# BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SELF-PRESENTATION STRATEGIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SOCIAL COMPARISON ORIENTATION AND LIFE SATISFACTION

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**Abstract**

This study examines the relationships between the Big Five personality traits, self-presentation strategies on social media, social comparison orientation, and life satisfaction. Grounded in personality theory and social comparison theory, the research proposes an integrative model explaining how stable dispositional traits shape identity regulation behaviors and psychological outcomes within digitally mediated environments. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 400 undergraduate students from universities in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The study utilized established measurement scales, including the Big Five Inventory (BFI), the Social Comparison Orientation scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and validated measures of self-presentation strategies on social media. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that Big Five personality traits significantly predict self-presentation strategies and social comparison orientation on social media platforms. Additionally, self-presentation strategies positively influence social comparison orientation. The findings also indicate that social comparison orientation has a significant negative effect on life satisfaction, suggesting that increased comparison tendencies within social media environments may reduce individuals' overall well-being. However, the mediating role of social comparison orientation between personality traits and life satisfaction was not statistically supported. Overall, the results highlight the central role of personality structures in shaping online identity regulation behaviors and emphasize the psychological implications of social comparison processes within social media contexts.

**Keywords:** Big Five Personality Traits; Self-Presentation Strategies; Social Comparison Orientation; Life Satisfaction; Social Media.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The strategic presentation of the self on social media platforms has emerged as a central domain of inquiry in contemporary communication and social psychology research, driven by the pervasive integration of digital technologies into everyday life (Hollenbaugh, 2021). These transformations reflect broader structural changes in the contemporary media ecosystem, where digital platforms have fundamentally reshaped the production, circulation, and interpretation of information within the new media environment (Mohamed et al., 2026). Grounded in Goffman's classical dramaturgical framework, self-presentation is conceptualized as the deliberate control of information and behavior to shape others'

impressions, reflecting both expressive and strategic social motives (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 2012). While Goffman's theoretical insights originated in offline interaction contexts, they remain highly relevant for understanding identity construction within digitally mediated environments characterized by persistent visibility and networked audiences (Toma et al., 2008; Hollenbaugh, 2021).

Social media fundamentally alters the structural conditions of identity performance by exposing users to large, heterogeneous, and often algorithmically shaped audiences, transforming impression management into a continuous and reflexive process rather than an isolated interpersonal act (Ellison et al., 2007; Beyens et al., 2024). These changes are closely linked to broader processes of mediatization that reshape patterns of social interaction and communication practices within digitally networked environments (Barry et al., 2024). In this context, self-presentation strategies can be understood as persistent communicative practices through which individuals construct, maintain, and regulate desired online identities (Stöven et al., 2024). These strategies include self-promotion, ingratiation, defensive presentation, and targeted image repair, enacted through posts, images, videos, status updates, comments, and interactional cues visible to extended audiences (Chen et al., 2023; Stöven et al., 2024).

Contemporary research consistently demonstrates that self-presentation is not an undifferentiated behavior but is systematically patterned according to stable personality characteristics (Yang et al., 2024). Personality traits, as conceptualized within the Five-Factor Model (FFM), provide a parsimonious and empirically robust framework for explaining enduring individual differences in social behavior (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Angelini, 2023).

Individuals high in Extraversion, for example, are more likely to engage in enhancement-oriented self-presentation strategies characterized by socially expansive and visibility-seeking behaviors, whereas individuals high in Neuroticism often adopt more defensive strategies aimed at minimizing social evaluation risks (Yang et al., 2024; Casale et al., 2024; Stöven et al., 2024). Openness to Experience has been associated with identity experimentation and creative self-expression, while Conscientiousness and Agreeableness tend to predict more regulated and socially adaptive forms of self-presentation (Angelini, 2023; Hamilton et al., 2023).

Beyond identity regulation, the psychological implications of social media engagement are deeply intertwined with processes of social comparison. Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals evaluate their abilities and self-worth through comparisons with others when objective standards are absent or ambiguous (Festinger, 1954). Digital platforms significantly amplify such processes by providing continuous exposure to curated and often idealized portrayals of others' lives (Vogel et al., 2014; Verduyn et al., 2021). Research examining online information engagement further suggests that exposure to social media content influences how individuals interpret social information, evaluate themselves relative to others, and interact with digital content environments (Moayad et al., 2026).

Within these environments, users are frequently exposed to upward comparisons, evaluating themselves against others perceived as more successful, attractive, or socially accomplished. Such comparisons have been consistently associated with negative self-evaluations, envy, and reductions in self-esteem (Meier & Schäfer, 2022; Beyens et al., 2024). In contrast, downward comparisons—evaluating oneself relative to individuals perceived as worse off—may provide temporary psychological benefits, though these effects are often unstable and context-dependent (Verduyn et al., 2021).

A critical mechanism intensifying social comparison processes is selective self-presentation. Social media users tend to disclose positive experiences and socially desirable aspects of their lives while concealing negative or routine experiences (Chou & Edge, 2012; Krasnova et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2023). These selective disclosures generate asymmetrical social perception environments that promote idealized social norms and distorted evaluative benchmarks, shaping users' emotional and cognitive self-assessments (Meier & Schäfer, 2022; Casale et al., 2024). Consequently, exposure to idealized social media content has been shown to increase envy and negative affect, which may mediate the relationship between social media use and subjective well-being outcomes (Tandoc et al., 2015; Verduyn et al., 2021; Casale et al., 2024).

Life satisfaction—defined as a global cognitive evaluation of one's overall quality of life—represents a central component of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1985). Contemporary research indicates that life satisfaction is shaped not only by the frequency of social media engagement but more importantly by the evaluative and comparison-based processes associated with digital identity performance (Abdellatif, 2022; Meier & Schäfer, 2022). At the same time, recent communication research highlights the increasing role of social media data and digital interaction analytics in understanding patterns of communication behavior and decision processes within contemporary media environments (Moayad et al., 2024). These developments underscore the importance of examining psychological mechanisms underlying digital interaction patterns.

Importantly, personality structures influence not only self-presentation behaviors but also comparison tendencies and broader well-being outcomes. The Five-Factor Model provides an integrated theoretical lens for understanding how dispositional traits shape both identity construction and evaluative processes in digital environments (Angelini, 2023; Yang et al., 2024). Emerging evidence suggests that traits such as Neuroticism may intensify vulnerability to negative comparison effects, whereas Extraversion and Openness may mitigate such effects by fostering more active and exploratory patterns of social media engagement (Yang et al., 2024; Casale et al., 2024).

Despite substantial theoretical progress, important gaps remain. Much of the existing literature is based on Western samples, limiting the cross-cultural generalizability of current findings (Ahmed et al., 2022; Basabain et al., 2021). Moreover, previous studies have frequently examined personality traits, self-presentation strategies, social comparison processes, and well-being outcomes in isolation, restricting the development of integrative explanatory models capable of capturing their complex interrelationships.

Accordingly, the present study develops and empirically tests a comprehensive theoretical framework examining how the Big Five personality traits influence self-presentation strategies on social media platforms and how these processes relate to social comparison orientation and life satisfaction among university students in Arab contexts.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Personality Traits and Self-Presentation Strategies

Self-presentation has long been conceptualized as a strategic regulatory process through which individuals actively manage how they are perceived by others. Within digitally mediated environments, however, this process assumes heightened complexity, as impression construction unfolds at the intersection of individual dispositions, platform affordances, and audience interpretation. Contemporary scholarship increasingly contends that self-presentation strategies cannot be adequately understood as mere communicative choices; rather, they represent psychologically grounded behaviors shaped by relatively stable individual differences, including personality-related tendencies.

Early dispositional perspectives provide a foundational theoretical basis for linking personality structures to self-presentation behavior. Avia et al. (1997), examining the relationship between self-monitoring and the Five-Factor Model, identified two distinct self-presentation styles: an acquisitive orientation, associated with Extraversion and Openness to Experience, and a defensive orientation, linked to Neuroticism.

Their findings demonstrate that individuals differ systematically in their approach to impression construction, with some predisposed toward assertive, self-enhancing behaviors, while others exhibit more protective, anxiety-driven strategies. This distinction is theoretically consequential, as it positions personality not as a peripheral background variable but as a structural determinant shaping how individuals regulate social visibility and evaluative exposure.

Complementing this dispositional interpretation, Scandell and Wlazelek (1996) demonstrated the susceptibility of personality assessment instruments to self-presentation strategies. By manipulating instructional conditions (e.g., fake-good and fake-bad profiles), their results revealed that individuals can strategically modify responses to generate socially desirable or undesirable profiles.

Although primarily methodological in orientation, this work underscores a critical theoretical implication: self-presentation is not merely expressive but inherently strategic, reflecting individuals' capacity to regulate identity displays in response to situational demands. Importantly, such regulatory behavior is unlikely to be psychologically neutral; rather, it is plausibly conditioned by dispositional traits influencing motivational priorities, self-evaluative concerns, and sensitivity to social judgment.

More recent investigations within social media contexts provide empirically grounded insights into how self-presentation strategies operate within digitally networked settings. Weisi and Hajizadeh (2024), analyzing LinkedIn profiles through a pragmatic framework, illustrated that professional self-presentation relies on systematically deployed speech acts and calibrated self-praise tactics. Their qualitative findings reveal a dominant tendency toward assertive self-presentation, manifested through strategies such as ingratiation, entitlement, enhancement, basking, and exemplification. Notably, users demonstrated a marked preference for implicit and indirect self-praise mechanisms—including evidential and proxy bragging—rather than overt self-promotion. This pattern suggests that impression construction within professional digital environments involves nuanced balancing between self-enhancement and social acceptability. From a personality perspective, such strategic modulation may reflect underlying dispositional differences related to self-confidence, social sensitivity, and evaluative concerns.

The dynamic and context-dependent nature of self-presentation is further evidenced in Huang and Vitak's (2022) examination of dual-account identity management on Instagram. Their mixed-methods study demonstrated that individuals differentiate between publicly curated, positively framed presentations (Rinsta) and more spontaneous, emotionally expressive displays (Finsta). Crucially, engagement perceptions varied systematically across accounts, with posts containing more negative emotional content eliciting less satisfying and supportive responses. These findings reinforce the view that self-presentation is not a static behavioral tendency but a contextually regulated process. Such differentiation aligns implicitly with personality-based interpretations, as individual differences are likely to shape preferences for disclosure boundaries, emotional expression, and impression management strategies.

Expanding the discussion to human brands, Murtas et al. (2024) highlighted the reciprocal and co-constructive relationship between self-presentation strategies and audience perception. Their study revealed that athletes are perceived differently depending on content emphasis, with performance-focused posts reinforcing professional identity, whereas appearance-focused content heightened model-oriented perceptions. Importantly, the persistence of uncivil or sexually objectifying responses irrespective of presentation strategy underscores that self-presentation outcomes are co-constructed through audience interpretation. Theoretically, this suggests that personality-driven presentation choices operate within socially contingent meaning systems, where individual intent interacts dynamically with cultural expectations and evaluative biases.

Collectively, these studies converge on a coherent theoretical proposition: self-presentation strategies represent psychologically anchored behaviors shaped by dispositional tendencies, while simultaneously constrained by platform architectures and audience interpretation. Personality traits, particularly within the Five-Factor Model framework, offer a parsimonious explanatory lens for understanding systematic variability in impression management orientations, strategic self-enhancement, emotional regulation, and sensitivity to social evaluation.

From this integrative perspective, Extraversion may be conceptually aligned with assertive, visibility-seeking presentation strategies; Neuroticism with defensive, evaluation-sensitive regulation; Openness with identity experimentation and narrative flexibility; Conscientiousness with controlled, norm-consistent presentation; and Agreeableness with socially harmonizing impression tactics. Although not all empirical investigations explicitly measure personality traits, their findings consistently reveal behavioral patterns theoretically compatible with dispositional interpretations.

Within digitally mediated environments, therefore, self-presentation strategies can be more accurately understood as observable manifestations of underlying psychological dispositions interacting with communicative affordances. This interpretation advances the literature beyond descriptive accounts of online behavior, positioning personality traits as central explanatory mechanisms within impression management processes.

## 2.2 Personality Traits and Social Comparison Orientation

Social comparison constitutes a fundamental psychological mechanism through which individuals evaluate their abilities, opinions, and self-worth relative to others (Festinger, 1954). While originally conceptualized within offline interpersonal contexts, contemporary digital environments have profoundly amplified the frequency, intensity, and structural conditions of comparison processes.

Social media platforms, characterized by persistent visibility, quantifiable feedback metrics, and algorithmically curated content streams, transform comparison from an episodic cognitive activity into a habitual mode of self-evaluation (Appel et al., 2021; Verduyn et al., 2021).

Within digitally networked environments, social comparison is not merely incidental but structurally embedded. Platform affordances systematically encourage exposure to highly selective and positively skewed self-presentations, frequently emphasizing success, attractiveness, and socially desirable experiences.

This asymmetry of social information has been shown to intensify upward comparison tendencies, which are consistently associated with adverse psychological outcomes, including diminished self-esteem, heightened envy, and reduced life satisfaction (Faelens et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). Conversely, downward comparison processes may offer temporary self-evaluative buffering yet remain contingent upon interpretive framing and individual differences (Wang et al., 2023).

Social Comparison Orientation (SCO)—defined as a relatively stable dispositional propensity to engage in comparative self-evaluation—has emerged as a critical variable moderating digital media experiences (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Individuals high in SCO exhibit heightened sensitivity to social information, increased attentional focus on others' performances, and greater susceptibility to comparison-induced affective responses (Lee, 2022). Within social media contexts, SCO has been associated with intensified monitoring behaviors, elevated emotional reactivity, and amplified responses to peer-generated content (Yang et al., 2021; Vogel & Rose, 2023).

A growing body of research suggests that personality traits play a decisive role in shaping comparison tendencies. Personality structures influence not only the likelihood of engaging in comparison but also its direction, interpretation, and psychological consequences (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2021). Neuroticism, for example, has been consistently associated with maladaptive comparison patterns, heightened evaluative sensitivity, and increased vulnerability to negative affect following upward comparisons (Zhang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). Individuals high in Neuroticism are more likely to interpret social information through a self-critical lens, thereby magnifying perceived discrepancies between the self and idealized portrayals of others.

Extraversion, by contrast, demonstrates a more nuanced relationship with SCO. Although extraverted individuals engage more actively in social interaction and platform participation, their comparison experiences appear moderated by social confidence and positive affectivity (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2021; Schneider & Schupp, 2022). Agreeableness has been linked to less antagonistic comparison tendencies, whereas Conscientiousness appears to regulate comparison processes through goal-directed self-evaluation rather than affective reactivity (Anglim & Horwood, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Openness to Experience has shown associations with interpretive flexibility, potentially moderating rigid comparison-driven evaluations (Błachnio et al., 2022).

Digital communication research increasingly recognizes that social comparison is not a uniform cognitive process but one deeply conditioned by motivational, cognitive, and dispositional determinants. Visual-centric platforms, in particular, intensify comparison dynamics through aesthetic optimization and lifestyle signaling (Faelens et al., 2021; Vogel & Rose, 2023). Exposure to idealized content frequently triggers automatic comparative judgments, reinforcing cycles of self-evaluation and affective response (Verduyn et al., 2021).

Despite substantial theoretical progress, critical gaps remain. Existing research often examines personality traits and SCO in isolation rather than within integrative explanatory frameworks. Cross-cultural variability also remains insufficiently explored, particularly within collectivistic or normatively conservative contexts. Furthermore, limited research has systematically investigated how personality structures shape SCO within university populations navigating identity consolidation and intensive digital engagement.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes SCO as a central psychological mechanism through which personality traits influence digital self-regulatory behaviors, advancing a more comprehensive dispositional account of comparative cognition in social media environments.

## 2.3 Social Comparison Orientation and Life Satisfaction

Social Comparison Orientation (SCO) reflects relatively stable individual differences in the extent to which individuals attend to and utilize social information for self-evaluation (Festinger, 1954; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). While Social Comparison Theory initially emphasized offline contexts, digital environments have substantially amplified comparison opportunities. Social media platforms provide continuous streams of socially

diagnostic cues, intensifying comparative cognition and lowering psychological thresholds for evaluative judgments (Vogel et al., 2014; Chae, 2017).

Life satisfaction, defined as a global cognitive evaluation of one's quality of life, represents a core component of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1985). Theoretical integration suggests both adaptive and maladaptive pathways. Although comparison may facilitate self-assessment and motivation, frequent upward comparisons often produce discrepancy-based evaluations that undermine well-being (Vogel et al., 2014; Yang & Robinson, 2018).

Empirical evidence consistently indicates that individuals high in SCO exhibit greater susceptibility to negative well-being outcomes. Exposure to upward comparison targets has been linked to diminished self-evaluations and reduced life satisfaction (Vogel et al., 2014; Chae, 2017; Appel et al., 2016). However, effects remain contingent upon interpretive framing; upward comparisons perceived as inspirational may yield adaptive outcomes (Lee, 2022).

Within social media environments, SCO appears particularly consequential. Comparison orientation predicts maladaptive cognitive and affective responses—including envy and reduced self-esteem—which subsequently impair broader well-being indicators (Yang & Robinson, 2018; Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Lee, 2022). Emerging integrative models further emphasize mediated pathways rather than purely direct effects (Servidio et al., 2024; Casale et al., 2023).

Collectively, the literature supports a nuanced interpretation: SCO functions as a susceptibility factor influencing life satisfaction within digitally saturated environments. Its effects are conditioned by comparison direction, cognitive appraisal, and individual psychological resources. Accordingly, contemporary research increasingly advocates modeling SCO within broader psychosocial frameworks capable of capturing mediation and moderation dynamics.

## 3. HYPOTHESES

### 3.1 Personality Traits and Self-Presentation Strategies

Contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes self-presentation in digital environments as a relatively stable regulatory process rather than a purely situational response (Chen et al., 2023; Stöven et al., 2024). Within social media contexts, impression management behaviors demonstrate systematic variability attributable to enduring dispositional structures (Seidman, 2013; Casale et al., 2024). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that personality traits function as structural antecedents of identity construction and regulation. Extraversion has been linked to enhancement-oriented strategies, whereas Neuroticism predicts defensive and protective presentation tendencies (Michikyan et al., 2014; Angelini, 2023).

**H1:** The Big Five personality traits exert statistically significant effects on self-presentation strategies on social media platforms.

## 3.2 Personality Traits and Social Comparison Orientation

Social comparison processes are structurally intensified within digitally networked environments characterized by persistent exposure to selectively curated identity portrayals (Verduyn et al., 2021; Meier & Schäfer, 2022). However, individuals differ systematically in their propensity to engage in comparative self-evaluation, reflecting stable dispositional tendencies (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999; Lee, 2022). Prior research demonstrates that personality traits, particularly Neuroticism, predict heightened comparison sensitivity and evaluative reactivity (Casale et al., 2024; Beyens et al., 2024).

**H2:** The Big Five personality traits exert statistically significant effects on social comparison orientation on social media platforms.

## 3.3 Self-Presentation Strategies and Social Comparison Orientation

Self-presentation and social comparison represent theoretically intertwined processes within social media environments (Verduyn et al., 2021). Selective identity displays contribute to asymmetrical social perception conditions that amplify perceived discrepancies (Meier & Schäfer, 2022). Empirical studies increasingly document direct associations between identity regulation behaviors and comparison tendencies (Casale et al., 2024; Stöven et al., 2024).

**H3:** Self-presentation strategies exert statistically significant effects on social comparison orientation.

## 3.4 Social Comparison Orientation and Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction reflects a global cognitive evaluation of one's overall quality of life (Diener et al., 1985). Accumulating evidence indicates that frequent social comparison — particularly upward comparison — is associated with diminished well-being outcomes (Vogel et al., 2014; Yang & Robinson, 2018). Recent digital well-being research consistently identifies social comparison orientation as a predictor of reduced life satisfaction (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Beyens et al., 2024).

**H4:** Social comparison orientation exerts a statistically significant negative effect on life satisfaction.

## 3.5 Mediating Role of Social Comparison Orientation

Contemporary dispositional-process models propose that personality effects on well-being outcomes are frequently transmitted through proximal cognitive-evaluative mechanisms (Verduyn et al., 2021). Empirical evidence demonstrates that traits such as Neuroticism exert indirect effects via heightened comparison susceptibility (Casale et al., 2024; Lee, 2022). Accordingly, social comparison orientation is expected to function as a mediating mechanism linking dispositional structures to life satisfaction.

**H5:** Social comparison orientation mediates the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction.

## 4. METHOD

### 4.1 Research Design and Participants

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the structural relationships among Big Five personality traits, uses of social media, social comparison orientation, life satisfaction, and self-presentation strategies on social media. Data were collected from a sample of **400 undergraduate students** enrolled in higher education institutions across Egypt and Saudi Arabia, representing three major public universities: Cairo University (Egypt), Zagazig University (Egypt), and Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (Saudi Arabia). The cross-national, multi-institutional sampling framework was adopted to enhance contextual variability across two distinct Arab media environments and to strengthen the external validity of the findings.

Participants were recruited through a regularly with social media content. An online self-administered questionnaire was employed for data collection. To minimize common method bias, several procedural remedies were applied, including neutral item wording, randomized item presentation order, and explicit assurances of respondent anonymity (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Administrative approvals were secured from the relevant university authorities prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent, participation was entirely voluntary, and no personally identifiable information was recorded.stratified convenience sampling procedure, with stratification criteria encompassing academic discipline and year of study. Eligibility required respondents to be active users of at least one social media platform and to engage.

### 4.2 Measures

### 4.2.1 Personality Traits (Five-Factor Model)

Personality traits were assessed using the Five-Factor Model (FFM), which conceptualizes personality as a structured system of stable individual differences shaping patterns of cognition, affect, and behavior. The Five-Factor Model represents one of the most extensively validated frameworks in personality psychology, capturing broad dispositional tendencies that systematically influence social interaction, emotional regulation, and evaluative sensitivity. Consistent with this framework, the present study measured Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness using the Big Five Inventory (BFI). The measurement of personality traits was based on the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of self-descriptive statements accurately reflected their typical behavioral tendencies and psychological dispositions. The items included statements such as "I see myself as someone who is talkative," "I see myself as someone who is outgoing, sociable," "I see myself as someone who worries a lot," "I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily," "I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things," "I see myself as someone who has an active imagination," "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job," "I see myself as someone who is reliable, can always be counted on," "I see myself as someone who

is helpful and unselfish with others," and "I see myself as someone who is generally trusting."

### 4.2.2 Social Media Use Intensity

Social media use intensity reflects the degree to which social media platforms are integrated into individuals' daily routines and subjective experiences. This construct captures both behavioral engagement and psychological attachment, representing the perceived centrality of social media within everyday life. Social media use intensity was measured using items adapted from the scale originally developed by Ellison et al. (2007).

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their engagement with social media platforms. The measurement items captured both habitual usage patterns and affective integration into daily activities. Specifically, respondents evaluated statements such as "Social media is part of my everyday activity," "Social media has become part of my daily routine," "I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto social media for a while," "I feel I am part of the social media community," and "I would be sorry if social media shut down."

### 4.2.3 Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media

Self-presentation strategies refer to individuals' deliberate efforts to regulate identity displays and manage impressions within digitally mediated environments. These strategies reflect controlled processes of selective self-disclosure, identity curation, and evaluative sensitivity. The construct captures strategic identity regulation behaviors commonly observed in social networking environments. Self-presentation strategies on social media were measured using items derived from Huang (2014). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their impression management and identity regulation tendencies. The measurement items captured deliberate self-regulatory behaviors associated with online identity construction. Specifically, respondents evaluated statements such as "I carefully manage how I present myself on social media," "I try to present an ideal version of myself on social media," "I think about how others will perceive my posts," "I selectively share content that creates a positive impression," and "I avoid posting content that may harm my image."

### 4.2.4 Upward Social Comparison on Social Media

Upward social comparison reflects individuals' tendencies to engage in discrepancy-based evaluations when exposed to others' online self-presentations. This construct captures comparative self-evaluations and perceived inferiority triggered by idealized portrayals commonly encountered on social media platforms. Upward social comparison on social media was measured using items derived from Vogel et al. (2014). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their comparison-based evaluative tendencies. The measurement items captured discrepancy-focused cognitive and affective responses associated with upward comparative judgments. Specifically, respondents evaluated statements such as "When I view others' social media profiles, I often feel worse about myself," "I often compare how

I am doing compared to others on social media," "I feel that others have better lives than me when I browse social media," and "Viewing others' posts makes me think about what I lack."

### 4.2.5 Social Comparison Orientation

Social comparison orientation represents a dispositional tendency to attend to and utilize comparative social information in self-evaluation processes. This construct captures stable individual differences in comparison sensitivity across social contexts. Social comparison orientation was measured using items derived from the Iowa–Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) developed by Gibbons and Buunk (1999). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their dispositional comparison tendencies. The measurement items captured stable individual differences in attentional orientation toward social information and evaluative processing tendencies. Specifically, respondents evaluated statements such as "I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life," "I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things," "I often compare how I am doing socially with other people," and "I am not the type of person who compares often with others" (reverse-coded).

### 4.2.6 Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction reflects individuals' overall cognitive evaluation of their quality of life. This construct captures generalized judgments concerning life conditions, goal attainment, and subjective well-being. Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their global cognitive evaluations. The measurement items captured generalized judgments of life quality and satisfaction. Specifically, respondents evaluated statements such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal," "The conditions of my life are excellent," "I am satisfied with my life," "So far I have gotten the important things I want in life," and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing."

### 4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) implemented in SmartPLS 4.0 (Ringle et al., 2022). PLS-SEM was selected given the study's predictive orientation, the inclusion of single-indicator constructs, and the composite nature of several variables (Hair et al., 2022). The analytical procedure followed a two-stage approach: (1) measurement model evaluation — assessing indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity for multi-item constructs; and (2) structural model evaluation — examining standardized path coefficients, bootstrapping-based significance testing (5,000 subsamples, two-tailed), and coefficients of determination ($R^2$). Single-indicator constructs were assigned fixed loadings of 1.000, consistent with established PLS-SEM conventions (Hair et al., 2022). To test the mediating hypothesis (H5), the bootstrapped indirect effect was examined to assess the statistical significance of the mediation pathway.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Table 1 presents the measurement model results for multi-item constructs. All factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022), confirming satisfactory indicator reliability. For the **Big Five Personality Traits** construct, standardized loadings ranged from 0.759 (BF1) to 0.951 (BF5). Internal consistency was supported by Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.904) and Composite Reliability (CR = 0.912), both surpassing the recommended cutoff of 0.70. Convergent validity was confirmed by an Average Variance Extracted value of 0.680, exceeding the 0.50 criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

For **Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media**, factor loadings ranged from 0.720 (SPSSM2) to 0.840 (SPSSM3), reflecting satisfactory indicator reliability. Internal consistency was confirmed (α = 0.848; CR = 0.863) and convergent validity was supported by an AVE of 0.615. The three single-indicator constructs — Uses of Social Media, Social Comparison Orientation, and Life Satisfaction — were each assigned fixed loadings of 1.000 by definition; reliability and AVE statistics are accordingly not applicable. Overall, the measurement model demonstrated adequate psychometric properties for all constructs included in the structural analysis.

**Table 1: Measurement Model — Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity**

| Construct | Item | Factor Loading | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Multi-Item Constructs* | | | | | |
| **Big Five Personality Traits** | BF1 | 0.759 | 0.904 | 0.912 | 0.680 |
| | BF2 | 0.777 | | | |
| | BF3 | 0.850 | | | |
| | BF4 | 0.781 | | | |
| | BF5 | 0.951 | | | |
| **Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media** | SPSSM1 | 0.753 | 0.848 | 0.863 | 0.615 |
| | SPSSM2 | 0.720 | | | |
| | SPSSM3 | 0.840 | | | |
| | SPSSM4 | 0.790 | | | |
| *Single-Indicator Constructs* | | | | | |
| **Uses of Social Media** | USM | 1.000 | — | — | — |
| **Social Comparison Orientation** | SCO | 1.000 | — | — | — |
| **Life Satisfaction** | LS | 1.000 | — | — | — |

*Note. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Single-indicator constructs (USM, SCO, LS) carry fixed loadings of 1.000; reliability and AVE are not applicable (—). All multi-item factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70.*

## 5.2 Structural Model Assessment

### 5.2.1 Explanatory Power (R²)

Table 2 presents the coefficients of determination for the three endogenous constructs in the model. **Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media** yielded an $R^2$ of 0.192 (adjusted $R^2$ = 0.189), indicating that the exogenous variables collectively explain approximately 19.2% of variance in self-presentation behaviors. **Life Satisfaction** demonstrated an $R^2$ of 0.199 (adjusted $R^2$ = 0.197), reflecting that Big Five personality traits account for approximately 19.9% of variance in life satisfaction outcomes. **Social Comparison Orientation** exhibited a markedly low $R^2$ of 0.005 (adjusted $R^2$ = 0.003), indicating that the included predictors contribute negligible explained variance to social comparison tendencies — a finding with direct implications for the evaluation of the mediation hypothesis H5.

**Table 2: Coefficients of Determination (R² and Adjusted R²)**

| Endogenous Construct | R² | R² Adjusted |
|---|---|---|
| Social Comparison Orientation (SCO) | 0.005 | 0.003 |
| Life Satisfaction (LS) | 0.199 | 0.197 |
| Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media (SPSSM) | 0.192 | 0.189 |

*Note. R² benchmarks: 0.02 = small, 0.13 = medium, 0.26 = large effect size (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2022).*

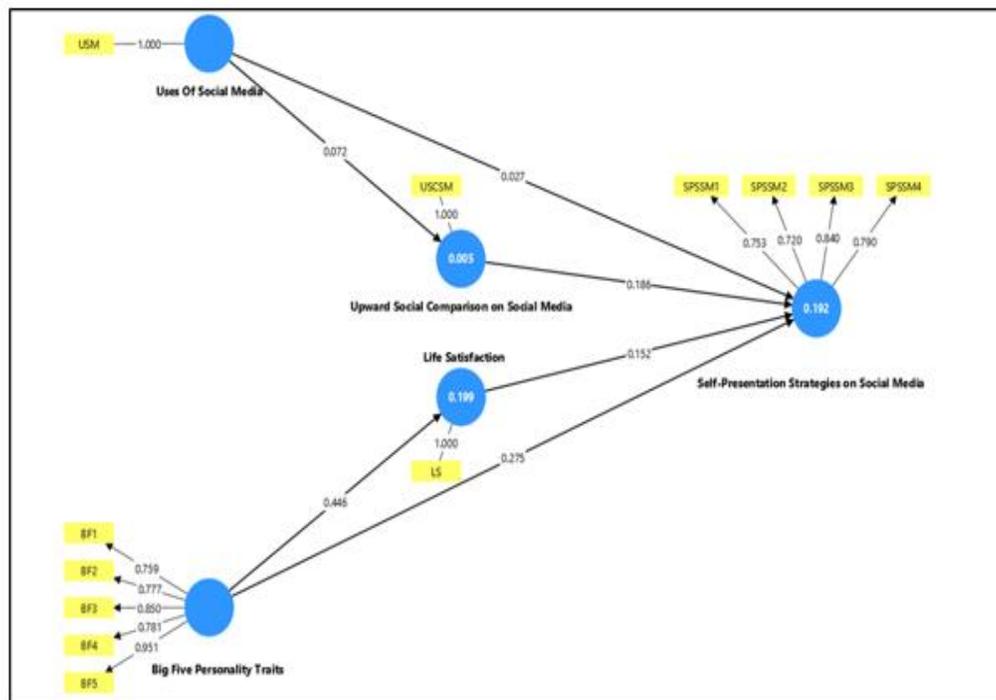### 5.2.2 Structural Path Coefficients



**Figure 1: Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients**

Figure 1 presents the full structural model with standardized path coefficients estimated through PLS-SEM. The figure displays the measurement loadings for each indicator alongside the structural paths linking all five constructs, providing a visual representation of the relative strength and direction of the hypothesized relationships.

As illustrated in Figure 1 and detailed in Table 3, the findings reveal a differentiated pattern of predictive effects across the five hypothesized structural relationships. Regarding the direct effect of **Big Five Personality Traits on Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media** (H1), a strong and statistically significant positive relationship was observed ($\beta$ = 0.446, t = 9.292, p < 0.001). This result indicates that individuals with higher levels of dispositional personality expression engage more actively in deliberate self-presentation behaviors on social media platforms. H1 is fully supported.

The direct effect of **Big Five Personality Traits on Social Comparison Orientation** (H2) was also statistically significant ($\beta$ = 0.275, t = 4.911, p < 0.001), confirming that core personality trait dispositions positively and meaningfully predict individuals' tendency to engage in social comparisons within digitally mediated environments. H2 is supported.

With respect to the effect of **Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Comparison Orientation** (H3), a statistically significant positive relationship was observed ($\beta$ = 0.186, t = 3.577, p < 0.001), indicating that individuals who more actively engage in impression management and identity curation on social media are more inclined toward comparison-based self-evaluation. H3 is supported.

The effect of **Social Comparison Orientation on Life Satisfaction** (H4) revealed a statistically significant negative relationship ($\beta$ = −0.152, t = 2.764, p = 0.006), indicating that a stronger dispositional tendency toward social comparison is associated with lower levels of global life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the broader empirical literature on social comparison and subjective well-being (Vogel et al., 2014; Jiang & Ngien, 2020). H4 is supported.

Finally, the mediating role of **Social Comparison Orientation in the relationship between Big Five Personality Traits and Life Satisfaction** (H5) was examined using the bootstrapped indirect effect procedure. The indirect effect was non-significant ($\beta$ = 0.072, t = 1.125, p = 0.261), indicating that Social Comparison Orientation does not function as a significant mediating mechanism between personality trait dispositions and life satisfaction within the present sample. H5 is therefore unsupported, suggesting that the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction may operate through alternative pathways not captured in the current model.

Of the five structural hypotheses examined, four received full empirical support (H1, H2, H3, H4) and one was unsupported (H5). The structural model explained 19.2% of the variance in self-presentation strategies on social media, 19.9% in life satisfaction, and a negligible proportion (0.5%) in social comparison orientation. Taken together, these findings underscore the central role of Big Five personality traits as key antecedents of both social comparison tendencies and self-presentation behaviors in digital environments. Furthermore, the significant negative effect of social comparison

orientation on life satisfaction (H4) highlights the well-being implications of social media use.

### Table 3: Structural Path Coefficients

| H | Structural Path | β | S.E. | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | Big Five Personality Traits → Self-Presentation Strategies on Social Media | 0.446 | 0.048 | 9.292 | 0.000 | **Supported** |
| H2 | Big Five Personality Traits → Social Comparison Orientation | 0.275 | 0.056 | 4.911 | 0.000 | **Supported** |
| H3 | Self-Presentation Strategies → Social Comparison Orientation | 0.186 | 0.052 | 3.577 | 0.000 | **Supported** |
| H4 | Social Comparison Orientation → Life Satisfaction | -0.152 | 0.055 | 2.764 | 0.006 | **Supported** |
| H5 | Social Comparison Orientation mediates: Big Five → Life Satisfaction | 0.072 | 0.064 | 1.125 | 0.261 | **Unsupported** |

The non-significant mediation finding (H5), however, suggests that the pathway from personality traits to life satisfaction is not primarily transmitted through social comparison orientation, pointing to the need for future research to explore alternative mediating mechanisms such as emotional regulation, self-esteem, or platform-specific usage patterns.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### H1. Big Five Traits → Self-Presentation Strategies

Self-presentation on social media is most convincingly interpreted as a **stable identity-regulatory system rather than episodic communicative performance**. Evidence from dual-account identity management demonstrates that users systematically differentiate between publicly curated and privately expressive identity displays, reflecting enduring regulatory goals such as reputational protection, audience calibration, and emotional boundary management (Huang & Vitak, 2022). This regulatory logic directly supports the theoretical premise of H1: personality traits, as relatively stable dispositional structures, provide a plausible explanatory basis for systematic variability in visibility management, disclosure selectivity, and evaluative risk regulation.

A **trait-consistent dual-style framework** offers a parsimonious mechanism for explaining heterogeneity in presentation strategies. The acquisitive–defensive distinction (Avia et al., 1997) captures two psychologically grounded orientations toward impression management: enhancement-oriented versus protection-oriented regulation. When situated within digitally mediated environments, this framework aligns with observed patterns of curated positivity, selective self-enhancement, and defensive identity

modulation. Consequently, systematic variation in Saudi university students' presentation strategies can be interpreted as manifestations of underlying dispositional regulation tendencies rather than platform-induced randomness.

Digital self-presentation frequently involves **calibrated, indirect self-enhancement rather than overt self-promotion**. Professional discourse analyses indicate that users strategically prefer implicit self-praise mechanisms (evidential/proxy bragging), suggesting optimization between competence signaling and anticipated social backlash (Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2024). This strategic calibration implies that impression construction is cognitively governed and socially sensitive — psychological domains strongly associated with trait-level differences in social confidence, evaluative concern, and self-monitoring tendencies.

Importantly, self-presentation strategies operate within **audience-constrained interpretive systems**. Findings from athlete branding research reveal that identity displays do not guarantee controllable outcomes, as audience reactions may remain uncivil or objectifying irrespective of presentation strategy (Murtas et al., 2024). This reinforces a critical theoretical clarification: significant personality → strategy effects remain theoretically coherent even when downstream outcomes vary, because impression construction is embedded within socially contingent meaning ecologies.

Self-presentation further introduces **measurement-level complexities**. Experimental manipulation of response instructions demonstrates that individuals can strategically distort personality assessments via self-presentational responding (Scandell & Wlazelek, 1996). Within socially evaluative environments, this implies that observed personality–strategy associations may represent conservative estimates, attenuated by latent impression-management biases.

Additionally, platform-level feedback mechanisms appear to **reinforce curated positivity**. Evidence indicates that posts containing negative emotional content elicit less satisfying engagement perceptions (Huang & Vitak, 2022), suggesting that users may learn to privilege enhancement-consistent displays. Such reinforcement processes plausibly amplify trait-consistent differences in emotional expressivity, disclosure boundaries, and identity optimization strategies.

Finally, cross-platform comparisons suggest that while **presentation tactics are contextual, regulatory logic is stable**. LinkedIn's competence-coded implicit self-praise differs from Instagram's identity segmentation practices, yet both reflect the same strategic imperative: regulate impressions under persistent audience visibility (Huang & Vitak, 2022; Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2024). This distinction strengthens H1 by positioning personality as shaping regulatory orientation rather than platform-specific tactics.

## H2. Big Five Traits → Social Comparison Orientation (SCO)

Social comparison orientation is best conceptualized as a **stable comparative attentional and evaluative processing style**, rather than a situationally triggered cognitive reaction. Empirical models consistently treat SCO as a dispositional construct

reflecting systematic sensitivity to socially diagnostic information (Servidio et al., 2024; Bajwa et al.). This dispositional framing aligns naturally with personality theory, wherein stable traits are expected to predict stable cognitive-evaluative tendencies.

Digital environments substantially increase the **availability and salience of comparison-relevant cues**, yet do not uniformly determine their psychological effects. The critical review emphasizes mixed, person-specific, and conditional outcomes, precisely the pattern anticipated when dispositional moderators such as SCO shape exposure-to-outcome dynamics (Meier & Johnson, 2022). Therefore, personality → SCO effects directly address a theoretically central heterogeneity mechanism identified in contemporary digital well-being research.

SCO further emerges as a **mechanistic ingredient in maladaptive behavioral pathways**. Moderated mediation findings demonstrate that smartphone addiction predicts SCO, which subsequently predicts phubbing behaviors (Bajwa et al.). This elevates SCO beyond descriptive status, positioning it as a proximal mechanism linking psychological predispositions to observable social regulation behaviors.

Importantly, SCO may not be entirely static. The review highlights the potential for **reciprocal reinforcement processes**, whereby repeated platform exposure and feedback learning gradually intensify comparative cognition (Meier & Johnson, 2022). This suggests that while personality may predict SCO, digitally mediated comparison tendencies may simultaneously evolve through environmental reinforcement — a nuance essential for interpreting cross-sectional estimates.

### H3. Self-Presentation Strategies → SCO

Self-presentation and social comparison appear to function as **mutually reinforcing regulatory processes within visibility-intensive environments**. Curated identity displays increase the supply of socially diagnostic information while simultaneously motivating comparative monitoring of peer standards (Huang & Vitak, 2022; Meier & Johnson, 2022). Consequently, strategy → SCO effects reflect a theoretically coherent visibility–evaluation spiral rather than independent processes.

Identity segmentation practices provide further insight into **comparison management dynamics**. Maintaining separate public and private identities implies strategic regulation of evaluative exposure, suggesting that certain presentation strategies may implicitly function as comparison-threat mitigation mechanisms (Huang & Vitak, 2022).

Indirect self-praise mechanisms may intensify comparative cognition by **anchoring users within achievement-coded evaluative frames** (Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2024). Where presentation emphasizes competence signaling, comparison processes may be cognitively amplified relative to relationally coded displays.

Audience feedback dynamics further complicate this relationship. When reactions remain unpredictable or normatively harsh, individuals may increase comparative vigilance to infer adaptive presentation norms (Murtas et al., 2024), providing a social-learning explanation for presentation → SCO effects.

### H4. SCO → Life Satisfaction (Negative)

The most defensible interpretation rejects deterministic technological harm narratives. Instead, comparison-driven effects are best framed as **conditional psychological vulnerability processes** (Meier & Johnson, 2022). Negative SCO → life satisfaction associations can therefore be interpreted as susceptibility-based effects, particularly pronounced under conditions of frequent upward comparison, idealized content exposure, and elevated evaluative concern.

Indirect empirical evidence supports the SCO → well-being pathway via **self-evaluative strain and relational impairments**. SCO participates in pathways predicting problematic engagement and social disconnection behaviors (Servidio et al., 2024; Bajwa et al.), mechanisms plausibly linked to diminished global well-being appraisals.

Conceptually, SCO functions as a **vulnerability amplifier rather than universal detriment**, increasing sensitivity to discrepancy-based evaluations without guaranteeing adverse outcomes (Meier & Johnson, 2022).

### H5. SCO as Mediator between Personality and Life Satisfaction

Serial mediation findings provide strong theoretical legitimacy for modeling SCO as a **proximal cognitive-evaluative transmission mechanism**. Evidence from FoMO → social comparison → self-esteem pathways illustrates how comparison processes transmit psychological predispositions into downstream behavioral and well-being outcomes (Servidio et al., 2024).

Similarly, SCO mediates smartphone addiction → phubbing relationships (Bajwa et al.), demonstrating its role as an intermediary linking predispositions to social functioning. Given that social functioning is central to life satisfaction, this supplies a robust inferential bridge for mediation logic. Conditional moderation effects further suggest that mediation pathways may be **stronger among psychologically vulnerable subgroups**, reinforcing the theoretical plausibility of personality → SCO → life satisfaction mechanisms.

Finally, unresolved theoretical questions concerning **user heterogeneity, agency, and causal specificity** (Meier & Johnson, 2022) align directly with the present mediation hypothesis, strengthening contribution positioning by specifying SCO as a core explanatory mechanism.

### 7. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between Big Five personality traits, self-presentation strategies on social media, social comparison orientation, and life satisfaction within an integrated psychological framework. The findings confirm that personality traits significantly influence both self-presentation strategies and social comparison tendencies in digital environments. These results suggest that online identity construction reflects stable dispositional characteristics rather than purely situational responses to platform features. The study also shows that self-presentation strategies are positively associated with social comparison orientation, indicating that identity

regulation and evaluative monitoring operate as interconnected processes within social media contexts. In addition, social comparison orientation was found to have a significant negative effect on life satisfaction, highlighting the potential psychological costs of comparison-driven engagement with curated online content. However, the mediating role of social comparison orientation between personality traits and life satisfaction was not supported, suggesting that other psychological mechanisms—such as self-esteem or emotional regulation—may better explain how personality influences well-being outcomes in digital environments. Overall, the study contributes to the literature by integrating personality theory, impression management, and social comparison processes into a unified framework for understanding social media behavior and its implications for subjective well-being.

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