# Social Media

The following is based on the study by Patrick Powell and his colleagues in 2013:

Researchers want to investigate how social media affects participants and their daily lives. Their main research questions were:

## Main research questions:

1. How do participants view their experiences on social networks?
2. How do social networks affect their relationships?

They recruited students (undergraduate and graduate) from American universities to share their thoughts. Participants varied from checking social media every few minutes to never having used social media. Most participants check social media at least once a week or more. They managed to find 50 students from 3 different universities. All interviews lasted about an hour.

# **Choose One (1 or 2):**

# Option 1:

The researchers interviewed each student individually. They had some questions prepared but also allowed the students to direct the topic of the interviews. They took the quotes from the students and analyzed them based on themes related to the research questions.

# Results

## Relationships:

The researchers believe most participants prefer social media connections to real life connections but know that real life connections are deeper. Here are some of the data from the interviews:

“It’s [social media] how I stay in touch with a lot of people. A lot of my former coworkers at my previous job, that’s how I stay in touch with them. A couple of my college friends, high school friends, so you know I get home from work I don’t want to go anywhere. I’m not a physically social kind of person. It allows me to stay in touch with people, some of whom live across the ocean.”

“I talked to people [on social networking sites] because I was bored and lonely [in offline life]”

“You feel really alone if you cannot connect to others on social media.”

“I met people at work and school. I added them on Facebook so I could reach them if I needed to and ask them a question or learn more about them and see what they posted that I might not know about. It’s become more to enhance real life relationships.”

“I would spend more time on social media than I would talking to my family and friends in real life. It’s easy to forget to reach out.”

“I would rather send someone a message online than call them on the phone. Sometimes I don’t want to leave the house so it’s a good way to keep in touch with people.”

“My mother-in-law tells me there are other things I could be doing [besides social networking].”

“It’s easier for me to have an online relationship because it’s shallower and less in depth [than offline relationships].”

## Experiences:

Most participants want to quit social media but cannot. This is more true if the participants are female. Here are some of the data from the interviews:

“Every other day I think I should stop using social media.”

“I am incapable of not playing online games with my friends.”

“I sometimes sit in the same room as my partner or my friends, but we do not talk. We would all be on our phones at the same time and be sending messages to others.”

“I open my phone and go to Facebook without even thinking.”

“I go on social media sites when I first wake up, first get into work, intermittently throughout my workday, during lunch break, at least every hour.”

“People always are sharing new information so I feel like it’s overwhelming just to check it once a day. Then you’re overwhelmed with a lot of information. There’s a lot of things I want to look at, but don’t have time all at once like read a news story or watch a news clip. For me I need to catch up every couple of hours to see so I don’t have to do all of it at once.”

“I want to back down more from usage and the Internet in general, especially when I come home at night. I want to read more and get away from all of that.”

“I waste a lot of time there and I avoid doing things that I should be doing such as school or work-work. It’s really helpful for procrastination.”

# Option 2:

The researchers distributed online links to questionnaires to the participants. The participants must fill out the questionnaires individually but they can choose to do so anytime they like. The questionnaires took about 30 minutes to finish. There were 45 items on the questionnaire. The questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale and the responses were added up and evaluated statistically.

# Results:

## Relationships

There was a negative correlation between the time participants spent on social media apps and the time they spent with friends and family (the more time spent on social media, the less they spend with people).

Students who spent more time on social media also tended to have more friends online but spend less time chatting with them.

Here is the table with data on time spent and relationships:

## Experiences

There was a positive correlation between the time spent on social media and the level of loneliness and depression within the students. Frequent social media users also reported experiencing more stress in school. Here is a table of the number of participants in each category:



# Discussion topics

Are these results generalizable to the public (i.e. would everyone feel the same way or is there a unique situation that leads to these feelings)?

Are the participants addicted? Why?

Does social media help or harm connections that people form? Why?

What are some notable data? Why are they like that?