

Facebook and Career Motivation



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Abstract

While the use of the social network Facebook has continued to increase among college students (Nesbitt & Marriot, 2007), studies show that this group may not be aware of the influence their social networking profile content can have on potential employers (Peluchette & Karl, 2010). However, level of motivation with regard to finding a job has not been studied as it may relate to Facebook content choices among college students. College students responded to an online survey that included questions on Facebook use, content and career motivation using a modified version of the Student Motivation Scale (Beatty, Behnke, & Froelich, 1980). This study found that Facebook users trust their privacy settings and feel that their profile content is a direct representation of themselves.

Theoretical Perspective

According to Social Impact Theory (Latane, 1981) an individual is influenced by others in terms of attitudes and behaviors, particularly with close groups such as peers (Utz & Krämer, 2009). An individual's privacy settings on social networks like Facebook may be influenced by perceived norms of close social groups, rather than what they believe may be attractive to employers.



Sample Facebook profile.

Method

Current college students responded to a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the social network site Facebook and how it relates to their degree of career motivation.

Participants: 195 respondents, recruited through email and Facebook event.

Procedure: Qualtrics survey software consisted of 17 questions and had six sections.

Instruments: The Career Motivation Scale

Adapted from the Student Motivation Scale (Beatty, Behnke, & Froelich, 1980)

Measures the motivational attitudes of students in the classroom

Sample items include involved, unchallenged, excited, interested, and enthused

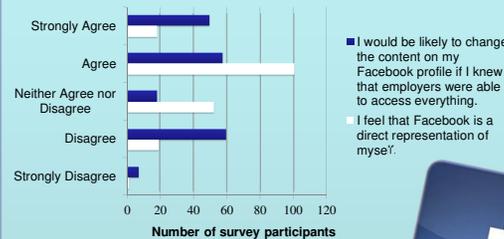
Items modified from the Student Motivation Scale to measure how students feel about finding a job when they graduate

The Career Motivation Scale was reliable, $\alpha = .88$, $M = 58.95$, $SD = 7.74$.

Research Questions & Results

RQ1: Is the belief that one's Facebook profile is a direct representation of oneself associated with the likelihood of changing profile content if one knew employers could access their profile?

There is a significant negative correlation ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$). As the belief that one's Facebook profile is a direct representation of themselves increases, the likelihood of changing one's profile content if one knew employers could access their profile decreases.



RQ2: Is comfort with potential employers viewing one's Facebook profile based on one's current privacy settings associated with:

a. the belief that one's profile is a direct representation of oneself?

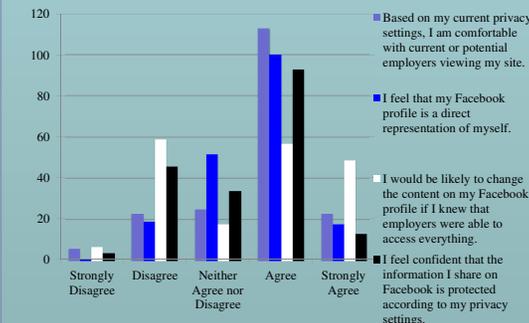
There is a significant positive correlation ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). As comfort with potential employers viewing one's Facebook profile based on their current privacy settings increases, the belief that their profile is a direct representation of themselves also increases.

b. the likelihood of changing one's profile content if one believed employers were able to access one's profile?

There is a significant negative correlation, ($r = -.34$, $p < .001$) that as comfort with potential employers viewing one's Facebook profile based on their current privacy settings increases, the likelihood of changing one's profile content if they believe employers were able to access their profile decreases.

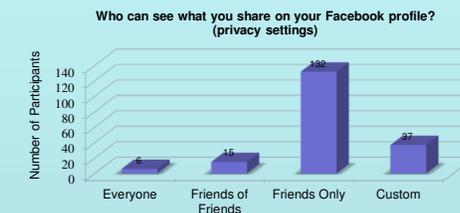
c. the confidence that the information one shares on Facebook is protected by one's privacy settings?

There is a significant positive correlation, ($r = .28$, $p < .001$) that as comfort with potential employers viewing one's Facebook profile based on their current privacy settings increases, the confidence that the information that one shares on Facebook is protected by one's privacy settings also increases.



RQ3: Is year in school associated with career motivation?

There is a significant positive correlation, ($r = .20$, $p < .01$) that as year in school increases so does career motivation. Results showed that out of the 195 participants, who completed the survey, 11 (6%) were freshmen, 16 (8%) were sophomores, 45 (23%) were juniors, 97 (50%) were seniors and 26 (13%) were graduate students.



Implications

Although career motivation is not related to Facebook profile content our results show that as students get closer to graduation, their career motivation increases. During tough economic times, career motivation is crucial for students graduating from college to stand out from more experienced job seekers. Career motivation requires a person to have certain qualities such as excitement, interest, and involvement with regards to finding a job. Career motivation is a key factor in finding a job upon graduation.

Approximately one in ten employers use social networking sites to review potential employees' profiles; employers who admit to using social networking sites to review potential employee profiles report that the information these profiles provide influences in the hiring process (Brandenburg, 2008). Organizations feel that social networking sites may be a reflection of the potential candidate based on what they share on their profiles.

However, most college students feel protected by their privacy settings and would be unlikely to change their profile content if they knew employers could access their profile. These results show a lack of understanding about how employers might perceive Facebook content so students pursuing careers need to be aware of how employers are accessing and using their data.

Conclusion

There is potential for future studies on this topic to learn specifically how employers feel about the fact that students believe their profiles are direct representations of themselves and they are comfortable with employers viewing their profiles with their current privacy settings. There may be opportunities in learning more about how employers feel about using Facebook to research potential employees and how these potential employees feel about employers viewing their profiles in the hiring process.

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