# BEYOND WHATSAPP PROFILE PICTURE: PERSONALITY PRESENTATION, SELF-DISCLOSURE, AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT OF 2021 FRESHMEN IN MALANG

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**ABSTRAK**
Foto profil adalah bagian integral dari sebagian besar *platform* media *online* karena memungkinkan pemilik akun untuk terhubung dengan komunitas *online* yang lebih beragam. Foto profil juga dapat digunakan untuk menggambarkan pengungkapan diri dalam komunikasi *online*, sehingga pengguna seringkali kebingungan dalam memilih foto untuk menggambarkan diri mereka sendiri. Bagi mahasiswa baru generasi Covid-19, foto profil di media sosial merupakan bagian dari manajemen impresi karena diharuskan berinteraksi secara utuh melalui *platform online*, khususnya WhatsApp, tanpa terlebih dahulu berinteraksi langsung. Dalam situasi seperti ini, biasanya kebanyakan maba akan menggunakan foto terbaiknya sebagai foto profil dengan tujuan untuk mengajak berinteraksi dengan maba lainnya agar bisa mulai bertukar pesan di WhatsApp. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana gambar profil WhatsApp mencerminkan kepribadian, emosi, dan keterbukaan diri mahasiswa baru angkatan 2021 (Generasi Covid-19) di Malang, Indonesia, dan bagaimana peran *Impression Management* dalam komunikasi CMC, WhatsApp pada kasus ini. Penelitian dilakukan dengan menggunakan analisis tematik, dengan menggunakan instrumen IPIP-NEO 30. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan yang cukup kuat antara foto profil WhatsApp dengan kepribadian mahasiswa baru angkatan 2021 (Generasi Covid-19) di Malang Raya. Juga, gambar profil WhatsApp berbicara banyak tentang emosi dan keadaan mental mereka saat mereka berusaha berkomunikasi melalui gambar. Lebih lanjut, para pengguna WhatsApp dalam hal ini secara sadar memilih gambar yang merepresentasikan dirinya. Artinya, mereka sadar akan Self-disclosure dan Impression Management mereka dalam komunikasi CMC, dalam hal ini WhatsApp.

**Kata kunci**
*Analisis Tematik, Manajemen Impresi, WhatsApp Profile Pictures*

**ABSTRACT**
Profile photos are an integral part of most online media platforms as it allows account owners to connect with a wider variety of online communities. Profile photos can also be used to describe self-disclosure in online communications, hence, the users are often confused about choosing an image or photo to describe themselves. For freshmen of the Covid-19 generation, profile photos on social media are part of impression management because they are required to have full interactions through online platforms, especially WhatsApp, without prior direct interaction. In this situation, usually, most freshmen will use their best photos as profile photos with the aim of inviting interaction with other freshmen so they can start exchanging messages on WhatsApp. This research aims to depict how WhatsApp profile pictures reflect the personalities, emotions, and self-disclosure of freshmen in the class of 2021 (Covid-19 Generation) in Malang, Indonesia, and what is the role of Impression Management in CMC communication, WhatsApp in this case. The research was carried out using thematic analysis,

using the IPIP-NEO 30 instrument. The results of the study show that there is a fairly strong relationship between WhatsApp profile pictures and the personalities of freshmen in the class of 2021 (Covid-19 Generation) in Malang. Also, the WhatsApp profile pictures speak a lot about their emotion and mental state as they attempt to communicate through images. Furthermore, the WhatsApp users in this case consciously choose images representing themselves. It means that they are aware of their self-disclosure and Impression Management in CMC communication, in this case, WhatsApp.

## Introduction

Social media users in Indonesia are recorded at 191.4 million people on 2022. The highest number of users is in the age range of 25-34 years with a total percentage of 32.6%, and 18-24 years with a difference of 0.6% less. The most accessed social media is WhatsApp (88.7%). It means that almost all social media users aged 18-34 years have at least one WhatsApp account. (Hootsuite, 2022). The social media platforms most used by Indonesians include YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Stephanie, 2021). The average Indonesian has 10-11 social media accounts with various types of social media, including media for sharing content, sending messages, and video conferencing (Lidwina, 2020).

Several reasons encourage people to use social media, including to gain social capital (A. Lenhart, 2009), form and maintain social relationships (N. A. Van House, 2009), as well as creating and enhancing self-image (S. Utz, 2010) which will be discussed further in "Identity Performance". Netizens who hope to get the benefits of social capital through social media by showing personal assets will publicize their social status by uploading self-portraits in exclusive and well-known locations, or by uploading self-portraits doing useful social activities. Moreover, those who are interested in forming and maintaining social ties can use social media as a medium for making connections and reconnecting with old friends or old co-workers (N. B. Ellison, C. Steinfield, and C. Lampe, 2007; Pennington, 2021). In addition, New Media is also useful as a medium for showing, receiving recognition, and storing various activities in accordance with the values and morals held (T. J. Thomson and K. Greenwood, 2020).

When using social media, profile photos are considered as an integral part (J. T. Hancock and C. L. Toma, 2011; T. Thomson, Keith Greenwood, 2020). This feature allows account owners or users to be connected to a wider variety of online communities. Profile photos can also be used to show self-disclosure in online communities. Therefore, users of a platform have a variety of different considerations when choosing an image or photo as a self-description in the application's profile photo. Various avatar considerations to choose from include human figures, either from personal photos or from idolized figures, photos of animals, objects, inscriptions supporting a program, memes, or a combination of these. However, there are those who actually ignore the existence of a profile photo on their online platform and leave it blank with the default frame from that platform (N. J. Hum et al. al, 2011).

The use of profile photos also depends on the particular situation. Sometimes users feel that they have to present their best on one platform, yet they feel that they have to hide their identity on another platform. This difference in user behavior is formed from the culture of the online community according to where the user is. This difference in

behavior is appropriate because currently social media accounts have become a part of human life (L. Liu, 2016; T. J. Thomson and K. Greenwood, 2020). In the context of the working world, a recent study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) shows that around 70% of recruiters use social media to monitor applicants (SHRM, 2018). This means that the content someone shares on social media can significantly impact their chances of being hired and hired. This research also shows that *recruiters* often see social media profile photos as a self-representative of applicants and use them to assess the suitability of applicants with the company and position (Guerra & Associates, 2016; Troncoso, I., & Luo, L. (2020).

The profile photo on social media also plays the role of self-representation and identity construction for users (Gosling & Mason, 2015). These same users are comfortable having their identifiable features in their profile pictures, and those who are more extroverted prefer to share the frame with someone else. Social media users, especially WhatsApp, can manage the privacy of uploaded content by adjusting the social media platform used, yet the profile photo itself is a universal public element. However, profile photo privacy is also essential as a privacy protection strategy as it allows users to control the information and media displayed on online networks. This situation is particularly relevant to users who may feel vulnerable if overly exposed, such as in the case of online harassment or stalking (Taddicken & Engel, 2017). Therefore, it is important for users to consider their own privacy and security needs when deciding whether or not to use a profile photo.

Early work on identity theory was proposed by Stryker (1968) and Burke (Burke and Tully 1977, 1991) sharing a view of the basic ideas contained in *George Herbert Mead's Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). Stryker and Burke were inspired by Mead's emphasis on the importance of meaning in understanding and explaining human behavior and social interactions. Stryker and Burke also conceptualize themselves into various identities from one identity that is interconnected. At the same time, as both moved their own theoretical ideas and research in different directions, one found theoretical justification for doing so in Mead's work.

Goffman's (1959) has written and stated clearly about identity and self-presentation in the realm of social media (B. Hogan, 2010). White et al. (2017) added that in contemporary society, the visual image of identity is quite an important element because being seen or seeing other people is part of identity formation and self-verification processes. Identity and impressions are created when someone poses for a photograph (N. A. Van House, 2009), and social media users tend to present the best visualization version of themselves through social media (B. Hogan, 2010). The visual portrait is influenced by the purpose of the person taking the photo, the person in the photo, and the person who sees the results of the photo (K. Tiidenberg, 2015). Therefore, it is important for someone to understand the perspective of the individuals being photographed and their perceptions of the users of the platform.

Since the era of Internet, especially since the existence of social media, communicating through the platforms fall under the theory of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication), a theory which includes various interpersonal communications accessed by personal computers and mobile devices, including instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp (Beißwenger et al, 2014). People who interact with CMC tend to send messages with more emotional content and are more likely to develop online relationships than those who don't (Walther, 2007). In addition, people who

communicate via CMC are more confident in the impression they create and more prone toward strategic self-presentation (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). In addition, Walther concludes that CMC allows for strategic Impression Management and better self-presentation than with face to face (FTF) communication. Due to the characteristics of social media, which allows time to edit messages, and write them offline, individuals devote extra time and cognitive effort to editing their messages (Walther, 2007).

In fact, online identities are created based on social and cultural norms (S. Utz, 2010). Several components of social identity such as gender, race, social status, sexual status, and so on can be shown through the visualization of profile photos. Some values and symbols that are less obvious, such as a person's desires and qualities, can also be seen clearly visually. As Humphreys has said that visual representations can reveal *aspirational identity,* as well as several aspects of a person's life including values and important things in life (T. J. Thomson and K. Greenwood, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced people to carry out productive activities virtually and needs social media to still connect with each other (Pratiwi, 2020; Ihsanuddin, 2020). Educational activities in all schools and universities in Indonesia implement "Learning from Home" with an online learning system according to Government instructions (Hendri, 2020). This, of course, makes students only able to interact virtually with teachers/lecturers and friends. In such a situation, effective communication is an important skill that must be possessed by students or students, especially during the current Covid-19 pandemic which requires virtual learning and remote communication. One approach that has been implemented in Indonesia is the use of synchronous communication media, such as Zoom and Google Meet which enable real-time communication between students and teachers. Meanwhile, asynchronous communication media, such as discussion forums and e-mail, facilitate communication between students and teachers for more flexibility (Sari, 2020).

Using social media is a part of implementing asynchronous communication in online learning. In this case, educators can facilitate effective communication and collaboration among students by using profile photos on virtual communication platforms and social media (Sari, 2020). Using a profile photo on a video conferencing platform has been shown to make students feel more connected and engaged in virtual learning environments and feel more comfortable interacting with their friends. The use of profile photos can also make a sense of responsibility and professionalism in a virtual learning environment because by showing one another's faces, students tend to be more interested and willing to participate in discussions which result in a more productive and effective learning experience (Nguyen et al., 2021).

When humans join a new group, they will try to build communication and establish social relations with all group members. This process, known as socialization, is an important aspect of human social behavior and helps foster a sense of belonging and acceptance within a group. Socialization can occur in various ways, such as direct communication, observation, and participation in group activities. It is important for the individual to direct the socialization process effectively in order to blend into the group and contribute to its functioning (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Recent research continues to explore the role of socialization in various group settings, such as online communities (Li et al., 2019), virtual teams (Qiu et al., 2020), and multicultural teams (Zhou et al., 2021).

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Oftentimes, humans show a good impression in attempts to form a good start. This matter is related to impression management, a process of controlling the reactions of others to one's self-image (Kreitner, Robert; & Kinicki, Angelo, 2005). However, it can't be done directly on campus during pandemic conditions and online learning policy. In the end, students can still have friends to get acquainted with online platforms through personal social media accounts, especially WhatsApp as one of the sharing platforms that people have used today to communicate.

Of course, this is also experienced by the freshmen class of 2021, especially freshmen from various universities in Malang. Malang is a city known as the main destination of education in Indonesia. The city has several universities, both public and private, which offer various study programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Dewi et al., 2020). With the number of existing tertiary institutions, many students from various regions in Indonesia come to Malang to continue their studies here.

Since the process of admissions, followed by the student orientation period and lecturing processes, all of those activities have to be carried out online through various social media and video conferencing platforms. This seems ironic as these times should be used by the freshmen to enjoy the atmosphere of new environments on campus with new friends. In the end, the freshmen can only interact with each other on social media. Based on pre-research observation, the freshmen have WhatsApp Groups formed by the student orientation committee or formed independently. In this situation, most freshmen usually use their best photos as profile photos for interacting with other freshmen, so they can start exchanging messages on WhatsApp and have some conversations. With such conditions, the researcher is interested in conducting research on depicting the communication motivation of Covid-19 generation freshmen in Malang using WhatsApp profile photos.

Studies on profile pictures as a way to communicate with others have been conducted several times. A study entitled "*Profile as Conversation: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster*" examined how profile pictures can be used as a medium to depict themselves in social media, Friendster, in this case. The 2006 study found that profile pictures, along with descriptive data, articulated friendship links, photographs, and testimonials, shape a digital body. Also, it can be an initiator of conversation and a medium for ongoing conversation (Boyd and Heer, 2006).

Another study was conducted in 2014 entitled "*Faces Engage Us: Photos with Faces Attract More Likes and Comments on Instagram*". The study examined how photos might signify engagements in Instagram. The study found that those whose photos showed faces are 38% more likely to receive likes and 32% more likely to receive comments (Bakhshi et al., 2014).

A study about photo profiles was also conducted in 2020 entitled "*Extending Impression Management Theory: The Need for Privacy vs the Need to Express Information on Instant Messaging Apps*". The findings demonstrate the structure, motivations, and communication functions of CMC IM. The study found the effect of gender and marital status on IM through instant messaging apps. The theoretical and analytical framework develops an impression construct that both reduces and increases information, which activates synchronous and asynchronous features of instant messaging apps, which affects interpersonal communication.

A study on Twitter has also succeeded in finding the fact that user personality influences the color choices and emotions shown in profile photos (L. Liu, D. Preoţiuc-

Pietro, Z. R. Samani, M. E. Moghaddam, and L. Ungar, 2016). This is also corroborated by previous studies, although not done online and only in the context of social media (P. Borkenau, S. Brecke, C. Möttig, and M. Paelecke, 2009), who discovered the fact that a person's personality can also be seen from the use of expressions and body postures or poses in photographs.

The things mentioned above are the foundation of this research; to conduct research on how WhatsApp profile pictures reflect the personalities, emotions, and self-disclosure of freshmen in the class of 2021 (Covid-19 Generation) in Malang, Indonesia, and what is the role of Impression Management in CMC communication.

In this study, which was adapted from the journal "*Profile Pictures Across Platforms: How Identity Visually Manifests Itself among Social Media Accounts*" (T. J. Thomson and K. Greenwood, 2020), researchers use IPIP-NEO 30. IPIP-NEO 30 is part of the benchmarks of personality created by The International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999). It consists of 30 questions given through Google Forms. The responses to each question use a Likert scale of 4 points. Responses ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". 1st point for "strongly disagree", 2nd point for "disagree", 3rd point for "agree" and 4th point for "strongly agree". The responses that have been obtained will automatically be inputted into Google Spreadsheet. Furthermore, researchers process the data which will be calculated and presented in percentages.

**Method**

This study uses a Constructivism paradigm with a Thematic Analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying data in a systematic, organized manner, and offers ideas about patterns of meaning in the form of themes through certain data (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017; Widiatmojo & Nasvian, 2021). This study uses data-based purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique, where the researcher selects subjects who share certain characteristics, knowledge, or experiences with the population (Ames et al., 2019; Campbell S, Greenwood M, Prior S, et al., 2020). The subject of the study is freshmen from several universities in Malang who have undergone online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The subject must also have a WhatsApp social media account, and use it to communicate during the online learning process.

The first research step was obtaining initial data. The research participants were asked to do a self-test of IPIP-NEO 30 from January 31st to February 2nd, 2022. Apart from doing the self-test, the participants were also asked to submit a WhatsApp profile photo that was used at that time. Furthermore, there were 107 freshmen willing to be part of the study. In the second step, researchers conducted a profile photo analysis based on the Thomson & Greenwood category table (2020). The last step is doing Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on 9-12 February 2022 with participants who are willing to be invited, in this study there were 9 people. In this FGD, the participants were asked to tell about the reasons for choosing to use the profile photo in more depth from the aspects listed in the Thomson & Greenwood table of the category (2020).

**Result and Discussion**
**Color**

Subjects chosen for a polychromatic photo as their profile photo, with about 72% (n = 77) used color photos, while the remaining 28% (n = 30) used monochromatic

photos. Some users choose to use black and white to make it look more artistic and to show a sadness and stressed mood due to dealing with their difficult problem.

> *"Incidentally chose a monochrome photo because it's medium adjust to the state of the heart, want to show a little sadness and stress because of a problem" (M. Audin)*

While users who choose to use color photos tend to want to show a cheerful and fun personality.

> *"I prefer using color photos because I tend to be extroverted and I want to look cheerful" (I. Kusumawati)*
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> *"Profile photo is the first impression of yourself from others, so as much as possible give my best. Color shows as not to be numb, if monochrome is affected as sadness even though it's not always like that" (K. Amalina)*
>
> *"I like colored photos because they give the impression of being more 'alive' and not gloomy" (T. Raras)*

**Table 1.** Summary findings of the profile photos analysis with coding

| Profile Pictures Form | Number of Instance (n=107) | Percent of Sample |
|---|---|---|
| **Color** | | |
|     Polychromatic | 77 | 72 |
|     Monochromatic | 30 | 28 |
| **Expression** | | |
|     Indeterminate | 50 | 47 |
|     Neutral | 18 | 17 |
|     Smile | 39 | 36 |
| **Alone or With Others** | | |
|     Alone | 97 | 91 |
|     With Other Human | 10 | 9 |
| **Using Frames, Effect and Overlays** | | |
|     Yes | 20 | 19 |
|     No | 87 | 81 |
| **Gaze** | | |
|     Direct | 63 | 59 |
|     Indirect | 44 | 41 |
| **Angle** | | |
|     Frontal | 46 | 43 |
|     Side | 61 | 57 |
| **Awareness** | | |
|     Candid | 25 | 23 |
|     Posed | 82 | 77 |
| **Location** | | |
|     Indoor | 53 | 49 |
|     Outdoor | 54 | 51 |
| **Amount of Body Shown** | | |
|     Full Body | 19 | 18 |
|     Waist-up | 42 | 39 |
|     Head and Shoulder | 46 | 43 |

Source: Processed by Researchers (2022)

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**Expression**

The data shows that 47% of the participants (n = 50) didn't show their expressions in the photo or undetectable. This number is more than smiling expressions at 36% (n = 39) and neutral expressions at 17% (n = 18). The reason the user chooses not to show facial expressions is because they feel uncomfortable showing facial expressions but not completely covering their face.

> *"Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic and online learning, I feel uncomfortable showing my face especially expressions on social media, but I also tried to not cover my face too much so that people can still be recognized" (S. Kartika)*
> *"Actually, the photo was taken suddenly, but the results, in my opinion, that's not bad. Then I chose that photo, even though my expressions were indeterminate" (T. Raras)*

While participants who choose to show expressions tend to want to show themselves as a cheerful person, to be themselves and to describe their mood.

> *"I want to be seen as a simple person, as it is, friendly and cheerful, because mostly people say that my face is kinda intimidating" (K. Amalina)*
> *"Actually in that photo I'm doing awkward pose because I don't know how to pose, but the results it's good and in accordance with my cheerful" (M. Alfaisal)*

**Alone or With Others**

The data shows that 91% of the participants (n = 97) showed themselves on their WhatsApp profile photo. This number was more than those who posted photos with other people by 9% (n = 10). The reason they use more photos of themselves is because they prefer to pose and show themselves so that they are more easily recognized by other people who want to contact them.

> *"I prefer to use my real photo because it's more easily recognized by people who want to contact me, especially people who have never met and want to contact me". (A. Daniswara)*
> *"I think WhatsApp is a personal thing, so I have to show myself real, especially on my profile photo. To show closeness with a person or group I think Instagram is a more right platform, or can using the WhatsApp Status" (K. Amalina)*

Meanwhile, users who use profile photos with other people tend to want to show closeness and affection for those closest to them in the profile photo used.

> *"Sometimes I use profile photos with my closest people. I'm doing this to show my affection to my family and friends" (S. Alifia)*

**Using Frames, Effects and Overlays**

The data shows that 81% of the participants (n = 87) didn't use any frames or effects on their WhatsApp profile photos. Meanwhile, only 19% (n = 20) of the participants used frames or effects. The main reason why they don't use frames or effects is because they prefer to show themselves as neutral, casual, and show their real identity.

> *"I want to show myself real and as is without photo effects" (T. Raras)*

Participants who use frames or effects want to adjust the brightness of the photo and show off their aesthetic character more.

> *"I use effects only to enlighten my photos but still look natural" (Intan Dwi Kusumawati)*
> *"I just download editing apps and trying to edit my photos, and the results turned out to be good" (M. Audin)*
> *"I use an editing apps only to upgrading the quality of my photos to makes look better" (M. Alfaisal)*

## Gaze & Angle

The data shows that most of the participants looked at the camera and the lens by 59% (n = 63), and 41% (n = 44) participants didn't look at the camera and the lens. Moreover, the participants took the photo with side angle by 57% (n = 61), and 43% (n = 46) participants took the photo with frontal angle. The participants who choose to stare at the lens because they want to be more "to the point" and not appear to be ignoring other people.

*"In my opinion, look away from the camera it seems like ignoring people who see the profile picture, so I use my photo looking at the camera" (K. Amalina)*
*"Most of the photos of myself are always look at the camera, so I use those photos" (S. Kartika)*
*"Actually there is no particular reason, I just want to look good and properly in front of camera" (M. Alfaisal)*

Meanwhile, participants who don't look at the lens tend to unconfidence and as self-expression according to mood, and consider candid photos to have better results

*"I feel confident when taking pictures not directly looking the camera, so I prefer to take pictures looking in a different direction of the camera" (M. Audin)*
*"Actually, it was an accidental photo when I was at the mall and looking at Gundam toys, then I took a picture with the Gundam toys. At first I just want to save that photo, but the results turned out to be good even though they didn't look at the camera" (A. Daniswara)*

## Awareness & Location

The data shows that most of the participants were not aware of the existence of the camera and the photos were taken without the subject's knowledge of 23% (n = 25). This number was less than those who were aware of the presence of the camera and posed by 77% (n = 82). Furthermore the participants took the photo at an outdoor area of 51% (n = 54) and balanced with the participants who took the photo at an indoor area of 49% (n = 53).

The participants select a photo pose as a form of portraying a good mood and looking good from their looks. Even so, sometimes when taking pictures the subject is aware of the presence of the camera, but poses as if he does not realize the existence of the camera. In addition, the photographer also gives directions to direct the view around the subject so that it seems that they are not aware of the camera.

*"Actually there is no special reason, I just want to look good and I am confident when posing. I choose indoor because the background was aesthetic and has proper lighting" (T. Raras)*
*"When I'm not posing, I feel awkward because I don't know how to pose. So I can take a good photo only by posing intentionally. I choose the outdoors because I like traveling and I want to show that time I feel happy when I'm in that place, around Mount Bromo" (M. Alfaisal)*

While participants choose candid photos because they feel that photos taken accidentally have better results.

*"When taking pictures I like to look at the camera and pose, but sometimes I pose like no camera. When choosing a profile photo, I choose a photo that doesn't look at the camera" (M. Audin)*

## Amount of body shown

Most of the participants (43% (n = 46)) use a profile photo that shows the head and shoulders. Meanwhile, 39% (n = 42) of participants used a profile photo showing the head to waist. The remaining 18% of the participants (n = 19) used a profile photo that showed the whole body. The user chooses to show the head to shoulders to make it easier to recognize because the face is the main identity of humans.

*"The face is the main identity of a humans, so I want to show my face with a few parts of my body (shoulders or waist) so that's still easily recognizable and in in accordance with my self-confidence" (K. Amalina)*
*"I really like to expose my face to my shoulders, even though the right angle for me is from head to waist" (S. Kartika)*

Then the participant chooses to show the head to the waist because he wants to show the face but not too much *close up*.

*"Actually my original photo shows the whole body, but I crop it to the waist because I feel more confident and still show the face area, although not too closed up" (I. Kusumawati)*

Meanwhile, users who show their entire body because they want to show their ideal body and the best clothes they wear.

*"I feel confident with my body and my outfit, so I choose to use a profile photo that shows my full body" (T. Raras)"*

## Personality Trait and The Relation to Profile Picture Selection

The results of the study above clearly show that there is a relationship between one's profile picture and their personality. It is in line with other previous research which found similar results; that there are strong links between the choice of social media images with emotions, demographics, and even personality traits (Guntuku et al., 2019). Furthermore, such findings strengthen the notion that social media users tend to communicate through images (Reece & Danforth, 2017; Gunuku et al., 2019). Also, this sort of communication through image is steadily increasing especially since most social media content is in image form since the development of camera-enabled mobile devices and image-based social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat (Burdick et al., 2012; Guntuku et al., 2019).

When referring to the results of the study, several respondents stated that the color they used on their profile photo images represents their mood and emotion. This is in line with the notion that the color of an image can express emotion (Wexner, 1954; Guntaku, 2019), psychological traits (Huang et al, 2016; Guntaku et al, 2019), personality traits (Skowron, et al, 2016; Guntaku, 2019), and mental health state (Reece and Danforth 2017; Guntaku, 2019).

Another thing to highlight is that several respondents agree that they use certain images as a representation of themselves in social media, in this case, WhatsApp. The utilization of a certain profile picture in this case plays as a visual communication where the users create online self-representation, such to look happy, to look friendly, to look successful, and so on (Wang et al, 2010; Wu et al, 2015; Teubner & Camacho, 2023).

Such visual communication, then, supports the notion that when social media users go online, they might be able to disclose aspects of themselves that are difficult to convey physically (Nguyen and Alexander, 1996; Harris & Bardey, 2019). Social media, WhatsApp in this case, is used to communicate or to control information about oneself to other people (DeVito, 2007; Prihantoro et al, 2020; Schlosser, 2020). Of course, it is in line with the self-disclosure theory in interpersonal communication study that self-disclosure is a way for someone to express information about themselves that is usually unknown to other people (DeVito, 2007; Prihantoro, 2020).

**Dual Concerns of Self Disclosure Affect CMC Impression Management**

This study explores the dual concern effect of self disclosure on CMC Impression Management. It finds that WhatsApp provides strategies that increase information, which increases self-disclosure, while also enabling strategies that reduce information, which decreases self-disclosure (Grebelsky-Lichtman, T., Adato, Z., & Traeger, S., 2020). WhatsApp activates two self-disclosure concerns that have an impact on Impression Management. On the one hand, it offers Impression Management Techniques that boost knowledge, which boosts self-disclosure. The profile pictures enable self-disclosure since it discloses private information. Indeed, it strengthens the earlier studies stating that CMC encourages greater self-disclosure than Face to Face communication (Becker & Stamp, 2005; Beißwenger et al., 2014; Walther, 2007).

The result of the study indicates that the participants consciously choose the photos they present in their WhatsApp profile picture. This is in line with research by (Strano, 2008; Krämer & Winter, 2008) stating that as people indeed carefully choose the information they present in CMC communication. Such action, then, alters Impression Management as it allows privacy and time to think about what to present (Walter, 2007). Since time does not play a significant role, the research supports research that indicates a high ability to succeed in Impression Management through CMC communication (Becker & Stamp, 2005; Merkle & Richardson, 2000).

According to this study, Impression Management is a result of self-monitoring psychological incentives. The WhatsApp application has an impact on how people can shape the image that their individual traits make on other people, which is consistent with earlier research (Day & Schleicher, 2009; Snyder & Gangestad, 2000). The theoretical and practical consequences of CMC Impression Management are covered by this study, which also examines the psychological inner motivations of self monitoring. We can draw the conclusion that a person's social sensitivity and level of fear of social judgment or appraisal affect their self-monitoring and the amount of time and effort they put into strategically presenting themselves. Additionally, one's perception of oneself is impacted (Feaster, 2010)

**Conclusion**

All in all, the research supports the notion that there is a fairly strong relationship between WhatsApp profile pictures and the personalities of new college students in the class of 2021 (Covid-19 Generation) in Malang. Also, the WhatsApp profile pictures speak a lot about their emotion and mental state as they attempt to communicate through images. Furthermore, the WhatsApp users in this case consciously choose images representing themselves. It means that they are aware of their self-disclosure and Impression Management in CMC communication, in this case WhatsApp.

It is essential to recognize that the ambit of this investigation is delimited to the WhatsApp platform and the specific context of new college students initiating their social interactions online due to the exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic. As communication dynamics evolve and digital platforms become central to global social engagement, online interactions are poised to gain even greater prominence. Subsequent research endeavors should encompass diverse communication contexts, involve participants from varied demographic backgrounds, and encompass an array of social media platforms. This broader approach will furnish a comprehensive comprehension of how

individuals steer their online identities and undertake self-disclosure in the varied digital domains they inhabit.

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