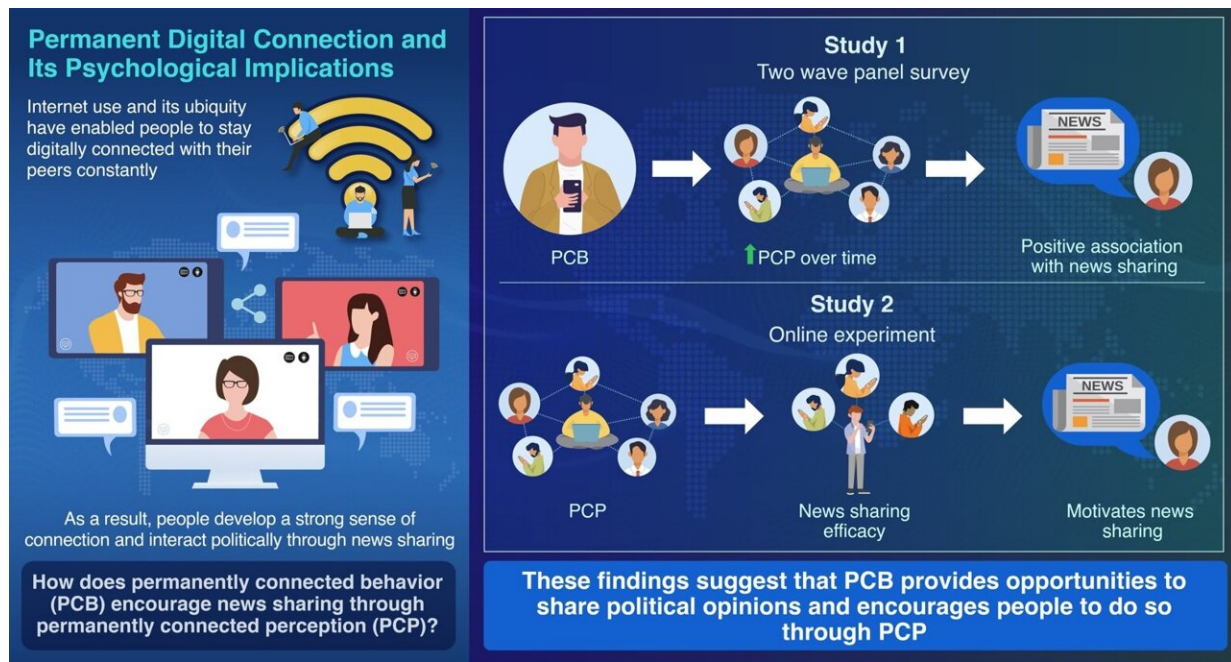


# Permanent digital connectivity encourages political behavior, such as news sharing

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Permanent Connectedness and Its Impact on News Sharing  
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PUSAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Data from a survey and an online experiment shows that being constantly online imparts a psychological perception of permanent togetherness. Credit: Pusan National University

Modern communication technology has enabled people across the world to not only access the internet and but also stay in constant touch with their peers digitally. Consequently, many individuals have developed the

habit of staying permanently online and permanently connected with their contacts.

This, in turn, has significantly impacted how we perceive our connectedness with our peers. Studies have shown that a strong sense of connectedness motivates people to interact politically with others by sharing [current events](#) related to social and political events.

To further expand on these perspectives, Assistant Professor Slgi (Sage) Lee from Pusan National University, Republic of Korea, examined in a new study how the behavior of engaging in constant digital communication, which she refers to as "permanently connected behavior" (PCB), creates a sense of permanent co-presence, or "permanently connected perception" (PCP). Additionally, she examined how PCP affects an individual's news sharing behavior. This paper was made available online on January 18, 2022 and was published in *News Media & Society*.

The study involved a two-wave panel survey to analyze the relationship among PCB, PCP and news sharing, and an online experiment exploring a mechanism through which PCP encourages news sharing.

The findings were insightful. The survey showed that constant online engagement led to an increase in PCP over time. This, in turn, was positively associated with a political behavior, news sharing, which Dr. Lee refers to as the "spillover effect."

"We tend to think that heavy use of internet-connected media and being always connected with others can cause stress, anxiety, and negative emotions, and does more harm than good. However, the current study offers a more optimistic view in which perpetual contact can produce positive psychological (i.e., a feeling of being together with others) and behavioral outcomes (i.e., sharing news and [political information](#))," says

Dr. Lee.

In addition to this, the online experiment revealed that [information sharing efficacy](#) (i.e., the belief that information shared with peers online will generate response from them) is a mechanism through which PCP facilitates news sharing. The experiment showed that information sharing efficacy was enhanced by PCP and led to an increase in news sharing. Essentially, the ease with which people can share news online largely motivates them to share news and political information.

"Sharing news information may not always be ideal as the spread of fake [news](#) or disinformation has become a major social issue. However, for [deliberative democracy](#) to be achieved and maintained constructively, it is critical that people actively share information and exchange their opinions on various social and public issues," comments Dr. Lee. "What we found is that permanent connectivity not only provides opportunities to share political opinions but also encourages people to do so by inducing a psychological state that they are constantly being together with others."

These findings come at a critical time when people's social activities have become considerably restricted due to the pandemic. While Dr. Lee is cautious and suggests that more research is needed to understand PCP, the study does show that PCP could potentially mitigate the negative emotions in individuals during social isolation.

**More information:** Slgi S. Lee, Permanent connectedness and its impact on news sharing, *New Media & Society* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/14614448211063466](#)

Provided by Pusan National University

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