Relationship Between Context Collapse and Regretted Self-Presentation on Instagram: The Mediating Role of Privacy Concern

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Abstract

Instagram, a primary visual sharing social networking site (SNS), provides users with a platform to strategically present themselves. Many individuals have encountered situations where they regretted their initial self-presentation efforts, leading to actions such as untagging, unfriending, or discontinuing their use of social media platforms. While prior research has explored the links between privacy concerns and regretted self-presentation on social media, a significant gap remains in our understanding of the concept of "context collapse" and the various ways regret can manifest in the online context. This study investigates the influence of context collapse on Instagram, specifically focusing on network size as a predictor of regretted self-presentation. Additionally, we explored the role of privacy concerns as potential mediators in these relationships. To gather data, we conducted an online survey involving 300 Instagram users who were undergraduate students, representing both private and public universities within the Klang area. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics V.27. Our findings indicate that a larger network on Instagram positively predicts regretted self-presentation, with privacy concerns mediating this association. The outcomes of this research have significant implications, providing valuable insights for educational practitioners to design intervention programs aimed at reducing regret among SNS users. Additionally, it offers crucial insights for both SNS users and developers, shedding light on the intricate interplay between regret, context collapse, and privacy concern. Ultimately, this study furnishes empirical evidence concerning users' regretted self-presentation on Instagram, highlighting the impact of SNS metrics and users' cognitive factors on these regrettable instances.

Key words: Context collapse; Privacy concern; Regret; Instagram

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) play a pivotal role in shaping social interactions; and offer users unique opportunities to carefully shape their self-presentation (Aichner, 2021). The growing engagement of young individuals in online self-presentation has led to an increase in self-disclosure and subsequent regret (Véliz, 2022). Notably, self-presentation strategies differ across various SNSs, with Instagram standing out for its emphasis on visual representation and user expression through innovative features (Hong et al., 2020). Instagram offers benefits such as photo and video editing capabilities, as well as the ease of sharing daily activities through hashtags in Instagram stories within a 24-hour period (Balci & Karaman, 2020). Individuals are motivated to emotionally and behaviourally manage self-presentation on SNSs, fearing the creation of undesirable impressions that could disrupt social interactions and personal behaviour (Leary, 2019). Self-presentation, regret, privacy concern and context collapse are culture and context-based (Vitak, 2012), people often confined to specific social or cultural resulting in merging individuals from diverse backgrounds into a single group. While the literature has provided a plethora of evidence, self-presentation on SNSs in the focus in the Western

context and lack of research done in the Eastern context (Cardon et al., 2009; Zhao & Jiang, 2011). Malaysia is a collectivism country that are recommending their conceptualization as separate unipolar dimension and consider the degree to which societies integrated into groups with perceived obligations and dependence on groups (Ramley et al., 2020). Westerners SNSs users present themselves more directly with still images and Asian tend to self-present with care by using manipulated graphics (Kim & Papacharissi, 2009). Self-presenting can make young individuals vulnerable, which uniquely to the weakness and defensiveness of their self-presentation (Hart et al., 2019). When young people posting things that may come to regret, this is an outcome of how individuals practice online self-presentation which is lack of privacy or excess of engagement and disinhibition (Véliz, 2022). The extant literature has shown that excessive self-presentation and privacy concern could bring about regret (Chen et al., 2012; Islam et al., 2020; Véliz, 2022). Therefore, the direct relationship could be expanded to indirect relationship by incorporating the third variable which is privacy concerns.

1.1 Research objectives

RO1: To identify the influences of context collapse on Instagram (size of the network) and behavioural manifestation of regret on this SNSs.

RO2: To test the influences of privacy concern and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram.

RO3: To find out the influences between context collapse on Instagram (size of the network) and privacy concern about Instagram.

RO4: To examine the mediating role of privacy concern in the relationship between context collapse on Instagram (size of the network) and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Counterfactual thinking and Communication Privacy Management Theory

The central concept of counterfactual thinking is generally perceived as beneficial or functional, serving as the foundational basis for the current theoretical overview of counterfactual literature; such experiences arise in response to negative affect and stem from corrective thinking (Beck et al., 2011). Through counterfactual thinking, individuals may articulate regret as a cognitive psychological response, especially when comparing chosen outcomes or alternatives unfavorably (Payir & Guttentag, 2019). This research integrates the Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory, illuminating how individuals navigate their private information's disclosure and protection (Petronio & Child,

2020). Within SNSs, especially among young adults, CPM sheds light on boundary regulation, considering factors like personal attributes and motivations (Child et al., 2011; Child & Starcher, 2016).

2.2 Regret and online regret self-presentation

Regret defined into multi-dimensional aspects including negative emotion and decision making. Regret is the negative emotion that people imagining their present situation would have been better if they had made another decision (Komiya et al., 2011). FitzGibbon (2021) concluded that individuals value their regrets more significantly than other negative emotions. Besides, regret is also a behavioural decision-making and it pushes individuals towards revising their previous decision in order to bring corrective actions to life circumstances (Zeelenberg et al., 2000). Within the realm of SNSs, regret manifests in various ways, including content postings, likes, and comments (Islam et al., 2020). These regrets commonly result from audience misinterpretations or content misrepresentations (Geusens & Vranken, 2021). In essence, those involved in online self-presentation face increased regret, shaped by both content and context (Stern, 2015Top of Form). Interestingly, older adolescents and seasoned users tend to untag more frequently than their younger counterparts (Birnholtz et al., 2017; Lang & Barton, 2015; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012). Additionally, users' personalities influence their online self-presentation, subsequently affecting their experiences of regret (Wang et al., 2020). A less explored but significant factor is "context collapse," which induces discomfort or a sense of lost identity online, prompting regrettable actions like altering privacy settings (Vanessa & Burner, 2017).

2.3 Context collapse on Network Size

Context collapse was first introduced by Boyd (2002) to the digital world, and describing on how online interaction merge from different context into a single online space. Context collapse plays a significant role in contributing to online regret as this occurs when an individuals' online behaviour contradicts their offline identity, leading to confusion or misunderstandings among their audience (Brandtzaeg & Lüders, 2018; Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Meyrowitz, 1986). With having these past literature, context collapse has not received much attention by scholars and lack of relevant research. In the context of online self-presentation and socialization on social media, context collapse typically refers to how multiple audiences are flattered into a single context and how individuals tailor their self-performances on SNSs (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012). Birnholtz et al. (2017) concluded that individuals untag when they regret and managing on privacy on their profile page for concerns on self-presentation on particular network size.

H1: There is a significant relationship between

context collapse (size of the network) and behavioural manifestation of regret.

2.4 Privacy concern

Online communication contributes to self-disclosure which would results of excessive self-disclosure and users regret of posting content (Xie & Kang, 2015). When self-disclosure made through public communicating channels for updating individuals' status, then individuals most likely visible to other user's entire network for communication with another (Vitak, 2012). Privacy concern have also influenced the ways in which people manage their unintentional disclosures, such as adjusting privacy settings, engaging in self-censorship, or unfriending others (Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Sibona, 2014). Self-disclosing personal information on SNSs increased the risk of experiencing online regrets as well as cyberbullying victimization (Aizenkot, 2020). Older teenage also self-discloses more personal information on SNSs compared to younger teenage (Xie & Kang, 2015). Besides, online regret can also regard on the personality of SNSs users which would effect on how their online performance. However, there are lack of studies document to what extent that young adults regret over SNSs and what factors contribute to such regret.

H2: There is a significant relationship between privacy concerns and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram.

Moreover, each individual user would raise their privacy concern due to the leakages of their personal experiences and change the privacy rule if they regret on sharing personal information. Gil-Lopez et al. (2018) concluded that individuals controlling age, gender and network size relate to their number of status updates which also tested whether people with greater network heterogeneity if individuals tend to post more or fewer updates. However, it is important to note that privacy concerns isolated does not account for the range of users' responses to privacy risk. There are strategies for managing context collapse on individuals own social media account. Individuals can keep the personal and professional aspects of their lives separately to maintain contextual boundaries (Vitak et al., 2012).

H3: There is a significant relationship between context collapse (size of the network) and privacy concerns.

2.5. Mediation effect of privacy concerns

Pondering the relationship between variables, privacy concerns could play the important role of regret. When individuals regret to practice self-presentation on SNS, they are regret of posting online which results of changing the setting on SNSs and behavioural manifestation of online regret (Gil-Lopez et al., 2018). Besides, the excessive self-disclosure usually results of regret of posting due to the appropriateness of content being disclosed and accessed by the advertisers, employers, and parents (Peluchette & Karl, 2008). If the information they have disclosed on SNS crossing the privacy boundary, then they easily get regret (Moore & McElroy, 2012; Wang et al., 2011). SNS users often regret for what they have posted and the posted content remains visible on platforms and reached to broad audience (Huang et al., 2020).

H4: Privacy concerns mediates the relationship between context collapse (size of the network) and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram.
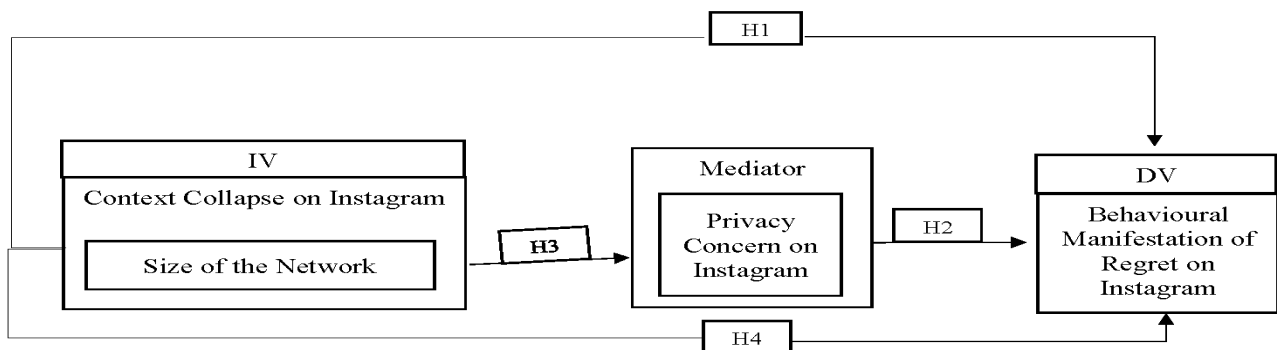
Note. IV= Independent Variable; DV= Dependent Variable; H= Hypothesis

Figure 1
Research Framework

3. METHOD

3.1 Design and data collection

Once ethics approval was granted by the University's Research Ethnics Committee (ID: REC.2310-14), then the online survey (Google Forms) were distributed via email and social media. Ethical issues also applied considering personal disclosure, authenticity and credibility of the research, cross-cultural contexts and issues of personal privacy through forms of Internet data collection (Creswell, 2014; Israel & Hay, 2006). With the pilot test conducted, the reliability all study variables are above 0.7 which are highly reliable. Following the required sample size outlined in Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, the present

study gathered a sample of 300 participants. The criteria targeted a specific age range, encompassing young adults who are undergraduates and Instagram users with private accounts.

The research instrument was developed based on measurements and instruments that are established and that has been developed in Western countries, but has been extensively used and tested in the context of Asian countries as well. Participants are required to report their network size on Instagram by reporting the number of their followers and filling out the Likert scale (Xie & Kang, 2015). The measurement of behavioural manifestation of regret (untagging, unfriending, and social media discontinuance) were measured with 7 point Likert scale (Dhir et al., 2016; Sibona, 2014). This study also adapted 5 point Likert scale (privacy concern) from Razini et al. (2020) and adapted to suit activities in Instagram context.

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, range, and standard deviation, were employed to summarize the context collapse of Instagram users regretted experiences. Assumption testing utilised normality and multicollinearity to test the normality value from the extracted data. For the mediation analysis, the mediation model was tested using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) in SPSS. A bootstrapping of 5000 resampling was performed with a confidence interval of 95%.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Participants

Regarding to the demographic profiles, the analysis illustrates that the majority of respondents (42.5%), totaling 127, possess a bachelor's degree related to the arts. Additionally, respondents with bachelor's degrees in business and science account for a similar proportion, with 30% (91 responses) and 27.5% (82 responses), respectively. Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) are studying at Xiamen University Malaysia. The second-largest proportion comes from respondents at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (25.7%), totaling 77 responses. Moreover, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Technologi Malaysia account for a smaller proportion, with 13.3% (40 respondents) and 11.3% (34 respondents), respectively.

In addition to the Instagram usages, all respondents were asked about the number of users they are following and being followed in Table 2. The mean of Instagram following ($M = 410$, $SD = 198$) and followers ($M = 404$, $SD = 179$) is similar. Most respondents with private accounts are following 100 to 300 (33.3%) and 301 to 500 (32.7%) Instagram users, followed by 22% (66 respondents). There are fewer respondents following more than 700 Instagram users (11.7%) and the fewest respondents following less than 100 respondents (0.3%) with only 1 respondent.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=300)

Variable	Frequency	n(%)
Gender		
Male	140	46.7
Female	160	53.3
Age		
18-20	116	38.7
21-23	121	40.3
24-25	63	21.0
Ethnicity		
Malay	37	12
Chinese	256	85.5
Indian	7	2.5
Academic Programme		
Bachelor of Arts	127	42.5
Bachelor of Business	91	30
Bachelor of Science	82	27.5
Universities		
Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM)	149	49.7
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	77	25.7
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	40	13.3
Universiti Technologi Malaysia (UTM)	34	11.3

Table 2
Instagram Usage

Variable	Frequency	n(%)
Instagram Following (M= 410.34 , SD= 198.82) (Size of the Network)		
Less than 100	1	.3
100 – 300	100	33.3
301 – 500	98	32.7
501 – 700	66	22
More than 700	35	11.7
Instagram Followers (M=404.04, SD = 179.73) (Size of the Network)		
Less than 100	5	1.7
100 – 300	131	43.7
301 – 500	121	40.6
501 – 700	37	12.3
More than 700	5	1.7
Instagram Usage (Checking Instagram/times)		
1 – 3 times	61	20.3
4 – 6 times	115	38.3
7 – 10 times	62	20.7
More than 10 times	62	20.7
Instagram Daily Usage (M= 2.94, SD=1.15) (per hours)		
Less than 1 hour	16	5.3
1 – 2 hours	112	37.3
3 – 4 hours	91	30.3
5 – 6 hours	35	11.8
More than 6 hours	46	15.3

4.2. Normality testing

We checked the normality using skewness and kurtosis. All the normality meets the requirement between -2 to +2, and -7 to +7. Table 3 presents further details on the descriptive statistics obtained through assumption testing and normality analysis.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistic for Computed Score for Each Variable

No.	Variables	Mean for total score	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1.	Size of the network	814.38	395.52	.311	-1.023
2.	Behavioural manifestation of regret	82.91	17.72	-1.677	1.340
3.	Privacy concern	32.39	6.27	-1.532	.983

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Table 4 present descriptive and correlational results for the investigated variables. Moreover, the variance of inflation factor (VIF) values is below 10 and indicate no multicollinearity issues (1.316) (Thompson et al, 2017). Size of the network and privacy concern have positively correlated (r=.49, p < .001), followed by size of the network and behavioural manifestation of regret (r=.52, p < .001). Behavioural manifestation of regret and privacy concern have a strong and positive correlation (r=.85, p < .001). When there is an increase in one's network size, then there will be increase in the level of regret.

Table 4
Correlations for all the study variables

No.	Variables	1	2	3	Collinearity tolerance	VIF
1.	Behavioural manifestation of regret	1				
2.	Size of the network	.52***	1		.760	1.316
3.	Privacy concern	.85***	.49***	1	.760	1.316

Note. ***p<.001.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The findings from the total effect model showed the support for *H1*, indicating a significant relationship between size of the network and behavioural manifestation of regret (ß = 0.023, *SE* = 0.002, *p* < 0.001). The results of assessing the direct effect of the mediation model in figure 2.2 reveal significant positive associations between privacy concern with behavioural manifestation of regret (ß = 2.220, *SE = 0.002*, p < 0.001). that is supporting *H2*. There is significant relationship between size of the network and privacy concern, supporting *H3*(ß = 0.008, *SE* = 0.001, p < 0.001). A bootstrapping method with 5,000 iterations was conducted to explore the indirect effect of the mediators, estimate standard errors and determine confidence intervals for indirect paths. The findings provided support of *H4*, indicating that privacy concern partially mediates the relationship between size of the network and behavioural manifestation of regret (ß = 0.017, *SE* = 002, *p* < 0.001). The finding aligns with the concept of partial mediation as discussed by Bader & Jones (2021).

5. DISCUSSION

As postulated, the findings of this study showed the positive influence of context collapse (size of the network) and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram (*H1*). As the size of the network increases, context collapse makes it challenging for individuals to vary their self-presentation based on the audience. Previous studies by Binder et al. (2009) and Vitak (2012) emphasized that individuals assess their regret levels based on the expansive and diverse sets of friends in their network. The phenomenon of context collapse within Instagram communities causes selective self-presentation, especially subsequent to regrettable experiences. As users grapple with the implications of context collapse on Instagram, their strategies evolve, correlating with escalating levels of regret (Dhir et al., 2016). Also, regrettable behaviors, epitomized by unfriending actions, are frequently triggered by excessive or incongruous posting behaviors, as articulated by Logan (2018). Moreover, this study underscores that Malaysian young adults' experiences of regrettable self-presentation are contingent upon their Instagram following and follower dynamics, inclusive of close friend lists. Respondents manifest diverse regrettable self-presentation behaviors, modulated by their network size, strategically curating their posts to align with idealized portrayals. The categorization of followers or followings is often influenced by individual interests, underscoring the nuanced interplay between network dynamics and self-presentation strategies on the platform.

The positive influences of privacy concern and behavioural manifestation of regret on Instagram supported in *H2,* aligns with previous findings (Sibona, 2014; Wang et al., 2011). Also, users would also consider their dissemination of personal and sensitive information in SNS use due to privacy (Dhir, 2016; Wang et al., 2011). According to the Instagram features, users can manage their followers into close friend list so they can make their ideal self-presentation and control their privacy to selected people. Moreover, as the audience size and diversity expand, individuals are inclined to disclose more personal information (Vitak, 2012). A nuanced comprehension of users' network dynamics is indispensable for elucidating how the composition of their networks shapes their public disclosures within these platforms. Moreover, the integration of the counterfactual thinking theory within this study serves to reinforce and validate the proposed hypotheses. Within this context, regrettable self-presentation surfaces as a corrective strategy that Instagram users adopt to navigate their online privacy apprehensions.

The positive relationship between context collapse (size of the network) and privacy concerns as hypothesized in *H3* was supported. In the realm of SNSs, the phenomenon of context collapse, as reflected in the scale of one's network, establishes a notable correlation with privacy concerns. The experience of context collapse on SNSs amplifies one's connections and visibility within the network, fostering interactions among friends of friends and the formation of new information-based connections. Notably, an expanded network size on SNSs aligns with heightened levels of regret stemming from dissatisfaction with posting practices and network-centric SNS usage (Islam et al., 2020). SNSs users who categorized their friends into distinct groups for more tailored disclosures exhibited a greater intentionality in their posting behavior compared to users who did not employ this advanced privacy feature. This difference may be attributed to individuals utilizing friend lists dedicating more time to deliberate on the most suitable audience for a specific status update. Moreover, privacy concerns and privacy management both negatively impact on the SNSs users (Li et al., 2016).

Privacy concern was found to partially mediates the relationship between context collapse (size of the network) and behavioral manifestation of regret on Instagram (*H4*). Privacy concerns exert a significant influence on individuals' recognition of context collapse, which delves into relationships encompassing factors such as network size, degree of heterogeneity, frequency of social updates, and linguistic variability. Subsequent research indicates that SNSs users exercise increased discretion in their status updates, emphasizing privacy and impression management over immutable personal details (Choi &Williams, 2020). There is a strongly correlation showed in present findings that Instagram users care about their privacy in terms of context collapse and their behavioural manifestation of regret. The current findings elucidate the mediating effects, thereby corroborating research hypothesis 4. When individuals experience regret regarding their self-presentation practices on SNSs, it frequently emanates from regrettable online postings. Moreover, regret often due to excessive self-disclosure, especially when the appropriateness of content becomes questionable to stakeholders such as advertisers, employers, or parents. Given the burgeoning scope and diversity of SNSs, curating one's digital persona becomes increasingly intricate, amplifying individual anxieties (Gil-Lopez et al., 2018).

5.1 Implications

This study holds significance from both practical and theoretical vantage points, illuminating how individuals interact with Instagram and elucidating potential mental benefits or detriments for SNS users. While the study conceptualizes regret primarily as a behavioral outcome, it implicitly acknowledges the presence of underlying negative or conscientious emotions associated with regret. From a theoretical perspective, this study leverages CT and CPM theory to elucidate the experiences of Instagram users characterized by regrettable self-presentation practices. The empirical findings furnish a foundational framework, facilitating subsequent scholarly inquiries into the nuanced relationship between privacy apprehensions and user conduct within digital domains. Specifically, CT enables an exploration of young adults' regret-associated self-presentation experiences by considering variables such as network size and behavioral manifestation.

From the practical perspective, the findings of study are provided for researchers, educational practitioners, and SNSs developers that target on SNSs. This research firstly focuses on offering advantage to SNSs users who actively engage in regretted self-presentation that generated from various user-generated content. The SNSs users are advised to be aware of the presence of regret that may discourage their social interaction, enjoyment or engagement in the online communities. Secondly, the research offers instrumental insights for educational practitioners, paving the way for the conceptualization and execution of targeted interventions aimed at mitigating regret among SNSs users. Thirdly, these findings hold salient implications for both end-users and platform developers, demystifying the intricate interdependencies among online regret, context collapse, and overarching privacy concerns. The results of this study could be valuable for the SNSs developers to enhance user-interface designs for the companies interested in targeting the young adult users' market for their brand, product and service; aiming for better users' experiences and positive feedbacks.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the present study addressed the gap in the literature by integrating theories and focus in Malaysian context that facilitate the novel ways of thinking about the impact of privacy concern in the relationship of context collapse on the regretted self-presentation. Regret as online behavioural manifestation showed that individuals had regretted self-presentation on Instagram via untagging, unfriending and discontinuing the social media use. Moreover, the sociocultural factors in Malaysia influence the research findings; individuals from collectivistic cultures such as Malaysia showed more care of presentation than individuals from individualistic cultures that affects how they share information with in and out group members and how they separate relational networks (Chow et al, 2000). By incorporating both CT and CPM theory, the research delved into the self-presentation behaviours of young adults, exploring the mediating role of privacy concerns in the relationship between context collapse and the behavioural manifestation of regret.

This study underscores the importance of distinguishing various behavioural orientations, identifying decision rules shaping coping behaviours, and emphasizing the need to incorporate individual subjectivity and agency into existing literature on context collapse and behavioural manifestation of regret.

Additionally, there is a need to enhance measurement tools aimed at assessing network diversity within Instagram and across broader SNSs landscapes, particularly in the context of context collapse. While the study's purposive sampling strategy targeted undergraduates - a group recognized for its extensive engagement with Instagram - the findings mainly resonate with users possessing private accounts. Consequently, future research should endeavor to explore these variables within a more diverse user base, encompassing individuals with public Instagram accounts. The current study encompassed a constrained participant pool, predominantly drawn from various universities situated within the Klang area. Furthermore, further research may investigate deeper research into the collectivism country such as in the Asian context which will have more SNSs users care about their self-presentation.

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