Online Communication in the Digital Age
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Lecture – 06
**Intrapersonal Computer-Mediated Communication**

Good morning dear friends and welcome to this module. Today, we will explore the concepts of intrapersonal communication facilitated by digital technology. While CMC or computer mediated communication is typically associated with interpersonal communication that means communication between two or more people, intrapersonal CMC involves communication with oneself often in a digital format.

Intrapersonal CMC refers to communication that occurs within an individual's own mind through the use of computer based technology. It remains a less explored area of communication despite being fundamental to all other forms of communication digital or otherwise. One debated aspect is how intrapersonal communication differs from psychology.

Some critics consider it as a communicative concept involving language to interact with oneself, while others view it as an extension of interpersonal communication where the individual is both the sender and receiver of messages. Forms of intrapersonal CMC

leverage digital technology to assist individuals in organizing their thoughts, managing information and expressing themselves privately. They can be valuable tools for personal productivity, self-reflection and creativity. Let us explore some representative instances of such computer mediated intrapersonal communication.

- Online personal journals and blogs serve as intrapersonal CMC outlets, enabling private or public expression of thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Note-taking apps and voice/video memos on smartphones and computers offer digital tools for intrapersonal CMC, aiding in the organization and capture of thoughts, to-do lists, ideas, reminders, and reflections.
- Drafting posts, tweets, or messages on social media platforms but not actually sharing them with others is a way to use CMC for self-expression or self-reflection.
- Some people create their own personal wikis or knowledge bases using tools like TiddlyWiki or Notion. These are used for organizing and storing personal information, ideas, and knowledge.
- Task management tools like Asana, Todoist, and calendars such as Google Calendar or Apple Calendar aid in personal goal setting, progress tracking, appointment scheduling, and effective time management.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZJRcqcd-Pw

We can refer to online personal journals and blogs. As an example of intrapersonal CMC outlets, they enable private or public expression of thoughts, feelings and experiences. Similarly, note-taking apps and voice or video memos on smartphones and computers also offer digital tools for intrapersonal CMC, aiding in the organization and capture of thoughts, to-do list, ideas, reminders and reflections. Similarly, drafting posts, tweets or messages on social media platforms, but not actually sharing them with others is also a way to use CMC for self-expression or self-reflection. Some people also create their personal wikis or knowledge bases using tools like Tiddly Wiki or Notion.

These are used for organizing and storing personal information, ideas and knowledge. Task management tools like Asana, Todoist and calendars such as Google or Apple Calendar aid in personal goal setting, progress tracking, appointment scheduling and effective time management. WhatsApp, recognized so far as a popular tool for interpersonal communication, has recently introduced a feature allowing users to leave personal messages for themselves. This capability is also prevalent in other messaging platforms like Instagram and Telegram, which are well-known messaging platforms that are primarily designed for interpersonal communication between friends and contacts. Users typically use these platforms to send messages, share media and engage in

conversations with others.

However, now these platforms have also recognized the value of allowing users to communicate with their own selves, which falls under the category of intrapersonal computer mediated communication.

Benefits of Intrapersonal CMC

- Intrapersonal CMC online offers a convenient and accessible way for individuals to explore their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, providing an opportunity for self-discovery and introspection.
- Unlike public forms of communication, it is private by nature, allowing individuals to maintain confidentiality and security for personal thoughts and information.
- Intrapersonal CMC tools offer convenient access across devices for jotting down thoughts, setting reminders, and capturing ideas whenever inspiration strikes.
- While some serve as a platform for creative expression and brainstorming it also aids as a therapeutic outlet for emotional expression and stress relief.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSMfDJIzIPg

Intrapersonal CMC online offers a convenient and accessible way for individuals to explore their thoughts, emotions and experiences, providing an opportunity for self-discovery as well as introspection. Unlike public forms of communication, it is private by nature, allowing us to maintain confidentiality and security for personal thoughts and information. Intrapersonal CMC tools offer convenient access across devices for jotting down thoughts, setting reminders and capturing ideas whenever inspiration strikes. While some serve as a platform for creative expression and brainstorming, they also aid as a therapeutic outlet for emotional expression and stress relief.

Sending messages to oneself through such platforms can offer guidance and motivation. It also helps in personal growth and goal achievement. Intrapersonal CMC is closely connected to identity as it provides a medium for self-expression, exploration and documentation of personal growth. It also allows us to create shape and reflect upon our digital identities, which may align with or differ from our offline identities. Additionally, Intrapersonal CMC plays a role in how individuals manage their privacy and have a control over their online persona.

It influences how they present themselves to the digital world.

Identifiability refers to how known and distinguishable individuals are when they are communicating with each other online. It can range from identifiable, where the sender's identity is clear and persistent, to anonymous with pseudonyms falling between. In identifiable communication, the sender typically uses their real name or a consistent username. This transparency fosters trust and accountability in online interactions and it also allows individuals to establish and maintain a reputation tied to their online identity.

  While pseudonyms provide a level of privacy by concealing the user's true identity, they also create a consistent online persona that others can recognize. Knowing who the communicators are online can also influence communication patterns similar to offline interactions. Identifiable communication encourages individuals to be more mindful of their communication choice and can reinforce offline communicative patterns and roles.

- Identifiability can be enhanced through the inclusion of detailed profile information.
  - Users may provide personal information, such as profile pictures, location, and contact details, making it easier for others to identify and connect with them online.
  - In professional digital networks like LinkedIn, comprehensive profiles promoting professional backgrounds and accomplishments are encouraged to build credibility and trust.
- In the online environment, people have more control over how they identify themselves, allowing them to choose the characteristics they want to display.
- This curated identity is a deliberate presentation of one's professional background, skills, achievements, and personality traits, designed to influence how others perceive and interact with them.

Source: www. seon.io

Identifiability can be enhanced through the inclusion of detailed profile information. We may provide personal information such as profile pictures, location and contact details and it makes it easier for others to identify and connect with us online.

In professional digital networks like LinkedIn, comprehensive profiles promoting professional backgrounds and accomplishments are encouraged to build credibility and trust. People have more control in an online environment over how they identify themselves, allowing them to choose the characteristics they want to consciously display. This curated identity is a deliberate presentation of one's professional background, skills, achievements and personality traits designed to influence how others perceive and interact with them. When individuals meticulously craft and maintain their online profiles, they construct a distinct image or persona that not only mirrors their professional identity, but also wields a significant influence on their interactions and communication within the digital environment. This influence extends to platforms where verification badges or symbols are employed to authenticate user accounts, a practice predominantly reserved for renowned individuals or entities, reinforcing their identities with an additional layer of authenticity.

Disinhibition effect in this context refers to the phenomenon where individuals display more uninhibited, impulsive or aggressive behavior in online environments in comparison to their face-to-face interactions. This behavioral change is attributed to the perceived anonymity associated with online interactions which reduces the fear of social judgment, accountability or repercussions. In online communication, social cues are also either limited or absolutely absent and it leads to a decreased self-awareness and also a decreased self-control. Individuals may feel freer to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions without the constraints of social norms or fear of immediate consequences. A sense of de-individuation where individuals feel less identified as unique individuals and more as part of a group or crowd can further accelerate the disinhibition effect.

The sense of liberation enables them to delve into various facets within the realm of immersive digital spaces and test out behaviors that they may be hesitant to exhibit in real life situations. The phenomenon of self-expression leads to users often experiencing a sense of liberation which allows them to experiment with different facets of their personality. Such experimentation in VR resonates with the core concept of intrapersonal CMC. Individuals employ digital tools to engage in self-communication and particularly in the context of VR explore diverse dimensions of their identity.

Source: https://youtu.be/N5zwrZ9UlPg?feature=shared

Online support groups or mental health communities can benefit from the disinhibition effect as individuals may feel more comfortable discussing personal issues or seeking help for their emotional challenges.

Individuals may often use it as an opportunity for self-exploration and self-expression where they may experiment with different identities or facets of their personality in an online fashion. In online group settings, the disinhibition effect can lead to the formation of tight-knit communities as members bond over shared experiences and emotional openness. On the negative side, the disinhibition effect can also lead to more negative behaviors including cyber bullying, trolling or engaging in harmful online activities. It is evident in online communication where time delays and physical distance between users diminish feelings of empathy and personal connection sometimes resulting in aggressive behavior. Additionally, the perception of an online audience as a strangers may contribute to this effect as we may feel less accountable for their actions.

While the disinhibition effect can foster openness and connection, it is important for us to exercise caution and have some ethical responsibility in our online interactions to prevent harmful behavior or unintended consequences.

Pseudonym

- When pseudonymous, the message's source is distinguishable and persistent but does not represent the offline sender faithfully.

- A pseudonym is a fictitious identity or *persona* that individuals adopt, and messages can be attributed to the same source over time.

- Pseudonyms are commonly employed for various purposes, including online identities, authorship, or artistic expression.

- Unlike anonymity, pseudonyms involve using a consistent and recognizable fictional name.
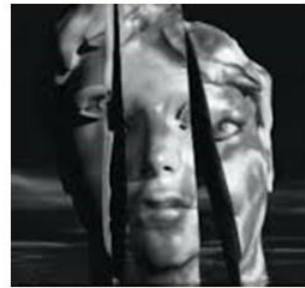
Source: www.writerswrite.co.za

The use of pseudonyms is also popular. With pseudonymous, the messages source is distinguishable and persistent but it does not represent the offline sender in a faithful fashion. A pseudonym as we understand is a fictitious identity or a persona that individuals adopt and messages can be attributed to the same source over a passage of time. Pseudonyms are commonly employed for various purposes including online identities, authorship or artistic expressions.

Unlike anonymity, pseudonyms involve using a consistent and recognizable fictional name. Pseudonyms have been used in various media including radio, literature and gaming to explore alternate identities or to protect privacy. Grumpy Cat whose real name was Tardar Sauce was an internet famous cat owned by Tabatha Bundesen. She managed her online presence and used her fame to create merchandise including t-shirts, mugs and other products. Grumpy Cat also made numerous appearances on television and even starred in her own lifetime movie Grumpy Cat's Worst Christmas Ever.

Anonymity

- Anonymity allows individuals to explore different identities and act out hidden aspects of themselves that they may not be comfortable expressing offline.
- It can be achieved through various means, such as using a pseudonym or handle, browsing the internet through virtual private networks (VPNs), or participating in discussions on social media or online platforms without revealing personal information.
- Anonymity is crucial in cases of whistleblowing, where individuals report wrongdoing or unethical behavior within organizations or institutions to protect themselves from retaliation.
  - It can therefore shield individuals from potential harassment, cyberbullying, or stalking by preventing others from easily identifying and targeting them.

Source: www.privacyend.com

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Anonymity on the other hand allows individuals to explore different identities and act out hidden aspects of themselves that they may not be comfortable expressing offline. Anonymity can be achieved through various means such as using a pseudonym or handle, browsing the internet through virtual private networks or VPNs or participating in discussions on social media or online platforms without revealing personal information. Anonymity is crucial in cases of whistleblowing where individuals report wrongdoing or unethical behavior within organizations or institutions to protect themselves from retaliation. It can therefore shield individuals from potential harassment, cyber bullying or stalking by preventing others from easily identifying and targeting them. However, it can also lead to challenges in maintaining conversational coherence when users cannot track who said what.

One of the most famous anonymous online identities is Satoshi Nakamoto. The pseudonymous person or group responsible for creating Bitcoin, world's largest and the first decentralized cryptocurrency. In 2008, a white paper was published under this name outlining the concept of a digital currency and the underlying blockchain technology. To this day, the true identity of Satoshi Nakamoto remains unknown. Whereas individuals have been speculated to be the creator of Bitcoin, but no concrete evidence has ever been provided.

Source: www.blog.internxt.com

We should also be aware of the difference between self anonymity and other anonymity. When someone maintains self anonymity, they intentionally avoid revealing personal information that could be used to identify them in real life. In many online platforms, individuals interact with others using self anonymity, creating a sense of detachment or distance. Other anonymity refers to an individual's interaction with anonymous others who use pseudonyms or usernames. For example, in situations of whistleblowing, journalists may use other anonymity to shield the identity of their sources.

Self anonymity is often adopted for privacy, security or personal preference, while other anonymity is usually employed to protect individuals from potential harm, retaliation or exposure. Both self anonymity and other anonymity can impact the level of trust, openness and the overall tone of discussions within digital spaces. Joining online gaming communities with a gamer tag or avatar that conceals the player's real identity can be viewed is an example of self anonymity. On the other hand, responses to anonymous surveys or feedback forms where the person collecting the data does not know the identity of the participants can be characterized as other anonymity. Let us also look at the difference between physical anonymity and discursive anonymity.

Physical Anonymity and Discursive Anonymity

- Physical anonymity refers to a situation where a person's physical presence is hidden or not easily identifiable in a given context.
    - This can range from using avatars that may not resemble their actual appearance to using voice changers to alter their voices, digital artwork, or logos without any direct connection to their real-life identity.
- Discursive anonymity involves concealing one's identity through language or communication patterns without necessarily hiding physical attributes.
    - Discursive anonymity is often used in online forums, social media, or public discussions where individuals may want to express their opinions, ideas, or critiques without revealing their true identity.

Source: www.businesstechweekly.com

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They are utilized in various contexts to safeguard personal information or to enable more candid and open interactions. Contributing to collaborative projects or online platforms under a collective work group identity rather than individual names is a form of discursive anonymity. This approach can foster a sense of belonging, can encourage collaboration and focus on the shared objectives or values of the group. However, it may also raise concerns about accountability and responsibility as individual actions may not be directly attributed to a specific person within the group.

Online Identity

- Everyone who utilizes the Internet, mainly social media platforms, possesses an online identity and may have multiple identities.
- Your online identity is a compilation of all the digital traces you leave across the Internet.
- The concept of identity online involves various dimensions of the self, including

  ❖ the actual self (how one perceives oneself to be),

  ❖ the ideal self (the self one aspires to become), and

  ❖ the ought self (the self-perceived as needed in each context).

Actual Self — The individual you presently embody.

Ought Self — The individual you perceive yourself as or the version of you that aligns with others' expectations

Ideal Self — The individual you strive or desire to become

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGV5OBa938I

Everyone who utilizes the internet, mainly social media platforms, possesses an online identity and may also possess multiple identities.

Your online identity is a compilation of all the digital traces that you leave across the internet. The concept of identity online involves various dimensions of the self including the actual self, the ideal self and the ought self. The actual self is how one perceives oneself to be. The ideal self refers to the self which one aspires to be and the ought self is the self perceived as needed in each context. Online dating provides an example of strategic self presentation where individuals create profiles as valuable or necessary that represent their ideal selves rather than their actual selves.

Actual Self

- The actual self includes internal aspects, such as personality traits and emotions, and external aspects, such as physical appearance and social roles.
  - The actual self is how individuals see themselves in the present and the accurate representation of who we are in the virtual space.
- In digital environments, the actual self refers to an individual's perception of their real or current identity as it exists within the context of the internet, social media, and online communities
  - While people may carefully manage their digital presence, aspects of their true selves still come through in their online interactions, such as spontaneous reactions, emotional responses, or moments of vulnerability.

Source: www.news.cornell.edu

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This process is done under the auspice of the ought self presenting attributes that are perceived in the dating context. The actual self includes internal aspects such as personality traits and emotions as well as external aspects such as physical appearance and societal roles. The actual self is how individuals see themselves in the present and the accurate representation of who we are in the virtual space. In digital environments, the actual self refers to an individual's perception of their real or current identity as it exists within the context of the internet, social media and online communities. While people may carefully manage their digital presence, aspects of their true selves still come through in their online interactions such as spontaneous reactions, emotional responses or moments of vulnerability.

Being mindful of one's digital footprint and maintaining authenticity are important aspects of representing the actual self in the digital realm. Individuals who maintain personal blogs or express their actual selves by sharing their experiences, emotions and stories find that these platforms provide an outlet for authentic self-expression and they also are able to attract like-minded audience. Apps and platforms dedicated to mental health such as therapy apps or support groups encourage users to express their actual emotions and challenges towards fostering better support and understanding. In comparison, the ought self is the self that aligns with social norms, expectations and responsibilities.

The ought self represents the ideal self in the sense of being the self that is perceived as needed or valuable in a specific situation.

 This can be influenced often by societal norms, the expectations of the community or workplace demands in online professional settings. People may conform to online norms or social conventions to align their digital behaviour with perceived obligations or expectations. Online platforms often invite social comparison where individuals compare themselves to others which influences how people present themselves to be perceived favorably in comparison to others. The ought self might also arise from a desire to maintain a positive online reputation and it can lead individuals to avoid controversial topics or post that can be perceived negatively by others. Self-presentation in digital communication entails balancing authenticity with the need to create a specific impression.

 Taking social norms into account, it is about representing oneself honestly while adapting to different contexts. Whether online or in person, individuals often form initial impressions. They are based on how they present themselves and this presentation can vary depending on the specific context such as professional, social or online friendly interactions.

Ideal self is the self that individuals strive to be and it may involve personal goals, aspirations and desires for self-improvement. People may use social media to showcase achievements, positive experiences and attributes they aspire to or are perceived as having. The ideal self online is the projection of how we want to be seen by others in the virtual world.

Personal branding requires individuals to strategically present themselves in a way that highlights their strengths and unique qualities often aligning with their ideal self. Individuals use personal branding strategies to stand out, to build credibility and

showcase their progress towards becoming the person they aspire to be. It often involves crafting a consistent narrative towards a unified and coherent image of oneself across various platforms and interactions. In the online environment, the gaps or congruence between the ideal self, ought self and actual self can have significant implications for individual well-being and relationships.
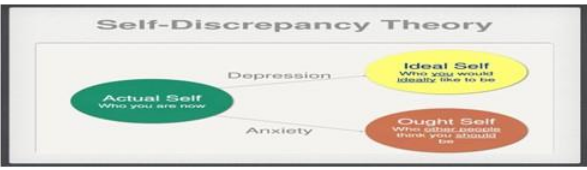
  The self-discrepancy explains how discrepancies between self representations can lead to emotional vulnerabilities.

  In this context, we would further refer to the self-discrepancy theory developed by Edward Higgins in 1987. It assigned specific emotions and effects to these disparities providing a deeper understanding of their emotional impact. So there may be initially discrepancies in self-concept, actual or own versus actual and other. Discrepancies between how one sees oneself and how one thinks others see them can lead to identity crisis, guilt and shame.

- Discrepancies in Self-Guide
  - Actual/Own vs. Ideal/Own: When one's attributes don't align with their desired attributes, it can result in dejection-related emotions like disappointment and dissatisfaction.
  - Actual/Own vs. Ideal/Other: When one's attributes don't match what significant others hope for them, it can lead to dejection-related emotions like shame, embarrassment, and feeling downcast.
  - Actual/Own vs. Ought/Other: If one's actions don't meet significant others' expectations, it can result in agitation-related emotions such as fear and feeling threatened.
- Discrepancies Between Ideal and Ought Selves
 - Discrepancies between the ideal self (hopes and wishes) and the ought self (duty and obligation) can lead to different self-regulatory behaviors, with the ideal domain predisposed to approach behavior and the ought domain predisposed to avoidance behavior.
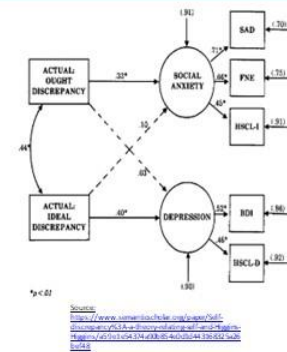
   There may be discrepancies in self-guide, actual and own versus ideal and own. In this context, when one's attributes do not align with their desired attributes, it can result in dejection related emotions like disappointment and dissatisfaction. In the actual own versus ideal other scenario, when one's attributes do not match with significant others' hope for them, it can lead to dejection related emotions like shame, embarrassment and feeling downcast. In actual own versus ought other situation, if one's actions do not meet significant others' expectations, it can result in agitation related emotions such as fear or feeling threatened. There are also discrepancies between the ideal and the ought selves.

   These discrepancies can lead to different self-regulatory behaviors with the ideal domain predisposed to approach behavior and the ought domain predisposed to avoidance behavior. Higgins theory also introduces the concept of the feared self, a domain measuring what does not want to become.

- The theory also introduces the concept of the "feared self," a domain measuring what one does not want to become.
- The availability and accessibility of self-discrepancies determine their impact, with highly accessible discrepancies producing more intense emotions.
- Self-discrepancy theory has been applied to various psychological problems, including career choice, depression, eating disorders, and procrastination.
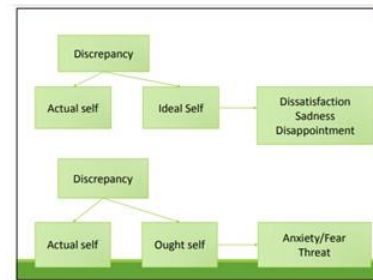
Source: www. clemencyexceptionpolar.com

The availability and accessibility of self-discrepancies determine their impact with highly accessible discrepancies producing more intense emotions. Self-discrepancy theory has been applied to various psychological problems including career choice, depression, eating disorders and procrastination. Since its inception in 1987, studies have explored the validity of self-discrepancy theory.

While some findings have contradicted aspects of the theory, others have proved further support for its validity. For example, a study in 1998 questioned the direct link between specific internal discrepancies and unique emotional discomforts, suggesting that various discrepancies can lead to a range of discomforts.

Lowest Common Denominator Self

- On highly identifiable social media platforms, individuals often present a lowest common denominator self, a simplified version of themselves consistent across multiple social contexts.

- This lowest common denominator self is often perceived as the most accurate representation of their characteristics.

- The "lowest common denominator self" is a balancing act that represents a core self consistent across different social circles and is perceived as relatively neutral and inoffensive.

Source: www.signzy.com

On highly identifiable social media platforms, individuals often present a lowest common denominator self, that is a simplified version of themselves consistent across multiple social context. This lowest common denominator self is often perceived as the most accurate representation of their characteristics. The lowest common denominator self is a balancing act that represents a core self-consistent across different social circles and is perceived as relatively neutral and inoffensive.

 People may dilute their true personalities, opinions of values to avoid offending or alienating anyone resulting in a version of themselves that is less authentic or less expressive of their individuality. It may prioritize surface level interactions and conversations to maintain a broad appeal. Individuals may seek approval and validation from others, making decisions based on what they believe will garner the most positive reactions. The concept of the lowest common denominator self is closely related to the idea of inclusive communication. It aims to ensure that all individuals regardless of their backgrounds, perspectives or identities can engage with and understand the content or message being communicated.

 Intrapersonal computer mediated communication is thus a dynamic and multifaceted domain of digital interaction.

Conclusion

- Intrapersonal Computer-Mediated Communication plays a vital role in the digital landscape, offering individuals the means to express themselves authentically, stay organized, and connect with their inner thoughts and emotions.

- It has furthermore transformed the way individuals explore and present their identities in the digital realm and is closely intertwined with authenticity, self-presentation, personal branding, and the management of multiple identities.

- However, intrapersonal CMC also comes with its set of challenges.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3rwVdS4V9I

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Intrapersonal computer mediated communication plays a vital role in the digital landscape, offering individuals the means to express themselves authentically, to stay organized and connect with their inner thoughts and emotions. It has furthermore transformed the way individuals explore and present their identities in the digital realm and it is closely intertwined with authenticity, self-presentation, personal branding and the management of multiple identities. However, intrapersonal CMC also comes with its set of challenges. Challenges like the disinhibition effect where individuals may exhibit behaviors online that they would not in real life settings, managing online identities and ensuring ethical responsibility are crucial considerations in this digital realm.

In the next module, we shall further elaborate on different approaches to digital identity in terms of its production, management and analysis. Thank you.