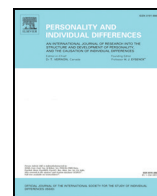




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## Posting photos on Facebook: The impact of Narcissism, Social Anxiety, Loneliness, and Shyness

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### ABSTRACT

Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world. It allows its users to present themselves, and interact with each other, in many different ways including sharing personal photos. The current study investigated the influence of social interaction variables Shyness, Loneliness, and Social Anxiety, the self-presentation variable Narcissism, and Facebook users' age on photo sharing. Within this we focused on the nature and frequency of posting photos, and how often these were interacted with. These variables have previously been investigated separately but not together. A total of 264 participants, 75 males and 189 females, ranging in age from 16 to 72 years ( $M = 31.65$ ,  $SD = 13.24$ ) answered an online questionnaire about Facebook use and individual difference characteristics. The kinds of photos posted were categorised as family, significant-other, friends, pets, one-self, parties, travel, sport, food, achievements, and other. Results revealed that time spent on Facebook, Age and Narcissism impacted positively, and Loneliness and Shyness impacted negatively, on the frequency of posting of some categories of photos online. Future research should extend the study of the impact of these social and self-presentation variables on Facebook behaviours.

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### 1. Introduction

Social networking sites (SNSs) have rapidly expanded since their inception in the early 2000s. Facebook, founded in 2004, has approximately 1.65 billion active users and is officially the world's largest SNS (Statista, 2016). Its recent growth has consisted largely of younger users (Rose, 2014). A user's age is indicative of how they use SNSs, with younger users spending more time on sites, more likely to engage with activities such as photo-posting (with the exception of family photos) and impression management (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012), and more likely to utilize Facebook for social (vs. informational) purposes (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012).

Social media are used primarily for interacting with other users by sharing and posting comments, linking with other people, and uploading photos (Garcia & Sikström, 2014). The widespread availability of mobile devices with built-in cameras has enabled SNS users to capture and document significant life moments and share these with others by posting photos online (Eftekhar, Fullwood, & Morris, 2014). Users are estimated to upload over 2 billion photos to Facebook per month (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011).

With photos becoming an increasingly utilized tool in online communication, self-presentation, and self-promotion (e.g., Eftekhar et al., 2014), and with the weight they carry in impression formation (e.g.,

Scott & Hand, 2016), it is important to understand how SNS users interact with this media and why individuals post photos online.

Recognising that online behaviours may reflect personality characteristics offline, researchers have studied how individual differences influence the utilization of different Facebook functions. Eftekhar et al. (2014) found that extraversion predicted having more friends, photo uploads and cover photos, while neuroticism predicted more photo uploads and photo albums. However Ross et al. (2009, p. 578) found that the traditional big five personality variables were “not as influential as previous literature would suggest” in predicting Facebook use. This led researchers to examine individual difference variables that might be more salient in explaining variation in uptake of Facebook features, such as their utilization for self-presentation (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008), belonging, and social interaction (Seidman, 2013). Recent studies have examined Narcissism as a self-presentation variable that impacts Facebook use (e.g., Ryan & Xenos, 2011), as well as variables reflecting difficulties in social interactions and relationships, such as Shyness, Loneliness and Social Anxiety.

Narcissism is a personality trait typical of individuals with an over-inflated understanding of their own importance or value (Krishnan & Atkin, 2014). Narcissists derive gratification from attracting admiration from others and enjoy using Facebook as it satisfies their need to engage in self-promotion (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Facebook users with high narcissism scores are more likely to share self-promoting posts and photos, believing other users find information about them interesting (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Narcissism is significantly positively correlated with frequency of posting photos of oneself (Bergman, Ferrington,

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Davenport, & Bergman, 2011), but not with posting photos in general (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). This suggests narcissists prefer the features of Facebook that afford self-promotion (e.g., updating Facebook status, changing profile photo) rather than posting photos in general. This demonstrates that considering 'photo posting' behaviour online as a single category may be too general, and that users may be more or less likely to post different categories of photo based on the intended outcome. Given their self-absorption, narcissists may be more likely to post "selfies" and other categories of photo relating to self-promotion.

Shyness is a factor that inhibits people from engaging in face-to-face social situations (Zimbardo, Pilkonis, & Norwood, 1974). SNSs are attractive to shy people, as there is no face-to-face interaction involved in online settings, making them feel more secure (Stritzke, Nguyen, & Durkin, 2004). Shy individuals enjoy some aspects of Facebook (e.g., sharing photos, videos, and updating status) however they tend to reveal less personal information online, compared to less shy individuals. The number and type of photos shy users share has not been investigated. Previous findings suggest that Facebook fails to facilitate intimate contact between shy users, creating false illusions of close friendships (Sheldon, 2013). Shy individuals may be less likely to post photos containing personal information, but be equally likely to post other categories of photos. They may also be less likely to comment on others' photos.

Loneliness refers to a negative emotion experienced when there is a perceived inconsistency between one's desired and experienced interpersonal relationships (Jin, 2013). Approximately 20% of individuals report loneliness as a major source of unhappiness (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). One theory suggests that lonely people tend to avoid engaging in SNSs due to poor social abilities (Correa, Hinsley, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2010), while another argues that lonely people enjoy using SNSs, viewing them as useful sources of interaction (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003). Lonelier users tend to spend more time on Facebook in an attempt to find companionship and emotional support (Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008), but have fewer online friends and disclose less personal information compared to less lonely individuals (Sheldon, 2013). This suggests lonely individuals have concerns about online self-disclosure but to our knowledge no study has investigated the effect of loneliness on photo sharing. Lonely individuals may share fewer photos, particularly those categories relating to self-disclosure, but loneliness may not impact on commenting on others' photos.

Social anxiety is defined as fear or embarrassment in social situations, which is related to fear of being judged (Murphy & Tasker, 2011). Socially anxious individuals feel uncomfortable or distressed in social situations, potentially leading to social withdrawal and eventual impairment of behaviour in face-to-face interactions. Individuals with high levels of social anxiety may compensate for their offline difficulties by engaging in interactions online (Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzan, & Gaddis, 2011). Alternatively, those with high social anxiety tend to disclose less personal information online (Bonetti, Campbell, & Gilmore, 2010), suggesting they are less likely to post photos of any type, or to comment on others' photos.

The aim of the current study was to further examine the impact of these individual difference variables, as well as age and time spent on Facebook, on behaviours related to posting photos on Facebook. Specifically, we investigated not just how likely individuals were to post photos on Facebook, but the likelihood, and frequency, of different categories of photos being posted, and users' likelihood of commenting on others' photos. Eleven photo categories were identified: family, significant-other, friends, pets, parties, self, travels, sports, food, achievements and other. We predicted that the individual difference variables would impact on posting photos of different categories, with narcissism positively predicting posting self-promoting photos such as selfies, shyness negatively predicting both posting personal photos and also commenting on others' photos, and loneliness negatively predicting photo-posting behaviour, particularly of personal photos. We also

predicted that that age (negatively) and time on Facebook (positively) would predict photo-posting behaviour.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Design

A cross-sectional design examined participants' Age, time spent on Facebook daily (Time), and the personality variables: Narcissism, Shyness, Loneliness, and Social Anxiety on their photo posting behaviour – both whether or not they post photos (Likelihood) and how often they posted photos (Frequency) – on Facebook for photos of different categories: family significant other, friends, pets, parties, selfies, travel, sports, food, achievements, and 'other'.

### 2.2. Participants

A total of 264 participants, 75 males and 189 females ranging in age from 16 to 72 years ( $M = 31.65$ ,  $SD = 13.24$ ) took part. All indicated on a yes/no question that they currently have a Facebook account. The majority of participants were British (78.2%), 17.7% were White European, 2.0% were White North American, and 1.4% of participants identified as mixed race. All participants were recruited via adverts on Facebook and Twitter and completed the questionnaire voluntarily.

### 2.3. Materials

Participants completed a questionnaire that asked about their Facebook behaviours and individual difference variables: Narcissism, Shyness, Loneliness, and Social Anxiety.

#### 2.3.1. Facebook behaviours

The Facebook section of the questionnaire asked how much time participants spent on Facebook daily and how often they posted photos in 11 categories identified by the researchers: family, significant-other, friends, pets, parties, self, travels, sports, food, achievements and other. Frequency of posting was measured on a nine-point scale from "Less than once per year" (1) to "More than once daily" (9). A mean frequency of posting score across the categories was also derived. Participants were also asked about their frequency of commenting on others' pictures, using the same scale.

#### 2.3.2. Personality measures

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory Version 3 (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) is a short 16-item measure of narcissism. It consists of pairs of statements, one narcissistic and the other not, from which participants are required to select the one that best applies to them, their final score being a sum of their narcissistic choices (out of 16). The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek & Briggs, 1990) was used to measure shyness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.898$ ). The total score was the mean of 13 items answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The UCLA Loneliness Scale version 3 (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978) was used to measure loneliness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.963$ ). The total score was the sum of a 20-item questionnaire with items answered on a 4-point scale (0–3). Social anxiety was measured using the 24 item Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (Liebowitz, 1987), with total score a sum of the avoidance and fear/anxiety of situations subscales. Participants indicated the level of anxiety they experienced in different situations, such as "Entering a room when others are already seated." on a 4-point Likert Scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.994$ ).

### 2.4. Procedure

The questionnaire was presented via the online survey tool SurveyMonkey which participants accessed via links on Facebook and Twitter. To ensure anonymity, participants entered a unique identifier

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