

Social Media Addiction, Anxiety, and Childhood Emotional Abuse in Young Adults:



A Scoping Literature Review

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Introduction

- Problematic social media use (PSMU) has become extremely prevalent in recent years, estimated 17% of the population suffer from social media addiction¹
- From 1990 to 2021 there was a 52% increase in anxiety disorders, potentially resulting from the ubiquitousness of social media²
- Childhood emotional abuse (CEA) is common and linked to insecure anxious attachment styles during adulthood, which is linked with PSMU through maladaptive coping, which then exacerbates anxiety^{3,4}
- This scoping review assesses the need for future research examining CEA as a moderator of the association between PSMU and anxiety in young adults

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of existing studies examining PSMU, anxiety, and/or CEA in young adults?
2. How have PSMU, anxiety, and CEA in young adults been measured and conceptualized in existing literature?
3. How have PSMU, anxiety, and CEA been associated with one another in existing literature?
4. Does existing research support the need for incorporating childhood emotional abuse as a moderator of problematic social media use and anxiety in young adults?

Methods

- Scoping reviews offer preliminary assessment of range of research; purpose to identify and determine nature and extent of the previous findings in a specific area⁵
- Less formal and quantitative than systematic review, used to broadly understand field^{5,6}
- Stage 1: Formulate research questions and objectives
- Stage 2: Identify relevant studies: PsycINFO, PubMed, CINAHL, AI search tools (e.g. Elicit, LitMaps, Connected papers), References
- Stage 3: Select a subset of studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria relevant to the research questions (e.g. includes $\geq$ two of the variables; adults ages 18-24)
- Stage 4: Extract and chart data: general study information, methodology, measures, conceptualization, associations and theoretical explanations, and implications for CEA as a moderator (3 in duplicate)
- Stage 5: Organize and synthesize key findings and themes relevant to research questions
- Stage 6: Consult and network with experts in the field to review findings and suggest additional considerations for future studies



PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram

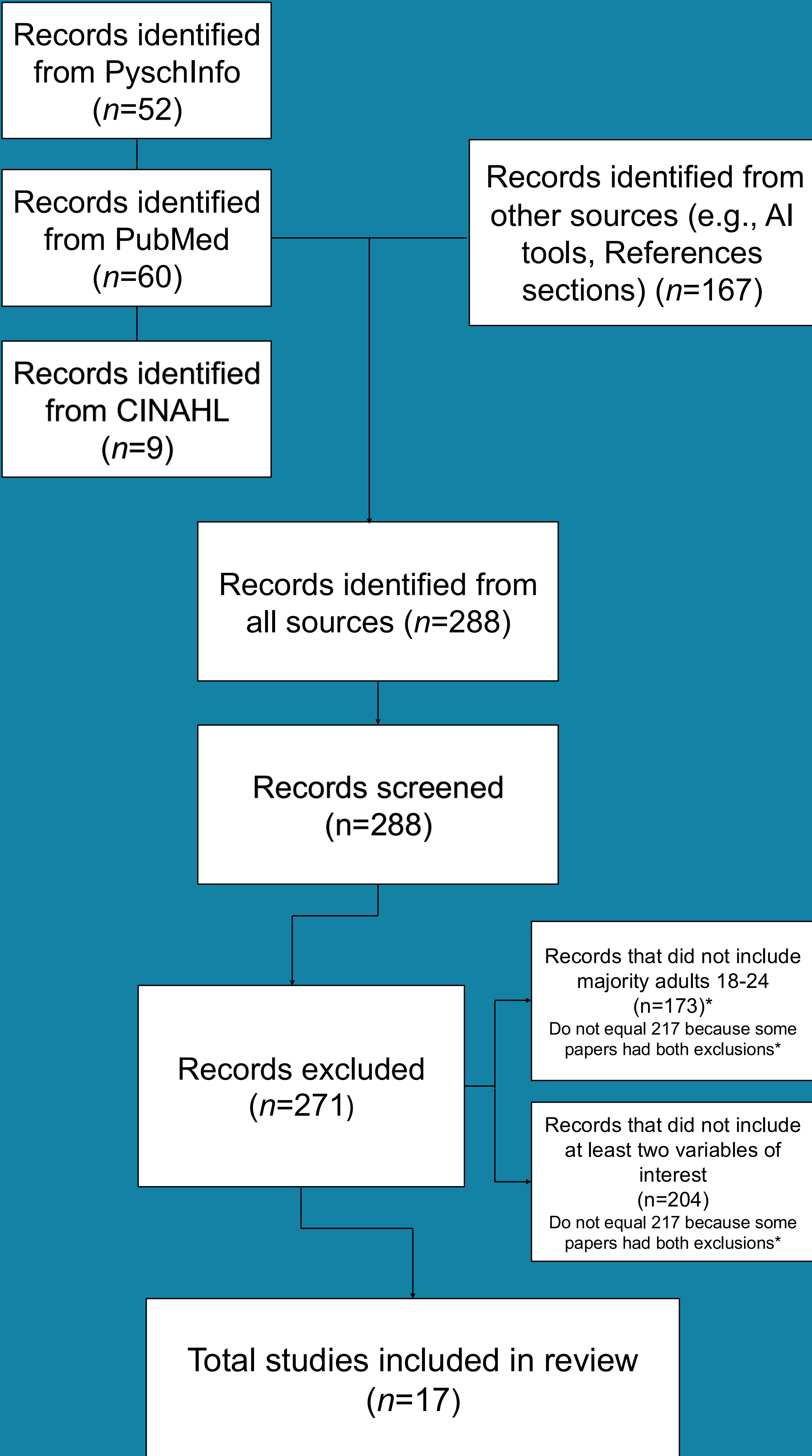


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram illustrating the selection process for studies included in the scoping review on childhood emotional abuse, social media use, and anxiety in young adults⁶

Results

- Out of 288 papers, 17 met inclusion criteria
- Majority female (n=12); Mostly white race (seven studies did not provide race/ethnicity)
- Three articles found bidirectional relationship between PSMU and anxiety
- Identified associations between CEA and PSMU (n=3) and CEA and anxiety (n=9)
- No past research looked at CEA as moderator
- Found associations differ by: gender, age, race, culture, poverty level, location, and experiences

Discussion

- Preliminary themes:
- Theme 1: Previous research has found associations between PSNU and anxiety for young adults, also found bidirectional associations
- Theme 2: Previous research has found differences in associations between PSMU, anxiety, and CEA by sex. Future research would benefit from using more representative gender samples
- Theme 3: Previous research has found differences in associations between PSMU, anxiety, and CEA by race/ethnicity. Future research would benefit from using more racially/ethnically representative samples
- Theme 4: No previous research has examined CEA as a moderator in this association, would add to literature

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the TRIO Ronald E. McNair post-baccalaureate achievement program for funding this research.