

# Screen Time Activities Reported by Adolescents with Elevated Symptoms of Depression

Cathrina Saint-Hubert, Maylinn Yon, BA, Jennifer Frederick, MS, Jenny Guo, BS, Mei Yi Ng, PhD

Department of Psychology, Florida International University

## INTRODUCTION

- More than 90% of adolescents in the US own a smartphone<sup>1</sup>.
- Smartphones are commonly used by adolescents to communicate with others through apps such as Snapchat and Instagram<sup>2</sup>.
- Findings on the effects of technology use on adolescent's mental health lack consensus. Effects vary depending on the measures and operationalization of technology use<sup>3</sup>
- The effects of digital technology use on adolescents' well-being also differ based on type of use. The impacts of communication-related use may be dependent on frequency of communication<sup>4</sup>.

## AIMS

- The current study aims to examine what types of smartphone apps and communication methods are used by adolescents with elevated symptoms of depression.

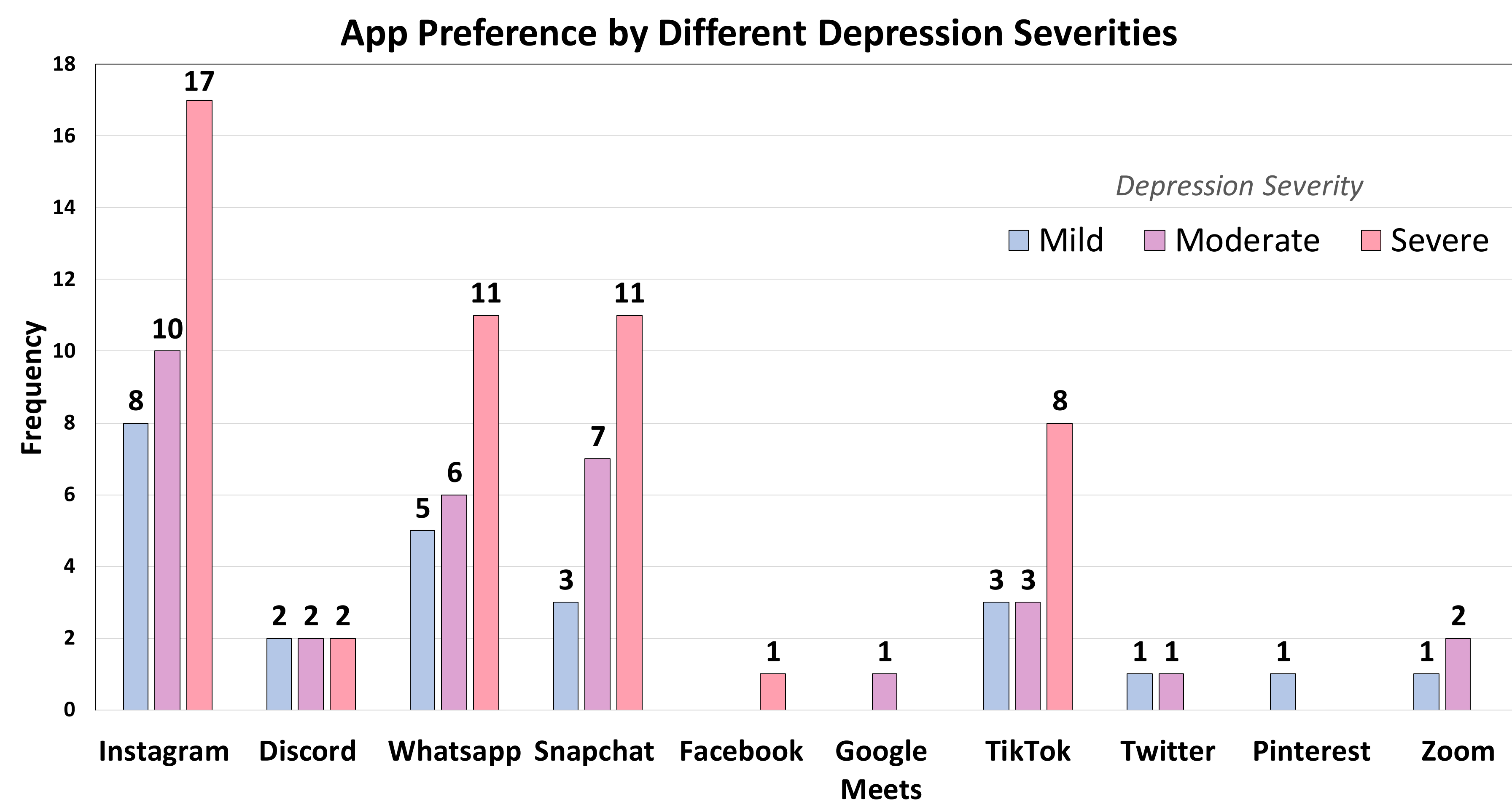
## PARTICIPANTS

- Sample ( $N=40$ ) consisted of largely female participants (75%).
- Participants primarily identified as Hispanic (82.5%); 45% identified as White, 20% as African American, 2.5% as Asian, and 22.5% as "Other" race.
- Adolescents were 12-18 years old ( $M_{age}=15.68$ ,  $SD_{age}=1.49$ ) who met a minimum score  $\geq 16$  on the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D).
- Symptoms ranged from Mild ( $n=9$ , CES-D scores  $\leq 16$ ), Moderate ( $n=10$ , CES-D score = 17 to 24), and Severe ( $n=21$ , CES-D score  $\geq 24$ ).
- Participants were recruited from the Center for Children and Families as well as other sources within the community such as Miami-Dade county high schools.

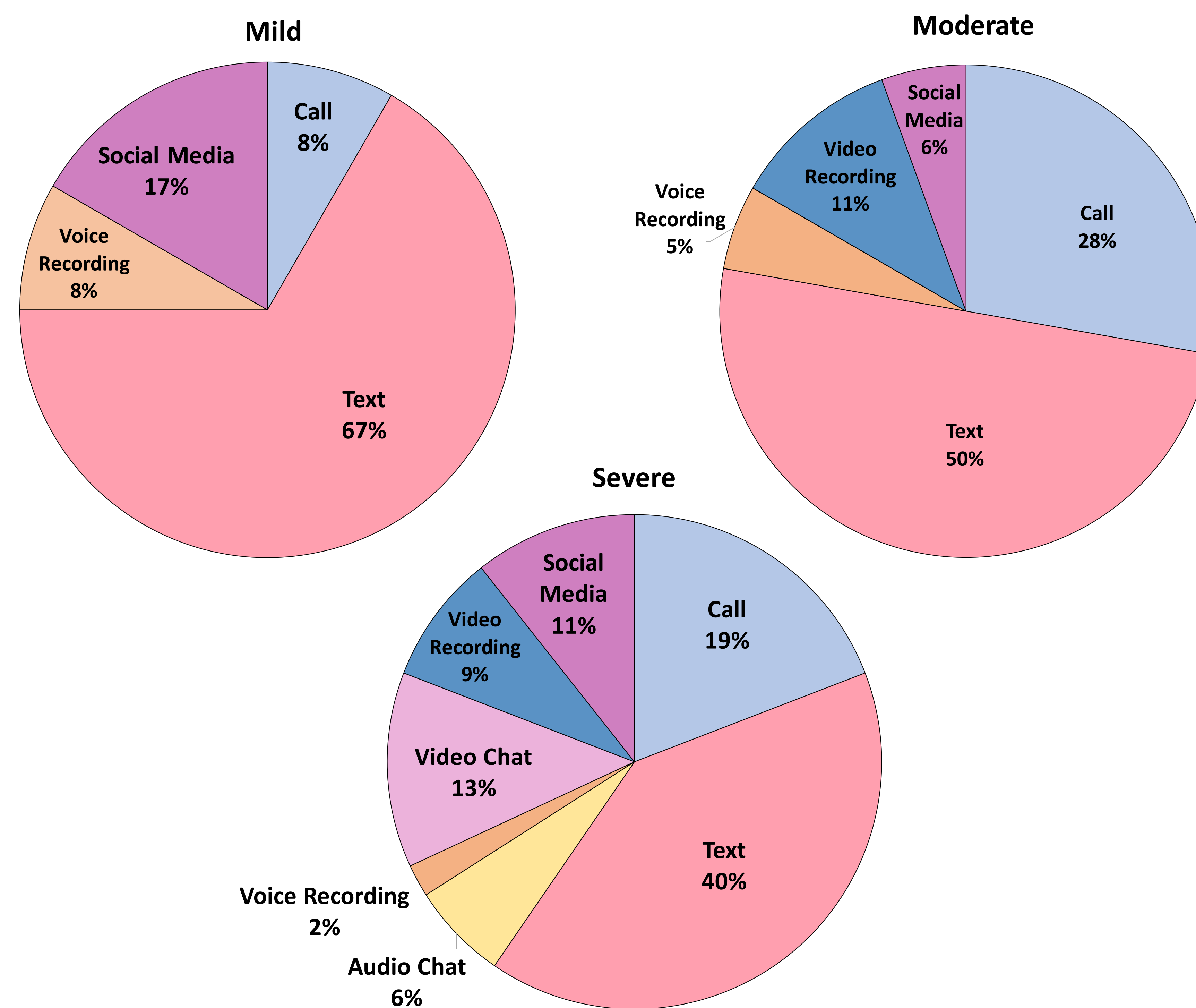
## METHOD

- Data was collected from the Youth Emotion and Smartphone Study (YESS Project) which seeks to investigate whether it is feasible to use smartphones to collect information about teens' daily feelings and behaviors.
- The YESS Project specifically looked at phone activity, physical activity, and sleep over 28 days.
- The Smartphone Communication Interview (SCI) was conducted during a follow-up visit after the 28-day period to assess communication-related app use, including the type of communication and its frequency.

## RESULTS



## Daily Communication Method Use by Different Depression Severities



## RESULTS CONT.

CES-D Severity	Average Amount of Apps Used
Mild	3.7
Moderate	4.2
Severe	3.3

- Teens most frequently reported using text to contact friends (81.6%) and parents (55%).
- Call was the second most frequently reported method to contact parents (42.5%).
- Native phone apps (100%), Instagram (87.5%), and Snapchat (50%) were the most frequently used apps.
- Our sample contained no significant variation in total amount of apps used in each severity levels.

## DISCUSSION

- Current study shows that teens use different communication methods to communicate with different people in their lives.
- Sample used text most frequently, which may be due to convenience and autonomy.<sup>5</sup>
- Objective measures of phone use, such as screen time reports, may be beneficial to understanding phone use behaviors.

## LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Findings are limited by use of self-report data and small sample size. Our sample was largely female, Hispanic with elevated symptoms of depression and thus cannot be generalized. Depression severity subgroups varied in size.
- Assessing content rather than frequency of specific app use can provide better insight into how smartphone use interacts with symptoms of depression.
- Identifying whether phone activity is passive or active could provide insight into how different types of phone activity impact teens' mental health.



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