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# Self-Esteem Issues in Facebook Users

Derry Gutierrez

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## Introduction

Social media is becoming a universal method of communication in our generation. One of the main social media sites is Facebook, which reached over one billion users around the world as of October 2012 (Fowler, 2012). This social media site allows its patrons to have an electronic way of communicating while also constructing a custom profile of their “perfect and ideal” life. Facebook was originally created with the intention of making it a social media site for college students only; however, as the site’s popularity grew rapidly it was soon made accessible to everyone. Young adults, specifically college students, are online so often which is why this population was chosen for the present study. Many of them become so distracted with social media that they forget about their daily responsibilities or tasks and end up feeling guilty or frustrated about the amount of time they have “wasted” observing other’s lives (Sheldon, 2008). The use of Facebook also makes its’ users compare themselves to others on the site and may also cause feelings of loneliness or isolation, all of which affect their self-esteem.

Self-esteem refers to a person’s positive or negative evaluation of the self; that is, the extent to which an individual views the self as worthwhile and competent (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-esteem is the evaluative emotional component of the broader self-concept (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003) and serves various social and existential functions like feelings of acceptance in groups and having meaning in life. Notably, self-esteem can be conceptualized as both a mostly stable trait that develops over time and a fluid state that is responsive to daily events and contexts (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991).

People often compare themselves with others, such as comparing themselves to their friends, parents, teachers, celebrities, etc. According to Social Comparison theory, people evaluate their opinions, abilities, emotions, and personality traits, and try to enhance their self-esteem and self-concept by comparing themselves with others (Lee, 2014). The chronic exposure to social comparison information on social media could have a detrimental impact on users’ self-evaluations and self-esteem. Trait self-esteem may in fact be unintentionally affected by long-term use of social media in everyday life (unintentionally meaning being trapped in the world of Facebook without knowing it). Prior research has revealed that high frequency Facebook use is associated with increased depression and decreased well-being (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). The current study will look at the relationship between the use of Facebook and Self-esteem.

## Hypotheses

- 1) This study will find that the intense usage of Facebook negatively affects students’ self-esteem.
- 2) This study will also determine that those who are single spend more time on Facebook than those in a relationship.

Figure 1- The relationship between Facebook usage score and Self Esteem

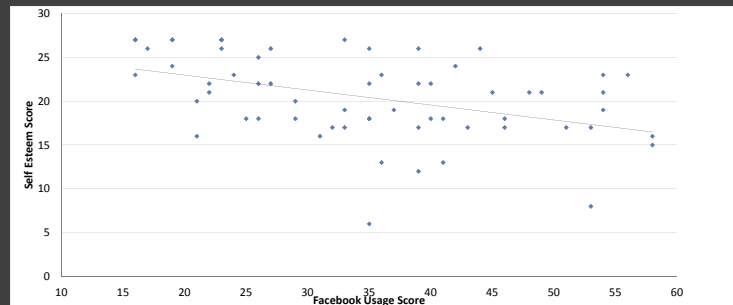


Figure 2- Hours on Facebook for those in a relationship compared to those who are single.

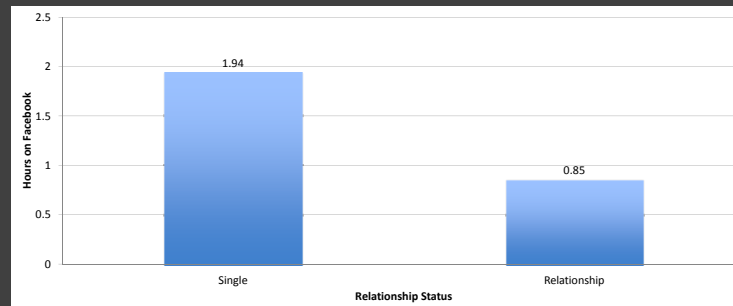
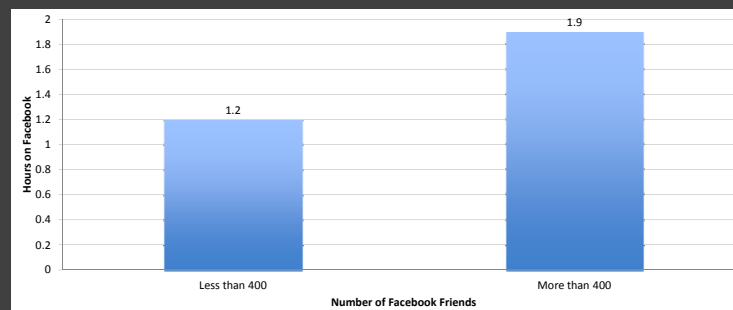


Figure 3 – The relationship between the number of Facebook friends and the time spent on Facebook



## Method

### Participants

- 68 Undergraduate Students from a small liberal arts university in northern California.
- The mean age was 23.07 (SD=7.31).
- The racial makeup of the sample was 37% White, 19% Hispanic/Latino, 9% Black/African American and 29% Asian/ Pacific Islander.

### Materials

- *Demographics Measure* which contained general questions about age, sex, and ethnicity.
- *Facebook Usage Survey* which measured the frequency and level of Facebook usage for each participant (derived from Rouis, Limayem, & Salehi-Sangari, 2011).
- *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale* evaluated the participants’ levels of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

### Procedure

- Participants were recruited via email from classes that were given a brief presentation on the project.
- Surveys were distributed via surveymonkey.com

## Results

- There was a negative correlation between Facebook usage and self esteem scores.  $r(59) = 0.43, p < 0.05$ , the first hypothesis was supported. See Figure 1.
- Those participants who were single (N=47) spend more time on Facebook than those in a relationship (N = 17). An independent sample t test found  $t(62) = 1.97, p = 0.05$ . The second hypothesis was supported, see Figure 2
- Participants who had over 400 friends on Facebook (N = 41) tended to spend more time on Facebook than people with fewer than 400 friends (N =23). An independent sample t test found  $t(57)=2.52, p < 0.05$  See figure 3

## Conclusion

- These results support the first hypothesis, usage of Facebook is negatively related to self-esteem.
- The second hypothesis was also supported as those who are single invest more time on Facebook than those in a relationship.
- Given the role that social media has on our future, people need to become more aware of the potential negative impact of daily use of sites such as Facebook.
- For future research, this study could be performed with participants in the general public and not just college students.