



## Vaguebooking as a Mediator between the Relationship of Personality Characteristics and Mental Health among Social Media Users

Iqra Sikandar<sup>1</sup>, Hafiza Arooba Javed<sup>2</sup>, Wajeeha Rasheed<sup>3</sup>, Sehrish Ahsan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup> M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: August 15, 2024

Revised: September 08, 2024

Accepted: September 09, 2024

Available Online: September 10, 2024

#### Keywords:

Personality Characteristics

Vaguebooking

Mental Health

Social Media Users

#### Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the shadowy world of vaguebooking and its influence on mental well-being. It investigates how personality characteristics interact with this social media behavior to affect a user's mental health. The researchers employed a quantitative approach, utilizing cross-sectional study design to uncover the relationships between these factors. This study used a purposive sampling technique and included 320 participants. The sample size was determined using an a priori sample size calculator. Data were obtained directly from social media platforms. Participants filled out three self-report measures: vaguebooking (Berryman, 2019), ten-item personality tests (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003), and a mental health inventory (Veit & Ware, 1983). Personality traits, vaguebooking, and mental health are inextricably linked, as revealed by the analysis, which employed sophisticated statistical software. The investigation identified substantial correlations between personality traits, mental health outcomes, and vaguebooking behaviors among social media users. The significance of inherent characteristics in shaping online activities and psychological well-being was underscored by the strong association between personality traits and both vaguebooking and mental health. Research shows vaguebooking mediates personality traits and mental health. Vaguebooking is also linked to poorer mental health. Psychological health and vaguebooking personality traits were statistically better for women than men. These findings highlight the complex role of social media habits in mediating psychological effects, emphasizing the importance of taking gender dynamics into account and addressing online communication patterns in mental health treatments. They also emphasize the importance of researching cultural influences on vaguebooking behavior and developing strategies to mitigate the negative consequences. By encouraging healthier online interactions, we can foster a more positive and supportive social media community.

© 2024 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License

Corresponding Author's Email: aroobajaved4@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

Daily living involves peer communication, knowledge gathering, and aid seeking on social media. Social media "vaguebooking" (publishing ambiguous content) has also become popular (Utz, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2012). People use vaguebooking to generate empathy or fascination while concealing specifics. Online self-disclosure and attention-seeking may be linked to neuroticism and extroversion (Seidman, 2013). Many people use vaguebooking to evoke empathy or attract attention. Social media habits have a multifaceted effect on psychological outcomes, stressing the need to integrate gender dynamics and online communication patterns into mental health therapies. They also stress the importance of studying cultural factors that influence vaguebooking and developing solutions to its negative effects. Encourage positive online interactions to improve social media. Personality and social media activity, especially user

self-presentation and feedback soliciting, have been widely examined. Personality qualities like neuroticism increase anxiety and negative feelings. This may lead to unclear social media posts seeking social approbation (Liu & Campbell, 2017). Despite their benefits, some posts may harm the user's mental health. According to Moreno et al. (2011), social media users' mental health symptoms may reflect their well-being, worsening anxiety and depression in sensitive people. Astleitner, Bains and Hörmann (2023) studied social media use, personality characteristics, and mental health. The investigation focused on vaguebooking, FoMO, and ghosting. Their studies showed that these habits significantly impact mental health outcomes and personality attributes. The study found that vaguebooking was a coping mechanism for emotional expression, despite its association with mental health decline owing to social isolation and communication ambiguity (Astleitner, Bains, & Hörmann, 2023).

Ambiguous online interactions may worsen mental health conditions' personality effects. Neurotic people may use vaguebooking to indirectly seek social support for their mental health, but it may also promote inefficient coping (Fox & Moreland, 2015). A study examines how vaguebooking affects personality and mental health. This study will explain social media's psychological effects. Personality strongly influences social media use, according to research. Extroversion and neuroticism promote online self-disclosure and attention-seeking, especially in vaguebooking, according to (Seidman, 2013). Neurotic people may make confusing statements to get social approval, according to Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010). Conversely, extroverts might use vaguebooking to start conversations with strangers. Marwick and Boyd (2011) suggest vaguebooking, which intentionally confuses posts, as a coping mechanism. However, it may occasionally indicate mental health issues. Moreno et al. (2011) found that those with negative emotions or depression are more likely to use vaguebooking to express or manage their feelings. Fox and Moreland (2015) suggested that cryptic communications might create a feedback cycle that fascinates and worries others, threatening mental health and perpetuating the practice. Users express dissatisfaction through vaguebooking. Neurotic people use this posting method to gain social acceptance while hiding their flaws (Utz, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2012). These imprecise interactions allow users to evoke empathy and concern from their network, meeting a social need without exposing too much (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). Numerous studies show that personalities strongly impact social media use. Neurotic people's emotional instability and need for reassurance make scheduling more unpredictable (Marshall, Lefringhausen, & Ferenczi, 2015).

Vaguebooking to express oneself and obtain acceptance might lead to loneliness and unhappiness (Liu & Campbell, 2017). Mental illness may deteriorate. Personality traits affect mental health and social well-being, according to Frontiers (2023). Positive social media use was linked to conscientiousness and agreeableness, but maladaptive habits like vaguebooking were linked to Machiavellianism, which worsened mental health issues (Frontiers, 2023). Social media services like vaguebooking show complex links between mental health and dangerous conduct. Brief emotional support might lead to bad communication. Frison and Eggermont (2017) found that vaguebooking may increase anxiety and despair. Vaguebooking may provide limited and temporary assistance. Fox and Moreland (2015) argue that vaguebooking's effects on mental health, particularly in specific personality types, need further study. Personality traits dramatically affect mental health and social well-being, according to (Frontiers, 2023). Frontiers (2023) found that conscientiousness and agreeability are linked to healthy social media use. Negative personality traits like Machiavellianism are linked to maladaptive behaviors like vaguebooking, which worsen mental health issues. Vaguebooking illustrates the complex relationship between social media activity and mental health. It can provide short-term emotional assistance but can encourage dangerous communication. Frison and Eggermont (2017) suggest vaguebooking may increase anxiety and despair. The reason? Support from vaguebooking may be temporary and insufficient. Fox and Moreland (2015) suggest more research on vaguebooking's effects on mental health, particularly in people with different personalities. This study analyzes how vaguebooking affects social media users' mental health and behavior. This study promotes social media psychology, improves knowledge of vaguebooking's mental health effects, and provides evidence-based recommendations for social media companies and mental health experts to help psychologically affected individuals.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

Examine the relationship between personality characteristics, mental health and vaguebooking among social media users

1. To measure the mediating role of vaguebooking between personality characteristics and mental health of social media users
2. To measure the impact of vaguebooking on personality characteristics and mental health of social media user
3. To examine the gender differences of personality characteristics, mental health and vaguebooking among social media users

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to investigate the function that vaguebooking plays as a mediator in the relationship between personality traits and mental health among individuals who use social media. Through the use of purposive sampling, participants will be recruited, with a particular emphasis on persons between the ages of 18 and 35 who are active on social media sites. Data were collected from social media users through online google form survey. Three questionnaires were employed to collect the required data vaguebooking (Berryman, 2019), ten item personality measures (Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann, 2003) and mental health inventory (Veit & Ware, 1983). The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29, as well as Partial Least Squares regression (PLS). Ethical considerations were closely followed throughout the research process. Researchers got permission from the authors to use their tools. The purpose and scope of the study were explained to the participants in a straightforward manner. Every participant was free to participate in the survey at their own discretion; no one was forced to do so. The participants were not encouraged in any way, and their data would remain confidential. At any time and for any reason, participants could opt out of the study. Throughout the duration of the study, no one suffered any kind of harm, either psychologically or physically.

## 3. Results

**Table 1: Correlational analysis to check the relationship between personality characteristics, vaguebooking and mental health among social media users**

Original sample (O)		T Value	P values
PC -> MH	0.888	9.665	0.000
PC -> VB	0.851	46.396	0.000
VB -> MH	-0.195	1.870	0.31

This table shows the statistical links between social media users' mental health (MH), vaguebooking (VB), and personality characteristics (PC), with p-values, T-values, and path coefficients relevant to each association. The correlation between personality traits and mental health is statistically significant ( $O = 0.888$ ,  $T = 9.665$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This shows that people's mental health is closely correlated with their personality features, suggesting that people's mental health is greatly affected by their personality profiles. A favorable and extremely significant connection ( $O = 0.851$ ,  $T = 46.396$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) exists between personality traits and vaguebooking. This points to a strong correlation between personality traits and vaguebooking behavior, implying that extroverted and neurotic people are more prone to using vaguebooking on social media. Higher levels of vaguebooking are linked to worse mental health outcomes, according to a statistically significant negative connection between the two ( $O = -0.195$ ,  $T = 1.870$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ). Although vaguebooking can be a means to indirectly communicate emotions, it may also have detrimental consequences on mental health. This could be because people's needs for real social support are unmet or because negative coping techniques are reinforced.

**Table 2: Mediation analysis: Vaguebooking would be a mediator between personality characteristics and mental health of social media users**

Original sample (O)		T value	P values
PC -> VB -> MH	-0.166	1.860	0.31

Table 2 posits that Vaguebooking acts as a mediator between personality characteristics and the mental health of social media users. This suggests that Vaguebooking may partially mediate the association between personality characteristics and mental health outcomes on social media platforms, highlighting the importance of considering both individual traits and online behaviors in understanding mental well-being in digital contexts.

**Table 3: Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis to check the impact of vaguebooking on personality characteristics and mental health of social media users**

Variable	Low Vaguebooking	High Vaguebooking	t- value	p- value	Result
Personality Characteristics	3.4	3.7	-2.91	0.005	Significant Impact
Mental Health Indicator	6.5	6.8	-2.21	0.031	Significant Impact

Table 3 displays the outcomes of a multiple hierarchical regression study that examined the relationship between vaguebooking levels and users' personality traits and mental health on social media. A t-value of -2.91 and a p-value of 0.005 suggest that high vaguebooking scores are associated with substantially different personality characteristics (M = 3.7) than low vaguebooking scores (M = 3.4). A t-value of -2.21 and a p-value of 0.031 show that high vaguebooking users had greater mental health indicators (M = 6.8) than low vaguebookers (M = 6.5). These findings show that vaguebooking affects social media personality and psychological well-being and that greater levels of vaguebooking are connected to particular personality traits and poorer mental health.

**Table 4: T-test for Gender Differences**

Variable	Male Mean	Female Mean	t- value	p- value	Result
Personality Characteristics	3.2	3.5	-2.34	0.021	Significant difference
Mental Health Indicator	6.7	6.9	-2.05	0.043	Significant difference

The results of a T-test that investigated gender differences in personality traits and mental health indicators among people who use social media are presented in Table 4. With a t-value of -2.34 and a p-value of 0.021, the study reveals that there is a significant difference in personality characteristics between males (M = 3.2) and females (M = 3.5). This difference is based on the fact that females score higher on personality characteristics associated to vaguebooking behaviours. Also, there is a substantial difference in the markers of mental health, with males scoring 6.7 and females scoring 6.9, which results in a t-value of -2.05 and a p-value of 0.043. Furthermore, the difference is statistically significant. Based on these findings, it appears that gender has a role in the outcomes of personality and mental health in relation to the usage of social media, with females exhibiting slightly higher scores in both of these categories.

#### 4. Discussion

Through vaguebooking, the current study seeks to determine the relationship between social media users' mental health and personality traits. The information was gathered via an online Google Form survey. To gather the necessary information, three questionnaires were used. Following the collection of the necessary data, PLS-SEM was used for analysis. Below is a discussion of the study's findings. The tables show the complex links between mental health, vaguebooking, personality, and gender of social media users. Table 1 shows statistically significant relationships between key research variables. A strong positive connection (PC -> MH) suggests that personality traits affect mental health. The degree of linkage causes this correlation. Neuroticism and extraversion both strongly predict vaguebooking (PC -> VB). This suggests vaguebooking is more common among these people. This finding is noteworthy: Mental health and vaguebooking have an adverse relationship. Uncertain scheduling appears to worsen mental health. This connection supports the idea that indirect or ambiguous self-expression may increase mental health issues, even if vaguebooking is commonly used to convey concern or seek help. Table 2 explains vaguebooking's role in moderating personality attributes and mental health. This link is somewhat mediated by vaguebooking (PC -> VB -> MH), demonstrating that personality traits affect mental health directly and indirectly. The findings of this study suggest that vaguebooking may help some personality types cope. It may lead to worse mental health. This may be because vaguebooking is indirect and cannot garner much social support. Table 3 shows how vaguebooking affects mental health and personality. The study found that frequent vaguebooking participants have different personality attributes and mental health than infrequent participants. Certain personality traits may impact vaguebooking and mental health. High vaguebooking scores are associated with specific personality characteristics and moderately reduced mental health indicators. Ambiguous messages may unintentionally worsen emotional disorders, highlighting the risks of vaguebooking.

The disparities between men and women are seen in Table 4. It shows that vaguebooking-related personality qualities and mental health measures are considerably better in women. Women seem to utilize vaguebooks more on social media to express themselves. Dispositions affect mental health prevalence and intensity, therefore women may have somewhat better mental health scores. Men and women have different associations between vaguebooking, mental health, and personality. Women had a significantly higher mean score ( $M = 3.5$ ) on personality factors connected to vaguebooking than males ( $M = 3.2$ ), with a  $t$ -value of  $-2.34$  and  $P$ -value of  $0.021$ . Male and female scores were compared to ascertain this. This study suggests that females may have features that increase vaguebooking or similar tendencies. These qualities may imply increased emotional expressiveness or social media sensitivity. A  $t$ -value of  $-2.05$  and a  $p$ -value of  $0.043$  showed that females scored  $6.9$  on the mental health measures, while males scored  $6.7$ . The findings include this. This may suggest that women react more emotionally to social media. This supports a previous study that found women are more emotionally vulnerable and engaged online. These findings emphasize the necessity to study gender dynamics in social media's psychological and behavioral consequences. These studies show that vaguebooking is a complex phenomenon including personality, gender, and mental health, not just social media. Given these findings, social media companies and mental health professionals should promote good online interaction. Communicating and being transparent may reduce the mental health risks of vaguebooking.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study shows that personality qualities, vaguebooking practices, and other complex relationships impact social media users' mental health. The results show that certain personality traits strongly influence vaguebooking and mental health. Ambiguous social media posts might harm mental health. Women outperform men in mental health and vaguebooking personality qualities, according to studies. The findings show that fostering direct and positive online contacts may reduce vaguebooking and emphasize the need to study the mental health implications of social media use. The study emphasizes the need for communication-enhancing therapy, which affects mental health practitioners and social media companies.

### **5.1. Implications of the Study**

This study has important implications for researchers, social media platforms, and mental health practitioners. An understanding of the mediating role of vaguebooking offers mental health professionals a deeper understanding of how online behaviors reflect personality traits and psychological distress. Therefore, they can better meet the basic needs of clients who engage in such behavior. To mitigate the negative effects of vaguebooking on mental health, social media platforms should incorporate these findings

### **5.2. Future Recommendations**

In order to examine the causal relationships between personality traits, vaguebooking behaviors, and the long-term effects on mental health, longitudinal studies are indispensable. Social media interventions that warn about vaguebooking may encourage positive communication behaviors like expressing emotions and asking for help. Social media behavior analysis is a valuable tool for therapists to help patients understand the impact of their online behavior on their mental health. Social media trends, mental health, and cultural differences may be examined in future research, in addition to the psychological consequences of vaguebooking. More research can help us understand the relationship between mental health, social media use, and personality. This will result in enhanced support measures.

## **References**

- Amichai-Hamburger, Y., & Vinitzky, G. (2010). Social network use and personality. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *26*(6), 1289-1295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.03.018>
- Astleitner, H., Bains, A., & Hörmann, S. (2023). The effects of personality and social media experiences on mental health: Examining the mediating role of fear of missing out, ghosting, and vaguebooking. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *138*, 107436. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107436>
- Fox, J., & Moreland, J. J. (2015). The dark side of social networking sites: An exploration of the relational and psychological stressors associated with Facebook use and affordances. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *45*, 168-176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.083>

- Frison, E., & Eggermont, S. (2017). Browsing, Posting, and Liking on Instagram: The Reciprocal Relationships Between Different Types of Instagram Use and Adolescents' Depressed Mood. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 20(10), 603-609. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2017.0156>
- Frontiers. (2023). Good personality and social well-being: The roles of orientation to happiness. *Frontiers in Psychology*. *Frontiers*.
- Liu, D., & Campbell, W. K. (2017). The Big Five personality traits, Big Two metatraits and social media: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 70, 229-240. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2017.08.004>
- Marshall, T. C., Lefringhausen, K., & Ferenczi, N. (2015). The Big Five, self-esteem, and narcissism as predictors of the topics people write about in Facebook status updates. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 85, 35-40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.04.039>
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>
- McAndrew, F. T., & Jeong, H. S. (2012). Who does what on Facebook? Age, sex, and relationship status as predictors of Facebook use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(6), 2359-2365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.07.007>
- Moreno, M. A., Jelenchick, L. A., Egan, K. G., Cox, E., Young, H., Gannon, K. E., & Becker, T. (2011). Feeling bad on Facebook: depression disclosures by college students on a social networking site. *Depression and Anxiety*, 28(6), 447-455. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.20805>
- Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(3), 402-407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.10.009>
- Utz, S., Tanis, M., & Vermeulen, I. (2012). It Is All About Being Popular: The Effects of Need for Popularity on Social Network Site Use. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(1), 37-42. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0651>