

# Link found between selfie viewing and decreased self-esteem

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Frequent viewing of selfies through social network sites like Facebook is linked to a decrease in self-esteem and life satisfaction, according to Penn State researchers in mass communications. "Most of the research done on social network sites looks at the motivation for posting and liking content, but we're now starting to look at the effect of viewing behavior," said Ruoxu Wang, graduate student in mass communications.

Viewing behavior is also called "lurking" - when a person does not participate in posting or liking social content, but is just an observer. This form of participation in [social media](#) may sound like it should have little effect on how humans view themselves, but the study, published online in the *Journal of Telematics and Informatics*, revealed the exact opposite.

Wang and Fan Yang, graduate student in [mass communications](#), conducted an online survey to collect data on the psychological effects of posting and viewing selfies and groupies. They worked with Wang's graduate adviser, Michel Haigh, associate professor in communications. Posting behavior did not have significant [psychological effects](#) for participants. Viewing behavior did. They discovered the more often people viewed their own and others' selfies, the lower their level of self-esteem and [life satisfaction](#).

"People usually post selfies when they're happy or having fun," said Wang. "This makes it easy for someone else to look at these pictures and think your his or her life is not as great as theirs."

Those participants categorized as having a strong desire to appear popular were even more sensitive to selfie and groupie viewing. In this case, however, selfie and groupie viewing behavior increased the self-esteem and life satisfaction for these participants, likely because this activity satisfied the participants' desires to appear popular, according to the researchers.

Wang and Yang hope their work can raise awareness about social media use and the effect it has on viewers of people's social networks.

"We don't often think about how what we post affects the people around us," said Yang. "I think this study can help people understand the potential consequences of their posting behavior. This can help counselors work with students feeling lonely, unpopular, or unsatisfied with their lives."

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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