

Relationship between Existing Connection and Social Media



Green River College

CMST 213 Communication in Social Media

June 13, 2022

### Relationship between Existing Connection and Social Media

Social media is conceptualized as the technology which enables us to find common interests and exchange more conversations (Simsek, et al., 2020). Conversations are essential to maintaining relationships, thus many people connected relationships with social media and have been researching how social media contributes to human relationships over years. Facebook, which has the largest number of users, allows people to feel they are in a community, and it results in high self-esteem (Humphreys, 2016). As a matter of the fact, by employing Facebook to maintain connections, college students can increase their satisfaction while decreasing their loneliness (Yang & Brown, 2013). In addition, it is proven that 605 out of 924 undergraduates students from North Cyprus utilized Facebook to maintain their relationships while 122 of them used Facebook to create new connections (Simsek, et al., 2020). However, since the Covid-19 Pandemic prevailed all over the world, “Stay Home” became crucial to avoid the risk of spreading viruses. This movement prevented people from connecting with others in person, and social media became more valuable to socialize online. As the previous research was conducted before the pandemic, again, the question of how social media helps college students maintain existing connections should be researched in 2022. Moreover, since most past research focused on only Facebook, other social media, such as Instagram or Twitter will be probed in this research. Based on the past research and the effect of the pandemic, it is hypothesized that social media more substantially empowers college students to strengthen existing connections in the middle of the pandemic.

#### **Method**

The research survey was posted to the author of this paper’s Instagram account and Green River College CMST 213 Class Discussion Board, and only college students were studied. There

are 40 participants in total (N=40), including mainly college students from Japan, and students taking CMST 213 at Green River College. The research survey includes 4 demographic questions and 10 content-related questions. The demographic questions focus on age, gender, origin, and race, and the questions do not only clarify that the participations are aged from 17 to 23 and above, but also that they originally are from North America, Asia, the Caribbean, or Europe. In addition, the participants did not only describe themselves as White (47.5%, n=19), Asia (32.5%, n=13), Black (7.5 %, n=3), Hispanic/Latin (5%, n=2), or Others (7.5 %, n=3), but they identified themselves as Male (27.5%, n=11), Female (67.5 %, n=27), Transgender (2.5%, n=1) or Another Gender Identity (2.5%, n=1). Also, the content-related questions are strongly linked to the existing connections on social media, such as the comfort level of maintaining existing connections on social media, the likelihood of using social media to keep in touch with friends, the importance of social media when maintaining friendships, and how participants maintain relationships on social media. These questions relating to existing connections were prepared to pursue this essay's research question that social media empowers college students to keep in touch with their friends. To enable participants to answer every survey question accurately, rating scales and selection scales were utilized since these types of questions are able to apply more nuances to the participants. Besides, to prevent non-college students from getting involved in this survey question, at the beginning of the survey, I instructed participants to ensure that they are college students and are eligible for answering this survey question.

### **Results**

To start, participants answered that they utilize Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LINE, Reddit, Telegram, Discord, Tinder, YouTube, Pinterest, and Messenger. On those social media platforms, the percentage of the purpose of building or maintaining

friendships mainly is shown in Table 1 and Graph 1. Overall, while 25 % of the participants built new relationships on social media, 95 % of the participants utilized social media to maintain their relationships. Others, such as learning something new or market items/ services on social media, were occupied by 5 % of the participants.

Graph 1

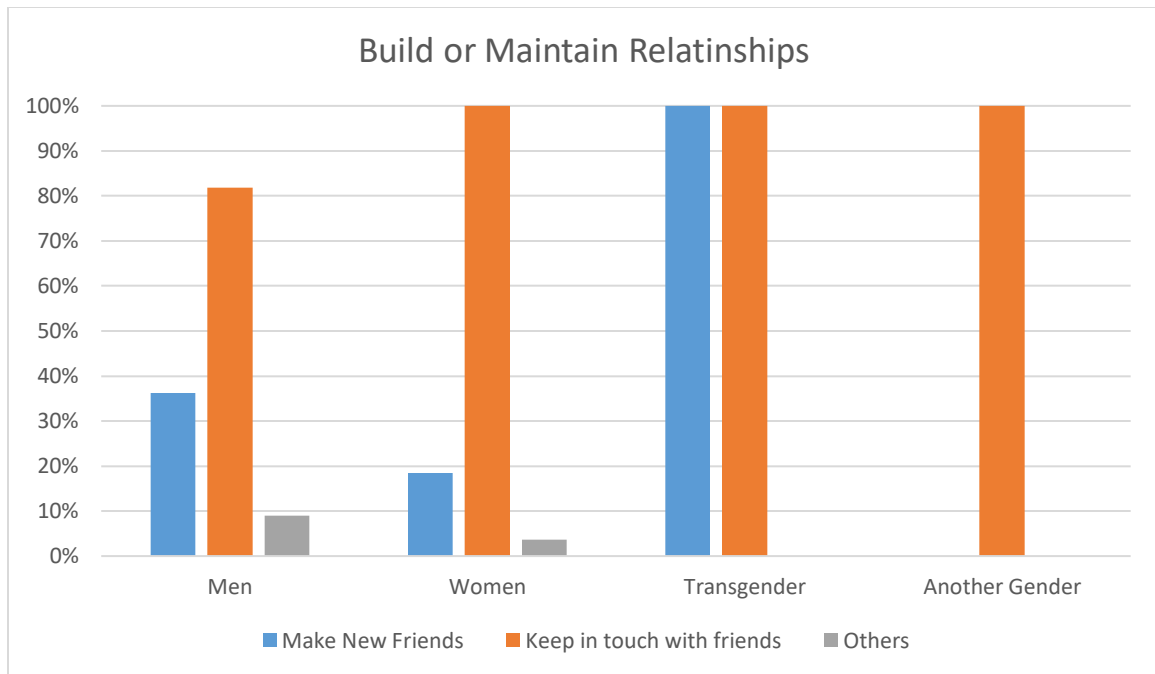


Table 1

|                            | Men (n=11) | Women (n=27) | Transgender (n=1) | Another Gender (n=1) |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Make New Friends           | 4 (36.3 %) | 5 (18.5 %)   | 1 (100%)          | 0 (0 %)              |
| Keep in touch with friends | 9 (81.8 %) | 27 (100 %)   | 1 (100 %)         | 1 (100 %)            |
| Others                     | 1 (9%)     | 1 (3.7%)     | 0 (0%)            | 0 (0%)               |

According to Table 1 and Graph 1, while few participants create their friendships on social media platforms, almost all of them utilize social media to maintain their friendships regardless of their gender identity. Especially, all of the participants who identified as women employ social

media platforms to keep in touch with their friends, and 9 out of 11 men also are willing to communicate with their friends on social media. Therefore, judging from the outcome, there are not any dramatic differences between men and women

Also, the specific ways of using these social media platforms to maintain their friendships are identified by one of survey questions, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

| <i>How do you keep in touch with your friends? (Multiple Choices)</i> | N= 40 |
|---|-------|
| Direct Messages on social media                                       | 37    |
| Commenting/Liking on friend's posts                                   | 25    |
| Video/Audio Call on social media Commenting/Liking on friend's posts  | 17    |
| Doing nothing, but just follow your friends                           | 11    |

As claimed in Table 2, in order to keep in touch with their friends, it is obvious that 92.5% of participants utilize the Direct Message function which is brought by social media platforms. This result can be considered one of the trends. Also, 62.5 % of the participants leave comments or like on friends' posts to interact with their friends on social media.

Furthermore, the importance of social media for maintaining friendships, the likelihood of maintaining friendships on social media, and the comfort level of talking with friends on social media compared to in-person are shown in Chart 3 and Table 3. More specifically, Table 3 and Chart 3 reflect on the participant's responses to questions on how important social media is to them and how likely they are to use social media, in order to maintain relationships were asked on rating scales. What is more, how comfortable participants feel when virtually communicating with others, was also questioned. These questions were asked on the rating

scales, and each includes five options, which are Very Likely, Somewhat Likely, Neutral, Somewhat Unlikely, and Very Unlikely.

Chart 3

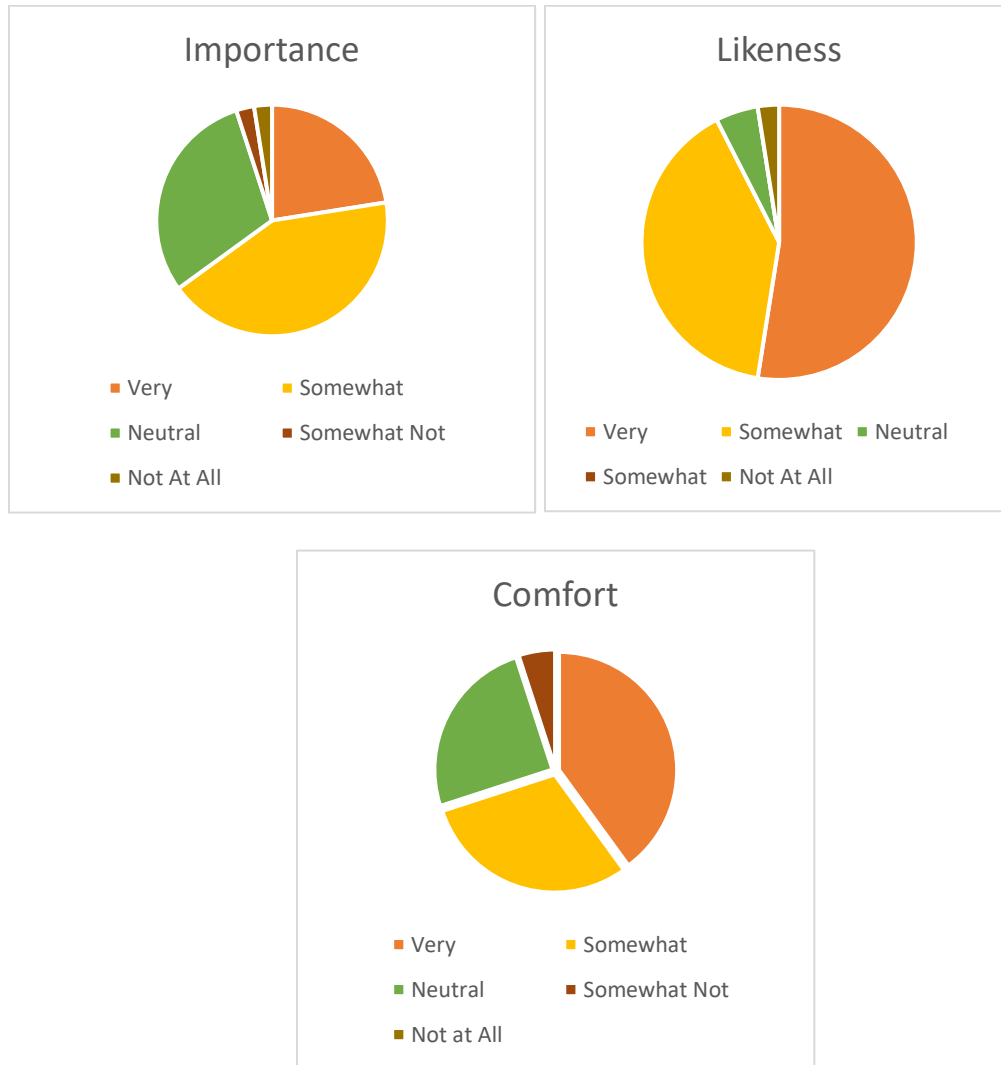


Table 3

| <i>Rating Scale</i> | Importance  | Likeness   | Comfort   |
|---------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Very                | 9 (22.5%)   | 21 (52.5%) | 16 (40%)  |
| Somewhat            | 17 (42.5 %) | 16 (40 %)  | 12 (30 %) |
| Neutral             | 12 (30%)    | 2 (5 %)    | 10 (25%)  |

|              |          |          |         |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------|
| Somewhat Not | 1 (2.5%) | 0 (0 %)  | 2 (5 %) |
| Not At All   | 1 (2.5%) | 1 (2.5%) | 0 (0 %) |

Judging from Table 3, “Very Important” and “Somewhat Important” are marked by 65 % of participants in total, and it illustrates that more than half of the participants think that social media is important for maintaining their friendships. Moreover, remarkably, 92.5 % of participants are very or somewhat likely to keep in touch with their friends on social media, which is considered another trend. Besides, only 2 out of 40 participants feel more uncomfortable communicating with their friends on social media compared to in person.

Lastly, all of the participants were probed into the likeness of social media usage when feeling lonely. This aims to research how effectively social media functions by exchanging communications with friends. The outcome is divided into four different ages and shown in Table 4.

Table 4

|                   | 17-18 (n=8) | 19-20 (n=7) | 21-22 (n=5) | 23 and Above (n= 20) | <i>Sum (N=40)</i> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Very Likely       | 3 (37.5%)   | 2 (28.6%)   | 1 (20%)     | 3 (15%)              | 9 (22.5%)         |
| Somewhat Likely   | 5 (62.5%)   | 2 (28.6%)   | 3 (60%)     | 7 (35%)              | 17 (42.5%)        |
| Neutral           | 0 (0%)      | 1 (14.3%)   | 0 (0%)      | 9 (45%)              | 10 (25%)          |
| Somewhat Unlikely | 0 (0%)      | 0 (0%)      | 1 (20%)     | 0 (0%)               | 1 (2.5%)          |
| Unlikely          | 0 (0%)      | 2 (28.6%)   | 0 (0%)      | 1 (5%)               | 3 (7.5%)          |

In accordance with Table 4, the older the participants become, the less they are likely to use social media to communicate with friends when they feel lonely. For instance, 100 % of the

participants aged from 17 to 18 are Very or Somewhat likely to use social media when they feel lonely. Meanwhile, 50 % of participants aged 23 and Above are Very or Somewhat likely to utilize social media. Overall, 90 % of the participants are likely to employ social media to talk with their friends when they feel lonely, but when dividing this result into each age, a substantial age difference was found.

### **Discussion**

Comprehensively, it is clear that social media does enable college students to strengthen existing connections. This research, which is being conducted in 2022, illustrates that 95% of college students keep in touch with friends on social media platforms. In contrast, A similar study in 2020 concluded that 65.5 % of 924 undergraduate students utilized social media to keep in touch with friends (Simsek, et al., 2020). Thus, in terms of percentage, the hypothesis that social media more substantially empowers college students to strengthen existing connections in the mid-pandemic is verified. In addition, in accordance with Table 2, while 37 out of 40 participants utilize the “direct message function” to interact with their friends, 17 out of them use “video/audio call”. While “video/audio call” is held through voices which is directly related to in-person communication, the direct message does not have any elements relating to in-person communication. Thus, the direct message is much less physical than video/audio calls, and this outcome can be interpreted as the fact that people prefer to communicate with others in more virtual ways. This statement tightly matches Chart 3 which indicates that people feel comfortable interacting with others online and proves the hypothesis by emphasizing how comfortable people can feel when they exchange conversations online.



Furthermore, Table 4 demonstrates that the older the participant becomes, the less they are likely to communicate with their friends on social media when they feel lonely, which is regarded as a significant finding. Adults, who are aged from 20 to 40, are equipped with the highest self-esteem and establish their own identity while teens are in the process (Humphreys, 2016). In other words, they are satisfied with themselves, and the satisfaction enables adults (aged 20 to 40) to spend their time alone. Thus, it is expected that the participants aged 23 and above are more independent than the others aged 17-18, and older people are less likely to utilize social media to interact with others. However, this research lacks substantial evidence to attest to the expectation. Thus, Table 1 should have been divided into each age to answer what kind of trends of keeping in touch with friends exists at each age. Moreover, compared to the number of female participants, the number of male participants is much smaller. Hence, the equivalency of the number of male and female participants is what still needs to be asked. Additionally, although Table 4 proves that 26 of 40 college students are very or somewhat likely to utilize social media when they feel lonely, and so social media is considered one tool to contact friends and get out of loneliness for college students, different emotions from loneliness, such as anxiety or anger, still need to be asked about.

The pandemic is currently coming to an end all over the world, and the previous lifestyle is gradually coming back to people. Thus, the number of college students who utilize social media to maintain friendships a year post pandemic (compared to the mid-pandemic), can be a topic for future research. Moreover, as most participants answered that they are likely to contact their friends when they feel lonely, another potential area of future interest and discovery is the relationship between mental health, social media, and human connections.

Human beings have been living in this world while cooperating with each other since the earth was formed. Considering the aspect, human beings cannot avoid having relationships with others, and social media successfully got into the essence of human beings. Throughout the survey, this project delivered me about the nature of human beings, and I learned how essential social media is to maintain existing connections. In the substantial way, social media empowers us. We, human beings, cannot forget to appreciate social media.

References

- Humphreys, A. (2016). *Social media: Enduring principles*. Oxford University Press.
- Simsek, A., Dabaj, F., & Simsek, E. (2020). Why and how do university students use Facebook in everyday life? *Revista De Cercetare Si Interventie Sociala*, 71, 59-76.
- Yang, C., & Brown, B. B. (2013). Motives for using facebook, patterns of facebook activities, and late adolescents' social adjustment to college. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(3), 403-16.