

How Does Social Media Change a Student's Self-esteem in Relation to Their Physical Appearance?



Green River College

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## How does Social Media Change a Student's Self-esteem in relation to Their Physical Appearance?

Self-esteem is, according to Rosenberg, “a ‘positive or negative attitude toward ...the self’ and “a key indicator of psychological well-being” (Baldwin, et al., 2002). Social media provides a platform that people form evaluations of themselves through comparison with others, being called as social comparison theory, and reduce their self-esteem on ease. (Humphrey, A., 2016). Besides, appearance is an important factor for self-worth, and there is an inextricable link between perception of appearance and self-worth. An analysis of TV sitcoms found that “76% of female characters were below average weight” for the reason that the media like TV, film and advertising place female self-worth on appearance and the body size (Clay, et al., 2005). From these findings, my research object is to explore, in case of social media, how a student's self-esteem in relation to their physical appearance change. Although male tends not to be affected by social comparison with others and decrease their self-esteem, my paper does not narrow the gender to focus on students.

**Hypotheses:** Social media usage decreases a student's self-esteem surrounding their physical appearance.

### **Method**

To examine the change of a student's self-esteem related to their physical

appearance, my study was conducted by a total of 30 participants, ranging from the ages of under 18-34. The analysis is limited to these participants who are students to follow the hypothesis. The participants consist of 73.3% female, 20% male, 3.3% transgender/non-binary, and 3.3% prefer not to answer. 70% of all participants are Asian, 20% are White, 6.7% are African, 6.7% are Hispanic or Latino, and 3.3% are African American.

The study utilizes Google Docs to analyze the results of a survey consisted with 10 demographic questions. They included the participants' general information: age, gender, ethnicity and occupations. After such information, the survey asked how long they use social media per day and the frequency of their posting or tweeting, and their comparison with others on social media. The follow-up question comes after to ask specifically what they most compare to others. Lastly, the survey included two questions regarding how often they feel their self-esteem surrounding their physical appearance is positively or negatively affected by social media use. The purpose of these questions is to clarify the link between social media and self-esteem and what makes their self-esteem in relation to physical appearance change.

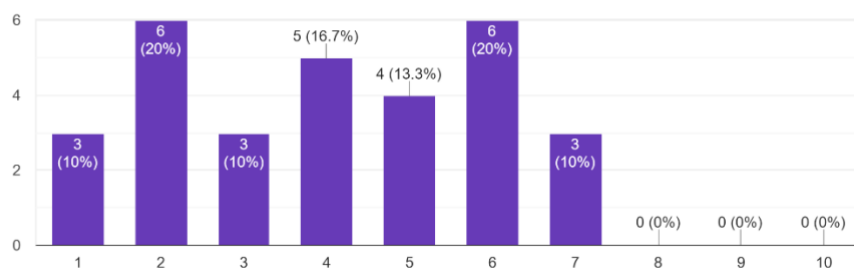
### **Result**

When analyzing the results of the survey, I found 36.7% of the participants occasionally post or tweet on social media, following behind is 23.3% that sometimes post or tweet, and 20% use social media just for watching. Also, 10% of participants answered the

question as often or every day. When asked how often they compare themselves to others on social media, 43.3% answered sometimes, following behind is occasionally at 23.3%, often at 20% and never at 13.3%. Nobody selected always in the question. As the linked question, I asked specifically what element they most compare to others when using social media. While half of participants selected fulfillment of personal life that social media displays, 37.9% compared their appearance to others on social media. The rests of answers are academic at 6.9%, job at 3.4% and personality at 3.4%.

In question 9 that ask how often they feel their self-esteem in relation to their physical appearance is positively affected by social media usage, 56.7% selected 1-4 out of 10. A total of 30% selected 6-7, and yet the neutral of 5 is 13.3%.

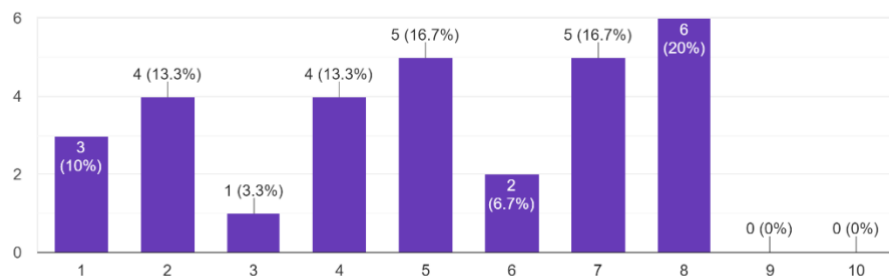
9. How often do you feel your self-esteem surrounding your physical appearance is positively affected by social media use? ど...尊心がSNSの利用によってプラスに影響していると感じますか。  
30件の回答



Comparatively, in the last question, 43.4% felt their self-esteem surrounding their physical appearance is negatively affected by social media usage at 6-8 out of 10. Looking through the data more specifically, the max is 8 at 20%, following behind is 7 at 16.7% and 6

at 6.7%. The participants that selected the neutral of 5 is also 16.7%. However, there are 39.9% answered 1-4, as being shown below.

10. How often do you feel your self-esteem in relation to your physical appearance is negatively affected by social media use? ど...心がSNSの利用によってマイナスに影響していると感じますか。  
30件の回答



## Discussion

In this paper, I conducted a survey to know if social media usage decreases a student's self-esteem surrounding their physical appearance. From the results of the survey, I found it partially supported the hypothesis and what social media presents are more negatively influential for students' self-esteem. Yet, it does not point only to appearance. In the question which following they most compare to others when using social media, the fulfillment of personal life was most chosen. The indication is that the harmful influence of social media, which vividly displays people's moment to pick up, was combined with the comparison theory on social media. When I take it into consideration, however, it was out of my expectation that the response of appearance comes into the second. It revealed that more than half of them do not feel the positive effect of social media use for their self-esteem,

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specifically their physical appearance.

### Reference

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