The Effect of Self-Comparison in Social Media on Self Esteem

Clara Moningka[1*], Ratih Eminiar P.[1]

[1]*Psychology Program, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, Indonesia*
Corresponding author, Email: clara.moningka@upj.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine how self-comparison during social media use affects self-esteem. Data obtained from 2016 showed that in Indonesia has a very high number of social media users. The largest group of social media users are adolescents, who spend more than three hours a day on social media. They display a positive self-image on social media to impress others. This behavior can be used as inspiration due to the positive content, but it can also trigger jealousy and low life satisfaction, and it can affect how individuals evaluate themselves. This quantitative study analyzed the data using a linear regression. The study population was comprised of 221 adolescents aged 13 to 18 years old. Social comparison was measured using the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure, which was developed by Gibbons and Bunk. Self-esteem was measured using the State Self-esteem Scale developed by Heatherton and Polivy. The regression analysis results indicated that the predictor explained 29.6% of the variance. Thus, self-comparison significantly predicted self-esteem.

Keywords: Self-comparison, social media, self-image.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has created a tool for building and maintaining relationships with other individuals, which is referred to as social media. Lenhart and Madden (cited by Haase & Young, 2010) explain that social media has become prevalent in people's lives. Social media itself can be defined as a group of internet-based applications that form social relationships and allow the formation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, cited by Romeltea, 2014). Social media is also becoming a place where users can be entertained, participate, and communicate in the social environment (Leonsis cited by Hardy, 2016).

Survey results obtained by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association stated that data obtained from 2016 (cited by Birra, 2018) reported a high number of social media users in Indonesia. Indonesia ranks fourth in the world for the use of social media and is the primary user of Facebook with over 100 million users, followed by other forms of social media. The largest population of social media users is comprised of adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 18 years old; these adolescents comprise over 75% of the total users and spend more than three hours a day on social media.

Research in Indonesia conducted by Ayun (2015) showed that adolescents also use social media to form their identifies. They often share personal messages with other users, view and read news, and

upload or share statuses. They also share information that describes their condition at certain times, the location of the place they are visiting or have visited, and photos and videos based on some events. Adolescents use social media to show their existence in their social environment. Streep (cited by Ayun, 2015) explained that through social media, people can display a positive self-image and able to show as they expected. Other research also states that social media users prefer to share activities that reflect the most pleasant parts of life, with the hope of receiving positive responses from other users (Kim & Lee, 2011; Foo cited by Moningka, 2017). They display a positive self-image to impress others. This behavior can be used as encouragement due to the encouraging content portrayed (Triastuti, Prabowo, & Nurul, 2017); however, it can also trigger a lower state of happiness, jealousy, and can reduce positive mood (Krasnova cited by Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014; Greitemeyer, Mugge, & Bollermann cited by Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014).

Vogel, Rose, Roberts, and Eckles (2014) explained that through social media, individuals have the opportunity to perform social comparisons using information shown by other users. Social media allows individuals to make comparisons easier and more frequently. Individuals can easily access social media anywhere and anytime. This situation also allows them to engage in comparing behavior.

Social comparison is defined as a condition in which individuals tend to compare themselves with other individuals (Festinger cited by Sarwono, 2013). Social comparison occurs when individuals need direction or standards with which to compare their opinions and abilities. Most adolescents perform this type of comparison when they start experiencing puberty (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009) and changes in brain structure that reflect an increase in their ability to process information (Santrock cited by Sarwono, 2011). Moningka (2017) explained that individuals will process cues from their social environment by comparing themselves with information that already exists. Sanderson (cited by Moningka, 2017) says that individuals perform comparisons with others to reduce insecurity about their performance or capability.

The advantages and disadvantages of social comparison are related to how individuals view and value themselves. This concept is called self-esteem (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014; Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015). According to Coopersmith (cited by Heatherton & Wyland, 2003), self-esteem is an individual's evaluation of their self. Self-esteem is a part of the self that is responsive to regular events and situations (Heatherton & Polivy cited byVogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014).

Research conducted by Tesser (cited by Heatherton & Polivy, 1999) showed the tendency for a relationship between social comparison and self-esteem. However, studies related to social comparison and self-esteem display differing results. Jang, Park, and Song (2016) conducted a study assessing social comparisons on Facebook. Their results showed that there was no significant relationship between social comparisons and self-esteem; conversely, research conducted by Vogel, Rose, Roberts, and Eckles (2014) identified a

significant relationship between the two variables. Through comparisons, individuals can create new standards for themselves. The above-mentioned studies indicate that the results of research on social comparison and self-esteem have not been consistent.

The differing results of previous studies highlight the need to perform further research to provide more reliable data on the relationship and the effect of comparison with self-esteem for social media users. Indonesia has a high rate of social media use among adolescents and has reported a large number of hoaxes or cyberbullying cases. Social media users will sacrifice other extravagances to make sure their mobile phones or other electronic devices have enough credit to access the internet (Moningka, 2017). In this study, in addition to assessing the relationship between social comparison and self-esteem, the researcher aimed to investigate the tendency to engage in social comparison in social media and how it effects the formation of self-esteem. This research is expected to serve as a reference for constructing educational programs on how to use social media wisely, particularly for children and adolescents.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The study participants were 221 adolescent males and females aged 13 to 18 years old who live in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The respondents in this study had social media accounts and were social media users who completed the online questionnaires. This study used a convenience sampling method. The informed consent form explained that this questionnaire was intended for adolescents within a certain age range. The researcher also ensured that the participants were completing the questionnaire voluntarily.

2.2. Measurement

2.2.1. Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM)

Social comparison was measured using the INCOM, which was developed by Gibbons and Bunk (1999). This scale consists of two dimensions (opinion and ability) with 11 total items. It was adapted for the context of social media into the Indonesian language by Moningka (2018). The corrected item total correlation of the items ranged from .333 to .543 with a reliability of .793. The items were assessed on a five-point Likert scale with options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2.2.2. State Self-esteem Scale (SSES)

Self-esteem was measured using the SSES, which was developed by Heatherton and Polivy (1991). This scale consists of three dimensions (performance, social, and appearance) with 20 total items. The corrected item total correlation ranged from .400 to .589 with a reliability of .787. Two items were not used because they had a low corrected item total correlation. The items were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "very suitable for me" to "very incompatible for me".

3. RESULTS

In this study, the scores for the INCOM and SSES were divided into high and low categories. The categorization was based on empirical mean norms.

Table 1 shows the score categorization for the study variables.

Table 1. Score Categorization for the Study Variables

Variable	Low	High
Social Comparison	11 – 37	38 – 55
Self-Esteem	18 – 62	63 – 90

3.1. Social Comparison Score Distribution

The social comparison score was divided into two categories, high and low. Based on the data obtained from the 221 respondents, 39 respondents (18%) had high social comparison scores and 182 (82%) had low social comparison scores. The distribution of the INCOM results (social comparison scores) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents based on INCOM Scores

Category	Social Comparison	
	n	%
High	39	18%
Low	182	82%
Total	221	100%

3.2. Self-Esteem Score Distribution

The self-esteem scores were divided into two categories, high and low. Based on the data obtained from the 221 respondents, 97 respondents (44%) had high self-esteem scores and 124 (56%) had low self-esteem scores. Table 3 displays the distribution of respondents based on self-esteem score.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents based on SSES Scores

Category	Self-esteem	
	n	%
High	97	44%
Total	221	100%

3.3. Person Product-Moment Correlation

The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation to determine the relationship between two variables. The result showed that there was a significant negative correlation between self-comparison and self-esteem ($r = -.544$, $p < .05$). The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 29.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .296$, $F(1,198) = 83.125$, $p < .01$). Thus, self-comparison significantly predicted self-esteem ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$).

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The results of this study identified a negative correlation between social comparisons in social media and self-esteem. In this case, the more often an individual compares behavior via social media, the more likely they are to have low self-esteem. This finding is similar to the results of a previous study conducted by Jang, Park, and Song (2016). This research also concluded that social comparisons via Facebook and self-esteem are negatively correlated. Self-esteem was also significantly related to perceived social support and mental health in that study. This finding is similar to other related studies conducted by Lyubomirsky and Ross (1997) and Giordano, Wood, and Michela (2000). These studies explained that comparison behaviors cause an individual to be unhappy with themselves. Adolescents tend to compare themselves with their peers, which clearly affects the formation of self-esteem. This is also supported by research by Vogel (2014), who suggests that social media users who often share about themselves tend to be unhappy and view themselves in a more negative light.

These research findings add to the literature by strengthening evidence for the negative effect of social media on adolescents. The results of this study can be used as a reference in Jakarta because other studies have stated that social comparison is common in social media and that there was no significant correlation between social comparison in social media and self-esteem. This study can also be used to help create interventions or educational programs for parents and teenagers to use social media wisely.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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