

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON EMERGING ADULTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL  
WELL-BEING: SPIRITUALITY AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

by

Lori DeWald

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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### **Abstract**

Approximately 70% of emerging adults, individuals ages 18-29 years, report using social media daily. Emerging adulthood is a time of role transition and exploration; therefore, it is important to understand the role social media has on this population. Social media use in young adults has shown mixed results. The inconsistencies of the research center on the content of social media use and the impact it has on well-being. When social media is used to build relationships and increase social support increased well-being was noted. Conversely, when social media use resulted in social comparisons and negative feedback decreased well-being was reported. Spirituality has been noted as protective factors and positive coping strategies for psychological challenges but have only been minimally examined as protective factors for social media use on psychological well-being. This study examined reasons and motivations for social media use and their impact on psychological well-being in emerging adults. Additionally, this study assessed the role of spirituality as a potential protective factor for social media and psychological well-being in emerging adults. An online survey consisted of forty-eight questions: two demographic questions, two assessing social media sites use; twenty assessing overall social media use, eighteen questions assessing psychological well-being, and six assessing spirituality was used for this study. Psychological well-being was positively correlated with YouTube use, but negatively correlated with Twitter use. Developing an understanding of how social media is used by this population and how that use impacts psychological well-being can better inform professionals interacting with these individuals.

Keywords: social media use, emerging adulthood, psychological well-being, spirituality

**Copyright Page**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Troy, whose words of encouragement and unending support pushed me through some of the challenging moments. For cheering me on when facing adversity and celebrating each milestone that came. For listening to me ramble about my research and offering words of feedback and suggestions when asked.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Steffany and Madison. Who are in the age group studied and allowed me to bounce thoughts and ideas off them about this population and current developmental tasks. For passing along my survey to their friends and coworkers to help me collect data and for cheering me on as I updated them on my progress.

I could not have made it through this process without any of you and I will forever be thankful for your part in this process.

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I am thankful for each one of you and the entire Liberty University psychology department who played a role in my education and experience in my doctoral journey.

Finally, I want to thank Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for prompting me to start on this journey and guiding and supporting me along the way. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” (*New King James Version*, Proverbs 3:5-6)

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

Emerging adults, those ages 18-29 years, are exploring and negotiating their developing identities and are being asked to make significant life decisions that can have lasting impacts on their development (Thomas et al., 2020). Social media use is prominent during these years, with approximately 70% of emerging adults using at least one social media platform daily (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Considering the high rates of social media use during these years, and that this is a time when the onset of serious mental health issues occurs, it is important to create an understanding of the role social media plays in navigating these tasks, including which social media sites are used, why they are used, and their impact on psychological well-being (Tangmunkongrarakul et al., 2019; Worsley et al, 2018).

Protective factors and moderators of social media use have been minimally studied. Self-compassion, showing kindness to oneself, rather than criticism of imperfections, and social media use have been studied and has been found to associate with greater emotional well-being and a lower impact on social stressors (Keyte et al., 2020). Additionally, spirituality, religious involvement and social media use have been minimally studied, but not as a protective factor or moderator of social media impact. Individuals who read the Bible and are more religiously involved are less likely to have social media accounts and use social media less frequently (Haroon et al., 2020).

Spirituality and religious involvement have also been shown to have positive impacts on development. Children and teens who have been religiously involved report lower levels of anxiety and depression, have lower levels of stress, display healthier

behaviors, and have better-coping strategies (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020; Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018). Research is needed to determine if spirituality and religious involvement have the same impact on emerging adults and if they can moderate the impact of social media use on psychological well-being.

### **Background**

Sixty percent of American adults use social networking sites, with 70% of those between 18-29 years old report using these sites daily (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). The most popular sites used by this population are YouTube (95%), Instagram (71%), Facebook (70%), Snapchat (65%), and TikTok (48%; Auxier & Anderson, 2021). It is important to understand the role social media use has on this population as it is a time of role transition when individuals are making decisions about their careers, relationships, education, and identities (Oxhandler et al., 2018).

Social media use in young adults has been shown to be negatively associated with depression, anxiety, and stress (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Early studies demonstrated that problematic social media use was positively associated with depression (Shensa et al., 2017) and anxiety (Vannucci et al., 2017). The more time spent on multiple social media platforms, the more likely individuals were to feel socially isolated and experience depression and anxiety symptoms (Primack et al., 2017; 2017). Increased exposure to social media can also lead to increased negative social comparison which also contributes to anxiety and stress (Vannucci et al., 2017). Social media sites, particularly photo-based sites such as Instagram and YouTube, promote self-representation, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction (Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017), with their use

associated with negative emotions, such as depression and loneliness (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019).

Not all research on young adult social media use and well-being is negative, however. Studies have shown that moderate uses of social media have been beneficial (Brailovskaia et al., 2020) for building and maintaining relationships and friendships as it allows for communication and connections with friends and family (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022). Social media use has also been shown to be positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem based on the experience of the interaction (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019). Positive interactions, social support, and a sense of belonging on social media are associated with decreased anxiety and depression symptoms, as well as decreased loneliness and increased self-esteem and life satisfaction (Seabrook et al., 2016).

The emotional outcome of social media use can be attributed to the reasons individuals use various social media sites. Studies have identified that gaining information, engaging in social interaction, maintaining relationships, entertaining oneself, and/or decreasing boredom are the main reasons young adults use various social media sites (Bettemann et al., 2021; Brailovskaia et al., 2020). When social media is used to build and maintain relationships, increase social support, and create a sense of belonging increased self-esteem and life satisfaction were noted (Moreton & Greenfield, 2022). However, social media use has also been found to result in social comparisons, negative feedback, and passive use resulting in decreased well-being and increased negative affect (Park & Baek, 2018).

Further exploration of how social media is used resulted in studies on passive social media use, such as scrolling, viewing, reading, and consuming others' information, versus active use, involving interacting with and commenting on others' information (Burnell et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021). Research demonstrated that active use of text-based platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, is not associated with well-being and loneliness (Burnell et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021), though passive use of photo-based sites, such as Instagram and Snapchat, has been associated with social comparison and negative well-being (Burnell et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Him et al., 2020). Further exploration is needed on how emerging adults use specific social media sites, their motivation for using various platforms, and the impact they have on psychological well-being (Masciantonio et al., 2021).

Sixty-five percent of emerging adults report being spiritual or religiously involved (Oxhandler et al., 2018), but spirituality, religious involvement, and social media use have been minimally studied. Individuals who are more religiously involved have been found to be less likely to use social media sites (Haroon et al., 2020). Additionally, individuals who are religiously involved have also been shown to demonstrate more prosocial behaviors and develop relationships that promote morality and self-esteem development (Berk, 2019; Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). Many religiously involved and spiritual adults use faith-based coping strategies to deal with various life stressors and as sources of support (Oxhandler et al., 2018), resulting in spirituality being identified as a protective factor in young adults for mental health issues (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Research is currently needed to determine

the psychological impact of social media use in those who consider themselves spiritual (Haroon et al., 2020; Rautela & Sharma, 2019).

While the Bible does not specifically talk about social media use or reasons for use, it does instruct Christians on how they should present themselves to others and protect themselves from evil and temptation in the world (*New International Version*, 2011, Romans. 12; I Cor. 4). When social media is used by emerging adults for self-presentation (i.e., for recognition, approval, and self-promotion or expression and interacting with others) they often do so as a means of exploration of various adult roles (Cleofas et al., 2022). Therefore, individuals should present themselves in a manner that pleases God. Online self-presentation should not conform to the world but rather should be according to God's will; humility and loving others, being sincere in that love and knowing they are no better than anyone else (Rm. 12; I Cor. 4). Additionally, Christians need to portray themselves on social media as a reflection of God, demonstrating His will and work in their lives and through building and encouraging others up and not tearing them down in their interactions (Eph. 4:29; I Thess. 5:11).

When social media is used by emerging adult to gain knowledge and information, entertainment, and to escape boredom, they become susceptible to the sins of the world (*New International Version*, 2011, I Cor. 1). Christians need to engage in protection from these threats on social media through fellowship with other believers and be mindful of things they seek online (Brown, 2016). Coming together with other believers provides reassurance that they will not have to face these threats alone (Gal. 6:1-2). When believers fellowship with one another, they can encourage and support one another during times of trial (I Thess. 5:11; Heb 3:13). Social media can be a means of



connecting with other believers to provide that support and encouragement and serve as a source of protection from the enemy's attacks. Jesus tells believers that "where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matt. 18:20).

The Bible also instructs Christians to beware of such things that will cause them to fall away from God, because like yeast in bread, temptation and sin will spread quickly through individuals when they are not careful (*New International Version*, 2011, Matt. 7:15, Mk. 8:15, Phil. 3:2). Believers need to be Spirit led (Gal. 5:16) and mindful of their interactions online, so that they are not enticed into ungodly ways, causing them to fall into temptation and away from God (II Tim. 2:26; Brown, 2016).

Additionally, the enemy seeks to entice believers on social media through the number of friends, followers, and comments (Burnell et al., 2020) they accumulate online. Christians need to

not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (*New International Version*, 2011, Matt. 6:19-21).

Rather than using social media to accumulate more friends, followers, and positive feedback on social media, Christians need to be selective with whom they engage on a personal level so that they are surrounding themselves with individuals who will not allow them to stray from God (Brown, 2016). This can be challenging as many emerging adults search for happiness and pleasure from being like others and having what others have and not what is God's will for them. Following God requires that individuals do not

look for answers in anything other than Him. If believers search social media for guidance and direction, they will not be seeking God's truth (John 17:17) but rather the truth of the world. The Bible states that the ways of the world are evil, and Christians need to be mindful that they do not follow them (Ephesians 5:15-16). "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (I Corinthians 15:33).

### **Problem Statement**

In 2019, more than 70% of adults ages 18-29 years reported using social media daily (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021). Considering that this period, known as emerging adulthood, is a time of transition where young people engage in an exploration of different roles and experiences that can have a lasting impact on developmental outcomes (Cleofas et al, 2022; Kohútová et al., 2021), it is important to understand the role social media has on this population. Studies conducted on emerging adults have shown that social media use is negatively associated with depression, anxiety, and stress (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019), with more frequent use correlating with more negative responses (Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Not all research on social media use and emotional well-being is negative. Research has shown that moderate uses of social media have been beneficial when used for building and maintaining relationships and friendships through communication and connections with friends and family (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022). This type of social media use has been positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019).

The inconsistency of research centers on the content of social media use and its impact on well-being (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2019). Photo-based social media sites, such as Instagram and YouTube, promote self-representation, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction (Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017), and when used for these purposes, depressive symptoms and loneliness are reported (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Text-based platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are not associated with well-being and loneliness (Burnell et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021). Most of the research completed on social media content and emotional well-being has focused on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, but not newer sites used by emerging adults, such as YouTube and TikTok (Burnell et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017). Further exploration of content viewed on newer platforms, as well as reasons for use, and the impact on psychological well-being is needed (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021; Masciantonio et al., 2021).

Finally, protective factors and moderators for the impact of social media use have been researched but remain limited. Self-compassion has been positively correlated with Instagram intensity and well-being (Keyte et al., 2020) but more research is needed for other protective factors on social media use (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021; Keyte et al., 2020). Spirituality and social media use have been minimally studied, but not as a protective factor of social media's impact on psychological well-being. Spirituality has been identified as a protective factor in young adults for mental health issues (Oxhandler et al., 2018) and many spiritual adults use faith-based coping strategies to deal with various life stressors and as sources of support (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Additionally,

individuals who read the Bible are less likely to have social media accounts and visit social media sites less frequently (Haroon et al., 2020). Since spirituality has shown positive developmental outcomes (Good & Willoughby, 2008), spiritual development needs to be studied to determine if it can be considered a protective factor for the negative impact of social media use (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021)

It is unclear if the psychological well-being of emerging adults is influenced by the specific social media platform used or the reasons and motivation for use of these sites (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021; Masciantonio et al, 2021). Additionally, protective factors of the impact of social media use, specifically spirituality (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021), have limited knowledge and exploration. Exploring these gaps can better inform professionals, increase the prevention of negative psychological well-being, and assist in identifying the risk for negative developmental outcomes (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between social network sites emerging adults, individuals ages 18-29 years, used more frequently and the relationship between the type of social media sites used and psychological well-being. The reason for social media use has reflected the platform selected which then impacted psychological well-being. Social networking sites are online media interaction platforms that allows for self-presentation, engagement, participation, and interactions between individuals. Psychological well-being refers to meaning, fulfillment, enjoyment, and pleasure in life. It also involves appropriate coping strategies, emotional regulation abilities, and healthy problem-solving capabilities (Yi-

Yuan et al., 2019). Additionally, this study explored the possibility of spirituality, the quest for meaning and purpose, transcendence, connectedness, and values, as potential protective of the relationship between the type of social media site used and psychological well-being.

### **Research Question(s) and Hypotheses**

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What is the relationship between level of spirituality and reasons and motivation for social media use among adults aged 18-29?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social media sites used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

RQ3: Does spirituality moderate the relationship between the type of social media site used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

#### **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: H<sub>0</sub>: It is hypothesized that adults ages 18-29 years who report lower levels of spirituality will use social media for reasons other than social support and spiritual interaction.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized that adults ages 18-29 years who report higher levels of spirituality will use social media sites for social support and spiritual interaction.

Hypothesis 2: H<sub>0</sub>: Adults ages 18-29 years will report no association with psychological well-being and social media when used for gaining information, building and maintaining relationships and communication and connecting with friends and family.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized adults ages 18-29 years will report increased psychological well-being when social media is used for gaining information, building and maintaining relationships, and communicating and connecting with friends and family.

Hypothesis 3: H<sub>o</sub>: Adults ages 18-29 years who report lower levels of spirituality will not have the effects of social media use moderated and will report lower psychological well-being.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized adults ages 18-29 who report higher levels spirituality will have the effects of social media use moderated and will report higher psychological well-being.

### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

This study explored levels of spirituality and reasons and motivations of social media use in emerging adults. Emerging adulthood is a period of exploration of various roles and relationships. Many emerging adults use social media to determine and define these roles (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). Outcomes of this exploration on emerging adults can have lasting impacts on development and life satisfaction (Kohútová et al., 2021), signifying a need to understand the impact of social media use on psychological well-being.

Additionally, more than sixty percent of emerging adult identify as being spiritual (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Spirituality has been shown to serve as a protective factor for health and well-being but has not been considered for social media use and psychological well-being (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). This study explored this construct to assess its potential as a protective factor for social media and psychology well-being in emerging adults.

There were challenges and limitations of this study. The first challenge noted, was the recruitment process and incentives to encourage participation in this assessment. Emerging adulthood is a period of transition and role explorations (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020) and young adults may be preoccupied with developmental life tasks to participate in this study. Promotion of this study occurred on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The study was not able to be promoted on Instagram, the site noted as most frequently used by this population, due to the structure of the platform. The inability to promote this study on Instagram may have prevented responses from some individuals who do not use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Additionally, this study was promoted in survey exchange Facebook groups, which limits the respondents to those who may only be seeking responses for research they are conducting.

Second, is the concern with the accuracy of self-reporting social media use and psychological well-being. Emerging adults could have underestimated or misrepresented social media use. Tools such as time-use diaries have been suggested for addressing the accuracy of self-reporting social media use (Barthorpe, et. al., 2020), but based on the limitations of this study, these tools were not available. Self-reporting psychological well-being may also be a challenging for some individuals. Individuals with low self-esteem or other mood and anxiety issues may underreport or not report any symptoms. Individuals feel ashamed, embarrassed, or stigmatized, and therefore underreport their psychological well-being for fear of feeling left out or different from their peers. Professional administration of psychological scales in future studies would be beneficial to moderate the impact of self-reporting. Additionally, diagnosed psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety, as well as lower measures of self-esteem and

self-confidence may influence scores of psychological well-being. Future studies should include psychological assessments or evaluations to assist in understanding the relationship of social media use and psychological outcomes.

Finally, the study sample posed limitations for this study. The sample size of 107 participants, while statistically appropriate, may limit the generalization of results to the emerging adult population. Also, the developmental period of emerging adulthood was the focus of this study, so results cannot be generalized to the entire stage of young adulthood and future testing should be completed on those over the age of 30 years. Future research should include a larger sample size and various ages groups to promote generalization of study results.

This study sought to discover if there was a relationship between social media use and psychological well-being in emerging adults. Previous research has shown mixed results of social media use and psychological well-being. This study sought to further explore this relationship focusing on emerging adults. Additionally, this study explored the possibility of spirituality as a protective factor for the impact of social media use on psychological well-being in emerging adults. Spirituality has been shown to be a protective factor for overall physical and mental health (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019), so assessing a relationship between these constructs was appropriate to determine how to assist this population with age-appropriate developmental tasks.

### **Theoretical Foundations of the Study**

The uses and gratification theory focuses on how and why social media is used by various individuals (Liu et al., 2019). In other words, what are the factors that motivate



individuals, what influences these factors, and what outcomes may result (Liu et al., 2019). Individuals use social media for specific reasons and with the intent of having those reasons fulfilled. If that is achieved, then social media use will continue (Kamble et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2019). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated, such as those who seek to engage in self-expression are more likely to use social media to achieve that goal. Those who are extrinsically motivated and seek external rewards, such as likes, comments, and friends, are more likely to use social media to gain those rewards (Liu et al., 2019). Having these needs met, continues the use of social networking sites, as individuals gain gratification from their use (Liu et al., 2019).

Emerging adults use social media to assist with the tasks of this development period. The three main goals during these years are autonomy, intimacy, and identity. Social media can be used for achieving all three goals as individuals assume more adult roles online, use various platforms to stay connected with others, gain information and education, and engage in self-expression (Cleofas et al. 2022). Individuals at this stage try out different experiences and make decisions about employment, relationships, financial responsibilities, and housing (Kohútová et al., 2021) largely through social media use (Cleofas et al, 2022). Therefore, reasons for use among this age group include maintaining relationships, socializing and meeting new people, gaining education and information, and entertainment (Cleofas et al., 2022). Young adults use various sites depending on the reason and motivation for using social media and whether that reason is achieved, and needs are met, which in turn impacts psychological well-being (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

Emerging adulthood is a period of instability and transition, which pushes young adults to explore who they are and what they want from life. According to James Marcia's identity status theory, identity formation is determined largely by choices presented when individuals re-evaluate their lives and then make a commitment to one of those choices (Boyd & Bee, 2019). Re-evaluation during emerging adulthood includes employment, love, worldview, and identity which begins in adolescence and continues through early adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Digital media is used to explore these life possibilities and promote a stable sense of self (Arnett, 2000; Clofas, et al., 2022; Naude, 2022). Social media allows self-creation and self-reflection as individuals engage in self-expression and self-presentation to various audiences and allows for viewing of how others engage in these tasks and where they may be similar (Naude, 2022).

Spirituality is part of the worldview exploration of emerging adulthood, as 65% of emerging adults report being spiritual or religiously involved (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Fowler's theory of faith development (Straughan, 2015) defines faith and spirituality as a sense of meaning and purpose in life with a belief in an ultimate reality. According to Fowler (Straughan, 2015), emerging adulthood is a period where individuals examine their theology based on life experiences. As individuals encounter various life issues, they engage in critical analysis of their thoughts, values, and beliefs, which they use to find meaning and purpose in life (Straughan, 2015). Emerging adults engage in this exploration through social media as they seek to gain information, build relationships, and interact with others (Arnett, 2000; Clofas, et al., 2022; Naude, 2022).

Social media is not mentioned in the Bible but having motivations and needs that are not in anything other than God is not wise (*New International Version*, 2011, Eph.

5:15-16). When individuals have a need, they need to go to God and ask Him to provide for their needs. Seeking His will and guidance should be the motivation Christians need to turn to God for having their needs met and achieve happiness and well-being (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7, 13; I Pet. 5:7). This is also true for seeking information and education. Christians need to turn to God for answers and information, “As for God, his way is perfect; The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him” (2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 18:30; Prov. 30:5). When individuals are curious, as emerging adults may be as they are exploring their identities and spirituality, and want to gain more wisdom and knowledge, they need to open their Bibles and seek Him for the answer before searching social media.

This study sought to explore levels of spirituality, motivations for use, and outcomes of social media use on psychological well-being in emerging adults. Having the desire to seek information and education will promote the use of some sites, while convenience, entertainment, relaxation, and social interaction will promote the use of other sites (Kircaburun et al., 2021). The reasons for use promote engagement of specific sites to gain the gratification of needs and maintenance of use, which in turn influences psychological well-being. It was unknown if the level of spirituality would play a role in the motivation and use of specific sites and would have impact on psychological well-being. Thus, the exploration of spirituality as a protective factor of the impact of social media use on psychological well-being was also be explored as spirituality may promote motivation and use of specific sites.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Emerging Adulthood:** emerging adulthood is defined as the period of transition where young people, ages 18-29 years, try out different experiences and make decisions about work and relationships (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020).

**Psychological Well-being:** psychological well-being is defined as an overall evaluation of life, including emotional experiences, life satisfaction (Masciantonio et al., 2021), social contribution, positive relationships, personal growth, self-acceptance, and life purpose (Tangmunkongrorakul et al., 2019).

**Social Media:** social media is defined as technologies that enable individuals to share content and information with others in online communities (Mackson et al., 2029).

**Social Networking Sites:** social networking sites are defined as a system of communication platforms where individuals can have unique identities, connect with others, and share and view the content (Masciantonio et al., 2021).

**Spirituality:** the quest for meaning and purpose, transcendence, connectedness, and values, involving recognition of a higher power that connects individuals to each other and the universe. Spirituality may involve religious traditions centered on a higher power but can also be a holistic belief in one's connection to the world and others (Barry et al., 2019; Danylchenko, 2022; Fenzel & Richardson, 2022).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study examined social media use in emerging adults, those ages 18-29 years, and the outcome of use on psychological well-being. These years are ones of significant stress, exploration, and decision-making as individuals are making choices about their hopes, dreams, careers, relationships, and education (Oxhandler et al., 2018). It is also the second most prominent group, after adolescents, to use social media (Auxier &

Anderson, 2021). Therefore, it was important to understand the role social media has on this population.

Exploring how social media use impacts psychological well-being can better inform professionals about reasons for use, what prompts use, and how use influences well-being. This study can also give background for the prevention of negative psychological well-being and assist in identifying risks for negative psychological outcomes and suggest methods for prevention (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021), including the role that spirituality plays in potentially alleviating any negative impact of social media use during this period. Additionally, it can increase awareness of and attitudes on potential outcomes for social media use, which can assist in the development of programs for those dealing with increased stress and other mental health challenges because of social media use, including but not limited to interventions for emotional regulation (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Finally, this study can inform on challenges that contribute to the developmental tasks of emerging adults as they explore and negotiate emerging identities and make decisions that can have lasting impacts on their long-term development (Thomas et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

Research on social media use with emerging adults has shown mixed results (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021; Keyte et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Studies have shown that social media use in this population is negatively associated with psychological well-being (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019), while others have shown that moderate uses of social media are valuable for increasing life satisfaction and self-esteem

(Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019). The inconsistency of the research centers on how social media is used and the reasons and motivation for use (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Kircaburun et al., 2018).

Individuals who use social media to maintain relationships and increase social support report higher psychological well-being, although specific site used for specific reasons for use is not completely known (Cleofas et al., 2022). An examination of this research is provided as well as a discussion about the research gaps that needed to be explored. This included a discussion of spirituality, which has been minimally studied but not as protective factor for social media use and psychological well-being (Haroon et al., 2020). This research explored social media sites used by emerging adults, including motivation and reasons for use, and how spirituality could potentially serve as a protective factor the impact of social media use on psychological well-being.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Overview**

Social media use has been found to be most prominent during adolescence and early adulthood (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The research that has been completed thus far has focused mainly on adolescence and yielded mixed results. Overall, a negative association was noted between teen social media use and self-esteem, with some research suggesting that self-esteem could be positively influenced by the feedback received from both friends and acquaintances (Valkenburg, et. al., 2017; Steinsbekk et al., 2020). While the impact of adolescent social media use has generated much research, social media research on emerging adulthood, individuals ages 18-29 years, has limited research (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

As social media sites gain popularity with emerging adults, it is important to determine which sites emerging adults are using, how users interact with these sites, and the influences they have on well-being (Burnell et al., 2020). Emerging adulthood is a time of role transition as individuals are making decisions about their hopes, dreams, careers, relationships, and education (Oxhandler et al., 2018), therefore, it is important to understand the role social media has on this population.

### **Description of Search Strategy**

A search of the Falwell Library was conducted on various topics. Parameters were peer-reviewed articles within the last five years. The search also included sources outside the Falwell Library. Topics of the search were social media use and psychological well-being, young adulthood and social media, emerging adulthood and social media, psychological well-being and social media, emerging adulthood,

psychological well-being, and social media, and passive-active, social media and young adults. This search yielded studies that focused on individual differences and personality characteristics and their impact on social media use. Another search of the Falwell Library was conducted using the same parameters and included the following topics: individual characteristics and social media, personality characteristics and social media, Big Five, and social media, and these topics with psychological well-being and well-being added to determine current research on this topic. This area of research has had several studies conducted on the impact of individual characteristics and social media use.

Another search using the same parameters was also conducted on spirituality or religiosity, psychological well-being, emerging adults, and social media. This search yielded limited results, prompting further exploration. Additionally, topics such as reasons and uses, motivations for use, social media and protective factors, religiosity, spirituality, and protective factors, spirituality and social media, and religiosity and social media were searched. This area of research was noted to have limited results.

Finally, a Google search was completed to identify a biblical foundation for social media use and young adults. The website [openbible.info](http://openbible.info) yielded multiple bible passages on topics such as happiness, well-being, interacting with others, looking to God for answers, not seeking evil, knowing that truth comes from God not worldly sources, and protecting oneself from the world (Good News Publishers, 2022). Once these topics were outlined, a Bible study of the associated passages was completed to develop a strong biblical foundation on the topic of social media use and psychological well-being (*New International Version*, 2011).



## **Review of Literature**

Social media use in young adults, under the age of 30 years, has produced mixed results. Initially, social media research was shown to be negatively associated with depression, anxiety, and stress (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Social media sites, particularly photo-based sites, such as Instagram and YouTube, promote self-representation, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction (Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017). The use of these sites is associated with negative emotions, such as depression and loneliness (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019).

Not all data on young adults' social media use and psychological well-being is negative, however. Research has shown that moderate uses of social media can be beneficial (Brailovskaia et al., 2020) for building and maintaining relationships and friendships as it allows for communication and connections with friends and family (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022). Social media use has also been shown to be positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019). Based on the inconsistencies in current research, further exploration is needed to develop a complete understanding of the impact of social media use on the psychological well-being of emerging adults (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2019).

### **Emerging Adulthood**

Emerging adulthood is a period of transition where young people engage in an exploration of identity, display feelings of instability and being in-between developmental periods, and are self-focused & optimistic about the future. It is an

opportunity to try different roles and experience successes, which in turn shapes developmental outcomes (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020; Cleofas et al, 2022; Kohútová et al., 2021). Individuals try out different experiences and make decisions about employment, relationships, financial responsibilities, and housing (Kohútová et al., 2021). This period of development includes three major tasks or milestones: autonomy, intimacy, and identity. Social media is used to assist with the completion of these tasks (Cleofas et al, 2022). An online survey of 1003 emerging adults explored how these individuals used social media during the Covid pandemic to complete these three major tasks. It was noted that the attainment of autonomy was aided by social media use as individuals can assume more adult roles online. Intimacy development was gained through social media as individuals use various platforms to stay connected with others. Finally, the task of identity was achieved using social media to gain information and education on various roles and engage in self-expression for identity formation (Cleofas et al. 2022).

Identity exploration in emerging adulthood is different from adolescence as these individuals focus on romantic relationships and work. Emerging adults try out different lifestyles to determine their role in life and what beliefs and values they will include in this exploration process (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). Individuals may experience periods of instability as they take on various roles and determine which are appropriate and which are not. This is done through a trial-and-error process as some roles may need course correction in determining the appropriate path (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020).

Additionally, identity exploration during emerging adulthood includes the development of self-concept or the overall image of self and interactions with others. Self-presentation on social media is used to explore identity and self-concept.

Individuals share aspects of themselves online either in a true and authentic fashion, a false or incorrect manner, or an ideal version of the self (Michikyan, 2020). Individuals who have a more integrated and coherent sense of self often engage in true or real presentations of the self on social media, while those who do not tend to display a false or ideal sense of self. This is often done to provide individuals with the ability to emphasize positive qualities and as a result enhance their self-esteem (Michikyan, 2020).

Emerging adulthood is also a period when individuals discover that they are on their own for choices in life. They are no longer governed by their parent's guidance and now must make choices for themselves, resulting in a self-focused view of life, where many concentrate solely on their own wants, needs, wishes, and desires. (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020; Cleofas et al, 2022). Ambiguous feelings also emerge during this time as individuals learn how to be financially independent, responsible for themselves, and make their own decisions. This leaves many emerging adults feeling as if they are not quite out of adolescence but not completely into adulthood, resulting in many mixed emotions and moods (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). Finally, as emerging adults begin to take on their own choices, identities, and roles, they realize that there are countless possibilities from which to choose. As these adults explore these possibilities, the environments in which they interact can have lasting impressions on the decisions that are made (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). Emerging adults often use social media to do this exploration, as they gain information and interact with others in various adult roles and professional activities (Cleofas et al, 2022). As individuals move through the developmental tasks of emerging adulthood, social media is the main environment in

which individuals resolve many tasks of this period, therefore, understanding the impact social media has on psychological well-being is important (Vannucci et al., 2017).

### **Quantity of Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being**

Social media and psychological well-being research have primarily focused on time spent on social media sites, resulting in several studies of problematic social media use and mental health outcomes (Cloafas et al, 2020; Shensa et al., 2017; Vannucci et al., 2017). These early studies demonstrated that problematic social media use was positively associated with depression and anxiety (Shensa et al., 2017; Vannucci et al., 2017). This could be due to the content viewed, negative comments received from others, social comparison, and pressures to maintain social profiles on social media. Negative content and interactions on social media promote negative affect, so problematic use can increase feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress (Shensa et al., 2017; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020; Vannucci et al., 2017). This, in turn, can have a negative impact on relationships and can lead to social isolation (Shensa, et al, 2017). Furthermore, problematic social media use can result in individuals ignoring other aspects of their lives, engaging in fewer in-person interactions, as well as decreased amounts of sleep and physical activity, prompting increased symptoms of depression (Shensa et al., 2017), shame, and guilt (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

Marino et al. (2018) explored the possibility of a relationship between problematic Facebook use in young adults and psychological well-being (Marino et al., 2018). A positive association between problematic Facebook use and depression and anxiety symptoms was noted as well as a negative relationship between problematic Facebook use and life satisfaction and well-being (Marino et al., 2018). Specifically,

Facebook was associated with increased stress responses based on negative feedback from others, increased awareness of stressors in the lives of others, and negative social comparison. Individuals already displaying increased anxiety may be prone to use social media for validation, anxiety reduction, and increased social support (Vannucci et al., 2017).

Further exploration of time spent on social media and psychological well-being focused on self-esteem and affect (Schivinski et al., 2020). Adult social media users were examined through an online survey to gather information on site used (FB, IG, other), problematic use, psychological well-being, self-esteem, affect, and motivation for use (Schivinski et al., 2020). Results showed that motives for social media use played a role in understanding the impact on psychological well-being. Intrapersonal motives, such as guilt, shame, self-esteem, and negative affect, were more predictive of problematic social media use (Schivinski et al., 2020). Additionally, those who engage in problematic social media use are more likely to use multiple platforms and have increased levels of negative affect and decreased levels of psychological well-being and self-esteem (Schivinski et al., 2020).

Problematic social media use has been found to be associated with multiple platform use. Two separate evaluations of the same population of young adults, ages 19-32 years, were conducted to determine the impact of multiple social media platform use on perceived social isolation, depression, and anxiety symptoms (Primack et al., 2017; 2017). It was noted that the more time spent on multiple social media platforms, the more likely individuals were to feel socially isolated and experience depression and anxiety symptoms (Primack et al., 2017; 2017). Individuals who are already feeling

socially isolated use social media more to achieve the social connections and interactions they feel they are missing. This can lead to increased feelings of depression and anxiety as social interaction online lack authentic and genuine social experiences one may have in face-to-face interactions. The increased negative affect could also be due to individuals missing out on face-to-face interactions, seeing an unrealistic portrayal of others' lives, or feeling as if they are missing out on what is happening with others (Primack et al., 2017;2017).

Not all early social media research demonstrated negative psychological outcomes with increased social media use. In a systematic review of studies conducted prior to 2016, Seabrook et al. (2016) noted positive interactions, social supports, and a sense of belonging on social media associated with decreased anxiety and depression symptoms, as well as decreased loneliness and increased self-esteem and life satisfaction (Seabrook et al., 2016). A study focusing on Instagram (IG) use and psychological well-being, specifically depression, anxiety, social comparison, loneliness, body image, and self-esteem was conducted on adult social media users (Mackson et al., 2019). Results supported those of Seabrook et al. (2016) and indicated that IG users were less anxious, depressed, and lonely than non-IG users when receiving positive feedback from others. Positive feedback received on IG enhanced one's self-esteem and feelings of social support and belonging (Mackson et al., 2019).

Affective experiences on social networking sites and their relationship with life satisfaction and emotional well-being became the focus of a two-study research design to determine the frequency of use and type of interaction engaged on well-being (Shi et al., 2019). Both research designs showed that positive affective experiences correlated with

positive emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Shi et al., 2019). Frequency of use was positively associated with life satisfaction, but not emotional well-being and no association was noted between the type of activity on social networking sites and life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Shi et al., 2019). These results indicated that positive interactions and experiences online are associated with positive life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Shi et al., 2019). Future research is needed to evaluate the type of engagement and quantity of social media use (Mackson et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2019).

### **Quality of Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being**

The impact of social media use on psychological well-being can be further studied through the quality of social media use versus the quantity of use. The quality of social media use has been shown to impact psychological well-being more than the quantity of use (Berryman et al., 2017). In other words, social media use alone was not a predictor of mental health functioning, but negative social media use was associated with mental health issues (Berryman et al., 2017).

Several studies have explored the quality of social media use focusing on active versus passive use (Burnell et al., 2020; Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Masciantonio et al., 2021; Verduyn et al., 2021). Active social media use has been defined as sharing information (experiences, videos, photos) and responding to others (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Masciantonio et al., 2021). Active social media use increases social capital, gains support from family and friends, and is associated with increased well-being (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). Passive social media use involves scrolling and browsing others' social media sites with minimal interaction (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Masciantonio et

al., 2021). Passive social media use is associated with negative well-being, specifically depressive symptoms (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018).

Further exploration of active and passive social media use on specific sites found that passive Facebook use was associated with upward social comparison and lower well-being, while active Facebook use was associated with increased negative affect (Masciantonio et al., 2021). Additionally, a positive association was noted between active IG use, life satisfaction, and negative affect. Active Twitter use was associated with more social support and positive life satisfaction, while passive users were less likely to engage in upward social comparison, likely due to Twitter's text-based format, which led to positive well-being. Finally, neither active nor passive use of TikTok was associated with well-being, social support, upwards social comparison, and life satisfaction (Masciantonio et al., 2021). Overall, these results demonstrated that active social media use is associated with increased social support and life satisfaction, while passive social media use is associated with increased social comparisons and decreased well-being (Masciantonio et al., 2021).

A meta-analysis of active and passive social media use explored the association between increased negative affect and active/passive social media use and indicated that new definitions of these constructs were needed (Verduyn et al., 2021). An extended active-passive model for social network sites was proposed to include expanded definitions of use. Active social media use should include targeted and non-targeted communication (Verduyn et al., 2021). Non-targeted communication is identified as broadcasting or providing status updates, while targeted communication includes commenting and direct messaging. Non-targeted communication is generally not



reciprocated, but when posts or status updates yield meaningful responses, feelings of connectedness and increased well-being result (Verduyn et al., 2021). Targeted communication, such as commenting and direct messaging, is more likely to be reciprocated, which is associated with social connectedness and increased well-being (Verduyn et al., 2021).

Passive use of social media should also be expanded to include the importance of content viewed and achievements of self and others. Viewing content that is considered of high importance to one's identity or viewing information that is considered ideal, leads to social comparisons and negative psychological well-being (Verduyn et al., 2021). Additionally, viewing the successes and failures of others can also lead to negative social comparisons and negative psychological well-being as one may consider their own successes and failures according to the content viewed (Verduyn et al., 2021). Future research needs to explore these expanded definitions with time spent on social media and the type of social interaction engaged on various sites to determine the impact on psychological well-being (Verduyn, 2021).

### ***Communication and Interaction***

Research has shown that communication and social interaction are two of the main reasons for social media use. Therefore, it is important to determine what individuals are sharing on social media sites. The two sites currently most used by emerging adults are Instagram (IG) and Snapchat (Him et al., 2020). Snapchat is considered a closed system and is perceived as being more private where users feel more free, open, and intentional in sharing (Him et al., 2020). A closed site gives the perception that individuals are free to engage in self-expression and informal

communication with friends (Him et al., 2020). Snapchat allows users to make personal connections with peers, share photos, and other personal information (Kamble et al. 2021). IG is considered an open system and is perceived as being less private and more connected to other platforms promoting more social interaction, but less sharing of personal information (Him et al., 2020). An evaluation of the impact of self-disclosure behaviors on IG and Snapchat in emerging adults revealed that individuals are more intentional in sharing on Snapchat than on IG and when individuals did share on IG, users were less honest in what was shared (Him et al., 2020). Additionally, IG allows for edited self-representation which promotes positive and desired qualities that can result in lower self-esteem and well-being (Mackson et al., 2019), however, the social support gained on both platforms can promote social supports and connectedness which are associated with increased well-being (Mackson et al., 2019). Future research on communication and interaction on social media needs to include other platforms and levels of self-disclosure and sharing as well as the impact on psychological well-being (Him et al., 2020; Kamble et al., 2021).

### ***Content Viewed***

The self-affirmation theory would suggest that viewing one's own profile would satisfy the desire to maintain a positive self-image through favorable self-presentation and would be more beneficial to psychological well-being (Burnell, et al., 2020). Browsing one's own profile allows for editing content to match those of others and monitoring feedback and responses which increases self-esteem and psychological well-being (Burnell et al., 2020). A study of 405 emerging adults examined this theory and found that browsing one's own IG profile led to increased well-being and self-perception

while browsing the profiles of others led to decreased well-being, including lower self-esteem and interpersonal negativity (Burnell et al., 2020). These results were contingent upon the individual and the motivation for use of IG, whether they were seeking validation, support, or feedback from others. Viewing one's own content promotes positive self-representation and self-affirmation as likes, comments, etc. which provide feedback that increases well-being (Burnell et al., 2020). Viewing the profiles of others can lead to negative social comparisons and the opinion that others as having a perfect or better life prompting reports of lower self-esteem and self-perception depending on the motivation for use. More research is needed on reasons for use of various social media sites and psychological well-being (Burnell et al., 2020).

Additional research on IG has yielded similar results (Moreton & Greenfield, 2022; Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018). An online survey of 129 women showed that increased IG use was associated with negative psychological well-being, including depressive symptoms, generalized anxiety, lower self-esteem, and negative body image and appearance when viewing others' profiles (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018). Explanations for this association suggest that sharing visual information allows for the perfection of images and when viewed by others promotes negative feelings as it leaves the perception of others having a better life (Burnell et al., 2020; Moreton & Greenfield, 2022). Additionally, when visual images are presented, it prompts validation and feedback from others which can negatively impact psychological well-being (Moreton & Greenfield, 2022). These results demonstrated that the content viewed has a significant impact on psychological well-being and future research needs to include protective factors for negative psychological outcomes (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018).

### *Social Comparison.*

Depressed moods resulting from social media use are related to comments made by others on social media as well as social comparisons made by the user. The association between social media use and negative mental health outcomes stems from the type of interaction occurring online (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). Social comparison has been identified as negatively associated with psychological well-being. (Burnell et al., 2020; Primack et al., 2017; Masciantonio et al., 2021). Increased use of social media can lead to increased anxiety and stress as individuals are overloaded with negative information and images which results in negative social comparison (Vannucci et al., 2017). A study of young female adults indicated that increased IG use is associated with negative psychological well-being, specifically increased depression and anxiety, decreased self-esteem, body satisfaction, and self-acceptance (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018). The more extreme social media is used, the more frequent the engagement of social comparison, as individuals view content that presents unrealistic, altered, and ideal expectations that promote negative outcomes, such as decreased feelings of self-worth and psychological well-being (Mackson et al, 2019; Wilson & Stock, 2021).

Most research on social comparison has focused on upwards social comparison and negative emotions, but downward social comparison and positive emotional responses also needed to be explored (Park & Baek, 2018). Upward social comparison involves viewing others as being superior and generally produces negative emotions. Downward social comparison involves observing those as less fortunate which can produce positive or negative emotions depending on how content is viewed (Park & Baek, 2018). Content viewed as positive or inspirational can generate positive emotions,

such as pride and pleasure, while content viewed negatively can produce feelings of depression and envy (Park & Baek, 2018). Emotional responses of social comparison are based on the direction of comparison (upward or downward), perceived control of content, positivity or negativity of content viewed, and whether attention is on the self or others (Park & Baek, 2018). An evaluation of Korean Facebook users found that social comparison based on self-esteem and self-improvement is associated with feelings of envy, depression, worry, and sympathy about themselves, while social comparison based on self-evaluation and validation is associated with feelings of optimism and inspiration about themselves (Park & Baek, 2018). More research on social comparison and on other social network sites beyond Facebook is needed.

### **Individual Characteristics, Social Media Use, and Psychological Well-Being**

Social media use has been shown to be associated with increased social connectivity and the promotion of social interaction in some individuals (Whaite et al., 2018). Those more connected have more social capital and use social media differently, resulting in a different impact on psychological well-being (Verduyn et al., 2021).

According to the social capital theory, personal attributes and group affiliations increase psychological well-being as individuals feel valued, closer to others, and informed about various issues. When individuals feel more connected and supported, they report increased life satisfaction (Park et al, 2020). An analysis of adult social media users revealed that individuals with diverse networks and closer relationships with family and friends, both on and offline, report lower depressive symptoms and increased life satisfaction (Park et al, 2020). Individuals who can develop relationships and supports on social media are associated with positive psychological well-being, while those who do

not, are associated with negative psychological well-being (Ostic et al., 2021). Those who struggle to develop support on social media report more loneliness which in turn promotes increased use which perpetuates feelings of loneliness (Dalton & Cassidy, 2021).

Individual characteristics may also result in some users being more vulnerable to the negative impact of social media use (Verduyn et al., 2021). Socially anxious individuals engage in false self-presentation as a means of coping with social anxiety and engaging in self-protection (Michikyan, 2020). Additionally, anxious individuals may use social media as a maladaptive coping mechanism to validate their current stressors or to avoid real-world stressors (Vannucci et al., 2017). Alternatively, these individuals may use social media as a positive coping strategy to increase social support and promote social communication, resulting in decreased anxiety and stress and increased self-esteem and self-worth (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Vanucci et al., 2021).

Individual characteristics have been shown to associate with this period of transition and life satisfaction (Kohútová et al., 2021). A study of 244 Slovak college students showed that individuals higher in agreeableness and openness reported increased life satisfaction and those with emotional negativity and instability reported decreased life satisfaction (Kohútová et al., 2021).

Research on social media use and the Big Five personality traits, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism, have shown that individual characteristics influence which sites one uses and how various sites are used (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harari, 2021; Whaite et al., 2018).

Individuals who are extroverts are those who are outgoing, social, cheerful, optimistic,

active, passionate, energetic, and engaging (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harari, 2021; Whaite et al., 2018). These individuals use multiple social media platforms, mainly Facebook and messaging sites, (Vaid & Harari, 2021) to meet new people, socialize and interact with friends and family, while engaging in photo sharing and self-disclosure (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Vaid & Harari, 2021). Extroverts also use various social media sites to maintain relationships, pass time, and seek information and education (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). These individuals report lower self-isolation and loneliness (Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Whaite et al., 2018) and increased well-being (Requena & Ayuso, 2021).

Individuals high in agreeableness are kind, considerate, caring, trusting, and modest (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harari, 2021; Whaite et al., 2018). These individuals display positive attitudes toward others and are reliable, generous, and well-mannered ((Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021). Agreeable individuals use social media to maintain relationships (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Whaite et al., 2018) but are not specific to one platform of use (Vaid & Harari, 2021). These individuals generally have larger friend networks due to “liking” and commenting on others’ posts and not engaging in self-representation and self-promotion (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Agreeable individuals report lower levels of self-isolation and higher well-being (Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Whaite et al., 2018).

Conscientious individuals are disciplined, dutiful, organized, hardworking, reliable, trustworthy, and achievement oriented (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harari, 2021). These individuals use social media to build relationships and maintain existing relationships. They tend to overlap in their platform

of choice based on their need to build new relationships, but generally use media-sharing platforms such as YouTube, to engage in self-promotion and seek feedback from others to increase self-image and self-esteem (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harai, 2021). Conscientiousness has been associated with increased well-being (Requena & Ayuso, 2021).

Individuals who are open to new experiences are curious, flexible, motivated, imaginative, unique, receptive to new ideas, and have various interests (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harari, 2021). Individuals high in openness do not use social media as frequently and have been negatively associated with Facebook and messaging platforms (Vaid & Harari, 2021). These individuals use social media to interact and develop new relationships (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). They are less likely to engage in self-presentation and self-promotion (Kircaburun, et al, 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021). Individuals high in openness use social media to gain information and education, possibly due to their curiosity and receptiveness to new ideas (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Research has not found an association between openness to new experiences and psychological well-being (Vaid & Harari, 2021).

Finally, individuals high in neuroticism are often viewed as being anxious, negative, and short-tempered (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021). These individuals struggle with mood stability and emotional regulation (Whaite et al., 2021). Individuals high in neuroticism engage in increased social networking site use (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020) and focus more on image-sharing sites, such as Instagram and Snapchat, and microblogging sites, like Twitter (Vaid & Harari, 2021). These individuals are more sensitive to the negative aspects of social media, such as social comparison, fear of



rejection and not gaining “likes” and feedback, and are less like to initiate relationships (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021). Individuals high in neuroticism also engage in passive social media use and report higher levels of social isolation (Whaite et al., 2018) and lower well-being (Requena & Ayuso, 2021).

### ***Social Networking Sites and Individual Characteristics.***

Vaid & Harai (2021) described social media platforms as computer networks that allow users to communicate with others and engage in social interactions in various avenues. Social media platforms have been categorized based on how they are used (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Vaid & Harari, 2021). Microblogging platforms are ones that allow for posting and reading information. Facebook and Twitter are common microblogging platforms for emerging adults (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Photo-based and image-sharing platforms are ones that allow more intimate and realistic interactions. YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are photo-based and image-sharing platforms popular with emerging adults (Kircaburun et al., 2018).

Facebook has been the most studied social networking site. It is used for sharing photos, videos, stories, statuses, and live streaming. Users can comment, tag, and “like” other individuals’ content (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Facebook is often used by individuals high in openness and extroversion for presenting, information seeking, and education (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Twitter, the other microblogging platform popular with emerging adults, allows users to post and read tweets from others who share information, engage in social interactions, and engage in self-presentation. This site is often used by individuals high in neuroticism for convenience of use and entertainment (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Vaid & Harari, 2021).

Instagram is a photo-based site that allows users to take, filter, and share photos, create stories, and live stream. Users of this site engage in self-representation and self-expression for entertainment, to pass time, and to see what others are sharing.

Individuals high in neuroticism use Instagram more frequently and users report lower levels of loneliness and increased life satisfaction as the use of this site may meet individual needs for intimacy (Kircaburun, et al., 2021).

Snapchat allows users to send photos and short videos to their community of followers. These photos and videos are only shared for brief periods and are viewed as being more secure than other social media sites (Him et al., 2020; Kircaburun et al., 2021). Individuals use this site to maintain relationships, and entertainment, and to engage in self-presentation and self-expression. Users of Snapchat report lower levels of loneliness and increased happiness and life satisfaction (Kircaburun et al., 2021).

Finally, YouTube is a media-sharing site where users can upload videos and share, comment, like, or dislike other media. Individuals can be passive or active users of this site and often use it to pass the time and gain information and education (Kircaburun et al., 2021). Individuals high in conscientiousness use media sharing sites for relaxation and entertainment (Vaid & Harari, 2021).

WhatsApp and TikTok are sites that are growing in popularity. WhatsApp is a voice and video calling site that allows users to send messages and verbally communicate with others. Users engage in more effective communication and interactions and use the site to establish and maintain relationships (Kircaburun et al., 2021). TikTok is a video-sharing site that allows users to upload videos and share, comment, and like other media.

Research on these applications is limited and more exploration is needed to determine how using these sites influences well-being (Kircaburun et al., 2021).

### **Reasons for Use of Social Media**

In 2019, social media sites had 3.46 billion users worldwide with most users being teens and young adults (Sulton, 2021). The main reasons for use of these sites are to gain information and inspiration, engage in social interaction, maintain relationships, and entertainment, escape boredom and alter mood (Bettemann et al., 2021; Brailovskaia et al., 2020). Motivations for use include maintaining social relationships, entertainment, and information gathering (Masciantonio et al., 2021). Individuals use social media to fulfill social needs, such as acceptance and belonging (Marino, et al, 2018). Depressed users use social media to regulate moods, escape problems, compensate for low self-esteem, and ease loneliness through social support (Marino et al., 2018). Individuals with increased anxiety use social media for validation and to decrease anxiety symptoms as well as to communicate with others and increase social support (Vannucci et al., 2017).

Emerging adults use social media for identity exploration and discovery of various roles and selves through self-presentation and engagement in various sociocultural groups. This population also uses social media to initiate, maintain, and improve relationships as well as to gain information and engage in self-expression (Cleofas et al., 2022; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). They gain social support and communicate with others through the sharing of information, pictures, and messages (Cleofas et al., 2022). Females are more likely to use social media for maintaining relationships, pursuing goals, completing tasks, and entertainment while males are more likely to use social media to meet people. (Cleofas et al., 2022).

The uses and gratification theory suggests that individuals seek out social media that will fulfill their needs and ultimately have those needs met (Sulton, 2021). Emerging adults use social media to gain information and interact with others which allows them to engage in adult roles and present professional activities (Cleofas et al., 2022). During this period, they use social media more due to increased autonomy, change in family roles and supports, and not being guided by parents' rules and restrictions (Dalton & Cassidy, 2021; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

A three-year study of 385 individuals aged 17–19-year-olds was conducted to determine motives for social media use from teen years to emerging adulthood (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). The focus was to see if use and motivations for use changed during this period and to determine if increased use influenced mental health outcomes. It was noted that reasons for use increased over the 3-year period and mental health outcomes were dependent on motivation for use (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). The most common reason for use was noted to be escaping boredom. This could be due to individuals no longer being under the guidance of parents and having more free time based on schooling and career choices (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). Emerging adults are no longer attending school for most of the day and often are still looking for employment or are engaging in higher education with various schedules. When social media is used to escape boredom, negative mental health outcomes were increased but further exploration is needed to determine how mental health outcomes are influenced by using social media to escape boredom (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). The use of social media to maintain social connections remained stable over the 3-year period but information seeking was a motivation for older individuals. This could be due to emerging adults attempting to

explore various identities and roles and having the desire to formulate their own views and opinions (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). Maintaining social connections on social media can promote feelings of empathy, humanity, and sympathy for others, which can aid in the developmental tasks of emerging adulthood (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

Uses and gratification for emerging adults and social media use differ for desired tasks or goals (Cleofas et al., 2022). A study of types of uses and rewards gained from social media use, specifically IG use in college-age adults, noted that the main reasons for use were for recognition and meeting social needs, such as approval and self-promotion (Ponnusamy et al., 2020). Further analysis of users of Snapchat, Instagram (IG), and What's App noted that younger users (ages not specified) were more likely to use certain platforms for specific needs (Sulton, 2021). Those using What's App were more likely to use the platform for connecting with family and friends and engaging in communication and social interactions, while participants using IG and Snapchat were more likely to use sites for entertainment, self-expression, getting to know others, and escaping boredom (Sulton, 2021).

Cleofas et al. (2022) studied the uses and gratification of emerging adults during the COVID pandemic to determine how social media is used to accomplish the developmental tasks of this period. Three main developmental tasks were identified: autonomy, intimacy, and identity. An online google forms study of 1003 individuals ages 18-29 years was conducted. Results demonstrated that emerging adults used social media to complete important developmental tasks during this period (Cleofas et al., 2022). It was noted that autonomy was attained by individuals being able to assume various adult roles on social media and explore how these roles fit with their sense of independence.

Intimacy was achieved through social media as emerging adults were able to share and promote themselves on various platforms (Cleofas et al., 2022). Finally, identity was formed through social media as individuals were able to explore various topics and engage in self-expression to determine which was appropriate for them (Cleofas et al., 2022). This research determined that social media is used for developmental tasks of emerging adulthood, but the specific site used to achieve various goals was not determined (Cleofas et al., 2022). Further exploration is needed to determine the uses of social media in emerging adults and how the use of these sites influences psychological well-being as they engage in age-appropriate developmental tasks (Cleofas et al., 2022).

### **Moderators and Protective Factors of Social Media Use**

Moderators and protective factors for social media use have been researched with limited results. Self-compassion has been researched and has been associated with greater emotional well-being and a lower impact on social stressors (Keyte et al., 2020). Self-compassion is defined as showing kindness to oneself, rather than focusing on one's imperfections. A study of 173 participants examined the impact of IG and psychological well-being when self-compassion was considered (Keyte et al., 2020). An association was noted between increased IG use and well-being, specifically depression, anxiety, and stress. When self-compassion was considered, a negative association was noted with both IG use and well-being (Keyte et al., 2020). In other words, focusing on the positives can help safeguard against the negative impact of social media use, such as social comparison, anxiety, and stress. Individuals with higher levels of self-compassion report lower levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms. This would suggest that self-

compassion may serve as a moderator for social media use, but more research is needed (Keyte et al., 2020).

Social media literacy has been considered as a protective factor for social media use and its impact on psychological well-being. Social literacy involves being familiar with and tending to who creates social media, who is the target of the social media information, as well as the content of the information presented (Paxton et al., 2022). When individuals can engage in this type of critical thinking, they are less likely to be influenced by the information presented. Measures of social media literacy generally focus on self-reports, making empirical testing challenging, but an early exploration of these measures has demonstrated positive outcomes on psychological well-being. Social literacy research is in its infancy and more exploration is needed to determine its role as a protective factor for social media use (Paxton et al., 2022).

### ***Religious Involvement and Spirituality***

Sixty-five percent of emerging adults report being spiritual or religiously involved and 90% of all adults' report that religion is important in their lives (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Spirituality has been identified as a protective factor in young adults for mental health issues and 80% adults who use faith-based coping strategies to deal with various life stressors, have been shown to have more social support, increased well-being, and sense of connection to others (Oxhandler et al., 2018).

Spirituality and religious involvement have been shown to be protective factors against stress and psychological distress for teens and young adults. Additionally, spirituality and religious involvement offer health benefits, both physical and mental, and are associated with morality and self-esteem development (Haroon et al., 2020;

Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). Individuals who indicate that faith and religion are important in their lives report lower anxiety and blood pressure, and better-coping strategies (Haroon et al., 2020). Additionally, individuals who report having higher levels of spirituality also report higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Bali et al., 2022; Ubharadka, 2019).

Spirituality, religious involvement, and social media use have been minimally studied, but not as protective factors for the impact of social media use. Individuals who read the Bible and are religiously involved have been shown to be less likely to have social media accounts and visit social media sites (Haroon et al., 2020). Spirituality and religious involvement have been shown to have positive impacts on development. Research has shown that children and teens who are religiously involved engage in less risky behaviors, report lower levels of anxiety and depression, have lower levels of stress, display healthier behaviors, and have better-coping strategies (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020; Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018). These individuals also have been shown to demonstrate more prosocial behaviors and develop trusting relationships with parents and religiously involved peers (Berk, 2019).

Haroon et al. (2020) studied 402 university students to examine the relationship between social media addiction, religious involvement, spirituality and depression, anxiety, and stress. Spirituality and religious involvement were explored as moderators for psychological adjustment or self-esteem (Haroon et al., 2020). Results showed a direct effect between social media addiction and psychological adjustment. Depression, anxiety, and stress were higher in individuals who reported increased social media use. Religious involvement and spirituality were shown to be moderators of social media



intrusion and psychological adjustment (Haroon et al., 2020). In other words, those who were more spiritual or religiously involved were not affected by increased social media use. Additionally, these individuals also reported higher levels of self-esteem and mental stability (Haroon et al., 2020). Spiritual development and religious involvement need further study to determine if they can be considered protective factors against the negative impact of social media use (Haroon et al., 2020; Rautela & Sharma, 2019).

Promoting well-being during emerging adulthood has been shown to have lasting impact and benefits (Bali et al., 2022). Since spirituality and religious involvement have been shown to have such positive developmental outcomes (Good & Willoughby, 2008), they need to be studied to determine if they can be considered protective factors against the negative impact of social media use (Haroon et al., 2020; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). During this period of development, emerging adults begin to distinguish between religious involvement and spirituality and express value and importance of spiritual beliefs over religion and religious practices (Barry et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will focus on spirituality as many emerging adults describe spirituality, not necessarily religious involvement, as part of their identity and identity development (Fenzel & Richardson, 2022).

### **Current Study**

Research on social media use, including reasons for use, and psychological well-being in emerging adults is limited and needs further exploration. Additionally, more information is needed on protective factors, specifically, spirituality to determine its impact on social media use and the psychological well-being of emerging adults. This proposed research intends to explore motivations and reasons for social media use among

emerging adults and if spirituality can serve as a protective factor for the impact of social media use on psychological well-being.

### **Biblical Foundations of the Study**

Emerging adults use social media for recognition, approval, self-promotion or self-expression, escaping boredom, entertainment, information, and interacting with others (Sulton, 2021). While the Bible does not specifically talk about social media use and reasons for use, it does instruct Christians on how they should present themselves to others and protect themselves from evil and temptation in the world. This could include self-presentation and protection on online forums and platforms.

#### **Self-Presentation on Social Media**

When social media is used by emerging adults for self-presentation (i.e., for recognition, approval, self-expression) they often do so as a means of exploration of various adult roles (Cleofas et al., 2022). The Bible instructs Christians on how they should engage in self-presentation (*New International Version*, 2011, Rm. 12; I Cor. 4). Online self-presentation should reflect God. The apostle Paul reminds believers that they are servants of Christ and need to do what is instructed and expected of them from God; living a life that glorifies Him (I Cor. 4). Believers need to be mindful of how they are presenting themselves online and ensure that it demonstrates God's will and work in their lives. Paul tells believers, "In everything set them as an example by doing what is good." (Titus 2:7). Christians should be examples for God by building each other up, encouraging others, and not tearing others down in their interactions (Eph. 4:29; I Thess. 5:11). The apostle Paul also teaches Christians that because God showed them grace and mercy, they need to live a life of righteousness that pleases Him. Believers should not

conform to the world but rather do God's will; presenting themselves as humble and loving others, being sincere in that love and knowing they are no better than anyone else (Rm. 12; I Cor. 4).

### **Self-Protection on Social Media**

When social media is used by emerging adult to gain knowledge, information, entertainment, and to escape boredom, they become susceptible to the evils of the world (*New International Version*, 2011, I Cor. 1). The apostle Paul explains the sins of the world to the church in Corinth and emphasizes that all Christians fall prey to these temptations (I Cor. 1). Believers face threats from the flesh (Gal. 5:17), society (I Jn. 2:15-17), and Satan (II Tim. 2:26). Christians need to engage in protection from these threats, which can occur on social media, through fellowship with other believers and being mindful of things that seek to cause them to stray from God (Brown, 2016).

### ***Fellowship with Other Believers***

Fellowship with other believers is one way that Christians can protect themselves from threats and temptations (*New International Version*, 2011, Heb. 10:25). Coming together with others provides reassurance for believers that they will not have to face these threats alone (Gal. 6:1-2). When believers fellowship with one another, they can encourage and support one another during times of trial (I Thess. 5:11; Heb 3:13). Social media can be a means of connecting with other believers to provide support and encouragement and serve as a source of protection from the evils in the world. Jesus tells believers that “where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matt. 18:20). Connecting with individuals who will lift them up and point them toward God (Ecc.4:9-12), allows believers guard against temptations and evil.

### *Avoiding Temptation and Evil*

Being mindful of that which seeks to cause believers to fall into temptations and sin is another means of self-protection (Brown, 2016). The Bible instructs Christians to beware of such things that will cause them to stray from God, because like yeast in bread, temptation and sin will spread quickly through individuals when they are not careful (*New International Version*, 2011, Matt. 7:15, Mk. 8:15, Phil. 3:2). Believers need to be mindful of their interactions, including what they seek and say online, so that they are not enticed into ungodly ways, causing them to fall into temptation and engage in things that take them from God (Brown, 2016).

Believers need to be led by the Spirit in all their actions (*New International Version*, 2011, Gal. 5:17) so that they are not tempted by the enemy (II Tim. 2:26). One of the ways the enemy seeks to entice believers on social media is through the number of friends, followers, comments, and likes (Burnell et al., 2020) they accumulate online. Christians need to

not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (*New International Version*, 2011, Matt. 6:19-21,).

Many individuals do not truly know those who follow or friend them. They simply accept these connections to achieve more and build up their social networks. The bigger one’s social network is and the more positive feedback that one receives the better they feel. Individuals begin to focus on these things and not on God. Rather than using social

media to accumulate more friends, followers, positive feedback, and likes on social media, Christians need to be selective with whom they engage on a personal level so that they are surrounding themselves with those who will not allow them to stray from God (Brown, 2016).

Self-protection from the enemy and evils of the world is also needed when social media is used for entertainment and to decrease boredom. The increased rates of social media use demonstrates that many individuals spend more time on social networking site than engaging in other tasks (Auxier & Anderson, 2021) and use social media as a primary form of communication (Cleofas et al, 2022). The Bible cautions believers about placing anything in their lives that may be more important than God (*New International Version*, 2011, Ex. 20:4, 1 Jn. 5:21). The apostle Paul lists several things that he considers idolatry; “sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed” (Col. 3:5). Social media can be considered an idol when used for entertainment and to decrease boredom to the point it takes their eyes off God (Brown, 2016).

When Christians take their eyes off God, the enemy will take advantage and increase temptations to stray. Social comparison is one example of how the enemy can take advantage of believers and cause them to take their eyes off God. When individuals engage in social comparison, they are viewing themselves against others and not as children of God. They focus on what others look like, have, and do that may be different and better. They seek to gain happiness and joy from being like others and not God. “For the joy of the Lord is your strength” (*New International Version*, 2011, Neh. 8:10b). Satan preys on our joy so we become weak and vulnerable to his attacks.

Believers need to seek protection from the evil one through God and His Word (*New International Version, 2011*, Heb. 4:12). He will provide strength and protection from the enemy (II Thess. 3:3). Christians need to “flee the evil desire” (II Tim. 2:22) of social media through God’s Word. Jesus was a great example of this when He used God’s Word to fight temptation from Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-10). Christians need to do the same when faced with temptations and threats online. When believer’s guard themselves with scripture, they can defend against the enemy (Ps. 119:11).

Finally, pray. In the garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed. Three separate times he prayed for strength and guidance from the Father (*New International Version, 2011*, Matt. 26: 36-46). He instructed his disciples to do the same. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matt 26:41). Believers need to pray so that they can receive wisdom and guidance from the Lord. When Christians engage in prayer, they receive God’s wisdom through the Spirit (I Corin. 2: 10), something the enemy seeks to fight against (II Corin. 4:4).

### **Seek God for Truth and Happiness**

When believers seek to follow God’s will and guidance, including protecting and presenting themselves on social media as God instructs, they will find happiness and well-being in Him. When Christians take their questions, concerns, and stressors to God, and not social media, He will provide peace, comfort, joy, and fulfillment (*New International Version, 2011*, Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7, 13; I Pet. 5:7,). This can be challenging as social media is so easily available and gratification of our needs and desires can be faster to obtain than waiting on God. If individuals seek God and wait on Him to answer their prayers, he “will renew their strength” (Is. 40:31).

When social media is used for gaining information and education, believers may find false or inaccurate information about what they are seeking. Christians need to look to God for guidance and answers, not social media. The way of the Lord is perfect and if Christians follow Him, and seek His guidance, He will bless us (*New International Version*, 2011, Ps.19:7). “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). Following God requires that individuals do not look for answers in anything other than Him. This includes social media. If Christians search social media for guidance and direction, they will not be seeking God’s truth (John 17:17) but rather the truth of the world. The Bible states that the ways of the world are evil, and Christians need to be mindful that they do not follow them (Ephesians 5:15-16). “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’” (I Corinthians 15:33).

### **Summary**

Social media use and psychological well-being research has demonstrated mixed results. Much of the current research showed that social media use is negatively associated with depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022; Shensa et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2019). Most of these studies focused on time spent on social media and reflected that increased social media use and multiple sites used are associated with increased psychological distress and negative well-being (Shensa et al., 2017; Vannucci et al., 2017).

When the focus on research shifted from time spent on social media, to quality of social media use, results reflected both positive and negative impacts on overall well-being (Berryman et al., 2017; Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). When social media is used to

build and maintain relationships, increase social support, and create a sense of belonging, reports of increased self-esteem and life satisfaction were noted (Moreton & Greenfield, 2022). When social media use results in social comparisons, negative feedback, and passive use decreased well-being, and increased negative affect were reported (Park & Baek, 2018).

Individuals who use social media to maintain relationships and increase social support report higher psychological well-being. Sites that are used to achieve these needs are not completely known (Cleofas et al., 2022). Additionally, spirituality has been shown to be a protective factor and means of positive coping with negative psychological symptoms. This construct has only been minimally studied and not as a protective factor for social media use and psychological well-being (Haroon et al., 2020). This proposed research intends to explore social media sites used by emerging adults, including motivation and reasons for use, and if spirituality can be considered potential protective factor for the impact of social media use on psychological well-being.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

### Overview

A quantitative correlational study was conducted to examine which social network sites emerging adults use, their reasons and motivations for use, and their relationship with psychological well-being. Additionally, spirituality was considered as potential protective factor for social media and its impact on psychological well-being. Participants between the ages of 18 and 29 years were recruited using various social media platforms to complete an online survey.

A survey was created to consist of forty-eight questions: two demographic questions, two assessing overall social media use, twenty assessing the reason for social media use, eighteen questions assessing psychological well-being, and six assessing spirituality. Statistical analyses were conducted using point biserial correlations to determine social media sites used and reasons for use. Additionally, point biserial correlations and a multiple linear regression were conducted to assess the relationships between spirituality level, social media use, and psychological well-being.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

#### Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between level of spirituality and reasons and motivation for social media use among adults aged 18-29?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social media sites used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

RQ3: Does spirituality moderate the relationship between the type of social media site used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

## **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: H<sub>0</sub>: It is hypothesized that adults ages 18-29 years who report lower levels of spirituality will use social media for reasons other than social support and spiritual interaction.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized that adults ages 18-29 years who report higher levels of spirituality will use social media sites for social support and spiritual interaction.

Hypothesis 2: H<sub>0</sub>: Adults ages 18-29 years will report no association with psychological well-being and social media when used for gaining information, building and maintaining relationships and communication and connecting with friends and family.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized adults ages 18-29 years will report increased psychological well-being when social media is used for gaining information, building and maintaining relationships, and communicating and connecting with friends and family.

Hypothesis 3: H<sub>0</sub>: Adults ages 18-29 years who report lower levels of spirituality will not have the effects of social media use moderated and will report lower psychological well-being.

H<sub>a</sub>: It is hypothesized adults ages 18-29 who report higher levels spirituality will have the effects of social media use moderated and will report higher psychological well-being.

## **Research Design**

This quantitative correlational study examined which social network sites emerging adults, individuals ages 18-29 years, use more frequently, their reasons for use, their relationship with psychological well-being, and what impact spirituality has in

diminishing the impact of social media on psychological well-being. This study had three goals. First to determine the reasons for use of social media sites used by young adults and if level of spirituality associates with those reasons and motivations. Second, to determine if social media use has an impact on psychological well-being based on the reason for use. Third, to determine whether spirituality has a diminishing effect on psychological well-being when using social media sites at least three times per week.

### **Participants**

Participants between the ages of 18 and 29 years were recruited using various social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Messenger promoting voluntary completion of an online survey monkey survey. The personal social media accounts of the author were used to promote the survey through a snowball effect. In other words, friends, followers, and others passed along the survey to prompt more participants. Additionally, the survey was posted on survey blog sites, status updates, and word of mouth like previous research studies completed on social media use (Barrada & Castro, 2020; Mackson et al., 2019).

Individuals were provided a link to complete the online survey. Participants were assured all information was kept confidential and confirmed their understanding of confidentiality and informed consent to testing procedures. When participants clicked on the link to complete the survey, they were directed to an information page that outlined the survey and ended with a consent statement that read as follows: "I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study." Participant were asked to select "yes" or "no". This served as their signed informed consent. Individuals who selected "yes" were directed

into the study and this served as their informed consent. Those who selected “no” were excused from participation.

The participants who met the age qualifications, based on self-reported age, and used social media at least three times weekly were included in the survey. Research has shown that 70% of young adults use social media daily (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Therefore, only individuals who use social media at least three times per week were included in this survey. This allowed for a representative sample of this population, considering any additional life events that may limit social media use on a given day.

A sample size of a minimum of 115 participants was selected through the recruitment procedures described. This was based on three separate G\*Power analyses completed to determine the needed sample size (See Appendix A). First, a z-test for point biserial correlation for a two-tailed test with two independent variables was conducted with an effect size of 0.6, an error of probability of 0.05, and a  $1-\beta$  power of 0.80 showed a minimum sample size of 94 participants. Next, a t-test analysis for linear multiple regression for a two-tailed test was conducted with an effect size of 0.15, an error of probability of 0.05, and a  $1-\beta$  power of 0.80 with two predictor variables showed a minimum sample size of 55 participants. The largest minimum sample required for all three analyses was 94 participants, which supported the proposed sample size of at least 115 participants.

### **Study Procedures**

Participants between the ages of 18 and 29 years were recruited using various social media platforms, through snowball effect, anonymous blogs sites, status updates, and word of mouth (Barrada & Castro, 2020; Mackson et al., 2019). Individuals were

provided a link to the survey in the advertisement to complete the survey. Participants were assured all information was kept confidential and confirmed their understanding of confidentiality and informed consent of testing procedures. When participants clicked on the link to complete the survey, they were directed to an information page that outlined the survey and ended with a consent statement that reads as follows: “I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.” Participant were asked selected “yes” or “no.” This served as their signed informed consent. Individuals who selected “yes” were directed into the study and this served at their informed consent. Those who selected “no” were excused from participation. (See Appendix B).

Once participants reviewed and consented to participate, the survey began. Survey Monkey Surveys was used to keep all data together and to ensure the validity and accuracy of responses. The survey was available for 13 weeks to recruit as many participants as possible so a representative sample could be obtained. Once all data was collected it was analyzed and assessed using SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses.

### **Instrumentation and Measurement**

A survey was created that consisted of forty-eight questions: two demographic questions, two assessing social media site used, twenty assessing reasons for use of social media sites, eighteen questions assessing psychological well-being, and six assessing spirituality. The demographic questions were based on gender: male, female, or other, and age group: 19-22, 23-25, and 26-29 years. The two questions assessing overall social media used included how many times per week on average social media was used:

everyday, at least 3 times per week, about 1-2 times per week, once a month, and less than once a month and which social media sites were used at least three time per week; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat, YouTube, TikTok, or other. Social media use was assessed using the Social Networking Sites Usage and Scale (SNSUN) a 20-item scale measuring use and activity on social media sites (Ali et al., 2019). Psychological well-being was assessed using a reversed scoring adaptation of the 18-item, Psychological Well-Being Scale designed to assess overall well-being in emerging adults (Ryff & Keys, 1995). Spirituality was measured using the Intrinsic Spirituality Scale, a modified six-item scale to assess spirituality on a 0-10 scale with higher numbers associated with higher levels of spirituality (Hodge, 2003).

### **Social Media Usage Scale**

Social media use has been assessed in research and formal scales for assessing use have been created. The Social Networking Sites Usage and Scale (SNSUN) (Ali et al., 2019) a 20-item scale measuring reasons for use and activity on social media sites was used for this study. This assessment has been tested for validity and reliability in measuring social media activity and use and how users integrate usage into their lives (Ali et al., 2019), on five specific needs: cognitive, affective, social integrative, diversion, and personal integrative needs, making this scale appropriate to assess reasons and motivation for social media use (Ali et al., 2019). The diversion needs subscale addresses issues of loneliness, boredom, and escaping worries. The higher the number on the subscale, the less these issues occur. The cognitive needs subscale addresses issues of reading research studies and data, searching for jobs and scholarships, gaining knowledge, and information on others. Affective needs addresses issues of routine online

usage, expressing emotions, developing relationships, talking about issues, and gaining assistance on those issues. Personal Integrative needs includes self-image, portrayal of image to others, judging other's information, and gaining approval among friends. Finally, the social integrative needs subscale assesses communication with friends, staying in touch with family, developing new friends and find interesting people, and contacting hard to reach individuals. Permission to use this scale has been obtain from the scale designer (see Appendix C).

### **The Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale**

The PWB Scale developed by Ryff and Keys (1995) measures six attributes of well-being including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This scale has been assessed for reliability through test-retest measures and has been found to be consistent (Celestine, 2021). Additional tests on the validity of this assessment demonstrated discriminant and convergent validity. In other words, it measured what it is designed to measure and is in line with other measures of well-being (Celestine, 2021). There are two PWB scales, an 18-item scale, and a 42-item scale (Ryff & Keys, 1995). This study used the 18-item scale for ease of administration and promotion of survey completion. The 18-item scale has been used with young adults from diverse backgrounds and has been shown to be reliable and valid (Ryff & Keys, 1995). The 18-item Ryff has six subscales that assess autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The autonomy subscale addresses one's confidence in one's own opinions, even when consensus is in opposition. Environmental mastery assesses how in charge of one's own situation individuals feels. The personal growth

subscale evaluates how important having new experiences that challenges one's view of the self and the world. The positive relationship with other subscales evaluates how giving an individual is and how willing an individual is to share time with others.

Purpose in life questions address whether an individual is driven towards a goal or is wandering through life aimlessly. Finally, the self-acceptance subscale assesses how pleased one is with the way life has turned out (Ryff & Keys, 1995). While there is no charge to use this scale in research, interested parties should request use and provide a description of how the assessment will be used to Dr. Carol Ryff (Ryff & Keys, 1995). Permission to use this scale was obtained from the scale designer (see Appendix D)

### **Spirituality**

The Intrinsic Spirituality Scale is a modified six-item scale to assess spirituality on a 0-10 scale with higher numbers associating with higher levels of spirituality (Hodge, 2003), using a seven-point Likert-based format. This measure has been used in research and has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity (Haroon et al., 2003; Koenig et al., 2015), with emerging adult population (Hodge, 2003). Permission was granted to use the Intrinsic Spirituality Scale by the author (see Appendix E).

Surveys were anonymous, and data was collected using the online survey format Survey Monkey to ensure the validity and accuracy of responses. The survey was available for 13 weeks to recruit as many participants as possible so a representative sample could be obtained. Collected data was then analyzed and assessed using SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses.

### **Operationalization of Variables**



**Participant Age:** this variable is a nominal variable that was measured by the researcher-created demographic question asking which age range participants fall within.

**Social Networking Sites:** this is a nominal variable that was measured by the researcher-created demographic question asking if participants use specific social media sites offering the choice of yes, this site is used at least three time per week or no, this site is not used at least three time per week. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, You Tube, and TikTok were provided as options. A final option of asking if other sites are used at least three times per week was provided with a place to list other sites used. Frequency of use was assessed only for determining appropriateness of participation in this study. Those who did not report using social networking sites a least three times per week were excluded as participants.

**Social Media Use:** this ordinal variable was assessed using the SNSUN Likert scale to determine reasons and motivation for social media use. The SNSUN assesses five reasons for social media use based on the needs of the individual using social media. These needs are cognitive, affective, social integrative, diversion, and personal integrative needs (Ali et al., 2019).

**Psychological Well-being:** is a dependent variable that was assessed using the PWB Likert scale to determine psychological well-being, including emotional experiences: life satisfaction (Masciantonio et al., 2021), social contribution, positive relationships, personal growth, self-acceptance, and life purpose (Tangmunkongrorakul et al., 2019).

**Spirituality:** this is a categorical variable was measured using the Intrinsic Spirituality Scale and was used to determine any association with social media site used as least three

time per week as well as any potential diminishing effect on psychological well-being when social media sites are used.

### **Data Analysis**

All statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses. The SNSUN and the ISS were used to assess the first hypothesis of this study, exploring if a relationship exists between reasons and motivations for social media use and spirituality level. A point biserial correlation was used to examine the subscores of spirituality level reported on the ISS and the subscores of reasons and motivations for social media use on the SNSUN and its subscales. All assumptions of the point biserial analysis, continuous variables, homogeneity of variances, and no significant outliers, were met and the variables, spirituality and reasons and motivation for use, were ordinal, making this analysis appropriate.

A point biserial analysis was also used to assess the second hypothesis of this study as it allowed for evaluating any potential relationship between social media site used at least three times per week and psychological well-being. Data collected from the SNSUN was compared to the data collect on the Ryff PWB scale. Assumptions for the point biserial analysis were met and the dependent variable, PWB, was ordinal with a binary nominal variable, yes/no for social media site being used.

The third hypothesis was addressed using a point biserial correlation and a multiple linear regression to determine the impact of social media use on psychological well-being, when controlling for spirituality. Data collected from the SNSUN, the Ryff PWB scale, and the ISS were used to assess if spirituality moderated the impact of social media use on psychological well-being. Additionally, a partial correlation was used to

assess the impact of social media use on psychological well-being, when controlling for spirituality using the subscale scores from the Ryff PWB scale, the five subscale scores from the SNSUN, and the scores from the ISS to determine any significant relationships between reasons and motivation for social media use and psychological well-being. These analyses were appropriate here as all assumptions were met and the dependent variable, PWB, was ordinal, and two independent variables were used, spirituality level and use of social media sites at least three times per week.

### **Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations**

This study explored the level of spirituality and potential correlation with uses and motivations of social media in emerging adults. This period of development is one in which individuals are exploring various roles and relationships and use social media to determine and define these roles (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). The developmental outcomes of this exploration on emerging adults can have lasting impacts on development and life satisfaction (Kohútová et al., 2021). Developing an understanding of the impact of social media use on psychological well-being, and the role of spirituality in social media use, in this population is one of the main goals of this proposed study.

The potential for spirituality as a protective factor for the impact of social media use on psychological well-being was another goal of this proposed study. Spirituality has been shown to serve as a protective factor for health and well-being but has not been considered for social media use and psychological well-being (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). This study explored this construct to assess its potential as a protective for social media and psychology in emerging adults.

This study did not explore age groups outside the developmental period of emerging adulthood as there are developmental tasks specific to this period that may be impacted by social media use. Further exploration of other developmental periods may be appropriate for future research. Additionally, this study did not explore religious involvement as a potential protective factor. Religious involvement has been shown to be a protective factor for both physical and mental health (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019), but more than sixty percent of emerging adult identify as being spiritual and not religiously involved (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Religious involvement should be considered in future research and assessed for possibility of serving as a protective factor for social media use and psychological well-being for emerging adults.

There are challenges and limitations of this study. The first challenge noted, is the recruitment process and incentives to encourage participation in this assessment. Emerging adulthood is a period of transition and role explorations (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020) so young adults may be preoccupied with life events to participate in this study. Promoting this study occurred on social media as most emerging adults report using social media daily (Keating & Rudd-Arieta, 2021).

Second, there was a concern with the accuracy of self-reporting social media use and psychological well-being. Emerging adults may underestimate or misrepresent social media use. Tools such as time-use diaries have been suggested for addressing the accuracy of self-reporting social media use (Barthorpe, et. al., 2020), but based on the limitations of this study, these tools are not available. Self-reporting may also be a challenge for reporting psychological well-being. Individuals with low self-esteem or

other mood and anxiety issues may underreport or not report any symptoms. Individuals feel ashamed, embarrassed, or stigmatized, and therefore underreport their psychological well-being for fear of feeling left out or different from their peers. Professional administration of psychological scales in future studies would be beneficial to moderate the impact of self-reporting. Additionally, diagnosed psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety, as well as lower measures of self-esteem and self-confidence may influence scores of psychological well-being. Future studies should include psychological assessments or evaluations to assist in understanding the relationship of social media use and psychological outcomes.

Finally, the study sample posed limitations for this study. The sample size of at least 107 participants, while statistically appropriate, may limit the generalization of results to the emerging adult population. Also, the developmental period of emerging adulthood is the focus of this study, so results cannot be generalized to the entire stage of young adulthood and future testing should be completed on those over the age of 30 years. Future research can include a larger sample size and various ages groups to promote generalization of study results.

This study sought to discover if there is a relationship between social media use and psychological well-being in emerging adults. Previous research has shown mixed results of social media use and psychological well-being and this study sought to further explore this relationship focusing on emerging adults. Emerging adults use social media for various reasons, including the completion of age-appropriate developmental tasks. Exploring the impact of social media use on this population's psychological well-being was needed as to determine the impact developmental outcomes.

Additionally, this study explored the possibility of spirituality as a protective factor for the impact of social media use on psychological well-being in emerging adults. Spirituality has been shown to be a protective factor for overall physical and mental health (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019), so assessing a relationship between these constructs was appropriate to determine how to assist this population with age-appropriate developmental tasks.

### **Summary**

This study was a quantitative correlational study to examine reasons and motivations for use and their impact on psychological well-being. Additionally, this study considered spirituality as potential protective factor for the impact of social media on psychological well-being. Individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years were recruited using various social media platforms. An online survey monkey survey was created that consisted of forty-eight questions: two demographic questions, two assessing overall social media use, twenty assessing reasons for social media use, eighteen questions assessing psychological well-being, and six assessing spirituality. All data was analyzed using SPSS version 29 and consisted of point biserial correlations and a multiple linear regression to determine reasons and motivations for social media sites used and their impact on psychological well-being, with spirituality being considered as a potential protective factor.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between type of social network sites emerging adults (individuals ages 18-29 years) used, the reasons and motivations for use, and psychological well-being. Does the reason for social media use reflect the platform selected and the individual's psychological well-being? To answer these questions, social networking sites were defined as any online media interaction platform that allows for self-presentation, engagement, participation, and interactions between individuals. Psychological well-being refers to meaning, fulfillment, enjoyment, and pleasure in life. It also involves appropriate coping strategies, emotional regulation abilities, and healthy problem-solving capabilities (Yi-Yuan et al., 2019). Additionally, this study explored the possibility of spirituality, the quest for meaning and purpose, transcendence, connectedness, and values, as a potential protective variable of the relationship between the type of social media site used and psychological well-being.

### **Research Question(s)**

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What is the relationship between level of spirituality and reasons and motivation for social media use among adults aged 18-29?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social media sites used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

RQ3: Does spirituality moderate the relationship between the type of social media site used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being?

A survey was created (see Appendix F) that consisted of forty-eight questions: two demographic questions, two assessing social media sites used, twenty assessing reasons for use of social media sites, eighteen questions assessing psychological well-being, and six assessing spirituality. The demographic questions were based on gender: male, female, or other, and age group: 19-22, 23-25, and 26-29 years. The two questions assessing overall social media used included how many times per week on average social media was used: everyday, at least 3 times per week, about 1-2 times per week, once a month, and less than once a month, as well as which social media sites were used at least three times per week: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat, YouTube, TikTok, or other. Social media use was assessed using the Social Networking Sites Usage and Scale (SNSUN), a 20-item scale measuring use and activity on social media sites (Ali et al., 2019). Psychological well-being was assessed using a reversed scoring adaptation of the Ryff 18-item Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale designed to assess overall well-being in emerging adults (Ryff & Keys, 1995). Spirituality was measured using the Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS), a modified six-item scale to assess spirituality on a 0-10 scale with higher numbers associated with higher levels of spirituality (Hodge, 2003).

Surveys were anonymous, and data was collected using the online survey format Survey Monkey to ensure the validity and accuracy of responses. The survey was available for 13 weeks to recruit as many participants as possible so a representative sample could be obtained. Collected data was then analyzed and assessed using SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses.

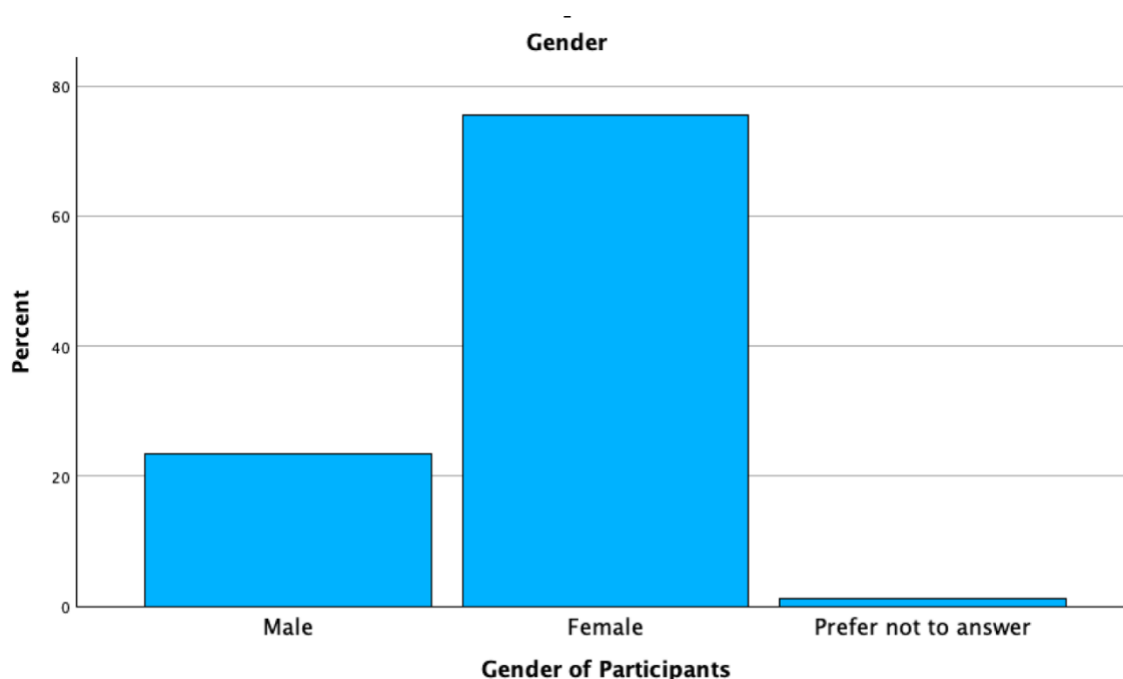
### **Descriptive Results**



One hundred and seven participants completed the Survey Monkey survey. There were two demographic questions. The first was based on gender (see figure 1): male, female, or other. Of the 107 participants, 75.56% identified as female, 23.33% identified as male, and 1.11% preferred not to answer the question. The second question addressed participants' age group (see figure 2): 19-22, 23-25, and 26-29 years. Most participants were between the ages of 22 and 25 years of age, with 51.11% of respondents falling in this category. Participants between the ages of 18 and 21 years were 17.78%, with 26.27% of participants indicating they were between the ages of 26 and 29 years. There were 4 respondents who reported being in another age category.

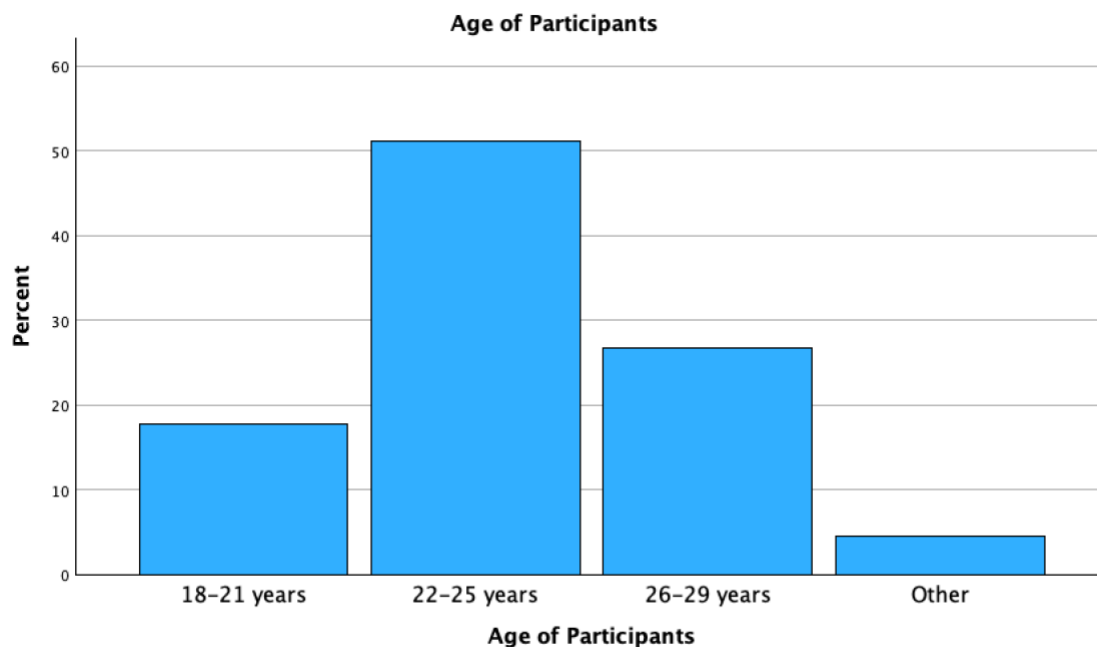
**Figure 1**

*Gender of Participants*



**Figure 2**

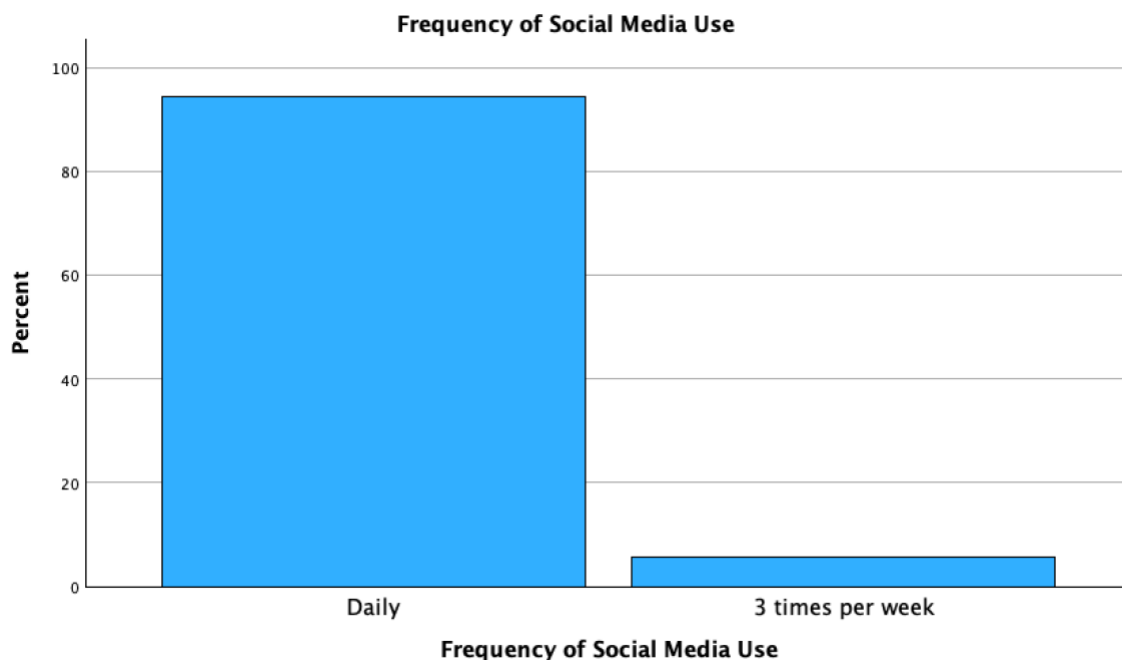
*Age of Participants*



The first question assessing overall social media used included how many times per week on average social media was used (see figure 3): everyday, at least 3 times per week, about 1-2 times per week, once a month, and less than once a month. 94.44% of participants reported using social media daily with 5.56% report using social media at least 3 times per week. None of the participants reported using social media less than 3 times week. The second question assessing overall social media use asked which social media sites were used at least three time per week (see figure 4); Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat, YouTube, TikTok, or other site provided the following results: Instagram 80%, Facebook 72.22%, YouTube 60%, TikTok 51.11%, Snap Chat 46.67%, Twitter 18.89%, and 6.67% reporting using other sites. The other sites listed were Pinterest (3), LinkedIn (2), BeReal (1).

### **Figure 3**

*Frequency of Social Media Use*



### **Study Findings**

All statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses.

#### **Research Question One**

What is the relationship between level of spirituality and reasons and motivation for social media use among adults aged 18-29? The SNSUN and the ISS were used to assess the first hypothesis of this study: individuals who report lower levels of spirituality will use social media for reasons other than social support and spiritual interaction. The subscores on the five subscales of the SNSUN were used to demonstrate the reasons and motivation for social media use. These subscores were compared with the subscores of the data collected from the ISS using a point biserial correlation (see Table 1). Analysis revealed no significant relationship between spirituality level and reasons and motivation for social media use.

**Table 1***Point Biserial Correlation for Spirituality and Reasons and Uses of Social Media Sites**Correlations*

		Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	SnapChat	YouTube	TikTok	Pinterest	BeReal	LinkedIn	Spirituality
Facebook	Pearson Correlation	1	.182	-.074	-.043	-.070	.035	-.155	.068	-.070	-.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085	.491	.690	.512	.744	.145	.527	.511	.879
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Twitter	Pearson Correlation	.182	1	.241*	.004	-.012	.153	-.090	-.051	.120	-.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085		.022	.972	.914	.151	.401	.632	.261	.368
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Instagram	Pearson Correlation	-.074	.241*	1	.022	-.181	.100	-.062	.053	.075	.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.491	.022		.835	.087	.348	.562	.620	.480	.296
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
SnapChat	Pearson Correlation	-.043	.004	.022	1	-.100	.333**	.074	-.099	.010	-.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.690	.972	.835		.348	.001	.486	.352	.925	.784
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
YouTube	Pearson Correlation	-.070	-.012	-.181	-.100	1	-.064	.025	-.130	.123	-.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.512	.914	.087	.348		.552	.813	.223	.248	.291
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
TikTok	Pearson Correlation	.035	.153	.100	.333**	-.064	1	-.058	-.104	-.147	-.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.744	.151	.348	.001	.552		.589	.331	.166	.499
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Pinterest	Pearson Correlation	-.155	-.090	-.062	.074	.025	-.058	1	-.020	-.028	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.145	.401	.562	.486	.813	.589		.854	.793	.270
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
BeReal	Pearson Correlation	.068	-.051	.053	-.099	-.130	-.104	-.020	1	-.016	-.128
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.527	.632	.620	.352	.223	.331	.854		.881	.229
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
LinkedIn	Pearson Correlation	-.070	.120	.075	.010	.123	-.147	-.028	-.016	1	-.175
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.511	.261	.480	.925	.248	.166	.793	.881		.099
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	-.016	-.096	.111	-.029	-.113	-.072	.118	-.128	-.175	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.879	.368	.296	.784	.291	.499	.270	.229	.099	
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Research Question Two:**

Is there a correlation between social media sites used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being? A point biserial correlation (see Table 2) was used to assess the relationship between social media site used and psychological well-being, using the data collected from the Ryff PWB scale and the data asking which social media sites participants used at least three time per week. No significant overall correlations were noted between psychological well-being and use of specific social media sites at least three times per week. However, two significant relationships were noted between Twitter and You Tube use a least three times per week and two of the subscales of the

Ryff PWB scale. A point biserial correlation revealed a significant relationship between YouTube use at least three times per week and the self-acceptance subscale of psychological well-being,  $r(90) = .238, p = .024$  (two-tailed). A significant correlation was also noted between Twitter use at least three times per week and the personal growth subscale of psychological well-being,  $r(90) = -.284, p = .024$  (two-tailed).

**Table 2** Point Biserial Correlation for Social Media Site Used and Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

*Correlations*

		Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	SnapChat	YouTube	TikTok	Pinterest	BeReal	LinkedIn	PWB
Facebook	Pearson Correlation	1	.182	-.074	-.043	-.070	.035	-.155	.068	-.070	-.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085	.491	.690	.512	.744	.145	.527	.511	.710
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Twitter	Pearson Correlation	.182	1	.241*	.004	-.012	.153	-.090	-.051	.120	-.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085		.022	.972	.914	.151	.401	.632	.261	.051
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Instagram	Pearson Correlation	-.074	.241*	1	.022	-.181	.100	-.062	.053	.075	-.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.491	.022		.835	.087	.348	.562	.620	.480	.533
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
SnapChat	Pearson Correlation	-.043	.004	.022	1	-.100	.333**	.074	-.099	.010	.122
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.690	.972	.835		.348	.001	.486	.352	.925	.253
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
YouTube	Pearson Correlation	-.070	-.012	-.181	-.100	1	-.064	.025	-.130	.123	.109
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.512	.914	.087	.348		.552	.813	.223	.248	.306
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
TikTok	Pearson Correlation	.035	.153	.100	.333**	-.064	1	-.058	-.104	-.147	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.744	.151	.348	.001	.552		.589	.331	.166	.085
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Pinterest	Pearson Correlation	-.155	-.090	-.062	.074	.025	-.058	1	-.020	-.028	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.145	.401	.562	.486	.813	.589		.854	.793	.938
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
BeReal	Pearson Correlation	.068	-.051	.053	-.099	-.130	-.104	-.020	1	-.016	.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.527	.632	.620	.352	.223	.331	.854		.881	.401
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
LinkedIn	Pearson Correlation	-.070	.120	.075	.010	.123	-.147	-.028	-.016	1	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.511	.261	.480	.925	.248	.166	.793	.881		.950
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
PWB	Pearson Correlation	-.040	-.207	-.067	.122	.109	.183	-.008	.090	-.007	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.710	.051	.533	.253	.306	.085	.938	.401	.950	
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A point biserial correlation (see Table 3) was also used to assess the relationship between reasons and motivation for social media use and specific social media sites used at least three times per week. Significant correlations were noted between using Twitter

use and TikTok use and two separate subscales. Analysis revealed a significant correlation between use of Twitter use at least three times per week and personal integrative needs,  $r(90) = -.214, p=.043$  (two-tailed). Additionally, a significant relationship was noted between diversion needs and use of the TikTok at least three times per week,  $r(90) = .377, p<.001$  (two-tailed).

**Table 3**  
*Point Biserial Correlation for Reasons and Motivation for Social Media Use and Specific Site Used*

Correlations

		Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	SnapChat	YouTube	TikTok	Pinterest	BeReal	LinkedIn	Social_Media_Use	Diversion_Needs	Cognitive_Needs	Affective_Needs	Personal_Integrative_Needs	Social_Integrative_Needs													
Facebook	Pearson Correlation	1	.182	-.074	-.043	-.070	.035	-.155	.068	-.070	.030	-.026	-.002	.054	.034	.051													
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085	.491	.690	.512	.744	.145	.527	.511	.778	.809	.986	.616	.751	.632													
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Twitter	Pearson Correlation	-.182	1	.241*	-.004	-.012	.153	-.090	-.051	.120	.066	.124	-.017	.028	-.065	-.009													
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.085	.922	.972	.914	.151	.401	.632	.261	.536	.244	.871	.793	.372	.930												
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Instagram	Pearson Correlation	-.074	.241*	1	.022	-.181	.100	-.062	.053	.075	.070	.068	.069	-.031	-.065	.075													
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.491	.022	.835	.087	.348	.562	.620	.480	.511	.525	.517	.373	.479												
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
SnapChat	Pearson Correlation	-.043	.004	.022	1	-.100	.332**	.074	-.099	.010	.008	.143	.001	-.065	.066	-.084													
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.690	.972	.835	.348	.001	.486	.352	.925	.943	.172	.990	.540	.537											
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
YouTube	Pearson Correlation	-.070	-.012	-.181	-.100	1	-.064	.025	-.130	.123	-.155	-.054	-.043	-.087	-.214*	-.131													
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.512	.914	.087	.348	.552	.813	.223	.248	.145	.615	.689	.417	.043	.220									
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
TikTok	Pearson Correlation	.035	.153	.100	.332**	-.064	1	-.058	-.104	-.147	.239*	.377**	.204	.149	.095	.106													
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.744		.151	.348	.001	.552	.223	.331	.854	.023	<.001	.054	.162	.371	.319									
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Pinterest	Pearson Correlation	-.155	-.090	-.062	.074	.023	-.058	1	-.020	-.028	.153	-.013	.156	.122	.124	.167													
	Sig. (2-tailed)								.145	.401	.562	.486	.813	.589	.020	.900	.143	.254	.244	.115									
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
BeReal	Pearson Correlation	.068	-.051	.053	-.099	-.130	-.104	-.020	1	-.016	-.088	-.156	.028	.012	-.134	-.027													
	Sig. (2-tailed)									.527	.632	.620	.352	.223	.331	.854	.023	.881	.408	.142	.791	.909	.209	.801					
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
LinkedIn	Pearson Correlation	-.070	.120	.075	.010	.123	-.147	-.028	-.016	1	-.147	-.020	-.121	-.036	-.128	-.159													
	Sig. (2-tailed)										.511	.261	.480	.925	.248	.166	.793	.881	.168	.848	.254	.601	.230	.135					
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Social_Media_Use	Pearson Correlation	.030	.066	.070	.008	-.155	.239*	.153	-.088	-.147	1	.583**	.603**	.799**	.780**	.804**													
	Sig. (2-tailed)											.778	.536	.511	.943	.143	.023	.151	.408	.168	.90	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001			
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Diversion_Needs	Pearson Correlation	-.026	.124	.068	.143	-.054	.377**	-.013	-.156	-.020	.583**	1	.300**	.400**	.254*	.249*													
	Sig. (2-tailed)												.809	.244	.525	.172	.615	<.001	.900	.142	.848	<.001	.003	<.001	.016	.018			
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Cognitive_Needs	Pearson Correlation	-.002	-.017	.069	.001	-.043	.204	.156	.028	-.121	.603**	.306**	1	.466**	.290**	.458**													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													.985	.871	.517	.990	.689	.054	.143	.791	.254	<.001	.003	<.001	.006	<.001		
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Affective_Needs	Pearson Correlation	.054	.028	-.031	-.065	-.087	.149	.122	.012	-.056	.799**	.400**	.466**	1	.497**	.544**													
	Sig. (2-tailed)														.616	.793	.775	.340	.417	.162	.254	.909	.601	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Personal_Integrative_Needs	Pearson Correlation	.034	.095	.095	.066	-.214*	.095	.124	-.134	-.128	.780**	.254*	.290**	.497**	1	.554**													
	Sig. (2-tailed)															.751	.372	.373	.537	.043	.371	.244	.209	.230	<.001	.016	.006	<.001	<.001
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													
Social_Integrative_Needs	Pearson Correlation	.051	-.009	.075	-.084	-.131	.106	.167	-.027	-.159	.804**	.249*	.458**	.544**	.554**	1													
	Sig. (2-tailed)															.632	.930	.479	.432	.220	.319	.115	.801	.135	<.001	.018	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90													

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Research Question Three:**

Does spirituality moderate the relationship between the type of social media site used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being? A multiple linear regression (see Table 4) was conducted to determine if there was a relationship with using social media sites at least three times per week and psychological well-being, when

controlling for spirituality. Data collected from the ISS, the Ryff PWB scale, and which social media sites are used at least three times per week were used for this analysis. Results reflected no significant relationship between social media site used at least three times per week and psychological well-being when controlling for spirituality.

**Table 4**

*Multiple Linear Regression for Social Media Site Used and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) When Controlling for Spirituality*

*Correlations*

		<i>PWB</i>	<i>Spirituality</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Twitter</i>	<i>Instagram</i>	<i>SnapChat</i>	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>TikTok</i>	<i>Pinterest</i>	<i>BeReal</i>	<i>LinkedIn</i>
Pearson Correlation	<i>PWB</i>	1.000	-.111	-.040	-.207	-.067	.122	.109	.183	-.008	.090	-.007
	<i>Spirituality</i>	-.111	1.000	-.016	-.096	.111	-.029	-.113	-.072	.118	-.128	-.175
	<i>Facebook</i>	-.040	-.016	1.000	.182	-.074	-.043	-.070	.035	-.155	.068	-.070
	<i>Twitter</i>	-.207	-.096	.182	1.000	.241	.004	-.012	.153	-.090	-.051	.120
	<i>Instagram</i>	-.067	.111	-.074	.241	1.000	.022	-.181	.100	-.062	.053	.075
	<i>SnapChat</i>	.122	-.029	-.043	.004	.022	1.000	-.100	.333	.074	-.099	.010
	<i>YouTube</i>	.109	-.113	-.070	-.012	-.181	-.100	1.000	-.064	.025	-.130	.123
	<i>TikTok</i>	.183	-.072	.035	.153	.100	.333	-.064	1.000	-.058	-.104	-.147
	<i>Pinterest</i>	-.008	.118	-.155	-.090	-.062	.074	.025	-.058	1.000	-.020	-.028
	<i>BeReal</i>	.090	-.128	.068	-.051	.053	-.099	-.130	-.104	-.020	1.000	-.016
	<i>LinkedIn</i>	-.007	-.175	-.070	.120	.075	.010	.123	-.147	-.028	-.016	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<i>PWB</i>	.	.148	.355	.025	.267	.126	.153	.042	.469	.201
<i>Spirituality</i>		.148	.	.439	.184	.148	.392	.145	.249	.135	.115	.050
<i>Facebook</i>		.355	.439	.	.043	.245	.345	.256	.372	.073	.263	.255
<i>Twitter</i>		.025	.184	.043	.	.011	.486	.457	.075	.200	.316	.130
<i>Instagram</i>		.267	.148	.245	.011	.	.417	.043	.174	.281	.310	.240
<i>SnapChat</i>		.126	.392	.345	.486	.417	.	.174	.001	.243	.176	.462
<i>YouTube</i>		.153	.145	.256	.457	.043	.174	.	.276	.407	.111	.124
<i>TikTok</i>		.042	.249	.372	.075	.174	.001	.276	.	.294	.165	.083
<i>Pinterest</i>		.469	.135	.073	.200	.281	.243	.407	.294	.	.427	.397
<i>BeReal</i>		.201	.115	.263	.316	.310	.176	.111	.165	.427	.	.441
<i>LinkedIn</i>		.475	.050	.255	.130	.240	.462	.124	.083	.397	.441	.
N		<i>PWB</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>Spirituality</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>Facebook</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>Twitter</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>Instagram</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>SnapChat</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>YouTube</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>TikTok</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>Pinterest</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>BeReal</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
	<i>LinkedIn</i>	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90

Additionally, a partial correlation (See Table 5) was conducted using the six subscale scores from the Ryff PWB scale, the five subscale scores from the SNSUN, and the subscores from the ISS to determine any significant relationships between reasons and motivation for social media use and psychological well-being. No overall correlation was noted between the SNSUN and the Ryff PWB scale, but several scores were noted

between the subscales. The following significant correlations were noted: reasons and motivation for social media use and the purpose in life subscale of the Ryff,  $r(90) = -.248, p=.019$  (two-tailed), affective needs for social media use and purpose in life,  $r(90) = -.256, p=.016$  (two-tailed), social integrative needs for social media use and purpose in life  $r(90) = -.305, p=.004$  (two-tailed), cognitive needs for social media use and self-acceptance,  $r(90) = .230, p=.028$  (two-tailed), cognitive needs for social media use and environmental mastery,  $r(90) = .263, p=.013$  (two-tailed), cognitive needs for social media use and personal growth,  $r(90) = .241, p=.023$  (two-tailed), and diversion needs for social media use and autonomy,  $r(90) = -.238, p=.025$  (two-tailed). A correlation was noted between affective needs for social media use and personal growth,  $r(90) = -.205, p=.053$  (two-tailed).

**Table 5**

*Partial Correlation for the Reasons and Motivation for Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) When Controlling for Spirituality*

Correlations

	Social_Media_Use	Diversion_Needs	Cognitive_Needs	Affective_Needs	Personal_Integrative_Needs	Social_Integrative_Needs	PWB	Self_Acceptance	Purpose_In_Life	Environmental_Mastery	Positive_Relations	Personal_Growth	Autonomy
Social_Media_Use	1	.588**	.603**	.799**	-.780**	-.804**	-.148	-.011	-.248*	.036	-.123	-.054	-.094
		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.163	.517	.018	.737	.250	.613	.376
		90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Diversion_Needs		1	.306**	.400**	.254*	-.249*	-.134	.042	.000	-.079	-.103	-.013	-.243*
			<.001	<.001	.016	.018	.207	.696	.997	.461	.333	.902	.021
			90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Cognitive_Needs			1	.468**	-.290**	-.458**	-.123	-.230*	-.166	-.257*	.040	.233*	.027
				<.001	<.001	.006	<.001	.248	.029	.118	.014	.706	.027
				90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Affective_Needs				1	-.497**	-.544**	-.184	-.071	-.255*	-.035	-.190	-.205	.003
					<.001	<.001	.083	.505	.015	.740	.073	.052	.976
					90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Personal_Integrative_Needs					1	-.554**	-.125	-.012	-.191	.047	-.090	-.079	-.113
						<.001	.241	.913	.071	.663	.398	.439	.287
						90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Social_Integrative_Needs						1	-.145	-.111	-.310**	.037	-.090	-.020	-.002
							.174	.296	.003	.733	.400	.830	.983
							90	90	90	90	90	90	90
PWB							1	.780**	.609**	.676**	.728**	.763**	.577**
								<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
								90	90	90	90	90	90
Self_Acceptance								1	.297**	.610**	.492**	.614**	.340**
									<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
									90	90	90	90	90
Purpose_In_Life									1	.137	.496**	.400**	.248*
										<.001	<.001	<.001	.011
										90	90	90	90
Environmental_Mastery										1	.410**	.481**	.317**
											<.001	<.001	.002
											90	90	90
Positive_Relations											1	.379**	.283**
												<.001	.007
												90	90
Personal_Growth												1	.483**
													<.001
													<.001
Autonomy													1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



## Summary

A quantitative correlational study was conducted to examine the relationship between type of social networking sites emerging adults, individuals ages 18-29 years, use, reasons and motivations for use, and psychological well-being. Additionally, the study explored the possibility of spirituality as potential protective factor between the type of social media site used at least three time per week and psychological well-being. An anonymous survey of forty-eight questions assessing social media site used, reasons for use, psychological well-being, and spirituality was used to answer three research questions. Reason and motivation for social media use was assessed using the Social Networking Sites Usage and Scale (SNSUN). Psychological well-being was assessed using the 18-point Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff & Keys, 1995). Spirituality was measured using the Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (Hodge, 2003). Collected data was then analyzed and assessed using SPSS version 29 with an alpha level of 0.05 to verify null hypotheses.

A point biserial correlation (see Table 1) revealed no significant relationship between spirituality and social media use, when the subscale scores on the five subscales of the SNSUN were compared with the subscale scores of the data collected from the ISS. A point biserial correlation (see Tables 2 & 3) revealed no significant overall correlation between psychological well-being and specific social media sites used at least three times per week. However, significant relationships were noted between Twitter and You Tube use and two of the subscales of the Ryff psychological well-being scale. Finally, a multiple linear regression (see Table 4) revealed no significant relationship between social media site used and psychological well-being when controlling for

spirituality. However, a Pearson's partial correlation (see Table 5) assessing the six subscale scores from the Ryff PWB scale, the five subscale scores from the SNSUN, reflected several significant correlations, when controlling for spirituality level. These relationships were explored to determine whether null hypothesis could be rejected. The results of that analysis will be discussed in the next section.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Overview

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between social network sites that emerging adults, individuals ages 18-29 years, used more frequently and the relationship between the social media sites used and psychological well-being. The reason for social media use has reflected the platform selected which then impacted psychological well-being. Social networking sites are online media interaction platform that allows for self-presentation, engagement, participation, and interactions between individuals. Psychological well-being refers to meaning, fulfillment, enjoyment, and pleasure in life. It also involves appropriate coping strategies, emotional regulation abilities, and healthy problem-solving capabilities (Yi-Yuan et al., 2019). Additionally, this study explored the possibility of spirituality, the quest for meaning and purpose, transcendence, connectedness, and values, as potential protective of the relationship between the type of social media site used and psychological well-being.

Emerging adulthood is a period of exploration of various roles and relationships. Many emerging adults use social media to determine and define these roles (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020). Outcomes of this online exploration can have lasting impacts on development and life satisfaction (Kohútová et al., 2021), suggesting a need to understand the impact of social media use on psychological well-being. Additionally, more than sixty percent of emerging adults identify as being spiritual (Oxhandler et al., 2018). Spirituality has been shown to serve as a protective factor for health and well-being but has not been considered for social media use and psychological well-being

(Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019). This study explored spirituality to assess its potential as a protective factor for social media and psychology well-being in emerging adults.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study revealed 94% of emerging adults use social media daily, with Instagram, Facebook, and SnapChat being the most frequently used sites. Spirituality did not correlate with reasons and motivation for social media use on the SNSUN. Additionally, psychological well-being did not vary by specific social media site used at least three times per week, even when controlling for spirituality. However, significant relationships were noted between Twitter and YouTube use and two of the subscales of the Ryff psychological well-being scale. Significant relationships were also noted between several of the subscale scores from the Ryff PWB scale and the subscale scores from the SNSUN.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The current study showed Instagram (80%), was the most used site by emerging adults followed by Facebook (72.22%), YouTube (60%), TikTok (51.11%), SnapChat (46.67%), Twitter (18.89%), and other sites (6.67%), with 94.44% of participants reported using social media daily. Previous research (Auxier & Anderson, 2021) revealed similar results except YouTube (95%) was the most used site by emerging adults followed by Instagram (71%), Facebook (70%), SnapChat (65%), and TikTok (48%).

First, this study sought to determine if there was a relationship between level of spirituality and reasons and motivation for social media use. No relationship was found

between the subscale scores of the reasons and motivation for social media use and spirituality. This result does not support the hypothesis that adults ages 18-29 years who report higher levels of spirituality will use social media sites for spiritual support and interaction. In other words, those who rate higher in spirituality do not appear to use social media for different reasons than those who rate lower in spirituality. Furthermore, those higher in spirituality do not appear to use social media for social support and spiritual interaction. Previous research indicated that those who are spiritual or religiously involved are less likely to use social media sites (Haroon et al., 2020). Therefore, these individuals may be seeking to fulfill their spirituality needs in other ways.

Biblical instruction indicates when believers have a need or desire, they should turn to God to have their needs met and to achieve happiness and well-being (*New International Version*, 2011, Phil. 4:6-7, 19). Additionally, these individuals need to turn to God for answers and information, “As for God, his way is perfect; The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him” (2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 18:30). These biblical truths could be influencing social media use in these individuals, as they may not be using social media sites to have these needs met or may be searching for wisdom and knowledge from sites that align with their theology, but more research is needed. The limitations of SNSUN and Intrinsic Spirituality scales do not allow for determining how social media sites may be used for spirituality needs of emerging adults and more research is needed in this area.

This study also sought to determine if there was a relationship between social media sites used at least three times per week among adults ages 18-29 years and

psychological well-being. Results do not support the second hypothesis that adults ages 18-29 years will report increased psychological well-being when social media is used for gaining information, building and maintaining relationships, and communicating and connecting with friends and family. While data did not reveal a significant overall correlation, there were significant correlations noted between Twitter and YouTube use three times per week and psychological well-being.

Twitter use three times per week was negatively correlated with the personal growth subscale of the Ryff. This would suggest that individuals who use Twitter three times per week report a lower desire to have new experiences that challenges them to think about themselves and the world. Twitter's text-based format has previously been associated with positive well-being (Masciantonio et al., 2021) and active Twitter use was associated with more social support and positive life satisfaction. These prior results could reflect the decreased desire for new experiences shown in this study. Emerging adults may be satisfied with the experiences they have and/or do not find the need to search for new ones via Twitter, although more research is needed to fully explore this correlation.

A positive correlation was noted between YouTube and self-acceptance. This would suggest that emerging adults who use YouTube three times per week, feel better about themselves and how their lives turned out. YouTube is a media-sharing site where users can upload videos as well as share, comment, like, or dislike other media. Individuals can be passive or active users of this site and often use it to pass the time and gain information and education (Kircaburun et al., 2021). Individuals high in conscientiousness, those who are disciplined, dutiful, organized, hardworking, reliable,

trustworthy, and achievement oriented, generally use media-sharing platforms such as YouTube, to engage in self-promotion and seek feedback from others to increase self-image and self-esteem (Kircaburun, et al., 2018; Requena & Ayuso, 2021; Vaid & Harai, 2021); tasks developmentally appropriate for emerging adults. Additionally, conscientiousness has been associated with increased well-being (Requena & Ayuso, 2021). This aligns with current study results that individuals who use YouTube three times per week show higher levels of self-acceptance.

Finally, this study sought to determine if spirituality moderated the relationship between the type of social media site used among adults ages 18-29 years and psychological well-being. Results do not support the third hypothesis that adults ages 18-29 who report higher levels spirituality will have the effects of social media use moderated and will report higher psychological well-being. No significant correlation was noted between use of any of the social media site three times per week and psychological well-being when controlling for spirituality. However, significant correlations were noted between Twitter and TikTok use three times per week and reasons for use, as well as and several of the subscale of both the SNSUN and the Ryff when controlling for spirituality.

Twitter use three times per week negatively correlated with personal integrative needs of emerging adults. In other words, this population does not use Twitter to gain approval from other or to engage in self-presentation and social interactions (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Vaid & Harari, 2021). This would align with previous research that demonstrated that Twitter use resulted in lower levels of social comparison, likely due to its text-based format (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Masciantonio et al., 2021).

Additionally, this would further support the negative correlation noted above that emerging adults who use Twitter three times per week are satisfied with life experiences and do not find the need to search for new ones via Twitter.

TikTok use three times per week positively correlated with diversion needs of the SNSUN. This suggests that when emerging adults are bored, lonely, or stressed, they use TikTok to meet these needs. TikTok is a photo-based and image-sharing platform popular with emerging adults (Kircaburun et al., 2018). These platforms allow more intimate and realistic interactions and have shown to associate with well-being, social support, and life satisfaction (Masciantonio et al., 2021), potentially prompting emerging adults using this platform when needing a distraction from daily life tasks and demands. Previous research also supports emerging adults using social media to escape boredom due to increased autonomy and change in life situations (Dalton & Cassidy, 2021; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

An analysis of the subscales of the SNSUN and the Ryff PWB scale revealed several significant correlations. A significant negative correlation was noted between the total score of the subscale scores of the SNSUN and purpose in life. This may suggest that emerging adults who use social media to meet their various needs may feel they have less direction in their lives. Previous research has shown the more social media is used, the more frequent individuals engage in social comparison which can lead to increased anxiety and stress as well as decreased feelings of self-worth and psychological well-being (Mackson et al, 2019; Vannucci et al., 2017; Wilson & Stock, 2021).

Significant positive correlations were noted between cognitive needs and self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and personal growth. When emerging adults used



social media to for areas of gaining knowledge, such as reading, research, studying, collecting data, applying for job, they reported higher levels self-satisfaction, feeling in charge of their own situation, and the desire to challenges themselves with new experiences. These results align with previous research that showed emerging adults use social media to gain information and interact with others as they explore various adult roles and professions (Cleofas et al., 2022). Emerging adults have been shown to use social media to gain information to help determine their role in life and with whom they wish to interact on a personal and professional level (Vannucci et al., 2017), which would align with current study results of individuals using social media to gain knowledge also report higher levels of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and personal growth.

When emerging adults used social media to communicate with friends and family and to meet new people, lower levels of having a direction and purpose in life were reported. Prior research indicated that individuals use social media for maintaining relationships, meeting new people, and communicating and connecting with friends and family (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Cleofas et al., 2022; Moretin & Greenfield, 2022). These interactions have shown to be positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019). Additionally, these interactions have been associated with decreased anxiety and depression symptoms, as well as decreased loneliness (Seabrook et al., 2016). While this does not explain current research results, it does demonstrate an area needing further exploration.

A negative correlation was also noted between using social media to express one's emotions, develop new relationships, and gain support from others with area of personal growth and purpose in life. In other words, as emerging adults use social media

to express themselves and develop new relationships, they do not have a desire for challenging new experiences or developing goals and direction in life. As emerging adults gain independence, determine their appropriate adult roles, and develop relationships, the goals of this developmental period (Cleofas et al., 2022), they may not feel the need to continue with that exploration as these goals have been met, although more research is needed to further explore this relationship.

Finally, when emerging adults use social media to escape boredom, worries, and loneliness, lower levels of confidence in their views, values, beliefs, and opinions are noted. Research has previously shown that when social media is used to escape boredom, negative mental health outcomes were reported, but further exploration is needed to determine how mental health outcomes are impacted by using social media to escape boredom (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). One possible explanation could be that the more social media is used, the more likely individuals are to engage in social comparison (Mackson et al, 2019; Wilson & Stock, 2021). Social comparison can promote negative outcomes, such as decreased feelings of self-worth and psychological well-being as individuals view content that viewed as unrealistic or ideal (Mackson et al, 2019; Wilson & Stock, 2021). This can result in emerging adults questioning their current view, values, and beliefs, but more research is needed to explore this relationship.

### **Implications**

Emerging adult is a developmental period of significant stress, explorations, and decision making as young adults, ages 18-29 years, are exploring various options in their lives as they transition from adolescents living with caregivers to adults, searching for careers, education, and relationships (Oxhanlder et al., 2018). Much of the transition that

occurs during these years occurs online, through various social media site, as emerging adults are the second largest group to use social media (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). This study explored the relationship between social media site used and psychological well-being in emerging adults. Previous research has shown mixed results of social media use and psychological well-being and this study sought to further explore this relationship focusing on emerging adults to develop an understanding of the role social media plays with this population.

Exploring and creating an understanding of how social media is used by this population and how use of certain sites impacts psychological well-being can better inform professionals interacting with these individuals. Professionals who understand reasons for social media use, what prompts use, and how use influences well-being, can provide better overall care to this population. Additionally, this study provided background for the prevention of negative psychological well-being as it assisted in identifying risks for negative psychological outcomes and suggested methods for prevention.

Determining potential well-being outcomes for social media use, including reasons and motivations certain sites are used, can inform on the developmental tasks of emerging adulthood as individuals may be using certain sites to explore and negotiate emerging identities and make decisions that can have lasting impacts on their lives (Thomas et al., 2020). Additionally, these results can assist in the development of programs for those dealing with increased stress and other mental health challenges because of social media use.

This survey explored the relationship that spirituality may play in potentially alleviating any negative impact of social media use during this developmental period, specifically impacts on psychological well-being. Spirituality has been shown to be a protective factor for overall physical and mental health (Haroon et al., 2020; Oxhandler et al., 2018; Rautela & Sharma, 2019), so assessing a relationship between these constructs was appropriate to determine how to assist this population with age-appropriate developmental tasks.

Finally, identifying how individuals use social media to explore their spirituality and the impact it has on psychological well-being can inform professionals, youth leaders, and other individuals who provide spiritual guidance and counseling on using spiritual coping strategies to assist with managing and addressing concerns noted when using various social media sites.

### **Limitations**

There were challenges and limitations of this study. The first challenge noted, was the recruitment process and incentives to encourage participation in this assessment. Emerging adulthood is a period of transition and role explorations (Bjorklund & Earles, 2020) and young adults may be preoccupied with developmental life tasks to participate in this study. Promotion of this study occurred on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The study was not able to be promoted on Instagram, the site noted as most frequently used by this population, due to the structure of the platform. The inability to promote this study on Instagram may have prevented responses from some individuals who do not use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Additionally, this study was promoted in survey

exchange Facebook groups, which limits the respondents to those who may only be seeking responses for research they are conducting.

Second, there was a concern with the accuracy of self-reporting social media use and psychological well-being. Emerging adults may underestimate or misrepresent social media use. Tools such as time-use diaries have been suggested for addressing the accuracy of self-reporting social media use (Barthorpe, et. al., 2020), but based on the limitations of this study, these tools are not available. Self-reporting may also be a challenge for reporting psychological well-being. Individuals with low self-esteem or other mood and anxiety issues may underreport or not report any symptoms. Individuals feel ashamed, embarrassed, or stigmatized, and therefore underreport their psychological well-being for fear of feeling left out or different from their peers. Professional administration of psychological scales in future studies would be beneficial to moderate the impact of self-reporting. Additionally, diagnosed psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety, as well as lower measures of self-esteem and self-confidence may influence scores of psychological well-being. Future studies should include psychological assessments or evaluations to assist in understanding the relationship of social media use and psychological outcomes.

Finally, the study sample posed limitations for this study. The sample size of a least 107 participants, while statistically appropriate, may limit the generalization of results to the emerging adult population. Also, the developmental period of emerging adulthood is the focus of this study, so results cannot be generalized to the entire stage of young adulthood and future testing should be completed on those over the age of 30

years. Future research can include a larger sample size and various ages groups to promote generalization of study results.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine the impact of social media use on psychological well-being. This study was able to determine that social media does correlate with several of the subscales of psychological well-being, but more research is needed in specific areas. First, more exploration is needed to determine which sites are used for which reasons. The SNSUN focused on five reasons for use: diversion, cognitive, affective, personal integrative, and social integrative needs. Diversion needs centered on escaping loneliness, boredom, and worries. Cognitive needs addressed seeking information. Affective needs focused on emotions and relationships and gaining support or assistance. Personal integrative needs considered self-presentation and gaining approval, while social integrative needs concentrated connecting and communicating with others. What this assessment did not consider was which one of the sites identified in this study were used to address which of these five needs. Future research should include questions that specify which sites are used to meet which individual need(s) for social media use. Additionally, research on which social media sites are used to meet which needs, should include newer social media sites such as What's App, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and BeReal as these were site indicated that emerging adults have started to use.

Future research should also consider what content is being viewed on different social media sites. Research has shown that when viewing one's profile correlates differently with psychological well-being than viewing someone else's profile. Viewing

one's own content promotes positive self-representation and self-affirmation increases well-being. While viewing the profiles of others can lead to negative social comparisons and lower self-esteem and self-perception depending on the motivation for use (Burnell et al., 2020). Additionally, some content viewed on social media can also lead to increased negative social comparison (Vannucci et al., 2017) leaving individuals feeling socially isolated and experiencing depression and anxiety symptoms (Primack et al., 2017; 2017). Therefore, when evaluating content viewed, the use of depression inventories and anxiety scales to assess psychological well-being would be beneficial as the PWB Scale used did not reflect anxiety, depression, and stress, but rather focused on overall well-being (Ryff & Keys, 1995).

Future research should explore several of the correlations noted in this study. First, the negative correlation between using social media to meet social needs and one's purpose in life should be explored. Previous research indicated that using social media for maintaining relationships, meeting new people, and connecting with friends and family associated positively with life satisfaction and self-esteem (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019). Prior research does not explain or support this current correlation, so further exploration is needed.

Second, the negative correlations between using social media to meet affective needs and personal growth and purpose in life should be explored. As emerging adults use social media to complete developmental tasks, they do not have a desire for challenging new experiences or developing goals and direction in life. Could it be that these individuals do not feel the need to continue with exploration, new experiences, and

goal development as they have already achieved age-appropriate developmental goals? More research is needed to further explore these relationships.

Third, the negative correlation between using social media to meet diversion needs and autonomy needs more explorations. Research has previously shown that when social media is used to escape boredom, negative mental health outcomes were reported, but this association was not fully explained (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). One possible explanation could be that as social media is used, individuals are more likely to engage in social comparison (Mackson et al, 2019; Wilson & Stock, 2021), which promotes negative outcomes (Mackson et al, 2019; Wilson & Stock, 2021). Could this result in emerging adults having lower confidence levels which prompts questioning their current view, values, and beliefs? More research is needed to explore this relationship.

Finally, more research is needed on spirituality as a protective factor for psychological well-being and social media use. The current study showed that when controlling for spirituality there were significant correlations with several of the subscale of the Ryff psychological well-being scale. What this study did not consider was if reason and motivation for use was a contributing variable or were results influence by spirituality. When controlling for spirituality and looking at reasons and motivation for use of specific social media sites and psychological well-being, YouTube use three times per week reported positive levels of self-acceptance. However, Twitter use three times per week was associated with lower levels of personal growth. Future research should examine these correlations further to determine if spirituality is part of the reasons and motivation for use and what relationship there may between higher levels of spirituality, social media site used, and psychological well-being.



## Summary

This study explored the relationship between social media site used and psychological well-being in emerging adults. Results revealed 94% of emerging adults use social media daily, with Instagram, Facebook, and SnapChat being the most frequently used sites. Spirituality did not correlate with reasons and motivation for social media use on the SNSUN. Additionally, psychological well-being did not correlate with any specific social media site used a least three times per week, even when controlling for spirituality. However, significant relationships were noted between Twitter and YouTube use and two of the subscales of the Ryff psychological well-being scale. Significant relationships were also noted between several of the subscale scores from the Ryff PWB scale and the subscale scores from the SNSUN.

By exploring and creating an understanding of how social media is used by this population, professionals interacting with these individuals can be better informed and provide better overall care. Risks for negative psychological outcomes were potentially identified as well as possible methods for prevention. These results can assist in the development of programs for those dealing with increased stress and other mental health challenges because of social media use. Professionals, youth leaders, and other individuals who provide guidance and counseling can be informed on coping strategies to assist with managing and addressing and concerns noted when using various social media sites.

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## APPENDIX A: G\*Power Analyses

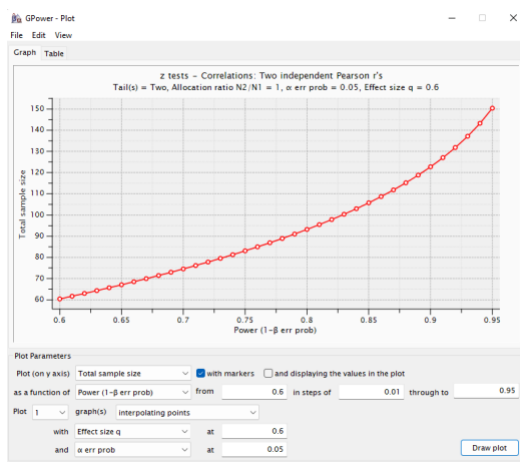


Figure A1: z-test correlation.

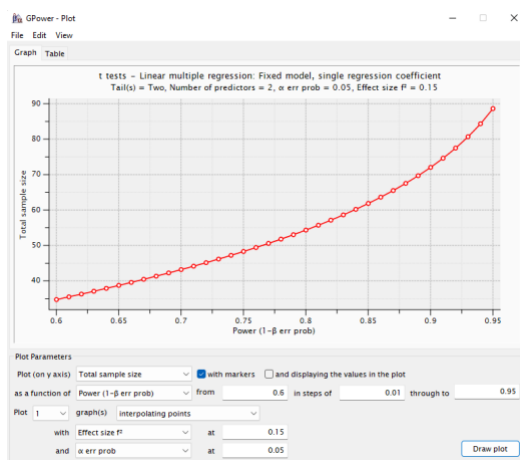


Figure A2: t-test for multiple linear regression.

## **APPENDIX B: Informed Consent**

**Title of Study:** Social Media Use and Psychology Well-Being in Emerging Adults: Spirituality as Potential Protective Factor.

**Investigators:** Lori DeWald under the supervision of Dr. Janet Brown, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form has information to help you decide whether you wish to participate—please review it carefully. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop at any time.

### **Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of social media use on the psychology well-being of emerging adults, those ages 18-29 years. This study will also explore spirituality as a potential protective factor for the impact social media has on these individuals.

### **Eligibility to Participate**

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are between the ages of 18-29 years and use social media at minimum of three times per week.

You should not participate if younger than 18 years or older than 29 years and do not use social media at least three time per week.

### **Description of Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a 46-question online survey about your reasons and motivations for using social media, the role spirituality plays in your life, and your overall life satisfaction and well-being.

### **Expected Time or Duration of Participation**

Your participation will last for approximately 20 minutes as you read each question and provide your responses.

### **Risk or Discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for completing this study. Should any discomfort or issues arise, discontinuation of the study is recommended.

### **Benefits to You and to Others**

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by outlining the impact social media has on emerging adults' life satisfaction, psychology well-being, and overall development.

## **Your Rights as a Research Participant**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. If you wish to withdraw from the study early, simply exit the survey and close your browser. You may also skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

## **Confidentiality**

To protect confidentiality of the study records and data, all surveys will be anonymous as no personal identification questions will be asked.

**Future Use of Your Information** All data collected will be analyzed and results will be reported in the author's dissertation manuscript. All surveys will be anonymous, so no personal information is disclosed.

## **Questions**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, contact Lori DeWald at [REDACTED] or Dr. Janet Brown at [REDACTED]

## **Your Consent**

By entering the survey, you indicate that you have read the information provided and agree to participate in this survey. Make sure you understand what the study involves before you begin. If you have any questions about the study after you agree to participate, you can contact the research team using the information provided above.

*Reference: IRB – Informed Consent Template – Standard Format*

*Revised 01/24/2022*




## APPENDIX C: Permission Using Social Networking Site Usage and Needs Scale (SNSUN)

Sub-Domains	Items	Reliability		Validity		Results
		CVI	Kappa	CVI	Kappa	
Distraction	SNS helps me to feel less lonely	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Validated
	I use SNS to gain ideas when I am bored	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Validated
Cognitive needs	SNS lets me explore my interests	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Validated
	I start using SNS when I have nothing better to do	1.00	1.00	0.98	0.98	Corrected
	SNS helps me to research and studies	1.00	1.00	0.93	0.93	Validated
	SNS helps to search job/online business/.../scholarship	1.00	1.00	0.93	0.93	Validated
Affective needs	SNS helps to gain knowledge	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Validated
	SNS gives me information about others	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Validated
	SNS allows me to explore what is out there	0.98	0.98	0.93	0.93	Excluded
	Using SNS is one of the easiest things I do when I'm online	1.00	1.00	0.93	0.93	Corrected
Personal integration needs	SNS helps me to express my emotions to others	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Validated
	SNS allows me to develop romantic relationship	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Validated
	I use SNS to talk about my problems and get advice	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Corrected
	I use SNS to express my anger to others who are.../unpopular	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Excluded
Social integrative needs	SNS is one of my go-to things	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Corrected
	SNS portrays an image of me to others	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Corrected
	People can use SNS to judge me	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Corrected
	SNS makes me feel among my peers	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	Excluded
Social integrative needs	SNS allows others about me	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Corrected
	I use SNS to gain favorable approval among friends	1.00	1.00	0.93	0.93	Corrected
	I use SNS to take part in activities	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Excluded
	SNS allows me to communicate with my friends	1.00	1.00	0.93	0.93	Validated
Social integrative needs	SNS allows me to stay in touch with family	0.93	0.93	1.00	1.00	Validated
	SNS enables me to add new friends	1.00	1.00	0.98	0.98	Corrected
	SNS enables me to find more interesting people	0.93	0.93	1.00	1.00	Validated
	When in real life	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	Validated
Social integrative needs	SNS enables me to get through to someone who is hard to reach	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Validated
	SNS allows me to find companionship	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Excluded
	I use SNS to see other people's pictures	0.93	0.93	0.98	0.98	Excluded

**Figure**  
Results of face and content validity analysis for SNSUN needs.

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### Appendix C1. Permission to use SNSUN.



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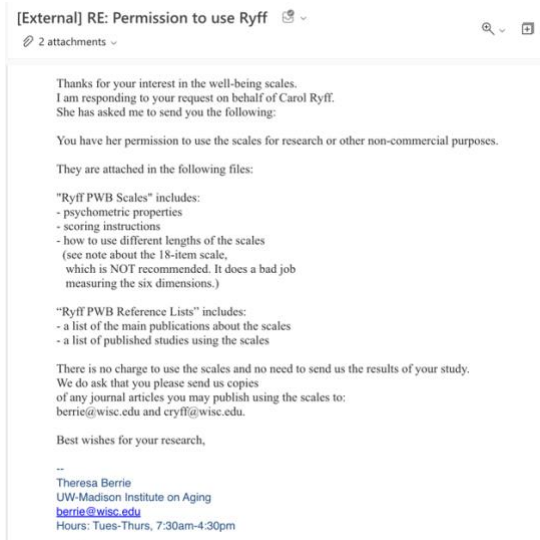
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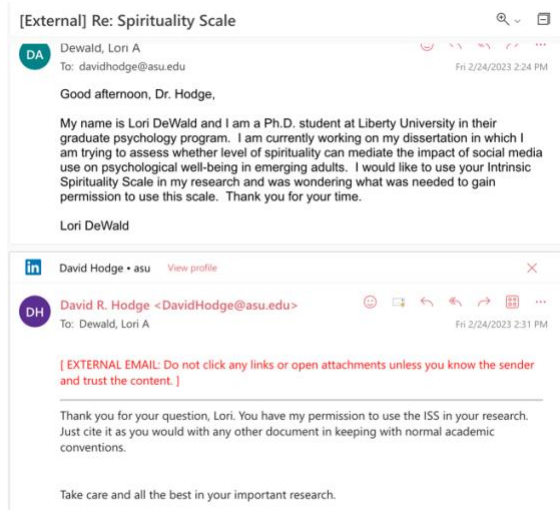
### Appendix C2. Permission to use SNSUN.

## APPENDIX D: Permission to Use Ryff Scale



Appendix D. Email permission to use Ryff Scale from representative for Dr. Carol Ryff, scale author.

## APPENDIX E: Permission to Use Intrinsic Spirituality Scale



Appendix E. Permission to use Intrinsic Spirituality Scale obtained from scale author.

## APPENDIX F: Social Media and Psychological Well-Being Survey

**Directions:** Please circle the response that best reflects your answer the following question.

1. What is your gender?    Male    Female    Other
2. What is your age?        19-22    23-25    26-29

**Directions:** For the following five questions, social media use will be measured using the following scale:

- 1 = Less than 30 min
- 2 = 31 to 60 min
- 3 = 1-2 hours
- 4 = 2-4 hours
- 5 = 4 or more hours

1. How much time do you spend on social media every day?"

1        2        3        4        5

2. How much time do you spend on the following social media sites:

You Tube	1	2	3	4	5
Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
Instagram	1	2	3	4	5
Snap Chat	1	2	3	4	5
Reddit	1	2	3	4	5
TikTok	1	2	3	4	5

3. How much time do you spend commenting on others' social media?

1        2        3        4        5

4. How much time do you spend scrolling/viewing others' social media?

1        2        3        4        5

5. How much time do you spend posting on your own social media?

1        2        3        4        5

**Circle one response under each question using the following format:**

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree moderately
- 3 = Disagree a little
- 4 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 = Agree a little
- 6 = Agree moderately
- 7 = Agree strongly

1. I like most parts of my personality.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
2. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with the way things turned out.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
3. Some people wander aimlessly through life, I am not one of them.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
4. The demands of everyday life often get me down.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
5. In many ways I feel disappointed about my life achievements.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
6. Maintaining close relationships have been difficult and frustrating for me.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
7. I live life one day at a time and do not think about the future.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
8. In general, I feel that I am in charge of the situation in which I live.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
9. I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
10. Sometimes I feel as if I have done all there is to do.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
11. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

12. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge the way I think about myself and the world.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

13. People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

14. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

15. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

16. I have not experienced many strong and warm relationships with others.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

17. I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from the way most other people think.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

18. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

**Here are several personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.**

1 = Disagree strongly

2 = Disagree moderately

3 = Disagree a little

4 = Neither agree nor disagree

5 = Agree a little

6 = Agree moderately

7 = Agree strongly

I see myself as:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Outgoing, enthusiastic.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Critical, quarrelsome.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Dependable, self-disciplined.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Nervous, easily upset.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Reserved, quiet.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Sympathetic, warm.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Disorganized, careless.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Conventional, uncreative.

Appendix F. Survey created and used on Survey Monkey to collect data.

## APPENDIX G: IRB Approval

Date: 12-3-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-1379

Title: The Impact of Social Media on Emerging Adults' Psychological Well-Being: Spirituality as a Protective Factor

Creation Date: 4-11-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Lori DeWald

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

### Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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### Key Study Contacts

Member	Lori DeWald	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Lori DeWald	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	
Member	Janet Brown	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	

Appendix G. IRB approval notification for research.