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Effects of Social Media on Young Adults: Self Efficacy, Body Image and Connection with Others

Sabrina Trimble, Diana J. Meter | Utah State University



Background

Self Efficacy: Self-efficacy is the confidence one feels in their own ability to achieve specific tasks that are placed before them (Bandura, 1982). Individuals who have high self-efficacy are often highly motivated (Bandura, 1997). This motivation can be portrayed through all aspects of an individual's life. Even an individual's social media use.

Connection with Others: When individuals do not feel that they can connect with others, it affects all aspects of their lives (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Individuals can become frustrated with what they identify as being a lack of understanding from others around them, and this can lead to the rejection of their realistic roles as they begin to create a more idealistic fantasy of an environment in which they feel they belong (Lee & Robbins, 1995).

Body Image Problems: According to Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, people have an inherent drive to compare themselves to one another. Social media provides the opportunity for individuals to compare their bodies to others' at any time.

Hypotheses: We expect that those with lower self-efficacy and less connection to others will engage with social media more often. We also expect that time on social media will predict body image problems.

Methods

Participants

- 213 college students
- 63% women, 32% men, 1% other gender
- 93% White non-Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Hispanic/Latinx, 3% Asian/ Asian American

Measures

- **Self Efficacy** (8 items): 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree, $\alpha = .92$, "I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind."
- **Connection with Others** (8 items): 1 = strongly agree, 6 = strongly disagree, $\alpha = .94$, "I feel disconnected from the world around me."
- **Body Image Problems** (5 items): 1 = never true, 7 = always true. $\alpha = .91$ "I shut down when I feel bad about my body shape or weight."
- **Social Media Use** (2 items): "How many minutes per day on average do you spend on social media?" and objective calculated measure of time spent on social media as reported on their cellular device.

Results

	1	2	3	4
1. Self Efficacy	--			
2. Connection with Others	-.31*	--		
3. Body Image	-.23*	.30***	--	
4. Actual Time on Social Media	-.08	.13	.16*	--
5. Perceived Time on Social Media	-.04	.08	.18**	.81**

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

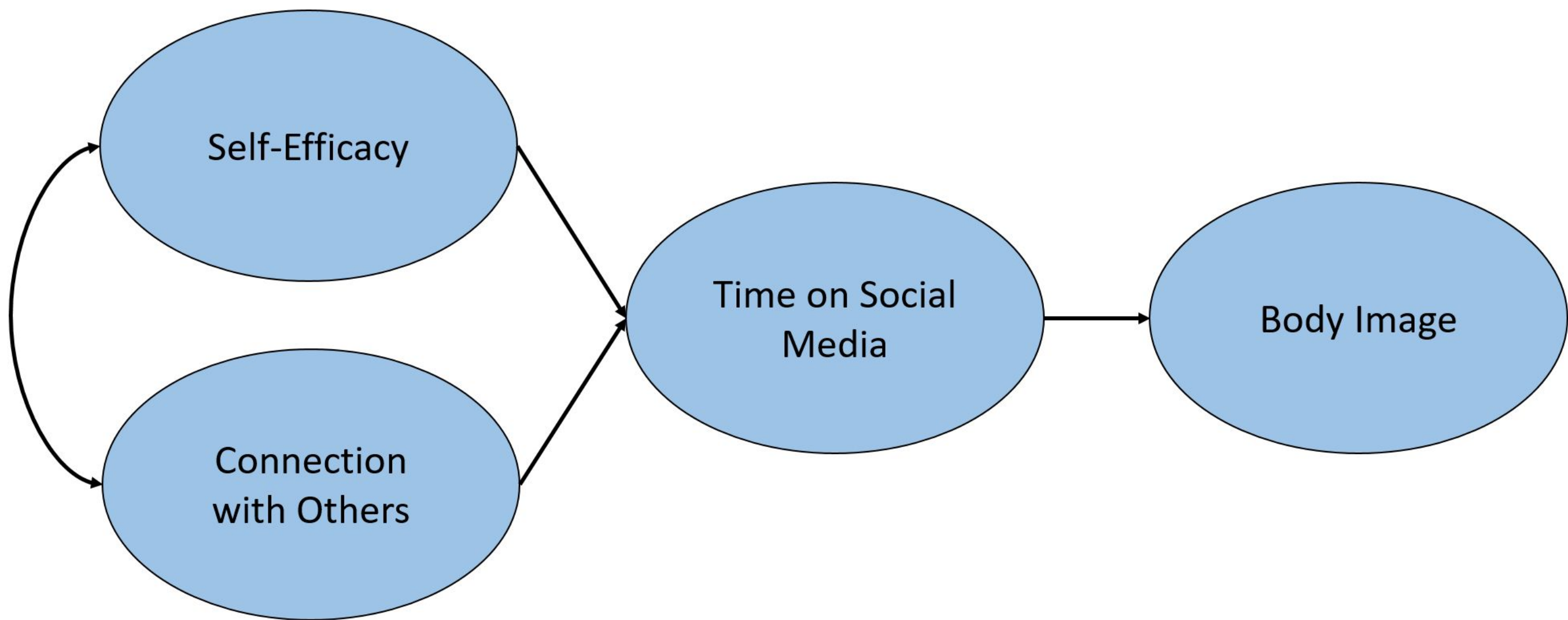


Figure 1. Hypothesized model
• Associations were tested in a structural equation model.

Perceived Time on Social Media

- Robust model fit $X^2(206) = 359.96, p < .001, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06 [.05, .07]$
- Neither self-efficacy ($\beta = .01, ns$) nor lack of connection ($\beta = .14, p = .06$) significantly predicted *perception* of time on social media. Time on social media positively predicted body issues ($\beta = .18, p < .01$).

Actual time on social media

- Robust model fit $X^2(206) = 359.96, p < .001, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06 [.05, .07]$
- Neither self-efficacy ($\beta = -.06, ns$) nor lack of connection ($\beta = .06, ns$) significantly predicted *actual* time on social media. Actual time on social media positively predicted body image issues ($\beta = .17, p < .05$).

Conclusions & Limitations

Conclusion

- Overall, the results suggest that although self-efficacy seems unrelated to time on social media, lack of belonging may be related to time on social media, and social media use may predict body image issues regardless of method of measuring.

Limitations

- We did not account for the time participants spend on social media on other devices. This may have resulted in an underestimation of actual hours on social media.
- SONA participants which raises issues of generalizability.

Future Directions

- Repeating this study with adolescence could enricht the literature and show if there is a statistically significant impact social media has on adolescence self efficacy, body image and connection with others.

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