



You've Got a Friend in Smartphones: Parasocial Relationships with Smartphones

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Introduction

- 94% of Americans (ages 18-29) have smartphones.¹
- News articles suggests that adults love their smartphones² and treat it as their friends³, but research is limited.
- Parasocial Relationships (PSRs): one-way, emotionally tinged relationships that adults form with entities⁴
- Purpose: to examine adult PSRs with smartphones and the attachment styles and personality characteristics that might predict these relationships.

Research Questions

- RQ₁**: Do young adults form PSRs with their smartphones?
- RQ₂**: How are attachment styles associated with the strength of PSRs with smartphones?
- RQ₃**: How are personality differences, such as self-esteem, shyness, loneliness, communication apprehension, and locus of control, associated with the intensity of PSRs with smartphones?

Method

- 285 participants (mean age = 21.5 years, 231 females)
- Completed online survey; Georgetown students awarded credits through SONA
- Seven measures: (1) Relationships Structure Questionnaire⁵; (2) Smartphone Parasocial Questionnaire; (3) Shyness Scale⁶; (4) UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)⁷; (5) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension⁸; (6) Rotter's Locus of Control⁹; (7) Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale¹⁰

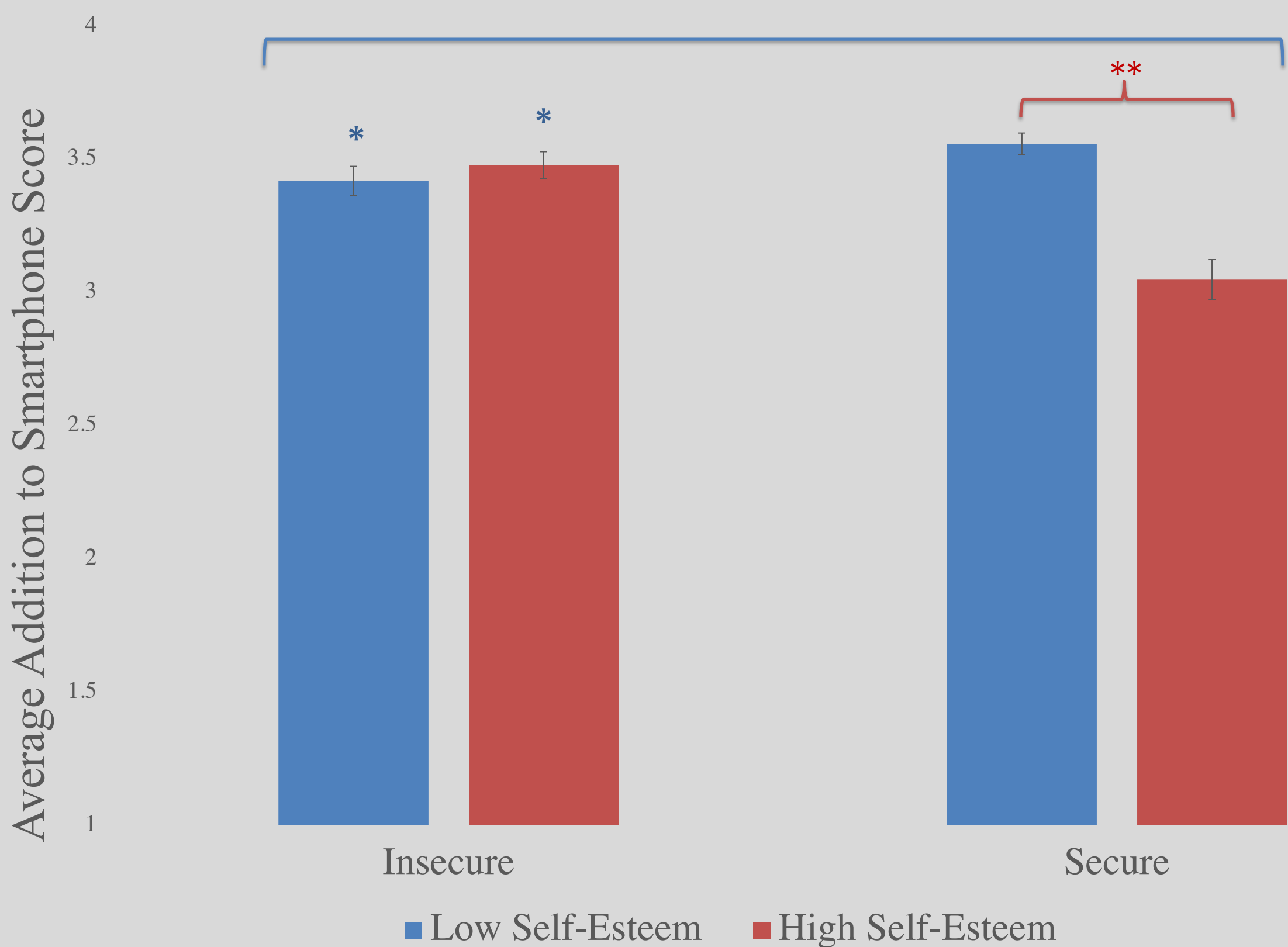


Results

RQ₁: Dimensions of PSRs with Smartphones (*N* = 285)

Factor	Eigen Values	% of Variance	Item	Factor Loadings		M	SD
Smartphone Personification $\alpha = .80$	3.60	35.95	“When I plug my cellphone in to charge, it feels like it is going to be rejuvenated.”	.75	.05	2.68	1.20
			“I am loyal to my smartphone.”	.72	.12	2.88	1.12
			“Giving my smartphone electricity is like feeding it.”	.70	-.04	2.28	1.20
			“I find that my smartphone is similar to me.”	.68	.03	2.14	1.07
			“My smartphone keeps me company.”	.65	.26	2.78	1.17
			“I think my smartphone is really smart.”	.63	.13	2.97	1.11
			“I get upset when my battery is low.”	.54	.24	2.52	1.17
			Addiction $\alpha = .73$	1.65	16.50	“Taking a break from my smartphone is a struggle.”	.10
“I feel like I am addicted to my smartphone.”	.22	.82				3.24	1.12
“My smartphone interferes with being in moment.”	.03	.72				3.65	0.97

RQ₂: Relation between Global Attachment Styles, Self-Esteem & Addiction to Smartphones



* *p* = .05 ** *p* = .02

RQ₃: Personality Characteristics Outcomes

- Self esteem marginally significant for Addiction to Smartphones, (*p* = .05)
- Shyness, loneliness, communication apprehension and locus of control not associated with Smartphone Personification or Addiction to Smartphones, *ps* > .05

Discussion

- Adults have PSRs with their smartphones.
 - Two dimensions emerge from this relationship:
 - 1) Smartphone Personification
 - 2) Addiction
- Secure attachment styles could act as a protective factor against addiction to smartphones, but influenced by self esteem. Adults with high self-esteem and secure global attachments are most protected from addiction.
- Results suggest that young adults treat smartphones as entities with which they have social relationships; however, this relationship allows for one to be constantly engaged, potentially leading to addictive behaviors



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