

Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, Oh My:
Parenting Young Kids in the Age of Social Media



Green River College

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Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, Oh My: Parenting Young Kids in the Age of Social Media

Introduction

I wanted to research how social media has affected parenting with a large amount of access to content that can help support parents of children five years of age and younger. My own personal experience of raising a four year old son and a two year old daughter in the social media age has been largely positive experiences. One of studies that I reviewed as part of my research focused on how social media and cell phones has effected parenting at meal times and has lead to less bonding time and more mealtime distractions (Vik, 2021). A Turkish study, collected data on what mothers use social media for in their role as parents, highest responses are surrounding communicating with and entertaining children from 0-14 years old (Ünlü, 2019). In addition in our textbook, *Social Media: Enduring Principles*, Chapter 8, Race and Gender, supports that social media platforms, like Pinterest, is predominantly used by women for domestic needs and health information (Humphreys, 2016), which supports Ünlü's 2019 research. Based on the literature and my own experiences with parenting, I wanted to test how social media has affected parenting children five years old or younger.

Method

The method used to test my research question was to create an eleven question survey that would target parents of children five years old or younger. To qualify my participants, I focused initial questions by asking for participants age, gender, and if they had a child five years old or younger. If they were a parent of a qualifying child's age, they went on to answer eight more questions regarding the age and gender of their child and how often, and for what reasons, they used social media related to parenting their child. All participants voluntarily took the Parenting and Social Media Survey. My survey was hosted on a Microsoft Forms platform, which offered participants to remain anonymous while

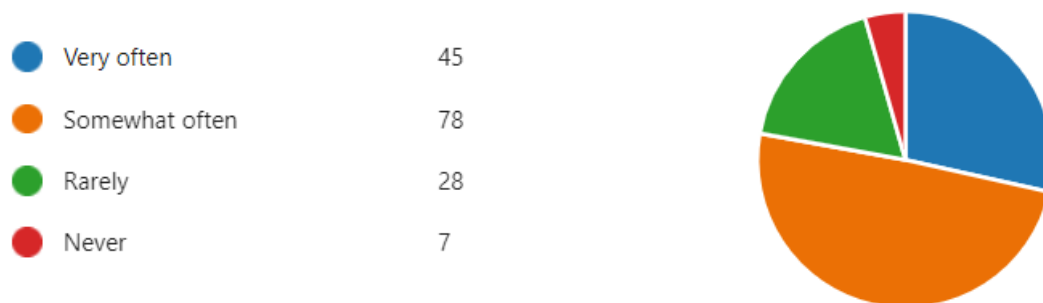
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submitting their responses. Most questions had a rating scale style answer. I distributed the survey using the social media platform of Facebook, within parenting groups that I already belong in. I kept my pool of subjects local by using two parenting groups within the region I reside in, South King County, Washington. I had 163 participants that took the survey, of which 158 of the participants qualified to take the full survey because they had a child five years old or younger.

Results

Participant population was 98% female and 2% male. The majority of the age demographics of the people taking the survey were 63% of 35-44 year olds and second largest was 25-34 years old with 33% of the participants. Majority of the child ages represented were 42% were 3-4 year old and 28% were 1-2 year olds. 78% of participants used social media very often or somewhat often to connect with other parents to build a sense of community and/or comradery. Additionally, 77% of parents surveyed use social media to look for activities to participate in, such as sensory play ideas, finding playdate groups or kid-friendly local events (figure 1).

Figure 1: Reponse for using social media for activities

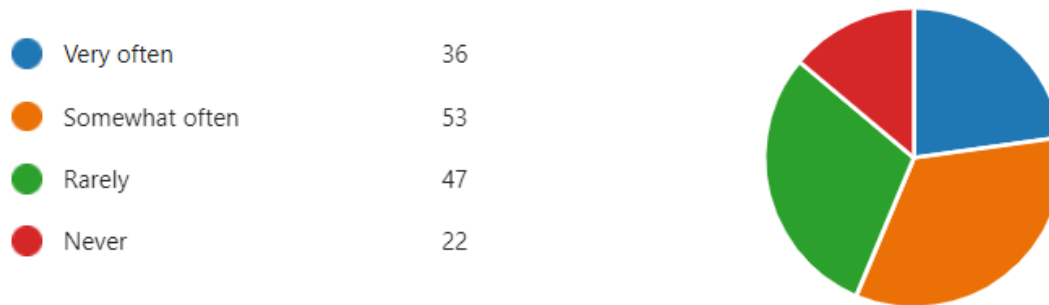


When looking at parents that potentially used social media for health and/or discipline information, it was interesting that 58% stated that they never or rarely used social media for that information. Results were split nearly 50/50 for parents that use social media for meal ideas for their children either quite often or rarely. Parents that use social media, like Youtube, for entertaining/educational content were

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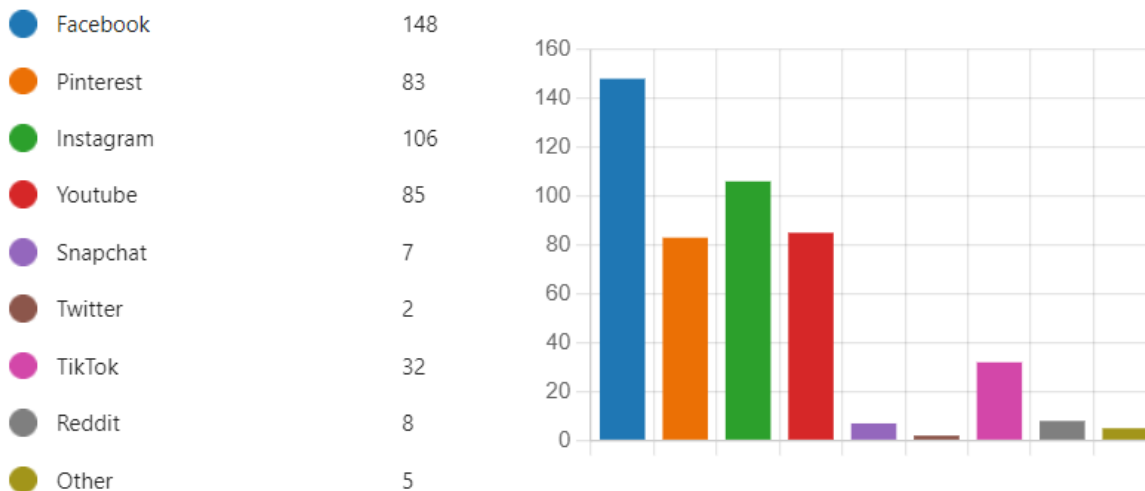
spread out fairly evenly (Figure 2), highest being somewhat often at 34%. One interesting data point is that 44% of the parents that responded very or somewhat often for this question their children were 3-4 years old.

Figure 2: Parents that use social media for entertaining/educational content



Unsurprising, the data supports that Facebook is this highest used social media platform for parental related activities (Figure 3). Instagram and Youtube round out the top 3 platforms for parental use.

Figure 3: Social media platforms used when participating in parental related activities



Discussion

Based on the data I received from my survey I interpret that social media has been a powerful tool and has affected parenting in the modern age in a positive way. Interestingly though, a lot of the research

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that participants provided is that they predominantly use social media to connect with other parents on and offline. They build a community of kid friendly events, play dates, recommendations for crafts, activities, and places to visit. With social media there is a lot more access to other parents and they can gain much more information with social media than without. A large percent of the parents that said they use social media (Youtube) for entertaining their child, the main age range of the children was 3-4 year old. Speaking from my own experience, I utilize this every day with my 3-4 year old. I found that fact interesting. These results are also supported in a previously mentioned study, as they also found that mothers utilize social media for entertaining children, searching for information about nurturing, household works and recommendations about a variety of needs (Ünlü, 2019). Data did also support that Pinterest is predominately used by women as noted in our textbook (Humphreys, 2016). I did find it surprising that the majority of participants do not use social media for health or behavioral information. One of my thoughts while formulating the survey questions is that parents would tap into the experience of other parents that may be dealing with a similar health or behavior concern, but the survey didn't support that.

Potential limitation in this research is that I only posted this to local parenting groups that were mainly only women and did not get a great picture of how men utilize social media related to parenting. In future research I would do national or even international parenting groups that have a mix of genders to get a bigger scope. I would also expand my questions further to probably also include toilet and sleep training related questions. Lastly, I would also include a few more social media platforms to select in the final question that focus on in person connections, like Meetup or Peanut. Those platforms were thought of after the conclusion of this study since the evidence really supported community building over anything else.

References

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