

Facebook status updates reveal low self-esteem and narcissism

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Facebook status updates can reveal a lot about the user

People who post Facebook status updates about their romantic partner are more likely to have low self-esteem, while those who brag about diets, exercise, and accomplishments are typically narcissists, according to new research.

Psychologists at Brunel University London surveyed Facebook users to

examine the [personality traits](#) and motives that influence the topics they choose to write about in their [status updates](#) – something that few previous studies have explored.

The data was collected from 555 Facebook users who completed online surveys measuring the 'Big Five' personality traits – extroversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness – as well as self-esteem and narcissism.

The research found:

- People with [low self-esteem](#) more frequently posted status updates about their current romantic partner.
- Narcissists more frequently updated about their achievements, which was motivated by their need for attention and validation from the Facebook community. These updates also received a greater number of 'likes' and comments, indicating that narcissists' boasting may be reinforced by the attention they crave.
- Narcissists also wrote more status updates about their diet and exercise routine, suggesting that they use Facebook to broadcast the effort they put into their physical appearance.
- Conscientiousness was associated with writing more updates about one's children.

Psychology lecturer Dr Tara Marshall, from Brunel University London, said: "It might come as little surprise that Facebook status updates reflect people's personality traits. However, it is important to understand why people write about certain topics on Facebook because their updates may be differentially rewarded with 'likes' and comments. People who receive more likes and comments tend to experience the benefits of social inclusion, whereas those who receive none feel ostracised.

"Although our results suggest that narcissists' bragging pays off because they receive more likes and comments to their status updates, it could be that their Facebook friends politely offer support while secretly disliking such egotistical displays. Greater awareness of how one's status updates might be perceived by friends could help people to avoid topics that annoy more than they entertain."

The research team said further studies should examine responses to particular status update topics, the likeability of those who update about them, and whether certain topics put people at greater risk of being unfriended.

'The Big Five, self-esteem, and narcissism as predictors of the topics people write about in Facebook status updates' by Tara C Marshall, Katharina Lefringhausen and Nelli Ferenczi is published [here](#).

More information: "The Big Five, self-esteem, and narcissism as predictors of the topics people write about in Facebook status updates," *Personality and Individual Differences*, Volume 85, October 2015, Pages 35-40, ISSN 0191-8869, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.04.039](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.04.039)

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