

Why do we overshare? An exploratory study on the phenomenon of oversharing in a sample of Italian adolescents and young adults

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In the digital age, sharing frequent updates and content about one's private life is highly prevalent among adolescents. The construct of oversharing refers to excessive sharing behaviour in terms of frequency and intimacy of information.

Background: Despite the relevance and potential negative consequences, oversharing remains under-investigated in the literature. This study explores oversharing in an Italian sample of adolescents and young adults, examining its features and its psychological and demographic correlates (self-esteem, loneliness, interpersonal difficulties and problematic social media use).

Methods: Data were collected via an online self-report questionnaire, which included the Online Oversharing Inventory, UCLA-Loneliness Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Inventory of Interpersonal Problems, Social Media Disorder Scale, and custom items. A total of 262 responses were collected (71.4% female; average age 20.67, SD = 3.08). Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were conducted.

Results: The OOI scale results show that 12.6% of participants shared most private life events online, and 24.8% felt nothing was too personal to post. Teenagers showed a tendency to overshare more than young adults. No significant gender differences emerged, though females shared more detailed content about location, participants, and emotions. Certain interpersonal difficulties (Intrusive-Needy, Domineering-Controlling, Overly Accommodating-Exploitable, Non-assertive, Self-sacrificing-Overly nurturant) and problematic social media use were significantly linked to oversharing. No associations were found with self-esteem and loneliness.

Conclusions: This research reflects on the relationship between oversharing and its antecedents, and whether this construct is toxic or consistent with evolutionary needs. The findings may prompt further studies on oversharing and its potential risks.

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Primary authors: Prof. FRISIELLO, Antonella; Prof. FORRESI, Barbara; GIOBBIO, Francesca

Presenter: GIOBBIO, Francesca

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