

# Gender Differences in Blogging

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**Background:** Journaling has been a tried and tested method for people to organize their thoughts and de-stress. Due to this, previous studies have looked at the effects of blogging on mental well-being and found it to be an effective way to increase self-awareness and reflect on and grow from difficult situations.

A study by Abbie Hibsich through Niagara University looked at the effects of blogging on the mental well-being of college students. Participants were provided prompts to write about on an online blog weekly and asked about their mental health before and after the study. On average, emotional well-being improved by 6.27 points,  $t(21)=3.67$ ,  $p=.002$ ,  $d=-0.81$  (Figure 1).

However, a major limitation to the study was “attrition: 38 students took the initial survey but only 22 completed the final survey” (Hibsich). In addition, of the 38 participants, only 2 of them were male. This indicated a severe lack of interest by the male population on campus.

These results are concerning as mental illness is highly prevalent in males, with men having a statistically significant higher rate of serious suicide attempts than women,  $p<.001$  (Arensman, et. al).



**Methods:** A follow-up study was performed in response to the limitations of Hibsich’s original study to determine attitudes towards blogging, specifically males blogging.

- Survey given to 79 people
- Ages 18-84, 72.5% female and 26.3% male
- Survey of 15 questions of opinions on the topic of blogging
- Answers ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with the option of “no opinion.”

**Results:** Many differences between genders were insignificant. For example, there was no significant differences or correlations between the rates men and women reported an overall interest in blogging or that they believed blogging is a feminine activity. However, when asked about the types of blogs, significantly more men reported that they would be interested in a blog about sports,  $t(74)=3.349$ ,  $p=.001$ . For that item, the mean rating for the men was 3.35 ( $SD=1.46$ ) and the mean rating for the women was 2.20 ( $SD=1.46$ ).

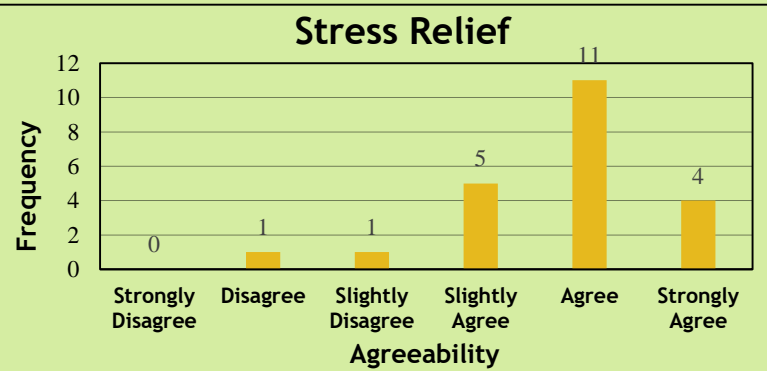


Figure 1. Hibsich Study: Participant ratings for the degree to which blogging relieved stress.

Mean responses to “I would enjoy reading a blog about sports”

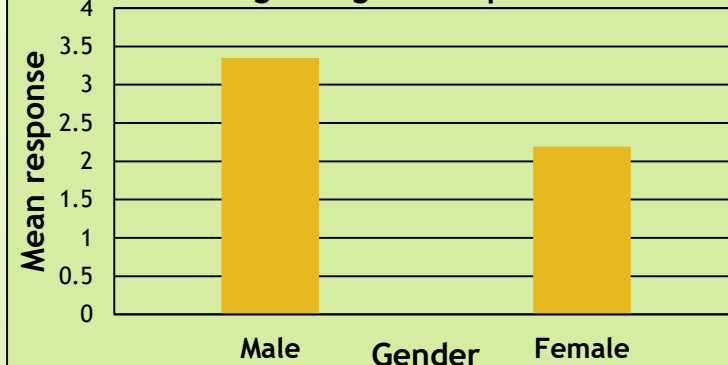


Figure 2. While men overall were much less likely to complete Hibsich’s blogging study, perhaps there was not enough range in the question’s subject types to interest men

**Discussion:** Although men and women seem to be equally interested in blogging, attraction to both reading or participating in a blog may be specifically affected by the subject of the blog.

Future studies could repeat the methods of Hibsich’s studies but with a choice of prompts. Perhaps the dropout was high because only those with interest in the prompts, or those who didn’t feel overly challenged to come up with information, followed through. A choice of prompts could still gauge the benefits of blogging while also allowing participants to not feel forced into completing the study. Another future study to gauge interest in blogging and whether it is believed to be a feminine activity should be done with the survey but with the “no opinion” option removed. This would cause participants to choose rather than to be able to avoid sharing their true feelings.