

Final Research Report:

Social Media Addiction in Young Adults from the Greater Edmonton Area

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between social media usage, social media addiction (SMA), and the effect SMA has on young adults in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. Eight peer-reviewed research studies have been collected that discuss topics such as social media addiction, social media usage, negative effects of social media on young adults, and traits common with high social media usage. The research will add to the academic conversation surrounding this topic. Three tiers of data collection were used to collect and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data needed to conclude the research: (1) an online survey on the general conceptions around social media usage, (2) a screen time log that tracked participants' social media usage hours for one week, and (3) a follow-up interview that determined participants' perception of social media and addiction. The main conclusions of this study are as follows: this sample spends more time on social media than the average global population; there is a negative perception and hesitancy surrounding the term addiction; social media has become integral to the lives of most people and is difficult to avoid; and frequent social media use is not always attributed to addiction.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Purpose

The hypothesis of this study is as follows: Over half of young adults in the Edmonton area are addicted to social media. This research sought to discover how many young adults in the Edmonton area struggle with social media addiction. Social media has become an integral part of many lives in the 21st century; it can be consumed in moderate amounts, but young adults may fall victim to its addictive design. This research used surveys, social media screen-time logs, and interviews to evaluate how much time young adults spend on social media. For the purpose of this research, young adults were considered to be people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. University students were not the only young adults who participated; the participants ranged from students to full-time workers, to pregnant people, to parents. Furthermore, for this research, the Edmonton area was considered to be anywhere within city limits or within 20 kilometers of Edmonton—the specific neighbourhoods and cities included were outlined in the survey. Lastly, social media was considered to be one of the following platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest.

Research Problem

With the accessibility of smartphones, social media is at everyone's disposal 24/7. Most young adults in this generation have grown up with smartphones and social media; therefore, it has become a part of most of their daily lives. We now have to ask: Where do we draw the line between frequent use and addiction? The recent addition of the “screen time” feature on most mobile devices has made people aware of how much time they spend on their smartphones daily.

This feature breaks down how much time you spend on each app, which is beneficial in determining whether most of their time is spent on social media or using other features. iPhones send an update every week with a weekly screen time report that informs people how much more or less time they've spent on their phone in comparison to previous weeks. With everyone stuck at home for the year 2020, due to COVID-19, screen time reports increased. In 2020, novelist Phil Stamper wrote “when I got that [screen time] notification, I found myself flinching at the results . . .” (para. 9).

One benefit of studying social media use and addiction is that most of the source material is from within the past decade, due to the recent emergence and popularity of these platforms. Recent research studies topic such as:

- How social media affects behaviour (Larson, 2021)
- Variables that predict social media addiction (Ciplak, 2020)
- The impact of social media addiction on the well-being of students (Zhao, 2020)
- Social media addiction and the internet (Nakaya, 2015)

The source material on this subject shows that there are harmful effects of high social media use and that it can negatively affect students. Since that has been established, it was first important to determine whether or not young adults in the Edmonton area were addicted to social media before diving into its negative effects. Most of these studies also touch on how much time their participants spend on social media; however, there have been no peer-reviewed studies that specifically focus on Canadian young adults, never mind those in the Edmonton region.

Research Questions

- Research question: Are the majority of young adults in the Edmonton area addicted to social media?
- Sub-question: How does social media addiction impact the lives of young adults in the Edmonton area?

Significance of the study

Social media addiction is an increasing issue as technology evolves. Technology has become an integral part of people's lives, whether it be through school, work, or personal use. This research study assessed how much time the average young adult, which includes people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, spends on social media each day. Most of the research done on this topic has been developed before the pandemic, meaning this current research gives insight as to how increased time at home has affected everyone's social media usage. Many workplaces and schools have switched to an online format for some of their delivery, increasing each individual's time spent online. Learning if young adults increased their social media usage is beneficial for each individual; scientists can also examine the effects that social media has on humans' brains, daily functions, perceptions, and neurological understanding.

Limitations

A large limitation within this research study fell on the lack of a formal definition of social media addiction. There has been an increased interest to study the effects of excessive social media usage, but a definite scale of SMA has yet to be established. Currently, social media addiction is not included in the DSM-5, limiting this study to available terminology.

Participation bias that may stem from a negative perception of addiction also limits the results. The negative perception may be internalized by the participants and addiction denial could skew data. The research team staged the questioning framework and terminology to reduce data collection and analysis errors.

A limitation within this study was the differentiation between social media use for work, school, and personal use. Some of the participants were required to engage with social media more than average, which was reflected in their surveys. Survey question 15 (Figure 14) was used to help understand which participants used social media for school, work, or both.

Another area of limitation came from only reviewing the media usage from a user's phone. The evolution of technology has provided a variety of devices that can access social media with the click of a button. Having these multiple points of accessibility to social media platforms makes it difficult to track usage from multiple devices. For this reason, it was decided to limit this research sample to only cell phone users who could refer to built-in phone usage statistics for consistent data collection. The researchers took these limitations into account while conducting the research by adjusting/staging questions and limiting data to specific devices.

Definitions of Terms

Table 1

Definition of Terms

Addiction	“A strong or harmful need to regularly have something” (Webster, 2021).
Social Media	“Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)” (Webster, 2021).
Media	Plural for <i>medium</i> . “A particular form or system of communication (such as newspapers, radio, or television)” (Webster, 2021).
Information Age	“The time period starting in the 1970s with the introduction of the personal computer with subsequent technology introduced. This laid out the first step towards providing the ability to

	transfer information freely and quickly” (Kormoczi, 2020).
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: authoritative volume that defines and classifies mental disorders in order to improve diagnoses, treatment, and research by hundreds of international experts in all aspects of mental health (American Psychiatric Association, 2021).
Youth	“The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years...” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).
Behaviours	“The way something (such as a machine or substance) moves, functions, or reacts” (Webster, 2021).
Social platform	Web-based technology that enables the development, deployment and management of social media solutions and services. (Techopedia, 2017)
Usage	“The action, amount, or mode of use” (Webster, 2021).
Communication	“The act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else” (Webster, 2021).
Social skills	“These are the skills that allow a person to interact and to act appropriately in given social contexts” (Sam, 2013).

Summary

Researching the social media usage of young adults in Edmonton shows how many have increased or have decreased their usage throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This research can be compared to pre-pandemic studies, before COVID-19 safety protocols were enforced and increased stay-at-home online activity. As technologies continue to evolve each year, social media access has changed and increased since previous studies were conducted. Users now have access to more apps and new social platforms that add to their screen time. With evolving technologies and the climate of society, it has become important to study the effects of SMA now

and understand how social media usage rates will increase or decrease annually. As much as users see the positive effects from social media usage, they don't often recognize the negative behaviours or outcomes SMA can produce.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

For the purpose of this study, eight peer-reviewed sources were used to guide the research by generating credible sources of information relating to the topic and to acknowledge missing factors. The past research studies are used to reference this study's conclusions with other researchers' findings and collected data. A change in statistics from past research was presumed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic causing an online activity surge, increasing the need and desire to access social media. An abundance of sources exist on the topic of social media usage and addiction, which indicates a growing desire to know more about the effects of increased social media usage on individuals.

Literature Review

Source One

The following source is a study titled “Variables predicting social media addiction: narcissism, happiness and average weekly time spent on social media.” The author and researcher is Ersun Ciplak, of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Education and the study was published in November 2020. The focus of this study is to “examine the variables that predict social media addiction” (Ciplak, 2020, p. 48). Ciplak (2020) has two hypotheses related to this: “The level of social media addiction related to the weekly time spent on social media” (p. 48). “Narcissism, happiness and weekly time spent on social media predict social media addiction at statistically significant levels.” (p. 48)

The main idea behind this research is that certain traits, notably narcissism and happiness, accompanied with weekly time spent on social media, are good predictors of social media addiction. Key words/variables highlighted in this article are “average time spent on social media, happiness, narcissism, [and] social media addiction” (Ciplak, 2020, p. 48). The official definition of narcissism is considered to be “the self-admiration of the individual” (Freud, 2010, as cited in Ciplak, 2020, p. 49). This research highlights that social media addiction has not been added as an official psychological disorder to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5); however, in recent years, they’ve included computer gaming as an addiction, so it seems as though social media addiction is on its way to becoming a classified mental illness (Ciplak, 2020).

The convenient sampling method was used to gather participants for this study (Ciplak, 2020). According to Alison Galloway (2005), “convenience sampling involves using respondents who are “convenient” to the researcher. There is no pattern whatsoever in acquiring these respondents”. Although Ciplak did not specify how his participants were acquired, Galloway outlines that they could have been collected in a number of ways. However they were acquired, the study group ended up being comprised of 239 adults (140 women and 99 men) in different regions of Turkey (Ciplak, 2020). The measurement tools included the Social Media Addiction Scale, the Happiness Scale – Short Form, the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale, and a personal information form. The three scales all “consist of [blank number of] items with five-point Likert-type response options” (p. 51). The Social Media Addiction Scale has twenty items, the Happiness Scale has six items, and the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Scale has

eighteen items. These scales were all developed by outside sources, not by Ciplak himself. The methodology in this study is quantitative due to the numerical nature of the scales and the close-ended questions in the personal information form. At the end of the study, both hypotheses ended up being supported by the research. Firstly, those who reported spending more time on social media weekly scored higher on the Social Media Addiction scale. Those who reported spending less time on social media weekly scored lower on the Social Media Addiction scale. Secondly, there was a “positive relationship” between high social media usage/addiction and narcissism (Ciplak, 2020, p. 53). There was a “negative relationship” between high social media usage and happiness (p. 53). This means that the more time participants spent on social media and the higher they scored on the addiction scale, the higher they scored on the narcissism scale. It also means that the more time they spent on social media, the lower they scored on the happiness scale.

This research is significant to our study for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights the fact that social media addiction is not yet a classified psychological disorder in the DSM-5. Secondly, it highlights the relationship between social media addiction and lower rates of happiness. It is well known that mental health is something that many young people struggle with. If our research findings suggest that the majority of young adults in the Edmonton area are addicted to social media, Ciplak’s (2020) research shows that this could be one of the reasons for lower rates of happiness among this population.

Source Two

To analyze qualitative data from the survey and interviews the review used is “a review of theories and models applied in studies of social media addiction and implications for future research” (Sun & Zhang, 2020). The review includes the introduction to the models and theories that researchers over time have attributed towards social media addiction. Sun and Zhang used this review to question what theories and models have been used in existing studies to explain the development of SMA, and what factors these theories and models significantly have in association to SMA. By categorizing these models, theories, variables, and factors, we can grasp the explanation of social media addiction and how our data can be analyzed (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

As this source is a review, it involves the use of 55 empirical studies on social media addiction and analyzes 25 common theories and models the researchers have found throughout. The review was designed to aid future research in understanding the concepts existing studies have concluded on the observations of SMA as the psychological condition. The review aids in a better understanding of SMA, but there is more information to be collected on how these models and theories explain the SMA phenomena (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

Through peer-reviewed articles, Sun and Zhang produced a generalized collection of explanatory and predictive claims. The models and theories explain the probable psychological variables, therefore make a causal claim on the emergence of social media addiction. The independent variable of the SMA phenomena is supported by the multitude of dependent variables within psychological theories and models. Table 1, *Theories and Models that Guide SMA Research* found in the research article categorizes the summarized models and theories with

their corresponding variables, studies, and sources (Sun & Zhang, 2021). Interpretative claims can be made using analytic induction, as Sally Jackson (1986) explains the examples collected in the phenomena are used to inductively build a hypothesis (Jackson, 1986). The data from the survey, interviews and screen time logs of this study were compared to the examples in Sun and Zhang's review to collect common themes and patterns in results.

The design of the review is based on existing empirical studies conducted by various researchers. Though the review itself does not conduct research with participants, it is designed to examine these previous studies and observations. The review categorizes the models and theories under categories based on their relation to the dependent variables found. It is important to mention that some theories and models mentioned are relevant to a variety of perspectives and categorizing them under single structures may be a limitation on the focus construct (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

Categories included in the review:

- Dispositional Difference Perspective
- Motivational Perspective
- Neurobiological Perspective
- Decision-Making Perspective
- Learning Perspective
- Technology Use Focused
- Social Network Focused
- Internet Specific Models

The final sample of the review consists of 55 articles. Sun and Zhang found their sources through keyword database searches, keywords searched included: social media, social network, social networking sites (SNS), and Facebook, along with addiction-related terms, such as addiction, addictive use, problematic use, and dependency. Articles were then screened to include studies that have been peer-reviewed and written in English, focus on the development of SMA and related factors, and applied existing theories and models that enhance future research design. Exclusion from the review's data search happened when, 1) the study adopted a theoretical framework only to measure SMA, 2) the study did not include any key concepts/constructs from the theories/models they draw upon, and 3) addictive social media use was examined as an independent variable only to predict other concepts. (Sun & Zhang, 2020, p. 2) The samples found were used to collect and categorize data, Sun and Zhang used this collection of research to build the review and table for future researchers to use as a reference guide of common models/theories and the corresponding variables and studies. Most of the highly cited theories/models in the sample focus on personal-level factors, such as dispositional differences and cognitive factors. Social, cultural, and technological factors that may have significant contributions to SMA are less touched upon (Lee et al., 2016).

Many definitions throughout the review are referenced by the original authors. The theories, models, perspectives, and variables were focused on for the purpose of this study.

Table 2

Source Two Definitions

Social media addiction	Commonly used and is defined as a maladaptive psychological dependency on social network sites to the extent that behavioural addiction symptoms occur (Cao, Gong, Yu, & Dai, 2020; Chen, 2019; Turel & Serenko, 2012).
Dispositional Difference Perspective	Some theories attribute addictive social media use to dispositional differences, presuming that people with certain types of dispositions are more likely to develop addictive use (Sun & Zhang, 2020).
Motivational Perspective	Individuals driven by certain motivations and psychological needs may end up using social media excessively (Sun & Zhang, 2020).
Neurobiological Perspective	The perspective that addictive behaviours are related to changes in neurobiological activities and brain structures (Sun & Zhang, 2020).
Decision-Making Perspective	The perspective examines the extensive usage of social media as a decision-making process (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

Learning Perspective	SMA can be considered a behaviour (i.e., response) learned from a repeated presentation of the same stimulus, which was reinforced when one experiences positive affect and psychological enhancement over the use (Sun & Zhang, 2020).
Technology Use Focused	The focus that social media as a feature-rich information technology with a high level of perceived usefulness and ease-of-use (Wang et al., 2015), afford users with various needs (Chen, 2019) and can be framed differently in different use contexts (Taradar et al., 2020).
Social Network Focused	The focus on how an individual's social network plays a vital role in shaping one's social media behaviour (Sun & Zhang, 2020).
Internet Specific Models	The three Internet use models mentioned in the review as the theoretical bases to examine problematic/addictive social media use (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

Phenomena	“A fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question” (Oxford Languages, 2020).
Analytic induction	The reasoning process in interpretive research using induction (generalization based on your knowledge of particular cases.) (Jackson S, 1986)
Explanatory claims	A claim that explains the relationships between various phenomena, often by identifying reasons or causes for these relationships” (Merrigan et al., 2012).
Causal claim	“A claim that predicts a change in one phenomenon is preceded and influenced by a change in another” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 289).
Independent variable	“A phenomenon presumed to be the source or cause of change in another phenomenon. It is sometimes called a ‘factor’” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 293).
Interpretive claims	“A claim that offers one or more explanations about how individuals, groups, and cultures create and interpret meanings” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 294).

Dependent variable	“A phenomenon that has been influenced by a change in another phenomenon; sometimes called the frequency or score” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 291).
Variable	A concept with a set of measurable characteristics” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 301).

The result of this review is a reference guide for future researchers, including this research team, to use in continued studies on SMA's. It's extensive examination on the theories and models of SMA will aid future research in conceptualizing the phenomenon and its effects on those dealing with these behavioural addiction symptoms. The diversity of perspectives mentioned in the review just scratches the surface of explaining the complexity of SMA, but a better theoretical understanding of this problematic use is required before intervention can begin (Sun & Zhang, 2020). This study used the models and theories provided to support the evidence collected in the surveys, screen time logs and interviews to conclude interpretive and causal claims of social media addiction and its variables in the psychological condition.

Source Three

Tutgun-Unal and Deniz's article directly correlates with this research topic as researchers develop a scale to measure the addictive traits of social media within university students.

Tutgun-Unal and Deniz's research was conducted to determine a scale used to measure the level of social media addiction within university students. With new types of addiction developing each year, the current web technologies were looked at as the main cause behind media overuse. After reading multiple studies expressing the negative and daily effects that overuse of social media causes, researchers wanted to determine to what extent social media usage is unhealthy, and where the average university student falls on that scale.

The research method used is qualitative as it seeks to understand the reasoning behind human social media obsession. Researchers are looking for an answer as to why it is so intriguing and why it holds the attention of so many users for such a long period of time (Tutgun-Unal and Deniz, 2015)).

The Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) was developed into a five-point likert scale. Increase in points from the likert scale equaled an increase in perceived social media addiction for each individual. Individuals that scored between a certain range of points would be classified anywhere from "No addiction" to "Very High Addicted." (Tutgun-Unal and Deniz, 2015).

In this study, 775 students holding at least one active social media account were evaluated. The media applications included in participation standards were Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter so that results were consistent. The ages of university students ranged from 18-45

years old across three universities within Istanbul. Over half of the participants were female, with all participants being distributed across various education departments.

Table 3*Source Three Definitions*

Social media addiction	A key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently but may experience distress without it. (Lin et al., 2017, as cited in Larson, 2021, p. 233)
Scale development	Process of developing a reliable and valid measure of a construct in order to assess an attribute of interest. (Tay, L., & Jebb, A. 2016)
Validity	The quality of being well-grounded, sound, or correct (Webster, 2021)
Reliability	The extent to which an experiment, test, or measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials (Webster, 2021)

In this study, 775 students were evaluated according to a five point likert scale. After all initial studies were completed, a structure of 41 items and four factors was developed. Out of all participants, the highest score was 205 and the lowest was 41. It was concluded that 59% of the total variance was viewed as being quite high in social sciences. Researchers expect a social media increase as technology grows and becomes more used within everyday life (Tutgun-Unal and Deniz, 2015).

Tutgun and Deniz's research is applicable to this study because it compares another way of measuring social media addiction. The likert scale developed is a reference point for us as we collect our own data. This research will allow us to compare and contrast how other researchers have executed their studies and make any changes we see fit.

Source Four

This study is titled, “Relationships among smartphone addiction, stress, academic performance, and satisfaction with life”. Authors, Maya Samaha and Nazir S. Hawi, explore the idea that smartphone addiction has negative effects on mental health and overall well-being. One goal of the study was to look into the link between smartphone addiction risk and life satisfaction, as mediated by stress and academic achievement. The other goal was to see if stress and academic performance mediated life satisfaction facilitated smartphone addiction.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived stress mediates the relationship between risk of smartphone addiction and satisfaction with life.

Hypothesis 2: Academic performance mediates the relationship between risk of smartphone addiction and satisfaction with life.

Hypothesis 3: There was a zero order correlation between smartphone addiction and satisfaction with life.

The stratified random sample method was used in this transverse study. The university's email system was used to send an email to all students, and a form explaining the study's objective and assuring volunteers that data collecting, storage, and reporting practices would ensure confidentiality and anonymity was given to volunteers before they completed the survey. This online survey was completed by 293 students using the university's student portal. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, and the sample size was reduced to 249 after cases with invalid responses to the trap question were eliminated from the dataset.

In terms of data collection methods, there were four components to the survey, including one for demographic data and three independent research instruments. Gender, age, education level, and academic major were all listed in the demographic information section, and Smartphone Addiction Scale - Short Version (SAS-SV), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale were the remaining components (SwLS). The SAS-SV, developed by (Kwon, Kim, Cho, & Yang, 2013) examines smartphone usage to determine the risk of smartphone addiction, although it does not diagnose addiction. This scale is a condensed version of the original Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS), which has 33 questions and six points. The SAS-SV is made up of ten items that are scored on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The scores on this scale varied from 10 to 54 in this study. For boys, a cutoff value of 31 was recommended, whereas for girls, a cutoff value of 33 was recommended. The higher the score, the higher the risk. The PSS, created by (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) is one of the most commonly employed psychological tools that assesses stress perception. This tool has been used in hundreds of investigations and consists of ten items ranging from "Never," to "Very Often," , on a five-point Likert-type scale. The scale's scores ranged from 6 to 34 in this study. The SwLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a tool that evaluates subjective well-being by measuring cognitive self-judgment regarding life satisfaction. It consists of five items ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The scale's scores in this study varied from 6 to 34. High SwLS scores suggest a higher level of life satisfaction. With a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87, this scale has excellent internal consistency.

Of 249 students surveyed, 44.6% were at risk of smartphone addiction and 53.4% reported high levels of perceived stress compared to that of students at low risk (49.1%). The average respondent was 20.96 years old, with an overall range between 17 and 26 years old. The results of this study revealed a strong correlation between smartphone addiction and stress, a negative link between smartphone addiction and academic performance, and a mediated negative link between smartphone addiction and life satisfaction (Samaha & Hawi, 2015). This study supports the current research topic, as it highlights the negative effects of excessive use of social media on overall health and well-being, especially concerning youth and young adults.

Source Five

The study titled “The impact of social media use types and social media addiction of subjective well-being of college students: A comparative analysis of addicted and non-addicted students conducted by Lei Zhao in 2020, compares the subjective well-being of social media addicted and non-addicted students through social media use types. Zhao focuses on the influence of different social media use types, and the relationship between social media addiction and subject well-being (Zhao, 2021). Zhao uses this study to answer the question: Does the way a student uses social media affect their subjective well-being?

Hypotheses:

H1. Social use has a positive effect on college students' social media addiction

H2. Entertainment use has a positive effect on college students' social media addiction

H3. Social use has a positive effect on college students' subjective well-being

H4. Entertainment use has a negative effect on college students' subjective well-being

H5. Social media addiction has a negative impact on college students' subjective well-being

The study consisted of qualitative and quantitative data collection across four measures: social use, entertainment use, social media addiction and subjective well-being.

Figure 1

Source Five Research Model

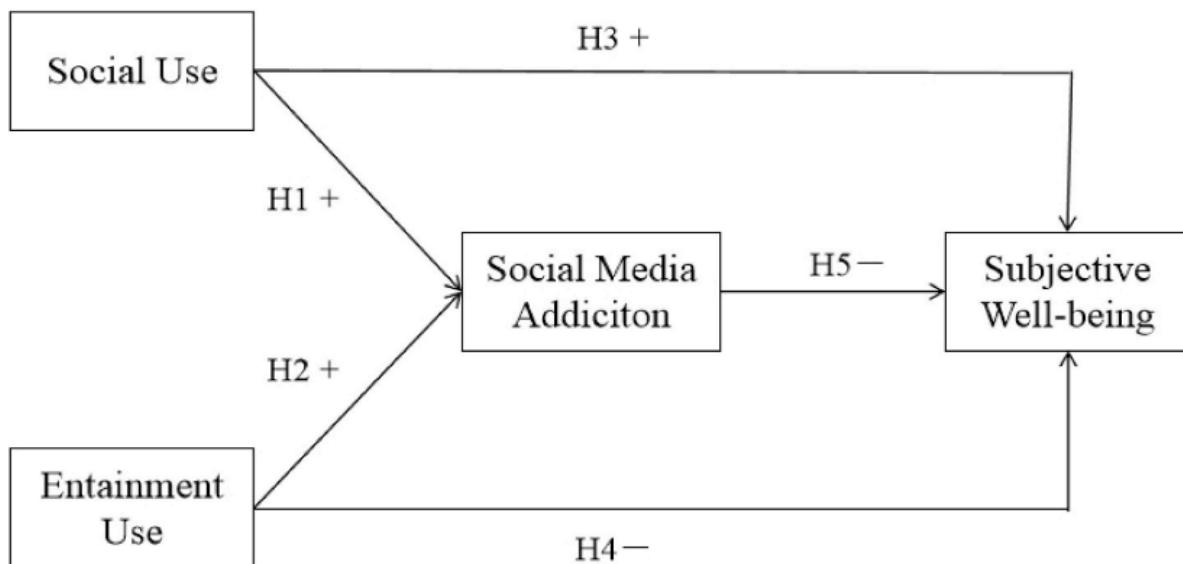


Fig. 1. The research model.

The research model shown above charts the positive and negative results on the correlation the hypotheses have in regard to Zhao's 2020 study.

The four measures used in existing sources regarding similar topics utilized Likert scale questions. By using Likert scales, researchers are able to assign emotions and behaviours a numerical value and range them from least to most. The numerical value and range provide the ability to measure a unidimensional variable (Merrigan et al., 2012). Zhao used these scales and created a questionnaire for participants to complete for the study. The questionnaire was distributed through random sampling at a comprehensive university in Anhui Province, China, with nearly 30,000 students. 400 printed questionnaires were distributed, with the outcome of 370 valid questionnaires obtained. Participants were given a small gift around \$2 worth for

participating. The total sample included 162 boys (43.9%) and 208 girls (56.1%). The sample was then divided into the 224 (60.5%) addicted and 146 (39.5%) non-addicted students. Addicted students were categorized by scoring 3 or more on at least six responses on the social media addiction scale (Zhao, 2021).

Table 4

Source Five Definitions

Social media addiction	The overuse of social media and inability to control one's activities on social media, this is considered symptoms of social media addiction (Kimberly, 2009; Tang et al., 2016).
Internet addiction	The obvious social and psychological damage caused by excessive use of the Internet, and brings serious harm to users' physical and mental health (Jie et al., 2014; Shaw & Black, 2008).
Social media use types	Based on the main functions of serving users, social media use can be divided into two types: social use (communication and interaction, update status, comment, etc.) and entertainment use (playing games, listening to music, browsing the web, etc.) (Wang et al., 2014).
Unidimensional variable	“A variable that cannot be broken down into distinct aspects for measurement” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 301).

Subjective well-being	<p>“An individual’s overall perception and evaluation of his or her own living conditions or specific areas of life (Felce, 2010; Pang, 2018a). As a multi-factorial construct, subjective well-being mainly includes cognitive judgment of overall life satisfaction and emotional assessment of emotions and feelings (Chan, 2013, pp. 96–113; Goswami, 2012). Due to these different dimensions of the concept (ie, life satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions) reflect a person’s subjective view of life experience, well-being is often defined as subjective well-being” (Zhao, 2021, p. 2).</p>
Likert scale	<p>“An interval scale that allows research participants to indicate varying levels of responses to questions. Typically, the scale asks for varying levels of agreement or frequency” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 294).</p>

The research done by Zhao's 2021 study and peer reviewed sources support the interpretative claims that the type of social media use does affect students' subjective well-being in different ways. The verification results of the total students and the non-addicted show that social use positively predicts the subjective well-being of college students, that is, social use can help them improve subjective well-being (Pang, 2018b). There are various reasons as to why and

how social use improves subjective well-being, the reasons seem to focus on the positive enhancements of socialization in real world behaviours and interactions. Zhao states that this study is “consistent with previous research (Błachnio et al., 2016; Ponnusamy et al., 2020), social media addiction has a negative impact on college students’ subjective well-being, which is supported in the validation of all three groups” (Zhao, 2021, p. 6). The addictive tendencies caused by the overuse of social media are the reasoning to a decreased overall subjective well-being, producing “symptoms (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood mediation, relapse, withdrawal, and conflict) (Andreassen et al., 2012) which will have adverse effects on their mental health, learning and life, and then reduce their subjective well-being” (Zhao, 2021, p. 5).

For the purpose of this study, Zhao’s comparative analysis and sources were used in the creation of the survey, interview questioning and framework. Similar Likert scales were used as the four variable measurements mentioned by Zhao: social use, entertainment use, social media addiction and subjective well-being (Zhao, 2021). These measurements provided participants a variety of response options that are still controlled for consistent data collection and analysis. The data collected from this research study was compared to Zhao’s data and hypotheses conclusions. Numerical data was analyzed according to the sample Zhao has provided to verify the validity of our hypothesis on social media addiction percentages and the impact SMA has on the lives of young adults.

Source Six

Larson (2021) “[examined] a mediational model wherein social media use in emerging adults predicts social media addiction through altered social behaviours, including face-to-face

interactions, communication apprehension, and social deficits.” (Larson, 2021, p. 228). The goal of this research is to relate social media use and addiction to social behaviour. By behaviour, Larson is referring to “face-to-face communication, communication apprehension, and social skill deficits” (p. 233). Larson bases her research on the following model, which could be interpreted as the hypotheses:

1. Those who were introduced to social media earlier on in their lives will use social media more frequently than those who were introduced to social media later on (Larson, 2021).
2. “Social media use [will] predict social media addiction” (Larson, 2021, p. 231).
3. High social media use, which correlates with social media addiction, results in “reduced face-to-face communication, higher communication apprehension, and poorer social skills.” (Larson, 2021, p. 231)

Some key words and terms in this article are adolescence, social media addiction, social media use, social skills, and social behaviour. The sample of this study were 109 post-secondary students from a private Californian university. The students who partook in this study were given course credits for an introductory psychology class in exchange for participation (Larson, 2021). The methodology used in this study consisted of a questionnaire comprised of four sections. All of the questions were close ended, making it quantitative. Study participants completed this questionnaire anonymously; therefore, race, sex, and age were not disclosed nor taken into consideration. The four sections were: “social media use, face-to-face interaction, communication apprehension, and social skill deficits” (Larson, 2021, p. 231). Some of the questions included topics such as when social media use began, how much time is currently

spent on social media, how much time is spent with friends (face-to-face), comfort level during in-person communication and class participation, how much time is spent thinking about social media, and whether or not social anxiety is experienced. The research uncovered that only one of the hypotheses was true: “social media use [predicts] social media addiction” (Larson, 2021, p. 233). No relationship was found between social media use and addiction and social behaviours. Additionally, Larson (2021) discovered no correlation between the age participants first started using social media and social media addiction.

Larson (2021) studied a similar sample to the one that we will be studying. Both are young adults — hers being specifically university-aged students. It is important to note that Larson’s post-secondary institution is a private American university whereas most of our participants attend a public Canadian university. Additionally, one thing that was mentioned in this study is that “a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently but may experience distress without it” (Lin et al., 2017, as cited in Larson, 2021, p. 233). This is important for our study because it shows that high social media usage does not necessarily correlate with social media addiction; however, distress in the absence of social media does indicate addiction. It will be important to include questions in our surveys and interviews that touch on the attitudes that participants have when it comes to being away from social media, not only the amount of time they spend on it.

Source Seven

This study titled “A study of social media usage and fear of missing out (FOMO) among youngsters” was written by Prerna Gosain and Dr. Kanchan Yadav in November of 2020 and

investigates the impact of (SMU) social media usage and Fear of missing out (FOMO) among youth. To achieve this, the researchers assessed the difference between adolescents and young adults in relation to the usage of social media and FOMO, the effects of social media usage among adolescents, the effects of social media usage among young adults, the effect of FOMO among adolescents, as well as the effect of FOMO among young adults. There are two hypotheses:

H1: There will be a significant level of difference between youngsters on FOMO.

H2: There will be a significant level of difference between youngsters on usage of social media.

In any research experiment, there is a dependent variable, which gets tested and measured in an empirical study or scientific experiment; there is also an Independent variable, which is controlled in a scientific experiment to test the effects on the dependent variable. In this particular study, there were three variables being measured, two of them being dependent: FOMO and social media usage. And the Independent variable is: age of adolescents (13-17 years) and age of young adults (18-early 25 years). In order to study the independent variables such as age group, adolescents, social media usage, and fear of missing out, a total sample of 100 students from different age groups was taken so that there can be 50 school going students of age group (13 to 17 years) and 50 college going students of age group (18 to 25 years). All the participants were selected using the “FOMO tool” developed by Przybylski, in the year 2013 (Przybylski et.al., 2013). Both male and female participants were selected through purposive sampling technique, and they were asked to identify their social media usage using two open

ended questions: i) Everyday time spent on social media networking websites (in hours) and ii) Day by day recurrence of visiting internet-based profiles.

This study utilizes quantitative research methods and was conducted at both lower school and university level. A few questions were also asked from the participants such as “Are you on more than two social networking sites?” to which they replied “Yes, “Usually you use social media for professional, educational or business purposes?” on which more than 90% of the participants answered as *No*, “Which one is more satisfying either playing games online like PubG or preferring to play outdoor games?”, More than 85% of the participants from both the age period answered that they spent hours playing games online like PubG, CS go, Free Fire, clash of clans, etc, which they prefer over any other outdoor game. To organize and interpret the data obtained, statistical techniques such as mean, SDs, and t-test were utilized. A survey was also carried out to find out the degree of FOMO and social media addiction faced by youth, using a questionnaire and interview plan to collect data for the study. It contained 10 close-ended questions related to FOMOs and 2 questions related to social media usage, a few general questions related to both the variables were also asked for the interview schedule.

In concluding the study (Gosain & Yadav, 2020), it was found that *everyday time spent on social media networking websites (in hours)* was very different for adolescents from that of young adults. 32% adolescents spent 1-3hrs daily, 34% of them spent 4-6hrs and, again 34% of them spent 7hrs and more on social media sites on a daily basis. Whereas 32% of the young adult participants responded the same for 1-3hrs, 60% for 4-6hrs and only 8% of them said that they spent more than 7hrs of their time on social media sites on a daily basis. In response to the

question of *day-by-day recurrence of visiting internet based profiles (in times)*, adolescents responded that 26% of them visit social media profiles 3-5times per day, 16% about 6- 10times and, 58% of them visit social media profiles 11-20times a day. Young adults' percentage differed from that of adolescents in terms of daily frequency of visiting social media platforms, as 36% of them responded that they visit their social media sites 3-5times a day, again 36% of them responded the same for 6-10times a day and, only 28% responded that they visit social media profiles 11-20times a day. This shows that adolescents are more dependent or addicted to social media usage.

This source is significantly relevant to the current research study, as it seeks to understand the rise in population getting engaged in social media, using a concept called fear of missing out (FOMO). FOMO is an example of a social psychological process which has been associated with excessive usage of social media platforms. The present study uses a comparative analysis to highlight the understanding of social media usage and FOMO among adolescents and young adults, and thus proves that there is a significant difference between youth on social media usage as well as on FOMO.

Source Eight

Nakaya, 2015, highlights the addictions surrounding internet and social media usage in today's digital age. It describes potential harmful effects that come with increased media use and how it could continue to affect the upcoming generations. It also delves into Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) further, discussing the impacts and common effects associated with it.

The main topic of Nakaya's research is IAD and its effects on an individual. Surrounding IAD, this book examines if IAD is classified as a medical disorder, causes of it, its impacts and harms, treatments available, and introduces some organizations dedicated to reducing the number of IAD cases. Nakaya's book contains quantitative data that contributes to the statistics regarding IAD cases globally, but specifically focuses its scope on Asia as they have the highest media usage rates. This book is discussion based, exploring the opinion of the author and taking into account the sources and evidence provided to express knowledge about the effects of IAD on individuals in this digital age. Asia was referenced within this book as it has the highest internet media usage per individual. The writer refers to researchers, medical professionals, and observations throughout the book to provide evidence of her claims regarding the commonality of IAD in everyday individuals.

Table 5

Source Eight Definitions

Internet Addiction Disorder	Type of behavioral addiction that involves compulsive Internet use. People with an Internet addiction may have underlying mental health or substance use issues that may require specialized addiction treatment. (Smith, 2021)
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IAD is a growing concern as technology grows and access to the internet increases. The number of IAD cases is expected to increase as technology becomes more integrated into society and it becomes more “normalized.” Researchers expect that many cases of IAD stem from “fear of missing out” (FOMO) as the newest generation is more focused on others’ perceptions.

Contribution This Study Will Make to the Literature

There is a significant amount of literature surrounding the negative effects of high social media use and social media addiction. Many of these studies also touch on social media addiction and highlight that “a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently, but may experience distress without it” (Lin et al., 2017, as cited in Larson, 2021, p. 233). Although the studies above prove a relationship between high social media usage and social media addiction, high usage alone is not enough to constitute addiction. It is important to perform continual research when it comes to this topic because technology and social media platforms are constantly evolving. For example, TikTok did not exist until 2016 but is now one of the most popular social media platforms amongst young people (D’Souza, 2021). Furthermore, no specific research has been done on young Canadian adults and social media use and addiction, especially anything that is specific to Alberta or the Edmonton Area. This is where our research comes in. It is also important to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic may play a large role in increased social media use among young adults. Social media addiction statistics may have changed drastically in the past couple of years. Our specific sample and period in time are what make this study different from others that are similar. This research will also represent Alberta on a global scale when it comes to research surrounding social media addiction in young adults.

Review of the Problem

This study was focused on investigating whether or not the majority of young adults, ranging from ages 18-24, in Edmonton are addicted to social media. The research team closely examined the impact social media has on the lives of young adults, by exploring how social media affects behaviour (Larson, 2021), variables that predict social media addiction (Ciplak, 2020), as well as the impact of social media addiction on the health and well-being of students (Zhao, 2020). A lot of insight can be gained from the sources included in the literature review, as they provide data that supports the study's hypothesis and research question.

Firstly, the research team learned that social media addiction is not yet a classified psychological disorder in the DSM-5, and that there is a close relation between social media use and addiction to social behaviours such as social skill deficits. The team also learned that there is a strong correlation between smartphone addiction and stress, a negative link between smartphone addiction and academic performance, and a mediated negative link between smartphone addiction and life satisfaction (Samaha & Hawi, 2016). Additionally, social media addiction can be a cause of lower rates of happiness in youths, FOMO (fear of missing out) being a significant example of a social psychological process which has been associated with excessive usage of social media platforms (Gosain & Yadav, 2020). This insight complements the research team's findings, and helps the research contribute to a further understanding of social media's impact on the lives of young adults, particularly in the Edmonton region.

Chapter 3: Methodology

During the study, the research team used a mixed method research approach to test their hypothesis. A mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Fischler, 2011). The researchers used the explanatory design, which started by collecting and analyzing quantitative data, then collected and analyzed qualitative data in a second phase as a follow-up to the quantitative results. This design connected the phases by using the quantitative results to shape the qualitative research questions, sampling, and data collection. Quantitative methods aided in quantifying patterns in attitudes, behaviors, and other defined variables, with the goal to potentially contextualize the results from the study sample in a wider population of the same age group. Qualitative methods were useful in analyzing non-numerical data and understanding certain concepts related to the topic of research. The research team used surveys, interviews, and screen time logs to evaluate the addictive tendencies to social media held by each individual participant.

Survey

The online anonymous survey, which was conducted on [Google Forms](#), contained closed-ended questions to help collect data from a predefined group of participants to gain information and insights into the research topic, and used random selection methods as a strategy to collect data. Simple random sampling ensured inclusion in the survey, as each participant in the target demographic had an equal chance of being selected. The age range of the participants was limited to young adults in the age range of 18 and 24 years old, specifically residing within

Edmonton city limits and 20km out from it. For ethical considerations, all participants were informed fully and truthfully, and guaranteed confidentiality before consenting to participation. The researchers also refrained from using the word ‘addiction’ until the interview portion, in order to avoid influencing or skewing participants’ responses. Instead, the term was rephrased and substituted with words such as ‘significant/substantial use, habits, dependence’ to remain accurate while also preventing the potential issue of deception. The survey was shared on each of the researchers’ personal social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) and was also shared in several private social media groups. Personal platforms used and their approximate reach:

Researcher One

- Facebook (1054)
- Instagram (1977)
- Twitter: Personal (427), Business (26)

Researcher Two

- Facebook (176)
- Instagram (753)
- Twitter (17)

Researcher Three

- Instagram (763)

Researcher Four

- Facebook (394)

- Instagram (349)

In addition to the use of personal platforms, the survey link was also posted onto three private pages on Facebook and one private messaging channel via Slack:

- [MacEwan University Student Experience](#) (7.6k members)
- [2020/2021 MacEwan University First-Year Students](#) (2.4k members)
- [MacEwan Sh*tposting](#) (2k members)
- MacEwan Public Relations 20202/21 Slack Channel (48 members)

The survey consisted of 15 questions with one additional question inviting participants to participate in further research. The questions covered demographics, social media usage and habits, and social media attitudes. The survey was distributed on October 26, 2021, and stayed open for 10 days until November 5, 2021, at midnight and collected 66 valid responses—some were deleted due to age requirements.

Screen Time Log

At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they consented to being contacted for “Phase 2” of the research study. Participants who indicated they were interested and consent to continued study involvement were contacted by the researchers. At this point the participants’ survey number was used as reference to maintain anonymity. The screen time logs are a collection of behavioural observation data, tracking how much time each participant spends on social media daily.

The screen time log was tracked across a 1-week duration. Some participants had sent days that were not described by the example for the search but were still included in the data

collection, recorded under the days they had provided. The screen time data was used to plot claims of social media screen time usage over the specified period of time. Social media usage data is collected and provided by most cellular phones (Apple and Android); this feature (if available) was used to date the back data to the week prior. By tracking the data prior to the meeting, possible limitations that may be caused due to participant bias are reduced. Bryn Farnsworth, Ph.D., explains that “participants will sometimes second-guess what the researcher is after, or change their answers or behaviors in different ways, depending on the experiment or environment (McCambridge et al., 2012). This is called participant bias, or “response bias, and it can have a huge impact on research findings” (Farnsworth, 2019).

The sample for the screen time log consists of the young adults, aged 18-24, that had previously completed the initial survey and have consented to disclose their social media usage data. This sample is not exclusive to university students, but through the availability of the personal outreach of the research team, it is assumed many of the participants will be students. The sample will be localized to the Edmonton region. The other varied characteristics of this sample depend on those who consent to participation. The sample participants were required to have the screen time tracking feature downloaded to their cellular phones, computer and/or other devices they use daily to qualify for continued participation.

Participants are required to have mobile devices with screen time tracking to represent the sample of social media users. Through “always on” technologies, the availability of communication is now the norm for many people for most of the day” (Ling, 2012). Abstaining from media use and communication access is now an action that requires intentions, planning,

and specific arrangements (Klimmt et al., 2018). The current climate of society calls for the use of mobile devices and social media in young adults' daily routines, therefore providing the opportunity to track how much of the modern daily device usage is spent on social media.

Data collected was used to generate the average social media usage hours across the sample, as well as noting the maximum and minimal times. The data was then compared to the peer-reviewed research on addictions and social media usage to see how the data correlates to previous research and definitions. The data collected was measured at a ratio level, providing the ability to record precise hours of usage across all participants. The precise hours were then analyzed by the participants general schedule, daily social availability, and the significance of the weekday to usage. Qualitative data measured these external factors that control daily time and accessibility participants have to their devices for social media usage. The amount of time each participant has in their schedule available to use social media impacts the results. For example, if a participant is working or in classes that day, they may not have time to be on social media, compared to a day off where they have more time to spend online than usual. It is important to note that participants may have to use social media as part of their job description. This factor may cause limitations and skew data and was reduced by asking participants the correlation of social media and work during this time.

In summary, the screen time log consists of data collection already provided by the participant's cellular devices. This methodology requires education on how to access the desired data, and confirmation of the collected data's validity. An example of a screen time data log was created to show what information was key in gaining a general sense of social media timing

through quantitative data. (See Appendix M) The screen time log results are analyzed with the variables previously mentioned to generate an accurate representation of causal claims.

We will conduct an interview with willing participants where we will ask mainly open-ended questions to gain a better understanding of the participant's views on the research topic. The interview will focus on the ideologies participants have towards social media usage and their personal definition of addiction.

Interviews

The third methodology used, the interview, was composed to answer any open-ended questions generating qualitative data that might have been lost in translation through a survey response. The survey and interview questions were staged to not allude to any preconceived bias towards addictions, possibly skewing the data collection. Interviews were scheduled with the two consenting participants that responded via email. Both interviews were scheduled with two research team members: a primary interviewer who asked the 9 interview questions, a secondary interviewer who recorded notes on responses and observations, and the research supervisor in a different virtual room to record the interview with the consent of the participant. The interviews were conducted via a secure room on Blackboard Collaborate, and the recordings were then uploaded to a Google Drive in their respective folders. Transcriptions of the interviews were written and filed accordingly.

The sample population for the interviews were those who expressed interest and consent in the initial survey. This sample is consistent with our other methodologies in age, demographics, location, and other varied characteristics mentioned earlier. It is important to

emphasize again, the sample characteristics will depend on the demographics of those willing and consenting to participation.

The two interviews conducted were approximately 15 minutes in duration. Data was collected by the secondary interviewer in a blank questionnaire. The answers were then analyzed by the research team for themes: beliefs, values and practices in the behavioural observations marked by the survey and screen time log. The responses measure the qualitative data required on participants' perception of social media and addiction. Themes were then categorized and compared with the other data collected and results were evaluated with the use of peer-reviewed sources.

The interviews provided further information towards explanatory claims through self-reporting of the participants. Self-reporting is important in this stage of the research, as it provides an insight into how the participants view their own prior, current, and future beliefs on their behaviours, and characteristics on social media addiction. Systematic sources of error are possible, as biases may become prevalent throughout this method. Farnsworth explains how participation bias can be reduced "by ensuring the participants that their data is truly confidential," and creating a judgment-free zone when conducting the research (Farnsworth, 2019). Staging the questioning framework can reduce confirmation and normalcy biases caused by possible shame and/or denial found through the verbal interview following the participants' disclosure of their behavioural habits. The biases may affect data accuracy if participants do not answer truthfully and attempt adherence to an existing ideologized belief of self and behavior regarding addiction and social media usage.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

A mixed methods approach (3-tiers) was used for this study: surveys, social media screen-time screenshots, interviews. The survey yielded 66 respondents, the social media screen-time screenshots resulted in 10 participants, and the interviews yielded 2 participants. Below, there is a section for each data collection method. Each survey question has an associated graph—Figures 2-14 and Tables 5-6. The screenshots that each participant sent in are displayed in the appendices along with the transcripts for both interviews.

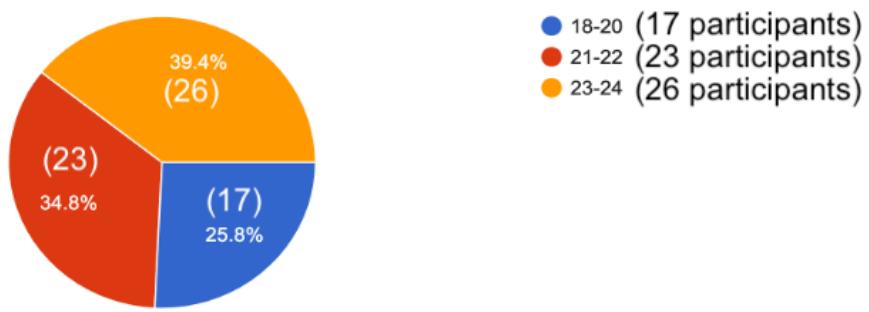
Survey Results

Figure 2

Question One: What is your Age Range?

1. What is your age range?

66 responses



Question number one determined the age ranges within the survey participants. Six over-age (25 years old) participants did not meet the requirements for the target demographic and their survey results were removed entirely from the data collection. The participants removed responded with ages: 25, 25, 25, 28, 30 and 27. The ages of eligible participants varied slightly,

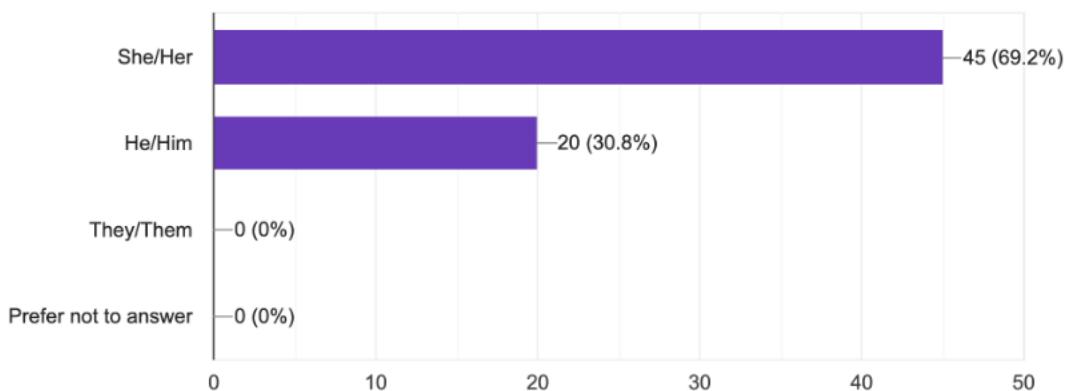
the highest results were 26 participants (39.4%) aged 23-24, 23 participants aged 21-22 (34.8%) and the lowest representation with only 17 participants aged 18-20 (25.8%). The results of this question were crucial in determining our age demographics required by the research question: “young adults” previously defined as those 18-24 years of age. Question one also shows what audiences by age the survey reached and what age groups showed the most interest in participating in this research topic. The response with the most participants was the 23-24 age group with 26 participants (39.4%) showing the most interest in participating in the research topic.

Figure 3

Question Two: What are your Preferred Pronouns?

2. What are your preferred pronouns?

65 responses



The results of the survey’s second question were not necessary for the research study and data analysis. These results were used to appropriately address participants that consented to participate in phase 2 of the research study. Out of 66 survey respondents, 55 answered question

2. Forty-five of those responses identified their preferred pronouns as “She/Her”, and 20 of the responses identified with “He/Him.” As such, there was a higher representation from female identifying respondents (69.2%) than male identified (30.8%). Two alternate options were available for participants to choose from: “They/Them” and “Prefer not to answer”, no participants chose these responses (0%). The one participant that did not answer question two may not have felt comfortable choosing either option available.

Table 5

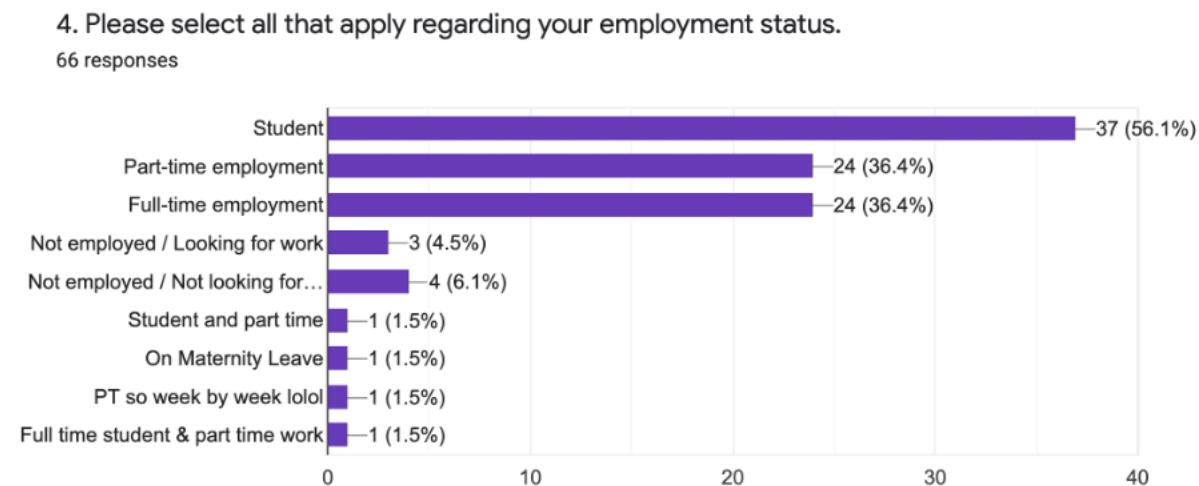
Question Three: What District of the Greater Edmonton Area do you Live in?

District	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
South-West	16	24.2%
Downtown	12	18.2%
West	8	12.1%
North-East	7	10.6%
North-West	6	9.1%
South-East	6	9.1%
Sherwood Park	3	4.5%
Saint Albert	2	3%
Spruce Grove	2	3%
Beaumont	1	1.5%
Stony Plain	1	1.5%
Fort Saskatchewan	1	1.5%
Gibbons	1	1.5%
Leduc	0	0%

Question 3 of the survey was used to show where the participants reside in Edmonton. The geographic results of this question determined the eligibility of respondents according to the target demographic defined by the research question: “Edmonton area.” The results show that out of 66 respondents, the majority of 16 participants reside in the South-West district of Edmonton (24.2%), second largest representation closely followed by 12 participants from the Downtown district (18.2%). Four of the districts average closely in the middle: 8 from the West (12.1%), 7 from the North-East (10.6%), 6 from the North-West (9.1%), and 6 from the South-East as well (9.1%). Three districts with equal-lower representation: 3 from Sherwood Park (4.5%), 2 from Saint Albert (3%), as well as 2 from Spruce Grove (3%). Four districts had only one respondent: Beaumont (1.5%), Stony Plain (1.5%), Fort Saskatchewan (1.5%), and Gibbons (1.5%). There were zero responses representing Leduc (0%).

Figure 4

Question Four: Please Select All That Apply Regarding Your Employment Status.



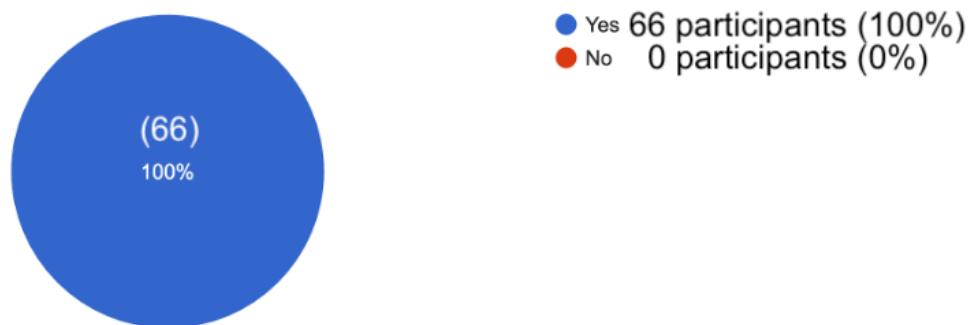
For question 4, there were 5 initial response options, as well as the opportunity to add an option that the participants deemed more applicable. This was used by some participants to group their responses instead of selecting all that applied. In the following analysis those responses will be added to the corresponding answers. Thirty-nine out of 66 participants responded with employment status “Student” (59.1%). The number of participants that responded with an employed status reported that 26 overall work part-time (39.4%) and 25 work full-time (37.9%). Three participants responded that they were not employed and looking for work (4.5%), and 4 reported that they were also not employed but were not looking for work (6.1%). One participant responded with their status as “On Maternity Leave” (1.5%). The responses to this question give the background on the participants average daily schedules and their availability to accessing social media.

Figure 5

Question Five: Do You Have a Social Media Account(s)?

5. Do you have a social media account(s)?

66 responses



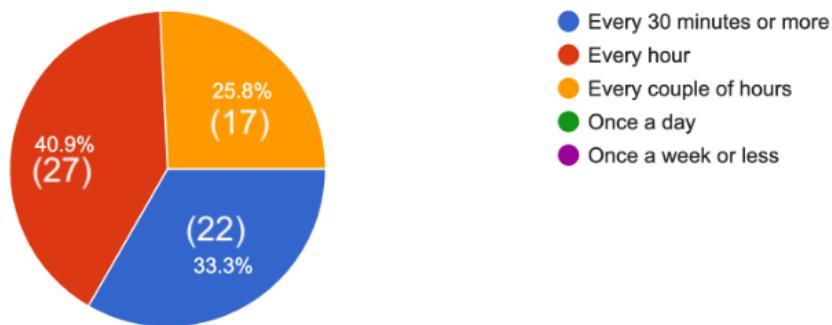
This chart shows that 100% of the participants all indicated that they have one or more social media accounts. This was the first step to the research study's hypothesis, as for young adults to be addicted to social media, they first need to be present and active on at least one or more social media platforms.

Figure 6

Question Six: On Average, How Often Do You Visit Social Media?

6. On average, how often do you visit social media?

66 responses



The chart above shows that 40.9% (27) of the participants use social media every hour, 33.3% (22) use it every 30 minutes or more, and 25.8% (17) use it every couple of hours. Out of 66 respondents however, none of them indicated that they use social media 'once a day' or 'once a week or less' as the options presented. This confirms that the majority of young adults in the Edmonton region are active on social media platforms on a daily basis, which contributes to some of the excessive habitual behaviours seen throughout the study.

Table 6

Question Seven: When Do You Find Yourself Using Social Media the Most?

Time of use	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
In my free time	41	62.1%
When I am supposed to be doing other things	19	28.8%
Both	2	3%
In between studying	1	1.5%
Depends on the day	1	1.5%
Both during free time and when I want to be doing other things	1	1.5%
I use it both times	1	1.5%

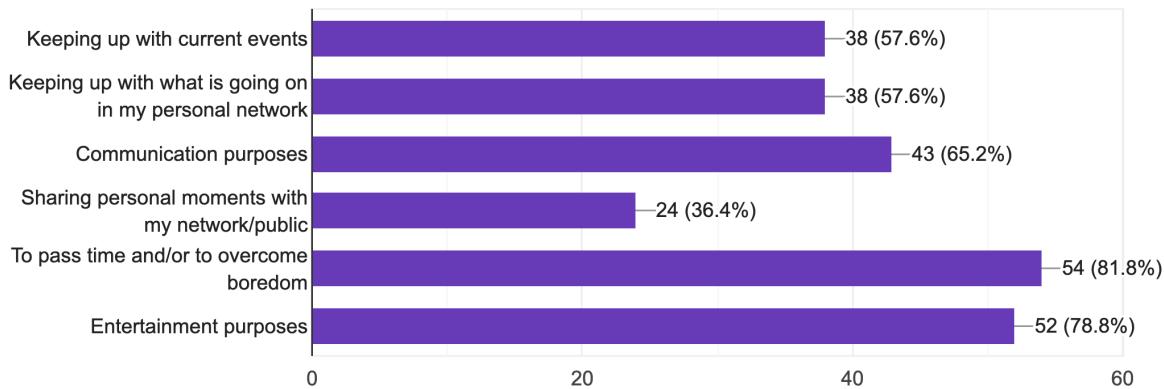
The chart shows that 62.1% (41) of all participants use social media in their free time, 28.8% (19) use it when they're supposed to be doing other things, and 3% (2) indicated both. The remaining four categories each had 1 respondent making up 1.5% of the 66 total respondents. We can infer from these percentages that while most young adults use social media excessively, this occurs mainly during leisure time for the majority.

Figure 7

Question Eight: What Do You Use Social Media for the Most Often? Select All That Apply.

8. What do you use social media for most often? Select all that apply.

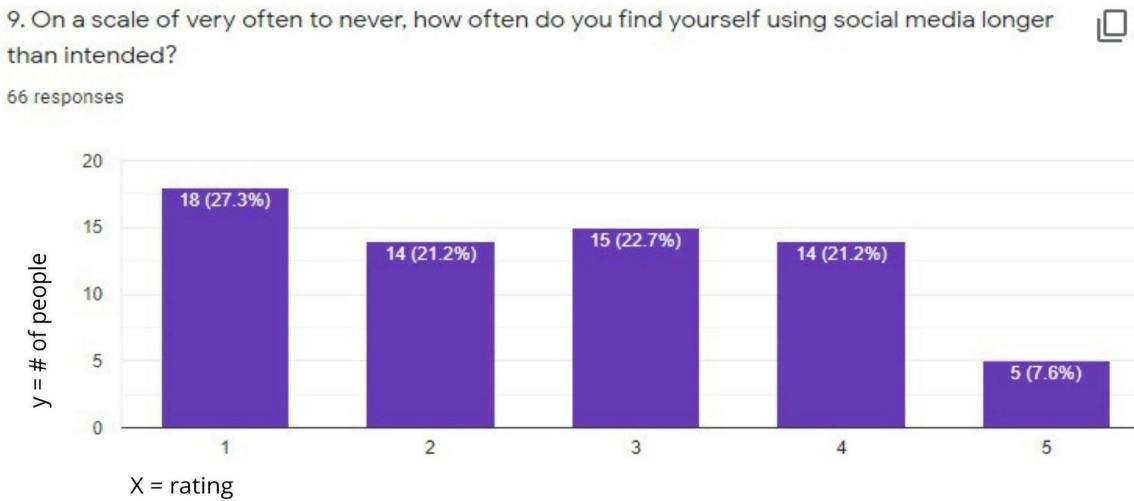
66 responses



In question 8, participants were asked to select all that apply when it comes to what they used social media for most often. The most selected option was selected by 54 (81.8%) respondents, indicating that they mostly use social media to pass time or overcome boredom. The least popular option was the use of social media to ‘share personal moments with my network/public’ only selected by 24 (36.4%) of respondents. A good option for this question would have been ‘For school and/or work purposes’ as one of the survey questions indicated that a large number of respondents (60.6%) also use social media for either both work and school, or one or the other.

Figure 8

Question Nine: On a Scale of Very Often to Never, How Often Do You Find Yourself Using Social Media Longer Than Intended?



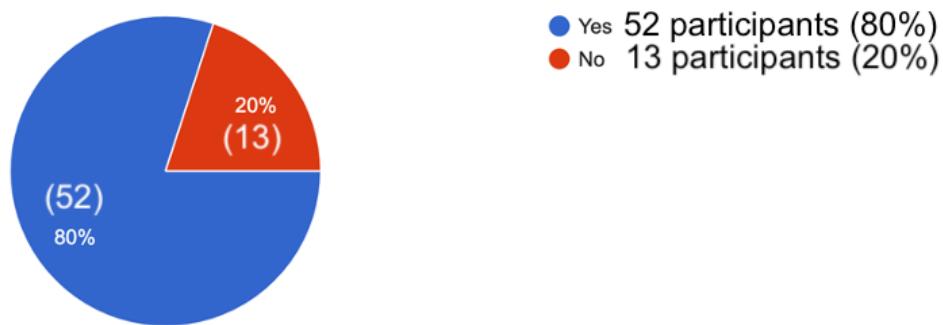
The highest-ranking answer was “very often,” with a total of 18 participants (27%), choosing this. Although, the rest of participants were evenly distributed in the other choices. Averaging about 21-22% for options 2 (14 responses), 3 (15 responses), and 4 (14 responses). The variety in these answers shows that a clearer question should have been asked. What each number meant, or even a simple 3 options (very often, sometimes, and never) could have been added. This may have allowed the receipt of more decisive answers to provide a clear conclusion to this question.

Figure 9

Question Ten: Has Social Media Become Significant to your Daily Routine?

10. Has social media become significant to your daily routine?

65 responses



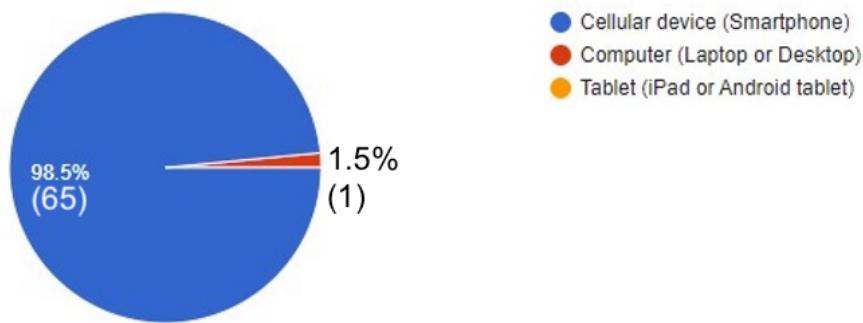
Eighty percent of users answered yes to social media becoming a part of their daily routine. This supports the observation that young adults have become reliant or habitual using their media each day, whether it be to send messages, check on updates of friends or the world, or even just to take up time in the slow parts of their day.

Figure 10

Question Eleven: What Device Do You Use Most Often to Access/Use Social Media?

11. What device do you use most often to access/use social media?

66 responses



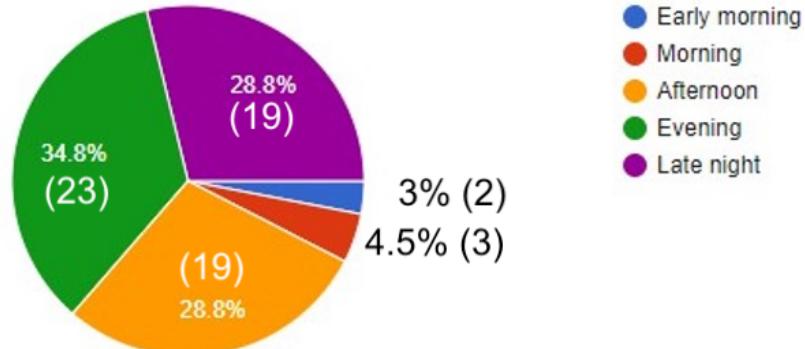
Almost all participants (98.5% out of the 66 responses) said they used cell phones to access social media throughout their day. This shows us that having growing technology and the ability to access social media with the click of a button creates an easy access environment for users to become habitual with checking their phones, messages, media, status updates, etc.

Figure 11

Question Twelve: What Time of the Day Do You Find Yourself Using Social Media the Most?

12. What time of the day do you find yourself using social media the most?

66 responses



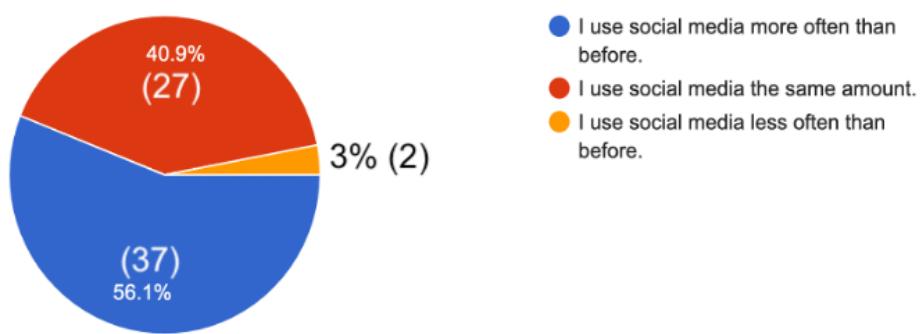
Participants were close to being evenly distributed between using social media mostly in the afternoon (28.8%), evening (34.8%), and late night (28.8%). This suggests that as people get what they need done for the day, they have excess time to spend on social media, or where boredom scrolling may set in for some.

Figure 12

Question 13: How Do You Feel Your Social Media Use Has Changed Since the COVID-19 Pandemic?

13. How do you feel your social media use has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

66 responses



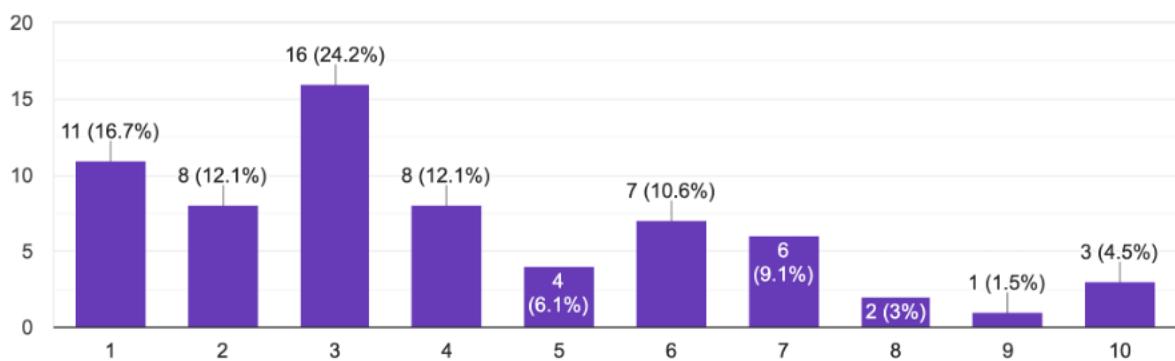
Over half of the 66 survey participants indicated that they use social media more often than before the pandemic, 56.1% (37/66) to be exact. Very few indicated that they use it less often than before, 3% (2/66) to be exact, and less than half, 40.9% (27/66) to be exact, indicated that they use it the same amount as before. This is important because it shows that the data concerning social media addiction that is presented may differ from prior years due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Figure 13

Question 14: How Do You Feel Your Social Media Use Has Changed Since the COVID-19 Pandemic?

14. On a scale from 1-10, how do you feel when you cannot use social media?

66 responses

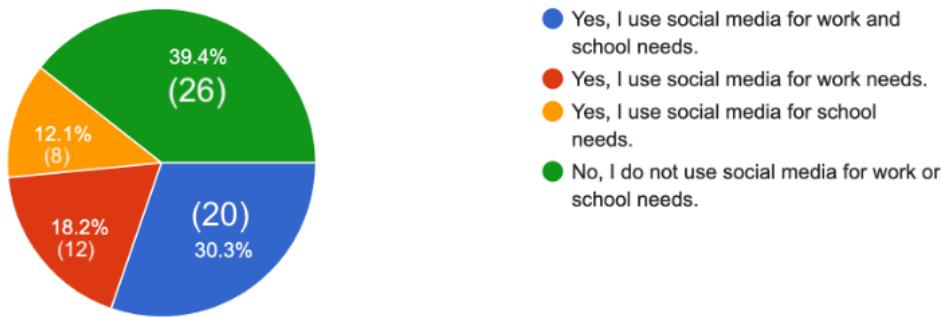


For this question, participants were asked to rank how they feel when they do not have access to social media. The beginning of the rank (1) is no discomfort, and the end of the rank (10) is strong discomfort. The majority of respondents indicated that they had either no discomfort or varying levels of low discomfort when they do not have access to social media. To be precise, 65.1% (43/66) of respondents ranked themselves below the halfway point (less discomfort), 28.7% (19/66) ranked themselves above the halfway point (more discomfort), and 6.1% (4/66) ranked themselves in the middle (medium discomfort).

Figure 14*Question 15: Do You Use Social Media For Work/School Purposes?*

15. Do you use social media for work/school purposes?

66 responses



This question asked participants what they typically use social media for. Out of 66 respondents, 39.4% (26/66) indicated that they do not use social media for work or school purposes, 30.3% (20/66) indicated that they use social media for work and school needs, 18.2% (12/66) use it only for work needs, and 12.1% (8/66) use it for school needs. In total, 60.6% (40/66) of participants use social media for either both work and school or one or the other. This is significant because it shows that not all social media use is up to the participant, some of it is necessary for other life responsibilities and cannot all be attributed to personal entertainment or communication purposes.

Social Media Screen Time Log Results

Table 7

Social Media Screen Time Data: iPhone Participants

Participant Number	Highest Daily Average	Lowest Daily Average	Weekly Average	Most Used Social Media App
3	3 hours, 45 minutes (11/04/2021)	1 hour, 52 minutes (11/06/2021)	3 hours, 5 minutes	Instagram
5	3 hours, 41 minutes (11/06/2021)	57 minutes (11/05/2021)	2 hours, 5 minutes	Instagram and Facebook
12	1 hour, 52 minutes (11/01/2021)	39 minutes (11/02/2021)	1 hour, 16 minutes	Instagram
35	3 hours, 37 minutes (11/06/2021)	52 minutes (11/10/2021)	2 hours, 5 minutes	Snapchat and Instagram
44	8 hours, 45 minutes (11/03/2021)	4 hours, 14 minutes (11/05/2021)	6 hours, 31 minutes	TikTok
55	5 hours, 8 minutes (11/04/2021)	2 hours (11/01/2021)	3 hours, 40 minutes	Snapchat
58	5 hours, 42 minutes (11/06/2021)	1 hour, 52 minutes (11/02/2021)	4 hours, 5 minutes	TikTok
66	6 hours, 6 minutes (11/02/2021)	1 hour, 41 minutes (11/06/2021)	3 hours, 28 minutes	TikTok and Instagram

Table 8*Overall Screen Time Data: Android Participants*

Participant Number	Highest Daily Average	Lowest Daily Average	Weekly Average	Most Used Social Media App
2	5 hours, 43 minutes (11/11/2021)	1 hour, 30 minutes (11/05/2021)	3 hours, 32 minutes	Snapchat
36	8 hours, 7 minutes (11/10/2021)	4 hours, 6 minutes (11/05/2021)	6 hours, 25 minutes	Instagram

Participant #2

See Appendix A for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #2 had an Android smartphone instead of an iPhone; therefore, there was no feature that broke down how much time was specifically spent on social media instead of on the phone in general. This participant spent an average of 3 hours and 32 minutes on their phone daily. Their highest recorded daily time was 5 hours and 43 minutes on Monday, November 1st and their lowest recorded daily time was 1 hour and 30 minutes on Friday, November 5th. Again, these times were not specific to time spent on social media.

Participant #3

See Appendix B for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #3 spent an average of 3 hours and 5 minutes on social media daily. Their highest recorded daily time was 3 hours and 45 minutes on Thursday, November 4th and their lowest recorded daily time was 1 hour and 52 minutes on Saturday, November 6th.

Participant #5

See Appendix C for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #5 spent an average of 2 hours and 5 minutes on social media daily. Their highest recorded daily time was 3 hours and 41 minutes on Saturday November 6th and their lowest recorded daily time was 57 minutes on Friday November 5th.

Participant #12

See Appendix D for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #12 spent an average of 1 hour and 16 minutes daily on social media. Their highest recorded daily time was 1 hour and 52 minutes on Monday, November 1, 2021. The lowest recorded daily time on social media was 39 minutes on Tuesday, November 2, 2021. This participant frequently used the Instagram app throughout the week, spending 3 hours and 32 minutes of their entire week on the one social platform.

Participant #35

See Appendix E for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #35 had provided different days than the other screen time logs, starting on November 6, 2021, and ending on November 11, 2021. The last day for the screen time log provided was recorded at 10 a.m., which does not give an accurate representation of their daily average and therefore was not included in the week's data collection and analysis. Their average time spent on social media was 2 hours and 5 minutes through the 6 days of data collected. They used social media the most on Saturday, November 6, 2021, recorded at 3 hours and 37 minutes. On November 10, 2021, they only used social media for 52 minutes of the day.

Participant #36

See Appendix F for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #36 has an Android therefore the data collected was inconsistent with the iPhone participants. The weekly average screen time usage was 6 hours and 25 minutes. The daily time they had spent on their phone was provided with the highest recorded use at 8 hours and 7 minutes on Wednesday November 10, 2021. Their lowest recorded phone usage was on Friday, November 5, 2021. It is crucial to note that phone usage and social media usage differ. The screenshots provided illustrate a high usage on the social media platform of Instagram at 8 hours and 46 minutes throughout the week. Other notable platforms included Reddit and YouTube, although it may be debated that YouTube can be categorized as an entertainment platform instead of a social media platform.

Participant #44

See Appendix G for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #44 spent an average of 6 hours and 31 minutes on social media daily. Their highest recorded daily time was 8 hours and 45 minutes on November 3, 2021, and their lowest recorded daily time was 4 hours and 14 minutes on November 5, 2021. On all days recorded, this participant spent the most time on TikTok, with an average of 4 hours and 36 minutes on the app each day.

Participant #55

See Appendix H for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #55 averaged a total of 3 hours and 40 minutes of daily social media activity. Their highest recorded daily time was 5 hours and 8 minutes on November 4, 2021. While their lowest was 2 hours on November 1, 2021. Out of seven days recorded, four days show that this respondent spent the most time on

snapshot, with an average of 1 hour and 32 minutes. The remaining two days were spent mostly on Instagram, averaging 2 hours and 24 minutes daily.

Participant #58

See Appendix I for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #58 spent an average of 4 hours and 5 minutes on social media daily with an increase of social media use on Fridays and Saturdays specifically. The researchers can assume this is due to being with friends or having more spare time outside of work or school to scroll through social media. The highest recorded day was 5 hours and 42 minutes. The most used app was TikTok every day of the week, with a minimum of 1 hour spent there each day.

Participant #66

See Appendix J for social media screen-time screenshots. Participant #66 averaged 3 hours and 28 minutes of social media time each week. Although there was 1 weekday, Tuesday, that was about 6 hours of social media screen time. This participants' screen logs were interesting as the lowest days were Saturday and Sundays, only reaching almost 2 hours on those days. The most used apps consisted of either TikTok or Instagram each day.

Interviews

Participant #51

See Appendix K for the interview transcript. Participant 51 was the first to be interviewed; he completed the survey prior to being interviewed but did not consent to providing his social media screen time. Some general themes and attitudes that were common in this interview are the following:

- Social media generally has a negative impact on his life
- Fear of missing out (FOMO) is what ties him to social media
- He believes he has qualities of social media addiction

This participant stated that social media has been more prevalent in his life since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Partly because he uses it for communication and social purposes to keep in touch with friends and partly because he uses it more during online classes than during in-person classes. Specifically, he found that he uses it more on Thursdays than on Tuesdays because his Thursday classes are online.

This participant also highlighted that fear of missing out is a big reason he feels tied to social media. When presented with a hypothetical scenario about all social media being inaccessible for the day, he expressed that it would have an extremely positive effect on his life. If nobody else has access to social media, he doesn't feel like he would be missing out on anything and would be less inclined to miss it.

When presented with a definition and explanation of social media addiction, he expressed that he feels as though addiction is a spectrum and that he has certain qualities of social media addiction and may fall somewhere along the spectrum. A comparison between his survey answers and his interview answers to determine likelihood of social media addiction can be found below in the “comparisons” section.

Participant #58

See Appendix L for the interview transcript. Participant #58 was our second interviewee. She completed the survey and consented to participate further in the study by providing daily

screen time logs and doing a follow-up interview. Being a student and part-time employed, this participant indicated that she uses social media for both work and school purposes. She is most active on social media during weekdays more than weekends, as it is easier to turn to her social accounts as a way to procrastinate around her classes, as opposed to being in a work environment. Although she finds herself using social media the most when she's supposed to be doing other things according to the survey, she stated that she is for the most part not dependent on social media and tries to not base a lot of her day around it. Instead, she uses her phone for stress relief and humour, rather than focusing too much on what's going on around the internet.

When presented with a hypothetical scenario about all social media being inaccessible for a day, she explained that while she might initially be affected, it would not be the end of the world. She values more functional sites such as Gmail or Blackboard and would be more affected if they were down for a certain period of time. Contrary to our first interviewee's FOMO as a cause of social media attachment, this participant expressed that she does not feel a need to keep up with what's trending, and instead prefers to use apps such as TikTok, that require minimal amounts of direct social interaction.

As a result, she believes that social media generally has a positive impact on her mental health and overall quality of life. She defined social media addiction as "When you get feelings of physical and emotional discomfort anytime you are not around your phone". With this definition in mind, she stated that she would not consider herself addicted to social media, but rather a frequent, but responsible, user of certain social media platforms for mainly entertainment purposes.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

Introduction

With a total of 66 survey responses, 10 social media screen-time log participants, and 2 interview participants, this study was able to collect a lot of data regarding the social media use and habits of young adults in Edmonton. This study differs from others in the way that it strictly focuses on this niche sample, as opposed to a broader population. Outlined below is a discussion related to the hypothesis of this research as well as 4 main conclusions and 4 significant comparisons. The section will end with 3 recommendations for future research surrounding this topic.

Discussion—In Relation to Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was as follows: Over half of young adults in the Edmonton area are addicted to social media. As previously stated, the DSM-5 does not yet include social media addiction as a classified psychological disorder; however, computer gaming is listed as a disorder, so it seems as though social media addiction is on its way to becoming an official disorder (Ciplak, 2020). The closest definition to social media addiction that was found in other research is: “a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently but may experience distress without it” (Lin et al., 2017, as cited in Larson, 2021, p. 233). Because social media addiction is not an official classified psychological disorder, there is no criteria for qualified physicians to diagnose. Since the researchers of this study are not licensed mental health professionals, they do not have the authority to determine whether or not the participants of this study are addicted to social media. Although this is the case, several conclusions were made over the course of the research that will contribute to the

academic discussion surrounding this topic and provide some insights that will benefit further research.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Average Time Spent

While looking at all the social media screen time data as a collective, the average time spent on social media daily was 3 hours and 16 minutes. This does not include participants #2 and #36; these participants have Android smartphones that do not provide the data for time spent specifically on social media, only overall screen time. Below is the breakdown if which social media apps were most common among individual participants:

Table 9

Conclusion 1 Social Media Platform Popularity

Participant	Most used social media platform
Participant #2	Snapchat
Participant #3	Instagram
Participant #5	Instagram and Facebook
Participant #12	Instagram
Participant #35	Snapchat and Instagram
Participant #36	Instagram
Participant #44	TikTok
Participant #55	Snapchat
Participant #58	TikTok
Participant #66	TikTok and Instagram

As seen above, Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok are the most used social media apps among Edmonton young adults who sent in their social media screen time screenshots. By a narrow margin, Instagram is the single most popular social media app. Further research could be done to determine why this is the case and what separates Instagram from other social media platforms. Based on the results, the average time spent on social media was 3 hours and 16 minutes and most of it was spent on Instagram. According to a worldwide study, the average daily time spent on social media across the globe is 2 hours and 41 minutes for people between the ages of 16 and 64 (Statista, 2021). Statista also showed that the most used social media platform in the world is Facebook; Instagram only ranks at #4 for worldwide popularity, after YouTube and WhatsApp (2021). This study's results indicate that young adults' social media habits differ from worldwide averages. Young adults in Edmonton have a higher daily average spent on social media in comparison to the general worldwide population. The results also indicate that they do not use the most popular worldwide social media platform most frequently; instead, they frequent Instagram the most.

Conclusion 2: Participant Perceptions

The perception of social media addiction plays a key role in a young adult defining their behaviours. Cellular devices have the resources to track screen time use as demonstrated in the second data collection method—the social media screen-time screenshots. This resource was created as the unknown shift to a new technology was concerning to all users. This data is used to track all aspects of cell phone usage, but few users examine their daily social media use as its

own aspect and only view the total screen time hours. This may be due to the preconceived notion that cell phone and social media users are constantly “plugged in.” With the ease of accessing any app in milliseconds while using their phone, users do not always realize their behaviours that follow. Survey question #9 (Figure 8) asked participants, “On a scale of very often to never, how often do you find yourself using social media longer than intended?” Most participants (27.3%) claimed that they used social media more often (response 1), response 2 (21.2%) and often (22.7%). This equals 71.2% of survey respondents claiming to use social media often to more often than intended.

Survey question #10 (Figure 9) asked participants, “Has social media become a significant part of your daily routine?” 80% of participants stated yes and 20% claimed it did not. Survey question #14 asked participants, “On a scale from 1-10, how do you feel when you cannot use social media?” Most participants claimed they felt no discomfort to mild discomfort (71.2%).

When analyzing these three questions together, there seems to be some disagreement in the claims of excessive social media usage and the participants actual feelings towards their use of social media. An equal number of responses (71.2%) stated they did not feel uncomfortable when not using social media, yet the same number of participants (71.2%) claimed they use social media often to more often than intended. A high average of participants also stated that social media use has become a part of their daily routine. There must be some deliberation amongst these factors when it comes to social media addiction. In the interviews, both participants stated that they see the addictive tendencies that may result from excessive social

media usage. Although, they did not openly state that they believe they are addicted to social media. This information together shows that young adults may exhibit addictive tendencies to social media but there is a negative perception of the word “addiction.” The difference is shown between one's personal definition of addiction, and their actual behaviours. Throughout this study, the research team worked diligently to not use the term addiction until the end of the interview to not create a confirmation bias. Although, it may be concluded that young adults are aware of social media addiction and their behaviours, but do not want to define themselves as addicted due to the negative connotation attached to the concept. The negative perception of “addiction” may skew the results when researching social media addiction, and this is shown through the inconsistency in results regarding individual perceptions, claims, and behaviours.

Conclusion 3: Adaptation to Social Media

The researchers concluded that young adults are addicted to social media. However, when taking into consideration the progression of technology, the accessibility to it and the need to have it in order to function properly in today’s society, young adults may not be as addicted to social media as initially thought. Young adults used to do school or work without technology, now it is a requirement in most scenarios. Young adults used to get news from papers or coffee shops, whereas now paper is considered a waste and everything is delivered online. Young adults are seen as being addicted to social media but in reality, they are adapting to the current societal standard. This may not be the “right” thing, it could be argued that social media is too accessible or too prevalent in our society, but that is not the focus of this research. Whether using social

media this much is right or wrong, young adults seem to be using it as it was meant to be and as they are required to work, school, or in their daily lives.

Conclusion 4: Social Media Use and Other Factors

Many young adults engage in some form of online media on a daily basis as shown in the study (including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and more). It would be unreasonable however, to conclude that the majority have an addiction to social media without first considering some of the factors that contribute to this excessive use. Social media addiction is often characterized by the combination of excessive media consumption, a high reliance on social media, and an inability to control this behavior despite suffering decreased physical and social engagement, and a negative impact overall. With the COVID 19 global pandemic especially, social media has been a largely used tool for allowing people to stay in touch despite being miles apart, communicating at instantaneous speeds. Social media has also been a tool for some to engage with school and work communities, as reflected by 30.3% of the survey respondents (see Figure 14). While 80% of participants admitted that social media has become significant to their daily routine, when asked how they would feel if they had no access to social media for a day, the majority indicated they would have little to no discomfort. This shows that the term "addiction" is often used too loosely, and it is vital to distinguish between addicted habits and usage.

After analyzing the results of this study, a prevalence of social media addiction symptoms was substantial among our sample of young adults. Before drawing a conclusion however, it is important to note that there are a lot of factors that contribute to this excessive use of social

media amongst young adults. As stated above, social media addiction is characterized by the combination of excessive media consumption, a high dependency on social media, and an inability to control this behavior despite suffering negative impacts. With this in mind, it would be inaccurate to deem all young adults addicted, as the majority of the survey respondents indicated that they had either no discomfort or varying levels of low discomfort when they do not have access to social media (see Figure 13.) Similar to the second interview subject, many young adults frequently use social media as a means of keeping up with what is going on in their personal network, as well as for entertainment purposes, but are not necessarily addicted to social media, despite displaying some addictive tendencies. It would be unrealistic to assume that all young adults have an addiction to social media, simply because the vast majority use some type of online social networking platform and spend a lot of their time online.

Comparisons Within This Study

Comparison 1: Survey and Interview Data—Participant #51

The first interview responses, from Participant #51, were compared with their survey responses to determine the likelihood of social media addiction. Below, some relevant survey questions along with Participant 51's answers have been selected:

Table 10

Comparison 1 Survey Answers

Survey Questions	Participant #51's Answer
Survey Question 9 (Figure 8): On a scale of very often to never, how often do you find yourself using social media more than anticipated?	The scale was from very often (1) to never (5) and Participant 51 selected 4 (almost never).

Survey Question 10 (Figure 9): Has social media become significant to your daily routine?	Participate 51 selected “yes”.
Survey Question 14 (Figure 13): On a scale from 1-10, how do you feel when you cannot use social media?	The scale was from no discomfort (1) to strong discomfort (10) and Participant 51 selected 3 (mild discomfort).

In participant 51’s interview, he was asked whether or not he would consider himself addicted to social media. Prior to being asked this question, the interviewers discussed his social media habits and attitudes and defined social media addiction with the following definition:

Although social media addiction is not yet a classified disorder in the DSM-5, “a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently, but may experience distress without it” (Lin et al., 2017, as cited in Larson, 2021, p. 233)

Participant 51 stated that he would place himself on the spectrum of social media addiction and that he does have qualities of social media addiction. This is interesting because while looking back at his survey answers, he indicated that he almost never finds himself using social media more than anticipated and that he only feels mild discomfort in the absence of social media. It appears that once he was presented with the concept of social media addiction, he reflected on his habits. Mostly, his survey responses do coincide with his statement of placing himself low on the “spectrum” of social media addiction.

Comparison 2: Survey Question #12 and Screen-Time Logs

The second comparison will examine the results of survey question #12, “What time of day do you find yourself using social media most?” to the data collected by the screen time logs. On the screen time log records, the time of day that social media was used most daily is shown by the second graph. In the [screen time log collection](#), the time of day social media was most used by each participant is highlighted in teal. In the survey, question 12 (Figure 11) responses show that most participants believe they use social media often in the evening (34.8%). The second and third highest responses came in equally, claiming they use social media most during the afternoon (28.8%) and late night (28.8%).

Through the screen time log data collected in regard to the time of day, results varied depending on the participant. The time of day spent on social media by most participants according to their screen time logs was around 6:00 p.m. to 11 p.m., defined by the survey response as “Evening.” Other times of day that were often used include the afternoon, which compares accurately with the equally second highest survey response. Some late-night averages were shown in the data, but not as much as an unexpected result, morning social media usage. The data collected from participants 12, 35, and 58, all show the results of frequent social media use in the hours between 6:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. Participant 12 was only one of the 3 survey respondents that stated they use social media most in the morning. The other 2 participants (35 and 58) that frequently used social media in the morning both stated they believed they used it most in the evening. In the survey, 3 respondents stated they often used social media in the morning, but two of those three did not participate in the screen time data log. Although there is a correlation between 3 responses claiming morning use, and 3 screen time logs showing

frequent morning usage, the claims of evening by the two participants' data log participants (35 and 58) show confirmation error.

This data analysis from the screen time logs proves the accuracy of the survey responses claiming that social media is used most frequently in the evening. The evening tends to give young adults a time to relax and unwind, which may explain the free time in their schedules that they may be able to use social media. Future research may investigate and explain the use of social media in the morning, which according to the survey has less usage, but through our screen time data records shows more use than assumed by the survey results.

Comparison 3: Survey, Screen Time Logs, Interview—Participant #58

For this comparison, Participant #58's answers to the questions below were compared to what her screen time logs and interview revealed. This participant was the only one who completed all three data collection methods: the survey, the screen time logs, and the interview.

Table 11
Comparison 3 Survey Answers

Survey Questions	Participant #58's Answers
Survey Question 4 (Figure 4): Please select all that apply regarding your employment status.	Participant 58 selected “student” and “part-time employment”.
Survey Question 15 (Figure 14): Do you use social media for work/school purposes?	Participant 58 selected “Yes, I use social media for work and school needs”.

Upon looking at the screen logs submitted, this individual seemed to spend most time on the media app, TikTok (see Appendix I). It was unclear whether this was being used for work, school, or purely just personal use. Given the media apps platform, it can be assumed that it was

mainly personal use within this application. During the interview conducted, Participant 58 described that she does not think she is addicted to social media, although may be addicted to certain apps (i.e. TikTok). She said she preferred social media apps that didn't involve interacting with friends or others directly online.

Comparison 4: FOMO in Interviews

A comparison can be made between the first and second interview subjects, as they both displayed a number of these symptoms, but had a different view on whether or not they were actually addicted to social media. The first interviewee highlighted that social media has been more prevalent in his life since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that fear of missing out (FOMO) is a big reason he feels tied to social media. He stated that if all social media was inaccessible for the day, it would have an extremely positive effect on his life, and when presented with a definition and explanation of social media addiction, he expressed that he feels as though addiction is a spectrum and that he may fall somewhere along the spectrum, as he has certain qualities of social media addiction. Interestingly, the second interviewee indicated that although she finds herself using social media the most when she's supposed to be doing other things according to the survey, she feels as though she is "for the most part not dependent on social media" but rather, uses her phone for stress relief and humour. Contrary to the first interviewee's FOMO as a cause of social media attachment, this participant expressed that she does not feel a need to keep up with what's trending, and instead prefers to use apps such as TikTok, that require minimal amounts of direct social interaction. She stated that she would not

consider herself addicted to social media, but rather a frequent, but responsible, user of certain social media platforms.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation 1: Create an Official DSM-5 Definition for Social Media Addiction

More research on this topic will be possible once social media addiction is officially recognized as a psychological disorder under the DSM-5. Once it is a classified disorder, there will be criteria that mental health professionals can use to diagnose patients as suffering from social media addiction (SMA). This will allow for more formal research into this topic because a definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’ can be attributed to each participant in a study when it comes to SMA. As of right now, other conclusions can be made but it is difficult to come to a formal conclusion in relation to SMA. Furthermore, once it is a classified disorder, there will be psychologists who specialize in this type of addiction who can contribute to the discussion surrounding this area of research.

Recommendation 2: Location, Age, and Sequential Designs

This research study examined the social media habits, behaviours, and perceptions of young adults, aged 18-24 in the Edmonton and surrounding area. It would be beneficial for future researchers to study other locations, either locally or globally, to compare or contrast a variety of results. The age range of the sample was chosen due to the likelihood of young adults actively participating on social media. Future research should look into other age ranges and how they are affected by social media usage and addiction. By conducting sequential research methods of different age ranges in relation to SMA, future researchers can determine indicators

at each life stage that could be attributed to SMA. A cross-sectional research design would collect a sample from a variety of age ranges at one point in time, to draw inferences about SMA and age at that current time (Merrigan et al., 2012). A longitudinal-panel study would collect SMA data at multiple different points of time in a participant's life (Merrigan et al., 2012). By collecting data over time with consistent participants, researchers could determine SMA in relation to the individual stages of life.

Recommendation 3: Long-term Effects of Excessive Smartphone and Social Media Use

The smartphone era has forced on us the need to always be connected and never truly shut down or log off. Although it has been widely studied and concluded that excessive use of social media has negative consequences on our lives, it would be interesting for future studies to research what long-term effects channeling so much time and energy into our devices will cause. According to Larry Rosen, psychology professor and author of *The Distracted Mind*, “A lot of phone usage is unconscious behavior, ... You shift from Facebook to Instagram, to checking the weather, to texts.” He suggests that an incredibly simple way to cut down on distractions is to turn off push notifications for as many apps as you can, and install an app that tracks your smartphone habits, so that you can set a specific usage goal and see how well you stick to it. Throughout this current research study, several short-term effects of social media addiction were discussed, such as phone-induced anxiety, poor academic performance, and stress. In the future, research studies could further explore the more long-term negative effects that the overuse of smartphones and social media can cause to our overall physical, social, mental, and intellectual well-being. Establishing these long-term effects will make people be more aware of their social

media use and habits, which may contribute to the prevention or reduced risk of getting affected by these issues.

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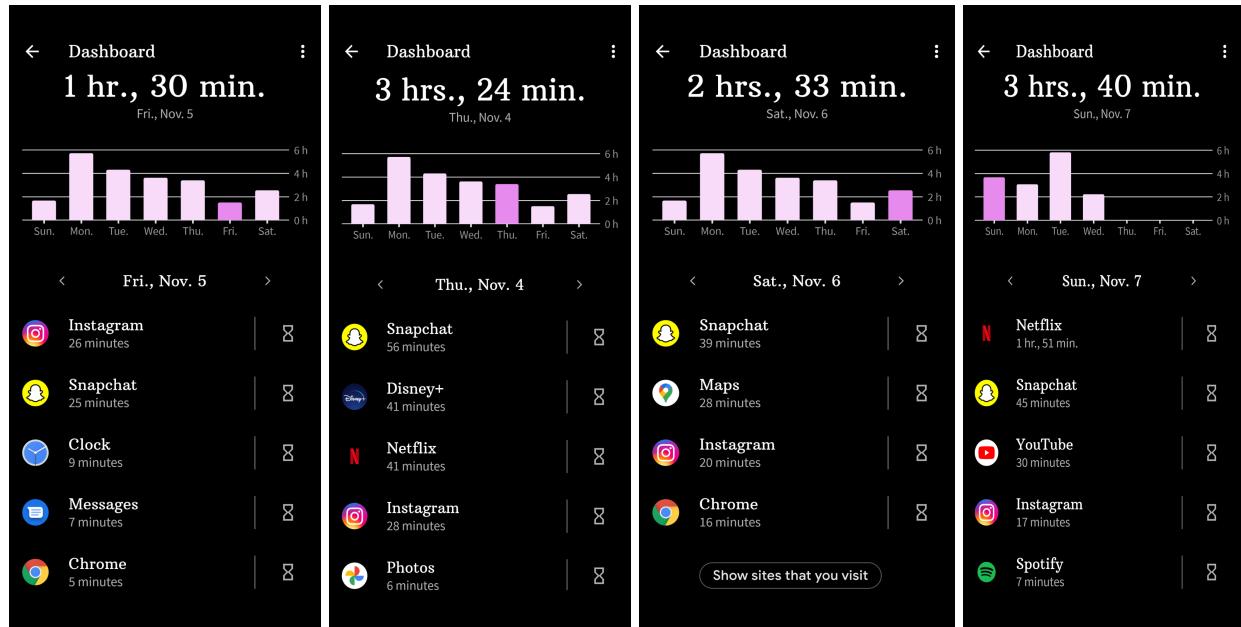
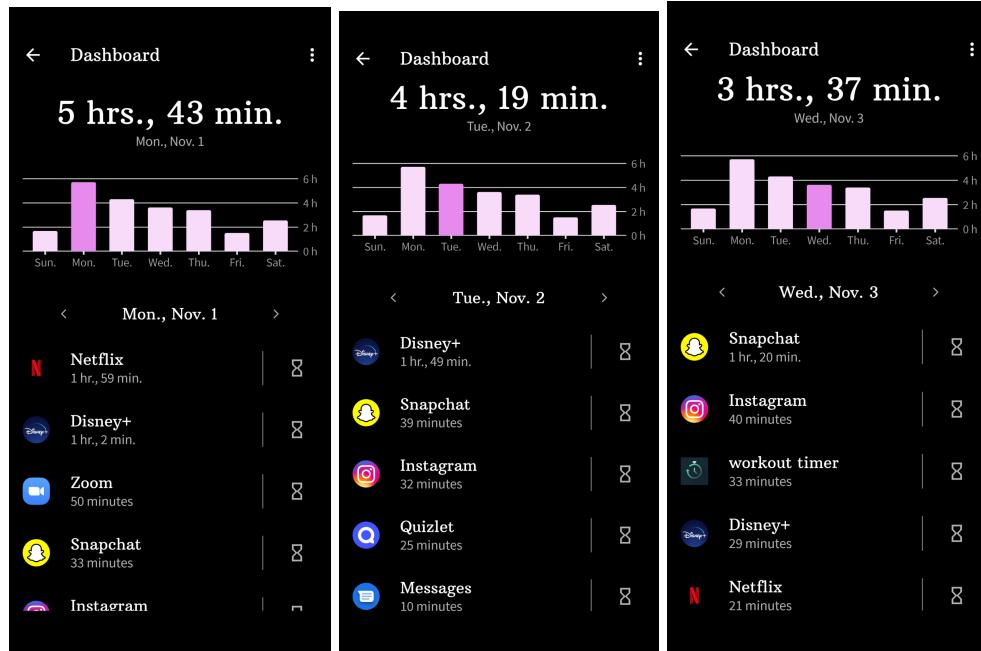
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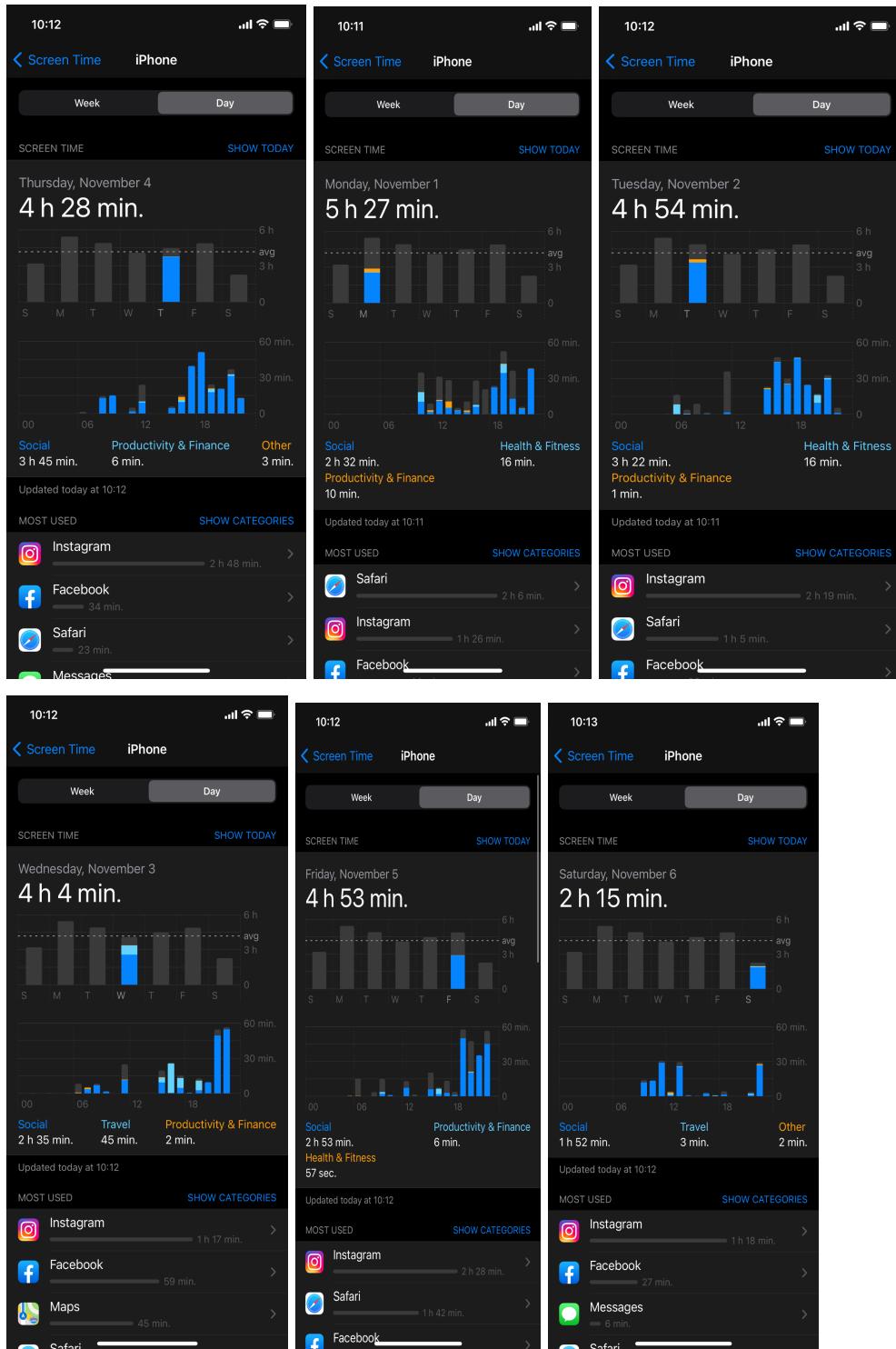
Appendices

Appendix A

Participant #2 Social Media Screen Time



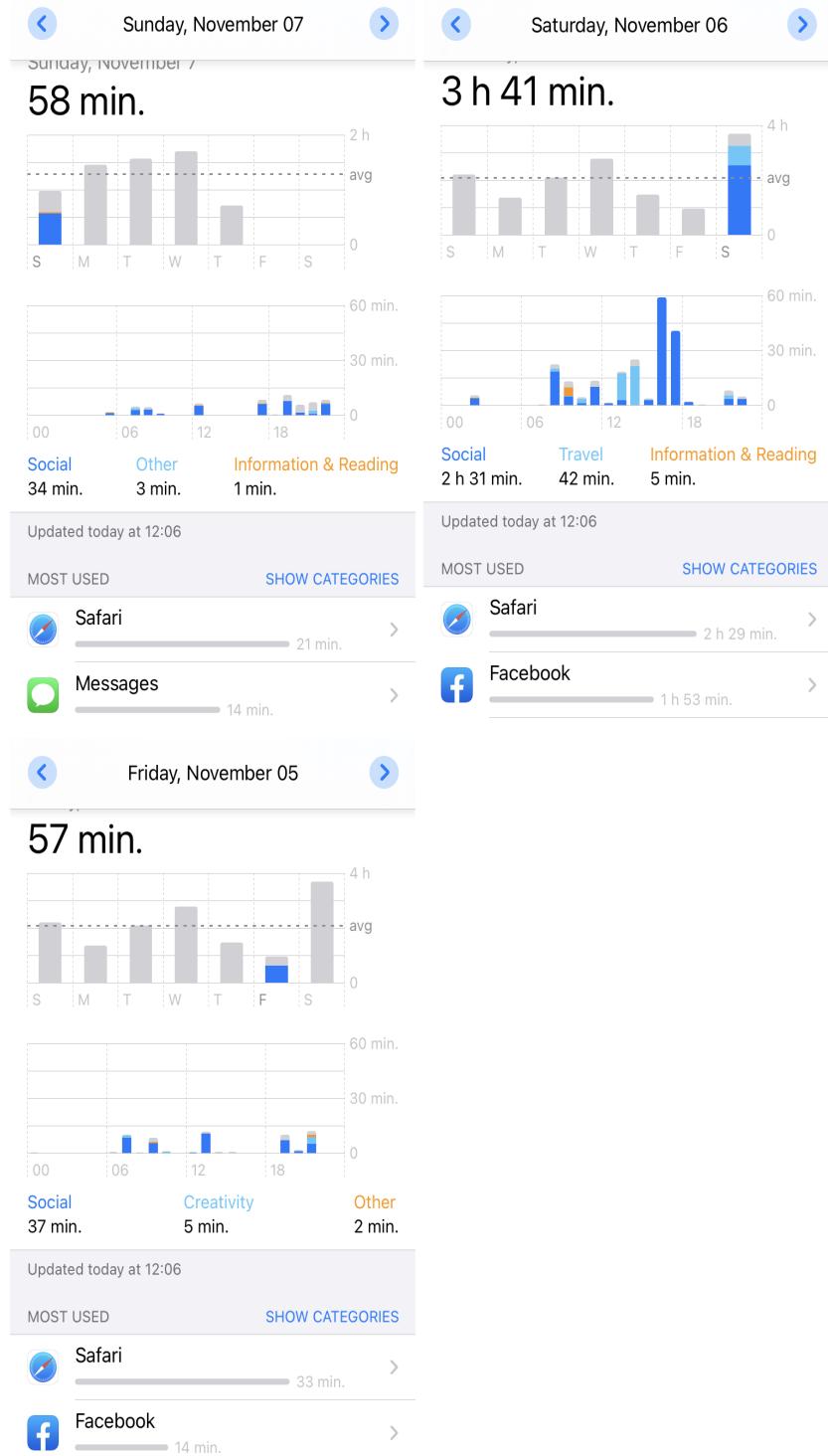
Appendix B
Participant #3 Social Media Screen Time

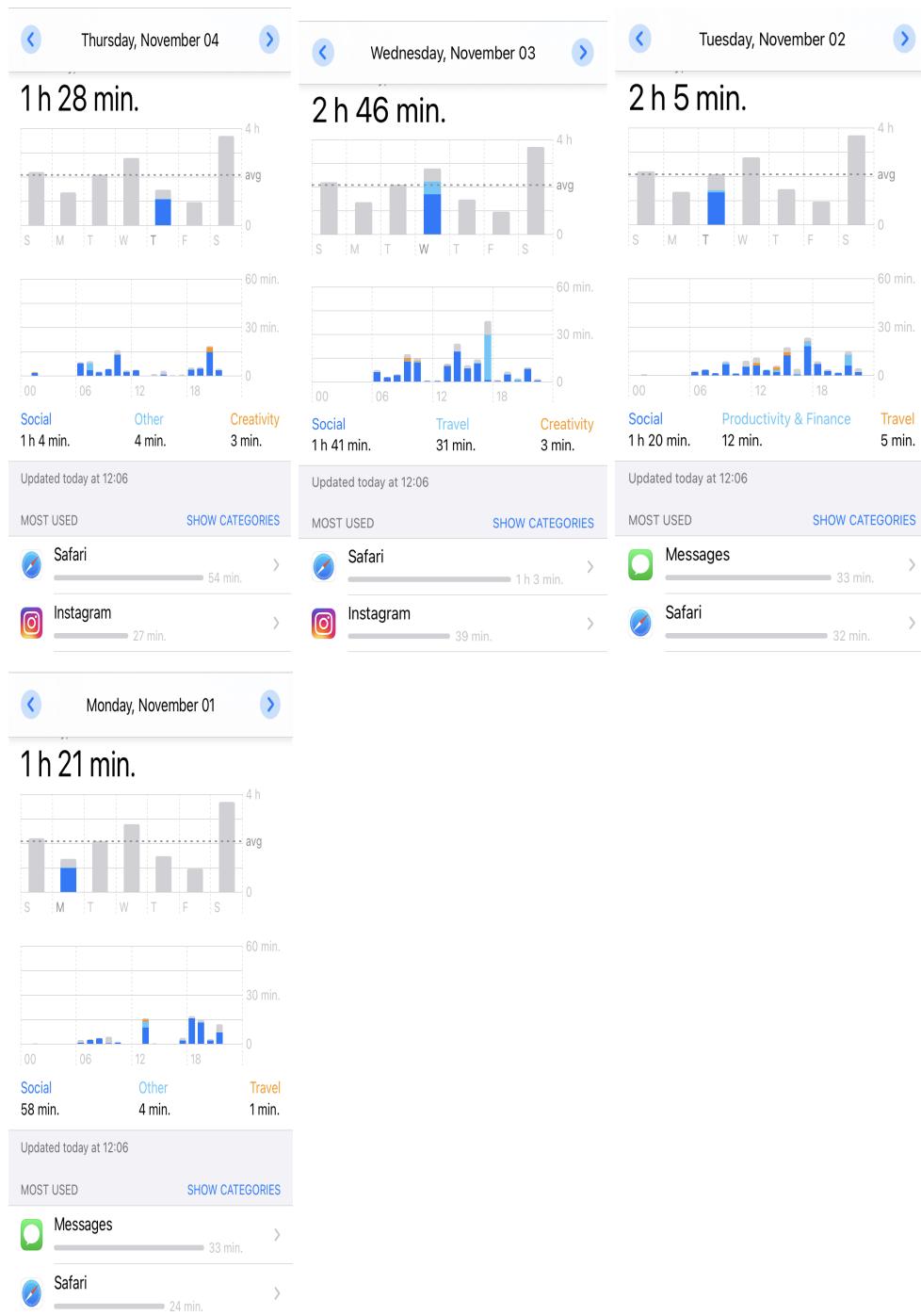




Appendix C

Participant #5 Social Media Screen Time

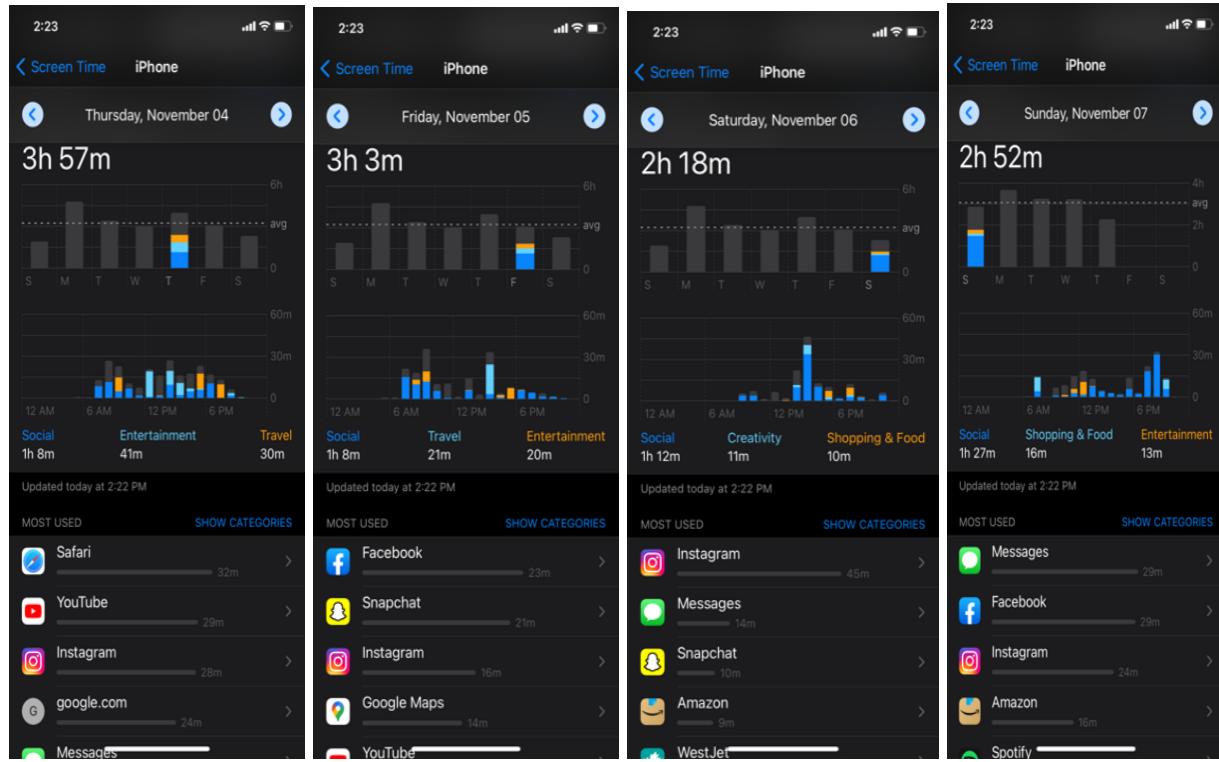




Appendix D

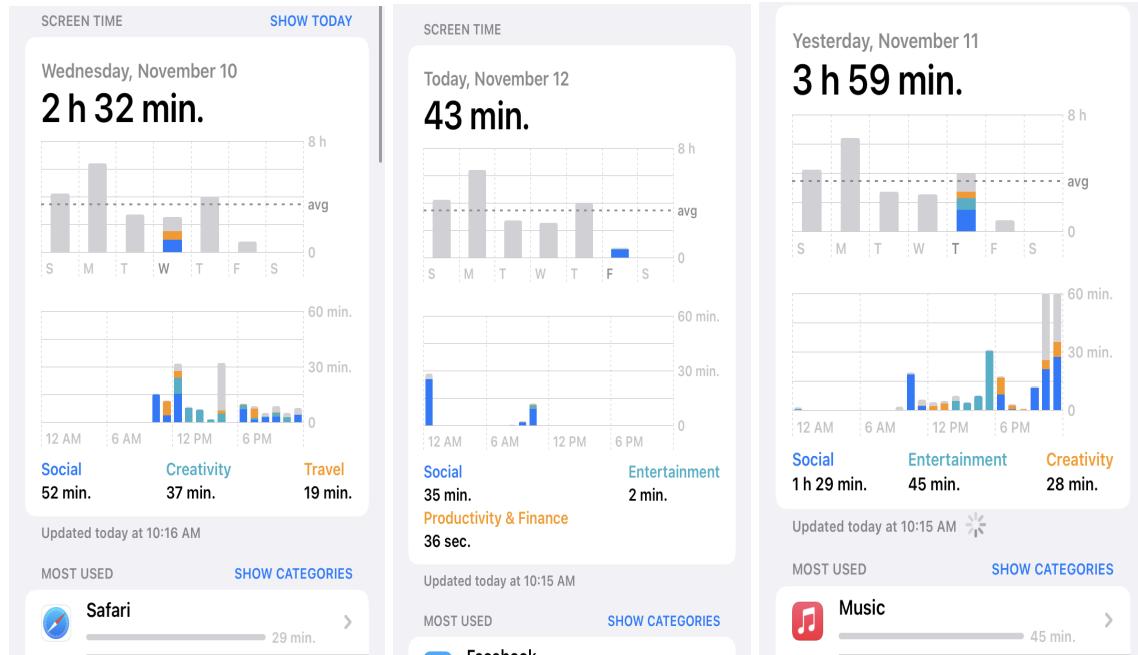
Participant #12 Social Media Screen Time

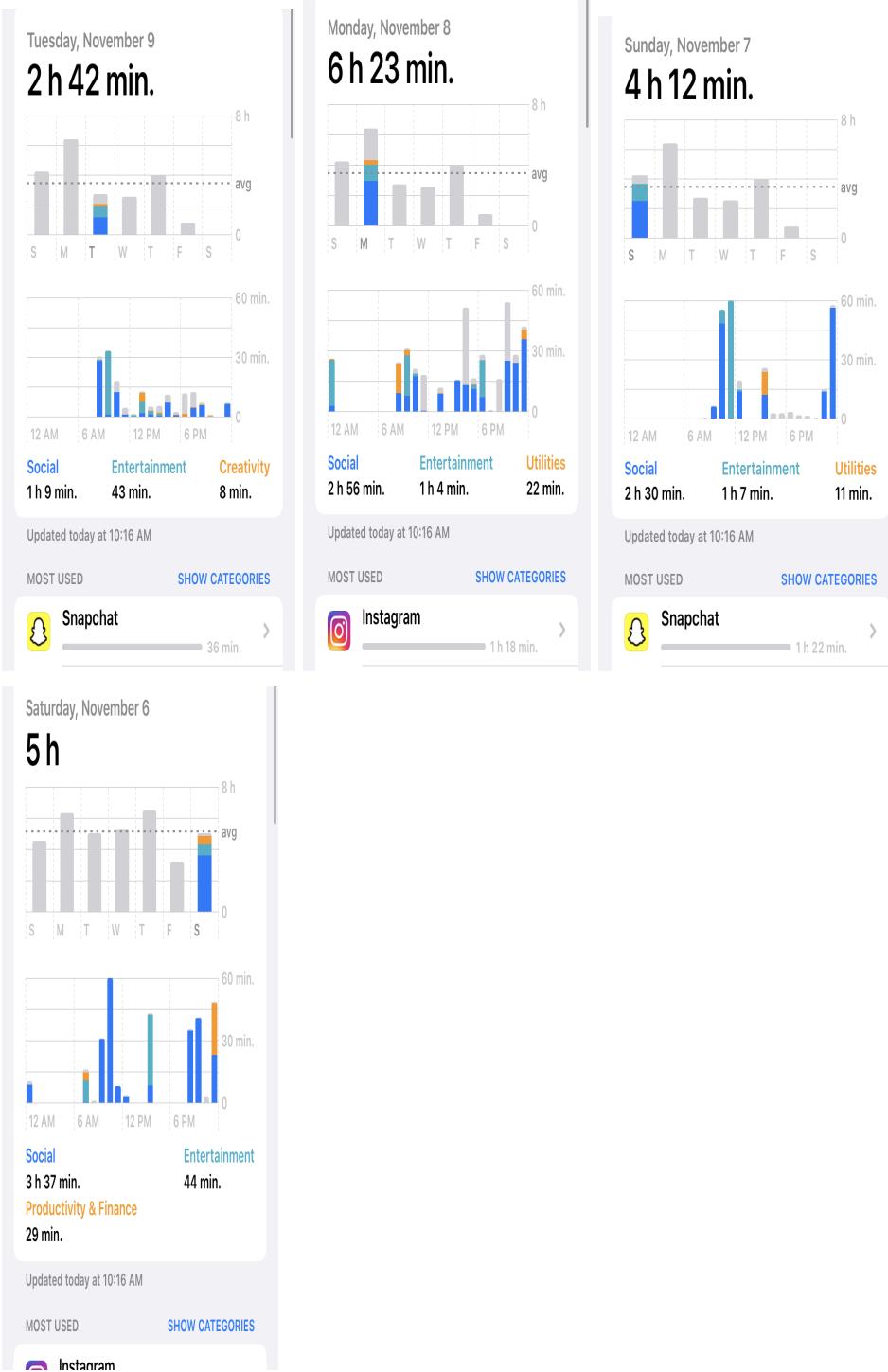




Appendix E

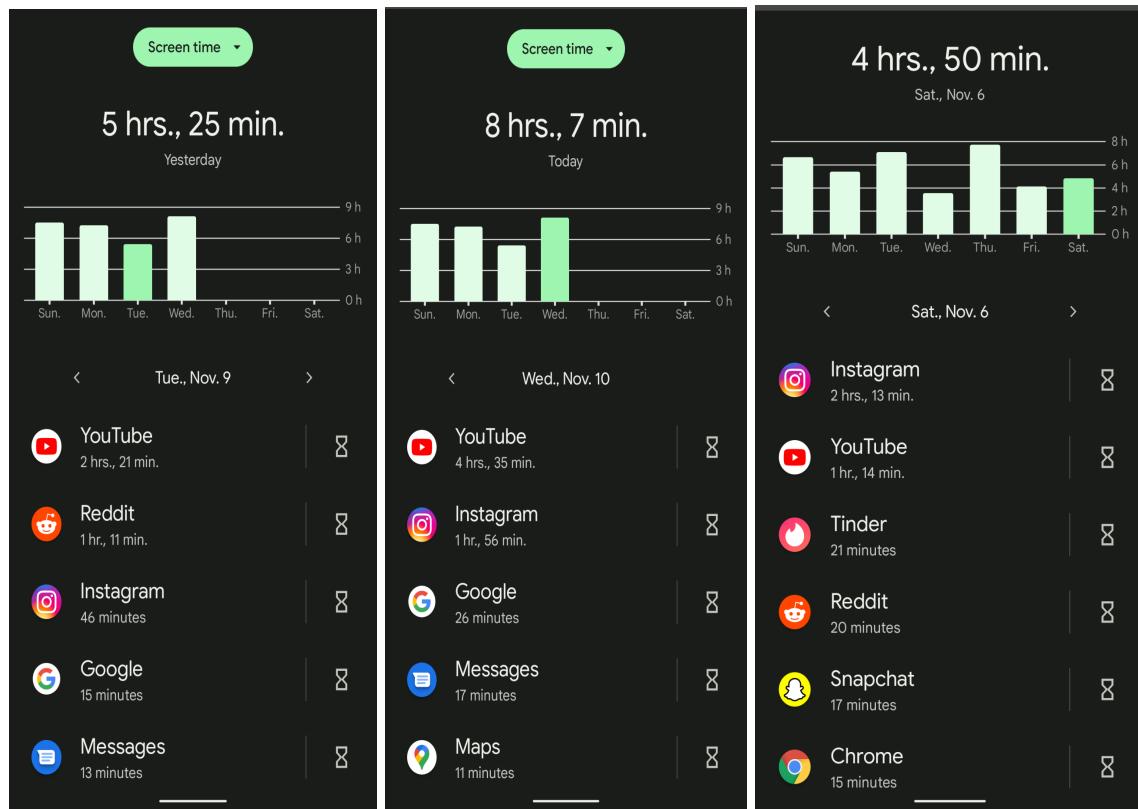
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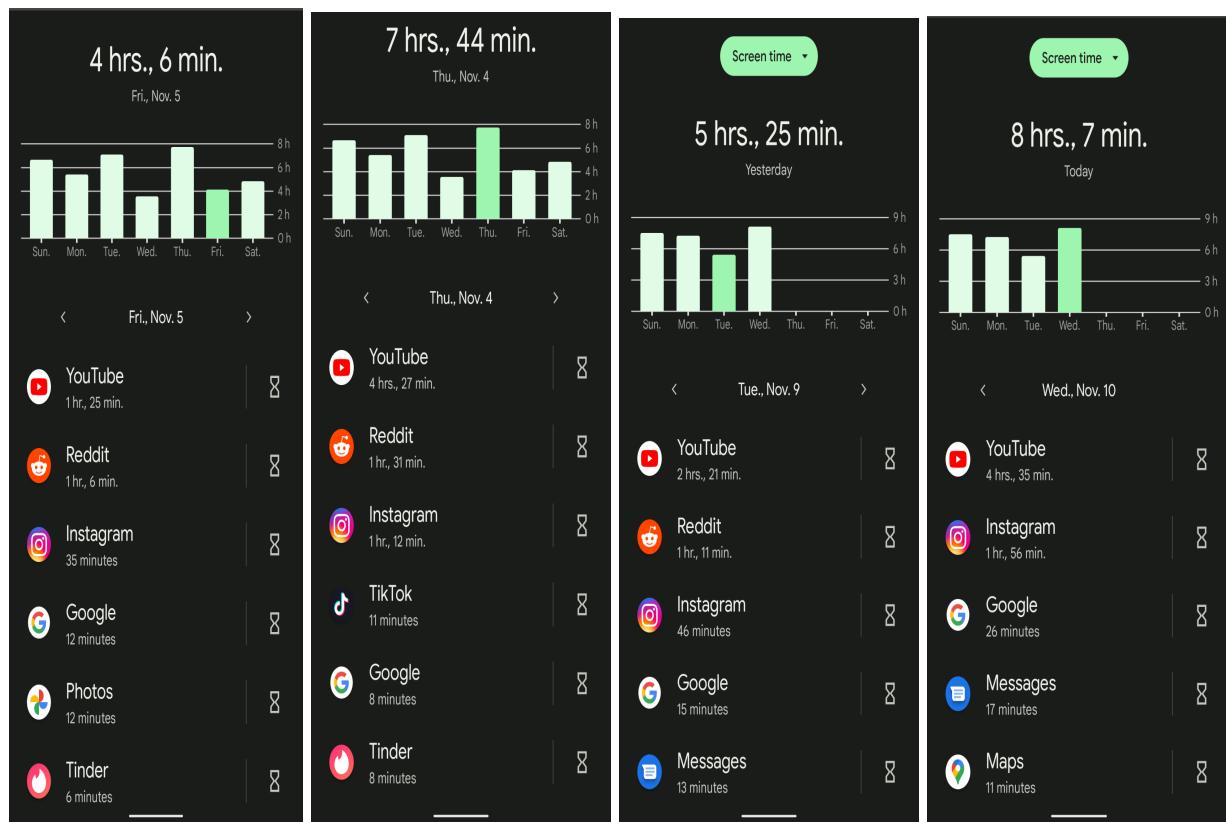




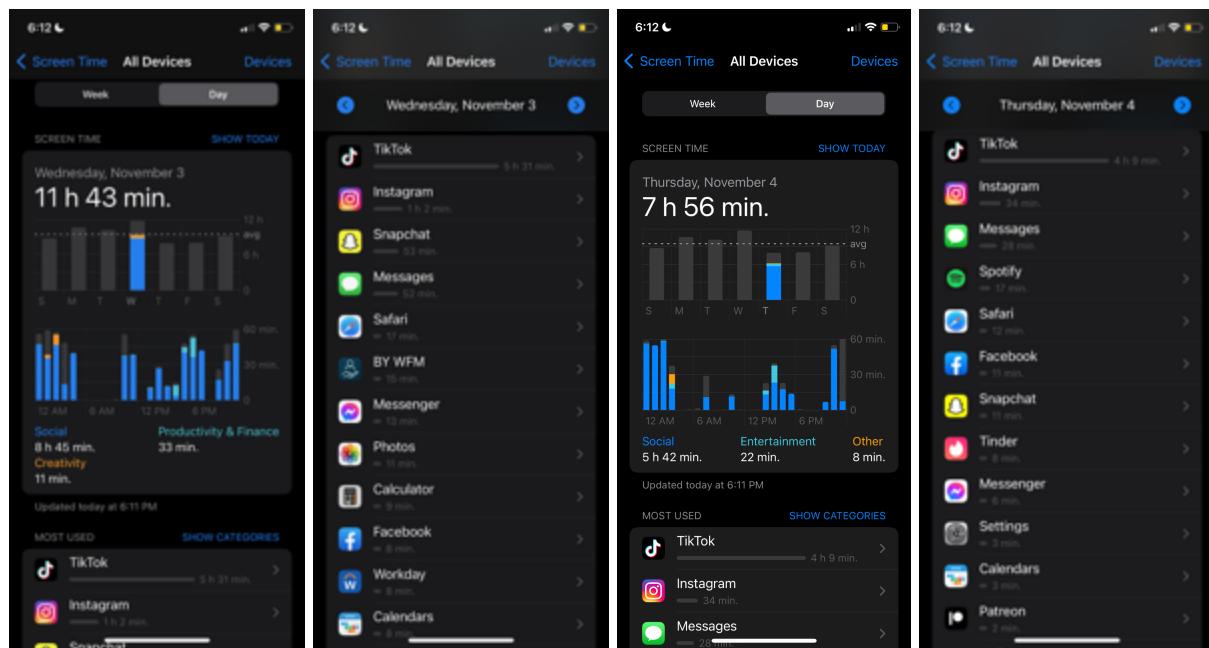
Appendix F

Participant #36 Social Media Screen Time

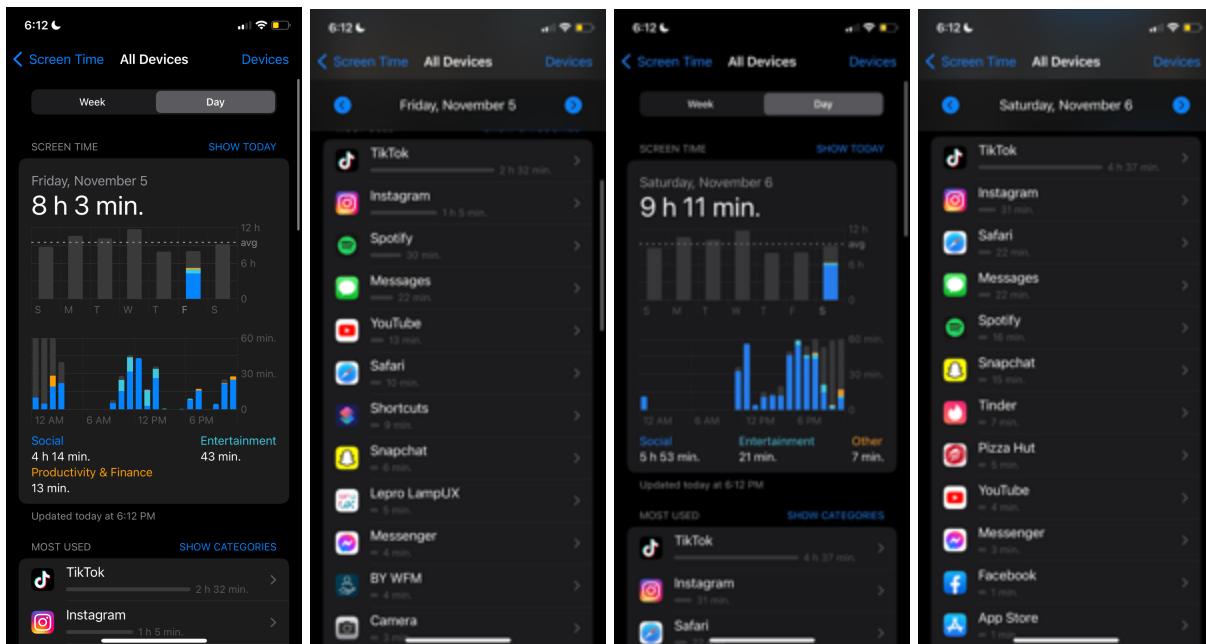
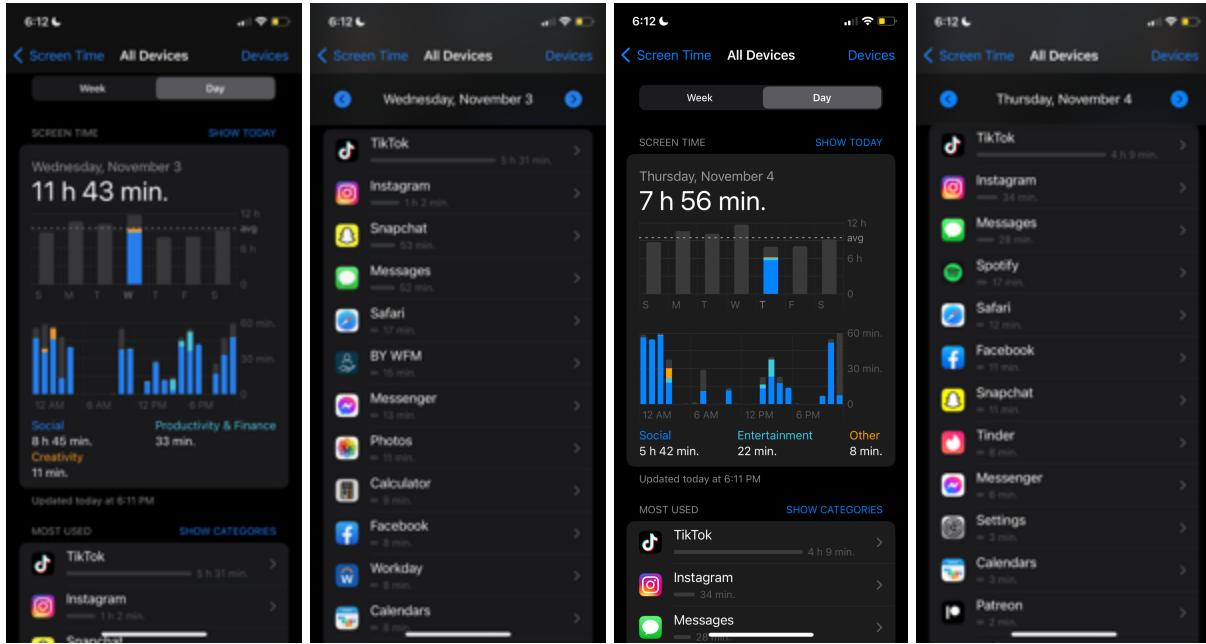


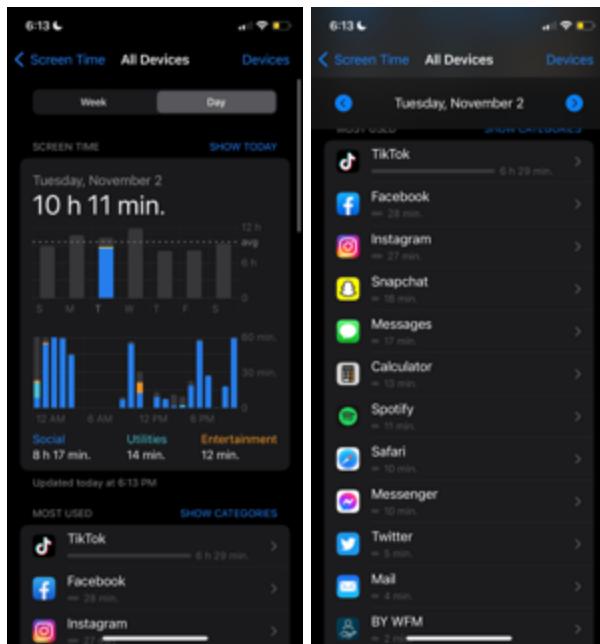
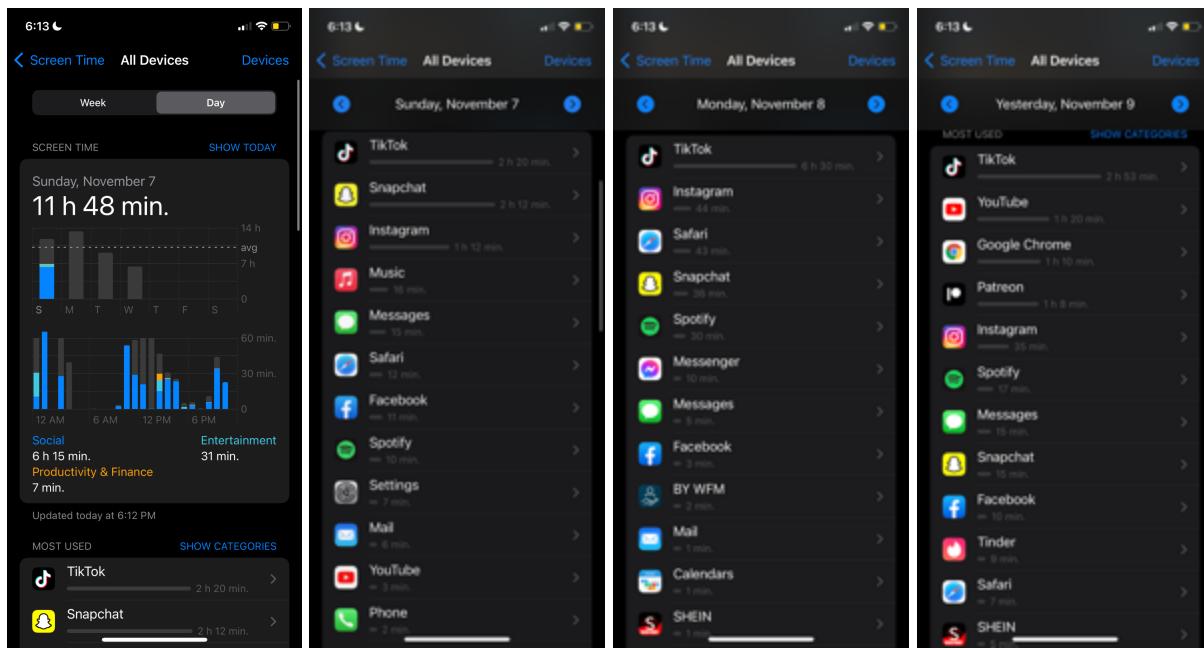


Appendix G
Participant #44 Social Media Screen Time









Appendix H

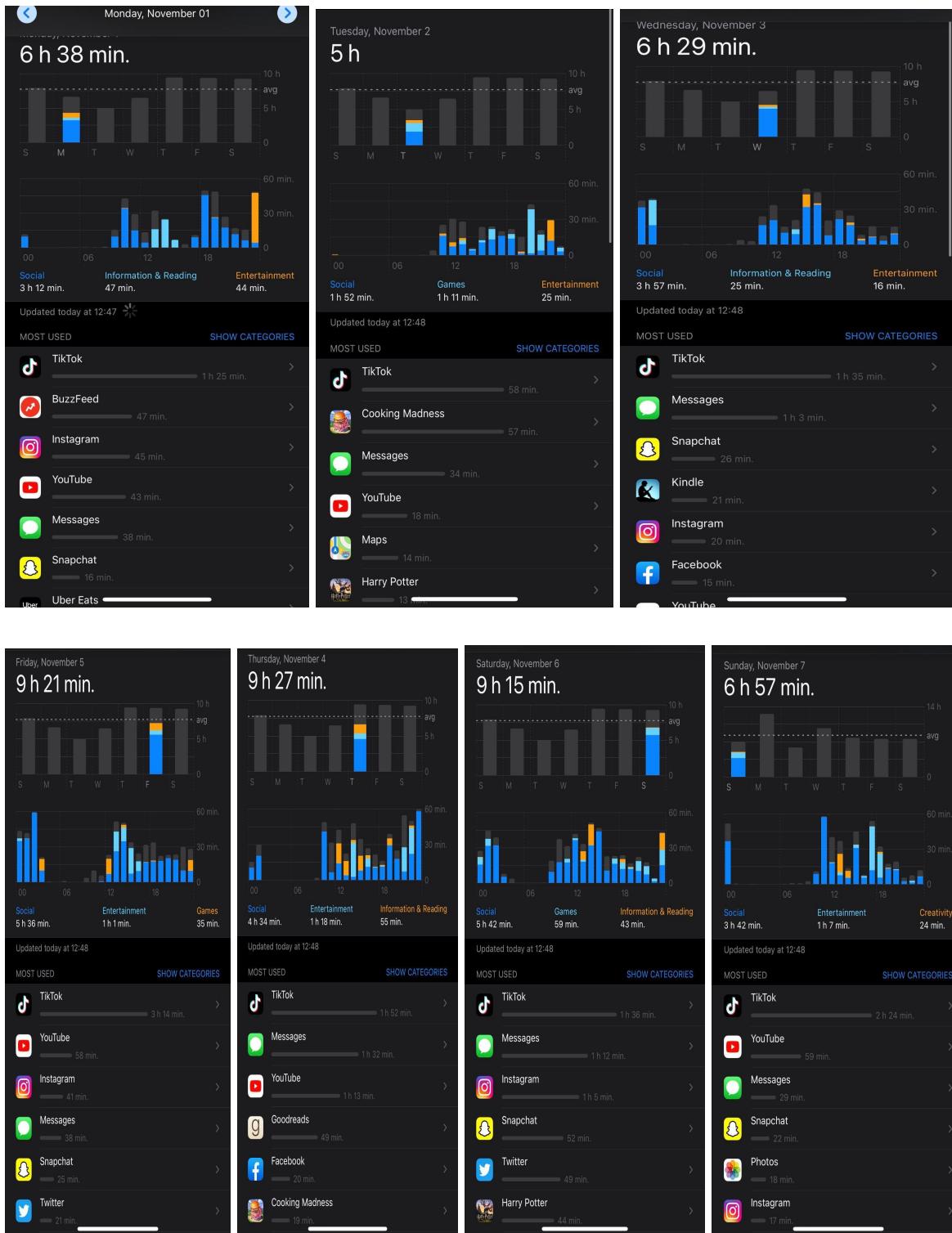
Participant #55 Social Media Screen Time





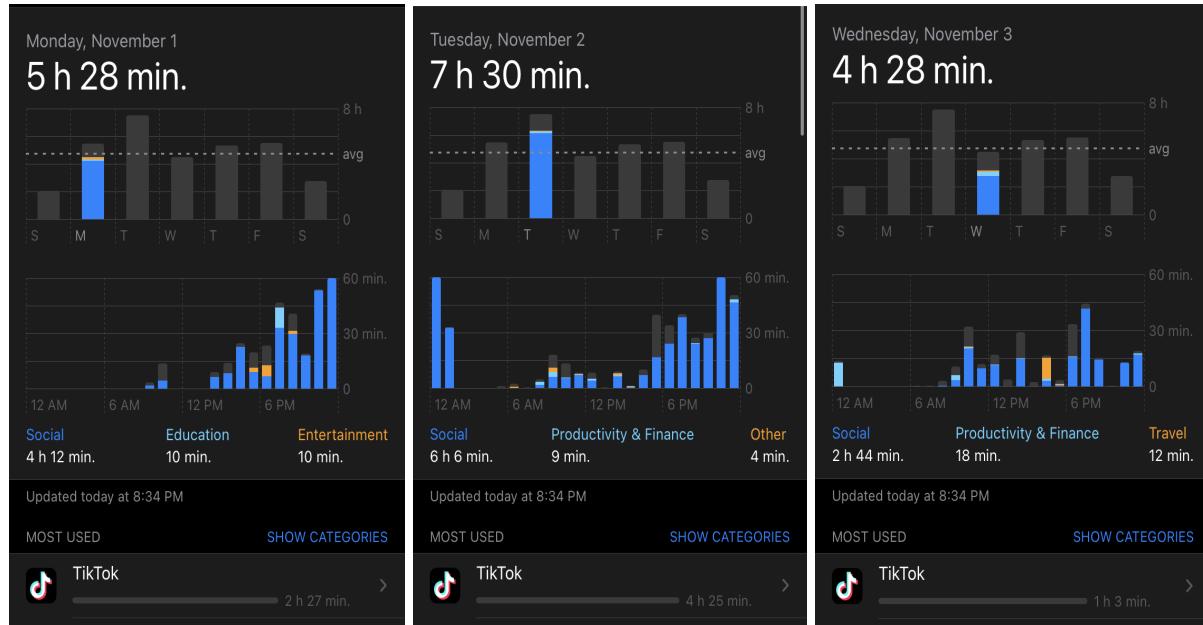
Appendix I

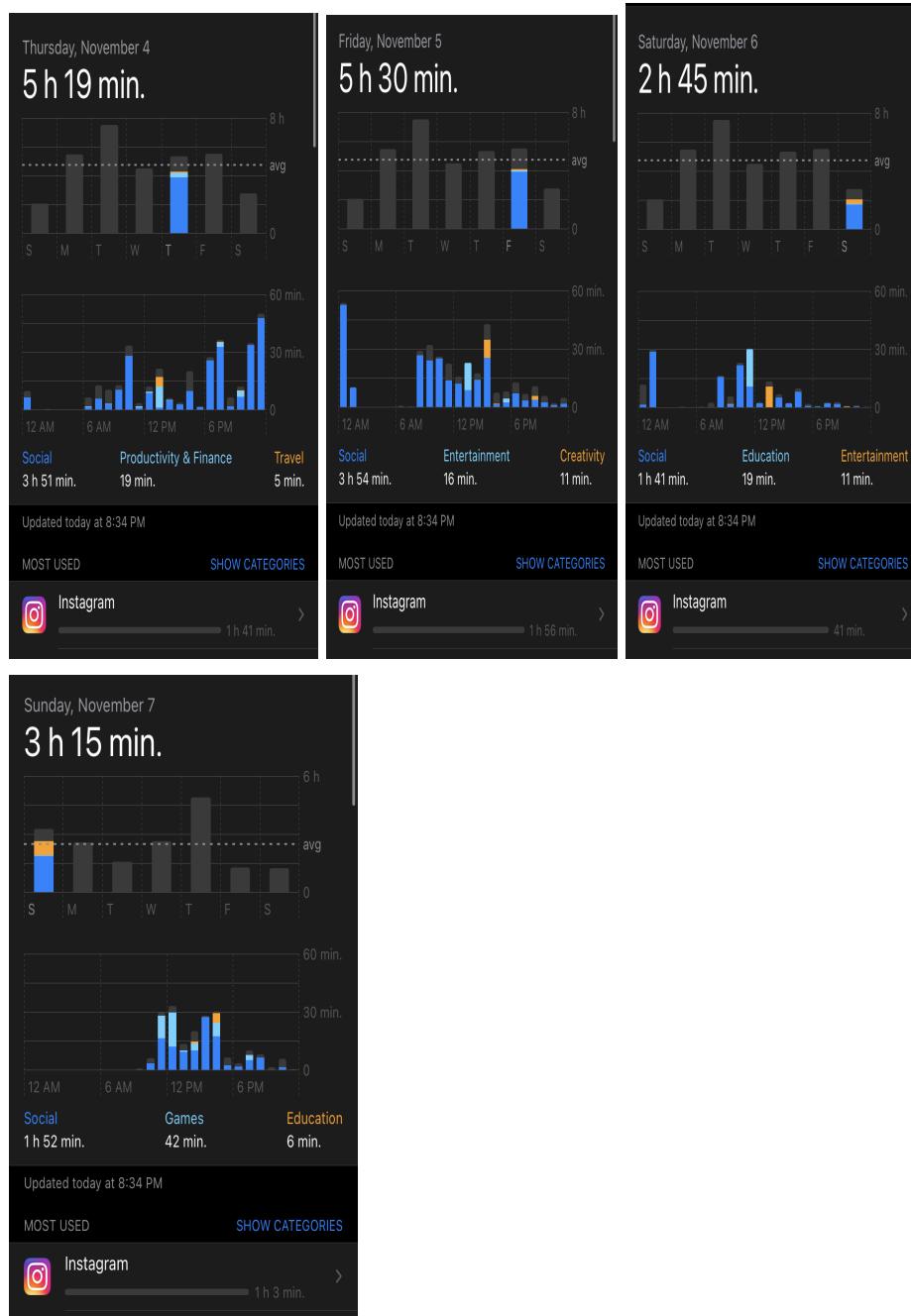
Participant #58 Social Media Screen Time



Appendix J

Participant #66 Social Media Screen Time





Appendix K

Participant #51 Interview Transcript

Participant: You guys have yours (cameras) on, so I'll turn mine on.

Researcher: Okay sounds good. And we're recording now. Do you have any questions about the consent form?

Participant: Uh nope! None come to mind.

Researcher: Okay, um, and we're recording. Do we have your permission to take notes during this?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: Awesome. Thank you. So, this interview will explore your self-report on social media use and individual behaviours. The data collected is confidential between you and us, the research team, and will solely be used for research purposes. We'll go ahead and get started with the first question. What days do you think you use social media the most and what days do you think you use social media the least during the week?

Participant: So, during the week, well on Thursdays I have an online class, so I find when I'm in my online classes I use social media a lot more because I tend to be I guess multitasking when I should be paying attention. So, I think that's the biggest factor is when I'm spending more time on social media, so on Thursdays I have more online classes than my other days. So, Thursday definitely is my biggest day of the week.

Researcher: And what day do you think you would use it the least typically?

Participant: Typically, the day I would use it the least would be Tuesdays. That's when I have in-person classes, most of my classes are in person. So ya that would be the day I use it the least.

Researcher: Okay so kind of depends on your schooling?

Participant: Exactly yeah.

Researcher: Alright. And how do you think that social media has affected your daily routine?

Participant: Hmm, it's kind of hard to say because, I wouldn't say it's disrupted but it's filled into the routine. So, like in the morning I'll check my feeds for news and just updates in general, then throughout the day if there's moments in between classes or just any really moments of brevity. I find myself filling that space with social media, so that's mostly how it works into my routine. But I guess it can be kind of disruptive to my routine in that it can take up time for other planned activities, mainly studying and schoolwork. So that's how it fits into my routine, I guess.

Researcher: Alright thank you. Do you believe having social media positively or negatively affects your mental health or your quality of life in general?

Participant: Um, hm. That's a really good question. I think generally speaking, being on social media really has a negative effect on my mental health. And I only say that just because whenever I do find an opportunity to take like a few days off or something that I'll do is delete TikTok off my phone for a few days. I find that i'm in a much better mood in the days afterwards. But I can't really pinpoint exactly what it is about it that I think is making me have a negative side effect, I guess. But I think yeah overall it's a negative.

Researcher: Sounds good. Would you say that you're dependent on social media?

Participant: Um, yeah I mean yeah I definitely would. Especially since the pandemic started, it's definitely been like my main social input. I'm not sure if you would count Discord as social media but like talking with my friends online and in video chats like this just recreationally has been my main social input. So, I think it has, yeah it has been really important.

Researcher: Okay, I'm going to give you a hypothetical scenario now. Say that all social media is down for the day, you cannot access anything, just not working. How would you react to that and how would it affect you that day?

Participant: I think that I would honestly react extremely positively because to me a lot of the um, like the negative mental health side effects of not using social media that comes with this anxiety or fear of missing out on maybe like a good meme or an important news story or an important life event in the lives of my friends or family. So that's usually when I do take a break from social media, that is an anxiety that's present. But if there was sort of, I guess like, if everybody was offline it would be kind of a security blanket. I think it could feel pretty comforting.

Researcher: Okay so kind of like if everybody doesn't have social media it's fine but if I'm only one then maybe not so fine?

Participant: Exactly, yes.

Researcher: Okay. What would you describe as an excessive use of social media?

Participant: Well, an excessive use of social media. I think social media, something that I think is excessive or I find myself is excessive is posting like too much. I've kind of taken a break from posting on social media since the pandemic started but I found when I was, I was getting too much of an ego boost from the validation that comes with collecting likes and comments and feedback from the other users. And that's what I found to be excessive is when it becomes like that much of a changer on your role. If I made a tweet and it got 10 likes, my day was made, and I was over the moon. But the conversely if I made a tweet and it got 0 likes I was very sour and in a bad mood. So, I think when it plays that big of a role in a person's life then it becomes excessive. And, I should say in my life.

Researcher: Yeah. And kind of following up on that question, would you consider that description of an excessive use of social media similar to social media addiction?

Participant: Yeah, I think it's sort of the prelude to addiction. When I think of social media addiction, I think of people that compulsively post multiple times a day and are very dependent on that feedback and that validation from others. The first thing that comes to my head is I had a friend who had an Instagram account and she had collected something like 10,000 followers and she got hacked. She lost the account, or she thought she lost the account, and it really sent her into a spiral of like a very bad depressive episode. And that to me is what I think is a bad social media addiction. So, I think yeah, excessive use is the prelude to that.

Researcher: Okay. I mean the next question is how would you define social media addiction but I feel like you just covered that so we can skip that one.

Participant: Yeah.

Researcher: Um I'm now going to read you a definition of social media addiction from a research article called "Social media use in emerging adults: Investigating the relationship with social media addiction and social behaviour" by Lauren Larson, to which we find accurate in regard to this research study. "Although social media addiction is not yet a classified psychological disorder in the DSM-5, "a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently but may experience distress without it." So as stated, social media addicts must experience a certain amount of distress in the absence of social media, on top of using it often or using it frequently. So looking back at your personal social media use and your previous answers and taking into consideration that definition. Would you consider yourself addicted to social media?

Participant: Hm. Yeah, I think with, because the way that that statement is phrased it makes it sound like addiction is a spectrum. And I think I definitely could place myself on that in a relative scale. Yeah, I think it would be fair to say that I do have qualities of social media addiction.

Researcher: Okay. Thank you. That wraps up all the questions we have for you. Do you have any questions for us?

Participant: Nope none come to mind.

Researcher: Alright well thank you so much for taking the time to do this, I know you took a chunk out of your day so thank you.

Participant: Oh it's my pleasure anything to help.

Researcher: Thank you, bye!

Participant: Welcome!

Appendix L

Participant #58 Interview

Researcher: So thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with us. Before we get started, do we have your permission to record your answers?

Participant: Yeah of course.

Researcher: Thank you. And do you have any questions about the consent form?

Participant: No, not at all.

Researcher: Perfect. So you may keep your camera on or off, totally up to you.

Participant: I'm just in a weird environment so I might keep it off.

Researcher: That's totally fine. This interview will explore your self-report on social media use and habitual behaviours. The data collected is confidential between you and us, the research team. It will solely be used for research purposes.

Participant: Sounds great.

Researcher: With that, we will jump right in. So the first question is what days do you think you use social media the most and when do you use it least during the week?

Participant: I think I would probably use social media the most on the weekdays more than the weekends because I feel like I usually work more on the weekends. And then during the week it's easier for me to procrastinate around my classes and stuff. Rather than if I'm in a restaurant it's kind of hard for me to actually sit and play on my phone.

Researcher: Yeah, okay. How do you think that social media has affected your daily routine?

Participant: I try not to base a lot of my day around certain apps. I try to stay away from Instagram and stuff. I mostly look for my phone for jokes, anything to crack me up. I more use it for kind of a relief or whatever kind of thing rather than like a comparative tool. I don't know what I'm trying to say.

Researcher: That makes sense. Do you believe social media positively or negatively affects your mental health and quality of life overall?

Participant: I think it positively affects my quality of life overall because I feel like I'm choosing to use it "responsibly." Back to my point I said, I don't really use it as a comparative tool. I don't really give a \$h!t what's going on, oh I probably shouldn't swear in here, but I don't really care what's going on on Instagram or any of that. I use it as more of a "oh that what a stressful class, why don't I go look for some jokes." I feel like it's not ruining my life by using it. I'm not sure.

Researcher: Okay. Well I guess that kind of answers the next question which was "would you say that you are dependent on social media"

Participant: Yeah I would probably say not much

Researcher: So for the next question, let's say in a hypothetical scenario, all social media platforms are down for the day and you cannot access anything. How would you react to that and how would that affect you for that day?

Participant: I feel like I get a little bit annoyed when that happens, but I feel like overall it's not the end of the world for me. I feel like I get more annoyed when its less social media sites and more functional sites like Gmail or Blackboard goes down. I feel like that really annoys me. But

when Instagram goes down, I just join in with the jokes about everyone else instead of letting it ruin my whole day.

Researcher: Okay. What would you describe as an excessive use of social media?

Participant: Oh god. I feel like I use my phone a lot so it's hard to say but I feel like upwards of 9 hours each day would be crazy. Are you guys looking for like a measurement in hours?

Researcher: That too. Just overall what do you think would be considered "okay this is excessive this is too much use?"

Participant: Ah okay, probably upwards of like 12 hours in a day. I think I reached that once in covid but other than that yeah that's probably good. Unless you have like a job where you're supposed to be monitoring social media all day. Cause that would for sure affect it as well.

Researcher: Okay. So piggybacking off of that, would you consider your description of excessive use of social media similar to addiction?

Participant: Yeah I would say that.

Researcher: Okay. So in your own terms, how would you define social media addiction?

Participant: I would think anytime it would cause you feelings of discomfort whether emotionally or physically. When you can't use it or you feel anxious if you're away from your phone and feel like something like that.

Researcher: Okay. So we will now read you a definition of social media addiction from a research article called "Social media use in emerging adults: Investigating the relationship with social media addiction and social behaviour" by Lauren Larson, to which we find accurate in regards to this research study. "Although social media addiction is not yet a classified

psychological disorder in the DSM-5, “a key aspect of social media addiction is that individuals do not only use social media more frequently, but may experience distress without it.” So with that, looking back at your personal social media use and your previous answers, throughout this research study, would you consider yourself addicted to social media?

Participant: So I wouldn't consider myself addicted to social media, well maybe certain platforms, I don't know. You probably need a yes or no. No, I would say I'm not addicted to social media.

Researcher: Okay. You did mention something about platforms so do you think you use more platforms specifically than social media as a whole? Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

Participant: Yeah for sure like I feel like I use apps less like Facebook or Instagram where I have to keep up with people. I'm more likely to use like TikTok or something to spend my time where I don't have to directly interact with anybody but I'm still getting enjoyment out of it. I feel like I spend most of my time on apps like that or Buzzfeed. I don't really like interacting with people on social media.

Researcher: That makes sense. Okay well that concludes our interview, do you have any questions for us?

Participant: I'm good. Thank you guys so much!

Researcher: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this, we appreciate it.

Participant: Thank you guys, have a great rest of your day.

Researcher: You too, thank you.

Appendix M

Examples Sent to Participants on How to Access Screen Time Logs

