



Communication-Related Factors Influencing Social Relationships, Psychological Well-Being, and Life Satisfaction among Older Social Media Users in Surat Thani Province

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Abstract

This study examines how communication-related factors affect social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among older social media users in Surat Thani Province. Four communication-related factors were integrated: family communication and communication outside the family (reflecting real-life social communication), and social media addiction and social media literacy (indicating quality of social media use). The empirical data were collected from 1,063 older adults aged 60 and above. 947 social media users were included for a structural equation modeling analysis. Results revealed that family communication was positively associated with social relationships and life satisfaction, as well as an indirect association with psychological well-being. Communication outside the family showed a positive direct association with social relationships and psychological well-being, and an indirect association with life satisfaction. Social media addiction was negatively associated with life satisfaction, while social media literacy showed positive direct associations with both psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The model demonstrated a good fit with empirical data ($\chi^2/df = 1.903$, CFI = 0.977, TLI = 0.973, RMSEA = 0.031, SRMR = 0.034).

This study suggests that communication should be understood as an integrated system of offline and online interactions rather than as isolated media use when explaining older adults' quality of life. By considering four communication-related factors within a unified framework, the study offers insights that may guide communities, policymakers, families, and caretakers in developing an intergenerational communication program and promoting media literacy as part of sustainable and inclusive aging initiatives.

Keywords: 1) Communication 2) Older adults 3) Social Relationship 4) Psychological Well-Being 5) Life Satisfaction

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Introduction

The global population is rapidly aging. Similarly, Thailand has already become an aging society, with 20.7 percent of the older adults among the total population (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2024). Currently, older adults continue to use traditional face-to-face communication, and adapt to online platforms such as social media. As a result, understanding the dynamics of both communication forms is important since they may influence older adults' quality of life. Previous research suggests that effective communication can reduce anxiety (Xiang et al., 2023, p. 1430), while social media use may also reduce loneliness, depression, and anxiety (Casanova, et al., 2021, pp. 8-10). However, Cotten, Schuster and Seifert (2022, pp. 8-9) discuss that problematic use may lead to negative effects, such as stress and psychological distress.

Most studies on communication and older adults have focused on the effects of a single form of communication, such as online social media and its relationship with loneliness, social isolation, or depression (Yang et al., 2021, pp. 10-11; Kanngooluem, Hengudomsub and Dallas, 2022, pp. 227-240), without integrating other communication-related factors. Additionally, most Thai studies have focused on psychological well-being and older adults' mental health, whereas online social media communication has been examined in terms of usage behavior, acceptance, and media formats (Charoenrook, 2020, pp. 229-237; Promchaluay, 2021, pp. 69-84). This demonstrates that gaps remain, particularly in determining which communication forms have the most

significant impact on older adults' lives across multiple dimensions.

Limited attention to media addiction and social media literacy as indicators of the quality of social media use, reveals another important gap. Furthermore, real-life communication (family communication and communication outside the family) and online social media use quality (social media addiction and social media literacy) have not been thoroughly analyzed in relation to social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction within the same structural model. Therefore, this study examines older adults in Surat Thani, which accounts for 17.61% of the provincial population (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2024), to fill the gaps in research on communication and older adults across all dimensions and areas. Interestingly, empirical research on communication and older adults in the South and Surat Thani remains limited despite the large population and diverse contexts.

This study aims to 1) examine the effects of four communication-related factors on older adults' social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, and 2) determine which form of communication has greater positive and negative effects on all three dimensions of quality of life. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of communication patterns among older adults and provide empirical evidence to inform policies and communication strategies that support their life skills in the digital era.



Literature Review

Family Communication

Family communication significantly promotes older adults' quality of life. The Family Communication Patterns Theory (Korner and Fitzpatrick, 2002, pp. 38-40) identifies two dimensions: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Family communication influences the quality of older adults' lives in various aspects, including social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Empirical studies have shown that open family communication improves and develops the quality of family relationships (Gettings and McNallie, 2021, pp. 287-305; Gong, et al., 2023, pp. 10-11) as well as associates with non-family relation behavior or social engagement (Schrodt, Witt and Messersmith, 2008, pp. 248-269; Zhang, et al., 2024, pp. 9-10; Wu, Li and Chao, 2025, pp. 6-8). In Asian contexts, emphasizing filial piety, emotional support constitutes an additional critical component that reduces depression and enhances well-being (Wu, Li and Chao, 2025, pp. 6-8; Zhan, Zhan and Wu, 2025, pp. 16-20). Additionally, Thai studies further suggest that pluralistic family communication patterns and emotional support relate to mental health and psychological well-being among older adults (Thanakwang, 2015, pp. 171-178; Seesawang, Thongtaeng and Nitirut, 2024, p. 354). Furthermore, Wang et al. (2020, pp. 10-11), Wang, et al. (2025, pp. 7-10) and Zhang, et al. (2024, pp. 9-10) explain that family emotional support affects and increases life satisfaction.

Notably, research integrating emotional support with family communication

theory remains limited. Therefore, this study developed a family communication model consisting of three main components: conversation orientation, conformity orientation, and emotional support, to examine the impacts on older adults' lives in the Thai context.

Hypotheses: Family communication has a direct positive influence on social relationships (H1), psychological well-being (H2), and life satisfaction (H3).

Communication Outside the Family

Communication outside the family also plays an important role in shaping older adults' quality of life. Frequent face-to-face communication with friends or neighbors helps improve quality of life (Luna, et al., 2020, pp. 1007-1008). Additionally, communication competence increases social networks and relationships (Query and James, 1989, pp. 165-184; Merolla, Neubauer and Otmar, 2024, pp. 13-15), while difficulty communicating in older adults relates to less social participation (Palmer, Newsom and Rook, 2016, pp. 136-141). Skills including message comprehension, emotional control, listening, assertiveness, and empathy promote greater psychological well-being (Palmer, et al., 2019, pp. 10-11; Yusefi, et al., 2021, pp. 3-4; Hossen and Salleh, 2024, pp. 315-332). Furthermore, prior studies (e.g., Kovalenko and Spivak, 2018, pp. 171-173; Ng, et al., 2020, pp. 555-560; Park and Kang, 2023, pp. 6-8) indicate that adequate communication opportunities with friends enhance older adults' life satisfaction, with effects mediated through psychological well-being (Chen, Yang and Feng, 2019, pp. 10-11).

This study, therefore, integrates findings from previous research with a communicative competence theoretical framework (Spitzberg, 1983, pp. 323-327) and interpersonal communication scale (Campbell and Ataş Akdemir, 2016, p.865), which consists of knowledge, skills, and motivation, to explain this type of communication and to better understand its mechanisms and impacts on older adults in the social context.

Hypotheses: Communication outside the family has a direct positive influence on social relationships (H4), psychological well-being (H5), and life satisfaction (H6).

Social Media Addiction

Older adults continue to access social media in increasing numbers (Cotten, Schuster and Seifert, 2022, p.1). Low-quality use evidently affects older adults' lives, with risks such as excessive use (Menon, et al., 2023, pp. 203-207) and addictive behaviors (Jia, Liu and Yang, 2022, pp. 8-9), which weaken social relationships by reducing face-to-face interaction and family bonding (Tadpatrikar, Sharma and Viswanath, 2021; Perez-Lozano and Espinosa, 2024, pp. 12-13). In addition, Huang (2020, pp. 12-33) indicates that problematic use of social media declines self-esteem, which is a core of psychological well-being, while some studies (e.g., Verma and Kumari, 2016, pp. 157-159; Twenge, 2019, pp. 372-379; Cone and Lee, 2023, pp. 7-8) suggest that intensive use and social media addiction decrease psychological well-being. Social media addiction also has negative impacts as it weakens life and relationship satisfaction (Huang, 2020, pp. 12-33; Rochat, et al., 2021, pp. 4-5; Çiftci and Yıldız,

2023, pp. 3509-3513; Deng, et al., 2024, p. 9).

Prior studies have primarily focused on the relationship between social media addiction and its impacts on adolescents. However, the scope of media addiction is no longer limited to that age range. Therefore, this study examines the negative effects of social media addiction on older adults to address this research gap more comprehensively.

Hypotheses: Social media addiction has a direct negative influence on social relationships (H7), psychological well-being (H8), and life satisfaction (H9).

Social Media Literacy

Social media literacy plays an important role in preventing social media use problems by reducing online risks. However, this skill among older adults remains limited (Prostináková Hossová, 2023, pp. 70-72). As a result, different literacy skills may lead to varying outcomes of social media use among older adults. Previous studies reveal that media literacy positively influences quality of life by enhancing social participation and increasing social capital through online activities (Nguyen, Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2022, pp. 942-958; Park and Chang, 2024, pp. 372-378). Additionally, research has shown that literacy knowledge acquisition has positive effects on psychological well-being (Kim and Shim, 2020, pp. 153-180). Furthermore, studies by Bhibulbhanuvat, Doungphummes and Sasiwongsaroj (2020, pp. 186-188) and Jung, Lee and Nam (2025, pp. 7-8) indicate that higher literacy skills among older adults may be associated with greater life satisfaction. Studies in Thailand show literacy levels ranging from low to moderate (Wuttirangsee,



2021, p. 96), with media literacy influencing quality of life (Sompuean and Saetan, 2021, pp. 98-99). However, research on the impacts of social media literacy on older adults in Thailand remains limited. This study, therefore, integrates social media literacy as a key variable into a model and examines its effects on older social media users to expand knowledge of the relationship between social media literacy and the quality of life among older adults.

Hypotheses: Social media literacy has a direct positive influence on social relationships (H10), psychological well-being (H11), and life satisfaction (H12).

Social Relationships, Psychological Well-being, and Life Satisfaction

Social relationships fundamentally affect happiness, life satisfaction, and individual well-being (Growney and English, 2025, pp. 1291-1314). Strong relationships with family and friends enhance well-being and life satisfaction among older adults (Cheng, et al., 2022, pp. 13-18; Patterson and Margolis,

2023, p. 2084), while good social networks and participation positively affect psychological well-being (Hossen and Salleh, 2024, pp. 315-332). Psychological well-being is crucial to quality of life and is associated with higher life satisfaction. Communication satisfaction and social participation enhance psychological well-being (Bhatiaseri, 2024, p. 10), while relationship problems decrease it (Thanakwang, 2015, pp. 171-178). Life satisfaction represents contentment with overall life aspects. This depends on communication, mental well-being, social participation, and socioeconomic status (Khodabakhsh, 2022, pp. 1300-1302).

Based on prior studies, social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction are conceptualized as interconnected characteristics of the older adults' quality of life. Consequently, this study specifies the relationships among these variables within the structural model to facilitate more accurate estimation of the direct and indirect effects of communication-related factors.

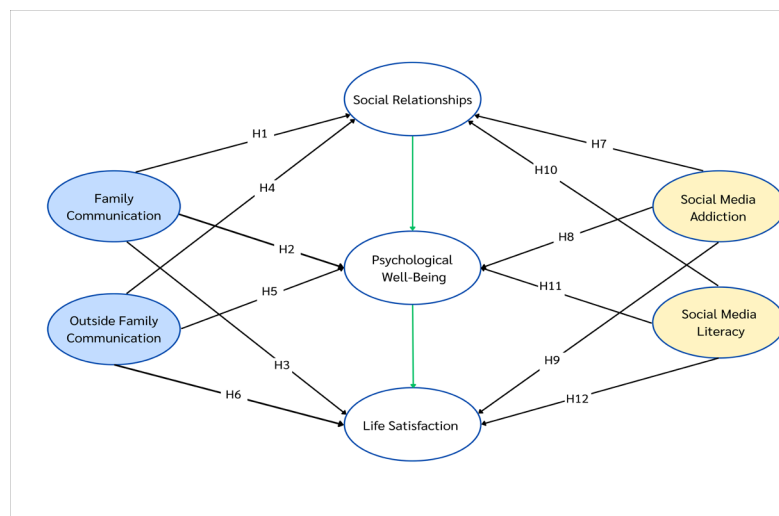


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methodology

Population and Sampling

Older adults aged 60 years and above in Surat Thani Province were selected, with 1,104 initial samples, calculated using Taro Yamane's formula with a 3% margin of error to ensure reliability for descriptive analysis, not for parameter estimation. Since this study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the appropriate sample size was further evaluated based on SEM requirements. A two-stage sampling procedure was used: stratified sampling to ensure geographic coverage (all 19 districts), followed by convenience sampling to recruit participants within each district. Inclusion criteria included older adults in good physical and mental health who could complete the questionnaire independently or respond verbally to researchers or trained research assistants. Accordingly, sampling bias from the non-probability sampling method may occur, limiting generalization to older adults in similar contexts.

After data screening, 1,063 complete questionnaires were available for descriptive analysis, while 41 (3.71%) had missing data, including skipping multiple questions and straight-lining throughout the rating scale sections. Listwise deletion was then applied, as the proportion of missing data was below the 5% threshold (Schafer and Graham, 2002, pp. 147-177) and did not affect research reliability.

For the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, a conceptually designated analytic sample was used. Non-social media users were excluded from the SEM analysis because the model's key latent variables (social media

addiction and social media literacy) require actual online media experience. After exclusions, the final analysis included 947 participants. Following Kline (2023, p. 419), the final sample size was determined based on the complexity of the model: seven latent variables, multiple observed indicators per construct, and several direct and indirect pathways. The remaining sample size, which exceeds recommended thresholds for complex covariance-based SEM, was considered suitable.

Measurements and Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire was systematically developed based on a literature review. The questions were back-translated into English to ensure conceptual equivalence. All items were assessed by three experts, with IOC values of 0.66 and 1.00. The questionnaire was then piloted with 110 older adults similar to the target sample. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above 0.80 for all scales. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: 1) demographic characteristics, 2) communication behaviors, family communication, and communication outside the family, 3) social media use behavior, social media addiction, and social media literacy, and 4) social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Subscale mean scores were used as domain-representative indicators of the latent constructs, reflecting theoretically meaningful dimensions while reducing model complexity in the CFA and SEM analyses (Little, et al., 2002, pp. 167-168; Hair, et al., 2019, pp. 664-665). All subscales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency.

**Table 1** Source of Measurement Items Used in the Questionnaire

Variables	Measurement Items	Source
Family communication (FAC)	Conversation orientation, conformity orientation, and emotional support (10 items; FAM1–FAM10), e.g., “Family members and I generally consult one another when making significant decisions.”	Adapted from Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002, pp.36-65); Wu, Li and Chao (2025, pp. 6-8)
Communication outside the family (COF)	Communication initiation, affective management, flexibility, and responsiveness skills (10 items; COF1–COF10), e.g., “I can understand and respond appropriately during group discussions.”	Adapted from Spitzberg (1983, pp. 323-327); Campbell and Ataş Akdemir (2016, p.865)
Social media addiction (SMA)	Six behavioral addiction components (salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse) (10 items; SMA1–SMA10), e.g., “I spend more time on social media increasingly.”	Adapted from Andreasen et al. (2016, pp. 252-262)
Social media literacy (SML)	Access, analysis, evaluation, and content creation skills (6 items; SML1–SML6), e.g., “I compare information from multiple sources before believing it.”	Adapted from Polanco-Levicán and Salvo-Garrido (2022, pp. 4-6)
Social relationship (REL)	Family, friends/neighbors, community, and social or organizational relationships (8 items; REL1–REL8), e.g., “I have people I can rely on when I need help.”	Adapted from Lozano-Hernández et al. (2023, pp. 12-13)
Psychological well-being (WEL)	Six dimensions of well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal growth, and positive relations with others) (12 items; WEL1–WEL12), e.g., “I feel that my life has a sense of direction.”	Ryff (1989, pp. 1074-1077)
Life satisfaction (SAT)	Five items from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (5 items; SAT1–SAT5), e.g., “In most ways my life is close to ideal.”	Diener et al. (1985, pp. 72-74)

Note: All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Composite indicators were computed following CFA validation.

Data Gathering

Data were collected between March and April 2025 using self-administered questionnaires from older adults in Surat Thani, with official permission from senior clubs, associations, and residential facilities. Club or association administrators and older adults were informed about data collection and participant rights.

Data analysis

A descriptive analysis was performed using frequency distribution tables displaying percentages, means, and standard deviations to describe demographic characteristics, social communication patterns, social media use, levels of social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among older adults.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted using AMOS version 26. The analysis procedure comprised a measurement model examination to assess construct validity, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Data normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis. Multicollinearity was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). The structural model was analyzed using Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation, with multivariate normality verification. Model fit was evaluated using fit indices: $\chi^2/df < 3$ (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 639), CFI and TLI $\geq .95$, and RMSEA $\leq .06$ (Hu and Bentler, 1999, pp. 1-55). Direct and indirect effects were analyzed according to the established conceptual framework.

Research Ethics and Participant Protection

This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Surat Thani Rajabhat University (Certificate No. SRU-EC 2025/031). All research participants provided signed informed consent and participated voluntarily. The researchers explained the research objectives, methodology, and all relevant details to participants, including the right to withdraw without consequences, anonymity, and the safety and security of their data.

Results

General Characteristics of Participants

Most participants were female (59.74%). The majority had education levels below a bachelor's degree (82.88%), and agriculture was the main current occupation (28.03%). 61.34% lived with their children, with 6.21% living alone, and 58.14% were not members of any groups or clubs.

Real-Life Social Communication among Older Adults

The study revealed that the majority of participants communicated primarily through face-to-face interaction (86.74%), followed by telephone (11.19%). Approximately 43.56% spent an average of 1-3 hours daily communicating in person, with family members as the most frequent conversation partners (61.90%). The primary communication barriers included generational differences with conversation partners (33.40%) and limited time among family members (19.17%). Participants expressed a desire to discuss topics of interest (25.92%) and have sufficient time to understand the conversation (22.83%). Additionally, they demonstrated high levels of family communication ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.02$), with slightly higher communication outside the family ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.00$).

Social Media Use among Older Adults

The results found that 89.05% used social media, mainly via mobile phones (94.83%). About 42.03% used social media daily, and 43.29% spent approximately 1-2 hours per day. The most frequently used application was LINE (31.11%), followed by YouTube (24.03%) and Facebook (19.88%). The level of social media addiction remained low ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.96$), while overall media literacy was moderate ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.06$).

Regarding social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among older adults in Surat Thani Province, the study revealed that older adults had high levels of social relationships ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.03$), psychological well-being ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.98$), and life satisfaction ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.91$).



Influences of Communication-Related Factors on Social Relationships, Psychological Well-Being, and Life Satisfaction

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The confirmatory factor analysis presented in Table 2 demonstrated that all variables exhibited construct validity, with composite reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.831 to 0.914, indicating good reliability levels. The analysis revealed satisfactory convergent validity, with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.534 to 0.720, exceeding the threshold of 0.5. Furthermore, all indicator factor loadings exceeded 0.60, which meet acceptable criteria.

Examination of data normality through skewness and kurtosis values showed that all indicators remained within ± 2.0 . Most distributions were negatively skewed, except for the social media addiction variable, suggesting that most participants scored relatively low on this variable. Kurtosis values were both positive and negative. Multicollinearity assessment using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) revealed values ranging from 1.09 to 1.76, well below the threshold of 5, indicating that there were no multicollinearity problems.

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variables	α	VIF	CR	AVE	λ	Sk	Ku
Family Communication	0.843	1.71	0.831	0.625			
Conversation orientation					0.877	-0.725	0.278
Emotional support					0.837	-0.755	0.258
Conformity orientation					0.606	-0.447	-0.135
Communication Outside Family	0.873	1.76	0.866	0.618			
Initiation competence					0.738	-0.812	0.623
Affective management competence					0.811	-0.613	-0.028
Communication flexibility					0.729	-0.685	0.220
Responsiveness skills					0.793	-0.495	-0.105
Social Media Addiction	0.868	1.09	0.903	0.609			
Salience					0.862	0.549	-0.172
Mood modification					0.877	0.576	0.017
Tolerance					0.855	0.521	-0.153
Withdrawal					0.757	0.896	0.509
Conflict					0.856	0.582	-0.138
Relapse					0.716	0.635	-0.573
Social Media Literacy	0.874	1.17	0.914	0.728			
Access and comprehension					0.816	-0.301	-0.591

Variables	α	VIF	CR	AVE	λ	Sk	Ku
Analysis and discrimination					0.807	-0.288	-0.230
Evaluation					0.879	-0.476	-0.285
Creation					0.914	-0.345	-0.481
Social Relationships	0.836	1.47	0.877	0.641			
Family relationships					0.870	-0.692	0.159
Friends/neighbor relationships					0.763	-0.564	0.056
Community relationships					0.735	-0.617	0.295
Social/organizational relationships				0.798	-0.820	0.378	
Psychological Well-Being	0.916	1.49	0.913	0.637			
Autonomy					0.696	-0.903	0.875
Environmental mastery					0.816	-0.916	0.705
Purpose in life					0.799	-0.779	0.418
Self-acceptance					0.855	-0.839	0.556
Personal growth					0.812	-0.739	0.544
Positive relationships with others					0.802	-0.715	0.523
Life Satisfaction	0.837	-	0.871	0.534			
Closeness of life to one's ideal					0.645	-0.525	-0.423
Perceived quality of life conditions				0.829	-0.622	-0.327	
Overall satisfaction with current life				0.776	-0.861	0.194	
Attainment of personally important goals				0.804	-0.752	0.029	
Willingness to relive one's life unchanged					0.635	-0.938	0.498

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981, pp. 382–388) for the seven latent constructs, revealing low-to-moderate correlations among the variables. No serious multicollinearity issues were detected, as all correlation coefficients (r) were below 0.70. Discriminant validity

assessment showed that the square root of AVE exceeded inter-construct correlations for all variable pairs. Additionally, the results provide evidence that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. Therefore, the measurement model possessed suitable properties for subsequent structural equation modeling analysis.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity

Latent Variable	FAC	WEL	SAT	REL	SML	SMA	COF
Family communication	0.791						
Psychological well-being	0.388	0.798					



Latent Variable	FAC	WEL	SAT	REL	SML	SMA	COF
Life satisfaction	0.283	0.437	0.730				
Social relationships	0.475	0.565	0.325	0.801			
Social media literacy	0.197	0.239	0.027	0.150	0.853		
Social media addiction	-0.155	-0.086	-0.185	-0.101	-0.233	0.780	
Communication outside family	0.689	0.460	0.273	0.454	0.241	-0.119	0.786

Note: FAC = Family communication, COF = Communication outside family, SMA = Social media addiction, SML = Social media literacy, REL = Social relationships, WEL = Psychological well-being, SAT = Life satisfaction. Bold numbers represent $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ values.

Structural Model Results

The structural equation model demonstrated a good fit with empirical data: $\chi^2 = 865.87$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.903$; GFI = 0.948; AGFI = 0.936; NFI = 0.952; CFI = 0.977; TLI = 0.973; RMSEA = 0.031 (CI = 0.028-0.034, SRMR = 0.034), indicating minimal error and significant model fit (Hair, et al., 2019, pp. 635-641; Hu and Bentler, 1999, pp. 1-55). Importantly, although the chi-square (χ^2) was statistically significant ($p < .001$), this result is expected given the large sample size and the chi-square test's sensitivity to sample size (Kline, 2023, p.419). Consequently, the overall model fit in this study was considered based on multiple fit indices rather than the chi-square p-value.

Path analysis results, presented in Figure 2 and Table 5, showed that family communication had significant direct positive effects on social relationships ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < .001$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.138$, $p < .01$), supporting H1 and H3 (Table 4), but not on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.024$, $p = .609$). It also demonstrated indirect effects on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.142$, $p < .001$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.062$, $p < .05$) through social relationships.

Communication outside the family had significant positive effects on social relationships ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < .001$) and psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < .001$), supporting H4 and H5, with an indirect effect on life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.176$, $p < .001$) through the mediated pathways specified in the model: both social relationships and psychological well-being.

Regarding social media use, addiction had a significant negative effect on life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.150$, $p < .001$) and a smaller but significant indirect effect ($\beta = -0.038$, $p < .05$), supporting H9, but not on social relationships and psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.049$, $p = .155$; $\beta = -0.050$, $p = .110$). Conversely, media literacy demonstrated positive direct and indirect effects on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.127$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.023$, $p < .05$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.089$, $p < .05$; $\beta = 0.079$, $p < .001$), supporting H11 and H12.

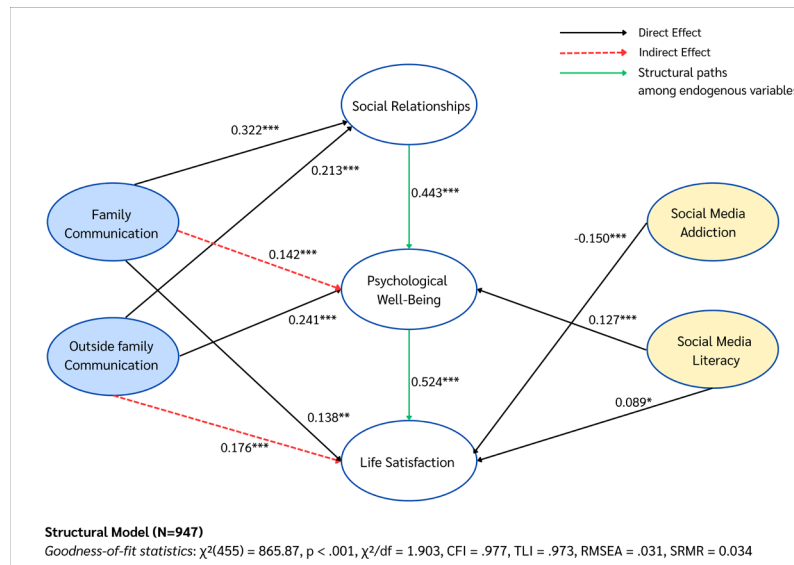


Figure 2 Structural Model with Analysis Results

However, the rejected hypotheses included: the effect of family communication on psychological well-being; the effect of communication outside the family on life satisfaction; the effects of social media addiction on social relationships and psychological well-being; and the effect of social media literacy on social relationships, none of which reached statistical significance.

Analysis of the coefficient of determination (R^2) for endogenous latent variables, as shown in Table 5, revealed that psychological

well-being (WEL) had the highest R^2 value of 0.387 (moderate level), followed by social relationships (REL) with $R^2 = 0.268$ (low level), and life satisfaction (SAT: $R^2 = 0.265$) (low level). While the model explains 26.5-38.7% of variance in the outcome variables, the remaining 61.3-73.5% of unexplained variance suggests that other unpredicted factors in this model may also play important roles, such as health status, economic resources, or community support systems.

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	b	S.E.	t-value	result
H1	FAC $\rightarrow$ REL	0.322***	0.362	0.058	6.190	Sig. Supported
H2	FAC $\rightarrow$ WEL	0.024	0.024	0.047	0.511	NS Rejected
H3	FAC $\rightarrow$ SAT	0.138**	0.119	0.046	2.592	Sig. Supported
H4	COF $\rightarrow$ REL	0.213***	0.262	0.064	4.098	Sig. Supported
H5	COF $\rightarrow$ WEL	0.241***	0.263	0.052	5.036	Sig. Supported
H6	COF $\rightarrow$ SAT	0.047	0.044	0.057	0.774	NS Rejected
H7	SMA $\rightarrow$ REL	-0.049	-0.038	0.027	-1.421	NS Rejected
H8	SMA $\rightarrow$ WEL	-0.050	-0.035	0.022	-1.599	NS Rejected
H9	SMA $\rightarrow$ SAT	-0.150***	-0.089	0.022	-4.087	Sig. Supported



Hypothesis	Path	β	b	S.E.	t-value	result	
H10	SML $\rightarrow$ REL	0.052	0.044	0.030	1.478	NS	Rejected
H11	SML $\rightarrow$ WEL	0.127***	0.095	0.024	3.949	Sig.	Supported
H12	SML $\rightarrow$ SAT	0.089*	0.057	0.025	2.287	Sig.	Supported

Note: FAC = Family communication, COF = Communication outside family, SMA = Social media addiction, SML = Social media literacy, REL = Social relationships, WEL = Psychological well-being, SAT = Life satisfaction. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5 Coefficients for the Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, and Total Effect

	REL ($R^2 = 0.268$)			WEL ($R^2 = 0.387$)			SAT ($R^2 = 0.265$)		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
FAC	0.322***	–	0.322***	0.024	0.142***	0.166*	0.138**	0.062*	0.200**
COF	0.213***	–	0.213***	0.241***	0.094***	0.335***	0.047	0.176***	0.223
SMA	-0.049	–	-0.049	-0.050	-0.022	-0.072	-0.150***	-0.038*	-0.188***
SML	0.052	–	0.052	0.127***	0.023*	0.150***	0.089*	0.079***	0.168*
REL	–	–	–	0.443***	–	0.443***	–	0.232***	0.232***
WEL	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.524***	–	0.524***
SAT	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note: FAC = Family communication, COF = Communication outside family, SMA = Social media addiction, SML = Social media literacy, REL = Social relationships, WEL = Psychological well-being, SAT = Life satisfaction. The structural model specifies the pathway REL $\rightarrow$ WEL $\rightarrow$ SAT. R^2 = coefficient of determination (explained variance). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Bootstrap confidence intervals are based on 5,000 resamples.

Discussion

This study contributes to understanding the theoretical frameworks regarding the impacts of various forms of communication on older social media users in Surat Thani Province. Notably, the findings support the integration of theories related to real-life social communication, both within and outside the family, as well as the concepts of quality of social media use: addiction and literacy through the lens of the Thai social context.

Effects of Real-Life Social Communication on Older Social Media Users in Surat Thani Province

The study revealed that family communication was positively associated with social relationships and life satisfaction, high-

lighting its importance in the lives of older social media users. These findings support the Family Communication Patterns Theory framework (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002, pp. 36-65) and Gong et al.'s (2023, pp. 10-11) study, which emphasized that open communication promotes stronger interpersonal relationships among older adults, especially with family members. Additionally, this increases life satisfaction among older adults (Zhang, et al., 2024, pp. 9-10). However, although research by international and Thai scholars has found that family communication patterns and emotional support are associated with psychological well-being among older adults (Thanakwang, 2015, pp. 171-178; Li, et al., 2024, pp. 10-13), this study did not align with the established

hypothesis and previous research.

This contradictory finding may be explained through indirect mechanisms that challenge assumptions from prior studies. The results indicate that family communication is indirectly associated with psychological well-being through social relationships. High-quality family communication tends to result in older social media users having better social relationships, and when they have good relationships, they experience improved psychological well-being. This study suggests that family communication may be linked to multiple aspects of older adults' lives, and that integrating emotional support as a component of family communication may broaden the original theoretical framework.

Communication outside the family, which encompasses four skill dimensions, was positively associated with social relationships and psychological well-being, with the strongest total effect on psychological well-being. These findings align with those of Palmer, et al. (2019, pp. 10-11) and Hossen and Salleh (2024, pp. 315-332), which indicate that effective communication among older adults is associated with greater psychological well-being. Likewise, regular communication also leads to improved social relationships (Merolla, Neubauer and Otmar, 2024, pp. 13-15).

Interestingly, while family communication had no direct association with psychological well-being, communication outside the family showed both direct and indirect associations. This finding may be explained by the real-life communication behaviors of older social media users in Surat Thani Province, where communication barriers included family

members' limited time and generational differences. These factors may encourage older social media users to communicate more with people outside the family, which is consistent with Growney and English's (2025, pp. 1291-1314) study, which found that older adults often prioritize communication and relationships with peripheral network members more, and receiving acceptance or recognition from outside the family may contribute to greater psychological well-being among older adults. Furthermore, the study identified pathways with total effects on life satisfaction, supporting Park and Kang's (2023, pp. 6-8) finding that conversations with friends can enhance life satisfaction.

Effects of Social Media Use on Older Social Media Users in Surat Thani Province

This study analyzed data from a sample group using social media to accurately explain and predict the influences of addiction and media literacy. The study found that the overall user group exhibited low-level tendencies toward social media addiction, consistent with Menon, et al.'s (2023, pp. 203-207) study, which found that older adults rely on and are addicted to social media less than users in other age groups. However, the data distribution indicates that a certain number of older social media users show fairly high addiction tendencies.

The results show that social media addiction was significantly and negatively associated with older social media users' life satisfaction, consistent with the established hypothesis and supporting Deng, et al.'s (2024, p.9) study, which found that social media addiction negatively affects life satisfaction,



particularly satisfaction with relationships. However, the study found no significant association with psychological well-being and social relationships, contradicting the established hypothesis and inconsistent with previous research indicating that social media addiction weakens social relationships (Perez-Lozano and Espinosa, 2024, pp. 12-13). This unexpected finding may be explained by the relatively low addiction levels in the sample group, which may not be severe enough to impact relationships with others and life satisfaction clearly.

As a variable reflecting knowledgeable and quality media use, the findings suggest that older adults who used social media demonstrated a moderate level of social media literacy. This finding is consistent with levels among older adults, both domestically and internationally, which are generally at low to moderate levels (Wuttirangsee, 2021, p. 96; Prostináková Hossová, 2023, pp. 70-72). Social media literacy was positively associated with psychological well-being, aligning with Kim and Shim (2020, pp. 153-180). The results also support the study by Jung, Lee and Nam (2025, pp. 7-8), which found that literacy is associated with life satisfaction among older adults who use social media. This aligns with the research by Sompuean and Saetan (2021, pp. 98-99), which found that media literacy and effective media use can positively affect older adults' quality of life. However, although research indicates that media literacy can increase social capital and enhance social participation (Nguyen, Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2022, pp. 942-958; Park and Chang, 2024, pp. 372-378), the find-

ings from this study did not support previous research and the established hypothesis, as no association with social relationships was found.

The findings underscore the complex role of communication in influencing social relationships, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. These results offer practical guidance for designing intergenerational communication programs and media literacy initiatives that support sustainable and inclusive aging.

Implications and Recommendations

Theoretical Implications

This study aims to fill gaps in research on the effects of communication on older adults. The experimental combination of emotional support as a component with Family Communication Patterns Theory and the integration of interpersonal communication skills with Communication Competence Theory helps expand an understanding of real-life communication phenomena among older adults who use social media in the Thai context. Additionally, considering social media addiction and literacy as qualities of social media use highlights the same importance as its frequency or intensity. Furthermore, the application of structural equation modeling provides a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the association between communication-related factors and social media users' quality of life.

Practical Recommendations

The findings highlight the necessity of promoting quality communication both in real life and through social media use to enhance

older adults' quality of life, as follows:

1. Policies and community-based programs, including intergenerational activities, should be established to enhance older adults' communication and life skills. Media literacy curricula or activities in older adult schools and communities should be developed to promote safe, high-quality social media use, such as training programs on "Older Adults' Awareness of Media Dangers." In addition, expanding social activity spaces can increase the opportunities for face-to-face interactions and social engagement.

2. Families and caregivers should foster open communication and emotional support to promote family communication capabilities among older adults. Older adults who use social media should be guided to prevent media addiction risks or online deception. Family activities should be organized to increase shared time and reduce generational gaps, identified as communication barriers in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be used as a basis for future research.

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Due to the exclusion of non-social media users from the SEM analysis, the findings may not generally represent older adults at both provincial and national levels. Future studies should conduct multiple-group analysis, comparing social media users and non-users, as well as urban and rural samples. Given the cross-sectional design, longitudinal studies should be employed to clarify causal relationships. Other factors such as communication frequency, health, and economic status should be included in the model, with examination across other regional contexts and, if appropriate, the incorporation of qualitative research methods for deeper insights.

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