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Age Differences with Presentation on Social Media

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Abstract

This study investigated younger, middle-aged, and older participants' self-esteem, self-expression, and comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media. It was hypothesized that older adult social media users would show different patterns and relationships in their use and self-expression. Participants included 214 younger- (52%), 135 middle-aged adults (33%), and 61 older-adults (15%). Self-esteem and regrets on social media were both related to comfort with self-expression on social media among older adults. In contrast, self-expression and comfort with self-expression on social media were related for younger- and middle-aged adults, but not older participants. Findings suggest that social media plays a unique role in older adults' lives. Researchers should be aware of and further explore age differences in reactions to social media.

Age Differences in Self Presentations and Self-Esteem on Social Media

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of social media with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and many other platforms becoming more popular (Perrin, 2015). In 2015, about 65% of adults used social media compared to 7% just ten years prior (in 2005). Through smartphones, social media can be accessed by anyone on the go from almost any location. Anyone with minimal knowledge of the Internet can portray themselves to a large audience on social media using photos, statuses, and reposts along with other various information (Kramer & Winter, 2008). Communication over social media is highly varied, as many people use and experience social media differently. Thus far, the majority of social media research has been directed towards adolescent and young adult users. However, prevalence of middle and older adult social media users is increasing. Social media use among older adults (aged 65 years or older) has gone up from 2% using social media in 2005 to 35% using social media in 2015 (Perrin, 2015). In 2018, social media users included 88% of younger adults (ages 18-29), 78% of middle-aged adults (ages 30–49 years), 64% older middle-aged adults (ages 50-64 years), and 37% older adults (ages 65 years and older) (Smith & Anderson, 2018). This research drew insight from social media users of various ages (i.e., 18-81 years) to examine potential differences in self-expression and reactions to one's own self-expression on social media across three different age groups (i.e., young-adults aged 18-24 years; middle-adults aged 25 to 49 years; older-adults aged 50 years or older).

Differences between In-Person and Social Media Interactions

Communication via social media differs greatly from in-person interactions. Social media posts are publicly shared to where acquaintances and even complete strangers can see them

(Bazarova & Choi, 2014). Posts are directed toward multiple audiences simultaneously that may have differing views, opinions, and social norms (Schlosser, 2020), which is rarely the case for in-person communication. Interpersonal communication norms and etiquette that apply to in-person communication do not necessarily extend to social media. As such, people may be more comfortable sharing and commenting about political or controversial topics on social media than they would be in-person (Schlosser, 2020). Conversations on social media about politics and other issues are typically not as civil online and can lead to blocking and unfriending of other social media users. Another difference between social media and in-person communication that Schlosser noted was that people do not have to respond right away on social media and therefore, can better think about and edit their responses before communicating them. Bazarova and Choi (2014) also noted differences in the frequency of self-disclosure between social media and in-person interactions. *Self-disclosure* regards the extent to which a person shares or releases sensitive and personal information on social media. Bazarova and Choi found that many social media users disclose private information as part of their basic profile (e.g., relationship status), whereas with in-person communication such self-disclosure is more gradual as interpersonal relationships develop. Bazarova and Choi also suggested that people may selectively disclose information about themselves because users tailor their posts differently depending on their own “imagined audiences.”

Self-Disclosure on Social Media: The Role of the Imagined Audience

Bazarova and Choi (2014) found that social media disclosure goals were different for each individual. Relational development goals meant to improve relationships were found to be more prominent for wall posts (e.g., news feeds) and private messages than in status updates. Users with social validation goals (e.g., posting to solicit likes) more often utilized status

updates. Women reported using social media to achieve relational goals more often than men, and the content of these relational-oriented messages was often more intimate than those who had social validation goals. Bazarova and Choi concluded that not only do people use social media to satisfy goals, but they also change communication styles depending on these goals. Bazarova and Choi suggested that each person constructs their own “imagined audience” who they believe will be the primary viewer of each post they make. For example, people use different communication styles or behavior on Facebook than when speaking on the phone, possibly because their imagined audience differs. Further evidence of the role of imagined audience is that many social media users indicate being more concerned about their self-presentation rather than self-disclosure (Schlosser, 2020).

Individual Differences in Self-Presentation and Identity Experimentation

Although self-presentation naturally includes some degree of self-disclosure, self-presentation also incorporates the intention to control what is shared or revealed in order to create their desired impression of oneself. In this way, self-disclosure is factual in nature, whereas self-presentation better reflects a desire to display an “ideal self” that may contain both factual and embellished (or diminished) information. It should be noted when it comes to self-expression on social media, self-presentation and self-disclosure are overlapping concepts. For example, sharing a picture of oneself online can be considered self-disclosure as it contains personal information. At the same time, the photo can easily be constructed (e.g., wearing makeup, adding digital filters) to portray an enhanced appearance. In contrast to in-person communication, social media provides users with infinite possible photos, names, and other highly personal information to put in their profile. As such, social media users have considerable control over their online self-presentation, whereas in real life self-presentations are relatively

predetermined and fixed. Evidence that social media provides users with opportunities to achieve desired self-presentation can be seen with how many people alter their physical appearance via editing (e.g., digital filters) or cosmetics to improve photographs on social media (Schlosser, 2020). When taken to a greater degree this self-presentation allows social media users to construct completely artificial identities. Fifty percent of adolescent internet users reported pretending to be someone else online (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). Valkenburg and Peter (2008) also found that experimenting with identity on social media (i.e., self-presentation) improved adolescents' social competence and their ability to form and manage interpersonal relationships with others (both online and in-person), but it did not affect their self-concept. In contrast, profile self-efficacy (i.e., a person's expectation that he or she can effectively present themselves online) has been linked with a variety of factors related to self-presentation (i.e., significant number of online friends, facial expressions displayed, the profile picture, the location where the profile picture was taken, and the text style used) (Kramer & Winter, 2008). Those with higher profile efficacy also tended to use informal or humorous writing on their profiles. Those with low efficacy used boring photos with serious facial expressions and no background, whereas those with high efficacy chose more interesting photos with a pose, a funny face, or a picture from a party.

Other researchers have explored demographic and personality factors related to self-presentation and experimentation online. Valkenburg and Peter (2008) noted that both genders reported similar degrees of identity experimentation. Lonely adolescents and those with social anxiety were more likely to experiment with their identity on social media. Kramer and Winter (2008) found that extraverts were more likely to choose a unique profile picture (using filters or editing) than a realistic picture (without filters or editing). Introverts were likely to have a more

reserved self-presentation, include less information on their profiles, and disclose fewer opinions on their homepage than extroverts. Previous research indicated that those with higher self-esteem use more words to describe themselves than people with lower self-esteem (Banczyk, Kramer, & Senokozlieva, 2008, as cited in Kramer & Winter, 2008), however, Kramer and Winter did not find such a relationship in their study.

Kramer and Winter (2008) concluded that self-efficacy plays a large role in how the participants present themselves online and that self-presentation and self-disclosure were both related to personality traits. Incorporating Valkenburg and Peter's (2008) conclusions suggests that self-presentations on social media may also be related to online identity experimentation and different patterns of self-presentation may occur across the lifespan. Specifically, adolescents and teenagers experiment with their identity more (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). It is important to note that these researchers did not directly compare different age groups in the relationships between self-efficacy, self-presentations, self-disclosure, and personality traits.

Risks Associated with Social Media Use

There are risks of social media use for all ages, many of which can affect users' comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media. While there is a lot of research studies on adolescents and social media (e.g., Twenge et al., 2019; Keles et al., 2020), adolescents and young adults are not the only age group affected by social media. Many middle- and older-aged adults struggle with self-expression on social media for various reasons. The term self-expression refers to the overlapping concepts that combine self-disclosure (i.e., sharing personal information online) and also self-presentation (i.e., adjusting self-relevant information to portray a more idealized version of oneself). For example, some people adjust the amount of information

they disclose to avoid showing employers, family members, friends, and peers information that could affect employment opportunities or interpersonal relationships (Schlosser, 2020). Self-expression may also be adjusted in a way that would avoid self-disclosure that could put social media users at risk from others.

Cyberbullying is a serious concern for social media users, although it presents itself differently for all age groups. Fifty-nine percent of teenagers report having experienced cyberbullying (Anderson, 2018). Sevcikova and Smahel (2009) found that adolescents and young adults, followed by older adults were most likely to report being cyberbullied. However, adolescents and young adults were more likely than older adults to know their cyberbully in person. As people grow older, they gain more relationships (e.g., Facebook friends or followers) with people they know both in person and on social media (Taylor, 2018). Because young adults tend to have broader social networks and generally rely on social media to a greater extent than other age groups (Taylor, 2018), young adults are particularly susceptible to cyberbullying from people they know in-person, as well as those they may only know through online interactions.

Parents, who are often young to middle-aged adults, intentionally avoid posting about their children to avoid exposing their children to online predators (Organization for Social Media Safety, 2021). Sixty-three percent of parents say that posting about their kids concerns them (Taylor, 2018) and 82% of child sexual predators use of the Internet or social media to gain information about children (Organization for Social Media Safety, 2021). Another risk that young and middle-aged adults face from self-expression online is that they themselves may be targeted. Around 21 percent of women 18 to 29 years of age report having experienced sexual harassment online (Organization for Social Media Safety, 2021). As people move into the middle age group, they use social media as a tool to maintain relationships and stay connected with their

peers (Taylor, 2018). They are more likely to share true information, while being careful to avoid oversharing. Because of this, middle-aged adults are more likely to have cyberbullying and critiques come from peers.

While older adults are less likely to be cyberbullied themselves, they are more likely to be taken advantage of by scammers online. Older adults typically have a lot of friends they know in person and online on social media (Taylor, 2018), likely because they tend to take an active role in fostering new relationships online. Malicious social media users can create fraudulent scams and false information for their own entertainment or to obtain people's money. Older adults are targeted more frequently for such scams because older people are more likely to own a home, have excellent credit, be raised to be polite and trusting, and want certain products that decrease health problems (Federal Bureau of Investigations, n.d.). Older adults are also less likely to report victimization and are typically viewed as less credible when they do report such crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigations, n.d.). Moreover, older persons tend to lose greater amounts of money due to fraud than younger persons (Witt, 2019). Being taken advantage of online or experiencing cyberbullying can have a variety of negative impacts in real life and an individual's mental health.

Potential Consequences of Self-Expression on Social Media

Mental health and enjoyment of social media users can also be reduced because of self-expression expectations and inconsistency between online and actual identities (Schlosser, 2020). It is speculated that the stress of choosing how to present oneself and disclose information on social media can be hard on one's sense of self (the way one acts in person is the same as online). People can become frustrated by reactions of others to their posts (e.g., "thumbs-down,"

criticism). Portraying oneself to such a large and diverse audience could potentially cause role conflicts, especially for middle aged adults who frequently juggle multiple major roles (i.e., parent, employee, daughter/son, etc.)

Young adults are more concerned about what people, especially their peers and parents think of them (Taylor, 2018). Middle aged adults are concerned about disclosing personal information about themselves and their families, while older adults seem to be most concerned about staying connected to people and are more likely to find a post with fewer likes to be embarrassing (Taylor, 2018). It is worth noting that many of the potential risks of social media are created when self-expression online affects offline (i.e., real-world) relationships or experiences. The way social media is used by different age groups may expose them to different risks. Therefore, it is important for researchers to understand how social media users of different ages feel about sharing personally relevant information on social media. Specifically, younger generations may not understand social repercussions of social media use (e.g., employers looking at social media) and older generations may use social media in such a way that it makes them vulnerable to exploitation (e.g., identity theft, fraud). Understanding social media users' reactions to their own social media posts is especially important for adult social media users, as the majority of research on social media has been done with adolescents. While young adults (aged 18 to 29 years) remain the most likely to use social media, there has been an increase in social media usage in populations aged 65 years and older in recent years (Perrin, 2015). As different age groups tend to use social media for different purposes, it is likely that the degree of self-expression people engage in on social media may translate to differing levels of comfort and regrets. One aim of the present study is to compare social media users' comfort and regret levels with their own self-expression across age groups.

The Current Study

The findings from these prior studies indicate that people of different ages use social media for different purposes (i.e., adolescents/young adults and identity experimentation, middle adults instrumental use of staying connected with and groups, older adults to maintain and develop new relationships). In addition, these differing goals for using social media across age groups may expose people of differing ages to particular potential consequences associated with that use (e.g., cyberbullying, scams). The current study assessed individuals' reported online self-expression (i.e., a combination both self-presentation and self-disclosure), comfort with self-expression (e.g., comfort with others seeing the material they post on social media), and regrets about prior self-expression (e.g., having removed or wanting to remove content about themselves from social media), as well as use of their real names on social media to access how age differences affect self-expression on social media. Self-esteem was also accessed to replicate prior work that showed links between self-presentation and self-esteem (e.g., Schlosser, 2020). As the majority of research regarding self-disclosure and self-presentation on social media has focused on adolescents and young adults, it is also important that we have literature on middle and older adult social media users. This study will compare groups of young-, middle-, and older-adults to discern if there are significant differences when it comes to mean levels of self-expression, and comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media. Further, the pattern of relationships between self-expression, and comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media, as they relate to self-esteem are expected to differ across age groups as well.

Hypotheses

H1: We hypothesize that older adults' social media use will differ from younger- and middle-aged adults. Specifically, self-expression and use of real name on social media is hypothesized to be lower among older- adults than other groups.

H2: It is further hypothesized that the pattern of relationships between self-esteem, self-expression, and comfort and regrets with self-expression will differ between age groups as well.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through four different methods. The majority of participants were recruited through a direct solicitation that was emailed to students, faculty, and staff at Western Illinois University. Additional indirect recruitment methods included posts about the survey on students' social media profiles. Social media platforms included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Lastly, invitations posted on Reddit and the Social Psychology Research Network, and flyers that were posted around campus were also used. To participate in the study, participants had to be 18 or older, to read and write in English, and to use social media. A total of 454 respondents accessed the survey. Of those, 410 reported their age and social media use (90%). Of those, 277 reported being female (68%) and 126 were male (31%), with an additional 7 participants (2%) who reported "other" (e.g., gender fluid). There were 332 white participants (84%), 26 African American participants (7%), 21 Asian or Asian American participants (5%),

and 17 participants with multiple or other ethnicities (4%). The majority of the participants (92%) were non-Hispanic individuals.

Overall participant ages ranged from age 18 to 81 years, $M = 31.06$ years ($SD = 14.15$ years). After careful inspection of the age distribution, participants were categorized into younger- (i.e., aged 18 to 24 years), middle- (i.e., aged 25 to 49 years), and older-adults (i.e., aged 50 or older). Two-hundred fourteen participants were younger-adults (52%), 135 were middle-adults, (33%), and 61 were older-adults.

Measures

An online survey was used to gather information about social media use. The complete survey gathered demographic and student information, satisfaction with interpersonal relationships, personality descriptors, and sleep quality. Of greatest interest of the current study were questions related to self-expression, and comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media, and self-esteem.

Self-Expression on Social Media. The three self-expression items were adapted from Orosz, Toth-Kiraly, and Boothe's (2015) Multidimensional Facebook Intensity Scale, where they comprised the self-expression subscale. An example item is "It is important for me to update my social media profiles regularly." Orosz et al. reported a test-retest reliability of .82; internal consistency in the current sample was $\alpha = .76$.

Comfort and Regrets with Self-Expression on Social Media. Eight items were generated for the purpose of this study to assess participants' comfort and regrets with self-expression related to social media use. Example *comfort* items were "My social media profile(s)

are consistent with who I want to be in an ideal world” and “I would be comfortable with members of my close family reading all of my social media posts/comments.” *Regrets* was measured with the following three items: “I have posted something to social media, but later felt that it would be better for me to remove it,” “I would rather express my opinions and beliefs on social media than do so in person,” and “I have asked other people to remove or change social media posts or pictures of me.” These 8 statements used a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Alphas were .56 for Comfort with Self-Expression and .44 for Regrets with Self-Expression.

Use of Real Name on Social Media. An additional slider related to self-presentation that ranged from (0%) “no profiles use my real name,” “about half of them,” and “all profiles use my real name” (100%) asked participants to rate how often a participant used their real name or other identifying information on social media.

Self-Esteem. The Single-Item Self Esteem Scale (Robins, Hendin, & Trzeniewski, 2001) was rated on a 7-point scale. Participants rated the statement “I have high self-esteem,” ranging from 1, *not very true of me*, to 7, *very true of me*.

Procedure

After following the provided link, participants were brought to a cover letter that described the purpose of the study, benefits and risks, researchers’ contact information, and a statement of consent that the participant had to agree with to access the questionnaire. After consenting, participants were brought to the online questionnaire. At the conclusion of the survey participants were brought to a page that thanked them for taking the survey, the purpose of the

study, and gave contact information, and the Institutional Review Board approval statement. The study typically took between 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

Results

Mean comparisons between young, middle, and older aged participants for self-esteem, self-expression on social media, comfort with self-expression on social media, and regrets on social media are shown in Figure 1. Younger participants reported more regrets on social media compared to middle and older participants. Older participants reported more self-esteem, self-expression, and comfort with self-expression when compared to younger- and middle-aged participants. These differences were significant via a series of one-way ANOVAs for self-esteem, $F(2, 320) = 5.25$, $MSE = 3.25$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .032$, self-expression, $F(2, 378) = 6.36$, $MSE = 0.67$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .033$, and regrets on social media, $F(2, 378) = 15.30$, $MSE = 0.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .075$, but not for comfort with self-expression with social media, $F(2, 378) = 1.14$, $MSE = 0.31$, $p = .32$, $\eta^2 = .006$. Across these variables, younger participants reported lower self-esteem, more self-expression, and higher levels of regrets than middle- and older-adult participants. In contrast, older participants reported the least self-expression and regrets about their self-expression, as well as the highest average self-esteem. Middle-adult participants reported levels in between the younger and older participants for three of the variables. There were no significant differences in comfort levels with self-expression between age groups.

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for younger, middle, and older participants' (1) use of real name on social media, (2) self-esteem, (3) self-expression on social media, (4) comfort with self-expression on social media, and (5) regrets with self-expression on social media are reported in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Significant correlations between use of real name

and self-expression ($r = .26$) and the use of real name and comfort with self-expression ($r = .20$) were noted for younger participants. Significant correlations were found between self-expression and self-esteem ($r = .32$), self-esteem and comfort with self-expression ($r = .40$), comfort and regrets with self-expression ($r = .27$) among older participants. Significant correlations were also found between self-expression and comfort with self-expression were found for younger ($r = .24$) and middle-aged participants ($r = .29$), but not for older-adult participants. Significant correlations were found between self-expression and regrets regarding self-expression for all age groups. This correlation was strongest for middle aged participants ($r = .53$) and somewhat weaker for younger ($r = .39$), and older participants ($r = .29$).

Discussion

The results of this study revealed many interesting relationships. Valkenburg and Peter (2008) found that 50% of internet users reported pretending to be someone else on social media. Although these findings may have been limited by measurement issues (see limitations section below), all three groups reported using their real names on social media at roughly the same rates (77 to 84% of accounts on average). In this study, people who used their real name on social media tended to report *higher* levels of self-expression and comfort with self-expression as well.

Self-Expression and Regrets with Self-Expression on Social Media

Self-expression and regrets with self-expression social media were significantly related for all three age groups, where middle aged adults reported the strongest correlation at $r = .53$. This finding can be interpreted such that the more people self-disclose on social media the more likely it is that they post materials they later decide that they perhaps they should not have. Finding that the middle-aged adults show the strongest relationship between regrets and self-

expression may be explained by this group of participants frequently managing multiple roles (e.g., marriage, work, parenting), which may have changed and conflicted with posts from earlier stages in the lifespan.

Older adults presented a different relationship than other age groups, where regrets and comfort with self-expression were only significant among older adults. The relationship was positive, suggesting that the more comfortable they feel with social media the more likely they are to also do or post something on social media that they later regret. Such a pattern is consistent with the idea that, especially among older adults, lack of awareness of potential risks involved with social media use can lead to victimization from other users with malicious intent. Possibly related to this interpretation is the somewhat opposite pattern that was observed for comfort with self-expression and self-expression. Young- and middle-aged adults both showed significant positive relationships, but the relationship between comfort with self-expression and self-expression was weaker and non-significant among older adults ($r = .12$). Again, this pattern suggests that lack of knowledge and comfort while using social media may occur from growing up without social media for the older adults. Whereas the more comfortable younger- and middle-aged adults were with social media the more they used it to express themselves online (e.g., familiar with multiple platforms). Notably, the mean levels of both self-expression and regrets about self-expression appeared to decrease across age groups, while mean levels of self-esteem were highest amongst older adults.

Social Media and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was related to both comfort with self-expression and self-expression for older-aged participants, but in opposite directions. The positive relationship between self-esteem

and comfort with self-expression suggests that social media may provide older adults a place to connect with others, which helps promote self-esteem. The negative correlation between self-esteem and self-expression suggests that people with lower self-esteem may use social media in an effort to express themselves, perhaps in a way that is harmful to self-esteem (e.g., disclosing too much, lack of responses from others). It is important to note that self-esteem was only related to comfort with self-expression and self-expression among the oldest age group; younger- and middle-aged adults showed no relationships between self-esteem and any of the self-expression on social media variables. This pattern is consistent with Valkenburg and Peter (2008) who found that experimentation with identity on the Internet did not relate to self-concept or self-esteem with their sample of young adults (aged 15 to 21 years). In our study, younger participants also reported lower mean levels of self-esteem and higher levels of self-expression than the other age groups, possibly because of pressures to look good to peers on social media.

Bazarova and Choi (2014) found that self-presentations were different for everyone and concluded that people change their self-expression to adapt to their audience(s). The findings of this study further support this conclusion, with younger- and middle-adult aged participants showing stronger relationships between self-expression and comfort with self-expression on social media than older participants. The generation of younger- and middle-adult participants used for this study have grown up or worked with the Internet and social media as a fixture in their lives. This may explain the significant relationship between self-expression and comfort with self-expression that emerged for these age groups. However, older participants did not show the same relationship, and differing levels of experience with social media may offer a potential explanation for this null result. It is important to further investigate how age relates to reactions towards social media use. The age differences discussed herein may be linked with generational

differences, such that the older adults in this study likely did not have exposure to social media at a young age. Thus, it is especially important to study such age differences as the current younger and middle-aged generations grow older.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had many strengths. This topic is also relevant to current concerns about social media and important in contemporary society. There was a large sample that was gathered for this study. However, there were some weaknesses to this study that may have affected the internal and external validity of our results. Internal validity may have been limited by differing response scales throughout the questionnaire, which may have confused some participants. Specifically, many participants skipped over or did not complete the slider that was used to assess the use of real name variable (46.7%). As this was the only slider used in the questionnaire, it may have been confusing or unclear to participants. In addition, internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's α) for the newly developed comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media variables was lower than is generally recommended for research. Future research into comfort and regrets with self-expression and use of real name should work toward more reliable and valid measurement. Lastly, the external validity of our findings could be limited due to the sample consisting only of social media users for this study (rather than comparing both users and non-users) and the sample was not ethnically or geographically diverse. More research is needed in this area to better overcome these limitations.

Conclusion

Self-expression and regrets on social media were related in all age groups. Consistent with the hypotheses, the results differed between older adults' social media use relative to that of

younger- and middle-aged adults. Specifically, self-esteem and regrets about self-expression were both related to comfort with self-expression on social media among older adults. In contrast, self-expression and comfort with self-expression on social media were significant for younger- and middle-aged adults, but not older adults. These differing patterns of relationships suggest that social media may play a unique role in older adults' lives. As older adults may be susceptible to particular risks associated with social media use, it is important for future research to be aware of and further study age differences in reactions to social media.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Use of Real Name, Self-esteem, Self-expression, and Comfort and Regrets with Self-Expression on Social Media for younger participants, ages 18 - 24

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Use of real name	84.05	25.27	--	.07	.26**	.20*	.16
2. Self-esteem	4.15	1.93		--	-.09	.14	-.15
3. Self-expression	2.51	0.84			--	.24**	.39**
4. Comfort with self-expression	3.30	0.58				--	-.05
5. Regrets with self-expression	2.81	0.78					--

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed)

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Use of Real Name, Self-esteem, Self-expression, and Comfort and Regrets with Self-Expression on Social Media for middle participants, ages 25-49

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Use of real name	84.51	25.73	--	.06	.01	-.18	-.12
2. Self-esteem	4.54	1.73		--	-.12	.13	.05
3. Self-expression	2.26	0.82			--	.29**	.53**
4. Comfort with self-expression	3.32	0.57				--	-.02
5. Regrets with self-expression	2.19	0.72					--

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed)

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Use of Real Name, Self-esteem, Self-expression, and Comfort and Regrets with Self-Expression on Social for older participants, ages 50 and up

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Use of real name	77.50	24.03	--	-- ^a	-- ^a	-- ^a	-- ^a
2. Self-esteem	5.06	1.54		--	-.32*	.40**	.02
3. Self-expression	2.14	0.78			--	.12	.29*
4. Comfort with self-expression	3.42	0.45				--	.27*
5. Regrets with self-expression	2.19	0.72					--

^a The large portion of missing data for the Use of Real Name slider among the older-adult age group resulted in anomalously high correlations (see limitations). These values have been omitted.

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed)

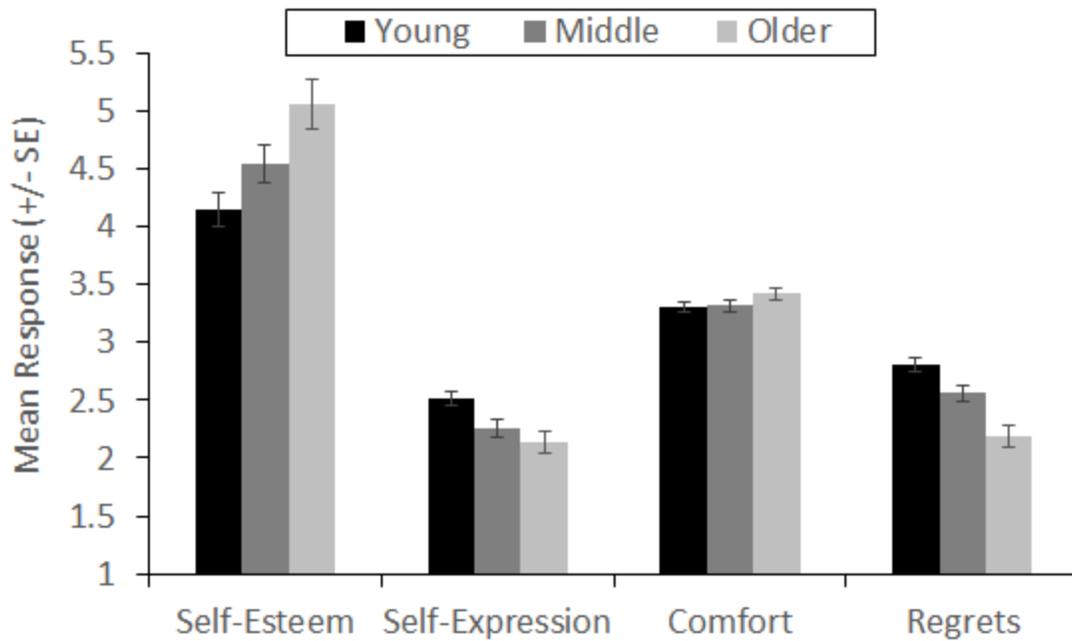


Figure 1. Mean ratings for self-esteem, self-expression on social media, and comfort and regrets with self-expression on social media for young participants ($n = 190$), middle age participants ($n = 130$), and older participants ($n = 61$). Error bars represent one standard error above and below the mean.