

## A Qualitative Study of Perceptions of Privacy in Interpersonal Communication

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### Abstract

BA review of extant literature on digital privacy reveals a paucity of attention to the nexus between privacy and interpersonal communication, particularly among university students. This study explores the evolution of students' interpersonal communication practices on Instagram, employing a phenomenological approach to examine privacy perceptions. The qualitative phenomenological method was selected to analyze individuals' subjective experiences and actions related to privacy in digital interactions. A notable limitation of the study is its focus on privacy perceptions within Instagram, rather than a broader analysis of digital privacy across social media platforms. The selection of Instagram as a subject of study was driven by its widespread use and emphasis on visual content, which was deemed relevant during the research period. The findings indicate that participants place significant importance on protecting their privacy, and while users tend to observe others on Instagram, they are more reluctant

to share personal content. The study also reveals that Instagram blurs the boundaries between public and private spaces. Although participants acknowledge privacy as an individual responsibility, they show less concern for controlling others' posts, reflecting a one-sided perception of privacy. In conclusion, the impact of social media on privacy needs reconsideration at both the individual and societal levels. The continuous online presence on social media platforms challenges traditional privacy boundaries, leading to new dynamics in personal information sharing. This study underscores the necessity of re-evaluating digital privacy in the evolving landscape of social media communication.

**Keywords:** Privacy, Perception of Privacy, Instagram, New Media.

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## Introduction

Privacy, a concept that has only recently gained widespread recognition, is among the fundamental rights and needs of individuals (DeBrabander, 2020: 75). The advent of the internet and the integration of digital communication technologies into our daily lives have led to a significant increase in the complexity and multidimensionality of this concept. These technologies, which have been adopted globally, have enabled the uncontrolled dissemination and storage of individuals' data, thereby necessitating a reevaluation of privacy from a digital perspective (Cady & McGregor, 2002: 8). The prominence of privacy as a significant issue in media and communication debates is indicative of the concept of digital privacy becoming one of the major concerns of the information age.

Petronio's Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory offers a significant framework for comprehending and examining the multifaceted nature of privacy (Petronio, 2013, 2002; Petronio et al., 2003). This theory posits that individuals formulate regulations to determine the recipients, timing, and extent of the disclosure of personal information. Through these regulations, privacy is not only safeguarded but also shared. Nevertheless, the rapid advancements in technology have led to the erosion of the applicability and effectiveness of these regulations. Digital platforms necessitate that individuals redefine the boundaries of privacy and question their capacity to manage these boundaries effectively.

Privacy is widely regarded as a fundamental human right in modern discourse, yet in today's digitalized world, perceptions of this right are contested. Petronio's theory analyzes individuals' views and strategies on privacy management to understand this construct, positing that privacy is a "dynamic process" and that individuals can change their privacy preferences depending on environmental factors and relational situations (2002). To illustrate this point, consider the use of social media platforms, where individuals can choose to make their personal information accessible to a broader audience, while also imposing constraints through rules and boundaries. However, it is important to note that these rules are susceptible to being violated by technological infrastructure and platform policies.

In this framework, privacy is shaped by individuals' need for autonomy and independence. However, the proliferation of digital technologies and the increase in the use of social media have created a change in the nature of privacy, thereby bringing the concept of social privacy to the forefront (Treppe & Masur, 2023: 26). Social privacy, therefore, can be defined as a concept encompassing the privacy boundaries of individuals in their social interactions, indicating that personal information has reached a dimension that is shared with wider social groups

instead of remaining only between the individual and his/her immediate environment. Petronio's CPM theory emphasizes the importance of examining the rules and practices of individuals to understand this new understanding of privacy.

The objective of this study is to examine university students' perceptions of privacy and the impact of these perceptions on the management of personal information and interpersonal communication. The Internet and digital platforms have undoubtedly led to the development of multifaceted privacy rules. Research in the literature indicates that individuals employ complex strategies to manage privacy boundaries in the digital environment. However, the efficacy of these strategies and the manner in which individuals respond to privacy violations remain subjects of ongoing debate. The proliferation of social media and the uncontrolled circulation of digital data underscore the necessity for further research on how privacy is handled in both the individual and societal dimensions.

## Background the Concept

The notion of privacy has assumed significant importance with the advent of the distinction between private and public spheres, as well as the mounting emphasis on the distinction between what ought to be divulged and what ought to be concealed. David Vincent contends that the extant literature on privacy, to a considerable extent, emerged in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, and that the period preceding that can be characterized as the middle age of privacy (Vincent, 2022: 11). The legal and moral underpinnings of the concept have exerted a significant influence on its subsequent evolution. Prior to this period, the concept was predominantly intertwined with surveillance. However, following this date, developments in the field of communication have led to a surge in research and a shift in the focus of studies on the concept.

As digital technologies have become increasingly pervasive in the twenty-first century, there have been concomitant shifts in the prevailing discourse on privacy. The evolution of social media into an integral facet of modern life has led to an erosion of privacy norms. Following the revelations made by Edward Snowden, there was a significant impact on privacy (Bruder & Maharidge, 2020; Greenwald, 2014; Rosso et al., 2020; Vincent, 2022: 12). However, it became evident that private organizations were breaching personal privacy boundaries that were beyond the scope of state control. The self-secure nature of the system has rendered it nearly impossible to prevent these leaks of privacy (Amer & Noujaim, 2019; Barassi, 2020). Organizations such as Big Nine and Big Tech have accumulated data on various aspects of daily life, including internet search history, thermostat settings, biometric information, medical records,

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and shopping habits (Webb, 2019). While numerous studies have elucidated the architecture of the system (Greenwald, 2021; Han, 2020a; Lenoir, 2023; O'Neil, 2020, 2022; Webb, 2019), the development of a solution to the problem has thus far been constrained to a theoretical framework (Rotenberg et al., 2015).

### The Relationship Between Privacy and Identity

In the context of this study, privacy is defined as the protection and development of online identities created in digital spaces and the data associated with these identities. The blurring of the distinction between online identities, public and private space, has led to significant challenges in determining responsibility for the security and control of personal data. While identity is an important component of reputation, it is also the carrier of all digital footprints. Digital movements, such as searches, clicks, likes, and shares, are meticulously recorded, thereby initiating a novel paradigm of self-presentation policy. However, unresolved challenges persist, particularly concerning privacy and confidentiality, between institutions and users.

Draper's (2019) study examines the industry that has emerged in the name of user privacy over a twenty-year period in the context of the digital image in terms of services such as protection and reputation management. The study's findings indicate that, despite the substantial growth of this industry, it has yet to deliver on its promises. Notably, there are still significant gaps in data protection.

The prevailing notion of the intimate nature of private life, that is, the idea that it should not be regarded as an object, has been rendered moot by the advent of digital media (N. Liu, 2024; Y. Liu et al., 2024). The emergence of a new image society, fostered by digital media, has effectively challenged the prevailing concepts of intimacy and privacy. This transformation has been extensively studied by scholars in the field, with notable contributions coming from Kornbluh (2023), who examines late capitalism's influence on this shift. According to Kornbluh (2023), the rise of the new image society is driven by the pursuit of ego, and the policies of transparency in digital life have reshaped the concept of privacy, deconstructing it from its traditional form. Han (2020), a contemporary philosopher, posits that transparency is both an ideology and a neoliberal apparatus, emphasizing that communication, information, production, and speed are integral to this process as it transforms into information. He further contends that circumstances such as privacy and foreignness impede this transformation. To achieve a transparent and effective system, it is essential to address these challenges.

In the digital realm, the ego finds an opportunity to manifest itself more vigorously, thereby enabling ideology to establish a foothold. Conversely, transparency is accompanied by a comparable degree of vulnerability (Crary, 2015; Han, 2021; Kornbluh, 2023). This tenuous yet, in numerous respects, vital equilibrium has led to an increased focus on image and reputation management, thereby ushering in the post-privacy era. The ideology of post-privacy in social media, as articulated by Han (2020b: 17), demands the sacrifice of privacy in the name of transparency. The development of institutions that control ephemeral content in the digital sphere is believed to be pivotal in the near future, as it will enable the formation of a significant sector. The advent of services in 2009 in the USA, designed to enhance the social media presence of young individuals preparing for university, is regarded as a pivotal milestone in the actualization of this sector (Draper, 2019: 101). This exemplifies the significance of the point reached in terms of user privacy, thereby giving rise to a substantial predicament. This issue is not confined to university applications; rather, it is regarded as one of the most fundamental and straightforward illustrations, as substantiated by research studies. Employers' digital footprint research, whether conducted on current or prospective employees, compromises the privacy of an individual's digital identity. As Draper's study notes, politicians, athletes, and artists, who enjoy widespread public recognition, are also subject to this digital image manipulation.

In contemporary society, individuals experience a sense of contentment derived from their online self-disclosures, often characterized by a sense of self-satisfaction. Concurrently, the management of online identities has become increasingly challenging, and concomitant difficulties have emerged in the domain of interpersonal communication (Capurro et al., 2013; Durante, 2011).

### Interpersonal Communication and Privacy

The advent of social networks has precipitated numerous advancements in communication skills. Concurrently, it has engendered the necessity for updates to interpersonal communication. The substitution of short messages with messaging and content delivery in various environments has profoundly transformed communication in the digital milieu. The emergent dynamics of communication have precipitated numerous updates in both the theoretical and practical domains. However, this paradigm shift has concomitantly given rise to novel challenges (Foucault Welles & González-Bailón, 2020).

Marwick (2023), an expert on privacy and privacy violations in social media, has observed that, in most cases, users do not experience discomfort as a result of these practices. In a separate study, the focus of

which was on persuasion processes in social media rather than privacy, the fact that users' data was presented to them by the system in the form of product advertisements was regarded as disturbing in a sense, yet useful in the sense that it facilitated the process (Durmuşahmet, 2021).

The notion that users are indifferent to the erosion of privacy in the digital realm or that discomfort does not manifest itself in a pure form has begun to evolve. Research that emphasizes the necessity for more precise determination of the limitations and freedom regarding user data control by systems, as well as the transition of a previously seen idea in real life regarding the acceptance of the private as private by users to the digital space, including a political dimension, is an important output.

In considering the implications of digital privacy in the context of contemporary issues, it is imperative to explore the intertwined themes of feminism, theories of power and inequality, information security, the prevention of manipulative content, and the protection of vulnerable groups. These themes have garnered significant attention and support from civil society in the realm of privacy (Marwick, 2023: 63). A predominant motivation underpinning this endeavor is the aspiration for privacy to be not merely a prerogative of those in vulnerable positions, but rather, to be meticulously crafted in a manner that ensures equitable participation in the digital realm by all individuals. This assertion is predicated on the recognition that social networks, which comprise a substantial and pervasive segment of the digital landscape, harbour the capacity to engender new forms of victimization or inequality.

As Vance Packard noted in *The Naked Society*, there is an encroachment on privacy in the digital realm, and the process of relinquishing privacy has been steadily rising since the 1960s, a period that marked the beginning of the decline of the concept of privacy (Vincent, 2022: 190). This observation underscores the necessity for increased research attention on the impact of privacy on interpersonal communication. The available options for users are largely confined to adjusting privacy settings and, in certain instances, implementing supplementary protective measures (Burgess et al., 2019: 473). A notable lacuna in the extant literature pertains to the user actions and perceptions in the context of interpersonal communication, a subject that has received scant scholarly attention.

## Methodology

### Aim of Research

Privacy, understood as the extent to which individuals can engage with each other on both physical and cognitive levels during interpersonal communication, is a two-way street. It not only protects an

individual's self-esteem but also empowers them to establish boundaries in their social interactions (İder, 2019: 111). The advent of social media has significantly transformed this dynamic, leading to the dissolution of traditional boundaries. The digitisation of interpersonal communication in the physical, cognitive, and communicative domains has effectively eliminated the boundaries that once defined these interactions (Draper, 2019; Marwick, 2023; Rotenberg et al., 2015; Trepte & Masur, 2023).

In Petronio's Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory, the boundaries between individuals' "privacy" and "disclosure" are treated as a state of alternating openness and closedness (Watkins Allen et al., 2007: 176). This theory is based on the disclosure of the private and the protection of private life, managing the boundaries of privacy in the public-private sphere through communication (Petronio, 2013). CPM is a valuable theory with considerable power. CPM is a theory derived from and based on "communication". CPM is a theory of communication that helps us understand how and why we disclose and conceal private information. It has generated a wealth of research in numerous contexts across disciplines such as computer science, health, psychology, sociology, business and government. In communication, CPM has primarily been used by researchers in the fields of interpersonal, family and health communication. However, as in other disciplines, CPM can be used to understand privacy and disclosure in contexts such as healthcare, education, social media, business, economics and organisations. CPM's flexibility as a theory helps researchers to fully understand both the privacy-expression dialectic and its applicability to real-world problems. It is important to capture all the ways in which CPM can help understand how people manage private information and identify the boundaries between disclosure and secrets through the use of social media. The term 'sharing' was previously employed as a euphemism for disclosure, with the recipient of private information being regarded as a co-owner or shareholder of that information. Consequently, a mutual boundary is established around the information. CPM delineates the capacity to establish multiple layers of privacy boundaries around shared information. To illustrate this concept, one may consider the existence of bilateral privacy boundaries, wherein the information is shared exclusively between two parties; group privacy boundaries, which pertain to the sharing of information within a defined group; family privacy boundaries, relevant when information is shared within the confines of a family unit; institutional privacy boundaries, applicable when information is deemed proprietary and thus subject to specific regulations; and societal privacy boundaries, which encompass information that is safeguarded by Security.

The concept pertains to the manner in which indi-

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viduals collectively own and oversee the management of private information, with the concomitant recognition that delineating privacy boundaries can engender a more intricate regulatory environment. The CPM perspective does not conceptualise disclosure as a unidirectional or simplistic form of communication. Instead, it acknowledges the reciprocal nature of private information disclosure, entailing a dynamic interaction between the discloser and the recipient. Consequently, the onus of co-managing the disclosure falls upon all recipients. Petronio (2013, 2002) contends that the coordination of boundaries is best achieved through the negotiation of privacy rules, facilitating simultaneous and effective management. The coordination of privacy boundaries employs three processes: privacy boundary linkages, private information co-ownership rights and privacy boundary permeability. Privacy boundary linkages denote alliances between a discloser and recipients (Petronio et al., 2003). As access to private information increases, boundaries become more permeable, with thinner boundaries representing greater openness and allowing for more effective flow of private information. In contrast, thicker boundaries represent less or no access, as is the case with secrets (Petronio, 2002).

CPM is a dynamic theory that is applied to the study of a range of interpersonal communication problems. Researchers utilising CPM have examined the following: (a) social media use (Child et al., 2012; Kanter et al., 2012), (b) stepfamily communication (Afifi, 2003), and (c) family interactions (Docan-Morgan, 2011). Turbulent conditions, such as privacy dilemmas and disruptions in disclosure processes, are important areas of research in interpersonal communication due to the intrinsically complex nature of privacy management within relational systems (Petronio & Jones, 2006). Studying the dimensions of disclosure and privacy with respect to social media offers a way to decipher the instability of human interaction, helping to understand the dynamics of relational systems (Afifi, 2003). The concept of relational dynamics is predicated on the notion of the extent to which individuals disclose or withhold information during the process of socialisation concerning privacy. Consequently, the notion of privacy is fundamentally about communication and is realised through communication. Petronio CPM asserts that individuals inherently require privacy and seek to regulate the dialectical tension between privacy and disclosure by establishing privacy rules. In principle, the boundaries of privacy oscillate between openness and closure, with the permission to observe information about oneself and to grant access to it demarcating the open boundary, and the information being private and access being obligatory demarcating the closed boundary (Watkins Allen et al., 2007: 176). The concept of privacy is subject to

constant change and transformation in the era of new communication technologies.

It has been demonstrated that individuals' privacy preferences are subject to change, influenced not only by personal inclinations but also by the structural and relational characteristics of the environment (Özbay et al., 2011: 13). Concomitant with the necessity for individual privacy, confidentiality and data protection, it is acquiring international importance in social and economic terms due to the proliferation of global information and communication technology services and increasing traffic between countries. In this study, Petronio's Communication Privacy Management Theory was determined as a criterion for evaluating the effects of individuals' social media use on their perception of privacy in the dimension of interpersonal communication. This evaluation was conducted on the axis of new communication technologies in social media, with the aim of assessing the phenomenon of individual privacy and sharing.

Privacy and sharing are often considered to be opposing concepts; however, in the contemporary era they have become increasingly intertwined. The advent of new communication technologies has served to transform the boundaries of these phenomena, as these technologies have enabled the sharing of content independent of time and space (Ashworth & Free, 2006). The present study aims to shed light on the interpersonal communication dimension, and to understand how social media influences the blurred boundaries between private and public spheres, transforming daily life practices and reshaping values. It is argued that individuals often violate their privacy in order to engage with social media, and that the concept of being social is now inextricably linked to being active on social media. The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of play.

No field study has been conducted on the privacy perceptions of Instagram user university students in Turkey in the context of interpersonal communication. In this case, while certain basic qualities such as human action, image production, communication, publicisation, private space and closed communication are being transformed into commodities, the extent to which this entire process is known by users becomes an important phenomenon that needs to be discussed (Capurro et al., 2013; Deng et al., 2011). In addition to the perception of privacy, the awareness of university students who are Instagram users in Turkey regarding the platform's role in their daily lives, their perception of public space, the relationship between the platform and privacy, the elements of the platform that contain threats to privacy, and the level of awareness about their perception of privacy in interpersonal communication can shape their usage practices.

### Research Methodology

This research employs a phenomenological design, constituting a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is defined as an empirical research approach predicated on the collection of qualitative data at the most fundamental level (Christensen et al., 2015: 402). This design places emphasis on how individuals perceive a phenomenon, how they describe it, their feelings towards it, their judgments of it, and their discourse on it with others (Quinn Patton, 2014: 104). In essence, phenomenological studies are those which are based on people's experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the world around them.

The present study examines the development of a perception process at the level of interpersonal communication within the scope of social media (Instagram) in the phenomenon of privacy. The study discusses how university students perceive the phenomenon of privacy, how they position privacy in their daily lives, whether social media poses a threat to privacy, and the effect of privacy on the interpersonal communication process based on Instagram.

### Research Questions

In order to be analyzed within the scope of this study, the following sub-research questions were determined within the framework of the themes of "participants' perception of privacy and the issues they consider private," "participants' privacy perception and awareness of Instagram," "participants' awareness of Instagram use as a public and private space," "participants' perception of threat to privacy in Instagram use," and "participants' knowledge and perception of privacy in interpersonal communication in Instagram use":

- Do Instagram users know the concept of privacy; which topics do participants consider private?
- What information do participants share on Instagram?
- Who do the participants follow on Instagram and who are they followed by?
- What do the participants share on Instagram?
- What do participants avoid sharing on Instagram?
- Where do the participants see Instagram in the public-private sphere distinction?
- Do participants see Instagram as a threat to privacy?
- How do the participants position Instagram in interpersonal communication?

In the course of the research, conceptual saturation of the responses was reached upon the completion of 13 in-depth interviews. Within this framework, a total of 13 Instagram user university students, 7 male

and 6 female, between the ages of 18 and 23, were interviewed. The objective of conducting interviews with these individuals is to ascertain the prevalence of Instagram as the "favorite" social media platform among internet users aged 16-24, as indicated by data from We Are Social (2023).

### Data Collection Technique

The research data were obtained through the implementation of a semi-structured interview form. This interview form is regarded as a method developed to ensure that all dimensions and questions related to the research problem are covered (Yıldırım, 2015). The semi-structured interview technique, a qualitative data collection method, was employed in this study. This technique facilitates the collection of rich data through open-ended inquiries (Özdemir, 2010: 326).

The objective of this study is to ascertain the impact of social media on an individual's perception of privacy. Distinct from extant literature on the subject, this study will be conducted on a sample of university students who utilize Instagram, thereby introducing a novel dimension to the research. It is anticipated that the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this field, and the findings obtained will be evaluated in subsequent studies on the subject. The study was conducted from November 2023 to December 2023, and it employed interviews as the primary data collection method. The study's scope was confined to the specific research questions and participant responses. The "Digital in 2023" report, published by "We Are Social" (The Changing World of Digital in 2023, 2023) offer current global internet usage statistics and social media statistics. According to the report, 4.76 billion people use social media platforms. According to the 2023 report, the number of social media users in Turkey has reached 62.55 million, constituting 73.1% of the total population. Social media use in Turkey is particularly prevalent among younger demographics. The same report indicates that 30% of Instagram users are between the ages of 18 and 24, and 91.2% of the population utilizes social media. Consequently, the present study's population comprises university students within the specified age range, including those enrolled at Düzce University. The study's sample is composed of university students between the ages of 18 and 23 at this institution.

Non-probability sampling was utilized in the study. This sampling method is frequently employed in qualitative research studies. This sampling method is characterized by its non-probability, which arises from the selection of a sample that is contingent upon the researcher's personal knowledge of the population or the study's objectives (Marczyk et al., 2005).

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the

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subjects selected for the research study, and their thoughts on the subject under investigation were recorded during the interviews. The phenomenological interview process is predicated on communication and interaction. Prior to the initiation of the primary research process, pilot interviews were conducted with four individuals to assess the comprehensibility of the questions. Following the pilot interviews, no changes were deemed necessary in the research questions, and the main research process was initiated.

As the data to be collected by the field could not be predicted at the onset of the research, all participants who agreed to participate were contacted. It was observed that the responses reached conceptual saturation (Guest et al., 2006) when 13 people were interviewed in depth. In this framework, a total of 13 Instagram user university students (seven male and six female) between the ages of 18 and 23 were interviewed. The participants were numbered K1 through K13 for the purpose of coding. The study was deemed an ethical endeavor by the Düzce University Ethics Committee (approval number E-78187535-050.06-354878) on October 24, 2023.

The data obtained through interviews were evaluated through descriptive analysis, which involves the systematic description of data, followed by the explanation and interpretation of these descriptions, and the identification of conclusions through the examination of cause-effect relationships (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006: 116). Following the interviews, new themes emerged that expanded upon the initial themes identified prior to the research. The findings concerning university students' perceptions of privacy and social media use in interpersonal communication, as well as the conceptualization of privacy, were then defined and described in relation to these emergent themes.

### Findings

#### Participants' Perception of Privacy

The perception of privacy among young people is elucidated in Table 1, which is organized under the sub-themes of "meaning of privacy" and "issues considered private."

Table 1. The Meaning of Privacy

<b>The meaning of privacy</b>	Personal, family and spatial circumstances
	Privacy
	Forbiddenness, forbidden to others
	Immunity
	Private life, private space
	Physical restraint
	Sexuality
	Covering the body

The participants' definitions of privacy primarily characterized it as conditions specific to the individual, family, and household. Additionally, they identified other meanings associated with the concept of privacy, including confidentiality, taboo, inviolability, private life, and private space.

P1 articulated privacy as "a person's private life," while P4 defined it as "the entrance to a person's private life." These participants further characterized privacy as secret, taboo, and worthy of protection. They underscored the individual's autonomy as the fundamental criterion for privacy, expressing that an individual should determine what information to keep private and protected.

P5 associated privacy with the family and household by stating that privacy is an area, home, or another place where people keep their personal or private information, and they emphasized the physical environment by mentioning that the act of sharing cannot be unlimited. In another definition, P7 emphasized the meaning of privacy in terms of sexuality and confidentiality by stating, "It is the closure of intimate areas and paying attention to this."

The participants' definitions of privacy were predominantly characterized by the "me" [private-subjective] dimension, with an emphasis on the personal, their own areas, their privacy, and their own prohibitions and protection. They perceived privacy as an area to be avoided and kept secret from others, yet they did not acknowledge a personal responsibility for the rights or privacy of others. The participants articulated that privacy constitutes a state of necessity and that the criterion for its determination is informed by the individual's consent. However, they appear to overlook the fact that they themselves are individuals who require protection on behalf of others. In this dimension, privacy is perceived as a unidirectional realm that exclusively concerns the self-protection of the individual.

Table 2. Matters Considered Intimate

<b>Matters Considered Intimate</b>	Family and home life
	Beliefs, views and opinions
	Physical characteristics
	Lifestyles and the way they dress
	Body exhibitionism

Among the issues considered private, the most frequently mentioned are family and home life, the interior of the household, beliefs, religious views and ideological thoughts, physical characteristics, lifestyles (eating and drinking culture), clothing and dressing. Apart from these, body exhibitionism is also among intimate issues. P7: "Intimate areas should be kept private, and it is important to be mindful of

this. No one should look at or touch these areas," emphasizing the inviolability of the body. P2 articulated that domestic environments are considered confidential and should not be disseminated to external parties, citing the potential for such disclosures to attract unwanted attention or even thieves. P2 further elucidated that privacy should be regarded as a form of security and protection, underscoring its significance in maintaining personal autonomy and well-being.

P6 evaluated privacy as "the necessity of dressing without exposing parts of the body that will attract attention," and stated that avoiding body exhibitionism is considered private. P12 expressed that privacy means "not revealing oneself, hiding the body," and expressed the covering of the body.

Social values and security concerns have been demonstrated to be effective in fostering the acceptance of family and home life as private spaces among participants. Even in the context of shared household dynamics, family matters are often regarded as private and are not typically discussed. This phenomenon is exemplified by the participants' responses to inquiries regarding their Instagram practices, including the content shared, the accounts they follow, and the accounts they allow to follow them. P3 articulated this sentiment, stating: "I exclusively follow individuals with whom I am acquainted and allow them to follow me. I am careful to ensure that my girlfriend is not included in any mutual acquaintances in my posts. The participants' family members are not privy to their romantic relationships, and it would be undesirable for them to discover such information. We have taken such measures independently." This statement underscores the role of social assumptions in shaping friendship relationships, irrespective of age. The prevailing social teachings and familial expectations shape the perception of the relationship between men and women, deeming it as clandestine rather than as a matter of personal volition.

### **Participants' Perception and Awareness of Privacy on Instagram**

In the contemporary era, characterized by the pervasive utilization of social media, individuals have become increasingly inclined to disseminate their personal information on these digital platforms. This practice, whether deliberate or inadvertent, has given rise to an escalating number of violations of privacy. The paradigm shift in understanding the concept of connectivity, precipitated by social media, has transformed the individual user into a "mobile individual," characterized by their constant engagement with mobile devices. This transformation has profound implications for the protection of personal privacy, as it facilitates a paradigm shift in the understanding of connectivity, from a static individual

using a mobile device to a dynamic entity that is perpetually connected. Applications that offer services through smart mobile devices frequently request user location information, employ filtering features, and present updates with titles such as "experience" and "access." The content becomes the individual itself, and the measure of privacy is supplanted by the application's power, despite the perception of the individual's autonomy. The distinction between private and non-private becomes increasingly indistinct. Individuals express a preference for being followed and surveilled. This dynamic shift in perspective has led to a paradigm shift in the understanding of privacy, where it is no longer regarded as a protected entity, but rather as something that is exhibited by the individual (Çakır, 2015: 377–379).

The voluntary and consentful nature of social media use and the sharing of content on these platforms is a testament to this shift. However, the prevailing sentiment among individuals is that failure to engage with social media, or to share content on these platforms, can result in ostracism from their respective social circles. This perceived social pressure constitutes an invisible pressure that exerts a significant influence on users' behavior (Esen, 2018: 61). Consequently, the concept of privacy becomes detached from its original meaning, as it is no longer private, but rather publicized, emptied, and narrowed (Awad et al., 2023; Katz, 2022). As the scope of privacy diminishes, individuals find themselves with no private matters or spaces of their own.

Nissenbaum (2009: 65) identifies three categories of privacy issues in social media. The initial problem pertains to the disclosure of personal information. The second problem is when an individual shares information about another individual. The third issue pertains to the phenomenon of surveillance, characterized by the pervasive tendency for individuals to be monitored. The transformative effect of social media on privacy is characterized by a deepening of the individual's tendency to be monitored.

To assess participants' privacy perceptions and awareness of Instagram, a series of inquiries were posed, exploring the types of information shared on Instagram accounts, the followers and followings, and the content shared versus what is avoided.

In response to inquiries regarding the information disclosed on Instagram accounts, the nature of follows and followings, and the implementation of privacy settings, P12 stated, "I exclusively share my aspirations through my profile, recognizing that these aspirations are inherently unattainable through any form of capture. My dreams, as they are not documented in any form, cannot be accessed by external entities." P12 further emphasized the absence of data security on Instagram, perceiving it as a breach of privacy.

P3 stated that the information they share on their

Instagram profile includes a quote of interest, their preferred sports team, their place of origin, and the university they attend. They also mentioned following acquaintances and a few notable figures on Instagram, while allowing acquaintances to follow them. P3 further elaborated that they share their activities instantaneously, such as during vacations. They claim that they do not share intimate pictures or information about their family because they value their privacy. The subject acknowledges the public nature of the content shared on their profile and acknowledges that it is subject to scrutiny. However, the subject asserts that they do not have any privacy concerns. The emphasis on privacy as defined by the individual rather than by the individual's followers is a salient point in this discourse. The notion that privacy is contingent on bodily inviolability and that physical privacy ought to be reinforced by virtual privacy is also a point of emphasis. The sharing of intimate moments, such as special activities and vacations, is not regarded as a violation of privacy, provided that such content is shared exclusively among close-knit groups. This phenomenon can be linked to the prevalent norm of sharing content related to holidays, special activities, events, and other such occasions, which is commonly observed among individuals. This practice serves to normalize the sharing of personal information, thereby reducing the perceived significance of privacy.

The participants' assessments of privacy are predominantly relationship-based, with participants considering the information they include in their profile, the individuals they follow, and the emphasis they place on their own closeness, partnerships, values, and self-protection. These values are reflected in the statements participants make, which include friends, family, and relatives they know. According to these participants, others serve as the primary source of guidance regarding the content shared on Instagram and the types of content that are deemed inappropriate or undesirable. This platform is regarded as a space that ought to be shielded from the intrusions of others' thoughts, feelings, and observations. Nevertheless, individuals should maintain communication to the extent that they themselves permit. The concept of personal responsibility for the privacy of others and the rights and obligations related to sharing personal information remains unaddressed. The practice of monitoring and disseminating the personal lives and content of others is regarded as an inherent right, and the realization that one might be regarded as the "other" by others is often overlooked. In this context, the platform is regarded as a unidirectional space where the assessment of privacy is subjective and individualized.

### **How Instagram Use Affects Participants' Awareness of Privacy as Public and Private Space**

The user's perception of social media as a public sphere for the formation of public opinion in social life (Habermas, 2023) or as a private space as the natural domain of the individual plays a decisive role in the perception and attitude toward privacy. With respect to the question of whether social media, specifically Instagram, is best regarded as a public or private domain, the majority of participants have concluded that it falls within the latter category. Participant 2 (P2), for instance, viewed Instagram as a private sphere, stating, "I see Instagram as a private space." "It is a private space. Individuals utilize it to share aspects of their personal lives and daily activities. It functions as a digital repository, akin to a personal diary, wherein individuals chronicle their daily activities. In essence, Instagram functions as a personal digital notebook, a repository where individuals chronicle their experiences and activities". P1 further elaborates on this perspective, stating, "Instagram is a private space in itself. Individuals share content that is inherently personal and reflective of their personal experiences. While direct observation does not support the notion of individuals sharing content on behalf of others, anecdotal evidence suggests a prevalent tendency for individuals to share content related to themselves". The participants' inclination to incorporate their social media profiles into their private spheres and assert ownership over them corroborates Petronio's (2010: 181) assertion that individuals perceive privacy as their personal domain, as if it were their own property.

Participant 8 (P8) further elaborates on this sentiment, stating, "Although Instagram appears to be a private space, it is, in essence, a platform where individuals expose their personal lives to a vast audience". This observation aligns with Bauman and Lyon's (2016) concept of fluid surveillance, emphasizing the dynamic nature of privacy in the digital age.

Five participants have positioned the participatory platform as both a public and a private space, a phenomenon that can be described as the blurring of boundaries due to the intertwining of public and private in certain historical periods (Berkta, 2015: 102). The blurring of boundaries blurs the boundaries of the concept, as social media platforms are accessible to everyone and each individual has the power to create their own content. P3: "It depends on the method you use. The private sphere encompasses the realm of personal information exchange and recreational activities, while the public sphere pertains to commercial or technological entities. P3 asserts that Instagram's categorization as either public or private is a simplistic approach, emphasizing the

ambiguity of boundaries between these spheres, a phenomenon that is also evident on social media platforms. The participant responses indicate a lack of consensus on the categorization of Instagram as either public or private. A novel finding of the study is the proposition that privacy, which is a concept often invoked in discussions about social media, can be used to position the relevant social media platform as a private space, despite its inclusion in the definition of a public space. This proposition underscores the originality of the study and emphasizes the need for further research in this area.

### **Participants' Perception of the Threat to Privacy Posed by Instagram Use**

In the context of social media, users disseminate personal information and content. Given that the content in question pertains to the individual user, the relationship between social media and privacy assumes significance. The practice of users disseminating personal data for the purpose of maintaining an online presence on social media platforms has the potential to compromise their privacy.

Individuals often become engrossed in social media platforms, losing sight of the potential consequences. These individuals, enthralled by the allure of these platforms, embark on a journey to join digital communities, often relinquishing their personal privacy to reach others and navigate the uncharted terrain of social media, where traditional boundaries become blurred (Anık, 2019: 127).

A significant proportion of participants perceive Instagram as a potential threat to their privacy. Participants articulate their concerns, citing the prospect of disclosing personal information without consent, its potential sale to third parties, and its utilization for commercial endeavors. Participant 2 (P2) articulates their concerns by stating, "Using Instagram poses a threat to privacy. They contend that the platform's capabilities allow for the misuse of personal information at any point in time. There is a risk of information theft. The potential for artificial intelligence to manipulate facial features and voices is a cause for concern. I find it disconcerting to ponder the potential consequences of such technological advancements. The concerns regarding the privacy implications of these technologies were articulated, and the technologies were perceived as a negative reflection of technological advancements that jeopardize personal information. P2's perspective aligns with the assertion by Bauman and Lyon (2016: 57) that social media platforms engage in user surveillance and subsequently monetize user data through sales to third parties and institutions.

In addition to the participants who perceive Instagram as a threat to their privacy, there are also participants who do not perceive any threat to privacy from Instagram. Participant 5, who asserted that Instagram

does not pose a threat to their privacy, stated the following: "On an individual basis, there is no inherent threat if the individual exercises discernment in determining what they wish to share and maintains vigilance in doing so. Ultimately, the decision of what to share or not is at the discretion of the individual user. When the decision is in my hands, there is nothing to reveal."

Participants who do not perceive Instagram as a threat to privacy attribute this to their own practices of making non-private posts. However, these participants failed to consider that the personal information provided during registration on these platforms and the digital footprints left during usage are processed and recorded by the platform. Consequently, it can be posited that the users of the platform are not cognizant of the perceived threat to their privacy.

### **Participants' Knowledge and Perception of Privacy in Interpersonal Communication in Instagram Use**

The protection of privacy is vital for healthy communication between individuals in society. In this context, Instagram, as a platform that challenges traditional boundaries of privacy, is of particular interest. The platform's impact on communication is twofold: it both expands the scope of individual privacy and transforms the traditional interpersonal communication process into a more individualized experience.

A notable proportion of the participants regard Instagram's integration into interpersonal communication as a fundamental right. When Instagram is evaluated specifically as an interpersonal communication tool, almost all of the participants stated that they use the platform extensively in their daily lives. A subsequent evaluation of the findings reveals that Instagram is perceived as an effective interpersonal communication tool for interacting with others, a medium that facilitates daily activities and maintains personal schedules, and a platform that fosters a sense of well-being by enabling interaction with others, expanding one's social network, and exerting influence over others.

The interpersonal communication dimension of the effects of participants' Instagram use on their perception of privacy was evaluated on the basis of Petronio's Communication Privacy Management Theory. According to Petronio's "Communication Privacy Management Theory," individuals inherently require privacy and endeavor to regulate the dialectical tension between privacy and disclosure by establishing privacy rules. In this theoretical framework, the boundaries of privacy oscillate between openness and closedness. At the open border, individuals grant permission to disclose information about themselves and allow access. Conversely, at the closed boundary, information is regarded as priva-

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te and access is not obligatory (Watkins Allen et al., 2007: 176). A collective affirmation emerged from all participants, underscoring the perceived necessity of privacy and its status as a fundamental requisite. They further delineated their access as being governed by a closed border. They further elaborated that the closed border in this context signifies the restriction of access to their account by external parties, a control that they manage through the implementation of hidden account settings.

When evaluating their experiences in relation to a negative or positive aspect of their interpersonal communication on Instagram, which they regarded as a tool for interpersonal interaction, the participants indicated that they engaged in digital actions consistent with their online daily activities and the circumstances they encountered.

P3: "I experienced a deterioration in my interpersonal communication. I published a post. This phenomenon is not without its nuances, however, as it is not without its positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect of this experience was the favorable response received from a family member. He extended his best wishes to the photograph I had shared, expressing his appreciation for it. Conversely, a friend expressed concern regarding the perceived lack of time spent with them, as compared to the time spent with a romantic partner. This prompted introspection regarding the necessity of allocating more attention to interpersonal communication and the act of sharing," he stated. In the context of interpersonal communication, they emphasized the primacy of the individual who disseminates information over the individual who merely spends time in the company of another. They further elaborated on their personal value judgments and the intricacies of effective communication management.

P4 articulated the challenges she encountered in her interpersonal interactions and the subsequent solution she devised: "My friend tagged me in one of her posts. I did not share it because I did not look good. This act of non-participation led to feelings of resentment, as if I had failed to contribute to the memory of us together. She then proceeded to expound on the concept of privacy, emphasizing its role in interpersonal interactions and the expectations that arise from them. The statement also alludes to the societal influence of the "show" phenomenon, where individuals strive to present an idealized version of themselves, often at the expense of privacy. It is noteworthy that the concern over being perceived as the best, or looking good, supersedes concerns related to privacy violation.

P9: "The concept of interpersonal communication is not fully comprehensible due to its nature, which is not confined to a specific group but rather extends to the collective. The concept of interpersonal communication can be likened to a possession that

belongs to the individual until it is disseminated, at which point it becomes the possession of all. It is important to maintain a sense of equanimity when confronted with divergent perspectives and to refrain from reacting with anger towards others. The participant's approach to interpersonal communication is characterized by a unique perspective, which they articulate as follows: "I find my own solution by thinking that if I share, I accept everything." This statement encapsulates the participant's philosophy regarding the disclosure of personal information, which they perceive as a fundamental aspect of interpersonal communication. It is noteworthy that the participant's approach to interpersonal communication diverges from the dynamics observed on social media platforms such as Instagram, where the emphasis is on the exhibition of personal content and the cultivation of a public image. The participant's statement aligns with Bauman and Lyon's (2013: 56) assertion that in the context of virtual intimacies, the emphasis shifts from intimacy to visibility, emphasizing the need to be exposed to a broad audience. This assertion aligns with Guy Debord's (1996) concept of the "society of spectacle," a term used to describe a modern society characterized by the pervasive circulation of images. The spectacle, in this sense, can be seen as a false sacrament for the masses, who, as a result of the symbolic meanings attributed to objects and images, find themselves ensnared in its spell. The display of privacy and interpersonal communication from one person to the public sphere rather than to each other is a reflection of this social understanding.

## Result and Conclusion

For the lonely modern individual, media is one of the basic means to understand and make sense of the world in which he or she lives, to be aware of social issues, to connect with other people, to create one's own identity, to communicate, in other words, to exist (Özgül, 2012: 45–50). "We shape our tools and they in turn shape us" (McLuhan cited in Rigel, 2003: 25). This statement quoted from McLuhan is working faster today (Rigel, 2003). Instagram, which opened its doors to everyone in the world with updates and additional features soon after its inception, has made the entire world more connected in a short period of time. On the other hand, Instagram has changed the way people express themselves and communicate with others, bringing different communication practices to both online and offline interpersonal communication. People voluntarily offer themselves and their own information on Instagram, share more information about themselves in the process, and are more interested in what their friends share. While Instagram offers users more control over their privacy than many other social networking sites, the Instagram ecosystem creates a

form of communication that is oriented around seeing, showing, and being watched. It may seem like a positive situation that people come together in the Instagram environment and become more aware of and interact with each other. It is a good thing as long as it does not create a society-wide exhibitionism (invasion of privacy) or a "culture of peeping," as Niedzviecki (2010) mentions.

In contemporary society, individuals often forgo their privacy in exchange for socialization, community participation, identity construction, and a sense of security (Acquisti et al., 2008; Draper, 2019; Trepte & Masur, 2023). This phenomenon is referred to as the privacy dilemma or privacy paradox in the extant literature. The trade-off between the benefits, such as socialization, recognition, and acceptance, and the privacy loss is a central theme in this discussion. This paradox, or trade-off, can be explained by Petronio's (Petronio et al., 2003; Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Jones, 2006) theory of "communication privacy management." Individuals' privacy boundaries and levels of interpersonal communication can be influenced by their own understanding of communication and their own motivational tools.

Marwick (2023: 68) contends that, despite the plethora of studies addressing various methods of safeguarding privacy in the online realm, the prevailing deficiency in the field of privacy research pertains to the paucity of attention devoted to the comprehensive and contextual nature of privacy studies, as well as to the perceptual experiences of users concerning this concept. The advent of technology has precipitated a paradigm shift in human existence and the conceptualization of privacy. While a substantial body of research has examined the evolution of privacy in the context of social media, a dearth of studies has focused on the intricacies of privacy perceptions in interpersonal communication within the demographic of university students, often referred to as the young generation (Vincent, 2022: 190). A paucity of research has been observed on the impact of privacy on interpersonal communication. Users' actions are limited, except in cases where they take additional protective measures, such as adjusting privacy settings in digital spaces (Burgess et al., 2019: 473). A paucity of research has been observed in the field of interpersonal communication, particularly concerning the actions of users and their perception levels. Technological advancements have precipitated profound transformations in human life and the conception of privacy. While a substantial body of research has examined the concept of privacy and its evolution through social media, a dearth of studies has focused on the intricacies of interpersonal communication and privacy perception within the context of university students, who represent the younger generation.

Digital technologies, including but not limited to computers, smart devices, and the internet, have become an integral part of daily life. These technologies have a profound impact on various aspects of human behavior, including thinking, producing values, and developing behaviors concerning the individual, society, and the way they perceive these entities. As a byproduct of digital technologies, social media and the virtual social space it constructs have an impact on the perception of privacy that reflects the values of the society to which the individual belongs. Technology-based changes in privacy perceptions are particularly evident among young people. Consequently, research endeavors focused on privacy must consider the evolving nature of interpersonal communication within the context of social media usage.

The present study was conducted with the objective of examining the privacy perception of young university students who use Instagram, as well as their perceptions of the interpersonal communication effects of social media use. The interpersonal communication dimension of the effects of Instagram use on the perception of privacy was evaluated on the axis of Petronio's Communication Privacy Management Theory. According to Petronio's "Communication Privacy Management Theory," individuals inherently value privacy and endeavor to regulate the dialectical tension between privacy and disclosure by establishing privacy rules. In this theoretical framework, the boundaries of privacy oscillate between openness and closedness. At the open boundary, individuals grant permission to disclose information about themselves and to whom that information is disclosed. Conversely, at the closed boundary, information is regarded as private and access is not obligatory (Watkins Allen et al., 2007: 176). All participants indicated a need for privacy and its perceived necessity, emphasizing the implementation of a closed border access model. They further elaborated that the concept of a "closed border" in this context refers to the restriction of their account access to others, with the implementation of hidden account settings to manage this restriction. When evaluating their experiences in the context of a negative or positive aspect concerning their interpersonal communication on Instagram, which they regarded as a tool for interpersonal interaction, the participants indicated that they engaged in digital actions consistent with their online daily activities and the circumstances they encountered.

This study, conducted on a sample of single students between the ages of 18 and 23 enrolled at Düzce University, inquired about participants' perceptions of privacy and its intersection with interpersonal communication. The study revealed that participants employed privacy to safeguard personal informati-

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on and activities, establishing a private sphere that encompasses individual and familial domains. The study delves into the concept of privacy, understood as a realm necessitating protection, within the context of interpersonal communication and Instagram. Instagram, an environment characterized by a prioritization of visual content and aesthetic standards, employs a service paradigm that encompasses connection, discovery, communication, and the delivery of customized advertising content. The participants reported a higher level of comfort in observing others on Instagram, while exhibiting a more reserved demeanor in their own posts. This perception of Instagram as a one-way observation tool is noteworthy. This perspective aligns with the predominant view in the extant literature that social media, a concept that has garnered significant attention in academic discourse, serves to obfuscate individuals' sense of privacy boundaries. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of the present study.

The initial contribution of the research to the extant literature is the conclusion that the participants are responsible for their own privacy and that they are not personally responsible for the content that others share without considering it private. In the context of privacy studies, it is generally accepted that the boundaries of privacy and intimacy are valid for the individual and for others. However, the research findings revealed a one-sided perception of this situation. A further contribution of the research is the observation that Instagram cannot be regarded exclusively as either a public or private space in the context of differentiating between these two dimensions. The evaluation of Instagram as both a public and private space for its intended use is shaped by the emphasis on privacy and the perception of the concept. The incessant connectivity facilitated by smartphones has emerged as a pivotal factor contributing to social media users' propensity to transgress privacy boundaries when disseminating personal information. This constant connectivity serves to blur the boundaries between privacy and transparency, thereby increasing the likelihood of information being shared or monitored.

In the context of social media, Instagram has emerged as a significant platform for individuals to share their personal content, aspirations, and sentiments. However, this practice is accompanied by a sense of pressure to gain acceptance from the platform's community. This dynamic has led to a shift in the traditional conception of privacy, transforming it from a private matter to a public exhibition. The prevalence of personal information sharing on Instagram has led to concerns regarding its impact on privacy. The platform's permissibility regarding the unauthorized dissemination of personal data to third parties, coupled with its utilization for commercial purposes, has further exacerbated these concerns.

The advent of social media platforms such as Ins-

tagram has profoundly impacted interpersonal communication dynamics, thereby raising concerns regarding the safeguarding of privacy and the establishment of a balanced exchange of information among individuals. Privacy can be conceptualized as a fundamental right, while communication can be regarded as a necessity. The present study is of particular significance as it delves into both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the intricacies of privacy awareness, shedding light on its implications for interpersonal communication and communication practices. The balancing act between privacy and disclosure is not confined solely to close personal relationships; it is a universal challenge that permeates various aspects of human interaction. The present theory can be applied to address questions related to the decision-making process concerning the disclosure of information on social media and online social networks. It is recommended that the CPM be applied to other samples, employing a theoretical perspective that facilitates a more profound understanding of the types of information individuals disclose, the information they maintain private, and the manner in which private information is processed across different groups of people.

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