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Excessive use of Facebook: The influence of self-monitoring and Facebook usage on social support

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of self-monitoring and the amount of Facebook use on Facebook addiction, and the associations among self-monitoring, Facebook addiction, Facebook usage, and social support. A cross-sectional design was used to collect the data from 257 college students who have used Facebook. The findings indicated that high self-monitors were more likely to be addicted to Facebook than were low self-monitors. In addition, the number of friends and Facebook activities were the major predictors of the amount of time on Facebook. High self-monitors, Facebook activities, and the amount of time predicted Facebook addiction. Moreover, the number of friends and low-self-monitors were linked to social support.

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Introduction

Social networking sites are one of the fast-growing media platforms allowing people to communicate and share information with others conveniently. Facebook is popular and its growth has been rapid around the world. To date (as of September 30, 2016), the number of Facebook active users worldwide is approximately 1.79 billion (Facebook, 2016). In Thailand, the statistics shows that almost 85 percent of Internet users have a Facebook account (Syndacast, 2015). Recently, Facebook was ranked the most influential brand in Thailand (The Nation, 2015).

Facebook usage has become epidemic and significant in people's lives and well-being. Communicating through Facebook has changed the way people connect with their social networks. With the various functions that Facebook offers, it allows users to do multiple activities such as presenting themselves to others, maintaining existing relationships, and building new networks and relationships. As a consequence, some users may spend a great amount of

time on Facebook and their usage may affect social relationships.

The empirical evidence suggested that individual differences were related to new media usage (Pornsakulvanich & Dumrongsiri, 2009). In addition, personality traits and skills were related to Facebook usage patterns (for example, Parks-Leduc, Pattie, Pargas, & Eliason, 2014), and the amount of time spent on Facebook affected social relationships (for example, Liu & Yu, 2013).

Some people prefer to spend more time on Facebook, which may affect their social support. Research on SNS use and social support revealed inconsistent results. Some studies revealed a positive relationship between SNS use and social support. Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, and Purcell (2011) found that Facebook users reported greater levels of support (emotional, instrumental, and companionship) than non-Facebook users. However, some studies found no relationship between SNS use and social support. Research has shown that the intensity of Facebook use did not predict bonding social capital (Vitak, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2011).

Questions to be raised concern how a particular personality trait such as self-monitoring is related to Facebook

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usage and social support, how the behavior in a given situation of high self-monitors who are well adjusted differ in their Facebook usage from low self-monitors who are less likely to adjust themselves to a given situation, who is more addicted to Facebook, and how has Facebook usage affected people's social relationships.

This study will help in better understanding Facebook usage behavior and how personality traits are related to the amount of Facebook use and social support. This study will extend the body of knowledge in various disciplines including psychology, communication, and new media. Furthermore, the study might provide useful information for organizations and government agencies to consider people's social media usage more closely and to deal with any potential social relationship issues and problems more effectively.

Therefore, this present study aimed to investigate further the role of self-monitoring and the amount of Facebook use on Facebook addiction, and the associations among self-monitoring, Facebook addiction, Facebook usage, and social support.

Self-monitoring

Mark Snyder introduced a self-monitoring concept in 1974 to explain personality traits and people's expressive behavior. According to Snyder (1974), self-monitoring refers to the extent to which people monitor (observe and control) their behaviors when presenting themselves to others. High self-monitors are sensitive to others' expressions and presentations and are able to adjust and learn to express themselves for appropriateness and impression. They are able to monitor and manage their self-presentation in different social situations. On the other hand, low self-monitors have less concern for the appropriateness of their self-presentation and expressive behaviors.

Self-monitoring has been included in many studies to understand people's personality traits, skill, and motivation (Parks-Leduc et al., 2014). Research shows that high-self-monitors have larger social networks (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001), are more flexible and adaptive (Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002), and are good at getting along (Day & Schleicher, 2006). Nevertheless, they tend to be more engaging in impression management to achieve a desired status (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). In contrast, low self-monitors tend to present their true selves, and are less willing to present a false image in order to impress others (Day & Schleicher, 2006).

Facebook Addiction

Internet addiction studies have been explored for decades. Young (1998) introduced the concept of Internet addiction and defined it as "an impulse-control disorder which does not involve an intoxicant" (p. 237). Young indicated that people who used the Internet for an average of 38 h or more per week tended to be addicted to the Internet.

Young (2009) suggested that Internet users can be addicted to different types of online usage. She differentiated

three subtypes of Internet addiction—excessive gaming, online sexual preoccupation, and e-mailing/texting. Facebook addiction is a type of addiction to texting, in which users keep coming back to the site to check their Timeline, make comments, post pictures, and chat in Messenger. As Griffiths (2000) pointed out, users may not be addicted to the medium itself, but they may be addicted to particular Internet activities.

In past years, scholars have studied Internet addiction, for example, how Internet usage affected people's lives and well-being (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007; Young, 1998), how disposition is related to Internet usage (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2000), and Internet addiction among college students (Pornsakulvanich, 2008).

Excessive use of Facebook has been a recent issue. Scholars have examined various topics such as personality traits and Facebook use (Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrong Siri, 2012; Ross et al., 2009; Ryan & Xenos, 2011), social comparison and Facebook use (de Vries & Kuhne, 2015), self-presentation on Facebook (Seidman, 2013), and Facebook use and well-being (Liu & Yu, 2013). Also, many studies found that excessive use of Facebook was affected by personality and usage behavioral patterns (Hong, Huang, Lin, & Chiu, 2014; Tang, Chen, Yang, Chung, & Lee, 2016).

Literature Review

Self-monitoring, Facebook Usage, and Facebook Addiction

Recent studies showed mixed results on the correlation between personality traits and Facebook use (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrong Siri, 2012; Ross et al., 2009; Seidman, 2013). For instance, Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010) found that those who scored high on extroversion (sociable) and conscientiousness (goal-oriented) had more friends on Facebook, whereas those who scored high on neuroticism (emotional instability) posted more pictures. Other studies found that extroverts spent more time on Facebook (Pornsakulvanich & Dumrong Siri, 2012), were more frequent users of Facebook (Seidman, 2013), had more friends, and uploaded photos and updated their status more frequently (Lee et al., 2014). Moreover, emotional stability was negatively related to the time spent on Facebook (Moore & McElroy, 2012; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrong Siri, 2012).

Research is scarce on the relationship between self-monitoring and Facebook usage and addiction. For instance, Hall and Pennington (2013) studied self-monitoring and Facebook use and found that high self-monitors were associated with a high frequency of posting, had more friends, and posted a profile picture at a younger age. They also found that extroversion was correlated with self-monitoring. Another study reported a positive correlation between self-presentation and Facebook addiction (Masur, Reinecke, Ziegele, & Quiring, 2014).

According to the review of literature, high-self-monitors may prefer spending more time on Facebook to manage and present themselves to others. Furthermore, the

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