Effects of Social Media Browsing on Leisure Solitude for Young Adults

How does social media use affect young adults’ experience with solitude?

STUDY 1 – DIARY STUDY DESIGN

Daily leisure solitude: “Was there any time today that you had an opportunity to just relax without having to do any work or being obligated to do some tasks?”

Sample of 111 normative-young adults between 18 and 24 years of age (Avg. age = 20):
- On average, reported having leisure solitude 60% of the time
- 80% of leisure solitude involved social media use

Main findings
- Daily experience of leisure solitude is associated with more calmness and relaxation, less anxiety and tenseness
- No evidence that social media use bears any detriments

STUDY 2 – WITHIN-SUBJECT

Sample of 146 Facebook users either:
- Spent 15 minutes thinking (T2), then 15 minutes browsing on Facebook (T3) (Green)
- Spent 15 minutes browsing on Facebook (T2), then 15 minutes thinking (T3) (Orange)

After spending some time in solitude...

Social media use raised high-arousal positive affect like excited, energized

Social media use increased feelings of inauthenticity (“I did not feel myself”)

STUDY 3 – BETWEEN SUBJECT

Sample of 249 social media users spent 15 minutes alone either:
- Thinking (n = 88) (Green)
- Browsing on social media (n = 83) (Purple)
- Reading books (n = 78) (Orange)

Social media use showed sharper drops in sadness, compared to thinking and reading

Social media use increased feelings of inauthenticity

Conclusion
- No evidence that social media has a large effect on leisure solitude for young adults, at least when observed in brief period of time
- Social media use curbs boredom and sadness, but increases reports of “not feeling myself”