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THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SMARTPHONE USE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Ellen Kaiser

University of Kentucky, ellen.kaiser@uky.edu

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Ellen Kaiser, Student

Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson, Major Professor

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, Director of Graduate Studies

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SMARTPHONE USE AND EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG
YOUNG ADULTS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Family Sciences in the College of Agriculture, Food and
Environment at the University of Kentucky

By
Ellen Kaiser
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson, Professor of Family Sciences
Lexington, Kentucky
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SMARTPHONE USE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

This study bridges the gap in the literature about the association between smartphone use and emotional intelligence on romantic relationship satisfaction. A sample of 161 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 26 at the University of Kentucky were recruited to complete an online survey about their smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction. Associations between smartphone usage and emotional intelligence, smartphone usage and romantic relationship satisfaction, and emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction were found. Specifically, productive smartphone usage was found to be positively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction, while problem smartphone usage was found to be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. Emotional intelligence was found to be positively associated with both productive smartphone usage and romantic relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that both smartphone usage and emotional intelligence can impact romantic relationship satisfaction. This study provides important implications for therapists working with couples to help improve their romantic relationship satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Smartphone, Emotional Intelligence, Relationship Satisfaction, Young Adults, Association

Ellen Kaiser

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By

Ellen Kaiser

Ronald Werner-Wilson, Ph.D

Director of Thesis

Hyungsoo Kim, Ph.D

Director of Graduate Studies

April 27, 2018

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the association between smartphone use and emotional intelligence on romantic relationship satisfaction. For the majority of Americans, smartphones are likely a major part of their every day lives. Nearly two-thirds of all Americans own a smartphone, while 85% of young adults aged 18-29 own a smartphone (Smith, 2015). Smartphones can keep us connected in our professional lives, through email and phone calls, they can keep us connected to friends and family through social media and text messages and they can give us an escape from reality through the various apps that fit one's personal interests. While it may seem obvious that smartphones impact most people's day to day lives, an interesting question arises when we begin to wonder how smartphone usage may be impacting our romantic relationships. Further, research has shown that personality traits such as neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and self-esteem can influence how individuals use mobile phones and can detect patterns in mobile phone use (Butt & Phillips, 2008; Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008).

Just as personality traits influence an individual in various ways, emotional intelligence, the ability to manage one's emotions effectively and to maintain strong interpersonal relationships, is an important characteristic of an individual (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence impacts various aspects of an individual's life such as interpersonal relationships, job success, and leadership abilities (Goleman, 1995). Different research questions arise when we begin to think of the impact of emotional intelligence and smartphone usage on romantic relationship satisfaction. As research expands the knowledge base concerning emotional intelligence and smartphone usage,

more insights about the association between emotional intelligence and smartphone usage on relationship satisfaction has become available. Reviewing literature related to the impact of emotional intelligence and smartphone usage on relationship satisfaction will provide a better understanding of the association of these variables on relationship satisfaction, which is important information for the field of family science and couple and family therapists. In the following paragraphs, research associated with smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction will be discussed.

Literature Review

Computer Mediated Communication

Today the majority of young adult Americans use computer mediated communication (CMC) occasionally or more frequently (Bonebrake, 2002; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Computer mediated communication includes any human communication that occurs through the use of one or more electronic devices. While most people still prefer to have face-to-face interactions with other individuals, other forms of communication such as text messaging, talking on the phone, social networking, and email are popular forms of communication (Pettigrew, 2009; Mieczakowski, Goldhaber, & Clarkson, 2011). Computer mediated communication can impact various aspects of adolescent's overall health, including emotional and mental disturbance, mindfulness, and relationships (Favotto, Michaelson, & Davidson, 2017). For adolescents specifically, engaging in consistent CMC can attribute to emotionally distressing and continuous negative interactions with others, through bullying and negative interactions with friends (Favotto et al., 2017). Others have experienced feeling like they spend too much time using communication technology and a loss of control over their CMC use, leading to a

point of feeling overwhelmed (Mieczakowski et al., 2011). Additionally, youths have reported finding themselves disengaged with the outside environment and the present moment (Favotto et al., 2017). However, there might be benefits of CMC when it comes to relationship formation and maintenance. CMC can help individuals stay in contact with friends and family that live far away (Mieczakowski et al., 2011; Favotto et al., 2017). Additionally, CMC can be beneficial to romantic relationships, as it can allow partners to speak to one another when otherwise this would not be possible and can also help increase feelings of closeness between individuals (Chiung-Wen, Ching-Chan, & Yi-Tang, 2011; Donath & Boyd, 2004; Pettigrew, 2009).

Smartphone Usage

Smartphones make it possible to have the internet at your fingertips and allows individuals to use the various features of smart phones to best fit their needs based on one's environment, lifestyle, and personal preference (Barkhuus & Polichar, 2010). "Proactive smartphone users" use them as a means to enable them to accomplish what they want and need (Barkhuus & Polichar, 2010). Smartphones are most popular in the young adult age group, which includes individuals aged 18-29 (Smith, 2015). It has been found that students used their smartphones mostly for the purpose of messages, talking, music, games, and camera use (Tan, C., Mustafa, P., & Donder, A., 2013). With that being said, younger smartphone users are more likely to engage in problematic and high-level smartphone use (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Walsh & White, 2006). Problematic smartphone usage can be defined as continued smartphone use regardless of negative outcomes (Walsh, White, & Young, 2010).

Smartphone Usage on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

While researchers have examined some problematic conditions associated with mobile or smartphone use, little research exists that examines the extent of these negative consequences, such as the impact on romantic relationship satisfaction. One popular function of smartphones is quick and easy access to various social media technologies. Social media accounts allow individuals to obtain more information about their partner's, including information about past romantic relationships, that can influence feelings of jealousy (Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009). Specifically, Facebook has been found to have an overall negative effect on romantic relationships (Nelson & Abiodun, 2017; Reichert, 2015). Through social media one is exposed to various images, including objectifying media. Through media consumption of objectifying media, individuals can find themselves objectifying their partners (Zurrbrigen, E.L., Ramsey, L.R., Jaworski, B.K., 2011). Men reported higher levels of partner-objectification than did women and partner objectification was found to be associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Zurrbrigen et. Al, 2011). Further, social media can give individuals more opportunities or temptations for infidelity, despite whether or not these actions turn into physical infidelity (Docan-Morgan & Docan, 2007).

Another popular function of smartphones is text messaging. Text messaging allows individuals to stay connected to their partner, while also having one's own autonomy, through the opportunity of having the option to respond to text messages when it is convenient (Pettigrew, 2009). Additionally, many couples use text messaging as a way to express their commitment to one another, by sending messages of love and affection. (Ackerman, Griskevicius, & Li, 2011; Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011). Text messaging can also be used as an effective way to have problem-

solving discussions. (Perry & Werner-Wilson, 2011). Having problem-solving discussions through text messaging or other forms of CMC can allow individuals the opportunity to have more time to reflect and understand before responding (Perry & Werner-Wilson, 2011).

Beyond the impact of how the various uses of smartphones can impact relationships, the mere presence of smartphones can interfere with human relationship formation (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). Whether or not individuals are aware of this impact, having a smartphone present while engaging with a romantic partner has the ability to inhibit trust and closeness and can reduce feelings of understanding and empathy, especially during conversations on meaningful topics (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). Impacts such as these are important to consider, for it shows that there is evidence that smartphones can impact relationships in varying degrees, even when the phones are not technically in use.

Definition of Emotional Intelligence

The term emotion intelligence (EI) was created by researchers Peter Salovey and John Mayer and became widely known in 1995 after it was introduced by Daniel Goleman in the book titled *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Since then, EI has been defined differently by several researchers producing a discrepancy on how it is understood and measured. There are two general approaches to conceptualize EI; ability models and mixed models (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) propose a four branch model to describe EI as an ability. The four branches are: “(a) perceive emotions in oneself and others accurately, (b) use emotions to facilitate thinking, (c) understand emotions, emotional language, and

the signals conveyed by emotions, and (d) manage emotions as to attain specific goals” (Mayer et al., 2008, p.4). These four branches of EI are valuable for understanding EI, but introducing other interpretations of EI will be helpful for forming a collaborative understanding, which will be useful for this study. Petrides and Furnham (2001) formulated a mixed model approach and describe the facets of EI: adaptability; assertiveness; the perception, expression, management and regulation of emotions; self-esteem; low-impulsiveness; relationship skills; self-motivation, stress management; self-competence; trait empathy; trait happiness; and trait optimism. These facets provide a more detailed understanding of EI and give specific traits that are considered when assessing EI. For the purpose of this study, a collaborative definition of EI will be used. EI will be defined as the ability to perceive and understand one’s emotions and the emotions of others, regulate one’s emotions, and will focus on the aspect of relationship skills (Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Mayer et al., 2008). This understanding of EI will be used to assess the impact of emotional intelligence on smartphone use and relationship satisfaction.

Emotional Intelligence on CMC and Smartphone Usage

Research suggests that EI can have an influence on CMC and smartphone usage. Casale, Tella, and Fioravanti (2012) found EI to be negatively associated with preference for online social interaction, which is also associated with more time spent online and a preference for online social interaction, compared to face-to-face interaction with other individuals. In addition, emotion management skills have been shown to be a predictor of levels of Internet addiction (Oktan, 2011). Specifically, emotion management skills were found to be negatively associated with loss of control, persisting in a negative behavior

despite the consequences, and a craving or compulsion in terms of Internet use (Oktan, 2011). Since smartphones provide access to the Internet, this research has important implications for smartphone usage.

Research has shown that personality traits can influence how individuals use mobile phones and can detect patterns in mobile phone use (Butt & Phillips, 2008; Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008). Specifically, personality traits that are related to EI such as neuroticism (level of emotional adjustment and stability), conscientiousness (regulation, control, and direction of goals and impulses), and agreeableness (difference in levels of social harmony and cooperation) have been shown to predict mobile phone behavior (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). For instance, individuals with more disagreeable tendencies reported greater mobile phone use for calls and instant messaging, which may be related to low social skills, making it easier to communicate over the phone, rather than face-to-face (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). Both low-conscientiousness and neuroticism have been associated with an increase in text messaging, while neuroticism is also associated with more mobile phone addictive tendencies (Ehrenberg et al., 2008).

Emotional Intelligence on Relationship Satisfaction

Smith, Heaven, and Ciarrochi (2008) focused on cohabiting couples and examined trait emotional intelligence, conflict communication patterns, and relationship satisfaction. The researchers examined the extent to which a couple's relationship satisfaction could be predicted by self-reported and/or estimates of partners EI and conception of communication patterns (Smith et al., 2008). One of the findings from this study was that the participant's estimate of their partner's EI was a predictor of relationship satisfaction (Smith et al., 2008). It was also found that relationship

satisfaction was related to perceived similarity of self-reported EI and estimates of partner's EI, although it was unknown whether the partners were genuinely similar (Smith et al., 2008). Other research has assessed if emotional intelligence is related to perceived positive and negative qualities among couples (Brackett, Warner, and Bosco, 2005; Zeidner, Kloda, and Matthews, 2013). It has been found that dyads in which both partners had low EI tended to report significantly poorer relationship outcomes than dyads in which one or both partners were high in EI (Brackett et al., 2005; Zeidner et al., 2013). Foran, O'Leary, and Williams (2012) conducted a study that evaluated four measures of emotional ability: emotional intelligence, self-rated alexithymia (difficulty in expressing, describing, and understanding one's emotions), partner-rated alexithymia, and couples' emotional awareness. Emotional intelligence and alexithymia were found to be significantly associated with relationship functioning and mood of one's self and one's partner (Foran et al., 2012). This study showed a positive correlation between high emotional intelligence and the functioning of individuals in a couple relationship (Foran et al., 2012). Malouff, Schutte and Thorsteinsson (2014) performed a meta-analysis and found that there is a significant association between trait emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction. Higher levels of emotional intelligence were positively correlated with both self-reported romantic relationship satisfaction and partner's level of relationship satisfaction.

Abbasi, Tabatabaei, Sharbaf, and Karshki (2016) conducted a study that assessed the relationship of attachment style and emotional intelligence with marital satisfaction. The researchers found that EI was positively correlated with marital satisfaction suggesting a possible explanation that participants with high EI have a more secure

individual self, which in turn aids in the formation of close relationships (Abbasi et al., 2016). Eslami, Hasanzadeh, and Jamshidi (2014) found a direct positive effect of emotional intelligence on the quality of a marital relationship. Findings suggest individuals who have high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to form strong interpersonal relationships (Eslami et al., 2014). Based on these research findings I would expect that individuals with higher EI have a strong sense of self, which in turn aids in the ability to form strong interpersonal relationships, influencing higher relationship satisfaction.

Other research has assessed emotional intelligence on marital adjustment. Researchers found that the ability to identify and communicate emotions effectively, and social relationship skills have a significant effect on marital adjustment (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Ortese & Tor-Anyiin, 2008;). The researchers discussed the importance of the individuals within a couple relationship to have these skills and capabilities (Ortese & Tor-Anyiin, 2008). Based on the findings of this research, I would expect that individuals who have high EI would have strong emotion management, emotional sensitivity skills, and social relationship skills, influencing high relationship satisfaction.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to examine the association between smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction. There is strong evidence that emotional intelligence has a strong correlation with relationship satisfaction and that it is important to assess the emotional intelligence of individuals within a dyadic relationship when examining what is influencing relationship satisfaction. Most of the research concerning EI and relationship satisfaction has focused mainly on

the individual. Researchers have discussed and assessed how the EI of individuals within a couple relationship is correlated with perceived and actual relationship satisfaction. Additionally, research has shown that different personality traits and emotional management skills can influence how one uses their smartphones and can be predictive of problem uses. EI concerns different traits and abilities, so it would be expected that EI will have some association on how one uses their smartphones.

Four hypotheses were tested.

H1: EI will be negatively associated with smartphone problem usage. Problem uses are indicated by behaviors that influence negative consequences, social difficulties, withdrawal, loss of control, or behavior salience.

H2: EI will be positively associated with productive smartphone usage.

Productive uses are indicated by behaviors that promote relationship maintenance or connectedness.

H3: Problem smartphone usage will be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction.

H4: Productive smartphone usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction.

Chapter Two: Method

Sampling

A sample of undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky were recruited to complete an online survey through Qualtrics. Email addresses of all undergraduate students were obtained by sending an open records request to ukopenrecords@uky.edu. A random probability sample of 10,030 email addresses of undergraduate students was generated. Next, an email that introduced the study and provided a link to the Qualtrics survey was sent to the sample (see Appendix A).

As an incentive for participation in the study, a drawing for four \$50 checks for every 100 people who completed the survey was offered. In the recruitment email, students were informed that they had a 1 in 25 chance of winning a \$50 check for completing the survey. Each participant that chose to enter into the drawing to win a \$50 check was randomly assigned a number, and winnings numbers were chosen using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, winning numbers were generated. There recruitment procedures resulted in a 1.6% response rate and an 81% completion rate.

Participants

Individuals who have been married, cohabitating, or in a committed romantic relationship for at least six months were the participants for this study. Inclusion criteria required that the individual participant be in a romantic relationship for at least six months, have a working and accessible smartphone, be a current undergraduate student at the University of Kentucky, be between 18 and 26 years of age, and be fluent in English. Although 357 participants completed the survey, only 161 participants met the inclusion criteria.

Due to some missing data, some components of the study were analyzed using 159 or 151 participants. Participants ranged from 18 to 26 years of age, with 21-year-olds being the largest group (23.0%), followed by 19-year-olds (21.2%), 20-year-olds (17.6%), 18-year-olds (13.9%), 22-year-olds (10.9%), 23-year-olds (5.5%), 24-year-olds (5.5%), 25-year-olds (1.8%), and 26-year-olds (0.06%). The majority of respondents were females (69.0%), followed by males (30.4%), and intersex (0.06%). Most participants were White or Caucasian (87.5%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (6.0%), Black or African American (3.6%), Asian or Asian American (1.8%), and Middle Eastern or Arab American (1.2%). A majority of participants were in a committed romantic relationship for at least six months (78.6%), followed by cohabiting (17.3%), and married (4.2%). The largest group of participants were in a relationship for 1.1-3 years (43.4%), followed by 6 months-1 year (25.9%), 3.1-5 years (19.9%), and 5+ years (10.8%).

Procedure

Research procedures followed a protocol approved by the University of Kentucky's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B) The online survey began with an informed consent page which required participants to read and then agree to its terms (see Appendix C). Participants were encouraged to complete all components of the survey, but it was explicit that it was voluntary and participants could choose skip questions if they did not wish to answer them.

Measures

Demographics.

The first portion of the survey contained demographic questions, including sex, age, race/ethnicity, romantic relationship status, and length of romantic relationship status (see Appendix D).

Smartphone Usage.

The Smartphone Usage survey incorporates questions derived from past research studies. The first eight questions are taken from the Mobile Phone Involvement Questionnaire (MPIQ) developed by Walsh et.al (2010). The MPIQ was developed based off the framework of Browns (1993, 1997) behavioral addiction components. The original measure developed by Brown has been adapted to measure different technologies such as online games and computers (1993, 1997). The term “mobile phone” has been replaced with “smartphone” and the term “others” has been replaced with “romantic partner” to better fit the proposed study. The measure includes cognitive and behavioral salience, loss of control, and withdrawal (Brown, 1993, 1997). Each question is scored on a 7-point Likert scale, anchored by strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The MPIQ has a $\alpha = .78$.

The second set of questions addressing strategic maintenance behaviors and relationship characteristics are taken from scales developed by Canary and Stafford (1992) and Dainton and Stafford (1993). The term “smartphone” has been incorporated into the questions to better fit the proposed study.

The third set of questions addressing problem usage from the Mobile Phone Problem Use Scale (MPPUS) developed by Bianchi and Phillips, have also been

incorporated (2005). These questions cover negative life consequences such as social difficulties (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005). Each question is scored on a 10-point Likert scale, anchored by not true at all (1) to extremely true (10). The term “mobile phone” has been replaced with “smartphone” to better fit the proposed study. The MPPUS has a $\alpha = .93$.

Relationship Satisfaction.

The 32-item Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) (Funk and Rogge, 2007) was designed to precisely measure relationship satisfaction for romantic couples. Example items include “amount of time spent together”, “I really feel like I am part of a team with my partner”, and “how good is your relationship compared to most?”. Each item has 5 or 6 Likert-type response items anchored by extremely unhappy (5) and perfect (6), always agree (5) and always disagree (0), all the time (5) and never (0), not at all true (0) and completely true (5), not at all (0) and completely (5), worse than all others (extremely bad) (0) and better than all others (completely good) (5), and never (0) and more often (5). The scale has a range of 0-161 and higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Scores below 104.5 indicate notable relationship dissatisfaction.

Emotional intelligence.

The 33-item Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was designed to assess emotional recognition in self and others, the ability to effectively utilize emotional information in problem-solving situations, and emotional regulation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Example items include “I seek out activities that make me happy” and “I compliment others when they have done something well”. Each item has 5 Likert-type response items anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). Scores range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher levels of emotional intelligence. This scale has good discriminate

validity with it not being associated with personality traits or cognitive ability. The EIS has a $r = .96$.

Chapter Three: Results

Analytical Approach

The main hypothesis of this study is that there will be an association between emotional intelligence and smartphone usage, in that higher levels of EI will be associated with lower smartphone problem uses. A secondary hypothesis is that individuals with high EI will use their smartphone in more productive ways. A third hypothesis is that problem smartphone usage will be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. A fourth hypothesis is that productive smartphone usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. In order to test these hypotheses, a bivariate correlational analysis was performed. This analysis examined the relationship between all four variables of emotional intelligence, productive smartphone usage, problematic smartphone usage, and romantic relationship satisfaction.

In order to determine the associations between the variables, Pearson correlations were conducted using a bivariate correlational analysis (see Table 1.1). Productive smartphone usage was positively correlated with problematic smartphone usage, $r = .378$, $p < .01$. This meant that as productive smartphone usage increased, problematic smartphone increased. Romantic relationship satisfaction was negatively correlated with problematic smartphone usage, $r = -.158$, $p < .05$. This meant that as problematic smartphone usage increased, romantic relationship satisfaction decreased. Emotional intelligence was positively correlated with productive smartphone usage, $r = .198$, $p < .05$. This meant that as emotional intelligence increased, productive smartphone usage

increased. As predicted by the literature, emotional intelligence was positively correlated with romantic relationship satisfaction $r = .334$, $p < .01$. This meant that as emotional intelligence increased, relationship satisfaction increased.

Table 3.1
 Pearson Correlations between All Variables for Total Sample

	Problem Smartphone Usage	Productive Smartphone Usage	CSI-32 Relationship Satisfaction	Emotional Intelligence
Problem Smartphone Usage	--			
Productive Smartphone Usage	.378**	--		
CSI-32 Relationship Satisfaction	-.158*	.195*	--	
Emotional Intelligence	-.042	.198*	.334**	--

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Chapter Four: Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the associations between smartphone usage, romantic relationship satisfaction, and emotional intelligence. Smartphone usage was divided into the components of productive smartphone usage and problematic smartphone usage. Productive smartphone usage included behaviors that are used as relationship maintenance or connectedness with one's partner, such as using a smartphone to express commitment to one's partner, to show how much one's partner means to them, and using a smartphone to say "I love you" to one's partner. Problematic smartphone usage included actions such as losing track of how much one is using a smartphone, experiencing a decrease in productivity as a direct result of the time one spends on their smartphone, and having friends and family complain about one's smartphone usage.

The first hypothesis of the current study is that EI would be negatively associated with problematic smartphone usage. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Interestingly, there was a positive correlation between productive and problem smartphone use. Some smartphone users have been found to be proactive users, who use smartphones as a way to accomplish what they want and need, while younger smartphone users are also more likely to engage in problematic and high-level smartphone use (Barkhuus & Polichar, 2010; Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Walsh & White, 2006). This finding suggests that perhaps smartphone users engage in both problematic and productive smartphone usage.

The second hypothesis of the current study is that there will be a positive correlation between EI and productive smartphone usage. This hypothesis was supported.

While it has been found that personality traits related to EI, such as neuroticism and conscientiousness, have a negative correlation with problem smartphone use (Ehrenburg et al., 2008), this finding suggests that when there is high level EI, resulting in more emotional regulation, adjustment, and control, individuals are better able to use a smartphone in productive ways.

The third hypothesis of the current study is that problem smartphone usage will be negatively associated with higher romantic relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported. As expected, EI was positively associated with higher romantic relationship satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2005; Zeidner et al., 2013; Foran et al., 2012; Malouff et al., 2014; Abbasi et al., 2016; Eslami et al., 2014). Further, problem smartphone usage was negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. Depending on what an individual is using one's smartphone for, social media can have a negative association with relationship satisfaction and can influence feelings of jealousy and mistrust (Muisse et al., 2009; Docan-Morgan & Docan, 2007). Further, having a smartphone present while spending time with one's romantic partner may inhibit trust and closeness (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012)

The fourth hypothesis of the current study is that productive smartphone usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. Some possible explanations for this result is that productive smartphone usage can help individuals stay connected to their partner, provide an opportunity to stress commitment to one's partner, and can be used as an effective way to have problem-solving discussions (Pettigrew, 2009; Ackerman et al., 2011; Coyne et al., 2011; Perry & Werner-Wilson, 2011).

Implications

With smartphones being an aspect of our everyday lives and emotional intelligence influencing romantic relationship satisfaction, it is important to understand the relationships between these variables. The results from this study suggest that smartphone usage can have both negative and positive influences on relationship satisfaction. By integrating aspects of EI, we can gain a better understanding of what may influence the type of smartphone usage one engages in.

Specifically, the results of this study provide important implications for therapists working with couples. Depending on the presenting problem, therapists may gain a more detailed assessment of a couple by inferring on the EI of the individual partners, assessing smartphone usage, and examining if smartphone use is productive or problematic within the relationship, using scales included in the present study. Knowing that EI is associated with relationship satisfaction, productive smartphone usage is positively associated with relationship satisfaction, and problematic smartphone usage is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, therapists can use this knowledge to integrate therapeutic interventions. Specifically, treatment modalities such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Cognitive Enhancement Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and other talk-based therapies have been found to help improve EI (Masjedi, Azadi, Taghavizadeh, Hosseinzadeh, & Koushkestani, 2015; Furrow, Edwards, Choi, & Bradley, 2012; Hurley, 2012; Eack, Hogarty, Greenwald, Hogarty, & Keshavan, 2007). For example, through CBT, a therapist can help client's strengthen their EI by working through cognitive distortions, such as blaming or emotional reasoning. Further, EFT can help couples improve their EI by learning more about their emotional responses

from an attachment theory lens. Perhaps helping couples become more emotionally intelligent, can also help them become more aware of and change their smartphone usage behaviors, as a means to increase more productive smartphone use. This approach could, in turn, help improve relationship satisfaction.

Case Example

The following is a case example from the authors clinical experience that describes how some issues pertaining to smartphone usage and emotional intelligence have been presented in a therapeutic setting. Names have been changed and any identifying information has been removed to protect the confidentiality of the clients.

Martha and Tony decided to seek out couple's therapy with the presenting problem of feeling disconnected. With both partners working full-time jobs and caring for a young child, the couple complained that there just isn't enough time in the day to have quality time together and they feel like they are drifting apart. When the therapist asked the couple to describe a recent time that they felt connected, Martha told the therapist about a long car ride that they had taken together on their way to visit family. Martha explained that it was nice to just be together in the car for a few hours without any of life's distractions. Tony interrupted Martha stating, "Are you serious? You were staring down at your phone the entire time!" Martha, seemingly confused, attempted to explain that it felt like Tony had nothing to say to her, so when their conversation grew quiet she decided to catch up with some of her friends through social media. Tony, becoming defensive, explained that when Martha is engulfed in her phone, it makes it difficult to start a conversation with her. Therapist interrupted the couple's quarrel and asked if smartphone use has become a reoccurring issue in their relationship, and both

clients agreed that it is a point of conflict that they continue to experience. As the session continued, the therapist attempted to de-escalate the clients by allowing them to calmly express the emotions that they each experience when one of them is distracted by their smartphones. Tony expressed to Martha, "I feel unimportant and ignored. When I look over and see you on your phone it feels like you would rather be connecting with others than with me. Then I become sad and I just try to ignore it because I don't know what to say." Martha, reaching out to touch Tony's arm replies, "I didn't realize that it upset you that much. When we do have the opportunity to spend time together, sometimes I still feel disconnected and I don't know what to say or how to start a conversation with you, so I take out my phone instead. I know that this isn't the best thing to do, and hearing you express your feelings towards me makes me want change my habit." Through this intervention, the therapist created the space for the clients to express their emotions to one another so that they could begin to gain an understanding of one another and form a stronger connection.

Throughout the course of treatment, Martha and Tony continued to participate in similar interventions that allowed them to increase awareness and understanding of each other's emotions. As both clients increased their emotional intelligence, they began changing their behaviors, especially pertaining to smartphone usage. The clients started a new ritual in which cell phones were to be put away during meal times, evenings, and dates. After a few months, the couple felt like that had met their goal of becoming connected and terminated therapy.

Limitations

Although this study presents new findings on the association between smartphone usage, EI, and romantic relationship satisfaction, the results should be interpreted with caution due to limitations. The present study used a sample of undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky, which means that the results are not generalizable to the larger population. Future research could benefit from studying samples from various geographic regions, including those outside of the United States. In addition, future research could also benefit from a more diverse sample in terms of ethnicity, since this study had a sample that consisted of mainly white people. Further, this study did not account for sexual orientation and future research could benefit by adding this variable. With this study using a young adult population, there was a small percentage of individuals in cohabiting or marital relationships. Future research could benefit from studying samples of varying age groups so that these types of relationships can be better understood. Finally, the present study used a correlational design, which can help explain relationships between variables, but cannot predict causality between variables.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to fill the gaps in the literature by understanding the association between smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction. Overall, it was found that EI and productive smartphone usage had a positive correlation with romantic relationship satisfaction. In addition, a negative correlation was found among EI and problematic smartphone usage and romantic relationship satisfaction. These findings are an important contribution to research on romantic relationship satisfaction. Knowing that EI and smartphone usage can influence romantic

relationship satisfaction has important implications, particularly for therapists working with couples. Encouragement of increased awareness of smartphone usage and interventions to help individuals improve their EI seems valuable for individuals to improve their romantic relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of considering EI and smartphone usage as possible influences on romantic relationship satisfaction.

Appendix A

Participant Recruitment E-mails

Dear Student,

Because you are enrolled in undergraduate studies at the University of Kentucky, we would appreciate it if you will take roughly 20-25 minutes to complete a survey designed to assess your experiences with smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and relationship satisfaction. If you are currently 18 to 26 years old, enrolled in undergraduate classes, and are a U.S. citizen, then you are eligible to participate in this research study. By completing the survey, you have the option to enter a drawing that gives you a 1 in 25 chance of winning a \$50 check.

To begin the survey, go to:

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please e-mail Ellen Kaiser at ellen.kaiser@uky.edu

Respectfully,

Ellen Kaiser and Dr. Ronald Werner-Wilson

Appendix B



Office of Research Integrity
IRB, RDRC

Initial Review

Approval Ends
January 9, 2019

IRB Number
17-0777-P4S

TO: Ellen Kaiser
Family Science
PI phone #: (937) 260-0038

FROM: Non-medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol Number 17-0777-P4S

DATE: January 18, 2018

On January 10, 2018, the Non-medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

The Association Between Smartphone Usage and Emotional Intelligence on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

Approval is effective from January 10, 2018 until January 9, 2019 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, attached is the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. **[Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.]** Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and returned to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigators responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities>]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori>]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428

see blue.

315 Kinkead Hall | Lexington, KY 40506-0057 | P: 859-257-9428 | F: 859-257-8995 | www.research.uky.edu/ori/

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

You are being invited to take part in a research study about smartphone usage, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are enrolled in an undergraduate program. Your response is highly valued and will contribute to research that may greatly improve the understanding of the effects of smartphone usage and emotional intelligence on romantic relationship satisfaction. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

Although you will not get immediate personal benefit from taking part in this research study, your responses may help us understand more about the influences on romantic relationship satisfaction.

We hope to receive completed questionnaires from about 500 people, so your answers are important to us. Of course, you have a choice about whether or not to complete the questionnaire, but if you do participate, you are free to skip any questions or discontinue at any time.

The questionnaire will take about 20-25 minutes to complete.

For every 100 people that complete the survey, there will be a drawing for four \$50 checks, for up to \$1000. This gives participants a 1 in 25 chance of winning a \$50 check.

Questions of a personal nature are included in the survey. Although we have tried to minimize this, some questions may make you upset or feel uncomfortable, and you may choose not to answer them. If some questions do upset you, you will be provided with a link to the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy's therapist locator services, www.therapistlocator.net

Your response to the survey is confidential, which means no names or e-mail addresses will appear or be used on research documents, or in presentations or publications. The research team will not know that any information you provided came from you.

Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received from the online survey/data gathering company, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the survey/data gathering company's servers, or while en route to either them or us. It is also possible the raw data collected for research purposes may be used for marketing or reporting purposes by the survey/data gathering company after the research is concluded, depending on the company's Terms of Service and Privacy policies.

If you have questions about this study, please contact me at ellen.kaiser@uky.edu or my academic advisor Ronald Werner-Wilson, Ph.D. at ronald.werner-wilson@uky.edu. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer,

contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important research study.

Sincerely,

Ellen Kaiser, Graduate Student
Department of Family Sciences, University of Kentucky
E-mail: ellen.kaiser@uky.edu

Appendix D

Demographic Questions

What is your age?

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Intersex

What is your race/ethnicity?

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/ Pacific Islander
- Other

What is your relationship status?

- Cohabiting
- Married
- Committed romantic relationship

How long have you been in your current romantic relationship?

- 6 months- 1 year
- 1.1 years- 3 years
- 3.1-5 years
- 5+ years

Appendix E

Smartphone Usage Survey

I often think about my smartphone when I am not using it

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I often use my smartphone for no particular reason

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

Arguments have arisen with my romantic partner because of my smartphone use

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I interrupt whatever else I am doing when I am contacted on my smartphone

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I feel connected to others when I use my smartphone

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I lose track of how much I am using my smartphone

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

The thought of being without my smartphone make me feel distressed

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I have been unable to reduce my smartphone use

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I use my smartphone to say “I love you” to my romantic partner

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I use my smartphone to talk about our plans for the future

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

When using my smartphone, I am open with my feelings with my romantic partner

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I use my smartphone to stress my commitment to my romantic partner

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I use my smartphone to disclose what I need or want from my romantic relationship

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I use my smartphone to show how much my romantic partner means to me

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree

I have used my smartphone to make myself feel better when I am feeling down

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true At all								Extremely true	

I have gotten into arguments with my romantic partner due to the time I spend on my smartphone

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true At all								Extremely true	

My productivity has decreased as a direct result of the time I spend on my smartphone

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not true At all								Extremely true	

Appendix F
Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32)

Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa- sionally Disagree	Fre- quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
Amount of time spent together	5	4	3	2	1	0
Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occassi onaly	Rarely	Never
In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all TRUE	A little TRUE	Some- what TRUE	Mostly TRUE	Almost Completely TRUE	Completely TRUE
I still feel a strong connection with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with / date) the same person	0	1	2	3	4	5
Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me	5	4	3	2	1	0
My relationship with my partner makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5

I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently	5	4	3	2	1	0
For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
I really feel like part of a team with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	A little	Some-what	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Worse than all others (Extremely bad)			Better than all others (Extremely good)		
How good is your relationship compared to most?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
Do you enjoy your partner's company?	0	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you and your partner have fun together? 0 1 2 3 4 5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

INTERESTING	5	4	3	2	1	0	BORING
BAD	0	1	2	3	4	5	GOOD
FULL	5	4	3	2	1	0	EMPTY
LONELY	0	1	2	3	4	5	FRIENDLY
STURDY	5	4	3	2	1	0	FRAGILE
DISCOURAGING	0	1	2	3	4	5	HOPEFUL
ENJOYABLE	5	4	3	2	1	0	MISERABLE

Appendix G

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)

(1) I know when to speak about my personal problems to others

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(2) When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(3) I expect that I will do well on most things I try

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(4) Other people find it easy to confide in me

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(5) I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people*

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(6) Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(7) When my mood changes, I see new possibilities

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(8) Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(9) I am aware of my emotions as I experience them

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(10) I expect good things to happen

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(11) I like to share my emotions with others

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree

(12) When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

- strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (13) I arrange events others enjoy
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (14) I seek out activities that make me happy
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (15) I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (16) I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (17) When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (18) By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (19) I know why my emotions change
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (20) When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (21) I have control over my emotions
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (22) I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (23) I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (24) I compliment others when they have done something well
1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neither agree
or disagree agree strongly agree
- (25) I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send
1 2 3 4 5

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
- (26) When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (27) When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (28) When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail*
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (29) I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (30) I help other people feel better when they are down
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (31) I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |
- (32) I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| strongly disagree | disagree | neither agree
or disagree | agree | strongly agree |

*These items are reverse scored

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Vita

Ellen Kaiser

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

M.S., Family Sciences-Couple and Family Therapy, 2018 (expected)
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY

B.S., Family Sciences, 2015
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD

Intern Therapist January 2017-May 2018
University of Kentucky Family Center Lexington, KY

Intern Therapist January 2017-May 2018
Lansdowne Elementary School Lexington, KY

Clinic Coordinator May 2017-May 2018
University of Kentucky Family Center Lexington, KY

Graduate Assistant August 2016-May 2017
University of Kentucky Lexington, KY

Crisis Care Intern January-May 2015
The Nest Center for Women, Children, & Families Lexington, KY

SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

Cum Laude, University of Kentucky, 2015