

The Effects of Self-Control and Self-Awareness on Social Media Usage, Self-Esteem, and Affect

Valery Kalinin

Brandon University

Negative effects from excessive social media usage are apparent, and with the increase in social media usage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, investigation into factors that mitigate excessive usage is warranted. Factors such as self-awareness, defined as being the object of one's attention, were included in the analysis of social media usage as it leads individuals to focus on attaining personal ideal standards. This self-regulatory aspect to self-awareness warrants the question as to whether high self-awareness limits the negative effects of social media usage. Self-awareness can lead to rumination instead of reflection though. Therefore, self-control was predicted to moderate (influence) the relationship between self-awareness and social media usage. Self-control, defined as the control over one's behaviour attitudes, and thought processes, was measured to examine its involvement in limiting excessive social media usage. Self-esteem (the positive or negative evaluation of oneself) and affect (emotion) were also included in analyses as they have never been examined in relation to both self-awareness and social media usage.

Previous studies have demonstrated that self-awareness is positively related to self-control, positive affect, and self-esteem when individuals address discrepancies between their current state and ideal standards. Furthermore, social media usage is negatively related to self-esteem, positive affect, and self-control. Therefore, it was hypothesized that self-awareness would be negatively related to social media usage, given self-control levels are high. Furthermore, self-awareness would be positively related to self-control, self-esteem, and affect, given social media usage is low. 125 psychology students (73.6% female) completed scales on self-awareness, social media usage, self-esteem, self-control, and affect. Linear regressions with moderation were conducted. No moderation occurred but it was found that self-control explained the relationship between self-awareness and social media usage. Self-awareness was positively related to self-esteem, self-control, and positive affect. Social media usage was not significantly

related to self-esteem, positive affect, or negative affect. Although not included in the initial hypotheses, self-control acted as a mediator in numerous analyses involving self-awareness and social media usage, highlighting how beneficial it is that self-awareness promotes self-control. Future research should focus on cultivating and improving self-awareness (e.g., through mindfulness meditation) and the consequent self-control to help avoid the negative outcomes associated with social media usage (e.g., negative affect and reduced self-esteem). In particular, younger populations should be educated on self-awareness so that they can reap the benefits of self-awareness at an earlier age.