Psychological Correlates of Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Among Social Media Users

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ABSTRACT

The recent burgeon on social media usage has contributed to much research examining the role of enmeshing psychological and psychosocial factors. Concerning the existing scenario, this study investigates the networking between narcissism, self-esteem and perfectionistic self-presentation among Facebook and Instagram users. Perfectionistic self-presentation is a major constituent of young people's identity development and may intensify during the transition to college. Against this backdrop, the study was conducted on 578 Indian students who belonged to the age range of 18-24 years. The result showed that perfectionistic self-presentation was predicted by self-esteem, narcissism, and intense usage of Instagram. The result also divulged the current trend and proclaimed that Instagram is a major online platform where perfectionistic self-presentation is portrayed to salvage the deflated self-esteem.

KEYWORDS

College Students, Facebook Intensity, Ideal-Self, Instagram Intensity, Narcissism, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation, Self-Esteem, Social Media Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Man, since the dawn of time has adapted, assimilated and survived in the world partly due to his incessant connectivity and kinship with other fellow beings. Aristotle had rightly opined that 'man is a social animal' and whether it was through letters in the past or with the current advancements in technology, we have come a long way in how we form and maintain relationships with those around us. In the past two decades, we have witnessed the myriad ways in which technology has successfully revolutionized connectivity chiefly through the incorporation of various social media platforms. This

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trend involves the technologies that are interactive and computer-mediated, allowing the users to create and share ideas, and information through various forms of expressions in these online communities. Although, social media is generally defined as any medium that allows individuals to connect and interact, this definition has been considered too broad as it would mean that forms of communication like television or telegraph are also to be considered social mediums. Across the world, the number of individuals that have incorporated social media in their lives has grown to nearly 3.5 billion at the outset of 2019, with a whopping 288 million new users.

The studies about Facebook have crossed millions whereas Instagram is slowly getting importance and is still an understudied topic (Salomon, 2013). Instagram, an American SNSs that was primarily focused on sharing photos and videos among its users, is currently owned by Facebook, Inc. Instagram was cleverly named as such to be short for instant telegram and it was launched in 2010 and had a surprisingly instantaneous growth and popularity. The main feature of the application is that it permits the users to upload videos and photos to it, these can be edited with the help of different filters, which are organized effectively using tags and particular location information (Hu et al., 2014). The posts from any account can be shared either publicly or with a private list of account holders or followers (Landsverk, 2014). The users of the platform can also browse the content of other users using the above-mentioned tags or location information while also having access to content that is trending or otherwise most viewed by people in a particular region on the platform as a whole. Users can furthermore show their support, acknowledgement or appreciation by 'liking' the photos and following other users to add their content to their particular and individualized feed. Concerning this existing scenario, this study investigates how psychological factors such as narcissism, self-esteem and perfectionistic self-presentation relate to Facebook and Instagram usage.

Narcissism

Narcissism is characterised by inflated self-constructs specifically associated with the traits like intelligence, dominance, and appeal (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Campbell et al., 2002; Gabriel et al., 1994). The initial studies of narcissism emerged in the late 1970s where three dominant trends of an individual's self-obsessed nature were noticed (Emmons, 1987). One trend affirmed the manifestation of society into extremely narcissistic (Mazlish, 1982; Nelson, 1977) wherein the tendency was evinced by the characteristics such as racism, sexism and nationalism. The second trend revolved around the phenomenon of self-serving bias (Harvey & Weary, 1984; Snyder, Stephan, &Rosenfield, 1978) that was included with cognitive and narcissistic overtones (Greenwald, 1980). The third trend narrowed the focus of narcissism to the clinical domain with multifarious aetiology. The present study chiefly propagates the amalgamation of the first two trends, wherein narcissism was viewed in the social context and as a cognitive facet.

With the exponential growth of social media, the recent studies are more focussed on connecting narcissism in the frame of online behaviour, predominantly dividing it into two opposite dimensions such as grandiosity and vulnerability between which an individual would vacillate (Wink, 1991; Wright & Edershile, 2018). Firstly, the grandiose type of narcissism enmeshed with exhibitionism and self-importance which are characterized by the reflection of ideas with grandiosity, often overlapping with aggression (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). Be at variance with grandiosity, vulnerable narcissists are a 'covert' type marked by hypersensitivity, defensiveness, and insecurity (Ahn et al., 2015; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). Research indicates both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism has a noteworthy impression on social media usage where Social Networking Sites (SNSs) can be manifested into specific platforms for narcissistic dreams to unfold (Ahn et al., 2015; Andreassen et al., 2017; Casale et al., 2016; McCain & Campbell, 2018). People share self-enhancing content with their potential audience which may or may not be true with themselves and eventually receive feedbacks (McCain & Campbell, 2018). Many of the time, the positive feedbacks act like reinforcing agents which further increase the tendency of similar behaviour with an escalation of their confidence as well as self-esteem. However, the negative reflection of the

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