

Good example of social psychology theory research paper

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



The advent of new technologies (Internet, virtual realities) is altering the conventional settings of psychological practice and research (Wiederhold, 2013). Cyberpsychology, a recent branch of Psychology, presents the advantage of shedding light on various aspects of personality from a unique perspective. Contemporarily relevant cyber tools of personality analysis can be used to extract valuable insights about issues of psychological well-being like self-esteem, narcissism and loneliness. This paper will explore the relationship between self-esteem, self-image and social networking, as well as the potential of cyberpsychology to investigate human behaviors.

The impact of online communities on the formation of identity has already been explored by a diversity of studies. At first researchers were mainly concerned with purely anonymous environments like forum boards and chat-rooms. Lately, however, more and more studies gravitate towards the notion of self-image and presentation as related to non-anonymous online environments (social networking environments). These communities appeal to certain segments of the population that share common interests or ideas. Early studies focused on dating sites (Ellison et al. cited in Mehdizadeh, 2010) demonstrated that people behave in a different manner in social networking communities in comparison to anonymous online interaction. This finding had significant implications regarding the development of online identity and suggested that self-presentation (in online settings) changed depending on the nature of the environment. Nowadays, friend-networking communities such as Facebook (today's synonym for social networking) have become a significant aspect of daily social life. Since these environments come with tools that help individuals alter their self-presentation behaviors,

they have become a quintessential tool of public perception management, often under the guise of seeking friendship.

Self-esteem, an individual's evaluation of her/his own worth, is a construct that most humans feel the need to maintain/improve and can be found at the core of an individual's self-concept. This is the reason why human beings will attempt to create positive presentations of their selves in both offline and online environments. It is likely that individuals characterized by low self-esteem will feel more motivated to participate in online activities that promise to improve their self-esteem because they offer a medium for their ideal image of self to express itself (Kramer, 2008, cited in Mehdizadeh, 2010). A number of recent studies (Krämer et al., 2008) did not find a connection between impression management and low/high self-esteem, or between the use of online venues for social networking and self-esteem, narcissism and neuroticism (Skues, 2012). Contradictory findings (Mehdizadeh, 2010) show a negative correlation between online social networking (Facebook) and self-esteem—those with lower Self-esteem scores were correlated with a greater number of logins each day and with a higher amount of time spent using Facebook during a single session. They also found (based on a theoretical connection between self-esteem and narcissism, stemming from psychoanalytical theory) a negative correlation between the self-promotion of one's "main photo" and self-esteem.

Similarly contradictory results showed that becoming self-aware by viewing one's Facebook profile increases self-esteem, suggesting that selective self-presentation in online media alters impressions of one's self (Gonzales, 2011). In addition to that, the grandiose exhibitionism subscale (part of the

Narcissistic Personality Inventory) was found to predict self-promoting activities on Facebook (Carpenter, 2012). Traits like online affective openness, collective self-esteem, communication anxiety were significant predictors of gratifications obtained from the use of online social networks (Zhang, 2011).

As already noted, another construct that can be explored through the lenses of online social networks research is narcissism. Narcissism, characterized by an overemphasized self-importance sense and a need to be admired, is linked with positive perceptions of one's own intelligence, attractiveness and influence. The interpersonal dynamics that fall under narcissism are said to lack warmth or intimacy; instead, these individuals focus on using relationships to be perceived as attractive, successful and having a high social status (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Online environments are the ideal space in which narcissists can manufacture their self-presentation for various motives. Virtual communities offer the possibility of forming a big number of superficial relationships and of initiating communication characterized by emotional detachment. Online users can choose appealing photos and write self-promoting descriptions of their selves in their attempt to enhance their self-image. Receiving public feedback on various aspects of their profile can be used as a narcissistic esteem regulator (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

These research initiatives aimed at elucidating online self-presentation will have to be taken much further to uncover the full spectrum of social consequences and benefits of online networking venues. For instance, new studies could focus on the benefits of virtual communication on users with low self-esteem and possible therapeutic uses where necessary—something

akin to recently developed virtual environments created to help teenagers with autism/communication impairments.

The presence of these social media tools is immanent and all-pervasive in today's society and a multidisciplinary approach to social networks research would significantly benefit future research on the topic. Theories on self-identity, self-esteem and self-presentation based on this approach have the potential to reveal a wide variety of socio-psychological aspects ranging from social perception to social meaning-making.

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