



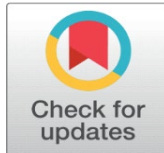
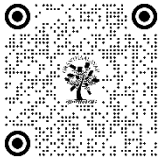


PROJECTING SELF ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A DRAMATURGICAL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The genuine and PC-interceded virtual selves have tossed a few worries to social researchers. This paper finds its gap in the application of Erving Goffman's theory of dramaturgy to contemporary web-based entertainment clients. It looks at whether the genuine existences of social media users get impacted by their self-projection on virtual spaces alongside taking a gander at these virtual spaces to honestly introduce an individual's personality. It draws on the constant dealings that social media users engage in while they travel between their real and virtual lives while subconsciously applying dramaturgy to their social media projections. The study used mixed methods. The quantitative part of the study was done by collecting data in form of a survey and the qualitative part was done by interviews with specialists.

Keywords: Social Media, Dramaturgy, Self -Presentation, Identity, Virtual Self, Influencers

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Media and virtual environments have entered our lives in a significant way. The use of social media has turned into an essential need in our lives today. The entire fabric of human correspondence has seen a significant shift. The way people communicate today is nothing like the communication that happened in pre-computer-mediated communication times. The advent of various social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp has thrown various opportunities to its users in terms of identity projections. Alongside diminishing the expense of information, has made it feasible for social media users to have for themselves an array of user-centric spaces which they could fill with content that is user-generated along with a compatibly varied set of opportunities for connecting these spaces to develop what is known as the virtual social network. This content, for the most part,

targets displaying oneself on social networking platforms. The impacts that one has on his character while going between the genuine and virtual self are manifolds. [Tanwar \(2020\)](#). states that human beings connect with an agenda for various reasons. Social Media has given an innovative dimension to the way humans connect.

The contemporary communication scene has seen a revolution in the form of digital media. A large majority have social media presence in one form or another. Social networking sites have become virtual homes of users. As mentioned by [Boyd \(2015\)](#), social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have been entwined in the digital arrangement of regular household groups and institutions all over the world. This interaction is so strong that the real and virtual selves are highly impacted by each other's presence. The identities that one has on virtual platforms at times affect real lives as well. This cause and effect can be studied in the light of the theory of Dramaturgy.

Erving Goffman, in his book 1959 titled 'The presentation of self', proposed the theory of Dramaturgy. [Goffman \(2002\)](#). He put it forth that since birth, we are thrust on a stage where we kind of play a certain role. The place where we enact our role is the front stage. We later retract to what is termed backstage, where we relax and plan for our next performance on the front stage. We need not act there and can be our real selves. Goffman proposed that our life is like a play that is never-ending and people around us are actors. He assumed that when a person is born, he is thrust into his everyday life which is like a stage. Since our birth, we become a part of the process of socialization. We start understanding how to play our roles in life from the people around us. We start to enact our roles with others whereas they start enacting their roles with us. Goffman projected that whatever we do, we are living some kind of a role play on the stage termed life. He also distinguished the front and back stages of the idea. Examples of the front stages can be a wedding, a lecture, a dinner table, or in this study, social media platforms. Hence any place where we present ourselves is a front stage. Looking at how important social media is in our lives we can also understand how important the performance we make on social media platforms is as a front stage. Further, sometimes we withdraw to the backstage of life. These are isolated zones where we don't need to act. We also use this occasion to rehearse and concoct for returning to the front stages. While using the stage of social media as a front stage we portray our virtual selves in a specific manner. This study extends Goffman's theory of Dramaturgy to contemporary social media. The virtual worlds are the front stages of the social media users where they display themselves to their fellow social media users, and their real lives are backstage where they plan these virtual presentations. The social media profile that they own allows them to either extend their real selves or create a completely new virtual self for themselves. This virtual self or 'Avatar' can be an impression that they want others to presume about themselves. Goffman further coined the terms impression management and manner of interacting. Impression Management denotes a practice of manipulating impressions of other people about self in the front stage of one's life. According to Goffman, we use numerous mechanisms which Goffman calls sign vehicles to present ourselves together as fellows. These usually utilized sign vehicles are our actual looks, group environments, and how to associate. As far as virtual entertainment, the image that an individual sets as his profile picture, the social arrangement that he exhibits to the public which remembers the urban communities one lives for or goes, the financial status that one offers on his walls, and the connections that one displays add to the front stages via web-based entertainment for the impression the board. How individual deals with these virtual personalities talk a ton about him. An individual who goes to

distant spots displays a vehicle, or costly embellishments mean his significance, influence, and riches. Then again, an individual with no such history via virtual entertainment would be viewed as a standard individual. The feelings we support provide individuals with a thought of our socio-social convictions. The posts that one offers on their virtual entertainment profile are an augmentation of one's actual self. Then, how an individual look matters a ton; physical make-up and garments assume a significant part in making the initial feeling on individuals. The clothing an individual embellishes likewise discusses his character, belief system, and foundation, and his y structure talks about the needs and the determinations of an individual. While actual wellness means discipline, actual excellence signifies benevolence. As per Goffman, the style of cooperation is likewise an image. Non-verbal correspondence can't be underestimated while stating the worth of correspondence. Goffman states that our way of interaction is also a sign vehicle. Among the most important ways to communicate is non-verbal communication. The gestures of a person, facial expressions, etc., help understand how he interacts. Gestures like hugging, shaking hands, etc., showcase the type of relationship people share. Extending the idea of Goffman to contemporary social media, profile pictures are like a mirror to one. Wants to be perceived by others. [Siibak \(2009\)](#) says that there is a striking difference when looking at profile pictures of girls and boys. His study revealed that when girls choose their visual selves, they value aesthetics and self-reflection more than boys. Social networking sites like Facebook have a complete gamut of emojis that can be used to convey emotions through facial expressions and gestures. [Golbeck et al. \(2011\)](#). puts forth that social media is one place where social media users present themselves to the world, showcasing their details and insights into their lives. [Georgieva \(2011\)](#). assumed three types of virtual selves that people have. It was further analysed, and the following analysis defined: people with a virtual self that is more or less similar to their real self; people with a virtual self that is more or less different from their real self; and a virtual self of people addicted to the virtual space (which may include the similar and different types). Thus, it can be derived that in the category where real and virtual selves are not identical, which is majorly correct in the case of pre-day social media users, there is an urge to make others believe that the virtual and real selves are the same and how one acts in virtual life further affects how he acts in his real life. It is a kind of self-confirmation to believe in the virtual world; one wants to be real. [Evans \(2012\)](#). states that when given sans context, there is no 'Self,' which means that virtual settings, as with any non-virtual settings, can offer backgrounds in which the 'Self' is a recurrent state of emergence and re-emergence. Thus, the virtual self may affect the real self. [Georgieva \(2011\)](#). further states that the cyber world was mirroring the real world: by effects of breaking news, by the virtual money being real capital, by relationships that start and end with online activity. The virtual and real selves, thus, in reality, are intertwined.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to look at the opinions of contemporary social media users about their opinion on

- 1) If how one presents oneself on social media affects how he acts in reality.
- 2) If social media can honestly introduce an individual's character.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study applied a mixed-method approach for data collection. The quantitative part of the study deals with conducting an online survey. The study locates its universe in social media platforms. The number of inhabitants in the study are clients of person-to-person communication locales like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

The maximum variation purposive sampling also called heterogeneous purposive sampling, used in the study, helped the researcher to look into a diverse range of cases (audiences or social media users) that are pertinent to the scene of virtual personality development and viewpoints connected with it.

The strategy allowed the researcher to acquire a comprehensive perspective on the various projections of the virtual character of the social media clients from different points. The review utilizes the most extreme variety of purposive testing to gather the information. Information from 500 respondents was gathered through a google form. A Likert scale was embraced for acquiring replies to the inquiries.

The information gathered was additionally dissected utilizing the chi-square test around six factors to be specific age, orientation, Educational Qualification, Occupation, relationship status, and the area of the home of the respondents. The p-values were considered to grasp the connection between the factors and the goals.

The results were further analysed in coherence with interviews conducted with communication experts, sociologists, and psychologists as the qualitative part of the study. Two experts from the fields of communication, sociology, and psychology were interviewed and insights were gained into expert opinions against the opinions of the population. Hence the study provides a holistic inquiry into how the theory of dramaturgy finds an extension in current-day social media along with the effects it can have on the identity of an individual.

3.1. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1

| Table 1 Opinion of Respondents on how One Presents Oneself on social media Affects how he Acts in Reality | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid % age |
| Strongly disagree | 8 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| Disagree | 40 | 8.0 | 8.0 |
| Neutral | 192 | 38.4 | 38.5 |
| Agree | 208 | 41.6 | 41.7 |
| Strongly agree | 51 | 10.2 | 10.2 |
| Total | 499 | 99.8 | 100.0 |
| No response | 1 | 0.2 | 0 |
| Total | 500 | 100 | |

Table 2

| Table 2 Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Gender | Chi-square | 11.359 |
| | df | 4 |
| | p-value | 0.023* |
| Age | Chi-square | 27.845 |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------|
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.006* |
| Educational Qualification | Chi-square | 19.350 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.08 |
| Occupation | Chi-square | 12.816 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.383 |
| Area of residence | Chi-square | 16.944 |
| | df | 8 |
| | p-value | 0.031* |
| Relationship status | Chi-square | 17.284 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.139 |

Table 1 and Table 2 show the opinions respondents shared about how one presents oneself on social media affects how one acts in reality. 51 (10.2%) respondents mentioned that they strongly agreed with this opinion whereas 208(41.6%) said they agreed. 192(38.4%) respondents were neutral to the opinion and (40) eight percent disagreed with the opinion. 8(1.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the opinion. The p values indicate a significant relationship between gender, age, and area of residence with an opinion on how one presents oneself on social media affecting how one acts in reality. 14.1% of female respondents strongly agree with the opinion as compared to 7.8% of male respondents. 34.6% of respondents the age of >40 agreed with the opinion as compared to 47 in the age group of 19-30 and 26.7% in the age group of <=18. 50% of residents of rural areas were neutral to the opinion as compared to 36.7% of semi-urban and 32.7% of urban residents. Figure 1

Figure 1

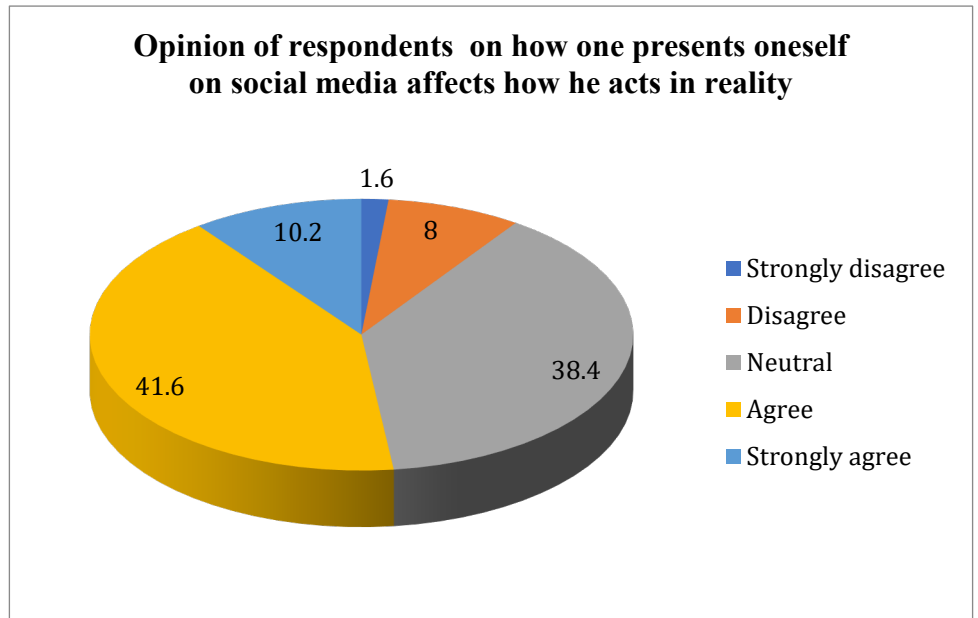


Figure 1 shows that 10.2% of respondents said that they strongly agreed with this opinion whereas 41.6% agreed. 38.4% of respondents were neutral to the opinion whereas eight percent disagreed with the opinion. 1.6% of respondents strongly disagreed with the opinion.

Table 3

| Table 3 Opinion of respondents on social media being able to truthfully present a person's identity | | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid %age |
| Strongly disagree | 13 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| Disagree | 74 | 14.8 | 14.9 |
| Neutral | 170 | 34.0 | 34.1 |
| Agree | 153 | 30.6 | 30.7 |
| Strongly agree | 88 | 17.6 | 17.7 |
| Total | 498 | 99.6 | 100 |
| No response | 2 | 0.4 | 0 |
| Total | 500 | 100.0 | |

Table 4

| Table 4 Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | |
|---|----------------|-------------|
| Gender | Chi-square | 4.026 |
| | df | 4 |
| | p-value | .402 |
| Age | Chi-square | 11.522 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.485 |
| Educational Qualification | Chi-square | 34.608 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.001* |
| Occupation | Chi-square | 13.112 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.361 |
| Area of residence | Chi-square | 24.015 |
| | df | 8 |
| | p-value | 0.002* |
| Relationship status | Chi-square | 17.817 |
| | df | 12 |
| | p-value | 0.121 |

Table 3 and **Table 4** show the opinions of the respondents on whether social media can truthfully present a person's identity. 88(17.6%) mentioned that they strongly agreed with the opinion whereas 153(30.6%) agreed with the opinion. 170 (34%) respondents were neutral on the opinion.

74 (14.8%) respondents disagreed with the opinion whereas 13 (2.6%) strongly disagreed. The p values indicated significant relation between educational qualification and opinion.

20% of respondents who were 10th agreed with the opinion as compared to 33.3% 12th, 35.7% graduates, and 26.2% postgraduates. **Figure 2**

Figure 2

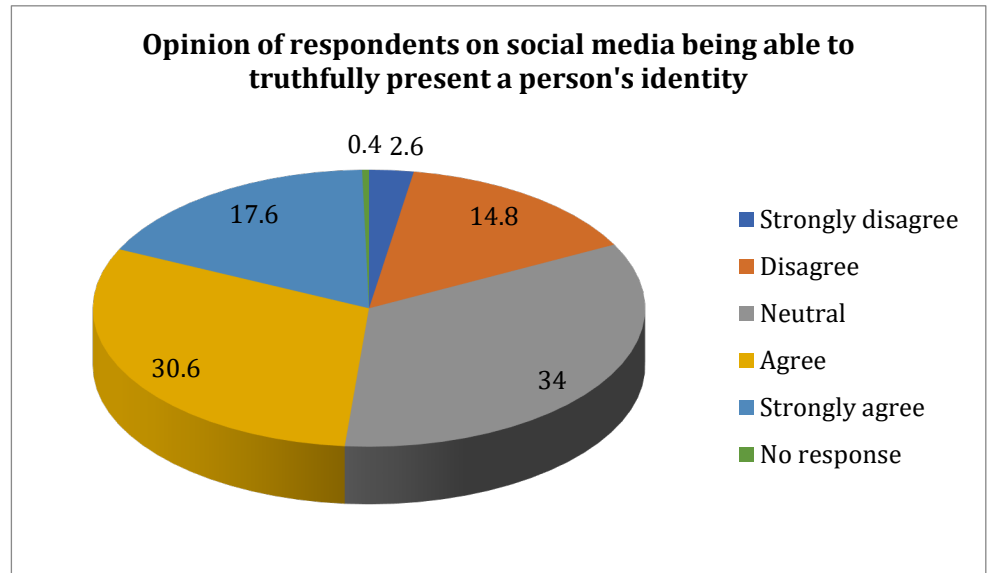


Figure 2 shows that 17.6% strongly agreed with the opinion whereas 30.6% agreed with the opinion whereas 34% of respondents were neutral on the opinion. 14.8% of respondents disagreed with the opinion whereas 2.6% strongly disagreed.

3.2. DATA INTERPRETATION

The results show that social media usage is increasing day by day. Users tend to be constantly involved with their virtual selves. A large number of users join the social media revolution every day increasing the number of users. Ryan et al. (2017). mentions that the usage of social media is increasing rapidly, and one of the major deliberations of the 21st-century orbits around how using these applications will impact the social relationships of users. Yoon and Vargas (2014). mentioned that the virtual setup is a “vehicle” to announce, outdo and model “avatars” as in virtual selves. Virtual lives have become an important part of real lives and avatars are thus entwined with real selves as well. This shows how dramaturgy comes to foreplay while traveling on and off social media and real selves.

The first section of the study asked for the opinion of the respondents about how one presents oneself on social media affects how one acts in reality. The data analysis suggests that most respondents believed that authentic selves are affected by how one works on social media. The dramaturgy involved is obvious in the user's opinion. The social media users will enact on the front stages of social media carry the identity subconsciously to their real lives. The plan for the front stages performances through putting in a lot of effort at times while choosing their profile pictures which further involves impression management suggested by Goffman. The manner of interacting can be thought of as the planning the user does while selecting the posts opinions or pictures he will share on his profile. Considering the theoretical framework it affects what others think of an individual. It is the driving force for a person's behavior The authentic self is defected by the virtual self as how one will act or present himself in virtual environment, it is thought in real lives and executed in virtual lives. Hence the travel is connected to each one who would want to project himself in similar ways online and offline to his peer. Results indicate that women agreed more with the opinion as compared to men whereas younger people agreed more with the opinion as compared to older ones. Rural residents were neutral to the opinion in larger numbers as compared semi-urban and urban.

Individuals highlighted that women seem to be accepting more that real and virtual lives are identical whereas older people too agreed to the opinion more. Rural respondents were neutral as the social media age is comparatively new to them and they are still in the process of making opinions. Dr.S. Rai mentioned that *“Peer pressure did exist even before social media. Social media has made peer pressure all the more vibrant and strong. But even if there was no social media peer pressure was a reality at all times. Even in the days when teenagers did not have social media there was enough social pressure to push somebody to doing some experiment or doing specific things and not only for teenagers but also for adults who are said to be making rational choices. Your choices are greatly guided by what your other friends say.”*

The next question asked for the opinion of the respondents on whether social media can truthfully present a person's identity. The majority of respondents also believed that social media can showcase a person's identity truthfully. Less-educated respondents agreed less with the opinion as compared to better-educated ones. It denotes that subconsciously the respondents believed that the identity they have planned to present online is true and they believe that the identity can be truthfully presented online. Results show that women agreed more with the opinion in comparison to men whereas younger people agreed more with the opinion in comparison to older ones. Rural residents were neutral to the opinion in larger numbers in comparison to semi-urban and urban respondents .

Though social media is an extension of real selves it lacks the capability to showcase a person in totality. It is only capable of showing a smaller part of a person's life. Generally, it shows the happier side of a person's life and fails to showcase the ups and downs of a person's life unless one chooses to do so. Though some people get into trending things like no filter posts where they may share unedited pictures of themselves or share their grief on social media platforms. Dr S. Rai mentioned that *People seek approval in everything they do like the way they look, the clothes they wear etc. Even celebrities do so as there are things that are commonly appreciated in a peer group. Conformity is a secondary human need but a very important one.*

Dr. N.Kaushik was of the view that *These are the virtual spaces where they want to exist in reality. They then subconsciously start believing that their virtual selves are identical to their real selves and start acting accordingly.*

As social beings, humans keep looking for approval on or off social media. Specifically on social media users believed majorly that what others said about a person affects their behavior. As it is important to gain public approval for one's act people try to behave in a specific manner.

Dr. R.K. Khayalia pointed out that *There is insecurity that they want to cope with. Both rich and poor have their own set of insecurities that they deal with in real livelier is insanity of having and not. Those who have been insecure about having and those who don't are insecure about not having. They try to nullify it with their virtual life presence. Whatever property you have is a threat positive and negative.*

Dr. S. Mishra, an expert on human psychology puts forth that, *social media profiles when looked at keenly sometimes can showcase themselves truthfully, but majorly they are used as camouflage for real-life fantasies or crises of the users.*

She further says that *virtual spaces are more imaginary spaces. People try to fulfill their communication social and psychological desires through their virtual selves.*

Taking into consideration the theoretical framework of the study it affects what others think of a person. It is the driving force for an individual's behavior. [Salim](#)

khan (2010). state that visual metaphors are hired to exhibit and coagulate connection with others. Secondly, through photographs, users produce a visual chronicle of social identities relating past and present of their social selves and finally visual images and multimedia become cohesive in the sense of self wherein the line dividing self-promotion and advertisement.

The real self is impacted by the virtual self as a lot of planning is done in real life as to how one will act or present himself on virtual media. Hence the journey is related to each other deeply. An individual would like to project himself in similar ways online and offline to his peer.

Gerbaudo (2015). mentioned that users communicate their appearance, their mood, their location, their taste in clothing or music, and many other elements of their personality to their internet peers.

Kietzmann et al. (2011). states that Users have also developed identity strategies (e.g., real identity versus virtual identities), while others focus on self-promotion (e.g., Facebook) or self-branding (e.g., LinkedIn)

Dr. K. Ranga said that *people hide real identities. There is a lot of difference between real and virtual lives. The reason for this is overexposure in the early years of life to social media and attachment to virtual identities.*

Finally, Hogan (2010) concludes that social media, frequently employs exhibitions, such as lists of status updates and sets of photos, alongside situational activities, such as chatting.

4. CONCLUSION

The study reasons that popular assessment and specialists approved the possibility of Dramaturgy. Individuals accepted that what they did in their virtual daily routines impacted their real lives too. Their demonstrations in virtual and genuine lives were hence associated. They subliminally assumed parts of the front phases of web-based entertainment and arranged in their genuine lives, for this situation, behind the stage.

Consequently, Dramaturgy is exceptionally clear in its conduct via web-based entertainment. The respondents accepted that virtual daily routines could influence genuine lives. They will generally lead their fantasy lives of virtuality, in actuality, too. Though the assessment of the general population and specialists contrasted on the goal while individuals said that virtual entertainment introduced an individual honestly, specialists felt that it was not really. Specialists said that web-based entertainment isn't fit for exhibiting every aspect of a character honestly; however, the user might accept so. They truly plan for their virtual selves in their genuine lives.

They perform when they are on virtual entertainment. The user chooses each part of their exhibition in the back stages of lives and establishes it on the front stage of social media.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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