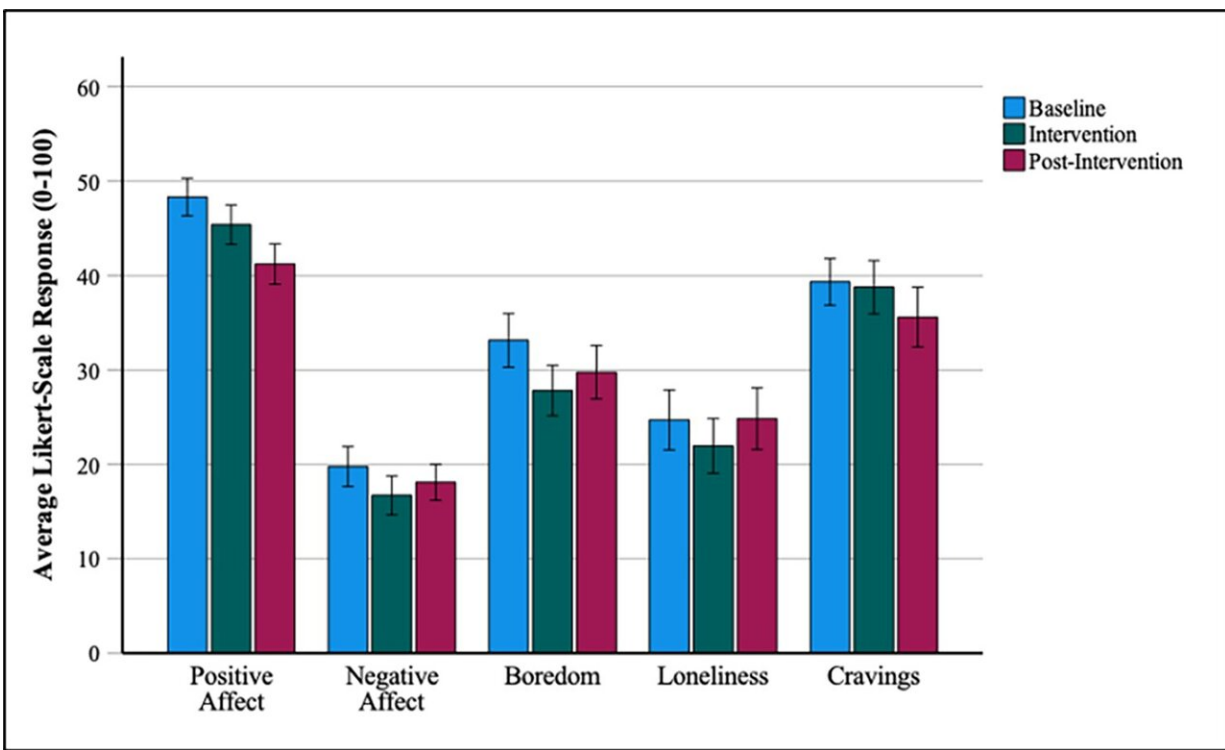


Experiment suggests taking a short break from social media results in mixed bag of feelings

November 9 2023, by Bob Yirka



Mean self-report ratings of mood across the three experiment phases. Error bars represent +/- 1 SE mean. Credit: *PLOS ONE* (2023). DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0293467](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293467)

A pair of psychologists at Durham University, in the U.K., has found

that when heavy social media users are asked to give up social media for a week, they experience some surprising feelings. In their study, [published](#) in *PLOS ONE*, Michael Wadsley and Niklas Ihssen conducted an experiment in which they asked heavy social media users to give up social media for one week and to answer questions regarding how they were feeling.

Prior research has suggested that some aspects of [social media](#) use mimic addictive behavior in certain individuals. In this new study, Wadsley and Ihssen tested whether such behavior is representative of the average heavy social media, or if it only applies to certain segments of the population. They designed and carried out a small experiment involving 51 volunteers who represented themselves as heavy social media users (they engaged with social media applications between 30 minutes and nine hours each day).

Each of the volunteers abstained from social media applications for six days. The researchers monitored the volunteers throughout the six days and for another four days afterward. Each of the volunteers filled out a questionnaire every day—the questions focused on how they were feeling regarding their sudden lack of social media use.

The researchers found that the volunteers reported having less trouble staying off social media than expected—they experienced little to no [withdrawal symptoms](#). They also, as expected, reported feeling fewer negative emotions. But they also reported feeling fewer positive emotions, another surprise. The volunteers also reported feeling less bored and having reduced feelings of loneliness.

The researchers suggest that social media use does not appear to be addictive to people in general, even for heavy users. They also acknowledge that most of the [volunteers](#) "relapsed" at least once by checking in with one or more [social media sites](#). They also note that their

study was small in scope, and that results might differ if done with larger groups of people who quit social media use for longer periods of time.

More information: Michael Wadsley et al, Restricting social networking site use for one week produces varied effects on mood but does not increase explicit or implicit desires to use SNSs: Findings from an ecological momentary assessment study, *PLOS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0293467](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293467)

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