites, not passive. Spending time talking with others may help clients feel better about themselves and promote interpersonal well-being. Individuals should also be made aware of social comparison and how social media can

play a role in exacerbating people's comparison of themselves to others, which can also have negative effects on their level of self-esteem and overall psychological distress. In general, spending less passive time on social media is likely to assist interpersonal health.

Limitations and Conclusion

Although this study advances knowledge on the interplay of psychological distress, social media, and age, no studies are without limitations. First, the sample is comprised of primarily white, heterosexual women. Collecting more diverse samples would help increase the generalizability of the results. It would have also been better to increase the time frame of the study beyond 10 days to get a better representation of how often individuals used social media. Second, the method of recruiting participants could have been improved. Participants could have been recruited using sources other than social media. By recruiting through social media, this study was biased towards those who use social media more often, and may be more comfortable using it. Also, this study utilized linear regression, which is only able to identify relationships between variables. Future studies should use more advanced analytical approaches to examine the findings in this study. Additionally, this study did not directly compare social media platforms. Future studies should examine differences across social media platforms to see if various platforms actually contribute more towards changes in psychological distress compared to others.

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between social media behaviors on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter and depression, anxiety, and stress, with a focus on age. Based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1968; 1983), middle adults may be more impacted by social media use than younger adults. Although certain behaviors can promote

psychological distress, it may be more beneficial for individuals to be more cognizant of how they use social media.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for study sample.

Study Variable		Ages 23 and	Ages 24 and	<i>F</i> (2,260)
		younger	older	
<i>n</i>		129	132	
Age		20.10 (1.35)	34.22 (10.58)	
Ethnicity	African American	1 (0.8)	3 (2.3)	
	Asian/Asian			
	American	6 (4.7)	6 (4.5)	
	Latino/a	12 (9.3)	7 (5.3)	
	Non-Hispanic White	106 (82.2)	108 (81.8)	
	Other	4 (3.1)	8 (6.1)	
Education	Less than high school	3 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	
	High school	33 (25.6)	12 (9.1)	
	Professional program	0 (0.0)	3 (2.3)	
	Some college	81 (62.8)	45 (34.1)	
	Undergraduate			
	degree	12 (9.3)	48 (36.4)	
	Graduate degree	0 (0.0)	24 (18.2)	
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	117 (90.7)	125 (94.7)	
	Homosexual	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	
	Bisexual	9 (7.0)	6 (4.5)	
	Other	1 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	

Relationship

Status	Single	33 (25.6)	20 (15.2)
	Casually dating	14 (10.9)	2 (1.5)
	Seriously dating	79 (61.2)	27 (20.5)
	Engaged	2 (1.6)	8 (6.1)
	Married	1 (0.8)	75 (56.8)

Social Media

Behaviors ^a	Minutes on Facebook	53.13 (58.94)	90.48 (73.71)	6.87**
	Minutes on SnapChat	75.32 (106.04)	17.89 (30.60)	31.63***
	Minutes on			
	Instagram	42.09 (56.96)	13.96 (29.59)	18.08***
	Minutes on Twitter	28.35 (46.94)	5.59 (16.49)	45.14***
	Frequency of Photos	3.01 (1.62)	3.19 (1.73)	.83
	Frequency of Posts	2.32 (1.25)	2.89 (1.65)	10.82***
	Frequency of			
	Comments	3.17 (1.45)	3.94 (1.72)	4.95*
	Frequency of			
	Monitoring	6.09 (1.20)	5.87 (1.44)	3.44
	Frequency of Private			
	Messaging	3.77 (1.77)	3.54 (1.81)	.06
Well-being				
Variables ^b	Depression	11.94 (4.65)	10.77 (4.20)	2.40
	Stress	13.90 (4.49)	12.94 (4.69)	3.22

Anxiety	10.75 (4.16)	9.90 (3.45)	.01
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*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

^aFrequency was measured on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all the time*).

^bEach measure of well-being was measured on a scale of 0 to 21, with higher numbers indicating lower levels of well-being.

Table 2. The influence of social media on well-being according to age group ($N = 261$).

Social Media Behavior	Age 23 and Younger ($n = 131$)			Age 24 and Older ($n = 130$)		
	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
<i>Model 1</i>						
Facebook Photos	.33 (.00)	.19 (.00)	.18 (.00)	-.31 (.00)*	-.36 (.00)*	-.32 (.00)*
Facebook Posts	.09 (.00)	.43 (.00)	.29 (.00)	.08 (.00)	-.05 (.00)	-.17 (.00)
Facebook Comments	-.38 (.00)	-.31 (.00)	-.36 (.00)	.07 (.00)	.15 (.00)	.46 (.00)*
Facebook Monitoring	-.22 (.00)	-.47 (.00)	-.20 (.00)	.33 (.00)	.42 (.00)*	.21 (.00)
Facebook Private Messaging	.24 (.00)	.34 (.00)	.17 (.00)	.18 (.00)	.11 (.00)	.04 (.00)
R^2	0.041	.060	.030	.148**	.134**	.104*
<i>Model 2</i>						
SnapChat Photos	.48 (.00)	.24 (.00)	.04 (.00)	.19 (.01)	-.13 (.01)	-.23 (.01)
SnapChat Posts	-.02 (.00)	.28 (.00)	.11 (.00)	.08 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.03 (.01)
SnapChat Comments	.20 (.00)	-.03 (.00)	-.19 (.00)	-.54 (.02)	.18 (.01)	.32 (.02)
SnapChat Monitoring	-.44 (.00)	-.23 (.00)	.08 (.00)	.61 (.01)	.60 (.01)*	.31 (.01)
SnapChat Private Messaging	-.18 (.00)	-.14 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.25 (.01)	-.67 (.01)*	-.43 (.01)

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R^2	.033	.035	.004	.037	.047	.022
<i>Model 3</i>						
Instagram Photos	.43 (.00)	.22 (.00)	.04 (.00)	.37 (.01)	.55 (.01)	.33 (.01)
Instagram Posts	.05 (.00)	.41 (.00)	.18 (.00)	-.18 (.01)	-.28 (.01)	-.11 (.01)
Instagram Comments	-.06 (.00)	-.30 (.00)	-.31 (.00)	-.24 (.01)	.07 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Instagram Monitoring	-.32 (.00)	-.35 (.00)	-.08 (.00)	.06 (.01)	-.16 (.01)	-.04 (.01)
Instagram Private Messaging	-.14 (.00)	.08 (.00)	.13 (.00)	.06 (.01)	-.23 (.01)	-.22 (.01)
R^2	.036	.025	.010	.022	.029	.015
<i>Model 4</i>						
Twitter Photos	.27 (.01)	.12 (.01)	-.22 (.01)	-.62 (.03)	-.15 (.02)	-.42 (.03)
Twitter Posts	.36 (.01)	.73 (.01)**	.53 (.01)*	.29 (.03)	-.23 (.02)	.07 (.03)
Twitter Comments	.26 (.01)	-.04 (.01)	-.12 (.01)	-.39 (.03)	-.48 (.02)	-.18 (.03)
Twitter Monitoring	-.82 (.01)	-.77 (.01)	-.50 (.01)	.55 (.03)	1.00 (.02)	.53 (.03)
Twitter Private Messaging	.05 (.01)	.13 (.01)	.43 (.01)	.22 (.02)	-.21 (.02)	-.09 (.02)
R^2	.056	.103*	.046	.061	.024	.019

Note: Data are standardized beta coefficients and presented as $B(SD)$. R^2 represents change in R from Step 1 (age, education, ethnicity [dichotomized], relationship status, and sexual orientation [dichotomized]) to Step 2 via regression analyses.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

