Facebook Use and Self-esteem in Women

– A bidirectional relationship?

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What is self-esteem?
Self-esteem can be defined as a subjective feeling of one's own worth; it reflects how individuals value and respect themselves as a person.

Background

Social media have rapidly changed our everyday lives. However, we know little about the longitudinal associations between social media use and fundamental psychological constructs such as self-esteem. Several cross-sectional studies have established a link between Facebook use, mental health issues, and poor self-esteem[1-2]. This study investigates possible prospective links between Facebook use and self-esteem. Only female participants are included in this study, because research has found this relationship to be more prominent in women than in men[3].

Research questions

1. Can initial self-esteem predict amount of Facebook use during a two-week period?
2. Can recent Facebook use predict current self-esteem level?

Methods

By using experience-sampling methodology, we are able to examine the relationship between Facebook use and self-esteem in a new and ecologically valid way. Participants responded to notifications given on their smartphones three times a day for two weeks and were asked to report current self-esteem as well as recent social media use.
Self-esteem was measured using a 4-item version of the Rosenberg Self-esteem-scale, rated 1-10.

N 149 women

Age 16-59 years (M = 26.5, SD = 9.5)

Self-esteem (M = 6.6, SD = 2.2)

Observations per participant

(M = 19.7, SD = 8.1)

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Self-esteem
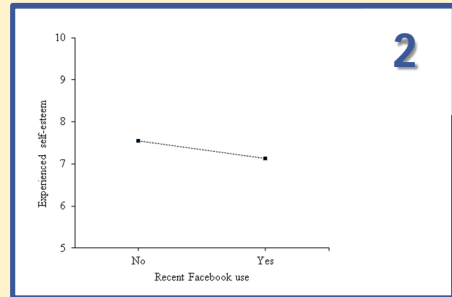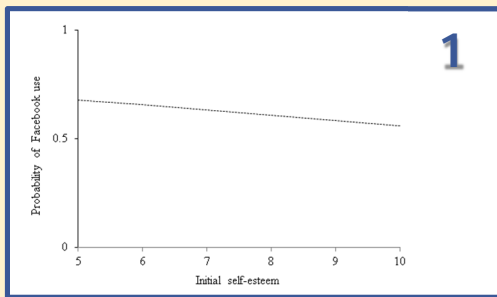
Facebook use

Self-esteem

Results

1. Multilevel analyses revealed that high initial self-esteem predicted less Facebook use during the experience-sampling period (b = −.102, *p* = .028). See Figure 1.

2. Recent Facebook use predicted lower current self-esteem level(b = −.431, *p* = .006). See Figure 2.

Age: Interaction analyses with age were run for both question **1** and **2**, however neither of them showed significant results. Age was then included as a control variable. The lack of interaction with age suggests that the discovered relationship is not age dependent.

Figure 1. X-axis: Initial self-esteem (5–10); Y-axis: Probability of Facebook use (0–1).

Figure 2. X-axis: Recent Facebook use (No, Yes); Y-axis: Experienced self-esteem (5–10).

Conclusions

Our multilevel analyses support a bidirectional relationship between Facebook use and self-esteem. This indicates that in addition to motivate Facebook use, low self-esteem could also be a consequence of Facebook use itself.
Thus, although Facebook use seems to be a common strategy to increase self-esteem, this strategy might be counterproductive.

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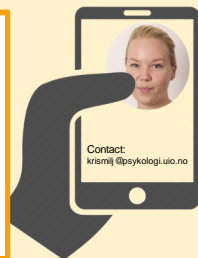
References

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