THE ROLE OF NARCISSISM FACETS AS PREDICTORS OF FACEBOOK ADDICTION AMONG MILLENNIALS

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ABSTRACT

The use of social networking sites (SNS) particularly Facebook has increased exponentially over the past few years. Majority of Facebook users consists of the younger generation which is the Millennials. This generation has been constantly branded as 'Generation Me' as they are believed to be more narcissistic, egoistical, entitled and self-centred compared to young adults of previous generations. In relation to that, this paper presents a research framework proposing that various facets of narcissism have an impact on Millennial technology users' addiction towards Facebook. In particular, it is proposed that three facets of narcissism namely leadership/authority, grandiose exhibitionism and entitlement/exploitativeness contribute to Millennials' Facebook addiction. This proposed framework is both timely and important because it investigates the link between technological users' psychobiological characteristics and problematic usage of social media at a time when the Internet has risen to occupy an indispensable role in modern living. Insights gained from the application of the proposed framework can be used to assist the government and relevant authorities in formulating new policies or measures that can help to prevent the prevalence of Facebook addiction.

Keywords: Facebook addiction, narcissism, exhibitionism, entitlement, social media, social networking sites.

Introduction:

The use of social networking sites (SNS) particularly Facebook has increased exponentially over the past few years. Despite being founded in 2004, it grew rapidly to become the world's most popular social networking site and one of the fastest-growing companies in history (Kirkpatrick, 2010). It is estimated that there are 890 million Facebook's users daily who spend an average of 21 minutes on Facebook each day (Orosz, Tóth-Király, & Bőthe, 2015)). Majority of its users consists of the younger generation particularly the Millennials, also known as Generation Y, who fall within the ages of 10 to 32. Compared to other generational cohorts, Millennials are more comfortable embracing Web 2.0 technologies (Burhanna, Seeholzer, & Salem, 2009)

being involved in online activities such as text messaging, social networking, blogging, podcasting and downloading. They were found to spend up to 2 hours per day on social networking sites such as Tumblr (57 percent), Facebook (52%), Twitter (17 percent), Instagram (11 percent) and SnapChat (4 percent).

Facebook for one has become indispensable in the lives of Millennials to the point that they cannot live without it instead of treating it merely as a social networking site (Balci & Gölcü, 2013). Many seemed to have developed an addiction to Facebook. The growth of Facebook addiction among the Millennial population is a grave concern considering that Millennials are fervent users of technology. (Stein, 2013) described Millennials as narcissistic, over-confident, entitled, lazy and known for constantly

holding up cameras, taking pictures of them and posting them online. According to researchers e.g. (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011); (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011); (Stein, 2013), such self-centred traits within the Millennials are exacerbated by technological platforms such as Facebook, causing Millennials to have higher rates of narcissism, materialism and technology addiction in their lives (Stein, 2013). (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008) claimed that today's youth are more narcissitic than young adults from previous generations. These individuals have been branded as 'Generation Me' because they appeared to be egoistical, entitled and self-centred (Twenge, 2006).

In relation to narcissism, the question that arises is how does this psychobiological trait contribute to the rise of Facebook addiction among the millennial undergraduates? By itself, narcissism is generally a broad concept. It has constantly been considered as a single construct when in fact it is a complex, multifaceted personality trait. More often than not, the multidimensionality of this construct has been constantly overlooked by researchers (Ackerman, et al., 2011). Examining narcissism as a narrow dimension using a singular total score will likely result in an imprecise understanding of narcissism because it would mix both adaptive and maladaptive aspects of this trait (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003). (Briggs & Cheek, 1986) cautioned that it is unacceptable to carry on with narcissism as a sole dimension using one total scale because doing so "deliberately ignores distinctions that are conceptually meaningful and empirically useful" (p. 129). Based on this grounding, we strongly adhere to the perspective that narcissism is a multidimensional construct and assert that the various; distinct dimensions of narcissism would contribute towards Millennial students' Facebook addiction. In this paper, we present a framework which proposes the facets of narcissism as predictors of Facebook addiction among the Millennial generation. In the following section, we review previous works pertaining to Millennials, Facebook usage and addiction as well as narcissism. Subsequently we present out proposed framework linking various facets of narcissism to Facebook addiction. This will then be followed by some conlcuding remarks.

Literature Review:

Millennials and Facebook:

According to (Strauss & Howe, 2000), Millennials are those born between the years 1982 to 2004. Nevertheless, there are no precise dates as to when the generation starts and ends. Researchers and commentators generally use birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. By (Strauss & Howe, 2000) definition, Millennials today would be those who fall within the ages of 10 to 32. They would comprise adolescents, college/university students and young, contemporary working adults. This is a generation of people who have been exposed to technology (computers and the Internet) since childhood (Djamasbi, Siegel, & Tullis, 2010). Consequently, they have an inherent aptitude and high skill levels when using new technologies (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010). Having grown up with digital technology and social media, the Millennials are fervent users of social networking sites (Leung, 2013). They not only embrace multiple technological modes of self-expression but also fuse their social lives into hi-tech gadgets. The increased popularity of SNS could be attributed partly to the fact that SNS allow users to become the producers and stars of their productions as they create their own profiles and observe those of others (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Facebook is a prime example of the exponential growth of SNS and also the most popular SNS among Millennials. Three quarters of the Millennial generation have created a profile on Facebook while one-in-five have posted a video of themselves online on YouTube (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011).

Facebook Addiction:

People addicted to using SNS experience similar symptoms like those who suffer from addictions to substances or other behaviours (Echeburua & de Corral, 2010). Joanna Lipari, a clinical psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles commented that Facebook addicts usually (1) lose sleep as they spend entire nights logged on to the site, (2) spend more than an hour a day on Facebook, (3) become obsessed with old flames that they reconnect with on Facebook, (4) ignore work in favour of Facebook, (5) break out in a cold sweat at the thought of getting off Facebook (Are you a Facebook addict?, 2009). Facebook addiction has been generally accepted as a form of disorder because addiction criteria such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance, and concealing the addictive behaviour, appear to be present in some people who use SNS excessively (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). According to (Griffiths, 2000); (Griffiths, 2005), all forms of behavioural addictions consist of a number of distinct common components. For instance, an individual can be classified as a Facebook addict if any of his/her behaviour meets the following addiction components:

1. Salience: A particular activity, such as Facebook use, becomes the most important activity in the subject's life and dominates his or her thinking;
2. Mood modification: The particular activity modifies or improves the subject's mood;
3. Tolerance: Increasing amounts of the particular activity

or time are required to achieve the desired effects;

4. Withdrawal: Unpleasant feelings, state, or physical effects (e.g. moody, irritable) when the particular activity is discontinued or suddenly reduced;

5. Conflict: The particular activity causes conflicts between addicts and those around them (e.g. family members or friends), with work/education and other activities (e.g. sleep or studies), or within individuals themselves; and

6. Relapse: The tendency to revert to earlier patterns of the activity after abstinence of control.

In 2011, researchers (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012) released an instrument that is aimed at measuring Facebook addiction specifically. The instrument was aptly called the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS) considering it was developed at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen in collaboration with the Bergen Clinics Foundation in Norway. The scale reflects the core elements of addiction such as salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse.

Narcissism:

Narcissism is a personality disorder which is defined by certain characteristics namely: (1) grandiose sense of one's self-importance; (2) preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; (3) exhibitionism; (4) responds to criticism, indifference, or defeat either with cool indifference or with marked feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness; (5) entitlement, expecting special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities; (6) exploitativeness; (7) relationships fluctuate between the extremes of overidealization and devaluation; and (8) lack of empathy (Raskin & Hall, 1979). People with high levels of narcissism are known to be exhibitionistic, attention-seeking, and are acutely concerned about their physical appearances (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). They generally hold an inflated view of themselves believing they are special and unique, and expect special treatment from others while believing they owe little or nothing in return (Leung, 2013). Due to their inflated view of themselves, narcissists tend to lack empathy and have few and close relationships, yet they strongly desire social contact with others. This is because other people serve as their primary source of admiration and attention. Narcissists also have problems regulating their self-esteem therefore they must rely on external sources for affirmation (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010).

Narcissism and use of social networking sites:

Research on the predictors of social networking site (SNS) usage often focus on narcissism with the presumption that SNS usage may create or reinforce individuals' narcissistic tendencies by functioning as platforms for self-promotional displays (Buffardi &

Campbell, 2008). Indeed researchers such as (Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2013) and (Ryan & Xenos, 2011) have found that there is a positive relationship between narcissism and the frequency of using SNSs. Narcissistic individuals are inclined to engage in frequent use of Facebook for the mere fact that Facebook functions as an outlet for them to engage in a variety of ways to showcase their exhibitionism and attention-seeking behavior (Buss & Chiodo, 1991), as well as to assert dominance and competitiveness in social situations (Emmons, 1984); (Raskin & Hall, 1979). This is usually done through posting photos and writing status updates on Facebook. Many studies (e.g. (Carpenter, 2012); (DeWall, Buffardi, Bonser, & Campbell, 2011); (Fox & Rooney, 2015); (Mehdizadeh, 2010); (Weiser, 2015) have shown that narcissism results in narcissistic-like patterns of self-promoting behaviors (e.g., status updates, number of Facebook friends, use of language and photographs to draw attention to oneself, posting of selfies) on these SNSs. Apart from the self-promotion feature, (Ong, et al., 2011) noted that SNSs appeal so much to narcissistic individuals because they provide the individuals the ability to maintain large social network bases of superficial relationships.

Dimensionality of narcissism:

(Raskin & Hall, 1979) introduced the Narcissistic Personality Inventory to measure the concept of narcissism. Later (Raskin & Terry, 1988) found in their factor analytic study that narcissism is manifested through seven dimensions specifically authority (preferring to be in charge), self-sufficiency (preferring to do things on one's own rather than in groups), superiority (belief that one is better than others), vanity (strong focus on physical appearance), exhibitionism (acting in ways that grab others'attention), entitlement (belief that one is deserving of special treatment), and exploitativeness (willingness to take advantage of others).

Researchers who have applied the NPI in their studies agree and found that narcissism is a multidimensional construct rather than a unidimensional one; hence examining narcissism as unidimensional may complicate relationships between its facets and important criterion variables (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009). Apart from discovering narcissism to be a complex, multifaceted construct, researchers also argue that narcissism consists of socially adaptive (normal) and maladaptive components (Ackerman, et al., 2011); (Emmons R. , 1987); (Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004). For one, (Ackerman, et al., 2011) demonstrated that the NPI assesses three robust and empirically useful components of narcissism, in particular leadership / authority, grandiose exhibitionism, and entitlement / exploitativeness. Of these, leadership / authority is considered adaptive for it is related to indices of psychological adjustment (e.g., self-esteem) but unrelated to narcissism's more

interpersonally aversive elements. In contrast, grandiose exhibitionism and entitlement/ exploitativeness are regarded as socially toxic and are more readily linked to maladaptive social outcomes (Ackerman, et al., 2011). While the (Raskin & Terry, 1988) narcissism seven factor solution is more established and well-known in the literature, the (Ackerman, et al., 2011) factorial solution is more recent and is perhaps more useful because it is simpler and yet preserves distinctions between grandiosity and entitlement (Maxwell, M.B., Hopwood, & Ackerman, 2011). For this reason, we adhere to (Ackerman, et al., 2011) three-factor solution of narcissism in our proposed framework.

Proposed Framework of Facets of Narcissism and Facebook Addiction:

In line with (Ackerman, et al., 2011) perspective, we propose that narcissism comprise of three facets which are leadership/authority, grandiose exhibitionism and entitlement/exploitativeness.   Leadership/authority reflects self-perceptions of leadership, dominance, and the capacity for social agency. Millennials who have high traces of this facet are motivated to lead and seek power and authority over others. Thus they may use Facebook frequently to the point of addiction for the reasons of promoting a positive self-image, seeking out self-enhancing experiences in social environments and assert dominance in achievement-related contexts (Clarke, Karlov, & Neale, 2015). Nevertheless, this facet of narcissism is considered as adaptive or normal as it is linked to psychological health and resilience (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004).

Proposition 1: Millennials with strong traits of leadership/authority tend to be more addicted to Facebook.

In stark contrast, the facets of grandiose exhibitionism and entitlement/exploitativeness are construed as maladaptive or pathological for these two facets are linked to problematic self-regulation processes (Clarke, Karlov, & Neale, 2015). Grandiose exhibitionism is a reflection of self – absorption, vanity, and exhibitionistic propensities. Millennials who have high grandiose exhibitionism propensities are in love with them and crave attention. Being a popular form of social media, Facebook becomes a perfect and addictive outlet for them to show off and seek opportunities for self-promotion.

Proposition 2: Millennials with strong traits of grandiose exhibitionism tend to be more addicted to Facebook.

On the other hand, entitlement/exploitativeness is a reflection of entitlement, a sense one deserves respect, and a willingness to exploit others. Millennials with

such traits have unwarranted or unreasonable expectations of favorable treatment from others. This type of individuals believes they deserve whatever they wish and will take advantage of others in the service of their goals. Often enough, Facebook is habitually depended on as a place where they can air rage or dissatisfaction over the lack of entitlement or respect they deserve or manipulate the feelings of other users.

Proposition 3: Millennials with strong traits of entitlement/exploitativeness tend to be more addicted to Facebook.

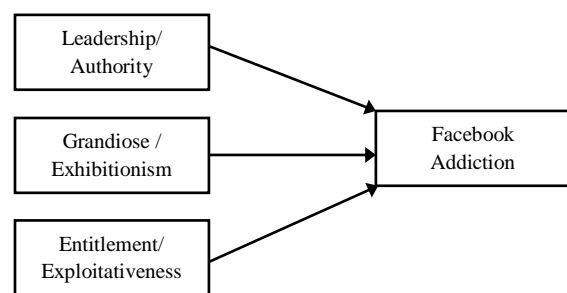Figure 1 depicts the relationship between the facets of narcissism and Facebook addiction

Figure 1: Proposed framework for facets of narcissism and Facebook addiction

Conclusion:

Generally it has been observed that the prevalence of narcissistic individuals on Facebook may lead to a rise in narcissistic behaviour among users; consequently such behaviour may begin to be regarded as acceptable (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). A society made up of an upcoming generation of narcissistic, lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow young individuals whose lives center around Facebook is not going to help the country progress and achieve its aspirations. As such, our proposed framework is both timely and important because it investigates the link between technological users' psychobiological characteristics and problematic usage of social media at a time when the Internet has risen to occupy an indispensable role in modern living. Insights gained from the application of the proposed framework can be used to assist the government and relevant authorities in formulating new policies or measures that can help to prevent the prevalence of Facebook addiction. A nation free from social maladies like Facebook addiction will be better equipped in achieving its goals of becoming a psychologically liberated, secure and developed society.

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