

The dark side of social media – and *Fifty Shades of Grey* introduction to the special issue: the dark side of social media

The massive-scale diffusion of social media in private life as well as workplaces calls for increased awareness and understanding of its risks and adverse consequences for individuals, organizations and societies (Garcia and Sikström, 2014; Fox and Moreland, 2015; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016; Oberst *et al.*, 2017; Trekels *et al.*, 2018). For example, the recent discussion on the role of social media in amplifying socially undesirable phenomena such as fake news (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017) and hate speech (Farkas *et al.*, Forthcoming) demonstrates a clear need for a critical analysis of the undesirable societal consequences of social media. At an individual level, the influence of people's social media engagement on phenomena such as loneliness (Song *et al.*, 2014), depression (Lin *et al.*, 2016), envy (Tandoc *et al.*, 2015) and narcissism (Andreassen *et al.*, 2017) is everything but perfectly understood. Finally, there is a long-standing void in the literature with respect to paradoxes and controversies related to the nature and outcomes of the core uses of social media. For example, following other people on social networking sites can be a means to maintain interpersonal connections but may also turn into digital voyeurism (Mäntymäki and Islam, 2014; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016).

With respect to future research directions regarding the dark side of social media, we highlight three areas that in our opinion would deserve increased scholarly attention. First, there is a clear need for research focusing on the dark side of social media particularly in the workplace context. Different social media tools and applications have rapidly proliferated to workplaces (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2016). However, the extant literature has largely focused on social media use in people's private lives. As a result, future research could for example investigate the relationship between workplace social media use and information overload (Yin *et al.*, 2018) and technostress.

Second, while the literature has identified a number of psycho-social phenomena attributed to social media use, there is a void in the current understanding of how the characteristics social media platforms and users' activities may contribute to the negative individual-level consequences. As a result, increased attention to the IT artefact (Matook and Brown, 2017) could be a means to make the research more relevant for service designers and platform operators.

Third, to take into account the potential social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993) related to people's responses and perceptions regarding their own cyberbullying, narcissism, trolling or voyeurism, future research should more extensively adopt research designs that utilize data from multiple sources. Hence, we recommend increased use of mixed methods (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2013) and multi-method (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2014) research designs as well as using data about users' actual behaviors to mitigate the risk of social desirability bias.

The purpose of this *Internet Research* Special Issue "The Dark Side of Social Media" is to provide a venue for critical academic research focusing on the adverse aspects of social media. The large number and diversity of themes covered by papers submitted to the special issue demonstrate that scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and methodological premises are investigating the phenomena surrounding social media from a critical perspective. The topics of the submissions ranged from extreme manifestations of the dark side of social media, such as pedophilia, hate crime and terrorism, to more mundane phenomena, such as fear of missing out (FOMO) and information overload. This exemplifies



that the dark side of social media in fact comprises a number of different degrees of darkness – and shades of gray.

With the invaluable help and support of the reviewers, we have selected eight papers for inclusion in the special issue, representing the two main lines of inquiry from the received submissions, negative aspects of social media for individuals and analyzing large volumes of online discussion data.

The first paper, “When social media traumatizes teens: the roles of online risk exposure, coping, and post-traumatic stress,” examines online risk experiences, particularly information breaches, exposure to explicit content, cyberbullying and sexual solicitation, as causes of post-traumatic stress disorder among teens. The second paper, “Coping with mobile technology overload in the workplace,” investigates mobile information technology overload in a workplace context. The third paper, “Is my FOMO causing fatigue? Advertising, social media fatigue, and the implications for consumers and brands,” examines how advertising factors such as attitude and intrusiveness impact social media fatigue, fear of missing out (FOMO) and privacy interlink. The fourth paper, “Investigating microblogging addiction tendency through the lens of use and gratification,” examines the behavioral and perceptual factors that impact the addiction tendency levels of microblogging users. The fifth paper, entitled “Social media’s have-nots: an era of social disenfranchisement,” focuses on the motivations, concerns, benefits and consequences associated with non-use of social media.

The sixth paper, “Tolerating and managing extreme speech on social media,” seeks to understand how internet users tolerate and manage extreme speech. The seventh paper, “The dark side of news community forums: opinion manipulation trolls,” explores the dark side of news community forums by identifying suspicious users and regular users. The eighth paper, “Online moral disengagement and hostile emotions in discussions on hosting immigrants,” seeks to examine the relationship between moral disengagement mechanisms and the hostile emotions expressed online towards hosting immigrants. The last paper, “The bidirectional mistrust – Callers’ online discussions about their experiences of using the national telephone advice service,” discloses the dark side of internet-based forums in which callers discuss their experiences of using the national telephone advice service.

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