



Living Through the Screen: Social Media Use and Embodiment in Youth

SSHRC CRSH



Kelsey E. Harty¹, Kevin A. E. Styba-Nelson¹, E. Jean Buckler², & Megan E. Ames¹

¹Department of Psychology, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC

²Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC

INTRODUCTION

- **Embodiment** includes bodily awareness, self-care, and autonomy¹⁻³
- **Social media use** is associated with increased body surveillance, reduced interoceptive awareness, and greater body dissatisfaction⁴⁻⁶
- **Higher screen time** has been linked to poorer emotion regulation, reduced physical activity, and disrupted sleep in youth⁷⁻⁹

OBJECTIVES

Are higher levels of social media use associated with lower embodiment in adolescents? Does maladaptive emotion regulation, physical activity, and sleep explain this association? Do these pathways differ by gender?

METHODS

Participants & Design

- 171 adolescents residing in Greater Victoria (13-17 years old; $M = 15.06$; $SD = 1.39$)
- 118 (69.0%) girls & gender diverse youth
- 114 (66.7%) White

14 day intensive longitudinal design; aggregated between-person data used in the analyses

Measures

Social media use measured through objective smartphone tracking (min/day)
*Experience of Embodiment Scale (EES)*¹⁰
*Cognitive-Emotion Regulation Questionnaire - Disengagement (CERQ-D)*¹¹
 Objective moderate-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) (min/day) and total sleep time (min/night) via Fitbit Inspire 3¹²

RESULTS

Analyses conducted in R using Hayes PROCESS Model 7

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Variable	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Social Media Use	175.00 (129.00)	—	-.09	.04	.10	-.29**	-.12
2. Sleep	476.00 (72.00)		—	.10	-.03	.12	.14
3. MVPA	47.80 (43.30)			—	.03	.09	-.44***
4. Emotion Regulation	0.47 (0.31)				—	-.26**	.12
5. Embodiment	3.58 (0.60)					—	-.11
6. Gender	0.68 (0.47)						—

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. MVPA, sleep, and social media use reported in minutes/day; embodiment and emotion regulation reported as means. Gender coded 0 = boy; 1 = girl/gender minority.

Embodiment & Social Media Use

- Social media use was negatively associated with embodiment ($\beta = -.24$, $p = .006$).

Emotion Regulation (ER)

- Social media use was positively associated with disengagement ER ($\beta = .31$, $p = .031$). Disengagement ER was negatively associated with embodiment ($\beta = -.27$, $p = .003$).

Sleep & MVPA

- No significant associations emerged for sleep or MVPA.

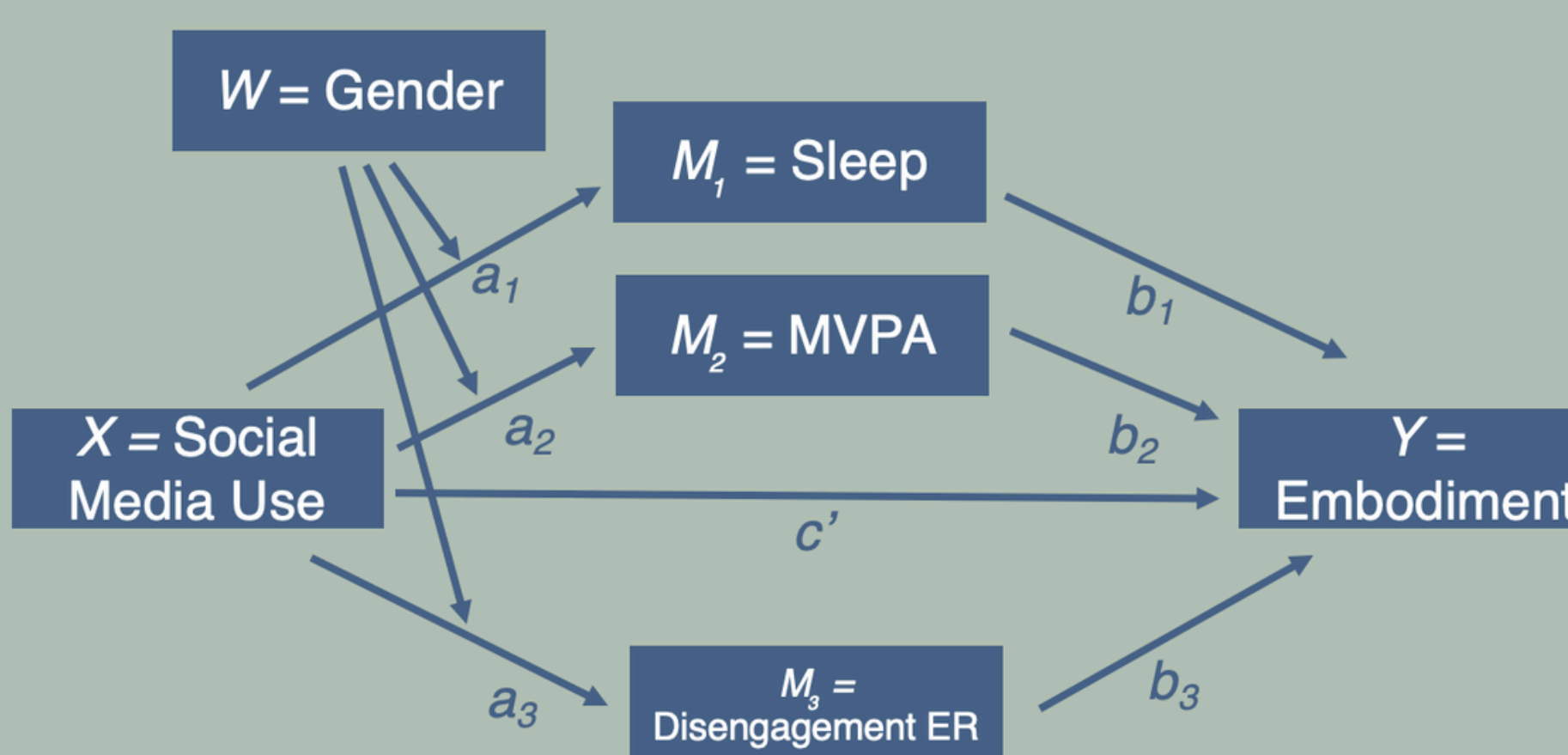
Gender

- The association between social media use and ER approached significance by gender ($p = .052$). Social media use was positively associated with ER for boys, but not for girls/gender minority participants.

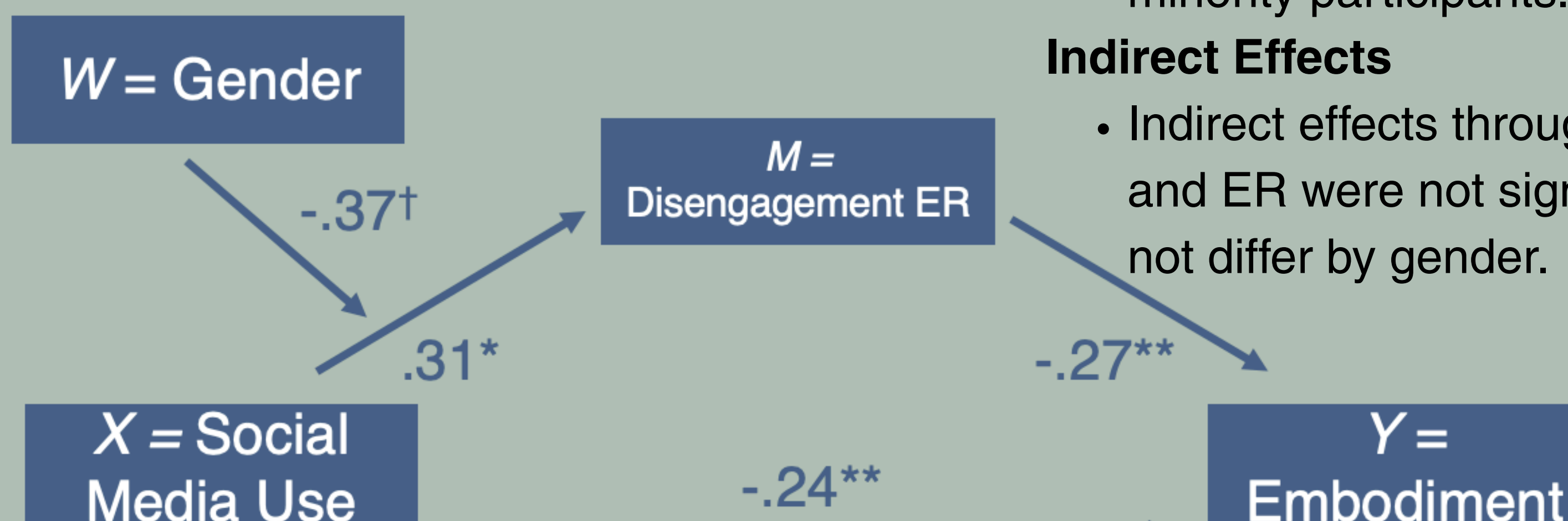
Indirect Effects

- Indirect effects through sleep, MVPA, and ER were not significant and did not differ by gender.

Conceptual Moderation Mediation Model



Moderation Mediation Model



Note. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION

- **Greater social media use → lower embodiment:** more time on social media may be linked to lower bodily awareness, connection, and autonomy⁴⁻⁶
- **Greater social media use → higher maladaptive ER:** more time on social media may be linked to greater use of avoidance, suppression, rumination, or distraction⁹
- **Higher maladaptive ER → lower embodiment:** greater use of maladaptive emotion regulation may be linked to feeling lower body attunement and connection⁴

Future research should examine *which* aspects of social media use are most strongly linked to embodiment (e.g., passive scrolling, appearance-based content, comparison, posting behaviors) and continue testing maladaptive emotion regulation as a potential mechanism

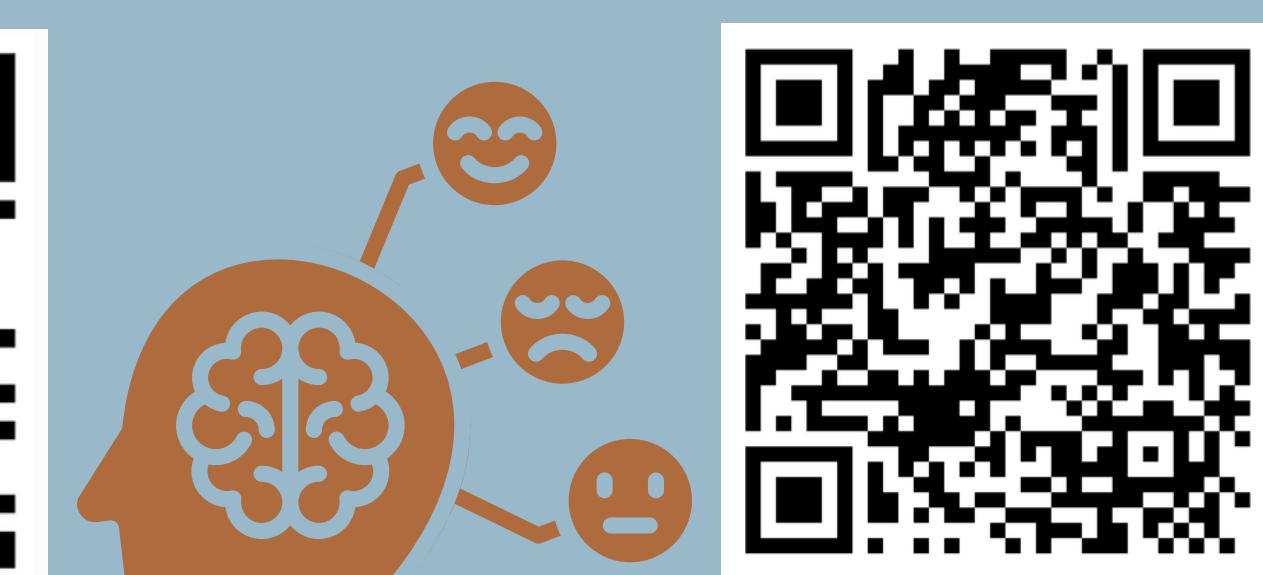
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude to the Ləkʷəŋən, Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose unceded territory this research was conducted on. This research was supported by the Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Awards, University of Victoria, and supervised by Dr. Megan Ames, Department of Psychology. The Adolescents' Daily Lives (ADL) project is supported by a SSHRC IDG (PI: Buckler) and a SSHRC IG (PI: Ames). We would like to thank our participants and youth community advisory board for their dedication to the project.

REFERENCES



References



ADL Protocol Paper