

Social Media and Narcissism

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Social Media Use and the Development of Narcissistic Behaviour

The use of social media platforms has increasingly become an integral part of the lives of the world's population, according to recent reports. The figures in this paragraph are estimates from the 2016 source period and should be read as historical platform statistics: the source estimated more than 2 billion active [Facebook users](#) and about 500 million people regularly posting photos on Instagram.

Another social media platform that was heavily used by subscribers around the world was Twitter. The cited estimate of 300 million active users reflects the source period and should not be presented as a current platform total (Appel & Gnambs, 2017).

During his first presidential term, Donald J. Trump used Twitter extensively to communicate with the people of the United States on key national issues. This highlighted how social media had evolved into a major connecting platform across different levels of interaction (Appel & Gnambs, 2017).

Self-Promotion, Online Identity, and Narcissistic Traits

Most subscribers and active users of these social media platforms spend huge chunks of their time accessing social connections, which are easily accessible from the comfort of mobile phones and are easily affordable all over the world (Firestone, 2012). Due to the numerous advantages that the platforms offer, including instant news updates, free interaction with friends and relatives, and their role as a commercial hub by providing [internet marketing](#), it is not surprising that people are increasingly becoming interested in enhancing their self-esteem levels and building on their personal brands (Appel & Gnambs, 2017).

Consequently, the use of the Facebook platform to advance individuals' self-interests through the posting of personal photos and marketing of their gender has led to the advancement of the culture of narcissism on these social media platforms. When a user gets a huge number of followers when he or she posts a personal photo on their timeline, this obviously affects one's self-esteem, and this contributes a lot to narcissistic tendencies in such a user in real-life interactions (Appel & Gnambs, 2017).

Narcissistic individuals always tend to regard themselves as uniquely talented, remarkable, and very

successful compared to others. This perceived sense of importance among users of social media has been confirmed in recent studies conducted by various researchers (Appel & Gnambs, 2017).

Social Platforms as Environments for Narcissism

According to researcher Markus Appel, social media platforms provide the best opportunity for narcissistic users to advance their agenda. Using these platforms, they can be able to present themselves to other users in the form of posts of personal photos and images to other users and seek to be approved by users who regularly follow their activities online. Social connections, especially Facebook, provide easy access to a large audience in the form of active users plying their trade online, and hence, it is easy for narcissistic users to post information with the intention of self-promotion (Appel & Gnambs, 2017). It is possible for them to thoroughly build on their public image using these platforms. Research studies have, therefore, established social connection platforms as favourable breeding grounds for the advancement of narcissistic character.

Scientists have developed various hypotheses to highlight the extent to which social media platforms contribute to the growth of narcissism among users. Firstly, there is a great belief that narcissists who are extravagantly imposing in appearance visit social media websites more frequently compared to vulnerable narcissists who are characterized by insecurity, low self-esteem, and [social isolation](#) (Appel & Gnambs, 2017). Secondly, scientists assume that there is a more defined connection between the number of friends, self-promoting activities, and narcissism on social media platforms than other interactive activities that are conducted on these platforms. The third assumption is that there is a clear relationship between narcissistic behaviour on social media platforms and the influences due to cultural affiliations. These assumptions are true from the results of various research studies, which confirm that there is a direct relationship between the number of photos uploaded to social media platforms and the likelihood of narcissistic traits among the users (Appel & Gnambs, 2017). The findings also discovered that narcissists spend more time actively on social media platforms compared to normal users. Markus Appel found that there exists a strong correlation between [social media behaviour](#) and narcissistic traits in users from countries such as Austria and the United States (Firestone, 2012).

An example of a narcissistic hashtag cited is Generation Me, which has been created on both Facebook and Instagram platforms and provides a favourable environment for users with narcissistic tendencies to advance their self-promoting activities. Users who usually like tagging themselves more frequently in posts of photos, regularly update their statuses, and tend to have more friends on Facebook have the highest narcissistic tendencies (Appel & Gnambs, 2017). Laura Buffadi, who is a researcher at the University in Spain, observes that typical narcissists use social media platforms to advance their self-interests and inform other users of their current activities.

Digital Interaction and the Social Costs of Self-Presentation

It is also a common observation that an individual sitting across a table in a conversational meeting is more likely to spend the entire time checking on his or her social media account instead of engaging in a one-on-one conversation with physical people present at the meeting (Firestone, 2012).

In conclusion, it is evident that social media platforms encourage self-promotion because users are the ones who generate content. Most users use the platforms to boost their self-esteem, seek attention, and look special, as they offer a rare opportunity for users to display a fictitious expression of themselves. It is more likely for the audience of narcissistic users to think of their lives as happier and better. It is important to note that the traits of narcissism are already ingrained by the time they join social media platforms, as studies have proven. According to researcher Shawn Bergman, an individual's personality is already established at the age of 7 years, while the minimum age limit for joining Facebook is 13 years (Firestone, 2012).

References

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Firestone, L. (2012, November 29). Is Social Media to Blame for the Rise in Narcissism? Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/compassion-matters/201211/is-social-media-blame-the-rise-in-narcissism>