

The impact of social media use on the self-esteem levels of its users.

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BA (Hons) in psychology

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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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3. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the staff in National College of Ireland especially all my lecturers for sharing their knowledge and giving me help and guidance. I would like to thank my friends and family for their support. A special thank you to all of my participants for volunteering to be part of this research study. I would also like to thank all of the friends that I have made throughout my time in National College of Ireland for all of their support.

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4. Abstract

Research on the impact of social media has focused most of its attention on body esteem and not self-esteem. The objective of this study was to research the impact social media has on the self-esteem levels of its male and female users to discover if male and females are equally impacted. In addition, to investigate the variables that possibly contribute to that impact such as age, time spent on social media daily and social media site used most. This study had a convenience sample of 59 individuals. The data was collected through online surveys, which included a demographic questionnaire, social media addiction scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. There was a significant medium negative correlation between self-esteem levels and social media use which indicates as social media addiction increases, self-esteem decreases. There was no significant found between gender scores. Although there was a significant difference in self-esteem levels of those who spend more time on Facebook. All other variables were analyzed in relation to social media addiction and self-esteem and were discussed. The results of this study supported two out of five hypotheses. Males and females self-esteem were negatively impacted by social media use, with no significant difference in their scores. Suggesting male and female's self-esteem are equally influenced by social media. Spending more time on Facebook was also seen to negatively impact self-esteem levels and increase social media addiction scores. Although not all hypotheses were supported results from this study still add to existing literature.

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5. Introduction

5.1. Literature Review

The 21st century marked the immense increase in the use of social networking sites around the world. A global digital report done in 2018 by the blog we are social stated that the number of social media users is 3.196 billion people, it had increased 13% from the previous year. As the popularity of social networking sites keeps increasing there is a constant need to research the possible impacts social media has on mental health. The value of this study is that although there has been lots of research done in this area, looking through past research done the results of the studies have been inconclusive as some studies indicate that social media has a positive impact and some that it has a negative impact on self-esteem and some indicating no direct link at all between the two. Another gap in past research is that a lot of studies done on social media focus on adolescence and a younger generation. Although many studies mention gender differences, few studies done look specifically on how gender moderates the impacts of social media on self-esteem. This study will focus on these three areas as well as investigating other variables that relate with the help of past research done related to the topics.

5.2 Social media

The three social media sites that this study will focus on are Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. A previous study looking at the most popular social media sites found that Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook were the most used social media sites. (Emanuel, R. (2016). The Global social media research summary 2018 provided a compilation of the most popular social networks sites worldwide by the amount of active users it has was done in October 2018 and done by Statista, it shows that Facebook being the most popular site with over 2 billion users, followed by Instagram with 1 billion and then Snapchat with almost three million users. With these sites

The impact of social media on the self-esteem levels of its users having so many users study the possible effects they have is important. A study done by Kalpidou, Costin and Morris investigated how Facebook use relate to self-esteem. Results from the study showed that students who spent the most time on Facebook had lower self-esteem. The results also showed that with older age the relationship with Facebook becomes more positive (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Like this study most studies done investigating the effects of social networking sites focuses of adolescences. The majority of studies done also only focus on the effects of Facebook. More studies need to be done looking at the effects on wider demographics such as a larger age range and focusing on gender specifics and investigate other social media sites as well as Facebook.

When researching the impacts of social media one thing that comes up a lot is that it is not social networking sites itself that impacts people but rather the experience they have with social networking sites such as it being positive or negative. Research investigating social Media's effect on self-esteem has suggested that the opinions of other people, whether it be friends or public and the feedback they give have very strong effects on people's self-esteems. Heatherton and Polivy (1991). Another study done by Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Schouten, A. P. (2006) also suggests the same that social networking sites has an indirect effect on their self-esteem. The number of relationships formed on the site impacts the use of social networking sites, the amount of feedback they receive on their profiles, and whether the feedback is positive or negative. Positive feedback enhanced self-esteem and negative feedback decreased their self-esteem. These studies suggest that it is not the time spent on social media but the content that impacts people's self-esteem. How important social media is to an individual could be a factor that influences the impact social media has on self-esteem. This has been suggested by studies such as one done by (Andreassen, C. S., et al, 2016) which stated that addictive use of social

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media has a negative association with self-esteem. Another gap that past research is missing is investigating if the amount of time spent on social media also impacts the users self-esteem.

There are a number of surveys that can be found online which report how much time people spend on social media sites on average, such as a study done by Digital information world in 2019 which says the average time spent on social media daily is 2 hours and 22 minutes.

Although there is not a lot of research done investigating what the effects of spending this amount of time on social media.

5.3 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an important construct in clinical, developmental and social psychology. (Abdel-Khalek, A. M. 2016). The role of self-esteem has been greatly researched over the last century but a general agreed upon definition has still not been decided. The definition of self-esteem that is being used in this study is self-esteem refers to a persons overall sense of his or her value or worth, it can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person ‘values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself’ cite. Self-esteem is said to have a strong relationship to happiness and that increases and decrease in self-esteem levels causes strong emotional reactions (Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. 2003). Studies have shown that low self-esteem is related to a number of issues such as emotional problems, substance abuse, and eating disorders. (Leary MR, Schreindorfer LS, Haupt AL). It has also been found that low self-esteem levels lead to different psychological problems such as depression, social anxiety, loneliness, alienation etc. (Leary, 2004). In regards to high self-esteem, studies have stated that higher self-esteem leads to greater happiness. (Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. 2003). Results from studies have also shown that

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high self-esteem levels are positively related to life satisfaction. Moksnes, U. K., & Espnes, G. A. (2013).

The majority of research on self-esteem focuses on internalizing problems that can affect self-esteem but it has also been suggest that self-esteem can be impact by external problems. (Henriksen, Ranøyen, Indredavik, & Stenseng. 2017). These external issues that affect self-esteem levels could include social networking sites. A great amount of research has been done investigating the relationship between self-esteem and social media. The results of past studies have been inconclusive as some studies indicate that social media has a positive impact and some that it has a negative impact on self-esteem and some indicating no direct link at all between the two. Chen & lee (2013) stated that social media sites, Facebook usage in their study, are directly related to psychological distress of individuals, which as a result reduces the self-esteem of people directly.

5.4 Gender Differences

This topic is relevant to study as there is a gap in past research done looking at the gender specific impacts of social media on the self-esteem. Most research done in this area focuses around body image and self-esteem. A lot of research done in relation to social media has focused on the impacts on adolescence and young adults there aren't studies which investigate the gender specific impacts of social media across a wider age range. Studies that focus on adolescence have found that female's self-esteem is generally moderately lower than male's self-esteem and that this difference is greatest around 16 years of age (Kling et al. 1999). There are a number of studies done looking at gender differences on social media such as the purpose of which male and females use social media, this study showed that females use social media to maintaining existing friends whereas males use it to find new relationships. Mazman, G. usluel,

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Y. (2011). Since previous research shows that males and females use social media for different reasons does this mean that social media could also impact males and females differently?

5.5 Current Study

This study will look at the impact social media use has on the self-esteem levels in both males and females also investigating if a certain social media sites impacts users self-esteem more. The three social media sites that will be focused on in this study are Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. The study will use an online questionnaire to obtain the data. The questionnaire will use the social media addiction scale to measure how important social media is to participants and how addicted to social media participants are. The questionnaire will also use the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to measure the self-esteem levels of participants. The questionnaire will also include four questions to gather demographics and other information needed. Previous research in this area results have been inconclusive on if social media does impact its users' self-esteem and if so what that impact is. An aim of this study will be to firstly investigate if social media use has an impact on its users and if it does what the nature of that effect is. The study also aim to investigate the gender specific impact that social media use has on self-esteem and if the use of one social media site has more of an impact on a certain gender more than the other.

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6. Hypothesis

The hypotheses for this study include that:

1. Men and women's self-esteem will be impacted by social media use (scoring higher on the Social media addiction scale (SMAS) will result in lower scores on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES).
2. Individuals who spend more time on social media will have a significantly lower self-esteem score and significantly higher social media addiction score.
3. Females will have a significantly lower self-esteem score than males.
4. There will be a significant difference in the impact on age groups; younger age group will have lower self-esteem scores and higher social media addiction scores.
5. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem levels of those who spend the most time on Facebook; those who spend more time on Facebook will have lower self-esteem scores.

7. Method

7.1 Participants

A convenience sampling method was used in this study targeted at both male and female social media users (n=59). One participant was removed from the sample as they had selected multiple options during the survey. The sample was obtained through online resources and an online survey. Participants ranged in gender (Males, n=14 /23.7 %; Females n= 45/76.3 %) and age with all participants being 18 years old or above. Participants were divided into three age brackets: 18-29 (n=39), 30-49 (n=15) and 50 years old or above (n=5).

7.2 Design

This research is a cross-sectional, quantitative study. To investigate the impacts of social media sites on the self-esteem of males' and females' online surveys were given including self-assessment scales. This study is of correlational design as it identifies the relationship between social media use and self-esteem. The Independent/ predictor variables in this study were social media use, gender and age, while the dependent/ criterion variable was self-esteem.

7.3 Materials

The study consisted of an online survey, which was created through the use of Google forms. The survey was divided into three parts the first being a four item demographics questionnaire, the second being the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS, Arslan & Kırık, 2013) and lastly the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, Rosenberg, 1965).

7.3.1 Demographics Questionnaire

A four-item demographics questionnaire was used to obtain participants gender, age, amount of time spent on social media daily and site which they spent the most time on. The four

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questions were followed by three answer options provided for participants to choose from which they felt best suited them.

7.3.2 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item scale that measures self-esteem levels by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale. As the scale measures both positive and negative self-feelings in relation to self-esteem, items 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 are reversed scored. The higher the score a participant received indicates higher levels of self-esteem and vice-versa, scores can range from 0-30. This is a valid scale that can be used to yield an overall score of self-esteem. (Tinakon & Nahathai. 2012). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, it is used to calculate how closely related a set of items are as a group. According to Rosenberg (1965), the RSES has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of 0.77. Internal consistency achieved in this sample was approaching excellent ($\alpha = .939$).

7.3.3. Social Media Addiction Scale

The Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) was developed by Arslan & Kırık (2013). The scale is made up of 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale. Items on the scale included statements such as “*I enjoy spending time on social media sites*”. The participants were given five options to choose from which ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Tests of the reliability and validity of the scale have been conducted by studies using this scale such as the Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form: The Reliability and Validity Study by Cengiz Sahin. Past studies calculated reliability co-efficient of .93. (Şahin, 2018). Internal consistency achieved in this sample was approaching excellent ($\alpha = .922$).

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7.4 Procedure

This study was conducted using an online survey created using Google forms. It consisted of an information sheet and consent form, once read and the participant agreed to consent, the three-part questionnaire was presented. Once the questionnaire was complete, a debriefing sheet followed it. The collection of data for the study began once it had been reviewed and approved by the ethics committee and researcher's supervisor to ensure the survey was ethical and contained all relevant information. A pilot study was not used for this study, as it contained no new scales or questionnaires.

Participants for the study were obtained through social media sites. To obtain the participants a link was posted on sites such as Facebook, Instagram and snapchat advertising and inviting participants to take part in the study. The advert explained participants must be 18 years old or above and be a social media user. Once participants clicked the link, they were brought to an information page explaining all necessary details of the study and after reading this the consent form was provided. In order to continue and participate in the study participants had to agree they were consenting to take part in the study and to having their data used in the study. If the participant did not consent, they would be unable to take part in the survey.

Once participants began the survey, they were asked to answer four demographic questions such as gender and time spent on social media. They would then move onto complete the two scales provided which were the SMAS and the RSES. Once they had completed answering these three sections, they were brought to a debriefing sheet, which provided all relevant information regarding the study, who to contact about the study and who to contact if they felt affected by the study in anyway. Participants could then submit their survey and were thanked for their participation in the study.

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All submitted surveys were automatically stored in the researchers Google documents page. This could only be accessed by the researcher and is password protected. This is to ensure the data provided by participants is stored safely and protected until the researcher begins data analysis.

8. Results

As the data was measured using Likert scales, which may consider to be interval in nature (Norman, 2010), inferential statistics, which included parametric tests, were applied to the data in order to compare variability between the demographical characteristics. According to Pallant (2013) ANOVA is useful for assessing group differences but it does not show where the significant difference is. However, Pallant further advises that post hoc comparisons can be conducted which will demonstrate which groups are significantly different from the others. Independent *t*-tests were used to compare the means for two groups of cases. Note that were the assumptions of the parametric tests were violated, appropriate non-parametric analyses were used. The level of significance was set by α - level < .05 in order to minimise the possibility of a Type I error. A Type I error occurs when the null hypotheses is rejected when it is true, a Type II error occurs when the null hypotheses is not rejected when it is false (Corty, 2007).

8.1 Demographic Characteristics

The highest proportion of the total participants (n=30, 50.8%) were females aged between 18-29 years. This was followed by males aged between 18-29 years (n=9, 15.3%). The majority of participants spent between 1-3 hours daily on social media (44.1%), with 59.3% spending the most time on Instagram. An overview of the participants' demographic characteristics is displayed in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1. Participants' Demographics

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%	Demographic	<i>n</i>	%
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<i>Gender</i>			<i>Age Group</i>		
Male	14	23.7%	18-29 years	39	66.1%
Female	45	76.3%	30-49 years	15	25.4%
			50+ years	5	8.5%
<i>Amount of time spent daily on social media</i>			<i>Which site do you spend most time on</i>		
> 1 hour	6	10.2%	Facebook	15	25.4%
1-3 hours	26	44.1%	Instagram	35	59.3%
< 3 hours	27	45.8%	Snapchat	9	15.3%

8.2 Self-Esteem

In this section the self-esteem, as measured by the RSES, is discussed. The mean score for the Total Score RSES was 9.25 (SD=6.96, range = (0,30)), indicating participants had low self-esteem. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality revealed that the data is not normally distributed (KS= .119, $p < .01$). In addition, the total score was examined for outliers and none were present, see Fig. 8.1. In Table 8.2 a breakdown of responses is displayed, positive questions are highlighted pink and negative questions are highlighted blue.

Table 8.2. RSES Response Rates

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale					
Item	<i>n</i>	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree	
		Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree
		(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)

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1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	59	2(3.4%)	2(3.4%)	30(50%)	25(42.4%)
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	59	2(3.4%)	1(1.7%)	29(49.2%)	27(45.8%)
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	59	25(42.4%)	25(42.4%)	8(13.6%)	1(1.7%)
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	59	4(6.8%)	7(11.9%)	28(47.5%)	20(30.9%)
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	59	25(42.4%)	21(35.6%)	10(16.9%)	3(5.1%)
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	59	2(3.4%)	13(22%)	21(35.6%)	23(39%)
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	59	4(6.8%)	10(16.9%)	24(40.7%)	21(36.5%)
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	59	19(32.2%)	18(30.5%)	16(27.1%)	6(10.2%)
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	59	14(23.7%)	18(30.5%)	20(33.9%)	7(11.9%)
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	59	19(32.2%)	20(33.9%)	15(25.4%)	5(8.5%)

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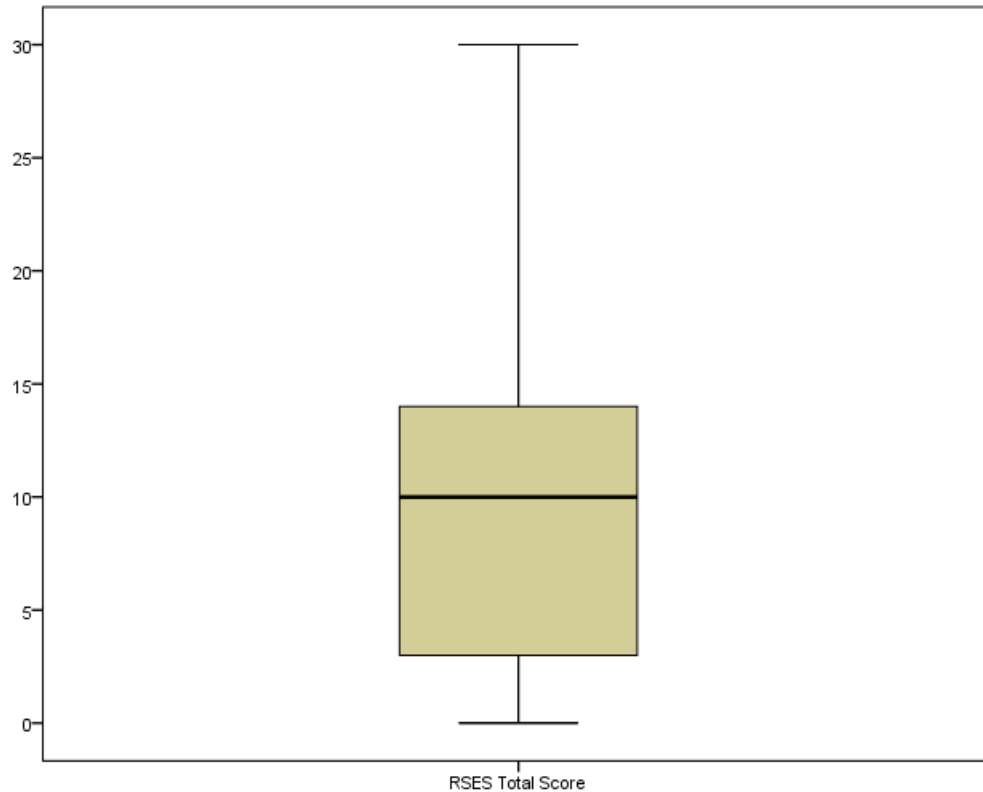


Figure 8.1. Boxplot of RSES Total Score

As the data is not normally distributed, a series of Kruskal-Wallis ANOVAs were conducted to explore differences between participants at demographic levels. As the Kruskal-Wallis test is robust to the violations of the assumption of homogeneity of variance between the groups and suitable for unbalanced groups. There was not a significant difference the mean rank scores of males and females ($\chi^2(1) = 0.12, p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant difference between age group (18-29 years mean rank = 37.27, 30-49 years mean rank = 17.37, 50+ years mean rank = 11.20) and self-esteem measure ($\chi^2(2) = 21.20, p < 0.001$). Further analysis used a Bonferroni correction, which is used to reduce the probability of making one or more false discoveries, or type I errors when performing multiple hypotheses tests which is known as family-wise error. This revealed that there is a significant difference between between the age groups 18-29 years and 30-49 years ($U = 94, p < .001$), as well as between the age groups 18-29

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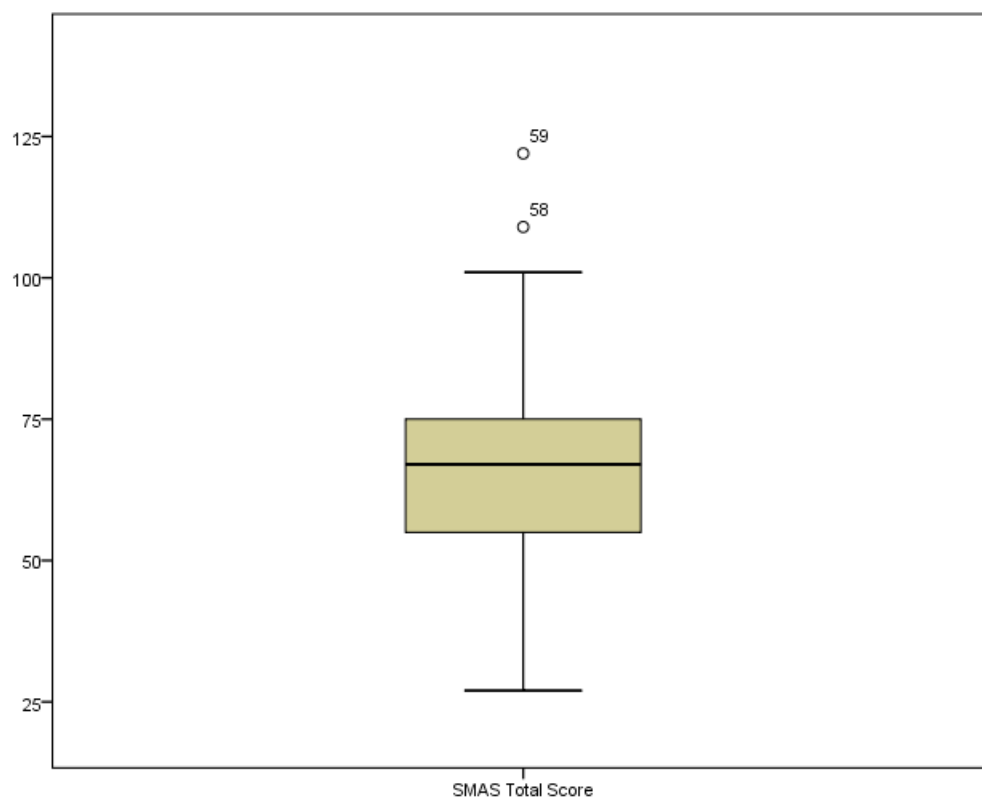
years and 50+ years ($U=12.5$, $p<.001$). This indicates that 18-29-year-old age group had a higher self-esteem score compared to the other two age groups.

There was not a significant difference between self-esteem total score and length of time spent on social media ($\chi^2(2) = 5.59$, $p>0.05$). Finally, self-esteem score and type of social media was statistically significant (Facebook mean rank=17.33, Instagram mean rank=34.13, Snapchat mean rank=35.06) ($\chi^2(2) = 8.97$, $p<0.05$). Further analysis indicated a statistical difference between levels of self-esteem for those using Facebook compared with those using Snapchat ($U=18.5$, $p<.005$). This difference was also found between Facebook and Instagram ($U=121.5$, $p<.005$), but not between Instagram and Snapchat ($U=154$, $p>.05$).

8.3 Social Media Addiction

The Total Score of the SMAS had a mean of 67.25 ($SD=17.63$, range= (27,122)). A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that this scale is normally distributed ($KS=.15$, $p>.05$). However, as shown in Fig. 8.3, there are two outliers. Given the small number of outliers, it was decided to run the analysis with them in the sample. A breakdown of these response rates are shown in Table 8.2 and graphically displayed in Fig. 8.3.

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**Figure 8.2.** Boxplot of SMAS Total Score**Table 8.3.** SMAS Response Rates

Social Media Addition Scale						
Item	<i>n</i>	Strongly Agree		Neither Agree/Disagree		Strongly Disagree
		(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)	(<i>n</i>) (%)
1. I connect with my friends using Facebook and twitter	59	16(27.1%)	30(50.8%)	3(5.1%)	8(13.6%)	2(3.4%)

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2. I look at the photos shared on social networking profiles	59	33(55.9%)	20(33.9%)	2(3.4%)	0(0%)	4(6.8%)
3. I search for my friends using social networking sites	59	27(45.8%)	18(30.5%)	6(10.2%)	4(6.8%)	4(6.8%)
4. I enjoy spending time in social networking sites	59	15(25.4%)	27(45.8%)	9(15.3%)	4(6.8%)	4(6.8%)
5. I want to view social networking sites starting at the early hours of a day	59	13(22%)	23(39%)	7(11.9%)	9(15.3%)	7(11.9%)
6. I wonder whether my friends read my posts	59	6(10.2%)	21(35.6%)	15(25.4%)	12(20.3%)	5(8.5%)
7. I wonder who visits my personal profile	59	13(22%)	21(35.6%)	9(15.3%)	10(16.9%)	6(10.2%)
8. I don't be aware of the time I spend navigating Facebook	59	12(20.3%)	21(35.6%)	10(16.9%)	13(22%)	3(5.1%)

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9. I follow the content	59	22(37.3%)	26(44.1%)	6(10.2%)	1(1.7%)
I am interested in from social media					4(6.8%)
10. I follow latest	59	16(27.1%)	27(45.8%)	9(15.3%)	5(8.5%)
news and events from social networking sites					2(3.4%)
11. Social networking	59	5(8.5%)	8(13.6%)	15(25.4%)	16(27.1%)
sites cement my friendships					15(25.4%)
12. I comment on the	59	9(15.3%)	25(42.4%)	13(22%)	7(11.9%)
photos my friends share					5(8.5%)
13. I prefer social	59	11(18.6%)	12(20.3%)	14(23.7%)	10(16.9%)
media over television					12(20.3%)
14. I feel that I have a	59	2(3.4%)	9(15.3%)	9(15.3%)	20(33.9%)
poor communication with my friends					19(32.2%)
15. I believe that	59	12(20.3%)	29(49.2%)	13(22%)	2(3.4%)
social media has a connective power					3(5.1%)

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16. I believe that new media has changed learning habits	59	16(27.1%)	26(44.1%)	11(18.6%)	2(3.4%)	4(6.8%)
17. I believe that new media has changed learning habits	59	15(25.4%)	22(37.3%)	13(22%)	4(6.8%)	5(8.5%)
18. I believe that social networking sites are instructive	59	9(15.3%)	15(25.4%)	25(42.4%)	4(6.8%)	6(10.2%)
19. I participate in events on social networking sites	59	5(8.5%)	13(22%)	15(25.4%)	13(22%)	13(22%)
20. I wonder who visits my personal profile	59	13(22%)	16(27.1%)	7(11.9%)	14(23.7%)	9(15.3%)
21. I find new friends through Facebook and Twitter	59	3(5.1%)	10(16.9%)	11(18.6%)	16(27.1%)	19(32.2%)
22. I think that I am being followed by someone in social media	59	3(5.1%)	5(8.5%)	9(15.3%)	21(35.6%)	21(35.6%)

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23. I believe that new media technologies change human life	59	13(22%)	26(44.1%)	11(18.6%)	4(6.8%)	5(8.5%)
<hr/>						
24. I read personal blog posts, and search content	59	9(15.3%)	23(39%)	5(8.5%)	10(16.9%)	12(20.3%)
<hr/>						
25. I freely share my ideas on social networking sites.	59	5(8.5%)	7(11.9%)	17(28.8%)	18(30.5%)	12(20.3%)
<hr/>						

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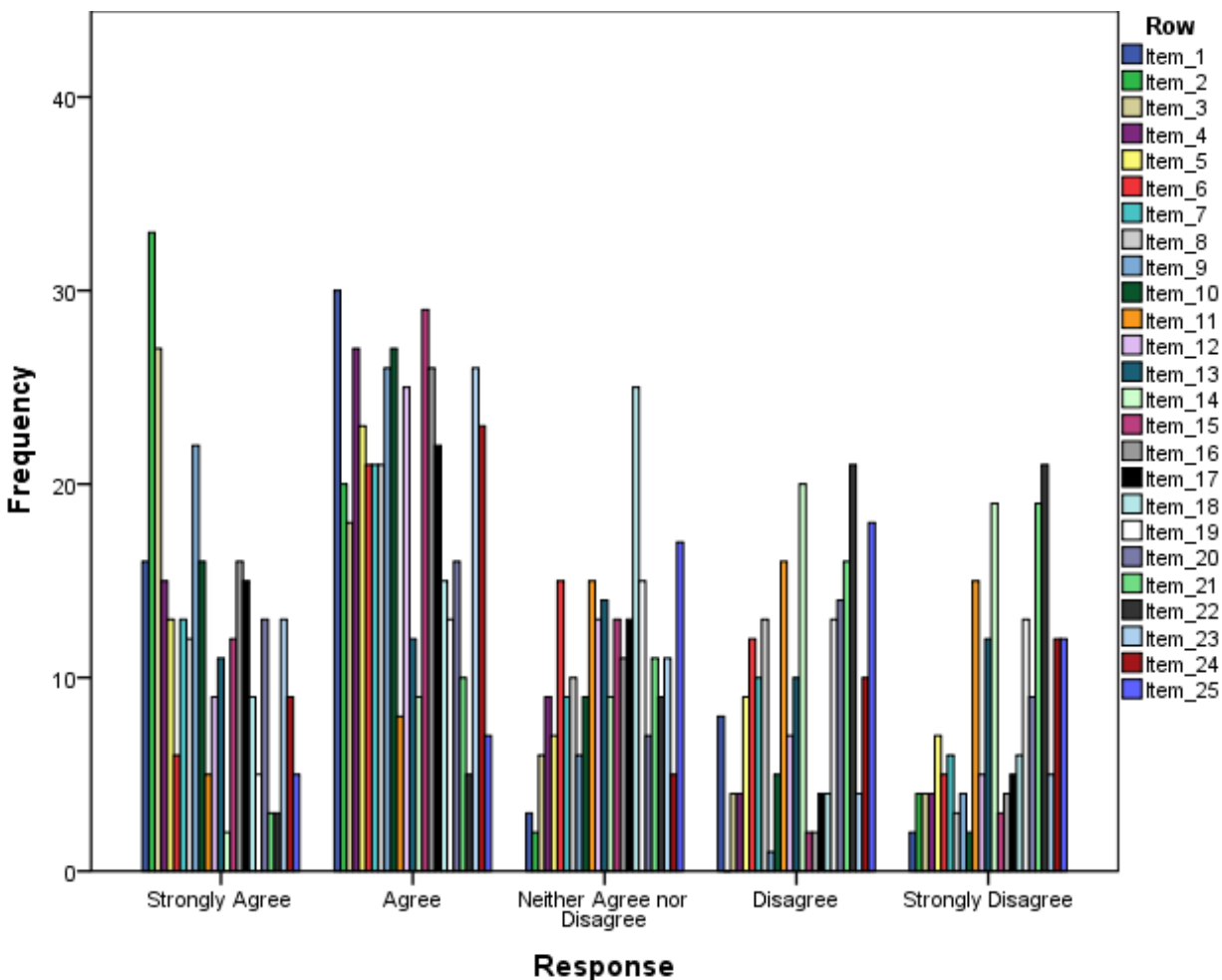


Figure 8.3. Histogram of response rates to SMAS

An ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean scores of males and females. A Levene test showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated ($L=1.644$, $p>.05$).

There was a non-significant result indicating no difference between mean scores by gender.

A Levene statistic revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated ($L=.59$, $p>.05$), when an ANOVA was run to explore the difference in mean Total Score of the SMAS by age group. The ANOVA revealed a significant difference ($F=7.58$, $p=.001$).

Post hoc tests with a Bonferroni correction indicated a statistically significant difference between the following age groups: 18-29-year age group (mean=61.56, SD=14.55) and the 30-49-year

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age group (mean=76.93, SDS=19.76) (mean difference=15.37, $p<.01$); 18-29-year age group and the 50+ year age group (mean=82.6, SD=13.15) (mean difference=21.04, $p<.03$). This indicated that the younger age group of 18-29 had a lower Total Score on the SMAS.

Exploring length of time on social media and SMAS Total Score revealed a non-significant F statistic (the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated). Finally, the ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the type of social media and SMAS Total Score ($L=.35$, $p>.05$, $F=5.32$, $p<.05$). Further analysis with a Bonferroni correction revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the SMAS between Facebook (mean=77.4, SD=18.74) and Snapchat (mean=55.33, SD=13.15) (mean difference= 22.07, $p<.01$). This would indicate that those spending more time on Facebook have a higher mean SMAS Total Score.

8.4 Correlation

There was a statistically significant medium negative correlation between the participants level of self-esteem and social media type ($r = -0.48$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that as social media addiction increase, self-esteem decreases, see Fig. 8.4.

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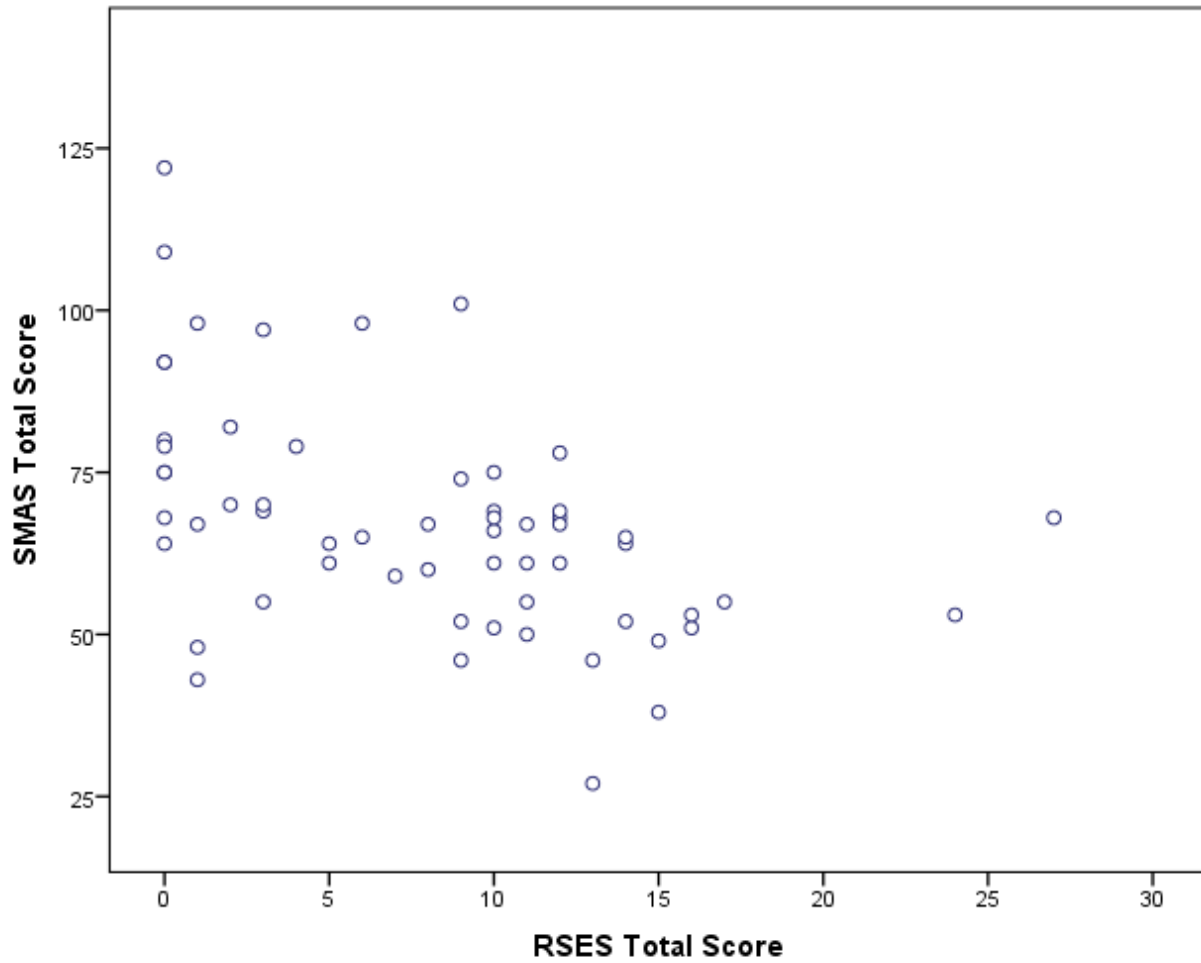


Figure 8.4. Scatterplot of RSES Total Score vs SMAS Total Score

9. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the impact social media use has on the self-esteem levels of its male and female users. The first research aim involved finding if men and women's self-esteem was impacted by their social media use. The second aim was to find if social medias impact on self-esteem levels differed depending on the user's gender, age, time spent on social media and which social media site they use the most.

To measure participant's self-esteem, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES) was used, scores on the scale range from 0-30 the higher the score the higher the levels of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). The mean RSES score in this study was 9.25, which indicate participants had low self-esteem.

Statistical tests were run to explore differences between participants as demographical levels. Reviewing previous studies investigating the gender difference in relation to self-esteem (Feingold,1994; Kling et al., 1999; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012; Orth,Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010; Robins et al., 2002; Shaw, Liang,& Krause, 2010; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003;Twenge & Campbell, 2001). Results from this study found a significant gender gap and that males report higher levels of self-esteem than females do. After evaluating results from the present studies scale show there was no significant difference in self-esteem scores of males and females, this leads us to reject the third hypothesis of the study which was females will have significantly lower self-esteem scores than males. Although the hypothesis was rejected these results suggests that it's not just that males have higher self-esteem levels than females in general but that its depended on specific areas that can impact self-esteem levels.

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However, there was a significant difference between age groups, results showed that the 18-29 age group had higher self-esteem levels compared to the 30-49 and 50+ age groups. Previous research found that both genders self-esteem is relatively high in childhood and then lowers during adolescence but rises again throughout adulthood before it once again declines in old age (Orth & Robins, 2014; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Wagner, Gerstorf, Hoppmann, & Luszcz, 2013). This study however did not find this which leads us to reject the fourth hypothesis of the study which was, there will be a significant difference in the impact on age groups, younger age group will have lower self-esteem scores and higher social media addiction scores. Although there was a significant difference in the impact on age groups found, the younger age group of 18-29 was found to have the highest levels of self-esteem. This result could suggest the younger generation have higher self-esteem levels in relation to social media as they were born in a generation where they grew up using social media and have learnt to deal better with the effect it can have on their self-esteem levels whereas the older generation are not as familiar to it, this could be a point for further research.

To measure participant's social media addiction, the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) developed by Arslan & Kırık (2013) was used. After analysis results show there was no significant difference in social media addiction scores by gender. This result was expected as there is no previous research that suggests males and females would differ in social media addiction scores, previous research also suggests that males and female use social media for different reasons. A study researching this suggested that females use social media to maintaining existing friends whereas males use it to find new relationships. (Mazman, G. usluel, Y. 2011). Since males and females use social media for different reasons this could mean how we measure their social media addiction needs to be based on why they use social media.

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Although there was no difference in social media addiction and gender there was a significant difference between social media addiction scores and age. Results showed that the younger age group of 18-29 had lower social media addiction scores compared to the 30-49 and to the 50+ age groups. This leads us to reject the fourth hypothesis of the study which was, there will be a significant difference in the impact on age groups, younger age group will have lower self-esteem scores and higher social media addiction scores. Although there is a significant difference between age groups it was predicted that the younger age group would have higher scores of social media addiction but results did not support this. This result could be due to the fact that it was found in results that those who spent the most time on Facebook had higher social media addiction scores and the older age groups reported spending the most time on Facebook whereas the younger age group spent more time on Instagram.

Investigating type of social media, the participant spent the most time on and self-esteem and social media addiction scores it was found that those who reported spending the most time on Facebook had lower self-esteem levels than the participants who spend the most time on snapchat and Instagram. It was also found that there was no difference found between self-esteem levels and spending the most on snapchat and Instagram. Results also showed that those who reported spending the most time on Facebook also reported having higher social media addiction scores. This supports the fifth hypothesis of this study, which was, there would be a significant difference in self-esteem levels of those who spend the most time on Facebook, those who spend more time on Facebook will have lower self-esteem scores. Previous research done suggested the same, one study investigating social media and self-esteem suggested that one hour spent on Facebook daily results in a 5.574 decrease in the self-esteem score of an individual

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(Maqaddas, Sanobia, Nawaz. 2017). The current study contributes to the research done suggesting that Facebook use has a negative impact on self-esteem levels of its users.

Results investigating all other demographics such as time spent on social media and which social media site is used the most found that there was no significant difference between self-esteem levels and time spent on social media meaning that the self-esteem levels of the 48.5% of participants who reported spending more than three hours on social media had relatively similar self-esteem levels to the 10.2% of participant that reported spending less than 1 hour on social media sites a day. There was also no significant difference between social media addiction score and time spent on social media, which means the participants who spent more time on social media daily were not more addicted to social media than those who spent less time on social media daily. This leads us to reject the second hypothesis of the study which was, Individuals who spend more time on social media would have a significantly lower self-esteem score and significantly higher social media addiction score.

A correlation analysis was run which showed a statistically significant medium negative correlation between participant self-esteem levels and type of social media used most. This correlation result indicates that as social media addiction increases, self-esteem decreases. This supports the first hypothesis of the study that men and women's self-esteem will be impacted by social media use (scoring higher on the Social media addiction scale (SMAS) will result in lower scores on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES). As a whole, this study outlines that social media use has an impact on its user's self-esteem.

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9.1 Strengths

Participants taking part in the study were given the choice of completing the study in a time and place in which they felt comfortable. They did not have to meet with the researcher to participate, which made it easier for individuals to participate. As participants had this choice it potentially increased participant's honesty and the study's reliability.

A strength of this study was that it took into consideration and explored variables which previous research had missed such as not only looking at gender and age difference but also which site they used the most and hours spent on social media. Considering these variables contributes to research in this area, also after completing the study more variables were discovered that would further contribute to research in this area.

Similarly, this study holds the potential to add to previous research in this area and can be used as a basis for future research to improve upon. Results found through this research would benefit in understanding the association between social media use and self-esteem and preventing low self-esteem.

9.2 Limitations

One limitation of this study was in regards to the sample there was a gender and age bias with a lack of male and participants over the age of 29. This may have had negative implications in relation to generalization and comparing scores in gender differences.

Another limitation of this study was lack of control over other variables such as whether participants had a positive or negative experience on social media sites in the past or personal issues affecting them at the time, variables such as this could have affected participant's answers.

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In addition, the use of self-report questionnaires as the form of data analysis could have caused inaccurate response, as participants can be biased when reporting on their own experiences.

Regardless of these limitations, the study was still a success in relation to investigating if social media use had an impact on self-esteem levels of its users and in relation investigating if gender differences exist. These limitations could also be easily improved on if the study was to be replicated.

9.3 Future Research

If this study was to be researched in future it could be improved upon by investigating additional variables that were not taken into consideration in this study, such as taking participants personality factors into consideration investigating and identifying participant's personality types would help future research see what impact social media use has on self-esteem levels of depending on the different personality types.

Similarly, future studies should investigate the experience individuals have on social media sites such as the content they view and whether they have a positive or negative experience this would benefit future research as the more variables taken into consideration the more accurate the results.

Future studies should aim to obtain a larger number of participants to cover more demographics, future studies should try to recruit more males and reach an older sample this would benefit the reliability and generalizing of results of future studies.

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10. Conclusion

The results of this study are in support of the society's perspective that social media negatively influence self-esteem for both genders. This study suggests male and females were both equally impacted by social media. Two out of the five hypotheses of the study were supported due to this the results of this study both agree and argue against previous literature. Previous literature focuses on how social media impacts peoples body esteem and does not focus on how it impacts their self-esteem, most studies that do investigate this focus on a younger age demographic whereas this study looked at the impact of a wide age demographic and results can be better generalized. As social media sites develop and grow in popularity, larger populations of people feel the impact from it. Important implications of this study are that it can be the basis for future research as it supports and contradicts previous research. This study outlines it findings and how theses findings can be further developed to investigate the area around social media use and self-esteem levels.

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12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix I – Advertisement

12.2 Appendix II – Study briefing information

12.3 Appendix III – Consent form

12.4 Appendix IV – Demographic questionnaire

12.5 Appendix V – Social media questionnaire

12.6 Appendix VI – Rosenberg self-esteem scale

12.7 Appendix VII – Study debriefing

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12.1 Appendix I – Advertisement

The impact of social media use on self-esteem levels in males and females.

If you are a user of social networking sites and over the age of 18 and wish to take part in an anonymous online survey for my thesis, which looks at the gender specific relationship between social media and self-esteem click the link below. More information is provided before you start the survey.

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12.2 Appendix II – Study briefing information

Study briefing information

The impact of social media uses on self-esteem levels

This study is designed to investigate the relationship between online social media use on self-esteem levels in males and females and to investigate whether certain social media sites have more of an impact on one gender than the other.

This study will involve you taking part in an online survey, which will consist of four multiple-choice questions in regards to demographics and questions in relation to social media use. The study will also include the social media addiction scale, which consists of 25 parts in relation to social media involvement. The study will also include the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, which will ask you ten questions in relation to self-esteem and give you four options to answer from. Once you have completed these two parts your participation in the study will be complete. The study typically takes 10 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

You as the participant of the study have rights. You can decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time with no explanation. You also have the right to ask that any data you supply to the study to be withdrawn/destroyed. You have the right to ask any questions you may have for the researcher or about the study to be answered.

All implication and cautions have been put in place to ensure to protect participants as much as possible. There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study, although there are no known risks to this study with any study there is always the risk of participants becoming distressed or anxious whilst completing the study. Participation in this study involves completion of two

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standardized scale which have both been tested a number of times. If any topics mentioned in the study affect you in anyway there will be a number of helpline and online support sites linked at the end of this debriefing form that you can go to if you feel affected by any part of the study during your participation.

This survey and study is being done as part of a college students final year thesis, the information you provide from taking the survey will be used as a part of a research study that will be submitted to be examined and also as a part of a presentation that will also be examined. The information will then be stored in the NCI thesis institutional depository. The data that will be collected for the study will not contain any personal information about you or contact details to keep your participation anonymous. Your data will only use for the purpose explained. The data from the study will only be available to the researcher.

Further contacts:

<http://mymind.org/self-esteem/> - 0766801060

<http://ie.reachout.com/getting-help-2/minding-your-mental-health/self-esteem/>

<http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/support-services/types-of-services/access-directly/phone-online/>

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12.3 Appendix III – Consent form

Participant consent form

The impact of social media uses on the self-esteem levels in males and female. Please only consent to take part in the study if you have read and agree with the following statements.

- I voluntary agree to participate in this research study
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and can refuse any questions without any consequences
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data from my survey after I have submitted it, in which case the data provided will be deleted up until the research study has been submitted to be examined
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study
- I have had all relevant information surrounding the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study
- I understand that participation in this study involves answering an online survey which includes ten questions and the completion of a scale
- I understand that there is no direct benefit in participating in this study
- I agree to the data I provided through this survey to be used as part of the research study and to be submitted as a part of a college thesis
- I understand that all information I provided for this study will be anonymous
- I understand that consent forms and the survey I submit will be retained by the researcher until it is submitted to the exam board as a part of their dissertation

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- I understand that all data generated by the study will be stored in the NCI thesis institution repository for five years
- I understand I am able to contact any of the people involved in the research if I have any questions or queries answered

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12.4 Appendix IV – Demographic questionnaire

Gender:

- Males
- Female
- Other

Age:

- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50+

Amount of time spent daily on social media:

- Less than 1 hour
- Between 1 and 3 hours
- More than 3 hours

Which site do you spend the most time on?

- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Instagram

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12.5 Appendix V – Social media questionnaire

Social media addiction questionnaire

Items strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and strongly disagree

1. I connect with my friends using Facebook and twitter
2. I look at the photos shared on social networking profiles
3. I search for my friends using social networking sites
4. I enjoy spending time in social networking sites
5. I want to view social networking sites starting at the early hours of a day
6. I wonder whether my friends read my posts
7. I wonder who visits my personal profile
8. I don't be aware of the time I spend navigating Facebook
9. I follow the content I am interested in from social media
10. I follow latest news and events from social networking sites
11. Social networking sites cement my friendships
12. I comment on the photos my friends share
13. I prefer social media over television
14. I feel that I have a poor communication with my friends
15. I believe that social media has a connective power
16. I believe that new media has changed learning habits
17. I believe that social networking sites are instructive
18. I participate in events on social networking sites
19. I wonder who visits my personal profile

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20. I find new friends through Facebook and Twitter
21. I think that I am being followed by someone in social media
22. I believe that new media technologies change human life
23. I read personal blog posts, and search content
24. I freely share my ideas on social networking sites

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12.6 Appendix VI – Rosenberg self-esteem scale

STATEMENT		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.				
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities..				
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.				
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.				
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.				
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.				
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.				

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8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.				
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.				
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.				

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12.7 Appendix VII – Study debriefing

By submitting your answers, you are consenting to have that data used as a part of the study and being submitted as a part of a thesis to be examined.

Thank you for your time, if you have any questions/complaints in relation to the study you can contact the researcher by emailing X16711965@student.ncirl.ie or you can contact NCI the institution the research is being submitted to by ringing +353 14498500.

If you feel affected in anyway by anything mentioned as a part of this study, there are a number of websites and contact numbers you can contact listed above.