



Facebook Truths: a Review of Research Studies

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ABSTRACT

Facebook is a growing network of communication. An emerging phenomenon of social media that is dominating the social discourse among individuals, groups and communities. However, there is an underlying change, running parallel to the supremacy of social media like Facebook, which is reducing the sense of well-being and satisfaction with life. Many researches are underway to explore how Facebook is becoming a gigantic agent. This paper reviews some of the significant research studies and tries to draw a scenario that defines the phenomenon 'Facebook Effect'.

KEYWORDS

Facebook, Social media, Network, Relationships, Society

Facebook is a catchphrase. From safe havens, streets to suburbs, it has engaged a multitude of people. Given them an outlet. To be there. A thing that is in. Just this week, one billion people used Facebook in a single day. Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg wrote in a post on his personal profile, "1 in 7 people on Earth used Facebook to connect with their friends and family" (Dredge, 2015). One billion daily users has come to stay as a new milestone for the social network.

Of course, technology is becoming more and more invasive. Facebook has been growing steadily. In the second quarter of 2015, it averaged 968 million daily active users, and 1.49 billion monthly active users.

Mark Zuckerberg added in his post, "A more open and connected world is a better world. It brings stronger relationships with those you love, a stronger economy with more opportunities, and a stronger society that reflects all of our values." (Dredge, 2015)

Well, this statement is relative in a sense that different people have different versions of connectivity, relationships, opportunities and values. That Facebook has been able to create a common meeting ground in these spheres sounds off the wall. Not to speak of building up a "stronger society" that runs on some kind of ethic. The various research studies belie the hyperbole associated with Facebook even as some of its positive usage may have garnered an impact.

The case in point is Mark Zuckerberg himself, the world's youngest billionaire, who was accused of stealing the idea by the creators of HarvardConnection (ConnectU), a social networking website founded by Harvard students. Though Zuckerberg pleaded innocence, but Zuckerberg's records of the incriminating Instant Messages revealed that Zuckerberg may have intentionally stolen the intellectual property of Harvard Connection and offered Facebook users' private information to his friends. Later, Zuckerberg apologized for the incriminating messages, saying he regretted them. "If you're going to go on to build a service that is influential and that a lot of people rely on, then you need to be mature, right?...I think I've grown and learned a lot", he said in an interview with *The New Yorker* (Vargas, 2010).

Hence, as even the 'Face' of Facebook possesses contentious contours, how can the claim of creating sound and value-based society seem plausible? And then, the medium which allows 'friending' and 'de-friending' anyone, the deeper connections in relationships exist nowhere. Where people invest in superficial relationships at the expense of more profound ones, what stronger society and what values are to be talked about?

The 2014 data study conducted by the Oxford University anthropologist and psychologist Robin Dunbar found that keeping up an actual friendship requires resources even as we may widen our network to two, three, or four hundred people that we see as friends, not just acquaintances. "The amount of social capital you have is pretty fixed. It involves time investment. If you garner connections with more people, you end up distributing your fixed amount of social capital more thinly so the average capital per person is lower," Dunbar wrote (Konnikova, 2014).

Another 2012 study published in *Computers in Human Behavior* found that people with low self-esteem who worried about their public perception had the most Facebook friends. The researchers concluded that self-conscious people compensate for low self-esteem by trying to appear popular on Facebook (Morin, 2014).

A 2014 study titled "Personality Traits and Self-Presentation at Facebook" published by Elsevier journal explored the relationship between personality traits and self-presentation at Facebook. In an online survey of Facebook users, it was found that "extraversion was positively related to self-presentation both on Wall and at News Feed. Extraverts uploaded photos and updated status more frequently, and had more friends displayed on Wall than introverts. Besides, extraverts clicked **Like**, wrote **Comment** and clicked **Share** at News Feed more frequently than introverts. Moreover, narcissists with high rivalry frequently updated their **Status** on Wall. In addition, neuroticism and conscientiousness were negatively related to writing **Comment** at News Feed" (Eunsun Lee, 2014).

The University of Michigan research tracked Facebook participants for two weeks and found that Facebook can have negative psychological consequences. It made people feel worse about both issues, and the more they browsed, the worse they felt, the study revealed. "On the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling the basic human need for social connection. Rather than enhancing well-being, however, these findings suggest that Facebook may undermine it," said the researchers. Colloquially, this theory is known as FOMO - Fear Of Missing Out - a side effect of seeing friends and family sitting on beaches or having fun at parties while you are on a computer (BBC, 2013).

In an empirical research study *'The "Facebook-self": characteristics and psychological predictors of false self-presentation on Facebook'* published by open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, a new phenomenon related to Facebook, called as the "false Facebook-self" was explored. As per study, "false

self-presentation on Facebook is a growing phenomenon, and in extreme cases; i.e., when ones Facebook image substantially deviates from their true image, it may serve as a gateway behavior to more problematic behaviors which may lead to psychological problems and even pathologies” (Gil-Or, 2015).

There is lot of research underway to study and explore the ramifications of something that world oversimplifies as “Facebook”. What is apparent has many other unnoticed and overlooked aspects that are working subtly to engineer a change that will be quite dangerous, psychologically as well as pathologically.

And lastly, while Zuckerberg claims that Facebook has weighed down world and its billion-in-a-day is matchless, a toothpaste product Colgate has more following than Facebook. Meaning tooth is a bigger priority than connecting with friends online through Facebook!

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