

Hungry for 'likes': Anxiety over Facebook photos linked to eating disorders

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Facebook has become a global phenomenon and an active space for social comparison. With the increase in technology use, there is a positive correlation with decreased body image in young women. In a study published in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 960 female college students were evaluated on the time they spend on social media sites, how important "likes" are, and whether or not they untag photos of themselves.

"Over 95% of college women in our study use Facebook, and those with Facebook accounts described typically spending 20 minutes on the site during each visit, amounting to over an hour on the site each day," said Dr. Pamela K. Keel.

Women who spent more time on Facebook reported a higher incidence of appearance-focused behaviors and reported greater eating pathology. These women were more likely to give greater significance to receiving comments and "likes" on status updates, frequently untagged pictures of themselves and compared their photos to friends.

"In examining the immediate consequences of Facebook use, we found that 20 minutes of Facebook use contributed to maintenance of higher weight and shape concerns and anxiety compared to a control internet condition. This causal link is important because anxiety and [body image](#) concerns both increase risk for developing [eating disorders](#)," Keel stated.

Although it is a main cause to the issue, Facebook could possibly

become a maintenance factor for prevention programs. The main objective is to encourage women to develop better self-image and practice responsible use of social media sites.

"Facebook merges powerful peer influences with broader societal messages that focus on the importance of women's appearance into a single platform that women carry with them throughout the day. As researchers and clinicians attempt to understand and address risk factors for eating disorders, greater attention is needed to the emerging role of social media in young people's lives."

More information: Annalise G. Mabe, K. Jean Forney, Pamela K. Keel, 'Do you "like" my photo? Facebook use maintains eating disorder risk' *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, [DOI: 10.1002/eat.22254](https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.22254)

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