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Facebook: A Students Link to Social Connections

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Abstract

Facebook, a popular social networking site among college students, provides the means for college students to stay in contact with their friends. I conducted this present study to examine the relationship between college students' Facebook usage, their age, and their number of friends. One hundred and thirteen students from a general psychology course participated in this study. The outcome suggest that Facebook usage among college students is higher among younger students, with those students spending 1.37 hours more per week logged into their Facebook account. Additionally this study found a strong correlation with the number of friends college students have and their Facebook usage, were those college students that have more friends interacted more frequently on Facebook. As expected this study confirmed the association between age and the number of friends as a driving factor behind Facebook usage.

Facebook is a social networking site with more then 300 million active users with over 50% of those users actively logging into their account on a daily basis. More then 6 billion minutes are spent on Facebook each day with more then 40 million account status updates per day, and over 2 billion photos uploaded each month (Facebook Corporation, 2009). On a recent survey, (Sheldon, 2008) 93% of college students had a Facebook account with an average of 130 friends on their account.

In the current study general psychology college students at Boise State University were surveyed about their current use of social networking sites specifically Facebook. Questions from a survey pertained to the number of friends associated with their Facebook account. Students were also asked about their primary use of Facebook along with the amount of time spent on their account. The primary focus of this study was to test if there was a correlation between a college students age and the amount of time that was spent online interacting through Facebook.

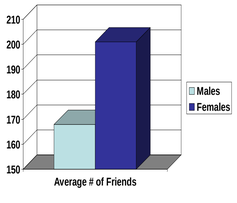
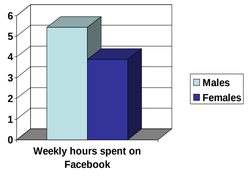
Method

Participants in this study were recruited from a pool of general psychology students. There were 113 total student participants in this study. Of the gender reporting there were 41 male and 64 female student participants. The students were presented with seven questions related to Facebook usage. The students were tested in a large classroom in two groups. The students were given 50 min to complete the survey, but completed the survey in 40 min. After the survey was completed, the students were debriefed and thanked for their time.

Results

There is not a significant association between gender and having a Facebook account, males answered 33 yes and 8 no, and females answered 52 yes and 11 no, X^2 (1, N = 104) = 0.07, n.s. There is not a significant association between year in school and having a Facebook account, X^2 (3, N = 110) = 2.72, n.s. There is a significant relationship between the number of hours spent on Facebook, and the number of friends on Facebook, r (70) = 0.28, $p < .05$. There is a significant relationship between age and number of hours spent on Facebook, r (83) = -0.23, $p < .05$. There is a significant relationship between age and number of friends on Facebook, r (85) = -0.34, $p < .05$.

Discussion

Facebook is a popular online social networking site that many college students use as a means to stay in contact with their friends. With the information discovered in this survey it was not a surprise to see that both males and females spent similar amount of hours per week logged into their Facebook account. One of the important findings in this study is that female students had an average of 201 friends while males had an average of 168 friends. However, females spent around 1.5 hours less time being logged into their accounts on a weekly basis: males averaged around 5.43 hours while females spent on average 3.88 hours per week. The positive correlation between the number of hours spent and number of friends that college students have is a clear indicator that the more friends a student has the higher the influence is on the amount of time that the student spends online.

The importance of this research is to understand that online social networking sites such as Facebook have become a popular means of staying in contact with current and past friends. Since not a lot of information is available about social networking sites, in particular Facebook, this study will provide further evidence about college students and their Facebook usage.