

Influence of Social Media on Personality and Behavior

Syeda Masooma Naqvi

Department of Clinical Psychology, ShifaTameer e Millat University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Fatima

National Institute of Food Science and Technology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

Arsalan Abid

Department of Nursing and Community Health, Faculty of Public Health, Glasgow
Caledonian University, Glasgow

Syed Adnan Rahmat

School of Public Health, Hebei Medical University, Shijiazhuang, China

Mahzeen Nazir

Department of Psychology, Government College University Faisalabad

Fatima Tariq

Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, University of Sargodha, Pakistan

Muhammad Riaz

Department of Allied Health Sciences, Sargodha Medical College, University of Sargodha,
Sargodha, Pakistan

Sana Mughees

Institute of Population Research, Pecking University Beijing University China, 100871

Mehboob Khaliq

Fahad Clinic, Kamboh Market Housing Colony, Sheikhpura

Shamaila Kausar

Department of Microbiology, University of Lahore, Pakistan

Fahad Said Khan

Department of Eastern Medicine, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of
Poonch Rawalakot Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

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Amir Aftab

Department of Eastern Medicine, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Poonch Rawalakot Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

Ali Imran

MDR TB Center, DHQ Hospital, Faisalabad

Kainat Zafar

Department of Eastern Medicine, Government College University, Faisalabad Pakistan

Muhammad Akram*

Department of Eastern Medicine, Government College University, Faisalabad Pakistan.

Corresponding Author Email: muhammadakram@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Social media's rapid rise continues to change how people communicate, interpret, and form their identities. Psychologists study three ways personality and social media interaction including the degree of authenticity in self-presentation, the role of social media in personality formation, and the influence of personality traits on behavior in the digital space. While self-presentation on Facebook and similar social media platforms is accurately portrayed, there is a tendency to amplify self-representation in a positive way, especially in cases of emotional stability and self-confidence. For adolescents and young adults, heavy social media usage correlates with the rise of depression, loneliness, and anxiety, as well as a decline in self-worth. Regarding personality and social media usage, the introverted and the extroverted and/or the narcissistic social media users behave differently. The introverts may truly express their-self easily, while extroverts and narcissists engage in social media more aggressively. Satisfying and destructive elements coexist, as seen in trolling, and are linked to social personality traits, including sadistic and aggressive behavior, especially in the form of digital hostility.

Keywords: Personality, digital identity, self-esteem, introversion, extroversion, social media, self-presentation, online behavior, mental health

Introduction

As the world becomes more digitalized, social media becomes more integrated in daily life, influencing the ways of communication, sharing, and understanding each other. Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) are all the platforms for self-presentation and social interaction, accommodating personalities in real life and, in some instances, distorting them. The seamless shift from offline to online social interaction has most people socializing more in the digital world (Kennedy et al 2016). Each time psychologists attempt to understand the deeper implications of the social media phenomenon, they advance the theory that certain personality types are more comfortable with the digital realm. Having social media accounts can boost social self-esteem, but expectations can also lead to anxiety, isolation, or even addiction. Most of the social media interactions and the subsequent outcome, one can experience boil down to the effects, technology has on the social self, the core of one's identity, and the complex integration of social relationships (Goodings et al 2007). It becomes essential to grasp the repercussions of social media on human personality so that social relationships are redefined.

Personality and the Social Media

Numerous recent studies have attempted to link our personality to the digital environment in which we live, as a result of the growing and almost continuous use of various social media platforms to interact virtually rather than in person (Schroeder et al 2010).

There are at least three ways in which personality and social media can interact and influence each other, raising three questions that psychologists are increasingly trying to answer.

1. Do we present ourselves authentically on social media?
2. Does social media use affect or alter our individual identity?

3. How do people with different personalities use social media?

Are You the Same Person Online

Method of defining identity is through the mask we wear and the public image we present to those around us (Kelley et al 2020). We increasingly present a different image online, on social media like Facebook, than in person. Therefore, the way other people perceive us online can also be a means of characterizing our personalities.

But do they see us as we really are, or are we fabricating an idealized version of ourselves online that we like to present to others? Are we showing a true image of ourselves or acting like someone we are not? According to several studies, most people are truthful about their online identities. Social media presents accurate images or impressions of the personality profiles we offer, according to studies conducted in Germany and the United States. Researchers concluded that online representations of personalities are at least as accurate as those offered in person (Vazire et al 2004).

However, many people try to present themselves online as much more emotionally stable as they actually are, according to a recent large-scale study conducted in Germany. According to more recent research, socially shy, reclusive, introverted, or neurotic people find it easier to reveal their true identity online than in person.

Furthermore, those who believe they can express their true identity are more active on Facebook and other social media than those who don't. What about the photos we take, known as selfies? How well do they reflect who we really are? Or are they simply for show, posing and striking poses to entertain others and create our own "reality shows"? According to studies, women send more selfies than men, and sending too many can make the sender appear less attractive and even less intimate or close to their friends (Dhir et al 2016). The idea that appearance matters more than behavior with friends can even be reinforced by them.

As you know, we aren't always honest about our self-image, especially when we meet new people we want to impress, such as a potential date or job. We might be less

likely to act differently than we really are with people we've known for a long time, with whom we feel safe, and for whom we don't pose a threat. Compared to our everyday offline lives, social media offers a much broader and more immediate audience. This is possibly the main difference.

Furthermore, we now know that when potential employers discover inappropriate content on a candidate's social media accounts, such as obscene language, sexual displays, or intoxication, it can have a significant negative impact on their career and future (Drouin et al 2015). According to one study, reviews of Facebook sites with unfavorable content generated erroneous impressions about the person's personality.

In the real world, a person's personality can make the difference between being recruited for a job or being accepted into a graduate program. Sites without inappropriate content generated more accurate assessments of the individual's personality.

How Does the Social Media Influence Our Personality?

Psychologists have shown that online social media platforms like Facebook influence and reflect our personalities. Compared with young people who spend much less time online, a study conducted in China among 13- to 18-year-olds revealed that excessive internet use was associated with significant levels of anxiety and sadness. According to other studies, excessive social media use can reduce psychological well-being—our happiness—and the quality of our friendships and romantic relationships (Twenge et al 2019).

According to an online survey of American college students, those who spoke to their parents on the phone had more positive, supportive, and rewarding connections with them than those who used social media to stay in touch. Furthermore, those who used social media to contact their parents reported feeling lonelier, more anxious, and having more conflicts with them.

Research conducted in various countries, including the Netherlands, Serbia, Hong Kong, and Korea, has shown that those who use social media excessively are more likely to be introverted, lonely, and have low self-esteem than those who use it less (Smith et al

2023).Addiction, which can be as compulsive and extreme as addiction to alcohol, drugs, or gambling, can also result from excessive internet use. This use has been shown to alter brain regions associated with sadness and anger.

How Does Our Personality Influence Our Use of Social Media?

Social media platforms have the power to influence and reflect our personality. Research conducted in both Eastern and Western cultures revealed that those with higher levels of extroversion and narcissism (i.e., an exaggerated and unrealistic self-concept) were significantly more likely to use Facebook than those with lower levels of these personality traits. The most narcissistic adolescents were also more likely to update their Facebook status more frequently (Ong EY et al 2011).

According to other research, those who frequently use social media are more likely to be extroverted, receptive to new experiences, less self-confident, less socially adept, less diligent, and less emotionally stable than those who use it less frequently.

Cell phone users have also been found to have different personalities. According to an Australian study of adults and adolescents, people with higher extroversion and a strong personal identity spent significantly more time making calls and changing wallpaper and ringtones than those who scored lower on these traits (Butt et al 2008). Furthermore, studies found that more neurotic, less meticulous, and shy people used their phones for texting more frequently than more meticulous and less neurotic people.

The characteristics of those who intentionally harm, annoy, and distress others by making abusive, provocative, and derogatory comments about them are the final consideration (Jay et al 2009).What do they look like? According to the data, trolls are primarily male, with an average age of 29, and display high levels of sadism, as expected. They enjoy mocking others. It gives them a positive feeling.

Conclusion

The interaction between an individual's personality and their use of social media is dynamic and reciprocal. While social media opens windows for people to express

themselves, connect with others, and explore their identities, it can also distort self-image and affect emotional outcomes. There is considerable individual variability in the functions of social media; for example, extroverts and narcissists might get energized by social media interaction, while the socially anxious and introverted might find social media a comfortable place to express themselves. On the other hand, social media might promote loneliness, anxiety, and addiction, a testament to the dark side of excessive digital use. The absence of social interaction regulation and the potential for socially disruptive behaviors, such as trolling, provide venues for negative personality traits to emerge and operate unimpeded in the online clique. The integrated knowledge of personality type and social media use is vital for developing a positive psychosocial approach to the virtual environment. Balancing social media to facilitate the positive use of technology while minimizing its inherent psychological risks can promote authentic social interaction and enhance individual mental health.

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