

Alcohol use, anxiety predict Facebook use by college students

10 April 2013

With nearly one billion users worldwide, Facebook has become a daily activity for hundreds of millions of people. Because so many people engage with the website daily, researchers are interested in how emotionally involved Facebook users become with the social networking site and the precursors that lead to Facebook connections with other people. Russell Clayton, now a doctoral student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, found that anxiety and alcohol use significantly predict emotional connectedness to Facebook.

Clayton's master's thesis, conducted under the supervision of Randall Osborne, Brian Miller, and Crystal Oberle of Texas State University, surveyed more than 225 college freshmen students concerning their perceived levels of loneliness, anxiousness, alcohol use, and marijuana use in the prediction of emotional connectedness to Facebook and Facebook connections. They found that students who reported higher levels of anxiousness and alcohol use appeared to be more emotionally connected with the social networking site. Clayton and his colleagues also found that students who reported higher levels of loneliness and anxiousness use Facebook as a platform to connect with others.

"People who perceive themselves to be anxious are more likely to want to meet and connect with people online, as opposed to a more social, public setting," Clayton said. "Also, when people who are emotionally connected to Facebook view pictures and statuses of their [Facebook friends](#) using alcohol, they are more motivated to engage in similar online behaviors in order to fit in socially."

Clayton says that because alcohol use is generally viewed as normative, or socially acceptable, among [college students](#), increased alcohol use may cause an increase in emotional connectedness to Facebook. The researchers also found that marijuana use predicted the opposite: a lack of emotional connectedness with Facebook.

"Marijuana use is less normative, meaning fewer people post on Facebook about using it," Clayton said. "In turn, people who engage in [marijuana](#) use are less likely to be emotionally attached to Facebook."

Clayton and his fellow researchers also found that students who reported high levels of perceived [loneliness](#) were not emotionally connected to Facebook, but use Facebook as a tool to connect with others.

This study was published in the *Journal of Computers in Human Behavior*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

APA citation: Alcohol use, anxiety predict Facebook use by college students (2013, April 10) retrieved 26 October 2020 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-04-alcohol-anxiety-facebook-college-students.html>

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