SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY: HOW SELF-ESTEEM CHANGE WHEN EXPOSED TO SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS

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Abstract - The fact that little had been discussed about the deleterious effects of social media points to need of examining various angles of social media to identify their inherent problems. Therefore, this research was set off to uncover what groups in our society are more susceptible than others to social media and its contents. Having administered a translated Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (RSES) together with other survey questions to 103 young people in Korea, correlation analysis, independent samples t-test, and regression analysis were conducted. The results revealed that gender, socioeconomic status (SES) were primary factors associated with the social media users' self-esteem, and the two variables (gender and SES) accounted for the difference in self-esteem. Finally, the same RSES was administered to the participants before and after they watched an upsetting social media posting, and a paired sample t-test was conducted. Though no difference was found in the overall self-esteem score, the participants showed a change in self-esteem with one question in RSES when the questionnaire was broken down and analyzed.

Index Terms - Gender, Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, Self-esteem, Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word "social media," also called, Social Network Site, was first coined by Christ Shipley, the founder of Guidewire group, at a conference called BlogOn in 2004 [1]. Social media has evolved into a "web-based platform networking through having individual build personal profiles and connect with others [2]," More than 66% of American adults are now actively engaged in social media site like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace [3]. The figure draws a steep upward slope with the introduction of various social media like Instagram, Snapchat, and more. And recently, social media has flocked greater public interests, creating a unique ecology in cyberspace and transforming the way people think and behave. Therefore, social scientists can use social media to analyze how our society evolves, how its people interact, and how its dynamic transform over the course of time. As is the case with most places where people gather to pitch in and share their opinions, social media are now becoming the venues that spawn an array of malice like rumors, libel, defamations, and more. Nevertheless, existing research pays little attention to the potential dangers of the social media and overly highlights their benefits [4] [5] [6]. Granted, social media have revolutionized various domains of our society, but one must be fully aware of the deleterious effects of social media for their activities would only be used for the good of our society. Therefore, this research explores current issues surrounding social media to identify problems inherent in social media. Furthermore, this research will uncover as to what groups in our society are more susceptible than others to the problem underlying social media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social media and cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, an issue that social media has spawned over the past few decades, is violence victimizing a growing number of people online. Though a single factor cannot aptly be attributed to this phenomenon, one thing is clear: social media offer convenient venues through which people fall into the hands of slanderers. Unlike conventional crimes, virtually no physical evidence can be collected to prosecute the slanders their verbal abuse. Criminalization of cyberbullying has ignited debates in many countries offering a vast network of the Internet. In fact, inflammatory remarks posted

In fact, inflammatory remarks posted on social media can reach a wider audience thus traumatizing victims to a greater extent. Bullying increases the risk of suicidal ideation and behaviors in a broad spectrum of youth [7]. Therefore, countries around the world are taking active legal measures against cyberbullying. In 2014, Singapore criminalized cyberbullying, and the first-time offense will incur a fine $5,000 or one year in jail while the repeated offenders face fines of $10,000 or two years of imprisonment [8]. China combats cyberbullying by passing a law requiring all netizens to register their real names online, holding them accountable for their cyber activities [8] while countries like Japan, Belgium, and South Korea taking active measure against cyberbullying befitting their cultural and political airs. Increasing concern about cyberbullying and its repercussion lend support to the laws that would control cyber activities to minimize cyberbullying in social media. .

B. Social media and overloading information

With the advent of the Internet, rumors, slanders, and fake news travel far faster than the past. In fact, social media played a vital role spreading fake news during 2016 presidential election in the US [9]. Offering journalists a new way to connect with readers, social media offer a broader channel through which people can read and access falsehood. For instance, satires attract readers and misleading people to false news and information [10]. The production of falsehood via social media is not confined to journalism because everyone and anyone can produce information. Furthermore, given the public inclination to pay attention to stimulating news, social media often serve as the spring of fake news and rumors. Like an infection, therefore, rumors and slanders travel fast, reaching a wider audience. Doerr, Fouz, & Frederich [11] studied the speediness of rumors traveling in social media through mathematical analysis. They observed that small-degree nodes learn a rumor immediately after one of their neighbors obtains it. The information is then forwarded to their neighbors even when the rumor is not organized centrally nor intelligent. Unfortunately, the fact that our brain capacity only has limited bandwidth for storing information suggests that fake news and false information mixed up with their viral nature must be invisibly sickening our mental health, encroaching our body's command center.

C. Social Media and Health Risk

As is the case with most activities with addictive nature, excessive time spent on social media incurs serious health risks. Higher is the risk for adolescents whose self-control is not fully developed. Existing research indicates that their frequent expressions of offline behaviors such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentations that have introduced problems such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, sexing [12]. Also, seemingly harmless food postings on social media can trigger more hunger, thus damaging people healthy eating habits. Psy. D. Susan Alber, the author of 'Eating Mindfully" says that "like the sexual kind, food porn allows us to lust after taboo things [13]. When exposed to food postings on social media over an extended period, the viewers are encouraged to eat more than their daily intake. In this regard, the public health professionals must now be aware and treat food postings on the social media with caution.

D. Social media and real-life conflicts

Dr. Nicholas David Bowman, an assistant professor at West Virginia University, warns that problematic behaviors happening online are not different from those in real life. Highlighting how there's no difference in the effects of such problems when compared to those in cyberspace, he maintains that social media allow more contact, more communication, and more public manner [14]. This increasing contact in social media worsens the frequency of injurious behaviors and offenses happening online; therefore, no issues in social media deserves less attention than those occurring in real life.

E. Social Media and psychological health

If only one can control, social media can help us stay connected with others, enriching our life. As social media expand influence on the broader spectrum of life, however, one should be keenly aware of the effects, especially the psychological ones. Cabral[15] from Elon University highlights how problems stemming from social media can be treated as a strand of addiction requiring clinical diagnosis and treatment. Having analyzed young people's social media usage by Griffith's six components that determine behavioral addiction, she discovered three components indicating an addiction—tolerance, salience, and relapse—amongst the participants. These people also show intrapsychic conflicts, "a mental struggle arising from the class of incompatible or opposing impulses, wishes, drives, and external demands [16]." This evidence demands more attention to social media as a potential channel through which people develop addictive behaviors.

When developed into an addiction, social media can ensnare children and adolescents who are more susceptible to external stimuli. O'Keefee & Clarke-Pearson [12] have coined a term Facebook depression as a symptom that "develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, such as Facebook, and then begin to exhibit symptoms of depression. Because it is known that behaviors of children and teenagers are more likely to be affected by peer pressure and their desire for social is greater, excessive use of social media can adversely affect their perspectives and self-concepts before they enter adulthood. If their negative experience in social media develops depression or similar psychological problem, it may distort their personality, characters, and mental well-being. Young [17] explains that "online users are becoming addicted to the Internet much the same as that others became addicted to drugs or alcohol." She explains the addictive use of the Internet may be defined as an impulse-control disorder. As the social media taking up a considerable portion of the Internet use, social media addiction must be categorized as a psychological disorder requiring clinical attention.

Zooming in on how young people develop an addiction, Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten [18] examined the effects of social media targeting Dutch adolescents. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), they revealed that the frequency of using social media affect adolescents' self-esteem and well-being: negative feedback decreased the

participants' self-esteem and well-being. Also, online marketing emerging as a primary channel that business enterprises communicate with potential customers, the products aimed at adults are now made more accessible to under-aged population, thus debilitating their mental health. Similarly, a research was done by Winpenny, Marteau, & Nolte [19] from RAND Europe reveals that children and adolescents are now exposed to alcohol marketing extensively, and the primary channels of such advertisements are Facebook and Youtube. The implication of this research finding extends beyond the scope of alcohols. The children and adolescents exposed to dangerous substances and contents unfit for their age can fall prey to the hands of pernicious influence in medial, leading to psychological or behavioral problems if proper monitoring is absent.

Data from federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) indicate that there is an association between the surge of social media and an increased suicide rate for teens [20]. CDC measured the attitudes, behaviors, and interests of a million American high school students aged 13 to 18 from 2009 to 2015. The report showed that the teenagers who use smartphones more than five hours a day are 70% more likely to experience suicidal ideation than others [20]. The report shows that two decades of declining suicide rate for teens before the advent of social media has met with an upward inflection point together with the surge of social media, thus suggesting that there is a high correlation between the suicide rate and the use of social media. Gasner [21] says that "teenagers who spend more hours 'liking' their friends' posts on social media may be more likely to have traits associated with violent behaviors." What drives the users violent remains a question that demands an answer.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the findings of Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten[18] that social media affect adolescents' self-esteem and well-being, this research aims to identify such relationship in the Korean context. Also, provided that many users are unaware of the effects of social media, what groups are more likely to be affected by social media is the topic worth investigating in depth. Using the study of Lenhart et al. [22] as a cornerstone, this research will investigate as to how gender difference can be accounted for by social media activities. Lenhart et al. [22] have found that while men and women are equally likely to use social mediate sites, "online women (21% of whom use Twitter and other status update services) are more likely to use social media than men (17% of whom do so)." In Facebook alone, "women (78%) are more likely than men (68%) to have a profile." Below are the questions that this research intends to explore:

1. What factors must be examined before studying the social media effects?
2. Does change in viewers' self-esteem differ by gender?
3. Does people's socioeconomic status affect the viewer's self-esteem?
4. Do people's self-esteem change after they see social media postings?

IV. METHOD

A. Participants

A total of 103 people living in the Republic of Korea participated in the study. The average age of the participants was 23 (SD = 5.17), and their male to female ratio was 44% to 66%. On a 10-point scale, the participants had indicated that their socioeconomic status (SES) was 5.60 (SD = 1.69). Their history of unfriending other users who were registered on their friend's list was 6.35 times (SD = 8.71). Furthermore, 34% of the participants said that they had mimicked activities of other users having viewed social media postings. On average, the hour spent on social media in a day was 2.89 (SD = 2.41).

B. Procedure

Before administering the survey, Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (RSES) and its applicability to this study were carefully examined. Lee et al. [23] examined the validity and the reliability of the scale translated into Korean by Choi [24]. They also analyzed the reliability, which was shown to be acceptable, $\alpha = .75\sim87$. Lee et al. [23], however, raised the question regarding the item #8 because the item's reliability differed significantly when given to different age groups. Therefore, this study carefully examined the translation and identified the mistranslation in the item: In the item, "I wish I could have more respect for myself," the word respect was translated into Jon-gyeong, which connotes a higher degree of respect like "veneration" or "reverence." Therefore, the translation was modified to Jon-joong, whose meaning better aligns with the English word, respect. In addition, the fact that it was translated into 28 languages then used in 53 different countries [25] lends support to the validity of the sale.

To minimize selection bias, the survey was administered in three different downtown areas in Seoul all of which that had heavy human traffic. The participants were compensated with a gift worth $3 after filling out the survey (100% return rate). Some participants came in groups or couples. In such cases, they were asked not to look at each other's answer to ensure the independence of each response. Before filling out the survey, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were notified that their personal information would not be collected, nor their

response would be disclosed to the third party outside this research.

Having agreed to participate, the participants were asked to fill out the following information: age, gender, the number of family members, the average hour spent on social media, the number of unfriended people, mimicking experience, socioeconomic status, and the reaction after exposed to wealth-boasting posts. On the same survey, the participants filled out Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale [26] consisting of ten questions.

Next, the participants were asked to watch one-minute-long social media posting of spoiled kids boasting their wealth. Then, they were given the same Rosenberg's Self-esteem questionnaire. This time, the questions were administered in reverse order to minimize the effects of short-term memory on the response.

Aware of the possibility that some participants might not provide their honest response under the surveillance of a researcher, a separate booth was set up. When completed, the participants stapled the paired responses—the pre-test and the post-test—and inserted them in a box as instructed. Also, because the question items #2, #5, #6, #8, #9 are reverse scored, they were coded before the analyses [26].

V. RESULT

Table 1. Pearson correlations of the Social Media-related Variables

	Age	Gender	Family Number	Time Spent on SM	Unfriend Number	Mimic	SES	Posting Reaction	Sum of Pre-test
Gender	-.068								
Family Number	-.177	**-.279****							
Times Spent on SM	-.033	.171	-.045						
Unfriend Number	.010	-.010	.076	.010					
Mimic	.148	**-.246***	.014	.023	.128				
SES	.024	.003	.012	-.060	.157	-.049			
Posting Reaction	.087	.016	.029	.043	.025	.121	-.147		
Sum of Pre-test	.064	**-.225***	.098	-.035	.059	.055	**.315****	**-.269****	
Sum of Post-test	.066	-.069	.085	-.018	.156	.011	**.247***	**-304****	**.773****

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 1 shows the correlations of variables used for analysis. When it comes to the correlation between gender and the number of family members(r = -.279), one should note that more females had chosen to participate in this research. Though moderate, we can also see that male participants had more family members living together than do women.

There seems to be a moderate correlation between gender and the inclination to mimic activities posted on social media (r = -.246), indicating that more males tend to mimic activities they find in social media than do women. Also, there appears to be a moderate correlation between gender and the pretest scores of self-esteem (r = -.225), showing that males had slightly higher self-esteem levels when looking at the pre-test result. Moreover, there seems to be a moderate yet statistically significant correlation between the participants' SES and self-esteem levels both through the pre-test (r = .315) and the post-test(r = .247). This means that people with high SES tend to have high self-esteem as well.

There appears to be a moderate correlation in the people's sensitivity to the social media posts boasting one's wealth and the self-esteem levels (r = -.269, r = -.304). One should note that the question asking about the sensitivity is provided in a 10-point scale, zero being oblivious and ten being feeling upset when seeing the postings when seeing or reading the postings that are meant to show off wealth. Those who are more sensitive to the postings tend to have lower self-esteem.

Table 2. Gender differences of social media related variables

		Male (n = 34)	Female (n = 67)	Mean Difference	t	p-value
Time Spent on Social Media	Mean (SD)	23.53 (4.94)	22.79 (5.32)	-.87	-1.91	0.06
Unfriended	Mean (SD)	6.56 (8.76)	6.37 (8.86)	.19	.10	.92
Sensitivity to Posting	Mean (SD)	3.67 (2.70)	3.76 (2.44)	-.08	-.16	.87
Mimic	Mean (SD)	0.50 (.50)	.25 (.44)	.25	**2.41**	**.019**
Self-Esteem (Pre-test)	Mean (SD)	31.85 (4.47)	29.51 (5.01)	2.34	**2.29**	**.024**

When compared mean differences between men and women, the time spent on social media, the number of people unfriended, and the sensitivity to posting all showed no statistical significance. However, men were more likely to mimic activities posted on social media than women, t(101) = 2.41, p = .019. The average self-esteem level of men (Mean = 31.85, SD = 4.47) was higher than that of women(Mean = 29.51, SD = 5.01) and the difference was statistically significant, t(101) = 2.29, p = .024. When compared the above result with that of Son's [27] research, which measured the self-esteem level of female college students whose average age 22.24 (SD = 1.54) showed that their self-esteem level was 30.74 (SD = 5.09) out of 40, we can conclude that the gender difference was quite similar.

Table 3. Regression analysis of self-esteem and socioeconomic status

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized	*t*	*p*-value
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Constant	28.40	2.05		13.82	.00
Gender	-.2.17	1.02	-.21	**-2.12**	**.04**
Mimic	.39	1.03	.04	.38	.70
Sensitivity to Posting	-.46	.19	-.24	**-.2.47**	**.02**
Time Spent on Social Media	.09	.20	.04	.45	.65
Unfriended	.01	.05	.01	.11	.91
SES	.84	.28	.29	**3.01**	**.00**

Having fitted a regression model predicting the participant's self-esteem, F-statistics(6,91) is 3.87 (p = .002), meaning that the model's predictive power is higher than the model simply using the mean values of the independent variables to predict the self-esteem. The intercept (28.40) shows that the self-esteem level of the participants is approximately 28.4 when the rest of the variables are zero. The result of the regression analysis has revealed that women's self-esteem level is expected to be 2.17 (t = -2.12, p = .04) lower than men when holding the rest of the variables constant. Also, holding other variables constant, those whose sensitivity to posting one point higher in the 10-point scale is expected to have 0.46 lower self-esteem, t = -2.47, p = .02. Lastly, holding other variables constant, those whose socioeconomic status one point higher in 10-point scale are expected to have 0.84 higher self-esteem, t = 3.01, p < .00. Though not shown in Table 3, the R-squared value is .203, meaning that 20% of the variance in self-esteem is associated with the variables included in the regression model.

*Below is the regression equation

"$\hat{Y}$ = 28.40 + -2.17(gender) + .39(mimicking experience) + -.46 (sensitivity to postings) + .09 (Time spent on social media) + .01 (Unfriended number) + .84 (SES)"

Table 4. Comparing before and after the participants were exposed to wealth-boasting postings

		Pretest	Posttest	*t*	*p*-value	*d*
Pre-test and Post-test	Mean (SD)	30.21 (4.85)	30.61 (5.30)	-1.18	.239	-.0.08

When compared the means of self-esteem before and after the participants watched wealth-boasting social media posts through a paired-sample test, the difference was not statistically significant, t = -1.18, p = .239. Though not significant, the slight increase in the self-esteem after the participants watched the wealth-boasting posts was an interesting phenomenon worth investigating deeper.

Table 5. Comparing the item responses of Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale

		Before	After	*t*	*p*-value	*d*
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	Mean (SD)	3.02 (.83)	3.09 (.79)	-1.02	.31	-.09
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.	Mean (SD)	2.85 (.81)	2.85 (.88)	.00	1.00	0
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	Mean (SD)	3.54 (.64)	3.57 (.67)	-.46	.65	-.05
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	Mean (SD)	3.02 (.67)	2.99 (.74)	.73.	.47	.04
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	Mean (SD)	3.28 (.71)	3.37 (.77)	-1.26	.21	-.12
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	Mean (SD)	2.87 (.84)	2.88 (.90)	-.15	.88	-.01
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	Mean (SD)	2.89 (.78)	2.97 (.77)	-1.65	.10	-.10
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	**Mean (SD)**	**2.17 (.88)**	**2.32 (.91)**	**-2.10**	**.04**	**-.17**
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	Mean (SD)	3.35 (.74)	3.41 (.81)	-.74	.46	-.08
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	Mean (SD)	3.26 (.73)	3.21 (.85)	.63	.53	.06

Note. Effect sizes represent the difference in the means divided by the pooled standard deviation.

When analyzed each question item in the scale, however, the increase of self-esteem question #8 was statistically significant, t = -2.10, p = .04, d = -.17, showing that the difference is not 0 in the population.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study contradicted the effects of social media on self-esteem as predicted by Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten [18]. A possible explanation for the contradiction might be associated with the fact that Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten's study [18] was targeting Dutch adolescent, whereas the participants of this study were in the college age. Also, cultural and the age difference could be accounted for by this difference.

(1) What factors must be examined before studying the social media effects?

One can see in Table 1 that gender is associated more with social media related variables than others. The fact that more women took interests in the research topic suggests that women take greater interests in social media. Looking at the moderate yet statistically significant associations in gender with mimicking experience (r = -.246) and gender with the level of self-esteem (r = -.225), one can argue that women with low self-esteem are more inclined to shy away from mimicking other people's activities posted in social media than men.

Next, the moderate association between SES and self-esteem (both in pretest and posttest) show that SES and its effects on self-esteem are integral to the study of social media. Also, the sensitivity to social

media is closely associated with the users' self-esteem. Looking at this correlation, we can see that the more sensitive one is about social media posting, the lower his or her self-esteem will be. Therefore, the sensitivity to posting is another indicator of self-esteem level via social media.

(2) Does change in viewers' self-esteem differ by gender?

Table 2 shows that the time spent on social media is not notably different. This finding is consistent with the discovery made in Lenhart et al. [22]. As indicated in Table 1, men are more likely than women to mimic activities of others in social media. Moreover, to answer the question above, we can see that women's self-esteem is slightly lower than men, and this is made apparent in Table 2. Therefore, gender does explain the difference in self-esteem within social media. And cultural, environmental or even age factors may be accounted for by this particular phenomenon; thus requiring further research to identify the cause.

(3) Does people's socioeconomic status(SES) affect their self-esteem in social media?

Looking at Table 1, those who perceive their SES to be high also have higher self-esteem than others. The finding can be further corroborated when we look at Table 3. While sensitivity to the contents of social media postings and gender can predict the differences in the viewers' self-esteem, the predictive power of SES on the people's self-esteem appears to be strong. Based on the result, one can conclude that SES does affect people's self-esteem in the domain of social media.

(4) Do people's self-esteem change after they see social media postings?

When comparing the change in self-esteem after people viewed a wealth-boasting post, no statistically significant difference was found. Looking closely, however, question #8 in the questionnaire showed a statistically significant increase. The discovery is somewhat contradictory when compared to the research done by Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten [18]. An explanation for the increase should be drawn with caution; however, one can assume that viewers could have felt that wealth-boasting activity less civil and moral conduct, thus making them feel they were morally superior. However, one should note that the participant's SES level was above average. Therefore, the self-esteem of those whose SES level lower than average may differ from the result.

LIMITATION

Because the survey was administered in downtown areas adjacent to selective colleges in Seoul, a large proportion of the participants might have been the students, meaning that the participants could have had above-average education levels. Therefore, future research must incorporate the education variable to ascertain the demographics.

More importantly, because participants were made to watch the wealth-boasting posts briefly, one must not jump to the conclusion that self-esteem levels stay the same when people see the postings on social media. In other words, the effects of long-term exposure to negative postings must be investigated in the future research.

CONCLUSION

The income inequality of our world is becoming more evident in the last few decades [28], social scientists must examine the changing natures of our society and how people whose status marginalized in our society perceive themselves foreshadows the changes that are yet to come. As social media flock more and more users throughout the world, one must pay closer attention to how social dynamics change, and social media serves as channels through which people can understand the change with clarity. In this regard, policymakers should take note of the finding that genders and socioeconomic status are the major factors affecting people's self-esteem in social media. Whether it be inside or outside of social media, women are experiencing lower self-esteem than men in Korean society. Also, people with low SES are more susceptible to the social media contents. These findings suggest that social media must be regulated in ways that would not victimize women and those who have low SES. Careful laws and regulation must be devised to equalize the imbalance.

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