



**Examining Determinants of Self-representation on Facebook:
A Study of Pakistani Youth**

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Abstract:

The last two decades are characterized by a continuous increase in the use of social networking sites (SNS) amongst people of all age groups across the globe. Users belonging to different demographic groups have different motives/needs which make them use these SNS. Furthermore, every individual has different ways of self-representation on these social networking sites, which are related to certain motives and needs that determine the way they represent themselves on SNS in a particular way. Hence, the present research was designed to know the determinants/ motives of self-representation on Facebook by Pakistani youth. It investigated four different socio-psychological determinants (motives) of self-representation of Facebook users. These dimensions were (i) social and affection motive, (ii) recognition motive, (iii) exhibitionism motive and (iv) cognitive motive. The study also examined the effects of gender and age differences on the self-representation motives of Facebook users. The researchers used survey technique. Data were collected from students of International Islamic University, Islamabad through questionnaire by employing convenient sampling techniques. Analysis of the collected data shows that Facebook users' main motives behind self-representation were social and affection, and exhibitionism. Results also demonstrated that these motives were not the same for males and females as well as users of different age groups.

Keywords: Pakistan, self-representation, SNS, Facebook, motives, youth, determinants

INTRODUCTION

As a matter of fact, societal contact and communication with others are intrinsic yearning and craving of the human beings. Man has been using different technologies and tools for this purpose. The present age is termed as the age of technology. Social networking sites have got faster and progressive growth in the recent past (Chang et al., 2015). In fact, social networking was initially created to satisfy user's personal communication needs. Millions of people became its users due to its ease. According to Digital 2021: Global Overview report, there are an estimated 4.20 billion social media users worldwide. This equates to almost 54% of the world's total population. This

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number is increasing day by day, active social media usage has grown by 13%, or 490 million people, since January 2020 (Avocado Social, 2021).

Facebook is the most popular and largest social network in the world, with approximately 2.91 billion active members as of the third quarter of 2021 ("Facebook MAU worldwide 2020," 2021). It is the most popular social networking site in Pakistan. The number of Facebook users in Pakistan is increasing. According to statistic, Pakistan ranks tenth in the world in terms of Facebook user audience ("Facebook users by country 2021," 2021). With a high number of users, Facebook appeals to users of all ages. Facebook is a personal media device for its users, which plays a key role in self-representation (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfeld, 2007).

Uses and gratification theory asserts that due to social and psychological needs, people use specific medium to represent themselves according to their desire. Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al. 1973) helps explain the gratifications sought and obtained in the use of social media, and also shows that these gratifications differ according to individual characteristics. Moreover, individuals use social media to obtain gratifications. Thus, communication model asserts that motives are the major cause due to which people choose specific medium that has ability to fulfill their desired needs (Rubin et al., 1988). The main aspect which motives model indicated humans being aware of their motives before the beginning of any communication (Rubin et al. 1988). According to Charney and Greenberg, people use internet for the gratification of their needs such as communication, pleasure, identity seeking, diversion, and entertainment and for their careers (Charney & Greenberg, 2001). Park and Floyd argued that with audience activity, individual social and psychological factors have influence on communication motives' uses and gratification theory supports their work (Park & Floyd, 1996). Papacharissi (2002) considered the idea of impression management to examine users' motivation for maintaining web pages. She found that web page users manipulate their information on their personal webpage for motivation such as surveillance, passing time, professional advancement, diversion, social utility and self-expression. On the basis of Goffman's definition Papacharissi argued that, "a web page provides the ideal setting for presentation of self-information, since it allowed a carefully crafted performance through which impression management was achieved under optimal conditions." Similar claims could be made for a Facebook user (Papacharissi, 2002). Another study conducted by Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) showed that individual social presence is directly linked to internet motives. Their major findings also showed that the motives behind the use of internet is information seeking and this is the main reason due to which individuals communicate with each other through the internet as a contrasting option to other needs such as interpersonal face to face communication. Their study lends support the claim that the internet is an alternative medium for the people who usually avoid interpersonal face to face communication. Dhaha and Igale (2013) explored six vital factors of using Facebook among youth of Somalia. They found that motives of using Facebook were self-portrayal, self-expression, passing time, virtual companionship, information and entertainment. Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) examined how people utilize SNSs to fulfill their motives. Their research was quantitative and qualitative in nature. Their results show many motivations of using Facebook such as social interaction, personal identity, information seeking and entertainment. Similarly, Kim, Sohan and Choi (2011) reported information, friendship, and entertainment as motives/determinants of social media use. Hargittai in his study on Facebook users in 2007 highlighted the gender difference in Facebook use. He argued that men use Facebook very frequently than females.

The motives/ determinants of females' Facebook usage were social need, entertainment and passing time whereas men want to make new relationship through Facebook and females want to maintain existing relationship (Hargittai, 2007). Wood describes social networking sites as mediated communication sites which offer interpersonal communication for its users by providing the multiple features where users can show characteristic of their desired constructed personal identity so users of social networking sites can easily decide what is appropriate for their representation of self (Wood et al., 2015).

Self-representation is more visible and noticeable in socializing networks than mainstream media. In the online environment the focus of amateurs is on self-broadcasting instead of some productive activities where they desire to represent themselves as unique and individualistic (Burgess & Green, 2009). Facebook users may start regulating their emotions and engage in cognitive-preoccupation, leading to stress and anxiety in actual life. Thus they find difficulties in managing their lives and experience negative consequences in real life (Marino et al., 2017). The youth of today's era grew up in the age of digital applications. Thus, they are true "digital native" of technology (Siegle, 2011). People especially the youth have certain motives which make them use Facebook. While there are various motivations for individuals to use SNSs (Alhabash & Ma 2017). The primary motivations include establishing and maintaining online and offline relationships (Kuss & Griffiths 2011). The uses and gratifications can also depend on the type of SNS they are engaged in. For example, Facebook can be used to satisfy the need to belong and self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

Individuals use Facebook to represent themselves in a flexible goal directed manner, a manner which allows desired self-representation to achieve desired goals. Users represent themselves in explicit and implicit ways (Enli & Nancy, 2012). Further, lack of physical appearance in Facebook facilities users to represent constructed self. Therefore, people might be more eager to represent themselves in certain ways to manage their optimal impressions on others and get gratification. This demands a need to identify the motives for which social media, especially Facebook is used by the general public. Consequently, the self-representation could influence gratification goals that people seek from their online self-representation.

According to Horzum (2016) few studies have been conducted to explore self-representation and Facebook user motives. Pakistan is no exception. The researchers could not find any worth-mentioning study conducted in Pakistan to examine the motives/ determinants of Facebook users' self-representation on the said social medium. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to investigate the motives behind the use of Facebook in Pakistan for self-representation.

Moreover, a critical review of the available literature on Facebook shows that researchers have used the notion of self-presentation instead of self-representation (Savneet & Malik, 2012); (Grieve et al., 2020); (Gil-Or et al., 2015); (Noumeur, 2019); (Yu & Kim, 2020); (Kim & Ahn, 2013). Few researchers have used the notion of self-representation. The virtual world is the place where people use the internet to "reinvent themselves". In the virtual world of internet users represent their second self (Peachey & Childs, 2011). Furthermore, human representation is based on how they framed themselves in photographs, images and text on cinema screen and websites etc (Silverstone, 1999; Couldry, 2006; Martin-Barbero, 1993). The concept of self-representation is centered on symbolic forms created and then disseminated which link it to the field of representation.

According to Thumim and Sara Enli through socializing online on Facebook, people construct their self-representation. (Thumim & Enli, 2012). Thumim argued that to participate in online social networks such as Facebook, individuals have no choice but to represent themselves (Thumim, 2009; Thumim, 2012). Therefore, it is very important to understand the concept of online self-representation and social and psychological dimensions of human motives which individuals want to gratify through self-representation on Facebook.

The researchers designed the present study to address these questions (1) what are the motives/determinants of Facebook users behind their self-representation on Facebook? and (2) Do people belonging to different gender and age groups have different motives of self-representation on Facebook?

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed survey method. Survey method is useful to know attitudinal and behavioral aspects of individuals. Target population of the study was young Facebook users while survey population of the present investigation was undergraduate students (BS students) of the International Islamic University, Islamabad. Convenient sampling technique was adopted for data collection. These young students were sampled because recent studies indicated that Facebook usage is common among university students (Dogruer, 2011). Initially, 250 students were approached out of which 177 students met the inclusion criteria using Facebook, hence the final sample size was 177. Cohen, Cohen, Aiken and West (2003) proposed a minimum sample size of 150 for two predictors in the study. As this study mainly has two predictors which are gender and age, hence the sample size is appropriate. Total strength of responses was 177 students out of 250, from which 100 students were from female category and 77 students were from male category

The researchers developed a questionnaire for data collection in the light of the objectives of the study and related literature review. The questionnaire contained 12 different close-ended questions. The empirical indicators of social and psychological dimensions behind self-representation are social and affection motive, recognition, exhibitionism and cognitive motive. Literature shows numerous inventories of Facebook users' motives. Leung, (2013) identified social and affection motive, recognition motive, cognitive motive and exhibitionism motive as the motives of self-representation on Facebook. Hence the researchers adopted Leung's dimensions of self-representation in the present study.

In order to investigate social and affection motive, four statements were asked about Facebook use such as 'I use Facebook to share my interest, view, and thought' and 'I use Facebook to understand myself' and 'I use Facebook to voice out discontent' and 'I use Facebook to get anger out of my chest'. For the investigation of recognition motive, three statements were used such as 'I use Facebook to promote my expertise', 'I use Facebook to establish my personal identity' and 'I use Facebook to gain respect and support'. While to investigate cognitive motive two statements were used such as "I use Facebook to refine my thinking" and "I use Facebook because I want to get others attention for Exhibitionism." Three statements were used such as 'I use Facebook because it makes me cool among peers' and 'I use Facebook because I want to gain fame' and 'I use Facebook because I like when people think about me'.

The questionnaire contained 5–point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree introduced by Likert (1932). Instruments of data collection were in the form of statements. The researchers used ascending order for the level of agreement with the given statements. They coded strongly agree as 05, agree as 04, neutral as 03, disagree as 02 and strongly disagree as 01.

Data were analyzed by using SPSS. Questionnaire was consisted of two piece of demographic information of students. It also contained 12 items that were related to motives of Facebook users' self-representation. Data were analyzed by using mean value with the help of computed sum of indicators and then the data was analyzed, tabulated and interpreted in the light of objectives of the study. The researchers employed Cronbach alpha for examining internal consistency of the data collection tool. Alpha Coefficient was calculated at .88 for 14 items. For the analysis of gender difference, the researchers used t –test and ANOVA was used for the analysis of age differences as these are most appropriate to measure reliability.

Sample Characteristics

The present study investigated gender and age-wise differences among respondents. The researchers analyzed the demographic characteristics of the respondents particularly in terms of gender and age. Table 1 given below shows Sample characteristics which are as follows.

Table 1: Gender and age-wise frequency distribution of the sample

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	77	43.50
	Female	100	56.50
Age	18-21	76	42.90
	22-24	67	37.90
	25-27	27	15.30
	28 & above	7	4.00

Initially, 250 individuals were approached for data collection, out of which data of 177 individuals (because they were fulfilling the inclusion criteria) were retained for the purpose of data analysis. As table shows 43.50 percent respondents were males and 56.50 were females. The ratio of respondents below the age of 21 were 42.90percent and the ratio of respondents between the age 21 to 25 were 37.90 percent and ratio of respondents between 24 to 28 were 15.30 percent and 4percentwere above the age of 28.

Social and Psychological Dimension of Self-Representation

Table 2: Mean scores of the respondents' motives/ determinants of self-representations on Facebook

Key: SOC (Social and affection motive), REC (recognition motive) COG (cognitive motive) EXH (exhibitionism motive) COM (communication motive)

The collected data shows social and affection motive (11.66) and exhibitionism motive (11.28) respectively, which are higher than other motives such as recognition motive (8.99) and cognitive motive (3.14). Data revealed that major motive, due to which people represent themselves on

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	A
MFB	20	100	58.84	.88
1. SAF	4	20	11.66	.80
2. REC	3	15	8.99	.78
3. COG	1	5	3.14	.72
4. EXH	4	20	11.28	.90

Facebook is "social and exhibitionism" motive.

Gender-wise differences in self-representation motives.

Table 3: Gender-wise differences in determinants of self-representation on Facebook

Results show that males scored ($M = 13.32$, $SD = 14.10$) higher as compared to females ($M = 10.37$, $SD = 2.58$) on Social motive. The difference is significant as $t(177) = 5.13$, $p < .05$. Similarly, males

Measures	Males		Females		<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		Cohens <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			LL	UL	
SN	13.32	4.01	10.37	2.58	5.13	.00	1.97	3.93	.50
REC	10.25	3.24	8.02	2.50	5.15	.00	1.37	3.07	.45
COG	3.49	1.19	2.86	1.15	3.55	.00	.28	.98	.28
EXH	13.31	4.32	9.72	3.82	5.84	.00	2.37	4.80	.55

scored higher ($M = 10.25$, $SD = 3.24$) as compared to females ($M = 8.02$, $SD = 2.50$) on Recognition motive. Again the difference came out to be significant $t(177) = 5.15$, $p < .05$). Results of cognitive motive shows that male score ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.19$) is higher than female ($M=2.86$, $SD=1.15$) and difference is significant as $t(177) = 3.55$, $p < .05$). On exhibitionism, male scored higher ($M=13.31$, $SD=4.32$) with significant difference $t(177) = 5.25$, $P < .05$). Results on communication motive also show that male scored higher than female ($M= 13.74$, $SD=4.05$) while the difference is significant as $t(177) = 5.25$, $p < .05$).

Self-representation Motives and Age Differences

Table 4: Age-wise differences of motives/determinants of self-representation on Facebook

Demographics	Categories	SAN		REC		COG		EXH	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (Years)	19-21	11.30	3.25	8.95	3.037	3.22	1.239	11.41	4.398
	22-24	10.76	2.731	8.60	2.594	2.96	1.199	10.09	4.010
	25-27	14.33	4.641	10.00	3.731	3.33	1.144	14.11	4.191
	28 & above	13.71	4.645	9.29	4.071	3.14	1.345	10.43	5.028
ANOVA <i>F</i>		<i>F</i> = 8.35		<i>F</i> = 1.39		<i>F</i> = .86		<i>F</i> 5.87	
ρ -value		ρ = .00		ρ = .24		ρ = .46		ρ = .00	

Key: SAN = Social and Affection Need; REC = Recognition Need; COG = Cognitive Need, EXH= Exhibition Need

Results also show that individuals represent themselves for social motive as (M=1) Majority of students 43percent belongs to age group 19-21 and they said that they use Facebook for exhibitionism, and social and affection motive. Resulted data shows mean of social and affection motive is (11.30). However, the resulted data shows that males aged 25-27 have more goals of exhibitionism motive than females. Mean is highest in same age group of 25-27 for exhibitionism motive i.e. 14.11 is higher than recognition motive, cognitive motive and exhibitionism motive and the age between 22-24 have less motives than other age group. One-way ANOVA was conducted across four age categories on outcomes; social and affective need, recognition need, cognitive need, exhibitionism need. Findings revealed the significant differences present across age categories on social and affective need, and exhibitionism need (as $\rho < .01$). However, there were no significant differences observed across age categories on recognition need, cognitive needs (as $\rho > .20$; see table 4).

DISCUSSIONS

Pursuing the assumptions of uses and gratifications theory the present investigation was aimed at exploring the motives/ determinants behind self-representation on Facebook amongst the Pakistani youth. The researchers selected students at International Islamic University, Islamabad through convenient sampling technique for the said purpose. Analysis of collected data shows that Facebook users represent themselves on Facebook for the gratification of their motives such as social/ affection motive, and the exhibitionism motive.

Result of data indicated that individuals mostly use Facebook because they want to share their interests, views and thoughts with other people, as table 2 shows the high mean values of

respondents specifically on social and affection motive. These findings are consistent with the previous studies (Yang & Brown, 2013). They also indicated that the social and affection motives as well as the exhibition motives for Facebook usage is neither culturally nor geographically bound. Findings also indicated that males scored significantly higher on all of the social and psychological motives for Facebook usage. However, the findings were inconsistent with the previous studies (Makashvili & Amirejibi, 2013)

The findings showed that young adult students want to repair their mood when they get bored by representing themselves on Facebook because it's fun for them to show themselves to others and receive encouragement. Several other studies show same motive behind Facebook use. It is human nature that they want to get other person's attention. So, for Facebook users it's easy to exhibit themselves in front of others according to their desires because physical appearance and face to face communication is not possible on Facebook, so users can easily represent themselves in their desired way and can make themselves cool among peers. Through this, they can get fame and become prominent among others. The results also substantiate the findings of Hollenbaugh's (2011) study. Furthermore, the researchers found that some young students represent themselves on Facebook to promote their expertise and their identity to gain respect and support. Similar motive of Facebook users was found by Leung (2013). The study found and confirm results of previous investigations that Facebook users disclose information about themselves and the major motives/ determinants behind their self-disclosure is social connection, and exhibitionism. Facebook users generally upload information about themselves, share updates and photos to connect with the world and to fulfill their social and psychological motives.

Over all the study by exploring age-wise and gender-wise differences amongst the users in terms of motives/ needs of Facebook uses confirms the assumptions of uses and gratification theory with respect to social media too. It found that although there is a great penetration of social media amongst people of all age groups around the world, but the motives of social media (Facebook) is not passive and not the same amongst them. The uses and gratifications theory assumes that audience mass media using behavior is active, and not passive; the audience get themselves engaged in mass media uses due to certain social and psychological motives, which they want to be gratified by mass media consumption. Although this theory was presented in the context of mass media, however, the researchers applied it on the present study (which is related to social media uses) and found that the uses and gratification theory can be employed for examining audience of social media uses and their motives as well.

Although the study was limited to Facebook users only however, researchers who wish to undertake further investigation in this area would do well to recruit users of all SNSs to come up with a clear generalization.

The major limitation of this study stems from its cross-sectional design, in which only association, and not causation, can be determined. Additionally, all data relied entirely on self-report measures that are liable to socially desirable and self-deceptive responding. This is particularly true in the case of questions assessing the motivation behind the use of Facebook. Finally, the present work was limited to a sample of university-going students in a cultural context characterized by collectivism; thus, readers should exercise caution before generalizing the present findings to the broader population, such as adults and Westerners (characterized by individualistic culture).

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