# **A Study on Online Communication Practices**

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**1.0** **Background**

This study is to study social media usage patterns of individuals. Specifically, we wish to study the factors that lead people not to use certain social media sites/services or abandon the sites/services or restrict their engagement with the sites/services. In some cases, people leave a site/service (i.e. deactivate their account) and come back after some time. We would like to explore these types of behaviors and uncover what causes them.

**2.0 Rationale and Specific Aims**

There has been little research on this subgroup of social media (non-)users, and we will try to understand why certain individuals resist, abandon, or lurk. This study will help us explore and understand the factors behind why people make these decisions regarding social media.

**3.0** **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

* At least 18 years of age.
* Have been residing in the U.S. for at least 5 years.

**4.0** **Enrollment/Randomization**

Users will be recruited via advertisements posted to IUClassified, Facebook, Craigslist, mailing lists, and forums as well as via Flyers distributed at approved locations on the Indiana University, Bloomington campus. The advertisements will direct them to a link to a brief 1-minute online screening questionnaire. We will utilize the responses to the screening questionnaire to select participants for the study, which will involve a 30-45 minute in-person/phone/skype interview conducted on-campus at Indiana University, Bloomington. For the study, we will interview 50 participants residing in the USA for more than 5 years. We will select interview participants based on the answers to the screening questionnaire. We will exclude anyone under the age of 18 and who has not resided in the US for at least 5 years. The residency criteria will help us ensure sufficient cultural homogeneity in the sample. Moreover, we will select those whose answers provide indications of resisting, abandoning, or lurking on Facebook. Among these, we will strive to create a diverse mix of across ages and professions/majors and a balanced mix of genders.

**5.0** **Study Procedures**

Users interested in participating in our study will first fill out a screening questionnaire (see #4 above). Those who qualify and are selected for participation (see #4 above) will be invited for a 30-45 minute in-person/phone/skype interview with one of the researchers. The in-person interviews will be conducted on-campus at Indiana University, Bloomington. Upon consent, we will interview participants following a semi-structured interview format based on our interview guide prepared in advance. The actual interview may deviate from the guide as appropriate to maintain a natural conversation flow and probe for deeper insight. The guide will be continually updated based on insight gained from each interview. The conversations will be audio-recorded with the interviewee's permission. Additionally, we may make written notes during the interview as needed.

**6.0** **Reporting of Adverse Events or Unanticipated Problems involving Risk to Participants or Others**

While we do not anticipate any adverse events or problems during our study, any events that do happen will be reported formally to the IRB within 24 hours in case of an emergency and within 2 weeks otherwise.

**7.0** **Study Withdrawal/Discontinuation**

A participant is free to withdraw participation at any time during the study.

**8.0** **Statistical Considerations**

Our study is qualitative and the analyses of the data will be done manually by the researchers using qualitative analysis techniques. Participation is restricted to those who have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years to reduce the impact of cultural differences on the findings (see #4 above). Participants will be sought via convenience and snowball sampling.

**9.0** **Privacy/Confidentiality Issues**

There will be no direct identifiers linked with the data that we collect. Any names, contact information, and other identifiers will be used by the researchers only for the purposes of contacting participants for arranging the interview. The contact information will be discarded once the interview has taken place. Further, any contact information will be kept separate from participant responses to interviews. All participants will be assigned a random identifier without any link to their email or any other identifying information. All analyses and reporting will be anonymous such that no connection or inference could be made to the real identities of the participants.

**10.0** **Follow-up and Record Retention**

Email addresses or any other contact/identifying information used for the purposes of arranging the interview will be destroyed after the interview. Audio-recordings of the interviews will be destroyed immediately upon transcription. Anonymized interview transcripts and screening questionnaire responses will be retained 3 years or until the conclusion of publication of the study findings, whichever is later.