

5-17-2016

# Social media use and self-esteem in undergraduate students

Carly Renee Pineiro

Rowan University, pineiroc0@students.rowan.edu

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**SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENTS**

by Carly R. Pineiro

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Psychology  
College of Science and Mathematics  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in School Psychology  
at  
Rowan University  
April 14, 2016

Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

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## **Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to Karen, Steve, Valerie, Deanna, Brady, and Toby.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Dr. Roberta Dihoff and Alicia Clendaniel for all their guidance, hard work, and support throughout this research project.

## **Abstract**

Carly R. Pineiro

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS  
2015-2016

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

With technology growing every day, people are using a different form of communication which is social media. Social media is a way that people communicate with family/friends, get information, posts photos, etc. It is estimated that the average amount of time spent on this social networking site ranges from thirty minutes to over two hours on a daily basis. The purpose of this study is to explore a correlation between high usage of social media use and lower levels of self-esteem. To test the correlation between social media usage and self-esteem students were asked to participate in an online, anonymous survey answering questions on how much social media they use and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Data was analyzed using a correlation test. The results of the data collection suggest that there is no correlation between high social media use and low self-esteem levels.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background

Social media is used every day globally. There are positive and negative effects for not only social media but, everything that people engage in. This study is going to focus on the negative effects social media can have on self-esteem levels. The main goal of this study is to find out the correlation between social media use and self-esteem levels. This study is going to compare a social media score and a self-esteem score in undergraduate students. This study hypothesizes that high levels of social media use will correlate with low levels of self-esteem in undergraduate students.

### Purpose

The purpose is to find out how strong the correlation is between high levels of social media use and self-esteem levels. Social media is widely used today. It's already known that social media plays a huge part in an American's life. One study found that approximately 60% of their participants received news stories on Facebook and spent anywhere from four to eight hours a week on Facebook (Schweisbeger, Billinson, Chock, 2014). Social media is used for other reasons than communication.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There are many issues that can occur when using social media sites. One issue that has been known to happen on social media is cyberbullying. One study researched cyberbullying, psychological distress, and self-esteem levels in youth-aged children. Their results were that overall, 22.9% of teenagers experienced cyberbullying in the past year. Girls presented a higher prevalence of cyberbullying, psychological distress, and low self-esteem than boys (Cénat et al., 2014).

Self-esteem is something that everyone has and each person has a different perception of themselves and different levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem is conceptualized as one's positive and negative evaluations of himself or herself and, relatedly, one's approval or disapproval of the self (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). One study focused on how many "selfies" a person posts on social media and how that relates to narcissism and self-esteem. This study also came to found that taking and posting "selfies" was not an action of showing off to their peers it was more a typical way of communication (Barry, 2015).

The current study is taking a different path and not testing young children but, testing young adults to see if age might play a factor in the effects of social media. Once there is a clear understanding of what age group suffers the most

then not only psychologists but, school districts, parents, teachers, etc., can focus on eliminating cyberbullying. There are limitations to this study. If a survey is going to be used to test social media, then it is not guaranteed that each participant will be truthful. The same issue can happen when testing self-esteem levels; participants might be embarrassed of low self-esteem levels and will not answer truthfully. The researchers are assuming that the participants will answer correctly and honestly. Researchers assume that their reporting will find high social media usage but, there will be low levels of self-esteem in the undergraduate students.

### **Definition of Terms**

Cyberbullying is defined by the government as, "bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites."

"Selfie" is defined as, a photograph that one takes of oneself with a digital camera or a front-facing smartphone, tablet, or webcam, especially for posting on a social-networking or photo-sharing website. The results of this study indicated that posting "selfies" was a fairly common occurrence and that there was a lack of association with narcissism, high self-esteem levels and posting many "selfies".

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### History of Social Networking

Social networking is a new phenomenon (Miller, Parsons, & Lifer, 2010).

The first reported social networking site was announced in 1995 which was known as classmates.com, sixdegrees.com was another site that launched shortly after in 1997.

There was a gap in social networking sites until 2003 when Myspace was launched. Facebook which is another popular social media site still used today was launched in 2004. Myspace and Facebook had a huge influence on not only social aspects of life but also, political and economic aspects. Myspace self-reported that by 2006 the site had reached 100 million users. Facebook reported similar statistics, stating that in October 2008 it had 110 million active members globally (Miller, Parsons, & Lifer, 2010).

Twitter is another free social networking site that was founded in 2006. 8% of internet users age 12-17 use Twitter. This makes Twitter far less common than sending or receiving text messages as 66% of teens do, or going online for news and political information, done by 62% of online teens. Older teens and

high school aged girls are more likely to use Twitter than other social networking sites (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010).

Instagram is a newer free social networking site. It is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on different platforms. Instagram was launched in 2010.

### **Definition of Social Networking**

Social Networking Site (SNS) is used to describe multiple aspects of engaging with others socially through some form of technology such as a cellular phone, smartphone, tablet, or computer. Globally, social networks are the maps of interconnections among socially related people (Acar, 2008).

There are many other sites that are used today other than Myspace and Facebook. For example, there is Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, Pinterest, Snapchat, and the list continues. Social media is used two different ways. The first, and more commonly studied, way is for organizational communication with external parties, such as customers, vendors, and the public at large (Leonardi, Huysman, & Seinfeld, 2013). The second and, heretofore, less commonly studied way in which organizations have employed social media is

for internal communication and social interaction within the enterprise (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013).

### **Social Media Usage**

Social media websites are the most common activity of today's children and adolescents. It was reported that 22% of teenagers engage in social networking at least ten times a day and more than half of the teens report that they engage in social networking at least one time a day. (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, more than 70% of youth and young adults (ages 12 to 29) who use the Internet use social networking sites (Lenhart et al., 2010).

A survey found that 47% of American adults use at least one social network (Donde, Chopade, & Ranjith, 2012). 95% of college students maintain a Facebook profile (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011). This study also found that 268 college students (primarily freshmen) reported spending an average of almost two hours per day engaging in social networking. Facebook has reported that members upload over 2 billion photos per month and 14 million videos per week, in addition to blog posts and weblinks (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011).

A study that 88.5% of their sample of undergraduate students from one university reported that they visited a social networking site at least once a day.

60% of the students stated that they visit these sites more than once a day. Social media has become so popular that it is a part of everyday life for students (Miller, Parsons, Lifer, 2010).

### **Social Media Use and Age**

Use of digital media (e.g., text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, photo and video sharing, and other forms of digital communication) has skyrocketed in recent years in ways that are dramatically shifting how and when young people connect with their friends and family members (Common Sense Media, 2012). The expansion of both the forms of and access to social media has challenged staff in youth serving programs to create policies that are responsive to the affordances of these ever-changing forms of communication, while also guarding against unforeseen risks and unintended negative consequences to program participants (Schwartz, et al., 2014).

Communication through social media is so prevalent today that it causes an issue when youth have to talk in a face-to-face situation. Youth mentoring relationships, once largely considered to be one-to-one relationships between youth and adults that were cultivated through in-person meetings or activities in the community or at school, now take a wide variety of forms with some



relationships taking place solely through digital forms of communication

(Shpigelman, 2014)

### **Demographics of Users**

Reports show that people of all ages use social media sites. The age varies between the sites and is changing with each year. Usage is increasing in not only in age but in men and women also. More men reported using social media sites in 2014 than they did in 2013.

In 2014, it was reported that 70% of people with a high school education or less use Facebook. In that same study it was reported that 71% of people who had some college education used Facebook. 74% of people who had a college degree use Facebook. 66% of the people who used Facebook in 2014 were men and 77% were women (Duggan, et al., 2014).

Twitter users have different statistics. In 2014 it was reported that, 16% of high school graduates reported using Twitter, 24% of people with some college education reported using Twitter and 30% of college graduates use Twitter. Twitter uses are 24% males and 21% females. These results are dramatically different from Facebook but, there was a rise in use from 2013 and 2014 (Duggan, et al., 2014).

Instagram users have more of a variety but, are most similar to Twitter statistics. In 2014 it was reported that 24% of college graduates use Instagram. 31% of users have some college education and 23% have a high education or less. From 2013 the percentage of men and women who use Instagram increased. Men went from 15% to 22% and women went from 20% to 29%. Instagram is a newer site that is continuously growing (Duggan, et al., 2014).

### **Social Media Use in Individuals with Low Self-Esteem**

Studies have found that individuals with low self-esteem try to compensate by becoming active in on-line activities, such as spending more time on Facebook, increasing the frequency of logging on to Facebook, and having more friends on Facebook. On the Internet, it seems, "the poor can get richer," meaning that introverts can compensate for the difficulties they experience in face-to-face interactions through on-line social networks (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010).

An association between people with low self-esteem and the number of Facebook friends was presented only among people with higher levels of public self-consciousness. Those who tend to be more concerned with their public self-image may engage more in the act of friending other Facebook users to fulfill their need for social compensation. They may also view the number of Facebook

friends as an indication of popularity and attempt to expand their Facebook connections to compensate for their lack of self-esteem (Lee, Moore, Park, & Park, 2012). For individuals with low self-esteem they use social media as a sense of "popularity" and do not act the way they normally would in a face-to-face setting.

Research indicates that those with low self-esteem tend to accept more friend requests from people they do not know very well (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013). Individuals with lower self-esteem find it easier to connect with new friends and communicate through social media since they can avoid one-on-one contact with people. Facebook allows users with lower self-esteem to create an image of themselves that they want others to perceive. They tend to frequently "untag" themselves from unflattering pictures in order to preserve this image (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013). Results from a study of one hundred Facebook users at York University implied that individuals with low self-esteem spend more time online and have more self-promotional content on their social networking profiles (Pantic, 2014). Social media gives anyone a chance to create an image that is not necessarily the truth about them. Individuals with low self-esteem can form this completely fake person on social networking sites.

Research has indicated that individuals with low self-esteem tend to frequently log into Facebook and spend more time on the social networking site than those with higher levels of self-esteem. This can be due to their attempt to compensate for their lack of self-esteem by increasing their number of online friends to feel a greater sense of belonging and heighten their perceived popularity. However, studies show that excessive friending can lead to negative evaluation of these "friend-rich" users and can be detrimental to one's well-being by being under the constant stress of being exposed to a large audience (Lee, Moore, Park & Park, 2012).

### **Pros of Social Media**

Social media allows people to stay in contact with friends, classmates, and relatives through an interactive medium; allowing individuals to meet new people with similar interests as well as individuals with different interests and cultural backgrounds; and promoting businesses, services, products, and websites (Donde, Chopade, & Ranjith, 2012). Social media is also noted to be the easiest and fastest way to collect information (Donde, Chopade, & Ranjith, 2012).

When asked about social media women agreed with statements such as "Facebook helps me to express my feelings easier" and "Facebook times causes [me] to feel excited and energized" (Thompson, Loughheed, 2012). A similar

study stated that social networking sites provide people opportunities to gratify the need to socially identify with others who look or think like they do, who share similar tastes and interests and who often compromise their closest group of friends/peers (Barker, 2012). This study also suggests that individuals who suffer from social anxiety can engage in social media usage to increase positive friendship experiences (Barker, 2012).

Results from one study implied that even if lonely people feel lower levels of well-being, the well-being of these people can be enhanced by the use of social networking sites. When lonely people engage in self-disclosure on social networking sites they usually receive social support from their “friends” on these sites (Lee, Noh, & Koo, 2013).

The self-presentation of suicidal acts in social media has become a public health concern (Fu, et al., 2013). On social media anything can be spoken about without any monitoring. Social media gives people a place to “chat” about issues they might be having. One important, yet understudied, research area is how social media affect people’s communication about suicide. Suicidal people often communicate with ambiguity, being in a state between dying by killing oneself and seeking the attention and help of others (Farberow & Shneidman, 1961).

The study indicated that there were various types of responses from Chinese microbloggers to an individual's online presentation of self-harm. A significant portion of the responses appeared to be positive, characterized functionally by efforts of caregiving and offers of assistance to the call for help (Fu, et al., 2013). The top 10 most influential microbloggers who reposted the original message showed concern and care for the person who self-harmed. Drawing on the hyperpersonal model (Walther, 1996), the consequence of these caregiving responses may positively address and reinforce a suicidal individual's underlying goal of self-presentation: the cry for help (Farberow & Shneidman, 1961).

### **Cons of Social Media**

There are cons to social media as well. There was a study done that found that social media has a negative effect on body image. One of the earliest studies on the effects of Internet use among young people reported that greater usage predicts increases in depressive symptoms over 1 year (Kraut et al., 1998).

Women reported being in a more negative mood after brief exposure to Facebook than after exposure to an appearance-neutral website, and that women who are high in appearance comparison tendency, spending time on Facebook lead to greater face, hair and skin-related discrepancies (Fardouly et al., 2015). A

study that is similar found that social networking sites can sometimes be related to more negative self-perception through negative social comparison (De Vries, Kuhne, 2015).

Cyberbullying is an issue that happens often on social networking sites. One study's results showed that higher levels of exposure to media portraying antisocial and risk behavior significantly contributed to higher initial rates of cyberbullying behaviors in adolescents (Den Hamer, Koniin, 2015).

Another study that focused around cyberbullying showed that teenage girls were more likely to report being victims of cyberbullying. This study also found that cyberbullying presents a slightly higher prevalence of psychological distress and low self-esteem compared to victims of other forms of bullying (Cenat et al., 2014).

Researchers found that three most commonly identified negative events that occurred while engaging in social networking was having a friend requested denied and/or ignored, having a public message or tag deleted, and having one's rank dropped on a list of Top Friends (Tokunaga, 2011). These events reported having a serious negative effect on the person.

Receiving negative feedback is predicted by adolescents' tendency to engage in online social exploration and risky online self-presentation.

Adolescents who engage in these risky online behaviors are characterized by older age, more sensation seeking, fewer peer problems, and more family conflict. (Koutamanis, Vossen, & Valkenburg, 2015).

Imaginary audience is the belief, typically heightened during adolescence that others are looking at and thinking about you at almost all times (Lapsey; Elkind 1989, 1967). As argued by research, this construct serves as both an expression of one's identity in relation to others and a wish to maintain ties with others (Lapsey; Elkind 1989, 1967). These behaviors could be reinforced by peers throughout social media. Social media gives the user a virtual audience.

Overall, results indicated that Facebook use was positively related to Imaginary Audience ideation, an important finding for the study of media use and adolescent development. (Cingel & Krcmar, 2014). Their results indicated a general relationship between media use and user characteristics. Given that the adolescents and emerging adults in our sample generally reported similar levels of Imaginary Audience, it is possible that they selectively exposed themselves to social networking sites to fill a developmental need (Cingel & Krcmar, 2014).

Users are missing out on a developmental need that needs to be received in physical life and not in the virtual world. These perceptions alter users' decisions and thoughts.



Social media has been found to pose a threat against mental health. Research suggests that online social networking is associated with several psychiatric disorders, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Pantic, 2014). Other studies found that more time spent online leads to a decline in communication with family members and friends, which can cause increased feelings of depression and loneliness (Kraut et al., 1998).

In one study, the researchers focused on a high school population, and found that more time spent on social networking sites was positively correlated to signs of symptoms of depression (Pantic, 2014). Another study found that social comparisons made on Facebook are associated with depressive symptoms. Engaging in frequent social comparisons can negatively impact one's mental well-being. The study continues to discuss that individuals with low self-esteem may end up feeling worse due to the effects of social comparison on social networking sites (Steers, Wickham, & Acitelli, 2014).

**Self-esteem.** For the purpose of this study both negative and positive aspects of self-esteem will be discussed. The main focus though will be if high levels of social media use will correlate with low levels of self-esteem. It is argued that every individual has a basic human need to raise or maintain self-

esteem. Self-esteem is considered an important indicator of an individual's well-being (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

The regulation of self-esteem is a powerful part of motivation. A study that researched self-esteem and the use of internet dating sites resulted that people will present themselves online in a manner that will lead to the greatest chance for success and work actively, to avoid failures. These results might suggest that people work actively to avoid failures because the failures may lead to decreased self-esteem (Kim, Kwon, Lee, 2009).

It has been shown through research that the concept of self-esteem is interpreted differently during stages of your life (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011). The current study will be using undergraduate students to see if self-esteem levels correlate with social media.

Individuals with low self-esteem may be considered more socially anxious, shy, lonely, and introverted. Individuals with low self-esteem may also experience less stable and fulfilling relationships than individuals with high self-esteem (Forest, Wood, 2012). As stated earlier, on social networking sites someone could deny a friend request or ignore it which makes the person feel negative about themselves. The need to belong and be accepted socially and loved can be overwhelmingly powerful; it is not surprising that people attempt

to meet this need through the use of social networking (Gangadharbatla, 2008). There is this need to belong on social networking sites and if there is rejection there can be serious effects to an individual's self-esteem (Turner, 2015).

**Importance of self-esteem.** There is prior research on if social media use correlates with self-esteem levels but, this study will focus mainly on undergraduate students. It is found that individuals with low self-esteem often posts more negative items on their profiles, thus leading them to receive more negative comments from friends and strangers, which may then further affect their self-esteem negatively (Forest, Wood, 2012). A study suggested that people with low self-esteem were more likely to spend over an hour per day on Facebook (Nadkarni, Hofmann, 2012).

If someone already suffers from low self-esteem, then using social media will only continue these feelings and cause more negativity. Young people who reported less positive and more negative interactions during social networking activities reported greater depressive symptoms concurrently and over time.

There have been findings that, social networking sites do not always have negative effect on self-esteem, social media has also been found to raise self-esteem levels. Narcissism is related to maintaining a positive image of oneself on social media (Bergman et al., 2011). Specific to sharing photos, as previously

noted, narcissism is related to self-reported posting of selfies on social media, with the amount of time an individual spends editing photos of themselves on social networking sites (Fox & Rooney, 2015), and with the selection of profile pictures that highlight one's physical attractiveness or personality (Kapidzic, 2013). In the "selfie" study demographic factors, such as age, are also likely factors in social media behavior because of generational differences in experience with, and exposure to, social media. Given the focus on college undergraduates in this study, generational differences in posts of selfies could not be adequately explored (Barry, 2015).

**Behaviors.** Behavior on social media is not the same behavior that someone would have in a classroom, at home, work, etc. Social media is a place where someone can release their stress and express their true feelings. One study found that using a scale that integrates one's behavior with their social media use gave them a better understanding of how the social media affected their participants. Results suggested that measuring social media use should focus on the integration social media use integration scale 47 of a site into one's social behavior and routines, as well as the emotional connection users experience with their use. Characteristics can possibly be influenced media use (Slater & Hayes, 2010; Slater, Henry, Swaim, & Anderson, 2003).

Psychologists have noted that in addition to a growth in entertainment media content that focuses on personal achievement and competition (e.g., reality TV shows), the ubiquitous invitation to post, tweet, and broadcast the self en masse via personalized new technologies may both reflect and fuel a societal shift toward individualistic values and a quest for fame (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Uhls & Greenfield, 2012). Behaviors can alter on social media depending on how someone wants to be perceived. Noted in the study above behaviors can alter from other's responses. These responses can boost or lower self-esteem of users.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Scales in Previous Research

Facebook use intensity. Ellison et al. (2007) created an 8-item scale called Facebook Use Intensity. The first two items asked about the average number of minutes spent actively using Facebook per week and about the number of people connected to a user's account (i.e., Facebook friends), on which participants could elect one of the nine custom answers (e.g., "0 10 or less, 1 11–50"). The remaining six items asked users about their emotional connection to the site and its role in their social relationships, and participants used a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree") to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Ellison et al. (2007) reported a Cronbach's alpha estimate of .83 for data obtained from a sample of emerging adults in college. This scale was administered in our study to provide convergent validity evidence for the SMUIS. (Ellison, Steinfield, Lampe, 2007).

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) offers the opportunity to both enact and respond to public performances of self, as well as to follow and interact with actual public figures (Greenwood, 2013). This scale gave inspiration for the scale that is going to be used in this current study. The current study is going to ask

how much time is spent on social media throughout the day, how many social media accounts are they enrolled in, and an already established self-esteem scale. With this scale this study is determined to find a correlation between social media use and self-esteem. (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, Johnson, 2013).

### **Participants**

The study was composed of 92 participants. Eight participants were eliminated because they declined to answer questions. The participants consisted of undergraduate students that were pulled from Rowan University's subject pool. Majority of participants had moderate level social media use. Majority of participants had self-esteem scores in the normal range. The participants were asked how much social media they used throughout a day and how many social media sites they use. After answering questions about social media usage they then answered an already established self-esteem scale to determine their self-esteem score.

### **Materials**

A survey was created to measure student's social media use and self-esteem scores to see if there is a correlation between high social media use and low self-esteem scores. The survey consisted of 12 questions, as shown in Appendix A. The first two questions are questions concerning social media

which can be answered using numbers. These two numbers will produce a social media score. The last ten questions consist of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale that can be answered using a 4-point Likert scale measuring student's self-esteem. The scale's four points ranged from lowest level of agreement to highest-level of agreement in the following levels: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree.

### **Design**

The current study is using a correlational design. The independent variable is levels of social media use. Participants responded with how much social media they use throughout a day and how many sites they are enrolled in. The dependent variable is their self-esteem scores which could be affected by how much social media the participants use.

### **Procedure**

Surveys were randomly given throughout Rowan university's subject pool where undergraduate students can answer different surveys that they choose. 100 total surveys were completed and 92 of these surveys were analyzed. Social Media scores ranged from 1 to 3. The mean score for social media was 2.1739. Majority of participants used social media moderately. The range for self-esteem scores was from 15 to 33. The mean self-esteem score was 23.2065. The survey



recorded the subjects' social media use and self-esteem scores using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from the lowest level of agreement to the highest level of agreement. 100 surveys were completed for this current study and 92 of these surveys were used. Eight participants were not able to participate because they declined to answer all the questions. The social media scores and self-esteem scores were inputted into SPSS 23. The scores were then put into a correlational study design to see if there is a correlation between high levels of social media use and low levels of self-esteem.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The current study explored the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem levels by administering an online survey to undergraduate students enrolled in Essentials of Psychology during the spring of 2016 at Rowan University. The online survey consisted of questions from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The survey was anonymous and posted on the Rowan Subject Pool for a month and students earned research credit for their participation. 100 participants took the survey but, only 92 were used for this study.

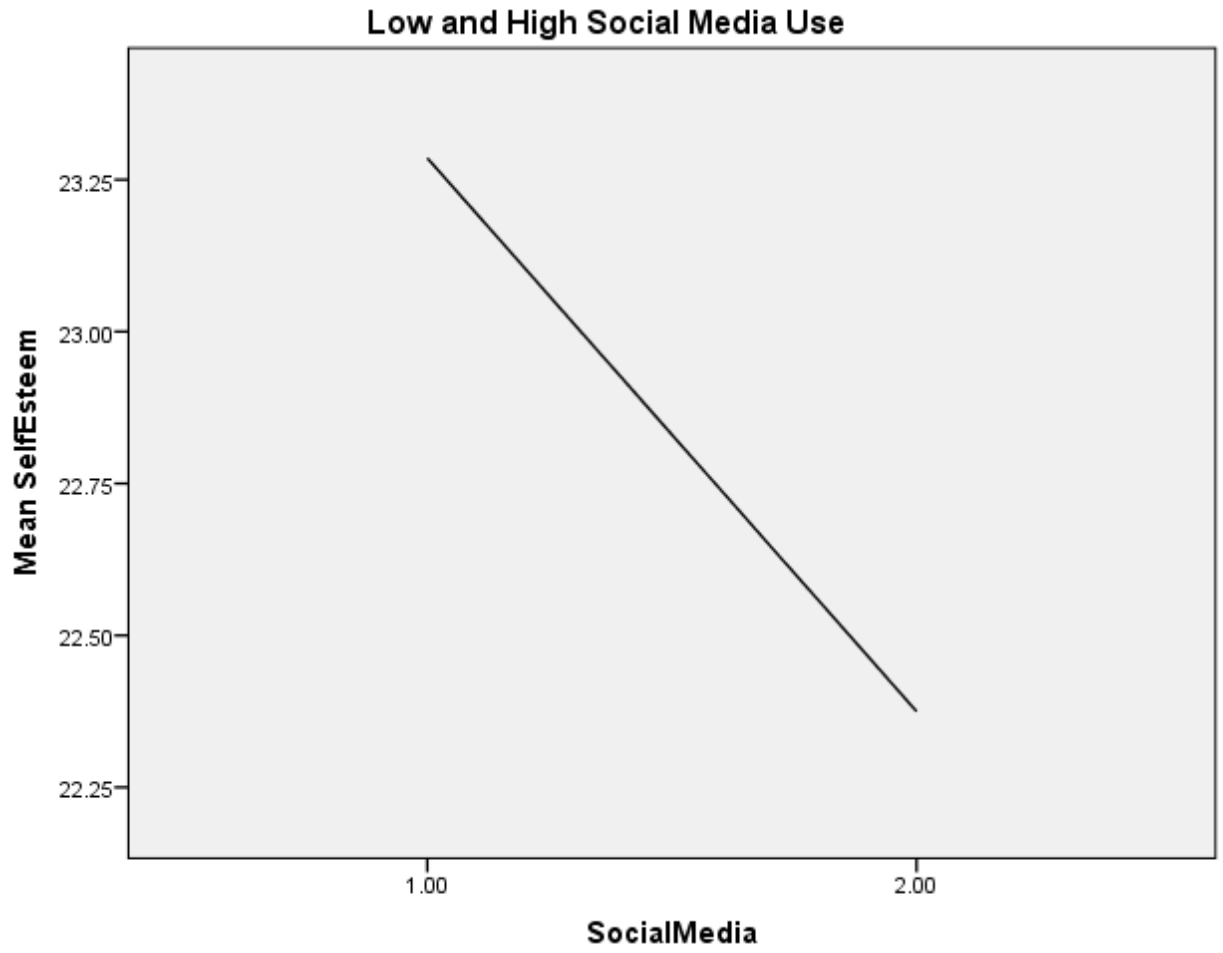
This study expected for undergraduate students to have moderate to high social media usage which was found to be true. This study also expected lower self-esteem levels in this population which was not found. The hypothesis for this current study, is that higher usage of social media would correlate with lower levels of self-esteem in undergraduate students.

Social media scores were computed through Excel and were compared between how many hours a day the participant spent on social media and how many different social media sites they are engaged in. From the two numeric answers, a score was calculated between the two to come up with a social media score. Scores ranged from 1 to 3. 1 being considered low usage and 3 being

considered high usage, 2 was considered moderate usage. The mean social media score was 2.1739 which showed that this population used social media pretty moderately.

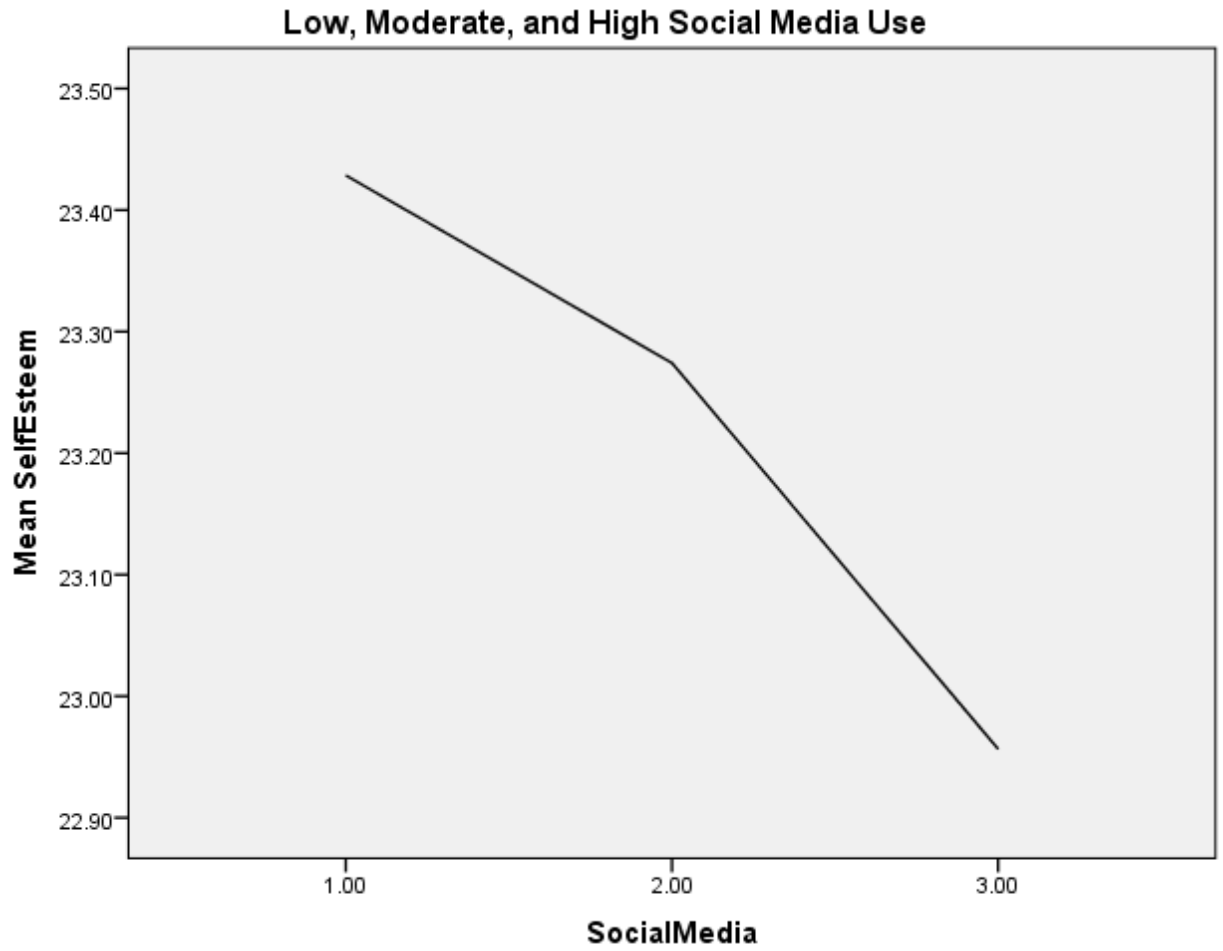
Self-esteem scores were computed through Excel and were compared between the ten different questions that are on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. After answering the questions, a score was calculated. The scale used a 4-point Likert Scale with (1) being Strongly Disagree, (2) being Disagree, (3) being Agree, and (4) being Strongly Agree. The mean score of Self-esteem was 23.2065 which is on the higher side of normal range. Scores under 15 suggest low self-esteem and over 25 suggest high self-esteem.

Correlational analyses computed between Social Media scores and Self-Esteem levels were not significant,  $r(38) = .537$ ,  $p = .095$ . This correlational analyses including low and high level usage of social media. Social media scores did not correlate with self-esteem levels, as shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1:* Low and High Social Media Use.

A correlational analysis was computed between three different Social Media scores and Self-Esteem levels. This correlational analyses included low, moderate, and high level usage of social media and self-esteem scores. This analyses was not significant,  $r(38) = .736$ ,  $p = .054$ . Including another social media level did not correlate with self-esteem levels, as shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: Low, Moderate, and High Social Media Use.*

In summary, social media usage did not correlate with self-esteem levels. It was predicted that high social media usage would correlate with low self-esteem levels. After deciphering the data, a trend was approaching. The graphs show that, there is a trend showing higher social media usage could correlate with lower self-esteem levels.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### Conclusions Regarding Social Media and Self-Esteem

The purpose of this study was to explore the correlation between social media use and self-esteem levels. Specifically, how much social media use the participant engages in daily. The hypothesis for the current study, is that higher usage of social media will correlate with lower levels of self-esteem.

After reviewing the data from the online survey given to the participants and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, there did not appear to be a significant correlation between social media usage and self-esteem levels. These results indicate that this particular group of undergraduate college students, frequent social media use does not correlate with self-esteem levels.

Past research has indicated that frequent use of social media, including different social media sites and how much time spent on these sites, has a direct effect on self-esteem levels due to overexposure and social comparison.

#### Limitations

This study had several limitations. A major limitation was the sample size. Only 100 undergraduate students signed up to participate in this study. Out of the 100 participants 8 had to be taken out because of refusal to answer questions.



There were only 92 participants all together. This was a small sample, if there were more participants there could have been potentially significant results.

Another limitation was using the undergraduate subject pool. Only Rowan University students enrolled in Essentials of Psychology in the Spring 2016 semester could sign up to take this survey. These students may not be a true or complete representation of the undergraduate population.

The current study was anonymous, so it did rely on the integrity of the participants. Rather than actually having the participants under surveillance to know exactly how many hours they spend on social media a day, this relied solely on their reports. Students had to report how many hours they spent on social media over the course of an entire day. Their reporting might not necessarily be consistent with how many hours they actually spend on social media/networking sites.

### **Future Research**

Future research should include a larger sample size not limited to only undergraduate students. If future research is done only in an undergraduate population multiple universities and colleges should be included into the sample size. Future research could also use any typical undergraduate student and not just students enrolled in Essentials in Psychology.

Future research should include a larger section for social media usage. The current study only had two questions on social media use. If more questions were involved a different score and different factors might affect results. In this study the participants were only asked how much time they spend on social media daily and how many sites are they enrolled in. There could be different scales used for specific networking sites that can be used.

Future research should also include different activities students participate in while on social media. For example, how often is the participants searching others' profiles, how often do they upload a "selfie", how does it make them feel when no one comments/likes their posts, or how many posts do they make in general? Many different questions could be asked involving social media.

Lastly, future research could focus on gender. In previous research, gender has been touched upon. Future research could really use gender to include other factors including, cyberbullying. Gender can have an effect on anything so it would be interesting to see if social media use could be another factor.

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## Appendix

### Online Survey

How many hours do you spend on your phone/social media a day?

How many different social media sites do you use?

<u>STATEMENT</u>		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	I wish I could have more <u>respect for myself</u> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>