Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) holds limitless possibilities for how people communicate. People continue to interact with others through CMC more frequently in an increasing variety of ways. Research on CMC has become increasingly popular as numerous varieties of online communication are created. Facebook is an online social network site through which users create and maintain personalized profiles to facilitate interactions with others. Facebook has grown exponentially since its origin four years ago and has over 60 million worldwide active users today.

In the area of online social networks there has been some research completed on self-disclosure and self-esteem seperately. With the recent increase in ways to disclose information about oneself through increased network applications on Facebook, self-disclosure as a field of study within social networks is expanding. While preparing for our research, we found data encouraging us to search for correlations between self-disclosure, self-esteem, gender, and the number of people one is disclosing to.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is self-esteem of Facebook users related to their self-disclosure on Facebook?

RQ2: Is gender of Facebook users related to their self-disclosure on Facebook?

RQ3: Is the number of Facebook “friends” users have related their self-disclosure on Facebook?

Methods

1537 people were contacted on Facebook through “friends” of the researchers. Contact was made by inviting people to an “event” on Facebook which provided them with a link to the survey. From these contacts, 186 surveys were completed online.

The survey asked for general information about respondents’ Facebook habits. It also included two standard questionnaires to measure Self-Esteem and Self-Disclosure.

Examples of general Facebook use questions are:
“On average, how many times a day do you login to Facebook?” and
“Do you accept friend requests from people you don’t know?”

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale asked users to respond to statements like:
“I feel I do not have much to be proud of,” and
“I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others” by marking how strongly they agree or disagree.

Wheeless’s Revised Self-Disclosure Scale also asked respondents to mark how strongly they agree or disagree with certain statements. The scale measures five dimensions of reported self-disclosure: intent, amount, positiveness/negativeness, depth (intimacy), and honesty. Example questions are:
“When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so,”
“My statements of my feelings are usually brief,”
“I normally reveal ‘bad’ feelings about myself.”

Results

RQ1: Findings

Correlation Between Self-Esteem and Honesty of Self-Disclosure

Pearson correlations revealed a significant association between Self-Esteem and Honesty of Self-Disclosure. (r=.49, p<.001)

RQ2: Findings

Difference in Depth of Self-Disclosure Between Males and Females

Independent samples T-test revealed a significant gender difference. Men were significantly higher in Depth of Self-Disclosure than females.
M=16.01 SD=5.62    F=13.99 SD=5.31    (t=-2.50, p<.05)

RQ3: Findings

Difference in Facebook Privacy Settings Between Males and Females

No significant correlations were found between the four other dimensions of self-disclosure.

Additional Findings

RQ1: Users with higher self-esteem reported self-disclosures that were more positive, more honest, and had less depth (intimacy). No significant correlations were found between self-esteem and amount of self-disclosure or intent (awareness) of self-disclosure.

RQ2: Males reported self-disclosure that had more depth than females. No significant correlations were found between gender and the four other dimensions of self-disclosure.

RQ3: No significant correlations were found between number of Facebook “friends” one has and self-disclosure.

Conclusion

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For more information on this study, Email us at: ecfacebookresearch@gmail.com