

The Relationship between Facebook and Body Esteem

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Recent data that sampled 36,950 college students from U.S. universities revealed 90% of students used social networking sites, and of those students, 97% used Facebook and reported daily use of the site (Smith & Caruso, 2010 as cited in Junco, 2011). Considering Facebook's popularity among young people, it is essential to understand how Facebook affects our society.



RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESIS:

RQ: What is the relationship between Facebook and body esteem comparing college freshmen and college senior women?

Hypothesis 1: We predicted that Facebook would negatively affect body esteem in young women when users utilized the site for social comparison among Facebook friends

Hypothesis 2: There will not be a difference between college freshmen and senior women when looking at the relationship between Facebook and body esteem.

PURPOSE:

- 1) To examine the relationship between Facebook and body esteem and compare this between senior and freshmen college women
- 2) To develop a reliable survey instrument which measures college women's attitudes towards Facebook and body esteem
- 3) To increase awareness on the issue of Facebook in connection with body esteem .

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Social Comparison Theory assumes that individuals compare themselves to others as a way of better understanding themselves as individuals. As applied to our study, this theory would predict that women who use Facebook as a tool for social comparison and view their Facebook friends as being better looking than them would have poorer body esteem.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

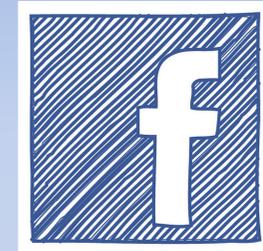
- A survey conducted by The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt (2012) found that 51% of Facebook users compared their life to others when viewing photos or reading statuses posted by friends.
- Franzoi et al. (2011) suggested that women were more likely to use similar or upward comparisons rather than downward comparison than men.
- Haferkamp and Krämer (2011) found that compared to participants who looked at photos of less attractive SNS users, individuals who viewed photos of attractive SNS users were in a less positive emotional state afterwards, reported a higher level of difference when it came to comparing their build and an ideal build, and were less satisfied with their body .
- Sheldon (2010) findings showed that when women were in college family influence subsided and peers were the most influential factor in contributing to a woman's body esteem and weight concerns.
- Krcmar et al. (2008) findings showed that the comparison process was found to negatively affect a woman's body esteem.

Comparing College Women

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RESULTS

Hypothesis # 1 (Variables can be found under dependent variables)	
FAC	A large number of uncertain responses from both freshmen and seniors. The remaining number of responses showed more students disagreed than agreed , especially for seniors. Most respondents seemed unsure of how Facebook affected their body esteem.
AWA	Both groups had around half of all respondents agreeing with the statement meaning that while respondents didn't know how Facebook may have affected their body esteem, they did know that it made them more aware of their appearance.
Hypothesis # 2 (Variables can be found under dependent variables)	
COM, MOR, PRI, EST, AWA	Results for this hypothesis were mixed. Freshmen and senior respondents agreed on 5 out of the 10 variable statements.
FAC	This variable showed significant difference between the two groups on the Independent T-test with a Sig. of 0.017. Support is provided in the Independent T-test at left. Many more seniors than freshmen disagreed that Facebook positively influenced their body esteem.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES:

GEN)- Gender of participant, (AGE)- Age of the participant, (YER)- Year in college, (PRO)- If the participant had a Facebook profile, (DAY)- How many times the participant logged onto Facebook in a given day, (LOK)- How often the participant looked at Facebook friends' photos and albums, (UPL)- How often the participant uploaded photos on their Facebook account.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES:

(COM)- I often compare myself to the photos of others posted on Facebook.
 (ACC)- After viewing photos of myself of Facebook I am more accepting of my appearance
 (MOR)- I tend to compare myself to people I perceive as more attractive than myself.
 (LES)- I tend to compare myself to people I perceive as less attractive than myself.
 (PRI)- I am proud of my body and my appearance.
 (PER)- I care about how others perceive my appearance.
 (WEI)- I am happy with my weight.
 (EST)- My body esteem has improved in the past 4 years.
 (FAC)- I believe Facebook positively influences my body esteem.
 (AWA)- Facebook makes me more aware of my body and appearance.

Independent T-Test

Table 3
Independent T-tests

Variable	Years in College		t	df	Sig.
	Freshman	Senior			
FAC	2.83 (0.77)	2.46 (0.80)	2.43	104	*0.017

*Note. (FAC) = I believe Facebook positively influences my body esteem. *significant @ p<=.05, two tailed.*

METHOD:

Participants: 106 students- 54 college freshmen women and 52 college senior women who had Facebook profiles.

Research Design: Non-random pilot study, cross sectional, purposive sampling design
Data collection Instrument: IRB approved, informed by literature & theory, implied consent, self administered surveys with one independent variable, seven demographic variables, ten closed ended statements based on a 1-5 Likert Scale, and one open ended statement.

Procedure: Administered questionnaires to all individuals in classes that were predominately women and freshmen and/or senior students. Implied consent and confidentiality were explained.

Data Analysis Plan: Cleaned & coded surveys, analyzed data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Cross-tabulations, mean-comparisons, independent t-tests, and a reliability analysis: Cronbach's Alpha was utilized.

IMPLICATIONS:

For Practitioners: The topic of Facebook and its relationship with body esteem needs to addressed to the public, and especially to college campuses. Support groups, posters on the issue, and additional resources are all ways to spread awareness.

Future Research: Random, national sample, Global sample; wider age range; Including men and comparing genders in all ages; Increasing the variability for the demographic questions, and using a 1-7 Likert scale; Respondents should be allotted more time to complete the survey; A qualitative approach to this topic would also be beneficial

CONCLUSION:

The differences found among the college freshmen and senior women revealed that senior women may be less likely to believe that Facebook positively influences their body esteem, less satisfied with their weight, and more likely to care about how others perceive them. Similarities among the groups, showed the same rate of body pride and improvement in body esteem over the past four years. Discussions about how we personally define and perceive our body esteem and body pride as we mature should be considered.

The most surprising result was the lack of certainty respondents had on many of the statements. These uncertain responses indicate a need for more awareness and discussion on the how social networking sites affect body esteem in young women.

