

Social Media Perceptions of Academic Performance and Self-Esteem as Defined by Female
Adolescents

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Department of Community Care and Counseling, Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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Abstract

The essential need for developing social interaction and relationships through participation on social media has begun to have an influence on academic performance and self-esteem in adolescents. This study examined the perceptions of adolescent females on the effect social media has had on both academic success and self-esteem. The literature reviewed the effects social media has on this population as it relates to these two areas. This was a qualitative study with 10 participants ages 11-15. A convenience group of participants were interviewed through in-person discussion whenever possible or through Google Meet/Zoom meetings. Questions were posed from an interview guide to record their perceptions the effects social media had on their academic achievement, family and friendships, and self-esteem.

Keywords: Academic performance, achievement, adolescent, self-esteem, social media

Dedication

Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” When I began this program in February 2019, I had no idea what events would befall me, both personally and professionally. As a middle school guidance counselor, however, I knew the topic I dealt with daily was the impact social media was having on our students. I became passionate about the reasons my students were drawn to spend hours on their phones. Of particular interest were the young ladies I worked with who not only spent hours being attached to their phones, but lived their lives based on what was being said about them on the screen. Beyond the screen these words that were often negative and demoralizing, resulting in problems in school both academically and socially. These young ladies also saw themselves as unworthy if they were not included with the “in” group, which led to thoughts of suicide or other self-harming behaviors.

Not long after I drafted my proposal topic and began to focus on the literature review, my granddaughter was found to have been cutting herself and writing suicidal notes in her journal. She was in 8th grade, 14 years old, and believing she needed to end her life all due to a “friend” she had made on Instagram. This “friend” convinced my granddaughter that “ending it” would free her from the pain she felt along with punishing her family for making her life “a living hell”. Fortunately, several events occurred in a short time that allowed my son and daughter-in-law to seek out the professional help their daughter needed. It was a long, dark time for our entire family. Today I am happy to say my granddaughter is healthy, happy, and succeeding beyond expectations as a high school junior. Even with the impact COVID-19 had on schools and the move to virtual learning, she is excelling. Prayers have been answered.

Along the way my daughter-in law discovered The Semicolon Project. The premise of this project is to promote positivity to those who have thought that ending their lives was the answer, that engaging in some form of self-harm was just the “semi-colon” in their life. The idea is just like in a sentence where the semi-colon pauses the thought, the sentence does finish with a complete thought. My son, daughter-in-law, and I have a semi-colon tattoo in honor of my granddaughter. Her sentence, her life, was merely paused, only to resume with a complete thought of moving forward and succeeding as the beautiful, intelligent, talented young woman she is.

This paper is dedicated to my granddaughter, Ms. Avary Lane Estep, in honor of her ability to shine as the star she is.

Acknowledgments

When one begins a journey into the unknown, one must have the courage to do so. This journey may be taken alone, or with others. And sometimes, as was the case with me, you take it alone but with the support and encouragement of others who believe in you and love you.

My journey to a doctorate began with a leap of faith and the unconditional support of my wonderful husband, Everette Morton. Knowing the time this process would take away from our time together, you didn't flinch when I told you what I wanted to do. There is no way I could have started down this path without your full and total support. Always my biggest cheerleader, you continued to do whatever was needed to keep me going, even when you were diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. I owe you so much for your love and support even when you were feeling your worst. The good Lord has kept us together through all the trials we have faced and has still seen fit let us dance from time to time. Everette, I love you with all my heart.

Family is one of life's greatest gifts. Mine is no exception. I have been gifted with three wonderful children, four beautiful grandchildren, a daughter-in-law, and a son-in-law who were always encouraging and telling me how proud they were of me. I doubt that I deserve their accolades, but I am certain that their words of encouragement, endless teasing with great humor, and unconditional love made this journey easier to bear. Matthew and Shannon, thank you for always having the faith in me that I sometimes couldn't find. Megan and Peter, thank you for the use of your dining room table without which I would never have made it through the coursework as I began this journey and for bringing humor into my craziest times. Mark, you always made me feel that I could reach the goal line. I heard your voice even when I was at the bottom of the pile. And to Avary, Collin, Henry, and Nora, Yaya loves you best!

I am privileged to be the aunt of the greatest niece of all time, Beckie Krol. Never in the three years it took for me to finish this monumental task did you ever make me feel as though I was not worthy or capable of getting this thing done. You were always there to lean on, vent to, cry with, and definitely laugh with. I thank you from the bottom of my heart and love you more than you know!

Two dearest friends must know how much they mean to me. Without your encouragement I do not know if I could have finished this journey. Neither of you would let me quit when I really wanted to. You kept pushing me and pushing me to not give up. Jackie Byrd and Andi Martin, I am eternally thankful to you for your stubbornness in not letting me walk away. We are more than friends...you are my buddy and my sista!

I believe that God puts people in your life exactly when you need them. He certainly did that for me when Dre Ragnow and Jen Jesse were paired up with me in the statistics class early in our coursework. Two better people I could not have asked for to go through that mind-boggling course with! Thank goodness you understood what all that mess was about as you surely carried me through it! I am so grateful to you both and am so happy that we have developed such a Noble friendship!! You two are the best, and I cannot wait until we celebrate together the completion of our journeys.

Dr. Cambra, I know I have tried your patience on more than one occasion! However I know I was blessed to you as my committee Chair. I still am not sure I completely understand the contrast between quantitative and qualitative, but I know you have taught me so much about things not remotely related to either of those things. I can't thank you enough for your encouragement and your patience with me as I navigated the waters.

Dr. Simmons, thank you for reading and re-reading my manuscript and for the suggestions that made it flow. Your kind spirit was always appreciated along with your kind words.

And finally, to Jay...you know who you are and how grateful I will always be.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

As social media has come to dominate the modern technological landscape, it has had potentially detrimental consequences on many users, especially female users (Longobardi et al., 2020). These detriments are understood in a broad sense, but not adequately researched in terms of adolescents or social media's effects on academic performance and self-esteem, especially in female students. The present study intended to address that gap in the literature and practice. Chapter 1 will present a summary of the study. It opens with a review of the background, especially the problems related to social media usage. Then, the study problem is explicated, followed by the research purpose. Next the research's significance is laid out, along with the research questions. Chapter 1 concludes with the definitions of several main terms and a summary.

Background

Using social media platforms as a method of building relationships has become routine in society today (Kircaburun et al., 2018). With the ease of accessibility to these internet platforms, social media usage is not always kept to appropriate levels, and problematically high usage has become a significant mental health concern (Kircaburun et al., 2018). For adolescents, particularly females (Chae, 2018; Greenwood et al., 2016), engagement with social media has developed into one of the most important priorities in their lives (Longobardi et al., 2020). Participating in social media use while neglecting other significant areas of their lives, compromising social and familial relationships along with educational responsibilities, has been found to have an adverse effect on their psychological well-being (Griffiths, 2013).

Excessive participation in social media potentially reduces the connectedness one has with family, peers, and nature itself, all of which are understood to be important to a healthy life (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). Individuals who become isolated from friends and family because of excessive social media usage experience greater feelings of loneliness, reduced levels of self-worth, and a diminished contentment with life (Bisen & Desphande, 2018). This runs counter to some of the original benefits of social media, such as reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation for older adults (Chopik, 2016). However, the spread and growth of social media has moved past these original purposes and sought to become something more all-encompassing (Andreassen et al., 2016). This has created many problems, including increased risk of negative online social interactions such as cyberbullying (Jelenchick et al., 2013).

A number of studies have assessed the physical and mental health challenges that have developed due to social media overuse and the increase in social media addictions (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Early studies examined the increasing symptoms of anxiety and depression, while additional research focused on loneliness, social isolation, as well as suicidal ideations, especially among adolescents and college students (Andrea, 2015; Bibbey et al., 2015). Other researchers have found that people who use more than one social media platform are using them as their primary source of social interaction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). This heavy use of technology as a means for individuals' social interaction may cause issues with social skills development because it limits their ability to learn how to participate in meaningful conversations. Another consequence of utilizing social media platforms as a primary means of social interaction is the poor development of socio-emotional skills required for evaluating the potential negative impact of what is being communicated.

One material consequence of excessive social media usage can be impaired academic outcomes. Yu et al. (2016) noted that some of the adverse effects of social media addiction were fatigue, sleep issues, and problems making and maintaining interpersonal relationships. In adolescents and college students, these factors can in turn harm academic performance. In addition, excessive social media usage can lead to mental exhaustion, leaving fewer mental resources to employ toward school or work (Malik et al., 2020b). Hence, adolescents having excessive social media use increasingly struggle to satisfy their educational responsibilities as their obsession with gaining access to social media sites increases (Bányai et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Lewis, 2015). As these students were challenged with poor academic performance, the development of effective intervention and prevention initiatives within the school presented as an essential solution and a sound united collaborator in the development of successful treatment programs (Bányai et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Lewis, 2015). To address these issues, a better understanding of the specific nature of social media usage and its effects by adolescents, and especially girls, is key.

Problem Statement

The problem was the detrimental effect of social media usage on academic performance and self-esteem in female students. Social media overuse has been connected to various mental health issues. Studies have indicated that social media overuse has been associated with depression which has seen to have effects on sleeping and physical exercise (David et al., 2018; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018; Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). These studies found numerous mental and physical health challenges that have emerged with disproportionate use and have concentrated on the intellectual challenges noted for children and young adolescents who participate in problematical use (Andrea, 2015; Bibbey et al., 2015).

Increased exposure to cyber-bullying is also related to social media overuse which potentially can lead to an increase in suicidal ideation and other self-harming behaviors (McCrae et al., 2017). In addition, social media overuse can affect students' academic performance through distraction (Malik et al., 2020a) or mental fatigue (Raza et al., 2020), among other pathways. Social media usage, especially at high volumes, can also be detrimental to students' self-esteem (Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). These effects tend to be more pronounced in female students, who have a greater degree of social orientation and place greater importance on popularity (Longobardi et al., 2020).

During the recent move to virtual learning due to COVID-19, there has been a rise in student participation on social media platforms reported by the school system (Drouin et al., 2020). Students have been in virtual classes since August 2020 and have continued into 2021 as there has been a rise in positive COVID cases reported within the Onslow County School System as well as the county at large. Online learning has shifted students' usage of social media platforms and made the study of that usage more important and urgent (Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). Although researchers have examined the results of social media usage along with identifying prognostic indicators for problematic use, there is incomplete research relating to the overuse of social media by female students in particular (Hunt et al., 2018). Further research is needed to better realize the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem, especially in females (Cingel et al., 2022). Research should also examine the effects of social media usage on academic performance in greater depth (Barton et al., 2021), especially in a wider array of contexts besides those that prior research has examined (Luo et al., 2020).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore how female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceive to impact the extent of time they spend on social media. Participants were asked to define their social media use related to which social media platform they most often used for social networking. Because the quantity of time expended on social media and the number of social media visits varies on the effect on student cognitive abilities, the unique effects of social media overuse and the regularity of daily use on students' educational success were evaluated separately.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant due to its practical implications; the study is important because of the need to better understand the potential pitfalls of social media. Today, social media is ubiquitous, especially among younger generations. According to Bányai et al (2017) approximately 71% of teenagers engage on two or more social media accounts with roughly 24% of adolescents noted as being continually online. As it relates to academics, social media has mixed effects, and some research has supported beneficial uses of social media for academics (e.g., Malik et al., 2020b). Other scholars have found social media to be detrimental to academic success and general wellbeing, exposing adolescents to risks such as cyberbullying and potentially contributing to mental fatigue that inhibits learning (Malik et al., 2020a; McCrae et al., 2017; Raza et al., 2020). Students who overused social media therefore often experienced poor psychological and emotional functioning, along with cognitive challenges (Bányai et al., 2017). To address this problem, it is important to develop both intervention and prevention

programs within the context of schools (Bányai et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Lewis, 2015).

The present study was also important because of the specific population it focuses on. Many researchers, including Shensa et al. (2017), Muzaffar et al. (2018), and Woods and Scott (2016) have noted the importance of demographic factors in understanding social media usage and its consequences. Among existing studies, age has been shown to be important, yet only Salomon and Brown (2019) have focused on adolescents in particular. On the other hand, the role of gender in general is well-studied, and the greater importance of these issues for females is well evidenced (Romo et al., 2016; Rosen et al., 2013; Salomon et al., 2019; Scott & Woods, 2018). Hence, the present study's focus on female students is substantiated with the significance of understanding and addressing these issues in adolescent girls being emphasized.

Research Questions

This study was designed to explore the following research questions:

RQ1: How do adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceive social media use affects their academic performance and self-esteem?

- a. What terms do adolescent females use to describe self-esteem?
- b. How do adolescent females describe academic performance?

RQ2: What factors do adolescent females (ages 11-15) believe impact the amount of time they spend on social media?

- a. How do adolescent females describe the time they spend on social media?
- b. How do adolescent females describe the importance social media is to them?

Definitions

Terms pertinent to the study include the following:

1. *Academic performance* – Academic performance is described as the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution of learning has attained their short or long-term educational goals (www.ed.gov).
2. *Adolescent* – For the purposes of this study, an adolescent is defined as someone in the age range of 11-15. Adolescent students are those enrolled in middle school.
3. *Self-esteem* – Self-esteem is defined as a person’s perception of his or herself and in particular, how positive or negative that internal mental image is (Vall-Roqué, et al., 2021).
4. *Social media platform* – Social media platforms are websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or WhatsApp whose primary purpose is facilitating the posting or sharing of personal information and facilitating social interaction between users (Raza et al., 2020).

Summary

To summarize, the problem was the detrimental effect of social media usage on academic performance and self-esteem in female students. To address this problem, the purpose of this study was to explore how female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceive to impact the amount of time they spend on social media. The study was driven by two overarching research questions, namely (a) How do female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive social media use affects their academic performance and self-esteem? and (b) What factors do female adolescents (ages 11-15) believe impact the quantity of time they spend on social media? Chapter 1 presented an introduction to an overview of the study, which included the key foundational elements above, the background of the study, and its significance. The significance of the study stems from the high rate of social media usage by adolescents, especially females, and its potentially detrimental

effects on both academic success and students' self-esteem. In Chapter 2, the literature underlying the study was examined in greater depth. This includes the theoretical foundation and a comprehensive discussion of the research problem.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

Social media permits young teens to create online identities, the forum to converse with peers and family members, and to construct social networks. These social media platforms can provide adolescents with beneficial support, particularly benefitting those who are subjected to omission or have physical and mental disabilities or prolonged illnesses (Andreassen, 2015; Malik et al., 2020b). Adolescents also use social media for self-expression and entertainment purposes. Social media networking can introduce adolescents to contemporary experiences, allowing these individuals to connect across geographical obstacles and introduce them to a multitude of topics such as healthy activities (Greenfield, 2018).

However, the use of social media platforms can easily be problematic as it transitions to social media addiction. Social media addiction is basically another addition to the current record of addiction terms (Andreassen, 2015). As is the case with other addictions, social media addiction can have probable adverse effects on self-esteem and possible academic success in middle school adolescents due to the excessive amount of time on internet social networking (Andreassen et al., 2017; Cingel et al., 2022). That is, research has shown that the excessive use of social media negatively impacts adolescent students due to a variety of reasons (Cingel et al., 2022; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018; Kircaburun et al., 2018).

Considerable literature is related to the negative effects of social media platform overuse dedicated to the connection with distress (Cingel et al., 2022; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018;

Kircaburun et al., 2018). In addition, excessive social media use can be a distraction for adolescents, disrupting their sleep (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018; Malik et al., 2020a). Furthermore, excessive social media use can widely expose adolescents to bullying both in person and online, rumor dissemination, peer pressure, and unrealistic views of other people's lives (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018; Kircaburun et al., 2018). This results in significantly negative effects on adolescent mental health and quality of life (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018; Kircaburun et al., 2018).

Furthermore, other researchers have reported that the excessive use of social media can potentially reduce the connectedness one has with family, peers, and nature itself (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). Current research studies on the connections between diverse Internet activities and life contentment has indicated that there is a connection between Internet use, depression, and loneliness (Bisen & Desphande, 2018; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). In fact, researchers have noted that social media addiction negatively affects the quality of life one experiences (Hussain & Griffiths, 2018; Tian et al., 2018). That is, isolated individuals from friends and family due to excessive social media use experience heightened levels of loneliness, decreased levels of self-esteem, and a diminished contentment with life (Bisen & Desphande, 2018; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). These negative effects of social media overuse have been contributing factors leading to self-harming behaviors among the adolescent age group (Andreassen, 2015; Malik et al., 2020b). Such self-harming behaviors include alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, cutting, suicidal ideation, and suicide, (Andreassen, 2015; Malik et al., 2020b; McCrae et al., 2017).

In addition to greater degrees of loneliness, decreased levels of self-esteem, and a diminished satisfaction with life, research has revealed that excessive use of social media negatively impacts the academic performances of adolescents (Andreassen et al., 2017; Kircaburun et al., 2018; Longobardi et al., 2020). Moreover, research has shown that excessive

social media use can lead to mental exhaustion, leaving depleted mental resources for use in school or work (Malik et al., 2020b). That is, adolescents who excessively use social media increasingly struggle to fulfill their educational responsibilities as their obsession with accessing social media sites increases (Bányai et al., 2017; Raza et al., 2020). This is important information to further examine given that, social media networking has become one of the most significant activities in their lives, particularly among female adolescents (Cingel et al., 2022; Longobardi et al., 2020). Reports have shown that 71% of adolescents participate on one or more social media accounts while approximately 24% of adolescents are noted to be constantly online (Bányai et al., 2017). As such, to address the issue of extreme use of social media among adolescent females, there was a need to further examine the specific nature of social media use and its effects through adolescent females' perspectives.

Despite the many reports regarding adverse effects of excessive social media use, there was a lack of research regarding social media use of female adolescent students and how they perceive that usage in relationship to their academic performance and self-esteem. There is widespread research that calls out for more research regarding the relationship between social media use and self-esteem, especially in females (Cingel et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2020; Salomon et al., 2019). Barton et al. (2021) reported the need to examine the effects of social media use on academic performance in greater depth. The researchers found that social media use and attention significantly predicted academic success (Barton et al., 2021). However, past researchers have not examined the effects of social media use on academic performance among adolescent females despite the predictive markers for problematic social media use (Barton et al., 2021; Cingel et al., 2022; Hunt et al., 2018). This is a significant gap in literature given that the negative effects of social media overuse on self-esteem is more pronounced among female

students than male students (Longobardi et al., 2020; Salomon et al., 2019; Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). Overall, within the specific population of female students, understanding the impact of social media use on adolescents and its consequences have been explicitly emphasized (Salomon et al., 2019; Scott & Woods, 2018). Investigation into these issues relating to excessive social media use for female adolescents is therefore integral for effective interventions within the context of schools, specifically through the firsthand perceptions of students themselves (Bányai et al., 2017; Muzaffar et al., 2018; Salomon & Brown, 2019).

The literature review of this study examined and reviewed theories and past literature that support the current study, specifically in examining the effect of social media use on academic performance and self-esteem in female students (Longobardi et al., 2020; Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). In addition, research has been called for in having a set of prevention and intervention programs within the school to assist with addressing the overuse of social media use and its effects such as female self-esteem and academic performance (Bányai et al., 2017; Malik et al., 2020b). Examining this topic further, especially at present time, was significant given the move to virtual learning due to COVID-19. Because of this, there has been an upsurge in the use of social media platforms reported by the school system (Drouin et al., 2020). According to researchers, academic performance levels based on the advent of increased virtual learning in schools because of COVID-19 is a new area of research that should be investigated (Drouin et al., 2020; Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). This research study could therefore contribute to bridging the gap in literature regarding the effects of social media use on academic success and self-esteem, especially in females, in much greater depth (Barton et al., 2021; Cingel et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2020). This topic is most relevant at the present time during the period of the COVID-19

pandemic, as it remains as an understudied area of research (Drouin et al., 2020; Vall-Roqué et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study was to explore how female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceived social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceived to impact the quantity of time they spend on social media. Furthermore, the objectives of this qualitative research study were to investigate how adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceived their use of social media affected their academic performance and self-esteem, to determine which factors impact the amount of time spent on social media, as perceived by female adolescents (ages 11-15), and to identify ways/mechanisms in which social media overuse among female adolescents (ages 11-15) are being or could be overcome. Providing the specific perceptions and experiences of adolescent females (ages 11-15) regarding the use of social media, as well as their time spent on social media, may consequently be used to develop intervention and prevention programs within the context of schools (Bányai et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015). The study also intended to contribute to the field of mental health by exploring the significant factors that impact the experiences of adolescent females regarding the use of social media, as well as their time spent on social media (Bányai et al., 2017). This included identifying ways/mechanisms in which the effects of the overuse of social media within the school context among female adolescents are being or could be overcome. This could, in turn, reduce the effects of social media use, especially at high volumes, on students' self-esteem and academic performances (Longobardi et al., 2020; Vall-Roqué et al., 2021). The findings of this study could aid in advocating the healthy usage of social media among female students such that they may fulfill their educational obligations, ensuring their wellbeing (Bányai

et al., 2017; Malik et al., 2020b). This study's findings may also provide more insight on how social media platforms could be used to improve learning.

The following search engines and online databases were used with the purpose of developing the literature review: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, Global Health, Google Scholar, Ingenta Connect, Journal Seek, and JSTOR: Journal Storage. Key search terms and the combination of search terms that were included in several online databases were the following: *adolescent social media use*, *Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior*, *social media overuse*, *social media platforms*, *social media use among female adolescents*, *social media use and academic performance*, *social media use and self-esteem*, and *social media use*. These key terms were used to find empirical studies that were associated to the problem outlined in the last chapter and the respective research questions.

The majority of the literature contained within was published between 2018 and 2022, specifically in terms of the impacts of social media use and frequency of daily social media use, the effects of social media use on female students' academic performance, the effects of social media use on female students' self-esteem, and the role of gender in the overuse of social media and its consequences. Recent findings were critical to keep the study as updated as possible. It is important to note that in the development of this study, studies dated before that time were included as part of the references, as in the case of the framework that is Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior.

The research articles that were chosen for inclusion in the study addressed topics of effects of social media use, Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, adolescent female students' overuse of social media, specific perceptions of female students regarding the use of social media, and how adolescent female students can be supported with the healthy use of social

media for learning within school contexts. As a way to tackle the research problem and questions posed in the previous chapter, the researcher added to the background knowledge presented by beginning with the means of identification of literature search and strategy. The first section of this review explained how the literature review was largely constructed. Following the second section, the research focused on the theoretical framework of the study. The third section focused on research studies with discussions centered on social media addiction or overuse. A section on the impact of social media addiction or overuse on self-esteem and academic performances were then discussed, consequently. Finally, the fourth section was the summary and synthesis of findings, underscoring the termination of this literature review and the central points to consider for this qualitative research study.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior was used as a theoretical foundation for the study in investigating the social media use of female adolescent students and how they perceive that usage in relationship to their academic performance and self-esteem. The theory of planned behavior is one of dominant social psychological theories in extant literature related to an individual's intention and cues (Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, the theory of planned behavior is an approach that is concerned with recognizing the causes of specific intentions and behaviors. According to the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen (1991), behavior is a function of an individual's intention to perform the behavior, which is determined by three categories of beliefs: behavioral, normative and control beliefs.

One of the principles of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior is that an individual's perception regarding positive or negative consequences of engaging in a specific behavior, as well as people's evaluation of these beliefs, drive the individual's attitude towards a specific

behavior (Abrahamse, 2019). This is referred to as one's behavioral belief (Abrahamse, 2019). In addition to behavioral belief, normative beliefs also contribute to one's intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The behavioral beliefs refer to the perceived expectations and behaviors of other people, together with an individual's motivation to conform to such expectations (Abrahamse, 2019). Lastly, control beliefs also impact an individual's intention to perform a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991). These control beliefs refer to the extent to which people perceive there to be elements that may impact their ability to perform a certain behavior, including factors such as skills, ability, time, and money (Ajzen, 1991). Overall, the theory of planned behavior helps in understanding the underlying behavioral intentions of certain behaviors, which are significantly influenced by the three sets of norms: one's attitude toward a behavior, the subjective norms surrounding the execution of that behavior, and one's perception of their control over the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Cameron, 2010).

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior has been widely used in psychology and in understanding various behaviors as in the case of the use of social networking sites and social media (Baker & White, 2010; Cameron, 2010; Pelling & White, 2009; Sihombing & Pramono, 2021). Sihombing and Pramono (2021) used the theory of planned behavior in a case study regarding social media use among voters in the Indonesian context. The researchers aimed to examine how the use of social media influences Indonesian youth's behavior, specifically in voting for a specific candidate (Sihombing & Pramono, 2021). The findings of their study showed that the information gathered from social media had a significant positive relationship with youth's attitude of voting for a specific presidential candidate (Sihombing & Pramono, 2021). In another study by Cameron (2010), the theory of planned behavior has proven to be a robust framework for examining the use of social

networking sites among college students. Cameron (2010) employed 221 college students in their study aged 18 to 27 years old wherein the findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between one's age and the use of social networking sites. Further, the use of social networking sites significantly decreased with increasing age (Cameron, 2010). It is noteworthy that the studies of Cameron (2010) and Sihombing and Pramono (2021) are not focused on adolescent females (ages 11-15) as participants of their studies. Nonetheless, these past studies provide justification regarding the use of the planned behavior theory in understanding social media use among individuals such as adolescent females, which can be further explored in this current study (Cameron, 2010; Sihombing & Pramono, 2021).

According to Baker and White (2010), Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior can be used in understanding influences on adolescent engagement with social networking sites and social media in general. Baker and White (2010) probed further into this topic in their study, examining adolescent use of social networking sites from an extended theory of planned behavior perspective. The researchers employed 160 adolescents in their study, examining each respondent's attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and intention, group norm, and self-esteem in line with using social networking sites (Baker & White, 2010). The findings of the study showed that attitude, perceived behavioral control, and group norm were all driving factors of adolescent engagement in social networking sites (Baker & White, 2010). Together, these three factors formed adolescent behavior in frequently using social networking sites (Baker & White, 2010). In another study, Pelling and White (2009) also used Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior in understanding the adolescent use of social networking sites. The researchers employed 233 university students in their study to examine factors that influenced and predicted the use of social networking sites (Pelling & White, 2009). The findings of their study revealed

that attitude and subjective norm significantly predicted intentions to use social media (Pelling & White, 2009). This is significant information given that intentions to use social media predicts behavior of using social media (Pelling & White, 2009). Furthermore, the findings showed that aspects of self-identity and belongingness significantly predicted adolescents' addiction toward social media use (Pelling & White, 2009). Overall, the theory of planned behavior helps inform the factors that influence adolescent use of social media and networking sites, including the addictive inclinations of adolescents towards social media (Baker & White, 2010; Pelling & White, 2009). These past findings could be further expanded in the specific population of female adolescents (ages 11-15), examining how they perceive social media use, as well as its impacts on their self-esteem and academic performances (Baker & White, 2010; Pelling & White, 2009). The theory of planned behavior could also be expanded in this study as it examines the amount of time female adolescents (ages 11-15) spend on social media, relating to their perceived importance regarding its use.

As a way to decrease the prevalence of social media overuse among adolescent females, more investigation was needed to ascertain ways and/or mechanisms in which the negative effects of social media addiction could be overcome. Additional studies have also shown that despite the primacy of social media overuse among adolescent females, there is a lack of effective intervention and prevention programs within the context of schools designed to promote the healthy use of social media and networking sites (Bányai et al., 2017). Investigation into how female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive the effects of social media overuse on their academic success and self-esteem is therefore integral for the encouragement of healthy social media use in schools (Bányai et al., 2017). This is important to address due to the high rate of social media use by adolescents, especially females, having potentially detrimental effects on

both students' academic success and self-esteem (Andreassen et al., 2017; Bányai et al., 2017; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018).

Therefore, the theory of planned behavior acted as a foundational position for this study as a theoretical framework and guide to identify the factors that impact the amount of time female adolescents spend on social media. As it relates to the understanding of female adolescents in school settings, this theory of planned behavior provided additional understanding from a behavioral perspective (Baker & White, 2010; Pelling & White, 2009). As such, the theory of planned behavior aided in providing insights on the impact of social media use on academic achievement and self-esteem specifically among adolescent females (Cameron, 2010; Sihombing & Pramono, 2021). A sizeable majority of past studies focus on social media overuse or addiction and the negative effects that are seen with its use (Barton et al., 2021; Ho et al., 2017; Sihombing & Pramono, 2021). For one, Ho et al. (2017) used the theory of planned behavior in their study of social media overuse and addiction among Singaporean adolescents and adults. The researchers found several factors that impact and predict the time spent on social media among adults and adolescents (Ho et al., 2017). While adolescents showed greater addiction to using social network sites as compared to adults, the findings of their study discovered that factors such as neuroticism and self-identity were significantly associated with social media overuse. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that excessive social media use and addiction significantly decreased self-esteem. This finding was found among both samples of adults and adolescents (Ho et al., 2017).

However, few studies to none put a direct weight on how adolescent females perceive the effects of social media use on their academic success and self-esteem, including how to address and overcome social media addiction specifically among adolescent females (Andreassen et al.,

2017; Ho et al., 2017; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018). Therefore, in reference to the theory of planned behavior as a point of reference, school organizations and school leaders can better detect ways/mechanisms in which gender bias in social media addiction specifically among adolescent females could be overcome, as well as recognize the perceptions of adolescent females regarding the effects of social media use on their academic success and self-esteem, together with the body of literature available. That is, the theory of planned behavior supported the present study in fostering a discussion that there are various impacts of the overuse of social media among adolescent females (Andreassen et al., 2017; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018). This framework also acted as a cornerstone to the literature in constructing relevant research or tools that meet the needs of adolescent females, specifically in promoting a healthy relationship between this cohort and their use of social media. This framework could also provide further empirical evidence on the different factors that impact the time spent on social media, especially among adolescent females (Andreassen et al., 2017; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018).

Social Media Addiction or Overuse

Excessive social media use has dramatically risen in recent years. Today the Internet has become one of the primary means of socializing. This has created such an impact that the lives of young teens are being aided through the rapid development of information technologies and availability to the Internet (Andreassen et al., 2017; Kim & Davis, 2009; Nesi et al., 2018).

Along with the growth of Internet use and its widespread accessibility, negative social media use has therefore become a topic for wide-ranging research.

Problematical social media use, also described as social media addiction or social media overuse, is a type of behavioral or psychological dependency on any social media platform or

platforms. This overuse of social media platforms related to social media addiction or social media overuse is also referred to as Internet addiction disorder which is related to other kinds of digital media overuse (Griffiths, 2013; Valkenburg et al., 2021). These disorders can be identified when a person participates in activities online at the expense of meeting daily responsibilities or participation in additional interests without consideration of the adverse outcomes (Valkenburg et al., 2021). Social media addiction is commonly defined as the compulsive use of social media platforms that result in substantial loss to an individual's performance in various life activities over an extended period of time (Griffiths, 2013; Valkenburg et al., 2021). Griffiths (2013) stated that these obsessive addictive behaviors can be illustrated by six components: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse. Behaviors that meet these six criteria can be deemed an addiction, which includes social media overuse. The addictive behavior is applicable whenever the behavior mars personal, family, academic, or professional life (Griffiths, 2013).

As such, there is mounting interest within the mental health community regarding the compulsive use and overuse of social media platforms. This is especially because researchers have found that the excessive use of social media and networking sites has significantly negative impacts on children and adolescents (Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2021). For instance, social media overuse leads to increased social isolation, levels of anxiety, and deteriorating school performance among adolescents (Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018; Kelly et al., 2018). Furthermore, several researchers have reported that social media addiction is an indicator of the development of anxiety, depression, and potentially self-harming behaviors, especially suicidal ideation (David et al., 2018; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018; Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019).

Twitter is a current social media platform that has gained increased popularity in recent years along with the increase of social media use. With the Twitter platform, studies began to appear that assess the instinctual nature of the interactions among individuals (David et al., 2018). Studies indicated that individuals who are Twitter users often reflect signs of depression and have a disheartening view of their satisfaction with their quality of life (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). Individuals who had a pessimistic view of their quality of life were also shown to have more profound feelings of depression and unhappiness (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). In addition it was found that some individuals more often posted frequent tweets associated with their ideas of suicidal ideation or death in general (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). In other situations, tweets made by adolescents frequently conveyed anger and aggression toward other adolescents, communicating similar thoughts as adults did (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). In addition to this, David et al. (2018) explained that the ability to remain nameless while participating on any social media platform has augmented the individuals' inclination to engage in personal attacks on others together along with sharing thoughts of self-harm. Furthermore, some individuals often do not realize on the affect their negative thoughts have on their exchanges with others, possibly resulting in intensifying the signs of depression and anxiety for the beneficiary of the message (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). Therefore, the use of social media has potentially negative impacts on adolescents' mental health (David et al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016).

There is also more research that underscores how social media addiction negatively impacts the person's mental health (Andreassen, 2015; Jasso-Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). Andreassen (2015) explained, individuals who display obsessive social media behaviors tended to spend an inordinate amount of their free time

thinking about social media and how to obtain more time for social media use. Thus, social media addiction or overuse is important to explore and address further given that there is an adverse effect on the otherwise general good health of an individual. That is, social media addiction or overuse may negatively impact the ability of students to lead productive lives, especially when their addictive social media behaviors go untreated (Chu, 2011; Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). The potentially negative impacts of social media use and addiction merits the need for further research, necessitating this current study (David et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). To further examine this topic, specifically among adolescents, the following sections will focus on discussing the impacts of social media overuse on adolescents' self-esteem and academic performance in school according to extant literature.

Impact on Self-Esteem

The adolescent years are a period during which momentous alterations take place in cognitive, biological, and social development. Self-esteem is a crucial factor in how an individual perceives him-or herself, be it negatively or positively, along with their own self-worth (Hawi & Samaha, 2019; Kelly et al., 2018). The individual's own sense of pride, positive self-evaluation, or self-respect is also entwined with his or her self-esteem (Hawi & Samaha, 2019). When self-esteem is decreased, an individual may be unable to find hope and motivation to succeed. As a result, with respect to the adolescent, the ability to perform appropriately in academic matters can be reduced (Hawi & Samaha, 2019; Kelly et al., 2018). In addition to cognitive evaluative aspects of the self, self-esteem also includes and impacts motivational aspects of the self (Barton et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2018).

Popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have provided opportunities for adolescents to develop and maintain relationships within social media. However, the overuse of social networking sites has been found to impact users' self-esteem (Kelly et al., 2018; Nesi et al., 2018). That is, studies on addictive social media use have been associated with self-esteem (Andreassen et al., 2017; Hawi & Samaha, 2019; Kelly et al., 2018; Valkenburg et al., 2006). Delving into this topic, Valkenburg et al. (2006) conducted a research study to examine the outcomes of overuse of social media networking sites on adolescents' self-esteem and well-being. The study concentrated on survey conducted online among 881 Dutch adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 assessing perceived well-being, social self-esteem, frequency of reactions to profiles, use of friend networking sites, and the tone of reactions to profiles (Valkenburg et al., 2006). The study results revealed that 49.3% of the reactions to their profiles were primarily negative with only 28.4% as positive, indicating a significant correlation between social media use and decreased self-esteem (Valkenburg et al., 2006). Kelly et al. (2018) reported similar findings, as the researchers examined population data from the UK Millennium Cohort Study on 10,904 adolescents (14-year-old adolescent females and males; Kelly et al., 2018). The researchers aimed to examine if social media use affected adolescent depressive symptoms, sleep, self-esteem, and body image (Kelly et al., 2018). The findings of their study revealed that the use of social media was significantly associated with online harassment, low self-esteem, poor sleep, and poor body image (Kelly et al., 2018). Overall, these effects resulted to increased risks and scores of depressive symptoms (Kelly et al., 2018). This negative association of online harassment, poor sleep, low self-esteem, and poor body image due to social media was more pronounced for adolescent females than for adolescent males (Kelly et al., 2018). This body of findings provide empirical results regarding the negative impact of social

media use on self-esteem, as well as other factors such as harassment, sleep, and body image (Kelly et al., 2018; Valkenburg et al., 2006).

Recent research studies indicate that persons of any age group who spend a substantial quantity of time on social media sites describe reduced levels of self-esteem. This relationship between social media overuse and self-esteem has been found especially among females (Banyai et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2018). Researchers have noted that females are more prone to giving more attention to social comparisons online which can be hostile to their self-worth (Banyai et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2018; Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). adolescent females who constantly use social media are therefore at risk of reporting high levels of depression and low levels of self-worth (Kelly et al., 2018; Nesi & Prinstein, 2015; Steinsbekk et al., 2021). In a more recent study, Steinsbekk et al. (2021) examined this topic in their study, exploring the impact of social media use on appearance self-esteem from childhood to adolescence in adolescent females and males. The researchers utilized an interview protocol and questionnaires to gather data on social media use regarding self-esteem and self-perceptions among adolescents aged 10, 12 and 14 years old (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). The findings of their quantitative study showed significant gender differences regarding the effect of social media use on self-esteem and self-perception outcomes (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). That is, adolescent females were grew more conscious about themselves as they spent increased time in social media (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). More specifically, the use of social media predicted diminished appearance in self-esteem from ages 10 to 12 and ages 12 to 14, but only among adolescent females (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). This body of knowledge presents empirical information regarding the negative impact of social media use on self-esteem and self-perceptions; this effect is not significantly found among adolescent males, as found consistently in extant literature (Kelly et al., 2018; Steinsbekk et al., 2021).

Impact on Academic Performance

Social media overuse has also been associated with decreased academic performance. Delving further into this topic of excessive social media use, research has shown that the amount of time individuals participated on social media platforms had a significant relationship with academic performance in school (Ahn, 2011; Huang, 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019; Talaue et al., 2018). Several researchers have noted that students struggle with fulfilling their academic responsibilities due to their preoccupation with their involvement on social media platforms and the amount of time they spent on them (Banyai et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015). This is important information given that many students are constantly online. In one study, Banyai et al. (2017) found that nearly 24% of the adolescent population were always actively online. Banyai et al. (2017) also ascertained that these adolescents had reduced cognitive, emotional, and psychological functioning and combatted academic challenges, which was not the case with most of their peers without social media addiction. As such, considerable thought should be given to focusing on designing effective intervention programs for school systems for students with a social media addiction. This is especially important because the more time students participate on social media sites, the less time they have to complete homework assignments which eventually reflect on their lower grades in the classroom (Habes et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019).

The use of Facebook has been researched in the context of its impact on academic success. Some researchers have noted that using Facebook decreases the probability of academic success (Habes et al., 2018). Habes et al. (2018) conducted a study on the use of social media among students in the higher educational universities and its impact on student achievement. The researchers conducted observations, employing a comparative and experimental approach in

their study, while also analyzing existing literature regarding the impact of using Facebook on academic success (Habes et al., 2018). The findings of their study revealed that university students who largely use social media, especially Facebook, experience negative decreases in their academic performances (Habes et al., 2018). Sampasa-Kanyinga et al. (2019) reported similarly, examining factors of social media use, school connectedness, and student academic success among middle and high school students. The researchers examined data from the 2013 cycle of the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, which entailed a cross-sectional survey of students in grades 7 to 12 (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). The findings of their study showed that social media daily use of more than two hours was negatively associated with academic performance of students in middle school and high school (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). Conversely, the results indicated that fewer than two hours of daily social media use was positively associated with higher levels of school achievement in high school students (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019).

The past results of Habes et al. (2018) and Sampasa-Kanyinga et al. (2019) were explained in a study conducted by Malik et al. (2020b). Malik et al. (2020b) examined the connection of social media fatigue and academic performance decrement in a large cross-sectional study. The researchers employed 1,398 WhatsApp users (aged 19 to 27 years) for one study and another with 472 WhatsApp users (aged 18 to 23 years) (Malik et al., 2020b). Through surveys, the findings of the study showed that social media overuse was significantly correlated to social media fatigue (Malik et al., 2020b). In turn, social media fatigue negatively impacts academic performance of students (Malik et al., 2020b). This body of findings emphasizes the need to decrease the time spent on social media, especially among middle school and high school students, as overuse of social media could lead to social media fatigue and thus decreases in

school performance (Habes et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020b; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019).

Overall, decreasing the time spent on social media, especially Facebook, could lead to better academic performance outcomes (Habes et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020b; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019). This body of research could be further extended and explored in the context of adolescent females in specific.

Even though there is concern from parents and educators related to social media overuse on adolescents' academic success, there is some suggestion that social media does not have an adverse effect on academics (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). That is, some research indicates contrasting findings compared to those of Sampasa-Kanyinga et al. (2019) and Habes et al. (2018; Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). These past researchers have reported that the time spent on Facebook or other social networking sites do not significantly impact academic success (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). For one, Marker et al. (2018) delved into this study in a meta-analysis wherein the researchers focused on examining the association between online social networking activities and academic achievement. The researchers examined 59 independent samples and found that the use of social networking sites such as Facebook is not significantly correlated to the time spent studying for school (Marker et al., 2018). In another meta-analysis study by Huang (2018), the researcher also noted that there is a weak relationship between social network site use and academic achievement. The researcher gathered and analyzed 30 studies with a total of 21,367 participants (Huang, 2018). The findings of the study showed that there is a negligible relationship between the use of social media and networking sites and academic achievement (Huang, 2018). Furthermore, there was not a significant correlation found between the duration of social media use and academic achievement (Huang, 2018), which is aligned with the findings of Marker et al. (2018).

Nauert's (2018) concluded similar results to those of Marker et al. (2018) and Huang (2018), as the researcher examined students' use of social networking sites and their resulting grades. During a research study conducted in Germany, Nauert (2018) examined how social media use by adolescents related to their academic grades. The researcher found that students frequently using social networking sites, with the individuals consistently posting messages and photos, have slightly lower grades; however, this negative effect has been found to be small (Nauert, 2018). Overall, students who are especially active on social media do not automatically spend less time studying (Nauert, 2018). From Nauert's (2018) study, it was determined that using social media does not indicate to have an adverse effect on school grades. Therefore, there is still no scientifically consistent proof of social media taking valuable time for schoolwork from pupils, as indicated in these past findings (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). This body of findings underscore that the habit of participating on social media platforms and the impact on adolescent academic achievement are still inconclusive (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018). That is, the relationship between social media overuse and academic achievement is still worth examining further, which merits the need for the current study, specifically among adolescent females (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). This gap in knowledge further justifies the need for the current study.

Research has shown that the use of social media has dual effects on academic performances of students. Several researchers have noted that social media use can have negative or positive effects on students' academic performance (Nauert, 2018; Talaue et al., 2018). Talaue et al. (2018) this conclusion on their study, as they examined the impact of social media use on academic performance of selected college students. Examining this topic among 60 students, the findings showed that social media use has a dual impact on student achievement (Talaue et al.,

2018). That is, some students are easily consumed with social media use, negatively impacting their academic grades (Talaue et al., 2018). However, there are also students who find the use of social network crucial for their development, using social media sites and networking for communication and socialization (Talaue et al., 2018). Ahn (2011) added, using social network sites can help students in their increase their participation and communication in schools, which may aid in educational achievement. Overall, this pool of findings underscore that the use of social media does not necessarily impact academic performances negatively (Nauert, 2018; Talaue et al., 2018). That is, the findings showed that there is some positive impact from social media on students' use for coursework while still others show the opposite (Nauert, 2018; Talaue et al., 2018). In line with the different conclusions regarding the influence of social media on academic performance, there is still a need to monitor the use of social media of adolescents (Nauert, 2018; Talaue et al., 2018). Nauert (2018) advised that parents should monitor their child's social media use in suitable ways. As such, it is therefore worth approaching adolescents' use of social networks with utmost responsibility (Nauert, 2018; Talaue et al., 2018).

Impact on Social Skills and Relationships

Adolescents who participate in overuse of social media greatly rely on technology and digital media for their social and peer contact. Researchers have noted that the use of social media has negative impacts on social skills development (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Nesi et al., 2018). According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), adolescents who overuse social media have restricted development of their social skills thus decreasing their ability to engage in appropriate verbal communication with both peers and adults. This is significant information given that the lack of ability to communicate can be detrimental emotionally (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Nesi et al., 2018).

However, the evolution of adolescent peer relationships due to social media use is not necessarily negative. That is, some researchers explained that the impact of social media on adolescent relationships become negative when it is used in high volumes (Nesi et al., 2018; Vannucci et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Nesi et al. (2018) explained this in their study, as the researchers aimed to develop a framework to explain the impact of social media on adolescents' peer experiences. According to Nesi et al. (2018), the use of social media transforms adolescents' peer experiences, specifically in five ways. First, social media changes the frequency of peer experiences. Second, social media use among adolescents enhances peer experiences and demands (Nesi et al., 2018). Third, social media use changes the qualitative nature of peer interactions. Fourth and lastly, social media allows adolescents more opportunities for compensatory behaviors while also developing new novel behaviors (Nesi et al., 2018). That is, the use of social media and its effects on peer relationships only become negative when its use become excessive and obsessive (Nesi et al., 2018). In such cases, excessive social media use increases the level of social withdrawal among adolescents, therefore damaging relationships with peers and adults (Nesi et al., 2018; Vannucci et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018).

Vannucci et al. (2019) concurred with Nesi et al.'s (2018) findings, noting that overall social media use does not necessarily translate to problematic peer relations. The researchers examined this in their longitudinal study wherein adolescents completed surveys during baseline and a follow-up after six months (Vannucci et al., 2019). The results of their study showed that Instagram/Snapchat use among adolescents resulted in higher close friendship competence and friendship support compared to the scores of adolescents with low social media use (Vannucci et al., 2019). However, their results also revealed that excessive social media use (exhibiting patterns of high Instagram/Snapchat use) was predictive of problematic behaviors such as

delinquency and family conflict (Vannucci et al., 2019). Overall, the impact of social media use on relationships with peers and adults varies along with the degree of using social networking sites (Nesi et al., 2018; Vannucci et al., 2019).

Given the varying impacts of social media use on relationships with peers and adults, it is important to develop a level of parental supervision and monitoring of behavior on social media use. Researchers have noted that adolescents who have a higher degree of parental support are inclined to be in better mental and physical health and have a more positive sense of overall well-being than adolescents who do not have this form of parental support (Bean et al., 2003; Procentese et al., 2019). According to Procentese et al. (2019), parents have a significant influence on how the adolescent views social media. That is, parents need to help foster positive perceptions about social media and its potential impact on their adolescent children (Procentese et al., 2019). As such, there is a need to develop intervention programs as a cooperative effort for school systems to develop, including parents as part of their programs (Banyai et al., 2017; Procentese et al., 2019). This collaborative type of intervention approach may aid in counteracting the potentially negative effects of social media addiction among adolescent females (Banyai et al., 2017; Procentese et al., 2019).

Summary

Even though social media and the use of social networking sites do not directly cause mental illness, the overuse of social media can potentially have a negative impact in the academic performances of adolescents. Studies have shown that the overuse of social media can lead to decreases in academic performance (Barton et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2020a; Malik et al., 2020b). Malik et al. (2020b) and Raza et al. (2020) explained that this negative effect was due to

mental fatigue, leaving students with less time and energy on academic work as their time in social media increases.

In relation to the effect of social media use on academic performance, future researchers would do well to examine this topic further, especially in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and specifically among adolescent females. Academic performance levels based on the advent of increased virtual learning in schools because of COVID-19 is a new area of research that should be investigated (Drouin et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018). More specifically, there is limited research on the impact of social media use on academic performance during COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent females (Drouin et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018). As such, future researchers would do well to compare assessment data from school year 2019 (prior to school closures due to COVID-19) and school years 2020 and 2021, which saw increased virtual learning or the return of students to classrooms after months of online learning (Drouin et al., 2020). This is important information to consider given the fact that students who undergo online learning potentially have the tendency to also use social networking sites (Hunt et al., 2018).

Research has also indicated that the overuse of social media can lead to decreases in self-esteem (Cingel et al., 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2021). That is, adolescents, particularly female adolescents, grow more conscious of their body image as they spend more time in social networking sites (Cingel et al., 2022). The past researchers noted thus that the overuse of social media effect on self-esteem is more profound among female adolescents (Cingel et al., 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2021). While there is an emergence of social media use and its potential impacts on adolescents; self-esteem, research in this area among adolescent females is deficient. For example, in the future it would be valuable for researchers to examine the various social media platforms or phone applications individually to identify any discrepancies any of these

platforms by themselves would have on adolescent self-esteem. Facebook has been the most popularly used social media platform for older age groups. Snapchat, Instagram, TicToc, and Twitter have become extremely popular and most often used platforms among the adolescent age group (David et al., 2018; Valkenburg et al., 2021). Each social networking site has a potentially negative influence on various constructs. As such, these more current and popular sites have not been studied enough to conclude what impression they have, either positively or negatively, on adolescent females (David et al., 2018).

Further longitudinal research is needed to identify the directionality of the effects seen. Future research could also duplicate previous research on the effects of social media on adolescent females and focus on exploring the effects of gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and other factors on the relationship linking increased social media use and the observed adverse consequences on adolescents. Additional research is needed to ascertain if duration or frequency of social media use lead to a measurable effect on the negative consequences observed among adolescents (Banyai et al., 2017). Such research studies need to address whether duration, longitudinally, or frequency matters more (Banyai et al., 2017; Muzaffar et al., 2018).

Researchers should also conduct innovative research to reveal key factors that incline adolescents to the adverse effects of increased social media use (Martinez-Ferrer et al., 2018), which merit the need for the current research. Finally, future researchers should also study how social media can be standardized to make its use more positive among students, especially adolescent females who have decreased self-esteem along with increased social media use (Longobardi et al., 2020). Overall, future research should be conducted to illustrate the negative effects of social media on adolescent females (Cingel et al., 2022; Longobardi et al., 2020; Muzaffar et al., 2018).

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

This chapter details the research methods that were used to investigate the perceptions adolescent females have about how they believe social media influences self-esteem and academic performance during the school year. This chapter outlines the research design and research questions that were studied together with a description of the participants. It also provides an overview of how the data were gathered using interviews with the participants. This then provided the data indicating the participants' perceptions of their individual social media use and how they believe it affects their own academic performance.

Design

Research Method

A qualitative research method was used in this research with the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A qualitative research method involves understanding the context of the trend of interest (Heppner et. al., 2016). Qualitative methods stress the process in which individuals give meaning to their social experiences and perceived realities (Litchman, 2011). This study focused on the participants' own ideas and perceptions of how their media use impacts their social relationships and academic performance. Such a research focus aligned with the way in which a qualitative study allows for the analysis of participants' perceptions. The participant interview provided a narrative of each participant's perception of how social media has impacted their life related to academics and self-esteem. Qualitative research simply represents methods or principles that are believed to affect science of human world. It assumes that there is a relationship between attitude and behavior related to human science (Litchman, 2011).

Qualitative methods not only help provide explanations of complex phenomena but are also beneficial in evolving or creating conceptual bases or theories, and in recommending hypotheses to explain the phenomena (Glesne, 2010). The value of any qualitative research is to provide valid results which are only possible after extensive research (Neubauer et al., 2019). Qualitative research encourages individuals to expand their responses when given topics not initially deliberated. Moreover, it stimulates individual experiences by encouraging participants to describe how their feelings and emotions may look in picture form. It also provides detail information related to data analysis, which provide unbiased and reliable information. By recording feelings, behaviors and attitudes, qualitative research obtains information to support the findings (Cresnel, 2013).

For several reasons a qualitative research method was appropriate for this study. First and foremost, individual participants were appraised on their perceptions of the quantity of time they spent on social media platforms, the impact it had on their self-esteem and their academic performance. Using a qualitative research method allowed for the investigation of social media use by describing and interpreting participants' own individual experiences. By adopting a qualitative methodological lens, this study explored how the participants' own stories were told to understand how they perceived and made use of their experiences. As this study focused on the participants' own individual perceptions of how their media use impacts their self-esteem and academic success, a qualitative study examined these perceptions and provided a narrative of each participant's view of how social media has impacted their life related to these two areas.

Qualitative research was also key because it gave the participants, who are adolescents, a voice in the research process. Giving children and adolescents a voice promotes self-esteem and self-worth. By giving them a voice through choice, opinion, feelings and emotions, children and

adolescents can develop and learn that they are important and valued. Feeling valued plays a large role in how a child learns (David et.al., 2018). For them to play and explore, actively learn and critically think, the need to feel confident in their environment and have the knowledge that their voice is heard, and their way of explorations will be noted and valued is critical to developing a positive image of themselves as they grow and develop (David et.al., 2018; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016).

Research Design

There are several research designs within the qualitative method. The specific research design that was utilized was a generic qualitative research design. Merriam (2002) has proposed that, like all qualitative research, in terms of distinguishing unifying design features of the generic qualitative approach, generic studies strive to understand how people construct, interpret, or find meaning from their world and their interactions. A generic qualitative approach is described by Caelli and Mill (2003) from the work of Merriam (1988) as encompassing studies that are intended to understand phenomena, processes, and/or the perspectives of research participants. They assert that researchers who use a generic method should make their theoretical position clear. For example, they should be explicit in the motivation for them to conduct the study. There should be similarity between methodology and methods—that is, methods should be sufficiently outlined to distinguish between them. Another example of this clarification is, if observation is utilized, is it adequately described to differentiate it from ethnographic observation? There should also be well-defined strategies to establish rigor, and the analytic lens through which data are examined should be established. For example, how has the researcher interacted with the data?

Additionally, Merriam (2009, p. 23) writes that generic studies are epistemologically social constructivist, theoretically interpretive studies that focus on “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences”. Social constructionism is the theory that people develop knowledge of the world in a social context, and that much of what we perceive as reality depends on shared assumptions (Vinney, 2021). From a social constructionist perspective, many things that are taken for granted and believed as objective reality are socially constructed, and thus, can change as society changes (Vinney, 2021). The knowledge created in a community has social, cultural, and political consequences. People in a community accept and sustain the community’s understanding of particular truths, values, and realities (Gergen, 2011). When new members of a community accept such knowledge, it extends even further. When a community’s accepted knowledge becomes policy, ideas about power and privilege in the community become codified. These socially constructed ideas then create social reality, and—if they aren’t examined—begin to seem fixed and unchangeable (Galbin, 2014). This can lead to antagonistic relationships between communities that don’t share the same understanding of social reality (Galbin, 2014). As such, generic studies draw on at least one or more established methods to build a research design “from the ground up.” By that it denotes that the methods within generic qualitative approaches are normally “highly inductive; the use of open codes, categories, and thematic analysis are most common” (Lim, 2011, p. 52).

For this study, the perceptions of the participants were interpreted to define how they see their social media use having an impact on their social relationships, their overall academic performance, and their perceptions of the relationship of social media use to self-esteem. A generic qualitative research design was appropriate because the study was qualitative in nature

but did not closely align with any specific research design such as phenomenology.

Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of the participants in great depth (Neubauer et al., 2019). The present study was more focused on the overall phenomenon. A case study, on the other hand, focuses deeply on the context of the research (Merriam, 1988). The present study sought to examine the phenomenon more generally. Because these specific qualitative designs are poorly aligned, a generic qualitative approach was more appropriate.

Research Questions

To determine the appropriate research questions for the study, it was important to focus on the principal research phenomenon. The research phenomenon for this study was how female adolescents use social media and how they perceive that usage as relating to their academic performance and self-esteem. For designing qualitative research questions, this central phenomenon can be split into two foci, namely the experience of social media use and the self-perception of its relation to self-esteem and academic performance. Therefore, the two overarching qualitative research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How do female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive social media use affects their academic performance and self-esteem?

- c. What terms do female adolescents use to describe self-esteem?
- d. How do female adolescents describe academic performance?

RQ2: What factors do female adolescents (ages 11-15) believe impact the amount of time they spend on social media?

- c. How do adolescent females describe the time they spend on social media?
- d. How do adolescent females describe the importance social media is to them?

Participants

Participants were chosen from a convenience sampling of middle school females in Grades 6-8 attending a local middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina. A preliminary assessment was provided to potential participants to determine their eligibility, willingness, and permission to participate in the study. The principal of this school was contacted in writing requesting permission to contact the parents of the female students of these grades. Permission is included as Appendix A. Once data collection began, the parents of the students were contacted via email and provided a copy of the Parental Consent letter as an attachment (see Appendix B). For those parents who granted permission, the students of these parents were contacted via email to seek their permission to participate in this study. To be included in the study, participants needed to be between the ages of 11 and 15, female, and active on at least one social media platform.

This group of participants was identified as being a target group within the local school system. During the recent move to virtual learning due to COVID-19, there had been an increase in the use of social media platforms reported by the school system. Academic performance had decreased as seen by educators in middle school classrooms. Students had reported that their interest veered away from completing academic work to noting the greater importance of staying connected to friends when they are unable to be present in the school setting.

Once parental permission was provided, participants were informed they could terminate their participation at any time by their own decision or by their parents. The preliminary assessment included demographic information which also included the age of the participant and her grade level in school. Participants were excluded from this study if they did not have access to a cell phone or personal laptop, did not have at least one social media platform, and did not

access one or more social media platforms more than three times per day. Because of the age of the participants each were given with a coupon for two admission tickets to the local dollar movie theater as compensation for their participation in this study.

Sample Size

The study was conducted based on the level of social media use. It was aimed at utilizing the data gathered from 5-10 participants, with the final sample size dependent on saturation. Saturation is the ideal that the sample size in qualitative research depends on reaching the point where new participants no longer contribute new ideas (Mason, 2010). Thus, the final sample size cannot be determined in advance. In a qualitative framework, research based on interviews often seeks to penetrate social life beyond appearance and manifest meanings. This necessitates the researcher to be immersed in the research field, to establish continuing, fruitful relationships with respondents and through theoretical contemplation to address the research problem in depth, as noted by prior research (e.g., Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Therefore, a small number of cases (fewer than 20) facilitated the researcher's close association with the respondents, and enhanced the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings.

Sources of Data

The chief source of data for the study was qualitative, semi-structured interviews. For purposes of this study, a semi-structured interview questionnaire was used to record the responses of the participants. The participants had individual views of how social media affects their personal life as well as their academic performance. These questions provided insight into their perceptions as to how their use of social media relates to their description of their self-esteem and how they view their educational achievement. The semi-structured interview is an ideal qualitative data source as it allows the researcher to collect data with both structure and

flexibility (Kallio et al., 2016). Structure was provided by the interview guide (see Appendix C), which was prepared in advance by the researcher (Rabionet, 2011). In this study, the interview guide was validated in advance by three experts (the dissertation committee).

Semi-structured interviews draw structure from the interview guide, but they also offer the researcher flexibility through the ability to ask the participants additional or probing questions to further clarify their experiences (Kallio et al., 2016). In this regard, the semi-structured interview provided a baseline of key information for each interview, but also afforded the ability to elicit more relevant data where possible. Although it was initially thought that the interviews would need to be conducted virtually, it was possible for the interviews for this study to be conducted in-person at the school site. At the time the interviews were conducted, the school community had returned to in-person learning following the move to virtual learning during COVID-19. The interviews lasted 30-60 minutes each. Each interview was audio recorded, then transcribed for use in the analysis. Participants were given the opportunity to member check their transcripts if they so desired.

Procedures

Once approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Protocol # 4063.012220 (See Appendix E), participants were drawn from a convenience sample of female students from one local year-round middle school in North Carolina in the summer semester of the 2022-2023 school year. Participants were within the ages of 11-15. Participants acquired parental permission to participate in the study, signed an individual assent form, had access to a personal laptop computer and/or cell phone, and used at least one or more social media platform. Both parent and participant consent were obtained through an electronic demographic survey.

The consent form was the first document provided to the participant's parent or guardian, which provided background information and the purpose of the study. It outlined the procedures, which were completed online (See Appendix B). In addition, the consent form also described any possible risks having to do with the study as well as any advantages to the participants. The participants were notified that their information would be kept confidential and maintained on a secured computer and written notes would be kept in a locked cabinet. It was explained that the researcher and faculty Chair would be the only individuals having access to the recorded interviews and transcripts of such, which would then be destroyed after the three-year record retention requirement. The consent forms also provided contact information for the researcher and discussed the voluntary nature of the study and how participants could terminate their participation at any time.

Because the study utilized the results of personal interviews based on their social media use, participants needed access to their own personal laptop computer or personal cell phone. The study was conducted in the summer semester of school year 2022-2023. Both parental and participant's permission needed to be obtained due to the ages of the students. Parents were asked to remain in the room adjacent to the interview so that they were easily accessible if the participants needed them but were not directly involved in or present for the interview as parental presence could skew the results with social desirability bias.

Site permission had already been obtained. Once data collection began, a parental consent form was sent to these parents via email. This consent form outlined the purpose of the study, how the study would be conducted, and the authorization to contact their child to participate in the study. Once permission was granted from the contacted parents, a participant consent form was sent to their children via email which outlined the purpose of the study, how the study would

be conducted, and requested their signature as granting their consent to take part in the study. Based on the information given on this consent form related to social media use, the participant sample was selected. Following this, individual interviews were scheduled with each participant. It had been anticipated that the interviews would be conducted through Google Meets, Zoom meetings, or Team Meetings based on the participant's individual computer program. However, because the school community had returned to in-person learning, all interviews were conducted in-person at the school site. Each participant was scheduled individually after school hours on a day convenient to the participant, the researcher, and the school principal who provided a secure area in which the interviews were conducted.

Information was gathered during the interview using a Participant Interview Questionnaire consisting of ten (10) questions related to social media use and the perception each participant has of its impact on their self-esteem, family and peer relationships, and academic performance. Questions also addressed the participant's reasons for using social media, the amount of time spent daily on social media platforms, and their thoughts on reduced or absence of social media in their lives.

Data Analysis

The study data analysis was carried out using Clarke et al.'s (2015) qualitative thematic analysis process. Data analysis was carried out with assistance from NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Clarke et al.'s (2015) thematic analysis process involves six key steps once the data are entered into NVivo and prepared for analysis.

The first step was building familiarity (Clarke et al., 2015). In this step, the researcher carefully read and reviewed each transcript, building a deep familiarity with the participants' responses and grounding the analysis in the data. The second step was open coding (Guest et al.,

2011). Codes represent ideas or simple units of meaning found in the data. To assist with assigning codes, an initial codebook was developed with codes that were expected to appear based on the literature. In addition, emergent codes were used to capture new ideas not in the initial codebook. After the data were coded, the third step was to identify preliminary themes (Terry et al., 2017). In this step, the prevalence of codes relative to one another were examined. When codes form patterns that offer larger units of meaning, and those larger units of meaning relate to the research questions, then these are themes.

Once the themes were identified, the fourth step was validation (Clarke et al., 2015). In this step, each theme was compared carefully back against the original transcripts. This validation step helped to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, and that every theme can be traced back to the data. Next, in the fifth step, the themes were cross validated (Guest et al., 2011). Cross-validation involved comparing the themes against one another. In this step, every theme was assessed to be unique and to represent a complete idea. Any themes changed in this step were re-validated as in step 4. Finally, the last step was to compile and recontextualize the themes (Terry et al., 2017). This step comprised Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Research on adolescents and minor children is defended ethically by the need to lessen the weight mental illnesses place on young people, their families, and society in general. These types of research studies must be handled with particular attention to the ethical principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Hoop et al., 2008). Child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors who work in partnership on research studies, or who advise patients and families about research participation need to consider nine specific fields when determining the ethical suitability of specialized protocols. These fields include scientific

merit and design; expertise, commitment, and integrity; risks and benefits; confidentiality; participant selection and recruitment; informed consent and decisional capacity; incentives; institution and peer/professional review; and data presentation (Hoop et al., 2008). Specific ethical questions in child and adolescent psychiatry research concern the use of randomized, controlled treatment trials, the informed consent process for research involving adolescents, therapeutic misconception, and conflicts of interest in physician referrals (Hoop et al., 2008).

Because this study included data collection on behaviors detrimental to mental health as they relate to self-esteem and academic performance, there was a need to determine the specific criteria for gauging level of risk based on any information gleaned from the participants' surveys and/or questionnaires. The criteria for risk will vary and will in part be decided by the research context and juxtaposition to data. Except for studies in which participants remain unspecified, risk criteria should be decided by the researchers beforehand and clearly outlined (Lloyd-Richardson et al., 2015). A risk assessment protocol should at the very least contain the following elements: screening for risk, reviewing the evidence, and deciding when and how to intervene.

The protection of human participants through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study. In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have particular importance due to the in-depth nature of the study process (Lloyd-Richardson et al., 2015). The concern of ethical issues becomes more salient when conducting face to face interview with a vulnerable group of participants. They may potentially become stressed while expressing their feelings during the interview session. The existing ethical guidance for undertaking qualitative research often provide general guidelines rather than focusing on how to apply it in practice.

The six important ethical issues were considered in this study. The process of obtaining Consent consisted of the following: consent should be given freely (voluntary), participants should understand what is being asked of them, and involved persons must be competent to consent. This means, to participate in the research study, participants needed to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information, and have a power of freedom of choice to allow them to decide whether to participate or decline. Participant's agreement to participation in this study was obtained only after a thorough explanation of the research process. All participants and their parents were required to present written consent prior to the start of the study.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was protected by not disclosing their names and identity in the data collection, data analysis, and the reporting of the study findings. The confidentiality of the interview environment was monitored carefully during email communications, interview sessions, data analysis, and dissemination of the findings. Data transcribing was conducted by the researcher in a private setting. The identities of the participants were removed during data transcription, including their names or any significant aspect of identity. In presenting the results of the study, the participants were referred to by their previously assigned numbers. Written consent or any document which contains the participants' personal detail was kept in a locked cabinet with no access to anyone other than the researcher. This personal information will be destroyed in accordance with the Liberty University research governance procedures.

There is potential risk to the participants in this study that may or may not become an issue but needed to be considered moving forward. Because the participants utilized their own laptop computer, some participants may have become over stimulated by the light from the

screen or any sound that is emitted as they type. These are physical risks that may occur. Psychological risks included the production of negative affective states such as anxiety, depression, guilt, or shock based on their reaction to questions asked. Social risks may have come into play as alterations in peer relationships may develop which may put the participant at a disadvantage. These risks included embarrassment, loss of respect for self or others, or being labeled based on participants' responses. Social risk was mitigated due to the use of the online platform used for the individual interview.

The risk of loss of confidentiality is always an issue in a research study. The identity of the participants must be carefully guarded and maintained unless the researcher has obtained the written permission of the participants to do otherwise. The more sensitive the research material the greater care must be taken to ensure its safety in obtaining, handling, and storing the data during and after the study. Coding of personal data should occur early and stored securely with only the researcher having access to it. Consent from the participants must always be obtained if the data is to be used for any purpose other than its original intention. Legal risks occur when research methods are liable for a violation of the law.

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this study was to explore how female adolescents (ages 11-15) perceive social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceive to impact the quantity of time they spend on social media. This chapter, Chapter 3, addressed how that research purpose will be carried out in practice. The chapter first reiterated the research questions from Chapter 1. Then, the choice and appropriateness of the qualitative research method and generic qualitative research design were laid out. Participants were chosen from a convenience sample of middle school females in Grades 6-8 enrolled in a

local middle school in North Carolina. The sample comprised 5-10 members of the population. The source of data was qualitative, semi-structured interviews guided by a pre-validated interview guide. The data were collected through 30- to 60-minute in-person interviews and audio recorded. Data were analyzed using Clarke et al.'s (2015) qualitative thematic analysis process. Ethical research practices were adhered to at every step of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how middle school adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceive social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem. The participants' perceptions of the influences of their time spent on social media were also investigated. This chapter contains the presentation of the findings of the study. A description of five middle school females in Grades 6-8 attending a local middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina is provided. Students in the Onslow County School System had been in virtual classes from August 2020 to 2021 due to the rise in COVID-19 cases reported in the area. The findings of this study were aimed to address the problem of overusing social media. Particularly, the consequences of overusing social media on middle school females' self-esteem and academic performance had not been explored in depth (Barton et al., 2021; Cingel et al., 2022). The process involved in developing the themes using Clarke et al.'s (2015) six-step thematic analysis framework is also included in this chapter. The resulting themes are presented according to the research questions:

RQ1: How do adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceive social media use affects their academic performance and self-esteem?

- What terms do adolescent females use to describe self-esteem?
- How do adolescent females describe academic performance?

RQ2: What factors do adolescent females (ages 11-15) believe impact the amount of time they spend on social media?

- How do adolescent females describe the time they spend on social media?
- How do adolescent females describe the importance social media is to them?

Theme Development

This study utilized a generic qualitative research design to evaluate female adolescents' perceptions of the amount of time spent on social media and its impact on their academic performance and self-esteem. Five middle school females in Grades 6 to 8 of a local middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina were selected for the study. As the participants were ages 11 to 15, parental consent was obtained. The participants underwent initial assessment to verify their eligibility and willingness to participate in the study. The researcher interviewed each participant on their use of social media and their perceptions of its impact on their self-esteem, family and peer relationships, and academic performance. The participants were interviewed individually in-person at the school site. The participants' parents were not part of the interview but were advised to remain in a room adjacent to the interview area should the participants need them.

The researcher analyzed and interpreted the data collected through the semi-structured interviews using Clarke et al.'s (2015) qualitative thematic analysis process. The six steps of the analysis were: data familiarization, code generation, initial theme identification, theme review, theme naming and definition, and report production (Clarke et al., 2015). Data analysis commenced once the researcher imported the transcribed audio recordings into NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis software, to organize and examine the gathered data.

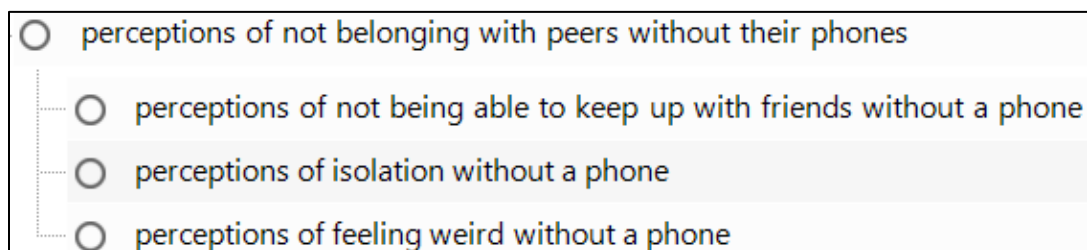
The first step in the thematic analysis was to become familiar with the data (Clarke et al., 2015). In this study, the researcher immersed in the data by personally conducting the interviews, listening and transcribing the audio recordings, and reviewing the transcripts. Rigorous and repeated reading of the transcripts enabled the researcher to gain a firm understanding of the responses of the participants and ground the analysis in the data.

The second step was code generation. The researcher highlighted any words, phrases, or paragraphs relevant to the research topic. The researcher created codes found throughout the data representing the significant ideas on how female adolescents use social media and its impact on their self-esteem and academic performance. For instance, Participant 4 stated, “Sometimes I feel like my phone is my only way to be in a group. I know of kids who don’t have a phone and they feel left out of stuff.” The participant described how peers without a phone were out of place. Thus, the code perceptions of isolation without a phone emerged from the statement. The researcher produced a codebook (see Appendix D) to record the development of each code.

The third step involved the identification of the preliminary themes. The researcher reviewed the codes and merged codes with similar meanings to create potential themes expressing larger units of meaning. The researcher identified the initial themes when the code received the highest frequency and grouped the codes with similar meanings. The themes were visually represented in NVivo 12 using the hierarchy feature as shown in Figure 1. In the figure, the codes perceptions of feeling weird without a phone, perceptions of isolation without a phone, and perceptions of not being able to keep up with friends without a phone pertained to the participants’ perceptions of not being able to belong among their peers if they did not have a phone to access social media contents. Thus, the theme perception of not belonging with peers without their phones emerged.

Figure 1

Perception of Not Belonging With Peers Without Their Phones



The next step was theme validation. The researcher compared the themes with each other and against the transcripts to ensure that each theme was grounded to the data. The researcher merged themes with similar patterns of meaning. Six themes emerged which were: (a) Negative and neutral perceptions about belongingness and no social media access, (b) Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance, (c) Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, (d) Using social media to relate with friends, (e) Using social media for interests and leisure, and (f) Using YouTube for learning.

The fifth step was to verify that each theme was unique from the others and that the themes combined to create a comprehensive and coherent idea. The theme negative and neutral perceptions about belongingness and no social media access was renamed to having access to social media was the norm to reflect a better response to RQ1. Each theme was defined and named to distinguish them from each other and to make sure they aligned with the research questions. An overview of the six final themes is shown in Table 1.

Table 1*Final Themes*

RQ alignment	Theme	Definition
RQ1	Having access to social media was the norm	Thoughts of being isolated when having no access to social media and thoughts of having access to social media as a norm
RQ1	Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance	Grades influenced by parents' expectations, interest in school, and interest in sports rather than social media use
RQ2	Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use	Parents and teachers overseeing the duration of social media use and content accessed on social media
RQ2	Using social media to relate with friends	Using social media to connect with friends when outside the school and to bond with friends through sharing and making content for social media
RQ2	Using social media for interests and leisure	Using social media to access content they consider fun and interesting
RQ2	Using YouTube for learning	Using YouTube to watch videos that supplement the lessons taught in classes

The researcher then produced a report of the results. The report contains the final themes, their descriptions, the number of people who participated, and the number of coded texts that were aligned with the research questions. The results presented in the next section are organized according to the research questions.

Results

The themes were derived from the six-step thematic analysis process devised by Clarke et al. (2015). The themes were: (a) Having access to social media, which was supported by four of

the five participants; (b) Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance, which was supported by four of the five participants; (c) Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, which was supported by all five participants; (d) Using social media to relate with friends, which was supported by all five participants; (e) Using social media for interests and leisure, which was supported by all five participants; and (f) Using YouTube for learning, which was supported by three of the five participants. Four universal themes emerged as the results of this study with social media use being the norm. An overview of the themes with the number of participants who contributed to the themes and the number of the theme's references in the data is shown in Table 2. The participants and the research question responses are described in the following sub-sections.

Table 2

Overview of Themes

Theme	No. of participants	No. of data references
Having access to social media was the norm	4	20
Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance	4	8
Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use	5	30
Using social media to relate with friends	5	29
Using social media for interests and leisure	5	26
Using YouTube for learning	3	6

Participants

The participants of this study were five middle school females in Grades 6-8 attending a local middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina. The participants were ages 11 to 15 and actively used at least one social media platform. Parental consent was obtained, as all the participants were under the age of eighteen. Descriptions of each participant are provided in the

following sub-sections. The participants' demographic information is summarized in Table 3. All the information were self-reported.

Table 3

Demographic Information

Participant	Grade level	Age	Most used apps	Estimated time of social media use
1	8	13	TikTok, Snapchat	14 hours a week
2	7	12	TikTok, Instagram	Several hours at night
3	6	11	Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube	More than one hour a day
4	6	11	TikTok	Not specified
5	8	13	TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube	A few hours before and after school

Participant 1

Participant is 13 years old and is in the eighth grade. She actively used TikTok and Instagram but was more inclined to use TikTok. She described her duration of social media use to be approximately 14 hours a week.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is 12 years old and is in the seventh grade. She preferred using TikTok to see “cool stuff” posted by influencers and Instagram and Snapchat to connect with her friends. She also used YouTube to watch the videos recommended by her friends. She shared that her parents did not monitor her use of social media, but her parents tasked her adult older sister to check on the contents she accesses in social media. She spends “several hours a night” using social media. Participant 2 revealed that she and a friend lied about their age while signing up for a Facebook account. She was curious about Facebook because of her older sister who showed

her contents found in the platform. However, Participant 2 thought that lying about her age in Facebook was not a big deal because she and her friend did not use their accounts anymore.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is 11 years old and in the sixth grade. She used Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Her mother monitored her social media use. She was only allowed to use her phone after finishing her chores and homework. She reported using social media platforms for a little over one hour a day for weekdays. On weekends, Participant 3 stated that she spent more time on her phone while she and her friends make TikTok videos.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is 11 years old and in the sixth grade. She used Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. She prefers TikTok the most because of seeing her friends' posts, making videos with them, and watching her favorite musicians. She uses YouTube to watch TV shows. Her mother would take her phone away if she was caught using it past her bedtime.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is 13 years old and in the eighth grade. She and her friends used to post pictures on Instagram, but she shared that Instagram posts caused "drama" in their school. She and her friends currently used TikTok and Snapchat to share their posts. She also used TikTok to make videos with a friend with whom she shared an interest in music and dance. She used YouTube to watch viral funny videos. Participant 5 used social media during her spare time such as while waiting for the bus before school, during the bus ride to and from school, after doing her homework, and during car rides to her soccer games.

Research Question Responses

The six final themes are presented in this section according to the two research questions that guided this study. The themes were: (a) Having access to social media was the norm; (b) Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance; (c) Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use; (d) Using social media to relate with friends; (e) Using social media for interests and leisure; and (f) Using YouTube for learning.

Theme 1: Having Access to Social Media was the Norm

Four of the five participants perceived that having a smart phone and using social media was the norm at their school. Three of the five participants believed that having no access to social media would lead to isolation among their peers, while two of the five participants felt neutral about having access to social media because they perceived using social media was not out of the ordinary. The codes and sample quotes that led to the development of this theme are presented in Table 4.

Table 4*Having Access to Social Media was a Norm*

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
Neutral about having a phone and social media access	Everyone uses a phone	"My phone doesn't make me feel good or bad. It's just there. Everyone has a phone, so I guess I'm just like them (Participant 3)."
	Plays sports	"Probably not [popular because of social media]...I play soccer so I guess I'm kinda popular because our team is good, but that doesn't have anything to do with social media (Participant 5)."
Perceptions of not belonging with peers without their phones	Perceptions of feeling weird without a phone	"I guess I would feel really weird and like an oddball because everyone has [a phone] (Participant 5)."
	Perceptions of isolation without a phone	"I wasn't allowed to have my phone...the next day at school, they were basically ignoring me cuz I didn't know what they were talking about (Participant 2)."
	Perceptions of not being able to keep up with friends without a phone	"Sometimes I feel like my phone is my only way to be in a group (Participant 4)." "I don't feel like I am part of my crew if I am not on my phone (Participant 2)."

Without access to social media, three of the five participants felt that they would not belong among their peers. Specifically, Participants 2 and 5 expressed that they felt unable to relate with their friends when their phones were temporarily taken away by their parents. Participant 5 shared, "I would feel really weird and like an oddball because everyone has them. I hated when my phone was taken away and I couldn't talk to anyone or see anything." Participant 5 further stated that her friends updated her about what she missed on social media, but the participant also perceived that her friends would not want to keep updating her. Participant 2

shared that her friends teased her for getting in trouble and having her phone taken away. She related her experience of being made fun of to being “the only kid” without access to online social media platforms. Participant 2 stated:

I don't want to be the only kid in school without a phone and online, you know? When I don't have my phone, like when I'm grounded, I get made fun of. That really bugs me...if you don't have a phone people look at you funny, like what's wrong with you?

Participant 4 described one instance that involved a female classmate without a phone and did not use social media. The classmate was avoided by other students. Participant 4 stated:

I just want to be accepted and like everyone else. I mean, there was this girl once who didn't have a phone cuz her parents didn't believe a kid should have a phone. Nobody wanted to talk to her because they thought she was weird. She dressed funny, too. But that shouldn't really matter, but if anyone talked to her, they got treated differently, you know? So, we just left her alone. She moved during the year anyway, so it wasn't a big deal. But I don't want anyone to think I'm weird.

Participant 2 experienced having her phone taken away by her parents and then “ignored” by her friends the next day at school because she could not relate to the social media contents they were discussing. Participant 2 stated:

I like being looked at as being one of the cool kids who know what's going on around school. I feel important which makes me feel good...I hated [having my phone taken away] because I always want to know what's going on. I hate being left out.

On the contrary, Participant 5 shared that her friends included her in their social media posts even when she was not physically with them to update her with what they were doing. Participant 5 shared:

I think that my friends and I know when maybe one of us might not be able to be with them, like one time my friends [names redacted] went to the mall together when I wasn't home, like my mom had me go somewhere with her, and they were posting pictures on Snapchat that I saw. But they were including me because I'm their friend and they wanted me to know what they were doing and wished I was with them. We can't always be together for everything.

Participants 3 and 5 also felt neutral about having a phone and using social media in the sense that social media was not out of the ordinary. Participant 3 stated, "I guess I'm okay. My phone doesn't make me feel good or bad. It's just there. Everyone has a phone so I guess I'm just like them." Participant 5 shared that social media use was the norm but she felt neutral about it. She also shared that she had friends to hang out with outside of social media and that she played soccer as well, which added to her perception that social media was only one part of her life.

Participant 5 revealed:

I don't think I feel good or bad. Social media doesn't make me feel like that. I feel bad when I have been grounded and didn't have my phone. But being on social media doesn't make me feel bad or anything...I just have my friends and we do our thing. I play soccer so I guess I'm kinda popular because our team is good, but that doesn't have anything to do with social media.

Theme 2: Social Media Use is Not Perceived to Influence Academic Performance

Four of the five participants perceived that social media did not impact their academic performance. These participants instead shared that their parents' expectations, their interest in school, and their interest in sports were linked with their academic performance. The initial

themes, codes, and sample quotes that supported the development of this theme are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Social Media Use is Not Perceived to Influence Academic Performance

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
Interest in school	Don't think grades are a big deal	"I do ok. I just don't see it being a big deal (Participant 2)."
	Likes school	"But I like school, so I want to do good (Participant 3)."
	Prefer talking to friends than studying	"I hate studying and it's easier to talk to my friends than do my homework (Participant 2)."
Parents' expectations	Parent set high expectations	"My parents are pretty tough on me and my brother about our grades (Participant 3)."
	Parent's expectations are not high	"Mine just go nuts if I get less than a B on anything (Participant 2)."
Sports	Keep up grades for sports	"I make sure I get my homework done before practice or a game (Participant 1)."

Participant 3 described her grades to be good because of their reminders for her and her brother. Participant 3 stated, "My parents are pretty tough on me and my brother about our grades. They keep telling us that school is the most important thing we have to do right now." Participant 3 also stated that she was interested in school and wanted to do well. Participant 3 stated, "But I like school so I want to do good. My grades are pretty good but since we just started most of what we do is basic stuff." Participant 2, whose parents did not have high expectation for her grades, attempted to get grades higher than a B because if she got lower than a B, her parents would tell her that she spent too much time on her phone and would take her phone away. Participant 2 also perceived that grades were "not a big deal." Participant 2 also expressed more interest in socializing with her friends than studying. Participant 2 elucidated:

I hate studying and it's easier to talk to my friends than do my homework. But we are getting progress reports next week so I know my parents will not be happy. I probably will get grounded and get my phone taken away. Then I guess I will have to do my homework.

Participants 1 and 5 were varsity players and shared that they had a minimum grade requirement to be allowed to keep playing their sport. Both participants shared that they set time for school, sports, and social media. Participant 5 shared:

My grades are good. We just got progress reports and I was passing everything. Had all A's and B's. So that was good. And it made my parents happy. They pretty much check on how much time I spend on my phone on a school night and as long as I get my work done and keep up my grades they don't really care. Plus, I have to keep up my grades because of soccer. I can't play if my grades are bad.

Theme 3: Parents' and Teachers' Monitoring of Social Media Use

All five of the participants shared that their parents and teachers supervised their social media use. Their parents specifically monitored the time they spent on their phones and the contents they accessed online. The three initial themes as well as the corresponding codes and sample quotes under this theme are shown in Table 6.

Table 6*Parents' and Teachers' Monitoring of Social Media Use*

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
Got away with lying about age	Created a Facebook account out of curiosity	"Yeah, me and my one friend [lied about our age] once just to see what would happen on Facebook (Participant 4)."
Parents' monitoring	Don't care about who they follow	"They usually don't care. They get that I follow bands and movie stars and stuff (Participant 2)."
	Entrusted older sibling for responsible social media use	"Since it was my sister who was showing me stuff, they tell her to be careful what she lets me see (Participant 2)."
	Monitor and control time spent on phone	"I am only allowed on my phone for an hour after school if I don't have anything else I have to do like chores and stuff (Participant 3)."
Teachers monitor device use	Monitor content accessed on phone	"I have restrictions where it says...I can't go there (Participant 1)."
	Allowed phones in class as a learning tool	"My teacher has us use our phones when we need a calculator (Participant 5)."

Participant 1 shared that her parents allotted a specific screen time for her and checked on the contents she accessed online to make sure that she was only accessing age-appropriate contents. Participant 3 described that her mother allows her to have one hour of screen time after she completes her chores; however, if she needed her phone to do school tasks, she was allowed to have more screen time while being supervised by her mother. Participant 3 shared:

I am only allowed on my phone for an hour after school if I don't have anything else I have to do like chores and stuff. But if I am doing stuff for school, I can be on it longer. My mom looks at what I'm doing so she makes me stop and get off if I'm just messing around with friends.

Participants 4 and 5 shared that their parents took away their phones if they spent too much time with it. Participant 5 had her phone taken away when her parents were not satisfied with her academic performance. Participant 5 admitted that during the previous year, she used to not pay attention to the time she spent using social media to chat with friends or watch videos that she neglected to do her homework. Participant 5 stated that her phone was taken away and she learned to balance her time better. Participant 4 was only allowed to use her phone after she completed her homework. Participant 4 sometimes used her phone to watch videos past her bed time, and her mother punished her by taking her phone away. Participant 4 shared:

I get my homework done because my mom makes me do it as soon as I get home from school. She works but gets home around the same time I do, so if I get on my phone before she does, she makes me get off and do my work. After that I can be on it as much as I want. But I will watch stuff at night after I go to bed. My mom catches me sometimes and then she takes my phone which really ticks me off.

Teachers were particular with the contents they accessed while using the device provided by the school. However, teachers could not monitor the content students accessed on their personal devices. Participant 5 shared that teachers allowed them to use their personal devices in class to use applications such as a graphing calculator because the devices supplied by the school was not sufficient for a one student one device ratio. Participant 5 shared:

We have tablets assigned to us to use for the year, so it's really easy to get online even in school. But usually, I only do that maybe at lunch or during breaks because the teachers pretty much monitor what we do on them. But I have my phone on me all the time so if I want to check emails or get on TikTok I do that with my phone. Our tablets are checked

by the school anyway, so if we did try to go somewhere we aren't supposed to it would shut us down.

Theme 4: Using Social Media to Relate to Friends

All five participants shared that they spent time on social media in order to access content to help them relate with their friends. These participants perceived that social media was important in their peer relationships. The two initial themes under this theme were using social media to connect with friends and to share interests with friends. The initial themes, codes, and sample quotes under this theme are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Using Social Media to Relate to Friends

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
Connecting with friends	Following friends	"I go to the middle school there are all kinds of kids I didn't know before, so they are friending me and I accept because it's cool to make new friends (Participant 4)."
	Staying connected with friends during weekends and school breaks	"This summer we used Snapchat a bunch to show each other what we did when we were on vacation (Participant 3)."
Sharing interests with friends	Following people recommended by friends	"I follow friends of friends on Instagram if my friends tell me it's okay (Participant 2)."
	Friends spend more time on their phones	"Some of my friends get to do whatever they want on their phones and can spend lots of time on it (Participant 3)."
	Having something to talk about with friends	"When we get to school we start talking about what we saw or did on our phones the night before (Participant 4)."
	Making videos with friends	"Most of the time on Saturday nights is when my friends and I make our TikTok dances (Participant 5)."

Two of the five participants shared that they used social media to connect with people in their school and be friends with them. Participant 4 shared, "I go to the middle school there are

all kinds of kids I didn't know before so they are friending me and I accept because it's cool to make new friends." Social media was not only helpful in making new friends but also in maintaining their friendships while on school breaks or any time they were not physically with their friends. Participant 5 described:

[Snapchat] is cool to use because you can send messages and do video messages, too. That's a neat way my friends and I send messages to one another. I probably use that mostly to just send messages when I want to chat up my friends.

Participant 3 also used Snapchat to keep up with her friends over the summer break. In addition, Participant 3 used TikTok to bond with her friends when they were physically together. They talked about the videos they watched, and they also filmed their own TikTok videos during weekends. Participant 3 shared:

Most of my friends can only use their phones like I do. So we talk about what we see when we are on the bus or at lunch. When I have more time on my phone on the weekends I spend more time with my friends on TikTok because we'll make up funny dances and stuff. This summer we used Snapchat a bunch to show each other what we did when we were on vacation. My family and I we went on vacation to Florida so I sent my friends pictures of me at Disney and Universal Studios. They laughed at the ones I took of me when I saw Goofy! He put a funny hat on me when we took the picture.

Participants 2, 3, and 5 followed the pages and profiles recommended by their friends so that they could discuss the contents. These three participants perceived that as long as their friends thought the pages and profiles were safe to follow, they would also follow their friends' recommendations. Participant 2 stated, "All of us find stuff that we think is cool and so we tell each other to go on and watch. As long as one of us knows who the person is then it's okay."

Participant 4 believed that social media and the contents within the platforms were the means in which she communicated with her friends. Participant 4 explained:

That’s how I talk to them. I don’t live close to any of my friends so we talk a lot on our phones. When we get to school, we start talking about what we saw or did on our phones the night before. When my friends send me pictures or funny memes, we talk about that.

Theme 5: Using Social Media for Interests and Leisure

The five participants perceived that social media contents were not limited to connecting with people they know. Social media platforms were also believed to link the participants to their interests. The participants believed that social media was important for their entertainment. Table 8 contains the initial themes, codes, and sample quotes that supported this theme.

Table 8

Using Social Media for Interests and Leisure

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
Following strangers based on interests	Based on their own interests	“Me and my friends follow them because we like their music or dance (Participant 5).”
	Follow famous people Not considered friends	“I follow famous people because I want to see what they are doing (Participant 2).” “I just like to watch the stuff on TikTok because most of it is funny...I don’t think they’re my friends (Participant 3).”
Watching videos for fun	Watching funny videos	“Sometimes I just watch videos that have to do with cats. I have a cat and I like to see what other kids or people post because they are funny. Cats are funny! (Participant 3)”
	Watching TikTok dance videos	“I probably spend more time on TikTok because I can see cool dance videos other people post (Participant 2).”
	Watching videos for entertainment	“YouTube lets me see videos of things on TV I can’t watch like Netflix and stuff because we don’t have that on our TV (Participant 4).”

All five participants shared that they have followed people they did not personally know on social media, but they did not consider those people to be their friends. Participant 3 stated, “Why would I want to be a friend with someone I don’t know? I just like to watch the stuff on TikTok because most of it is funny.” The strangers they followed were either famous or posted contents that interested them. Participant 2 shared, “I follow famous people because I want to see what they are doing. Like I follow the bands I like and singers.”

Apart from their interests, these participants also found leisure in watching funny videos and TikTok dance videos. Participant 1 stated, “Usually on YouTube, I just watch either funny videos or my favorite YouTubers’ [reaction videos]. It could be funny.” Participant 3 liked cats and liked to watch funny cat videos online. Participant 3 shared, “Sometimes I just watch videos that have to do with cats. I have a cat and I like to see what other kids or people post because they are funny. Cats are funny!” Participant 2 thought that TikTok dance videos were “cool” and like to watch them.

Theme 6: Using YouTube for Learning

YouTube was the only social media platform that three of the five participants described to be a tool for learning. These three participants believed that YouTube was a useful resource for learning. The initial theme, codes, and sample quotes that emerged from the data to develop this theme are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Using YouTube for Learning

Initial theme	Code	Sample quote
YouTube videos to supplement lessons	Videos for math and science lessons	“I guess it can help me when I need some help because the teachers tell us where to go to get some help if we don’t understand something, especially in math or science (Participant 4).”

Can be
distracting

“Sometimes I get distracted though... I will click on something that pops up (Participant 3).”

The three participants shared that their teachers encouraged them to use YouTube videos to supplement the lessons taught in class. YouTube videos were specifically used to supplement Math and Science lessons. Participant 5 stated, “The teachers actually want us to go on YouTube to watch tutorials, especially in Math.” Participant 4 shared that the teachers did not only encourage students to use YouTube, but also provided links to the videos. Participant 4 noted:

I guess it can help me when I need some help because the teachers tell us where to go to get some help if we don’t understand something, especially in math or science. They use videos from YouTube all the time.

Participant 3 also experienced receiving links to YouTube videos from her teachers and having her teachers use YouTube videos while in class. Participant 3 also searched for YouTube videos on her own to help her understand her Math lessons. Participant 3 stated:

Our teachers use [YouTube videos] in class, too, so they tell us to go on them and watch...I use YouTube a lot for Math. That’s my worst subject and I hate it so I go on there to see videos to help me.

However, Participant 3 also perceived that YouTube was distracting. The participant described the pop-ups that appear in YouTube videos that distracted her from studying. Participant 3 disclosed, “Sometimes I get distracted though. Well, instead of watching the video to help me I will click on something that pops up and get watching that.”

Summary

This chapter contained the presentation of the findings that addressed the purpose of exploring how middle school females aged 11 to 15 perceive social media use as affecting their

academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceive to impact the amount of time they spend on social media. Five middle school females in Grades 6-8 attending a local middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina were interviewed for this study. Parental consent was obtained to interview minors. The interview data were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Six final themes emerged from the analysis. The themes Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, using social media to relate with friends, and using social media for interests and leisure emerged universally from the data collected from all five participants. The themes *Having access to social media* was the norm and *Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance* emerged from the data collected from four of the five participants. The theme *Using YouTube for learning* emerged from the data collected from three of the five participants.

The five participants generally perceived social media use to have negative and neutral impacts on their self-esteem and academic performance. Specifically, for self-esteem, the participants perceived themselves negatively if they did not have access to social media but perceived neutrality when using social media. For academic performance, social media use had little influence. Parents' expectations, interest in studying, and the minimum grade requirement to play varsity sports had more influence on academic performance than social media use.

The five participants described their time spent on social media to typically exceed one hour a day. Some participants were monitored by their parents in terms of the time spent on their phones and the contents they accessed online. The participants also shared that they were usually only allowed to use their phones after finishing their homework and chores. Parents also tended to punish them for poor grades or excess use of their phones by temporarily taking their phones away. Without their phones, the participants generally believed that their peer relationships were

affected. The participants perceived that using social media was important in making new friends and maintaining existing friendships. Social media was helpful in messaging friends when they were not physically together. Social media was also described to be helpful in bonding with friends in terms of having shared interests to talk about or in terms of making videos together for fun. The participants also perceived social media to be important in keeping them entertained and in accessing contents related to their interests such as music and dance. Some participants believed that YouTube was important to supplement their Math and Science lessons.

The findings will be discussed in the next chapter. The discussion includes an interpretation of the findings through the lens of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, and how much the themes answered the research questions and filled the gap in research. The discussion is followed by the description of the implications of the study findings. The limitations, recommendations, and conclusions of the study are also presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceived social media use as affecting their academic performance and self-esteem and the factors they perceive to impact the amount of time they spend on social media. This chapter will provide a summary of the study findings, a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature, and the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. What follows is a description and rationale of the delimitations and limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a summary of the study.

Summary of Findings

The participants of this study were five middle school females in Grades 6-8 attending Crossroads Middle School in Onslow County, North Carolina. The participants were ages 11 to 15 and actively used at least one social media platform. Six themes emerged from the results of the key findings of this study. Three of the themes were universally supported by all five participants. The universal themes were parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, using social media to relate with friends, and using social media for interests and leisure. The themes having access to social media was the norm and social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance were supported by four of the five participants, while the theme using YouTube for learning was supported by three of the five participants. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: How do adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceive social media use affects their academic performance and self-esteem?

- e. What terms do adolescent females use to describe self-esteem?

f. How do adolescent females describe academic performance?

RQ2: What factors do adolescent females (ages 11-15) believe impact the amount of time they spend on social media?

e. How do adolescent females describe the time they spend on social media?

f. How do adolescent females describe the importance social media is to them?

In answer to RQ1, four of the five participants generally perceived social media use to have negative and neutral impacts on their self-esteem and perceived academic performance. Specifically, for self-esteem, the four participants perceived themselves negatively if they did not have access to social media but perceived neutrality when using social media. According to four of the five participants, social media use had little influence on academic performance. Parents' expectations, interest in studying, and the minimum grade requirement to play varsity sports had more influence on academic performance than social media use. For RQ2, all five participants described their time spent on social media to typically exceed one hour a day. Four of the five participants were monitored by their parents in terms of the time spent on their phones and the contents they accessed online. The four participants also shared that they were usually only allowed to use their phones after finishing their homework and chores. Parents also tended to punish them for poor grades or excess use of their phones by temporarily taking their phones away. Without their phones, the five participants generally believed that their peer relationships were affected. All five participants perceived that using social media was important in making new friends and maintaining existing friendships. Social media was helpful in bonding with friends when they were not physically together. The five participants also perceived social media to be important in keeping them entertained and in accessing contents related to their interests such as music and dance. Three participants believed that YouTube was important to supplement

their Math and Science lessons. The next section will discuss these key research findings of the study in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature.

Discussion

This section will discuss the key findings of this study and how these findings may extend research on theory informing the topics and confirm, diverge, or extend previous knowledge in the empirical literature. In the process, an analysis of these findings will be provided in the context of the theoretical foundation that is comprised of planned behavior theory. Then, the six underlying themes of the key findings as previously noted will be compared and contrasted with the main concepts in the literature review of social media addiction or overuse, impact on self-esteem, impact on academic performance, and impact on social skills and relationships.

Theoretical Literature

According to the theory of planned behavior as posited by Ajzen (1991), behavior is a function of an individual's intention to perform the behavior, which is determined by three categories of beliefs: behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. One of the principles of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior is that an individual's perception regarding positive or negative consequences of engaging in a specific behavior, as well as the evaluation of these beliefs, drives the individual's attitude towards a specific behavior (Abrahamse, 2019). This is referred to as one's behavioral belief (Abrahamse, 2019). In addition to behavioral belief, normative beliefs also contribute to one's intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The normative beliefs refer to the perceived expectations and behaviors of other people, together with an individual's motivation to comply with such expectations (Abrahamse, 2019). Lastly, control beliefs also impact an individual's intention to perform a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991). These

control beliefs refer to the extent to which people perceive there to be factors that may impact their ability to perform a certain behavior, including factors such as time, money, skills, and abilities (Ajzen, 1991).

Overall, the planned behavior theory helps to understand the underlying behavioral intentions of certain behaviors, which are significantly influenced by these three sets of norms: one's attitude toward a behavior, the subjective norms surrounding the execution of that behavior, and one's perception of their control over the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Cameron, 2010). This theory is also one of the predominant social psychological theories in the extant literature related to an individual's intention and cues (Smith et al., 2020). Therefore, the theory of planned behavior is an appropriate and useful guide to identify significant factors that impact the amount of time adolescent females spend on social media, and as related to better understanding the impact of social media use on adolescent females in school settings, their academic performance, and on their self-esteem (Baker & White, 2010; Cameron, 2010; Pelling & White, 2009; Sihombing & Pramono, 2021).

First, according to Aizen's theory of planned behavior, a behavioral belief is an individual's perception regarding positive or negative consequences of engaging in a specific behavior, as well as the evaluation of these beliefs that drives the individual's attitude towards a specific behavior. With social media use being applied to this theory as the specific behavior among adolescent females in this study, the key themes of the research findings of social media use is not associated with academic performance, using social media to relate with friends, using social media for interests and leisure, and using YouTube for learning all directly link to this aspect of planned behavior theory of behavioral belief among the participants of the study through their perceptions regarding the positive or negative consequences of engaging in social

media use as associated to their academic performance, to relate to friends, to use to enhance their interests and leisure, and to use directly to enhance learning. Most participants did not perceive there to be any negative consequences of their social media use and instead reported positive consequences in these areas.

Regarding the second aspect of planned behavior theory, normative beliefs refer to the perceived expectations and behaviors of other people, together with an individual's motivation to comply with such expectations. The findings from this study from the key theme of having access to social media was the norm directly link to this aspect of planned behavior theory. All of the participants perceived that having a smartphone and using social media was the norm at their school. Three participants further believed that having no access to social media would lead to isolation among their peers. Thus, having no access to social media tended to negatively impact the self-esteem of participants because they perceived they would no longer be able to meet the expectations of this social norm within their school.

For control beliefs in planned behavior theory, this third aspect refers to the extent to which an individual perceives there to be factors that may impact their ability to perform a certain behavior. The findings from this study of the key theme of parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use directly links to this aspect of planned behavior theory. All the participants shared that their parents and teachers supervised their social media use, and their parents specifically monitored the time they spent on their phones and the contents they accessed online, indicating that all these participants perceived that this control directly impacted their ability to use social media.

The findings of this study as analyzed within the key themes all extend the theoretical literature as related to the theoretical foundation of planned behavior theory and as specifically

applied to social media use among adolescent females. The aspect of this theory of behavioral beliefs aligns with the key themes of social media use is not associated with academic performance, using social media to relate with friends, using social media for interests and leisure, and using YouTube for learning. The aspect of normative beliefs aligns with the key theme of having access to social media was the norm. The aspect of control beliefs aligns with the key theme of parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media. The following section will examine how the key findings of this study within these underlying themes confirm, diverge, or extend previous knowledge in the empirical literature.

Empirical Literature

Relevant and significant topics within the empirical literature reviewed were social media addiction or overuse, impact on self-esteem, impact on academic performance, and impact on social skills and relationships. The key findings of this study revealed six themes. The following three themes emerged universally from the data collected from all five participants: parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, using social media to relate with friends, and using social media for interests and leisure. The themes having access to social media was the norm, and social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance were supported by four of the five participants. The theme using YouTube for learning was supported by three of the five participants. The six key themes of this study will be compared and contrasted to these relevant and significant topics in the empirical literature to determine if the key themes of the findings of this study confirm, diverge, or extend the previous knowledge in the empirical literature.

Access to Social Media was the Norm

Four of the five participants perceived that having a smartphone and using social media was the norm at their school. However, three participants believed that having no access to social media would lead to isolation among their peers, while two participants felt neutral about having access to social media because they perceived using social media was not out of the ordinary. Thus, having no access to social media tended to have negative influence on the middle school females' self-esteem, while having access to social media seemingly did not have an influence on the participants' self-esteem. Although the specific discussion of social media being the norm was not highlighted in the empirical literature, implied and related topics were recognized in the empirical literature of social media addiction or overuse and impact on self-esteem. Multiple studies concurred in their findings that excessive use of social media and networking sites had significant negative impacts on children and adolescents (Kelly et al., 2018; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2021). The recognition in the empirical literature of the excessive use of social media and networking sites among children and adolescents implies that having access to social media among adolescents was also the norm. Therefore, this key theme of the findings of this study generally confirms previous findings in the empirical literature by implication.

The specific findings within this theme of having no access to social media tended to have negative influence on the middle school females' self-esteem, while having access to social media seemingly did not have an influence on the participants' self-esteem, appeared to diverge from the empirical literature. Researchers found that the overuse of social media could lead to decreases in self-esteem, particularly among adolescent females as related to their body image (Cingel et al., 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2021). Another study also concurred in part that the

excessive use of social media among adolescents was significantly associated with low self-esteem, poor body image, and other negative impacts such as depressive symptoms, online harassment, and poor sleep (Kelly et al., 2018). The divergence from the empirical literature within this specific theme of this study pertaining to self-esteem may be explained by the negative impact of social media overuse among adolescent females rather than merely the perception among the adolescent females in this study that social media use was the norm.

Perceived Social Media Use and Academic Performance

Four participants of this study perceived that social media did not impact their academic performance. The participants instead shared that their parents' expectations, their interest in school, and their interest in sports were linked with their academic performance. Consensus was found within the empirical literature that social media overuse was associated with poor academic performance, while other consensus was found within the empirical literature that social media use itself was not associated with academic performance. Multiple studies within the literature found that social media overuse could lead to decreases in academic performance (Banyai et al., 2017; Barton et al., 2021; Habes et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2020a; Malik et al., 2020b; Raza et al., 2020; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2019; Talaue et al., 2018). However, the findings of other studies in the literature indicated that social media use itself was not associated with academic performance (Huang, 2018; Marker et al., 2018; Nauert, 2018). Therefore, the key findings within the theme of this study that social media use is not associated with academic performance both converge and diverge with the empirical literature. Specific findings within this key theme that parents' expectations, interest in school, and interest in sports were linked with academic performance also further extend the empirical

literature of perceptions among adolescent females regarding significant factors that are associated with academic performance instead.

Parents' and Teachers' Monitoring of Social Media Use

All the participants shared that their parents and teachers supervised their social media use. Their parents specifically monitored the time they spent on their phones and the contents they accessed online. Several studies in the empirical literature recognized parental monitoring of social media use among adolescents and found that such parental monitoring fostered better health and a sense of well-being as compared with adolescents who did not receive this type of parental support (Bean et al., 2003; Nauert, 2018; Procentese et al., 2019). Procentese et al. (2019) and Banyai et al. (2017) also further recognized that there was a need to continue to develop intervention programs as a collaborative effort within school systems between parents and teachers to monitor social media use among adolescent females that may counteract the potentially negative effects of social media addiction as well. Therefore, the key findings of this theme generally converge with empirical literature of the recognition of parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use among adolescents and the importance of doing so.

Using Social Media to Relate With Friends

All five participants shared that they spent time on social media in order to access content to help them relate with their friends and perceived that social media was important in their peer relationships. However, studies within the empirical literature found negative impacts of social media use on adolescent relationships and social skills development that increased social withdrawal, particularly when social media was used in high volumes (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Nesi et al., 2018; Vannucci et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). The findings within this key theme clearly diverge from the empirical literature, as the adolescent females in this study perceived

that social media was important to relate with friends and did not perceive any negative impacts from such social media use on their peer relationships. The divergence of the findings of this study with the empirical literature may again be explained by the significant factor of overuse of social media that causes these negative impacts found in the literature and by the mediating variable of monitoring of social media use by parents and teachers. Therefore, the findings of this study also extend the empirical literature by further emphasizing the significance of social media use versus overuse and the mediating factor of monitoring social media use among adolescent females to significantly reduce such negative impacts to peer relationships.

Using Social Media for Interests and Leisure

All five participants perceived that social media platforms were not limited to connecting with people they knew and were also believed to link them to their other leisure interests. These key findings within the theme of this study were not the focus of any of the research topics of the studies found in the empirical literature reviewed of social media addiction or overuse, impact on self-esteem, impact on academic performance, and impact on social skills and relationships. Therefore, findings of this key theme for the study clearly extend the empirical literature by indicating that social media among adolescent females is not just used for relational connection but to also connect to other leisure interests.

Using YouTube for Learning

YouTube was the only social media platform that three of the five participants described to be a tool for learning. The three participants shared that their teachers encouraged them to use YouTube videos to supplement the lessons taught in class, particularly for Math and Science lessons. This topic within the empirical literature of using social media platforms for learning was also not a current focus of research. Therefore, findings of this key theme for the study

clearly extend the empirical literature as well by indicating that YouTube in particular was a social media platform that was used by adolescent females for learning that was encouraged by their teachers to use for this purpose. The next main section of this chapter will explore the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this study.

Implications

This section will explore the implications of the key results of this study as they pertain to the theoretical foundation, the empirical literature, and practical implications for professionals and parents. In the process, the theoretical implications for the theory of planned behavior will be examined. Next, the empirical implications for the extant literature reviewed will also be examined. Then, the practical implications for professionals in the mental health and education fields and parents will be explored as they pertain to adolescent females.

Theoretical Implications

The theory of planned behavior as posited by Ajzen (1991) emphasizes that behavior is a function of an individual's intention to perform the behavior, which is determined by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. With social media use being applied to this theory as the specific behavior among adolescent females in this study, the key themes of the research findings of having access to social media was the norm, social media use is not associated with academic performance, parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use, using social media to relate with friends, using social media for interests and leisure, and using YouTube for learning all clearly aligned with this theory across the constructs of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. Therefore, the theoretical implications for this study add further support that the theory of planned behavior is one of the predominant social psychological theories related to an

individual's intention and cues (Smith et al., 2020) that can also be applied to the planned behavior of social media use and specifically among adolescent females.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of the key findings of this study to the extant literature supported, did not support, or extended the literature. First, further support was generally found within the theme that social media use was the norm to the empirical literature. However, research in the literature tended to focus on the overuse of social media, while the key findings of this study theme did not emphasize social media overuse among these adolescent females, only that it was the norm. The specific findings within this theme of having no access to social media tended to have a negative influence on the participants self-esteem, while having access to social media seemingly did not have an influence on the participants' self-esteem, did not support the extant literature which emphasized the negative impact of social media overuse on the self-esteem of adolescent females. Empirical implications suggest that this discrepancy may be caused by the focus of social media overuse in the literature which was not indicated by the key findings of this study among the participants. Further support was also found of the key theme of this study of parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use to recognition within the extant literature of these same findings.

The key theme of this study that social media use is not associated with academic performance both supported and did not support the extant literature, as the literature itself had mixed findings regarding this topic. Specific findings within this key theme that parents' expectations, interest in school, and interest in sports were linked with academic performance also extend the empirical literature of perceptions among adolescent females regarding significant factors that are associated with academic performance instead. Further empirical

implications of mixed findings within the literature also indicate the need for more research to better understand this topic.

Regarding the key theme of using social media to relate with friends, key findings did not support the extant literature, as all participants shared that using social media helped them relate with their friends and perceived that social media was important in their peer relationships. However, studies within the empirical literature emphasized the negative impacts of social media use on adolescent relationships and social skills development. Therefore, these findings specific to adolescent females also extend the literature by emphasizing the positive impact of social media use on peer relationships rather than the negative impact, with further empirical implications that more research is needed to clarify the deeper nuances of what significant factors make social media use among adolescents have a positive or negative impact on their peer relationships.

The last two key themes of the findings of this study of using social media for interests and leisure, and using YouTube for learning both extend the literature, as neither of these topics were found to be a specific focus of research in the literature. Empirical implications suggest then that further research is needed to better understand how social media is used to pursue other interests and leisure beyond relational connection and as specific to adolescents and adolescent females. Further research is also implied to better understand how YouTube and other social media platforms are used for learning and among adolescents and adolescent females.

Practical Implications

The key findings of this study all have practical implications for mental health and education professionals who work with this particular population of youth. These key findings also have practical implications for parents of female adolescents.

Specifically for mental health professionals, multiple findings of this study indicated that adolescent females did not perceive social media use as having a negative impact on their lives pertaining to their self-esteem or peer relationships. Rather, the adolescent females of this study perceived that having no access to social media tended to have a negative influence on their self-esteem, and social media was important in their peer relationships to help them relate with friends. These adolescent females also shared that social media use further enhanced their lives to pursue other leisure interests. Therefore, these key findings have practical implications for mental health professionals to increase their ability to counsel and aid this particular population of youth by contributing to better understanding adolescent female perceptions of social media use and the positive impacts that social media use can have on their quality of life.

Specifically for education professionals, multiple findings of this study also indicated no negative impacts on academic performance among the participants from social media use and some positive impacts for learning pertaining to the social media platform of YouTube. Other findings from this study indicated that parents' expectations, interest in school, and interest in sports were more significantly linked with academic performance than social media use. Teacher monitoring of social media use was also recognized among all of the participants as a significant factor that helped them to successfully manage their social media use. Therefore, all of these key findings have practical implications for education professionals that help them to better understand what significant factors impact academic performance as perceived by adolescent females, while also emphasizing the opportunity to use social media platforms as a tool for learning and the importance of a teacher's role in helping to monitor positive and appropriate social media use among their students.

Specifically for the parents of adolescent females, the key findings of this study emphasized the importance of parental expectations to their academic performance. Key findings also had practical implications of the importance of a parent's role in helping to monitor positive and appropriate social media use with their children. The next main section will examine the delimitations and limitations of this study.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations as purposeful decisions to limit or define the boundaries of the study were to focus research on adolescent females (age 11-15) and their perceptions of social media use. This decision was made due to a professional interest in this population as a middle school guidance counselor and a personal interest in this population as a grandmother to a granddaughter in this age group to better understand how this population perceived social media use. There is also a lack of extant literature specific to social media use among adolescent females and how they perceive that usage as it relates to their academic performance and self-esteem (Cingel et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2020; Salomon et al., 2019).

The limitations of this study as potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled were factors associated with sample size, geographical location, and other socio-demographic variables. The sample size was relatively small, consisting of only five participants, yet not necessarily too small for a qualitative research design that sought to conduct in-depth interviews with study participants. The geographic location was limited to only one middle school in Onslow County, North Carolina. Other socio-demographic variables that may have limited the findings might be associated with the level of parental and teacher involvement in the monitoring of social media use among the participants. However, despite these limitations that may impact the transferability of the results of this study, these findings still offer a valuable

contribution to the literature to better understand perceptions of social media use among adolescent females and the positive impacts that social media use can have on their quality of life, particularly when this usage is being appropriately monitored by teachers and parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are multiple directions for future research from consideration of the study findings, delimitations, and limitations. Regarding the study findings, it is recommended that future research be conducted to better understand how duration or frequency of social media use among adolescent females determines negative or positive impacts. Future research is also recommended to examine how social media can be regulated by teachers and parents to make its use more positive among this population of youth to include a better understanding of practices that could enhance self-esteem, peer relationships, other leisure interests, and academic performance, with platforms such as YouTube as a learning tool. Future research is also recommended as well to better understand the factors that adolescent females perceive are significant in their academic performance.

Regarding the study delimitations and limitations, future research is recommended to create research designs that have a larger sample size and across other geographic locations. These research designs could also include other types of designs such as longitudinal and quantitative studies to better understand long-term effects of social media use on adolescent females or more precisely measure significant variables that positively or negatively impact adolescent females through their use of social media. Future research is recommended as well to examine the effects of sociodemographic variables such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, family structure, school setting, sexuality, and other variables that may predispose adolescents to

the negative or positive effects of social media use. The last section of this chapter will summarize major conclusions of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how adolescent females (ages 11-15) perceived social media use as affecting their self-esteem and academic performance and the factors they perceive to impact the amount of time they spend on social media. Key findings of this study indicated that the participants generally perceived that their social media use had positive rather than negative impacts on their self-esteem, academic performance, peer relationships, and pursuit of other leisure interests. The monitoring of social media use by their teachers and parents was also found to be a significant mediating factor that reduced any negative impact of their use of social media. Theoretical implications were discussed of the alignment of planned behavior theory as the theoretical foundation of the study with all of the major themes of the findings of the study that extended this theory to be applied to social media use among adolescent females. Empirical implications were discussed that emphasized the valuable contribution of this study to help fill existing gaps in the literature specific to social media use among adolescent females, the need to better understand social media use versus overuse and how duration or frequency of social media use among adolescent females determines negative or positive impacts, and the need to better understand the mediating role of teacher and parent monitoring of social media use among this population. Practical implications were also discussed of the valuable contribution of this study for mental health and education professionals and for parents to better understand social media use among adolescent females and the importance of monitoring such usage so they can become even more effective in fostering the positive growth and development of these youth.

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Appendix A
Research Permission

December 10, 2021

Dear Ms Martin,

My name is Michele T. Miller, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Counseling and Community Care with a concentration in Traumatology. I am writing to you once again to request permission to seek participation for my study from female students at your school.

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact the time spent on social media platforms affects students' academic performance, self-esteem, and potential for engagement in self-harming behaviors. Participants will be asked to describe their social media use based on amount of time spent on the specific platform used (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TicToc, etc.) and frequency of use.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to allow your students to participate will not affect your or their current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your students to participate, they are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the surveys without affecting those relationships. For my study I am looking to have at least five (5) participants.

If you grant permission for me to contact your students I would send an email invitation to the parents of your 6th/7th/8th grade female students' parents providing them with a parental consent form giving me permission to contact their daughter. For those who give permission I would send the students an email invitation with a consent form that would be sent back to me via mail or email. Once I have consent from the students, I will begin the study.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience with your decision or if you have any questions or concerns about this request.

Sincerely,

Michele T. Miller
mmiller144@liberty.edu

January 10, 2022

Dear Ms. Miller,

Thank you for your letter requesting permission to contact the parents of our female students in Grades 6-8. I appreciate the purpose of your study and feel it is one that is important to investigate.

I grant you permission to work with our students. As discussed in our previous communication, the best way to do this will be through my teachers who can provide you with the necessary contact information that you will need. Please contact me again when you are prepared to move forward with this process, and I will put you in touch with the teachers in each grade level with whom I have spoken.

This should be an exciting endeavor for my students. Social media impacts our students' lives daily. It will be interesting to see how these young ladies will respond.

I look forward to collaborating with you through this process.

Andrea Martin

Andrea Martin, Ph.D.
Principal

Appendix B

Parental Consent

Parental Consent

Title of the Project:

Social Media Perceptions of Academic Performance and Self-esteem as Defined by Adolescent Females

Principal Investigator:

Michele T. Miller

Doctoral Candidate in Counseling and Community Care in Traumatology

Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your child, _____ is invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be female, age 11-15, in grades 6, 7, or 8 in middle school. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to allow your child to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact the time spent on social media platforms affects students' academic performance, self-esteem, and potential for engagement in self-harming behaviors. Participants will be asked to describe their social media use based on amount of time spent on the specific platform used (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.) and frequency of use.

What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I will ask her to do the following things:

1. Complete an online demographic information form which will provide information about herself. This should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
2. Complete an online Interview Questionnaire which will provide information about her social media use and frequency. This may take up to 30 minutes to complete.
3. Complete an online interview about her perceptions of how her social media use has affected her academic performance, her self-esteem, and any thoughts or actions toward self-harming behaviors. This may take up to an hour to complete. This would be done through Google Meet or another means available to both she and I. Responses to questions will be audio recorded for use in analyzing the data.

How could participants or others benefit from this study?

There are no direct benefits to the participants, but the information that will be collected in this study will help add to what we know about the pitfalls of social media use, particularly its impact on adolescent females' academic performance and peer relationships.

What risks might participants experience from being in this study?

It is possible that answering questions about self-esteem and peer relationships may pose some psychological risks for the participants. In these cases, participants will be provided with a referral to a free counseling service. It should also be noted that if during the study any information is disclosed related to child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I am mandated to report such information. Termination of your child's participation will result if it is determined that she has not disclosed accurate information related to any of these potential issues.

How will personal information be protected?

- The records of this study will be kept private.
- Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of individual codes.
- When necessary, personal interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- When necessary, personal interviews will be recorded by the researcher on paper. No audio recordings will be made. This information will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

How will participants be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. The direct compensation participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is receiving a coupon for two admission tickets to the local dollar movie theater. This coupon will be provided upon completion of the study and will be sent via email to each participant. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be pulled and separated from your responses to maintain your anonymity.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect your or her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the surveys without affecting those relationships.

What should be done if a participant wishes to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw your child from the study or your child chooses to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you or your child wish[es] to discontinue her participation, and your child should not submit the study materials. Your child's responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Michele T. Miller. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at _____ or via email at mmiller144@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Brian Cambra, at bcambra1@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

Printed Child's/Student's Name

Parent's Signature

Date

Minor's Signature

Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Responses to these questions will be recorded whenever possible with interviews conducted in-person when permissible or through Google Meet, Zoom, or other appropriate on-line service.

Participant Name: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Please complete the following questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of this research study. Your responses should be based on your perception of your social media use.

1. Of the social media platforms available to you (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, or Other), which one do you participate in the most frequently? Explain why you chose this platform over the others.
2. Have you ever accepted a friend request from someone you were not sure you knew?

Prompt: Explain why you would want to “friend” or follow someone you do not know.
3. Have you ever lied about your age to gain access to a social media platform? Explain why or why not.
4. Based on the amount of time you spend on social media platforms how do you feel this affects your academic performance? For example, how does it affect your grades, your attention in class, or how much of your homework you are able to complete and do well?
5. How do you perceive social media helps or hinders your academic performance? In other words, how does social media help you do better in school? Or how does social media make it difficult for you to complete your school-related tasks?
6. How do you feel your participation on social media affects your peer relationships? In what way does it make it easier or more difficult to stay friends with your classmates or peers?
7. Has your participation on social media ever made you feel lonely or alone? Tell me more about that experience and how you feel.
8. Describe why it is important for you to be connected on social media.

9. Describe how your use of social media impacts your self-esteem. In other words, how does social media make you feel about yourself? Does it help you feel good about yourself, or does it make you feel uncomfortable, meaning does it make you feel worse?

Prompt: Are you using social media simply to be part of the popular group? Explain.

10. If you were not able to have social media accounts, describe how that would affect you, your peer relationships, and/or relationships with family members.

11. What first comes to mind when I say the following words?

- a. TikTok
- b. Social media like
- c. Group chats
- d. Going viral
- e. Trending

Appendix D

Code Book

Code	Initial theme	Theme
Everyone uses a phone Plays sports	Neutral about having a phone and social media access	Having access to social media was a norm
Perceptions of feeling weird without a phone Perceptions of isolation without a phone Perceptions of not being able to keep up with friends without a phone	Perceptions of not belonging with peers without their phones	
Don't think grades are a big deal Likes school Prefer talking to friends than studying	Interest in school	Social media use is not perceived to influence academic performance
Parent set high expectations Parent's expectations are not high	Parents' expectations	
Keep up grades for sports	Sports	
Created a Facebook account out of curiosity	Got away with lying about age	Parents' and teachers' monitoring of social media use

Code	Initial theme	Theme
Don't use FB anymore Did not think it was a big deal Not interested in Facebook Thought about consequences		
	Parents' monitoring	
Don't care about who they follow Entrusted older sibling for responsible social media use Monitor and control time spent on phone Monitor content accessed on phone		
	Teachers monitor device use	
Allowed phones in class as a learning tool		Using social media for interests and leisure
Based on their own interests Follow famous people Not considered friends	Following strangers based on interests	
Watching funny videos Watching tiktok dance videos Watching videos for entertainment	Watching videos for fun	
Following friends Staying connected with friends during weekends and school breaks	Connecting with friends	Using social media to relate with friends
Following people recommended by friends Friends spend more time on their phones Having something to talk about with friends Making videos with friends	Sharing interests with friends	

Code	Initial theme	Theme
Videos for math and science lessons		Using YouTube for learning
Can be distracting		
