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Personality traits of young people having a profile on a social networking site

Abstract

Introduction. Social networking sites are virtual online communities, where users can design personal profiles available for public assessment, interact with friends, and meet with others, based on shared interests. SNS (social networking sites) have been defined as a "global consumer phenomenon" because they have been experiencing a sharp increase in popularity and use over the last decade. SNS websites, such as Facebook, are becoming increasingly popular, however, little is known about psychosocial variables, which are risk factors for excessive use of these websites.

Aim. The aim of the work was to characterize personality traits (self-image characteristics, ways of coping with stress and aggression intensity) of youth who have a profile on a social networking site.

Material and methods. The study included a total of 590 individuals from 16 to 18 years of age. Among the subjects, a group of 51 people without a profile was identified and 539 – with a profile on a social networking site. The group of teenagers was examined by means of statistical methods: a socio-demographic survey by the authors' own design, H. G. Gough and A. B. Heilbrun's Adjective Check List (ACL), Stress Coping Questionnaire (SCQ) constructed by W. Janke, G. Erdmann, K. W. Kallus, in the Polish language compilation by E. Januszewska, Buss-Durkee Hostility – Gild Inventory, developed in Polish by Choynowski.

Results. Statistically significant differences were found in terms of self-image features, ways of coping with stress and activity displayed on the Internet between the youth who had and did not have a profile on the social networking site.

Conclusions. Significantly more young people who have a profile on a social networking site share their personal data with strangers met through the Internet, use internet services and make purchases online, compared to the youth who do not have this profile. Young people with a profile on a social portal are characterized by greater timidity, difficulties in coping with stress and everyday tasks, less perseverance, entrepreneurship, effectiveness in the implementation of tasks, less self-confidence, less autonomy, responsibility and tolerance in comparison with young people who do not have a profile. Young people who have a social media profile are more likely to turn to other people in a stressful situation to request support and advice.

Keywords: social networking sites, self-image, coping with stress, personality traits.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, there were 2.34 billion users of social networks globally [1]. In the same year, 22.9% of the world's population used Facebook [2]. The use of social networking sites (SNS) has become for many people the main way of spending free time, enabling communication with others online, regardless of time and space restrictions [3]. The most commonly used social media are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Over 1 billion 645 million social media users are registered, and the number of further unregistered users of SNS is not known [4]. From a wide range of social networking opportunities such as publishing and commenting on photos and videos, as well as communication between users – almost 90% of adolescents aged 14-17 are already using it. Most often, they set up a Facebook account (78.4%).

Social networks less frequently mentioned by young people are Twitter, Fotka, Grono, Photoblog, Myspace and others [5]. The popularity of social networking sites among younger Internet users is surprising – 68% of children aged 7-14 go on Facebook, although legally it is available for people who have turned 13 [6].

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are virtual online communities where users can design personal profiles available for public assessment, interact with friends and meet with others based on shared interests [7]. SNS have been described as a "global consumer phenomenon" because they have been experiencing a surge in popularity and use over the last decade. The power of social networking websites is proved by the forecasts that by 2021, the number of active users of social media globally will have reached about 3.02 billion i.e. about a third of the total population of the Earth [1].

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SNS websites, such as Facebook, are becoming increasingly popular, however, little is known about psychosocial variables, which are risk factors for excessive use of these websites. Based on the survey of 233 students, Pelling and White (2009) showed that SNS users with an increased need for affiliation were more likely to develop addiction to the use of SNS. Internet addiction, whose type is addiction to social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, may be a prospective mental health problem of some Internet users [7,8].

Frequent use of SNS is associated with an increased level of extraversion, neuroticism and narcissism, as well as with low levels of self-assessment and low self-esteem [9]. Individuals who have very few contacts in relationships outside the Internet can compensate for their timidity, low self-assessment and low life satisfaction by using social networks [10-13]. Moreover, Orr et al. [14] studied timidity in relation to online communication and SNS because forums such as Facebook and MySpace provide timid people with possibility of social interactions. They determined that the degree of timidity is to a large extent related to the amount of time users used Facebook. Timidity was negatively correlated with the number of Facebook contacts [14].

Nadkarni and Hofmann [12] determined that the use of Facebook depends primarily on the severity of the need to belong and self-presentation. These two needs are combined with personality traits: narcissism, neuroticism, introversion, self-esteem and timidity [15-18]. Self-esteem is closely related to the need to belong and it often reflects the acceptance of an individual in the group. Lowering one's self-esteem can act as a warning about prospective social exclusion, which can motivate the individual to take the necessary precautions to avoid rejection and improve his position in a particular social hierarchy [19]. There is evidence that using Facebook can improve self-esteem by increasing the sense of belonging [20]. Gonzales et al. [21] noticed that the exposure to information presented on a personal Facebook profile improves the self-esteem of a given person [21]. This is especially noticeable when a person selectively presents information about themselves, which means that digital self-presentation can positively affect self-assessment. Back et al. [22] formulated the hypothesis that Facebook users create their profiles to reflect an idealized, not a real picture of themselves. Reich et al. [23] and Subrahmanyam and Greenfield [24] emphasise that teenagers use these SNS to solve developmental problems, such as the desire for closeness. However, communication on the Internet may expose adolescents to the risk of interacting with unknown individuals from whom they may experience various forms of violence. This is favoured by the lack of control of children's online activity on the part of their parents, the lack of satisfying emotional needs, such as belonging, acceptance, support at home, difficulties in establishing interpersonal relations.

AIM

The aim of the work was to characterize personality traits (self-image characteristics, ways of coping with stress and aggression intensity) of youth who have a profile on a social networking site.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study included a total of 590 individuals from 16 to 19 years of age. Among the subjects, a group of 51 people without a profile was identified and 539 – with a profile on a social networking site.

The group of teenagers was examined using the following methods: A socio-demographic survey by the authors' own design, H. G. Gough and A. B. Heilbrun's Adjective Check List ACL [26], W. Janke, G. Erdmann and K. W. Kallus's Stress Coping Questionnaire (SCQ), compiled in the Polish language by E. Januszewska [27], Buss-Durkee Hostility – Gild Inventory, compiled in Polish by Choynowski [28]. On the basis of the ACL Test, the self-image characteristics of the examined youth were determined, the KRS Questionnaire – preferred ways of coping with stress, and on the basis of Hostility –- Gild Inventory – intensification of aggression.

RESULTS

1. Online activity of young people who have a profile on a social networking site

In the first stage of the analyses, the activity conducted on the Internet by young people with and without a profile on a social networking site was compared, using the χ^2 test.

TABLE 1. Comparison of the activity displayed on the Internet by young people who have and who do not have a profile on a social networking site.

Activity	do not have a profile		have a profile		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
Upload	25	60.98%	200	80.32%	7.580	0.005
Shot	5	12.20%	93	37.20%	9.86	0.002
Sending your photo to an unknown chatbot	6	14.63%	72	28.80%	3.60	0.05
Providing a telephone number to an unknown chatbot	5	12.20%	73	29.20%	5.19	0.02
Buying clothes on the Internet	10	24.39%	101	40.56%	3.90	0.05

Significantly more adolescents who have a profile on the social networking site use Wrzuta and Fotka websites, and they sent their photo, phone number to an unknown chatbot and bought clothes via the Internet, compared to the youth who do not have a profile.

2. A self-image of adolescents having a profile on a social networking site

Table 2 compares the mean results obtained in the Adjective Check List (ACL) by young people who have and who do not have a profile on a social networking site, by means of the Student's t test.

TABLE 2. Comparison of the self-image of young people who have and who do not have a profile on a social networking site.

ACL scales	have a profile		do not have a profile		t	p
	M	sd	M	sd		
No-Ckd (total number of adjectives checked)	38.27	8.91	36.95	7.21	0.86	n.i.
Fav (favourable)	42.09	8.39	43.76	8.97	-1.11	n.i.
Unfav (unfavourable)	54.81	11.85	52.84	11.37	0.94	n.i.
Com (communality)	31.59	9.95	35.86	9.91	-2.42	0.02
Ach (achievement)	45.89	7.47	48.95	9.06	-2.22	0.03
Dom (dominance)	47.85	6.84	50.59	8.46	-2.17	0.031
End (endurance)	46.19	8.44	48.65	9.48	-1.61	n.i.
Ord (order)	46.49	8.51	48.78	8.94	-1.50	n.i.
Int (intraception)	40.63	8.10	43.11	8.78	-1.70	n.i.
Nur (nurturance)	41.35	8.94	42.62	8.02	-0.81	n.i.
Aff (affiliation)	44.78	9.22	44.51	9.55	0.16	n.i.
Het (heterosexuality)	48.17	9.86	46.41	10.35	1.00	n.i.
Exh (exhibition)	53.55	8.01	52.76	8.19	0.55	n.i.
Aut (autonomy)	54.60	7.45	53.46	7.20	0.87	n.i.
Agg (aggression)	52.69	8.84	52.05	9.89	0.40	n.i.
Cha (change)	45.56	7.17	45.62	5.72	-0.05	n.i.
Suc (succorance)	48.74	8.36	47.08	10.00	1.09	n.i.
Aba (abasement)	47.89	8.89	46.16	10.66	1.06	n.i.
Def (deference)	46.16	7.93	46.11	8.64	0.03	n.i.
Crs (counselling readiness)	47.45	9.42	48.62	11.07	-0.68	n.i.
S-Cn (self-control)	46.87	7.57	47.92	7.45	-0.78	n.i.
S-Cfd (self-confidence)	48.42	9.05	50.54	9.66	-1.31	n.i.
P-adj (personal adjustment)	42.99	8.87	44.89	8.60	-1.21	n.i.
Iss (ideal self)	51.75	8.34	53.97	8.38	-1.50	n.i.
Cps (creative personality)	50.21	6.89	51.08	7.70	-0.70	n.i.
Mls (military leader)	39.29	8.21	41.97	9.50	-1.79	n.i.
Mas (masculine)	50.02	9.10	53.08	10.18	-1.86	n.i.
Fem (feminine)	42.66	8.20	40.68	9.45	1.33	n.i.
Cp (critical parent)	51.01	7.44	51.38	8.55	-0.27	n.i.
Np (nurturing parent)	45.73	7.82	48.81	7.41	-2.23	0.03
A (adult)	43.81	6.82	46.89	7.17	-2.52	0.012
Fc (free child)	50.80	7.16	50.68	8.27	0.10	n.i.
Ac (adapted child)	52.47	6.92	50.70	6.37	1.45	n.i.

Youth having a profile on a social portal, compared to youth without a profile on the portal is characterized by increased timidity, the lack of persistence, entrepreneurship, effectiveness in the implementation of tasks and self-confidence, the tendency to avoid competition and team work. People who have a profile on a social networking site are less autonomous, less responsible, worse cope with the tasks of everyday life and are less tolerant and caring towards other people.

3. Ways of coping with stress used by young people with a profile on a social networking site

In Table 3, the mean results were compared, obtained in the SCQ scales by young people who have and do not have a profile on a social networking site, using the Student's t test.

TABLE 3. Comparison of the mean results in the SCQ scales, obtained by young people who have and do not have a profile on a social networking site.

Coping with Stress Questionnaire scales (SCQ)	have a profile		do not have a profile		t	p
	M	sd	M	sd		
Belittling	9.18	4.67	8.50	4.36	0.84	n.i.
Comparison to others	8.17	4.61	8.03	4.73	0.18	n.i.
Defence against fault	8.05	3.92	7.45	3.90	0.88	n.i.
Diverting attention	9.13	4.19	9.34	4.91	-0.28	n.i.
Alternative satisfaction	9.51	5.05	9.13	4.79	0.43	n.i.
Seeking self-affirmation	9.05	4.55	8.21	4.82	1.05	n.i.
Attempt to control the situation	9.49	4.57	9.13	4.49	0.45	n.i.
Attempt to control one's reactions	10.25	4.52	9.68	4.88	0.71	n.i.
Positive self-instruction	9.62	4.89	8.76	4.73	1.00	n.i.
Seeking social support	9.33	5.70	7.03	4.81	2.36	0.02
Avoiding tendency	9.61	4.53	9.39	5.15	0.26	n.i.
Escaping tendency	7.47	4.51	6.82	5.17	0.81	n.i.
Isolation from other people	7.06	4.71	7.32	5.55	-0.31	n.i.
Further preoccupation in thoughts	9.38	5.45	8.63	5.57	0.79	n.i.
Resignation	8.89	4.57	8.47	4.91	0.52	n.i.
Self-pity	8.48	4.95	8.26	5.56	0.25	n.i.
Self-blaming	8.63	5.15	7.74	5.19	0.99	n.i.
Aggression	7.77	4.75	6.47	4.96	1.55	n.i.
Dependence	3.91	4.18	3.53	3.74	0.53	n.i.

Individuals who have a profile on a social networking site significantly more often than individuals who do not have a profile, in a stressful situation, turn to other people for help and advice.

4. Intensification of aggression in adolescents with a profile on a social networking site

Table 4 compares the mean results obtained in the Hostility - Gild Inventory scales by young people who have and do not have a profile on a social networking site, using the Student's t test.

TABLE 4. Comparison of the mean results in Hostility – Gild Inventory scales, obtained by young people who have and who do not have a profile on a social networking site.

Buss-Durkee Hostility ǀ – Gild Inventory scales	have ǀa profile		do not have a profile		t	p
	M	sd	M	sd		
Physical aggression	0.89	0.48	0.87	0.55	0.29	n.i.
Indirect hostility	0.92	0.43	0.92	0.39	-0.10	n.i.
Irritability	1.10	0.42	1.08	0.39	0.34	n.i.
Negativism	1.10	0.51	1.01	0.53	1.02	n.i.
Resentment	0.95	0.47	0.87	0.52	0.96	n.i.
Suspicion	0.95	0.39	0.92	0.45	0.50	n.i.
Verbal aggression	1.04	0.35	0.99	0.37	0.83	n.i.
Guilt	1.03	0.48	0.96	0.56	0.93	n.i.

Compared groups of adolescents do not differ in the intensification of aggression.

DISCUSSION

The obtained research results provide information about the differences in the scope of activity displayed on the Internet, as well as about the differences in personality traits among young people who have and who do not have a profile on a social networking site. Significantly more young people who have a profile on a social networking site share their personal data with strangers who they met on the Internet, use online services and make purchases online. Rightly so Reich et al. [23] and Subrahmanyam and Greenfield [24] emphasise the risk of youth entering into relationships with strangers on social networking sites, to whom they reveal their personal data, telephone number and thus expose themselves to the danger of experiencing various forms of violence from them.

The results of the conducted research indicate that people with a profile on a social portal are more timid, they avoid competition, team work more than people without a profile. Youth having a profile on the portal are characterized by less persistence, entrepreneurship, effectiveness in the implementation of tasks and life goals, less self-confidence, less autonomy, responsibility, tolerance, and more severe difficulties in coping with the tasks of everyday life, compared to youth without a profile. Individuals who have a profile on a social networking site significantly more often than people who do not have a profile, in a stressful situation, turn to other people for help and advice. These results are in line with the outlook presented by Nadkarnia and Hofmann [9], who connect the use of social networking sites with timidity, low self-esteem and low life satisfaction. Baker [10] believes that limited contact with people outside the Internet, which is caused by personality traits, such as timidity and negative self-esteem, can be compensated by contacts made on social fora. Difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships outside the Internet, building self-esteem just due to the contacts established via the Internet, creating an unreal, idealized self-image, intensified in puberty the need to belong could be risk factors for the development of an Internet addiction or social networking sites addiction.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Significantly more adolescents who have a profile on a social networking site share their personal data with strangers who are met through the Internet, use online services and make purchases online, compared to the youth who do not have a profile.
2. Young people with a profile on a social portal are characterized by greater timidity, difficulties in coping with stress and everyday tasks, less perseverance, entrepreneurship, effectiveness in the implementation of tasks, less self-confidence, less autonomy, responsibility and tolerance in comparison with young people who do not have a profile.
3. Young people who have a social media profile are more likely to turn to other people in a stressful situation and ask for support and advice.

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