

**The Influence of Personality Traits on Social Media Use and Online Self-Presentation
Among University Students: A Study of Extraversion and Neuroticism**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of personality traits, specifically extraversion and neuroticism, on social media use and online self-presentation among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. Using a cross sectional method, the research examines the frequency of social media use, the motivations behind social media engagement, and the ways students present themselves online. The results indicate that extraverted students tend to use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok more frequently and engage in self-promotion, showcasing their social lives and achievements. In contrast, neurotic students use social media as a means of emotional expression, engaging in self-disclosure to seek emotional support and validation. The study also identifies significant differences in online self-presentation behaviors between students from private and government universities, with private university students engaging more in self-promotion. The findings underscore the importance of personality traits in shaping social media behaviors and suggest the need for mindful social media engagement strategies, particularly for neurotic individuals who may experience emotional distress through online interactions.

Keywords: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Social Media Use, Online Self-Presentation, Personality Traits, Digital Behavior

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media has dramatically transformed communication, self-expression, and social interaction across the globe, particularly among young people in academic settings. As university students engage more with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the intersection of personality traits and social media use has become an increasingly important area of research. This study aims to explore

how personality traits, specifically extraversion and neuroticism, influence the frequency and type of social media use, as well as the online self-presentation behaviors exhibited by students in universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan.

Social media gives people a lot of chance to be heard and seen. But in most cases, the way people act online appears to be congruent with their personality type. Beyond this, we know that personality traits such as extraversion (sociability and assertiveness) or neuroticism (emotional instability; anxiety) have an impact on what people do online, including social media self-presentation and social behaviors more generally (Gosling et al., 2011; Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014). For example, extraverted people might communicate on more different social media and present a positive and open image, whereas neurotics may use such platforms to express their emotions or stress level (Tiggemann & Slater 2014).

Where the literature review provided an overview of personality and social media behaviors, it told us little about why, specifically, university students use these sites in a Pakistani context other than some entries on extraversion and neuroticism. Considering the impact of but not being limited to digital engagement that affects academic life, student well-being and identity formation, this study examines how personality traits relate to online behavior among SGM students.

In this study, our objectives are two-fold: first, to investigate the association between extraversion and neurotic-mism and their connections with frequency and kinds of social media use among university students; second, we also delve into how such personality traits affect the online self-presentation strategies practiced by them on different platforms like Facebook, Instagram TikTok etc. Second, this study seeks to ascertain whether social media use and self-presentation practices differ on the type of university (private vs. government) and data collection mode (online vs. physical).

The relevance of this paper in the field is especially high for psychologists, educators and social media researchers as it highlights how digital platforms shape and mediate personality and online self-presentation. This knowledge could guide the implementation of educational policies and interventions that will encourage healthier, more responsible social media usage among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the nexus between personality traits, and social media usage especially among university students has been the interest of scholars. With digital platforms providing outlets for social expression, interpersonal engagement and e-identity construction, it is imperative to understand how personality traits influence the use of social media and self-presentation choices in the online world. This portion of the current analysis will review previous research on extraversion and neuroticism, examining how these traits are related to social media behaviors — specifically, self- presentation and motives for using social networking sites.

Extroversion and neuroticism, two of the five cardinal traits in the Big Five Personality Model, have often been associated with social media usage patterns (McCrae & Costa 2008). Extraversion represents traits such as sociability, assertiveness, and excitement-seeking; neuroticism represents a tendency to experience negative affect, emotional instability, irritability and sadness. Such variables have been found to affect social media behaviors such as the frequency with which an individual uses a platform, what content they will post and also how present themselves on these platforms.

It was hypothesized that, among the Big Five dimensions of personality, active use on social media would be positively related with extraversion because their outgoing nature and sociability should serve a need for others (González et al., 2020). It has been observed in studies that people with extraverted personalities are the ones who intensely use social media while interacting through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok etc (Wang et al., 2015). It is likely then that the same sociable behavior might also be displayed in their online presence where they tend to report more about themselves and feel more socially motivated (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). The self-presentation of extraverts is typically positive, confident, and open due to their strong need for validation and social approval (Back et al., 2010).

In addition, extraverts are more likely to use social media for socializing and entertainment (Correa et al., 2010) but it is not completely clear how this different behavior may affect information seeking. These platforms provide an outlet for people to establish and continue social connections, as well as interact with one another in a lively and open environment. The propensity to self-disclose — either in the form of thoughts, feelings, or life experiences — is indicative of an individual seeking attention and validation which, by default, is a hallmark behavior exhibited by gregarious and extraverted types (Gosling et al. 2011).

In contrast, individuals high in neuroticism tend to exhibit different social media behaviors. Neurotic individuals, characterized by emotional instability and anxiety, are often more prone to negative emotional responses and may use social media as a means of emotional expression or coping (Wood et al., 2015). Research has found some evidence to suggest that individuals high on the neuroticism trait experience higher levels of negative affect (anxiety, sadness) while using social networking sites, particularly when it involves comparing oneself with others (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). They can use social media to gain reassurance or feedback from significant others and thus satisfy emotional needs, reducing feelings of insecurity (Bayer et al., 2016).

Neurotic people may also demonstrate higher self-disclosure on the social media platform as they might consider using these places to vent out their unhappiness (Jiang et al., 2021). It may be that neuroticism predisposes people to share their personal struggles or seek sympathy online (Schoenebeck, 2014). Although neurotic individuals might feel temporarily better after online interactions, research has shown that the same digital behaviour may have adverse effects on their emotional stability, especially when receiving negative feedback or engaging in upward social comparison (Valkenburg et al., 2017).

Self-presentation, or the way individuals portray themselves to others, is a central aspect of social media use, particularly in platforms that emphasize visual content and personal narratives. The motivation for online self-presentation is influenced by personality traits, with both extraverts and neurotic individuals engaging in curated self-presentation in ways that align with their psychological needs (Walther, 2011).

Extraverted individuals are more likely to engage in self-promotion behaviors on social media. Studies have shown that extraverts tend to present an idealized version of themselves online, often showcasing their social lives, achievements, and positive experiences to gain social validation (González et al., 2020). Extraverts are more likely to engage in curated image management, where they selectively post content that reflects a positive and social persona. This behavior is consistent with the desire to be noticed, admired, and praised by others, as extraverts are generally more focused on public affirmation (Back et al., 2010).

In contrast, neurotic individuals may use social media to express feelings instead of exhibiting themselves (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). They tend to be more open with self-disclosure and reveal their struggles or vulnerabilities. This is often done to obtain feedback or peer-verification, with the responses neurotic individuals reap online causing them more negative emotional responses (Valkenburg et al., 2017). This kind of self-presentation serves a social function for neurotic people by reducing their feeling of being misunderstood and alienated (Buckels et al., 2015), but it also has the disadvantage of getting negative feedback or doing some social comparisons causing more emotional disturbance among them (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

Different personality traits make people use social media for different purposes. The former are more likely to be on platforms for entertainment and peer engagement (Say Extraverts on Social Networking Sites), whereas the latter may use social networks in pursuit of emotional validation or anxiety management. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) explains that people choose their media consumption based on their needs in respect to the type of information, entertainment or social interaction they want to achieve. Moreover, extraverted people might use social media more for reinforcement motives concerning social interaction, whereas neurotic people may consider it as a coping or emotional regulation tool (Jiang et al., 2021).

The evolution of social media platforms and their impact on behaviour; New areas in personality research On the other hand, a recent study provides evidence that TikTok—another platform, albeit an emerging one that has short-form video at its centre—attracts extraverted or neurotic individuals who may be driven by different motivations to engage. Thus, TikTok may act as a method of exhibition for extraverted personalities; showing off their abilities in an entertaining way, and as a lighthearted distraction or form of emotional release to neurotic users through the interactive content (Tiggemann & Slater, 2021).

In addition, an increasing number of studies have explored how social media behaviors may vary according to university context (e.g., between private vs. government universities). In contrast, undergraduates in generally more competitive or academically demanding environments may appear different based on personality traits that they are being pressured to develop by academic and social (peers) interaction (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013). These circumstances may also influence the ways in which students engage with social media to navigate their sense of self and social interactions.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between extraversion and neuroticism and the frequency and type of social media use among students.
2. To explore how these personality traits influence the way students present themselves online (e.g., self-promotion, self-disclosure).
3. To investigate the motivations behind students' use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will use a cross sectional research design, combining quantitative approaches to explore the relationship between personality traits (specifically extraversion and neuroticism) and social media behaviors, including online self-presentation. This design will allow for a comprehensive understanding

of how personality traits influence students' social media use, motivations, and the ways they present themselves online. Data will be collected from both private and government universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan, using online and physical data collection methods. Participants will be recruited using convenience sampling from universities.

Participants

The inclusion criteria for this study require participants to be undergraduate or graduate students currently enrolled in either a private or government university in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additionally, participants must have an active social media presence, using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok, and be willing to provide informed consent to participate in the survey. The exclusion criteria specify that students who are not enrolled in any university or do not actively use social media will be excluded, as well as those who are unable to complete the survey due to language barriers or other cognitive impairments. A total of 800 students were recruited for the study.

Instruments

This study used multiple scales for evaluating variables such as extraversion and neuroticism, social media adherence, and traits from online self-presentation. The BFI (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) will be used to assess extraversion and neuroticism. This highly reliable scale consists of 44 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale which measures the Big Five personality traits especially extraversion (sociability, assertiveness) and neuroticism (emotional instability, anxiety). It has also exhibited strong internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83 to 0.89 for its subscales in several studies (John et al., 2008). The intention of creating the Social Media Use and Online Self-Presentation Questionnaire was to develop a study-specific questionnaire. It quantifies social media frequency and types (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) and assesses how students portray themselves online with an emphasis on characteristics like self-promotion, self-disclosure, and image management. The high reliability of the scale was also noted, wherein Cronbach's alpha was 0.85 for its internal consistency. Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch; 1973), Motivations for Social Media Use Scale posits that individuals use various media to fulfil certain needs including entertainment, social interaction and self-presentation. The purpose being checked is whether someone uses the social media in order to find others, for fun or pleasure, and expression of self are revised by probing this scale. Demonstrated reliability was supported with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.84 in different contexts that supported its applicability for measuring e-communication media motives.

This data will be supplemented with demographic variables, including age, gender, university type (private versus government), and academic major to control for potential confounding variables. These scales offer a complete repertoire of measures to examine the connections between behaviors in various social websites and the Big Five, and have established psychometric properties in both personality assessment as well as measurement of social media engagement.

Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants:

1. **Informed Consent:** Participants will receive information about the purpose of the study, data confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time.

2. **Confidentiality:** All responses will remain anonymous, and personal information will be securely stored.
3. **Voluntary Participation:** Participation will be voluntary, with no penalties for withdrawal at any time.
4. **Debriefing:** Participants will be debriefed at the end of the study, with additional resources provided if needed.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study include:

- **Self-Report Bias:** Participants may provide socially desirable responses about their social media behaviors or personality traits.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study will only capture data at one point in time, so causal relationships cannot be inferred.
- **Convenience Sampling:** The sample may not fully represent the broader population of university students.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

A total of 800 students participated in this study. The sample included students from both private and government universities in KPK. The demographic breakdown of the participants is presented in **Table 1**.

| Demographic Variable | Category | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| University | Abdul Wali Khan University | 120 | 15.0 |
| | Bacha Khan University | 110 | 13.8 |
| | Peshawar University | 120 | 15.0 |
| | University of Swabi | 100 | 12.5 |
| | IMSciences | 100 | 12.5 |
| | Women University Mardan | 90 | 11.3 |
| | Sarhad University | 160 | 20.0 |
| Gender | Male | 390 | 48.8 |
| | Female | 410 | 51.3 |
| Age | 18-22 | 550 | 68.8 |
| | 23-27 | 200 | 25.0 |

| Demographic Variable | Category | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Academic Year | 28+ | 50 | 6.3 |
| | 1st Year | 250 | 31.3 |
| | 2nd Year | 230 | 28.8 |
| | 3rd Year | 150 | 18.8 |
| | 4th Year | 170 | 21.3 |

Personality Traits

The **Big Five Inventory (BFI)** was used to measure extraversion and neuroticism. The mean scores for the personality traits are summarized in **Table 2**.

| Personality Trait | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Extraversion | 3.45 | 0.58 |
| Neuroticism | 2.75 | 0.72 |

The average score for extraversion was moderately high, suggesting that most students exhibited traits of sociability and assertiveness. The score for neuroticism indicates moderate emotional instability, with students demonstrating tendencies toward anxiety and emotional volatility.

Social Media Use

The frequency of social media use was measured by self-reported hours spent on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. **Table 3** presents the mean number of hours spent on social media per day.

| Social Media Platform | Mean Hours Per Day (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Facebook | 1.88 | 1.13 |
| Instagram | 2.21 | 1.34 |
| TikTok | 2.77 | 1.55 |

TikTok was the most frequently used platform among students, followed by Instagram and Facebook. This suggests that students are highly engaged with visual and short-form video content.

Online Self-Presentation

Students' behaviors regarding self-presentation on social media were assessed using a self-developed sc

| Self-Presentation Behavior | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Self-Promotion (posting achievements) | 3.41 | 0.80 |
| Self-Disclosure (personal sharing) | 2.98 | 0.85 |
| Curated Image (selective sharing) | 3.12 | 0.75 |

Most students exhibited moderate self-promotion on social media, with a tendency to selectively curate their online presence. Self-disclosure (sharing personal details) was lower but still significant.

Correlational Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between extraversion, neuroticism, and social media use, as well as self-presentation behaviors. The results are shown in **Table 5**.

| Personality Trait | Social Media Use (Facebook) | Social Media Use (Instagram) | Social Media Use (TikTok) | Self-Promotion | Self-Disclosure |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Extraversion | .38** | .42** | .47** | .45** | .40** |
| Neuroticism | .23** | .21** | .28** | .15* | .22** |

Note: * $p < .01$, $p < .05$

The results reveal significant positive correlations between extraversion and social media use across all platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). Extraversion was particularly associated with self-promotion and self-disclosure, suggesting that more extraverted students tend to engage more with social media, particularly in terms of sharing personal achievements and disclosing details about their lives. Neuroticism was positively correlated with TikTok use and self-disclosure, indicating that more neurotic students may use social media as a means of emotional expression.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how extraversion and neuroticism predict social media use and online self-presentation behaviors, controlling for demographic variables. The results are summarized in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Social Media Use and Self-Presentation Behaviors

| Predictor | Social Media Use (Facebook) | Social Media Use (Instagram) | Social Media Use (TikTok) | Self-Promotion | Self-Disclosure |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Constant | 1.25** | 1.13** | 1.41** | 2.85** | 2.68** |

| Predictor | Social Media Use (Facebook) | Social Media Use (Instagram) | Social Media Use (TikTok) | Self-Promotion | Self-Disclosure |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Extraversion | 0.12** | 0.14** | 0.17** | 0.22** | 0.20** |
| Neuroticism | 0.08* | 0.06* | 0.09** | 0.06 | 0.09** |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.03 |
| Gender | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.02 |

Note: * $p < .01$, $p < .05$

The regression model was significant for all dependent variables (social media use and self-presentation behaviors). Extraversion was a significant predictor of social media use across all platforms, with TikTok use being most strongly influenced by extraversion ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .01$). Neuroticism also significantly predicted social media use, especially TikTok use ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < .01$), and self-disclosure behavior ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The current study aims to investigate the effect of extraversion and neuroticism on social media behaviors and online self-presentation among university students from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. Results reveal strong relationships between personality variables, as well as social media use/persona. These results again suggest that personality shapes not only the quantity and type of attention received on social media, but also how people present themselves online.

The results indicated that extraversion was also a strong predictor of social media use and online self-presentation behaviors. In the case of the frequent use of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for self-promotion by extraverted students, these findings are consistent with previous research arguing that provision of information about appearance predicts more engagement in folks high on extroversion (González et al., 2020; Back et al., 2010). This would make sense as extraverted people usually have a larger network of friends and acquaintances to stay in contact with, but also because extraverts are innately social and seek external validation concern about how they come across to others. Tiggemann and Slater (2021) found that extraverted students were engaging quite a lot on TikTok where content is more performative, allowing for creative expression of social identity. This seems to reinforce the notion that it is extroverts who are most attracted to projecting real images in their social media accounts, reflecting them as places of self-expression and social communication.

Higher levels of Neuroticism, however, were positively associated with Self-disclosure and TikTok use highly neurotic students were more likely to use social media to share personal problems or seek validation by writing about their emotions. As in previous studies neurotic traits predicted greater use of social media to express emotion and regulate instability (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014; Wood et al., 2015). This is particularly salient in relation to neuroticism and TikTok use, as the platform's short-form video style combined with interactive content design form a likely haven for neurotic individuals to express themselves more immediately and personally. This is consistent with the view that there are two sides to TikTok on an emotional level and identity-exploration level, which further explains why so many people who are high in neuroticism and really like support or reassurance through online interactions use the platform (Jian et al., 2021).

High levels of self-presentation behaviors also plays a role in integrating personality traits into this context. This is consistent with the traditional idea that extraverts seek to show Positivity on social media, like accomplishments and interpersonal interactions (Back et al., 2010), thus are more likely for Self-promotion. By contrast, neurotic types were particularly high in self-disclosure: revealing personal information/emotions. This implies that whereas extraverts may be looking for validation and social acceptance in distilling their identities into images of the self, neurotic individuals could be more likely to use social media as a form of emotional catharsis or source of affective confirmation (Schoenebeck, 2014).

Implications for Social Media Use and Personality Research

These findings are crucial for both personality psychology and related research areas on social media behavior. The association between extraversion and use of social media shows a clear example on how personality factors influence the manner users engage in digital environments. Social media serves as an extension of their sociability for extraverted university students, allowing them to maintain social networks and a public image. Neurotic individuals, by contrast typically use social media to express their emotions and hence their want for self-disclosure, showing the variance in social media usage among individual personality differences (Bayer et al., 2016).

In a more practical sense, knowing how personality traits relate to social media activity may allow educational interventions that aim to counteract negative patterns of social media use. For example, universities should look into the creation of resources that can help prompt more mindful social media use—especially seeing the impact (or lack thereof) on social network site users who tend to be neurotic and may utilize such services in ways that add to their emotional issues (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Moreover, platforms especially relevant for neuroticism, such as TikTok, might operate new positive affect and reduced social comparison functions that could negate the adverse effects of social media use on emotion.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design of these studies does not allow for causal inference and whether personality traits cause social media behaviors or vice versa cannot be determined, but associations between personality traits and social media use behaviors were identified. Longitudinal research is required to shed more light on the causal relationships between personality traits and online behaviors.

Second, the reliance on self-report measures increases the risk of social desirability biases, especially when evaluating social media use and online cropping. Future research should include the use of more objective measures in social media behaviors, such as review their profiles from social networks or their online engagement activity.

In conclusion, we need to recognize the difference in the culture and regarding regions differences this research also showed behavior of students which may have been experiencing different social media use and self-presentation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Acknowledgments Future research can investigate how cultural factors in various countries or regions influence the association between personality traits and social media behaviors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the influence of personality traits—specifically extraversion and neuroticism on social media use and self-presentation among university students. The findings underscore the importance of personality in shaping how individuals engage with social media platforms and curate their online identities. By examining these dynamics, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of digital behavior and offers practical insights for fostering healthier and more mindful social media use, particularly in academic settings.

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