**Social Media Use and Risky Behaviors in Adolescence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis**

Anna Vannucci, Emily G. Simpson, Sonja Gagnon, and Christine McCauley Ohannessian
Connecticut Children’s; University of Connecticut

**Introduction**
The social media context may exacerbate adolescents’ propensity for risky behaviors (Nesi, Choukas-Bradley, & Prinstein, 2018). Research in this area is burgeoning, but not well integrated. As such, this meta-analytic study examined the associations between social media use and risky behaviors across studies of adolescents.

**Methods**
Structured query language searched PsycInfo, PubMed, Google Scholar, and Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global, which yielded 2,067 articles that were screened by two independent raters (κ = .77). The final sample included 27 independent cross-sectional studies with 67,407 adolescents (Mage = 15.5, range: 12.6-18.0 years; 51.7% girls; 57.2% White).

**Results**
Positive correlations were found between social media use and engagement in risky behaviors overall, substance use, risky sexual acts, and violent behaviors (r's = .19-.23, p < .001). Studies assessing solely Facebook/MySpace use in relation to substance use had smaller effect sizes than studies assessing contemporary social media platforms (B = .03, p < .05, R² = .26). Younger samples also had larger effect sizes for studies on social media use and risky sexual acts (B = .06, p < .05, R² = .30). There was evidence for publication bias.

**Discussion**
This meta-analysis indicates that more time spent using social media is linked to more frequent engagement in risky behaviors during adolescence. Longitudinal and meditational studies are needed to clarify directionality and make more specific practice and policy recommendations so that social media is a safe context in which adolescents can thrive.

---

**Adolescents who spend more time using social media are more likely to use substances, have risky sex, and commit violent acts.**

---

**NOTABLE VISUALS**

**Table 1. Results of Random Effects Models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r (95% CI)</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>I²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risky Behaviors</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67,407</td>
<td>.21 (.16-.25)</td>
<td>1055.4*</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36,228</td>
<td>.19 (.12-.26)</td>
<td>656.5*</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Sexual Acts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23,098</td>
<td>.21 (.15-.28)</td>
<td>319.1*</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Insufficient studies (k = 3) to conduct a random effects model for violent behaviors (rs = .07-.23, ps < .001). *p < .001.

**Table 2. Forest Plot**

**Figure 1. Funnel Plot**

**Figure 2. Age Effects**