

Self-Monitoring Social Rewards on Facebook Profile Pictures and Social Comparison Effect on Gen Z Egyptian Females' Self-Presentation and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Females upload profile pictures to their Facebook accounts to present their ideal selves to a virtual world. Receiving feedback on profile pictures in the form of 'Reactions' and comments is an integral part of the Facebook experience. 'Reactions' such as 'likes,' 'love,' and 'wow,' are seen as symbols of social acceptance. Furthermore, social comparisons can occur on Facebook. Those most prone to compare themselves to others are Generation Z (Gen Z) females, who are dependent on social media. Hence, self-monitoring and social comparison can affect females' self-presentation and self-esteem. Accordingly, the study aims to examine the effect of self-monitoring social rewards of 'likes' and comments on Facebook profile pictures and social comparison on the self-presentation and self-esteem of Gen Z Egyptian females. A survey was conducted on a non-probability purposive sample of 210 female Egyptian Gen Z youth between ages 13 and 26. In addition, two interviews were conducted with a female psychiatrist and a female psychologist. Some interviewees' opinions coincided with the survey results, whereas others opposed them.

Keywords: Virtual world, likes, comments

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Introduction

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, have become a fundamental tool for people to communicate with one another (Özkent, 2022), even though their effects on mental health are still under investigation. During the COVID-19 lockdown, individuals' daily lives and social interactions became more dependent on social media as people were asked to physically stay apart from each other (Sun et al., 2020). Social media addiction is most evident in young adults (Al-Samarraie et al., 2021) known as Gen Z, Zoomers, Net-generation, Digital generation, and Digital natives (Tezel Yalkut, 2020). Gen Z is the focus of this study who are born between the years of 1997-2012 and are aged between 11 and 26 (Šramková & Sirotiaková, 2021; *Age range by generation*, 2023). They came into a world with a constant internet connection, where social media platforms became a norm and an integral part of their daily lives that rapidly socialized them (Gilhooly, 2019; Padín et al., 2021).

People share personal information like their photos with a large community of individuals on these friend-networking sites (Bergagna & Tartaglia, 2018). They say, "a picture is worth a thousand words" (Hum et al., 2011, p.1828) in today's virtual village, 'likes' and comments on social media posts speak volumes. In online communities, profile pictures are "one of the most telling pieces of self-disclosure or image construction" (Thomson & Greenwood, 2020, p. 348). Through social media females can present their best-often digitally improved and artificially created images to the public. Many social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat have picture editing features that permit users to smooth wrinkles or change the size of their face before posting on social media (Chen et al., 2019) to ensure the maximum number of 'likes' and comments. Facebook the leading social media platform with the most active users (Marengo et al., 2021) released a new feature other than the 'like' button, called 'Reactions.' 'Reactions' allows users to react to other people's posts. Under the post, users can choose 'love,' 'haha,' 'wow,' 'sad,' or 'angry' in addition to 'like' (Varanasi et al., 2018). These 'Reactions' and comments are numerical representations and texts of social acceptance, in the form of "online social currency," which can drive

people to compare themselves to others (Rosenthal-von der Pütten et al., 2019, p.76).

In phone setting, users can allow Facebook to send notifications once they receive a ‘like’ and a comment from others on their posts even when they are not actively browsing their Facebook or when the phone is locked. At the end of each year, Facebook sends users their picture with the most ‘likes.’ Facebook even makes popular posts with many ‘likes’ and comments more noticeable on users’ newsfeeds. Frequent ‘likes’ and positive comments received can result in an increase in users’ self-esteem and happiness (Marengo et al., 2021). Self-esteem is an opinion that a person makes about him/herself that explains a mental attitude and specifies to what extent an individual thinks himself to be able, worthy, successful, and significant (Hong et al., 2017).

Facebook users may compare themselves to other users on the number of ‘likes’ and positive comments received from others under their pictures. A friend's picture can initiate social comparison. In tandem, self-esteem affects the propensity to compare oneself to others, and can lead to using Facebook as a device for social comparison (Bergagna & Tartaglia, 2018). Interpersonal feedback seeking and social comparison on social media has led to depression amongst youth (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). There are few studies conducted in Egypt concerning mental health like social media and panic during the pandemic (Shehata & Abdeldaim, 2022), internet use, and addiction (Araby et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Abd El-Mawgood et al., 2021), the relationship between anxiety, depression, and the internet (Effat et al., 2019), Facebook and internet addiction, anxiety, and depression (Halima et al., 2015). Whereas many studies in Egypt and the Middle East examined the role of social media in the synchronization of the Arab Springs (Alshoaibi, 2018), internet censoring in the Middle East (Rahimi & Gupta, 2020), cyber abuse against Egyptian females (Eltokhy et al., 2022) and fake news in Arab countries (Alqahs et al., 2023), rather than mental health issues.

This study examines three areas. First, the self-monitoring social awards of ‘likes’ and comments effects on Facebook profile pictures and its effect on online self-presentation which is explained using the

self-presentation theory. Second, how self-monitoring social awards of ‘likes’ and comments affect self-esteem using the theoretical framework of the sociometer theory. Third, social comparison on Facebook and its effect on self-esteem and online self-presentation using the social comparison theory. The study addresses multiple gaps that make it an essential contribution. First, the study extends the limited research on the understanding of the importance of females posting an ideal profile picture. The study added to the literature by further explaining how monitoring ‘likes’ and comments on Facebook profile pictures impacts females’ self-presentation and self-esteem. No previous study to the best of the author’s knowledge has been conducted in Egypt, the Middle East, and North Africa (MENA) region on a similar topic.

Literature Review

Facebook in Egypt

“Perched astride two continents, sandwiched between two seas, and watered by a river that feeds ten countries, Egypt is a nation destined to have extensive contact with the outside world.” – Nabil Fahmy, in an Essay published in *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs* (2012, p.91).

In 2004, Facebook was launched as a social media platform allowing people to connect more efficiently with family, friends, and work colleagues, used as an addition rather than a substitute for ‘non-virtual’ friendships (Saxena & Majumdar, 2016; Zheng et al., 2016). For Egypt, Facebook became a tool of liberation as the country faced poor living conditions and over 30 years of bureaucratic rule (Elshahed, 2020). In 2011, more than 80 million Facebook users existed in Egypt, 78% were aged 15 to 29. News of demonstrations in Tunisia went viral on social media platforms, which sparked the Egyptian revolution, that was mostly led by youth (Alshoabi, 2018). The Revolution that took place in Cairo’s Tahrir Square on Jan 25, 2011, was due to a Facebook page called “We Are All Khaled Said,” named after a 28-year-old who was killed by Egyptian police in 2010 after being dragged out of an internet café. A Google executive, Wael Ghonim was the page’s creator (Elshahed, 2020). In addition, another

Facebook page called “Day of Revolution” posted the locations of the protests to over 90,000 followers. Facebook disseminated live coverage of the revolution to the world which put pressure on the Egyptian government to abide by the human rights standards (Alshoaibi, 2018). The British newspaper *The Guardian*, referred to the role of Facebook in the Egyptian revolution as a “social media revolution” (Shearlaw, 2016).

The revolution has intensified specific mental health symptoms among Egyptians like anxiety and worry, accelerating feelings of doubt about the future that can lead to depression and suicide. During 2009, The Egyptian Mental Health Act endorsed vital human rights laws, including ‘psychiatric patients’ rights.’ After the Egyptian revolution, many psychiatrists raised concern for that the misuse of the law, by the government who detained people into psychiatric hospitals accused of political crimes, specifically those from religious extremist groups (Nagy, 2012).

Like the rest of the world, Egypt’s social media users increased drastically with the fast spread of the COVID pandemic and quarantine measures. According to DataRepotal, 2020, social media users in Egypt increased by 2.9 million, between April 2019 and January 2020 (Kemp, 2020). In 2022, Egypt’s population reached over 105 million, of which 77.66 million are internet users, a 22% increase between 2019-2020 (Amin et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2022). In 2022, there were over 51 million Facebook users, 27.5% were between the ages of 18 and 24 (*Egypt Facebook users by age 2022*, 2022). Egypt is the largest Facebook market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the 10th largest market globally for social networks (Radcliffe & Abuhmaid, 2022).

Egyptian Female Facebook Users

The Egyptian culture is multifaceted and diverse, influenced by Islam, its heritage, and its strategic location. Friendship and the family are important features of the Egyptian culture where the country’s cultural differences effects behavior, communication, and its values within social media platforms like Facebook (Attia, 2018). Some Egyptian women opt not to upload their personal profile picture on

their Facebook page because they don't want their identity to be disclosed or stolen. Facebook launched a feature in Egypt and three other countries to stop people from sharing or downloading profile picture of others, this feature mainly targets females (Afifi, 2018).

On the *AlArabiya* News website, an international Arabic news television channel posted news about an Indian Mufti who declared that uploading photos on Facebook and other social media platforms is "un-Islamic" (*No profile pic? Indian mufti says posting Facebook photos is 'un-islamic'*, 2020). Egyptian female users engage on Facebook for social reasons and follow religious pages (Darweesh, 2020). The most popular three Facebook pages in Egypt are Mustafa Hosny page who is an Islamic preacher followed by Amr Khaled page, also a page about the Islamic religion. Then *Habebaty* Magazine discusses women's fashion and religion (Elgohary, 2017). For Egyptian females, Facebook is seen as a credible source of information and a mobilising instrument for public opinion. During the 2020 Egyptian parliamentary elections, women candidates heavily used Facebook in their campaigns (Khodair & All, 2023).

Online Self-Presentation through Facebook Profile Pictures

Social goals like being accepted by others are linked to self-presentation. In an effective self-presentation, individuals perform the behaviours needed to create specific social achievements. Firstly, effective self-presentation is connected to the skill of regulating social openness and self-image. Extremely effective self-presentation individuals adapt their behaviour to the surrounding social environment, controlling, monitoring, and adjusting the image they present to others within different social situations. The ability to adjust a person's social image can be the outcome of a calculating attitude who carefully displays certain personality traits, excluding information to present an idealistic image to others. Secondly, for youths to have effective self-presentation, they view matters from others' perspectives and consider their self-worth, hence they synchronise their behaviour to impress others (Laghi et al., 2011).

The Facebook profile picture next to the user's name, is the first image that friends see prior to sending a friend request (Metzler &

Scheithauer, 2017). The profile segment is composed of three main parts: a profile picture, profile information, and a cover photo. While browsing through Facebook profiles, the profile picture is the only tool exposed to everybody (Saxena & Majumdar, 2016). There are gender differences between men and women in the way they portray themselves on Facebook, females more than males prioritize building a positive self-presentation on social media (Haferkamp et al., 2012). In a study by Tifferet & Vilnai- Yavetz (2014) men's profile pictures emphasise their status with the clothes they wear while women emphasise their social relationships and emotions.

Facebook allows users to post information about themselves, such as hobbies, likes/dislikes, and personal reflections on “status updates” and “wall posts” (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). People's first impressions of a user's personality are based mainly on their Facebook profile picture (Tifferet & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014). In a study by Wu et al. (2015) they discovered a correlation between Facebook users' personality and profile pictures choice. Facebook users personalities influenced the profile picture choice and profile pictures reflected the personality of the users. Online self-presentation allows people to portray a public persona they hoped for themselves that was not known to people offline (Zhao, 2008). According to Baumeister (1982), the two motives of self-presentation are to satisfy the audience and to develop, uphold and adjust one's public self-corresponding to one's ideal. On the other hand, Back et al. (2010) study found that Facebook profiles represent the user's true personality rather than a virtual self-idealized personality.

According to Hum et al. (2011) Facebook profile pictures are seen as important by users in constructing positive identities, where a lot of thought is put into picture choice. The study participants were experimenting with different identities by often changing their Facebook profile picture. Portraying a positive self-presentation of oneself to receive a positive evaluation is an effort to increase self-esteem (Baumeister, 1982). On the other hand, according to Metzler & Scheithauer (2017) teenagers positive self-presentation was correlated to a higher occurrence of receiving positive feedback which negatively correlated with self-esteem. Thus, profile pictures can negatively

affect the user's mental health when negative perceptions surface concerning their self-image (Zheng et al., 2016).

Self-image is a mental picture of how an individual perceives themselves (Nair, 2016). A study by McLean et al. (2015) showed that girls who often share selfies on social media define their self-worth in terms of their shape and weight, leading to dietary restraint, body dissatisfaction, and internalization of the thin ideal more than those who do not share selfies. On the contrary, a study Gonzales and Hancock (2011) found that respondents that changed their profile picture often had greater self-esteem contributing to the Hyperpersonal Model. The model proposes that computer-mediated communication on Facebook either enhances or diminishes self-esteem. Yang and Brown (2016) explored variations in youth's online self-presentation during their switch to college and examined correlations between online self-presentation and students' self-concept and self-esteem. The study found a positive correlation between Facebook self-presentation and an increase in self-esteem.

Self-presentation is the packaging and editing of oneself that is presented to others (Goffman, 1959). The editing of a Facebook profile picture makes other users pay attention to the picture (Metzler & Scheithauer, 2017). Prior to posting on Facebook, profile pictures are meticulously chosen and digitally corrected (Padín et al., 2021). A report by Gill (2021) examined 175 women in the United Kingdom between the ages of 18 to 30. The study found that 90% of the participants edited or used filters to their pictures before posting on social media. Furthermore, according to a study on 252 participants, the use of snapchat filter applications was associated with lower self-esteem scores and higher agreement to plastic surgery (Chen et al., 2019). Consequently, Facebook users often presume that others are more successful and happier than they are (Padín et al., 2021). A study by Chou and Edge (2012) on 425 students at Utah university found that heavy Facebook users believed others had better lives and were happier. According to a study by Agrawal and Agrawal (2021) one-fourth of the respondents edited their pictures before posting them on social media. The main reasons behind them editing their pictures were to hide skin bruises and improve their look. Concurrently,

filtered selfies can affect youth self-esteem and body image as these images internalize beauty standards (Rajanala et al., 2018). According to a study by Wallace et al. (2014) users “liking” a certain Facebook page, they are creating a sought-after social image for themselves. Facebook users strategically consider their self-presentation via their profile picture to generate positive feedback in the form of ‘likes’ and comments (Kim and Yang, 2017). If the users monitor and ‘likes’ the reactions made from a certain profile picture, there is a strong possibility that they will post similar profile picture to create the same reaction (Wu et al., 2015). Facebook editing behaviour implies that users’ regularly monitor their retouched image for ‘likes’ and comments (Chae, 2017).

Self-Monitoring Social Rewards and Self-Esteem

People get excited when they see a notification on Facebook. Like Pavlov's dog, Facebook has programmed users to expect something intriguing, specifically relevant to them, when they click on the icon. The notification can be an alert that somebody commented or ‘liked’ your profile picture. You become excited quickly. You received the treat like Pavlov’s dog (Goldman, 2016). Facebook users communicate by carrying out three behaviors: liking, commenting, and sharing (Kim and Yang, 2017). In February 2009, Facebook launched the ‘like’ button which rapidly became a popular tool for users to communicate positive feelings about posted content (Egebark & Ekström, 2011). Receiving ‘likes’ and positive comments on Facebook profile pictures signals approval inside a person’s social setting since it is seen as giving gifts to somebody (Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Hong et al., 2017). People are more prone to ‘like’ pictures portraying many ‘likes’ than pictures with few likes. This shows the influence that others have on ‘liking’ a picture. Greater brain activity concerned with imitation, attention and reward processing is linked to viewing pictures with more ‘likes’ than fewer ones (Sherman et al., 2016). Since billions of ‘likes’ are received daily on Facebook, users are less worried about getting ‘likes’ than the number of ‘likes’ they will receive (Burrow & Rainone, 2017). Even though, sometimes, giving ‘likes’ happens out of habit rather than regarding the content (Hayes et al., 2016).

Burrow and Rainone (2017) conducted two studies and found a positive correlation between self-esteem and the number of Facebook 'likes' on profile pictures. The study used the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The researchers based their study on the sociometer theory (Gallinari, 2017). Metzler and Scheithauer (2017) study used Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in a survey. They found that youths number of friends and positive self-presentation were correlated to a higher frequency of obtaining positive feedback, which negatively affected self-esteem. Scissors et al. (2016) examined receiving 'likes' on Facebook posts using a survey. The measures used were for self-monitoring and self-esteem. The study found that self-monitoring, self-esteem and participating in preserving relationships were all associated to opinions and feelings about 'likes.' The study discovered that 'likes' from close Facebook friends, family and partners are more significant than from other users. Additionally, the study found that respondents with low self-esteem had higher levels of self-monitoring. They are also prone to feel that 'likes' are essential and feel unhappy when they do not receive enough of them.

According to Yang and Suh (2014) as cited by Lee (2020) Facebook users monitor other users profiles to see how they react to images. Additionally, a study by Steinsbekk (2020) who interviewed children from the age of ten about social media and used a survey to measure self-esteem. Results found that 40% of respondents used Instagram but two years later 95% used Facebook. Findings also showed that girls who "like" and comment on posts continuously develop poor self-esteem. A study by Gallinari (2017) on 160 females between 18 and 25 found a minimal positive correlation between numbers of 'likes' and self-esteem. With immediate feedback in the form of 'likes' youth put importance on the number of 'likes' that acts as a sign for peer recognition. Since social comparison is essential to youths self-assessment, then the number of 'likes' on their posts and others can affect their self-esteem (Desjarlais, 2019).

Social Comparison, Self-Esteem, and Self-Presentation on Facebook Profile Pictures

A key source of information about ‘the self’ are social comparisons since people usually depend on this information to assess their capabilities and thoughts, to boost their self-esteem and better their performance (Schneider & Schupp, 2014). Social media platforms offer a plethora of social comparison options since comparisons information are more noticeable online, like the number of Facebook friends. The use of Facebook creates social comparison effects such as jealousy. In numerous studies, Facebook use positively correlates with depression due to online social comparison or jealousy. An experimental study by Rosenthal-von der Pütten et al., (2019) on 118 participants assessed selfies of others and their own selfies with and without ‘likes.’ Additionally, they viewed two selfies with several ‘likes’ and specified if they like the other person’s selfie and their emotional state. Findings indicated that ‘likes’ are used for comparisons and that a downward comparison made respondents feel more epiphras and more at an advantage. On the other hand, after an upward comparison, they wanted to be like that person and felt subordinate and unhappy. The number of friends, ‘likes,’ followers and comments posted on social media gives comparison information. This information enables users to build feelings about each other (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). According to Pew Research center as cited by Warrender (2020) the usual number of online ‘friends’ is about 338, allowing more opportunities for social comparison.

A study by Bergagna and Tartaglia (2018) used a survey with the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) and the Italian version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale measures on 250 Italian students. Results showed a relationship between low self-esteem and Facebook use mainly hours spent on Facebook due to social comparison. Female respondents who use Facebook for social relations were indirectly affected by low self-esteem and directly affected by high self-esteem. Furthermore, Vogel et al. (2014) study questioned if regular Facebook use was correlated with lower self-esteem. It was found that respondents who used Facebook a lot had low self-esteem that was mediated by upward social comparisons.

Results found that respondents who had upward comparison information usually had low self-assessment and low self-esteem, then the respondents that had downward comparison information. Similarly, a study by Hanna et al. (2017) on 1,104 females and males undergraduate students were asked to fill out a survey to measure Facebook usage, social comparison, self-objectification, and well-being. Findings showed that for both genders Facebook use was correlated with lower self-esteem, poor mental health, and weight shaming.

Additionally, Błachnio et al. (2016) used the Facebook Motivation and Importance Scale and the Facebook Intensity Scales on 653 Polish Facebook users that showed that higher narcissism and lower self-esteem were related to greater online activity. According to Chou and Edge (2012), as cited by Gilhooly (2019), people who spend more time on Facebook believe that other users are happier and have better lives than they do. Furthermore, Burke et al. (2020) conducted a survey on 38,000 people from 18 countries found that people who frequently reported more social comparison, had more friends, spent more time on Facebook, and saw more content on the platform. Respondents also viewed larger amounts of friends' feedback on posts and comparatively more positivity.

Individuals socially compare themselves on Facebook in an upward direction because people tend to present themselves at their best (Dibb & Foster, 2021). Facebook profile pictures communicate copious social comparison information portraying positive self-presentations that create a fertile environment for jealousy (Appel et al., 2016). Since profile pictures posted on Facebook are carefully created to portray the best possible image of a person, then individuals may get feelings of body dissatisfaction (Rutledge et al., 2013). A study by Fox and Vendemia (2016) examined a U.S sample of 1,686, (908 females and 778 males) picture-related behaviour, including editing photos, posting images, and emotions after upward and downward social comparison with others' images on social media platforms. Results found that females edited images more often than males and after upward social comparison, they felt worse about their body image. Body comparison tendency mediated these feelings. In

addition, an online survey by Chae (2017) conducted on females in South Korea between ages 20 and 39 found that regular selfie-taking, an increase level of public self-consciousness and frequent social media use are correlated with social comparison and increased selfie-editing behaviour. Facebook use is associated with increased upward social comparisons leading to negative self-perceived social skills (de Vries, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study adopts the following three theories.

The Self-Presentation Theory:

Many academics use Goffman's theory of self-presentation in their studies on social media (Merunková & Šlerka, 2019). Goffman's proposes that people by changing their own setting, appearance, and manner, they wish to control the feelings that others have about them (Artino, 2019). Goffman was the first to use the theatre to explain and examine peoples' self-presentation in daily face-to-face social interactions. His 1959 book "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life," shows how individuals behaviour in social situations are like actors performing on stage to an audience (Merunková & Šlerka, 2019). Individuals act out certain "personas" as they would like others to view them (Artino, 2019). Once the performance (interaction) ends, the actor stops acting and returns backstage, relaxes, and possibly gets ready for another performance (Merunková & Šlerka, 2019). Furthermore. Goffman also used the mask as a metaphor to explain deception in interpersonal interaction. He contemplated the technology during his days being the telephone, that facilitated interaction. He argues that conversations via the telephone are "a departure from the norm" (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013).

Today social media has become the new stage for virtual social interactions (Merunková & Šlerka, 2019). The stage is where people are posting on social media and the "backstage" is when they are not posting (Artino, 2019). The profile picture on social media became a "central component of online presentation, and one that is critical for relational success" (Hancock & Toma, 2009, p.368). Profile pictures

are as a window not just into the lives of individual users but also into the culture of the greater online community (Thomson & Greenwood, 2020). Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms for posting photographs (Agrawal & Agrawal, 2021). The Facebook profile picture is an important element of self-presentation, to identify individuals within the social network (Saxena & Majumdar, 2016).

The Sociometer Theory:

According to the sociometer theory, self-esteem is a mental gauge to the extent that which individuals feel that they are socially valued and accepted within any relationship. According to the sociometer theory, individuals neither seek or need self-esteem, however, they try to increase or protect their self-esteem and develop their interpersonal worth and increase their social acceptance (Leary, 2012). According to Heatherton & Wyland (2003) as cited by Hong et al. (2017) idea of the looking-glass self is a procedure of social perception individuals have about themselves constructed from how other people reacts to them is. Hence, self-esteem mirrors the environment that people are in. According to the sociometer model, proposed by Leary et al. (1995) self-esteem serves as a gauge or monitor of social rejection or acceptance based on the reaction of others. Hence, receiving “likes” from others on Facebook indicates social acceptance and acknowledgment which leads to high self-esteem since it satisfies users’ psychological needs (Hong et al., 2017; Burrow & Rainone, 2017). The level of self-esteem could be a result of interpersonal failures and successes (Baumeister et al., 2003).

The Social Comparison Theory:

According to Festinger (1954), the social comparison theory claims that people tend to assess their abilities by comparing themselves to others in their social circle with similar characteristics like age and gender (Gilhooly, 2019; Fox & Vendemia, 2016). For example, a person’s assessment of his ability to write poetry will largely depend on the opinion of others concerning his ability. Other than peoples opinion, one’s ability can be evaluated by comparing the actual performance of others to one’s accomplishments. Like when

individuals want to assess their running capabilities, they will compare the time they ran to that of others who ran the same distance (Festinger, 1954).

According to the theory, social comparisons contain a directional element, either upward or downward social comparisons. When comparisons are made the other person will either be seen as better or worse than the individual participating in the self-analysis (Gilhooly, 2019). When individuals compare themselves to others that seem to be doing better, this is an upward comparison which tends to create negative effects. Whereas, when individuals compare themselves to those in a worse situation then downward the downward comparison creates a positive effect. Lateral comparisons can also take place where individuals compare themselves to those, they perceive to be similar (Fardoulya et al., 2017).

The Research Problem

Facebook like other social media platforms became a window for females to present themselves in the best possible way through their profile pictures. Therefore, they use applications to edit and improve their profile picture. They gain gratifications as other Facebook users “like” or comment on their profile pictures, indicating social acceptance. Some tend to monitor the “likes” or comments on their profile pictures and compare themselves with others on Facebook. In addition, Facebook importance and intensity shows how Facebook became an important part of people’s lives. Hence, self-monitoring, social comparison, Facebook importance, Facebook intensity, and editing Facebook profile pictures affects Gen Z females self-presentation and self-esteem. Higher self-esteem fulfills users’ psychological needs, whereas lower-self-esteem is associated with mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and lack of self-confidence.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims:

- To examine how self-monitoring social rewards on Facebook profile pictures and social comparison, effects young Egyptian females' self-presentation and self-esteem.
- To assess how Facebook motivation and importance, and Facebook intensity effects young Egyptian females' self-presentation and self-esteem.
- To compare how editing or not editing Facebook profile pictures effects self-presentation and self-esteem.
- To examine if the interviewed experts confirm or oppose the survey results.

Survey Research Questions & Hypothesis

The Research Questions

RQ1. What are the reasons behind Egyptian females not putting a personal Facebook profile picture?

RQ2. What are the reasons behind Egyptian females putting personal profile pictures on Facebook?

RQ3. What type of pictures do Egyptian females put as their profile picture on Facebook?

RQ4. How many use edit apps or filters before uploading their Facebook profile pictures?

RQ5. What are the reasons that they do not use edit apps or filters before uploading their Facebook profile pictures?

The Hypotheses

H1. There is a significant correlation between self-monitoring social rewards on Facebook profile pictures and the following:

- a) self-presentation
- b) self-esteem

H2. There is a significant correlation between social comparison on Facebook and the following:

- a) self-presentation
- b) self-esteem

H3. There is a significant correlation between Facebook motivation and importance and the following:

- a) self-presentation
- b) self-esteem.

H4. There is a significant correlation between Facebook intensity and the following:

- a) self-presentation
- b) self-esteem.

H5. There are significant differences between those who edit, or don't edit their profiles pictures before uploading them and the following:

- a) self-presentation
- b) self-esteem

The Interview Questions

Q1. What does social media mean to Generation Z?

Q2. To what extent have Generation Z become dependent on social media?

Q3. What are the mental health problems brought about from social media?

Q4. What does a profile picture on social media mean to Generation Z?

Q5. Why is self-presentation on social media and Facebook important to Generation Z?

- Q6. What are the reasons that some do not have a personal profile picture on Facebook?
- Q7. Do you think likes and positive comments on profile pictures are important to them?
- Q8. What happens if they do not get positive comments on profile pictures?
- Q9. Why do they monitor their profile picture for likes and comments?
- Q10. Do female youth socially compare themselves to other females on Facebook?
- Q11. Do you feel that females monitor more than males?
- Q12. Why do females use apps and filters on their profile picture on Facebook before uploading them?

Methodology

The Sample and Sample Size

The study consisted of two research methods to gather primary data using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling method is an intentional choice of respondents due to the qualities they have. The researcher chose what information was needed and sets out to find respondents who were willing to give the information (Etikan et al., 2016), keeping in mind the objectives behind the study. As for the first method an online survey on Google forms was distributed to 210 Egyptian females Facebook users between the ages of 13 and 26 who represented Gen Z. For the survey, the author referred to 'likes,' 'love,' and 'wow' 'reactions' as 'likes' since that is the most frequently used terminology. A link to the google forms bilingual survey in Arabic and English was distributed either by WhatsApp or email to Egyptian female participants. The statement at the beginning of the survey introduced the topic and reassured respondents that their identity were kept anonymous, and the data collected would only be for academic use. Once the questionnaire was closed, the required data was extracted to answer the research questions and hypotheses (figure 1). The qualitative answers in Arabic were translated into English.

Additionally, two structured interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom. The first interview was conducted with Dr. Alexandra Gazis, Associate Director for Student Well-Being, Student Accessibility Services Unit (SAS), and Counselor Center for Student Well-Being at The American University in Cairo (AUC). The second interview was conducted with Dr. Malak Doss, Consultant Psychiatrist at The Behman Hospital. The interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data achieved from the survey and used to examine whether the experts' insights reinforce or contradicts the survey results. Prior to recording, the author obtained consent from the interviewees before recording and for their interviews to be published. The interviews were then transcribed.

Survey Instrument and Measures

The questionnaire consisted of three screening questions 1. What is your gender? (100% females) 2. Do you have Facebook? (100% answered yes) 3. What is your age? (48.1% were between the ages of 21 to 22). Additional questions were: What type of picture do you most put as your profile picture on Facebook? (refer to table 2), What are the reasons behind putting a personal profile picture on Facebook? (refer to table 3) What are the reasons that you do not put a personal profile picture on Facebook? (open-ended question). Do you use edit apps and filters on your profile picture on Facebook before uploading it (refer to table 4). If yes, how frequently do you use a filter on your Facebook profile picture? (refer to table 5) If no, why? (open-ended question). In the past week, on average, approximately how much time per day have you spent actively using Facebook? (refer to table 6). Most respondents, 101 respondents (48.1%) were 21 to 22 years old. The demographic question about personal monthly expenditure: "Approximately how much money do you personally spend per month?" 80 respondents (38.1%) chose between LE.1,001 and L.E.3000 (refer to table 1).

Table 1 Respondents Demographics: Age Distribution and Monthly Expenditure		
<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender: Female</i>	210	100
13-14	8	3.8
15-16	14	6.7
17-18	10	4.8
19-20	25	11.9
21-22	101	48.1
23-24	31	14.8
25-26	21	10
<i>Personal Monthly Expenditure</i>		
Less than L.E.1,000 EGP	30	14.3
Between LE.1,001-L.E.3000 EGP	80	38.1
Between L.E.3,001-L.E.5000 EGP	38	18.1
Between L.E.5,001- L.E.10,000 EGP	38	18.1
More than L.E.10,001 EGP	24	11.4
Total	210	100

The survey included the following measures:

a) **Facebook Motivation and Importance Scale** (Błachnio et al., 2016) consisted of 21-items, 13-items about Facebook personal importance and 8-items concentrated on motivation to utilise Facebook, based on the list of Facebook use motives by Hew (2011) and by Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) as cited by Błachnio et al. (2016). Out of the 21-items, this study used 5-items. The items had a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.

b) **Facebook Intensity Scale** (Ellison et al., 2007) used to measure Facebook use and emotional attachment Facebook has in users' daily lives (Błachnio et al., 2016). The scale has 8-items only 2-items were used within this study. The items had a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.

c) **Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure** (INCOM) (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) were used to measure social comparison on Facebook. Respondents were required to rate the degree of agreement consisting of 10-items out of the 11-items from Gibbons and Buunk

(1999) measuring one's general tendency to compare themselves with others. 3-items from Steers et al. (2014) study were added. Additionally, the author added another non-directional social comparison to meet the study's need: "I look at the number of 'likes' and the types of comments that other people have posted on their Facebook profile picture."

d) **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)** by sociologist Morris Rosenberg measures self-esteem using 10-items statements (5 being positive statements and 5 being negative statements). The 5 positive statements question numbers are 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10 and scores are calculated Strongly Agree (SA=3), Agree (A=2), Disagree (D=1), Strongly Disagree (SD=0) whereas, with the 5-negative statements, question numbers 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9, scores are reversed being (SA=0), (A=1), (D=2), (SD=3). The items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from a strongly agree score to a strongly disagree to assess overall thoughts on self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

e) **Self-Monitoring Measure** is an item created by the author to test self-monitoring profile pictures using the 6-point Likert scale taken from a study by Lennox & Wolfe (1984) with high scores portraying high self-monitoring: 5= certainly, always true; 4 = generally true; 3 = somewhat true, but with exception; 2 = somewhat false, but with exception; 1=generally false; 0=certainly, always false.

f) **Self-presentation and Upward Social Comparison Inclination Scale (SPAUSCIS)** by Hjetland et al. (2022) tests both upward social comparison and self-presentation using 9-items. The author used 5-items of the 9-items for self-presentation that are modified and tailored for the study to test the hypotheses. The word social media is changed to Facebook and the word post is changed to Facebook profile pictures. The items in the original measure had a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all", "very little", "sometimes/partly true", "a lot", and "very much." However, the current study used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (refer to Table 7 for the mean values and Standard Deviations (SDs) for the items in the measures and scales).

Data Analysis

Data collected was analysed to test the proposed hypotheses. To test H1a, H1b, H2a., H2b, H3a, H3b and H4a and H4b simple linear regression was conducted. For H5a and H5b the t-test was run. The study independent variables are self-monitoring and social comparison, and the dependent variables are self-presentation and self-esteem. After the intercoder reliability was established at the beginning, and all variables were considered reliable at .70 to .80 minimum level, data was analysed. The degree of statistical significance is defined as a p-value ranging from 0 and 1. The p-value that is less than 0.05 (typically ≤ 0.05) is significant showing a strong correlation (McLeod, 2019).

Results

<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Photo of me taken by someone	137	65.2
Selfie	27	12.9
Me in a group	12	5.7
Me with my partner	6	2.9
A picture of any object like a flower	10	4.8
I do not upload any profile picture on Facebook	14	6.7
Other	4	1.9
Total	210	100

The majority 196 respondents (93.3%) put a profile picture on their Facebook and only 14 respondents (6.7%) do not. To answer RQ3: “What type of pictures do Egyptian females put as their profile picture on Facebook?” 137 respondents (65.2%) posted Facebook profile pictures of a “Photo of them taken by someone,” followed by 27 respondents (12.9%) who post a “Selfie,” 12 respondents (5.7%)

answered “Me in a group.” 10 respondents (4.8%) put “A picture of an object like a flower.”

To answer RQ1: “What are the reasons behind Egyptian females not putting a personal Facebook profile picture?” Some of the reasons for not putting a Facebook profile picture were “I think it’s safer,” “self- confidence issues,” “I don’t feel comfortable sharing my personal photos on social media,” “I do not like putting all my information and data on Facebook.” “I am a complicated person.” Someone stated that its “because of my dad.”

<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Others do, so I do	28	15.4
It is expected by any Facebook user	84	46.2
To present myself in the best possible way	113	62.1
To generate likes and positive comments	32	17.6
Other	15	8.2
Total	182	100

To answer RQ2: “What are the reasons behind Egyptian females putting personal profile pictures on Facebook?” most respondents out of the 182 respondents (86.7%) who put a personal profile picture, 113 respondents (62.1%) chose “To present themselves in the best possible way.” Followed by 84 respondents (46.2%) who chose “It is expected by any Facebook user.” 32 respondents (17.6%) answered, “To generate likes and positive comments.” 28 respondents (15.4%) felt that “Others do, so I do.” Those who chose “other” were 15 respondents (8.2%) who answered the opened ended question: “For others to know who I am” or “So people can know its me.”

Table 4 Using edit apps and filters on Facebook profile pictures		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	91	50
No	91	50

To answer RQ4: “How many use edit apps or filters before uploading their Facebook profile pictures?” responses were divided equally: 91 respondents (50%) answered ‘yes’ and 91 respondents (50%) answered ‘no’ to using edit apps or filters before uploading their Facebook profile pictures.

To answer RQ5, a sample of the responses for not using editing apps and filters are: “I don’t like to be fake,” “I’m proud of who I am and satisfied with my own imperfections,” “I like being natural,” I use these apps only when the photo has any problem like brightness but I don’t use it to change something in my face,” “I love to appear naturally,” “artificial/fake,” “I don’t like filters, it looks fake and changes the face features,” “I only do colour correction for my photos.” “I think that editing photos doesn’t reflect reality” and “I’m proud of who I am and satisfied with my own imperfections.”

Table 5 Frequency of using editing apps and filters on your Facebook profile picture		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Never	91	50
Rarely	11	6
Sometimes	32	17.6
Often	19	10.4
Usually	20	11
Always	9	4.9
Total	182	100

For those respondents that use the editing apps and filters, 32 respondents (17.6%) sometimes use them, 20 respondents (11%) usually use them, 19 respondents (10.4%) often use them, 11 respondents (6%) rarely use them, and 9 respondents (4.9%) always use them.

Table 6 Time daily spent actively on Facebook

<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than an hour	44	21
Between one hour to 5 hours	120	57.1
Between 5 hours to 9 hours	35	16.7
More than 9 hours	11	5.2
Total	210	

Over half of the respondents, 120 respondents (57.1%) spend between one and five hours daily active on Facebook.

Table 7 The Mean Values and Standard Deviations (SDs) for Items in Measures & Scales

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Facebook	I want to express and present myself	3.80	0.982
Motivation	I am constantly logged into Facebook	4.15	1.032
and	I cannot wait to share photos or life events on Facebook	2.65	1.132
Importance	I promote myself through Facebook	2.60	1.175
Scale	I start my day by checking out Facebook	3.49	1.234
Facebook	Facebook has become part of my daily routine	3.96	1.073
Intensity	I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook		
Scale	for a while	3.40	1.222
Iowa-	I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend,	2.60	1.027
Netherlands	family members, etc.) are doing with how others are		
Comparison	doing		
Orientation	I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things	2.81	1.115
Measure	compared with how others do things		
	If I want to find out how well I have done something, I	2.63	1.122
	compare what I have done with how others have done		
	I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social	2.83	1.092
	skills, popularity) with other people		
	I am not the type of person who compares often with	3.48	1.099
	others		
	I often compare myself with others with respect to what I	2.79	1.130
	have accomplished in life		
	I often try to find out what others think who face similar	3.47	0.949
	problems as I face		
	I always like to know what others in a similar situation	3.50	1.073
	would do		
	If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out	3.50	0.999
	what others think about it		
	I never consider my situation in life relative to that of	3.24	1.041
	other people		
	When I am on Facebook, I always pay a lot of attention to	2.59	1.082
	how well I have done something compared to how others		
	do things		
	The last time I used Facebook I felt less confident about	2.30	1.098
	what I have achieved compared to other people		
	Last time I used Facebook I believed that I had	2.43	0.937
	accomplished more than other people had		
	I look at the number of 'likes' and the types of comments	3.10	1.181
	that other people have posted on their Facebook profile		
	picture		

Table 7 The Mean Values and Standard Deviations (SDs) for Items in Measures & Scales Cont.			
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	2.11	0.651
	At times I think I am no good at all	1.68	0.829
	I feel that I have a number of good qualities	2.21	0.608
	I am able to do things as well as most other people	2.08	0.697
	I feel I do not have much to be proud of	1.09	0.860
	I certainly feel useless at times	1.40	0.929
	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	1.95	0.733
	I wish I could have more respect for myself	1.71	0.981
	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	0.98	0.925
	I take a positive attitude toward myself	2.04	0.808
	Self-Monitoring Measure	I frequently monitor the 'likes' and comments on my new profile picture	4.53
Self-presentation and Upward Social Comparison Inclination Scale (SPAUSCIS)	I use a lot of time and energy on the content I post on Facebook	2.77	1.240
	It is important to me that my profile picture receive many likes and/or comments	3.07	1.210
	It is important to me to have many followers on Facebook	2.79	1.235
	I retouch images of myself to look better before I post them on Facebook	2.89	1.278
	The response I get for what I post (images/status updates/stories) impacts how I feel	2.98	1.174

Facebook Motivation and Importance Scale: The cumulative mean= 16.6857, SD = 4.0476 and $\alpha = 0.775$.

Facebook Intensity Scale: The cumulative mean = 7.3524, SD = 2.097099 and $\alpha = 0.798$.

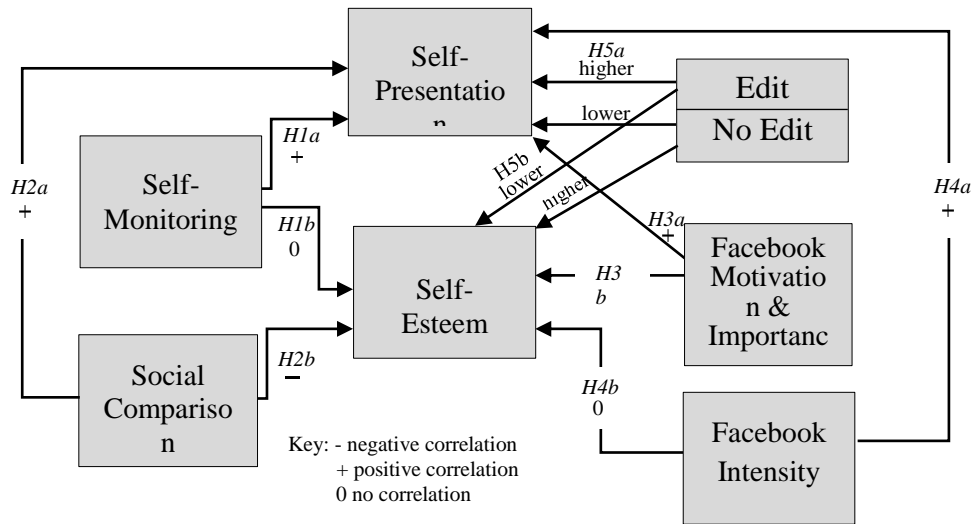
Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure = The cumulative mean = 39.8476, SD = 8.68842 and $\alpha = 0.848$.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale = The cumulative mean = 18.5429, SD = 4.94376 and $\alpha = 0.812$.

Self-Presentation and Upward Social Comparison Inclination Scale = The cumulative mean = 14.4952, SD = 4.6271, and $\alpha = 0.822$

Hypotheses Testing

Figure Model for hypotheses results



The results for H1a show that self-monitoring social rewards of ‘likes’ and comments on Facebook profile pictures has a positive significant correlation with self-presentation [$P = 0.000$, $T = 12.230$, $\beta = 0.647$, $R^2 = 0.418$]. Therefore, in total 41.8% of the variance of self-presentation can be explained by self-monitoring through regression. The results for H1b were contrary to expectation since self-monitoring social rewards of ‘likes’ and comments on Facebook profile pictures has no significant correlation with self-esteem [$P = 0.548$, $T = 0.602$].

The results for H2a shows that there is a positive correlation between social comparison on Facebook and self-presentation [$P = 0.000$, $T = 8.739$, $\beta = 0.518$, $R^2 = 0.269$]. In total, 26.9% of the variance of self-presentation can be explained by social comparison through regression. As females compare themselves on Facebook, self-presentation becomes important. As for H2b results showed a negative correlation between social comparison on Facebook and self-esteem [$P = 0.000$, $T = -5.290$, $\beta = -0.344$, $R^2 = 0.119$], as social comparison on Facebook increases, self-esteem decreases and vice versa. In total, 11.9% of the variance of self-esteem can be explained

by social comparison on Facebook through regression. The results of H1a, H2a, H2b were expected.

The results for H3a found a positive significant correlation between Facebook motivation and importance and self-presentation [$P = 0.000$, $T = 8.057$, $\beta = 0.488$, $R^2 = 0.238$] and in total, 23.8% of the variance of self-presentation can be explained by Facebook motivation and importance through regression. As for H3b, no correlation was found between Facebook motivation and importance and self-esteem [$P = 0.350$, $T = 0.937$].

Similarly, H4a results show a positive significant correlation between Facebook intensity and self-presentation [$P = 0.000$, $T = 6.704$, $\beta = 0.422$, $R^2 = 0.178$]. In total, 17.8% of the variance of self-presentation can be explained by Facebook intensity positively through regression. H4b, results showed no significant correlation between Facebook intensity and self-esteem [$P = 0.546$, $T = 0.605$].

As for H5a, there is a significant difference between those who edit on their Facebook profile pictures and self-presentation. Those who edit on their Facebook profile pictures have higher importance for their self-presentation ($m = 16.593$, $SD = 4.133$, $t = 5.67$, $p = 0.000$) in comparison with those who do not edit who have lower importance for their self-presentation ($m = 12.945$, $SD = 4.1537$, $t = 5.67$, $p = 0.000$). H5b test shows a significant difference between those who edit on their Facebook profile pictures and self-esteem. Hence, those who edit have lower self-esteem ($m = 17.86$, $SD = 4.494$, $t = -2.204$, $p = 0.029$) in comparison with those who do not edit, have higher self-esteem ($m = 19.461$, $SD = 5.23$, $t = -2.204$, $p = 0.029$).

Hypotheses Results Discussion

Self-presentation

One of the anticipated study results was that the respondents self-presentation is affected by the self-monitoring social rewards of 'likes' and comments on Facebook profile pictures, showing a positive relationship. As respondents monitor their 'likes' and positive comments on their Facebook profile pictures they see what images receive more 'likes' and comments. Therefore, an increase in self-monitoring leads to an increase in self-presentation and vice versa. To

self-present oneself in the best possible way on Facebook, many turn to edit apps to retouch their profile pictures. Hence the study found, a significant difference between respondents who edit or do not edit their profile pictures and self-presentation. Those who edit have higher importance of their online self-presentation and those respondents who do not edit have lower importance their online self-presentation. A predictable result was the positive relationship between social comparison with online self-presentation, as social comparison increases so does the importance of their self-presentation. Both Facebook motivation & importance and Facebook intensity are positively correlated with online self-presentation. As respondents Facebook importance increases so does the importance of their self-presentation, where the two variables move in tandem, in the same direction.

Self-esteem

Surprisingly, self-esteem was not affected by the following: self-monitoring social rewards of ‘likes’ and comments on Facebook profile pictures, Facebook motivation & importance and Facebook intensity. Hence, there was no correlations between these variables even though the interviewees believe that there is an association between self-monitoring and self-esteem. Furthermore, a study by Gallinari (2017) found a minimal positive correlation between numbers of ‘likes’ and self-esteem, similarly, Scissors et al. (2016) study found that respondents with low self-esteem had higher levels of self-monitoring. Also, Vogel et al. (2014) found a negative correlation between Facebook usage and self-esteem. That is why most of the author’s correlation results concerning self-esteem were unexpected. However, expected results are the negative correlation between social comparison and self-esteem, as social comparison increases, self-esteem decreases and vice versa. Furthermore, the study found a significant difference between respondents who edit or do not edit their Facebook profile pictures and self-esteem. Those who edit have lower self-esteem than those who do not edit.

Interview Answers and Comparative Analysis Between Interviews and Survey

Q1. What does social media mean to Generation Z?

Dr. Doss stated:

They get mental health awareness and support from social media. Social media affects their thoughts, reasoning, and behaviour. I see a lot of effects of social media on how they act, what they buy, the services they want, what they look up to, and their thoughts. They see their world through social media. It affects their thoughts and behaviour too.

Similarly, Dr. Gazis indicated “It plays a part in shaping their personality, their mental awareness and finding themselves in a lot of ways.”

Q2. To what extent have Generation Z become dependent on social media?

Dr. Doss affirmed, “To a very big extent, they can’t live without social media. Without social media, they wouldn’t be able to fit in.” Dr. Gazis asserted “They are dependent on it, especially to gain connections and gain their social status. So a big part of their identity is focused on windows of social media.” The expert opinions correspond with the survey results of the statement “I am constantly logged into Facebook” which has the highest mean= 4.15 and SD= 1.032 under the Facebook Motivation and Importance Scale. Similarly, the statement “Facebook has become part of my daily routine” under the Facebook Intensity Sale has the highest mean= 3.96 and SD=1.073. Hence, these results show dependence and importance of Facebook to respondents lives.

Q3. What are the mental health problems bought about from social media?

Dr. Doss confirmed, “There is some evidence between an inverse relation between screen time and psychological well-being. So, the more screen time there is the less psychological well-being. There is

evidence of that.” Dr. Gazis explained “From my personal practice with teens, preteens, and early adulthood, I would say one of the major impacts of social media on such a generation is higher levels of anxiety, higher levels of identity confusion, higher levels of attention seeking, in seeking approval of others and seeking answers to questions.” Both interviewees opinion contradicted the current study results for H4b that found no significant correlation between Facebook intensity and self-esteem.

Q4. What does a profile picture on social media mean to Generation Z?

Dr. Doss believed, “A profile picture means how we view ourselves and how we desire to be seen by others, basically, how we want people to see us.” Dr. Gazis described “A profile picture in general is part of the identity, but if you put culture into it, it could also not only be part of the identity but part of the social rules of what you should do.” Hence, profile pictures self-present the Facebook user in the way they want others to see them. This coincides with the survey results where the majority chose to put a profile picture on Facebook to present themselves in the best possible way (113 respondents: 62.1%).

Q5. Why is self-presentation on social media and Facebook important to Generation Z?

Dr. Doss proclaimed:

Facebook is not very relevant to this age group. One of my clients, a 14-year-old girl was telling me that Facebook is for grandmas, Instagram is for mum’s, and for older adults and Facebook is for grandma's and grand parents. They don’t really use Facebook; they use other communication platforms like TikTok and Snapchat.

Concerning self-presentation, Dr. Doss went on to say, “Self-presentation is how they want people to see them. Self-presentation is basically a behaviour with an intention to change how people perceive you so it’s how you develop your identity online.”

Whereas Dr. Gazis confirmed:

Self-presentation in general in this age group is a very important part of who I am. It's a part of am I belonging, it's a part of can I find myself, is this what I belong to, do I have enough people around me to support me. Through such platforms they find these answers, or they seek answers for these questions. So it's an important part for seeking answers and for finding themselves, for connecting to others of the same group.

Q6. What are the reasons that some do not have a personal profile picture on Facebook?

Dr. Doss refers to class differences and explained:

People don't put a personal picture for privacy, or for not wanting to be judged or seen by others. Maybe they are not confident or have problems with self-esteem. They wouldn't want anyone to see that they are not confident about the way they look. I have worked with people from very underprivileged low social economic to people who were very privileged in Cairo. There is definitely a very big difference between how these people perceive profile pictures. People of less privilege cultures who are more conservative won't put their profile picture because it's not appropriate and they shouldn't do that. People who are more privileged don't think about it that way think about how I would look, does this look nice doesn't look nice. So, it really depends on and what social class you are talking about.

While, Dr. Doss mentioned class differences, Dr. Gazis identified cultural reasons and described:

In our culture, in the Middle East, many don't put profile pictures. Many young girls don't put their profile pictures because parents prevent them to because this is not appropriate, because of religion saying that you shouldn't do this, thinking that this is a religious thing. They should not put their picture as this means they want to attract attention, so this is *haram*. So they put a flower, they put a horse, they put a butterfly. At the end of the day, it still represents a part of them. Sometimes they put a picture of a verse of the Quran or a cross.

Dr. Gazis explanation coincides with the survey results where one female stated that she did not put a Facebook profile picture of herself because of her dad.

Q7. Do you think likes and positive comments on profile pictures are important to them?

Dr. Doss stated “Unfortunately, a lot of times they concentrate on getting their self-esteem from that. So with the younger generations who concentrate on getting their self-esteem from that, then that this is where it goes wrong.”

Dr. Gazis specified:

It is very important gratification mode, it’s a very important verification for them. It’s a tool for acceptance. A lot of them say yes, I keep checking if my post, I got many likes or if I get any comments. They are very keen on following up after each post or after each picture. If this does not happen, it contributes to their wellbeing. It can contribute into an already shaken personality.

Q8. What happens if they do not get positive comments on profile pictures?

Dr. Doss stated:

Since they are basing all their self-esteem from approval and what other people think of them, so they get upset when they don’t get the positive comments. Sometimes it can consume an adolescents life. This is where they get the self-esteem from.

Similarly, Dr. Gazis commented, “This will trigger a better self-esteem, will trigger better confidence in themselves, its not going to trigger but it will boost happiness, will boost a part of I belong you know, yes, I’m here and I belong.”

These interviewee opinions disagree with the survey results for H1b that showed that self-monitoring social rewards of ‘likes’ and comments on profile pictures has no significant correlation with self-esteem.

Q9. Why do they monitor their profile picture for likes and comments?

Dr. Doss stated:

They get their self-worth from that and a lot of times when I talk to adolescents and young adults, I try to make them understand that it is not so. That you can put yourself worth in so many other things, you can't just live in this virtual life.

Dr. Gazis proclaimed:

Sometimes I feel that such behaviour becomes very compulsive. Some teens and young adults become very obsessed and are very much attached to such behavior. I have to decrease the level of anxiety within them. It depends on the personality. They find it boosts their self-esteem, if it doesn't, they can repost something else and can catch another wave. Some behaviour for this generation turns into an obsession and turns into a very compulsive behaviour.

Q10. Do female youth socially compare themselves to other females on Facebook?

Dr. Doss clarified "On Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, yes, there is more comparison than on Facebook." Furthermore Dr. Gazis stated, "They do compare, they count the numbers, the number of likes and, comments. They do count and it does matter, I think." With the survey results under the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure "I am not the type of person who compares often with others" with a high mean= 3.48 and SD= 1.099 showing contradiction to experts opinion. With the survey finding in the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure, where the statement "I look at the number of 'likes' and the types of comments that other people have posted on their Facebook profile picture" had a high mean=3.10 and SD=1.181 showing agreement.

Q11. Do you feel that females monitor more than males?

Dr. Doss described "Females monitor in personal accounts like in Snapchat, Pinterest, TikTok, more than men. Men monitor more with

business accounts like YouTube, LinkedIn, and Twitter. They get their self-worth from that.” Dr. Gazis asserted “A little higher percentage in females. It matters for both genders.”

Q12. Why do females use apps and filters on their profile picture on Facebook before uploading them?

Dr. Doss stated:

There is a hype of that now and this is how they want to be seen. People with poor body image and lower self-esteem are more likely to use filters. Someone who have poor body image and lower self-esteem are more likely to use these filters.

Dr. Gazis explained:

I think it’s a trend that they’re following blindly. Some do use these filters because they are not very certain about how they look but it could have underlying reasons regarding body image. Definitely, there are a few people who use it to cover their very low self-esteem in regard to their body image.

Opinion of experts agree with the survey results that found 50% of the sample use editing apps on their Facebook profile pictures and H5b test that showed a significant difference between those who edit on their Facebook profile pictures and self-esteem.

Limitations and Recommendations of the Study

There are still some limitations to the study, although the study results explained how self-monitoring social awards on Facebook profile pictures and social comparison affected Gen Z Egyptian females' self-presentation and self-esteem. Namely, many respondents did not fill out the questionnaire because they did not have Facebook or preferred other social media platforms like Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram. Researchers could conduct a similar study across different social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok and include males in the sample.

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