

2022

## Role of Social Media in Adolescent-Parent Relationships Among At-Risk Youths

Jennifer Davis  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Jennifer Davis

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Role of Social Media in Adolescent-Parent Relationships Among At-Risk Youths

by

Jennifer Davis

MA, Webster University, 2012

BS, College of Charleston, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Full Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

Social media has been linked to online crimes and cyberbullying among 88% of teens. The purpose of this study was to understand the role of adolescent and parent social media use on adolescents reported at-risk behaviors, as well as the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents using the attachment theory. An interpretive phenomenological analysis design was used in this study to describe relationships between adolescents and their parents involving social media use and reported at-risk behaviors. Semi-structured interviews were performed with a total of six pairs of individuals resulting in 12 total participants. There were four female adolescents and two male adolescents, between the ages of 13 to 17. The ages of the parents were not applicable to this study and therefore were not collected. Data analysis resulted in three themes: encountering negativity on social media did not refrain from social media usage, misunderstanding between social media and technology caused challenges on parental monitoring, and quality of time spent together differed in the perception of the adolescent participants and parent participants. Findings of this research add to current literature involving social media and the impact it has on parent-adolescent relationships involving at-risk youth. Themes can help direct future research on this topic among all educators, parents, and all communities around the world to better understand the role of social media on adolescent-parent relationships. Understanding this can lead to positive social change through insights involving amount of time spent on social media and how it can negatively impact youths and parent-child relationships.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, coach, and husband. Thank you for all the support you gave me throughout this process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this journey took longer than expected. Sometimes quotes about life can be difficult to understand until you experience it yourself. This quote sums up my entire dissertation journey: “When you face difficult times, know that challenges are not sent to destroy you. They’re sent to promote, increase, and strengthen you.”

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I would like to thank my chair Dr. Jessica Hart. I was honored that you asked me to consider you being my chair. Throughout this process, you helped me keep it together when I was at a low point and questioning myself whether I could do this. Due to the pandemic, we had to completely change my research design that was out of our comfort zone. Together we overcame several barriers, and I could not have done this without you.

Dr. Bethany Walters, you pushed me to limits I did not know I had. One example would be patience. Due to the pandemic, patience was an essential part of this process. I started my dissertation with one research design and ended with a completely different research design which so happens to be my weakest area. Your very precise edits and wording helped make this dissertation from good to superior, in my opinion at least. I know you could sense my frustration during this process but continued to be encouraging and supportive.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my qualitative research professor, Dr. Ethel Perry. Joke ended up being on me when I decided my dissertation was not going to be a qualitative research study. I guess this supports the saying "Never say never!"

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Social media is used for business, selling items, connecting with family and friends, and support groups (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). However, it has also become harmful, with consequences involving delinquent behaviors, a rise in mental health issues, and issues involving lack of social skills (Woods & Scott, 2016). According to Moaward and Ebrahme (2016), adolescents ranging from 12 to 18 who spend more time on social media have fewer interactions with their parents. Adolescents reported having a better relationship with their parents if they were allowed to use social media (Moaward & Ebrahme, 2016). Conversely, adolescents who have negative encounters with their parents reported feeling lonely and having less secure attachment with their parents (Moaward & Ebrahem, 2016). Negative encounters on social media can lead to cyberbullying, gang violence, sexually risky behaviors, and cyber suicide (Patton et al., 2014).

The attachment theory means that when a primary attachment figure is unavailable, it disrupts the child's safety, security, and protection, resulting in psychological suffering (Babić et al., 2016). Lack of parental attachment can result in juveniles committing criminal and offending behaviors (Felizzi, 2015). This study involved exploring the role of social media in terms of adolescent-parent relationships involving juvenile delinquents. Furthermore, this study includes information about the importance of relationships among adolescents to avoid psychological suffering and delinquent behaviors. Sherrell and Lambie (2018) said insecure attachment and social

media practices are associated with lower relationship development. Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory was used as guidance to address different forms of attachment between primary caregivers and adolescents, which can provide insights in terms of what will help minimize psychological suffering.

### **Background**

Meng-Hsien et al. (2019) said high social media use was linked to depressive symptoms, panic attacks, delinquent behaviors, and family conflict. Parents who engaged in social media had a significant impact on social media influences, which is linked to having a positive relationship with their adolescent (Meng-Hsien et al., 2019). Parents who did not monitor adolescent social media users were found to be more controlling, resulting in negative impacts in terms of relationships with their adolescent children.

There is a positive correlation between cyberbullying victimization and deviant risk behaviors (Graham & Wood, 2019). Galik et al. (2014) said positive parental attachment resulted in lower delinquency behaviors, while negative parental attachment was associated with delinquency. There are several forms of social media bullying, which include cyberbullying/victimization, electronic dating/aggression/cyberstalking, cyber suicide, and gang violence (Patton et al., 2014). Bullying through social media has become popular because it does not involve face-to-face confrontations. Cyberbullies typically spread rumors and aggressive comments. Online dating, also known as electronic dating, can result in aggression and cyberstalking (Patton et al., 2014). These behaviors can lead to criminal offending behaviors, smoking, drugs, and risky sexual behaviors (Pujazon-Zazik et al., 2011). There is a need to explore experiences and

motives involving how social media use among adolescents and their parents affects juvenile delinquency and parental relationships.

### **Problem Statement**

Social media has been linked to online crimes and cyberbullying among 88% of teens (Guarded Child, 2020). Hawke (2018) said social media minimizes verbal communication and leads to significant problems in terms of social skills for both adults and those under the age of 18. Although social media has positive aspects such as the capability to communicate with family and friends, it is also shown to have negative impacts on mental health, such as depression and anxiety (Twenge et al., 2018). Juvenile delinquency is associated with social media use among minors and their parents (Jiang, 2018). Additionally, adolescents who report that their parents are distracted by their cell phones are often neglected (Jiang, 2018).

Adolescents who kept information from their parents were more likely to have parents with intrusive parenting styles, which led to detachment between adolescents and their parents (Goldstein, 2016). Adolescents who have positive relationships with their parents can lead to a decrease in juvenile delinquent behaviors and a decrease in social media engagement for both parents and their adolescents (Twenge et al., 2018). However, there has been minimal research involving how social media use among adolescents and their parents affects juvenile delinquency and parental relationships.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of a qualitative research study is to gain a deeper understanding on how participants within the study develop purpose from their environment as well as how

this influences their behaviors (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The qualitative approach was used to understand adolescent experiences with parents relationships and social media.

because it allowed me to capture the richness of participants' experiences sufficiently.

I used an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) to explore the role of social media on adolescent-parent relationships involving juvenile delinquents.

Researchers have studied social media use among adolescents and their parents, juvenile delinquency, and parental attachment, but not together. I addressed the gap in the literature that has yet to be addressed by any researcher.

### **Research Questions**

*RQ1:* What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?

*RQ2:* What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in the adolescent-parent relationship?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was John Bowlby's attachment theory. There are three forms of attachment patterns: secure, anxious-avoidant, and anxious resistant (Babić et al., 2016). Later, Mary Ainsworth added disorganized-insecure attachment and provided a new assessment technique called the Stranger Situation Classification to better assess how attachment differs among children. Bowlby's and Ainsworth's attachment theory offers guidance in terms of different forms of attachment between primary caregivers and children.



This framework assisted me in exploring the role of social media in terms of adolescent-parent relationships involving at-risk youths. While research has addressed social media use among adolescents and their parents, juvenile delinquency, and parental attachment, these variables have not been explored together.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study was a qualitative research study is to gain a deeper understanding on how participants within the study develop purpose from their environment as well as how this influences their behaviors. This study used an IPA approach because the goal was to describe relationships between adolescents and their parents involving social media use and reported juvenile delinquency. I used this design to address different forms of attachments between primary caregivers and adolescents. IPA was used to address forms of attachment which help minimize psychological suffering. The attachment theory was applied to the issue of social media use among adolescents and their parents in terms of contributions to juvenile offending criminal behaviors as well as parental attachment based on personal lived experiences.

This study involved using semi-structured qualitative interviews with a sample of six pairs of participants for a total of 12 participants. According to Crouch and McKeenzie (2006), fewer than 20 participants allows the researcher to build closer relationships with participants. This reduces potential bias and validity threats that could occur in qualitative research (Crouch & McKeenzie, 2006). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore experiences and motives involving how social media use among

adolescents and their parents as well as at-risk behaviors. Interviews allowed me to gather enough information until saturation was reached.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

*Adolescent:* Individuals between the ages of 12 and 18(Moaward & Ebrahme, 2016).

*Adoptive parent:* Legal parents who serves parental responsibilities and rights of the biological parent (NeJaime, 2021).

*Biological Parent:* Birth parents also known as original parents or natural parents (NeJaime, 2021).

*Cyberbullying:* Bullying via digital technologies such as social media. Examples of cyberbullying include spreading lies and posting embarrassing photos of another sending hurtful messages, sending threats in any form, and stalking, all of which are used to scare, anger, and shame the person who is targeted (UNICEF, n.d.)

*Delinquent Behaviors:* Aggressive behaviors such as fighting, bullying, and using weapons, destructive behaviors such as destruction of property, deceitful behaviors, which include lying, shoplifting, and stealing, violation of rules, running away, skipping school, and inappropriate sexual behaviors (Habersaat et al., 2019)

*Social Media:* Sites that are designed for people to share information as quickly and efficiently as possible (Hudson, 2020).

*Social Media Influencer:* Those online who engage their audiences, specifically adolescents, because of the popularity of social media with this age group (Lin et al., 2019).

### **Assumptions**

One assumption I had in this study was that individuals tend to underestimate the amount of time they engage on social media and technology devices. Clements (2019) said in 2019, 79% of individuals participated in social media. On average, youths between the ages of 12 and 17 average more than 40 hours on social media per week (Vazsonyi et al., 2016). In general, society tends to overestimate positive behaviors and underestimate negative behaviors such as an addiction to social media. Therefore, I assumed that participants underestimated the amount of time they spent on social media.

A second assumption I had in this study was the different definitions of what a positive relationship is between a parent and a child. What one parent may assume qualifies as a strong relationship may not be for another parent. It is also assumed that an adolescent is less likely to view their relationship with their parents the same way their parents view the relationship. Parental attachment was addressed among both parents and adolescents. The purpose of using a qualitative design was to acquire subjective experiences of participants, which resulted in different perspectives. The third assumption I had for this study was because my participants were enrolled in an alternative school, they had histories of at-risk behaviors, which resulted in expulsion their previous school. At-risk behaviors were explored to help explain the importance of parental attachment and how it relates to delinquent behaviors leading to expulsion.

Given that interviews require self-reporting, there was a possibility that parents would discuss with their adolescents what should and should not be said during interviews. I assumed building a positive rapport with the adolescent participants and

reminding them the information they self-disclose is confidential and will not be disclosed with their parents will not impact on experiences they reported.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study involved social media, parental attachment, and juvenile delinquent behaviors. Participants included parents of adolescents and adolescents who were between the ages of 13 and 17. To be included in the study, participants had to be recent social media users. Additionally, all adolescent participants were enrolled in an alternative school. All participants resided in South Carolina and therefore, participants' experiences may not be applicable to other geographical locations. I recruited a specific population of at-risk adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 who attended an alternative school in South Carolina along with their parents. This will allow researchers to understand how social media and parental attachment can lead to delinquent behaviors from the perspectives of adolescents.

Social media, parental attachment, and at-risk behaviors have been subjects of research; however, to my knowledge, there has not been a study involving all three variables. I focused on a smaller subgroup of participants because I interviewed both adolescent and their parents. Additionally, I focused on exploring experiences and motives in terms of how social media use among adolescents and their parents affects at-risk behaviors and parental relationships.

### **Limitations**

Lack of generalizability is one major limitation of this study because I used a qualitative research design with a small sample. Findings may be different across

geographical regions. However, this study can be beneficial to educators, parents, and communities around the world by providing evidence-based research involving the role of social media has on adolescent-parent relationships with at-risk youths.

Data collection became a limitation because of the COVID-19 pandemic and requirements for social distancing. Collecting data was also limited based on how data were retrieved. Virtual interviews limit confidentiality of participants who are using their own devices. Using home devices allowed parents to have access to adolescent interviews, which may hinder what participants chose to share. I attempted to limit this via face-to-face interviews which involved social distancing by staying six feet away from participants.

Another limitation involved how my role as the researcher influenced participants' responses because the interview was recorded, and I was a mandated reporter. To minimize this limitation, I built a positive rapport with both adolescent and parent participants where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences. There was a chance that participants were not comfortable with me, and I attempted to minimize this via positive interactions during the sampling process. It is imperative for researchers to be aware of their own biases and constantly reflect during interviews to avoid misinterpreting data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Qualitative research is subjective because it involves understanding human behavior therefore, results are based on the researchers own interpretation (Leaug, 2015). Qualitative data allowed me to explore experiences and motives involving social media use among adolescents and their parents and effects on juvenile delinquency and parental relationships. This study can be

beneficial to educators, parents, and the communities all over the world and lead to positive social change by providing evidence-based research on this topic.

### **Significance**

Results of this study involve significance of understanding the role of social media usage in the adolescent-parent relationship of juvenile delinquents. Clements (2019) said 79% of the U.S. population participate in social media, and parents who are on social media use it for almost 4 hours per day. Participating in social media takes away from face-to-face interactions, which is critical between parents and their children. Results of this study added to current research involving social media, adolescent-parent relationships, and at-risk behaviors.

### **Summary**

There is a significant amount of research on the negative impacts social media has on adolescents and the relationship they have with their parents; however, social media continues to be an epidemic problem (Guarded Child, 2020). Researchers have studied social media use among adolescents and their parents, juvenile delinquency, and parental attachment but not together. Goldstein (2016) said adolescents who kept information from their parents were more likely to have parents with intrusive parenting styles. Adolescents whose parents had intrusive parenting styles had negative relationships with those parents and were more likely to engage in cyberbullying (Goldstein, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences and motives involving how social media use among adolescents and their parents affects juvenile delinquency and parental relationships. I used IPA to explore how social media impacts at-risk youth and

parental relationships. Specific key terms were listed in this chapter. In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of literature and rationale for the study by using evidence-based research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Social media is becoming an epidemic problem in society, with 88% of teenagers reporting cyberbullying, and 26% of online crimes involve social media (Guarded Child, 2020). It has led to reduced verbal communication and increased social skill deficiencies not only for adults but also minors (Hawke, 2018). Social media is a way to communicate with family and friends, but the amount of time spent on social media impacts on mental health (Twenge et al., 2018). Jiang (2018) said social media use among minors and their parents is associated with juvenile delinquency. Jiang (2018) said 51% of teens reported their parents are often distracted on their cell phones. Parents who are overly engaged on their cell phones on social media are disengaged with their children.

Researchers have studied social media use among adolescents and their parents, juvenile delinquency, and parental attachment, but not together. Goldstein (2016) explored juvenile delinquency and parental attachment and found adolescents who kept information from their parents were more likely to have parents with intrusive parenting styles. This in turn led to detachment between adolescents and their parents, and adolescents were more likely to engage in cyberbullying (Goldstein, 2016). Vannucci and Ohannessian (2019) said high social media use predicted increased depressive symptoms, panic attacks, delinquent behaviors, and family conflicts.

In this chapter, I provide a thorough review of the literature. Background information about the attachment theory is provided. The attachment theory was applied to the issue of social media use among adolescents and their parents and how this



contributed to juvenile offending criminal behaviors as well as parental attachment issues. Adolescents and their parents were explored to address these topics. I researched literature and addressed gaps to validate the need for the current study.

### **Literature Research Strategy**

The following databases were used to find current literature on the topic: ScienceDirect, CINAHL Plus, Business Source Complete, Social Sciences Citation Index, SocINDEX, PsycInfo, and ERIC.

### **Keywords and Research Barriers**

In this study, I used the following key terms: *social media usage, adolescents and their parents, juvenile delinquency, parental attachment, and attachment theory*. I combined key terms to narrow down literature to find scholarly articles as they related to the topic of the study. I searched for sources that were published between 2015 and 2020. I expanded my search to include older seminal works that were relevant to my topic and theoretical framework. I found scholarly articles by looking through reference lists from articles I found.

One major barrier was finding information on social media use among parents. In general, there is minimal literature involving social media use among parents. To address this barrier, I searched for authors of sources to find more research on my topic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Attachment Theory**

There are three forms of attachment patterns: secure, anxious-avoidant, and anxious resistant (Babić et al., 2016; Bowlby, 1953). Secure attachment is when a child's

parents give their child autonomy, and the child shows anxiety in the presence of a stranger and sadness when their caregiver is not around (Bowlby, 1953). Children who seem less anxious after being separated from their caregiver and prefer strangers over their primary caregiver are defined as anxious-avoidant (Babić et al., 2016). Anxious-resistant children do not have interests in exploration and playing (Babić et al., 2016). Children who have anxious-resistant attachments to their parent's express sadness, have problems calming down when taken away from their caregiver, continue to throw tantrums, and are passively resistant (Babić et al., 2016).

In the 1970s, Mary Ainsworth expanded on Bowlby's research and added disorganized-insecure attachment. Ainsworth also formulated an assessment technique called the Stranger Situation Classification to better assess how attachment differs among children. When a primary attachment figure is unavailable when needed, it disrupts the child's safety, security, and protection, resulting in psychological suffering (Babić et al., 2016). Pathology increases when the psychological mechanism of attachment is distorted or dysfunctional, which results in not fulfilling biological functions humans need to develop meaningful secure relationships (Fonagy, 2003).

I explored the role of social media in terms of adolescent-parent relationships involving juvenile delinquents. This study includes information about the importance of relationships among adolescents to avoid psychological suffering and delinquent behaviors. Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory was used to address different forms of attachments between primary caregivers and adolescents to address how to minimize psychological suffering.

Sherrell and Lambie (2018) said insecure attachment and social media practices are associated with lower relationship development. There was a relationship between attachment styles, social media, and relationship development (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018). Specifically, participants in this study who reported having an insecure attachment style had relationship problems which were related to social media networking (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018). Those who are on social media for at least 4 hours daily, specifically parents of minors, are likely to development insecure attachments (Sherrell & Lambie, 2017).

Venta et al. (2019) discussed that 90% of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 engage in social media use daily. Additionally, 24% reported getting on social media constantly with over 70% of those adolescents having access to some form of electronics (Venta et al., 2019). Venta et al. (2019) proposed a study to examine an attachment-based model of social media use in adolescents and attachment as it relates to online behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a less secure parent-adolescent attachment correlated to social media use and if hypermentalizings would support the relationship between insecure attachment and social media use (Venta et al., 2019). Hypermentalizing is defined as a social-cognitive process that assumes other people's mental state based on observation. The sample used in this study included 68 adolescents from ages 15 to 18 (Venta et al., 2019). Attachment to parents was measured using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment-Revised (IPPA) which is used to measure adolescent's perception of positive and negative characteristics with their relationship to their parents (Arms-den & Greenburg, 1987 as cited in Venta et al., 2019).

The IPPA is composed of 25 items evaluating trust, alienation, and communication (Venta et al., 2019). Adolescents' thoughts and feelings while interacting with others was measured using the Hypermentalizing Questionnaire (HZQ; Sharp et al., 2019 as cited in Venta et al., 2019). Social media use was measured using the Motivations for Electronic Interaction Scale (MEIS; Nesi & Prinstein, 2018 as cited in Venta et al., 2019) to evaluate the adolescents' behaviors when using social media sites.

Venta et al. (2019) found a significant mediational effect in adolescents with insecure mother-adolescent attachments and having negative thoughts and feelings (Venta et al., 2019). These adolescents also participated in social media more than adolescents who had a secure attachment with their parents (Venta et al., 2019). Additionally, the present study found that an increase of social media usage was also correlated to negative outcomes, which includes aggression, anxiety, and depression (Venta et al., 2019). Venta et al., (2019) explained that adolescents who constantly engage in social media usage are more likely to interpret posts, pictures, and words in a negative way, which could lead to negative outcomes, as mentioned. Furthermore, Venta et al., (2019) discussed these findings as it relates to attachment theory that parent-adolescent relationships and feelings can also contribute to more social media usage. Adolescents who do feels as if they have a secure relationship to their parents resulting in negative thoughts and feelings lead to social media to obtain attention through those, they associate with on social media networks. Attachment theory best fits my study because this theory explains the importance of how different parental styles can contribute to the

relationship parents have with their adolescent. For instance, insecure attachment may be correlated with juvenile delinquency (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018).

Children or adolescents bond differently with their parents based on parents' behaviors (Craig, 2016). Craig (2016) examined three forms of attachment measures which include juveniles' perceived attachment to their mothers and fathers. Those who have a stronger bond with their parents are less likely to display delinquent behaviors compared to those with minimal attachments (Craig, 2016). A strong bond builds upon the importance of commitment, involvement, and belief within the bond of the child and parent (Craig, 2016). Craig (2016) said youths who reported feeling closer to their parents were less likely to partake in delinquent behaviors. When there is a negative attachment starting at an earlier age, the child is more likely to partake in delinquent behaviors the older they get (Craig, 2016).

Craig (2016) proposed a study to determine the overall measure of parental bonding as it associates with lower delinquency and the relationship between parental bonds and a child's delinquency. He collected information from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health data set (Craig, 2016). The adolescents in this study were in middle or high school with more than 90,000 students completing the initial survey (Craig, 2016). Delinquency was measured on a 15-item delinquency scale which included: painting graffiti, property damage, lying to authority figures, robbery, physical fighting, hurting someone enough that they needed medical attention, running away, driving without permission, stealing, burglary, threatening with a weapon, selling drugs, group fighting, and disrupting the peace (Craig, 2016). Parental bond was

measured by asking the respondents separately how close they felt to their parents (Craig, 2016). The researchers concluded youths who felt closer to their parents were less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors (Craig, 2016). Furthermore, this study found there was a significant relationship on delinquency behaviors with the maternal bond while the paternal bond was not significant (Craig, 2016). These results show the importance of having that secure attachment between a child and their mother early on as well as continuing through the adolescent years.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media**

Participating in frequent social media usage takes away from having that person-to-person interaction, which is significantly important between parents and their children. Clements (2019) reported that in 2019, 79 % of individuals participated in social media. Popular social media sites include YouTube (85 %), Instagram (72%), and Snapchat (69 %) (Acts for Youth, 2020). Another popular social media network is Facebook, which started in 2004 (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018). Facebook started as a social media network solely for college students and later expanded where anyone can have access. Facebook allows individuals to create a personal profile page, add friends, exchange message, videos, update statuses, and is used to promote businesses (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018). Furthermore, like most social media networks, Facebook is also used for other reasons such as dating (Sherrell & Lambie, 2018). The problem with Facebook and other social media networks is what is being posted for public viewing. For example, statuses can be directed to another person and videos could be posted without permission (Sherrell &

Lambie, 2018). This could lead to cyberbullying and other delinquent behaviors such as threats of violence and sexual harassment. Social media networks also allow people to communicate behind screens, which gives people the opportunity to say exactly what they are feeling that would otherwise not be said face to face.

### **Social Media Use and Adolescents**

Wright (2018) was interested in addressing the gap in the literature by studying the moderating effects of parental mediation strategies (restrictive, covieing, and instructive), as it pertains to cyberbullying victimization and adjustment difficulties among adolescents. Wright (2018) surveyed 568 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15. The questionnaires used measured victimization through cyberbullying and parental mediation. The researcher found that restrictive mediation within social networking was correlated to strict rules on social media use (Wright, 2018). Adolescents who had restrictive parents were less likely to be involved with social media, but their social skills were lacking, which could result in having difficulties when faced with peer challenges (Wright, 2018). With parents who scored high on levels of instructive mediation, adolescents were less likely to be victimized through cyberbullying (Wright, 2018). These results propose that cyberbullying is positively correlated to parental mediation as well as mental health problems and behavioral aggression (Wright, 2018).

Bullying and being bullied has been linked to suicidal behavior, specifically with adolescents (Kim et al., 2020). Cyberbullying has been shown to have a significant negative effect on adolescents' aggression and cyberbullies often harass more than one victim (Kim et al., 2020). Kim et al. (2020) examined whether the involvement in

cyberbullying and victims of cyberbullying increased suicide risk. Data was gathered from 93 adolescents in a longitudinal study to determine interventions to prevent aggressive behaviors specifically with cyberbullying (Kim et al., 2020). Measurements included the School Questionnaire, Suicide Risk Screen, and Cyberbullying (Kim et al., 2020).

Kim et al. (2020) found that cyber victimization was associated with increased suicidal behaviors. However, those who are the cyberbullies were not found to have any association to suicidal behaviors (Kim et al., 2020). These findings are important for parents to know because they can help prevent this by monitoring their adolescent's social media usage (Kim et al., 2020). The problem is, those who are cyberbullies have been shown to have a negative relationship with their parents, which indicates decreased social media monitoring (Wright, 2018). Schools and educators who understand the impact of cyberbullying can recognize the patterns of behaviors connected to cyberbullying and therefore provide an immediate intervention in hopes to decrease any suicidal ideation a student may have (Kim et al., 2020).

Graham and Wood (2019) surveyed 15,624 adolescents between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade to examine the association between cyberbullying victimization and health risk behaviors (drug use, alcohol use, multiple sexual partners) pertaining to juvenile delinquency. Graham and Wood (2019) were also interested in studying how cyberbullying related to deviant health risk behaviors were affected from physical bullying. Researchers found a positive correlation between cyberbullying victimization and all forms of deviant risk behaviors (Graham & Wood, 2019). When risky behavior is



present, adolescents reported being victims of cyberbullying and physical bullying (Graham & Wood, 2019).

On average, youths between the ages of 12 and 17 average about 17 hours per week online with some youths averaging more than 40 hours per week (Vazsonyi et al., 2016). Each year, more youths rely on mobile phones and computers for online communication which allows youths to engage in aggressive behaviors online through instant messaging, social media, and texts (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Social media usage is correlated to less self-control and higher impulsivity (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Cyberbullying perpetrators are less likely to bully at school due to the face-to-face environment (Vazonyi et al., 2016).

Vazonyi et al. (2016) examined the effects of low self-control on cyberbullying and offline bullying by compulsive use of social media and relationship problems related to social media. Negative behaviors and health consequences are correlated to cyberbullying. Cyberbully perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying report negative mental health problems such as lower self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Victims of cyberbullying are likely to participate in substance use, violent behaviors, and risky sexual behaviors (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). On the other hand, cyberbullying perpetrators show difficulties in their behaviors, emotions, and peer relationships (Campbell et al., 2013).

According to Vazonyi et al. (2016), self-control theory is correlated to participation in delinquent and deviant behaviors based on an individual's self-control which is developed during the first 10 years of a person's life through parenting practices.

Such practices include bonding, monitoring, and correcting norm violations (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Those who have low levels of self-control tend to be impulsive, insensitive to others, and tend to act impulsively without thinking of long-term consequences of their actions (Vazonyi et al., 2016). The present study used a sample of 708 adolescents between the ages of 11 and 19 (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Measures included age, sex, family structure, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Measures also included low self-control (LSC), social media problems, offline bullying perpetration, and online cyberbullying perpetration; each measurement contained a specific scale for each variable (Vazonyi et al., 2016).

Results were that 70% of adolescents spend between less than an hour up to three hours on the internet daily and 13.1% report spending more than six hours daily (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Cyberbullying was found to range between 14% to 22% and overall bullying was 38%, with the most common form being verbal aggression (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Relationships between LSC, social media problems, cyberbullying, and offline bullying were found to be positively correlated (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Low self-control was found to be correlated with high use of social media and impulsivity (Vazonyi et al., 2016). In addition, LSC was found to be correlated to bullying online and offline, specifically in males (Vazonyi et al., 2016). This study provides important findings on how self-control affects adolescents' social media usage. The researchers also concluded that cyberbullies were found to be more compulsive and have peer relationship problems which leads to long-term adjustment problems (Vazonyi et al., 2016).

Individuals who continually behave in a hostile way towards others to intentionally hurt them through online devices is called cyberbullying perpetration (CBP) (Kircaburun et al., 2019). CBP is correlated to losing control while using the internet, specifically social media, which leads to an increase of risky online behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). According to Tokunaga (2010), CBP is mostly common among adolescents and tends to affect 20-40% of young people. Adolescents who are emotionally invested in social media had poor sleeping habits, low self-esteem, high anxiety, and high depression (Woods & Scott, 2016). Adolescents who do not engage in social media use, have also expressed feeling isolated and stressed which could lead to an increase of anxiety and depression (Forest & Wood, 2012). On the other hand, social media can also be used as a self-esteem booster. For instance, if someone is feeling down, this individual may post information that reflects how they are feeling hoping to gain positivity from “friends;” however, this could also lead to negative effects where the individual does not get the positivity they were looking for (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

Kircaburun et al. (2019) examined the relationship between two online behaviors: cyberbullying perpetration (CBP) and problematic social media use (PSMU) as they relate with social connectedness, belongingness, depression, and self-esteem. Kircaburun et al. (2019) had 1,143 participants, between the ages of 14 and 21, to determine how PSMU affects young adults who were bullied as teenagers. Measures used included the following surveys: Cyberbullying Offending Scale, Short Depress-Happiness Scale, Social Media Use Questionnaire, Social Connectedness Scale, and Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale to measure the variables used in this study (Kircaburun et al., 2019).

Kircaburun et al. (2019) said CBP was positively correlated with younger males, needing to have the feeling of general belongingness, and problematic social media use. On the other hand, females engaging in PSMU was found to be positively correlated to general belongingness and depression while indirectly correlated to self-esteem, social connectedness, and general belongingness through depression (Kircaburun et al., 2019). The researchers also found that adolescents and young adults who engage in high usage of PSMU were liking to engage in CBP (Kircaburun et al., 2019). This study helps educators, parents, and the community to understand the importance of monitoring their adolescent's social media usage as well as what they are posting whether it is negative or positive. Furthermore, this study helps us understand that the earlier CBP starts, the higher the likelihood it will continue into adulthood. Last, if CBP continues into adulthood, if the individual eventually has children, it could negatively impact the child.

### **Social Media Use and Parent-Adolescent Relationships**

Adolescents are spending a significant amount of time on social media (Lin et al., 2019). One significant area when it comes to social media are influencers who are social media celebrities who engage their audience, specifically adolescents, because of the popularity with this age group (Lin et al., 2019). Adolescents seem to trust these influencers and therefore following them on social media (Lin et al., 2019). These influencers also engage with their audience which allows people to gain the feeling of being noticed and believing these influencers are their friends (Lin et al., 2019). Lin et al. (2019) discussed the lack of awareness with parents as it relates to their adolescent and social media influencers. For parents to have an understanding on what social media

influencers have on their child, they must be able to understand the purpose of influencers and be aware if their child participates actively or passively (Lin et al., 2019).

Anderson (2016) studied how often parents discuss with their teens who are between the ages of 13 and 17, on what is appropriate and inappropriate online behaviors. Anderson (2016) found that only 33% of parents occasionally talked to their teens on what is appropriate on social media as it relates to behavior in school, home, and social lives. Parents reported that they discussed with their teens 42% of the time on what is appropriate to share online and 40% of parents admitted they occasionally had conversations with their teens on what content they are allowed to view online (Anderson, 2016). Parents reported they occasionally (43% of the time) discussed with their teen on specific content on what is appropriate or inappropriate as it relates to TV, music, books, magazines, and other social media (Anderson, 2016). Lastly, parents reported 42% of the time they occasionally discussed with their teen on what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviors when it comes to online behavior towards others (Anderson, 2016). These specific statistics shows us that parents assume that speaking to their teens occasionally about what is appropriate and inappropriate online will keep their teens reframed from such behaviors. However, parents need to be aware on the importance of talking to their teens frequently on what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviors online, which involves monitoring social media usage regularly.

Cornish (2014) found that parents tend to lack awareness on the effects of online advertising compared to internet safety, which includes predators and cyberbullying. Parents dismiss the fact that advertisements and influencers can also have a negative

impact on their child. Parental mediation is an important factor when monitoring what their children are getting into; to do so, parents must be fluent with the internet and social media as well (Lin et al., 2019). The more the parent understands all aspects of social media and negative influences it can have, the likelihood they are able to monitor their child's internet as well as social media usage (Lin et al., 2019).

Lin et al. (2019) surveyed 200 mothers and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 years old. This study focused on two different forms of social media use: active and passive (Lin et al., 2019). Active users post pictures, statuses, comment, and communicate with others on a regular base while passive users tend to scroll and see what everyone is up too including watching ads (Lin et al., 2019). The study focused on understanding parents' perception of social media influencers by determining how parents interact with social media in general, keeping in mind active versus passive use of social media (Lin et al., 2019).

Lin et al. (2019) also aimed to relate parental attitudes to social media and the impact social media influencers have on their adolescent. Last, this study aimed to exam the mediating role of psychological empowerment as it relates through social media and the methods that are taken to manage the social media influencers (Lin et al., 2019).

Psychological empowerment explains the fundamental motivations parents must understand how social media influencers impact their adolescent's social media use (Lin et al., 2019). A survey was to measure parent's beliefs and views on social media influencers (Lin et al., 2019). To gather information on parental mediation scale, parents were asked to identify how often they interacted with their adolescent, which included

parents' use of restrictive, instructive, supervision, and co-use mediation to manage their adolescent's active media usage (Lin et al., 2019). Social media use was determined by participants reporting how much time they spend on social media and whether they participate actively or passively (Lin et al., 2019). Psychological empowerment was determined using a Likert scale (Lin et al., 2019). Intrapersonal empowerment increases negativity awareness about social media influencers as well as parental mediation (Lin et al., 2019). Interactional empowerment increases positive views relating to social media influencers and therefore reducing parental mediation (Lin et al., 2019).

Lin et al. (2019) concluded that when parents are actively participating in social media, they become more aware of tactics social media uses. Furthermore, those who are active on social media show higher intrapersonal empowerment which increases parental mediation of social media influencers (Lin et al., 2019). Passive use of social media increases interactional empowerment, which indicated that adolescents who have negative views as it relates to social media influencers are less likely to engage in social media (Lin et al., 2019). The importance of this study implies that if parents rely on their community to keep them updated on parenting practices, parents are less likely to change their ways of parenting (Lin et al., 2019). Given that social media has a significant impact on adolescents, it is important for parents to be aware of their adolescent social media use, monitor their use, and limit their use on social media (Lin et al., 2019). There are ways parents can block certain social media sites and set these sites with parental control (Knorr, 2020). Parental control can provide the ability to view see what youths are logging into (Knorr, 2020). However, parents also need to be aware that youths can

figure out how to disable parental control which is why parents are encouraged to continue checking on a regular base if parental control was disabled (Knorr, 2020).

Abar et al., (2018) examined how parent-child social media interaction correlated to youths' risky behaviors. A sample of 252 college students participated in this study. The researchers found that 63 % of youths who reported being friends with their parents during high school engaged in less risky behaviors (Abar et al., 2018). Additionally, 27 % reported they blocked their parents from seeing posts and pictures (Abar et al., 2018). Most participants (65 %) reported that parents communicated information from their social media account on a regular base (Abar et al., 2018). The researchers concluded that youths who were friends with their parents and did not block their parents from certain posts were less likely to participate in risky behaviors compared to youths who blocked their parents from seeing certain posts (Abar et al., 2018). These findings could lead to social change because it supports the notion that the parent-child interaction through social media reduces the chances of risky behavior, including juvenile delinquency (Abar et al., 2018).

Alveraz-Garcia et al., (2018) analyzed the correlation between individual, family, and community variables focusing on the possibility that an adolescent will display aggressive behaviors towards others through a cell phone or internet. Participants included 3,059 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 in which 77.9% of those participants engaged in social media (Alverez-Garcia et al., 2018). The measurements in the study included: Dimensions of Parenting Style Questionnaire, Parental Control on Internet Usage Questionnaire, self-report scales on aggression/antisocial behaviors, and



the Cyber-Aggression Questionnaire for Adolescents (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2018). The researchers concluded that older adolescents were at risk for occasional and severe cyber aggression (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2018). Participants who failed a year in school tended to be more impulsive, displayed higher levels of aggression, and were less empathetic (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2018). Lastly, Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018) found that neglectful parenting styles were associated to impulsiveness and empathy among adolescents.

Melotti et al., (2018) examined the dimensions and relationships of parental control, adolescents' disclosure, and trust from parents in association to violent and deviant behaviors. The participants included 1,420 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 (Melotti et al., 2018). Measurements used included the Child Disclosure, Parental Control, and Parental Trust scales (Melotti et al., 2018). Researchers concluded that participants with lower scores on disclosure, trust, and control were at increased risk for violent behaviors (Melotti et al., 2018). Trust was not found to be a significant predictor of violent behavior (Melotti et al., 2018). Parent control was found to be harmful when there is no trust or disclosure (Melotti et al., 2018). Participants who reported low control, trust, and disclosure were associated with physical, psychological, and cyberbullying (Melotti et al., 2018).

Stockdale et al., (2018) studied a sample of 1,072 adolescents between the ages of 10 to 20 on how they perceived their own and parent's technofence, which was defined as an interruption to social interaction because of technology. The study examined how technofence was correlated to anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, prosocial behaviors, and civic engagements as it pertained to parental warmth (Stockdale et al., 2018).

Stockdale et al. (2018) also assessed how adolescents' acting out and the parent-child relationship correlated with one another when distracted by social media. Researchers found that most adolescents reported being distracted and communicated less with their parents due to distractions with technology (Stockdale et al., 2018). Adolescents reported that parents who were distracted with technology were linked to decreased feelings of parental warmth; parental warmth was negatively correlated to behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, and positively associated to prosocial behaviors (Stockdale et al., 2018). This alone could cause difficulty in parenting style and the ability for the adolescent to develop social skills and handle peer conflicts (Stockdale et al., 2018).

Galik et al., (2014) examined the relationship between adolescents' parental attachment, and delinquent behaviors with trust, communication, and alienation. Data was retrieved from 300 students between the ages of 15 and 18 and the instruments used included the "Behaviour of Students" and "Parental Attachment" surveys (Galik et al., 2014). The researchers concluded that adolescents who scored high in delinquent behaviors were associated with misbehavior in school, engagement in criminal behavior, vandalism, dishonesty, and drugs (Galik et al., 2014). Furthermore, Galik et al. (2014) found that positive parental attachment resulted in lower delinquency behaviors.

Parents have an influential role in developing and shaping their child's behavior (Sarwar, 2016). Sarwar (2016) explored the influence of parents and their parenting styles on their children's behavior. This study examined different parenting styles that may lead to delinquency using a case study. A qualitative in-depth interview was used with two

mothers of children with delinquent behaviors. Sarwar (2016) found an authoritarian parenting style led the children to become rebellious and adopt problematic behavior due to more than necessary power exercised on the children by their parents.

Parents turn to social media to communicate with family and friends as well as find support from others. What parents are not aware of is the impact on how social media affects their relationship with their child. Ante-Contreras (2016) discussed how excessive use of social media has become an issue because it takes away from human interactions. Additionally, social media usage is also a problem with parent-child relationships because of the parent's inability to bond and spend time with their children (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Ante-Contreras (2016) explained that beside the lack of communication parents' have with their children that is necessary in creating a strong bond, the parent may also be emotionally distracted neglecting important needs of their children. The researchers discussed the use of social media by parents and how it effects their parenting style and attachment.

To measure attachment styles of parents and the use of social media, Ante-Contreras (2016) proposed a quantitative study that included several surveys and interviews among new parents who participate in social media. These specific surveys were able to measure the participant's social media usage, the level of parenting skills, the number of hours of childcare, the level of attachment, and their parenting style (Ante-Contreras, 2016). The researchers found that parents who completed the survey presented with a balanced or authoritative study (Ante-Contreras, 2106). The strongest correlation found was found between a parent's authoritarian score and the amount of social media

usage hours (Ante-Contreras, 2106). Therefore, the greater number of hours a parent is on social media, the increased likelihood of physical punishment, threats, or other negative consequences were used as a discipline rather than discussing the child's negative behavior (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Furthermore, parents who reported high hours of social media usage scored higher levels in authoritarian parenting styles (Ante-Contreras, 2016). In conclusion, parents who engage in social media the most tend to have an authoritarian parenting style, which was found to be related anxious-avoidant attachment (Ante-Contreras, 2016).

### **Parenting Styles**

According to Baumrind (1991), there are four different parenting styles: authoritarian or disciplinarian, permissive or indulgent, uninvolved, and authoritative. Baumrind (1991) described parenting styles to control and socialize their children and parental demandingness refers to behavioral control on the demands the parents want to become integrated into the family. Authoritative parenting style is describes as being highly responsive but at the same time, demanding along with nurturing (Baumrind, 1991). This parenting style encourages children to be responsible, encourages autonomy, and consider why rules exist (Dewar, 2018). Authoritarian parents expect their children to obey them and rely on punishment to control their children (Dewar, 2018). Permissive parents are responsive and warm yet do not enforce rules (Dewar, 2018). Uninvolved parenting provides children with minimal emotional support and does not implement standards of conduct (Dewar, 2018). Authoritative parenting is known to be the best type of parenting style related to successful up-bringing because this style of parenting

provides a balance between emotional support and security as well as implementing the importance of following rules.

Arokiasamy et al., (2019) discussed the importance of parenting styles and parental attachment among youths as it pertains to internet addictions. The virtual world has advanced significantly within the last 15 years. Children are born into the virtual world and are likely to grow up spending more time on technology rather than school or family. Arokiasamy et al. (2019) reported significant hours on the internet can affect adolescences' lives. Attachment among parents and children is considered a secure connection which is developed over time from birth and beyond (Arokiasamy et al., 2019). Therefore, it is recommended families have a healthy home environment with secure attachments (Arokiasamy et al., 2019).

Goldstein (2016) discussed that social media has made a tremendous impact on how individuals communicate with one another. A significant concern among is adolescents cyberbullying as well as the amount of information adolescents have both online and offline when involving their parents (Goldstein, 2016). Goldstein (2016) used 110 high school students in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Surveys were given to assess the adolescent's social interaction online and offline and how much their parents monitored their social media participation (Goldstein, 2016). The researcher found that cyber bullying and aggressive behaviors were associated to adolescents who lied about their social lives with their parents (Goldstein, 2016). In relation to these findings, Goldstein (2016) found that adolescents who kept information from their parents was due to overly intrusive parenting style resulting in detachment by the youth.

### **Social Media Use and Adolescent Wellbeing**

Social media has been found to influence young adults' mental well-being in a negative way (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Emerging adults are those between the ages of 18 and 34. Studies have shown that emerging adults spend about nine to twelve hours a day on social media and about 80% to 90% use social media (Nielsen, 2018; Smith & Anderson, 2018). Frequent social media use has been shown to correlate with mental health problems among young adults (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Additionally, social isolating and loneliness has also been linked to social media use (Primack et al., 2017). The National Institute of Mental Health (2019) reported that 22.1% of adults ages 18-25 experience some form of mental illness and 5.9% experience a serious form of mental illness. Emotional regulation is defined as having awareness, clarity, acceptance, ability to control, and ability to work through emotional responses (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Rasmussen et al. (2020) examined the relationship between social media use and mental well-being as it relates to negative emotion regulation and apparent stress among emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 34. Social media was measured by open-ended questions related to the amount of time they spend on social media (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Difficulties with emotion regulation was measured using the Emotion Regulation Scale and Perceived stress was measured by using the Perceived Stress Scale (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Mental health problems were measured by responding to 14 questions related to their state of mind (Rasmussen et al., 2020). The authors of this study found that emerging adults' social media use was related to mental health problems because it is related to difficulties with emotion regulation and stress (Rasmussen et al.,

2020). Emerging adults tended to engage in social media use to increase social support and suppression emotions (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Wang and Saudino (2011) found that emerging adults are less able to regulate their emotions than older adults. Overall, the researchers suggested that high use of social media and emotional, as well as mental outcomes can lead to difficulties with emotional regulation, perceived stress, and mental health (Rasmussen et al., 2020).

The use of social media among adolescents has been linked to mental health problems. Barry et al. (2017) assessed adolescents and their parents on social media use and how it correlates to mental health issues. Participants included 226 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 as well as their parents (Barry et al., 2017). The social media survey-adolescent version was given to the adolescents to complete which focused on what social media network they used, the use of fake accounts, and how often they check their account (Barry et al., 2017). Adolescents were also given the fear of missing out (FoMo) survey and UCLA loneliness scale (Barry et al., 2017). Parents were given the social media-survey-parent version which asked the same questions their adolescent were asked but, based on their perspective (Barry et al., 2017). Parents also completed the DSM-5 checklist with symptoms focusing on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder (CD), anxiety, and depression (Barry et al., 2017).

Barry et al. (2017) concluded that social media activity was positively correlated to FoMo and loneliness in addition to parent-reported ADHD, anxiety, and depression. Loneliness was found to have a negative social impact relating do social media among

adolescents with internalization problems with adolescents who had several social media accounts (Barry et al., 2017). Interestingly, those who reported higher FoMo but had fewer social accounts scored lower on internalization symptoms (Barry et al., 2017). On the other hand, based on the parent-reported social media survey, adolescents who had several social media accounts and high FoMo were found to be highly correlated to anxiety and depression (Barry et al., 2017). These findings are important because it helps us understand the significance of FoMo as it relates to adolescent social media usage given that most of modern information is retrieved from social media and the internet (Barry et al., 2017).

### **Social Media Use and Juvenile Delinquents**

Violent crimes that are considered serious include aggravated assault, rape, murder, and robbery. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported juveniles between the ages of 12 to 17 with four of every ten juveniles are involved in serious violent crimes (OJJDP, n.d.). In 2018, juvenile offenders were involved in 867 murders representing eight percent of all murder offenders with a firearm being the most used form of murder in the United States (OJJDP n.d.). According to the OJJDP (n.d.), there are certain time frames where specific juvenile violent crimes are committed. For example, robberies typically occur between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. on school days and at 9 p.m. on nonschool days (OJJDP, n.d.). Juvenile offenders who are involved in aggravated assault crimes typically do so before 7 p.m. and sexual assaults spike at 8 a.m. and noon for school and nonschool days in addition to 3 p.m. on school days (OJJDP, n.d.). Understanding these specific statistics is significant because it provides



insight on time frames juvenile offenders could potentially participate in these crimes. This information is also useful for parents, teachers, and the community in providing awareness when faced with an adolescent at risk in participating in delinquent behaviors.

Social media use has been linked to depression, conduct problems, and heavy alcohol use among adolescents (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). The participants in a study by Brunborg and Anders (2019) were either in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Variables used in this study included time spent on social media, symptoms of depression, conduct problems, heavy drinking, sports practice, unsupervised leisure activities, and peer relationship problems (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). The researchers concluded that adolescents who spent more time on social media were likely to be depressed, had conduct problems, and consumed a heavy amount of alcohol intake (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). However, Brunborg and Andreas (2019) found that an increase in peer relationship problems were predictors in depression and conduct problems. Furthermore, unsupervised time also increased the likelihood of conduct problems, as did heavy alcohol intake (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019).

Juveniles between the ages of 13 and 15 are well informed of the popularity of social media. Mojares et al. (2015) discussed which social networking sites were mostly used by juveniles and examined which of the social media sites contributed to the development of delinquent behaviors. In general, females used social media more so than males, specifically Facebook and Twitter. Mojares et al. (2015) reported that 73% of females ages 12 to 17 used social media sites and the average adolescent sends about 3,339 text messages a month. Depression was found to be a factor with excessive social

media usage (Brandt, 2008, as cited in Mojares et al., 2015). It has also been found that adolescences who partake in social media usage are likely to be alone, did not care for others' feelings, and lack of motivation (Brandt, 2008). Cyberbullying and harassment were found to be the most common form of juvenile delinquent behaviors which could be caused by levels of depression as well as low self-esteem (Mojares et al., 2015).

Social media has been shown to have a significant impact on the behaviors and minds of those who use social media. Although social media is often used to connect with people and get support, there is a negative impact, specifically with adolescents. Social media tends to be correlated to cyber bullying, criminal activity on social media, gang violence, and suicide (Ghosh, 2017). Furthermore, social media has also been linked to greater access to firearms as well as harmful explosives (Ghosh, 2017). Specific social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram appear to be the primary social networks that lead to violent crimes (Ghosh, 2017). According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, exposure to social media violence has a significant role among escalating violent behaviors among adolescences (Ghosh, 2017).

Patton et al. (2019) conducted 33 interviews with participants ages 14 to 24 who experienced neighborhood violence or gang involvement as well as active social media user. The results concluded that social media posts were directly correlated to gang violence and violent threats (Patton et al., 2019). Furthermore, Patten et al. (2019) found that social media users who tag other user's names was perceived as threatening multiple audiences including individuals who did not have connections to the author, creating a hostile situation. Patten et al. (2019) reported that real-world interactions can escalate

online communication which then leads back to violent real-world actions. For instance, cyberbullying and harassment were found to be the most common form of juvenile delinquent behaviors (Mojares et al., 2015). Patten et al.'s (2019) findings support the research findings of Graham & Wood (2019) on the positive correlation between cyberbullying victimization and all forms of deviant risk behaviors. Implications noted by Patten et al. (2019) study, discussed the importance of understanding how individuals interpret real-world experiences and the importance of understanding that youths will use social media as an outlet to express their trauma and grief. It is also importance for law enforcement to understand the perception youths have on interpreting what is said online. Patten et al. (2019) suggested that future research should investigate the impact age and social media may have on interpreting threats. By doing so, professionals can formulate an intervention and prevention strategies in preventing violence online and offline before it escalates.

The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center at the University of Michigan (2014) found that media-violence is positively correlated to antisocial behaviors such as imitative violent behaviors with toys to criminal violence among children, acceptance of violent behaviors, hostility, and desensitization among violent behaviors (Ghosh, 2017). Youths tend to learn from their environment; therefore, if they are exposed to any form of violence, the chances of participating in violent behaviors and crimes increases significantly (Ghosh, 2017). Furthermore, virtual conflicts on social media have been found to escalate in assaults, shootings, and murders (Ghosh, 2017).

## Summary

Social media is becoming an epidemic problem in society, specifically with adolescents. There is currently no research on how increased numbers of hours on social media is related to aggressive behavior and parental attachment. Specifically, while there is research involving relationships between increased numbers of hours on social media and aggressive behavior (Ghosh, 2017) as well as increased numbers of hours on social media and parental attachment (Abar et al., (2018), no researcher has yet examined social media's impact on juvenile delinquency and parental attachment. Therefore, I aimed to discuss how social media impacts adolescent-parent relationships with at-risk youths by filling this gap in literature by using attachment theory.

Adolescents between ages of 13 and 17, and their parents were explored to address contributions to at-risk behaviors as well as parental attachment. Chapter 3 includes a review of the methodology of the study as well as the research design, data analysis, and participant recruitment methods.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Social media is becoming an epidemic problem in society with 88% of teenagers reporting cyberbullying and 26% of online crimes involving social media (Guarded Child, 2020). It has affected verbal communication and led to deficiencies in social skills not only for adults but minors as well (Hawke, 2018). Social media is another way to communicate with family and friends, but the amount of time spent on social media has been shown to impact mental health (Twenge et al., 2018). Jiang (2018) said social media use among minors and their parents is associated with juvenile delinquency. Jiang said 51% of teens reported that their parents are often distracted on their cell phones. Parents who are overly engaged on their cell phones on social media are disengaged with their children. In this study, I used the attachment theory to explore the role of social media in terms of adolescent-parent relationships involving juvenile delinquents. When a primary attachment figure is unavailable when needed, it disrupts the child's safety, security, and protection, resulting in psychological suffering (Babić et al., 2016).

In this chapter, I discuss the sampling methods that were used to provide insights about adolescents as well as their parents. Questions for parents involved their perspectives of relationships they have with their adolescents, perceived social media use for themselves and their adolescents, and at-risk behaviors they believed their adolescents engage in. Information was assessed from an alternative school for students who are at-risk of expulsion due to at-risk behaviors. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore experiences and motives involving how social media use among adolescents and

their parents and their effects on at-risk youths and parental relationships (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather information until saturation was reached. Potential biases were discussed during the data collection process as well as instruments. I reviewed issues of trustworthiness and ethical precautions that were established in the present study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

I established the following research questions for the study:

*RQ1:* What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?

*RQ2:* What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationship?

### **Phenomenon of Study**

This study involved exploring experiences involving social media and their effects on adolescent-parent relationships among juvenile delinquents. The purpose of a qualitative research study is to gain a deeper understanding of how participants develop purpose from their environment as well as how their purpose influences their behavior (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A phenomenon is understood by studying lived experiences of those who have applicable connections with the phenomenon to define or more deeply understand it by addressing commonalities among participants and their lived experiences (Crossman, 2018). The overall phenomenon explored was experiences with social media affecting adolescent-parent relationships involving at-risk youths. Social media is becoming an epidemic problem in society, with 88% of teens reporting cyberbullying and

26% of online crimes involve social media (Guarded Child, 2020). Jiang (2018) said 51% of teenagers reported that their parents are often distracted on their cell phones. Parents who are overly engaged on their cell phones on social media, are disengaged with their children. Therefore, it is important to understand the possible impact this has when parents are not engaged with their children.

### **Research Design**

The nature of this study was qualitative and involved using a phenomenological approach. The goal of this study was to describe relationships between adolescents and their parent as they pertained to social media use and reported at-risk behaviors. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand what influences individuals and their processes of decision-making (InterQ Research, 2020). Using the phenomenology approach helped explain the purpose of the study.

This study involved using semi-structured qualitative interviews with a sample size of six pairs of participants. According to Crouch and McKeenzie (2006), less than 20 participants allows the researcher to build closer relationships with participants, which allows for more of an open willingness to exchange more information. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore experiences and motives involving social media use among adolescents and their effects on juvenile delinquency and parental relationships (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This allowed me to gather enough information until saturation was reached.

Qualitative interviews involve insights into individuals' lived experiences, understanding how individuals make sense of reality as it relates to phenomena, and how

individuals' experiences and perspectives relate to other studies with similar topics (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interview questions in this study involved experiences and behaviors to highlight what an individual has done, will do, or is currently doing (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I asked about how adolescents perceive their relationships with their parents and how parents perceived their relationship with their adolescents as they pertained to social media.

### Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach that involves exploring participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017). This allows the researcher to make informed decisions regarding participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017). An important factor of IPA is the ability to make sense of those lived experiences (Alase, 2017). IPA involves a detailed examination of personal experiences combined with the researcher's own interpretations as well as combining phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Hermeneutics refers to the need to understand the mindset of a person and language to understand the meaning of the person's lived experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Ideography involves an in-depth analysis of individual cases and interpreting individuals' perspectives in exclusive situations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). A detailed analysis of individual experiences and generic experimental themes are combined with the researcher's own interpretations to determine a larger phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

I used an IPA approach in this study because it allowed me to explore the experiences of the participants, understanding those experiences, and how those



meanings are formulated. IPA works well with attachment theory because this theory provides guidance on the different forms of attachments between the primary caregiver and the adolescent which can provide insight on which attachment will help minimize psychological suffering. Therefore, attachment theory was applied to the issue of social media use among adolescents and their parents contribute to at-risk youths as well as parental attachment based on their own person lived experiences. Adolescents and their parents were explored to provide explanations on the contribution to at-risk youths as well as parental attachment which is correlated to the IPA approach.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher in this study, I gathered, coded, interpreted the data, and made a conclusion based upon the self-disclose experiences of the participants. I conducted a semi-structured interviews while engaging with the participants. Given that the interviews will be semi-structured, I organized and directed the interview followed by specific follow-up questions to gain a deeper insight for each participant's response (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I made sure that each participant felt comfortable emotionally and physically while establishing a positive rapport. It is critical to have that positive rapport because it allows each participant to form that trust with me. Having trust encouraged participants to positively engage in the interview and provide honest answers within the interview process.

I did not have previous personal relationships with any of the participants therefore, there were no concerns with influences regarding dual relationships. Although participants did not have any previous personal relationship with me, I have experiences

as a Licensed Professional Counselor working with juvenile delinquents and family dynamics. None of my data collection process were from current or prior relationships with any agency.

Bias has a potential to exist in all research methods and as a qualitative researcher I need to be able to understand and confront my values and beliefs underlying my decisions. (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, it is important for qualitative researchers to make thoughtful methodological choices and analyze the root in which these choices are made (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a licensed mental health therapist, I am trained to actively listen while reframing from interpreting based on my personal values. Similar experiences my clients may encounter result in their person unique lived experiences. However, I am aware that as a licensed mental health therapist, I may interpret the participants' experiences based on my professional upbringing (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). To avoid this bias, I was consciously aware with frequent self-checking of my interpretations to ensure I am not hindering the analysis process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

#### ***Population***

The population of interest were at-risk youths and their parents between the ages of 13 to 17. The sample participants included the biological fathers or mothers of at-risk youths who are in South Carolina as well as the youth. This study did not eliminate ethnic groups and social-economic status of the participants.

### *Sampling Method*

The selection of participants should reflect and represent the similarity that exists among the participants chosen (Alase, 2017). In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is highly recommended when selecting participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2012). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to specifically select participants that will help answer the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2012).

Recruitment for this study was an alternative school or out-patient behavioral health organization targeting at-risk youths. Alternative Educational Services focus on helping juveniles at risk of expulsion (Lexington County School District One, 2020). The goal for alternative schools is designed to assist with at-risk youths on understanding the importance of an education, learn how to make responsible decisions, and learning to take responsibilities for their actions (Lexington County School District One, 2020). Parents are encouraged to be involved with their at-risk youth by learning to create an environment to help youths adjust their behavior patterns and reframe from getting expelled (Lexington County School District One, 2020). Participants were recruited through an email (See Appendix E) posted by the director or principal of the alternative education school or out-patient behavioral health organization with my contact information. Recruitment emails were distributed to all parents providing equal opportunity to participate in this study and will include the criteria needed to be considered for this study. Although the director or principal worked with me in sending out emails to parents, the school or out-patient behavioral health organization is not affiliated with the study. To thank participants for their time, they received a Target gift

card for \$10. Potential participants were asked a series of additional inclusion questions (See Appendix F) to determine if they meet the criteria for the study.

Before recruiting participants, the researcher got approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Walden University to guarantee the research study ensures protection for the participants and follows the uppermost level of ethics. Once my study was approved by the IRB, I contacted the director or principal of the alternative school or out-patient behavioral health organization to obtain permission to advertise to the parents of the adolescents to confirm they can send out the recruitment email. When I obtained permission from the director or principal, I emailed the recruitment email to the director or principal of the alternative school or out-patient behavioral health organization so it can be sent to all parents. Parents who were interested in the study reached out to me through email. I scheduled a time to contact the parent to ask the addition inclusion questions and explain the purpose of the study and time commitment for data collection.

If the parent and their adolescent met the criteria, I scheduled a time for their interview. If the school is unavailable for the students, the interview took place at the closest local library of the participant. If the library is unavailable at the time scheduled, I met the participants at a private conference office which is located near the alternative school. The interview for the out-patient behavioral health organization took place at the closest local library of the participant or private conference office if the library is unavailable. The parent was informed to have some form of entertainment for the adolescent while they are being interviewed or have someone pick them up after their interview is finished. If the parent decided to bring a form of entertainment for the youth,

the door was prompt slightly open to ensure supervision. Confidentiality was maintained by a white noise machine so the adolescent cannot hear their parent's interview while being supervised. Before the study began, I reviewed the informed consent with the parent and adolescent at the same time to ensure they understand the purpose of the study, potential risks, and are not forced to participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) (See Appendix A & B). The researcher obtained approval from the youth and the youth's parents because they were under the age of 18. Additionally, I am a mandated reporter and if any harm is reported, I am obligated to report any harm to the Department of Social Services (DSS), which will be documented and reviewed in the informed consent.

### *Participants*

According to IPA, it is recommended that the participants recruited have similar experiences (Alase, 2017). For this study, similar experiences included the amount of time engaged by adolescents and their parents, at-risk youth, and parental attachment. This study used a sample size of six pairs of participants or until saturation is reached. At-risk youths in this study were between the ages of 13 and 17, and their parents were biologically related to their child. According to Crouch and McKeenzie (2006) less than 20 participants allows the researcher an opportunity to build a closer relationship with the participants which allows for more of an open willingness to exchange more information. Recruitment was obtained from a local alternative school or out-patient behavioral health organization to ensure the best possible way to get participants with experiences needed for this research study. Criteria included a history of at-risk behaviors by the youths over the series of three years. The possible delinquent behaviors included aggressive behaviors

which include bullying, fighting, and any form of cruelty; destructive behaviors, truancy, and deceitful behaviors such as lying, shoplifting, and breaking into another person's property. Furthermore, parents and adolescents must engage in social media for at least 14 hours a week. According to BBC (n.d.), engaging in social media for at least two hours a day is related to poor mental health. Those under the age of 18 are a vulnerable population and therefore prescreening and consent from the parent will be required. Parents and adolescents were in the same room and the same time to obtain consent by the parent and assent by the adolescent.

### **Instrumentation**

Audio recorded semi-structured interviews was used for this study and the interview was developed by the researcher to ensure the purpose of the research is uncovered. It is recommended that two fundamental questions are asked followed by five to seven follow-up questions (Alase, 2017) to ensure what the researcher wants to explore, which in this case is the role social media has among adolescent-parent relationship in at-risk youths.

The researcher formulated the open-ended interview questions based on the purpose of the study which was to explore the role social media has among adolescent-parent relationship in at-risk youths. The questions explored experiences of the participants while allowing the literature to suggest the main question and researching appropriate research questions based on the purpose of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Questions highlighted the number of hours a day are the parents and adolescence on social media; how the adolescent views the amount of time their parents engage on social

media and how the parent views the adolescent on social media (See Appendixes C & D). The rationale of these interview questions was designed to answer the research questions and purpose of this study.

### **Procedures**

IPA allows researchers to explore and understand the inmost lived experiences of participants (Alase, 2017). Additionally, IPA gives the study the best chance of collecting detailed and accurate data by developing a relationship with the participants so their lived experiences can be explored and interpreted (Alase, 2017). Data collection in a semi-structured interview can be challenging, specifically with follow-up questions because participants may volunteer information and it is up to the researcher to decide if the information is relevant to the research study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I conducted the research study face to face with the participant using the questions I developed. The face-to-face interview took place at the closest local library of the participant. If the library was unavailable at the time scheduled, I met the participant at a private conference office which is located near the alternative school and out-patient mental health organization. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I followed all precautions which includes staying six feet from the participants, wearing masks, and providing hand sanitizer. Consent and assent forms were signed prior to the research study.

The times of the interviews were agreed upon the participants and their schedule. I interviewed the adolescent and parent on the same day with each participant for about an hour. I interviewed the adolescent first for approximately an hour followed by the parent for approximately an hour. The parent and adolescent were not in the same room

while conducting the interview. The parent was informed to have some form of entertainment for the adolescent while they are being interviewed or have someone pick them up after their interview is finished. If the parent decided to bring a form of entertainment for the youth, the door was prompt slightly open to ensure supervision. Confidentiality was maintained by a white noise machine so the adolescent cannot hear their parent's interview while being supervised. Member checking was not included in this study to maintain confidentiality of the adolescent. I ensured the interview is transcribed correctly and accurately by reading over and listening to the data several times with the recording device and back up tape recorder. As a licensed professional counselor, I have experience in conducting interviews which allows my skills to determine the quality of data collected and have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the data collected. If the participant expressed any stress during or after the interview, I provided the participant with services to address any distress which was included on the consent form.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

In data analysis, the researcher examines the results and explores the meaning of the data collected (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It is important to stay close to the data by accurately transcribing interviews, and coding the results by concepts, themes, examples, and any other information that is discovered with the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I read through the data more than once so I can begin identifying themes. Identifying themes allows the researcher to identify what the participant says by applying theoretical constructs to the analyses of the participant's phenomenology (Storey, 2007). While



conducting interviews, I was aware of my own emotions, also known as transparency (Storey, 2007) while identifying patterns. Given that I am a trained clinician; it is a natural for me to be aware of an emotion I may have with the information I receive. After identifying themes, I labeled each theme based on repetitive notes of the transcripts as well as analyzed themes (Storey, 2007). Once the themes were labeled, the data was organized by provisional theme, sub-theme, and superordinate theme (Storey, 2007).

### *Coding process*

In qualitative research analysis, the interview transcript should be transcribed verbatim, using color-codes to assist with coding, and categorize the analysis in themes (Alase, 2017). IPA allows the coding process to discover themes that are related to each individuals' lived experience (Alase, 2017). When transcribing my analysis, I prepared a transcript that has a full as well as accurate verbatim written interpretation of the questions and answers because reading a transcript is quicker than listening to a recording several times (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Furthermore, listening to recordings and attempting to remember what was said can result in bias and unreliability (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The coding process I used is as follow:

1. Transcribe accurate verbatim written interpretation of the questions and answers followed by examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).
2. Read through the data several times to assist in becoming aware of key words and phrases that are repeated by participants which are considered core essence of the participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017).

3. It is essential for the reader to be aware of the data and suspend their own bias and beliefs by reading the data objectively while putting themselves into the lived experiences of the participant. By doing so allows the researcher to understand the participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017)
4. Organize the codes and recognize the concepts, themes, and events of the data (Alase, 2017). Organizing codes involves finding emerging themes and finding connections followed by grouping them accordingly based on conceptual similarities and providing a descriptive label for each cluster (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research tends to focus on data trustworthiness rather than data which is a significant factor because qualitative research measures variables compared to quantitative research which are measures by numbers (Devault, 2019). Therefore, qualitative research allows researchers to explore and discuss results based on participant's experiences (Devault, 2019).

Trustworthiness is based on four different components: credibility, transferability, dependability stages, and confirmability. According to Guba (1981) creditability refers to the researcher's ability to consider all the complexities that present within the study as well as noticing patterns that are not easily clarified (as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Triangulation institutes credibility which also contributes to trustworthiness (Devault, 2019). Triangulation focuses on the same research questions for each participant while collecting data from other sources using different methods to answer the exact question

(Devault, 2019). Additionally, credibility incorporates member checks which allows participants to review the data collected including the researchers' interpretation which gives them a chance to fill in any misunderstandings and gaps (Devault, 2019).

Transferability focuses on simplifying the findings of the study and the ability to apply the findings to other situations and contexts (Devault, 2019). There is not a guarantee that researchers can prove the interpreted data is transferable (Devault, 2019). A factor contributed to transferability is purposive sampling which is used to enrich specific data to the context of where the data was collected (Devault, 2019). Additionally, purposive sampling focuses on participants' characteristics which are associated to the research question (Devault, 2019).

Unlike credibility which tends to be related to validity of the results, dependability tends to be related to reliability (Devault, 2019). Reliability allows awareness to future researchers on the accuracy of the results (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This study provided in-depth data the participants provide to ensure dependability.

Confirmability provides future researchers to replicate the study and fill in the gap within the literature based on the researcher's future recommendations (Devault, 2019). Replicating the results also inquires that the results are not based on conscious or unconscious bias (Devault). One way I ensured confirmability was to review as well as have a second opinion from a colleague if any of the results stems from bias.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Before recruiting participants, the researcher got approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Walden University to guarantee the research study ensures

protection for the participants and follows the uppermost level of ethics. To ensure I used the appropriate ethical guidelines, I followed the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (2016). I got approval from the IRB and obtained informed consent prior to my research study. The informed consent discussed the purpose of the study, duration, and procedures (APA, 2016). Additionally, the informed consent discussed that the participant could terminate participation at any time, limits of confidentiality, incentives for participating, and providing participants with the results of the study by email. A copy of the results was available at the school or out-patient behavioral health organization (APA, 2016). Informed consent discussed that the recording will not be used for any reason other than the purpose of this study (APA, 2016). Maintaining confidentiality is the primary obligation to protect information that is received (APA, 2016). However, participants were told that if any harm is being reported, the researcher is mandated to report the findings to DSS. I provided the participants with a report on the findings of this study through email.

I used a numbering system to identify participants to maintain confidentiality and recordings were destroyed after the completion of accurate transcriptions according to the APA (2016) guidelines. The transcripts were kept double locked, and the memos written by the researcher was coded so only the researcher will be able to identify the participants (APA, 2016). Debriefing occurred after the interview for participants could have the opportunity to discuss their experience and misconceptions they may have (APA, 2016). If the participant needed to withdraw from the study due to harm, I provided resources

the participant can utilize. Per APA (2016) guidelines, all written and recorded documents will be destroyed after five years.

### **Summary**

The methodology of the study was explained so that future researchers and readers can interpret data analysis, methods, and interpretive choices involving the purpose of this study. IPA was chosen because it is a qualitative research approach that involves exploring participants' lived experiences without any distortion (Alase, 2017). Since the purpose of this study was to explore experiences and motives in terms of how social media use among adolescents and their parents affects their relationships, IPA was the appropriate choice. The sampling method was purposeful to reflect the population that was studied. Participants were at-risk youths and their parents from an alternative school in South Carolina. Data were recorded and transcribed so I could code and analyze the data. Problems related to trustworthiness were addressed. Ethical considerations were addressed to allow the highest standards of research according to APA guidelines. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of results.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

Social media is used in many ways, including business, selling items, connecting with family and friends, and support groups (WHO, 2019). However, it has also become harmful, with consequences involving delinquent behaviors, a rise in mental health issues, and lack of social skills issues (Woods & Scott, 2016). According to Moaward and Ebrahme (2016), adolescents ranging from 12 to 18 who spend more time on social media have less interactions with their parents. Adolescents who had negative encounters with their parents reported feeling lonely and having less secure attachments with their parents (Moaward & Ebrahim, 2016). There is a gap in literature regarding the role of social media in terms of adolescent-parent relationship involving at-risk youths. Therefore, I aimed to discuss how social media impacts adolescent-parent relationships involving at-risk youths and fill this gap in literature by using the attachment theory.

In this study, I applied the attachment theory to explore adolescent-parent relationships. The research questions in this study were:

*RQ1:* What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?

*RQ2:* What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationships?

In this chapter, I discuss the setting and specific criteria to participate in this study. Additionally, data collection and analyses are discussed as well as data trustworthiness. Last, I present results of the study.

### **Setting**

Participant pairs were able to participate in one of two ways: in person or virtually through using the electronic platform Zoom. Virtual interviews were an option due to safety concerns because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual interviews opened opportunities for other participants from any states to participate as well. Participant pairs who decided to have their interviews in-person did so at the local library closest to them as agreed upon, which allowed for a neutral environment. Six pairs of participants interviewed for this study for a total of 12 participants. Adolescent participants ranged between 13 and 17, as well as one biological or adopted parent. Three of six participant pairs decided to meet in person, while the other three participants were interviewed virtually using Zoom. Two of the three participant pairs who decided to participate through virtual interviews lived in another states (Florida and Texas).

### **Demographics**

A total of six pairs of individuals participated in the study, resulting in 12 total participants. There were four female adolescents and two male adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17. Ages of parents were not applicable to this study and therefore were not collected. Participants lived in South Carolina (four pairs), Florida (one pair), and Texas (one pair). Both adolescents and parent participants met the criteria of engaging on social media for at least 14 hours a week. Adolescent participants also met criteria for at-risk behaviors in terms of verbal aggression and lying. One participant reported physical aggressive behaviors and cyberbullying. Due to the small sample size, additional details were not provided to protect participants' confidentiality.

### **Data Collection**

I performed semi-structured interviews with six pairs of participants. To recruit participants from local schools in South Carolina, I had to contact Lexington County School District One, which had seven schools within the district, for permission to have access to students. I had to fill out an intensive form explaining the purpose of the study and how results of the study would benefit the community. I got approval to contact principals for schools within Lexington County School District One. This recruitment process was unsuccessful because two principals were no longer able to help due to inconsistency of in-person school attendance because of COVID, and five principals did not respond.

For the mental health outpatient facility, I emailed the recruitment letter to the directors of the facility who all agreed to post the recruitment letter in their office or in the waiting area. The recruitment letter provided my email so potential participants could contact me about participating in the study. Two participant pairs from an outpatient facility were interested in participating in this study and contacted me through the email provided on the recruitment letter. One participant pair met the criteria for this study and the other participate pair did not. I was unable to recruit any more participants from the mental health facilities. I contacted the IRB so I could update my request so I could recruit participants through local community websites.

With the community websites, 10 parents contacted me interested in participating in this study. I provided additional information about this study. Two out of the 10 parents did not respond after receiving further information about this study, three



participant pairs did not meet criteria for this study after providing additional information, and five participant pairs met criteria for this study based on additional information that was provided. For participant pairs who met criteria for this study, I scheduled times to ask additional screening questions and made sure they met criteria. Once it was determined participant pairs met criteria, interview times were scheduled. Participant pairs who were interviewed via Zoom were emailed consent and assent forms to sign and email back to me before scheduling interviews.

Interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes and took place at the local library that was closest to participants or through Zoom. For participant pairs who decided to do their interviews in person, I interviewed adolescents and parents on the same day to eliminate chances discussing interviews. Parents were interviewed immediately after adolescents. If participants were local, I set up times to meet at the nearest library. Once at the library, I provided them with assent and consent forms that I went over, and they signed. The first two pairs of participants informed me they were going to be late due to prior obligations. Although all interview questions were completed, the last participant interview seemed rushed, which could have impacted depth of information. These interviews were not rescheduled because that day was the only day interviews could be completed. I was unable to stay later because the library was closed for the remainder of the day.

For in-person interviews, I reserved the same conference room ahead of time once participants informed me what times worked best to be interviewed. The three interviews took place during the weekend, which all participants agreed was best to schedule their interviews, particularly between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. when the library had few people. The

room where in-person interviews took place had several long tables, chairs, and a window which allowed me to supervise the adolescent participants while their parents were being interviewed. I rearranged the room so that one of the long tables was placed in the back right corner, which allowed participant pairs to be as far away from the door as possible, because the room was not soundproofed. I had my white noise machine by the door to limit any possible noise coming from the library and prevent participant interviews from being overheard. I had participants with their backs to the door to limit distractions that could occur during interviews, and I sat directly across from participants. Although the conference room was in the back of the library and behind bookshelves, the window in the room could be a distraction. Additionally, having participants face away from the door prevented anyone in the library from identifying participants. During all three interviews, there was not anyone in the library, and therefore we had complete privacy while interviews took place. During the first two interviews, another adult was present which allowed adolescents to stay with them while their parent was being interviewed. For the third interview, while the adolescent was being interviewed, the parent kept busy in the library, and when it was time to interview the parent, the adolescent read a book at a table, which allowed the adolescent to be in sight.

For participants who volunteered for virtual interviews, I first set up a time for screening questions. If the participants met the criteria and wanted to proceed with the study, I emailed the parent both the assent and consent form. When the forms were returned to me, we set up a time for the interview. Prior to the scheduled interview, I sent the link to both the adolescent and parent. All three Zoom interviews I completed where

at my home, in a private room, with a white wall behind me to minimize any distraction, and my white noise turned on to ensure complete privacy. All my participants were aware of the private room and white noise for the Zoom interviews.

For all the interviews, I used two audio recordings, my phone and a digital voice activated recorder in case one of the recordings stopped working. Additionally, I used Otter, an app I downloaded on my phone, which helped transcribe each interview. In addition to transcribing the interview for each participant, Otter was also able to keep track of word and phrases that were often mentioned. Both recorders were placed on the table for in-person interviews and by my laptop for Zoom interviews. I asked all the interview questions exactly as worded for each participant. All the participants were able to go in-depth with their responses including the adolescents who tended to be more guarded. However, I reminded the adolescents that their responses are confidential which appeared to provide them reassurance and they disclosed additional information after this statement was made. Additionally, I printed out copies of the adolescent and parent interview which allowed me to take additional notes during the interview process as an additional resource when analyzing the data.

Questions were focused on the experiences the participants encountered with social media, parent-adolescent relationships, and adolescent at-risk behaviors. All the participants were able to explain in-depth their experiences. I added follow-up questions if the answers the participant's needed clarification. It is possible that the location in which the interview took place may have caused the participant to feel more guarded because they did not feel comfortable while the interview took place. The participants

may have felt less guarded in the in-person interview because I was able to have more control of the environment because the participants saw the white noise and was able to see that the other participant was not standing by the door watching when the interview first started. During the interview, I was able to see if the other participant was watching. On the other hand, it is possible the participants were more guarded while being interviewed in-person because they were in an environment which they had less control over.

For the Zoom interviews, the participant may have felt more comfortable and therefore provided more information to their interview questions because they had more control over their environment and was able to choose where their interview took place. However, it is also possible that participants were guarded during their Zoom interview because it was not guaranteed that the other participant was not listening outside the room even though the participants agreed to give their parent or adolescent complete privacy. Therefore, depending on the environment and how comfortable the participant felt, could have an impact on their answers on whether more information as given or less information was given. because some of the interviews were virtual there may have been less information provided. While it was mentioned before the interview to find a private location so the participant would be comfortable with their responses, it is possible that the other participant was nearby.

A major limitation is the participant pairs who showed up late which could have impacted the quality of data from shortened or rushed interviews. This assumption is further discussed in the limitation section of Chapter 5. There were several variations due

to the difficulties recruiting participants. The first variation was the ability to advertise this study through the community sites, and while more participant pairs replied, they lived out of town or out of state. Therefore, the second variation requested through IRB was doing virtual interviews via Zoom to allow participants who lived out of state to participate. Another limitation was the first two pairs of participants who informed me they were going to be late to their interviews due to prior obligations. Although all the interview questions were completed, the last participant's interview seemed rushed which could have impacted the depth of information given.

Another external factor could be the COVID pandemic because it required social distancing and therefore it made it difficult to socialize with others. With that said, this could have impacted the participants answers to the interview questions because their overall wellbeing may not be the same compared to the participant's well-being prior to the COVID pandemic. It is also possible that because of COVID, social media use may have increased because they were unable to socialize with others in person. The time of day of the interview could have impacted the participant's answers to the interview question because it is possible, they may have been more tired than usual, hungry, or distracted by something that may have occurred before their interview. Other external factors may include gender and age because questions could be interpreted differently based on how each participant processes and understands the interview questions. I provided each participant with a \$10 gift card to Target at the completion of the interview and a handout for the parents discussing "Fifteen Apps Parents Should Know About" (See Appendix F).

### **Variations in Data Collection**

There were several variations which occurred throughout the data collection process. The definition of key terms was modified to fit changes of the study. *Adopted parent* was added to the study to allow equal opportunities to parents who were either biological parents or adopted parents. To be considered for this study as an adopted parent, the child had to live with the parent for at least 13 years given that the youngest a participant could be 13 years old. This specific criterion was chosen so the adopted child lived with their adopted parent like the amount of time the biological child lived with their parents. The terms “delinquent behaviors” were changed to at-risk behaviors because of the significant legal risks if I asked participants to disclose a minor’s illegal behaviors. At-risk behaviors included aggressive behaviors such as fighting and bullying and verbally aggressive such as bullying, cyberbullying, and lying. In addition to the definition of social media discussed in Chapter 1 under key terms, it was also defined as any form of online or screen devices (e.g., video games, email). The research questions for this study were also updated to replace juvenile delinquent behaviors to at-risk youths. RQ1 was also revised to help clarify what the question is asking.

*RQ1:* What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?

*RQ-2:* What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationship?

Although there were some discrepancies in the data collection, each transcript had both converging and diverging themes. Diverging themes were determined to be

important discrepant cases which are discussed in-depth after the results of all the subthemes within a theme.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I formed the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings to provide evidence of trustworthiness. I applied several methods to make certain of credibility. Creditability refers to the researcher's ability to consider all the complexities that present within the study as well as noticing patterns that are not easily clarified (as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One method I used was prolonged exposure (Guba, 1981) by building a rapport with the participants to gain in-depth data sets. Additionally, I used triangulation which also contributes to trustworthiness (2019). Triangulation focuses on the same research questions for each participant while collecting data from other sources using different methods to answer the exact question (Devault, 2019). Triangulation was used in this study by using multiple sources until saturation was met (Devault, 2019). I collected in-depth data through the semi structured interviews of each participant. According to Guba (1981) to establish transferability, the researcher should present as much data as needed so that readers can make their interpretations to the themes based on the data provided. I will use direct quotes to provide readers with additional data so they can determine their interpretations in the result section of this chapter.

The in-depth methods section in Chapter 3 assisted in determining dependability of the methodology used for the reader in this study. This warrants that someone can review the data collection methods to make sure that it was done appropriately (Guba,

1981). Additionally, I also enhanced the dependability of this study by working with the dissertation committee to make sure that the methods were held to suitable standards.

Finally, I established conformability of this study by mindfully self-checking myself by asking myself if my thoughts and reaction were free from bias and did not influence this study (Guba, 1981). Additionally, I consulted with my dissertation committee to determine if my thoughts and reaction were free from bias because of my profession. The data was organized in a way that can be retrieved and reviewed to the process I used to gather and analyze the data if audited (Guba, 1981).

### **Data Analysis**

Saturation was reached after six pairs of participants, as no new information was obtained after interviewing the last pair. I followed the IPA guidelines as discussed in Chapter 3 when analyzing the data. Prior to the interviews, I printed hard copies of the adolescent and parent interview question. By doing so, I was able to compare the written hand notes to the transcribed interview which allowed me to quickly analyze the answers between the data pairs of participants to all the themes and subthemes. After the interview, I first printed out the transcripts and read the transcripts several times and played both recordings used to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate. I went through the recordings to make sure the transcripts caught all the participants' responses. The transcriber I used kept tracked of repetitive words that were said throughout the interview which allowed me to identify repetitive patterns words said more than once that were consistent with the data. By doing so, I was able to pull out possible themes and subthemes. I first compared answers between each participant pair to determine the



meaning of each sentence. I completed this process multiple times for each pair of participants pairs to ensure I pulled out all the evolving themes. Before moving on to the second stage, I wrote out a narrative analysis for each data set of pairs which was written as a summary of all the answers given with possible underlying meaning. The purpose of writing a narrative analysis was for me to view the data set in a different perspective which allowed me to determine if there were other relevant meaning in the answers I may have missed.

During the second stage, I analyzed the data between the pairs and pulled out themes from the codes I found in the data set for each interview. I compared the answers given by each data pair and noticed evolving themes. In the last stage of data analysis, I went over all the transcripts to determine if there were any discrepancies within each data set pairs. All transcriptions between data set pairs had both converging and diverging themes and were supported by quotes given by each participant pair. Diverging themes were determined to be important discrepant cases which are discussed in-depth after the results of all the subthemes within a theme.

I pulled out three themes and five subthemes. The three themes were: encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage, misunderstanding between social media and technology causes challenges on parental monitoring, and quality of time spent together differ in the perceptive of the adolescent participants and parent participants. The five subthemes included: Parents are concerned with risk of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignore these concerns or think it will not happen to them. Another subtheme was parents continue to allow their

adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them, while adolescents are unaware of their parent’s concerns. The third subtheme included adolescents’ perception on their negative moods differ from their parent when asked to get off technology devices which no longer allows access to social media. The fourth subtheme was the perception between adolescent and their parents differed on the purpose of social media is used. The last subtheme found was social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescents and their parents’ relationship. Table 1 shows how the themes found in this study relates to each research question.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Research Questions and Theme*

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<i>RQ1: What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?</i>	<p>Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage.</p> <p>Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology.</p>
<i>RQ2: What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationship?</i>	<p>Quality time spent together differs in the perspective in adolescent participants and parent participants.</p>

## **Results**

This section discusses the results as well as themes that appeared in response to each research question (RQ). Discrepancies were discussed when pertinent. The

information from this study adds to the current literature and brings additional evidence related to the impact social media has on the adolescent-parent relationship and at-risk behaviors among youths. The coding in this study were referred to as pairs and individuals within the pair. “A” was used for the adolescent responses and “P” was used for the parent’s responses, and numbers 1-6 indicates the pair number, when referring to both the adolescent and pair “AP” was used.

**RQ1: What is the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents?**

Two themes appeared in response to RQ1 regarding the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents. Those two themes were (a) Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage and (b) Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Themes and Subthemes for RQ1*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage.	Parents continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them.
Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology.	Adolescents’ perception on their negative moods differ from their parent’ when asked to get off technology devices and no longer have access to social media.

The perception between adolescent and their parents differed on the purpose of social media is use.

**Theme 1: Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social usage.**

This theme addressed RQ1 and the role of adolescents reported at-risk behaviors and social media use among adolescents and their parents. Throughout the interviews, participant pairs reported they encountered some form of negative influence on social media that affected their overall mental health. Yet, all participant pairs continued engaging in social media despite these concerns. Social media allows individuals to express their thoughts and feelings without seeing the expressions on other people's faces. By doing so, it is easier to encounter negative posts, comments, and cyberbullying. Although all six participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media, all six pairs continue to get on social media, and the two common subthemes mentioned within this theme. A1 reported: "There is a lot of different stuff on there, especially when it comes to like, I guess, body images and kind of rumors, that kind of stuff basically". However, A1 continues to use social media because "it is something to do and a few of my friends have it. So see what they're up to". P1 reported they noticed the way people talk to one another in a negative way and not caring how it may impact others:

I mean, just people who don't care what they say" and "I was on Facebook for years. And I got off it, because of all the rabbit holes and the just negative talk that comes on every single page that you go on."

P1 reported that they go back on social media because they joined a group and watch videos on how to do hobbies such as cooking or doing hair specifically on Tic Tok “I look at different ways that people cook or doing their hair”.

***Subtheme 1.1: Parents are concerned with risk of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignore these concerns or think it won't happen to them.***

Five out of the six parent participants reported concerns with risk of connecting with strangers while adolescent participants are aware they are talking to strangers but choose to ignore these concerns. One out of the six adolescent participants reported concerns with the risk of connecting with strangers. A2 reported that social media has an impact on teenagers because they do not know who they are really talking to behind the screen “you may not be talking to the person you thought”. P2 expressed concerns about A2 talking to strangers after a previous incident where their teen did meet a stranger.

***Subtheme 1.2: Parents continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them.***

All six parent participants reported how they noticed the affect social media has on their adolescent; they continue to allow them to use social media. None of the six adolescent participants reported being aware of parent's concerns as it pertains to their changes in mood. However, four out of the six participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media and how it affects them; but continue to use social media.

Parent participants reported they noticed depressed moods among their adolescent since using social media. For pair AP1, P1 described their child as “social and had pictures with bright emotions” prior to using social media. Now, P1 reported that their

adolescent “barely smiles, became self-absorbed with taking selfies, and her life revolves around social media”. P1 reported they noticed that their teen uses foul language the more they are engaging on social media. A1 reported that social media, specifically social media influencers, focus on body image and feels pressured to look a certain way.

For pair AP3, prior to social media use, P3 reported their adolescent is a completely different person and now their adolescent is more withdrawn when exposed to social media and anxious but is unsure if it is related to social media use. A3 reported they are easily peer pressured into doing things they do not want to do: “Basically just people forcing me to do something I'm not comfortable with. You get through with it. Yeah, okay, then I end up like hating it regretting it”.

### *Discrepant Cases*

One out of the six adolescent participants did not report concerns with the risk of connecting with strangers and four out of the six adolescent participants acknowledged they knew they were talking to strangers but were not concerned. Two out of the six adolescent participants explained that the strangers they meet on social media claim they eventually become friends. A3 said:

Usually, they don't really give away their age, usually, people just more focused on like a conversation or having a debate. You get to meet people all over the world, I get to communicate and make friends by knowing that.

Although all the parent participants did express concerns with connecting with strangers, five out of the six adolescent participants did not, and one out of the six adolescent participants did not mention the risk of talking to strangers at all. This shows

that the risk behind talking to strangers is not powerful enough to reframe from talking to people they do not know on social media.

One reason adolescents reported they continue to communicate with others they do not know on social media is because it is easier to talk to people online compared to face-to-face. A5 reported that social media has an impact on teenagers because the amount of risk social media has which includes talking to strangers: “So many things online that a lot of people don’t know how to protect themselves”. However, A5 also reported it is easier to talk to people on social media because it is easier to develop a connection. A6 did not express concerns about talking to people on social media they do not know because they use social media to communicate and socialize with people in general.

All parent participants reported the negative affects social media have on their adolescent but, they continue to let their adolescent use social media. None of the adolescent participants reported being aware of their parent’s concerns as it pertains to their changes in mood. Although the adolescent participants were not aware of concerns their parents had on their moods, they were aware of how social media contributed to their moods and how they view themselves. A1 reported that social media tends to fixate on body image and believes that social media influencers almost have the perfect body “Whenever I see like, Kylie Jenner, I overthink about myself. She posted her like exercise routine and I’m like I want to be like that”.

**Theme 2: Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology.**

This theme addressed RQ1 and the role of adolescents' at-risk behaviors and social media use among themselves and their parents. There is a lot of misunderstanding between social media and technology which can make it difficult for parents to monitor their teens social media. Many parents are not aware of the different kinds of social media sites are available because of the constant change in technology.

Two out of the six parent participants reported putting parental restrictions on their adolescent (AP2, AP6). Four out of the six parent participants reported they rely on their adolescent telling them what they are viewing but not monitor what social media sites they are on (AP1, AP3, AP4, AP5). Five out of the six adolescent participants reported they are on their technology devices longer than their parents reported and had social media sites their parents were not aware of. The two most common things mentioned that contributed to parental monitoring and misunderstanding between social media and technology were the different perception on negative moods when technology devices are not available and the different perception between participant pairs and the purpose of social media use.

***Subtheme 2.1: Adolescents' perception on their negative moods differs from their parent' when asked to get off a technology device and they no longer have access to social media.***

Four out of the six participant pairs reported some form of aggression as it pertains to getting off their technology device which limits their access to social media (AP1, AP3, AP4, AP5). Verbal aggression was commonly reported among these four participant pairs specifically verbal aggression among the adolescent participants towards



their parent such as yelling and getting overly angry to the point that they slammed their phones and negative body language (storming off, tantrums, slamming phone). Taking away technology devices limits the ability to connect with others on social media and possible fear of missing out on important updates on social media.

In two out of the six parent participants reported increased verbal aggression when they ask their adolescent to put their technology device away. The adolescent participants reported they did not have any verbal aggression when asked to get off their technology device. A5 reported there was a point they would get angry when their technology device was taken away, but the aggression is no longer there because there is no point for their parent to take away their means of communicating with others: “Oh, I don’t necessarily get my phone taken away because it’s just I’m obviously it’s no point and take me away from the phone because that’s where all my friends are. And all it would do is hurt me.”

***Subtheme 2.2: The perception between adolescent and their parents differed on the purpose of social media is used.***

All participant pairs reported the main reason adolescents use social media is to talk to their friends. A1 stated: “Something to do and friends” and knew their parent had Tik Tok but did not why their parent is on social media. P1 reported the reason their adolescent uses social media is because everyone has it:

Because everyone has it. That was all she ever told me ever since she was like 11.

She is so self-absorbed in having to take selfies every five seconds. She’s always

talks about; well look how much money they're making just from some stupid dance. For the longest time her career choice was to be a YouTuber.

When it came to parent use and adolescent's perception on their social media use, all adolescent participants acknowledged their parent had social media but, none of the adolescents were able to identify the purpose their parent engages in social media. Four out of six adolescent participants identified what social media sites their parent is on. Two out of the six adolescent participants reported their parent have social media but did not report specific social media sites. Reasons parent participants reported using social media was for work as well as communicating with friends and family.

**RQ2: What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationship?**

The one theme that appeared in response to RQ2 is the quality of time spent together differ in the perceptiveness of the participant pairs. There was one subtheme that emerged from this theme which was social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescences and their parent's relationship.

**Table 3**

*Theme and Subtheme for RQ2*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Subtheme</i>
Quality of time spent together differ in the perceptiveness of the adolescent participants and parent participants.	Social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescences and their parent's relationship.

**Theme 3: Quality of time spent together differs in the perspective of the adolescent and parent participants.**

Theme 3 addressed RQ2, which referred to the quality of time spent between the adolescent and their parent differs in the perspective of the adolescent and parent. For the last theme, three out of the six adolescent participants reported the negative impact social media has on quality time when the parents engage on social media. A3 reported they get annoyed when their parent is on social media because they feel ignored. P3 reported they believe that their teen would be frustrated because their teen will feel unimportant and not having their full attention.

A5 reported it upsets them because they feel as if they cannot spend time with their parent because they are on social media and not paying attention to them. P5 reported they are aware that their adolescent hates it when they are on social media because it takes away their attention from their adolescent. Two out of the six adolescent participants reported feeling ignored while the parent was unaware of the negative impact they had on their adolescent because they were on social media. There seems to be a disconnect between being present in the moment and quality time spent. A1 reported feeling left out when their parent is constantly on social media specifically if they are trying to say something important. A1 stated: "Sometimes I feel left out. She will be paying more attention to that. I give up after talking to her for a bit."

P1 reported did not acknowledge any negative impact their adolescent has when they are on social media because they believe they spend quality time together having conversations their teen's friends and crushes.

A4 reported there were times where they were trying to tell their parent something, but they were not listening:

I try to tell them something and their typing or whatever. And then they'll be like, tell me in a second, I'm doing something. That's how the world is feels normal at this point in our lives, we don't need to ask our parents for much. We can do whatever.

P4 reported they were unsure how the amount of time they are on social media impacts their adolescent but admitted their adolescent would try to talk to them and they are not paying attention because they are in the "middle of something" and would ask him to wait

***Subtheme 3.1: Social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescences and their parent's relationship.***

When it comes to trusting one another, there seems to be a disconnect on the amount of trust the pairs of participants have with one another relating to social media or not. Two out of six participant pairs reported they trust one another, but to an extent. Two out of the six adolescent participants reported they trust their parent meanwhile their parent reported not trusting their teen. Additionally, two out of the six adolescent participants reported they do not trust their parent even though their parent reported they trust their teen.

Even though two out of the six participant pairs reported trusting one another, there still seems to be hesitation on being completely honest with one another. A2 reported having trust in their parent; however, A2 continues using social media without

their parent knowing because they know they are not allowed to have any form of social media. Interestingly, P2 reported having trust in their teen because they believe their teen comes to them about anything and if they want to download a specific app, they will come ask them first, yet, that is not the case.

Pair AP5 both reported being able to trust one another to an extent. A5 reported they completely trust their parent but at the same times does not tell their parent everything because they do not want to add stress and have them overthink what was said. P5 reported they trust their teen although they are aware their teen hides things from them. However, P5 also reported there have been times where their teen lost their trust when their teen becomes impulsive about their decisions and meets people from social media they do not know.

Two out of the six participant pairs, the adolescent participants reported trusting their parent while parent participants reported not trusting their adolescent. A1 reported having complete trust in their parent who is the only person they feel comfortable talking to. P1 reported they believe their teen hides things from them, specifically as it relates to social media, because of their negative reaction. AP6, A6 reported having complete trust in their parent and believes they can go to their parent about anything but did not report if they believe their parent trusts them. P6 reported they do not trust their teen because their teen has a history of being sneaky and manipulative when it comes to meeting people from social media they do not know.

Two out of six adolescent participants reported they did not trust their parent while their parent reported trusting their adolescent. A3 reported they do not trust their

parent because they believe their parent because they do not feel comfortable talking to them about what is going on because they feel as if their parent will not understand. A3 reported lying about their responsibilities they are supposed to be doing because they would rather engage on social media and lying helps to get away with things or a reward: “You can lie about winning something and then getting the reward for it. Or you can lie about doing something and just get away with it.” P3 reported they have high trust with their teen and could not recall a situation when their teen did lose their trust. At the same time, P3 also reported they believe their teen has difficulties trusting them at times because there have been times where they did not follow through with what they promised.

A4 reported they do not trust their parent because does not seem to listen to what they are saying. Therefore, what is the point in relying on them for anything. P4 reported they do trust their teen and believes their teen can trust them because they can call or text them about anything.

### **Summary**

I performed semi-structured interview to understand experiences and motives involving how social media use among adolescents and their parents and their effects on at-risk adolescent and parental relationships. Interviews were based around two research questions, and three themes were developed in response to questions from interviews. Two themes were developed regarding RQ1, “what is the role of social media use among adolescents and their parents in the adolescents’ reported at-risk behaviors?” The two areas that developed to be the most significant to the role of social media use among

adolescents and their parents in the adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors were encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage and parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding of social media and technology.

Participant pairs reported influences on social media that negatively impacted their overall mental health. Nevertheless, all participant pairs continued engaging in social media despite these concerns. Therefore, encountering negativity on social media does not seem to impact staying off social media. Additionally, parents expressed concerns about their teenagers talking to strangers on social media, and although they were aware of these concerns, they chose to ignore them. Although parents acknowledged they were concerned about how social media impacts mental health, they continue to let their teenagers engage on social media.

Misunderstanding of social media and technology causes challenges in terms of parental monitoring. Most parents are not aware of the different types of social media that are available because technology is quickly advancing. To get access to social media, typically a technology device is needed. Without this technology device, it is difficult to access any form of social media.

One theme that was developed regarding RQ2 was that there seems to be a disconnect in terms of amount of trust pairs of participants had with each other relating to social media. Participant pairs had different perspectives involving quality time spent together. Parent participants reported that their adolescents would rather be on social media than spend quality time with them. Conversely, adolescent participants also

reported feeling ignored when their parents engaged on social media while trying to have conversations.

This chapter includes results and themes that were developed from data. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the present study as well as discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

Social media has become extremely popular in society because of convenient access to communications (WHO, 2019). Social media can also have negative impact on society and lead to mental health and lack of social skills issues (Woods & Scott, 2016). Adolescents between 12 and 18 who spend more time on social media have less interactions with their parents (Moaward & Ebrahme, 2016). Adolescents who have negative encounters with their parents reported feeling lonely and having less secure attachments with their parents (Moaward & Ebrahem, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role of social media on adolescent-parent relationships involving at-risk youths. This study had six pairs of participants ( $n = 12$ ) and I conducted semi-structured interviews and analyzed data using the IPA framework.

RQ1 was: What is the role of adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors and social media use on relationships between adolescents and their parents? The two themes that developed in response to RQ1 were: (a) encountering negativity on social media does not lead to refraining from social media usage, and (b) parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstandings involving social media and technology. From these main themes, the following subthemes emerged: (a) parents are concerned with risks involved with connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignore these concerns or think they will not happen, (b) parents continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite negative effects social media has on them, (c) adolescents' perceptions of their negative moods differ from their parents when they are asked to get off technology devices and no

longer have access to social media, and (d) perceptions of adolescents and their parents differ in terms of the purpose of social media. These themes and subthemes expand on research as presented in Chapter 2, which is discussed in this chapter.

RQ2 was: What is the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents in their adolescent-parent relationships? One theme appeared in response to RQ2: quality of time spent together differs in terms of perceptions of adolescent and parent participants. From this main theme, the following subtheme emerged: Social media continues to be an issue regardless of adolescent and parent relationships. This subtheme was found to expand on research presented in Chapter 2, which is discussed in this chapter. Additionally, in this chapter, I interpret and discuss results based on the theoretical foundation, explore implications for future research, and address possible positive social change.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In this study, I addressed three main themes and five subthemes in relation to how social media impacts at-risk youths and parent-adolescent relationships. These themes and subthemes are further interpreted in relation to literature as it pertains to results. These themes and subthemes were used to fill a gap in literature involving how social media impacts at risk-youths and adolescent-parent relationships.

**Theme 1: Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage.**

Even though participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media, they continue to use social media (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Social media allows individuals

to express their thoughts and feelings without seeing expressions on other people's faces. Because of this, it is easier to encounter negative posts, comments, and cyberbullying. Constant exposure to negative experiences on social media increases chances of at-risk behaviors (Vazonyi et al. (2016). My finding supports this because despite negativity on social media, all participant pairs continue to engage on social media. Although most participant pairs reported that certain social media posts put them in a negative state, they continued to use social media. Therefore, despite negative effects of social media, this does not seem to prevent social media users from continuing to engage on social media.

***Subtheme 1.1: Parents are concerned with risk of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignore these concerns or think it won't happen to them.***

Impulsive decisions were found to be common among teenagers in this study. Even though all parents reported concerns about their teenagers talking to someone they did not know, they continue to allow their adolescents to engage in social media. The adolescent brain is still developing, specifically the frontal lobe which is the area of the brain that involves making decisions (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Therefore, teenagers are more susceptible to risking impulsive behaviors, and they are easily influenced (Child Welfare Information, 2015).

Vazonyi et al. (2016) examined the effects of low self-control on cyberbullying and offline bullying by compulsive use of social media and relationship problems related to social media. According to Vazonyi et al. (2016), self-control theory is positively correlated to delinquency and deviant behaviors based on an individual's self-control. One adolescent participant reported getting involved with a someone online and

eventually revealed themselves expressing the love they develop towards them. Afterwards, they found out the other person was significantly older despite having claimed to be around the same age as this adolescent participant.

Those who have low levels of self-control tend to be impulsive, insensitive to others, and act impulsively without thinking of long-term consequences of their actions (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Low self-control was found to be positively correlated with high use of social media and impulsivity (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Additionally, although participant pairs in this study were aware of risks of talking to strangers, they either do not care or think it will impact them. For instance, one adolescent participant reported having concerns with talking to strangers but continues talking to people they do not know and will referred to them as friends: “Usually, they don’t really give away their age, usually, people just more focused on like a conversation or having a debate.’ Therefore, they continue to act impulsively when communicating with others online despite the long-term consequences for their actions (Vazonyi et al., 2016).

***Subtheme 1.2: Parents continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them.***

I found parent participants continue to allow their adolescent to engage on social media. Social isolating and loneliness have also been linked to social media use (Primack et al., 2017). Four out of six participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media but continue to use it.

Ghosh (2017) said youths tend to learn from their environment; therefore, if they are exposed to any form of violence, chances of participating in violent behaviors and

crimes increases significantly. P5 reported noticing an increase in verbal aggression which includes swearing and frustration of adolescents relating to social media. P6 reported noticing their adolescent lacked motivation and quickly becomes agitated over “dumb things” and developing an entitled attitude since beginning to use social media. Brant (2008) said adolescents who partake in social media are likely to be alone, do not care for others’ feelings, and lack motivation. Social media tends to affect teenagers the most when they feel as if they are not good enough and are lonely (Dean & Headrick, 2018).

## **Theme 2: Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology**

The results in this study concluded parent participants are unaware of the amount of time their adolescent spends on social media which could be contributed to the lack of quality time they spend with one another. Furthermore, parent participants may seem unaware of the amount of time their adolescent is on social media because parents are unaware of the different forms of technology and social media sites that are available. Lin et al. (2019) found that parents who rely on their community to keep them updated on parenting practices, parents are less likely to change their ways of parenting (Lin et al., 2019). Given that social media has a significant impact on adolescents, it is important for parents to be aware of their adolescent social media use, monitor their use, and limit their use on social media (Lin et al., 2019). The findings of this study found that not all parent participants monitor their teen’s social media use and are unaware of all the sites their

teen is on. One reason is because they are not aware of other forms social media that are available because technology is constantly changing.

***Subtheme 2.1: Adolescents' perception on their negative moods differs from their parent' when asked to get off technology devices and no longer have access to social media***

Each year, more youths rely on mobile phones and computers for online communication which allows youths to engage on social media using different forms of technology devices (Vazonyi et al., 2016). All participant pairs reported some form of aggression when asked to get off social media. Adolescent participants reported having more verbal aggression towards their parent when asked to get off social media because it takes away their ability to communicate with others. Barry et al. (2017) also found that understanding the significance of fear of missing out (FoMo) as it relates to adolescent social media usage because social media is where adolescents receive most information as it pertains to their peers.

The findings of this study suggest that verbal aggression increased with higher social media usage and aggressive behavior is associated to what the person encounters on social media which supports the findings by Vazonyi et al. (2016). Furthermore, virtual conflicts on social media have been found to escalate in assaults, shootings, and murders (Ghosh, 2017). In addition, these findings also support the finding by Barry et al. (2017) which concluded that social media activity was positively correlated to FoMo and loneliness.

*Subtheme 2.2: The perception between adolescent and their parents differed on the purpose of social media is use*

Dean and Headrick (2018) found that parents are not fully aware of what their teen is doing on social media. Adolescent participants in this study were between the ages of 13 to 17 (Dean & Headrick, 2018). The adolescents and their parents were given a social media survey on phone use, talking to strangers, online bullying, sexting, participating in something on social media their parents would be surprised about, and self-esteem issues (Dean & Headrick, 2018). Most of the parents in this study (72%) said their teen had curfews for phone use yet, 54% of teens reported having to turn their phones off at a certain time (Dean & Headrick, 2018). In this study, 34% of parents stated their teen has spoken to someone online they do not know yet, 47% of teens admitted talking to strangers online (Dean & Headrick, 2018).

Dean and Headrick's (2018) study also noted that when it came to sexting, 24% of teens admitted they have been asked for nudes or partial clothing, 20% of teens reported receiving nudes or partial clothing, and 10% reported they have sent a nude or partial clothing (Dean & Headrick, 2018). Only 15% of parents reported their teen has been asked for nudes or partial clothing, 12% reported their teen has been asked for nudes or partial clothing, and 5% of parents reported their teen has sent nude or partial clothing (Dean & Headrick, 2018). Most of the teenagers in that study reported their parents would get upset if they found out they were talking to someone they do not know, look at something they should not, send pictures their parent would not approve of, look up porn, or send nudes. (Dean & Headrick, 2018).

The findings of this study support the findings of Dean and Headrick (2018) because most of the adolescent participants did not share everything they see or engage in when they are on social media. In fact, most of the parent participants did not know all social media sites their adolescent was on. All adolescent participants in this study use social media to talk to their friends because it is easier to communicate. These findings support the study by Steinmetz (2018) who found that teens would rather talk to their friends online than face-to-face communication. All adolescent participants were aware that their parent engages on social media but did not know specific sites their parent was on and the reasons their parent use social media.

**Theme 3: Quality of time spent together differ in the perceptives of the adolescent participants and parent participants**

Parents turn to social media to communicate with family and friends as well as find support from others (Ante-Contrera, 2016). What parents are not aware of is how much social media can affect their relationship with their child (Ante-Contrera, 2016). The results of this study support these findings because all the adolescents in this study reported feeling ignored and not important when their parent was distracted by social media (Ante-Contrera, 2016). The findings of this study support the results conducted by Ante-Contreras (2016), who found that social media usage is problematic with parent-child relationships because of the parent's inability to bond and spend time with their children.

The results of this study also found that adolescent participants who engaged in frequent social media use were more distracted and did not communicate as much with



their parents. This supports the findings from Stockdale et al. (2018) who found that most adolescents reported being distracted and communicated less (Stockdale et al., 2018). Lastly, in this study, parent participants reported there are times when their adolescent would speak to them, but they were distracted by social media. All adolescent participants in this study reported that when their parent is distracted by social media while they are trying to talk to them, they feel ignored. Parents who are distracted by social media may not realize they are neglecting the emotional support their child needs (Ante-Contreras, 2016).

***Subtheme 3.1: Social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescences and their parent's relationship***

All parent participants reported having trust in their adolescent; however, only two out of the six adolescent participants reported trusting their parent. Parent participants reported they believed their adolescent knows they can come to them about anything. Yet, four out of the six adolescent participants reported they do not go to their parent about everything because they do not feel comfortable telling them everything. These results support the findings from Dean and Headrick (2018) where teens reported their parents would get upset if they found out they were talking to someone they do not know, look at something they should not, send pictures their parent would not approve of, look up porn, or send nudes.

**Attachment Theory**

The role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships among at-risk youths can be viewed through the theory of attachment. Attachment theory is based upon the

belief that different forms of attachments between the primary caregiver and the child can affect the relationship the parent and child have (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016).

Attachment theory explains that when a primary attachment figure is unavailable when needed, it disrupts the child's safety, security, and protection resulting in psychological suffering (Babić et al., 2016).

This study supports attachment theory because although there seems to be a secure attachment between the participant pairs, there also seems to be a disconnect as it pertains to social media use, perspective of quality of time spent together, and the level of trust adolescents and their parents have among each other. In this section, I discuss how attachment theory relates to each theme and subtheme.

**Theme 1: Encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage.**

Although all six participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media, all six pairs of participants continue to get on social media. Therefore, encountering some form of negativity on social media does not seem to impact staying off social media. The negative encounters participant pairs reported included pressure on maintaining a certain body image, name calling, peer pressure, verbal aggression amongst one another, and cyberbullying. Participant pairs also reported encountering negativity on social media yet continue to engage on social media themselves. This theme supports anxious-avoidant attachment style (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016) because parents continue to encourage a premature sense of independence in their adolescent on allowing them to engage on social media despite the negative impact social media has on them.

Alternatively, if the adolescent sees their parent engaging on social media regardless of the negative encounters their parents may have, it is possible the adolescent continues to engage on social media because their parent also continues to engage on social media.

Parents have an influential role in developing and shaping their child's behavior (Sarwar, 2016). Sarwar (2016) explored the influence of parents and their parenting styles on their children's behavior. Parents who continue to engage on social media for at least four hours a day, do not realize the negative effects social media has on them could negatively impact their adolescent. The results of this study support Sherrell and Lambie's (2018) findings; those who are on social media for at least four hours daily, specifically parents of minors, are likely to contribute to their attachment style. This theme also supports the insecure attachment style because parents are focused more on social media than their adolescent needs (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016).

***Subtheme 1.1: Parents are concerned with risk of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignore these concerns or think it won't happen to them***

Parent participants expressed concerns with their adolescent connecting with strangers. However, their adolescents continue to ignore these concerns or think it will not happen to them. Although parent participants express their concerns to their adolescents about talking to strangers on social media, adolescents continue to engage on social media which supports avoidant-resistant attachment style. Bowlby, (1953) and Babić et al. (2016) found that children's parents who have an anxious-resistant attachment style, tend to develop an independence stance where they believe they can take care of themselves. P4 reported "At this point in our lives, we don't really need to

ask our parents for much. We can do whatever.” Because parent participants allow their adolescent to continue engaging on social media despite their concerns about their adolescent talking to strangers, the adolescents ignore these concerns and continue to engage on social media.

***Subtheme 1.2: Parents continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them***

Parent participants expressed concerns on the negative impact social media has on their adolescents such as isolation, increased verbal aggression, and increased depression which has resulted in one adolescent receiving in-patient psychiatric care. Yet, parent participants continue to allow their adolescent to use social media despite the negative affects social media has on them. These findings support avoidant-resistant attachment because parents are aware of the negative impact social media has yet, they avoid and dismiss taking additional precautions to minimize these concerns such as limiting social media use and monitoring what social media sites their adolescent is on (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Brunborg and Andreas (2019) conducted a study in which they concluded that adolescents who spent more time on social media were likely to be depressed and had conduct behaviors (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). In addition, Brunborg and Andreas (2019) found that an increase in peer relationship problems were predictors in depression and conduct problems.

## **Theme 2: Parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology**

The misunderstanding between social media and technology can cause challenges for parents to monitor their teens social media use. The parent participants in this study did not appear aware of the different forms of social media sites that are available because of the constant change in technology. These findings support the study by Cornish (2014) who found that parents tend to lack awareness on the effects of online advertising compared to internet safety, which includes predators and cyberbullying. Additionally, parents dismissed the fact that advertisements and influencers can also have a negative impact on their child (Cornish, 2014).

Four out of the six parent participants reported they do not monitor their adolescent social media use because they rely on their adolescent to inform them of what they are viewing. Therefore, parents rely on what they believe is a secure attachment between themselves and their adolescent because they put enough trust in their adolescent to come to them if needed (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Unsupervised time also increased the likelihood of conduct behaviors (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). On the other hand, Lin et al. (2019) found that parents who understand all aspects of social media and negative influences it can have, the likelihood they are able to monitor their child's internet as well as social media usage (Lin et al., 2019).

***Subtheme 2.1: Adolescents' perception on their negative moods differs from their parent' when asked to get off technology devices and no longer have access to social media***

Adolescent participants in this study reported feeling angry towards their parent when their technology devices are taken away. Parent participants reported noticing their adolescent gets angry when their technology device is taken away because they no longer have access to social media. Venta et al. (2019) found that an increase of social media usage was also correlated to negative outcomes, which includes aggression, anxiety, and depression.

This subtheme supports an avoidant-resistant attachment in the parents because the parents are aware social media is how their adolescent connects with their friends (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Most adolescent participants pairs in this study reported they cannot communicate with their parent because their parent is unable to connect with them at an emotional level. A3 reported “I usually don't really talk to them about like stuff just because like I don't know. I just don't feel comfortable with it. A lot of times the usually don't understand.” Therefore, removing their technology device takes away from getting the emotional support they need.

***Subtheme 2.2: The perception between adolescent and their parents differed on the purpose of social media is use.***

Even though all adolescent participants reported their adolescent used social media to talk to friends, they were unaware of all the social media sites and devices their adolescents used. This supports the adolescents as utilizing avoidant-resistant attachment

style because parents are preoccupied with their own social media use rather than staying updated on current social media sites and different forms of technology devices (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Most adolescent participants in this study knew their parent had social media but was not completely aware of why their parent engages on social media.

In this study, adolescent participants expressed that at times their parent sometimes are there for them, but other times are not which supports the anxious-avoidant attachment because there seems to be an emotional disconnect and feeling ignored (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Therefore, adolescents may feel that if their parent does not care enough to pay attention to them, why would they take the time to care what their parent is doing. P4 reported they talk to their friends rather than their parent “Most of the time talk to a friend about things like that or things like that are personal stuff. She never talks to me about anything. I don’t talk to her about anything. Like when we talk, it’s just you know about nothing.”

### **Theme 3: Quality of time spent together differ in the perceptive of the adolescent participants and parent participants**

This theme supports parents utilizing anxious-avoidant attachment style because though parent participant pairs reported being available any time their adolescent needed them, this was not always the case (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). All adolescent participants in this study reported feeling ignored and not important when they try to communicate with their parent about, yet their parent was distracted by social media and non-responsive. The results of this study support the findings by Stockdale et al. (2018), who stated that adolescents reported that parents who were distracted with technology

were linked to decreased feelings of parental warmth; parental warmth was negatively correlated to behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, and positively associated to prosocial behaviors.

Participant pairs in the present study reported using social media to communicate with family and friends as well as find support from others. Stockdale et al. (2018) found that most adolescents reported being distracted and communicated less with their parents due to distractions with technology. Parent participants in this study reported that their adolescent would rather spend time on social media than spend quality time with them. However, adolescent participants reported frustration because their parent is not attentive when they are trying to communicate with them causing them to feel ignored. Moreover, social media usage is also a problem with parent-child relationships because of the parent's inability to bond and spend time with their children (Ante-Contreras, 2016) which supports the findings of this study.

Three out of the six parent participants reported they did not believe their adolescent felt they were being ignored. Based on this perspective, there seems to be a disconnect between the adolescent and their parent on the quality of their relationship. What parents are not aware of is the impact on how social media affects their relationship with their child (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Ante-Contreras (2016) discussed how disproportionate use of social media has become an issue because it takes away from human interactions. In their study, parents who engage in social media the most tended to have an authoritarian parenting style, which was found to be related anxious-avoidant parental attachment (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Parents continue to believe they have a



secure relationship with their adolescent while adolescents report feeling ignored because their parent is emotionally unavailable supporting the anxious-avoidant attachment style (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016).

***Subtheme 3.1: Social media continues to be an issue regardless of the trust between adolescences and their parent's relationship***

Parent participants in this study reported trusting their adolescent and having a good relationship with them. Based on these results, parent participants believe they have a secure attachment with their adolescent and believe their adolescent knows they can come to them for anything which includes social media interactions. However, most adolescent participants reported not trusting their parent enough to come to them about anything including social media interactions. Goldstein (2016) found that adolescents who kept information from their parents was due to overly intrusive parenting style resulting in detachment by the youth.

Adolescent participants in this study reported that their parent sometimes listens to them, but sometimes does not which support anxious-avoidant parenting style (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). Additionally, adolescent participants in this study reported they attempted to communicate with their parent about something important, which included social media encounters, yet their parent was not fully engaged to what they are trying to communicate. Therefore, the trust they had for their parent decreased because they felt ignored and not heard. These findings support Sherrell and Lambie's (2018) research study that found parents who are on social media for at least four hours daily, specifically parents of minors, are likely to development an insecure attachment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are always limitations to consider. The purpose of a qualitative research study was to gain a deeper understanding on how the participants within the study develop purpose from their environment as well as how their purpose influences their behavior (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, qualitative research studies tend to have a smaller sample size so that the researcher can gain a deeper insight into the participant's lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participant pairs in this study were grouped as pairs; therefore, even though 12 participants were interviewed, the data focused on the adolescent and parent as a pair. The data collected can only account for a few southern states (South Carolina, Texas, and Florida). The small sample size was mostly due to IPA methodology recommending a small sample size, as well as parent-adolescent content-focused communication which resulted in quickly reaching saturation. For this study, conduct problems did include not severe behavioral disorders or a history of criminal behaviors and socioeconomic status was not accounted for.

A major limitation in this study was the COVID-19 pandemic which put significant challenges in this study. First, students were forced to attend school virtually from home to ensure social isolation protocols. Therefore, students had fewer social interactions in-person which may have increased the frequency they used social media. Second, recruitment was very challenging, specifically with the inconsistency of in-person school and the parents' employment status. Originally this study was recruiting for in-person interviews; however, due to the difficulties in obtaining participants, a request of change was submitted to IRB to add virtual interviews; which was approved.

This study involves the participants to either sign an assent form or consent form. When the interviews were face-to-face, I was able to see if the participants each signed their consent instead of the parent signing both. Participants were more likely to discuss any concerns about the consent or assent when the interviews were in person. Additionally, because two pairs of participants were late, the quality of their responses are questionable. Furthermore, gender, race, and age were not accounted for and may play important roles in understanding the data.

Another limitation as it pertains to Zoom interviews was privacy. Although it was asked for each participant to be in an area where they can get complete privacy, there is always a chance this will not happen. I had more control for the interviews that were in-person because I was in a secluded room where I can also see where the other participant was while the interview was going on. Additionally, interviews via Zoom can easily be manipulated in the sense that the participants can talk amongst one another after one interview but before the second interview. In the consent and assent form, it specifically disclosed that the participants do not discuss the interviews until both are completed. To eliminate this limitation as much as possible, I interviewed the adolescent first, then the parent to try and prevent the parent from manipulating the adolescent's answers. With Zoom, there was a short period of time between the adolescent finishing the interview and then the parent logging into the interview. In-person interviews, I was able to see the participant pairs leaving and coming into the interview.

The recruitment requirements as it pertains to parents has its own limitation because it left out caregivers who have raised the child, but not their biological parent.

This study focused specifically on biological parents and later adopted parents were added. Although this is a limitation, it is also a recommendation for future studies to recruit any form of caregiver to the adolescent. However, in this study, all the parents reported they were the biological parent of their adolescent.

IPA implies the researcher exploring their own reactions, suspending bias, and being able to place themselves in the participants own experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Although I believe I am fully aware of my own reactions and bias given my background and training, and because I am confident in my training and awareness, it is possible I overlooked my own reactions. However, it should also be noted that I made sure to self-check and reflected to avoid any bias. Furthermore, I frequently spoke to my dissertation committee on how I conducted the interviews and how I developed my themes to assure my background training did not impact the results.

### **Recommendations**

The first recommendation is a replication study to confirm results. To my knowledge, there has not been other studies exploring the role of social media in adolescent parent relationships among at-risk youths. A second recommendation for future research is interviewing adolescents who are juvenile delinquents. This population will provide richer data on the magnitude of at-risk behaviors and how it is impacted by social media and the parent-adolescent relationship. A third recommendation is to interview caregivers who are not biological parents. Adolescents who are considered juvenile delinquents may be in foster care, living with another family member, or custody under the state. By further exploring the connection between juvenile delinquents and

non-biological parents can assist to strengthen the academic literature and provide significantly important data that will contribute to social change.

Expanding the age group can also shed insight into richer data. For example, a couple of parents responded to the recruitment letter, but their child was under the age of 13, and therefore they were ineligible for this study. The requirement for this study was for the adolescent to be at least 13 because that is the requirement for most social media sites. However, it is very likely there are children under the age of 13 who have social media. Social media in this study was identified as any online form of communication, it provides opportunity for children younger than 13 to engage on some form of online communication. Additionally, another possible avenue for future research may be considering gender differences. Girls may relate differently to both social media and in their relationship with their parents.

Another possibility for future research is do a quantitative study using the same variables. A quantitative study will provide a larger sample size and strengthen the reliability and validity of this study. While this study provides rich data on the explored experiences for each participant, having quantitative data will provide options to consider other variables. It also allows for more randomized sampling of participants which will allow the results to be more generalized. A quantitative study can also give the opportunity to individuals all over the world which will provide richer data and more insight on how social media impacts the parent-adolescent relationship and reported at-risk behaviors.

### **Implications**

The results of this study have several implications for social change. One major implication for social change is the need to understand the importance of the adolescent-parent relationship as it relates to childhood development. Having secure attachment allows the child to develop healthy relationships, form trust, and gain self-confidence as well as self-esteem (Bowlby, 1953; Babić et al., 2016). However, the results of this study show that the perspective of the adolescent-parent relationship differ on attachment style. Although parents may think they have a secure relationship with their adolescent, the adolescent perspective on their relationship with their parent differs. Based on the results of this study, the relationship adolescents reported having with their parent supported the anxious/preoccupied attachment style and avoidant/dismissive attachment style.

Another implication for this study is the importance of understanding how social media impacts adolescents. This information can benefit providers, educators, parents, and the community to better understand the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships among at-risk youths. Today, social media is highly used to communicate with others and maintain relationships. Although social media has benefits, it also has a significant number of negative impacts. For instance, it is important for parents and society to be aware of how negative experiences on social media result from cyberbullying, peer pressure, and feelings of insecurity. It is also important to understand that social media also impacts how adolescents communicate with others. Adolescents are less likely to consider that the person they are talking to is not the person they think

they are. Adolescents do not consider the fact that a stranger can track them down and find them based on the communication that was exchanged.

A third implication of this study is understanding how social media impacts the parent-adolescent relationship. This study provides evidence in the importance of the parent being engaged with their child instead of getting distracted by social media. In addition, the result of this study explains the importance of having quality time to strengthen the bond between the child and parent. Lastly, this study explains the importance of parents monitoring the amount of time their child is on social media and the content in which their child is exposed to.

### **Summary**

The findings of this research add to the current literature regarding social media and the impact it has on the parent-adolescent relationship among at-risk youths. The themes identified in this study were: encountering negativity on social media does not refrain from social media usage, parental monitoring is challenged because of misunderstanding between social media and technology, and quality of time spent together differ in the perspective of the adolescent participants and parent participants. These themes can help lead future research to expand on the impact social media has in the adolescent-parent relationships among at-risk youths and can benefit providers, educators, parents, and the community to better understand the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships. Understanding this information can provide insight on monitoring the amount of time spent on social media and how it can negatively impact youths and the parent-child relationship.

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## Appendix A: Assent Form

Hello, my name is Jennifer Davis, and I am doing a research project to learn about the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationship among at-risk youths. I am inviting you to join my project. I am going to read this form with you so you can learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

### **WHO I AM:**

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree.

### **ABOUT THE PROJECT:**

This study involves the following steps:

- Keep at six feet to make sure the COVID-19 rules are followed.
- This study will last about two hours which includes interviewing your parent as well.
- There will not be a follow-up interview.
- Please do not discuss the interview until all the interviews are completed.

### **Here are some sample questions:**

1. Based on your experience, how many hours a day would you say you are on social media?
2. Based on your experience, how would you describe your relationship with your (mom/dad)?

### **IT'S YOUR CHOICE:**

You do not have to be in this project if you do not want to. Everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. I am looking for six pairs of volunteers for this study.

Being in this project might make you tired or stressed, just like going to school. But I am hoping this project might help others by learn how the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationship among at-risk youths.

If you do become upset in any way, I will give you and your parent information for a free and low-cost mental health support resources which include:

- eTherapy  
Website: [etherapypro.com](http://etherapypro.com)
- Emergency HOTLINE  
1-800-273-8255

For participating, you will get a \$10 gift card to Target and will receive this gift card at the end of the interview.

### **PRIVACY:**

I am required to protect your privacy. That means no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. The only time I must tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else as well as any of the behaviors listed below. This will be the *only* information that must also be shared with your parent.

### **As a mandated reported, I am required by law to report the following:**

- Reports suicidal thinking including reports of self-harm.
- Reporting of homicidal thinking including harming others.
- Harm of child which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, mistreatment, and if you are in a situation where you do not feel safe.
- Harm of older adults which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect.
- Any form of child pornography which includes taking naked pictures and sending to
- other people.
- Any inappropriate sexual pictures that are posed on social media.
- Sexual assault which includes any adult 18 and older who has been involved or is involved with someone under the age of 18.

### **ASKING QUESTIONS:**

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Gjellstad. Her phone number is 612-312-1210.

If you want to volunteer, please sign below.

Name of adolescent: \_\_\_\_\_

Adolescent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Parent Consent Form for Research

You and your child are invited to take part in a research study about exploring the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationship among at-risk youths. The researcher is inviting at-risk youths between the ages of 13 and 17 who has a history of conduct behaviors (lying, physical aggression, verbal altercation (which includes cyberbullying), and truancy over the series of three years. Other factors include parents and adolescents engaging in social media for at least 14 hours a week to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to allow your child and yourself to take part in this study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jennifer Davis, who is a student at Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationship among at-risk youths.

### **Procedures:**

This study If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Give consent to your child participating in the study as well as yourself.
- Keep six feet to ensure COVID-19 protocols are met.
- This study will last about two hours which includes interviewing your child.
- There will not be a follow-up interview.
- You might wish to retain this consent form and assent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.
- Please do not discuss the interview until all the interviews are completed.

*This study will take place at the local library in one of the reserved meeting rooms. You and your child will both be interviewed for this study; your child will be interviewed first followed by you.*

### **Here are some sample questions:**

1. Based on your experience, how often would you say you are on social media daily?

2. Based on your experience, how would you describe your relationship with  
(child's name)?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So, everyone involved will respect you and your child's decision about whether they join the study. After obtaining parent consent and your consent for yourself, each child will be asked if they wish to volunteer (this is called child assent and is required in addition to parent consent). If you decide to consent now, you or your child can still change your minds later. Your child and you can stop at any time. The researcher is seeking six pairs of volunteers for this study.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that your child might encounter in daily life, such as learning in school. Minor discomforts you might encounter include daily life such as inconvenient errands. With the protections in place, being in this study would pose minimal risk to your child's and your wellbeing.

If your child does become upset or triggered in any way, I will provide you with contact information for a free and low-cost mental health support resources which include:

- eTherapy  
Website: [etherapypro.com](http://etherapypro.com)
- Emergency HOTLINE  
1-800-273-8255

**As a mandated reported, I am obligated by law to report the following:**

1. Reports suicidal ideation including reports of self-harm.
2. Reporting of homicidal ideation including harming others.
3. Abuse of child which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and child endangerment.
4. Abuse of vulnerable adults which includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect.
5. Any form of child pornography which includes taking nudes and sending to others as well as posting on any form of social media.
6. Sexual assault which includes any adult 18 and older who has been involved or is involved with a minor (those 17 and under).

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by providing evidence-based research to educators, parents, and the



community in general by leading to positive social change by providing evidence-based research an explanation on the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships among at-risk youths.

**Payment:**

For participating, you will receive a \$10 gift card to Target and will receive this gift card at the end of the interview.

**Privacy:**

The researcher is required to protect the privacy of both you and your child. You and your child's identity will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. The researcher will not use your family's personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name and your child's name or anything else that could identify you in any way. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the researcher is required to remove all names and identifying details before sharing; this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. It is important to note that I will not share any information your child discloses in his/her interview unless it is information that requires mandating reporting is mentioned. Data will be kept secure by double locking transcripts and memos written by the researchers with specific codes for only the researcher is able to identify the participants. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you want to talk privately about your child's rights as a participant or your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **07-16-21-0973021** and it expires on **July 15, 2022**.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above. If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Parent	_____
Printed Name of Child	_____
Date of consent	_____
Parent's Signature	_____
Researcher's Signature	_____

## Appendix C: Adolescent Interview

1. Based on your experience, how many hours a day would you say you are on social media?
  - a. How do you think social media influences how you spend your day?
  - b. What is the main reason you engage in social media?
  - c. Based on your experience, please describe your experiences with social media.
    - i. Based on your experience, what problems do you believe social media impacts teenagers?
  - d. Please describe how social media influences you and are there certain social media sites you prefer more than others? If so, why?
    - i. Based on your experience, would you say you talk to people more on social media or face to face?
2. Based on your experience, does your parent engage in any social media?
  - a. How does it make you feel when you see your (mom/dad) on their phones?  
Please explain.
    - i. Based on your experience, how does the amount of time your parent is on social media, or their phones impact your relationship with your parent?
    - ii. Based on your experience, describe problems that you believe teens have in their relationships with their parents where social media is so popular. living in a time where social media is so common.

3. Based on your experience, have you been in trouble for misbehavior at school and home?
  - a. What are the main reasons you get into trouble at school and home?
    - i. How has your behavior resulted in negative consequences with your parent(s)? For example, do you and your parent argue often, your phone gets taken away.
    - ii. What are specific situations lead to misbehavior both at school and home?
  - b. Have you ever been in trouble or got into an argument with your parents because you were online too much?
4. Based on your experience, please describe your relationship with your (mom/dad)?
  - a. Based on your experience, how would you describe the amount of trust you have with your parent where you can talk to your parent about anything?
  - b. Please describe how the amount of time you spend with your parent influence your relationship with your parent, based on your experience.
    - i. What activities do you and your parent do when you do spend time with your parent?
5. Based on your experience, are there other people in your life you feel comfortable talking to instead of your parent?

## Appendix D: Parent Interview

1. Based on your experience, how often would you say you are on social media daily?
  - a. Please describe experiences you had on social media that may have impacted you in a negative way.
  - b. What are the top three reasons you engage in social media?
2. Based on your experience, please describe your understanding on social media and why your child engages in social media?
  - a. What social media sites are you aware of (child's name) is on?
    - i. Please describe any concerns you may have on those social media sites.
    - ii. Describe steps you do to monitor your child's social media participation if any?
  - b. Based on your experience, how often do you witness (child's name) on social media per day?
  - c. Have you seen a change in (child's name) moods, attitudes, or behaviors because of social media use?
    - i. Based on your experience, please describe the negative behaviors your child may have when asked to get off social media and the negative impact social media can have?
3. Please describe how social media may influence your child's behavior?

- a. Based on your experiences, do you think your child's behavior is worse at home or school and why?
  - b. What specific conduct behaviors have you noticed your child engages in both at school and home that could be related to social media?
  - c. What concerns do you have about teens engaging in social media and have you discussed these concerns with your child?
4. Based on your experience, how would you describe your relationship with (child's name)?
- a. How often would you say that you and your child spend time together and the activities you do together?
  - b. Based on your experience, how do you feel your trust level is between you and your child?
    - i. What are specific examples you believe helps with gaining trust or losing trust?
  - c. Based on your experience, please describe how the amount of time you engage in social media or on your phone affect your child's behavior.

## Appendix E: Inclusion Questions

**Parent Only:**

Is your child adopted? If so, at what age was he or she adopted?

**Child and Parent Together**

1. Do you both have social media?
2. About how much time a day would you say you are on social media?
3. Parent: Please describe any at-risk behaviors you are aware your child has a history of and for how long? Child: Would you agree with this? If not, please explain.

## Appendix F: Recruitment Letter

My name is Jennifer Davis, and I am a student from the Department of Psychology at Walden University. I am writing to inform you of having an opportunity to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationship among at-risk youths. For example, some at-risk behaviors include aggressive behaviors such as fighting and bullying and verbally aggressive such as bullying, cyberbullying, and lying. To participate in this study, you must currently be active on social media as well as your adolescent. Additionally, you must be the adolescent's biological parent or adopted parent. If your adolescent is adopted, he or she must be living with you for at least 13 years.

If you decide you want to participate in this study, you can email me with the email provided below in which you will also provide your contact information. I will give you a call and ask a series of questions pertaining to social media use, your adolescent's current behavior, and your relationship with your adolescent. We would not be able to proceed with the study if we have a personal relationship or if you are a current client of mine. If you are selected, we will be setting an interview with you and your adolescent. The interviews will either be face-to-face or through zoom. I will be going over the informed consent to ensure you want to continue with this study. If our interview is face-to-face you will need to have someone pick up your child or provide entertainment while you are being interviewed. I want to ensure that your child is safe and supervised while during your interview.

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at this school, out-patient mental health agency, the community, or I will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. If you decide you do want to participate, you and your child will each receive a \$10 gift card to Target as a token of appreciation.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Davis



## Appendix G: 21 Apps Parents Should Know About

# 21 APPS

## PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Courtesy of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office  
SEPTEMBER 2019



**PLENTY OF FISH**



PLENTY OF FISH is a popular free dating app and website that encourages chatting with strangers. It allows users to browse profiles based on location.

**HILY**



HILY is a dating app where users can browse photos, engage in chats, send private videos and more. Based on the GPS location of a mobile device, strangers can arrange to meet up locally.

**ZOOSK**



ZOOSK is a location-based dating app and website similar to many others. The app is available in 80 countries and utilizes a "carousel" feature which matches users with random strangers.

**MOCOSPACE**



MOCOSPACE is a free social networking and dating app geared towards African American and Latino communities. Users can connect with strangers worldwide via text messages or voice calls.

**BEST SECRET FOLDER**



BEST SECRET FOLDER is specifically meant to "hide photos and videos," according to app store descriptions. It features password protection, decoy videos and alarm settings.

**MONKEY**



MONKEY is a live video chat app that connects users to random strangers worldwide, offering group chat and private message options. It claims to be rated for ages 12 and up but has "mild sexual content and nudity."

**MEETME**



MEETME is a dating social media app that allows users to connect with people based on geographic proximity. As the app's name suggests, users are encouraged to meet each other in person.

**GRINDR**



GRINDR is a dating app geared towards gay, bi and transgender people. The app gives users options to chat, share photos and meet up based on a smart phone's GPS location.

**SKOUT**



SKOUT is a location-based dating app and website. While users under 17 years old are unable to share private photos, kids can easily create an account using a different age.

**WHATSAPP**



WHATSAPP is a popular messaging app that allows users to send texts, photos, voicemails, make calls and video chats worldwide. WHATSAPP uses an internet connection on smart phones and computers.

**TIKTOK**



TIKTOK is a new mobile device app popular with kids used for creating and sharing short videos. With very limited privacy controls, users are vulnerable to cyber bullying and explicit content.

**BADDOO**



BADDOO is a dating and social networking app where users can chat, share photos and videos and connect based on location. While the app is intended for adults only, teens are known to create profiles.

**BUMBLE**



BUMBLE is similar to the popular dating app "Tinder" however, it requires women to make the first contact. Kids have been known to use BUMBLE to create fake accounts and falsify their age.

**SNAPCHAT**



SNAPCHAT is one of the most popular apps in recent years. While the app promises users can take a photo/video and it will disappear, new features including "stories" allows users to view content for up to 24 hours. Snapchat also allows users to see your location.

**KIK**



KIK allows anyone to contact and direct message your child. Kids can bypass traditional text messaging features. KIK gives users unlimited access to anyone, anywhere, anytime.

**LIVEME**



LIVE.ME is a live-streaming video app that uses geolocation to share videos so users can find out a broadcaster's exact location. Users can earn "coins" as a way to "pay" minors for photos.

**HOLLA**



HOLLA is a self-proclaimed "addicting" video chat app that allows users to meet people all over the world in just seconds. Reviewers say they have been confronted with racial slurs, explicit content, and more.

**WHISPER**



WHISPER is an anonymous social network that promotes sharing secrets with strangers. It also reveals a user's location so people can meet up.

**ASK.FM**



ASK.FM is known for cyber bullying. The app encourages users to allow anonymous people to ask them questions.

**CALCULATOR%**



CALCULATOR% is only one of SEVERAL secret apps used to hide photos, videos, files, and browser history.

**HOT OR NOT**



HOT OR NOT encourages users to rate your profile, check out people in their area, and chat with strangers. The goal of this app is to hook up.

For more information, contact Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Community Affairs at 941.861.4005

