

Ethics Assessment Form:

Before submitting your research project proposal for approval by the local Ethics Commission of Universität Hamburg's Department of Informatics, please use this questionnaire to think through the potential ethical aspects and challenges of your research project and potential ways of mitigating ethical risks. To apply for approval, please then submit the filled-out and signed form to the ethics commission in time. You can find the submission deadlines and dates for the commission's hearing on the website: <https://www.inf.uni-hamburg.de/home/ethics.html>. You can contact the ethics commission via email on ethikkommission@informatik.uni-hamburg.de

Disclaimer: Ensuring research ethics (and legal compliance) is the responsibility of the researchers conducting the individual research projects. This means it is their task to think through the ethical aspects and potential problems of their research throughout the research process and to incorporate research ethics into their projects' design. This should be done before applying to the local Ethics Commission. The commission can then approve that this has been done appropriately. The questionnaire provided by the Ethics Commission presents a tool for researchers to think through the ethical dimensions of their project.

For all applicants:

Project Title: Effects of Financial Security and Social Media Usage on Stress Levels

Principal Investigator (PI):

Name	Institution/Faculty	Email
John Doe	Department of Informatics, Universität Hamburg	John.doe@example.com

Project Funding: Self-Financed

Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

The Principal Investigator and fellow researchers do not have any financial, professional, or personal conflict of interest. This purpose of this study is purely academic.

Research Description

1. In about 250-500 words, please provide a brief description of the research project you are seeking the approval of the ethics commission for. Please be aware that members of the commission may not be from your field. Please explain technical terms or use language accessible to people outside your field.

Answer: This study will explore two potential **contributors to stress-levels in consenting, adults: social-media usage and financial security.**

- Financial security in terms of the participants' ability to meet their current financial needs and the participants' satisfaction with this ability.
- Social media usage in terms of number of hours spent on social media platform i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok etc., and overall emotional and psychological response after social media engagement.

The research will be conducted via an **online questionnaire**. This will ensure equal opportunity for participation across the population. Data from the following will be disregarded to ensure ethical standards and scope of the study:

- non-consenting minors
- individuals with pre-existing severe, mental health conditions that require clinical intervention or active treatment

Data collected from participants will be **anonymized** and participation will be voluntary, with the option to **withdraw at any time**. The questionnaire is also designed to ensure that the data cannot be traced back to the original participants even with anonymous data.

The findings of the study aim to healthy social media habits and financial resilience by understanding how each of these factors affect the stress levels of person, if at all.

2. What are your research goals?

Answer: The goal of this study is to better understand how financial stability or the perception of it influences an individual's stress levels, identify any observed patterns or correlation. Alongside this is another factor: social-media usage. The study aims to explore the effects of social media usage on stress levels as well.

This can contribute to **stress management interventions** and also understand the **stress-causing factors for the general public.**

3. Briefly name and explain your research methods (e.g. experimental, qualitative or quantitative methods). Here you may add material that helps the commission understand the planned procedure such as for instance schematic overviews over the experimental setup.

Answer: Quantitative research methods will be used in this study. The study will be conducted via an online questionnaire. The procedure of the study will be as follows:

- Participant Recruitment: Participants will be recruited from different backgrounds via online forums.
- Data Collection: Participants will fill out a questionnaire that includes:
 - **A: Personal Information:** Questions including age, financial status, satisfaction with financial status
 - **B: General Stress Assessment:** General questions about the stress levels of the participant, some based off on State-Trait Anxiety Inventory.
 - **C: Social Media Usage:** Assessment of frequency and type of engagement with social media platforms
 - **D: Stress Assessment:** Assessment of the general emotional and psychological state of the participant after social media usage.

Please answer where applicable:

Human Participants

4. Does your study involve human participants?

Answer: Yes

5. Who are the human participants of your study and how do you recruit them?

Answer: The participants will be adults who can provide **informed consent** and **use any major social media platform** i.e Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter. Research will be conducted through a questionnaire online. This will ensure diversity in terms of background of the population and avoid bias. Recruitment material will clearly state the purpose of the study, data collected and its analysis. It will also be emphasized that participation is voluntary and that the data cannot be traced back to them.

6. Are there any vulnerable groups among your participants or participants who cannot fully give informed consent, e.g., minors, people with dementia, or other health conditions, and so forth? If yes, how do you take the ethical issues arising from this into consideration?

Answer: No. All participants are asked for their age in the questionnaire and only the data of eligible participants (adult & able to give informed consent) is used, after it has been pseudonymized.

7. If you are conducting research with vulnerable groups, please explain why particular research with this group is necessary for your research aims and why this research could not be conducted with a non-vulnerable group. Please also explain in which way your research benefits this group and what you do to further this group's well-being.

Answer: This research is not being conducted with vulnerable groups.

8. Is there any possibility that your experiment may have a negative impact on the physical or mental health or well-being of the participants? If so, how do you plan to mitigate this risk?

Answer: While unlikely, participants might be comfortable when it comes to answering questions about their financial security and stress. In such a situation:

- The participants will be reminded about the voluntary nature of the study and their choice to withdraw at any point.
- The participants will also be allowed to skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. This will also be useful in revising the questionnaire by considering how many and which questions go unanswered.

9. Is there any possibility of discovering previously unknown conditions (incidental findings), such as medical diagnoses, and if so, how do you plan to react to such results?

Answer: No.

Informed Consent

10. How do you ensure that research participants have full understanding of the research purpose, collected data and its use and the nature of their participation? How do you establish informed consent? Please also submit the informed consent form you plan to use.

Answer: The purpose of the research is described in the beginning of the questionnaire as well as the consent form that will be presented to the participants. It is also made clear to the participants in the consent form how their data is collected and analysed. We will ensure that the participants understand this data collection by asking them brief questions in the consent form after they have gone through the material:

- Do you understand the purpose of the study?
- Do you understand how your data will be collected?
- Do you understand how your data will be analysed?
- Do you understand how your data will be anonymized?

11. Are there any hurdles for establishing informed consent in your research or does your research design prohibit the rigorous establishment of informed consent? Please explain how. Please also explain why an alternative research design is not possible for your research purpose. How do you plan to mitigate the negative effects of this circumstance and which mechanism of briefing and debriefing do you have in place?

Answer: There are minimal hurdles considering it is an online questionnaire. However, the obstacles may occur due to:

- Participants may not fully read or understand the consent form
- It may be difficult to verify age of the participant as it self-reporting

Alternate Design:

No alternate design, such as in-person data-collection, is possible as it limits the sample diversity and size that would not be limited otherwise (through online platforms). Anonymity and convenience of online-survey may also be compromised in a face-to-face setting.

Mitigation Measure:

- Consent Form: Participants will be required to sign a comprehensive digital consent form that ensures transparency in data collection and analysis.
- Age verification: Responses from non-consenting individuals will simply not be collected/stored.

Data Protection and Privacy

12. Does your study involve the processing of data about people or generated by their activity?

Answer: Yes, the study involves processing data about self-report stress levels, perception of financial security, and social media usage.

13. Do you collect any personal or personally identifiable data? Do you collect any sensitive data (cf. Art. 9 GDPR)?

Answer: No directly identifiable data, such as name, address, workplace, will be collected. Only demographic data such as age, and employment status will be collected. Sensitive information such as racial/ethnic origin, health-related data will not be collected.

It should also be clarified that while questions about financial status might be considered sensitive, no data is collected or asked for about the participants' income, source(s) of income. Only the participants' level of satisfaction with their financial status is asked for.

14. If so, how do you ensure the protection of this data? How is it stored and transferred? Who will have access?

Answer: Even though no sensitive data is collected, the following safety measure will be taken:

- Responses from the questionnaire will be anonymized and participants will be identified via randomized alphanumeric codes.
- All data will be stored on secure, encrypted servers.
- Only principal investigator and research team members will have access to the data.
- Access will be restricted via password protected accounts that only respective authorized users know.

15. Do you use any third-party providers or services that may have access to research or personal data? Please explain why no alternative ways of data processing are possible and how you plan to mitigate negative effects.

Answer: Yes, online survey platform such as Google Forms, will be used as they use HTTPS encryption, ensuring data remains confidential even during transmission. Once

data collection is complete, data will be downloaded, anonymized and removed from the collection platform.

Publication and sharing of data and research results

16. In what form will you publish or distribute your research results, or the data collected? Do you consider the FAIR principles? (Wilkinson, Mark D., et al. "The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship." Scientific data 3.1 (2016): 1-9.)

Answer: The research will be published in peer-review **academic journals** and presented at **relevant conferences**. Only anonymized data will be shared, ensuring original participants cannot be traced to.

To align with the FAIR principles:

- **Findable:** Dataset will include metadata
- **Accessible:** Upon request through data repositories that uphold ethical standards, an anonymized version of the dataset can be made available.
- **Interoperable:** The data will be formatted in a way to ensure collaboration and integration with other researches.
- **Reusable:** Other researchers can responsibly reuse and understand data via licensing.

17. How do you anonymize/pseudonymize data? Do any publications include personal or sensitive data or the potential for reidentification or abuse? If so, how do you plan to mitigate risks stemming from this?

Answer: The questionnaire **does not include personal or sensitive data** that can be used for re-identification or abuse. No names, nationality, email or other identifying factors are asked for. Each response to the questionnaire is assigned a random ID and therefore, cannot be traced back to the actual participant, and the response can still be followed-up on and re-analyzed, if needed.

Responsible Disclosure

18. Does your research bear the potential to identify cybersecurity risks or vulnerabilities or risks to the security of infrastructures? If so, how does your research contribute to closing these vulnerabilities? What procedures for responsible disclosure do you intend to follow?

Answer: No.

Dual Use

19. Does your research, your research results or publication thereof bear the potential for abuse, malicious use, or the violations of laws and personal and human rights in the future? If so, in what way do you plan to mitigate the potential for such dual use?

Please note that much research carries the potential for misuse, the intention here is to reflect on whether this is especially so in the proposed study.

Answer: This research has minimal potential for abuse or malicious use as it is focused on aggregated patterns of stress, financial security, and social media usage.

20. A serious concern with respect to dual use, is the possibility that seemingly unrelated research might be repurposed to service military ends. Does your research, your research results or publication thereof bear the potential for such military use? If so, in what way do you plan to mitigate the potential for such dual use?

Answer: This study has no foreseeable application for military use as it is behavioral study concerning public health.

However, to mitigate unintended use, findings will only be released through reputable academic and professional channels that uphold ethical standards.

You are required to abide by the “Civil Clause” of the Faculty of Mathematics, Informatics and Natural Sciences: *“The Faculty of Mathematics, Informatics and Natural Sciences (MIN) only contributes to peaceful goals and civil purposes. Therefore, its members direct their research and development, teaching, and learning to civil issues and applications.”*

See: <https://www.min.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/zivilklausel.html>

Other Relevant Information or Issues

21. Are there any other relevant ethical issues, challenges or problems that you wish to bring to the attention of the ethics commission? Is there any other information you find relevant for the ethics assessment?

Answer: All challenges or issues and their mitigation measures have been mentioned.

Declaration

I hereby confirm that the information provided is truthful, accurate and complete.

XYZ (Location, Date) 10.12.2024 Signature: Jane Doe