

Beyond the Screen

Examining Social Media Exposure and Mental Well Being Among iPhone Users in College

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Background

- Studies have linked social media use to negative mental health outcomes due to:
 - Algorithmic reinforcement of negative biases (Rasmussen et. al, 2020)
 - Exposure to idealized images
 - Comparison-induced anxiety
- Increased social media use is associated with:
 - Feelings of social isolation (Bekalu, 2019)
 - Anxiety (Bekalu, 2019)
- Emotional attachment to social media correlates with poorer social well-being and mental health (Cain, 2018)
- Our study aims to:
 - Identify how different content influences individuals' mental health
 - Explore correlations between content volume and outcomes among UCSD students

Methods

- In April and May of 2024, anonymous surveys were distributed to UCSD undergraduate students owning iPhones via Qualtrics.
- Surveys were distributed through the BSPH email as well as physically distributed within Geisel library.
- From this, individuals completed the survey, providing data produced through their iPhone 'Screen Time' settings.
- Outcome: Assessment of positive and negative affectivity.
- Variables: Social media use (operationalized via iPhone's 'Screen Time' tool), demographic factors (age, major, class level), positive and negative affectivity scores.
- The PANAS short form is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess an individual's current emotional state by measuring positive and negative affectivity



Results

Table 1: Demographics

| Characteristic | Overall, N = 50 ¹ | Females, N = 28 ¹ | Males, N = 22 ¹ | p-value ² |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Age (in years) | | | | > 0.99 |
| < 18 | 1 (2.0%) | 1 (3.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | |
| 18-20 | 27 (54.0%) | 15 (53.6%) | 12 (54.5%) | |
| 21-23 | 20 (40.0%) | 11 (39.3%) | 9 (40.9%) | |
| 25+ | 2 (4.0%) | 1 (3.6%) | 1 (4.5%) | |
| Major | | | | 0.004 |
| Non-Stem | 19 (38.0%) | 15 (53.6%) | 4 (18.2%) | |
| Stem | 23 (46.0%) | 7 (25.0%) | 16 (72.7%) | |
| Other | 8 (16.0%) | 6 (21.4%) | 2 (9.1%) | |
| Class Level | | | | 0.12 |
| Freshman | 6 (12.0%) | 3 (10.7%) | 3 (13.6%) | |
| Sophomore | 15 (30.0%) | 9 (32.1%) | 6 (27.3%) | |
| Junior | 16 (32.0%) | 12 (42.9%) | 4 (18.2%) | |
| Senior | 13 (26.0%) | 4 (14.3%) | 9 (40.9%) | |
| Social Media Daily Average | | | | 0.96 |
| 0-3 hrs | 20 (40.0%) | 11 (39.3%) | 9 (40.9%) | |
| 3-6 hrs | 21 (42.0%) | 12 (42.9%) | 9 (40.9%) | |
| 6-9 hrs | 5 (10.0%) | 3 (10.7%) | 2 (9.1%) | |
| 9-12 hrs | 1 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (4.5%) | |
| 12+ hrs | 3 (6.0%) | 2 (7.1%) | 1 (4.5%) | |

¹ n (%)
² Fisher's exact test

Table 2: Positive Affectivity

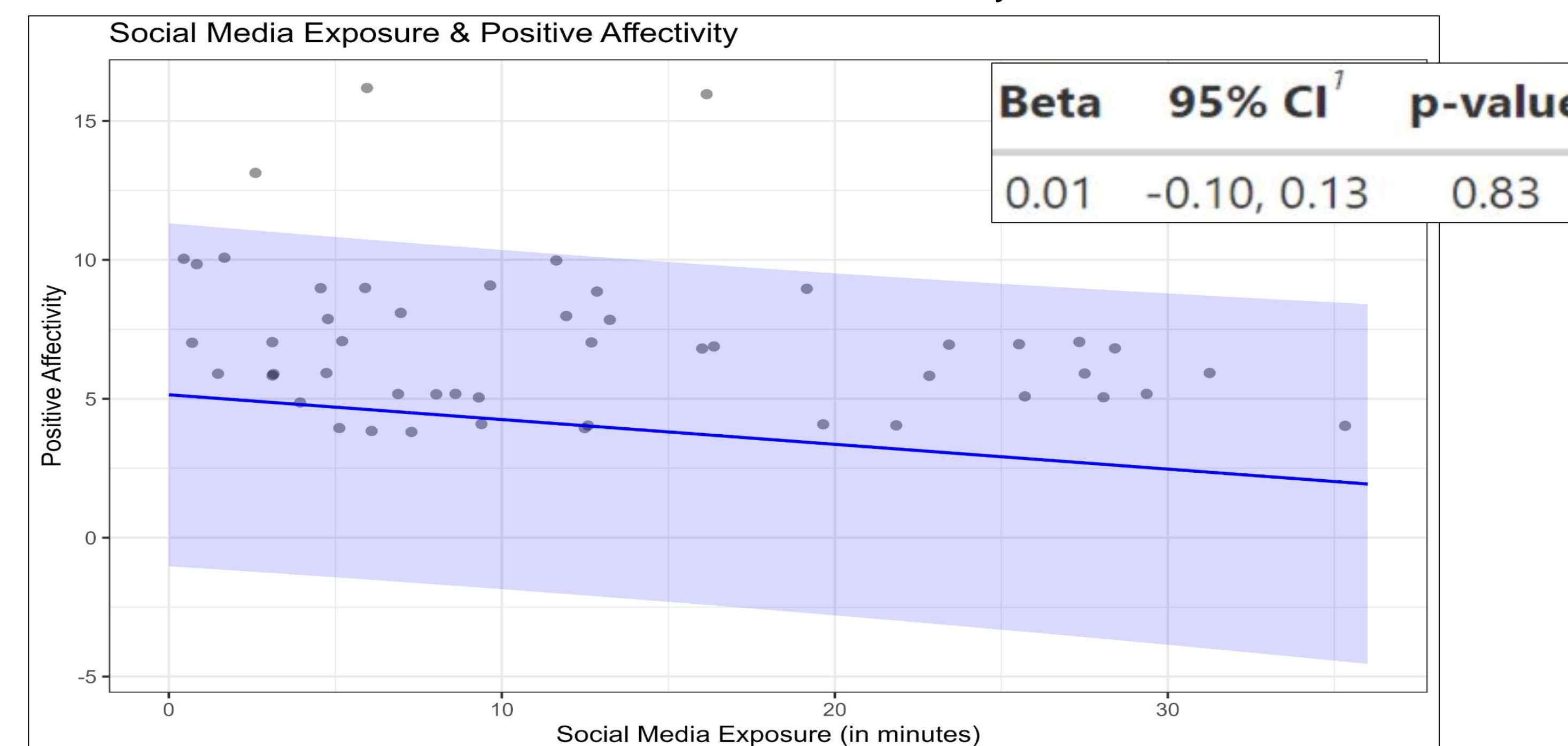
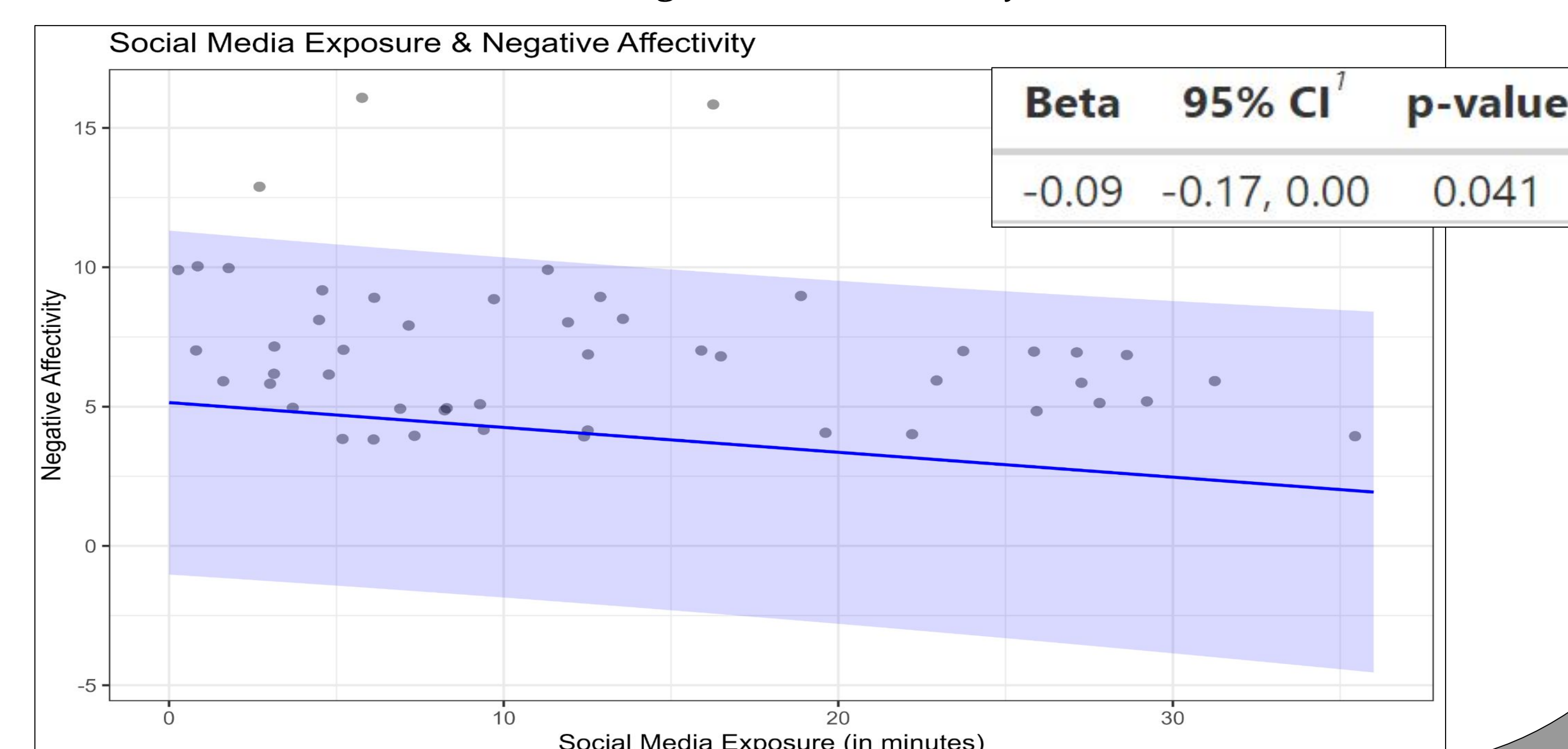


Table 3: Negative Affectivity



Policy Implications

- Incorporating digital literacy into school curriculum that teaches students about the psychological impacts of social media.
- Workshops and training for parents to guide their children on how to use social media responsibly.
- Implementing policies that require social media companies to monitor and mitigate harmful content that can contribute to negative affectivity.
- Community guidelines enforcement on social media platforms.
- Targeted interventions/further research of groups that are particularly vulnerable to negative impacts of social media.

Conclusions

- There was a significant correlation found between social media exposure and negative affectivity, however there was no correlation between exposure and positive affectivity
- No correlation found between exposure and major or age

