

# CONSEQUENCES OF FACEBOOKING AMONG WOMEN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:-** Facebook, as one of the most used social networking site, has become a prominent figure of modern life. However, a few recent researches have shown that if facebook has revolutionized social behaviours and networking practices, it has also posed as a threat to one's wellbeing. With these thoughts the present paper is an attempt to analyse facebook usage among women and to understand the consequence of facebook use on different age groups. For this purpose, 110 women participants were contacted to respond on a measure comprising items pertaining to self esteem, depression, loneliness and other facebook related items. The results revealed a significant effect of education on self esteem. Further, depression and loneliness were found to be significantly related to each other, with time given to facebook activities found significantly but negatively related to education and age. Self esteem however, did not reveal any significant relationship with any of the factors under study.

**Key Words :-** Facebook, Self esteem, depression, loneliness, online communication, wellbeing

## Introduction

Various social networking sites have become, in the past few years, the most popular online target for people of all ages. People of all ages have started using these sites and the various level of user attraction has been accompanied by much coverage in the popular press, including speculations about the potential gains and harms stemming from the use of social networking services (Hargittai, 2007; Hempel, 2005; Magid, 2006). The Eastern Standard Time has reported that social media adoption among internet users in India is around 84% today. Facebook (FB) is one such social networking site that has emerged as important for all internet and mobile users in past two years.

Academic research has shown and is still generating data that revealed that women use every major social media channel more than men-except LinkedIn. According to a research conducted at Pew by Duggan & Smith (2013), US

females use Facebook more than any other networking site as compared to their male counterparts. Arab news on April 19, 2014 has reported that India is expected to overtake the US as the country with most Facebook users in 2014, with its total number forecast to surge beyond the 150 million mark from the current 93 million level (Akhir, 2014).

The data reveal that women use almost all the social networking sites more than males except LinkedIn. However, the data for Indian Facebook users reveal that females are far behind male users in using this site (figure 1). Besides, recent years have seen tremendous change in this demographic distribution for females who are increasing in numbers more than their male counterparts, in India. Furthermore, the trends for usage of facebook reveal that youngsters falling in the age range of 18-34 years cover almost 75% of total usage of facebook (figure 2).

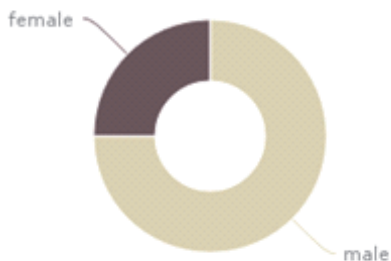
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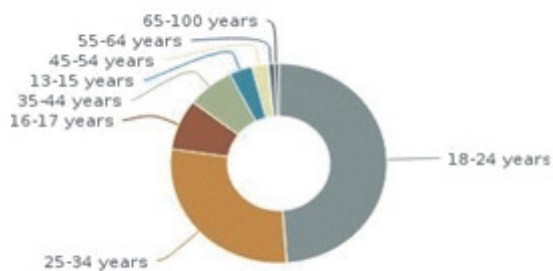
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**Figure 1: Gender wise distribution of FB usage in India**



**Figure 2: Age wise distribution of FB use in India**

With its (FB's) availability on mobile phones all over the country (India) Facebook has affected the social life and activity of people in various ways. With its ability to let users continuously stay in touch with friends, relatives and other acquaintances, face book has also helped unite people with common interests and/or beliefs through groups and other pages, and has been known to reunite lost family members and friends because of the widespread reach of its network (Richter, 2013). Looking at these aspects and the ease of having FB on mobiles while on movement also we would feel that Facebook is beneficial to one's social life as it helps us continuously stay in contact with their friends and relatives. However, another viewpoint also exists that says that it may be one basis for increased antisocial tendencies because people are not directly communicating with each other. In this line, few studies have named FB as a

source of problems in relationships as there have been rise in divorce and suicide rates corresponding to materials presented on this social site.

Looking at these trends, there have been few long debates on the consequences of online networking activities, both on male as well as female users. With these thought it seems to be interesting in finding the importance of facebook in the lives of young women and also understanding the consequences, it has or may have on them. The present paper, in this line, focuses on analysing facebook usage among women and with an objective to understand the consequence of FB use on women of different age groups.

## Method

Present study was conducted with a two fold objective. It was intended to analyse the pattern of facebook usage among women and to understand the consequence of its use on women.

## Sample

The study focused on a sample of 110 women facebook users in a large city of central India. The group of women who participated in this study were students or those who were in search of jobs. The age of all participants ranged from 20-28 years. It was ensured that all the participants were active facebook users and were at least graduate or were students of some graduate or above classes. The participants were contacted independently at their homes, market place and or at their place of study. Purposive sampling technique was used to reach out prospective candidates for the present study. After taking their consent the tool, specially designed for this study, was handed to them for their responses.

## The Measure

The measure included three sections wherein the first section was devoted towards socio-demographic items pertaining to

participant's age, gender, educational background including years of study, marital status, time given to facebook activities, mode of using facebook and types of favourite uploads.

Second part of the measure included a self report Rosenberg Self Esteem (RSE) inventory devised by Rosenberg (1965). The Rosenberg SE consists of 10 items assessing global self-esteem (e.g., “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself; I feel that I have a number of good qualities”). The participants had to respond on a four point rating scale indicating Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). High score on this scale meant better self esteem. The psychometric property of the scale was calculated and the reliability alpha was found to be .64 for the present study. Previous studies have reported alpha reliabilities for the RSE ranging from .72 to .88 (Gray-Little et al., 1997).

The third part of the measure consisted of a scale devoted to depression. This scale contained 6 items meant for measuring depression and happiness (Joseph et al., 2004). The items in the scale were to be responded on a four point rating scale, namely Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Often. High score on this scale depicted high depression. The reliability alpha was found to be .65 for the present study.

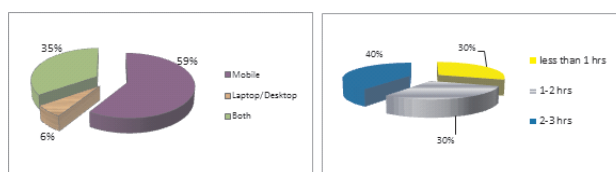
The fourth section of the scale included a 20 item scale on Loneliness developed by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson (1978). The scale was to be responded on a four point rating scale with a score of 4 given to the extreme high response and 1 was allocated to the lowest response as a score. The alpha of the scale was calculated which was found to 0.70.

## Results and Discussion

The data was analysed using SPSS version 19 and the statistics used were mean, percentage distribution, and correlation, as appropriate. The results of the analysis are presented in form of tabular and graphical presentation, as required and looking at

suitability of the same.

The results indicate that around 59% of the women participants use facebook through their mobile handsets and 35% present themselves on facebook through laptops/desktops. Only 6% participants indicated using both the medium for the facebook activities. The result is shown in figure 3. Similarly the results reveal that 40% of the participants were using facebook around 2-3 hours per day, where as 30% each were using it for either 1-2 hours or less than 1 hours (figure 3).



**Figure 3: Distribution pertaining to mode through Facebook used & hours of facebook used per day by women.**

Besides, the results of the study also evince that 40% of the total sample was graduate, 50% were pursuing their post graduation and 2% were pursuing their doctoral studies. Furthermore, 8% of the total participants were found to be enrolled in some graduate level courses like B.A., B.Sc., B.Com. etc. Furthermore, 54.55% of the participants were in the age group of 20-23 years and rest 45.45% were found to be in the age group of 24-28 years.

The results, as shown above, reveal that facebook is now mostly being used while women are on move and the most preferred media is mobile. Looking at the recent changes in mobile technology, low mobile internet packages and with the advent of cheaper smart handset, the trend of this kind will always be revealed. This is why the social networking sites are becoming more popular among youngsters. However, considerable numbers of women are also using their laptops and desktops for using the facebook related activities. This may be because desktop/laptops provide these youngsters more privacy and the level of concentration also seems to play its role. Apart from this, it is also possible

that the handsets they are using do not support internet/facebook apps and or they are more comfortable with the desktops/laptops as it provides more space and software which are required for these young participants.

The study included the measures for assessing Rosenberg self esteem, depression and loneliness of the women facebook users. One way ANOVA was also used to determine the significance of difference between various scores on different measures. The results indicate a significant difference in the scores of self esteem on educational background of the participants ( $F=2.72$  (3,106);  $p<.05$ ). The mean score presented in the Table 1 depicts that post graduate participants were high on self esteem and the lowest were the undergraduate participants. No significant effect of education was found on depression and or loneliness. However, the mean Table 1 reveals that PG and undergraduate participants were more depressed and the PhD participants were least depressed. Similarly, the PhD participants revealed least feeling of loneliness and the women participants from undergraduate group reported being more loneliness with PG women group standing next in the line to them.

**Table 1: Education on Rosenberg Self Esteem, Depression & Loneliness**

Measure	Education	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self Esteem	Graduation enrolled	19.56	4.927
	Graduate	23.48	3.494
	PG	23.51	4.181
	Ph.D	23.00	1.414
	Total	23.16	4.056
Depression	Graduation enrolled	17.67	2.345
	Graduate	16.89	3.200
	PG	17.67	3.198
	Ph.D	15.00	2.828
	Total	17.31	3.135
Loneliness	Graduation enrolled	58.3333	3.77492
	Graduate	55.9318	5.44058
	PG	55.4364	6.01776
	Ph.D	55.0000	4.24264
	Total	55.8636	5.60713

The trend revealed by the present results may be due to the fact that the undergraduate students are mostly new to their college culture and also are most active in terms of maintaining

their friendship and also loosing it and perceiving themselves as the best in the world. Body image also seems to play its role in the present study. Further, the role of maturity also seems to lend its hand in the present result that is evinced through the result showing PhD students revealing better self esteem. Besides, low self esteem has been frequently found to be related to depression. The present study confirms such findings as the undergraduate and the PG participants, who also revealed low esteem, were found to be more depressed than their counterparts.

When hours put to facebook activities were questioned, it was found that self esteem was high when moderate duration was given by the participants (Table 2). In January 2014, it was found that on an average Indians use 2.4 hours of their total time for social networking activities (Kemp, January 2014). The trend also reveals that higher use lowers self esteem. However, no significant difference was found, when ANOVA was applied, between the three levels of duration defined for the study. No significant difference was found on the measures of depression and loneliness on hours given to facebook activities. The mean results, however, reveal those 1-2 hours of facebook users were depressed and experienced the symptoms of loneliness (Table 2), as well. This result seems to indicate that use of facebook by women group may be for enhancing their self esteem. However, significant difference was not seen between various groups of facebook user on time factor.

**Table 2: Hours of Facebook use on Rosenberg Self Esteem, Depression & Loneliness**

Measures	Hours	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self Esteem	less than 1 hrs	23.45	4.236
	1-2 hrs	23.91	4.304
	2-3 hrs	22.39	3.668
	Total	23.16	4.056
Depression	less than 1 hrs	17.12	3.498
	1-2 hrs	17.58	3.289
	2-3 hrs	17.25	2.771
	Total	17.31	3.135
Loneliness	less than 1 hrs	54.2727	5.35183
	1-2 hrs	56.6970	5.69805
	2-3 hrs	56.4318	5.60481
	Total	55.8636	5.60713

Table 3 results evince that the group who used both the medium, namely mobile handset and desktop/laptops scored better on self esteem. However, laptop/desktop users for facebook showed that they were more depressed and were experiencing more loneliness than their counterparts. Besides, ANOVA results revealed no significant difference on medium. This result seems to be due to the fact that frequent mobile users are perceived to be having more friends and are supposed to be surrounded with friends and different people and are frequently changing their environment. This fact helps them to be relieved from depression and the feeling of loneliness. On the other hand self esteem is also said to be enhanced when a person considers oneself to be friendlier and are outwardly and reveal more control on her in browsing social networking sites. Perhaps, the participants of this research seem to be demonstrating more self-control and were operating in a closed friendship group and hence esteem was not affected.

**Table 3: Medium for Facebook use on Rosenberg Self Esteem, Depression & Loneliness**

Measures	Medium	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self Esteem	Mobile	22.83	4.237
	Laptop/Desktop	22.43	4.504
	Both	23.87	3.648
	Total	23.16	4.056
Depression	Mobile	17.31	3.077
	Laptop/Desktop	18.86	3.436
	Both	17.03	3.183
	Total	17.31	3.135
Loneliness	Mobile	55.4154	5.03703
	Laptop/Desktop	59.7143	7.95224
	Both	55.9211	5.94289
	Total	55.8636	5.60713

To ascertain the relationship between various variables under consideration for the present study Pearson correlation was used between self esteem, depression, loneliness, age, time given to FB activities and education. The results are presented in Table 4.

The correlation reveals a positive and significant relationship between depression and loneliness ( $r=.30$ ). This suggests that with enhanced experience of loneliness, depression also increases. Furthermore, loneliness was

found to be negatively related to age ( $r= -.22$ ), which indicates that with age feeling of loneliness is reduced. Age was also found to be related to education ( $r=.58$ ) positively and time given to facebook activity ( $r= -.30$ ) negatively. This relationship indicates that education increases with age whereas younger participants devote more time to facebook than their older counterparts. Besides, education was also found to be negatively related to time devoted to facebook ( $r=-.61$ ). This evinces that higher the education, less is the time devoted to facebook activities. Other variable did not reveal any significant relationship between them.

**Table 4: Relationship of Rosenberg Self Esteem (RSE), Depression, Loneliness, Age & Education.**

	Depression	Loneliness	Age	Education	Time given to FB activities
RSE	.04	-.07	.14	.17	-.12
Depression	1	.30**	-.11	.03	.01
Loneliness		1	-.22*	-.12	.15
Age			1	.58**	-.30**
Education				1	-.61**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The correlation result provides an interesting account of how the measures used in this research are related. Previous investigators (Ayas & Horzum, 2013; Shotton, 1991) have confirmed that loneliness is related to depression and the present results are consistent with those studies. There are few studies that have shown that there is insignificant negative and low level relationship between internet addiction and self esteem (e.g., Greenberg, Lewis & Dodd, 1999; Murali & George, 2007). The present study has reveals a negative but insignificant relationship between self esteem, loneliness and time given to facebook activities. The reason for this result may be that individuals using facebook, more frequently a day, accept it as a symbol of status, and pride to have lots of friends and do not attempt to change this situation. Thus, the loneliness boosts depression.

## Conclusion

Present findings strongly support a relationship between Facebook variables and depression and loneliness. This is true for the whole sample where considerable number were found to be appending a lot of time on Facebook which has been revealed as negatively related to self-esteem.

By and by, it has been reported that use of social networks like Facebook and Twitter makes the lives worse and self esteem goes negative (Soltero, 2012 ). But there is also a caveat. Self esteem fluctuates with each strike of likes and unlike. This seems to indicate that the number of likes on Facebook is actually related to better self worth perception. Further, in one of the research Wilcox & Stephen (2013) has demonstrated that the users, if, are focused on a closed group of friends, their esteem seems to rise. However, at later stage, their self control is reduced as they seem to move over surfing other networks and here their esteem gets threatened.

The present results suggest that the participants were probably naive in using Facebook and hence demonstrated more control and kept their esteem. Besides, there was no significant difference reported. This also seems to suggest that esteem was almost stable across the study group. Present results are in contradiction to the conclusions made by Wilcox & Stephen (2013).

The relationship between loneliness, depression and internet usage is quite enduring and has been known to have negative effects on depression and loneliness (Moody, 2001; Whang, Lee & Chang, 2003). One group of research has noted and argued that the relationship around loneliness and depression cause addictive, habitual or problematic Internet use (e.g., see

Caplan, 2007; LaRose, Lin, & Eastin, 2003). Besides, one perspective views loneliness as the effect of Internet use rather than its cause and possibly negative life consequences like loneliness and depression with low esteem may cause an individual to adopt online activity like Facebooking as a mode of coping. In the same line, it has been found earlier that socially anxious individuals tend to pass more time on Facebook and hence seems to be more susceptible to ailments like depression and loneliness feeling (e.g., Sheldon, 2008). The present result supports this notion.

The interpretation of the findings of this study should be looked with caution because of the small sample size and the uneven representation of demographic factors and gender itself. Gender difference could have, if taken, provided important interpretation towards the problems taken in this research. However, previous researchers have not, too frequently, reported gender differences in the use of Facebook. A bigger sample could have allowed advanced statistical analyses such as regression.

Taking insight from the present study, future studies would like to include other facebook factors in to the study like, number of FB friends, gender, type of FB use, nature of friendships, and above all shyness, personality, willingness to communicate and communication apprehension. One more thing that is worth researching is to find out various influences of Facebook presents to its users. Although the study did not include the duration of Facebook use (in years/months) still the study provides modest interpretation with the nature of question asked. The future of social networking research studies seems to be bright as many social scientists have now opened themselves to this domain of research.

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