Dublin Business School

Usage of social networking sites and their effects on self-esteem.

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites are virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real‑life friends and meet other people based on shared interests, examples of such sites are twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Such sites are becoming increasingly popular within society, not just among young people but across all ages (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012). This study aims to find out whether age and gender have an effect on the use of social networking sites and also whether the amount of time people spend using their social networking sites effect the individual with regard to their self-esteem and whether usage of social networking sites change with age.

This study surveyed 114 participants, 60 males (N=60) and 54 females (N=54). The participant's ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-two years of age. The participants were all undergraduate students from Dublin Business School and other Irish colleges and universities. The key findings of this study were that there was an insignificant positive

correlation between time spent on social networking sites and an individual's self-esteem, where R=.066. There was a significant negative medium correlation between the age of the participant and time spent on social networking sites where R= -.449. There was a significant medium negative correlation between the age of the participant and amount of social networking sites used, where R= -.432. And there was a significant medium positive correlation where R= .587 between the amount of social networking sites a person has on their mobile phone and the amount of time they spend on social networking sites. No correlation was found between gender and the amount of time spent on social networking sites, or gender and the amount of social networking sites an individual uses. There was also no variance in self-esteem found between genders.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research project is to distinguish whether or not there is a correlation between the amount time spent on social networking sites and a person's self-esteem, and whether this changes with age. It also aims to collect and analyse data in order to find out whether gender and age also influence the usage of social networking sites. The main reason for this study is that over the past decade, there has been a huge increase in the availability of social networking sites to the public, and they have become increasingly popular in recent years (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012). This study aims to find out if social networking sites have an effect a person's self-esteem and to find out whether age and gender have and influence on the use of social networking sites. There has been very little research into this area, especially in Ireland.

According to Castells (2000) a technological revolution began to take place towards the end of the 1900's. This revolution, which was based around information technologies, began to change and speed up the material basis of society. Although human beings have been establishing social networks since at least the beginning of speech, now there are more ways for people to create these social networks. A network can be described as a collection of links between elements of a unit (Dijk, 2006, p.24-25).

Social Networking Sites are just one example of the new ways available to people which allow them to create networks. According to Meena, Mittal & Solanki (2013) social networking sites are virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real‑life friends and meet other people based on shared interests. Some common examples of such sites are Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Like everything else, there are both positives and negatives to Social Networking Sites, and the literature review is going to analyse previous studies that have been carried out in order to examine what these positives and negatives are, how age and gender effect the use of social networking sites and the effects social networking sites have on the individual including their self-esteem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Networking Sites and Gender

Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis & Kruck (2012) conducted a study in order to find out whether or not self-presentation on social networking sites is subject to gender differences, as was previously found that there are gender differences in self-presentation within society. The study consisted of 106 randomly chosen, public accessible social networking site profiles that were made up of 54 men and 52 women. The results of this study shows that men were more likely to use their social networking sites for communication purposes than women. It was found that women are more likely to use the social networking site in order to compare themselves to others and for looking for information on other people's profiles, whereas men are more likely to view other people's profiles in order to find friends. It was also found that women are more likely to use group names and upload portrait photos of themselves as their self-presentation whereas men and more likely to upload full body images.

Thompson & Lougheed (2012) conducted a peer reviewed exploratory study in order find out whether there are communication differences between males and females when it comes to social networking sites. This study was comprised of two hundred and sixty-eight undergraduate college students, with 76% of them in their freshman year. Females made up 53.3% of the participants and 46.7% were male. The mean age of the participants was 19.10

years with a standard deviation of 2.4. The gender differences examined through the social networking site Facebook found that women were more likely than men to report spending more time on the site than they had previously intended, often lost sleep as a result of Facebook, felt closer to Facebook friends than those seen on a daily basis, felt that pictures on Facebook caused them to have a negative body image, and that from time to time it causes them to feel stressed or addicted to Facebook.

A study by Bonds-Raacke & Raacke (2010) also conducted an experimental study examining gender differences in the use of social networking sites. This study was comprised of 201 students from a four year public, east-coast university, only 63 (31%) of the participants were male and 138 (69%) were female, compared the to the almost equal gender division in the Thompson and Lougheed (2012) study, as a result of the extreme difference between the number of males and females the results would not be as accurate. The mean age of the participants was 19.4 years with a standard deviation of 4.7, which is similar to the study by Thompson and Lougheed (2012). The most popularly used social network site with 87% of the participants in this study using it was Facebook and 82% used MySpace. The main difference between the male and female use of social networking sites, was that men were significantly more likely to use the site for dating purposes. This study also found that men used the social networking sites to share more information about themselves than women, in contrast to the study by Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis & Kruck (2012) which found that men were more likely to use social networking sites for communication purposes than women. This study also found that there was a significant difference between the privacy of men and women profiles. It was found that women were more likely to have their profile set to private than men, with 78% of women having their profile set to private compared to 44% of men.

A study was conducted by Shen, & Khalifa (2010), which analyzed gender differences in relation to the use of Facebook among Arabic students. This study was comprised of both

questionnaires and a focus group. One hundred and twenty-eight questionnaires were handed to Arabic college students and 70 were returned, the 70 valid questionnaires were made up of 35 female participants and 35 male participants. No incentive was given to the participants to complete the survey as it was all voluntary. The majority of the participants were undergraduate students, and the ages of the participants ranged between nineteen and thirty years of age. Out of the participants that took part in the survey, 84.3% of them had at least 6 months experience using Facebook and 54.3% of them logged onto the site daily. One focus group was arranged comprising of 20 females who did not participate in the survey, this focus group was established in order to identify the measures for frequent activity for Facebook, perceived consequences and any influential other in measuring subjective norms. This study found that Arabic females who used social networking sites found themselves to feel an increased independence compared to that of males. Female students also found that Facebook was a place that they could express their opinions freely and that it plays a very important role in empowering women. Male students were more wary of other Facebook users whereas the female students were more trusting of the information others shared. Women were less likely to perceive spending time on Facebook as 'wasting time' compared to males.

Social Networking Sites and Age

Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner & Neyer (2013) conducted a study through analyzing previous research. It consists of 277 studies and 177,635 participants. The aim of this study was to find out how large social networks typically are, and how their size and composition change across adulthood. The result of this study found that cross-sectional and longitudinal studies discovered that the global social network increased up until young adulthood and then decreased steadily, that both a person's personal and friendship reduce as person travels

through adulthood, a person's family network remains stable from their adolescent and teenage years all the way to old age, and that networks with co-workers and neighbors were only important in specific age ranges.

A number of studies have been conducted by Pew Internet & American Life Project on this topic. Pew Internet & American Life Project focus on the American population. One such study is called Older Adults and Internet Use and the report for this study was published in 2012. This study looks at people aged from eighteen years to people 65+. Similarly to the study by Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner & Neyer, this study found that the older a person got, the less interest they had in social networks. The result of this study showed that 53% of Americans aged over sixty-five years of age use the internet, and 70% of these internet users use the internet on a typical day. It was also found the percentage of internet use drops drastically for people that are over the age of seventy-five. One in three online users over the age of sixty-five use social networking sites such as LinkedIn or Facebook. This figure has grown from 13% to 33% of people aged over 65 years using social networking sites from 2009 to 2012, and 18% of these visit social networking sites on a daily basis.

Social Networking Sites: - Positives and Negatives

Nitzburg & Farber (2013) conducted a study using a survey established by the researchers in order to investigate the role of attachment in influencing the views and feelings of emerging adults about social networking sites and their disclosures to social networking sites. This study was comprised of a convenient sample of 416, but only 339 of these were emerging adults. This sample was then made up of 127 males (36.9%) and 212 females (63.1%), with the mean age of participants of 21.5 years of age with a standard deviation of 2.95. This study

found that the lower age was significantly predictive of a higher number of hours using social networking sites, over gender, ethnicity of the participant and attachment status. But it was also found that a higher age significantly predicted feeling more insincere when using social networking sites. The study shows evidence that the higher the degrees of attachment anxiety the more likely it is that the participant shows higher levels of feeling intimate with others over social networking sites, as well as participants who experience high levels of attachment insecurity are more likely to use social networking sites in order to avoid more personal face-to-face communication with people. The main finding of this study was that it was the disorganised and anxious attachment styles that were greatly predictive of using social networking sites in order to avoid personal face to face communication with people outside of social networking sites.

A study was carried out by Meena, Mittal & Solanki (2013), this study was based on the problematic use of social networking sites on school going teenagers in India. A cross-sectional study was used to carry out the research. 200 students were used as participants, this was made up of 115 boys and 85 girls, but only 198 students returned the questionnaires filled in completely, reducing the number of girls to 83. In this research it was also found that boys are more likely to use social networking sites to the extent that it becomes problematic compared to girls. This report states that problematic use of social networking sites is characterized by excessive indulgence in social networking use which affects the individual at an academic and co-curricular level as well as their interpersonal and social skills. Although this finding supports the findings that Barker (2012) found, the results of this study may have been effected by the fact that a significantly more amount of males took part than girls, compared to the 59% of girls and 41% of males in the study by Barker (2012).

Humans are societal beings that need relationships and communication with other humans in order to survive, and for that reason social networks exist. Social networking sites now allow

people to expand their social networks far more not than ever thought possible in previous years (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008, p.1). These vast technology advances over recent years have had much more on an impact on people's lives than had been previously imagined, they provide people with social platforms in order to allow them to express themselves and communicate with other people in a technological way (Srivastava & Bhardwaj, 2014, p.1).

Coyle & Vaughn (2008) conducted a small study which consisted of surveying 68 undergraduate students ages eighteen to twenty-two years of age and they also conducted two small focus groups one with six participants and the other with seven, in order to find out about college students communication habits. 37% of the participants stated that they used one social networking site, 53% stated that they used two social networking sites and 9% stated that they used three. Out of the 68 people that were surveyed 41 stated that they use social networking sites in order to keep in contact with friends.

Although there are positives to giving peoples the opportunity to express themselves and their personalities on a technological podium, this can result in people being ridiculed and bullied over these sites. This is called cyberbullying or online social cruelty. Kowalski, Limber & Agatson (2012) define cyberbullying as bullying through email, instant messaging (IM), in a chat-room, on a website, on an online gaming site, or through digital images or messages sent to a cellular phone. They also state that although cyberbullying is unique it also holds some similar traits to regular bullying such as drastically reducing the victims self-esteem. This links to the study by Wilcox & Stephen (2013) as it states that people with strong ties to Facebook, such as having a lot of friends, have a higher self-esteem than those who have weak ties. Having weak ties to the social networking site may cause some individuals to become targets of cyberbullying, as a result further lowering their self-esteem.

Social Networking Sites and Self-Esteem.

Wilcox and Stephen (2013) carried out five experiments focusing on the effects that Social Networking sites have on people's behaviour. The first study that was carried out used 100 people from a US panel, 57 females and 43 males. These 100 participants were then divided into four separate groups, Facebook, no Facebook, strong ties and weak ties. The results of this study found that people with strong ties experienced an increase in their self-esteem.

In the second experiment, Wilcox and Stephen (2013), carried out a study to find out whether or not the increase in self-esteem found in the participants was a result of the image they portrayed over Facebook. In this study, it was found that the only way that the use of social networking sites increased a person's self-esteem was when the participants were made to think about the type of information they presented to others while using social networking sites.

In the following studies by Wilcox and Stephen (2013) support was found for the theory that although there was an increase in the self-esteem of the participants on social networking sites, they may also lead them to lose self-control as a result, which may then result in health problems.

Although in the study by Wilcox and Stephen (2013), there was support to the theory that the use of social networking sites increases a persons' self-esteem once they focus on the way they present themselves, a study by Okamoto et al (2011) obtained different results. In this study, a Chinese sample was used rather than the American sample used in Wilcox and Stephens' study in 2013. The sample used in the study by Okamoto et al (2011) was substantially larger, with 5,563 10th grade students. In china there are two types of schools, professional and academic, samples from both schools were used.

In this study it was found that students with high friend nominations displayed lower depressive symptoms whereas those who had a lower amount of friend nominations showed higher levels. However, a contradiction did appear while carrying out this study, it was found that girls from a professional school who had a popular status, which was based on the 'most-liked' nominations actually displayed an increase in the risk of depression as they showed more depressive symptoms.

Past internet chat rooms and forums were set up in order to allow people meet and chat with strangers online as the internet was not as accessible as it is today. Nowadays internet sites are set up in order to allow people to communicate with people that they are already friends with. People do not usually set up accounts for social networking sites unless they already have friends on it and have been invited to join. Therefore, unlike before, social networking sites connect people rather than isolate them (Ahn, 2011, p.1441).

Similarly to Wilcox and Stephen (2013), Barker (2009) carried out a study based on American freshman students. This study used a quantitative approach in order to carry out the research. 734 students were analysed in this study, which was made up of 59% females, 41% males and a large selection of ethnicities. In this study it was found that females were more likely to display high positive collective self-esteem, whereas males were more likely to report a more negative collective self-esteem than the females. Females were also more likely to use social networking sites as a means of communicating with friends, passing time and entertainment which correlates with the positive collective self-esteem whereas males were more likely to use social networking sites for social compensation and social identity gratification.

A study was conducted by Valkenburg et al (2006), the sample for this research was comprised of 881 adolescents, aged between 10 and 19 years old and had a profile on a Dutch

social networking site. These 881 teenagers were given a survey making this a quantitative research approach. This aim of this study was to find out if social networking sites had an effect on the self-esteem and general well-being on the teenagers using such sites. In this study it was found that the self-esteem of teenagers was effected solely by the feedback they received on their profiles, it was found that positive feedback enhanced the self-esteem whereas negative feedback decreased it. The majority of teenagers, 78%, predominantly received positive feedback, whereas only a small fraction of the sample, 7%, continuously received negative feedback, which for these adolescents it causes adverse effects on their self-esteem.

A study was carried out by Stefanone et al (2011) which consisted of 311 participants. The participants of this study completed online surveys, a quantitative approach, in order to measure self-worth, self-esteem and typical behaviours on Facebook. It was found that the appearance contingency for self-worth had the strongest relationship.

Gangadharbatla (2008) carried out a study on why college students feel the need to join social networking sites. This study takes a slightly different approach as it aimed to find out if a college student's self-esteem, need to belong, need for cognition and self-worth has an effect on their view of social networking sites, rather than looking at it from a different perspective similarly to the majority of other studies. The sample for this study consisted of 237 undergraduate students aged between 18 and 30 years of age. 56.1% of the sample was made up of females and the remaining 43.9% of the sample was made up of males. It was found that 92% of the participants logged into their social networking sites at least once a day and 6% log on as often as 10 times a day. It was also found that a college students' self-esteem, need to belong and self-worth have an effect on their attitudes towards social networking sites, whereas their need for cognition has no influence on their willingness to join at all.

Aims and Objectives of the study:

The objective of this study is to find out whether or not the amount of time spent on social networking sites have an effect on a person's self-esteem. This study also aims to collect and analyse data using quantitative methods in order to find out whether gender and age also influence the usage of social networking sites and to also add to current research.

Hypotheses:

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Time spent on social networking sites will have an effect on a person's self-esteem.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):- Time spent on social networking sites will have no effect on a person's self-esteem.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Age will have an influence on the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Null Hypothesis (H_2):- Age will have no influence on the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Age will have an influence on the amount of social networking sites a person uses.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):- Age will have no influence on the amount of social networking sites a person uses.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Gender will have an influence on the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):- Gender will have no influence on the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Gender will have an influence on the amount of social networking sites used.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):- Gender will have no influence on the amount of social networking sites used.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):- Social networking sites on a mobile phone will influence the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):- Social networking sites on a mobile phone will have no influence the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

METHODS

1.1 Materials: The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used in order to measure the self-esteem of the participants. A second questionnaire was also established by the researcher in order to measure the amount of time spent on social networking sites. This questionnaire was made up of closed-ended questions.

1.2 Apparatus: In carrying out this study, the researcher used a password protected USB key and a locked filing cabinet in order to protect and store the data collected securely and SPSS, which is a computer program, was used to analyse quantitative questionnaires.

1.3 Participants: 114 participants took part in this study (N=114). They were made up of undergraduate students with a minimum age of 18 and a maximum age of 72 and the mean age was 29.27 (M=29.27) with a standard deviation of 12.320. There were 60 males (N=60) (52.6%) and 54 females (N=54) (47.4%). These participants were accessed within Dublin

Business School and other Irish colleges and universities, and were from both rural and urban areas across Ireland. The participants were recruited verbally and were explained the purpose of this study and written guidelines provided on the questionnaires were also used. The participants took part in order to add to research, they participated voluntarily and no incentive was offered. They also had to option to ask the researcher any further questions.

1.4 Design: This study was carried out using a quantitative research and a correlational design was used, as well as frequencies and descriptive statistics. For the correlational design, the predictor variable was self-esteem and the criterion variable was the amount of time spent on social networking sites. In order to achieve the correlational score, the researcher used bivariate correlations using a two-tailed Pearson correlation coefficient.

1.5 Procedure: Over a period of several weeks the researcher handed out questionnaires to students within Dublin Business School and other colleges. This was a non-probability sample or convenience sample which was justified based on the convenience and availability of the participants. The researcher then asked the participants if they would like to participate in the study. The researcher also explained to them that the study was for academic purposes only, that they were not to put their name on any of the questionnaires as it is completely confidential and that all participants will be unidentifiable. Written guidelines were also provided to the participants on the front page of the questionnaires which can be seen in the Appendix 1 at the back of the report. The participants were also given an opportunity to ask the researcher any questions. The only criteria that that the participants had to fill was that they were over the age of 18 years for ethical purposes, and that they were undergraduate students. There was no age cut off point for the participants. One of the limitations that arose while carrying out the study was that some of the participants did not use any social networking sites, this had an adverse effect on the result obtained within the study. Another limitation that occurred while carrying out the research was that one hundred and fifty

questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students from a number of colleges within Dublin, only one hundred and twenty-two were returned and only one hundred and fourteen participants filled in the questionnaires correctly and therefore the answers of the questionnaires incorrectly completed could not be counted as part of the study. Such completed questionnaires were shredded in order to protect the participant's identity.

In order to use the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to analyse the self-esteem of the participants, using SPSS the results for questions three, five, eight, nine and ten all had to be recoded as they were negative answers.

1.6 Ethical considerations: One of ethical issues or risks that could have arose from this study is the possibility that some of the participants may have been victims of cyber/internet bullying. If so this questionnaire may have caused them distress as they had to answer questions on the social networking sites they use and questions in order to analyse their self-esteem. In order to address the risk of any participant becoming distressed as a result of this study, the researcher included contact information for a selection of organizations, including counsellors, which may help in regard to any distress the participants may experience. In order to address any unknown risks of harm this study may cause the participants, the researcher included their own contact information in the form of an email address on the survey in case of any participant wanting to contact them in relation to any part of the questionnaire.

Another ethical issue that was addressed was briefly touched on in the procedure section of this report, this issue is informed consent. Each of the participants were informed of all details of the nature of this study in both a written and verbal manor. If they consented to participate they had the option to complete the questionnaire and if not, they were not obliged to complete the questionnaire.

In order to protect the identities of the participants the completed surveys were kept in a locked filing cabinet, which only the researcher had the key to, until they were being analysed, they were then put back into the filing cabinet and will remain there for approximately a year, they will then be shredded/destroyed in order to protect the information provided by the participants. Also all the information that was stored digitally was password protected including the laptop used and the USB key.

RESULTS

The number of participants that took part in the present study was one hundred and fourteen (N=114) and the ages ranged from eighteen years to seventy-two years of age. Sixty males (N=60) took part in the study which is 52.6% of the total participants, and fifty-four females (N=54) took part which is 47.4% of the total participants. Out of the one-hundred and fourteen participants, all disclosed their age, the mean age for males was 29.38 (M=29.38) with a standard deviation of 12.775, the mean age for females was 29.15 (M=29.15) with a standard deviation of 11.912.

Graph 1.1:
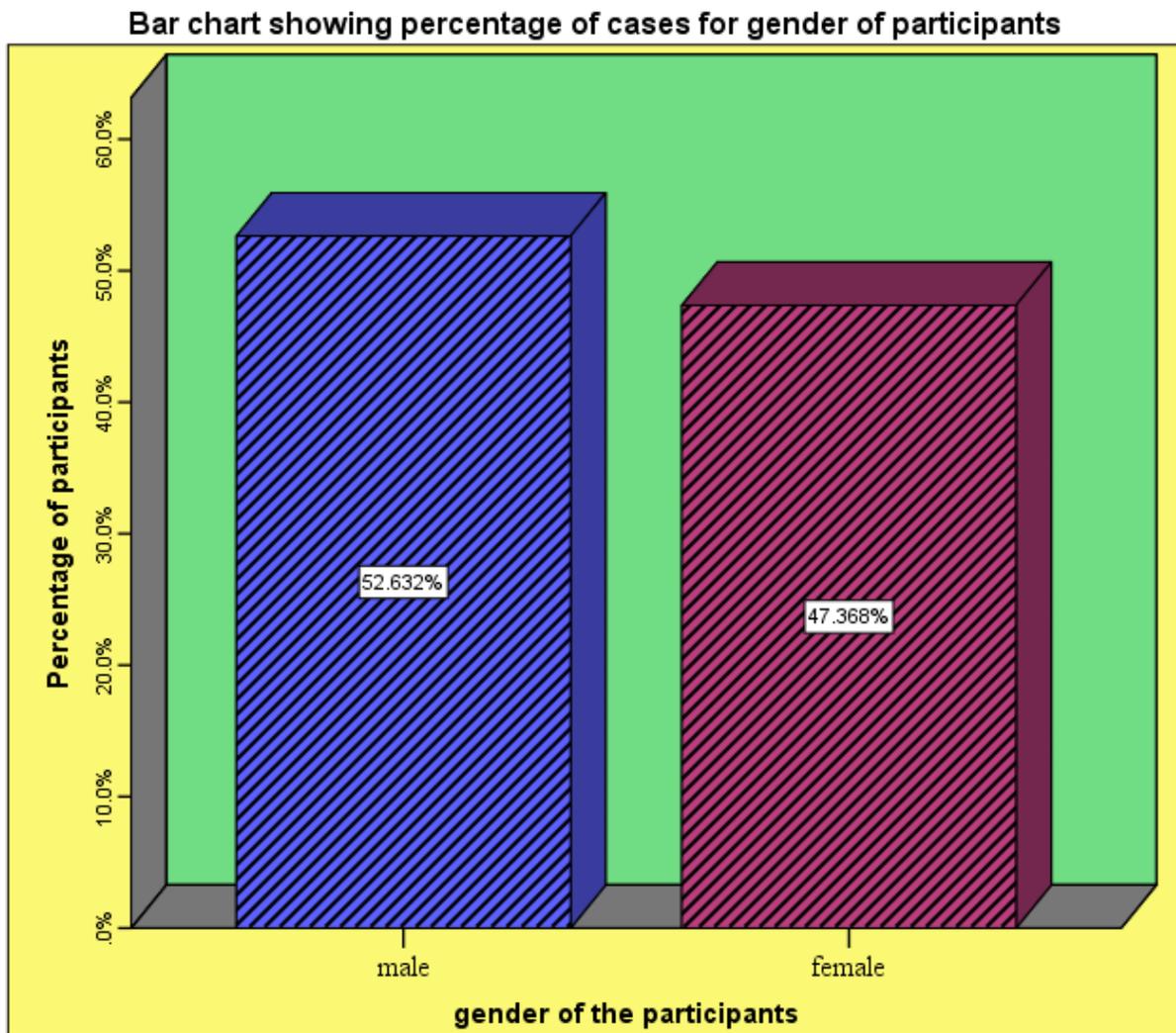
Although 2 females and 2 males did not use any form of social networking sites, in this study it was found that 98 participants (N=98) use Facebook which is 86% of the total participants, 63 participants (N=63) use Twitter which is 55.3% of participants, 18 participants (N=18) use LinkedIn which is 15.8% of participants, 10 participants (N=10) use Tumblr which is 8.8% of participants, 40 participants (N=40) use Instagram which is 35.10% of participants, 7 participants (N=7) use Ask.fm which is 6.1% of participants and 31 participants (N=31) used other forms of social networking sites which is 27.2% of the total participants.

During this study it was found that the majority of both men and women, 22 men and 23 women, checked their social networking site(s) more than five times a day, and the minority

of men and women either never checked them or did so once a week. The main difference between the males and females was that 20% of males checked their social networking site(s) two to three times daily and only 6.7% checked them three to five times a day, in contrast 9.3% of women checking their site(s) two to three times daily and 20.4% checking them three to five times daily. These figures can be seen in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Displaying the number and percentage of participants and how often they check their social networking site(s).

	MALES	FEMALES
NEVER	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.7%)
ONCE AWEEK	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.6%)
FEW TIMES A WEEK	7 (11.7%)	2 (3.7%)
ONCE A DAY	8 (13.3%)	8 (14.8%)
2-3 TIMES DAILY	15 (20%)	5 (9.3%)
3-5 TIMES DAILY	4 (6.7%)	11 (20.4%)
5 + TIMES DAILY	22 (36.7%)	23 (42.6%)

Using descriptive statistics, it was found that there was no significant difference in the frequency of men and women updating their profile on social networking site(s). The majority of both males and females stated that they updated their profile(s) every few months with a figure of 26.7% of males and 27.8% of females, but then surprisingly the next most common answer for females was multiple times day with a figure of 25.9%. Every few weeks was the second most common answer for men with 23.3% choosing it which was followed closely by multiple times a day with a percentage of 18.3%. These results can be seen in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Displaying the number and percentage of males and females based on how often they check their social networking site(s).

	MALES	FEMALE
NEVER	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.7%)
EVERY FEW MONTHS	16 (26.7%)	15 (27.8%)
EVERY FEW WEEKS	14 (23.3%)	10 (18.5%)
ONCE A WEEK	8 (13.3%)	5 (9.3%)
MULTIPLE TIMES AWEEK	4 (6.7%)	6 (11.1%)
ONCE A DAY	5 (8.3%)	2 (3.7%)
MULTIPLE TIMES A DAY	11 (18.3%)	14 (25.9%)

A bivariate, two-tailed, Pearson correlation test was carried out in order to determine whether or not there was a relationship between age and the amount of time spent on social networking sites. The result of this test showed that there was a significant negative medium correlation in this study where R= -.449 and N=114. This shows that the older a person get the less time they spend on social networking sites. This rejects the null hypothesis (H_0) supporting the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

However the same test was carried out in order to determine whether or not there was a relationship between gender and time spent on social networking sites. The result of this test showed that there was a non-significant negative correlation with R= -.069, showing that there was no relationship found between gender and the amount of time spent on social networking sites. This fails to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and rejects the alternative hypothesis (H_1). See Table 1.3, Table 1.4 and Graph 1.2 below.
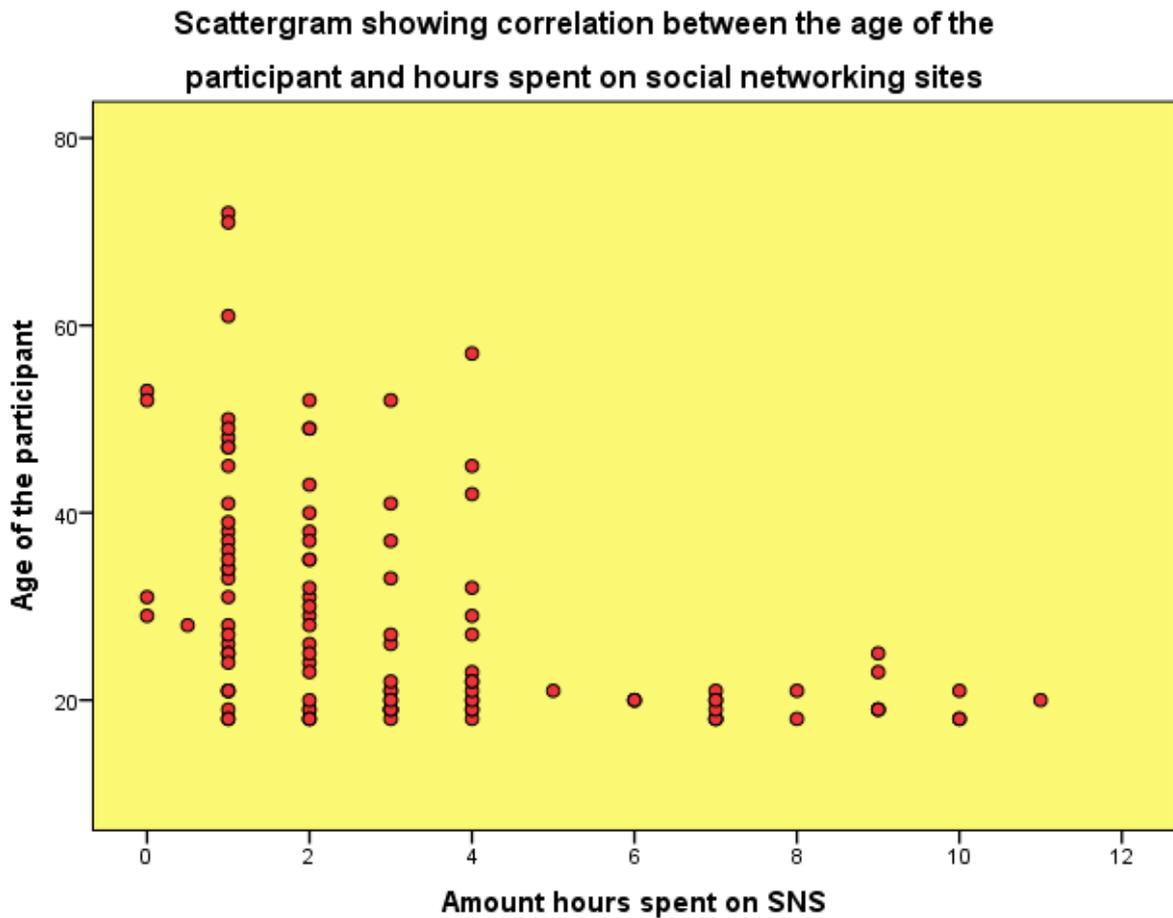
Table 1.3:

Correlation between age and time spent on social networking sites (SNS)

		Age of the participant	Amount of hours spent on SNS
	Pearson Correlation	1	-.449
Age of the participant	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
	Pearson Correlation	-.449	1
Amount of hours spent on SNS	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

Table 1.4

Correlation between gender and time spent on social networking sites (SNS)

		Gender of the participant	Amount of hours spent on SNS
	Pearson Correlation	1	.069
Gender of the participant	Sig. (2-tailed)		.464
	N	114	114
	Pearson Correlation	.069	1
Amount of hours spent on SNS	Sig. (2-tailed)	.464	
	N	114	114

Graph 1.2

Scattergram showing correlation between the age of the participant and hours spent on social networking sites

A bivariate Pearson correlation test was also carried out in order to distinguish whether or not there was a relationship between age and the amount of social networking sites used. The result of this test shows that there was a significant medium negative correlation where R= -.432 and N=114, showing in this case that there is a relationship between the age of a person and the amount of social networking sites they use, as a person gets older they use a smaller amount of social networking sites. This can be seen in Table 1.5 and Graph 1.3 below. This result rejects the null hypothesis (H_0), supporting the alternative hypothesis (H_1). The result is very similar to the previous test carried out between age and hours spent on social networking sites.
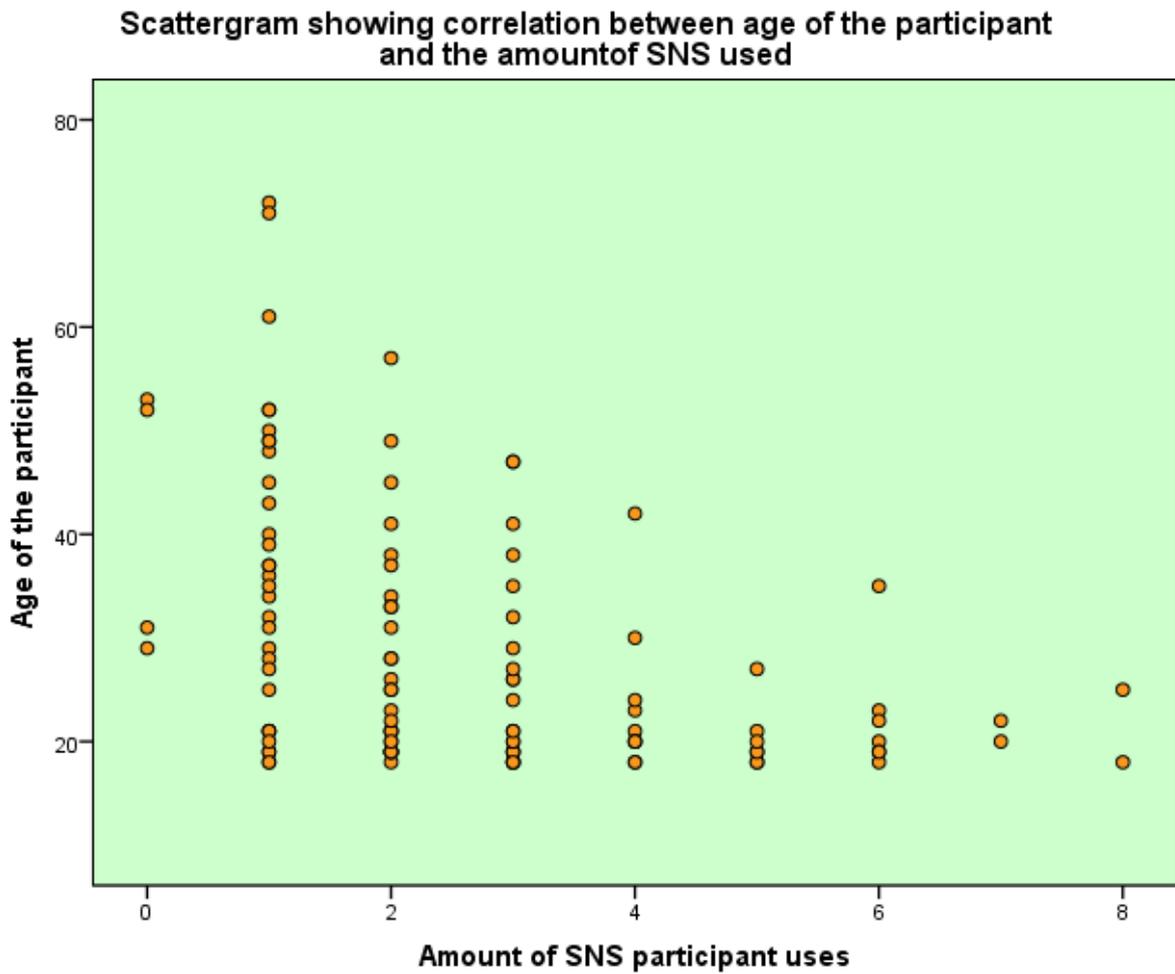
Another test was carried out in order to distinguish whether or not there was a correlation between the gender of the participant and the amount of social networking sites used. The result of this test shows a significant small positive correlation where R= .152 and N=114, showing that for this study there is a small relationship between gender and the amount of social networking sites used. This study rejects the null hypothesis (H_0) and supporting the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This can be seen in Table 1.6 below. This shows that there is a slightly larger correlation between gender and the amount of social networking sites used, and gender and the amount of time spent on social networking sites.

Table 1.5:

Correlation between age and amount of social network sites used.

		Age of the participant	Amount of SNS participant uses
Age of the participant	Pearson Correlation	1	-.432
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
Amount SNS participant uses	Pearson Correlation	-.432	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

Graph 1.3

Scattergram showing correlation between age of the participant and the amount of SNS used

Table 1.6

Correlation between gender and amount of social networking sites used.

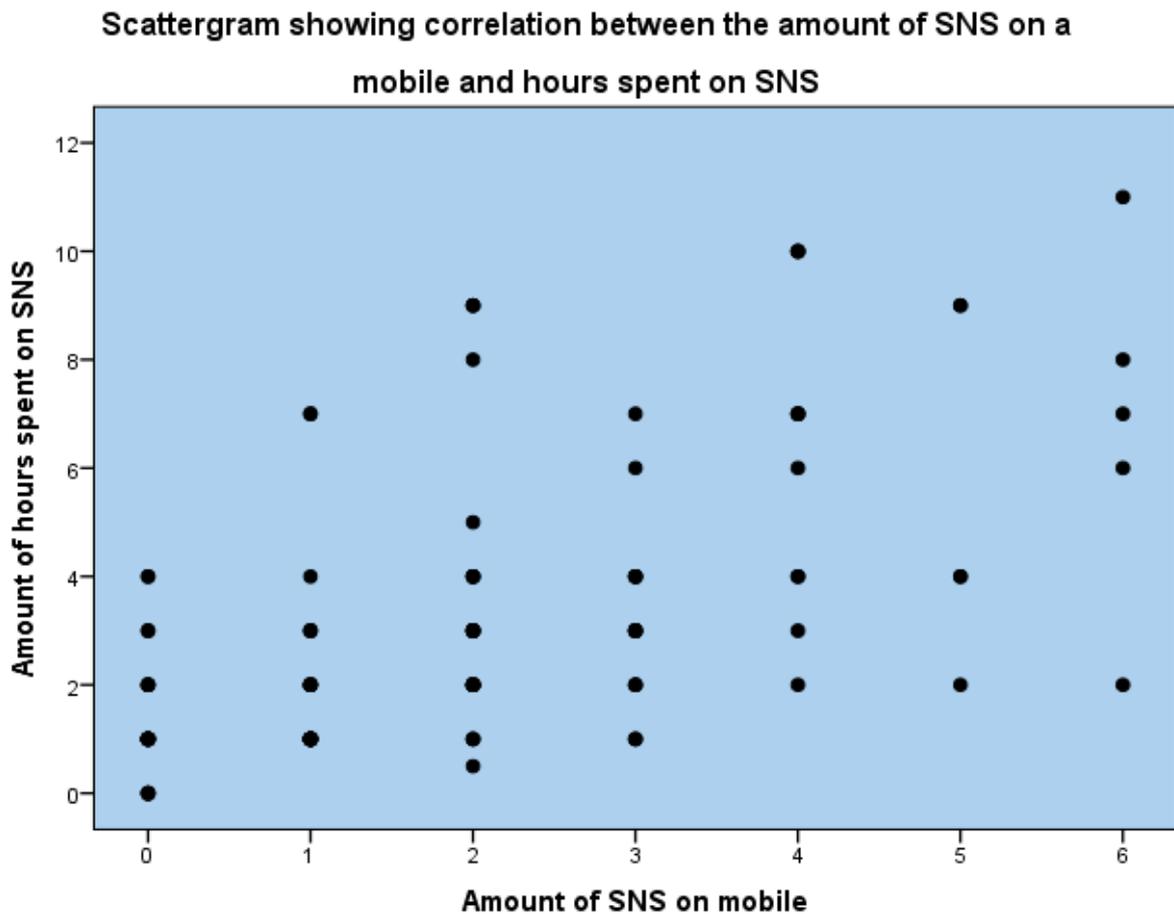|		Amount of SNS participant uses	Gender of the participant
Amount of SNS participant uses	Pearson Correlation	1	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.106
	N	114	114
Gender of the participant	Pearson Correlation	.052	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.106	
	N	114	114

In order to find out whether or not there was a relationship between the amount of time spent on social networking sites and the amount of social networking sites people had on their mobile phones a Pearson two-tailed correlational test was conducted. From the result of this test it was found that there was a significant medium positive correlation where R= .587 and N=114, showing that in this study the more social networking sites an individual has on their mobile the more time they spend using social networking sites. This rejects the null hypothesis (H_0) and supports the alternative hypothesis (H_1). See Table 1.7 and Graph 1.4 below.

Table 1.7

Correlation between the amounts of time spent on SNS and the amount of SNS on a mobile phone

		Amount of hours spent on SNS	How many SNS on mobile
Amount of hours spent on SNS	Pearson Correlation	1	.587
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
How many SNS on mobile	Pearson Correlation	.587	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

Graph 1.4:

Scattergram showing correlation between the amount of SNS on a mobile and hours spent on SNS

The final and main correlation carried out in this study was in order to find out whether or not time spent on social networking sites have an effect on their self-esteem. This correlation was one of the main aims and objectives for this study. There has been results found within this study showing that many different aspects of a person influence the usage of social networking sites and this correlation was to find out whether usage of social networking sites effect a person's self-esteem. The result of this study showed an insignificant positive correlation where R= .066 and N=114, showing that in this study time spent on social networking sites has very little or no influence on an individual's self-esteem. This fails in rejecting the null
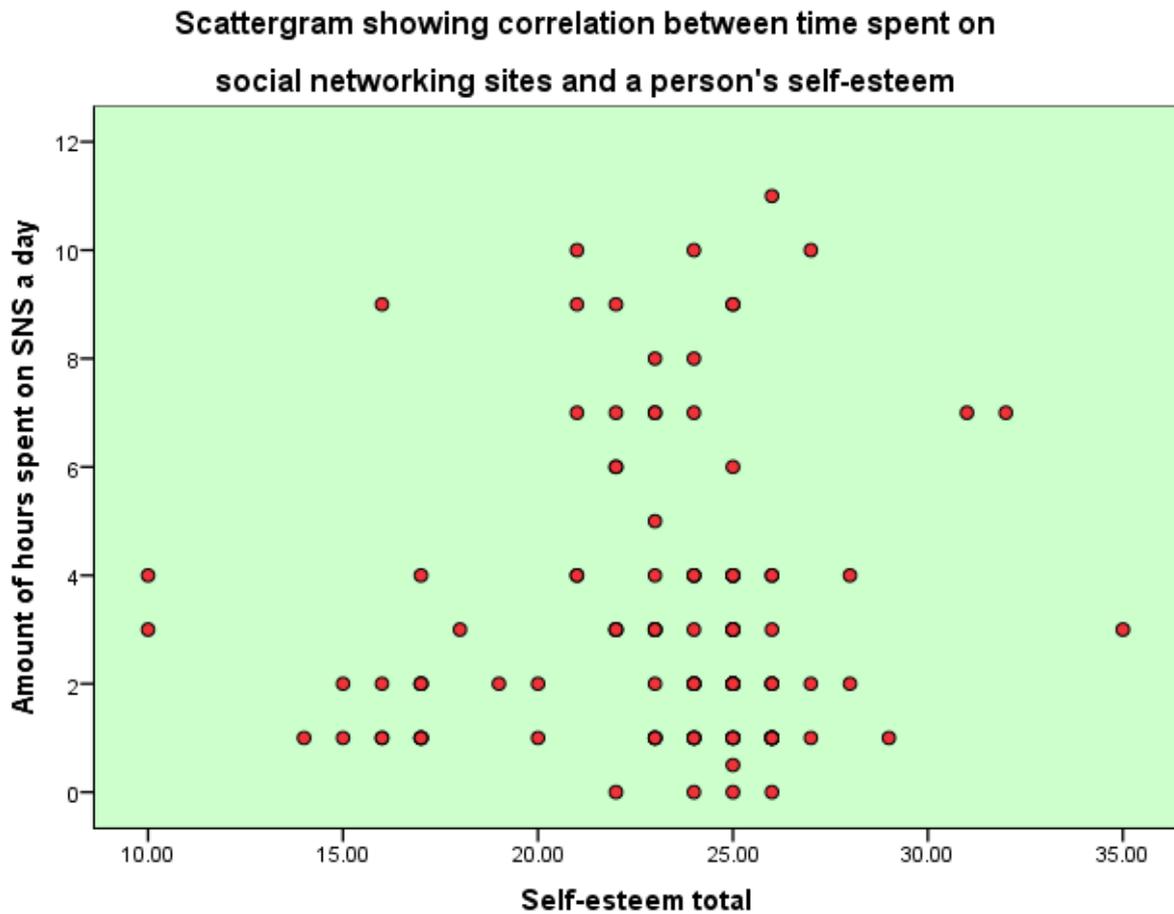
hypothesis (H_0). See Table 1.8 and Graph 1.5 below. There was also no significant difference in the self-esteem of the male and female participants.

Table 1.8:

Correlation between amount of time spent on social networking sites and a person's self-esteem

		Amount of hours spent on SNS	self-esteem total
	Pearson Correlation	1	.066
Amount of hours spent on SNS	Sig. (2-tailed)		.483
	N	114	114
	Pearson Correlation	.066	1
self-esteem total	Sig. (2-tailed)	.483	
	N	114	114

Graph 1.5

Scattergram showing correlation between time spent on social networking sites and a person's self-esteem

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to determine whether or not there is a correlation between the amount of time spent on social networking sites and a person's self-esteem, and whether this changes with age. It also aims to collect and analyse data in order to find out whether gender and age also influence the usage of social networking sites, and to add to the current research that has been conducted.

The mean age of the participants that took part in this study was 29.27 years (M=29.27) with a standard deviation of 12.320 and the ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-two. This study

supports evidence that social networking sites are no longer only used by young people and teenagers but are becoming increasingly popular among older generations as well. Similarly the study by Pew Internet and American Life Project (2012) shows evidence that more and more people over the age of sixty-five years are not only using the internet but are also using social networking site such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Dijk (2006) also described the network society as a social formation with an infrastructure of social and media networks enabling prime mode of organization at all levels, meaning that people from all ages and backgrounds use social networking sites.

Although the older person is beginning to use social networking sites and the internet more than they did in previous years, this study found that the age of the individual has an effect on the amount of time they spend on social networking sites, as well the amount of social networking sites that they use. It shows support for Pew Internet and American Life Project (2012)'s result that although the amount of people aged over sixty-five years of age using social networking sites has increased to 33% only 18% of them visit their social networking site on a daily basis compared to 82% of all adults having social networking sites and 67% visit their social networking site on a daily basis.

Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner & Neyer (2013) conducted a study that analyzed a number of other studies in order to find out the effects age had on social networks within society. This study analyzed the results of 177,635 participants in both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Although this study is based on social networks alone and not social networking sites, and the number of participants in the current study is significantly lower than that of the study by Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner & Neyer (2013), the results between this study, the current study and the study conducted by Pew Internet & American life Project were very similar, stating that as a person get older their social networks with friends and colleagues decrease, it also states that throughout a person's adolescent and teenage years there social network is increasing.

This is possibly the reason behind older people spending less time on social networking sites than younger people, which support was found for in this study through correlations. Unfortunately in the report of the study by Pew Internet & American Life Project (2012) the number of participants who took part in the survey was not stated, as a result no comparison between sample size and participants can be made.

Another reason for younger people spending more time on social networking sites than older people is that they learned how to use it and understand it a lot easier and quicker. Srivastava & Bhardwaj (2014) state that children and young people have taken to the internet and social networking sites effortlessly. Similarly Kowalski, Limber & Agatson (2012) state that the majority of what children's parents know about social networking sites, computers and the internet in general was in fact taught to them by their children.

With regard to gender differences when using social networking sites, it was found that the majority of the studies examined in the process of this study only looked at the differences between the way males and females use their social networking site accounts to communicate, for self-presentation, what they use social networking sites for, and their attitudes towards social networking sites, unlike in this study where it focused on possible gender differences between time spent on social networking sites, and the amount of social networking sites used.

Although there are many gender differences with regard to the use of social networking sites, this study found no significant correlation between an individual's gender and the amount of time spent on social networking sites, or the amount of social networking sites they are a member of. Similarly in the study by Nitzburg & Farber (2013), it was found that the younger the age of the participant was significantly more predictive of more time spent on social networking sites than any other variable including gender. This study had a convenient sample

of 336 which consisted of 127 males and 212 females. The extreme variation between the amount of males and females may have an effect on the reliability of the results, however in the current study, although the sample size is significantly smaller the ratio of males to females is much more even increasing the reliability of the results, and the same results were obtained.

The current study found results that supported the theory that the amount time a person spends on social networking sites does not have any effect on the individual's self-esteem. This result was established through measuring the amount of hours people spend on social networking sites and correlating it to the total scores of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. The result of this was an insignificant positive correlation of .066, which means that the correlation was too small to have any significance. The more time people spent on social networking sites, the higher their score was in the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, this meant that people who spent more time on social networking sites had a slightly lower self-esteem than those who spent less time, but the difference is not prominent enough in order to say that there is a correlation to be seen. One of the experiments conducted by Wilcox & Stephen (2013) was comprised of 100 participants, 57 females and 43 males. This experiment was set up in order to distinguish whether the ties people had to Facebook effected their self-esteem. The result of this test suggested that people who had strong social ties to Facebook experienced an increase in their self-esteem whereas the participants who had weak ties to Facebook experienced a decrease in self-esteem. Comparing these results to the current study shows that time spent on social networking sites on its own may not effect an individual's self-esteem and since no other variables were taken into consideration, no correlation was seen.

In another experiment by Wilcox & Stephen (2013) it was found that the use of social networking sites increases the self-esteem of the individual that is using the site, when that individual was made to think about the way in which they present themselves through the social

networking site. This also supports the previous statement that it is possible that in current study, no correlation was found between time spent on social networking sites and an individual's self-esteem, as it may not be the only aspect of a social networking site's usage that could have an effect on a person's self-esteem.

A similar study was conducted by Okamoto et al. (2011) but instead of the participants being from America, the participants of this study were from Chinese schools. The sample size of this study consisted of 5,563 students. Similarly to the study by Wilcox & Stephen (2013) in this study it was found that the participants who had high friend nomination, or social ties, displayed lower depressive symptoms and the participants who had a lower amount of friend nominations showed higher depressive symptoms. In contradiction to this it was found that popular girls from a professional school showed a higher risk for depression. This shows that there are many different aspects of the use social networking sites that can effect an individual's self-esteem.

A study by Baker (2009) contradicts the findings of this current study as well the findings of the study by Okamoto et al. (2011) This study had a large sample size of 734 American students. It was found the females were more likely to have a high positive collective self-esteem and males were found to have a more negative collective self-esteem than that of the females when using social networking sites, and in the current study males and females did not show any difference in self-esteem. It can be seen that three different results were obtained in three different countries.

Similarly in a study by Shen, & Khalifa (2010), Arabic female students felt that the use of social networking sites allowed them to have a safe environment in which they could freely express their opinions. They also felt that the use of social networking sites gave them a sense of liberation and independence. These feelings would increase the self-esteem of any individ-

ual. The female Arabic students were also less likely to perceive spending time on social networking sites as a waste on time. This demonstrates the difference that culture has on the effects social networking sites has on the individual.

A quantitative study by Valkenburg et al (2006) comprised of 881 adolescents found that the self-esteem of the adolescents was effected solely by the feedback they received on their profiles. If the social networking site user received positive feedback on their profile their self-esteem would increase, the majority of the adolescents would continuously receive positive feedback on their profile, whereas for the minority of adolescents that would receive negative feedback their self-esteem would decrease. As the majority of the adolescents profiles would receive positive feedback and this increases their self-esteem, then spending time on these social networking increases the self-esteem of the majority of the teenagers. The current study challenges this result as it did not find any correlation between using social networking sites and an individual's self-esteem.

A study by Gangadharbatla (2008) took a different angle analysing social networking site usage and self-esteem. This study examined whether or not a person's self-esteem or need to belong effected their use of social networking sites rather than the other way around in the case of the current study. This study was aimed at undergraduate students, similarly to the current study, but its sample size was larger as it had 237 participants. The age range for this study was 18 to 30 years, whereas for the current study it is a much broader range of 18 to 72 years. This study found that 92% of the participants logged into their social networking site at least once a day with 6% logging into up to 10 times a day. These results are similar to the ones obtained in the current study 39.5% of the participants checked their social networking site more than five times a day and 84.2% of the participants checked it at least once a day. Similarly to the current study, Gangadharbatla (2008) found that an individual's self-esteem, self-worth or need to belong did not have any effect on the ungraduated students' attitudes

towards social networking sites, as well as on their willingness to join them. Whereas in the current study, the undergraduate students' self-esteem was not affected by the amount of time they spent on social networking sites.

Limitations

Limitations are unavoidable within any piece of research. They provide the researcher with an understanding of what could or should have been done differently in order to achieve more accurate results.

One of the limitations that was experienced when carrying out this study was that there was a lack of questionnaires completed older people. The age range of this study was from eighteen years of age to seventy-two years of age and the mean age of the participants was 29.27 years. This shows that the majority of the participants were around 29 years of age. This may have had an effect on the results in relation to the correlations between age and the amount of time spent on social networking sites, as well as the correlation between age and the amount of social networking sites used.

Although there was no correlation between gender and the use of social networking sites, one of the limitations that may have affected this result was that 60 males and only 54 females took part in the study. Since the amount of males and females are not equal, the results may not be completely accurate.

Another potential limitation with regard to the participants of this study is in relation to the number of participants. Since only 114 participants returned correctly completed surveys, this study cannot represent undergraduate students as a whole. Nonetheless, the participants who took part in this study are from an educated background as they were all ungraduated college students.

Limitations that occurred while carrying out the research, included obtaining a suitable sample size for the study, as well as attempting to receive correctly completed questionnaires from the participants. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed among undergraduate students, only one hundred and twenty-two were returned, and out of them only one hundred and fourteen questionnaires were correctly completed.

Other limitations that may have been experienced while carrying out this piece of research are extraneous variables. These are unwanted variables that may have had an effect on the relationships between variables and results that the researcher is examining. Such variables may include cyber bullying. If one of the participants had an extremely low self-esteem as a result of cyber bullying this may have had a detrimental effect on the result. Some of the participants also answered some of the questions with extreme values which had an effect on the end result.

One final limitation that may have caused the results of this study to be slightly inaccurate is that participants were asked to recall approximately how many hours a day they spend on social networking sites, how many times they check their social networking site and how many social networking sites they are members off. As human error is extremely possible, the participants could have easily under or over-estimated any of these questions. It is also a possibility that the participants lied about the amount of hours they spent on social networking sites in order to go along with what they thought was normal and the participants could have possibly been dishonest while completing the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Any of these could have had serious effects on the end results of this research.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results mentioned above in this study provide quantitative evidence that supports and challenges previous studies, as well as contributing to research based on social networking sites that is already available.

This study has shown that social networking sites are no longer a method of communication and entertainment for primarily teenagers and young people, and that the older population are becoming increasingly active on social networking sites with findings in the study showing that the mean age for females was 29.15 years with a standard deviation of 11.912 and the mean age for males was 29.38 with a standard deviation of 12.775.

This study has also revealed that social networking sites are a growing part of the majority of the population's lives with 36.5% of males and 42.6% of females checking their social networking sites over five times a day, and with 83.3% of females and 78.3% having social networking sites readily available on their mobile phones.

The main and most surprising result of this piece of research was that there was no correlation between the amount of time spent on social networking sites and a person's self-esteem. This is an extremely surprising result as the majority of the previous research stated that social networking sites had either a negative or a positive effect on the user's self-esteem, but in the case of this study there was no significant correlation in either direction.

In relation to future research, this study provides strong groundwork and foundations for a more in-depth study. A qualitative study would be recommended in order to analyse the reasons behind why older people spend less time on social networking sites than younger people and to investigate the people's attitudes and beliefs towards the use of social networking sites. A study in order to investigate into the reason behind research from different countries displaying different results with regard to the effects of social networking sites on a person's

self-esteem, and to also see if an individual's culture and religion are also significant varia-

bles, would also be recommended. Finally a larger scaled study is needed in order to get a

better sense of whether or not time spent on social networking sites have an effect on an un-

dergraduate student's self-esteem, as the scale of the current study was not large enough.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

_____

_____

WHETHER TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES EFFECT A PERSONS
SELF-ESTEEM

This study is concerned about whether time spent on social networking sites can effect a per-
son's self-esteem.

Please answer each section as honestly as you can, do not spend too long

thinking about each question as there are no right or wrong answers.

Any information that you give will remain anonymous, you are

not required to write your name anywhere on this survey. I hope you find

this interesting, and I would like to thank you in advance for your time and

co-operation.

If you require any further information concerning this research, please contact me at the
email address below.

Amanda Ruigrok

Email: 1689691@mydbs.ie

Appendix 2:

Please complete the following demographic information.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your gender? Male [   ] Female [   ] Other [   ]

3. How many social networking sites do you use? _____

4. How many hours approx. do you spend on social networking sites a day? _____

5. Do you have social networking sites on your mobile phone? Yes [   ] No [   ]

6. If 'yes' how many? _____

7. Please tick all social networking sites you use.

   Facebook [   ]

   Twitter [   ]

   Instagram [   ]

   LinkedIn [   ]

   Tumblr [   ]

   Ask.fm [   ]

   Other [   ]

8. How often would you check your social networking site?

   Once a week [   ]

   Few times a week [   ]

   Once a day [   ]

   2-3 times daily [   ]

   3-5 times daily [   ]

   5+ times daily [   ]

9. How often would you update your profile?

   Every few months [   ]

   Every few weeks [   ]

   Once a week [   ]

   Multiple times a week [   ]

   Once a day [   ]

   Multiple times a day [   ]

Appendix 3:- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number to the right of the statement as follows:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = disagree

4 = strongly disagree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others…..1   2   3   4

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities………………………………1   2   3   4

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure…………………………..1   2   3   4

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people………………………...1   2   3   4

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of……………………………….1   2   3   4

6. I take a positive attitude towards myself……………………………………1   2   3   4

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself…………………………………..1   2   3   4

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself………………………………..1   2   3   4

9. I certainly feel useless at times……………………………………………..1   2   3   4

10. At times I think I am no good at all………………………………………..1   2   3   4

Thank you very much for giving up your time in order to participate in this study, it is very much appreciated. As previously stated, all information given while answering this questionnaire will remain 100% anonymous.

Many thanks,

Amanda Ruigrok.