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Dallin Bywater
Chelsey Tautkus
Paul Moss
Dana Kearnes

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Facebook and Self-worth
Ashley Bell, Chelsey Tautkus, Chris Wei, Dallin Bywater, Dana Kearnes, Paul Moss
Family, Home and Social Sciences College at Brigham Young University

Introduction

"Facebook," the relatively recent Internet boom, has become increasingly popular in the past few years, particularly among college students who spend an average of 30 minutes per day on its pages (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). The online networking site features a database where people can store pictures of themselves, friends, and others in their own "profile" after which their online "friends" can browse them and make comments. Facebook also allows its users to post their thoughts, feelings, and even favorite videos to their profile for others to see. With 85% of all college students being active users of Facebook, one can be sure that their friends will see the posted information (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

Facebook is an easy way to find approval through social gratification. Whether it is an issue of self-worth or of narcissism, some people need social gratification, and these people seek activities that can either be physically or mentally harmful to their welfare (Piazza, Bowman, Contrucci, Delta, Adelins, et al.). Social networks on the Internet, such as Facebook, are usually a less harmful way to gain social gratification. To test the hypothesis, Tautkus and Self 2009 found that 57% of the young people reported believing that their online friends care for them (Hampton & Wellman 2003).

It is already known that self-worth can be easily manipulated and diminished by disparagement. In response to this disparagement, one will then seek social gratification from their peers, which will work to bolster their damaged self-worth. One of the easiest ways for these disparaged people to seek social gratification is through Facebook use. However, it is not yet known if a decrease of self-worth leads to an increase in Facebook usage; if this relationship indeed exists, then we may be able to understand more about the link between self-worth and social networking. For example, it is possible that poor mental health causes people to more intensely use Facebook. Testing our theory adds to our understanding of how external validation of self-worth can broaden their social circle, and begin to believe that their online friends care for them (Hampton & Wallman 2003).

Methods

• There were 96 Brigham Young University undergraduate participants, 49 in the experimental group, 47 in the control group, 42 males, 54 females.
• The control group completed a demographic questionnaire, followed by a social aptitude test, and a Facebook intensity test, which participants took through SONA.
• The experimental group completed the demographic questionnaire, followed by a social aptitude test, received falsified social aptitude results, completed a Facebook intensity test, and lastly was debriefed.
• A Likert scale format was used for our tests.
• The independent variable was self-worth, and the dependent variable was Facebook use intensity.
• Self-worth was manipulated by giving experimental group participants low social aptitude results.
• Facebook intensity was measured by a Facebook intensity scale.

Results

• There was no significance in demographic differences between groups as shown in Table 1. All of the demographic questions had a p value that was greater than .05, which means that our sample was randomized.

• An analysis of variance on the dependent variable (Facebook intensity) showed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Table 2 shows the significance level of the analysis (p=.114).

• Figure 1 shows that gender did have an interaction with the independent variable (self-worth). While the female experimental and control groups showed little variance, the male experimental and control groups had a significant difference in the mean scores.

• Because of the interaction of group versus gender, a further analysis of the male only sample showed significant variance between the experimental and control groups. The significance level of the male only sample analysis of variance was .009.

Discussion

Findings:
• Results did not support the initial hypothesis that lowering self-worth causes more intense Facebook use.
• Males’ Facebook intensity was significantly negatively affected by social disparagement. Results showed a significant amount of variance of Facebook intensity between the experimental group and the control group. The male experimental group had lower Facebook intensity after being disparaged.

• An alternative explanation for our findings could be that there are other factors that influence Facebook use.

• Males, perhaps due to pride, may deny their reliance on social crutches when disparaged.

Limitations:
• Limited sample size
• BYU-only population
• Ineffective manipulation check

Future Research:
• Gender differences in their reactions to various social stimuli
• Research the impact of gender on pride
• Explore self-worth and Facebook use among other age groups, universities, or cross-cultures