

The relationship between personality and  
social media: A study of Irish  
undergraduate students

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## **Abstract**

Previous research has associated the five dimensions of the Big Five Model (BFM) of personality with social media usage. The current study aims to expand on the existing research by investigating the complex facets of each personality trait as proposed by the BFM, and how they may in turn be applied to social networking behaviours. A questionnaire based, quantitative design was adopted. Participants, who were enrolled in an undergraduate programme, attending the National College of Ireland (n=66) were required to complete an information sheet, providing all relevant demographic details, the Big Five Personality Questionnaire and The Social Networking Questionnaire, taking 15-20 minutes to complete. A total score for each personality trait was calculated for each participant, enabling the investigation of the relationships that exist between the criterion variables- ‘forms of social media utilised’, ‘total number of friends’, ‘time spent on SNS’, ‘levels of preference for face to face communication’ and the predictor variables ‘Openness to new experience’, ‘Conscientiousness’, ‘Extraversion’, ‘Agreeableness’ and ‘Neuroticism’ to occur. Spearman’s rho correlation revealed a weak negative relationship between conscientiousness and time spent on social media,  $r=-.23$ ,  $n=57$ ,  $p=0.02$  and neuroticism and time spent on social media,  $r=-.29$ ,  $n=61$ ,  $p=0.02$ . Results further revealed a medium, positive, significant relationship between extraversion and total number of friends,  $r=.304$ ,  $n=59$ ,  $p=0.02$ . Independent samples t-tests indicated non-significant differences in levels of agreeableness and a preference for face to face communication, and a non-significant difference in levels of openness and utilising the most forms of social media. Implications are discussed in relation to the impact these traits have on social media use for the benefit of parents, educators, marketers and advertisers.

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## **Introduction**

The Psychology of personality has gleaned much attention in recent years. The concept of the personality trait has gained a powerful status in the study of social, developmental, cultural and clinical psychology (Mc Adams & Pals, 2006). The primary aim of personality psychology is to categorise broad individual differences that may be apparent in social and emotional life (John & Srivastava, 1999). Evidence has emerged suggesting all measures of personality can be reduced and structured under a five factor model (henceforth FFM) of personality (Goldberg, 1990). The five central principles portray a broad outline of what scientists, clinicians and academics should consider when seeking psychological sense of individual human behaviours (King, George & Hebl, 2005). Organising the five central principles resulted in the emergence of the “Big Five” factor model of personality (Goldberg, 1990). This complex model labels the personality outcomes as follows: openness to new experience, conscientious, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Moore & Mc Elroy, 2012). Goldberg (1990) stated that analyses of any large sample of personality trait adjectives exemplify a variant of the five elements, thus all terms can be represented within this arrangement. The dimensionality of the “Big Five” factor model of personality is deemed generalizable across all cultures (Roberts, Caspi & Moytt, 2001; Helson & Kwan, 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1994). Furthermore, it is a common held belief that the five facets of the model remain stable across time (Costa & McCrae, 1994). Costa and Mc Crae (1992) deem the FFM of personality to be the most comprehensive and parsimonious model existing in this field of study to date. The model has gained vast empirical support and in recent times is considered the

most standard, universal measurement of personality traits and characteristics (Wehrli, 2008).

Individuals frequently utilise the internet to easily expand existing content and knowledge: in the past they used it to purchase products and services. However, over the last 15 years, the way in which individuals communicate on the internet has evolved. Individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds are using the internet to project themselves on to the virtual world through the use of various online platforms. For example, content sharing sites, blogs and social networking sites (henceforth SNS), enabling individuals to create, adjust, share and discuss internet and life content, thus representing the social media phenomenon (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert (2010) revealed keeping in contact with existing friends as a primary motive for using SNS. 92 college students were surveyed to produce this information; ‘‘quite a bit’’ was chosen by 36.96% of respondents and ‘‘a whole lot’’ was the option 48.91% of respondents selected. Furthermore, 24.18% reported posting pictures of themselves and their peers ‘‘a whole lot’’ while 38.46% reported posting images online ‘‘quite a bit’’. Moreover, it is believed males utilise social networking platforms to form new relationships, while females aim to maintain their existing relationships through the features on offer from various SNS (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012).

Similarly, self-presentation on social networking sites (SNS) / social media sites is an extremely popular feature of this phenomenon the population is experiencing (Krämer, & Winter, 2008). These web based communities permit users to present themselves in a profile with chosen personal information and photographs, while emphasis is placed on the maintenance of online friendships through the use of online messaging and adding other individuals as ‘‘friends’’ to personal contact lists (Bibby,

2008). In light of this, users of social media can seek people with similar interests, connect with friends and present alluring and attractive descriptions of themselves and the life they live. (Krämer, & Winter, 2008). Furthermore, social interaction and information exchange are quickly becoming the most popular services provided by SNS (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012). McKenna and Bargh (1999) noted that the social interaction that takes place on SNS has unique and alluring characteristics that may appeal to certain personality traits: 1) anonymity; relationships may exist and be upheld without the ubiquitous elements associated with physical presence. 2) Choice; users can choose when to log in and out and can write what they wish to say, giving users greater control than the control they hold in a relationship that occurs in real-time. Establishing personal identity is an underlying, motivating principle guiding social media usage (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert ,2010); the expression of true feelings and opinions is a fundamental aspect of this process (Wellman,2001). The study of Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert (2010) revealed 26.37% of their study population reported sharing ‘‘some’’ of their honest opinions on SNS, while 64.13% reported sharing ‘‘not much’’ of their true opinions to the world on SNS, further highlighting that establishing personal identity is an underlying, motivating principle guiding the social media usage of certain individuals.

Time spent online on SNS varies across ages, genders and occupations (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2010; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Roberts, Foehr & Rideout, 2005). According to the work of Roberts, Foehr & Rideout (2005), 8-18-year-old US citizens reported spending 6.5 hours or more on SNS. Similarly, half of 12-17 year olds logged on to SNS daily, with 22% of respondents reporting logging on several times a day, 26% logging on at least once per day and 15% doing so once or twice per

week (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Additionally, the study of Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert (2010) proclaimed that US college students spend anything from 2-117 minutes per week day on SNS and 0-165 minutes per weekend day on SNS. These differing reports from each study indicates the need for further investigation into how much time an individual spends on SNS, and why they may choose to do so.

### **Emergence of The Big Five**

As previously discussed, a consensus has been reached by personality psychologists that the various domains of personality can best be defined by the five dimensions of the FFM of Personality (Moore & Mc Elroy, 2012). Costa and Mc Crae (1992) deem the FFM of personality to be the most comprehensive and parsimonious model existing in this field of study to date. The model has gained vast empirical support and in recent times is considered the most standard and universal measurement of personality traits and characteristics. (Wehrli, 2008; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007). The five personality factors can be applied to individuals' behaviour in a wide array of contexts (Wehrli, 2008), including SNS activity (Devaraj et al., 2008).

## **Openness to New Experience**

Openness to new experience is a means of representing an individual's willingness or desires to contemplate other approaches in life. Individuals who score high on the trait of openness tend to be intellectually curious, and they report enjoying artistic pursuits (Ross et al 2009). Imagination and insight are two prominent features of this personality trait, as well as being adventurous and creative (George & Zhuo, 2001). Being more traditional and reporting struggles with abstract thinking are characteristics associated with individuals who may be considered as having low levels of the personality trait openness to new experience (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005). Put simply, the trait refers to the width, depth and ramification of an individual's mental and experiential life (Cervone & Pervin, 2008). In addition, highly open individuals tend to possess higher levels of tolerance for exploring unfamiliar or novel things or settings (McCrae & Costa, 1992).

Interestingly, Correa et al (2010) discovered that the personality trait, openness to new experience is positively correlated with greater levels of social media usage.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Butt & Philips (2008) revealed openness to be a factor most likely to be associated with giving new things a try and committing to novel methods of communication. They referred to Facebook as the mainstream form of social media, and suggested that individuals who score highly on the trait of openness may utilise various forms of SNS, not solely Facebook.

Moreover, Guadagno et al (2008), revealed individuals scoring high on the characteristic of openness to new experience were more inclined to participate in blogging activities, a modernistic feature of certain SNS. Similarly, Ross et al (2009) highlighted the higher an individual's score on the trait of openness to new

experience, the more likely the individual may be to consider alternative methods of communication, choosing more contemporary forms of communication, like features offered on SNS. High scores of openness to new experience are also believed to predict an individual's likelihood of keeping update and usage of new features on SNS (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010).

### **Conscientiousness**

Conscientiousness is often identified as competence, achievement, self-discipline, dutifulness and orderliness (Butt & Philips,2008). Additionally, the trait is concerned with the levels of proactivity, responsibility and organisation an individual may hold. Individuals who receive a high score on the following trait are characterised by their high levels of determination and their innate drives and desires to be productive (Chemorro-Premuzic, 2013). Conscientious individuals exhibit attentive, careful, persistent, orderly and strategical tendencies, on the contrary, those who score low on this personality trait are routinely irresponsible, unreliable, careless and distractible (Caspi, Roberts & Shiner, 2005). The term conscientiousness includes an individual's inclination to obey socially prescribed norms and rules (Bogg & Roberts, 2013).

To support the assumptions of the behaviours of conscientious individuals, Butt and Philips (2008) revealed highly conscientious people refrain from utilising social media, they believe the sites lead to procrastination and act as a distraction, taking time from more important tasks. Similarly, Wilson, Fornasier & White (2010) discovered the personality trait conscientiousness was associated with limited time



spent on SNS, supporting the work of Wahrli (2008); highly conscientious people will not devote large amounts of attention or time supplies to SNS such as Facebook and the study Launderers & Lounsbury (2006) who revealed less conscientious college students spend more time on SNS, compared to those who scored high on the trait. Conscientiousness individuals showed preference for investing time into their main objectives by avoiding any distractions. A negative relationship between the trait of conscientiousness and the use of the internet as a communication tool has also previously been revealed by Swickert, Hittner, Harris & Herring (2002).

### **Extraversion**

The extraversion-introversion element of the FFM comprises extraversion at one end of the continuum, and introversion at the opposite end (Carducci, 2009).

It is a common held assumption that extraverted individuals enjoy the company of other people, appreciate excitement and tend to be more adventurous compared to those who are more introverted (Carducci, 2009). Highly extraverted people gravitate towards stimulating environments and are more gregarious in their thoughts and behaviours (Swickert, Hittner, Harris & Herring, 2002). The current trait should promote the development of strong and plentiful social networks on and offline (Ciavarella, Buchholtz, Riordan, Gatewood & Stokes, 2004). Extraverts habitually focus their psych energy out towards the world and environment away from themselves, and commonly source stimulation from their surroundings, reporting displeasure from time spent alone (Liebert & Liebert, 1998).

These innate impulses of extraverts may encourage them to go online to SNS to investigate the new and exciting features they may have on offer (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2000). Extraversion is positively associated with communication, thus

providing extraverts with motivation to sign up and to use SNS (Wahrli, 2008).

Focusing on the frequency of SNS usage is not applicable when investigating extraverts and their SNS engagement, focus should be aimed at what features of SNS they utilise most often and how many personal contacts they have access to (Seidman, 2013).

Similarly, the work of Hamburger & Ben-Artizi (2000) highlighted extraversion as being positively related to the use of the internet and SNS. Their investigation further portrayed extraverts' tendency to utilise the leisure services available on the internet and having copious amounts of people added to their contact lists. Furthermore, it is a common shared belief that introverts locate their real- self on the online realms of SNS, while extraverts share their true identity offline in the concrete world of face-to-face interaction. Interestingly, introverts show adverse preference for communication services offered by SNS, compared to extraverts (McFarland & Ployhart,2015).

Extraverts are the popular individuals amongst us (Hamburger & Ben-Artizi, 2000), those who are popular offline, are notably more popular online on SNS, the work of Zywica & Danowski (2008) revealed extraverts have more friends added to their personal contact lists on line, resulting from the offline popularity they display.

Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2011), discovered adolescents only consider a small portion of their online friends their actual friends in real life (75/300), the others being referred to acquaintances met a small selection of times. The sociability inclination of extraverts leaves them with a greater opportunity to meet new acquaintances, which will be labelled as friends in the world of SNS, later resulting in these acquaintances being added to personal contact lists.

## **Agreeableness**

Agreeableness, primarily specifies the interpersonal qualities and social adaptability of an individual, connecting cooperativeness, warmth, kindness, affection and helpful characteristics held within a person with their interactions with others (Moore & McElroy, 2012). On the contrary, disagreeable people can be cold, quarrelsome, selfish and somewhat competitive in their motives (Haslam, 2007). The trait links friendly, considerable and modest behaviour, predicting agreeable individuals to hold a general pre-disposition toward prosocial behaviour (Chemorro-Premuzic, 2013). It refers to an individual's willingness to accommodate other's feelings and wishes; agreeable characters are commonly cooperative, considerate, empathetic, generous, well-mannered and kind with the opposite including people whom are aggressive, rude, spiteful, stubborn and manipulative (Caspi, Roberts & Shiner, 2005). Agreeableness combines a wide collection of traits that promote congenial relationships with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997).

Individuals who score poorly on the trait of agreeableness are often characters who are difficult to have in your presence, thus reporting struggles when forming offline relationships in the concrete world of face-to-face communication, leaving them with fewer friends or acquaintances available to be added to their personal contact lists on SNS (Landers & Lounsbury, 2006). To further argue this point, the research of Butt & Philips (2008) portrayed that people whom are more prone to disagreement are more likely to take a phone call in the presence of another. They suggested a reputable justification made by low scoring agreeable individuals for this unacceptable behaviour; it derives from the desires of others to avoid engaging in face-to-face communication with these people as much as possible, suggesting the identical may be apparent for Social networking communicative behaviours, promoting an

association for a preference for face to face communication forms as opposed to online communication types. Valkenburg, Schouten & Peter (2005) support the idea that people behave in identical manners both online on SNS and offline, further implementing the idea that the higher the achieved score of agreeableness the more inclined the individual is to prefer face to face communication methods, avoiding communication forms that do not support direct contact.

Face to face communication, compared to communication that occurs on SNS, permits a more sincere expression of feelings and emotions (Johnson, Rickel & Lester, 2000). Eye contact and body language provide adequate emotional queues that communication on SNS just cannot provide, hence explaining why helpful, empathetic, agreeable individuals will exhibit a preference for this type of communication. In addition, this type of conversation provides a source for immediate feedback, solving problems and helping people at the earliest convenience (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2013); an aspect of face-to-face communication that appeals to agreeable characters who support, guide and comfort people by nature (Carlo, Okun, Knight & de Guzman, 2005).

### **Neuroticism**

The personality trait of neuroticism encompasses an individuals' emotional stability; neurotic people are more liable to experiencing negative emotions, including anger, shame and embarrassment (Haslam, 2007). High scoring neurotic individuals can be aggressive, tense, volatile, impulsive and restless, holding the tendency to experience anxiety, compared to the typically calm, relaxed personalities of those whom are emotionally stable (Chemorro-Premuzic, 2013). Neuroticism is regarded the most pervasive personality measure, its presence is noted in nearly every measure of

personality (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). The trait results in the experiencing of instability and stress as well as personal insecurities and ultimately, depression (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). In general, the underlying mechanisms pertaining neuroticism refer to the absence of positive psychological adjustment and the presence of emotional instability observed in people (Seidman, 2013).

Highly neurotic people possess strong interest in utilising the internet and SNS for communication purposes (Wolfordt & Doll, 2001), and are motivated by their loneliness to utilise SNS to meet new people online, thus investing large segments of time online (Butt & Philips, 2008). Correspondingly, it has been discovered that neurotic people are more honest and straightforward in relation to what they post on SNS; it is believed they share more accurate and truthful descriptions of themselves on the SNS profiles, with the intention of meeting someone with shared characteristics (Amichai-Hamburger, Wainpel & Fox, 2002).

It is plausible to discuss the negative effects of uncontrolled internet usage in relation to the trait of neuroticism (Baruch, 2001). Neuroticism has been proven to be a risk factor for the onset of internet addiction (Tsitsika et al., 2011). Kuss, Griffiths & Binder (2013) proclaimed that the higher the score of neuroticism one receives, the more dependent they are on the internet, thus individuals who possess emotional instability issues are more susceptible to the adverse effects of internet addiction and spending extreme portions of time online (Yao, He, Ko & Pang, 2014).

## **Social Media**

Virtual collections of users' profiles and how they are shared amongst other users is the universal definition applied to SNS (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). The most prevalent details shared publically by social media users are demographic details (Arnett, 2000). hometown, age, occupation, birth date and relationship status being the most frequently shared personal information (Quan-Haase & Young ,2010).

Through the sharing of these chosen personal details, SNS provides users with more control over their self-presentational behaviours (Goffman, 1959). By constructing these online self-presentations, users are granted the freedom to choose what aspects of their personalities should be revealed online and which photographs dispatch the best images to their "friends"- allowing them to manage their self-presentations more strategically compared to face to face, concrete world communication (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006).

Mangold & Faulds (2009) exposed the leading SNS on offer to individuals worldwide; they considered social networking sites (Facebook), business networking sites (LinkedIn), photo sharing sites (Instagram), Invitation only social networks (Snap Chat) and dating network sites (Tinder) as the most prominent forms of Social media utilised by individuals. In light of this, Quan-Haase & Young (2010) suggested each SNS holds its on biases regarding the form of communication it offers to its subscribers; each form of SNS provides different communication options for its users, therefore it is considered applicable to investigate preference of particular personality traits for each communication option on offer from each SNS.

In the modern world of technology, people with various personality traits may be more inclined to engage in varying types of online engagement which are considered

different to those they engage in in the offline realm (Mondak & Halperin, 2008). Despite the role of SNS in society today, research in relation to the antecedents of SNS usage has been minimal (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). However, a small body of research literature exists that suggests individual differences influence and guide online, SN behaviour, motivating the current study.

As discussed briefly previously, the study of McKenna and Bargh (1999) argued that the social interaction that occurs on SNS has unique and attractive characteristics that may appeal to certain personality traits. Their study further revealed that there are 2 main motivators encouraging individuals to interact on SNS; self-related motives and social-related motives. If these social and self-related motives are not met through daily social- interaction, SNS users may attempt to satisfy them through SNS, prompting the study of the links between personality traits and SNS engagement.

Similarly, Engelberg and Sjöberg (2004) carried out research which examined the extent to which personality and other individual differences (inter-personal skills and Emotional Intelligence) were related to levels of SNS usage. They included the “Big Five” personality dimensions in their investigation, but discovered no link between personality differences and SNS usage levels, however, their findings did suggest that frequent users of SNS tend to be lonely and have largely deviant values and attributes which are correlated with certain personality types, indicating the requirement of future investigations.

Moreover, the work completed by Ong et al (2011) investigated the relationship of the personality dimensions’ narcissism and extraversion on adolescents’ self-presentation on the SNS Facebook. They also aimed to support the discoveries of Buffardi and Campbell (2008). Both pieces of research revealed that SNS give individuals who

score high on the trait of narcissism, the ideal platform for self-regulation, giving them full control over self-presentation and giving rise to the maintenance of large, superficial social network based relationships. Additionally, their work highlighted that introverted individuals were more appealed to SNS as opposed to old, out-dated methods of communication compared to extroverts, however, extroverts were found to have more ‘‘friends’’ on their personal contact lists and were more likely to self-disclose online. The study was comprised of 360 (N=360) adolescents from Singapore and the researchers stated it would be beneficial to this field of research to investigate if the findings are transferable across various ages and nationalities. (Ong, Ang, Ho, Lim, Goh, Lee, & Chua ,2011)

Various researchers (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989; Devaraj, Easley, & Crant, 2008) have provided empirical evidence to suggest that the FFM of personality can predict internet and SNS behaviour better than any other individual differences e.g. cognitive style, emotional intelligence and IQ (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). With this in mind, past research has delved into the role of the various personality traits and their relationship with internet usage and SNS use. In relation to the internet, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) examined the gratification levels of individuals who utilised the internet on a daily basis. The researchers chose not to examine personality as a direct predictor of internet usage, but their results strongly suggest an existing association between extraversion and purposive internet usage and a very probable link between neuroticism and using the internet for interpersonal gratification and as a time passer. These possible connections were concluded by the discoveries of their study: those who reported satisfaction in relation to their social life showed preference for utilising the internet for instrumental purposes and for gathering information, while those less



satisfied with their social life appreciated the internet as a tool for substituting social interaction in real-time (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Additionally, Wilson, Fornasier and White (2010) sought to predict adolescents' use of SNS by investigating their personality traits and attributes. The studies' sample consisted of 201 (N=201) college students aged 17 to 24 years. Their findings revealed personality traits significantly predicted levels of SNS use, but a vast amount of variety was not explained by the measures of personality e.g. self-esteem levels and self- concept ideas. Extraverted and unconscientious participants reported higher levels of SNS usage, but the researchers noted the direction of future research, recommending that future studies should aim to identify other psychosocial characteristics which may explain the high levels of SNS usage that exists amongst younger populations (Wilson, Fornasier & White, 2010).

### **Facebook**

The social media platform Facebook permits users with a means of self-presentation through an online profile; users accumulate "friends" who post comments on their pages and their uploaded photographs. Through these online profiles, members can join virtual groups based on shared interests; learn other user's hobbies, interests, musical tastes and romantic relationships status. Facebook members engage in "searching" for individuals with whom they have an existing offline connection with as opposed to searching for complete strangers to meet (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

Personality has been shown to be a reputable predictor of Facebook usage. Correa, Hinsley and de Zúñiga (2010) utilised a national sample of US adults to investigate the relationship that exists between 3 dimensions of the Big Five Model of Personality: extraversion, emotional stability, openness to new experience and Facebook usage. The roles of age and gender as predictors were also examined in the study. Revelations were made in relation to extraversion and openness to new experiences and how they positively predict Facebook use. On the contrary, emotional stability was discovered to be a negative predictor of Facebook usage. The discoveries altered with gender and age: extraverted men and women were both more likely to use Facebook, males with greater levels of emotional instability were deemed more regular users of Facebook, extraversion amongst the younger portion of the sample was an important predictor of social media usage as a whole and it emerged being more open to new experiences was a vital personality trait which predicted Facebook usage amongst the elder segment of the study population. The current study controlled for any possible residual effects of demographic variables (age, gender, race, education and income levels) based on the ideologies of the literature identifying some demographic variables being related to particular personality traits. The researchers concluded that personality traits are one of the most valid predictors of Facebook usage in the US.

### **Snapchat**

The application ‘‘Snapchat’’ is a form of social media which access users contact son their mobile phones once it has been downloaded, this enables them to add users to their ‘‘Snap’’ contact lists. Once both users have approved each other, messaging can then commence. Pictures and videos are sent between users, which appear on the recipients’ phone for anything from 1-10 seconds. Pictures and videos can be sent to

more than one person at a time and users have the option to add captions or doodles to the outgoing media, prior to sending it. The application tracks who users message on a regular basis, providing a ‘best friend’ group for those messaged most by a particular user, which can be viewed by all other contacts on their profiles. Both pictures and videos sent via the application are deleted from the recipients’ phone and the Snapchat network unless the recipient chooses to ‘screenshot’ the photo, sending a notification to the sender immediately (Poltash, 2013).

Explorations into the activity of Snapchat users have been conducted. The research portrays that personality differences can disclose the jealousy individuals experience on SNS (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). The analyses revealed that if the correct personality traits are present i.e. neuroticism, individuals are more inclined to experience SNS jealousy. (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). Research revealed that Snapchat jealousy was significantly greater in highly neurotic individuals compared to the reported levels of jealousy individuals experience on Facebook, especially when a romantic partner received a message from a previous partner or an unknown member of the opposite sex (Utz, Khalid & Muscanell, 2015).

## **Instagram**

Instagram is a contemporary form of social media. The site allows users to easily share their daily activities by taking photos and editing them using the various filters the application has on offer. Users have the option to add captions, hashtags using the # symbol to provide a description of their upload and mention other users using the @ symbol which introduces a link from their profile to the mentioned user's profile. The application enables users to "follow" an unlimited amount of people, and users can activate privacy features so as their posted items can only be viewed by approved "followers". Users routinely keep track of the amount of "likes" and comments their post receives, rewarding people who "liked" their post with a returned "like" on their posted items (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014).

Ferwerda, Schedl & Tkalcic (2015) aimed to infer personality traits of individuals based on the means by which users edit and add "filters" to their uploaded Instagram posts. Their study was comprised of 113 participants and 22,398 Instagram uploads. Their results revealed that distinct features that Instagram "filters" offer (hue, brightness and saturation) are positively correlated to observed personality traits of individual users, indicating SNS can make revelations regarding the personality types of users.

## **Tinder**

With over 20,000 downloads taking place daily, Tinder is arguably the most notable dating application option available (Wortham, 2013). The Tinder application is free of charge and is referred to as a self-selection dating application. Users browse through

numerous profiles and select their most fitting partner with the purpose of meeting in person after chatting online for a short period. Users are asked to select their age, gender, location and sexual orientation to aid the process of locating suitable, nearby singles. An option to provide a character bio is also available. Users anonymously swipe right if they are attracted to another user and left if they are not. A ‘match’ is created when 2 people swipe right on each other, providing a private chat window for them to have a conversation prior to deciding if they want to meet in person (James, 2015).

Valkenburg & Peter (2007) conducted a study to explore the various characteristics of people who utilise online dating sites like Tinder. Their results exposed that extraverted individuals are more inclined to show an interest in another user online, similar to offline situations, and those who receive a low score on dating anxiety are more likely to utilise online dating applications to search for a partner. The researchers noted, the online populations and observed online behaviours are increasing beginning to resemble offline behaviours and attitudes, supporting the current study.

### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a professionally orientated SNS by which users upload online resumes and build ‘connections’ with current or past colleagues and friends. The SNS profiles of users are public and link other individuals to the profiles of users i.e. supervisors and managers whom can verify if the uploaded career history details are correct (Guillory & Hancock, 2012). Every ‘connection’ a user has on LinkedIn is known to the user and they usually have direct contact in their field of work. Users

search for their ‘‘connections’’ by name, company, location and industry. The SNS cannot protect the privacy of its members as the main purpose of the SNS is to create a global and professional network (Thew, 2008).

### **Present Study**

Research in this area could be viewed as beneficial to many, especially those involved in educational settings (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Learners are constantly seeking information to help resolve their encountered problems or to satisfy their curiosity; the learning that occurs in this context is referred to as autonomous, informed and an integral component of the learning experience in society today (McGloughlin & Lee, 2010). Research has portrayed social media as a beneficial tool to children, it can enhance communication, help establish social connections and improve technical skills (O’Keeffe & Pearson, 2011). Thus, this study could be of interest of parents and guardians as well as those involved in the education sector, proposing to shed light on the existing relationship between the five personality dimensions and social media behaviours.

Additionally, marketers and advertisers are constantly attempting to control the status of electronic word of mouth on SNS (Chu & Kim, 2011). The factors that influence this electronic word of mouth process on SNS could be explained by the facets of the 5 dimensions of personality and their associations with SNS behaviours, thus this study could be seen as useful for those interested in this process.

Research examining the influence of the various personality traits on social media usage is plentiful. The field of study constitutes an important area for researchers

interested in these online technologies and their possible impacts on an individual, as demonstrated by the recent scholarship in the area; (Mckenna & Bargh, 1999; Amichai-Hamburger, Wainpel & Fox, 2002; Engelberg & Sjoberg, 2004; Guadagno, Okdie & Eno, 2008; Butt & Philips, 2008; Easley & Crant, 2008; Wilson, Fornasier & White, 2010). Despite this fact, many aspects of this social media phenomenon and the effectiveness of the five personality factors at predicting the array of observed social media behaviours, have received limited research attention (Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy & Pitt, 2012).

Notably, the trait neuroticism has been established as a prevalent risk factor of internet addiction (Hardie & Tee, 2007; Tsitsika et al 2011), but research is still minimal examining the association between a neurotic personality and developing an addiction to social media platforms, possibly leading to neurotic individuals spending excessive amounts of time on SNS.

Similarly, the trait openness to new experience has been of interest to researchers (Correa, Hinsley & de Zungia, 2010; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Ross et al, 2009), with the bulk of the research indicating those who score high on the trait exercise large amounts of time on SNS and are more inclined to use the numerous features associated with each form of social media, experimenting with newly launched features as soon as they are made publically available to download. Due to their adventurous and creative impulses, one could assume the social media environment would be one where these individuals pursue these drives. The excessive amounts of time spent on social media (Correa, Hinsley & de Zungia, 2010) could be explained by the likelihood of these people to utilise every form of social media, mediated by their audacious natures, building on this idea has escaped this line of research.

Furthermore, by including five personality factors, the current research was constructed to explore and investigate how well personality traits influenced the means by which the students of The National College of Ireland utilised SNS and their offered features for social purposes. Additionally, this study proposed to examine the trends of SNS usage associated with the various personality traits for an undergraduate, Irish sample. In particular, a self-report measure of SNS usage was utilised to gain insight into prominent usage factors linked with SNS; the forms of SNS individuals utilise, the amount of time spent online on SNS, frequency of usage, the use of SNS for communication purposes (publically and privately), amount of “friends” and “followers” on personal contact lists and the expression of true opinions and beliefs on SNS.

Against this background of the investigated personality traits and the research discussed above, the following hypotheses have been devised:

**Hypothesis 1:** The personality trait of conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with time spent on social media.

**Hypothesis 2:** The personality trait of extraversion will be positively correlated with total number of “friends”/“followers” on social networking sites.

**Hypothesis 3:** Agreeable individuals will exhibit a preference for face-to-face communication forms.

Through the incorporation of an Irish, Undergraduate sample, this study aims to offer a perspective to all facets of the aforementioned research gaps. The main aims of the current study are as follows:



**Aim 1:** The personality trait of neuroticism will be positively correlated with more time spent online on SNS.

**Aim 2:** The personality trait openness to new experience will indicate usage of the most forms of social media.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A non-probability sample of 66(n=66) undergraduate students attending the National College of Ireland (NCI) (22 males, 44 females), who ranged in age from 17-32 (M=19.45, SD= 2.29) completed the following study. Researchers attended tutorial sessions of students enrolled on the ‘‘Business’’ and ‘‘Human Resource Management’’ courses in NCI, providing them with a brief outline of what the study entailed. Students who wished to participate did so by completing the handed out questionnaires.

To participate, individuals were required to be enrolled in an undergraduate programme offered by NCI and were required to have an account on any of the investigated social media forms.

### **Design**

A questionnaire was utilised to gather relevant information for the current study. The questionnaires were considered more practical due to time restrictions, thus allowing results from the large study population to be quickly quantified.

A Quantitative investigation was conducted to aid produce more reliable, objective and reputable results, reducing the impact of researcher biases and making the yielded results more generalizable to the entire population. Similarly, the quantitative design

of the study reduced the complex concept of SNS behaviours to a limited number of variables.

This design permitted the investigation of the relationship that exists between the criterion variables- ‘‘forms of social media utilised’’, ‘‘total number of friends’’, ‘‘time spent on SNS’’, ‘‘levels of preference for face to face communication’’ and the predictor variables ‘‘Openness to new experience’’, ‘‘Conscientiousness’’, ‘‘Extraversion’’, ‘‘Agreeableness’’ and ‘‘Neuroticism’’.

Thus, a questionnaire based, quantitative study was utilised to conduct the following exploratory study.

For analyses purposes, the amount of time spent on each form of social media was combined to provide a total score of hours spent on SNS daily. Similarly, the number of ‘‘friends/followers’’ a participant reported having on each form of SNS was computed to give a total number of friends on social media for each participant. Additionally, a total computed score for each personality trait was calculated for each participant.

Thus the relationship between the criterion variables forms of social media utilised, total number of friends, time spent on SNS, levels of preference for face to face communication and the predictor variables Openness to new experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism were also examined.

The statistical method adopted to investigate H1, H2 and aim 1 was Spearman’s rho correlation due to the lack of normally distributed data.

Additionally, the statistical method adopted to investigate H3 and aim 2 was an independent samples t-test.

## **Measures**

### **Demographic Information**

Participants were requested to note their age, gender and to further confirm that they are enrolled in an undergraduate programme, attending the National College of Ireland for logistical and research purposes. Unique subject identification numbers were noted on the first page of each questionnaire (see appendix A).

### **The Big Five Questionnaire**

Individual scores on each of the 5 proposed personality traits were measured using the Big Five Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1981), which consists of 50 statements (see appendix B). Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). For each personality factor, the Big Five Questionnaire presents 10 bipolar adjective scales which are later computed together under the personality trait factor, providing a total score for each particular personality trait (see appendix C). The calculated scores for each personality dimension ranges from 0-40.

Previous studies indicate the adequate reliability of the Big Five Factor Model of Personality. The internal reliabilities for all five of the model's scales were reported by Gosling, Rentford, Swann, 2003 as being greater than 0.75. Research carried out

by Zamorano, Carillo, Silva, Sandoval & Pastrana (2014) reported reliability scores for each of the five dimensions; extraversion = 0.76, agreeableness = 0.62, conscientiousness = 0.78, neuroticism = 0.74 and openness to new experience = 0.77. A complete scale reliability score revealed a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  score of 0.72.

Additionally, The Big Five Factor Model of Personality generalises reliability across various sample types, languages and cultures (John & Srivastava, 1999) and it has gained vast empirical support allowing it to be considered the most standard and universal measurement of an individual's personality traits (Wehrli, 2008; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007).

Reliability analyses were conducted on the following questionnaire (see Appendix D), a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.63 was obtained, further supporting the reliability of this personality measure.

Answers to various questions were also recoded to help eliminate response bias, yielding more valid results (see Appendix E).

### **The Social Media Questionnaire**

In order to measure the SNS activity of participants, a self-devised scale was utilised by the researcher (see Appendix F).

Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Blank spaces were provided for participants to fill in for certain parts of the questionnaire.

A high degree of internal consistency associated with the following measure was established by a high Cronbach  $\alpha$  result of 0.81 (see Appendix G). Furthermore, empirical support and validity of the current questionnaire stemmed from a wide range of past research which revealed the motives associated with social media forms and the social media engagement levels of individuals.

**Section one** was designed to gather information in relation to what forms of SNS participants use, (Mangold & Faulds ,2009), time they spend on each SNS daily (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert ,2010; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Roberts, Foehr & Rideout, 2005), the number of friends they have added to their personal contact lists (Bibby, 2008) and the levels of preference for face-to-face communication forms participants hold over the features SNS offer (Butt & Philips,2008). Participants were requested to note their answer in the blank space provided.

**Section two** was designed to obtain information in relation to what participants utilise SNS for, i.e. Meeting new friends or keeping in contact with existing friends (Muscanell & Guadagno ,2012), sharing images of themselves and their friends (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert ,2010) and expressing their beliefs and opinions (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert ,2010; Wolf,2000). Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Section three** was designed to acquire information in relation to what personal details participants share on SNS and how they utilise the various features on offer from SNS, i.e. personal details (Quan-Haase & Young ,2010; Arnett, 2000), honest opinions and judgements (Wolf,2000), Participants were requested to indicate the

extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### **Procedure**

A pilot study was undertaken by 5 participants (n=5), 3 males and 2 females, who ranged in age from 19-24. The results from the pilot study recommended the removal of the informed consent section of the questionnaire which participants were required to sign and date, making the study as anonymous as possible. This section was replaced with an information sheet outlining participant's rights to participate and the confidential and voluntary nature of the study.

Researchers attended a tutorial class of each participant where a brief description of what the current study entailed was provided, anyone who wished to participate did so by completing the handed out questionnaires.

Participants were instructed to read the information sheet before beginning and were encouraged to take note of the researcher's contact details and their unique identification number.

Each questionnaire was completed in paperback format, and took 15-20 minutes in total to complete.

The personal details section of the study was completed first- participants provided their demographic details (age, gender and confirmation of being an Undergraduate Student attending NCI).

The Big Five Personality test was then completed by participants – they indicated the extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

The Social Networking Questionnaire was completed last by participants. Section one instructed participants to fill in the blank spaces, section two and three instructed them to indicate the extent to which they identified with each of the statements outlined on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Completed questionnaires were then handed back to the researcher present and was stored following the National College of Ireland guidelines.

Data collection for the current study took place over a one-month period from the 19<sup>th</sup> of January to the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2017.

Each completed questionnaire was inputted into IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0. Analyses were conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 program.



## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 1:** Frequencies for the current sample for each categorical variable (n = 66)

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percentage</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	22	33.3
Female	44	66.7
<i>Social Media Memberships</i>		
Facebook	56	84.8
Snap Chat	52	78.8
Instagram	45	68.2
Tinder	5	7.6
LinkedIn	0	0
<i>Preference for Face-to-face</i>		
Yes	58	87.9
No	8	12.1

The descriptive statistics for computed extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to new experience scores, total time spent on SNS daily, and total number of ‘‘friends/followers’’ added to contact lists on SNS are presented below in table 2. Histograms and normal Q-Q plots were examined in order to assess normality for each aforementioned variable.

The mean score for extraversion was calculated ( $M=22.45$ ,  $SD= 8.58$ ), indicating the current study sample exhibit moderate levels of the personality trait. For extraversion scores, the histogram was normally distributed, achieving a bell curve shape, and the Q-Q plot had a reasonably straight line, suggesting a normal distribution of extraversion scores.

The mean score for agreeableness ( $M=29.14$ ,  $SD= 6.5$ ) indicated participants scored moderately high on the current trait. The histogram was relatively normally distributed achieving a bell curve shape and the normal Q-Q plot had a straight line, which suggests normal distribution is present.

The mean score for conscientiousness was calculated ( $M=22.82$ ,  $SD= 6.45$ ), indicating the current sample exhibits moderate levels of this personality trait. For conscientiousness scores, the histogram was normally distributed, achieving a bell curve shape, and the Q-Q plot had a reasonably straight line, suggesting a normal distribution of scores.

The mean score for neuroticism was calculated ( $M=17.73$ ,  $SD= 8.51$ ), indicating the participants of this study exhibit moderately low levels of the personality trait. For extraversion scores, the histogram was normally distributed, achieving a bell curve shape, and the Q-Q plot had a reasonably straight line, suggesting a normal distribution of neuroticism scores.

The mean score for openness to new experience was calculated ( $M=20.66$ ,  $SD= 6.36$ ). This indicates the current study sample exhibit moderate levels of openness to new experience. For openness to new experience scores, the histogram was normally distributed, achieving a bell curve shape, and the Q-Q plot had a reasonably straight line, suggesting a normal distribution of extraversion scores.

The mean score for total hours spent per day on SNS ( $M=6.72$ ,  $SD= 4.39$ ) suggests participants spend large amounts of time daily on various SNS. On inspection of the histogram and the normal Q-Q plot, it is clear the data is not normally distributed. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov value of .082 further implies the lack of normal distribution for the results yielded.

The mean score for total number of ‘‘friends/followers’’ participants have added to their personal contact lists ( $M=1616.36$ ,  $SD= 1336$ ) suggests participants have many people added to their personal contact lists on various SNS. On inspection of the histogram and the normal Q-Q plot, it is clear the data is not normally distributed. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov value of .000 further implies the lack of normally distributed data.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of all relevant continuous variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Possible Range</b>
Age	19.45	19.00	2.29	17-32	
Extraversion	22.45	22.50	8.58	0-40	0-40
Agreeableness	29.14	30.00	6.50	13-40	0-40
Conscientiousness	22.82	23.0	6.48	6-34	0-40
Neuroticism	17.73	18.00	8.51	2-37	0-40
Openness	20.66	21	6.36	7-33	0-40
Time Spent on SNS daily	6.72	6.00	4.39	0-17	
Total number of friends/followers	1616.36	1290	1336	60-6068	

## **Correlational Analyses**

The relationship between all relevant continuous variables was investigated using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient due to the violation of the assumption of normality. Results of this Spearman's rho correlation coefficient are presented in Table 3.

The relationship between the personality trait conscientiousness and time spent online on social media was investigated.

There was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables,  $r=-.23$ ,  $n=57$ ,  $p=0.084$ . This indicates that higher levels of conscientiousness are associated with lower amounts of time spent online on SNS. The two variables shared 5.34% of variance in common.

The relationship between the personality trait extraversion and total number of personal contacts on SNS was also investigated.

There was a moderate, positive relationship between the two variables,  $r=.304$ ,  $n=59$ ,  $p=0.019$ . This indicates that the more extraverted an individual, the more "friends/followers" they will have added online on SNS. The two variables shared 9.24% of variance in common.

The relationship between the personality trait neuroticism and time spent online on social media was lastly investigated.

There was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables,  $r=-.29$ ,  $n=61$ ,  $p=0.022$ . This indicates that higher levels of the trait neuroticism are associated with less time spent online on SNS. The two variables shared 8.41% of variance in common.

**Table 3:** Correlations between relevant continuous variables

<b>Variables</b>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conscientiousness	1				
2. Extraversion	-.16	1			
3. Neuroticism	-.02	.11	1		
4. Total ‘‘friends/followers’’	.03	.30*	-.33*	1	
5. Total time on SNS	-.23	.22	-.30*	.43**	1

Note. Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### **Comparison Analyses**

A number of independent samples t-tests were completed to compare group differences between the personality trait agreeableness and individual's preference for face-to-face communication as opposed to using the private features on offer on SNS, and group differences between the personality trait openness to new experience and using various forms of Social media, results are presented below in table 4. Bonferroni corrections were applied to reduce the chances of a type 1 error, results were only deemed significant if  $p < 0.01$ .

### **Independent t-tests**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare levels of preference for face-to-face communication forms between agreeable individuals. There was no significant difference in the indicated preference for face-to-face conversation scores,  $t(7.75) = 1.27, p = 0.24$ , two tailed, with those preferring face-to-face communication scoring higher ( $M = 29.70, SD = 5.84$ ) than those whom do not prefer face-to-face communication ( $M = 25.25, SD = 9.63$ ). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference = 4.45, 95% CI: -3.66-12.55) was medium to large (Cohen's  $d = 0.575$ ).

An independent samples t-test was also conducted to compare levels of openness to new experience that exists amongst those who reported using Facebook and those who did not. There was no significant difference in the indicated levels of openness amongst those who use Facebook and those who do not,  $t(63) = .951, p = 0.345$ , two tailed, with those reporting using Facebook scoring higher ( $M = 20.98, SD = 6.04$ ) than those whom do not use Facebook ( $M = 18.9, SD = 8.06$ ). The magnitude of differences

in the means (mean difference=2.08, 95% CI: -2.29-6.45) was small to medium (Cohen's  $d=0.327$ ).

Alike, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare levels of openness to new experience that exists amongst those who reported using Instagram and those who did not. There was no significant difference in the indicated levels of openness amongst those who use Instagram and those who do not,  $t(63) = .037$ ,  $p=0.971$ , two tailed, with those reporting using Instagram scoring slightly higher ( $M=20.68$ ,  $SD=6.64$ ) than those whom do not use Instagram ( $M=20.62$ ,  $SD=5.89$ ). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference=.063, 95% CI: -3.33-3.46) was extremely small (Cohen's  $d=0.01$ ).

An independent samples t-test was also conducted to compare levels of openness to new experience that exists amongst those who reported using Snap Chat and those who did not. There was no significant difference in the indicated levels of openness amongst those who use Snap Chat and those who do not,  $t(63) = -.27$ ,  $p=0.79$ , two tailed, with those reporting using Snap Chat scoring lower ( $M=20.55$ ,  $SD=6.39$ ) than those whom do not use Snap Chat ( $M=21.07$ ,  $SD=6.44$ ). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference=-.522, 95% CI: -4.39-3.34) was extremely small (Cohen's  $d=-0.081$ ).

Lastly, an independent samples t-test was also conducted to compare levels of openness to new experience that exists amongst those who reported using Tinder and those who did not. There was no significant difference in the indicated levels of openness amongst those who use Tinder and those who do not,  $t(63) = 2.08$ ,  $p=0.62$ , two tailed, with those reporting using Tinder scoring higher ( $M=26.2$ ,  $SD=7.05$ ) than



those whom do not use Tinder ( $M=20.2$ ,  $SD= 6.14$ ). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference= $6.0$ , 95% CI:  $-232-11.77$ ) was large (Cohen's  $d=0.97$ ).

**Table 4:** Group differences between the personality trait agreeableness and individual's preference for face-to-face communication as opposed to using the private features on offer on SNS, and group differences between the personality trait openness to new experience and using various forms of Social media.

Variable	Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
<b>Preference for face-to-face communication</b>	Yes	56	29.70	5.84	7.75	0.575
	No	8	7.49	2.23		
<b>Facebook</b>	Yes	55	20.98	6.04	.95	.337
	No	10	18.9	8.06		
<b>Instagram</b>	Yes	44	20.68	6.64	.04	0.01
	No	21	20.62	5.89		
<b>Snap Chat</b>	Yes	51	20.55	6.40	-.27	-0.08
	No	14	21.07	6.44		
<b>Tinder</b>	Yes	5	26.20	7.05	2.08	0.97
	No	60	20.20	6.14		

*Note.* LFT = Low Frustration tolerance;  $\eta^2$  = eta squared; Statistical significance:  $*p < .001$

## **Discussion**

The primary aim of the current study was to explore how effective the personality traits openness to new experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism, as proposed by the hierarchical Big Five Model of personality (Goldberg, 1990), are at influencing the means by which students of the National College of Ireland utilise SNS and their offered features for social purposes. The aim derived from previous research which has indicated that personality traits are reputable predictors of SNS behaviours (Hughes, Rowe, Mark Batey & Lee, 2012; Correa, Hinsley, de Zúñiga, 2010; Devaraj, Easley & Crant, 2008). Collectively, the study was endeavouring to examine the trends that may be apparent amongst the classified personality traits and time spent online, the number of personal contacts an individual may have and the underlying motives for using SNS.

In order to explore the above fundamental objective, three hypotheses and two aims were presented. Generally, it was postulated that differences in SNS usage and behaviours would be observed across the various personality traits.

The association between the personality trait of openness to new experience and the probability of utilising the most forms of social media was investigated.

The related hypothesis stated that ‘‘the personality trait openness to new experience will indicate usage of the most forms of social media’’. Generated results failed to support this hypothesis, revealing insignificant differences in the levels of openness and reports of utilising each form of social media.

Extremely small effect sizes were exposed for the differences that exist between the trait of openness and using Instagram and Snap Chat. In addition, a small to medium effect size exists in the differences in levels of openness and using the social media

site Facebook for the current sample of interest. A feasible explanation for these yielded small effect sizes could be due to relatively small sample of the current study. The inclusion of more participants could expose larger effect sizes.

A large effect size was determined by the levels of openness and using Tinder along with an insignificant difference. If a large effect size and an insignificant result is obtained, this could be as a result of a limited sample size of less than 100 people (Stevens, 1996), thus the recruitment of more participants could produce a significant difference, indicating the requirement of a further study into this relationship.

The current trait refers to individual's willingness or desires to contemplate other approaches in life, open individuals possess higher levels of tolerance for exploring novel and unique things (McCrae & Costa, 1992). The inclusion of Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, Tinder and LinkedIn was inspired by the work of Mangold & Faulds (2009), who revealed these as the most prevalent social media sites on offer to the public. The inclusion of newly launched SNS in the current study e.g. 'Bumble' would be recommended for future research, trying out new forms of social media may be linked with the trait of openness as it could stimulate their curiosity (Ross et al., 2009).

These findings are not complementary of the work of Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky (2010), Butt & Philips (2008) and Guadagno et al., (2008), who uncovered a link between openness and being driven to use the most forms of social media and the use of all special features on offer by each SNS.

Furthermore, the link between the trait of conscientiousness and time invested into social media was investigated. The hypothesis of interest stated 'the personality trait of conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with time spent on social media'.

Yielded results revealed a weak, negative association between openness and time spent online; allowing one to conclude those who possess high levels of conscientiousness will spend limited amounts of time on SNS. The two variables of interest shared 5.34% of variance in common, a common explanation for this could be due to the outliers (Bland & Altman, 2011), but no extreme outliers were present. A probable explanation for the obtained weak effect size is the limited sample size of 66 participants whom completed the current study. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Wilson, Fornasier & White (2010), Wahrli (2008) and Lauenders & Lounsbury (2006), who all alike revealed a negative association between conscientiousness and time spent on social media sites.

It is plausible to suggest that highly conscientiousness individuals possess high levels of self-control (Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004), encouraging them to refrain from utilising social media for large amounts of time (Swickert, Hittner, Harris & Herring ,2002). This expected, negative influence for the trait conscientiousness on time invested on SNS, could be overruled by conscientious individual's dominant work ethic (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2011), which may offer an explanation to the weak correlation observed, allowing one to speculate conscientious individuals may still partake in SN without it interrupting their propensity for success.

Over using social media would contradict their proactive and responsible attributes, serving as a distraction from more beneficial and worthwhile tasks (McElroy, Hendrickson, Townsend & De Marie, 2007).

On account of the following, future research should aim to review the likelihood of conscientious individuals utilising social media to gather information in relation to tasks at hand or for the purposes of their work. Similarly, social media sites are

increasingly being used to seek information in relation to real world matters i.e. world crises (Sutter, 2010), health information (Fox, 2011) and general current affairs (Pepitone, 2010). Thus, an investigation into conscientious individual's probability of utilising social media for these current matters would be beneficial. Focus should be aimed at assessing the underlying motives present, encouraging these individuals to utilise SNS.

Alike, an investigation into the trait of extraversion, and it's possible, positive relationship with amount of "friends" extraverts may have added to their personal contacts was conducted. The associated hypothesis stated "the personality trait of extraversion will be positively correlated with total number of "friends"/"followers" on social networking sites". Generated results revealed a moderate, positive relationship between the trait of extraversion and total number of friends added to personal contact lists, yielding a small value for the amount of variance shared between the variables. As mentioned previously, this could be as a result of a limited sample size, with a larger sample size possibly yielding larger amounts of variance in common between the variables. Similarly, the results were in line with the findings of Zywicki & Danowski (2008) and Wehrli (2008), whom both revealed a positive association between the personality trait extraversion and the number of "friends" an individual may have added to their personal contact lists on social media.

The trait of extraversion endorses strong and plentiful social connections both on SNS and in real world settings (Ciavarella, Buchholtz, Riordan, Gatewood & Stokes, 2004). Friendships that may exist online on SNS may be deemed somewhat superficial, and it is considered inappropriate to not accept a friend request from someone whom you may be familiar with (Boyd, 2007). This online social norm results in a wide array of relationships on SNS being represented as friendships.

Furthermore, the current trait is positively associated with communication and sociability (Liebert & Liebert, 1998), creating more possibilities for extraverts to establish more familiar connections, leaving them with a greater selection of people to add as ‘‘friends’’ to their personal contact lists on SNS. With this facet of the trait of extraversion in mind, future studies should aim to explore if the popularity of extraverted individuals online is identical to the observed popularity they may hold in offline situations.

In addition, an exploration of the link between the trait of agreeableness and the indication for a preference for face to face communication types as opposed to online communication was conducted. The related hypothesis stated ‘‘ Agreeable individuals will exhibit a preference for face-to-face communication forms’’, and in turn was not supported, no significant difference was observed between agreeable individuals and their inclination to prefer face to face conversations, over those one may have online. A large effect size was generated and according to Stevens (1996), a large effect size and an insignificant result, as generated during the course of this investigation, could be as a result of a small sample size, which seems to be a prevalent, reoccurring issue during the course of the following study.

The results differed from the revelations made by Butt & Philps (2008) and Valkenburg, Schouten & Peter (2005), both exposing agreeable individual’s preference for face to face communication types.

The trait of agreeableness encompasses a collection of attributes that uphold favourable relationships with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). As a result of their behaviour towards others and their caring and attentive tendencies, agreeable individuals exhibit high levels of empathy and enjoy helping people in times of need

(Klimstra, 2013). Given the inclinations of agreeable individuals to help and support others, it would be appropriate to investigate the levels of support, guidance and thus the effectiveness of the advice, an agreeable individual can offer someone through SNS features, compared to the effectiveness of the advice one may give in real world interactions.

Furthermore, an investigation into the relationship that exists between the trait of neuroticism and time spent on SNS was completed. The associated hypothesis states ‘‘ the personality trait of neuroticism will be positively correlated with more time spent online on SNS’’, and in turn it was not supported.

The yielded results were not concurrent with the research of Wolfardt & Doll (2001) and Butt & Philips (2008).

The trait neuroticism contributes to breakdowns one may experience in relation to their levels of self-control (Sun & Wu, 2011), thus the following trait has been previously linked with internet addiction (Hardie & Tee, 2007), indicating the tendencies of highly neurotic people to spend great amounts of time online. Neurotic people report preferring to complete tasks alone, allowing them to avoid being subject to any form of anxiety (Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010), thus motivating their SNS behaviours and resulting in them investing large amounts of time on Social media.

Similarly, social media provides a platform for highly neurotic individuals to present themselves and exaggerate their lacking, prosocial characteristics; social media equips them with the choice of what traits and attributes they share with people online, compared to the control they have over this in real world interactions (Seidman, 2013). This control can be seen to promote excessive segments of time being spent on SNS by these neurotic people (Guadagno, et al., 2012). In light of this, future research

should aim to conceptualise the means by which neurotic people present themselves on SNS, through posting photographs, editing their wall content and profile descriptions, thus aiming to offer insight into the underlying self-presentations activities neurotic people may engage in, ultimately influencing their SNS activities.

Supplementary to the preceding findings, a negative, significant correlation was yielded between the trait of neuroticism and total number of friends added to personal contact lists. This expected finding could be rooted in the aggressive, tense, volatile, impulsive and restless tendencies of highly neurotic people (Chemorro-Premuzic, 2013), resulting in them having less friends to be possibly added to their personal contact lists, unlike extraverted individuals (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2000).

Similarly, a significant positive correlation between time spent on SNS and the number of friends participants had added to their personal contact lists was generated, strong connections exist between building large social networks online and investing time on SNS, as previously demonstrated by Gilbert & Karahalios (2009).

In addition, interestingly no participants of the current study reported using LinkedIn; LinkedIn is a business-relationship focused SNS (Bilge, Strufe, Balzarotti & Kirda, 2009). The stage of the undergraduate participants in their career progression may be the reasoning as to why they do not utilise this social media platform as of yet; the launch of a longitudinal study could investigate at what stage of peoples careers do they sign up to this work orientated SNS.

Recent times have observed a large increase in research being conducted on the emergence of the problem of internet addiction (Griffiths, 2000). This newly emerging mental health problem provokes symptoms similar to those associated with substance addictions; mood changes, withdrawal, conflict and relapse (Griffiths,



2005), to mention a few. Widyanto & Griffiths (2006), claim that looking at internet addiction as a whole, universal problem is outdated and irrelevant in the rapidly evolving world of the World Wide Web. Research should focus on particular, potentially addictive activities that people may be engaging in on the internet i.e. SNS (Engels et al., 2009). In light of this evolving problem facing internet users, there are many negative consequences associated with internet addiction; it can alter cognitive functioning (Park et al., 2011), result in poor academic performance (Jsitsika et al., 2011), lead to poor eating habits and malnourishment (Kim et al., 2010) and can promote the development of poor interpersonal skills (Milani, Osualdella & Di Blasio, 2009).

Thus, in addition to the outlined recommendations for future research aforementioned, future research should aim to further offer insight into what personality traits, apart from neuroticism, may be positive predictors of the onset of internet addiction and what traits may serve as possible protective mechanisms against the development of internet addiction. The existing measures of internet addiction i.e. the Internet Addiction Scale (Bernardi & Pallanti, 2009), Internet Addition Test (Young, 1998) and the Internet Related Problem Scale (Armstrong, Philips & Saling, 2000), collectively assess tolerance levels of individuals, cravings one may be experiencing, the negative impacts the internet may be having on an individual and the areas of their life the internet may be effecting. Future studies could aim to alter these scales, focusing solely on social media addiction and dependence, thus shedding light on the probabilities of one being over dependent on social media, as opposed to one being addicted to the internet in general.

Research suggests forms of social media sites are being increasingly utilised as a resource for developing formal and informal learning patterns; providing the learner

with control over their knowledge management and construction. Ultimately, this surge has resulted in these SNS being labelled as social learning platforms, where learning is socially mediated (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2011); implementing the belief that this study could be valuable to those involved in the education setting. The current study traced the trajectories of SNS usage across an undergraduate sample, the goal settings of this population in relation to social media i.e. what they use it for or what content they may post and time details, three vital components of the social media routine that must be examined if an educator is considering making use of a social media platform to cultivate the learning of students. The inclusion of the various personality traits could offer a judgement on what traits would benefit more from utilising social media as a learning platform.

Parents and guardians may also be somewhat interested in the findings of this study, their attention probably being placed on the time segments people are spending on these sites; the new, upcoming generation of college attendees will be faced with added social media pressures and it may interfere greatly with the time they spend online on SNS. Similarly, some parents and guardians may lack a basic understanding in relation to the fact that the online activities their children engage in are just an extension to their logged off lives (O’Keeffe & Pearson, 2011). Through the examination of personality and social media behaviour, this belief has become more apparent, making this study relevant for parents who may be lacking in the relevant technical skills, and do not have an account on any form of social media.

Marketers and advertisers could make use of this study; they could further apply it to more populations and use it to generate information in relation to the electronic word of mouth that are faced to tackle (Chu & Kim, 2011). Certain personality traits could be viewed as influential to this word of mouth process, some may be more prone to

keep sharing it, others may refrain from participating in it, whereas others may view it online and then share it with their real world acquaintances. Social media may be considered the most imperative tool in advertising (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013), and research must be conducted to keep up to date with its rapid and exponential advancement.

Moreover, this study is not without limitations, therefore the findings should be interpreted with caution. Given the small size ( $n=66$ ), the opportunity of discovering a genuine true effect is low (Button et al., 2013), ultimately questioning the reliability of the findings of this study. Similarly, the relationship between the variables in question could be seriously undermined due to this limitation. A smaller sample size increases the probability of assuming a genuine true finding as false, which may have occurred in light of the findings of this study. An appropriate sample size produces more efficient research and the data generated is considered more reputable. Thus the limited sample of this study undermines the internal and ultimately external validity of the findings.

A major limitation associated with this study is the self-designed questionnaire utilised to measure the social media activities of participants. This measure was lacking in external reliability and validity. The appropriate analyses were conducted by the researcher to establish the degree of reliability associated with the questionnaire, producing an appropriate reliability score, but issues are still apparent; the issue being, is the measure adequately reflecting the underlying concept of social media activities. Measures such as the one in question undergo tests for reliability to assess if they produce consistent results when applied to the identical population time and time again (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). The absence of a valid and reliable

measure of social media usage greatly undermines the validity and generalisability of the findings produced.

In line with this self-designed measure is the use of self-report measures which occurred in the generation of the data for the current study. There are many problems associated with self-report measures, honesty and image management (Austin, Gibson, Deary, McGregor & Dent, 1998) being the first. When choosing to utilise a questionnaire as a tool for data collection, researchers are heavily relying on the honesty of the participants. The extent by which participants wish to manage how they appear through their provided answers, will differ greatly drastically various personality types (Austin, Gibson, Deary, McGregor & Dent, 1998), an issue which was not controlled for in light of the current research,

Another associated problem with self-report measures is the lack of introspective ability participants may possess (Fan et al., 2006). As a result they may not be able to report accurate responses to particular questions; people's opinions of themselves are completely different to the views others hold of them (Fan et al., 2006).

Response bias is one's tendency to respond to questions as they appear on a questionnaire in a certain way or pattern (Surguladze et al., 2004), resulting in them ignoring the actual evidence they have been requested to assess. These became increasingly more of a problem as participants progressed through both questionnaires, interviews or direct observations could eliminate this problem.

Finally, each participant completed the questionnaire in a classroom, in the presence of another. Participants were seen and heard to be conversing about their answers, questioning the honesty of the participants. Similarly, the background chatter served as a possible distraction, negatively impacting the yielded data.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, by including five personality factors, the current research was constructed to explore and investigate how well personality traits influenced the means by which the students of The National College of Ireland utilised SNS and their offered features for social purposes. Additionally, this study proposed to examine the trends of SNS usage associated with the various personality traits for an undergraduate, Irish sample. This study achieved to shed light on the apparent trends that exist amongst the undergraduate sample on NCI students, thus it is important to interpret the results with caution. Replication and validation of the utilised measures would be beneficial and could then be applied to assess the population as a whole, who is increasingly becoming more dependent on social media.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Part 1: Demographic Information**

Please fill in the information in the space provided beside the following questions.

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you enrolled in an undergraduate programme at NCI?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Part 2: The Big Five Personality Test

This is a personality test, it will help the researcher understand why you act the way that you do and how your personality is structured.

In the table below, for each statement 1-50, mark how much you agree with on the **scale 1-5**, where

**1=disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=neutral, 4=slightly agree and 5=agree**, in the box to the left/ right of it labelled rating.

Rating	I.....	I.....	Rating
	1. Am the life of the party.	26. Have little to say.	
	2. Feel little concern for others	27. Have a soft heart.	
	3. Am always prepared.	28. Often forget to put things back in their proper place.	
	4. Get stressed out easily	29. Get upset easily	
	5. Have a rich vocabulary.	30. Do not have a good imagination.	
	6. Don't talk a lot.	31. Talk to a lot of different people at parties.	
	7. Am interested in people.	32. Am not really interested in others.	
	8. Leave my belongings around.	33. Like order.	
	9. Am relaxed most of the time.	34. Change my mood a lot	
	10. Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.	35. Am quick to understand things	
	11. Feel comfortable around people.	36. Don't like to draw attention to myself	
	12. Insult people.	37. Take time out for others.	
	13. Pay attention to details.	38. Shirk my duties.	
	14. Worry about things.	39. Have frequent mood swings.	
	15. Have a vivid imagination	40. Use difficult words.	
	16. Keep in the background.	41. Don't mind being the centre of attention	
	17. Sympathize with others' feelings.	42. Feel others' emotions.	
	18. Make a mess of things.	43. Follow a schedule.	
	19. Seldom feel blue.	44. Get irritated easily	
	20. Am not interested in abstract ideas.	45. Spend time reflecting on things	
	21. Start conversations.	46. Am quiet around strangers.	
	22. Am not interested in other people's problems.	47. Make people feel at ease.	
	23. Get chores done right away	48. Am exacting in my work.	
	24. Am easily disturbed.	49. Often feel blue.	
	25. Have excellent ideas.	50. Am full of ideas.	



### **Appendix C**

**Extraversion** = 20 + (1) \_\_\_ + (6) \_\_\_ + (11) \_\_\_ + (16) \_\_\_ + (21) \_\_\_ + (26) \_\_\_ + (31) \_\_\_ + (36) \_\_\_ + (41) \_\_\_ + (46) \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Agreeableness** = 14 + (2) \_\_\_ + (7) \_\_\_ + (12) \_\_\_ + (17) \_\_\_ + (22) \_\_\_ + (27) \_\_\_ + (32) \_\_\_ + (37) \_\_\_ + (42) \_\_\_ + (47) \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Conscientiousness** = 14 + (3) \_\_\_ + (8) \_\_\_ + (13) \_\_\_ + (18) \_\_\_ + (23) \_\_\_ + (28) \_\_\_ + (33) \_\_\_ + (38) \_\_\_ + (43) \_\_\_ + (48) \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Neuroticism** = 38 + (4) \_\_\_ + (9) \_\_\_ + (14) \_\_\_ + (19) \_\_\_ + (24) \_\_\_ + (29) \_\_\_ + (34) \_\_\_ + (39) \_\_\_ + (44) \_\_\_ + (49) \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Openness to New Experience** = 8 + (5) \_\_\_ + (10) \_\_\_ + (15) \_\_\_ + (20) \_\_\_ + (25) \_\_\_ + (30) \_\_\_ + (35) \_\_\_ + (40) \_\_\_ + (45) \_\_\_ + (50) \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.633	50

### **Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I am the life of the party	151.0175	189.946	.181	.625
I Feel little concern for others	151.6140	194.527	.007	.640
I am always prepared	151.0702	196.995	-.031	.639
I get stressed out easily	150.5965	177.424	.462	.601
Have a rich vocabulary	150.9825	190.518	.189	.625
Don't talk a lot.	151.5439	200.610	-.137	.648
Am interested in people.	150.2456	186.296	.285	.618
Leave my belongings around.	151.7544	197.689	-.059	.643
Am relaxed most of the time	150.7368	204.233	-.241	.654
Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas	151.5439	192.610	.108	.630
Feel comfortable around people	150.3158	193.327	.097	.631
Insult people.	151.8246	201.719	-.163	.651
Pay attention to details.	150.1579	185.671	.399	.614
Worry about things	150.3333	177.512	.505	.600
Have a vivid imagination.	150.4561	189.967	.178	.626
Keep in the background	151.3684	200.308	-.132	.646
Sympathize with others' feelings.	149.8772	187.681	.350	.618
Make a mess of things.	151.1228	190.288	.202	.625
Seldom feel blue	151.3333	201.190	-.163	.647
Am not interested in abstract ideas	151.7719	197.536	-.049	.640
Start conversations	150.6316	192.237	.108	.630

Am not interested in other people's problems	152.0351	201.963	-.188	.648
Get chores done right away	151.1930	196.373	-.028	.641
Am easily disturbed	150.8070	184.944	.266	.618
Have excellent ideas.	150.9123	189.974	.197	.625
Have little to say	151.7544	192.046	.116	.630
Have a soft heart	150.0351	189.534	.220	.623
Often forget to put things back in their proper place	151.4737	190.968	.107	.631
Get upset easily	150.8947	174.132	.561	.593
Do not have a good imagination	151.7368	199.126	-.098	.646
Talk to a lot of different people at parties	150.3860	193.777	.057	.634
Am not really interested in other	152.3509	197.482	-.040	.637
Like order	150.4912	195.790	.004	.637
Change my mood a lot	150.7193	182.420	.350	.612
Am quick to understand things	150.6140	191.277	.140	.628
Don't like to draw attention to myself	150.5789	195.427	.002	.638
Take time out for others	150.2105	185.098	.379	.614
Shirk my duties.	151.4211	188.891	.204	.624
Have frequent mood swings.	150.9825	180.089	.395	.607
Use difficult words	151.3158	192.113	.099	.631
Don't mind being the centre of attention.	151.4386	193.893	.038	.636
Feel others' emotions	150.3684	181.594	.461	.607
Follow a schedule	150.9123	194.010	.044	.635
Get irritated easily	150.5789	180.677	.426	.607
Spend time reflecting on things	150.5965	178.995	.477	.603
Am quiet around strangers	150.8246	192.362	.104	.631
Make people feel at ease.	150.3860	188.456	.294	.620
Am exacting in my work	151.0000	192.429	.139	.628
Often feel blue	151.4912	180.969	.413	.608
Am full of ideas.	150.7719	188.893	.207	.624

## **Appendix E**

Answers to Q2, Q4, Q6, Q8, Q10, Q12, Q14, Q16, Q18, Q20, Q22, Q24, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q32, Q34, Q36, Q38, Q39, Q44, Q46 and Q49 were reverse coded.

**Appendix F:**

**Part 3: The Social Networking Site Questionnaire**

Please give your feedback on your use of Social media/ Social Networking Sites.

**Section one:** Please fill in the blank space as they apply to you.

Q1. Are you a frequent user of the following Social media sites?

- a) Facebook? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Snap Chat? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Instagram? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Tinder? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) LinkedIn? \_\_\_\_\_

Q2. On a typical day I spend X amount of time on (hours and minutes):

- a) Facebook? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Snapchat? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Instagram? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Tinder? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) LinkedIn? \_\_\_\_\_

Q3. I have X amount of friends/ followers on:

- a) Facebook? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Snapchat? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Instagram? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Tinder? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) LinkedIn? \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. I prefer face to face communication as opposed to using social media site's feature? \_\_\_\_

**Section two:** Please mark how much you agree with the following statements on the scale 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5= strongly agree, in the box to the right of it.

Statement: I use Social Media to:	Rating
Make new friends	
Keep in contact with existing friends publically? i.e. posting on their profiles, tagging them in posts.	
Share images and life events? i.e. selfies or photographs, tagging yourself and a friends	

in your location.	
Express feelings and opinions (through means of a public post)?	

**Section 3:** Please mark how much you agree with the following statements on the scale 1-5, where 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5= strongly agree, in the box to the right of it.

<b>Statement:</b>	<b>Provide Answer in the box</b>
I share personal details on Social Media (age, relationship status, occupation)	
I share personal information on Social Media (locations, holidays)	
I share pictures of myself and my friends on Social Media (selfies, group photographs)	

**Appendix G:**

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.805	23