

## Chapter 89

# The Relation of Gender, Behavior, and Intimacy Development on Level of Facebook Addiction in Emerging Adults

**Melanie Kimpton**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

**Alexandria Orel**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

**Marilyn Campbell**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

**Kelly Wozencroft**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

**Eliza Leong Weigin**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

**Chrystal Whiteford**

*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*

### ABSTRACT

*Social networking sites are changing the way in which young people develop and maintain friendships and relationships. This study investigated the relationship between level of Facebook addiction, Facebook behaviors, gender, and intimacy development in emerging adults. Participants were 273 university students aged 18 to 25. They completed an online questionnaire that measured their level of Facebook addiction, what they do on Facebook, and their ability to form intimate relationships. A gender difference was found with long distance, passive, active photo, and organizing behaviors relating to high levels of Facebook addiction in females, whereas gaming was related to high levels of Facebook addiction in males. Intimacy development was related to high Facebook use and long distance, active photo, and organizing behaviors, but not to the level of Facebook addiction. Implications regarding the identification of at-risk for addiction emerging adults are discussed.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites are changing the way in which young people develop and maintain friendships and relationships (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Arguably the most popular and influential of these sites is Facebook (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Hudiburgh, 2012). Media and academic research alike has criticized Facebook for its addictive qualities and has raised concerns about its relationship to the development of young people (Anderson, Fagan, Woodnutt, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2012; Kuss, Griffiths, & Binder, 2013). While the key feature of Facebook is the ability to connect with other people and facilitate friendships (Sofiah, Omar, Bolong, & Osman, 2011; Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008), it may also serve a variety of different personal and social needs including online gaming, photo sharing, and monitoring of friend's behaviors. The concept of Facebook addiction is controversial; rather than being addicted *to* Facebook, it may be more likely that there are addictions *on* Facebook (Griffiths, 2012). The current study's aim was to examine the relationship between level of Facebook addiction, Facebook behaviors, and gender; and determine whether intimacy development was related to level of Facebook addiction.

Facebook was launched in 2004 and now has over 1.23 billion active users each month (Anderson et al., 2012; Facebook, 2014; Pempek, Yermolayever, & Calvert, 2009). Users create a "profile" that includes their basic information which allows communication with other users, uploading of photographs and videos, posting updates about what they are doing or thinking, and playing games (Pempek et al. 2009; Tong et al., 2008). Facebook's impact on changing the way in which people communicate has made it a centre of debate within the academic community with many considering it a useful, social way to connect with friends, while others suggest that it is an "isolating distraction" from creating deeper social interactions (Anderson et al., 2012; Carpenter, Green, & LaFlam, 2011).

## Facebook Addiction

Despite the potential positive consequences that Facebook has for social connection, there has been recent concern that excessive Facebook use is unhealthy, particularly in adolescents and emerging adults who are at higher risk of developing a social networking addiction (Sofiah et al., 2011; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008) due to differences in developing cognitive control. Some of the areas of a person's life that excessive Facebook can affect include work, study, health, and personal relationships (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013; Karaikos, Tzavellas, Balta, & Paparrigonpoulous, 2010; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Pempek et al., 2009).

Research on Internet addiction could help to determine what Facebook behaviors are indicative of levels of addiction. It has been found that online gaming, shopping, use of social Internet applications, and behaviors that elicit "communication pleasure", increase the risk of developing an Internet addiction (Chou & Hsiao, 2000; Kuss, Griffiths, & Binder, 2013). Communication pleasure, based upon Stephenson's Play Theory of Mass Communication, posits that use of a communication medium generates a pleasurable communication experience reminiscent of an addiction high (Stephenson, 1988). These varied activities suggest that people may be more likely to become addicted to specific Internet behaviors, rather than the Internet as a whole.

Despite no known research looking at the levels of Facebook addiction in males, many studies have found differences in the way in which males and females use Facebook. Females have been found to

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