

**Digital Identity Construction of LinkedIn Users: An Analytical Study of Discursive Practices**

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**Received:** 14-02-2026

**Revised:** 26-02-2026

**Accepted:** 12-03-2026

**Published:** 27-03-2026

**ABSTRACT**

*Digital identity construction on LinkedIn has appeared as an important area of investigation, mainly in relation to how individuals create and present themselves on social media platforms for professional networking. As an internationally acclaimed platform, the function of LinkedIn is not only limited to its role as a best tool for job seeking and recruiting but also as a discursive space where individuals consciously shape and negotiate their professional personas. These discursive practices understood through the frameworks of scholars such as Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak offer insight into the complex interplay between language, society, and power in digital contexts. This study investigates the concept of "digital identity" with a particular focus on how Goffman's (1959) theories of impression management, front stage, and backstage behavior manifest in online self-presentation. Particularly, it focuses on how users employ LinkedIn to construct their professional identities, and to what extent these digitally mediated identities bring into line with, or diverge from, their offline identities.*

**Keywords:** Digital Identity, LinkedIn, Discursive Practices

**INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

The construction of digital identity on professional networking platforms has gained increasing scholarly attention, mainly concerning how users curate their professional selves in dynamic, algorithm-driven environments. LinkedIn, as a platform specifically designed for professional networking, has become a central point for understanding how individuals present themselves in ways that align with professional expectations while navigating the inherent tensions between authenticity, platform constraints, and strategic self-promotion.

Barnett (2019) investigated how entrepreneurs in Aotearoa/New Zealand employ LinkedIn to build and communicate their professional identities. The study focused on whether LinkedIn could be a feasible medium for presenting a *true* digital persona and foregrounded the *identity tensions* and *meta-identity conflicts* that may result in this context. Through qualitative methods, Barnett adopted a two-dimensional analytical framework to assess identity issues specific to the LinkedIn platform. Drawing from the experiences of entrepreneurial professionals in the region, the results of the study showed that the participants frequently used LinkedIn to develop, refine, and enhance their professional brands. However, this process was not without resistance. The features of the platform often created tensions between the professional roles of the users and the more fluid, personalized identity representations encouraged by LinkedIn. Barnett concluded that these tensions have implications not only for professional branding but also for educational institutions and entrepreneurship training programs, suggesting that deeper understanding of such discursive dynamics

could help small business owners more effectively craft their online identities.

Van Dijck (2013) while examining the social networking platforms on broader level, addressed the power struggles inherent in identity construction on platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. This study focused on the interplay between users, employers, and platform owners in shaping and controlling public personas. Van Dijck said that social media platforms assist as mediators of identity, but also as gatekeepers who exert influence over how identities are constructed and perceived. The study compared Facebook and LinkedIn, noting that although both platforms employ similar identity-building strategies, they are directed at distinct audiences. While Facebook is geared toward personal self-presentation and social engagement, LinkedIn is structured to support professional branding and career development. For instance, LinkedIn's "People You May Know" (PYMK) algorithm actively fosters network growth and encourages users to expand their professional connections. Van Dijck noted that such platform features have a profound influence on how users engage with their identities and how they perform self-presentation, often aligning their behaviors with the perceived expectations of prospective employers or collaborators.

In order to improve their social as well as professional funding, individuals are encouraged by Facebook and LinkedIn to highlight their accomplishments and abilities. The level of agency as well as authenticity users possess through these identity functions is also called into doubt, though. Although LinkedIn may enable users to create more ambitious professional identities, it also exposes them to monitoring and normative evaluations that influence their online behavior. As a result, social media accounts not only support certain identities additionally subtly influence how users behave. In the career realm, where one's online profile may greatly influence prospects in the actual world, these issues are especially pertinent. Van Dijck's research emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend the dominance dynamics ingrained in platform design and how they support ongoing digital identity struggle.

Li et al. (2018) used a computational linguistic method to address the identity formation problem. Using k-means clustering as well as latent semantic analysis (LSA), their study examined the self-descriptive jargon employed by LinkedIn members to investigate how individuals describe each other based on the assumed audience—friends or prospective employers. In each scenario, respondents were prompted to choose 10 words that best characterized them. Similar trends in the way people create their identities according to circumstances were shown by the researchers, who discovered nine different clusters of self-explanatory phrases. Particularly, it was discovered that while gender as well as age did not numerically substantially affect the semantic content of self-descriptions, interactions with others, recruiting status, as well as previous schooling performed.

This study advances our knowledge about the way internal (self-perception) as well as external (audience expectation) elements influence digital self-presentation. The capacity to forecast confident user traits from language choices demonstrates the manner in which identity-related factors may be inferred from linguistic data, indicating that individuals' self-presentations are both strategically and semantically planned. Crucially, the results highlight the influenced by context nature of identity creation on LinkedIn, with users modifying their appearance according to their goals of attracting professional possibilities or fostering social interactions. The "front stage" and "backstage" personalities are examples of how people act numerous representations of their own personalities according to the situation, which is consistent with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory.

The subjective sensations as well as identity conflicts that users encounter especially among creative professionals are highlighted by Barnett's (2019) qualitative results. Li et al. (2018) provide concrete proof of the language techniques used in digital self-expression and whereas Van Dijck (2013) broadens the conversation by investigating the platform-level relationships of power that influence the actions of users. Every research supports the idea that LinkedIn is a multidimensional socio-technical arena wherein identity is

constantly created, controlled, and occasionally disputed rather than just an unaltered professional socialization site.

Overall, the literature study indicates that a combination of network amenities, audience awareness, institutional demands, and decisions about language influence one's identity on LinkedIn. By critically analyzing the discursive techniques that users employ to express their professional identities, the present research expands on this collection of literature. It pays careful consideration to the extent that these activities either parallel or deviate beyond offline identity representations. The current study uses discourse analysis based on Fairclough's critical discourse approach as well as Goffman's theories of self-presentation to identify the tactics used by LinkedIn users to balance competence, integrity, and effective marketing in online environments.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***Participants***

Thirty people with at least 500 connections on LinkedIn and ties to the academic community made up the study sample. The participants were split up into two distinct groups: fifteen people who served as professors and fifteen people who held non-teaching roles like writers and researchers. In order to understand how identity was created by individuals in roles, two groups were identified and investigated. In addition, the study involved a methodical review of at least ten postings from each participant in order to collect the necessary data for analysis. The teachers were selected for this study through the research's social network. They represent 15 individuals from different schools, colleges, and universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The researcher's social network was used to choose the group's participants of non-teacher's group. There are fifteen people in this group, including researchers, food and nutrition writers, blog writers, ghostwriters, and content writers.

### ***Instrument***

This study relied on data collection through observations of profiles, visiting the participant's profiles, and semi-structured interviews. Researchers may acquire insights for the research by using semi-structured interviews to learn more about participants ideas, experiences, and opinions. These interviews may reveal hidden narratives and the research site culture.

### **Data Collection**

By looking at the participant profiles, the first round of data collection was completed. A well-designed structured observation sheet was utilized to facilitate the observations. The structured observation sheet has distinct categories based on the study objectives. The technique of gathering data then included conducting semi- structured interviews with the individuals.

### ***Visiting Participants' Profiles***

Prior to contacting the participants, permission to view their accounts was gained through the use of the web platform LinkedIn. The participant's consent was obtained, and the researchers proceeded to collect the necessary data by methodically reviewing their profiles for one and a half months. After that, the participants activity inside the chosen time frame was examined, and the researcher chose ten posts at random.

### *Interviews*

After the initial stage of the data observation, the participants were informed about the interview procedure, and after that, individual online interviews were performed utilizing the Zoom platform. The interview procedure placed significant importance on guaranteeing a reliable internet connection and optimal audibility. A total of 30 participants were interviewed based on their availability.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

This section examines and discusses the participant's role regarding identity construction based on data collected from participants' profiles.

#### **Statement 1: The participant's primary role is central to their presentation.**

All of the participants in both teacher and non-teacher groups strongly agreed that their primary roles are central to how they present their digital selves.

### **Analysis**

An in-depth analysis of the participants' LinkedIn profiles revealed that the *primary professional role* plays a central and organizing function in their digital identity construction. Across both groups educators and non-educators participants consistently anchored their online self-presentation in the context of their main occupational identity. This finding aligns with the broader literature on identity theory, which posits that individuals tend to organize their sense of self hierarchically, with certain roles taking precedence over others depending on social context and perceived importance (Burke & Stets, 2009).

While individuals inevitably juggle multiple social roles such as parent, sibling, athlete, or student it is the dominant, often professional, identity that is foregrounded in public-facing platforms like LinkedIn. For example, a participant may simultaneously identify as a brother, a cricket enthusiast, and a student, yet choose to highlight their role as a *teacher* on their profile. This selection is not accidental; rather, it reflects the perceived social relevance and prestige of the primary professional role in a networked, career-oriented environment. As Blumer (1962) observed in his foundational work on symbolic interactionism, social interaction begins with an assessment of the other's role and status, often encapsulated in the common introductory question: "*What do you do for a living?*" The response to this question not only communicates one's function in society but also serves as a shorthand for social categorization and relational mapping.

The study emphasized the strategic nature of this role-based self-presentation. On LinkedIn, users are prompted to construct an identity that projects competence, expertise, and credibility. This compels users to foreground a coherent, recognizable professional identity often their primary role which becomes the core around which other elements of the profile are organized. The prominence of this role is evident from the very structure of LinkedIn profiles: immediately following the user's name, the headline typically displays the job title or professional designation, not personal details such as age, educational background, or familial ties. This design choice reflects the platform's function as a space for professional networking and self-branding.

From the perspective of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of social interaction, the emphasis on the primary professional role can be interpreted as a deliberate *front-stage performance*. Goffman argues that individuals, much like actors in a play, perform roles that are contextually appropriate to the settings in which they find themselves. LinkedIn, as a professional stage, demands a particular kind of performance one that conforms to institutional expectations, audience norms, and the affordances of the digital platform. The participants in this study appeared highly conscious of this requirement. All thirty participants both from

academic and non-academic domains reported that their LinkedIn profiles prioritized the role that best represented their professional identity, such as "teacher," "researcher," or "writer." The participants did not mention secondary personal roles unless these were directly relevant to their professional image.

Moreover, the degree to which individuals identify with their primary role can be inferred from the depth and breadth of information they include on their profiles. Participants who viewed their professional role as central to their identity tended to elaborate more on their work experience, affiliations, certifications, and accomplishments. They also used more industry-specific language and curated their profiles to reflect professionalism and alignment with their occupational communities. This supports Burke and Stets' (2009) contention that identity salience is directly proportional to the amount of effort individuals invest in maintaining and displaying that identity.

Another compelling observation relates to how these identities are curated in ways that blur the boundary between the *online* and *offline* self. Many participants stated that the way they presented themselves on LinkedIn closely mirrored their real-world professional conduct and persona. This suggests that while digital platforms offer affordances for curated and sometimes idealized self-presentation, many users still aim for a certain level of *authenticity* or at least *coherence* with their offline identities. This convergence aligns with the findings of earlier studies (e.g., Barnett, 2019), which suggest that the desire to project an authentic professional identity often competes with the platform's promotional logic.

Importantly, this alignment between online and offline identity does not necessarily imply passivity or lack of strategy. Rather, users actively manage their front-stage performances in ways that meet both personal goals and external expectations. Goffman (1959) emphasized that performances are not inherently inauthentic; they are contextually tailored, purpose-driven, and audience-sensitive. In this case, the "audience" consists of peers, potential employers, collaborators, and professional communities each with their own expectations and norms. As such, the choice to highlight one's primary role is both a strategic and socially reinforced act.

In conclusion, the data affirms that primary professional roles are not only central to identity construction on LinkedIn but are also perceived by users as the most socially valuable and communicatively effective dimension of self-presentation. Participants navigate multiple roles in their personal lives, but their digital identity construction is overwhelmingly shaped by the role that offers the highest symbolic capital in professional contexts. Whether they are teachers, writers, or researchers, users orient their LinkedIn personas around these primary identities to establish credibility, network effectively, and participate meaningfully in platform-specific discourse. This underscores the central role of social roles in digital identity construction and highlights the ongoing interplay between personal identity, platform affordances, and audience expectations in the age of professional social media.



**Figure 1. Teacher's profile**





Figure 2. Teacher's profile

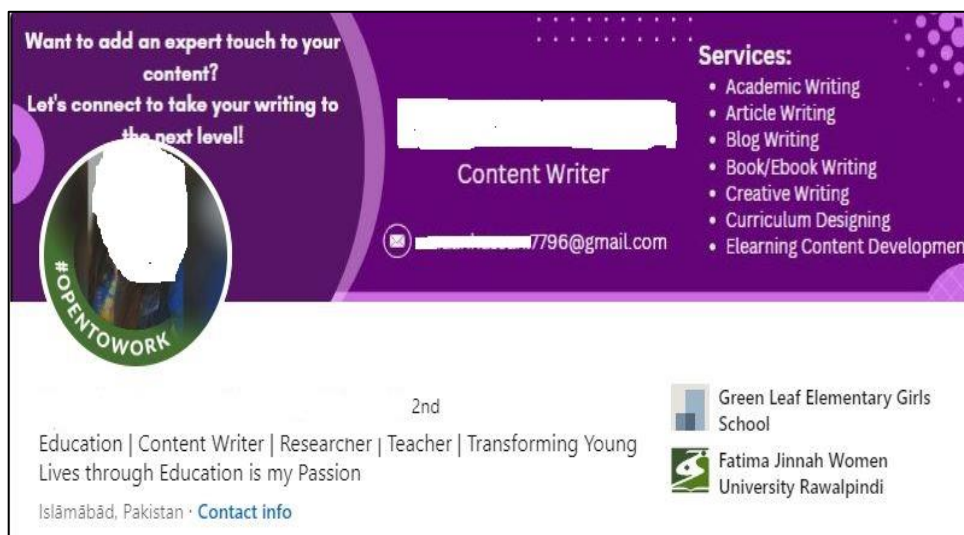


Figure 3. Non-Teacher's profile

In the context of digital identity formation, where individuals exercise a heightened level of agency and intentionality in curating their public personas, the *primary professional role* emerges as a foundational pillar around which the narrative of the self is constructed. This role is not merely a descriptor of occupational function; it operates as a symbolic anchor that influences the themes, tone, and content of digital self-representation. Soh et al. (2024) emphasize that primary roles serve as the central organizing principle for digital identities, shaping not only how individuals introduce themselves but also how they network and engage within professional communities.

The current study provides empirical support for this assertion. Analysis of the "About" sections of participants' LinkedIn profiles revealed a consistent emphasis on self-descriptions that revolved around participants' primary roles. This section, designed by the platform to allow users to articulate their professional persona, was treated by participants as a space for establishing credibility and coherence in relation to their main occupational identity. The language used was aspirational, skill-oriented, and aligned

with professional norms—clearly intended to enhance the participant’s visibility and attractiveness within their respective fields.

For instance, Participant 1 wrote:

*“Enthusiastic learner, eager to contribute to team success through hard work, attention to detail, and excellent communication skills... I am in the process of completing my MPhil thesis and am working full-time as an English Teacher.”*

This self-description is explicitly centered on the teaching role, incorporating relevant skills and aspirations that resonate with educational professionalism. Similarly, Participant 7 stated:

*“Experienced and MIEEE-certified Teacher with a demonstrated history of working in the education management industry... Strong education professional with a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication.”*

This participant foregrounds credentials and core competencies directly tied to the teaching profession, reinforcing the impression of a role-specific digital identity. Participant 24, who identifies as a writer, structured their self-presentation accordingly:

*“Writer and Poet from Rawalpindi, Pakistan... confident that I can make an instant impact in writer roles.”*

These examples illustrate that participants did not provide extraneous personal information or content irrelevant to their core professional roles. Instead, they used the “About” section strategically to craft a coherent and persuasive narrative that aligned with their occupational identity. This practice reflects Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical theory, where the “front stage” is meticulously managed to fit audience expectations. LinkedIn users, in this case, perform their roles in a way that satisfies the professional norms of their field while also fostering credibility, relatability, and trustworthiness.

In addition to profile summaries, participants’ posts on LinkedIn also reflected a consistent alignment with their primary roles. Whether through inspirational messages, reflections on pedagogical practices, or announcements of academic milestones, the content shared was deeply embedded in their professional domain. These posts functioned as ongoing discursive acts that reinforced their digital identity and strengthened their positioning within a professional network.

For example:

- **Participant 5** posted: *“Education teaches you how to play, but Experience teaches you when to take those right strokes... who is with me?”* -a motivational reflection aimed at educators and learners.
- **Participant 8** commented: *“I have noticed a trend among academics who often portray technological advancement as the worst thing....”* -signaling engagement with pedagogical debates and trends in higher education.
- **Participant 12** wrote: *“Honored to be part of a delegation sponsored by @USAID, visiting Trade Tech College Louisiana with colleagues from FJWU”* -presenting professional achievements and affiliations.

These posts are more than mere status updates; they are carefully curated textual performances that contribute to the ongoing maintenance and negotiation of one’s professional identity in the digital public sphere. Each of them references not only the participant’s role but also broader discourses within their professional field such

as education policy, teaching practice, or international collaboration thereby situating the speaker within an informed and active professional community.

Such discursive practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of *platform affordances*. LinkedIn encourages identity performance that is oriented around career goals and skill-based narratives. The platform's design and algorithmic logic reward consistency, professional signaling, and engagement with domain-relevant content. As such, users are incentivized to maintain identity coherence by posting content that reinforces their primary professional role. This form of digital impression management is in line with the expectations of both the platform and its audience.

The participants' deliberate exclusion of irrelevant personal information further highlights the boundary management strategies they employ. In contrast to platforms like Facebook or Instagram where a mixture of personal and social roles might be displayed LinkedIn fosters a culture of *role-specific discourse*. This echoes Van Dijck's (2013) distinction between "social" and "professional" identity construction across platforms, where LinkedIn encourages users to selectively showcase the aspects of self that are most likely to yield professional capital.

In conclusion, the current findings demonstrate that the primary professional role is not only central to digital identity formation but also serves as the lens through which individuals filter their discursive choices, platform interactions, and network affiliations. From profile summaries to posts, every aspect of the participants' LinkedIn activity reflects a strong orientation toward role-relevant self-presentation. These findings contribute to our understanding of identity as a performative and strategic process shaped by platform structures, audience expectations, and individual agency within digital spaces.

**Statement 2: The connections of participants include people from similar roles.**

All of the participants of both teacher and non-teacher groups connections showed people from the same fields.

**Analysis**

LinkedIn, like other social networking platforms, facilitates the formation of digital social circles through its "connections" feature. These connections reflect users' professional networks and play a vital role in shaping their digital identity. During the observation of participants' LinkedIn profiles, it became evident that most of their connections were closely aligned with their primary professional roles. Individuals predominantly connected with others from similar or related fields, creating a professional echo chamber that reinforced their digital personas.

For instance, participants who identified primarily as teachers had connections that included other educators, researchers, academic administrators, and instructors. Their digital networks were composed mainly of individuals engaged in educational and academic work, suggesting that their professional role significantly influenced whom they connected with and, by extension, how they curated their online presence. This pattern was also observed among participants from the writer group. Their networks largely consisted of fellow writers, freelancers, editors, poets, and academic professionals engaged in content creation or scholarly writing. These individuals shared similar professional identities and interests, creating a sense of role-based community within the platform.

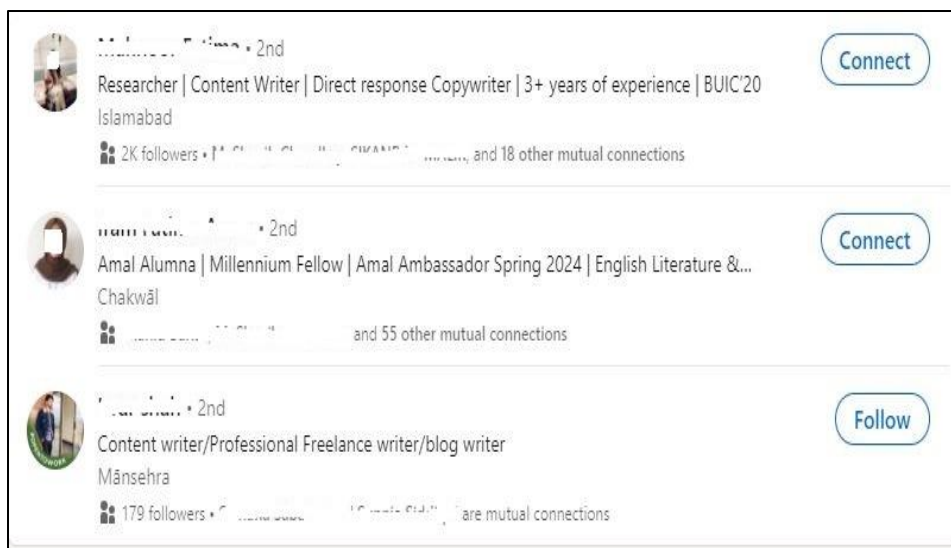
The clustering of connections around similar professional roles suggests that LinkedIn users tend to form digital social circles that align with their occupational identities. These circles not only provide validation and reinforcement for the individual's role-based identity but also function as a support network for professional



growth and recognition. This dynamic is consistent with Goffman's (1959) concept of role allies individuals who help validate and sustain a performer's identity in front-stage settings. Thus, the composition of a user's connections on LinkedIn plays a crucial role in the construction and maintenance of their digital identity, further emphasizing the centrality of the primary role in digital self-presentation. For example:



**Figure 4. Non-Teacher's profile**



**Figure 5. Non-Teacher's profile**

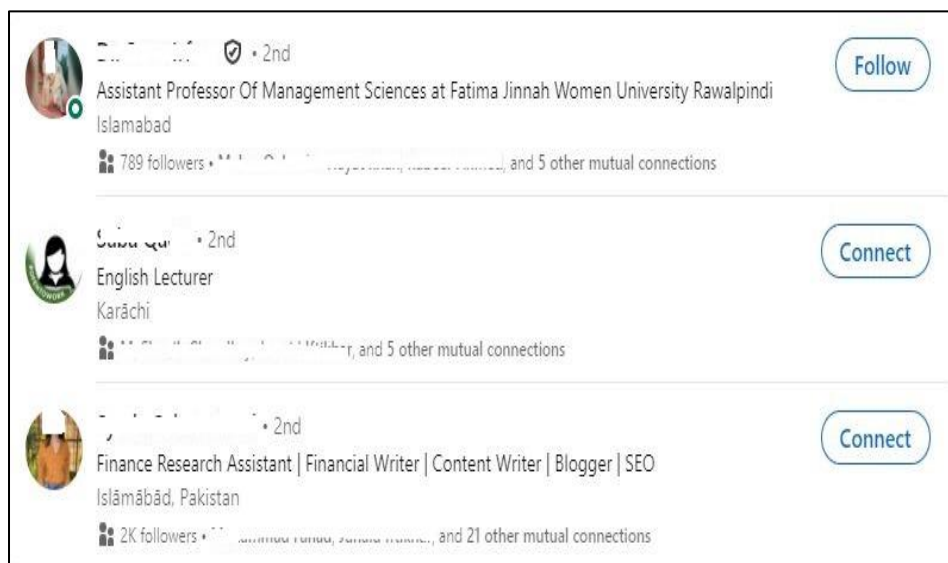


Figure 6. Teacher's profile

Figure 22 and Figure 23, both taken from the connection lists of participants identifying as writers, reveal a notable pattern: the connections largely consist of other writers novelists, poets, content creators, and freelance authors indicating a professional clustering around a shared identity. Similarly, Figure 24, which illustrates the network of a participant identifying as a teacher, shows that the majority of connections also belong to the teaching profession. These observations suggest that LinkedIn users form digital circles comprised of individuals who share their primary professional roles, effectively creating a network of *role allies*.

This phenomenon aligns with Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework, particularly his concept of “role allies.” According to Goffman, role allies are those who share or support an individual's social role, offering validation, reinforcement, and collaborative performance of that identity in social settings. In both offline and online contexts, these allies play a pivotal role in helping an individual sustain a coherent self-presentation. Within the LinkedIn environment, this support takes the form of endorsements, shared content, likes, comments, and even the composition of the user's visible network.

Expanding Goffman's ideas into the digital realm, Rosana and Irfan Fauzi (2024) argue that digital identity is not constructed in isolation but through a series of performed interactions across online platforms. These performances profile descriptions, shared posts, recommendations, and digital interactions are strategically managed to project a specific professional persona. Over time, these performances attract others with similar roles, values, and professional goals, resulting in a self-reinforcing network. This digital role circle is essential not only for social validation but also for increasing visibility and credibility within a specific domain.

In the context of the current study, this pattern was consistently observed. Participants employed Goffman's (1959) concept of *impression management* by deliberately curating their connections, content, and interactions to highlight their professional selves. Writers connected with other writers and shared content about writing techniques, freelance work, or literary achievements. Teachers, in turn, connected with fellow educators and circulated content related to pedagogical innovations, academic events, and educational discourse. In doing so, they reinforced the digital construction of their identity by surrounding themselves with individuals who would validate and echo their role-specific discourse.

Moreover, the presence of role-aligned networks also serves a functional purpose beyond mere identity affirmation. These networks offer opportunities for mentorship, collaboration, and professional growth. In this sense, LinkedIn functions as both a stage for impression management and a community of practice where digital identities are continuously shaped through mutual recognition and role-specific interaction.

In conclusion, the formation of digital circles based on shared roles as evidenced through the connection patterns in Figures 22, 23, and 24 demonstrates the practical application of Goffman's (1959) and Rosana & Fauzi's (2024) theories in the digital age. Participants' digital identities were not only individually constructed but socially sustained through alignment with like-minded peers, illustrating the collective nature of identity construction on professional networking platforms like LinkedIn.

### **Interviews**

This section corresponds to the third research question and examines and discusses the participant's role regarding identity construction based on data collected through interviews.

### **Role**

All of the instructors' group members acknowledged in the interviews that their principal occupations had a significant influence on their digital identities. Their digital presence was centered around this role, one that they defined as a core structuring principle rather than a static title. Like the real world, whereby professional jobs have social expectations teachers should be calm and courteous, writers should be aware of language, as well as artists should be creative the digital world likewise requires conformity according to these role-based standards (Seifullina et al., 2024).

The participants stated that they were aware of the professional norms associated with their positions. Because a number of the pupils follow me on social media, one participant said, "I avoid posting any discriminatory remarks or content that could negatively affect my image as a teacher" (P 3). Another underlined, "I would never want to disappoint my students; everything I post is always in line with my role as a teacher" (P 7). Additionally, a female history teacher stated, "I consider carefully before posting anything that might affect how I'm perceived by colleagues and students, as teachers are expected to be polite and balanced" (P 9).

The importance of professional identity in digital identity formation is highlighted by this focus on role-based regulation of oneself. Kraynov (2024) contends that people's imagined roles have a significant impact on how they show themselves in digital settings. Comments from the non-teacher group also corroborate this conclusion. "I am careful about the content I post—it must reflect my identity as a writer," stated one participant (P 20). "People expect writers to have perfect grammar and a large vocabulary," another person commented. What I post is greatly influenced by the pressure I feel to live up to that level (P 26). Goffman's (1959) claim that a person's identity creation is greatly influenced by their primary function, particularly through the control of perceptions, is supported by both qualitative replies as well as post-observation observations.

### **STRATEGIES OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT**

Participants employed a variety of impression management strategies, particularly conservative presentation, self-monitoring, and deliberate self-enhancement, to construct and preserve their digital identities. These strategies were influenced by their awareness of the social expectations tied to their roles.

### **1. Conservative Approach**

A guarded and orthodox digital persona was developed by many participants, particularly those from the teachers' group. They saw this constraint as a necessary component of their job duties. "My training taught me to protect my professional reputation because anything I post can be used against me in the future, so I don't comment or share much," one instructor stated (P 11). "I only share content that might be educational or motivational for my students," another person remarked (P 1).

The non-teacher group's members had similar opinions. In order to preserve their professional image, they established personal limits and refrained from providing casual or personal stuff. "I am pretty careful about what I post, as I don't want to risk damaging my reputation," for example, said one (P 17). "I steer clear of amateurish posts because they have the potential to permanently damage my reputation," said another (P 23). These results are consistent with those of Soh et al. (2024), who highlight the growing prevalence of role-driven selection of content as well as censorship by themselves in digital environments.

### **2. Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring**

The participants were very thoughtful in addition to being careful. They practiced constant self-monitoring, which Döring (1999) says is necessary to have a consistent and good online self-image. This involved taking down postings, going over remarks, and changing wording in response to audience input.

"There have been times I regretted posting something and deleted it later," one educator observed (P 7). "I choose my words carefully because I know students and peers are watching," another person stated (P 3). This feeling was repeated by a writer: "I have rules for myself about language, tone, everything and I check to make sure I follow them all the time" (P 30). Participants' increased digital consciousness is reflected in this fluid self-examination, which aids them in matching their material to the image of professionalism they want to convey.

### **3. Self-Enhancement and Ingratiation**

In line with Goffman's theory of front-stage conduct, respondents also intentionally employed ingratiation and self-enhancement to sway audience opinions. They used formal or educated language, emphasized professional accomplishments, and avoided any content that didn't align with their work requirements while curating their online persona.

For example, a language teacher shared, "I avoid casual language in posts; I use correct grammar and punctuation to set a good example" (P 5). Another teacher admitted, "I intentionally use fancy words to impress my followers" (P 7). Complex vocabulary, in academic and professional circles, signals intelligence, discipline, and credibility. Similarly, non-teachers like writers adopted formal language to establish expertise and reliability. One said, "I research captions before posting because my language reflects my skills and affects whether clients take me seriously" (P 22).

These answers show the manner in which impression management strategies are instruments of professional consistency rather than dishonesty. Respondents created a purposefully constructed persona that enhances trustworthiness in a cutthroat digital environment while reflecting real-life duties.

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