THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SELF EXPRESSION

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

In English 10

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A Research Report

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**ABSTRACT**

Social media has emerged as a powerful medium for self-expression, influencing the way people communicate, represent themselves, and express their views. This research investigates the impact of social media on self-expression, with emphasis on how it affects confidence in expressing personal views, the general effect on personal expression, and the positive and negative effects of online self-presentation. Results suggest that social media allows for creativity, self-expression, and free-flowing conversation, but creates difficulty in the form of self-censorship, social comparison, and conformity to societal norms.

While others become empowered by digital expression, there are others who cannot cope with the ill effects of online validation. The research also points to how various social media platforms condition self-expression, as visual platforms induce aesthetic representation while text-based ones induce verbal representation. The findings underscore the imperative for digital literacy education, the design changes on platforms to decrease pressures of social validation, and mental health support tools in creating a more healthful online experience.

This research adds to the current debate about digital identity and self-presentation, shedding light on the nuances of social media's impact on personal expression. Additional research is suggested to study the long-term psychological and social effects of online self-expression in various populations.

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**CHAPTER 1**

**THE RESEARCH AND ITS BACKGROUND**

**Introduction**

Social media can seem like an artificial world in which people’s lives consist entirely of exotic vacations, thriving friendships, and photogenic, healthy meals. In fact, there is an entire industry built around people’s desire to present idealistic self-representations on social media. Popular applications like Face Tune, for example, allow users to modify everything about themselves, from skin tone to the size of their physical features. In line with this “self-idealization perspective”, research has shown that self-expressions on social media platforms are often idealized, exaggerated, and unrealistic. That is, social media users often act as virtual curators of their online selves by staging or editing content they present to others.

A contrasting body of research suggests that social media platforms constitute extensions of offline identities, with users presenting relatively authentic versions of themselves. While users might engage in some degree of self-idealization, the social nature of the platforms is thought to provide a degree of accountability that prevents individuals from starkly misrepresenting their identities. This is particularly true for platforms such as Facebook, where the majority of friends in a user’s network also have an offline connection. In fact, modern social media sites like Facebook and Instagram are far more realistic than early social media websites such as Second Life, where users presented themselves as avatars that were often fully divorced from reality. In line with this authentic self-expression perspective, research has shown that individuals on Facebook are more likely to express their actual rather than their idealized personalities

The desire to present the self in a way that is ideal and authentic is not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, an individual is likely to desire both simultaneously. This occurs in part because self-idealization and authentic self-expression fulfill different psychological needs and are associated with different psychological costs. On the one hand, self-idealization has been called a “fundamental part of human nature” because it allows individuals to cultivate a positive self-view and to create positive impressions of themselves in others. In addition, authentic self-expression allows individuals to verify and affirm their sense of self which can increase self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. On the other hand, self-idealizing behavior can be psychologically costly, as acting out of character is associated with feelings of internal conflict, psychological discomfort, and strong emotional reactions; individuals may also possess characteristics that are more or less socially desirable, bringing their desire to present themselves in an authentic way into conflict with their desire to present the best version of themselves.

Here, we explore the tension between self-idealization and authentic self-expression on social media, and test how prioritizing one over the other impacts users’ well-being. We focus our analysis on a core component of the self: personality.  Personality captures fundamental differences in the way that people think, feel and behave, reflecting the psychological characteristics that make individuals uniquely themselves. Building on the Five Factor Model of personality, we test the extent to which authentic self-expression of personality characteristics are related to Life Satisfaction, hypothesizing that greater authentic self-expression will be positively correlated with Life Satisfaction. In exploratory analyses, we also consider whether this relationship is moderated by the personality characteristics of the individual. That is, not all individuals might benefit from authentic self-expression equally. Given that some personality traits are more socially desirable than others, individuals who possess more desirable personality traits are likely to experience a reduced tension between self-idealization and authentic self-expression. Consequently, individuals with more socially desirable profiles might disproportionality benefit from authentic self-expression because the motivational pulls of self-idealization and authentic self-expression point in the same rather than the opposite direction.

Previous literature on authentic self-expression has predominantly relied on self-reported perceptions of authenticity as a state of feeling authentic, or a judgement about the honesty or consistency of one’s self. However, such self-reported measures have been shown to be biased by valence states, and social desirability. To overcome these limitations, in Study 1 we introduce a measure of Quantified Authenticity. If authenticity is most simply defined as the unobstructed expression of one’s self, then authenticity can be estimated as the proximity of an individual’s self-view and their observable self-expression. We calculate Quantified Authenticity by comparing self-reported personality to personality judgements made by computers on the basis of observable behaviors on Facebook (i.e., Likes and status updates).

By observing self-presentation on social media and comparing it to the individual’s self-view, we are able to quantify the extent to which an individual deviates from their authentic self. That is, we locate each individual on a continuum that ranges from low authenticity (i.e., large discrepancy between the self-view and observable self-expression) to high authenticity (i.e., perfect alignment between the self-view and observable self-expression). Importantly, our approach rests on the assumption that any deviation from the self-view on social media constitutes an attempt to present oneself in a more positive light, and therefore a form of self-idealization. While a deviation could theoretically indicate both self-idealization and self-deprecation, it is unlikely that users will deviate from their true selves in a way that makes them look worse in the eyes of others. A strength of our measures is that we do not postulate that self-idealization takes a particular form of deviation from the self or is associated with striving for a particular profile. Although research suggests that there are certain personality traits that are more desirable on average the extent to which a person sees scoring high or low on a given trait is likely somewhat idiosyncratic and depends at least in part on other people in their social network. For example, behaving in a more extraverted way might be self-enhancing for most people; however, there might be individuals for whom behaving in a more introverted way might be more desirable (e.g. because the norm of their social network is more introverted). Hence, our conceptualization of Quantified Authenticity allows for deviations in different directions (see Supplementary Information for more detail).

**Statement of the Problem**

This research focuses on the effects of social media on self-expression, particularly how it influences individuals, ability to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and identities. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does social media influence confidence in expressing personal opinions?
2. How does social media impact individual’s self-expression?
3. What are the positive and negative effects of social media on self-expression?

**Scope and Limitation**

The study will examine the relationship between social media usage and self-expression, focusing on the influence of social media on identity formation, self-presentation, and emotional expressions.

This research focuses on be conducted among young adults age 18-25 in the Philippines, and will explore effects of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter on self-expression. The young adults in the Philippines, which may not be representative of the entire global population. Additionally, the study will rely on self-reported data from surveys and interviews, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. Furthermore, the study will only examine the impact of social media on self-expressions, and will not consider other factors that may influence self-expression, such as family and cultural background.

However, despite these limitations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the impact of social media on self-expression among young adults in the Philippines. According to a study by Gonzales and Hancock (2011), social media has become an essential tool for self-expression and identity formation, highlighting the importance of understanding the impact of social media on self-expression.

**Significance of the Study**

The presentation is about the effect of social media on self-expression and how it will benefit future researchers, students and teachers.

Future Researchers. Social media helps future researchers because they can immediately find out what they know and what they have learned through social media. It helps them in how to do research because they can watch how research is done. This helps them in how to do their research. Once they have learned, they will then research what they have learned and the topic and they will know how to what they need to do as future researchers.

Student. The social media is helpful to students because their needs to answer or research are on social media, which makes it easier for them to find what they need to find and this is really helpful because it makes it easier to find what their teacher is asking them to research about history or anything else. Because of social media, they can easily find out what they are researching about school

Teachers. Social media can be beneficial for teachers in self-expression because it helps them with their school works. It also necessary for their work. If they can get the topics and teach them to their students, students can learn what they don’t know and the topic comes from social media. Then what the teacher has already studied will be taught to their students.

**Definition of Terms**

The following important terms are defined based on the context or how they were used in the study:

**Digital Identity**. In this study, digital identity was defined as an individual’s online persona, self-presentation, and personal information shared across digital platforms, as measured by the consistency of their media profiles, the extent of personal information disclosed, and their engagement in online interaction.

**Online Disinhibition Effects**. In this study, online disinhibition effect was defined as an individual’s tendency to express thoughts, emotions or behaviors more openly and with less restraint in online interactions compared to face-to-face communication.

**Self Esteem**. In this study, self-esteem wad defines as an individual’s perceived level of self-worth and confidence.

**Self-Expression**. In this study, self-expression was defined as an individual’s ability to communicate their thoughts, emotions. Ideas, and identity through various means, such as words, actions, images, or creative content.

**Self-Validation**. In this study, self-validation was defined as an act of accepting our own internal experience, including our thoughts and feelings.

**Social Media**. In this study, social media was defined as an online platform used for communication, content sharing, and interaction among users, including text, images, videos, and other digital media.