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Lauren Oglesby, Allison Crowley, Prachi Desai, Jhaminique Lynwood, Meredith Murgia, Kelsey Richardson, & Elizabeth Cotter, PhD



V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

Introduction

Facebook is used by approximately 1.06 billion (Craig, 2013) to keep in touch with family and friends. However, the question remains whether Facebook is helpful or harmful to people's well-being. According to a research study conducted by Gonzales and Hancock (2010), Facebook use enhances self-esteem by providing multiple opportunities for selective self-presentation through photos and personal details. Another research study by Twenge, Freeman and Campbell (2012) found that participants who spent time on social network sites endorsed more positive self-views.

While some research indicates that Facebook has a positive effect on the user other studies suggest that Facebook use is detrimental. A study conducted by Tazghini and Siedlecki (2013) found a negative association between self-esteem and Facebook activity. This association was related to actions like untagging “undesirable” pictures or adding others as friends who they are not familiar with. Similarly, Sheppard Pratt's (2012) research indicated that Facebook has a negative impact on self-esteem and body image. “Facebook is making it easier for people to spend more time and energy criticizing their own bodies and wishing they looked like someone else” (Dr. Harry Brandt, director of The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt).

Given the discrepancies in the research, a worthwhile next step involves examining personal characteristics that may influence the relationship between Facebook use and well-being. The present research will examine whether certain factors influence the relationship between Facebook use and overall well-being.

Research Questions

1. Is the association between Facebook use and well-being positive in a sample of VCU students?
2. Do the gratifications obtained from Facebook use differ depending on personal characteristics like self-esteem or body image?
3. Do characteristics like body image or self-esteem moderate the relationship between Facebook use and overall well-being?

Method

Procedure and Participants

- The procedure for this study is currently in the process of IRB approval. However, the data will be collected by using survey research through Sona Systems website.
- The participants will be from Virginia Commonwealth University's psychology undergraduate program. Participants are going to be compensated by receiving a credit for a class they're enrolled in.

Measures

- **Gratifications Obtained from Facebook Use:** a 23-item and 6-subscale to measure the gratifications received from Facebook use (Zhang et al.).
- **Society and the Adolescent Self-Image:** a 10-item scale measuring the positive or negative orientation towards oneself (Rosenberg, 1989).
- **Body Satisfaction Scale (BSS):** a 16-item self-report questionnaire that measures body dissatisfaction, but does not measure the nature of dissatisfaction. (Slade, Dewey, Newton, Brodie, & Kiemle, 1990)
- **Adjustment to College:** a 52-item self-report Likert-type scale, yielding four aspects of adjustment to college (Baker & Sirky, 1984).
- **UCLA Loneliness Scale:** a 20-item scale self-report measuring one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation (Russell, 1996).
- **Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-CSDS):** a 33-item true/false questionnaire measuring social desirability independent of psychopathology (Crowne, D.P., & Marlowe, D., 1960)
- **Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale:** a brief 12-item assessment measuring the social anxiety behind fear of negative evaluation (Leary, 1983)
- **Frequency of Use:** “How often do you use Facebook” (one item measure developed by research team).
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** a 5-item scale measuring cognitive judgments of one's life (Diener, 1985)

Planned Analyses

- Data analysis will be conducted using SPSS version 21.0.
- Correlation analysis will be conducted to examine the associations between all variables of interest.
- Hierarchical multiple regression analysis will be conducted to examine the potential moderating role of self-esteem or body image on the relation between Facebook use and well-being.

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