

Report on Bachelor's Thesis

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Name of marker: Dr Rachel Horsley BSc(hons); PG Cert; PhD; fHEA

*Mark: **Class 2 (62%** - see marking criteria: Appendix 1)*

NOTE: I had seen several previous versions of the thesis and provided advice. The student appears to have taken the majority of this advice and the thesis is improved, however, the present version is much different to the version I last saw, but due to a miscommunication I never had sight of the present version to approve it. Had I had this opportunity, I would have suggested that the Discussion be extended.

This thesis concerns the psychological impact of Facebook use, in particular it draws on social comparison theory (and other relevant theories) to critically review the evidence that Facebook can engender negative effects on well-being /life-satisfaction that are mediated by social comparison. This is an interesting topic, and the theoretical elements complement one another well. The format is a systematic review.

Introduction to the thesis was generally fine, setting out the structure and research question. Aim was assumptive given that research shows effects in different directions (said in previous sentence!)

The introductory literature review was again, well-written, and I found it interesting to read, and also found it thought-provoking; e.g., social risk hypothesis and evolutionary account of depression as applied to contemporary society. This section was appropriate in length, well-focused and defined the necessary terms and theories.

Objective and hypothetical model Hypothesis follows logically from the introductory literature review and the theories contained therein. The method of systematic review was justified, and the choice of method is appropriate. A couple of errors in writing style. Misuse of 'reliable' in scientific terms – this is a very common misunderstanding however.

Method The search terms were somewhat restricted and mean that several relevant studies were likely to be overlooked (e.g., why not include 'depression' as well as wellbeing?). The inclusion/exclusion criteria – these were okay. Good justification of the 5-year search period 2014-2018 (note, 2019 had not started when thesis was submitted). Quality standards were identified by which to select the studies. It is stated that not necessarily all criteria needed to be met for inclusion –in which case she should have simply adjusted the inclusion criteria I suppose.... (I think it was an issue around having control/comparison groups which are not present in all quant analyses). Good that she considered validity and reliability of psychometric scales too.

PRISMA diagram has no title and isn't referred to. The student was advised to use a scientific database such as Web of Science (WoS) to do the search, rather than Google Scholar (GS) because GS makes the process more laborious and less accurate. However, the student did not think she had access to databases like WoS. I did experience some resistance from the student over how to implement and report the search in a systematic way. There remains a question as to whether the search method produced full literature available, since the final number of papers is rather small for a review.

Data analysis

Evaluative criteria: it was good that the students included these: CASP are okay to use, but AMSTAR is for reviewing systematic reviews, so not quite appropriate, STROBE is fine as were the Meline set. The reason the student chose to create her own set of criteria inspired by these other sets was because e.g, CASP cover experimental studies, but specifically RCTs, so the criteria are too conservative for a standard experimental

study. I think she could have communicated the choice of criteria in a more elegant way, but from a practical perspective, the final set of criteria are okay.

Description of individual studies was fine. Shows generally good understanding of the design and analysis of the studies, especially given that the student has almost no training in this area (and given this, it is unsurprising that there are one or two misunderstandings).

The students had been instructed that the review part of these should not rely on simply describing the studies one by one (this can be done first, but briefly), rather, themes across the studies should be identified (e.g., FB and SCO) and each theme reviewed across multiple papers to evaluate the strength of the findings (based on their quality) within these themes (however she did this is the discussion).

Discussion This section contained some good synthesis of findings and themes, although some of this more properly belonged in the Data Analysis section (the more descriptive elements and Table 2). The findings could have been explored more, especially in relation to the existing background literature. There is some integration with theory, but this could have been done more in this section. Consideration of the limitations in the literature was included but was somewhat general, nevertheless fairly consistent with the expectations at Bachelor level (and without much methods training). Conclusions are solid, and the recommendations are mostly sensible (the student had been advised that a previous recommendation similar to the first one stated here should be omitted for the very reasons she then goes on to state. This part could have been safely deleted).

Bibliography: most important assertions were referenced, although ideally referencing could have been more thorough.

English language use Mostly well written, grammatical, logical development of argument. One or two minor typos, one or two clumsy sentences English usage generally good – one or two misused terms, but certainly no worse than a UK bachelor's student, and in many cases rather better than many I have read recently.

Cooperation and response to criticism The student worked very independently, with guidance on improving previous versions of the thesis (I 'inherited' this student). The student was sometimes resistant to implementing advice, but in the end, I believe that she did implement the majority of what I suggested, although not always as well as she could have done.

Supervisor's conclusions

Overall, I find this thesis is of sufficient quality to achieve a pass at Grade 2 (62%); it demonstrates a number of core skills (not always executed perfectly, but sufficiently well), good writing skills, and good knowledge and understanding of the area, a systematic approach, some independent and original thought. Had there not been a slight procedural misunderstanding, the final form of the thesis would have been fed-back on and some final improvements could have been made, such as extending the discussion, but the key information and interpretations are there.

APPENDIX 1: MARKING CRITERIA

CLASS 3: Pass (50-59): Will fulfil <u>ALL</u> of the criteria outlined below either ‘marginally’, ‘adequately’, or ‘strongly’.				
	<i>Marginally</i>	<i>Adequately</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<p>Work which strongly fulfils the majority of pass criteria may be considered at commendation level.</p> <p>Strong pass : 57-59 (anchor: 58) The majority of criteria at pass level are strongly fulfilled</p> <p>Pass: 54-56 (anchor: 55) The majority of criteria at pass level are adequately fulfilled.</p> <p>Marginal pass: 50-53 (anchor: 52) The majority of criteria at pass level are marginally fulfilled.</p> <p>Work which fails to at least marginally fulfil the majority of pass criteria should be considered as a fail (see page 2)</p>
Acceptable coverage, generally accurate, and relevant to the question set				
Evidence of basic reading/use of resources				
Acceptable understanding of literature, including theory				
Acceptable awareness of core debates/issues in the subject				
Academic style of writing and referencing				
Some development of an argument				
Acceptable organisation and structure				
Some use of evidence to support/challenge an argument				
<i>Where appropriate</i> , demonstrates awareness of the applications, social context, or history of the subject				
<i>Where appropriate</i> , applies principles to real world events and problems				
CLASS 2: Commendation (60-69): Will fulfil <u>ALL</u> of the criteria outlined below either ‘marginally’, ‘adequately’, or ‘strongly’				
	<i>Marginally</i>	<i>Adequately</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<p>Work which strongly fulfils the majority of commendation criteria may be considered at distinction level</p> <p>Strong commendation: 67-69 (anchor: 68) The majority of criteria at commendation level are strongly fulfilled</p> <p>Commendation: 64-66 (anchor: 65) The majority of criteria at commendation level are adequately fulfilled.</p> <p>Marginal commendation: 60-63 (anchor: 62) The majority of criteria at commendation level are marginally fulfilled.</p> <p>Work which fails to at least marginally fulfil the majority of commendation criteria should be considered at pass level only</p>
Comprehensive and accurate coverage relevant to the question set		X		
Evidence of wider reading/use of a range of resources		X		
Sufficient use of primary resources		X		
Good understanding of literature, including theory	X			
Good grasp of core debates/current issues in psychology		X		
Good academic style of writing and referencing		X		
Development of coherent argument	X			
Good organisation and structure	X			
Thoughtful evaluation of evidence and/or textual material	X			
Consistent and appropriate use of evidence to support/challenge an argument	X			
<i>Where appropriate</i> , demonstrates a critical awareness of the applications, social context, or history of the subject		X		
<i>Where appropriate</i> , is able to skilfully apply principles to real world events and problems	X			
CLASS 1: Distinction (70+): Will excel on <u>AT LEAST ONE</u> and probably several of the criteria outlined below (in addition to strongly fulfilling <u>ALL</u> the CLASS 2 criteria)				
Comprehensive and accurate coverage of complex and specialised areas				<p>Outstanding Distinction: 86-100 (anchor: 90) Excels on all of the listed criteria at distinction level and has additional qualities that set it aside from the norm. Rarely awarded, requiring special justification.</p> <p>Strong distinction: 80-85 (anchor: 82) Excels on most of the listed criteria at distinction level. Normally the top grade awarded on a module.</p> <p>Distinction: 75-79 (anchor: 77) Excels on more than one listed criterion at distinction level.</p> <p>Marginal distinction: 70-74 (anchor: 72) Excels on at least one listed criterion at distinction level.</p>
Evidence of comprehensive reading/use of a range of resources				
Depth of critical insight into complex theoretical issues				
Originality of exposition or treatment				
Clarity of argument and expression				
Shows a creative and imaginative approach				
Critical evaluation of evidence and research methodologies, where appropriate				

CLASS 4: Marginal Fail (< 50): <u>ALL</u> the criteria outlined below will either be passed or marginally failed			
	<i>Clear fail</i>	<i>Marginal fail</i>	<i>Pass</i>
Acceptable coverage, generally accurate, and relevant to the question set			
Evidence of basic reading/use of resources			
Acceptable understanding of literature, including theory			
Acceptable awareness of core debates/current issues in the subject			
Academic style of writing and referencing			
Some development of an argument			
Some use of evidence to support/challenge an argument			
Acceptable organisation and structure			
<i>Where appropriate</i> , demonstrates awareness of the applications, social context, or history of the subject			
<i>Where appropriate</i> , is able to apply principles to real world events and problems			
<p>Work which passes <u>ALL</u> criteria should be considered at pass level (see page 1)</p> <p>Marginal fail: 47-49 (anchor: 48) One criterion has been marginally failed and the rest passed.</p> <p>Fail: 44-46 (anchor: 45) A few of the criteria are marginally failed, but many are passed.</p> <p>Non-compensation fail: 40-43 (anchor: 42) Many of the criteria are marginally failed and only a few passed.</p> <p>Work for which <u>ANY</u> of these criteria have been marked as a clear fail or work which achieves <u>NO</u> passes should be considered as a clear fail (see below)</p>			
<p>Clear fail (30-39):</p> <p>37-39 (anchor: 38) One criterion has been clearly failed.</p> <p>34-36 (anchor: 35) A few of the criteria have been clearly failed.</p> <p>30-33 (anchor: 32) Many of the criteria have been clearly failed.</p> <p>Work for which most or all of the criteria have been clearly failed may be considered within the categories below.</p>			
<p>Very clear fail 20-29 (anchor: 25) Answer contains a little subject-related information relevant to the question, or some non subject-related information relevant to the question.</p> <p>Attempted an answer: 10-19 (anchor: 15) Answer contains a tiny bit of subject-related information (or some other information) relevant to the question.</p> <p>Almost no attempt: 1-9 (anchor: 5) Answer contains something which relates to the question.</p> <p>No attempt: 0 Nothing written that relates to the question (except perhaps restating the question); no submission.</p>			