

1 Analyzing the effects of COVID-19 related social media use on well-being

2 Tobias Dienlin<sup>1</sup>

3 <sup>1</sup> University of Vienna

4 Author Note

5 Tobias Dienlin, Department of Communication, University of Vienna.

6 Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tobias Dienlin,  
7 University of Vienna, Department of Communication, 1090 Vienna, Austria. E-mail:  
8 tobias.dienlin@univie.ac.at

## Abstract

9  
10 In times of crisis such as the Corona pandemic citizens need to stay informed about recent  
11 events, political decisions, or mandatory protection measures. To this end, many people  
12 use various types of media, and increasingly social media. However, because social media  
13 are particularly engaging, some find it hard to disconnect. In this preregistered study, I  
14 investigated whether using social media for COVID-19 related reasons affected  
15 psychological well-being. To answer this question I analyzed data from the Austrian  
16 Corona Panel Project, which consists of 3,018 participants. Well-being was measured at all  
17 24 waves, and communication at five specific waves. I ran three random effects within  
18 between models, controlling for several stable and varying confounders. Results showed  
19 that the effects of COVID-19 related social media use on well-being were very small,  
20 arguably too small to matter. Fears that social media use during times of crisis critically  
21 impairs well-being are not supported.

22 *Keywords:* COVID-19, Coronavirus, well-being, affect, life satisfaction, social media  
23 use, news use, communication, random effects within between model, panel study,  
24 longitudinal study.

Analyzing the effects of COVID-19 related social media use on well-being