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If It's Ok That Your Mom Can See It, You Can Publish It– on Suitable Behavior in Social Media

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The goal of this paper is to understand suitable behavior in social media, by first investigating the purpose of social media, followed by the various ways people use social media, and finally the boundaries for suitable behavior on social media.

Study Procedures: This study adopts a qualitative approach. Questionnaires written for open-ended responses were administered to a sample of 90 university students at a Finnish university. Content analysis was used to interpret diverse responses pertaining to participants' perceptions of social media.

Results: Our findings highlight how important users consider the impressions of themselves in the eyes of others on social media, and that these impressions should apply not only to the current moment, but also with an eye to the future. Self-reactiveness was an important factor in establishing suitable social media behavior.

Conclusions: Discussing behavior and especially moral behavior in social media can improve one's understanding in practice, as it is rapidly becoming an important part of everyone's daily life.

Keywords: Social media; Social Networking Service (SNS); facebook; university student; social agency; behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are social by nature. Today, the need for social interaction expresses itself new ways that can be quite democratic or prove problematic as well. People spend an increasing amount of time on social media or social networking services (SNSs); writing about one's doings, sharing photos, and following others' lives have become a salient part of our lives. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on a common language or shared identities [1]. Reading and writing skills and an ability to express thoughts and interact through writing is an increasingly important skill, and the new generation grows into it in fundamentally different ways than previous generations. Is something lost or gained?

Research on people's behavior in social media has grown around the world and has adopted various points of view [1,2,3,4]. However, a recent review study of such research by Caers et al. [2] showed that information and understanding about social media is still quite fragmented and lacks nuances to characterize different settings, countries, and demographic variables [see also 4].

In Finland, research on social media has focused on, for example, its educational uses [5,6] and people's overall behavior [7]. However, Finland is a high-technology country and, thus directing further focus on social media research [8]. In this study, Finnish university students were asked about their behavior in social media. The concept of "social media" corresponds to the Finnish word that refers to social networking sites (SNSs), so these two concepts are used here interchangeably. boyd and Ellison's definition of SNS covers the target media of this study: social networking sites are "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" [1, p. 211].

Some recent international studies provide an impression of the massive impact internet-based social networks and social media have on people's lives. For example, one collaborative study conducted by Harvard and University of Chicago [9] surveying 19,000 Americans claimed that over a third of couples meet in the internet; and better yet, romantic relationships that start online last longer and are happier than those beginning traditionally with face-to-face contact. The influence of the internet on partner selection and dating is a growing field of study [10,11].

The fundamental reasons for joining social media are found to be (1) the need to belong and (2) the need for self-presentation [12]. SNSs, thus, constitute an important channel to establish and maintain social relationships and find social support as well as constructing a public identity [12] (see also 13). Indeed, behaviors that enhance social networking have surprising real-world results. For example, a new study suggests you can judge a person's future happiness by their Facebook photo because an intense smile on Facebook signals a person's real-world behavior and gives the impression of a friendship-worthy personality [14]. The relationship between life satisfaction and happiness with Facebook profiles has proven reciprocal; happy pictures boost one's feelings because people receive positive feedback and so repeat their emotionally positive postings [11]. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lompe discovered that the use of social media is strongly associated with the three types of social capital and interacts with measures of psychological well-being in college students [15].

Online social relationships also carry several risks. Social media interactions exist at the limits of reality; sometimes, people construct a more imaginary online personality that does not correspond to their real life selves [16]. For example, it has been predicted that narcissism is connected with higher levels of social activity and self-promoting content in the online community [17]. Some users seem to be simply unaware of the possible consequences of their behavior in social media [18] or of over-exposing themselves [19]. On the other hand, many online communities also have strong social norms regulating behavior and suitable action [20]. Likewise, SNSs include risks that can harm one's privacy. Ho, Maiga, and Aïmeur divide these risks into three: security risks (e.g., identity theft, phishing), reputation and credibility risks (e.g., what a prospective employee would not want his potential employer to find in a background check), and profiling risks (e.g., spam, unsolicited collection of user data). Still, an increasing number of people establish profiles online and are willing to share their lives with other users [21].

In all, knowledge of the behavioral rules or manners in social media remains scarce, and "because of the influential role the mass media play in society, understanding the psychosocial mechanisms through which symbolic communication influences human thought, affect, and action is of considerable import" [22, p. 265].

2. HUMAN AGENCY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR

This study considers users of social media as active agents in the world of socio-structural influences. The idea of Bandura's social cognitive theory of mass communication [22] is founded on the conception of people as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental events or inner forces. It means that personal agency operates within a broad network of socio-structural influences (see also [23]).

Bagozzi and Lee contrasted the role of individual and collective reasons versus individual and collective pressures on a person's intentions to perform certain acts [24]. Cheung and Lee's [25] recent study showed that subjective norms are particularly important in determining user decisions on social networking sites. Users are more exposed to other people's influences as they interact in the social network [see also 24]. A second kind of social influence process, social identity (as in cognitive social identity, evaluative social identity, and affective social identity), is also significant in explaining intentional social action in online social networks.

The social dimension of behavior in SNSs is important if we consider, for example, the social and contextual processes associated with developing prosocial and moral behaviors of young adolescents [26] as well as adults for whom social media has only in the last decade become a part of their lives [e.g., 27]. Likewise, Sigrún Adalbjarnardóttir emphasizes the difficult challenge for human beings to respect each other's attitudes and feelings and solve socio-moral conflicts together [28]. Berkowitz and Grych introduce eight aspects of moral functioning in human beings: four meta-moral characteristics (social orientation, self-control, compliance, and self-esteem) and four components of psychological morality (empathy, conscience, moral reasoning, and altruism) [29], that all can be viewed in the light of behavior in SNSs, too.

Likewise, Bandura's theory [22,23] helps understand the motives behind human behavior, particularly in SNSs. The main agentic features of human behavior are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality refers to a human

being's motivation to act in a specific way to produce specific outcomes [see also 30]. Forethought refocuses people's agency from the present moment toward a perspective of the future. Priorities, values, and goals direct behavior but people also pay attention to competing influences that constitute one's moral foundation (see also [31]). Self-reactiveness, then, refers to people's ability to self-regulate and motivate their behavior. Evaluation of one's actions in relation to personal goals provides one with a sense of meaning and self-satisfaction [e.g., 32]. Importantly, human behavior constitutes moral agency when [23] moral reasoning becomes action through self-regulatory mechanisms such as one's personal understanding of right and wrong, or good and bad [cf., 33]. The fourth element of self-reflectiveness is the self-examination of one's own action and behavior, and one's evaluations of one's strengths and capabilities [34,35,36].

These kinds of human agency direct our behavior in SNSs, too. Therefore, it is not only important to know how and why people have made social media such a major part of their lives—why they spend so much time at their computers and mobile phones—but more importantly, what it means for social relationships, whether there are behavioral rules specific to social media, or whether the moral behavior in social media is similar to the framework of real life [37,38].

The social media influences people's lives in many different ways, which gives a reason to study suitable manners for social media more thoroughly. This study focuses on the perspective of university students on behavioral issues in social media. Recent studies indicate a topical need for such research in the face of social media's rapid growth and popularity, whether the norms of what one can and must not do and must not do [39].

3. METHODS

This study analyzes what purposes university students see for social media, how they use them, and how they think they should and could be used. Our objective is to discover if there are any rules or agreements about suitable behavior in social media. We therefore developed the following research questions:

- (1) How do university students describe the importance and reasons for their use of social media?
- (2) What kinds of rules or agreements do university students follow when using social media?
- (3) What kind of behavior do university students find suitable in social media?

The study was conducted on September 23–25, 2013 among students at a northern-Finnish university participating in an educational psychology course entitled “The Basics of Learning and Developmental Psychology” (5 ECTS). The course lecturer asked the participants to fill out a questionnaire about their relationship with social media. Answering was voluntary and anonymous, and, so did not influence, for example, the students' grading.

Of the 140 students taking the course, 90 participated in the research by returning the questionnaire, a relatively good participation rate of 64%. Only seven respondents were men (7.8%) and 83 were women (92.2%). This uneven gender balance lies in the fact that students of education and educational psychology are mostly women. However, because the purpose of the study was not to discover any gender-specific differences in the use of social media but only students' SNS behavior in general, the data were considered suitable, and would not be analyzed in terms of gender.

The questionnaire included both structured and open-ended questions. The structured questions were for collecting background information only, while the open-ended responses constituted the actual data, which were interpreted using qualitative content analysis [40]. The questions focused on four core areas: (1) the students' opinions on social media and its importance (What do you think about social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and their usage? How important do you think social media are?), (2) their behavior on social media (If you have a social media profile, how do you decide what pictures and comments you will publish?; How would you describe your behavior on social media?; Do you write often or comment on others' postings, what occupies your attention?), (3) rules of using social media and agreements between friends and family members (Have you agreed upon any rules concerning the use of social media with your friend or partner?; How would you advice beginning users of social media?; How would you describe suitable behavior in social media?), and (4) the usability of the social media (How could social media be used more efficiently?; What are the possibilities of using social media in your opinion?). The answers to the last group of questions are not discussed in this article.

Qualitative content analysis method was utilized in this study. According to Mayring, categories are, thus, in the center of analysis [40]. The research questions direct qualitative content analysis and aspects of text interpretation are categorized [40]. In this study, the themes that emerged from the data were used as the categories and sub-categories forming the results. According to the procedures of content analysis, the categories were carefully formed and revised throughout the process of analysis; this is called feedback loops [40]. This analysis method was considered suitable because our main interest lay in the content of responses, how the participants described their own behavior and suitable behavior, rather than in numerical information. However, some information about the amount of participants illustrating each content category is given to show that the interpretations are not based on just single responses.

The background questions covered the participants' age, gender, and marital status. They were also asked whether or not they used the social media and, if yes, how often. The participants were then asked to describe briefly their most important reason for using social media. Table 1 illustrates the participants' background information.

Table 1. Participants of the SNS survey

Category	Specification	N (%)
Gender	women	83 (92.2%)
	men	7 (7.8%)
Age	under 20	22 (24.4%)
	21 – 30	48 (53.3%)
	31 – 40	16 (17.8%)
	41 and over	4 (4.4%)
	Mean age	25.8
Marital Status	Single	35 (38.9%)
	Dating	23 (25.6%)
	Married / Co-habiting	32 (35.6%)
Uses the Social Media	Not at all	2 (2.2%)
	Once a month	0 (.0%)
	Once a week	2 (2.2%)
	Several times a week	4 (4.4%)
	Once a day	10 (11.1%)
	Several times a day	72 (80.0%)

The data obtained in this study were relatively biased due to the student group recruited: the vast majority of participants were women and even quite young ones. However, the participant group did represent relatively well students of education and educational psychology—the study unit in which they had registered—but any further generalizations cannot be made based on these data, nor were wider generalizations even the objective of this qualitatively-oriented study. The data were considered suitable for the reliability of the study because almost everyone used SNSs and were, at least, familiar with them. Therefore, they had an impression of behavior in social media and could be considered suitable informants for the purposes of this study.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The Behavior in the Social Media among University Students

University students were then asked to describe in their own words their typical behavior in social media. Their descriptions were categorized according to the main aspects of use: status updates, commenting, publishing photos, communication, and other activities.

4.1.1 Status update behaviors

Status updates are one of the most important parts of distributing information about oneself in social media. Indeed, most students (N=78, 86.7%) described their updating behavior this way too. Many (N=25) described themselves as “*cautious users*” who always think carefully before they write anything or share their doings or opinions in social media. They thought through their conscious behavior with the awareness that all their publications might be seen by third-party members. They did not want to relate too much of their personal lives, but rather share what they would with others in the real life. Several students mentioned the good hands-on advice that “if your mom can see your publication, you can publish it”.

“I want that what I publish would be something that I could tell my acquaintances without saying too much. – I want to be as private as possible.” (Student no. 72)

Others did not emphasize their carefulness as much as they were “*conscious about the content of the publication and status updates*”. Fifteen students preferred publishing only when they had something important to say or something special had happened to them. They were oriented to the relevance of content, and focused on issues that were important to them, such as hobbies, nature, traveling, or birthdays.

“Nothing pointless. Only if I need to and I really want to.” (Student no. 56)

“I update if something bigger or exiting happens in my life.” (Student no. 28)

The third group described their updating behavior as motivated “*to write only about something positive and amuse others by their updates*” (N = 12). These users focused on creating a positive atmosphere and wanted to share positive and funny things about their lives with others in the social media.

“Most often I publish funny stories that make people laugh and are positive in general, so that others could smile.” (Student no. 86).

The fourth group “*constructed their image through updates*”. They designed their updates based on how they displayed the image and appearance they wanted for themselves (N = 10). Many students were worried about what their employer or possible future employers would think about their updates, but most just said that they wanted to provide the best possible images of themselves.

“I always think what kind of picture I give about myself to others.” (Student no. 58)

“I decide what I publish based on how presentable they are in relation to my position as a student / a future teacher / a summer worker.” (Students no. 53)

Ten students described their behavior in the social media as “*free and not so conscious*”. They considered it suitable and natural to display their lives widely in the social media and published updates as they felt. Usually, they described their updates are not very profound or personal, mostly about their real-time doings, “telling jokes without any deeper meaning” (Student no. 43), while a few said they published freely and actively about their opinions:

“I am really active and stand-taking” (Student no. 48)

4.1.2 Commenting behaviors

Commenting is the second important behavior that takes place in social media. Commenting is when users of social media read and leave replies to others’ updates or posts. University students (N=74, 82.2%) described their commenting behavior in many ways. The biggest group (N=30) was “*active commentators*” who followed others’ profiles actively, mostly those of their relatives and close friends. Many active commentators reported that they tend to comment more often than write or publish something by themselves. Commenting was also a means to show interest, to maintain friendships, and to note others’ significant, extraordinary, or funny happenings.

“I comment a lot on my friends’ photos, etc. And some shared news headlines that are interesting / cause a sensation.” (Student no. 28)

“I comment on things that I would not necessarily have known without social media.” (Student no. 71)

A second commenting behavior was described as “*the followers*” (N=19). They would rather just follow others’ postings and doings than comment on them. Everyone in this group called themselves, for example, followers, passive users, bystanders, or even stalkers.

“I am an onlooker. I post and comment rarely.” (Student no. 73)

“I comment on something in Facebook only seldom. I have become a bystander. Mostly, I pay attention to people’s show-downs ‘in public’. I often find them quite amusing.” (Student no. 80)

Two other commenting behaviors could also be distinguished from the data: “*the likers*” (N=12) and those who “*comment only when they have important things to say*” (N=12). The likers refers to a group of social media users who do not write or comment much, but use the “like” button to show their interest. These students reported that they found “liking” easy and

convenient, and a relatively neutral way of appearing in the social media. "Liking" was also used to cheer up others and show empathy.

"I usually just like people's pictures/postings if I find them nice." (Student no. 24)

"I rarely comment, usually I just 'like' if I like it." (Student no. 79)

Those who want to stick to simple businesslike commenting may reply and write to others' postings and pictures if they want to take a stand on something or if the issue is important to them. Often, these students tended to comment on issues concerning hobbies or topical societal issues.

"I will comment on the publication if I really have something to say about it to write a proper comment." (Student no. 75)

"I comment on issues that arouse the desire to express my opinion." (Student no. 45)

4.1.3 Photo publishing behaviors

The third distinctive behavior in the social media relates to the publication of photos. In this group, again, university students followed certain principles, although relatively fewer students (N=41, 45.6%) than in the first two behavior categories described their behavior.

Fifteen students had decided to publish pictures, but only "*to a limited audience or about a limited theme*". The limited audience could mean that they would name those people among their friends who could see the picture, or they had ready groups to which they targeted each photo publication. The limited theme regarding photos was another way of limiting the photo publication; many students reported that they would only publish pictures of their pets or about nature.

The second group published "*only presentable photos*". In this case, the most important criterion for photo publication was how good-looking the photo was and how well it depicts the people appearing in it. Fourteen university students named this as their preliminary basis for the publication of photos in the social media.

"When it comes to pictures, I am extremely strict. Everything has to be perfect." (Student no. 36)

"They have to be sensible, so that I don't have to be ashamed if my friends see them." (Student no. 21)

The rest of the students published pictures "*freely*" (N=9) without any limitations or further considerations about publishing.

"FB is a good channel to show pictures." (Student no. 46)

"I often attach a picture there." (Student no. 81)

Then there were those students who had decided to refrain from publishing any photos.

Their attitude to publishing was "*not at all*" (N=3):

"I don't have even a profile picture." (Student no. 25)

4.1.4 Other behaviors in social media

University students also described other social media behaviors. Nine described using social media primarily because for chatting, which means that they preferred the private messaging that it makes possible. Seventeen students described their behavior in social media through individual benefits or additional activities it offered. These could be, for example, hobby groups and hobby-related information, news and information sharing, games, peer support, and second-hand commerce. Social media could also offer a place simply to pass time, so behavior in the social media could also be relaxing.

"Facebook is a nice place to hang out when you are too tired to go anywhere in the evening." (Student no. 26)

"I follow the national news channel via the social media because I am a follower. - - Mostly, I just play different games." (Student no. 70)

4.1.5 Summary

Table 2 illustrates the categories of students' behaviors in social media.

Table 2. Categories of students' behaviors in social media

If you have a profile in the social media, how do you decide what pictures and comments you will publish? How would you describe your behavior at the social media? Do you write often or comment on others' postings, what occupies your attention?	Number of Answers (N)	Sub-groups of a Category
Status update behaviors	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cautious users who always think carefully before they write anything or share their doings or opinions in the social media - users who are conscious about the content of the publication and status updates - users who write only about something positive and amuse others by their updates - users who construct their image through updates - users who behave freely and not so consciously
Commenting Behaviors	74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active commentators - the followers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the likers - users who comment only when they have important things to say
Photo Publishing Behaviors	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to a limited audience or about a limited theme - only presentable photos - freely - not at all
Other Behaviors	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chatting and private messaging - individual benefits or additional activities offered by social media (e.g. hobby groups) - relaxing pastime

4.2 Current Rules and Agreements for Using the Social Media

The questionnaire included sections in which the university students were asked to describe what, if any, kinds of rules or agreements they had about how to behave in the social media.

4.2.1 No rules or agreements

Surprisingly many (N=62, 68.9%) had no specific agreements with anyone on how they should behave in social media or any agreed rules on, for example, what to publish. Of these 62 students, a third (N=22) gave no specifics, but just said that they had not made any agreements or developed any rules with anyone. A little fewer (N=19) reported that no rules or agreements had been made deliberately but that they followed some unspoken behavioral rules when they used social media. With this, they often referred to how they handled pictures of others or what they posted about others.

“I haven’t agreed to anything by word of mouth but I consider it a good habit to ask permission from those people who appear in my photos or comments.” (Student no. 9)

“There are not any agreed rules but an ‘unwritten’ rule is that you don’t publish, for example, your friend’s photo or something without the friend’s consent.” (Student no. 48)

4.2.2 No agreements but common sense

Sixteen university students did not have any agreements, but behaved based on a reciprocal trust that everyone knows how to behave in social media. They referred to common sense and general good manners that would guide their behavior in the social media, and they believed their friends would do the same.

“There are no specific rules, but everyone knows how to behave properly. If there is a picture that you don’t find pleasing, you can ask the person to take it off.” (Student no.12)

“We have no rules. We think that you have to ‘behave’ in social media like you would behave in the normal life, too.” (Student no.36)

4.2.3 Everyone makes their own choices

Five of the university students who did not have any rules or agreements appealed to personal freedom. Everyone appears as an individual in the social media and, ultimately, their behavior cannot be regulated by mutual agreements or rules.

“I have never agreed upon anything with anyone about social media. We are all free people and can do what we like.” (Student no. 86)

4.2.4 Specific rules and agreements with other users

The rest of the participants had made some concrete agreements with other users of social media. Mostly, they had agreed upon the publication of photos (N=17, 18.9%) or the contents of updates or comments (N=8, 8.9%). With regard to photo publications, that they had discussed whether or not they or their friends can publish photos or whether they should ask separate permissions for each photo. Usually, the latter was the case.

Commenting and posting behavior was regulated by a convention not to publish any private information about others. In social media, it is also possible to “tag” people in posts, which visibly connects their profile with the post. Some students had made agreements about this option. Couples had agreed not to publish overly romantic posts in each other’s profiles.

“I don’t want my boyfriend to ‘whisper endearments’ to me in public in Facebook.” (Student no. 51)

4.2.5 Summary

Table 3 summarizes the rules and agreements university students had made regarding their use of social media.

Table 3. Rules and agreements in social media

Have you agreed on any rules concerning the use of the social media with your friend or partner?	Number of Students (N)	Description of Category
No Rules or Agreements	62	- no specific agreements with anyone on how they should behave in social media or any agreed rules on what to publish - “unspoken behavioral rules”
No Agreements But Common Sense	16	- no agreements, but reciprocal trust that everyone knows how to behave in social media - common sense and general good manners
Everyone Makes Their Own Choices	5	- everyone appears as an individual in social media and, ultimately, people’s behavior cannot be regulated by mutual agreements or rules
Specific Rules and Agreements with Other Users	25	- specific agreements on the publication of photos, contents of updates or comments, or tagging others in postings

4.3 Suitable Behavior in Social Media

Next, the university students were asked to describe how they would advise newcomers in the use of social media and how to behave there. The students' answers constituted four equally important themes for advice categories: understanding the publicity and finality of one's appearance in the social media, selecting how personal matters should be published, setting suitable privacy settings, and remembering good manners and noticing other users.

4.3.1 Publicity and finality of publishing on the internet

Most advice (N=28) concerned the publicity and finality of publishing a post or a photo in social media. The students wanted to highlight that what is published once stays in the internet and is accessible by a much wider crowd than one may first intend. Therefore, careful consideration is needed and social media users should act with awareness of the far-reaching consequences of one's behavior.

"You should always consider whether you could look at the picture or the posting after a couple of years without a shame." (Student no. 36)

"The more people will see your pictures etc., the more you should consider their publication." (Student no. 60)

"Everything is permanent in the internet." (Student no. 66)

4.3.2 Personal information to be published only discretely

Personal information and private matters should be published with discretion, according to the university students (N=22). This category included advice that focused on how much people would and should know about one's doings, feelings, and personal lives. Their general idea was that not every single action should be posted and that one should keep in mind that one should be able to share posts with people and acquaintances when meeting them face to face.

"I think that suitable behavior would be neutral. I would advise that you do not have to tell everything, and do not update your status 10 times a day like 'I'm preparing a dinner', 'I'm going to the store', etc." (Student no. 31)

"You should behave like you do when encountering someone face-to-face, be polite and consider what you would tell about yourself to passing acquaintances. You should not update your status in the social media when drunk." (Student no. 11)

4.3.3 Safer publishing with privacy settings

Close to this advice is that concerning privacy settings. The students' advice (N=22) did not refer so much to the contents of one's posts and behavior in social media, but to the boundaries of who can see how much of one's profile. Nuanced privacy settings make it possible to share things about one's life with only good friends and relatives, or others one considers important. Privacy settings can also protect one's information to some extent, and they are therefore worth becoming familiar when starting to use social media.

“My advice is to restrict carefully who can watch and comment on your profile pages.” (Student no. 9)

“If you don’t want it to be heard from the random person in the street or it could end up on the wall of a dirty, middle-aged, and paunchy geezer...” (Student no. 72)

4.3.4 Good manners and thinking of others

The fourth category of advice (N=22) regards suitable social media behavior in general, specifically good manners and the notice of other users. University students were widely of the opinion that the same manners of daily practice also apply to social media. One’s writings and photos should not offend anyone, and one should therefore always re-read the posting to prevent possible misunderstanding before publishing it. Politeness and respect were the words used most frequently in the students’ answers.

“Put only something that your mother and father can see without worrying. Do not humiliate others.” (Student no. 35)

“Suitable behavior is avoiding offense, being quite decorous and polite.” (Student no. 14)

Much behavioral advice also emphasized the importance of considering others and that one’s wider perspective can be easily forgotten when updating statuses alone at one’s computer. One should always keep in mind the people who actually exist and see the publication:

“If you wonder what suitable behavior is, you can think what you would do or say if these Facebook friends shared this physical space with you now.” (Student no. 89)

“Write your comments like you were having a face-to-face conversation with the person and his or her family was there around you listening. Many people have parents and plenty of relatives in social media.” (Student no. 5)

4.3.5 Summary

Table 4 presents a summary of university students’ opinions on and advice about suitable behavior in social media.

Table 4. University students’ opinions on and advice about suitable behavior in social media

How would you describe suitable behavior in the social media? How would you advice beginning users of the social media?	Number of Answers (N)	Description of Category
Publicity and Finality of Publishing in Internet	28	- what is once published stays on the internet and is accessible by a much wider crowd than first intended - careful consideration

		- notice the far-reaching consequences of one's behavior in social media
Personal Information to be Published Only Discretely	22	- pay attention to how much people would and should know about your doings, feelings, and personal life - compare postings to things you would share with people and acquaintances when meeting them face to face
Safer Publishing with Privacy Settings	22	- set suitable settings to your profile - possible to share things about one's life with just good friends and relatives or others who are important to one
Good Manners and Thinking of Others	22	- suitable behavior in social media in general - remember good manners and notice other users - politeness and respect - keep in mind people who see the publication

5. DISCUSSION

To summarize the findings, it seems that the university students' behavior in the social media included all features of human agency [23]. Intentionality referred to both the actual behaviors including publications—postings, shares, commenting, and photo uploads—and advice given by the students. They emphasized the importance of planning one's actions, which is best manifested through, for example, endeavoring to build a profile that gives the same impression one wants to give in public. All behavior influences this image—intentional and unintentional.

Forethought makes another and perhaps even more important aspect of social media behavior. This is also connected with the awareness of how one's behavior there affects others. The students explained their own behavior and justified their advice by recognizing how they should treat others, whether to tag posted photos or tag them in posts or comments, and how wide an audience can see these publications (e.g., their friends' parents, relatives, or employers). Politeness and good manners are also an important dimension of social media behavior. Forethought can save not only one's own face but that of others. In the opinions of many students, airing private matters is beyond the purposes of social media.

Self-reactiveness refers to the motivational aspect of one's agency. One should pay attention to one's behavior in the social media, and evaluate how it matches one's own goals and values. Relatively few of the surveyed students seemed concerned about how much time they spent reading others' posts and surfing in the exciting worlds of SNSs. Self-reactiveness is, however, needed to control one's usage of time, too, and to evaluate the

extent to which one finds it appropriate to interact through the social media instead of traditional face-to-face encounters [4][41]. Therefore, self-reactiveness in social media also includes the constant assessment of the benefits and limitations of social media brings for one's social relationships. While it becomes fast, timely, and cheap to be in contact with friends living far away, social encounters with people nearby remain important to one's well-being in many ways [43,44].

When discussing the findings regarding gratifications, it seemed that the university students used SNSs to fulfill their various needs for diversion and entertainment, for social relationships, and for identity construction [42], but their behavior in the social media included other intentions and purposes that also reflect social human agency.

The metacognitive capability to reflect on the appropriateness of one's behavior in social media is a core of human agency [23]. When considering the students' thoughts about suitable social media behavior, it seemed that when people understand the basic nature of SNSs and all the publicity they involve, they can pay attention to their own behavior toward themselves and others at a more realistic level. However, the way people represent themselves in social media, their need for self-presentation, is also closely connected to their specific behaviors, such as choice of profile photo [12].

Despite the differences in how much and how freely people use social media, everyone should engage at some level of self-reflection with their values and purposes in their relationships with it. Debatin et al. [42] suggested that SNS users claimed to understand privacy issues, yet reported uploading large amounts of personal information, and they ascribed risks to privacy invasion more to others than themselves. Our research data similarly showed that university students were well aware of the privacy risks, and especially worried about the harm their behavior could cause to others, not just to themselves.

Nevertheless, SNSs are a natural part of their lives: they use it for sharing and base their actions on the idea of having nothing to hide. Others are more concerned for their privacy, and thus are likely to make explicit agreements on how to handle the relevant data. Then again, SNSs are not for everyone and no one should be forced to join these communities. Regardless of one's fundamental attitudes and opinion regarding social media, mutual respect between diverse users and good manners make the foundation of moral and appropriate behavior.

6. CONCLUSION

The contribution of the study lies in its findings regarding suitable behavior in social media. One must consider the customs and justifications of action in these environments. If they require specific thought, these should be made explicit to clarify and demystify its use, and simultaneously make such customs easier not only for regular SNSs users to understand, but also those like school administrators and teachers who are not themselves deeply involved, but who must still have with related issues. The educational role of social media is also an important area for future research. For example, a recent study in Finland showed that tools provided by social media are attractive to students today, obviously, and so making those tools a part of traditional teaching, studying and learning is rational [6]. Especially moral behavior in social media can increase one's understanding and influence practical actions [see 28]. As this study showed, life pursuits in social media, as in general life, has the same two sides as Keefer suggested [45]: knowledge of our own pursuits of well-being and an obligation to others. The university students' advice and perceptions of

suitable social media behavior showed the need for self-fulfillment but not at the expense of others. There must be some characteristics or way of action that is fundamentally good that the concept of “moral common sense” can reference [31]. According to Sommers, good moral habits enhance one’s capacity for rational judgment (see also [46]), and this kind of rationality was strongly called for in the university students’ advice when they described how people should be able to assess how to behave if they compare their actions with what they would do in “real life.” This is valuable to understand, because previous studies have shown that social factors had the most significant impact on the intention to use social media in the first place [47]. Therefore, behavior in social media, as in everyday life, involves a high level of internalized reflection [48]. While self-disclosure and social connection are the fundamental motivations to foster online interpersonal communication more generally [49], awareness of the consequences of one’s actions and information sharing in the internet are critical aspects of SNSs [50], and these issues are certainly something that simple common sense does not necessarily resolve. One needs to be thoroughly familiar with the site’s privacy settings, and technical knowledge of its terms of use and functions, too. However, after one is on first name terms with these important issues the common sense of how to behave returns to relevance—and the site. No one can hide behind settings when all that one does is visible and permanent. Here, golden behavioral rules can prove priceless!

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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