



Type D personality, stress coping strategies and self-efficacy as predictors of Facebook intrusion



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ABSTRACT

Recently, Facebook has become one of the most popular social networking sites. People use it more and more often. A number of studies have recently addressed the issue of excessive Facebook use, showing this phenomenon to be a spreading problem. The main aim of the present study was to examine whether Type D personality, self-efficacy and coping strategies are related to Facebook intrusion. The participants were 882 students of Polish universities, all of them Facebook users (72% women, mean age: 22.25 years, $SD = 2.06$). We used the Facebook Intrusion Questionnaire, the Facebook Intensity Scale, the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations, and the Type D Scale. We applied the pen-and-paper procedure. Our results indicate that emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented strategies of coping in stressful situations are predictors of Facebook intrusion and Facebook intensity. The relations between both Facebook intrusion and intensity and social inhibition are significant only when emotion-oriented coping strategy is controlled. The knowledge of whether coping strategies in stressful situations, such as focus on emotions or avoidance, are related to Facebook intrusion might be useful for clinical purposes.

1. Introduction

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. The number of its users reached 1 billion in 2014 and keeps increasing (Facebook, 2014). People use Facebook more and more, but only some of them have or will have a problem connected with using it. Intensive Facebook usage results in a new kind of behavioral disturbance. In the context of technological addiction, Elphinston and Noller (2011) defined Facebook intrusion as excessive involvement in Facebook that interferes with day-to-day activities and relationships. They distinguished three symptoms of this disorder: withdrawal, relapse and reinstatement, and euphoria. The concept of Facebook intrusion covers the state of distress and discomfort in situations of no access to Facebook. It is also related to aimless efforts to reduce Facebook use and positive feelings about being connected to the site. Facebook intrusion refers to a lack of control over Facebook use and to persistence in using Facebook despite experiencing its negative consequences. Given the frequency of Facebook use and its powerful effect on social life, excessive attachment to Facebook can become a serious mental health condition (e.g., Błachnio et al., 2015).

Facebook addiction or Facebook intrusion (or, more broadly, social

media addiction) has not been included in the recent disease classification manuals: the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) or the International Classification of Diseases and Health Problems (ICD-10). There is, however, strong consensus among specialists representing various disciplines – including psychologists and psychiatrists – that it is highly important to study problematic Facebook use in order to learn more about its nature and comorbidity. Research on determining the potential risk factors for this mental disorder is gaining in importance. According to some researchers, excessive behaviors should be distinguished from addiction (see Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths et al., 2014), and excessive Facebook use is not the same as Facebook addiction (Dantlgraber et al., 2016). Dantlgraber et al. (2016) adapted the Internet Addiction Test to the Facebook context. They concluded that Facebook addiction, though similar to the construct of Internet addiction, is narrower and more specific. This means that problematic Facebook use is a case of problematic Internet use, whereas problematic Internet use does not necessarily imply problematic Facebook use. The authors identified two factors in the Facebook Addiction Test (FAT): (1) Loss of Control and Interference With Daily Life and (2) Emotional and Cognitive Preoccupation With Facebook (Dantlgraber et al., 2016).

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Some scholars (e.g., Koc and Gulyagci, 2013) report a relation between a high level of Facebook use and Facebook addiction. Excessive Internet use and Internet addiction are interchangeably used terms (e.g., Weinstein and Lejoyeux, 2010). Although it is not always the case that those who spend much time on Facebook are addicted, there are some indications that among heavy Facebook users there are those who are already addicted to Facebook or are at risk of developing this kind of addiction.

Facebook has changed social life and the way people – especially the young generations – communicate; it has changed the way they share information and pictures, the way they promote themselves, and where they set the privacy border (Kezer et al., 2016; Kim and Gweon, 2016; Steijn et al., 2016). It is therefore of paramount importance to investigate this phenomenon in various countries. There are studies showing cultural differences in Facebook use. These differences are visible in sharing photos (Günsoy et al., 2015; Huang and Park, 2013), in self-disclosure behavior (Reed et al., 2016), in self-presentation (Lee-Won et al., 2014), and in posting information (Nadkarni and Hofmann, 2012). Another study showed that Facebook intrusion is slightly related to Internet penetration in different countries (Blachnio et al., 2016a, 2016b). Our previous study revealed that cultural variables such as uniqueness and low context are predictors of Facebook intrusion (Blachnio et al., 2016b).

In Poland, where the present study was conducted, about 80% of Internet users have Facebook accounts (Gemius, 2015). Due to the large population of users and a wide range of technological applications that enable engaging in various activities, the phenomenon of Facebook has been a subject of extensive research around the globe (e.g., Blachnio et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2012). In Poland, Facebook is the most popular SNS. In June 2014, it was the second most often visited site after Google (Gemius, 2015).

Stress is defined as a “nonspecific response of the body to noxious stimuli” (Selye, 1956, p. 12). Denollet (2005) introduced the construct of distressed personality, known as Type D personality, characterized by vulnerability to chronic distress. Type D personality consists of two factors: negative affectivity and social inhibition. People with a high level of negative affectivity have a tendency to feel negative emotions such as irritation, fear, or anger. At the same time, they score high on social inhibition and tend not to express negative emotions in social situations (Denollet, 2005). Some results indicate that Type D personality is related to alcohol addiction (Bruce et al., 2013). Other findings show that there is a positive link between Type D personality and depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, mental distress, passive coping, and low social support (Mols and Denollet, 2010). Amichai-Hamburger and Hayat (2013) discussed the beneficial effect of the Internet on users with social inhibition, for whom it is easier to socialize online. On the other hand, some studies report that Facebook users scored somewhat higher on extraversion (Wilson et al., 2010). Moreover, Facebook intensity is positively associated with extraversion (Blachnio and Przepiorka, 2016). Consequently, as for social inhibition aspect of Type D personality, it is difficult to predict the direction of the relation. Previous findings showing the association between excessive Internet use and Type D personality inspired our search in this direction. What is more, in a recent study, Holdoš (2016) found positive correlations between Internet addiction and Type D personality. In view of the above, it can be supposed that there is a relationship between different addictions and Type D personality. We suppose that the tendency to feel more stress in different situations may be a predictor of maladaptive behavioral symptoms, such as excessive Facebook involvement. Apart from distressed personality, coping strategies should be taken into consideration.

To the best of our knowledge, there is scarce research on Facebook intrusion and coping with stress. One of the pieces of evidence in favor of this link comes from a study on the relationship between Internet addiction and coping strategies. Wöfling et al. (2011) showed that Internet addiction was related to dysfunctional (maladaptive) coping

strategies. Al-Gamal et al. (2016) found a link between a high level of mental distress and Internet addiction in a student sample. Another study revealed that people who are addicted to social media tend to have lower mindfulness and choose emotion-oriented strategies in stressful situations (Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, 2015). A study devoted to Internet addiction and coping with stress indicated that avoidance coping style was related to generalized problematic Internet use (Li et al., 2008). It is therefore reasonable to predict that people who use Facebook intensively will choose coping strategies based on emotion and avoidance. A study of Chinese adolescents showed that, in their case, negative coping style was a mediator between stressful life events and the risk of IA (Tang et al., 2014).

Additionally, people differ in how they perceive their own efficacy in coping with difficulties in life (Jerusalem and Schwarzer, 1981). Chiu (2014) pointed out that self-efficacy was a mediator between academic stress and smartphone addiction. Jeong and Kim (2011) indicated that social self-efficacy in real life was negatively linked with game addiction, while self-efficacy in cyber life was positively related to it. Poor coping and cognitive expectations were mediators between generalized Internet addiction and other factors, such as low self-efficacy and high stress vulnerability (Brand et al., 2014). We therefore expected that lower self-efficacy would be related to higher Facebook addiction.

The main aim of the study was to examine whether Type D personality and strategies of coping with stress are related to Facebook intrusion. We considered stress-related variables, such as self-efficacy, coping with stress, and distressed personality. The present study aims to fill the gap in research by identifying the determinants of Facebook intrusion. It helps to understand the addictive mechanisms of this type of social media. So far, there has been scant research on the relation between stress and excessive Facebook use. To the best of our knowledge, there has been only one study examining this relation (Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Its authors tested a sample of employees in Thailand and found that addiction to social media was positively related to the use of emotion-focused coping in dealing with stress at work. What distinguished our study from theirs was the different cultural context and the fact that the sample represented the general population of Facebook users rather than a specific group. A body of recent studies (e.g. Blachnio et al., 2016a, 2016b) showed that cultural aspect of Facebook intrusion may play an important explanatory role, and therefore it should be controlled in future research. Moreover, Sriwilai and Charoensukmongkol (2015) used a different scale to measure coping strategies – namely, the one developed by Lewin and Sager (2008). The present study was extended to include Type D personality, which is linked with a tendency to experience negative emotions in different situations (Denollet, 2005).

We formulated the following hypotheses. In **Hypothesis 1**, we predicted that Type D personality would be related to Facebook intensity and Facebook intrusion:

H1.1. Social exhibition is related to Facebook intensity and Facebook intrusion.

H2.2. Negative affectivity is related to Facebook intensity and Facebook intrusion.

Hypothesis 2., it was postulated that maladaptive coping strategies would be associated with Facebook intensity and intrusion:

H2.1. Avoidance coping is positively related to Facebook intensity and intrusion.

H2.2. Emotion coping strategy is positively related to Facebook intensity and intrusion.

Hypothesis 3., it was predicted that self-efficacy would be negatively related to Facebook intensity and intrusion.

All these hypotheses were tested in a cross-sectional study on a sample of Polish students who were Facebook users.

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