An Investigation into Adaptive Self Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces

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I declare that this submission is my own work. Where I have read, consulted, and used the work of others I have acknowledged in the text.

29th March 2023	Melissa Murphy
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List of Abbreviations

IM – Impression Motivation

IC – Impression Construction

POP – Perceptions of Protection

POC – Perceptions of Control

POSS – The Presentation of Online Self Scale

POSSA – The Presentation of Online Self Scale for Adults

SCC – Self Concept Clarity

IG – Instagram

BR – Be Real

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Abstract

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between self-presentation adaptiveness and personality presentation (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness), on Instagram and BeReal by means of a cross-sectional, between and within groups design. An online questionnaire was administered to 137 participants (53 men, 78 women, 5 non-binary, 1 preferred not to specify). They completed the Adaptable Self subscale of the Presentation of Online Self Scale for Adults. Participants subsequently completed the Ten Item Personality Inventory twice, once for how they present their personality traits on Instagram, and once for BeReal. Five one-way analyses of variance found no significant relationship between self-adaptiveness and differences in presentation of the Big Five traits between Instagram and BeReal. Five paired sample t-tests found a significant difference in presentation of openness between Instagram and BeReal. No significant difference was observed between Instagram and BeReal in the case of the other four personality traits. Implications suggests the popularity of “memes” has changed how people self-present online. Future research should aim to collect an offline personality presentation to investigate differences in more depth.

Introduction

Introduction

The internet has become a crucial aspect of everyday life, as it has the capacity to be used in a variety of settings, both professional and recreational. The online world has incredible reach and influence (Baym et al., 2004), and with this comes new ways and opportunities for people to present themselves. The current study will examine self-presentation, including influencing factors both online and offline, such as need for approval, anonymity, and online disinhibition. Self-adaptiveness refers to how individuals may switch persona as means of identity exploration (Strimbu et al., 2021). Certain personality traits have been linked to particular online behaviour, such as neuroticism and inauthentic self-presentation, and agreeableness and the decreased likelihood of approval seeking behaviours (Hjetland et al., 2022). The aim of this research is to analyse the self-adaptiveness of social media users and ascertain whether this is linked to changes in personality presentation Instagram and BeReal. Furthermore, the differences in presentation of the Big Five traits will also be examined between the two platforms.

1.1 Self-Presentation

The terms Self-presentation and Impression Management can be used interchangeably. They describe how individuals' control or manage how other people think of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Goffman (1956) posited that each person behaves in a particular manner to avoid embarrassment and to establish themselves as respectable individuals within a social setting.

1.1.1 Impression Motivation

Leary and Kowalski (1990) highlight two facets which influence self-presentation. Firstly, impression motivation (IM) is the extent to which individuals are motivated to regulate other peoples' impressions of them. An individual may be motivated to do this if they have a goal relevant to the impression they wish to create. For instance, displaying the best aspects of oneself on a first date to increase the likelihood of a second. IM will differ depending on the value placed on the goal to be achieved, as a high value goal will result in high IM. The discrepancy between the current impression that is believed to be held by

others, and the desired impression can be a compelling motivator for IM (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

1.1.2 Impression Construction

Impression construction (IC) determines the type of impression that is produced, and how it will be executed. Leary and Kowalski (1990) list five key aspects of IC as follow: self-concept, role constraints, target values, desired and undesired identity images, and current or potential social images. Self-concept is the primary determinant of an individual's projected impressions, as it is often mirrored in their constructed images. Individuals avoid asserting images of themselves that contradict their self-concept. Unless there is something to obscure, people present what they believe to be accurate representation of themselves (Leary & Allen, 2011).

Roles may prescribe specific behaviour, and often require individuals to portray themselves with certain characteristics or as a certain kind of person. Furthermore, Individuals may also tailor their image to the value of powerful others, such as presenting negatively if it is felt that presenting positively would intimidate that powerful other, for example “Playing dumb”. While not necessarily false, it is a presentation an individual may feel will garner approval from others. Additionally, the desired identity of an individual may be constructed by outwardly claiming traits that fit the desired identity. Should the individual maintain consistency with this, it may result in a boost in self-esteem. (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

As self-presentation is a major influence that shape everyday interactions in a plethora of social situations, it may result in varying self-presentation within online spaces. Merunkova and Slerka (2019) tested the validity of Goffman’s (1956) theory and reported that it did in fact extend to online settings, as a conscious effort to manage impressions was made online.

1.2 Factors Affecting Online Presentation

Several factors influence differences in online and offline self-presentation such as the need for approval, perceived audience, online disinhibition, and anonymity. However, this list is non-exhaustive. The need for approval seems to be a significant factor in predicting online self-presentation. Mun and Kim (2021) report that a strong need for

approval correlated with higher levels of deceptive presentations online and determined self-presentation as a principal means of acquiring said approval.

The audience an individual seeks approval from may be equally as important as the approval itself. Zheng et al. (2020) stated that the strength of ties to the perceived audience determined to what degree individuals choose to display their ideal selves online. It was reported that while self-enhancing information was shared with both close and distant friends, individuals were more likely to engage in self-verification with close friends, for example, admitting weakness. Self-verification is the process in which an individual will attempt to consolidate their pre-existing views and conceptions of themselves, both positive and negative (Sedikides, 1993; as cited by Zheng et al., 2020). Perhaps this is partly due to close friends having the ability to point out discrepancies in self-presentation, as they are familiar with the individual in question. However, Zheng et al. (2020) made the point that the operationalisation of self-verification was a limitation, as the midpoint score of the scale was 1, with the upper and lower end being 2 and 0, respectively. This allowed participants who scored 1 to both self-enhance and self-verify at the same time without indicating a preference for either.

Scott et al. (2022) explored online disinhibition as a factor contributing to misleading presentations. Online disinhibition is reductions in self-restraint in online interactions compared to offline ones. It is reported that people hold two key perceptions, which are Perceptions of Protection (POP), and Perceptions of Control (POC). POP refers to an individual's perception of the capacity to be invisible, safe, and protected online. POC refers to how much perceived control there is over interactions and self-presentation online. High POP levels significantly predicted online disinhibition, and individuals with a combination of high levels of social anxiety and high POP levels were the most likely to engage in online disinhibiting behaviour. This was associated with negative personal and behavioural outcomes, such as cyberbullying, trolling, and false self-presentation (Scott et al., 2021; as cited by Scott et al., 2022).

Evans et al. (2017) describes anonymity as one of the internet's affordances. While it is essential for privacy, it can facilitate negative behaviours, such as online disinhibition (Kim

et al., 2019) which can lead to other negative outcomes. This may be due to the heightened sense of private self-awareness, or acknowledgement of one's own physical and emotional state, and a reduced sense of public self-awareness, lowering sense of accountability and identifiability (Scott, 1998). Kim et al. (2009) as cited by Mun and Kim (2021), reported that individuals found being deceitful online effortless due to anonymity. Conversely, Clark-Gordon et al. (2019) highlighted that anonymity positively correlated with self-disclosure to strangers which would otherwise be atypical in online settings. However, there was a variance across the studies analysed that could not be explained.

Invisibility can amplify the perception of anonymity, creating the belief that the offline self cannot be associated with online behaviour. This lack of inhibition could be attributed to the lack of eye contact, and the inability to see the reaction of others. These effects, however, are context-dependent and may vary depending on disinhibition type (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012, 2015), but may explain varying self-presentation online.

1.3 Online Self-Presentation and Self-Concept

The Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS) is a psychometric tool developed by Fullwood et al. (2016) designed to assess online presentation of adolescents through 21 items. The scale includes four factors of self-presentation: Ideal Self, Multiple Selves, Consistent Self, and Online Presentation Preference POSS is unsuitable for adults due to the Ideal Self factor being inapplicable to a mature population as the gap between the ideal self and true self decreases and consolidates into adulthood (Strimbu & O'Connell, 2019).

Strimbu et al. (2021) tested the POSS on an adult sample of social network users to develop an appropriate measure for adult self-presentation online. The result was a modified version of the POSS known as the Presentation of Online Self Scale for Adults (POSSA) which consisted of these three factors: the Adaptable Self, the Authentic Self, and Freedom of Self Online. Items within the Ideal Self factor from the POSS were altered and dispersed throughout the new factors within the POSSA. Adaptable Self reflects how an adult participant may shift personas online as a means of escapism or exploration. Authentic Self compares online and offline identity authenticity. Finally, Freedom of Self Online

represents the degree to which the participants values freedom of expression in presenting online.

Allport (1955) defined Self Concept as an internal collection of self-beliefs held by an individual and is a part of personality development. An individual with a stable and defined sense of self is known to have what is called Self Concept Clarity (SCC) (Campbell et al., 1996; as cited by Fullwood et al., 2016). There is some evidence to suggest that those with a low SCC, also tend to have low self-esteem and higher neuroticism. The converse of this also seems to hold true, that a high SCC correlates to high self-esteem (Campbell et al., 1996).

Shao and Ni (2019) reported that those who had a low SCC tended to engage more online, however, this could be mediated by high levels of self-control. Fullwood et al. (2016) reports that those with a lower sense of self tended to experiment with their self-presentation online more regularly, and often presented their idealised selves rather than their true or actual selves. In conjunction with this, they found that high social anxiety, low self-esteem, and low SCC were predictors for individuals presenting their idealised selves and preferring online forms of communication. Individuals with high SCC and Self-Monitoring Tendency were more likely to present a single self. Similarly, Strimbu and O'Connell (2019) reported that when controlling for age, SCC was the biggest predictor for online self-presentation, and individuals with a lower SCC were more likely to present discrepancies between online and offline selves.

1.4 Online Self-Presentation and Personality

Previous research suggests that the big five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness) may explain individual differences in how people behave online (Blumer & Döring, 2012) while other research has explored personality as predictors of online self-presentation. For example, Strimbu et al. (2021) reported a positive correlation between online self-presentation and extraversion and conscientiousness. However, more research on this may be required due to unequal gender representation. Michikyan et al. (2014) examined extraversion and neuroticism in young adults and reported that individuals with higher neuroticism scores often presented ideal or false selves online. Lower extraversion scores also predicted a discrepancy in online

and offline presentation. Research on openness is scarce, however, Hadlington et al. (2020) report that higher openness scores predict a greater likelihood of sharing personal information.

1.5 Multiple Selves Online

While there are many factors involved in online self-presentation, and evidence that people may present an ideal or deceptive self online, it is important to also investigate the presentation of multiple selves in different online spaces. Huang and Vitak (2022) investigated the difference in presentation strategies between real Instagram accounts, and secondary fake Instagram accounts, otherwise known as Rinstas and Finstas, respectively. It was reported that while Rinstas contained more carefully curated and uplifting or positive posts, Finstas were much more emotional, impulsive, and negative by comparison. Since Finstas are usually reserved for close friends they also contained posts that were deemed unfit for an individual's Rinsta. This supports research by Zheng et al. (2020) regarding the effect of perceived audience on self-presentation strategies.

Fullwood et al. (2016) reported that those who spent more time online, and had less friends on Facebook, had an increased likelihood of presenting multiple selves online. However, in Davidson and Joinson's (2021) interview-based study it was reported that multiple-self presentation across platforms was used as a strategy to keep social and professional lives separate. Self-presentation on varying online platforms was influenced by the perceived purpose of the social media. For example, LinkedIn and email was associated with professionalism, whereas Snapchat, was perceived as more fun and less permanent. A limitation of this study is that the data was collected in 2017, while the study itself was not published until 2021. Social media interfaces are frequently updated, and that may alter the way individuals interact with others and self-present. For example, the addition of time-sensitive non-permanent posts, or stories. A replication of this study may be needed to support these results.

1.6 The Current Study

While there is extensive research in the area of self-presentation online, there is a noticeable lack of research on how individuals vary their self-presentation across multiple platforms. In particular there is little research on how presentation of personality might vary in different online spaces.

The aim of this study is to investigate the adaptive self-presentation of social media users, using the adaptive self subscale of the POSSA, and evaluate whether it is related to changes in personality presentation across two different platforms online. In addition, the difference in presentation of traits across two platforms will be examined.

Research question: Is adaptive self-presentation online related to differences in self-reported personality trait presentation in Instagram and BeReal?

It is hypothesised that those who score higher on self-adaptiveness will have greater differences in:

H1: presentation of extraversion between Instagram and BeReal.

H2: presentation of agreeableness between Instagram and BeReal.

H3: presentation of conscientiousness between Instagram and BeReal.

H4: presentation of neuroticism between Instagram and BeReal.

H5: presentation of openness between Instagram and BeReal.

Research question: Will there be differences in the presentation of personality traits between Instagram and BeReal?

It is hypothesised that there will be differences between Instagram and BeReal in:

H6: presentation of extraversion.

H7: presentation of agreeableness.

H8: presentation of conscientiousness.

H9: presentation of neuroticism.

H10: presentation of openness.

Method

Method

2.1 Design

This cross-sectional study used a between and within groups design (IV1 Adaptive Self Score: 1 = low, 2= medium, 3 = high). The dependant variables have been adapted from the subscales of the Big Five Inventory (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness) and will represent the difference in presentation between online platforms. The method of data collection was an online quantitative questionnaire.

2.2 Participants

Participants (*N*=137) with an age range from 18-32 (*M*= 22.43, *SD*= 2.82) were recruited via convenience and snowball sampling by posting the link online and sharing within the researchers' institute. The sample consisted of 78 women, 53 men, 5 non-binary individuals, and 1 person choosing not to specify. The inclusion criteria were individuals over the age of 18, who were active users of Instagram and BeReal. 154 responses were collected; however, 17 participants were removed due to invalid responses. Ethical approval was granted by the Department of Technology and Psychology Ethics Committee (Appendix A) and participants were treated in accordance with the Psychological Society of Ireland Code of Ethics (PSI, 2019).

2.3 Materials

The online questionnaire was constructed using Microsoft Forms. It consisted of the following: a demographics form (Appendix B), which asked questions about age and gender; an information sheet (Appendix C) outlining the study, their role, and rights as participants; a consent form (Appendix D); and a debrief sheet (Appendix E) which reminded participants about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw.

2.3.1 Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

This study utilised the Gosling et al. TIPI (2003; Appendix F) which is a validated 10-item measure of the Big Five Personality inventory aspects of Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism. Sample item is "I see myself as sympathetic, warm". Items are measured across a seven-point Likert scale from 1: Disagree Strongly, to 7: Agree Strongly. Every second item was reversed scored, and total mean score

for each factor is calculated. Previous reliability testing reported a moderate Cronbach's alpha (α =.40-.68; Gosling et al., 2003). However, the current study reported a varied Cronbach's alpha (α = -.081-.758). The TIPI was chosen over longer measures of personality to control participant drop off.

2.3.2 The Presentation of Online Self Scale for Adults (POSSA)

The POSSA (Appendix G; Strimbu et al., 2021) was designed assess differences in online self-presentation in adults, as previous scales focused on adolescents. This scale uses a five-point Likert scale which ranges from 1: Strongly Disagree, to 5: Strongly Agree. This study uses the six item Adaptable Self subscale, with items such as "I can escape myself online", equating to a score range of 7-42. Higher scores indicate an increased likelihood of individual's presenting multiple selves online. Reliability tests indicate Adaptable Self subscale had a high Cronbach's alpha (α = .84), which was consistent with Strimbu et al. (2021; α = .87; Appendix H).

2.4 Pilot test

A pilot test was conducted (N= 4) to ensure that the survey functionality and instruction clarity. The average completion time was four minutes. Branching was added to the questionnaire post pilot to filter participants who did not meet inclusion criteria.

2.5 Procedure

Participants followed the link to the Microsoft Forms questionnaire to read the information sheet and to give consent to the use of their data. Each participant made an identification code should they request data removal in the future, before answering demographic questions. Participants then filled out the Adaptive self scale, and then completed the TIPI twice each, once for Instagram and again for BeReal. Consent was requested again from the participants upon completion of the questionnaires, and they were thanked for their participation as part of the debrief.

Results

Results

3.1 Overview

Adaptable self-scores acted as the independent variable for the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), while the difference between Instagram and BeReal of each personality trait acted as the dependant variable. The G power sample size estimate for this analysis was reported to be 127. The total personality trait scores (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness) for each online platform was used as the independent variables for the paired samples t test.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Adaptable Self scores were grouped into three levels using the mean and standard deviation of the data. One standard deviation above and below the mean was used to group the moderate level, scores below that range were low, and scores above were high. Scores of 5-10 indicated low adaptable self, 11-17 indicated moderate adaptable self, and 18 -24 indicated high adaptable self (Appendix I). The difference in personality traits was calculated by subtracting the total Instagram scores for each trait, from the BeReal equivalents.

Table 1 overleaf displays a summary of the descriptive statistics on the difference in personality traits between platforms, based on levels of adaptable self-scores.

Table 1

Means Standard Deviations, n Values for the Difference in Personality traits Based on Adaptable Self Scores

Adaptable Self Level	Low (28)		Moderate (76)		High (33)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M* *SD*	
Diff. Extraversion	-.36	2.88	-.18	3.08	.76	2.86
Diff. Agreeableness	.21	1.94	-.08	1.74	.33	1.91
Diff.Conscientiousness	.25	1.92	.42	1.87	.26	2.32
Diff. Neuroticism	.43	1.64	.20	2.08	.94	2.21
Diff. Openness	.36	1.88	.28	1.64	.88	1.93

Table 2 below displays a summary of the descriptive statistics of each personality trait, based on online platform.

Table 2

Means Standard Deviations, n Value, and Min Max for the Difference in Personality traits Based Online Platform

Online Platform	*Instagram***				*BeReal***			
	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Extraversion	*6.84*	*2.20*	*2*	*11*	*6.83*	*2.149*	*2*	*11*
Agreeableness	*7.83*	*1.625*	*4*	*11*	*7.75*	*1.365*	*4*	*11*
Conscientiousness	*6.62*	*1.659*	*2*	*10*	*6.28*	*1.623*	*2*	*10*
Neuroticism	*7.83*	*1.667*	*3*	*11*	*7.41*	*1.791*	*3*	*11*
Openness	*7.73*	*1.379*	*4*	*11*	*7.29*	*1.628*	*2*	*11*

*n=137***

3.3 Inferential Statistics

3.3.1 One-way ANOVA

Five one-way between-groups ANOVA were conducted to explore the impact of adaptive self levels (IV: low, moderate, and high) on the difference in personality presentation between two online platforms (Instagram, BeReal). As multiple ANOVAs were conducted, an alpha level of .01 was used throughout the analysis (Appendix J).

3.3.2 Assumptions

Preliminary analyses were carried out to check the assumptions of each one-way ANOVA. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated in any case, as assessed by Levene's test (Appendix K).

The normality of distributions of the sample were evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Appendix L), which revealed deviations from normality for differences in: extraversion ($p < .001$), agreeableness ($p < .001$), conscientiousness ($p = .004$), neuroticism ($p < .001$) and openness ($p < .001$). The assumption of normality was also violated in the case of Adaptable Self scores ($p = .002$).

3.3.3 Hypotheses

Hypotheses one to five stated that the level of adaptable self would be related to a significant difference between the presentation of each personality trait (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness) on Instagram and BeReal. As seen in Table 3 overleaf, no significant difference was observed for any of the five traits. Therefore, hypotheses one to five are not supported.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analyses of Variance for the Difference in Personality Traits Based on Adaptable Self Scores

Adaptable Self Score	Low		Moderate		High		*F*(1, 134)	*p*	*1-β*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Diff. Extraversion	-.36	2.88	-.18	3.08	.76	2.86	1.55	.216	.140
Diff.Agreeableness	.21	1.94	-.08	1.74	.33	1.91	.685	.506	.053
Diff.Conscientious	.25	1.92	.42	1.87	.26	2.32	.119	.888	.016
Diff. Neuroticism	.43	1.64	.20	2.08	.94	2.21	1.53	.220	.138
Diff. Openness	.36	1.88	.28	1.64	.88	1.93	1.36	.261	.118

Box plots reporting the means of each group and variable are also displayed (Appendix M).

3.3.4 Paired Samples t-tests

Five paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare the means of the five personality traits within the context of Instagram and BeReal. The alpha level had been set to .01, as multiple t-tests had been conducted (Appendix N). The normality of distributions was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which revealed deviations from normality for the total personality scores of each online platform (p<.05). The findings of the five paired sample t-test are displayed in Table 4 overleaf.

Table 4

Results of the paired samples t-test comparing means of personality traits across online platforms

Online platform	*Be Real **		*Instagram **		*t(136)*	*p*	*Cohen's d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Extraversion	*6.83*	*2.149*	*6.84*	*2.20*	*-.03*	*.976*	*.005*
Agreeableness	*7.75*	*1.365*	*7.83*	*1.625*	*-.517*	*.606*	*.053*
Conscientiousness	*6.28*	*1.623*	*6.62*	*1.659*	*-2.047*	*.043*	*.207*
Neuroticism	*7.41*	*1.797*	*7.83*	*1.667*	*-2.428*	*.016*	*.242*
Openness	*7.29*	*1.628*	*7.73*	*1.379*	*-2.926*	*.004***	*.291*

**n=137, **p <.01*

3.3.5 Hypotheses

Hypothesis six, seven, and eight stated that there would be a difference in the means of Instagram and BeReal extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Results indicated no statistically significant difference between the means, and therefore the null hypothesis is retained.

Hypothesis nine stated that there would be a difference in the means of Instagram (*M* =7.83, *SD* = 1.67) and BeReal (*M* = 7.41, *SD* = 1.80) neuroticism. The paired samples t-test indicated that the hypothesis was approaching significance (*t*(136) = -2.43, *p* = .016), however, as the alpha level was set to .01, the null hypothesis was retained.

Hypothesis ten stated that there would be a difference in the means of Instagram (*M* = 7.73, *SD* = 1.38) and BeReal (*M* = 7.29, *SD* = 1.63) openness. This hypothesis was accepted, as the paired samples t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between means of the two platforms (*t*(136) = -2.93, *p* = .004, *d* = .291).

Discussion

Discussion

4.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the link between self-adaptiveness and presentation of personality traits on Instagram and BeReal. Few previous studies have examined self-presentation across multiple platforms online. No significant difference was observed for participants on their difference in personality presentation, based on adaptable self-scores. There was also no significant difference between presentations of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. However, there was a difference for the participants in openness presentation on Instagram.

Hypotheses 1 to 5 were not supported, as no significant difference was found for the participants on their differences in personality presentation online, based on adaptable self-scores (low, moderate, high). This suggests that self-adaptiveness is not a key indicator when predicting differences in personality presentation between online platforms. IG is typically quite curated, while BR encourages authenticity. These apps were deliberately chosen for the current study due to this difference in function, with the intention of observing large differences between platforms. However, this was not the case, as the frequency with which individuals engage with BR may limit their ability to display full selves, leading to a shallow and curated self-presentation. These findings contradicted the concept of the Adaptable Self (Strimbu et al., 2021) which suggests adults present multiple personas online as a form of escapism. Research by Strimbu and O'Connell (2019) may explain this, suggesting that SCC is the greatest predictor of variances in OSP when controlling for age. Participants of the current study may have had consistent levels of SCC collectively.

Hypotheses 6-9 stated that there would be differences in presentation of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, respectively, between IG and BR. No significant differences for participants between IG and BR presentations of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, or neuroticism was observed. Zheng et al. (2020) highlighted the influence of strength ties to perceived audiences on self-presentation, which may help explain these results. Despite differences in platform functionality, participants of the current study may have held similar strength ties to

perceived audiences on each, therefore presentations remain unchanged as the potential of discrepancies between presentations becoming evident increases. Further investigations should therefore control for ties to perceived audiences as a co-variate.

Hypothesis 10 stated that there would be differences in openness presentations between the IG and BR which was supported as participants reported higher openness on IG. Harris and Bardey (2019) stated that participants reported higher openness when evaluating self-presentation on IG while others rated them less favourably. This was reportedly due to engagement with idealised self-presentation over true self. Results of the current study should be interpreted with caution despite this link, due to small observed effect size.

4.2 Strengths and Limitations of Current Study

The current study aimed to compensate for a lack of recent research investigating adaptable self and personality traits across multiple online platforms. This study challenges the assumption that individuals present differently in online spaces due to a plethora of factors, minimising adaptable self as a factor, narrowing the scope in this area of research.

Additionally, the clear, and well-defined research questions were a considerable strength of this study, as it ensured that the study remained focused and replicable. Design, data collection and analyses were also narrowly focused which reinforces the validity of results. Furthermore, the use of well-established scales, such as the POSSA and TIPI, reduces measurement error and increases internal validity (Pagano, 2012).

However, a major limitation of this study was the reliance on self-reporting. Self-reporting increases the risk of social desirability bias, which is the risk of participants underreporting undesirable traits (Meriac & Gorman, 2017) which may lead to inaccurate results. This may undermine validity, both internal and external, and reliability of the study (Pagano, 2012). Additionally, a further limitation of the current study was that it did not test for baseline personality presentation or offline presentation. This would have enabled the incorporation of the other aspects of the POSSA, such as Authentic Self, increasing the scope of the study.

Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha scores of the TIPI scale were low, with the exception of extraversion, calling into question reliability of results for the other personality traits as they may not be accurate or consistent (Pagano, 2012). Despite frequently having low reliability scores the TIPI correlates well with longer measures of personality, which indicates it is a valid measure that captures the Big Five Personality traits well (Gosling et al., 2003). In addition, despite hypothesis 10 reporting significance, the observed effect size was small indicating limited practical applications of this finding.

4.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Findings

The results of the current study challenged the assumption that people present differently on different online spaces and indicates that adaptable self may not be a key factor in predicting differing self-presentations of personality online. This could be due to an overall high level of SCC within the sample, as low SCC may predict varying self-presentations across platforms (Fullwood et al., 2016). Future research should examine this controlling for SCC. Additionally, the current study revealed that there was no significant difference in extraversion between platforms (IG/BR). This suggests that individuals with lower levels of extraversion present differently online (Michikyan et al., 2014). Furthermore, the sample may have contained a disproportionate number of extraverts, as Table 2 reports min and max scores which indicate the mean for both IG and BR were relatively high.

The difference in neuroticism between IG and BR was not significant. However, the result approached significance. With a larger sample size, a statistically significant result may have been attained. Interestingly, trait neuroticism was higher on IG than on BR. This was unexpected as IG has been regarded as more carefully curated (Huang & Vitak, 2022) compared to BR and the timed, snapshot nature of its posts. This may be explained by the rise in popularity of memes depicting humorous aspects of personal difficulties online as a form of emotional management (Akram & Drabble, 2022).

The current study indicated that trait openness presentation was higher on IG than on BR. Trait openness is associated with intelligence, curiosity, and creativity (Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2019), which are considered desirable traits in both online and offline spaces. However, trait openness is also associated with oversharing of personal information online

(Hadlington, et al., 2020), and higher online engagement in general (Correa et al., 2010). This may support Akram and Drabble's (2022) view of memes and personal difficulties: individuals with higher openness are more likely to self-disclose, overshare, and therefore, may engage with this form of dark internet humour.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should aim to control social desirability bias, for instance by reducing reliance on self-reporting methods. Furthermore, in addition to measuring differences in personality between online platforms, future research could incorporate baseline personality presentations to investigate these differences in more depth.

Additionally, it is advisable that future research use a longer measure of personality to increase the reliability of the results. In conjunction with this, future research should aim to collect a larger sample size, as this will not only increase the likelihood of equality of distribution within groups, but this will also increase the statistical power of the study (Pagano, 2012). Furthermore, overrecruiting to a large degree may help negate the effect of drop-off from using a longer personality measure.

4.5 Conclusion

Overall, the current study contributes to the understanding of the differences in online self-presentation across multiple online spaces. The study indicates that adaptive self may not be a key factor when predicting differences in online presentation, though further research is needed. There were statistically non-significant differences of personality traits between online platforms, except for openness. However, due to a small effect size, practical implications are limited. Therefore, interpretation of results should be carried out with caution. Despite this, this study emphasises the importance of investigating null hypotheses, as it may provide insight into other factors which may impact or moderate the relationship between variables. While the study does not confirm many of the initial hypotheses, it should not be taken that they are incorrect. Rather it indicates the need for future research to explore the possibilities of co-variate aspects in regard to adaptable self, as well as correlations between personality traits and specific online factors to fully understand online self-presentation.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Approval

From: Grainne Kirwan <Grainne.Kirwan@iadt.ie>
Sent: Sunday, November 27, 2022 12:30 PM
To: Nicola Fox-Hamilton <Nicola.Fox-Hamilton@iadt.ie>
Subject: RE: Melissa Murphy Amber route ethics

Dear Nicola

Thank you for forwarding the ethics application from Melissa Murphy.

The amber route project entitled "An Investigation into Adaptive Self Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces " has been approved by the Psychology Ethics Committee and the student may proceed with data collection whenever you deem them to be ready.

Best wishes
Grainne

Appendix B – Demographic Questions

1. Please provide us with an anonymised code which we can use to identify your data if you later wish to have it removed from our dataset. Please do so by answering the following two questions.
    - What are the second letters of your first and last name? (For example, if your name is Jane Smith, these letters would be 'AM')
    - What are the last three digits of your telephone number?

    Code:

2. Gender: I identify as:

3. Age: I am _____ years old.

Appendix C – Information Sheet

Title of project: An Investigation into Adaptive Self-Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces

You are being invited to take part in the research An Investigation into Adaptive Self-Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces. This project is being undertaken by Melissa Murphy for our major research project as part of the BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology, IADT.

Before you decide whether you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with someone you trust. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information please ask, our contact details are at the end of this information sheet. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the project?

As more aspects of life become accessible through online spaces, for example working or dating, it is important to evaluate the consistency of self-presentation in a variety of scenarios. This research aims to look at how people may present their personality traits differently on a number of online platforms, and whether those who score higher on a scale to measure adaptive self-presentation are more likely to do so.

Who is being invited to take part?

This study is for adults ages 18+ who have at multiple online platforms in which they engage with regularly.

What is involved?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked demographic questions about your age and gender, followed by a questionnaire regarding online activity and presentation. Then you will be asked to fill out the same personality inventory twice, but each in relation to separate preselected social media platforms. This study will take approximately 4 minutes.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form that lets us know you have read this information sheet and

understand what is involved in the research. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons. Choosing not to take part or asking for your data removed from the study will not impact grades, assessments, or any future studies.

What are the disadvantages and risks (if any) of taking part?

The questionnaire will be about personality and online presentation and there is a possibility that there will be questions that make you uncomfortable. You may decide not to answer these questions if you do not wish to.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot promise the study will help you, but the information we get from the study will help to increase the understanding of self-presentation online and personality differences.

How will my information be used?

Your responses to the questionnaire will be combined with all other participants' data and statistically analysed. No individual's data will be identifiable in the final report. The results of this analysis will be reported in the thesis for the BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology in the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology. This can be requested through the library at IADT, or by emailing the researcher or supervisor at N00192217@iadt.ie and Nicola.Fox-Hamilton@iadt.ie. This study may also be published in an academic journal article and may be written about for blog posts or media articles, and these can be requested from the researcher.

How will my data be protected?

Under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the legal basis for collecting data for scholarly research is that of public interest. The regulations regarding the protection of your data will be followed. Only data which is needed for analysis will be collected. By giving your consent to take part in the study you are consenting to the use of your data as detailed in this information sheet.

The data will be retained by the researcher for at least one year, and may be retained for up to 7 years if the results of the study are published in certain capacities (e.g., in a journal article). There is also a possibility that the fully anonymised dataset may be submitted to a journal and made available to other researchers and academics worldwide for verification purposes, but if this occurs it will be ensured that you are not identifiable from the data.

As the supervisor on this project, I, Nicola Fox-Hamilton, am responsible for ensuring that all datasets will be stored in accordance with GDPR regulations and those which are not submitted to a journal will be fully deleted on or before February 28th, 2030.

Melissa Murphy, Dr Nicola Fox-Hamilton, and Dr Christine Horne will have access to this data, which will be stored on a password protected computer and after 7 years will be securely destroyed. In the event of a data breach, the data protection officer will be informed immediately. You will not be fully identifiable from the data, and it will be coded to ensure anonymity.

You will find contact information for IADT's Data Protection Officer, Mr Bernard Mullarkey, and more information on your rights concerning your data at https://iadt.ie/about/your-rights-entitlements/gdpr/

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by the IADT Psychology Ethics Committee.

What if you have any questions or there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Melissa Murphy at N00192217@iadt.ie or their supervisor, Nicola Fox-Hamilton at Nicola.Fox-Hamilton@iadt.ie.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Date

15th of January 2023

Appendix D – Consent Form

Title of Project: An Investigation into Adaptive Self-Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces

Name of Researcher/s: Melissa Murphy

Please tick box:

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	□
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	□
3	I understand that data collected about me during this study will not be identifiable when the research is published.	□
4	I am over 18	□
5	I agree to take part in this study.	□

1. Having completed the questionnaire:
    - I consent to the researchers using my answers for their research
    - I wish to have my answers removed from the research

Appendix E – Debrief Form

Title of Project: An Investigation into Adaptive Self-Presentation Online and Differences in Personality Presentation within Multiple Online Spaces

Name of Researcher/s: Melissa Murphy

Thank you very much for taking part in this research study.

This study is designed to investigate how personality and self-presentation varies across online platforms. It was also designed to investigate whether a highly adaptable self correlates with differences in personality expression between platforms. You and others who have taken part will help with understanding variations in personality in this area. As there is a gap in the research so it is imperative that it get examined further as more aspects of everyday life become accessible online.

Withdrawal information

If you have any questions about this study, or if you would like to withdraw your data from the study, please contact the researcher or supervisor at N00192217@iadt.ie and Nicola.Fox-Hamilton@iadt.ie In your email let them know your unique ID code, which is the second letter of your first and last name, and the last 3 digits if your phone number. If you submit a request for data removal, all data collected from you will be securely deleted. You will be able to remove your data from the study until the 20th of February when the data will be combined and analysed. Data removal will not be possible after that date. Please keep a copy of this information in case you wish to remove your data after leaving this screen.

Data protection

Your data will be treated according to GDPR regulations. You will find contact information for IADT's Data Protection Officer, Mr Bernard Mullarkey, and more information on your rights concerning your data at https://iadt.ie/about/your-rights-entitlements/gdpr/

Support resources

If you have been affected by the content of this study in any way, the organisations below may be of assistance.

HSE Support Services

https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/services-support/supports-services/

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this research.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher or supervisor at N00192217@iadt.ie and Nicola.Fox-Hamilton@iadt.ie.

Appendix F – Ten Item Personality Inventory

Think or a moment about who you present yourself to be Instagram, in the posts, stories, comments, reactions, and other content you add to that platform. Please rate the following statements from 1-7 based on how much you identify with that statement in regard to **INSTAGRAM.** 1 = Disagree strongly, 7 = Agree strongly.

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.

2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.

3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.

4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.

5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.

6. _____ Reserved, quiet.

7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.

8. _____ Disorganized, careless.

9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.

10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.

Please rate the following statements from 1-7 based on how much you identify with that statement in regard to **BE REAL.** 1 = Disagree strongly, 7 = Agree strongly.

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.

2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.

3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.

4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.

5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.

6. _____ Reserved, quiet.

7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.

8. _____ Disorganized, careless.

9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.

10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.

Appendix G – The Presentation of Online Self Scale for Adults (Adaptable Self Subscale)

Please rate the following statements from 1-5, based on how much you identify with the statement being made. 1 =strongly disagree, and 5 =strongly agree.

1.

I very often act out different personas in certain online spaces

2.

I regularly use different personas online

3.

I enjoy acting out different identities online

4.

Being online allows me to create a new identity

5.

I am a different person depending on which online space I'm in

6.

I can escape from myself online

Appendix H – Cronbach's Alpha Tables.

Adaptable Self Subscale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.840	.841	6

Instagram Extraversion:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.758	.759	2

Instagram Agreeableness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.193	.196	2

Instagram Conscientiousness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.099	.101	2

Instagram Neuroticism:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.271	.274	2

Instagram Openness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.163	.179	2

Be Real Extraversion:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.537	.538	2

Be Real Agreeableness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha[a]	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items[a]	N of Items
-.081	-.086	2

a. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.

Be Real Conscientiousness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.424	.424	2

Be Real Neuroticism:

Reliability Statistics

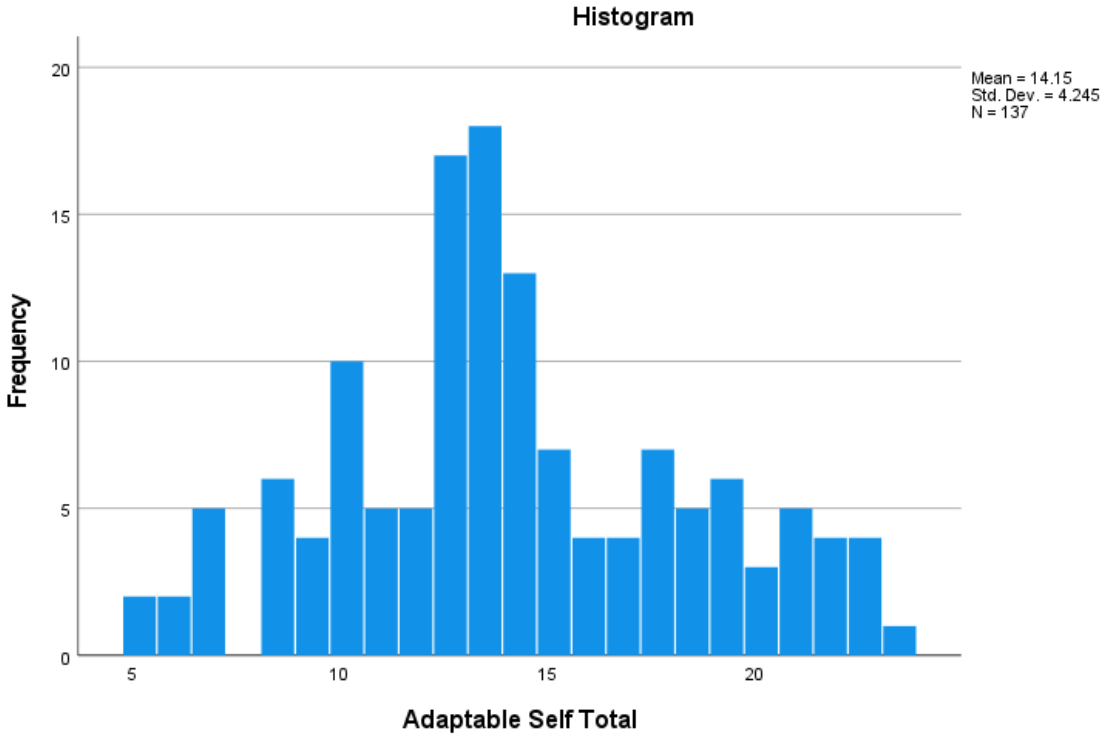
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.320	.320	2

Be Real Openness:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.334	.339	2

Appendix I – Frequency Distribution, Mean and Standard Deviation



Appendix J – ANOVA

Descriptives

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	99% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Change in Extra	1	28	-.36	2.883	.545	-1.87	1.15	-6	5
	2	76	-.18	3.076	.353	-1.12	.75	-8	7
	3	33	.76	2.166	.377	-.27	1.79	-3	6
	Total	137	.01	2.856	.244	-.63	.64	-8	7
Change in Agree	1	28	.21	1.936	.366	-.80	1.23	-3	6
	2	76	-.08	1.740	.200	-.61	.45	-4	4
	3	33	.33	1.907	.332	-.58	1.24	-3	5
	Total	137	.08	1.817	.155	-.33	.49	-4	6
Change in Consc	1	28	.25	1.922	.363	-.76	1.26	-4	5
	2	76	.42	1.871	.215	-.15	.99	-5	5
	3	33	.26	2.312	.402	-.84	1.36	-4	4
	Total	137	.35	1.982	.169	-.10	.79	-5	5
Change in Neuro	1	28	.43	1.637	.309	-.43	1.29	-3	4
	2	76	.20	2.079	.238	-.43	.83	-4	6
	3	33	.94	2.218	.386	-.12	2.00	-3	6
	Total	137	.42	2.041	.174	-.03	.88	-4	6
Change in Open	1	28	.36	1.875	.354	-.62	1.34	-2	6
	2	76	.28	1.640	.188	-.21	.78	-3	4
	3	33	.88	1.933	.336	-.04	1.80	-2	6
	Total	137	.44	1.767	.151	.05	.84	-3	6

ANOVA Table

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Change in Extra	Between Groups	25.082	2	12.541	1.550	.216
	Within Groups	1083.910	134	8.089		
	Total	1108.993	136			
Change in Agree	Between Groups	4.543	2	2.271	.685	.506
	Within Groups	444.574	134	3.318		
	Total	449.117	136			
Change in Consc	Between Groups	.944	2	.472	.119	.888
	Within Groups	533.337	134	3.980		
	Total	534.281	136			
Change in Neuro	Between Groups	12.670	2	6.335	1.533	.220
	Within Groups	553.775	134	4.133		
	Total	566.445	136			
Change in Open	Between Groups	8.421	2	4.211	1.356	.261
	Within Groups	416.111	134	3.105		
	Total	424.533	136			

Appendix K– Levene's Test

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Change in Extra	Based on Mean	1.362	2	134	.260
	Based on Median	1.168	2	134	.314
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.168	2	123.692	.314
	Based on trimmed mean	1.351	2	134	.263
Change in Agree	Based on Mean	.110	2	134	.896
	Based on Median	.079	2	134	.924
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.079	2	129.871	.924
	Based on trimmed mean	.125	2	134	.883
Change in Consc	Based on Mean	.985	2	134	.376
	Based on Median	.977	2	134	.379
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.977	2	130.048	.379
	Based on trimmed mean	1.002	2	134	.370
Change in Neuro	Based on Mean	1.301	2	134	.276
	Based on Median	1.299	2	134	.276
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.299	2	130.428	.276
	Based on trimmed mean	1.294	2	134	.278
Change in Open	Based on Mean	1.254	2	134	.289
	Based on Median	1.501	2	134	.227
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.501	2	117.236	.227
	Based on trimmed mean	1.399	2	134	.250

Appendix L – Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Adaptable Self Score

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Adaptable Self Total	.101	137	.002	.976	137	.017

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

ANOVA Dependent Variables- Differences in Personality Traits

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Change in Extra	.116	137	<.001	.985	137	.131
Change in Agree	.117	137	<.001	.978	137	.023
Change in Consc	.095	137	.004	.981	137	.048
Change in Neuro	.111	137	<.001	.980	137	.040
Change in Open	.124	137	<.001	.969	137	.004

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Social Media Personality Totals

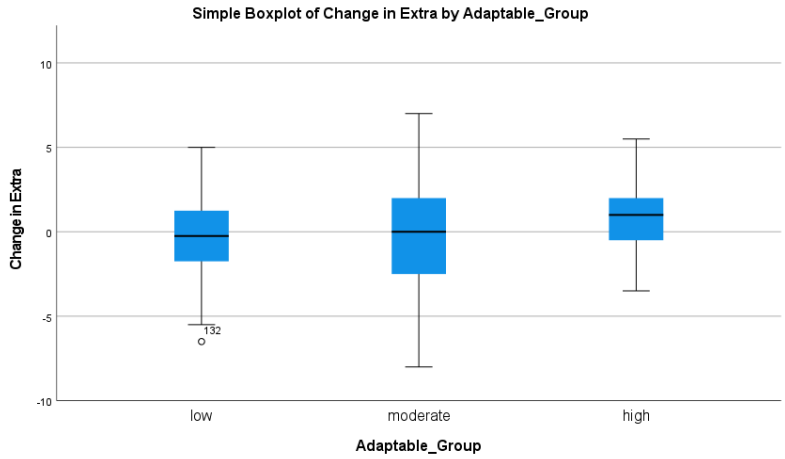
Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Insta Ex Total	.165	137	<.001	.936	137	<.001
Insta Agr Total	.144	137	<.001	.944	137	<.001
Insta Con Total	.115	137	<.001	.962	137	<.001
Insta Neuro Total	.147	137	<.001	.947	137	<.001
Insta Open Total	.114	137	<.001	.972	137	.006
BR Ex Total	.138	137	<.001	.932	137	<.001
BR Agr Total	.117	137	<.001	.966	137	.002
BR Con Total	.109	137	<.001	.968	137	.002
BR Neuro Total	.134	137	<.001	.960	137	<.001
BR Open Total	.100	137	.002	.970	137	.004

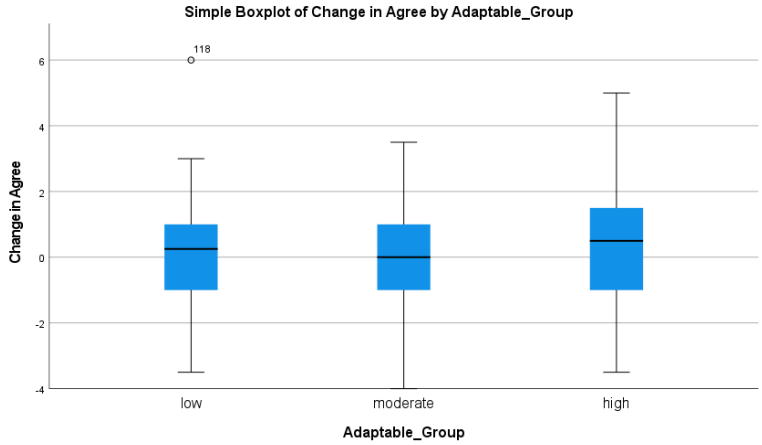
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix M - Box Plot for ANOVAs

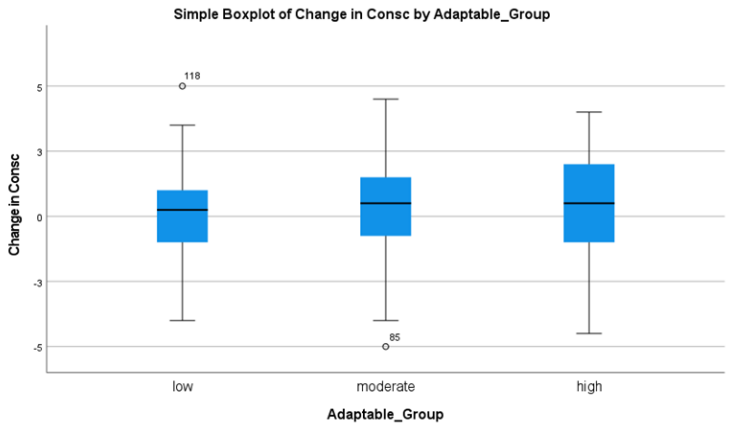
Differences in Extraversion



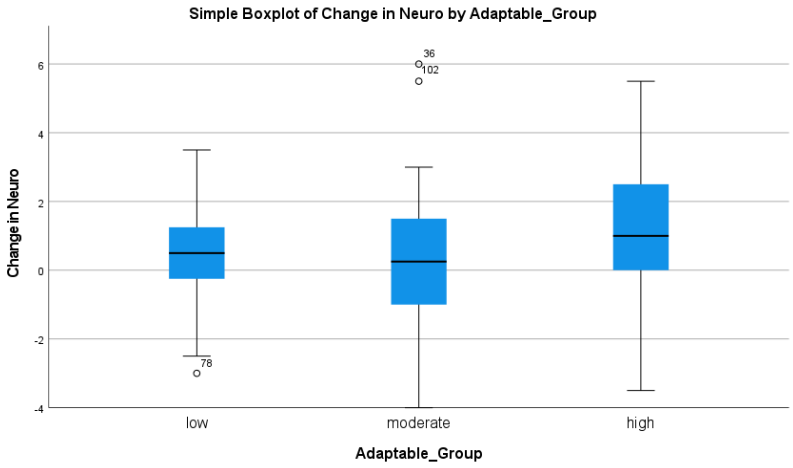
Differences in Agreeableness



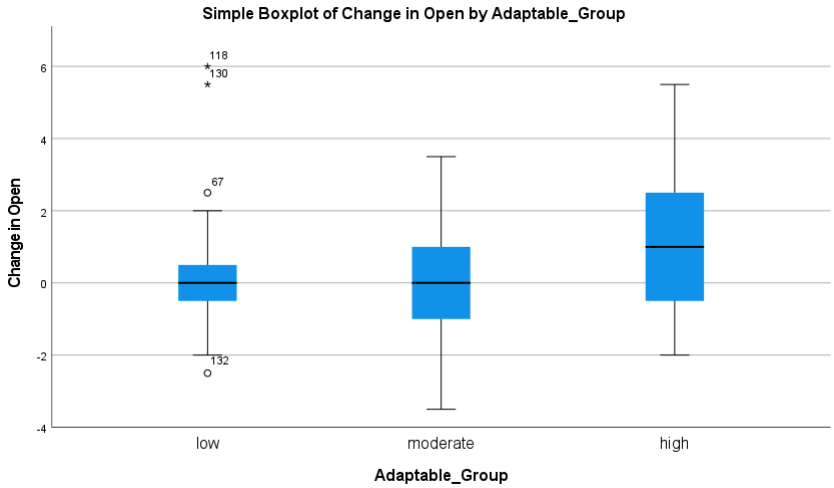
Differences in Conscientiousness:



Difference in Neuroticism:



Difference in Openness:



Appendix N – Paired Samples t-test Table

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	99% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	BR Ex Total - Insta Ex Total	-.007	2.856	.244	-.645	.630	-.030	136	.488	.976
Pair 2	BR Agr Total - Insta Agr Total	-.080	1.817	.155	-.486	.325	-.517	136	.303	.606
Pair 3	BR Con Total - Insta Con Total	-.347	1.982	.169	-.789	.096	-2.047	136	.021	.043
Pair 4	BR Neuro Total - Insta Neuro Total	-.423	2.041	.174	-.879	.032	-2.428	136	.008	.016
Pair 5	BR Open Total - Insta Open Total	-.442	1.767	.151	-.836	-.047	-2.926	136	.002	.004