

# Parent perceptions of positive and negative impacts of phone use on parenting and associations with stress, depression, and child behavior

Brandon T. McDaniel, Ph.D.

## BACKGROUND

- ❖ Parents may use devices to regulate negative emotions/stress or to reach out for support (Jang et al., 2017; Lupton, 2016; McDaniel et al., 2012; Morris, 2014; Newsham et al., 2018; Radesky et al., 2016).
- ❖ Use may both help and hinder parenting, and also may cause tech interruptions in parenting (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018; Stockdale et al., 2018).
- ❖ We examined parents' frequency of phone use around child, perceived frequency of positive/negative impacts, and associations with stress, depression, and child behavior.

## METHOD

- ❖ 296 parents completed a survey
  - ❖ Parent mean age = 33.1 (Range 19 to 56)
  - ❖ Median income \$64,223; 75% Caucasian
  - ❖ 72% married; 55% had more than one child
  - ❖ Child mean age = 4.3 (Range 3 to 6)

## RESULTS

- ❖ Used Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) in Mplus
- ❖ Identified 4 classes of parents (Figure 1)
  - ❖ Rare users (50%)
  - ❖ Positive users (19%)
  - ❖ Heavy users (21%)
  - ❖ Very heavy users (10%)
- ❖ Differences in outcomes by class (Figure 2)
  - ❖ Very heavy users showed greater stress, dep, and child beh prob (all  $ps < .05$ , except heavy/very heavy similar on dep,  $p = .20$ ).
  - ❖ Rare users showed least stress, dep, and beh prob (all  $ps < .05$ , except see next).
  - ❖ Positive users show lower stress (similar to rare,  $p = .34$ ) than heavy/very heavy ( $ps < .05$ ), similar dep to heavy ( $p = .21$ ), and more beh prob than rare ( $p < .05$ ) but fewer than heavy/very heavy ( $ps < .05$ ).
  - ❖ Heavy users, higher on all variables, but showed lower stress and beh prob than very heavy ( $ps < .05$ , although heavy/very heavy show similar levels of depression).

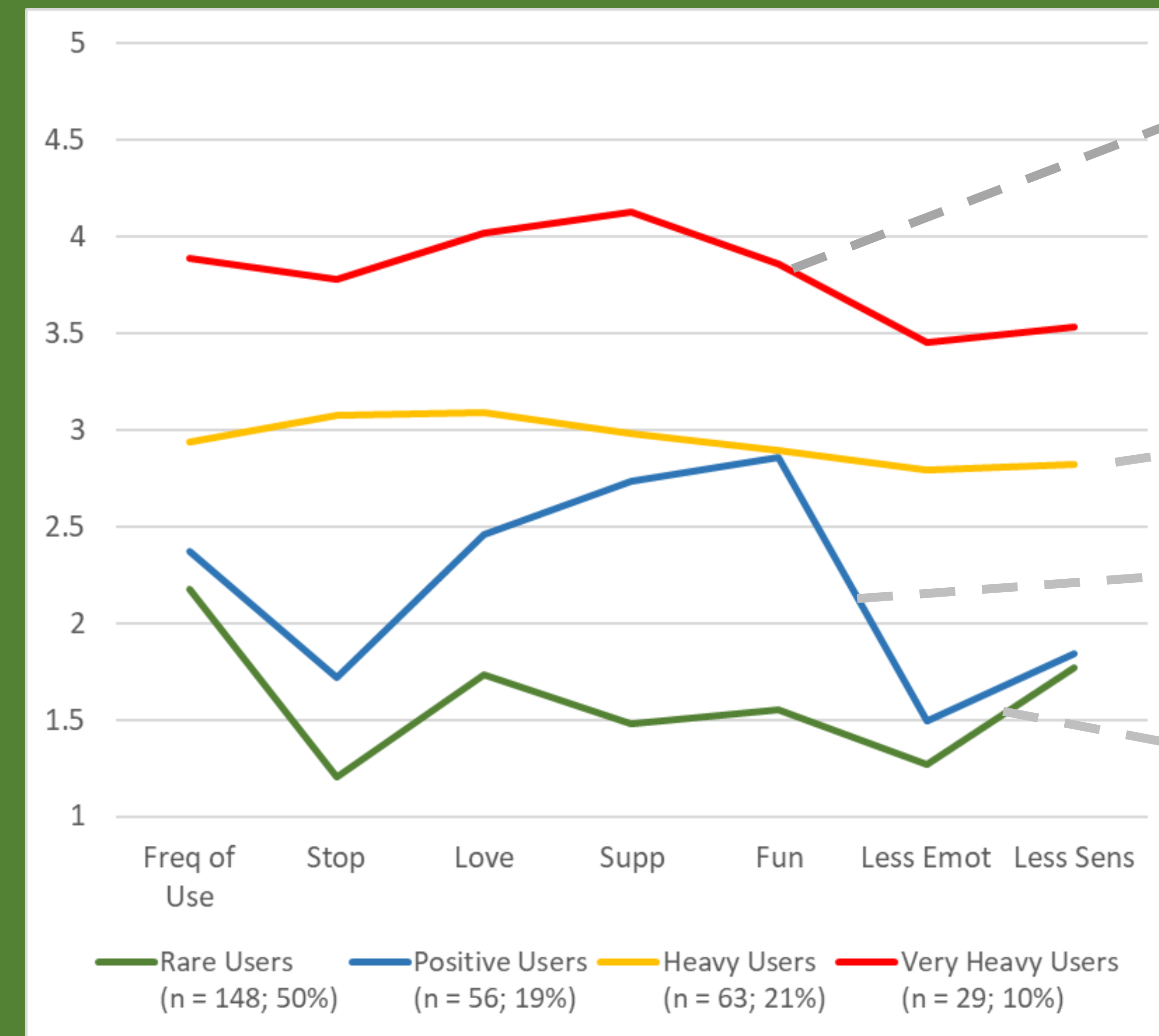


Figure 1. Estimated values of positive and negative phone use by latent class

# Parents feel their phone use helps and hinders, but heavier users show greater stress, depression, and child behavior issues.

Contact: [BTMcDaniel.PhD@gmail.com](mailto:BTMcDaniel.PhD@gmail.com)

Engaged very often in phone use around child and all positive and negative uses.

Often used their phone around their child and often engaged in positive and negative use.

Similar to rare users on frequency of use and negative uses, sometimes to often used phone to love child again, find support, and make parenting more fun.

Sometimes used their phone around their child, but rarely engaged in positive or negative uses.

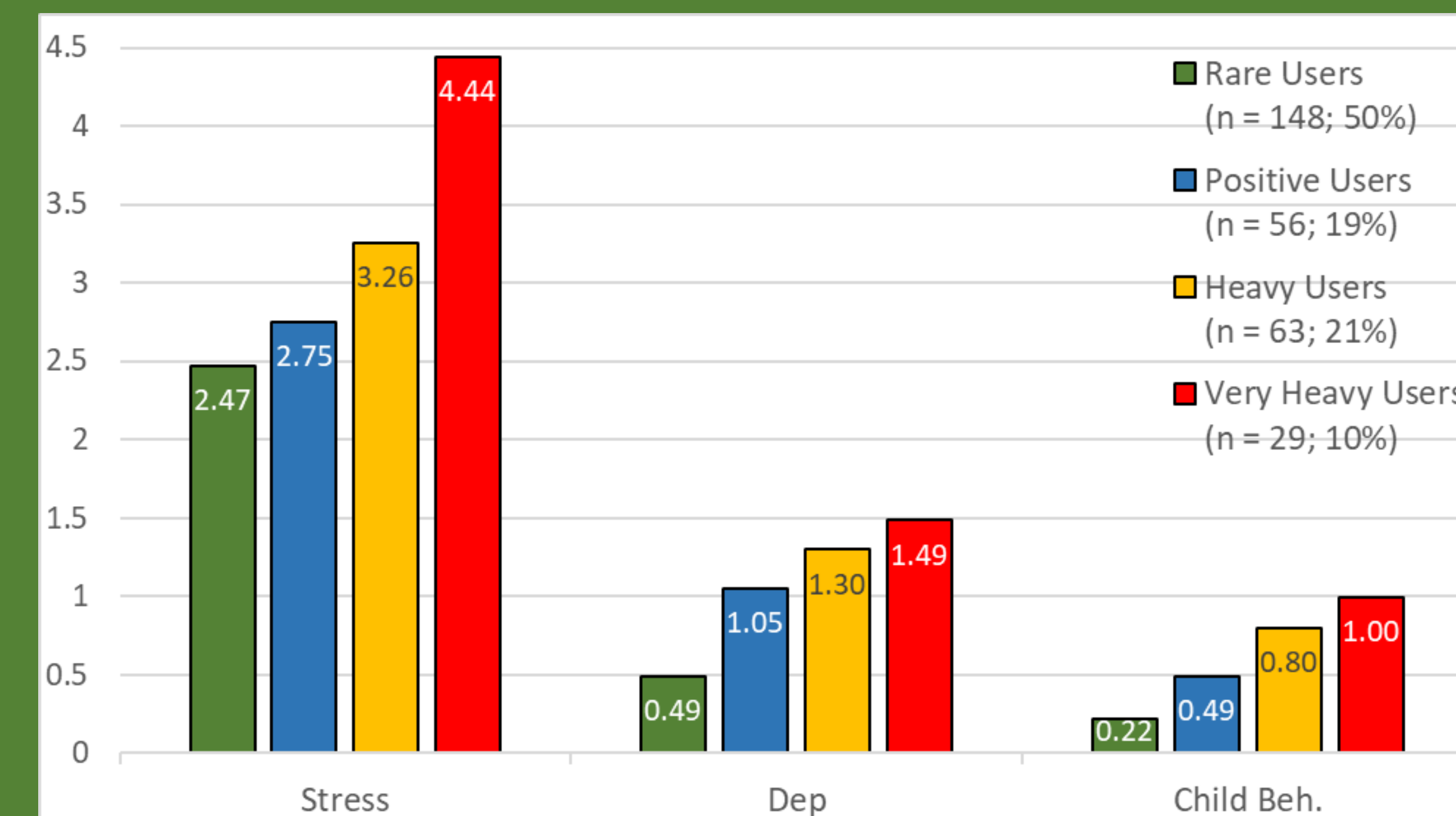


Figure 2. Estimated values of parenting stress, depressive symptoms, and child behavior problems by latent class

Rare Users (50%) showed the lowest stress, depression, and child behavior problems.

Heavy and Very Heavy Users (31%) showed the greatest stress, depression, and child behavior problems. Very Heavy Users showed even greater stress and child behavior problems.

Positive Users (19%) appeared to experience depression levels similar to Heavy Users, and more behavior problems than Rare Users. Interestingly, their stress levels were lower like Rare Users.

## MEASURES

- ❖ **Frequency of phone use during time spent with child** – 1 item; 1 = Never, 5 = Almost always
- ❖ **Positive uses** – 1 = Never, 5 = Almost always
  - ❖ **Stop from overreact** (3 items; “My device use helps me not to yell at my child”).
  - ❖ **Help love child again** (3 items; “After my device use, I’m able to see the positives of my child again”).
  - ❖ **Find support** (2 items; “My device use helps me to feel supported in my parenting by family or friends”).
  - ❖ **Make parent more fun** (2 items; “After device use, I am a more fun parent”)
- ❖ **Negative uses** – 1 = Never, 5 = Almost always
  - ❖ **Less emotionally available** (7 items; “I don’t really feel mentally or emotionally available to my child after my device use”).
  - ❖ **Miss parenting moments** (3 items; “I miss some parenting moments when I’m on my device”).
- ❖ **Parenting Stress** – 3 items
  - ❖ 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree
- ❖ **Depressive Symptoms (CES-D; 7 items)**
  - ❖ 0 = Rarely/none of the time, 3 = Most/all of the time
- ❖ **Child Behavior Problems (BPI; 30 items)**
  - ❖ 0 = Not true, 2 = Often true

## DESCRIPTIVES – POS & NEG USE

Potential Impacts of Phone Use	% who say Sometimes or more
<b>Stops Parent from Overreacting</b>	51%
I am at my breaking point with my child, so I use my device and that calms me down.	58%
My device use helps me not to yell at my child.	48%
My device use keeps me from doing or saying something I would regret with my child.	45%
<b>Helps Parent Love Child Again</b>	68%
I’m able to be more loving with my child once I get off my device.	73%
After my device use, I’m able to see the positives of my child again.	65%
After my device use, I’m able to see what I like about parenting again.	65%
<b>Supports Parent</b>	68%
I am able to find parenting strategies for my child, which makes me a more effective parent after my device use.	75%
My device use helps me to feel supported in my parenting by family or friends.	61%
<b>Makes Parent More Fun</b>	70%
My device use helps me think of activities to do with my child.	79%
After device use, I am a more fun parent.	60%
<b>Less Emotionally Available</b>	47%
My mind is still on what I was doing on my device when I start interacting with my child again.	56%
I get frustrated with my child because they keep trying to get my attention while I’m on my device.	56%
I feel worse about myself as a parent because of what I see or read on my device.	50%
I feel sad about what is going on in my family because of what I see or read on my device.	45%
I really don’t want to engage in parenting anymore when I’m on my device.	43%
I don’t really feel mentally or emotionally available to my child after my device use.	43%
I get more frustrated with my child’s behavior because of what I see or read on my device.	39%
<b>Miss Parenting Moments</b>	66%
It takes me longer to respond to my child than I usually would when I’m on my device.	69%
I miss some parenting moments when I’m on my device around my child.	68%
I misinterpret or misunderstand what my child needs when I’m on my device.	63%