

Does Social Media Enhance Leon Festinger's Social Comparison Theory?

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Instagram
 ↑↓ Upward & Downward

Social comparison can go two ways: up or down. Upward comparison is used to motivate people and provide inspiration. Upward comparison is associated with self-improvement. This involves using others to better themselves. On the other end of the spectrum is downward comparison, which is associated with self-enhancement, or in other words a confidence boost. People seek certain standards that increase their own view of themselves. This often results in a negative light, causing people to have a low self-esteem (Corcoran et al., 2011)

Enhance 🌟 or improve? 🙌
 #youarebetter #motivation

What is Social Comparison Theory?

Originally developed by American Social Psychologist, Leon Festinger, Social Comparison Theory is the comparison between oneself and others that impacts one's behavior. In 1954, he hypothesized that our need to compare ourselves to others is rooted from evolutionary times in which we have the need to protect ourselves and assess threats (Webber, 2017). Most of the time people compare themselves to individuals they most identify with. For example, sex, occupation, appearance, age, etc., these are all factors people find relationships with (Beasley, 2018).

Upward & Downward Facebook Usage Impact on Mental Health "Likes" for Validation

Leon Festinger
 (Photo from <https://www.nap.edu>)

Instagram
 🧠 Impact on Mental Health

There is evidence that social media may have a direct relationship with depressive symptoms. A study was done with 619 students (57% female) in the 8th – 9th grade age range. The students completed questions about their technology habits and their mental well-being. The results showed a significant correlation between technology use and depressive symptoms. However, there needs to be further investigation due to other factors that could be involved (Nesi & Prinstein, 2018).

Is comparison the thief of joy???

#mentalhealth #socialcomparison

Feeling: Happy 😊 Having tons of #fun right now! LOL

Hangouts 3, Twitter 1, Tumblr 31, Snapchat 4, Instagram 1, Vine 61, Facebook 75, Messenger 4

(Photos from www.elitedaily.com)

Does Social Media Increase Social Comparison?

Whether it is to boost our self-esteem, motivate us, or look at how we "should" be living, social media makes it easy for us to compare ourselves to others. Festinger's theory on social comparison shines through in this new era of technology. Social Media enables us to view highlight shots of everyone's glorious lifestyles. However, what we don't see is the behind-the-scenes action. Giving everyone else the picture-perfect life, it is easy to compare our drama-filled, tragic, and dull lives to someone who seems like they have it all. Overall, social media does play a role in Festinger's theory. However, it is not 100% conclusive. There are many other factors that could be involved: an individual's mood, their gender, their financial standing, etc. For most of the studies done, there has been a positive correlation, but it must be noted that the age range taken for those studies was between 16-25 (Nesi & Prinstein, 2018). Therefore, many people are unaccounted for. As more research is conducted, studies might find there to be a definite enhancement of social comparison due to social media use.

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facebook
 Facebook Usage

SIGH. THOSE GUYS ARE SO MUCH COOLER THAN ME.

COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS IS DUMB.

Photo from whywhywhyquestionmark.wordpress.com

A study was conducted connecting social comparison and Facebook use. The results showed a positive correlation, suggesting that individuals who spent more time on Facebook had a larger habit of comparing themselves to others (Vogel et al., 2015). Another study done that used Facebook showed that women in particular, compared appearances of others with themselves, giving them negative feelings towards their face, hair, and skin (Tanney, 2015).

200 Likes 25 Comments 109 Shares

Like Comment Share

"Likes" for Validation

Some People see this

↓ Like

as this

↓ Self Esteem

Photo from <https://vc.bridgew.edu>

Researchers conducted studies involving comparison due to social media "likes." In one study, they observed the participants reactions to see if more "likes" than someone else resulted in positive self-perception and if less "likes" resulted in negative self-perception. The results showed a positive correlation between the number of "likes" on an individual's post and their feelings towards their self-worth (Gallinari, 2017).

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