Gender and Facebook motives as predictors of specific types of Facebook use: A latent growth curve analysis in adolescence

# Details

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## Authors

Frison E.;Eggermont S.

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## Sample

1,102 Flemish adolescents between 11 and 18 years old participated at all three time points

# Abstract

Despite increasing evidence that specific types of Facebook use (i.e., active private,
active public, and passive Facebook use) are differently related to adolescents’ well-being,
little is known how these types function over the course of adolescence and whether gender
and Facebook motives may predict the initial level and changes in these types over time. To
address these gaps, Flemish adolescents (ages 12 to 19) were questioned at three different
time points, with six months in between (NTime1 = 1,866). Latent growth curve models
revealed that active private Facebook use increased over the course of adolescence, whereas
public Facebook use decreased. Passive Facebook use, however, remained stable. In
addition, gender and Facebook motives were related to initial levels of specific types of
Facebook use, and predictive of dynamic change in specific types of Facebook use over time.
The discussion focuses on the understanding and implications of these findings

# Outcome

"Active private Facebook use increased over the course adolescence, whereas public Facebook use decreased. The growth in active private Facebook use may be due to adolescents’ increasing need for establishing and retaining close relationships with peers, whereas the descent in active public Facebook use may be due to the fulfillment of identity exploration needs in young adolescence. Additionally, this might be explained by the fact that today’s teenagers are moving to alternative online platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat, for engaging in public interaction. Since teens have become more cautious about what they share publicly on Facebook, they may
therefore engage more in public sharing on Instagram and Snapchat. Concerning gender, girls have higher initial levels of active private Facebook use, compared to boys. It particularly fulfills girls’ social role expectations. People have specific expectations about
female and male characteristics: whereas males are expected to develop traits that manifest agency (e.g., being independent), females are expected to develop traits that manifest communal behavior (e.g., being social). Concerning the motives, during adolescence, teens are facing an increasing need to belong to a peer group and to explore their identity, but they also have to cope with new stressors. This, escapism motives positively predicted all three types of Facebook use. Relationship maintenance additionally predicted active private and passive Facebook use, whereas information sharing additionally predicted active public Facebook use. Besides, Facebook is especially driven by a desire to share information with others or to escape the stresses of daily life, rather than to maintain relationships. This can be explained by the fact that private and passive Facebook use, but also private messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, offer adolescents
alternative platforms for social interaction, which may be more suitable for relationship maintenance and therefore more attractive than a public Facebook setting." (Frison Eggermont, 2016, pp. 14-17)