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### The protective influence of relationship commitment on the effects of Facebook addiction on marital disaffection

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## The Protective Influence of Relationship Commitment on the Effects of Facebook Addiction on Marital Disaffection

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### ABSTRACT

Previous research has suggested that Facebook use can lead to adverse romantic relationship outcomes due to interpersonal conflicts, interactions with potential romantic alternatives, and jealousy. However, these associations have been explored mainly with undergraduates, focusing primarily on conflict rather than emotional disengagement. The current study examined the associations between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection (e.g., loss of love, emotional disengagement) amongst 138 (95 females and 43 males) cohabiting married Facebook users residing in the United States. The results revealed that Facebook addiction and marital disaffection were positively related, even after controlling for relationship commitment. Additionally, greater relationship commitment weakened the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection. There are likely multiple explanations for the current findings; however, results suggest that higher levels of relationship commitment may protect spouses against the negative relationship outcomes associated with Facebook addiction. Future longitudinal work with couples is needed to clarify the directionality of the relationship between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection.

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### KEYWORDS

Facebook addiction;  
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marital disaffection;  
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Social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkedIn, are virtual communities that individuals use to interact with other users who have shared interests (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). In line with uses and gratifications perspectives (e.g., Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), some of these SNSs, such as LinkedIn, are used for utilitarian purposes, such as finding a job or career development; others, like Facebook and Snapchat, are used mainly for hedonic purposes, such as seeking and maintaining social connections (Chen, 2011). In general, these popular SNSs provide a medium for the exchange of social information,

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which serves to increase social closeness (Neubaum & Krämer, 2015). However, and perhaps because of this social reinforcement, SNSs are addictive for some individuals (Hong, Huang, Lin, & Chiu, 2014). In fact, for some, Facebook use is the single most important activity of their daily routine (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). According to recent statistics, the average person spends two hours on social media daily, while teens spend up to nine hours on social media daily (Mediakix, 2018). Social media is so attention absorbing that 50% of individuals check social media while driving, and 70% sleep next to their phones, with 10% of teens checking their phone more than ten times per night (Mediakix, 2018). A compulsive attachment to Facebook that interferes with the users' everyday activities and causes problems in interpersonal relationships is referred to as Facebook intrusion (Elphinston & Noller, 2011) or Facebook addiction (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012; Satici & Uysal, 2015; Young, Kuss, Griffiths, & Howard, 2017).

Problematic use has the potential to disrupt relationships beyond that of regular use because dependency is characterized by obsessive and impulsive behaviors (Kim, Seo, & David, 2015). SNS addiction is a subtype of Internet addiction and shows a positive relationship with sleep disturbances, extraversion, neuroticism (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019; Blachnio et al., 2016), and mental illness (Abbasi & Dibble, 2019). In fact, Facebook addiction is similar to substance addiction in many ways, with symptoms such as salience (preoccupation with Facebook use), mood modification (mood alterations due to Facebook use), tolerance (increased Facebook use is required to achieve the same pleasure that was first achieved with less usage), conflict (problems arise at work or in close relationships due to Facebook use), withdrawal (adverse consequences psychologically and/or physiologically when Facebook use is constricted), and relapse (reinstatement after efforts to control use; Andreassen et al., 2012). Moreover, as with substance abuse, Facebook addiction is associated with escapism (Young et al., 2017), and those with low levels of happiness and life satisfaction may be particularly prone to its problematic use (Satici & Uysal, 2015). Addictions to social media, generally, have been linked with poor academic performance in college (Tsitsika et al., 2011), problematic identity formation (e.g., through negative comparisons with others, Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011), and decreased relationship quality (Milani, Osualdella, & Di Blasio, 2009).

Facebook use and/or addiction can potentially disrupt romantic relationships through at least three different routes. First, everyday technology use can influence the quality of face-to-face interactions and family time, which may lead to decreased relationship quality and drive further technology use (David & Roberts, 2017; McDaniel, 2015; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016a,b; McDaniel et al., 2018; Roberts & David, 2016). Second, SNSs could be used

to solicit or maintain relationships with alternative relationship partners. Research has shown that people use SNSs to collect, interpret, and evaluate online information about current, past, and potential romantic partners (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013), solicit new romantic partners (Drouin, Miller, & Dibble, 2014), maintain communication with alternative romantic partners (Dibble & Drouin, 2014; Dibble, Drouin, Aune, & Boller, 2015), and engage in infidelity-related behaviors (McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017). Third, social media can influence the perception of romantic partners, especially among those who perceive the idyllic display of a perfect relationship on media as real and derogate their own relationships (Coyne, McDaniel, & Stockdale, 2017; Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014). Considering the many routes by which SNSs might negatively affect relationships, it is unsurprising that a growing body of research has shown that SNS use is associated with relationship discord, including conflict, lack of intimacy, jealousy, and relationship dissolution (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013; Cravens, Leckie, & Whiting, 2013; Drouin et al., 2014; Elphinston & Noller, 2011).

Although it is reasonable to expect that high levels of SNS use, and particularly SNS addiction, might disrupt well-established romantic connections, the research on SNS use and relationship discord has focused mainly on use rather than addiction, and it has been conducted primarily with young adult college students. Only a few known studies (e.g., Abbasi, 2018a,b; 2019a; Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017b,c; Abbasi, Rattan, Kousar, & Elsayed, 2017; McDaniel et al., 2017) have examined SNS use among married individuals, and none of these studies have examined the effects of Facebook addiction, specifically, on marital disaffection, nor the role of commitment in moderating these associations among married partners.

### **Marital disaffection and Facebook addiction**

Marital disaffection is a gradual deterioration of care, love, and emotional attachment, and a developing sense of emotional indifference toward one's spouse (Kayser, 1993; Kayser & Rao, 2006). This emotional indifference is synonymously referred to as romantic disengagement (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008) or marital disaffection (Kayser, 1993). All conceptual definitions of disaffection have one feature in common: emotional distancing (German, 2013). In essence, disaffection consists of emotional, behavioral, affective, and cognitive components that are focused on increasing physical, psychological, and emotional distance between partners (Barry et al., 2008). Marital disaffection is a related but separate construct from marital dissatisfaction, marital breakdown, and marital dissolution. It is not synonymous with marital dissatisfaction, because

although both may be related to low levels of marital adjustment and marital happiness, marital disaffection can be transitory and occur simultaneously with positive feelings towards the partner (Kayser & Rao, 2006). Meanwhile, marital breakdown refers to a decline in the attractiveness of marriage, developing feelings of ambivalence, and marital conflicts, but emotional indifference does not define it (Kayser & Rao, 2006). Finally, marital dissolution is not the same as marital disaffection; disaffection represents a loss of love but does not necessarily predict divorce; disaffected couples do not always dissolve their marriages (Kayser & Rao, 2006), which may be due to financial or family considerations.

With regard to potential links between marital disaffection and Facebook addiction, the *time displacement hypothesis* suggests that time is not elastic (Nie, 2001; Nie & Hillygus, 2002); therefore, people who spend excessive time on Internet-based SNSs may spend less time fostering intimacy in their face-to-face relationships (Nie & Erbring, 2000). This idea is consistent with recent research that has demonstrated that greater device use is associated with a lack of intimacy and lower perceived relationship quality (Halpern & Katz, 2017). Therefore, Facebook addiction could lead to marital disaffection simply because individuals are spending more time on their devices (perhaps obsessively and impulsively) and less time with their spouses, decreasing levels of emotional intimacy and creating indifference. In line with this proposition, one of the key underlying factors of marital disaffection is a lack of emotional intimacy (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017a; Kayser, 1993, 1996). Alternatively, time spent on devices has the potential to create conflict within romantic relationships (Halpern & Katz, 2017; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016a; McDaniel et al., 2018; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012; Roberts & David, 2016). For example, a partner might argue or complain about an individual's device use (Halpern & Katz, 2017; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). Although voiced conflict may help to resolve relationship issues, it might also cause partners to disengage and withdraw (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Nichols, Backer-Fulghum, Boska, & Sanford, 2015). This *demand/withdraw pattern of conflict avoidance* is relatively common among couples, particularly distressed couples (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). In this case, those addicted to Facebook who are encountering conflict related to their excessive use might withdraw from their partner. In turn, as Facebook addiction is linked with escapism, especially common among those who are unhappy and dissatisfied (Satici & Uysal, 2015; Young et al., 2017), this may spur a greater dependence on Facebook as a method to escape further relationship conflict.

Marital disaffection might also stem from an individual's excessive Facebook use for soliciting connections or communicating with potential alternative partners online, or even making unfavorable social comparisons



derogating spouse and/or relationship based on idealized portrayals of others' romantic relationships. Rusbult's (1980) investment model suggests that commitment to one's partner is affected not only by one's level of satisfaction with and investment in the relationship, but also by the quality of alternatives to the relationship (Rusbult, Agnew, & Ximena, 2011). Therefore, those who perceive that they have better alternatives to their current romantic relationship often demonstrate less commitment to their partner (Le & Agnew, 2003; VanderDrift, Lehmiller, & Kelly, 2012), which might manifest as the emotional indifference that is the hallmark of marital disaffection. Additionally, viewing media that portrays dream-like relationships may influence individuals' perception of a perfect relationship (Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014). For some, the portrayal of an ideal relationship on media may lead partners to negatively evaluate their own partner and become disillusioned or dissatisfied in their relationship (Coyne et al., 2017; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Smith Lebeau & Buckingham, 2008). Combined, these studies suggest that Facebook addiction may result in marital disaffection through contact with alternative romantic partners (and a reassessment of the quality of their alternatives) and/or discontentment stemming from unfavorable social comparisons of their own relationship with idealized portrayals of others' romantic relationships.

Relationship commitment offers one potential buffer between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection. Commitment has been defined as the willingness and determination to work through troubled times in a relationship (Lauer & Lauer, 1986); it is also a robust and direct predictor of relationship stability and breakup (Agnew, 2009). Committed individuals often make a greater number of accommodations to maintain relationship harmony (e.g., Rusbult et al., 2011). For example, high commitment predicts behavioral accommodation such as inhibiting negative retaliatory behaviors, acting in the best interest of a partner (foregoing personal preferences), and forgiving a partner despite betrayal (Rusbult et al., 2011). Thus, those high in commitment may be less prone to the negative relational consequences of Facebook addiction. For example, when SNS conflict arises, those high in commitment may be more likely to accommodate their partner's needs and give up detrimental SNS behaviors (such as sending and accepting friend's request with romantic interest, chatting with potential partners, monitoring potential partner's profile, adding an incorrect relationship status, blocking the primary partner, sharing relationship conflicts) in the interest of maintaining relationship satisfaction. Although this relationship has not been explored directly in the existing SNS and technology use research, there is some recent evidence that those with higher levels of commitment may be less engaged in negative SNS behaviors. Specifically, McDaniel et al. (2017) found that married individuals who



expressed less ambivalent feelings about their relationship (i.e., feeling trapped, feeling unsure about continuing their relationship, etc.) engaged in fewer infidelity-related behaviors on SNSs. Based on theories related to commitment (e.g., Rusbult et al., 2011) and prior research, we expected that commitment might act as a buffer against the potential negative effects of Facebook addiction on marital disaffection. In other words, the level of Facebook addiction may not matter as much in relationships where there is high commitment because partners high in commitment derogate alternatives, have high investment, and are more forgiving and more likely to inhibit negative retaliatory behaviors (e.g., Rusbult et al., 2011).

In the current study, we examined Facebook addiction as a predictor of disaffection, and explored feelings of commitment as a potential moderator in the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection. The hypotheses were: Facebook addiction would be positively related to marital disaffection (H1), and marital commitment would moderate the effect of Facebook addiction on marital disaffection such that the greater the commitment, the weaker the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection (H2).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 138 participants (95 females, 43 males) ranging in age from 19 years to 70 years ( $M = 36.54$ ,  $SD = 10.92$ ) were included in the analyses. Participants had to be adult Facebook users (18 years or older) in a heterosexual and cohabiting marital relationship, and residing in the United States. The sample spanned a range of occupations and consisted of 70.3% White, 10.1% Asian, 7.2% African American, 5.1% Hispanic, 3.6% Native American, and 3.6% unknown. Education level ranged greatly among the participants such that 28.9% had a high school diploma, 25.9% had an Associate's degree, 27.4% had a Bachelor's degree, 13.3% had a Master's degree, 3.7% had a Doctorate degree, and 0.7% had a Post-Doctoral degree.

### **Procedure**

The institutional review board at a U.S. public university approved the present study. The study included an online anonymous survey administered through the SurveyMonkey website. The survey link was shared on the research website of the approving university, Facebook, LinkedIn, Amazon Turk, Whats-app, and Twitter. Participants first agreed to the study terms and then they were directed to the main survey.

## Measures

### Demographics

Participants answered questions about their age, gender, ethnicity, education level, occupation, relationship length, and diagnosis of mental illness.

### Marital disaffection

The 21-item *Marital Disaffection Scale* (MDS; Kayser, 1996) was used to access the level of marital disaffection towards one's spouse. MDS measures the elements of emotional estrangement in couples by focusing on the experience of indifference, lack of care, and lack of attachment towards the partner (Robinson, Flowers, & Kok-Mun, 2006). Couples who had high marital disaffection scores were found to be more susceptible to counseling (Kayser, 1996). MDS is related to other evaluative scales of marital happiness ( $r = -.56$ ) and marital closeness ( $r = -.86$ ; Kayser, 1996). Example items include "I look forward to seeing my spouse at the end of the day" and "I find myself withdrawing more and more from my spouse." Participants respond on a 4-point scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*very true*). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine items that might cross load on both MDS and commitment. Nine items in the MDS had factor loadings of .40 or more on the commitment dimension. These nine items were therefore removed from our calculation of the MDS score. The remaining 12 items were averaged to produce an overall score (some items were reverse scored); higher scores indicate greater marital disaffection ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### Commitment

The 15-item commitment portion of the Investment Model Scale assessed the participant's commitment to their current partner and relationship (Rusbult et al., 2011; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009). This measure analyzes scores based on three subscales: intent to persist, attachment, and long-term orientation. Participants report the extent to which each statement describes their feelings about their relationship on a 9-point scale, ranging from 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8 (*agree completely*). Example items include "I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives" and "I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our marriage persist." Based on factor analysis, one item ("I feel completely attached to my partner and our relationship") was removed because it cross loaded with the marital disaffection scale. The remaining 14 items were averaged to produce an overall commitment score, with higher scores indicating greater commitment to the current relationship ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

### Facebook addiction

The eight-item *Facebook Intrusion Questionnaire* (FIQ; Elphinston & Noller, 2011) measured problematic Facebook use and intrusion in life. Facebook intrusion was used as a measure of Facebook addiction because both have the same definition and symptomatology (Błachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2016). They also represent the same underlying construct and have been used interchangeably by others (e.g., Błachnio, Przepiorka, Benvenuti, Mazzoni, & Seidman, 2018; Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos, 2014). Example items include “I often think about Facebook when I am not using it” and “I have been unable to reduce my Facebook use.” A 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) was used to rate each item. The FIQ scores ranged from 8 to 53 with the mean score of 25.89, which suggests moderate levels of Facebook intrusion. Higher scores represent higher levels of Facebook addiction ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

### Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations on main study variables appear in Table 1. Bivariate correlations suggested no significant association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection. However, as explained in the introduction, we believed it would be important to control for and include commitment as a moderator of the potential associations. To test the hypotheses, we specified a moderation model utilizing the SPSS PROCESS Macro developed by Hayes (2013). Based on the PROCESS macro guidelines (Hayes, 2013), the specific moderation model (model 1) with 5000 bootstrap resamples was used to compute the standard error and 95% confidence interval limits at the .05 significance level. In this model, Facebook addiction was added as the predictor variable (X), marital disaffection was added as the outcome variable (Y), and relationship commitment was added as the moderator variable (M). Using the PROCESS Macro is advantageous over the traditional Sobel’s test approach. First, the bootstrap resampling method tests the indirect effects (Hayes, 2009, 2013; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010); second, it allowed us to include age and gender as covariates; last, the Johnson-Neyman technique can be used to test the simple slope effects (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

First, the overall model was significant [ $F(6, 129) = 22.63, p < 0.001, R^2 = .72$ ]. In support of our hypothesis (H1), Facebook addiction was positively associated with marital disaffection [ $b = .01, t(129) = 3.16, p < .001$ ]. In other words, those who rated greater Facebook addiction also showed greater disaffection in their marital relationship. We also found support for our hypothesis (H2) that commitment would moderate the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection [ $b = -.01,$

**Table 1.** Descriptives and Correlations for Facebook Addiction, Marital Disaffection, and Commitment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	–	–.10	.80**	–.04	–.00	.05
2. Gender	–	–	–.03	.07	–.06	.15
3. Relationship length	–	–	–	–.07	–.01	.04
4. Facebook addiction	–	–	–	–	.14	.05
5. Marital disaffection	–	–	–	–	–	–.67**
6. Commitment	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>M (SD)</i>	36.54 (10.92)	1.69 (.46)	11.77 (9.60)	25.38 (9.08)	1.60 (.58)	6.49 (1.53)

Note.  $N = 138$  married individuals. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

$t(129) = -3.28, p < .001$ ]. The results indicate that the level of commitment was negatively associated with marital disaffection [ $b = -.27, t(129) = -11.24, p < .001$ ].

## Discussion

The availability of SNSs has created a technological landscape wherein individuals can engage in social interactions that may have a negative impact on their primary romantic relationship. Numerous studies have shown that these interactions, and the conflicts that arise from these interactions, can have deleterious effects on committed relationships (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017a,c; Clayton et al. 2013; Cravens et al., 2013; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Helsper & Whitty, 2010; Marshall, Bejanyan, Di Castro, & Lee, 2013; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016a; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011; Valenzuela, Halpern, & Katz, 2014). In this study, we extended this line of inquiry by examining whether Facebook addiction in married partners was related to marital disaffection, and whether this association was moderated by the level of commitment that individuals feel toward their partner.

Our H1 was supported—Facebook addiction and marital disaffection were positively related even after controlling for the level of relationship commitment. In other words, those who reported more Facebook addiction in their own lives also reported more disaffection in their marriages. Thus, our results suggest that excessive Facebook use is related not only to infidelity, conflict and lower levels of satisfaction (Abbasi, 2018a,b; Clayton et al. 2013; Cravens et al., 2013), but also to more emotional disengagement in the relationship and less relational closeness. Although this emotional disengagement could be viewed as a relationship outcome, it could also be classified as a potential pathway to later relationship dissolution. In fact, it might be this disengagement, rather than conflict, that may lead to a decline in relationship quality and/or eventual relationship dissolution (Valenzuela et al., 2014). Teasing apart these alternative routes to relationship dissolution is an important goal for future research.

These findings with regard to relationship commitment add a layer of complexity to the relationship dynamics surrounding SNS use. In line with H2, commitment did interact with levels of Facebook addiction. Although Facebook addiction was positively related to feelings of marital disaffection, spouses who reported higher commitment were less likely to experience these negative effects. This is an intriguing finding. Previously it was found that in unmarried partners, commitment did not interact with Facebook addiction to lower romantic disengagement (Abbasi, 2019b). In a cover story for *60 Minutes*, a former Google employee suggested that companies are designing phones and SNSs applications to be highly addictive—tapping into motivations that are nearly impossible to resist (Cooper, 2017). Thus, although the most controlled, conscientious, and committed partners may not be able to curb their SNS addictive behaviors, their addiction does not necessarily negatively affect their perceived marital quality perhaps because they are likely to inhibit negative feelings and behaviors toward their committed partner (Rusbult et al., 2011). Alternatively, it may be that married individuals with high levels of commitment are engaging in different types of Facebook behaviors than those with low levels of commitment (e.g., same amount of time but less investigation of alternative partners), which leads to different feelings towards their primary partner. These alternative pathways from Facebook addiction to marital disaffection merit further investigation. We interpret our data with the caveat that we used a measure of Facebook addiction only (i.e., not controlling for other variables related to basic Facebook use), and that the observed pathways may not be unique to addiction. However, addiction can occur, and it can be damaging. Therefore, it is still useful to identify this as one route through which bona fide addiction might impact marital quality.

### ***Implications for family therapy/practice***

This study shows an association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection and points to potential implications for spouses and therapists. It is important to mention that our sample included only married, relatively older participants (mean age 36 years), which is different from studies that utilized only undergraduate college students (mean age 19 years) who were dating at that time (e.g., Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Therefore, the present study suggests that Facebook addiction and adverse relationship outcomes are also linked in married individuals (although it is important to consider levels of commitment). Therapists suggest that romantic disengagement has a poor prognosis, and disaffected couples seldom recover from their emotional indifference (Barry, 2010; Doherty, 2012). Nevertheless, previous research has also shown that

an early use of therapeutic interventions can help to curb marital decline. For example, research has shown that after a couple exhibits a decline in their marital quality during the first year of marriage, interventions focusing on the reappraisal of marital conflicts in the second year eliminated such a decline (Finkel, Slotter, Luchies, Walton, & Gross, 2013). Thus, emotion-focused therapy (Greenman & Johnson, 2013) and discernment counseling (Doherty, 2012) might be used in therapy to treat partners exhibiting marital disaffection (See Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017a for a review). The results of this study may help guide therapists to focus beyond the factors that are typically associated with marital disaffection such as age, commitment, length of a marriage, social contacts, children, and general control over life (Kayser, 1993). Based on our findings, therapists are encouraged to examine SNS usage and addiction in partners who exhibit symptoms of marital disaffection to carve out a plan to combat marital problems before they lead to complete disengagement and/or and marital dissolution.

### Limitations

The present study was cross-sectional, and therefore the direction of causality is unknown. It may also be that marital disaffection is causing Facebook addiction in spouses. We suggest a possible circular relationship wherein more Facebook addiction likely causes more marital disaffection, and greater disaffection leads individuals to engage further with social media. We look to future longitudinal studies to explore these transactional processes over time. Moreover, in this study, we did not examine, as others have (e.g., Cravens & Whiting, 2014; Drouin et al., 2014; Drouin, Miller, & Dibble, 2015) if partners were using Facebook to monitor alternative relationships. Thus, we do not know if marital disaffection occurs because SNS users are engaging with other potential romantic partners or whether it occurs simply because they are displacing the time that could be spent with their primary partner on social media—although other work has found that as technology use begins to interfere in couple interactions, relationship satisfaction deteriorates (e.g., McDaniel & Coyne, 2016a; McDaniel et al., 2018). Also, as we analyzed data from only heterosexual participants (less than 1% of sample reported being homosexual), the results cannot be generalized to homosexual or bisexual populations. Finally, we recruited participants from various SNSs/platforms, but did not have measures to assess which site they used most frequently. It may be that these associations differ by which site participants prefer and how frequently they use each or multiple sites.



## Future directions

A more nuanced examination of the path by which addiction is impacting disaffection is warranted, and a follow-up experimental study (manipulating Facebook usage to simulate addiction vs. a control group) would help to delineate causal relationships. Additionally, a longitudinal study that assesses the fluctuation in Facebook addiction, disaffection, and commitment scores over time would provide a means for examining the directionality of the relationships between these variables. Our study focused only on commitment as a potential moderator. Acknowledging that there are other potential relationship variables, such as trust and romantic jealousy, that might moderate or mediate the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection, it would be beneficial to explore these relationships in future research. Researchers could also use non-SNS platforms for recruitment to capture a wide range of SNS use (including non-use) and also include general measures of SNS and technology addiction to better elucidate whether it is addiction or simply frequency of use that is most related to couple relationship quality.

## Conclusion

Facebook and SNS use, in general, may be problematic in romantic relationships because of time displacement, availability of alternative partners, and idealization of other's relationships. Additionally, certain behaviors (e.g., flirting, infidelity) that are facilitated by Facebook and other SNSs can be detrimental to romantic relationships (e.g., Clayton et al., 2013; McDaniel et al., 2017; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009; Mukesh, Mayo, & Gonçalves, 2016). The current study added to previous work by showing that Facebook addiction—reflecting excessive or impulsive use—is linked not only to conflict and dissatisfaction (like in prior research) but also to emotional disengagement from one's partner (i.e., disaffection). Researchers have previously found that commitment to a partner is a predictor of a stable relationship (Agnew, 2009; Rusbult et al., 2011). This study found that commitment may indeed buffer against the negative effects of Facebook addiction within married couples. Overall, findings from our study suggest that married partners should be mindful of how they use SNSs with or around their partner, especially if they already have low levels of relationship commitment.

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