

## **INFLUENCE OF EXPOSURE TO FACEBOOK ON SELF-ESTEEM**

***Benjamin O. Omolayo, PhD***

Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

***Shyngle K. Balogun, PhD***

Department of Psychology, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

***Olajumoke C. Omole, M.Sc***

Department of Psychology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

The study examines the influence that activities on Facebook have on self-esteem. It aims at finding whether Facebook activities will increase or decrease users' self-esteem. 192 students selected from two universities participated in the study and their age ranges between 16 to 35 years. Data were collected with the use of two standardized research instruments namely Facebook Intensity Questionnaire (FBI) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The data were analyzed using t-test for independent groups and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Four hypotheses were tested and results show a significant positive influence of Facebook on self-esteem. Age was found to have significant influence on self-esteem but not on Facebook usage. Also, no significant difference exists between female and male usage of Facebook. Findings also indicated that using headphones for Facebooking does not bring about greater self-esteem over those using desktop and laptop computers for Facebooking. It was concluded that engaging in Facebook activities will positively influence the self-esteem of Facebook users.

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**Keywords:** Facebook, Self-esteem, Exposure, Social network, Facebook user

### **Introduction**

The internet has increasingly become part of our daily life within the last two decades. Accordingly, the online communication means, such as e-mail, chat rooms and social communication network have begun to be more prevalently used. Several studies have established that the prevalence of the use of internet has increased among the young and

adults (Peluchette & Karl, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Young, Dutta & Dommetty, 2009). It can be seen that recent studies have been intended to determine the frequencies with which people use online technologies and to assess their behaviors during the usage (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2009; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). One of the issues that have been dealt with and that have grown more important in recent years is the use of social networking sites (SNS). Studies have revealed that the young have begun to spend more time at such networks (Roberts, Foehr & Rideout, 2005; West, Lewis & Currie, 2009).

Social Networking Site (SNS) is any website that enables a person to create a public profile to build relationships between him/her and co-workers, friends, schoolmates and family members. Social networking sites (SNS) are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The first social networking site was launched in 1997 and currently there are hundreds of SNS across the globe, supporting a spectrum of practices, interests and users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The social networking site is spreading widely around the world and it is getting more popular. There are many popular social networking sites around the world such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Google Plus+, Tagged, Hi5, Myyearbook, Meetup, Badoo, Bebo, Mylife and Friendster. The uniqueness of social networking sites is providing users with the features to present themselves using their profile picture and personality information. It also allows users to express their feelings with friends on the network. Users can also share photos, videos or interesting links with friends to show their kindness. Social networking sites are only useful when people are really using them as application to stay connected with friends and family to share experiences, memories, happiness and sadness. However, it is also dangerous when people are addicted to it. The most social networking site users are students from high schools and colleges (Kalpidou, Costin & Morris, 2011). This was corroborated by Kim & Davis (2008) who found that college-age users (between 18 and 25 years old) constitute the biggest age group (accounting for approximately 30%) of the total user population, and Lee, Sim, Tan & Trevor (2006) who revealed that one-third of the population of Facebook users are college students. In this category of people, Facebook has become a part of their daily activities. The number of friends an individual has on social networking site has a positive relationship to social connection which changes his/her personality from

less talking to being open, friendly, and being involved in socials. It also improves user's communication skill (Lee, Sim, Tan & Trevor, 2006).

Facebook is one of the social networking sites available around the world. It was established in 2004, and since then, it has grown stronger. It provides technological features that allow users to present their identity with personal information to others such as friends, family members, co-workers or even strangers. Users can also share status, photos, videos, messaging and more with their friends on the network. Users also have the right to hide their photos, videos or status on the network. Facebook has attracted a big amount of people every day. Many people are gradually getting addicted to it because it is a great social networking site for users to stay in touch with friends and family members.

There are many reasons why people are on Facebook. The reasons are emotional connection and social connection (Kalpidou, Costin, Morris, 2011). The emotional connection is sharing status which has a connection to user's emotion. Whenever a user is sad or happy, he/she post a status to share. In return, the user would receive a console or earn contribution of advices from friends on the network. Social connection is using the Facebook to establish friendship with people met in places like bars, club, schools, worship centers, ceremonies, seminars, conferences and the likes by checking their personal information. Therefore, the benefits of using Facebook include having new friends, growing friendship and personality improvement. It also improves the users' way of communication. In a survey of over 2,000 university students, Joinson (2008) found suggestive evidence that the primary use of Facebook was for social searching, that is, to find out more information about and make connections with people who they have met briefly offline, in class, or through current friends.

Facebook is beneficial to mental health and wellbeing because its use can help maintain contact with family and friends who might live far away. This allows people to receive emotional support in times of hardship, through a quick and effective technology. It can also reduce feelings of isolation and being 'cutoff from the world'. Facebook can help some introverts in communicating with others since it provides a context in which they are more comfortable to talk and to convey their feelings without much pressure as face-to-face contact (Kim & Davis, 2008).

Alexander (2001) views self-esteem as a syndrome and a set of indicators for mental well-being. The core of self-esteem is an unconditional appreciation of oneself, that is, an appreciation of both positive and negative potential in its fullest sense. An acceptance of this

enables us to take responsibility for ourselves and become accountable for our actions. It also means that we can be more realistic about our achievements and shortcomings. Self-esteem can be increased by achieving great successes and maintained by avoiding failures. Raised self-esteem could be achieved and maintained by adopting less ambitious goals. Self-esteem is competence-oriented but also open to change. Alexander also distinguishes between trait self-esteem which reflects confidence or ability in a particular area, such as work or sport, and global self-esteem which is intrinsic worthiness regardless of what particular abilities or qualities we may have. Rosenberg (1965) also made an important contribution to defining self-esteem by introducing the concept of worthiness. Worthiness is whether a person judge himself/herself as good or bad. It is an evaluative attitude towards oneself and the extent to which the individual believes himself/herself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. He added that self-esteem was important to a person's identity and awareness, and that high and low self-esteem would influence behavior in positive and negative ways respectively. Self-esteem is a lived phenomenon, dynamic, and it is therefore on-going and open to change (Mruk, 1999). According to Mruk (1999), there are three elements of self-esteem. Firstly, there is a connection between competence and worthiness. Secondly, self-esteem is lived on both cognitive and affective levels, and thirdly, self-esteem is a dynamic phenomenon which can fluctuate more than characteristics like personality and intelligence. Self-esteem could be seen as perception rather than reality. It refers to a person's belief about whether he/she is intelligent and attractive but does not necessarily say anything about whether the person is actually intelligent and attractive. People's beliefs shape their actions in many important ways, and these actions in turn shape their social reality and the social realities of the people around them.

Many studies have been conducted to test how the internet can affect self-esteem with different variables. The study of Van der Aa (2008) focused on the correlation between adolescents' daily internet use and issues of low well-being such as loneliness, low self-esteem and depressive moods. He discovered that adolescents with lower levels of emotional stability and a higher level of introversion are more likely to develop compulsive internet use (CIU). He also found that 99% of the adolescents surveyed actively used the internet and that 97% of those same adolescents had internet access at home. He further revealed in his findings that daily internet use (DIU) in itself, is only marginal and not directly associated with low well-being in adolescence and young adulthood.

Gross (2009) examined how logging onto a social network where the user did not know the person affects self-esteem and how they view themselves. His results showed that

self-esteem was more positive when a user communicated with another user that he/she did not know rather than playing an online game.

Schwartz (2010) investigated the link between the use of Facebook and self-esteem, narcissism and loneliness. Usage of Facebook is on the rise with students increasingly using it for a variety of reasons. He examined if the higher use of Facebook negatively affect self-esteem, narcissism or loneliness. He found that on average, users spent an hour on Facebook daily and, depending on the person, may have had one to five status updates a week. His findings showed that the more students logged onto Facebook, the lower the student's self-esteem. Also, narcissism was only positively correlated with the number of friends a user had, while loneliness was positively correlated with usage, updates and a number of friends. Lonely people used the social media website as a way to feel closer to others.

Kim & Davis (2008) conducted a study on the problematic internet use (PIU) and its link to self-esteem, sensation seeking, subjective values and unrealistic optimism. Problematic internet use (PIU) is described as internet activities that are compulsive and have interference with normal activities of daily living. They found a link between PIU and self-esteem because individuals with a lower self-esteem or that have been socially rejected tends to spend more time on the internet. Students that used the internet primarily to make friends also have lower self-control and increased level of PIU. Their findings revealed that females were more likely to use the internet as a way to keep contact with family members while male were more likely to use the internet for playing online games, become famous or seek romantic partners.

Kraut, Petterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay & Scherlis (1998) conducted a longitudinal study to determine if internet usage was beneficial or detrimental. Their results showed that with more internet use came less family interaction, and a decline of family communication. It also showed that increased internet use decreased the individual's sense of community and resulted in smaller social support networks. With smaller support groups, the participants tended to be more depressed, lonelier, and have more daily stress since they did not have support groups to fall back on.

The study conducted by Kratzer, Fetchenhaver & Belschak (2009) was designed to determine if internet bullying was as prevalent as bullying in person in school aged children. They were interested in learning if victims of cyber bullying were simultaneously victims in other environments such as school or if the victims of cyber bullying were completely different from other types of bullying. They found that some students that are bullying victims at school often use the anonymity of the internet to become bullies themselves.

The role of social networking and its effects on young adults has largely been ignored (Fischer, Sollie & Morrow, 1986) in terms of the psychological implications and the impact on quality of relationships. Epstein (1983) suggests that many researchers have concluded that social ties and interpersonal connections are needed to foster and develop positive social skills and that reciprocal relations promote positive mental health and psychological adjustment. In many ways, social interaction on the internet resembles that of the traditional face-to-face mode of interaction and enables further accessibility to close relations, prompting overall connectedness and well-being (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002). However, the qualities of internet communication and interaction, such as its greater anonymity, that is known to produce greater intimacy and closeness online, do not necessarily demonstrate equally consistent offline results among users (Bargh, et al., 2002).

This study is aimed to explore whether Facebook activity upgraded or downgraded a person's self-esteem, whether activity on Facebook positively or negatively affects a person's self-esteem, and to examine the influence of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant positive influence of Facebook on self-esteem.
2. Students using handphone for Facebooking will exhibit greater self-esteem than students using desktop and laptop computers for Facebooking.
3. There will be a significant influence of age on the use of Facebook and self-esteem.
4. There will be a significant difference between female and male usage of Facebook.

### **Research Design**

The ex-post facto research design was used for this study. The study also made use of survey method to collect data from the participants. Exposure to Facebook, gender, age, and device use are the independent variables while self-esteem is the dependent variable.

### **Research Participants**

One hundred and ninety-two (192) students were selected from the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State and Federal University of Technology, Akure in Ondo State using purposeful sampling method. They comprised of eighty-seven (87) male and one hundred and five (105) female. The age range of the participants is between 16 and 35 years with a mean age of 25.5 years.

### **Research Instruments**

Two standardized research instruments were used in this study to generate data. They are:

## 1. Facebook Intensity Questionnaire (FBI)

This instrument was designed by Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) to measure exposure to Facebook. It is an 8-item questionnaire that has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. It was designed to measure the extent to which user actively engaged in Facebook activities, the number of Facebook friends, the amount of time spent on Facebook daily, the extent to which users are emotionally connected to Facebook and the extent to which Facebook was integrated into their daily activities.

## 2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

This is a 10-item scale designed in 1965 by Rosenberg to understand the general feelings about oneself. The scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77, minimum Coefficient of Reproducibility was 0.90. It has alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.87. The test-retest reliability for a 2-week interval was calculated at 0.85 while the 7-month interval was calculated at 0.63 (Rosenberg, 1965).

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the research participants were analyzed using t-test for independent groups and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The t-test for independent groups was used to test hypotheses one and four while One-way ANOVA was used to test hypotheses two and three.

### Results

Results of this study are presented in tables below.

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be a significant positive influence of Facebook on self-esteem.

**Table 1:** t-test summary table showing the influence of facebook on self-esteem.

| Variable    | N     | Mean  | SD    | df  | t-obt | t-crit | p    |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|--------|------|
| Facebook    | 23.77 | 23.77 | 6.35  | 191 | 4.337 | 1.960  | <.05 |
| Self-esteem | 19.08 | 19.08 | 14.01 |     |       |        |      |

$$t(192) = 4.337, p < .05$$

Results from Table 1 shows that facebook has a significant positive influence on self-esteem. The first hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** Students using handphone for facebooking will exhibit greater self-esteem than students using desktop and laptop computers for facebooking.

**Table 2:** One-way ANOVA table showing self-esteem and device

| Sources        | SS        | df  | MS      | f-obt | f-crit | p    |
|----------------|-----------|-----|---------|-------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 17.438    | 2   | 8.674   | 0.043 | 3.00   | >.05 |
| Within Groups  | 37770.646 | 189 | 199.845 |       |        |      |
| Total          | 37787.995 | 191 |         |       |        |      |

$$f(1,189) = 0.043, p > .05$$

Table 2 showed that students using handphone for facebooking do not exhibit greater self-esteem than students using desktop and laptop computers for facebooking. The hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a significant influence of age on the use of facebook and self-esteem.

**Table 3:** One-way ANOVA table showing the influence of age on the use of facebook and self-esteem.

| Variables       | Sources        | df  | SS        | MS      | f-obt | f-crit | p    |
|-----------------|----------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------|--------|------|
| Use of Facebook | Between Groups | 3   | 135.556   | 45.185  | 1.123 | 2.60   | >.05 |
|                 | Within Groups  | 188 | 7566.360  | 40.247  |       |        |      |
|                 | Total          | 191 | 7701.917  |         |       |        |      |
| Self-esteem     | Between Groups | 3   | 2220.917  | 740.063 | 3.946 | 2.60   | <.05 |
|                 | Within Groups  | 188 | 25256.476 | 187.534 |       |        |      |
|                 | Total          | 191 | 37476.667 |         |       |        |      |

Table 3 shows that the influence of age on the use of facebook is not significant ( $f(1,188) = 1.123, p > .05$ ), but age has a significant influence on self-esteem ( $f(1,188) = 3.946, p < .05$ ).

**Hypothesis 4:** There will be a significant different between female and male usage of facebook.

**Table 4:** t-test summary table showing gender and usage of facebook

| Gender | N   | Mean  | SD   | df  | t-obt | t-crit | p     |
|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|--------|-------|
| Male   | 87  | 23.92 | 6.21 | 190 | 0.098 | 1.960  | > .05 |
| Female | 105 | 23.83 | 6.60 |     |       |        |       |

$$t(192) = 0.098, p > .05$$

Results from Table 4 indicated that there is no significant difference between female and male usage of facebook. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

## Discussion

This study aims at finding out the influence that exposure to Facebook will have on self-esteem. That is, to know whether self-esteem could be downgraded or upgraded by presenting oneself to the world through Facebook interaction.

Results from this study revealed a significant positive influence of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem. This means that the more people use Facebook as a means of social interaction, the greater the frequency of their interaction with friends will be, which in turn will have a positive impact on their self-esteem and their satisfaction with life. This explains why most university students cannot do without chatting with their friends on Facebook platform. It also explains why the prevalence of the use of Facebook has increased among young people most especially the university students. The plausible explanation of this finding is that the use of Facebook brings satisfaction and well-being to the users because they have friends on the platform to share their emotion, happiness and pain with whenever



the need arises. Users could also seek for professional advice from their professional friends on the Facebook platform. It is an avenue to meet with different kinds of people especially people of liked minds. It is also an avenue for some introverts to crawl out of their shell by communicating and sharing information with others which they may find difficult to do in face-to-face interaction. This finding supports the previous findings of Kalpidou et al (2011), Kim & Davis (2008), Lee et al (2006) and Gross (2009). However, the previous finding of Schwartz (2010) does not support this finding.

The findings of this study also revealed that students using handphone for Facebooking do not exhibit greater self-esteem than students using desktop and laptop computers for Facebooking. The plausible explanation of this finding is that a user can connect, chat and share status with friends on the Facebook platform using any of the devices (handphone, desktop and laptop computers). The entire device could be used effectively by a user to connect with friends and family on the platform. Moreover, this finding revealed that students using handphone for Facebooking do not exhibit greater self-esteem than those using desktop and laptop computers for Facebooking. This means that no matter the device used, it doesn't make one to exhibit greater self-esteem than others.

Moreover, findings showed that age has significant influence on self-esteem. This implies that age is a factor that determines the increase or decrease in self-esteem of university students, but age has nothing to do with the extent to which people engage in Facebook because findings from this study also revealed that age does not have significant influence on the use of Facebook. This means that whether a person is young or old, it does not affect the extent of his/her involvement in Facebook activities.

Furthermore, findings showed that there is no significant difference between female and male usage of Facebook. This implies that gender does not determine the frequent use of Facebook. That is, the female is not using the Facebook than male, and being a female or male does not translate to not using the Facebook at all times. This finding does not support the previous findings of Kim & Davis (2008) who found that female tend to use the Facebook as a way to keep contact with friends and family more than male.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that there is a significant positive influence of Facebook on self-esteem. Also using handphone for Facebooking does not bring about greater self-esteem over those using desktop and laptop computers for Facebooking. Also, age has no significant influence on Facebook, but it does on self-esteem. No significant difference exists between female and male usage of Facebook.

## **Recommendations**

Findings from this study have shown that Facebook has a significant positive influence on self-esteem of both male and female. Therefore, the following recommendations will help in the management of self-esteem when dealing with Facebook.

First, students should engage in Facebook activities in order to manage their self-esteem positively, but they should abstain from the over-use of the application as this may have an adverse influence on their self-esteem.

In addition, school psychologists and counselors should use the Facebook platform as part of their helping mechanism to their students in order to help them reshaping their self-esteem.

The psychological benefits of Facebook are real. Perhaps this explains why so many teenagers are constantly engaged with Facebook. They may have discovered how to build self-esteem and feel good, at least in the short term. However, parents should set limits to the time their teenagers spend on social media even though teenagers and self-esteem issues go hand-in-hand.

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