Full length article

Problematic Facebook use and procrastination

Aneta Przepiorka [a], Agata Błachnio [a], Juan F. Díaz-Morales [b, *]

[a] Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
[b] Dpto. Psicología Diferencial y del Trabajo, Facultad de Psicología, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

In recent years, we can observe the increasing popularity of Facebook. The main aim of our study was to examine whether procrastination is associated with Facebook intrusion and intensity. The participants in the study were 954 Facebook users aged between 18 and 58 years. We used the Facebook Intrusion Questionnaire, the Facebook Intensity Scale, the General Procrastination Scale, and the Decisional Procrastination Scale. Our results indicate that general and decisional procrastination are significant predictors of Facebook intrusion and intensity. Also, females and young participants use Facebook more intensely and are more likely to become addicted to Facebook.

1. Introduction

Have you logged into Facebook today? If so, you belong to the community of 1 billion users of this social networking site. Many people start their day holding a coffee cup in one hand and busily browsing Facebook or posting daily news with the other. Since it was launched in 2004, Facebook has become a global phenomenon and continues to beat records of popularity (Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010). Thanks to its many applications, Facebook provides a kind of platform for communication and information sharing; it allows people to maintain existing relationships or start new ones, publish and view photos, or participate in discussions (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). Facebook creates a new virtual reality that so many people are part of, regardless of culture, nationality, or religion. The negative aspect of this social phenomenon is the danger of problematic use of or even becoming addicted to Facebook. It is a fact that there is an increasing number of people who use social networks in problematic ways, which puts them at risk of becoming Internet addicts (see Kuss, Griffiths, Karila, & Billieux, 2014). Considering its huge impact on social life, it is worth exploring this issue further in order to determine the characteristics of Facebook users who might be particularly prone to excessive

and problematic Facebook use. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) underline the importance of the in-depth study of the issue of Facebook addiction in order to determine its comorbidity and to identify specific patterns of developing this kind of addiction.

Based on the body of literature on Facebook (e.g., Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Rudnicka, 2013; Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Hudiburgh, 2012; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Seidman, 2012), a psychological profile of Facebook users can be sketched. For instance, Facebook users are characterized by a high level of extraversion as well as lower levels of conscientiousness and social isolation compared to non-users (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). A positive relationship has also been found between agreeableness and Facebook use (Moore & McElroy, 2012; Seidman, 2012). Other personality traits positively related to Facebook use include neuroticism (Ross et al., 2009), shyness (Orr et al., 2009), or narcissism (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011; Mehdizadeh, 2010).

One of the characteristics that have not been analyzed in relation to Facebook use is procrastination. Procrastination is conceptualized as postponing some actions crucial to the timely completion of assignments (Lay, 1986) — that is, purposive and frequent delay in beginning or completing a task to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort (Schouwenburg, Lay, Pychyl, & Ferrari, 2004). People who procrastinate do not work on a task and, as a result, they "feel bad" (anxiety, regret) due to their delaying tactics.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: juanfcodiaz@psi.ucm.es (J.F. Díaz-Morales).

Those who procrastinate suffer from social and psychological repercussions (Ferrari, 2010; Steel, 2011). The literature on this subject shows that the problem of procrastination especially affects young people. Academic procrastination is frequently reported among students. Among adults, there is constant pressure on people to be effective at work and to manage time efficiently. This behavior was found to be related to higher depression, anxiety, and stress and to lower satisfaction with life (Aziz & Tariq, 2013). In the work context, procrastinators had lower salaries, were employed for a shorter duration, and were more likely to be unemployed (Nguyen, Steel, & Ferrari, 2013).

Procrastination is also typically viewed as volitional — that is, as involving the voluntary choice of one behavior or task over competing options (Ferrari & Pychyl, 2000). In this perspective, excessive Facebook use could be a distraction from accomplishing planned tasks, increasing the tendency to put off until tomorrow what one should do today (procrastination). The question arises of whether individuals who have a tendency to procrastinate spend more time on Facebook and are at a higher risk of developing Facebook addiction.

The findings on the associations between procrastination and problematic Internet use are scarce and those already published are rather contradictory. On the one hand, Odaci (2011) showed that there was no statistically significant association between problematic Internet use and academic procrastination. On the other hand, Thatcher, Wretschko, and Fridjhon (2008) presented the results of a study on a sample of 1399 Internet users revealing a relationship between problematic Internet use and online procrastination measured with the Distraction subscale of the Online Cognition Scale (OCS; Davis, Flett, & Besser, 2002). The lack of consistency in these results may stem from cultural differences and/or from different instruments used to measure both problematic Facebook use and procrastination. In the present study, the term "Facebook intrusion" is used interchangeably with the term "Facebook addiction." These two concepts are strongly interrelated: both point to excessive involvement in Facebook (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Both Facebook intrusion and Facebook addiction are constructs that involve a lack of control over time, experiencing negative consequences because of excessive Facebook use, and inner pressure to use Facebook despite its detrimental effect on one's life. A large body of research on Facebook intrusion has revealed negative aspects of this kind of problematic Facebook use interfering with daily activity and relationship functioning. For instance, Facebook intrusion was positively related to depression (Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2015), low self-control (Blachnio & Przepiorka, 2016a), low level of conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, low positive orientation (Blachnio & Przepiorka, 2016b), or high level of loneliness (Blachnio, Przepiorka, Boruch, & Bałakier, 2016).

Regarding demographic variables, sex and age are related to different patterns of Facebook use. The participant's age is a very important determinant of these patterns, since old people tend to use social networks less frequently and are generally "less dependent" on online activities. For instance, females have been found to spend more time on Facebook, to have more Facebook friends, and to be more likely to use profile pictures for impression management. Women and older people have been found to be more engaged in online family activity (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). Young people tend to spend more time on Facebook and have more Facebook friends than older users (Murphy, 2013). A recent study revealed that adolescents are the group that discloses the most private information on Facebook (Błachnio, Przepiorka, Bałakier, & Boruch, 2016). In the light of these differences between age and sex groups, it would be interesting to include these variables in analyses and to investigate their role in the relationship between Facebook use and procrastination.

Alternatively, procrastination can be measured from a behavioral perspective using the *General Procrastination Scale* (GP; Lay, 1986), developed to assess the frequency with which people postpone performing everyday behavioral tasks or activities, or using a cognitive measure, namely, the *Decisional Procrastination Scale* (DP; Mann, 1982). Although decisional and general procrastination are related behaviors, some researchers observed subtle differences between them. Decisional procrastination is more situationally specific and related to the context of postponing the decision, whereas general procrastination is an example of behavioral procrastination (Anderson, 2003; Ferrari & Emmons, 1994) and is understood as the frequency with which people postpone performing everyday behavioral tasks or activities. The cognitive type of procrastination (indecision) has been defined as purposive delay in making decisions within some specific time frame (Díaz-Morales & Ferrari, 2015). Indecision can drive chronic behavioral procrastinators to create excuses to justify why they do not focus on the target behavior. If you are a procrastinator, the delay seems logical and justifiable; however, from an external point of view it is irrational and can damage other people's perception of you (Ferrari, 2010).

To support the assumption about the distinct character of decisional procrastination and general procrastination, Tibbett and Ferrari (2015) outlined different psychological portraits of these two types. For instance, indecision was related to strong neuroticism and moderate introversion, whereas generalized procrastination was strongly associated with unconscientiousness and weakly with neuroticism. Moreover, Díaz-Morales, Ferrari, and Cohen (2008) found that morningness was negatively related to behavioral, but not to decisional procrastination. Overall, the results indicated different temporal profiles of indecision and behavioral procrastination. Behavioral procrastination related to low future time orientation and low morningness, whereas indecision related to both high negative and high positive past as well as to low present-hedonistic and low future time orientations. Therefore, it appears that distinct forms of procrastination can be differentiated based on time perspectives.

Considering the consequences of Facebook addiction, this question is of great importance for mental and physical health. The main aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between behavioral procrastination, cognitive procrastination, Facebook intensity, and Facebook intrusion. Facebook intensity and Facebook intrusion are two closely related constructs. Facebook intrusion includes such aspects as "withdrawal (distress related to an inability to access Facebook), relapse and reinstatement (efforts to reduce Facebook use that have been unsuccessful), and euphoria (feeling connected to others when using Facebook)" (Elphinston & Noller, 2011, p. 631). Facebook intensity relates not only to the frequency and duration of its use, but also to the emotional attitude towards this site and its integration with its users' daily life (Ellison et al., 2007). Higher Facebook intensity has been found to be positively related to Facebook addiction (Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2016). The more one uses Facebook, the more prone one is to develop the addiction. Facebook intensity includes the number of Facebook friends and the amount of time spent using Facebook. Facebook use may be a more general term that reflects users' behavior on Facebook. A high level of Facebook intrusion and Facebook intensity can be labeled as problematic Facebook use. Like problematic Internet use (cf. Iacovelli & Valenti, 2009), problematic Facebook use may be indicative of addictive tendency. To our best knowledge, this is the first study to investigate these associations. Based on the literature on procrastination, we assumed that those who have a tendency to procrastinate will be more prone to intense Facebook use and Facebook intrusion.