

Is social networking media affecting social interaction between users?

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Abstract

This research shows that Facebook usage reduces face to face contacts and that Facebook usage is affected by self-esteem. Also there are differences between the Facebook usage patterns of males and females.

Introduction

This project examines the use of social media by users in Ireland and adds to existing international research as there may be factors which are unique to Irish users.

The current project proposes to fill the gaps in knowledge by examining the differences in Facebook usage by males and females and also by

respondents with higher and lower self-esteem scores on “The Self-Esteem Scale” (Rosenberg, 1965).

The main hypotheses:

(H1) Facebook usage has a negative effect on face to face communication

A further hypothesis is:

(H2) Females spend more time on Facebook than males and use Facebook in a different way to males.

A third hypothesis is:

(H3) Facebook usage is affected by the levels of self-esteem of users.



Methods

A questionnaire was designed incorporating questions aimed at revealing the internet usage of participants. Participants were chosen from Facebook users aged 18 years old and upwards. Questionnaires were completed by 114 males and 128 females. The questionnaire was set up on Google Docs and a link was shared with Facebook contacts. The data was analysed by using SPSS to compare the amount of time spent by participants on social networking media with the amount of time spent on face to face interactions with peers. No codes of ethics were broken throughout the research. The use of a tailored questionnaire was regarded as the most appropriate manner to conduct the research. It had the advantage of complete confidentiality for the participants and so was more likely to elicit candid replies.

Results

The responses supported the hypothesis that Facebook usage has a negative effect on face to face communication. A majority agreed they spend more time communicating on Facebook than face to face and the time they spent on Facebook reduced the time they spent communicating with friends, face to face.

Discussion

The research did not find that females spend more time on Facebook than males. One interesting conclusion was that males appeared to have a more emotional connection with Facebook than females, with males more likely to log on to Facebook when they are feeling lonely.

References

This link to loneliness and possible depression reflects an observation by Kujath (2002) who noted that an early study by Kraut et al (1998) found that extensive internet use was associated with increases in depression and loneliness.