**Investigating Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem Among Younger and Older Adults**



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**Dissertation submitted as a requirement for the degree of BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology, 2024**

**Declaration**

I declare that this submission is my own work. Where I have read, consulted, and used the work of others I have acknowledged this in the text.

Word count: 4515

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Sinéad Meade for the continued support and guidance she provided me with throughout the course of this year. I would also like to thank Dr. Horn and Dr. Connolly for their clear instructions and all the help they gave me in my final year. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother for always believing in me even when I struggled to.

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## Abstract

This quantitative study aimed to investigate if social media usage affects self-esteem among younger and older adults. A convenience sample of 139 participants (54 Male, 85 Female) with an age range of 19-77 years (M=36.92, SD=18.006) completed an online survey on Microsoft Forms. The survey employed demographic questions, The Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS), and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES). A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted using IBM SPSS Software. The first hypothesis, that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem based on age (younger and older adults), was supported. The second hypothesis, that there would be a significant difference in younger and older adults’ self-esteem levels based on their social media usage, was not supported. The third hypothesis, that there would be a significant interaction between age and social media usage on self-esteem, was not supported. Results showed that older adults had higher levels of self-esteem compared to younger adults. These results were discussed in the context of existing theory and previous research findings, suggesting that it is consistent with some past research. Future studies may benefit from employing a larger sample size while also implementing more relevant independent variables such as gender and personality traits.

## Introduction

Social media has gained popularity due to its easy accessibility, its ability to facilitate connectivity, and as it can provide entertainment to many individuals around the world (Evans, 2019)*.* There are many positive implications around social media use such as maintaining contact with friends and family. According to CSO (2022), 78% of internet users interact on social media apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Snapchat. These apps are mainly used for individuals communicating with each other online. Apps such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat have become successful due to the aspect of visual storytelling which captures the interest of users in a more compelling manner (Balaban Sali & Simsek, 2014). Many schools and college institutions have made their curriculums online-friendly, meaning that students have access to a wider and more accessible range of books and articles (Balaban Sali & Simsek, 2014). Recent statistics show that 89% of those aged 16-29 years old communicate on social media compared to 45% of those aged 60-74 years of age (CSO, 2021).

Although there are a multitude of positive aspects surrounding social media, there are also many negative effects. These include cyberbullying, addiction, mental health issues, and comparative social behaviours. A study by (Woods & Scott, 2016) was conducted on 467 Scottish adolescents. Their study aimed to determine whether social media use is related to sleep quality, self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. The study found that overall social media usage was associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. It is clear from previous research that social media can have a negative impact on an individual’s mental health, particularly low self-esteem (Berryman et al., 2017).

# Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to how much we value, accept, and believe in our capabilities throughout daily life (Britton et al., 2021). Self-esteem is a fundamental aspect of human nature as it can determine how competently we can complete tasks. Self-esteem can be broken down into two components: self-knowledge and self-awareness. These refer to our conceptions about how strong or weak we are as individuals (Minev et al., 2018). According to Orth et al. (2018), self-esteem typically lowers when an individual transitions from childhood into the beginning stages of adolescence. Self-esteem fluctuates throughout life due to our response to personal experiences. Adolescence is the key stage in life where self-esteem becomes most apparent due to the hormones produced while the individual is going through puberty. These hormonal changes can cause the individual to have shifts in mood and may be more likely to have disputes with friends and family, thus leading to changes in one’s self-esteem (Krauss et al., 2020).

Self-esteem can be increased through positive reinforcement, receiving good grades on exams, and having strong social relationships. Cvencek et al. (2017) Found that children respond more effectively when hearing positive words such as “good” about themselves relating to tasks they completed. Low self-esteem can be caused by traumatic events i.e. bullying and neglect. A study by Lei et al. (2019) found that children who were victims of cyberbullying reported having low self-esteem. Another finding from this study was that those who engage in cyberbullying behaviours tended to have low self-esteem, showcasing to researchers the vicious cycle and strong link between low self-esteem and social media.

# Age Differences on Social Media

Social media can be used as a tool for a variety of reasons depending on the user’s personal preferences. The moderating role of age is an important factor to consider when researching the topic of social media as different age groups may use social media quite differently. Prensky (2001) coined the terms digital natives and digital immigrants. The term digital native refers to the contemporary youth i.e. Millennials and Gen Z, these individuals have spent most of their lives around and using technology. Prensky believed that digital natives have an intuitive grasp and natural fluency of technology compared to older generations. Digital immigrants refer to members of Gen X and baby boomers, these individuals were not born into a digital era and instead had to learn how to operate technologies in later life. Ultimately, digital immigrants do not have the same intuition toward technology and tend to struggle with learning how to effectively use it.

According to Berryman et al. (2017), young adults frequently use social media to interact with friends and post updates about their lives, ultimately to continue building up their online social presence. This is usually the case for contemporary young adults as they grew up around technology for most of their lives. Based on previous research by Bell et al. (2013), it seems that older adults primarily use social media to keep in contact with family and to keep up to date with current affairs. However, they are less likely to engage in online communication compared to younger adults due to a lack of technological self-efficacy.

# Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison theory, proposed by Leon Festinger (1954) suggests that individuals determine their self-worth while comparing themselves to other people. Regarding social media, individuals may compare their self-worth to another user’s social media presence. This theory evaluates two main types of social comparison: upward and downward. Upwards social comparison involves individuals comparing themselves to people that are viewed as “better”. This may act as a catalyst for improving oneself however, there is a risk that the individual may also feel inadequate. Downward social comparison involves an individual comparing themselves to people viewed as less fortunate. This form of social comparison can boost one’s self-esteem while also leading to arrogance (Gerber et al., 2018). Regarding social media, individuals may engage in social comparison while viewing their friends or even celebrities' social media accounts. This can impact self-esteem depending on how good or bad the individual feels while comparing themselves to others online. One study by Vogel et al. (2014) supports this theory as their research found that upward social comparisons mediated the relationship between recurrent Facebook usage and self-esteem levels. Their study had 145 undergraduate students from a Midwestern University in the United States, showing that younger adults can be negatively affected by social media usage.

# Self Presentation Theory

Erving Goffman’s (1959) theory on the presentation of the self postulates that people adjust the way they present the self to manage their public image and how others view them. This impression management is analogised to an actor who presents the private self backstage and the public self front stage. Whereas those who are backstage may be more sincere as there are fewer people around to judge their character (Geurin, 2017). On social media, individuals may exaggerate their own emotions or beauty standards in the hope of receiving more likes and followers. However, if the individual receives negative feedback while falsifying their online image, they may have lower self-esteem. Barasch et al. (2017) conducted two field and three laboratory studies regarding photo taking and found that those who aim to share photos online with their peers feel stronger self-presentational concerns, meaning they have less enjoyment as they are not as engaged with the experience.

# Social Media and Self-esteem

Bell et al. (2013) examined the relationship between Facebook use and loneliness, social satisfaction, and confidence with technology among older adults by asking them to fill out a variety of surveys on topics such as confidence with technology and a loneliness questionnaire. There were 142 participants aged 50 years and over from the Georgia Tech HomeLab. Bell et al. (2013) found that there was no signification relationship between Facebook use and loneliness within their sample. However, they did find a significant relationship between Facebook use and social satisfaction among their sample. The limitations of this study were the high volunteer bias, and that the majority of the sample were highly functioning older adults. One limitation of their study was the high volunteer bias, this can lead to unreliable data as the participants involved in the study may not be representative of the general population of older adults. Burrow and Rainone (2017) conducted a study that tested whether there was a link between receiving a large amount of ‘likes’ and improved self-esteem. Their results showcased that when individuals posted on Facebook, they cared less about whether their peers liked the content within their posts and cared more about the likes received. One of the limitations of this study was the strong correlation between the variables of purpose and self-esteem which may have caused their results to be inaccurate.

Sharifian et al. (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study to determine whether social media usage between younger and older adults was consistent. They did this by using the general social media usage subscale of the Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale. They also aimed to investigate how social media usage relates to socioemotional health among diverse age groups to determine whether age has an impact on these associations. There were 592 participants involved in this study, 350 of those being in the 55 years and older category (older adults) and 242 placed in the 19-54 years old (younger adults) category. Sharifian et al. (2021) found that younger adults had higher reported social media use compared to older adults, and higher social media use was strongly linked to worse socioemotional health in younger adults compared to older adults. They also found that younger adults are more likely to check social media networks in school or work. Whereas older adults have lower skill levels to fully take advantage of such technologies. It is clear from this study that there are notable age-related differences regarding social media usage.

# The Present Study

The large number of studies conducted on social media usage and self-esteem showcases that there are underlying issues associated with these topics in today’s society. Although previous literature has examined the topics of self-esteem and social media usage among younger and older adults separately (Berryman et al. 2017; Bell et al.,2013; Woods & Scott, 2016;), very few have compared these topics to younger and older adults in the same study (Sharifian et al., 2021; Burrow & Rainone, 2017). Based on the articles previously mentioned, it is clear that younger adults are more susceptible to the harmful aspects associated with social media. Given these theoretical and methodological limitations, the present study aims to determine whether social media usage affects self-esteem differently among younger and older adults. From looking at previous literature, the main demographic for social media studies has been adolescents and young adults. However, there have been several studies conducted on middle-aged and older adults. A gap in the literature was found regarding studies examining social media use and its impact on self-esteem among younger and older adults.

# Research Question

Does social media usage affect self-esteem among younger and older adults differently?

# Hypotheses

**H1:** There will be a difference for younger and older adults on their self-esteem levels based on their age.

**H2:** There will be a difference for younger and older adults on their self-esteem levels based on their social media usage.

**H3:** There will be a significant interaction between age and social media usage on self-esteem.

Methodology

# Research Design

The current study used an online quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. A questionnaire-based survey was used to assess the variables. The independent variables were age (younger and older adults) and social media usage (low and high). The dependent variable was self-esteem.

# Participants

The participants were gathered through convenience and snowball sampling via social media. There was a total of 139 participants, 54 males and 85 females. All participants in the study were over the age of 18yrs. Participants were placed into subgroups depending on their age i.e. younger adults (aged 18yrs-35yrs) and older adults (aged 50-85yrs). The treatment of participants was in accordance with the ethical standards of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI, 2019). The present study also followed the British Psychological Society code of ethics for Internet-mediated research (Hewson & Buchanan, 2021). The Psychology Ethics Committee at IADT (PEC) granted ethical approval for an ethics amber route application for the present study.

# Materials

The following materials were used for this study. An invitation to participate in the study was advertised as an Instagram post containing a QR code on social media. This was developed by the researcher. Each participant was given an information sheet which outlined the aims of the study, what participation would involve, and participants’ ethical rights (see Appendix A). A consent form was given to all participants which asked them to provide their informed consent to participate and reiterated their rights in relation to the study (see Appendix B). A demographic information form was used to collect participants’ age and gender, and for them to generate a participant ID code.

Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used in this study to measure positive and negative feelings the individual made toward themselves (see Appendix C). Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item, 4-point Likert scale with answers ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scores can range from 10 to 40, with higher scores signifying higher self-esteem. An example of one of the questions on this scale is “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”. The RSES has been used over the years as a self-report measure and has shown good validity due to its high Cronbach’s alpha value of .83 in a previous study (e.g. Woods & Scott, 2016). The current study had a Cronbach’s alpha value of .91 (See Appendix D).

Rosen’s (2013) The Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS) was used to measure the participants’ social media usage. The MTUAS was proposed as a means of assessing the engagement with media and technology across a variety of types of research studies. The MTUAS includes 60 items which assess 11 usage subscales and 4 attitudes subscales. The present study used the 9-item General Social Media Usage subscale only (see Appendix E). This subscale uses a 10-point frequency scale with scoring in parentheses; Never (1) Once a month (2) Several times a month (3) Once a week (4) Several times a week (5) Once a day (6) Several times a day (7) Once an hour (8) Several times an hour (9) All the time (10). An example of one of the questions from this subscale is “Check your Facebook page or other social media networks”. A recent study by Sharifian et al. (2021) had a strong Cronbach's alpha of .94 and the present study had a Cronbach's alpha of .86 (See Appendix F).

A confirmation of consent form was used to obtain confirmation from participants to use their data in the research (See Appendix G). A debrief form reiterated to participants the aims of the study and provided them with information about relevant support services if they were negatively affected by participating in the study (See Appendix H).

A pilot study was conducted after ethical approval was obtained. The pilot study was conducted to ensure that all aspects of the online survey were clear and concise. Any feedback received from the pilot study was reviewed and changes were made where necessary. The survey took approximately 7 minutes to complete.

# Procedure

Participants were invited to voluntarily take part in the online survey on Microsoft Forms through social media or word of mouth. Participants used a link or a QR code provided by the researcher to access the survey. The link brought the participants to the survey on Microsoft Forms. First, the information sheet was presented to participants. Then they were presented with an informed consent form. If participants were over 18yrs and provided their informed consent, they progressed to the participant demographic form. This form prompted each participant to indicate their age and gender and to create a unique ID code to ensure anonymity and to differentiate themselves from other participants, should they wish to withdraw from the study. Participants were then presented with the RSES scale and then the MTUAS scales. They were asked to rate their level of agreement with the scale items according to Likert scales. All questions were optional; however, any incomplete surveys were not included in the final results. After this, participants were asked to confirm their consent to take part in the study. Finally, a debrief form was presented to participants. It reiterated the aims of the study and provided participants with the researcher's contact details should they wish to withdraw from the study along with information about relevant support services in case they were negatively affected by participating.

Results

# Overview of Findings

The independent variables were age (younger and older adults) and social media usage (high and low). Participants were divided into two groups depending on their age based on a previous study’s groupings (Moberly et al., 2023). Participants aged 18-35 years were placed into the younger adults category and participants aged 50-85 years were placed into the older adults category. Participants were grouped into high and low social media usage groups. The average MTUAS score based on the sample in the present study was 4.7. Therefore, those who scored below 4.7 were placed into the “Low Social Media Usage” group and those who scored above 4.7 were placed into the “High Social Media Usage” group. The dependent variable was self-esteem. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to investigate the impact of age and social media usage on self-esteem among younger and older adults. The analysis was carried out using SPSS version 29.

# Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the mean scores and standard deviations for social media usage (low and high) based on age (younger and older adults).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics based on total RSES Scores*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age Categories | Social Media Usage | | Mean | | SD | N | |
| Younger Adults | Low Social Media Usage | | | 28.89 | 7.315 | | 18 |
|  | High Social Media Usage | | | 28.68 | 5.572 | | 69 |
|  | Total | 28.72 | | | 5.927 | | 87 |
| Older Adults | Low Social Media Usage | | | 34.09 | 4.946 | | 43 |
|  | High Social Media Usage | | | 30.22 | 4.381 | | 9 |
|  | Total | 33.42 | | | 5.035 | | 52 |
| Total | Low Social Media Usage | | | 32.56 | 6.166 | | 61 |
|  | High Social Media Usage | | | 28.86 | 5.446 | | 78 |
|  | Total | 30.48 | | | 6.039 | | 139 |

# Tests of Assumptions

The assumption of Homogeneity of Variance, which was tested using Levene’s test of homogeneity, was not violated.

# Inferential Statistics

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to investigate the impact of age and social media usage on self-esteem among younger and older adults (See Appendix I). Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem between younger and older adults. This hypothesis was supported, as a significant difference in younger and older adults' self-esteem levels was found, F(1,135) = 7.151, *p* =.008, partial eta squared = .05, power = .76.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem based on their social media usage (high/low). This hypothesis was not supported, as no significant difference in younger and older adults' self-esteem levels based on their social media usage was found, F(1,135) = 2.614, *p* = .108, partial eta squared = .019, power = .36.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a significant interaction between age and social media usage on self-esteem. This hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant interaction between age and social media usage on self-esteem found, F(1,135) = 2.109, *p* = .149, partial eta squared = .015, power = .30.

Mean scores of self-esteem based on age and social media usage are displayed in Figure 1. The patterns in Figure 1 showcase how higher social media usage impacts the self-esteem of both younger and older adults. The results in Figure 1 were not statistically significant however, it is still worth displaying.

**Figure 1**

*Estimated Marginal Means of Total RSES Scores*

*Note:* The blue line represents younger adults, and the green line represents older adults. The left side of the graph represents lower social media usage, and the right side of the graph represents Higher social media usage.

Discussion

# Overview of Findings

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of social media usage on the self-esteem of younger and older adults. The first hypothesis, that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem based on age (younger and older adults), was supported. Hypothesis 2, that there would be a significant difference in younger and older adults’ self-esteem levels based on their social media usage, was not supported. Hypothesis 3, that there would be a significant interaction between age and social media usage on self-esteem, was not supported.

The first hypothesis was supported, and these results are consistent with previous research in this area (Orth et al., 2018; Kiviruusu et al., 2015). The study conducted by Orth et al., (2018) discovered that younger adults had lower levels of self-esteem compared to older adults. This is in line with the findings of the present study as younger adults also had lower self-esteem compared to older adults It should be noted that they stated how individuals who exhibit low/high self-esteem in the early periods of their lives tend to have low/high self-esteem later in their lives. Another study by Kiviruusu et al. (2015) stated that individuals’ self-esteem tends to increase from young adulthood into older adulthood. This is consistent with the results of hypothesis 1 of the present study due to older adults having higher levels of self-esteem. Possible explanations for these findings could be due to natural maturation and the resolution of challenges faced by the individual in young adulthood/adolescence (Kiviruusu et al., 2015).

The second hypothesis was not supported, and this finding aligns differently with previous research conducted in this area as most previous studies have found that younger adults have lower self-esteem compared to older adults regarding their social media usage. A study conducted by Sharifian et al. (2021) found that younger adults had higher reported social media usage compared to older adults, and higher social media usage was strongly linked to worse socioemotional health in younger adults compared to older adults. In relation to the present study, there may not have been a significant difference due to the growing popularity of social media. Another reason could be due to the homogeneity of social media usage in contemporary society. Younger adults in the present study typically had higher social media usage, however, the results did not greatly differ from the older adults, therefore no significant results were found.

Hypothesis 3 was also not supported, and this could be due to social media having a similar impact on self-esteem regardless of age, leading to a lack of interaction between the two independent variables. Another reason could be due to the complexity of social media's effects on individuals. Research carried out by Prensky (2001) noted the differences in social media efficacy by coining the terms *digital natives* and *digital immigrants*. These terms refer to the difference between how easy social media is to navigate for younger adults compared to older adults. This may provide some insight as to why it is difficult to understand the underlying reasons why individuals react differently to what they are exposed to online.

# Strengths of the Present Study

The present study has distinct strengths. First, the comparison of younger and older adults on their social media usage and self-esteem has been an under-researched topic. Although the present study has a small sample size, the results may provide some insight into the age differences associated with social media usage and self-esteem in Irish society. Another strength is the robustness of the study design, which included the use of a 2x2 two-way between-groups analysis of variance. The high Cronbach’s alpha values of .908 for RSES and .862 for MTUAS are notable strengths. Having high Cronbach’s alpha values is essential to a study’s reliability and validity as they showcase that the items within the scales are accurately measuring what they are supposed to.

# Weaknesses of the Present Study

The present study has a few weaknesses, the first being the use of convenience sampling on social media to obtain participants. This resulted in most of the participants fitting into the younger adults category as they were more easily accessible to the researcher, meaning the sample may not be representative of the broader population. Another weakness is the number of participants in the present study which was 139. The low number of participants is due to time constraints and a lack of funding provided for an undergraduate thesis. The number of participants could also be a reason why only one of the hypotheses had a significant result as a larger sample size could accommodate more older adults, which the present study had a lower amount of compared to younger adults. Another weakness could be the unmeasured confounding variables associated with assessing the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem.

# Theoretical Implications

Social Comparison theory, proposed by Leon Festinger (1954) suggests that individuals determine their self-worth while comparing themselves to other people. By examining this theory and comparing it to the findings of the present study, it is possible that upward social comparison could be attributed to lower self-esteem among those in the younger adult category. This is due to the younger adults having higher social media usage scores and lower self-esteem compared to those in the older adult category. The self-presentation theory proposed by Erving Goffman (1959) does not provide a good explanation for the results of the present study as the theory focuses on how individuals present themselves to others. The MTUAS used in the present study does not directly measure how individuals portray themselves to other people. Understanding and examining the processes involved in theories allows researchers to improve and adapt the aspects of theories for future research.

# Practical Implications

The present study found that older adults had significantly higher levels of self-esteem compared to younger adults. The practical implication of this study is that younger adults have low self-esteem and a way around this issue could be to implement self-esteem promotion into the educational curriculum. This could be done by collaborating with schools, colleges, and youth centres to identify appealing topics for young people and implementing aspects of self-esteem into extracurricular activities. These topics could include self-awareness, self-acceptance, positive body image, resilience, assertiveness, coping skills, goal setting, and decision-making. Implementing interactive activities around these topics may help younger people to improve their self-esteem.

Although the older adults in the present study had higher self-esteem than the younger adults, this does not necessarily mean that it is representative of all older adults. Promoting lifelong learning could be a good resource for older adults as it could motivate them to share ideas and build on their social connections regardless of age.

# Future Research

In relation to future research on social media usage and self-esteem, one could conduct a longitudinal study on younger adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults. Having a larger sample size would increase the reliability and generalisability of the results, meaning researchers would have a better understanding of the long-term effects social media can have on an adult’s self-esteem. Another step future researchers could carry out is to implement more relevant independent variables to the study e.g. gender and personality traits (extraversion/introversion) based on previous research. The knowledge gained by incorporating the previously mentioned suggestions to future research could broaden our understanding of social media usage and its effect on self-esteem.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design and found that there were no significant differences between younger and older adults’ social media usage on their self-esteem. Instead, the main finding of this study is that older adults had higher levels of self-esteem compared to younger adults regardless of their level of social media usage. Although the sample size may not be representative of the greater population, there was still a high level of internal consistency. Some theories from previous research provided clarity and explanations for some of the research findings in the present study and some did not. Regardless, the key finding from this study is important to note and for society as a whole to work on together.

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Appendices

# Appendix A: Information Sheet

**Information Sheet**

**Title of project**: Investigating the Impact of Social Media Usage on Self-esteem Among Younger and Older Adults

You are being invited to take part in the research Investigating the Impact of Social Media Usage on Self-esteem Among Younger and Older Adults. This project is being undertaken by Chris Dent for my major research project as part of the BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology, IADT.

Before you decide whether you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with someone you trust. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information please ask, our contact details are at the end of this information sheet. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the project?**

The present study aims to determine whether social media usage affects self-esteem among younger and older adults. From looking at previous literature, the main demographic for social media studies has been adolescents and young adults. However, there have been several studies conducted on middle-aged and older adults. A gap in the literature was found regarding studies examining social media use and its impact on self-esteem among younger and older adults.

**Why are you being invited to take part?**

This study is for adults over the age of 18 who use social media.

**What is involved?**

If you choose to participate, you will be asked demographic questions about your age and gender, followed by two questionnaires. The first questionnaire will be about your level of social media usage and the second will be about your self-esteem. The study will take approximately X minutes.

**Do I have to take part?**

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form that lets us know you have read this information sheet and understand what is involved in the research. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

**What are the disadvantages and risks (if any) of taking part?**

The questionnaire will be about social media and self-esteem, so there is a possibility that there will be questions that may trigger any unpleasant memories you may have that are associated with these topics.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

I cannot promise the study will help you, but the information I get from the study will help to increase the understanding of how social media usage impacts self-esteem.

**How will my information be used?**

Your responses to the questionnaire will be combined with all other participants data and statistically analysed. No individual’s data will be identifiable in the final report. The results of this analysis will be reported in the thesis for the BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology in the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology. This can be requested through the library at IADT, or by emailing the researcher Chris Dent at [N00202486@iadt.ie](mailto:N00202486@iadt.ie) or supervisor Sinéad Meade at sinead.meade@iadt.ie. This study may also be published in an academic journal article and may be written about for blog posts or media articles and these can be requested from the researcher.

**How will my data be protected?**

Under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the legal basis for collecting data for scholarly research is that of public interest. The regulations regarding the protection of your data will be followed. Only data which is needed for analysis will be collected. By giving your consent to take part in the study you are consenting to the use of your data as detailed in this information sheet.

The data will be retained by the researcher for at least one year, and may be retained for up to 7 years if the results of the study are published in certain capacities (e.g. in a journal article). There is also a possibility that the fully anonymised dataset may be submitted to a journal and made available to other researchers and academics worldwide for verification purposes, but if this occurs it will be ensured that you are not identifiable from the data.

As the supervisor on this project, I, Chris Dent am responsible for ensuring that all datasets will be stored in accordance with GDPR regulations and those which are not submitted to a journal will be fully deleted on or before date 7 years from data collection.

The collected anonymous data will be accessible to the researcher, Chris Dent, the supervisor, Sinéad Meade, and a statistics lecture, Christine Horn. The data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. In the event of a data breach, the data protection officer in IADT will be immediately notified. The data will be completely anonymous. You will be asked to create a unique ID for yourself, which will allow you to withdraw your answers from the study before data analysis is conducted. The supervisor will store the data on a password-protected computer and dispose of it after the required time period.

You will find contact information for IADT's Data Protection Officer, Mr Bernard Mullarkey, and more information on your rights concerning your data at <https://iadt.ie/about/your-rights-entitlements/gdpr/>

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by the IADT Psychology Ethics Committee.

**What if you have any questions or there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Chris Dent ([N00202486@iadt.ie](mailto:N00202486@iadt.ie)) or their supervisor Sinéad Meade (sinead.meade@iadt.ie)*.*

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet**

**Date**

1 February 2024

# Appendix B: Consent Form

**CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Project:**

Investigating the Impact of Social Media Usage on Self-Esteem among Younger and Older Adults

**Name of Researcher:** Chris Dent

## Please tick box

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | □ |
| 2 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. | □ |
| 3 | I understand that data collected about me during this study will not be identifiable when the research is published. | □ |
| 4 | I am over 18 years of age | □ |
| 5 | I agree to take part in this study. | □ |

# Appendix C: Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES)

Instructions Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree, Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

1. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

# Appendix D: Cronbach’s Alpha of RSES

A screenshot of a computer

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# Appendix E: General Social Media Usage Subscale from the MTUAS

How often do you do each of the following activities on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter?

Never (1)

Once a month (2)

Several times a month (3)

Once a week (4)

Several times a week (5)

Once a day (6)

Several times a day (7)

Once an hour (8)

Several times an hour (9)

All the time (10)

1. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Check your Facebook page or other social networks

2. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Check your Facebook page from your smartphone

3. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Check Facebook at work or school

4. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Post status updates

5. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Post photos

6. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Browse profiles and photos

7. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Read postings

8. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Comment on postings, status updates, photos, etc.

9. (General Social Media Usage Subscale) Click "Like" to a posting, photo, etc

# Appendix F: Cronbach’s Alpha of MTUAS Subscale

A screenshot of a computer

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# Appendix G: Confirmation of Consent

**CONFIRMATION OF CONSENT FOR DATA USE**

**This question must be included at the end of all online surveys and experiments, immediately before the debrief.**

**Note: the participant must only be able to tick one of these options. If the participant ticks neither option, or does not reach this question in the survey, then the participant’s data should be removed from the database.**

1. Having completed the questionnaire:
   * I consent to the researchers using my answers for their research
   * I wish to have my answers removed from the research

# Appendix H: Debrief

**DEBRIEFING INFORMATION FORM**

**Title of Project:**

Investigating the Impact of Social Media Usage on Self-Esteem among Younger and Older Adults

**Name of Researcher/s:** Chris Dent

**Thank you very much for taking part in this research study.**

This study is designed to investigate whether social media usage affects self-esteem among younger and older adults. From looking at previous literature, the main demographic for social media studies has been adolescents and young adults. However, there have been several studies conducted on middle-aged and older adults. A gap in the literature was found regarding studies examining social media use and its impact on self-esteem among younger and older adults.

**Withdrawal information**If you have any questions about this study, or if you would like to withdraw your data from the study, please contact the researcher Chris Dent at [N00202486@iadt.ie](mailto:N00202486@iadt.ie) or supervisor Sinéad Meade at [sinead.meade@iadt.ie](mailto:sinead.meade@iadt.ie). In your email let them know your unique ID code which you created by using the second letters of your first and last name, followed by the last 3 digits of your phone number. If you submit a request for data removal, all data collected from you will be securely deleted. You will be able to remove your data from the study until when the data will be combined and analysed. Data removal will not be possible after that date. Please keep a copy of this information in case you wish to remove your data after leaving this screen.

**Data protection**Your data will be treated according to GDPR regulations. You will find contact information for IADT's Data Protection Officer, Mr Bernard Mullarkey, and more information on your rights concerning your data at <https://iadt.ie/about/your-rights-entitlements/gdpr/>

**Support resources**

If you have been affected by the content of this study in any way, the organizations below may be of assistance.

Jigsaw - Mental health advice and support – online and in person – for young people aged 12 to 25 years old, and for parents or concerned adults. [Visit jigsaw.ie/livechat to chat online with a clinician](https://jigsaw.ie/talk-online/live-chat/) or [Find Jigsaw services in your area - jigsaw.ie](https://jigsaw.ie/services-in-your-area/)

ALONE - National support and referral line for older people. [Phone 0818 222 024](tel:0818222024), 8am to 8pm every day or visit their website [alone.ie](https://alone.ie/).

**Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this research.**

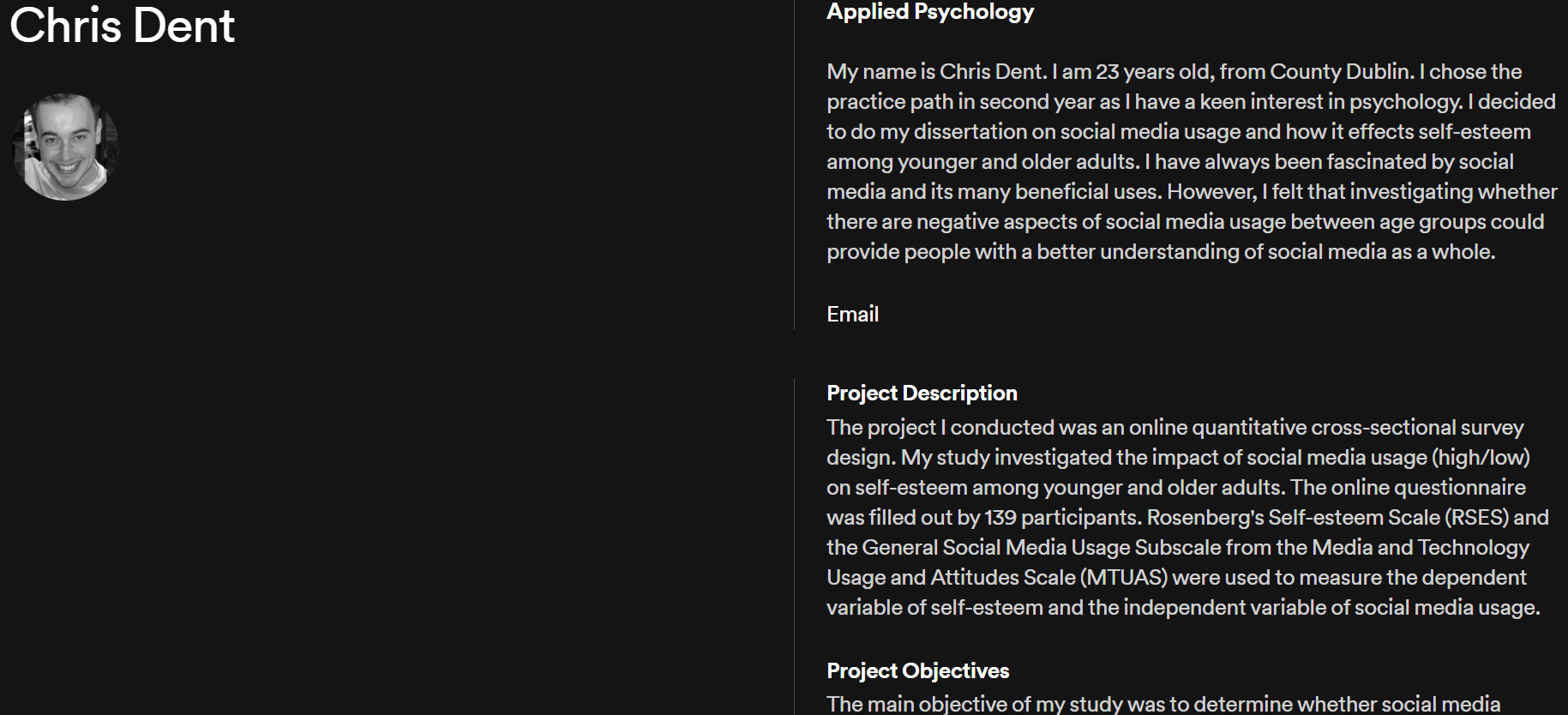
If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher Chris Dent at [N00202486@iadt.ie](mailto:N00202486@iadt.ie) or supervisor Sinéad Meade at [sinead.meade@iadt.ie](mailto:sinead.meade@iadt.ie).

# Appendix I: Two-way Between-groups Analysis of Variance

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# Appendix J: Dissemination



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