

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND RISKY BEHAVIORS IN ADOLESCENCE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

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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 ($\kappa = .77$). The final sample included 27 independent cross-sectional studies with 67,407 adolescents ($M_{age} = 15.5$, range: 12.6-18.0 years; 51.7% girls; 57.2% White).

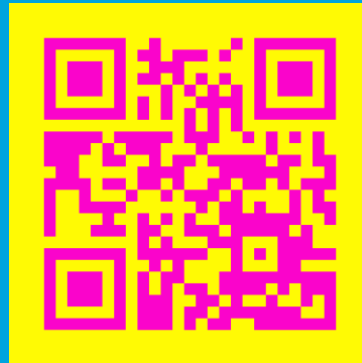
RESULTS

Positive correlations were found between social media use and engagement in risky behaviors overall, substance use, risky sexual acts, and violent behaviors ($r_s = .19-.23$, $p_s < .001$). Studies assessing solely Facebook/MySpace use in relation to substance use had smaller effect sizes than studies assessing contemporary social media platforms ($B = -0.03$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .26$). Younger samples also had larger effect sizes for studies on social media use and risky sexual acts ($B = -0.06$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .30$). 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 mediational 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

Outcome	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i> (95% CI)	<i>Q</i>	<i>I</i> ²
Risky Behaviors	27	67,407	.21 (.16-.25)	1055.4*	.97
Substance Use	14	36,228	.19 (.12-.26)	656.5*	.98
Risky Sexual Acts	14	23,098	.21 (.15-.28)	319.1*	.95

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

Table 2. Forest Plot

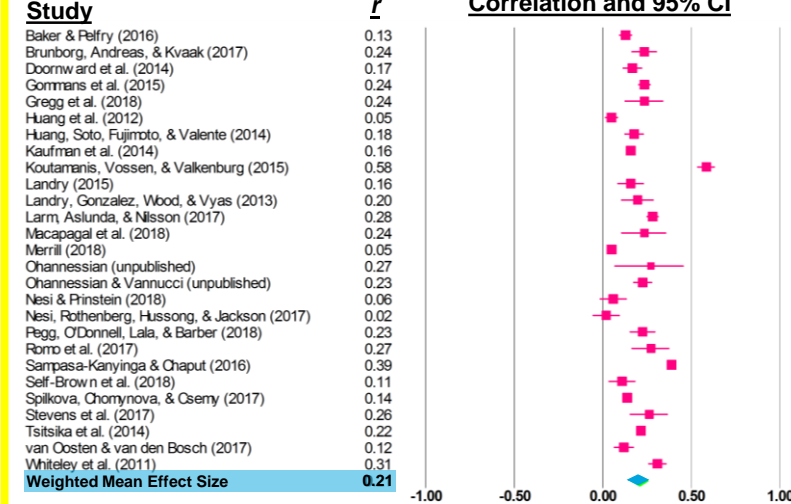


Figure 1. Funnel Plot

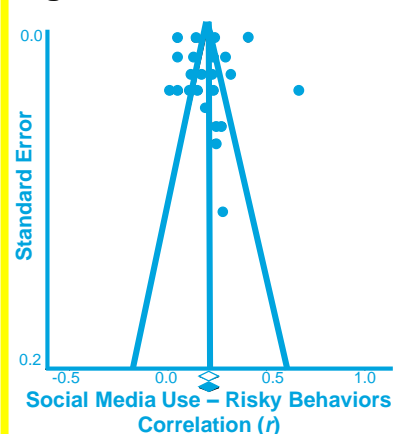


Figure 2. Age Effects

