

## **Social Media and Mental Well-Being: Exploring Relationship between Facebook Usage and Self-esteem**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the advent of the on-line social networking sites Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter, have become increasingly popular and almost an integral part of everyday life, especially for college students. Approximately ninety percent of college students have a Facebook account, and it is estimated that the average amount of time spent on this social networking site ranges from thirty minutes to over two hours on a daily basis. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the use of Facebook and the self-esteem levels of college students. Results have been conflicting as far as past research is concerned concerning facebook usage and self- esteem. To test the effect Facebook interaction has on self-esteem, undergraduate students were asked to participate in a survey that consisted of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Facebook Intensity Scale. It was hypothesized that low self-esteem would lead to more Facebook usage and gender will be an influence on Facebook usage. Collected data was analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage, mean score and correlation was calculated.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Facebook, Self-esteem, Facebook intensity.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

With the advent of the internet over a decade ago came the introduction of a new form of communication referred to as networking. On-line social networking sites, such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter, have become increasingly popular and almost an integral part of everyday life, especially for college students. Launched in 2004, Facebook is now the predominant social networking social site with over one billion active users. Approximately ninety percent of college students have a Facebook account, and it is estimated that the

average amount of time spent on this social networking site ranges from thirty minutes to over two hours on a daily basis.

The internet has increasingly become part of our daily life and the online communication means, such as e-mail, chat rooms and social communication networks have begun to be more prevalently used. Several studies have established that the prevalence of the use of internet has increased among the youth and adults (Peluchette & Karl, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Young, Dutta & Dommety, 2009).

Research is just beginning to understand the challenges, benefits and negative consequences of this different way in which people interact with each other. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are like double-edged sword, on the one hand they may have brought a greater sense of democratisation, but on the other, there is the dark side to it too, and many youth are either being harassed or becoming addicted to it, leading to psychological problems. Much media attention has focused on the “dangers” of online social networking, particularly for young people. This has led to fears about online social networking and calls for increased regulation and accountability of providers of these sites.

The importance of this study is to explore the relationship between on-line social networking sites, particularly Facebook, and the self-esteem of college students. Research has indicated that the more time that is spent on Facebook; the higher is the likelihood of low self-esteem. It appears that spending more time online leads to a decline in face-to-face communication with family and peers which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression.

The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between Facebook usage and self-esteem of undergraduate students. This study examined the correlation between Facebook and self-esteem among college students by measuring the collective amount of time

spent on Facebook and number of friends on Facebook.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Early studies suggested that internet communication had a negative impact on the individual by reducing face-to-face interactions and increasing level of loneliness (Kraut et al, 1998). More recent studies have revealed a more complex set of outcomes (Beer, 2008). Studies have indicated that internet communications may supplement traditional social behaviour rather than increase or decrease it. This is consistent with a social network theory which implies that the more a person socialises in a traditional sense, the more they will socialise online. Increasingly, studies are indicating that social networking has a positive impact on social connectedness and wellbeing (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Further, it has been suggested that online social networking may have benefits for those who find face-to-face contact difficult such as those who are shy or introverted (Wolfradt & Doll, 2001). Nevertheless, cyber bullying and inappropriate use of personal information have been identified as problems (Cross et al., 2009).

Many studies have been conducted to test how the internet can affect self-esteem with different variables. Studies to check relationship between Facebook and self-esteem have reported conflicting results. Present study is an attempt to shed some more light on the issue.

### Facebook usage:

Created in 2004, Facebook is reported to have over 1.18 billion monthly active users. It generates 1.6 billion page views each day (Needham & Company, 2007). The typical user spends about 20 minutes a day on the site, and two-thirds of users log in at least once a day (Cassidy, 2006; Needham & Company, 2007). Capitalizing on its success among college students Facebook launched a high school version in early September 2005. Much of the existing academic research on Facebook has focused on identity presentation and privacy concerns (Stutzman, 2006). Looking at the amount of information Facebook participants provide about them the relatively open nature of the information, and the lack of privacy controls enacted by the users, Acquisti & Gross (2006) argue that users may be putting themselves at risk both offline (e.g., stalking) and online (e.g., identity theft).

### Facebook and self-esteem

Some studies have found that people with low self-esteem who are worried about their public perception have more Facebook friends. The researchers concluded that self-conscious people compensate for low self-esteem by trying to appear popular on Facebook.

One study found that those with lower levels of self-esteem spent more time on Facebook than those with higher levels of self-esteem (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013).

In another study it was found that Facebook usage has a negative relationship with self-esteem, which indicated that participants who spent more time on Facebook tended to have lower self-esteem (Rivadeneyra et al, 2007).

Another study by Zywicki and Danowski (2008) found that those more extroverted and with higher self-esteem, support the Social enhancement hypothesis, being more popular both offline and on Facebook.

Lindsay & Grant (2002) and Gonzales, (2011) found that Facebook use increased self-esteem. In yet another study by Jason (2012) it was found that there was no association between self-esteem and Facebook usage.

### METHOD:

Two hundred and ten undergraduate college students responded to a questionnaire study. The collected data was analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage, and mean score.

Tools: The following were used for the study.

#### i) Demographics

A self constructed scale was used to gather data about gender, age and educational qualification.

#### ii) Facebook intensity questionnaire (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007)

This instrument was designed by Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) to measure exposure to Facebook. It is an 8-item questionnaire designed to measure the extent to which the user actively engaged in Facebook activities, the number of Facebook friends, the amount of time spent on Facebook daily, the extent to which users are emotionally connected to Facebook and the extent to which Facebook was integrated into their daily activities.

iii) Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

This is a 10-item scale designed in 1965 by Rosenberg to understand the general feelings one has about oneself.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a negative influence of Facebook (in terms of number of friends and time spent on Facebook) on self-esteem.
2. There will be a significant difference between female and male usage of Facebook.

Research Design

Survey method was used to collect data from the participants. Purposive random sampling method was used to investigate the relationship between exposure to Facebook and self-esteem.

**RESULTS:**

Time spent on Facebook	%age
Less than 30 minutes	46.9
31 minutes to 2 hours	21.0
More than 2 hours	25.3

Table 1: Time spent on Facebook (N=210, F=139 & M=71)

Number of Facebook friends	%age
Less than 100	8.3
101-200	8.8
More than 200	76

Table 2: Number of friends on facebook

**Hi:** There will be a negative influence of Facebook (in terms of number of friends, time spent on facebook and emotional connection with facebook) on self-esteem. There will also be negative influence of facebook in terms of its various dimensions (proud to be on facebook, facebook is part of daily life, etc.) and self-esteem.

To measure the effect of Facebook intensity on self-esteem following measures were taken:

1. Correlation between self-esteem & number of friends on Facebook
2. Correlation between self-esteem & time spent on Facebook
3. Correlation between self-esteem & emotional connect with Facebook

Correlation between Self-esteem	Person's PR
Facebook time	-0.161
Facebook friends	-0.025
Emotional Connectedness	
Use it everyday	-0.056
Proud to be on Facebook	0.008
Feel out of touch	-0.167
Sorry if Facebook shuts	-0.022
Facebook is part of daily life	-0.050

**Table 3: Correlation between FBI (its dimensions) and SE**

**Hiii:** There will be a significant difference between female and male usage of Facebook.

To see the usage number of facebook friends and time spent on Facebook was considered

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Confidence Interval
Male	65	2.8870	0.68396	0.036	-.27299 to .27928
Female	130	2.6833	.65705		

**Table 4: Gender and Facebook Friends**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Confidence Interval
Male	64	1.95	1.265	-0.336	-0.619 to 0.448
Female	129	2.04	1.293		

**Table 5: Gender and Facebook Time**

## DISCUSSION/

### INTERPRETATIONS:

The main aim of the study was to look for a relationship between Facebook intensity which comprised of time spent on Facebook, number of Facebook friends, emotional connection with

Facebook and the user's self-esteem. Besides this, the study also tried examining whether there exists a gender difference in Facebook usage.

With regards to the first hypothesis most studies conducted previously provided a confusing picture. Unlike previous

researchers, in this study the Facebook Intensity Scale was applied to capture important dimensions, such as emotional connectedness to the site and its integration into individuals' daily routines. This allowed a more refined assessment of it.

The findings of the present study revealed a negative relationship between Facebook usage and self-esteem. More specifically, both time spent on Facebook (Pearson correlation = -0.161) and the number of Facebook friends (Pearson correlation = -0.025) correlated negatively with self-esteem, suggesting that extensive use of the social networking site and having many friends are related to lower self-esteem, although negative correlation was not found to be significant.

In emotional connectedness, five components were explored. They were: proud to be on Facebook, Facebook being part of everyday activity, Facebook being part of a daily routine, feeling out of touch when not logged into Facebook, and being sad if Facebook shuts down.

Although negative correlation was found between self esteem and four components of facebook usage, it was not significant. Proud to be on Facebook and self-esteem was found to be positively related.

Van der Aa (2008) studied the correlation between youth's daily internet use and issues of low well-being such as low self-esteem. He discovered that individuals with lower levels of emotional stability and

a higher level of introversion are more likely to develop compulsive internet use.

Schwartz (2010) investigated the link between the use of Facebook and self-esteem and found that higher use of Facebook negatively affects self-esteem. His findings showed that the more students logged onto Facebook, the lower the student's self-esteem.

This means that if people suffer with low esteem they use Facebook more as a means of social interaction with great frequency to interact with friends, which in turn will have an impact on their self-esteem. This explains why most university students cannot do without chatting with their friends on Facebook platform. It also explains why the prevalence of the use of Facebook has increased among young people especially the university students. However, the data does not give any indication of whether it is the participant's initial low self-esteem that makes them use Facebook so intensely or whether their high reliance on Facebook has a lowering effect on their self-esteem. Since the correlation was not found to be significant it can be concluded that, in the present study, no significant relationship was established between facebook usage and self-esteem.

There is much documentation supporting the idea that there is a significant gender difference in utilizing social networking sites. One study by Kraut (1998) found that females are more likely than males to use online tools such as Facebook to

maintain and establish their social networks. Another study found that women share more photos and spend more time on social networking sites than men (Stefanone, Lackaff, and Rosen, 2011).

In the present study no significant difference was found between gender and Facebook usage ('t' value of 0.036 for gender and facebook friends falls between confidence interval -.27299 to .27928 (and 't' value of .336 falls between confidence interval — 0.619 to 0.448 for gender and facebook time) which is consistent with other research findings.

Historically, women have been more avid users of social media than men. In fact, in November 2010, the gender gap was as large as 15 percentage points. Studies (Acquisti & Gross, 2006) have found that women are more likely to use Facebook or MySpace. However, in one study Lenhart (2009) found that Facebook as well as LinkedIn users were more likely to be male.

Researchers who have examined the gender of users of multiple SNSs have found contradictory results. In general, women seem to use SNSs more to explicitly foster social connections. They were also more likely to not only write blogs but also write about family, romantic relationships, friendships, and health in those blogs.

Present findings imply that gender does not determine the frequent use of Facebook. That is, female users are not

using the Facebook more than male users and being a female, male does not translate to not using, or using the Facebook at all times. This finding does not support the previous findings of Kim & Davis (2008) who found that female users tended to use the Facebook more than male users, specifically as a way to keep contact with friends and family more than male.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that there is no significant influence of Facebook on self-esteem and no significant difference exists between female and male usage of Facebook. However, the results should be interpreted with a degree of caution because of certain limitations in the study. The author used a survey as an explicit measurement of self-esteem that is not immune to response bias, i.e. participants answer questions in the way they think the questioner wants them to answer.

The result found between self-esteem and Facebook intensity suggests that there maybe more complex underlying factors beyond our present data, and therefore implies the need for further studies. Obviously, self-esteem is a complex emotional evaluation of an individual's own worth that is influenced by a number of social elements and functions, such as acceptance among friends, parenting, early life experiences, sense of being loved, etc.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

One of the main limitations of this study was that it relied on the honesty and integrity of the participants. Rather than monitoring time spent on Facebook, the participants were asked to report how many hours they spent on this site on a daily basis.

The present study is an extension of a previous study by the same author. Attempts were made to increase the sample size but this will still be considered a small sample size to compare levels of Facebook intensity and self-esteem. Future Recommendations for future studies are to aim for larger samples in order to strengthen the reliability of the statistical analyses. Another limitation of the current study was that it had a skewed gender distribution where women were overrepresented. The present study focused only on undergraduate students and the research cannot be generalized. Further, the students asked to participate were from one college, and the results may differ depending on demographics.

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