

Facebook and its Effect on Young Adults in Romantic Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Facebook, a social networking site, was primarily created to connect people in an online forum, to bridge the distances among people. It has now become an integral part of people's life; especially the young adult population and thus certain questions have been arising revolving around their romantic relationship which is also somehow getting affected by Facebook.

Aim: In the present study, the main focus was placed upon how Facebook and overuse of this social networking site have been posing its influence on young adult couples of age 18-25 years, in their romantic relationships with respect to their self-esteem, narcissism, jealousy and attachment pattern.

Method: Apart from the general information schedule, Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS) was used to differentiate between Facebook addicts and Facebook non-addicts. For assessing the above-mentioned domains, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40), Facebook Jealousy Scale and Relationship Structure Questionnaire were used. The statistical package SPSS 10 was used in computing the 't'-test of significance and the mean and SD were used as descriptive statistics.

Results: The results revealed Facebook addict females to have significantly higher jealousy than Facebook addict males, while the latter were found to have significantly higher mother avoidance and father avoidance than the former. Facebook addict females were found to have significantly higher self-esteem, jealousy and best friend anxiety than Facebook non-addict females, while Facebook addict males were found to have significantly higher jealousy, father avoidance, mother avoidance, dating partner avoidance, best friend avoidance and best friend anxiety than Facebook non-addict males.

Conclusion: Thus, Facebook, other than primarily bridging distances among people, has now been posing its adverse effects on romantic relationships of young adults, which is now a matter of concern in the present era.

Keywords: Social networking, overuse, self-esteem, narcissism, jealousy, attachment

INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a worldwide system of interconnected computer networks that has enabled complete innovative forms of social interaction and activities with widespread usability and access. Social Networking Websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc have routed new means of socialization and connection.

Facebook is one founded on 4th February 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates. Presently, anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old can register himself or herself to this website and may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages, and receive automatic notifications when they update their profiles. Facebook enables individuals to continuously keep in touch with relatives, friends and other acquaintances in any part of the world provided there is access to the internet. It is also considered a source of problems in relationships. Several new stories have suggested that

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Facebook use can lead to higher instances of break-ups, divorce and infidelity, but the claims have been questioned by other commentators.

Self Esteem is a reflection of an individual's overall emotional evaluation of his or her worth. Smith and Mackie define Self Esteem as "The self-concept is what we think about the self; self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it". According to research by Amanda Forrest of the University of California and Joanne Wood at Waterloo University, published in *Psychological Science* in 2012, people with low self-esteem feel safer sharing on Facebook.

Narcissism is the pursuit of gratification vanity, or egoistic admiration of one's own physical or mental attributes, that is derived from arrogant pride. According to Keith Campbell, in the UGA research published in 2012 in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, "Editing yourself and constructing yourself on these social networking sites, even for a short period of time, seems to have an effect on how you see yourself."

Of all relationships we engage in over a lifetime, perhaps the most important is romantic relationships. While dependency is essential to the survival of any relationship; anxiety, sadness, jealousy and insecurity are inevitable when there is a threat to the relationship (Pfeiffer and Wong, 1989). Jealousy is defined as the emotional reaction to a threat to a relationship (Pfeiffer and Wong, 1989), and is one of the most potentially destructive emotions in romantic relationships (Buunk and Bringle, 1987). Muise, Christofides, and Desmarais (2009) found that the time that a couple spent on Facebook was directly proportional to their Facebook jealousy.

Insecure attachment is manifested in two types of externalized behaviour: Anxious Insecure Attachment and Avoidant Insecure Attachment. An individual with Anxious Insecure Attachment will be highly vigilant and attentive while an individual with Avoidant Insecure Attachment will be highly self-reliant and avoidant towards negativity. According to the displacement hypothesis, time spent engaging in online communication takes the place of the time spent with existing offline social contacts, hence reducing the quality of those offline relationships indicating that greater time spent online seemed to displace important strong-tie relationships with family and friends (Kraut et.al, 1998, Valkenburg & Peter, 2007a).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Design: A quantitative study approach was adopted to find whether Facebook addiction had any effect on young adults in a romantic relationship especially related to self-esteem, narcissism, jealousy and attachment in close interpersonal relationships.

Participants: The participants for the present study comprised 60 subjects in total. Out of these 60 subjects, 30 were males and 30 were females using Facebook actively for at least 2 hours a week. A comparative group of 60 more participants (30 males; 30 females) were also included who were not addicted to Facebook. The age range is 18-25 years. All were in a romantic relationship with a partner of the opposite sex, unmarried, students. The minimum educational qualification is class -12 passed. All belong to middle-class socioeconomic status. A subject who is employed or with any significant physical illness or psychiatric illness were excluded.

Ethical Consideration: Appropriate relevant safeguards in relation to the protection of subjects had been undertaken and reviewed by an ethical review committee at the University

for the current study. The research was conducted following general ethical guidelines in psychology. At first, the subjects were approached and they have explained the purpose of the present study. Subjects, who are willing to participate, after being briefed were only approached for the data collection purpose.

Measures Used:

1. *General Information Schedule*: For the present study an information schedule was prepared to elicit information on Name, Age, Sex, Educational Qualification, Information on family type, Number of family members, Residence, Monthly family income, Relationship status, Duration of the same, whether have a Facebook account, Approximate time spent in using Facebook per week, Presence of any physical or psychiatric illness.
2. *Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS)*: The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale has been developed by Dr. Cecile Andraessen at the University of Bergen, Norway with her colleagues.
3. *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)*: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was developed by Dr. Rosenberg, who was a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland in 1965.
4. *Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)*: The Narcissistic Personality Inventory was developed by Raskin and Hall in 1988.
5. *Facebook Jealousy Scale (FJS)*: The Facebook Jealousy Scale was developed by Muise et.al, 2009 in order to assess the experience of jealousy in the specific context of Facebook.
6. *Relationship Structure Questionnaire (RSQ)*: The Relationship Structure (RS) Questionnaire self-report instrument is designed to assess attachment patterns in a variety of close relationships.

Procedure: Before starting the data collection, the participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of data. The participants, who gave consent for participation, were approached with the information schedule and Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale initially. After receiving the basic information of the participants from the information schedule, with the help of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale, screening was done for Facebook addiction and then four groups were categorized: Facebook non-addict females, Facebook non-addict males, Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males. After the categorization, the questionnaires were administered to all the participants and then statistical analysis was done.

Analysis: The statistical package SPSS 10 was used in computing the 't'-test of significance. The mean and SD were used as descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Facebook non-addict females and Facebook addict females with respect to self-esteem, narcissism, and jealousy:

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between Facebook non-addict females and Facebook addict females with respect to self-esteem (t-value= 3.52), jealousy (t-

value=3.41). Self-esteem is found to be higher in Facebook addict females ($m=26.27$) compared to Facebook non-addict females ($m=23.77$). Facebook addict females ($m=3.99$) are found to have higher jealousy than Facebook non-addict females ($m=1.72$).

Table I: Self-Esteem, Narcissism and Jealousy of Facebook non-addict females and Facebook Addict Females

Names of the scores	Self-esteem		Narcissism		Jealousy	
	Facebook non-addict females	Facebook addict females	Facebook non-addict females	Facebook addict females	Facebook non-addict females	Facebook addict females
Mean	23.77	26.27	14.80	16.40	1.72	3.99
S. D	2.96	2.52	6.18	5.39	0.25	3.54
T-value	3.52**		1.07		3.41**	

** indicates t-value to be significant at .01 level of significance.

Facebook non-addict females and Facebook addict females with respect to best friend avoidance subscale and best friend anxiety subscale:

The result indicates that there is a significant difference between Facebook non-addict females and Facebook addict females with respect to the best friend anxiety subscale (t -value= 2.44). Facebook addict females ($m=2.16$) are found to have higher best friend anxiety than Facebook non-addict females ($m=1.48$).

Table II: Best friend Avoidance and Best friend Anxiety in Facebook non-addict females and Facebook addict Females.

Names of the scores	Best friend avoidance		Best friend anxiety	
	Facebook non-addict females	Facebook addict females	Facebook non-addict females	Facebook addict females
Mean	1.69	1.94	1.48	2.16
S. D	0.72	1.01	0.78	1.32
T-value	1.14		2.44**	

** indicates the t-value to be significant at the .01 level of significance.

Facebook non-addict males and Facebook addict males with respect to self-esteem, narcissism, and jealousy:

The result indicates that there is a significant difference between Facebook non-addict males and Facebook addict males with respect to jealousy (t -value=4.19). Facebook addict males ($m=2.58$) are found to have higher jealousy than Facebook non-addict males ($m=1.67$).

Table III: Jealousy in Facebook non-addict males and Facebook addict males

Names of the scores	Self-esteem		Narcissism		Jealousy	
	Facebook non-addict males	Facebook addict males	Facebook non-addict males	Facebook addict males	Facebook non-addict males	Facebook addict males
Mean	24.70	25.97	14.37	14.17	1.67	2.58
S. D	3.15	2.68	2.87	5.79	0.39	1.04
T-value	1.67		-0.145		4.19**	

** indicates t-value to be significant at .01 level of significance.

Facebook non-addict males and Facebook addict males with respect to **attachment in close interpersonal relationships** in the different subscales of relationship structure questionnaire:

The results show that Facebook addict males ($m=3.69$) have higher father avoidance than Facebook non-addict males ($m=2.07$). Facebook addict males ($m=2.00$) tend to avoid their dating partner more than Facebook non-addict males ($m=1.51$). Facebook addict males ($m=2.22$) tend to have best friend avoidance more than Facebook non-addict males ($m=1.53$). Best friend anxiety is found to be higher in Facebook addict males ($m=2.16$) than in Facebook non-addict males ($m=1.36$).

Table IV: Father avoidance, Father anxiety, Dating partner avoidance, Dating partner anxiety, Best friend avoidance and Best friend anxiety in Facebook non-addict males and Facebook addict males

Names of the scores	Father avoidance		Father anxiety		Dating partner avoidance		Dating partner anxiety		Best friend avoidance		Best friend anxiety	
	NA	A	NA	A	NA	A	NA	A	NA	A	NA	A
Mean	2.07	3.69	1.48	1.78	1.51	2.00	1.23	1.53	1.53	2.22	1.36	2.16
S. D	1.53	1.54	1.19	1.23	0.75	1.13	0.58	1.24	0.70	1.08	0.77	1.54
T-value	4.10**	0.941			1.97*	1.18			2.96**	2.55**		

** indicates t-value to be significant at .01 level of significance

NA = Facebook non-addict males A = Facebook addict males.

Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males with respect to **self-esteem, narcissism, and jealousy**:

The result indicates that there is a significant difference between Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males with respect to jealousy ($t\text{-value}=2.07$). Facebook addict females ($m=3.93$) tend to have higher jealousy than Facebook addict males ($m=2.53$).

Table V: Self-esteem, Narcissism and Jealousy in Facebook addict females and Facebook addict Males

Names of the scores	Self-esteem		Narcissism		Jealousy	
	Facebook addict females	Facebook addict males	Facebook addict females	Facebook addict males	Facebook addict females	Facebook addict males
Mean	26.27	25.97	16.40	14.17	3.93	2.53
S. D	2.52	2.68	5.39	5.79	3.54	1.04
T-value	0.44		1.55		2.07**	

** indicates t-value to be significant at .01 level of significance.

Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males with respect to different subscales of the relationship structure questionnaire assessing **attachment in close interpersonal relationships**:

Table VI: Result comparing Mother avoidance, Mother anxiety, Father avoidance and father anxiety in Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males.

Results show that Facebook addict males (m=3.03) tend to have higher mother avoidance than Facebook addict females (m=2.17). Facebook addict males (m=3.69) tend to have higher father avoidance than Facebook addict females (m=2.42).

Names of the scores	Mother avoidance		Mother anxiety		Father avoidance		Father anxiety	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Mean	2.17	3.03	1.48	1.51	2.42	3.69	1.58	1.78
S. D	1.13	1.31	0.78	0.89	1.27	1.54	0.95	1.23
T-value	2.88**		0.104		3.51**		0.71	

** indicates t-value to be significant at .01 level of significance.

F = Facebook addict females M = Facebook addict males

DISCUSSION

Self-esteem, jealousy and attachment in close interpersonal relationships in Facebook addict females:

The females, who are addicted to Facebook, tend to have higher self-esteem than those who are not addicted to Facebook. This may be due to the fact that more time spent on Facebook on posting and receiving feedback in the form of 'likes' or acceptable 'comments', it may boost their self-esteem. According to Jeffrey Hancock, a professor of communication at Cornell University and author of a study on Facebook's psychological effects, Facebook boosts self-worth, unlike a mirror does. A mirror reflects who we really are and may have a negative effect on our self-esteem if that image does not match our expectations. But Facebook can show a positive version of us. According to Guimond, Chatard, Martinot,

Crisp, and Redersdorff, 2006; Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi, 1992), women's self-esteem tends to be more related to maintaining social connections and a state of interdependence.

In this process of development of trust and commitment toward any relationship, an inevitable stem of jealousy also grows within individuals. People tend to have insecurity in every aspect of their relationships- be it towards a committed relationship or a friendship or just online friendships via chat messages. Even in the latter mentioned relationship jealousy and insecurity may be noticed by the restlessness of an individual if the person, on the other hand, takes a long time to reply to the chat messages. They tend to have a feeling that the other person would be chatting with someone else in a parallel connection. As females tend to be more emotionally dependent and value relationships, they tend to have jealousy regarding emotional infidelity to their partners. The jealousy stems from feelings of insecurity about their partner with respect to any real or imagined third person. Muise, Christofides, and Desmarais (2009) conducted a study focusing on Facebook and jealousy. The researchers found that increased use of Facebook predicted —Facebook-related jealousy. The authors suggest that perhaps individuals are exposed to vague information regarding their partner, and are therefore compelled to further engage in Facebook use in order to gather more information. This process can inevitably turn into a never-ending cycle of Facebook use and jealousy. They found that the amount of time that romantically-involved people spent on Facebook was positively associated with Facebook jealousy. This refers to jealous feelings and behaviour related to Facebook use, such as feeling jealous if one's romantic partner becomes Facebook friends with an ex-partner or worrying that one's partner is secretly developing a relationship with someone else on Facebook.

The emotional dependency of women brings about fear of abandonment. They seek love and remain preoccupied with thoughts of being rejected by others as they crave sociability, in turn, affecting their relationships. Social networking sites like Facebook provides an autonomous world for individuals to make online friendship. Those who tend to spend more time on Facebook spend more time maintaining friendships online and due to this, they fail to give time for the previous offline friendships. According to Bartholomew (1990), anxious attachment is related to a preoccupation with feelings of rejection, abandonment and dependency, which are characteristics of females.

Jealousy and attachment in close interpersonal relationships in Facebook addict males:

Males also tend to experience jealousy with respect to their romantic relationships just like females. But the context of jealousy in the case of males tends to be due to sexual infidelity. They are found to be suspicious in relation to their romantic partners regarding physical relationships. Buss et al. (1992) found support for the hypothesis that "jealousy involves physiological reactions (autonomic arousal) to a perceived threat and motivated action to reduce the threat" (p. 251). The result is suggestive that male jealousy develops comparatively more when sexual feelings are probably present between a partner and a rival.

Males are found to be withdrawn and less expressive in the context of attachment in close interpersonal relationships. As a result, they tend to avoid connecting themselves and expressing their feelings regarding their relationships. Their withdrawal tendency from the affectional contents of the relationships has been proved in the findings of the study where they tend to avoid connections with father, romantic partner and best friend. Moreover, feelings of jealousy tend to be one of the causes of avoidance in romantic relationships. According to the study of Itziar Alonso-Arbiol et.al, 2002, instrumental attachment is compatible with an attachment style that is highly characterized by the anxiety of rejection

and abandonment combined with avoidance of closeness and intimacy. Instrumental dependency may reflect insecurity without opening oneself to rejection of one's core self. Avoidance, anxiety and masculinity made independent contributions to instrumental dependence. Attachment avoidance contributes to instrumental dependency presumably because avoidant individuals lack self-confidence and security but do not feel safe seeking emotional support. They prefer instrumental dependency rather than seeking personal acceptance.

Comparison of jealousy between Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males:

Males and females, both tend to have jealousy present within them. But females are found to be influenced by Facebook with respect to jealousy more than males. Two types of jealousy that are mostly considered are jealousy due to sexual infidelity and jealousy due to emotional infidelity. Emotional jealousy is found to be predominant in females, as they tend to be more emotionally expressive compared to males. On the other hand, jealousy due to sexual infidelity is present in both males and females but females tend to suppress their sexual infidelity due to socio-cultural values. Females are mostly expected to behave in a socially approved manner, which includes masking their sexual desires and infidelity from expression. Males on the other hand are mostly sexually driven due to socio-cultural views of males being more powerful than women and experience autonomy regarding expressing their views about sexual infidelity. A few psychologists, such as David DeSteno and Christine Harris, have proposed non-evolutionary explanations, explanations, that make sense of the findings not by appealing to domain-specific evolved tendencies but to more domain-general human reasoning ability. The most well-known name for this cognitive interpretation of Buss's data is the "double-shot hypothesis." This hypothesis asserts that men and women will be more upset about the type of infidelity that they believe is most likely to imply that the other type of infidelity is occurring as well (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). In other words, women will be especially jealous about emotional infidelity because they believe that if a man is in love with someone, he is likely to be having sex with her (i.e. emotional and sexual infidelity), whereas it is probable that a man will willingly have sex with someone without being in love with her, (i.e. sexual without emotional infidelity). Conversely, according to this hypothesis, men believe that it is possible for a woman to be emotionally attached to someone without having sex, but if she is having sex with someone then she is probably also in love with him. Thus, regarding Buss's results, it appears as though gender is the variable that affects jealousy; when in reality it is individuals' rational beliefs about the opposite sex that cause them to show a sex-differentiated response.

Comparison of avoidance in close interpersonal relationships between Facebook addict females and Facebook addict males:

It is a social taboo that males cannot cry and express their feelings. Males have to be strong and cannot have emotional breakdowns. These social norms regarding males have been passed on to generations after generations among the males. Thus, they tend to withdraw themselves and are found to be less emotional compared to women, who are just expected to be the opposite by society. Hofstede (1980; 1998) defined masculinity as a cultural concept where males tend to be assertive, tough and focused on material success. They tend to be dismissive, fearful, less trusting and have a negative view of others.

CONCLUSION

In this ONLINE ERA, Facebook has been ruling the social networking sites in forming and maintaining romantic relationships. It is growing with the passing days. The TIMELINE of Facebook is the page that provides the basic and sufficient information for a person to know about another person. The category of RELATIONSHIP STATUS plays a major role in the romantic relationships of people. With the growing popularity of this site, researches have also been progressing in order to view its effect on different aspects of an individual's life. People who are in romantic relationships are found to have an effect on their relationship due to Facebook. Facebook has been posing its effect on self-esteem, attachment in close interpersonal relationships. The most deep-rooted and vicious effect of Facebook is on the jealousy component in a romantic relationship, which is triggered by Facebook. Males and females tend to differ in the quality and quantity of jealousy. Thus, it can be viewed that Facebook's impact on an individual's life is worth mentioning. With passing days, people are becoming obsessed with the use of Facebook and value their online connections similar to their real-life connections.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Taken

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