

WHO, WHEN, AND WHY WE DISCLOSE DISTRESS ON SNS:
NETWORK CLOSENESS, PERCEIVED AFFORDANCES, DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS,
AND DISCLOSURE GOALS

by

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Abstract

People often feel the need to disclose their experiences and feelings after experiencing negative events and emotions. Social networking sites (SNSs) offer unprecedented opportunities for broadcasting self-disclosure. However, questions regarding under what conditions, motivated by what goals, and which groups of people tend to post distressing information on SNSs have received insufficient scholarly attention. Rooted in the functional approach of self-disclosure, the current study investigated how network closeness, perceived SNS affordances (i.e., network accessibility, visibility, and visibility control), and depressive symptoms are related to broadcasting distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via disclosure goals (i.e., support-seeking and emotion expression goals). Working with 398 college students, this study found that network closeness and depressive symptoms were indirectly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking and emotion expression goals. Also, anticipated negative evaluations as subjective risks moderated the associations between disclosure goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. The results further reveal that, although network accessibility can be a catalyst for emotional disclosures, the intimacy of one's network may play a more important role in terms of enhancing support-seeking and emotional expressions on SNSs. Another implication of this study is that the potential effects of perceived visibility may depend on perceived visibility control and self-presentational concerns. Together, this study extends the functional model of self-disclosure on SNSs and offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of distress disclosures on SNSs.

Keywords: distress disclosure, SNSs, online network, affordances, depressive symptoms, disclosure goals

Who, When, and Why We Disclose Distress on SNSs:

Network Closeness, Perceived Affordances, Depressive Symptoms, and Disclosure Goals

Introduction

After experiencing negative life events or emotions, individuals often feel the need to disclose their experiences and feelings to others (Rimé, 1995; Stiles, Shuster, & Harrigan, 1992). Distress disclosure can be defined as disclosing one's negative personal information to others, including unpleasant or distressing life events, thoughts, and feelings (e.g., Kahn & Hessling, 2001). Although social networking sites (SNSs) offer unprecedented opportunities for information-sharing, available evidence suggests that it is uncommon for people to use these platforms for distress disclosures. People post more positively rather than negatively valenced information on SNSs ("positivity bias"; Reinecke & Trepte, 2014), which may be caused by self-presentational concerns (Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012), privacy risks (Zlatolas, Welzer, Heričko, & Hölbl, 2015), or injunctive norms (perceived appropriateness; Waterloo, Baumgartner, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2018). However, people who share distress or stigmatized identities on SNSs may obtain a considerable amount of emotional or informational support because SNSs provide a useful pathway for friends/acquaintances to offer such messages (e.g., Nabi, Prestin, & So, 2013; Rains, 2018). Given this apparent conflict (i.e., social networks proving useful for distress disclosures yet infrequently used), it is essential to investigate a series of questions such as under what conditions, motivated by what goals, and which groups of people tend to post distressing information on SNSs.

Although "positivity bias" exists, recent research has shown that people do disclose their negative experiences or emotions on SNSs (Bazarova, Choi, Whitlock, Cosley, & Sosik, 2017; Moreno, Jelenchick, & Kota, 2013; Park, Cha, & Cha, 2012). For example, Moreno et al. (2011)

found that with a sample of 200 profiles, 25% of profiles have displayed one or more depressive symptoms via status updates on Facebook. Given that, the current study explores the phenomenon of distress disclosures on SNSs based on the functional approach of self-disclosure (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000). This functional approach assumes that people strategically disclose their personal information to achieve goals and control social worlds (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000). Namely, the salience of disclosure goals influences whether and what to disclose. Specifically, the disclosure decision model (Omarzu, 2000) assumes that situational cues and individual differences affect the salience of disclosure goals, which, in turn, influences disclosure characteristics and content. Based on this functional approach of self-disclosure, the current study investigates how situational cues (i.e., network closeness; perceived SNS affordances: network accessibility, visibility, and visibility control) and individual differences (i.e., depressive symptoms) are related to distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via disclosure goals (i.e., support-seeking and emotion expression goals). Furthermore, the disclosure decision model assumes that perceived disclosure risks affect the depth of self-disclosure. Therefore, the present study also examines whether anticipated negative evaluations as subjective risks moderate the associations between disclosure goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Disentangling the questions as to who, when, and why individuals publicly disclose distress on SNSs offers the opportunity to advance our understandings of self-disclosure and factors influencing communication technology use in several important ways. First, focusing on public self-disclosure makes it possible to explore distress disclosures beyond dyadic interactions and extend traditional theories to the contemporary media environment. In particular, the functional approach of self-disclosure does not specify the circumstances and individual

differences that activate disclosure goals and motivate disclosure behaviors. Therefore, by investigating the potential effects of network characteristics, perceived SNS affordances, and depressive symptoms, the study extends the functional model and advances our understandings about the antecedents and underpinnings of public distress disclosures on SNSs.

Second, instead of focusing on a specific SNS, this study examines the potential effects of network closeness and perceived affordances across SNS platforms, which can contribute to more nuanced and durable theorizing regarding SNSs, as a specific SNS can lose its popularity but affordances are relatively stable (Ellison & Vitak, 2015; Fox & McEwan, 2017). Third, this research can further advance studies on the consequences of distress disclosures through informing when and who may gain the benefits of disclosing distressing information on SNSs. Fourth, an important scope condition for the associations between disclosure goals and distress disclosures was evaluated, which informs the condition under which people are more likely to disclose distress on SNSs. Lastly, no previous study has integrated network closeness, perceived SNS affordances (i.e., network accessibility, visibility, and visibility control), depressive symptoms, disclosure goals, and anticipated negative evaluations to one model to predict distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. Therefore, by examining a such model, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of public distress disclosures on SNSs.

Literature Review

The Functional Approach of Self-Disclosure

Derlega and Grzelak (1979) proposed a functional approach of self-disclosure, which suggests that self-disclosure is a strategic behavior that people use to achieve their goals and control social worlds. In particular, Derlega and Grzelak suggested that individuals disclose personal information to achieve one or more of five goals: self-expression (i.e., venting out

negative emotions), self-clarification (i.e., clarifying a discloser's own identity and opinions on some issues), social validation (i.e., obtaining social acceptance and support), relationship development (i.e., developing and maintaining social relationships), and social control (i.e., selectively using information to increase control over their own and others' outcomes).

Based on the functional approach of self-disclosure, Omarzu (2000) proposed a disclosure decision model, which focuses on individuals' initial decisions to disclose and explains the factors affecting disclosure decision-making. An essential part of this model emphasizes the importance of disclosure goals and factors influencing disclosure goals. In particular, this model assumes that the decision regarding whether and what to disclose depends on the salience or accessibility of disclosure goals. In other words, only when one particular disclosure goal is salient in a situation, is an individual likely to self-disclose. In addition, this model assumes that situational cues and individual differences affect the salience of disclosure goals. Specifically, different disclosure goals represent different social rewards that disclosure can gain. For example, the rewards of relationship development disclosures are maintaining or increasing the intimacy of a relationship, and the rewards of social validation disclosures are obtaining social acceptance and support from others. Situational cues imply the accessibility of different kinds of rewards (e.g., a private setting is more accessible for intimate exchange than a public setting) and individual differences may affect the salience of a certain social need and the willingness to pursue a certain reward (e.g., people with low self-esteem may primarily pursue others' liking and social acceptance). Together, situational cues and individual differences affect the salience of disclosure goals, which, in turn, influences the characteristics and content of self-disclosure.

Although the activation of a particular disclosure goal is the prerequisite for self-disclosure, this model also assumes that subjective risks may influence the depth of disclosures. In other words, even if individuals have motivations to self-disclose in a situation, the perceived risks of disclosures may reduce the intimacy of self-disclosure. For example, distressing information is relatively intimate (e.g., Howell & Conway, 1990); consequently, the subjective risks such as anticipated negative evaluations of distress disclosures need to be low to make people disclose their distress. Overall, given that the functional approach of self-disclosure (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000) explains the decision-making process of disclosures, the present study uses this approach to investigate who, when, and why individuals disclose distress and the scope conditions of distress disclosures on SNSs.

Goals of Distress Disclosure

Two types of disclosure goals may be associated with disclosing distress. At an individual level, people may disclose their distress primarily for expressing negative emotions. As noted above, the social rewards that self-disclosure can gain are embedded in disclosure goals. The social rewards of expressing negative emotions can be decreased stress and distress and improved psychological and physical health (e.g., Gross & Levenson, 1997; Rimé, 2009; Zech, 2005). Indeed, research has shown that emotional disclosures can help disclosers gain these social rewards. These studies showed that emotional disclosures such as written disclosures (i.e., writing about past stressful and traumatic events) are beneficial for reducing distress and anxiety and improving well-being through expressing negative emotions, especially inhibited emotions (e.g., Baikié & Wilhelm, 2005; Francis & Pennebaker, 1992; Smyth, 1998). Although disclosing distress to others can be risky as others may evaluate the discloser negatively (Nadler & Jeffrey, 1986), it may be likely that individuals disclose their distress for expressing negative

emotions in order to gain the social rewards associated with emotional expression. Supporting the idea that distress disclosure is motivated by emotional expression, previous research has shown that one key motive of social sharing of emotional experiences is expressing and venting out emotions (Duprez, Christophe, Rimé, Congard, & Antoine, 2015; Rimé, 2007). Particularly, Duprez and colleagues (2015) found that the primary motive when sharing negative events was venting. Similarly, in the context of SNSs, research found that the need of emotion expression predicted increased negative self-disclosure on SNSs (Lin, Tov, & Qiu, 2014). In addition, the high intimacy implied by distressing information is also likely to be caused by emotion expression goals. Prager (1989) has found that people disclosing for expressing emotions disclosed the most intimate information than those disclosing for other motives (e.g., social control).

At social levels, people may disclose their distress for obtaining social approval and support. A considerable number of studies have suggested that disclosing distress is associated with the rewards of obtaining social support (Bos, Kanner, Muris, Janssen, & Mayer, 2009; Gellaitry, Peters, Bloomfield, & Horne, 2010; Pennebaker, 2009; Smith, Rossetto, & Peterson, 2008). In the online context, researchers also found that self-disclosure, especially emotional disclosure, was positively associated with social support (Huang, 2016; Ko & Kuo, 2009; Lee, Noh, & Koo, 2013). Therefore, as one type of the social rewards of distress disclosures can be increases in social support, individuals may be motivated by gaining support such as emotional comfort or advice to disclose their negative experiences and emotions. Indeed, in addition to expressing negative emotions, previous research has also shown that obtaining social support, including emotional and informational support, is another primary motive for social sharing of emotional experiences (Duprez et al., 2015; Rimé, 2007). Also, research has shown that seeking

social support is one of the primary motives for people to use SNSs (e.g., Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Therefore, on SNSs, individuals may be motivated by support-seeking goals to disclose distressing information.

Furthermore, Bazarova and Choi (2014) found that the two most primary goals for public posts on Facebook were self-expression (i.e., venting out negative emotions) and social validation (i.e., obtaining social approval and support). As noted above, the disclosure decision model assumes that the salience of disclosure goals affects whether and what to disclose. Therefore, the salience of disclosure goals of seeking social support and expressing emotions may be associated with the tendency of distress disclosure on SNSs. Therefore, the present study hypothesizes:

H1: Emotion expression goals are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

H2: Support-seeking goals are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Network Closeness, Disclosure Goals, and Distress Disclosure

Although individuals may disclose personal information for seeking social support and expressing negative emotions, these two disclosure goals may not be activated under inappropriate situations. According to the disclosure decision model, situational cues affect the salience of a specific disclosure goal (Omarzu, 2000). One of the situational factors which can influence disclosure goals of expressing emotions and seeking support on SNSs may be the closeness of the network.

Across different age groups, people often share their emotional experiences with intimate targets (e.g., parents, friends, or spouse/partner) instead of non-intimates (Rimé, 2009). For

example, the targets of social sharing of emotions for young adults are primarily friends and spouses/partners (Rimé, 2009). Therefore, when the intimacy of targets is high, people may display high levels of willingness to express their emotions. In line with this idea, Lin and colleagues (2014) have found that network density predicted increased needs for emotional expression, which, in turn, predicted increased expressions of negative emotions. Given that relationship intimacy may be associated with emotional expressions, when the perceived intimacy of SNS networks is high, the disclosure goal of expressing emotions may become salient. Therefore, the present study hypothesizes:

H3(a): Network closeness is positively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.

Network closeness may also be related to support-seeking behaviors. Previous research has shown that relationship closeness was associated with support-seeking (Chow & Buhrmester, 2011; Chow & Glaman, 2013). Namely, those who perceive their social relationships as intimate are likely to seek social support from their relational networks. In addition, a series of studies have shown that when experiencing negative and stressful life events, social support received from intimate others such as spouses, parents, and friends is significant (Kalichman, DiMarco, Austin, Luke, & DiFonzo, 2003; Licitra-Kleckler & Waas, 1993). Given that people may be more likely to seek support from intimate others and that these intimates are essential support resources, perceived high network closeness may make the disclosure goal of seeking support accessible.

H3(b): Network closeness is positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.

Expressions of positive emotions are considered as more appropriate, conventional, and desirable than expressions of negative emotions (Caltabiano & Smithson, 1983). Due to the

inappropriateness and undesirability of expressions of negative emotions, negative disclosure is viewed as more intimate than positive disclosure (Howell & Conway, 1990). According to social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), the intimacy of disclosure should be matched with the intimacy of interaction partners. Namely, with the intimacy of interaction partners increases, the willingness to disclose negative experiences and emotions would be improved. Therefore, network closeness may be directly associated with the willingness of distress disclosures on SNSs.

H4: Network closeness is positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

According to the functional approach and disclosure decision model, disclosure goals may mediate the associations between situational cues and disclosing behaviors (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000). Supporting this assumption, Bazarova and Choi (2014) have found that disclosure goals (i.e., relationship development, social validation, social control, and self-expression) mediated the effects of Facebook conditions (i.e., status update, wall post, and private message) on disclosure intimacy. Therefore, the present study also examines the mediating effects of emotion expression and support-seeking goals.

H5: (a) Emotion expression goals and (b) support-seeking goals mediate the association between network closeness and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Perceived SNS Affordances, Disclosure Goals, and Distress Disclosure

Previous research has shown that technological affordances, such as anonymity, visibility, and persistence, influence online social behaviors, including self-presentation, relationship maintenance, and social support solicitation (e.g., DeAndrea, 2015; Devito, Birnholtz, & Hancock, 2017; Oh & Larose, 2016; Vitak & Kim, 2014). Gibson (1979) defined

affordances as “inherent functional attributes of a particular object emerging in the relationship between actor and object” (Fox & McEwan, 2017, p. 299). However, Norman’s (1990) perspective of affordances emphasizes users’ perceptions and experiences with an object. Perceived affordances may be of particular importance because they can influence human behaviors. Supporting this assumption, research has shown that users’ perceptions of technological affordances vary, and perceived affordances are associated with behavioral outcomes (e.g., Fox & McEwan, 2017; Rains, 2007).

Based on Evans, Pearce, Vitak, and Treem (2017), perceived affordances are a relational construct linking the object/technology with the behavioral outcomes. Specifically, Evans et al. (2017) developed three minimum threshold criteria to qualify something as an affordance. First, a feature of a technology is not an affordance. Second, an outcome of technology use is not an affordance. Lastly, the thing needs to have variability to be an affordance. Following these three criteria, the current study examines the associations between three types of perceived SNS affordances (i.e., perceived network accessibility, visibility, and visibility control) and disclosure goals and distress disclosures on SNSs.

Network accessibility. One primary affordance of SNSs is accessibility, which refers to “the capability of using a channel, regardless of time, place, structural limitations, or other constraints” (Fox & McEwan, 2020, p. 374). The accessibility is facilitated by the persistent and continual SNS service regardless of whether individual users are active or not (Carr & Hayes, 2015). In face-to-face interactions or real-time chats, people need to adjust their pace and time to match that of another; however, on SNSs, individuals can participate in message creation, transmission, and consumption without adjustments to or considerations of others (Carr & Hayes, 2015). The channel accessibility may facilitate the perceived accessibility of one’s online

network. Namely, as most people have easy access to SNSs (e.g., on smartphones), individuals may consider others as available at any time through their smartphones or other communication technologies. At the very least, people may perceive a part of their online networks as available whenever they are active online. In particular, people may perceive the accessibility of online networks as greater than person-to-person interactions (i.e., online and offline) because adjustments to a specific person are not necessary. Under this condition, people may be more likely to solicit social support from their online network when they experience negative events because the high network accessibility represents high responsiveness from their network, which implies the possible provision of social support. Based on the possible association between perceived network accessibility and support-soliciting, the present study hypothesizes:

H6: Perceived network accessibility is positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.

As noted above, support-seeking goals may be positively associated with the tendency of distress disclosure on SNSs. Therefore, perceived network accessibility may be related to distress disclosure tendencies via support-seeking goals on SNSs. Specifically, the current study hypothesizes:

H7: Support-seeking goals mediate the association between perceived network accessibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Visibility. visibility refers to the extent to which people consider the information on a specific SNS to be visible and the level of difficulty of finding the information (Evans et al., 2017; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). As SNSs are networked communication platforms where information can be seen by members within or even outside of a network (e.g., Ellison & Boyd, 2013), visibility is an important SNS affordance, which has been found to be associated with

online interactions and message production (e.g., Choi & Toma, 2014; Oh & Larose, 2016; Vitak & Ellison, 2013).

Although some research has shown that visibility can be positively associated with support-seeking behaviors on SNSs because users are able to effectively solicit both emotional and information support from a large group of people (e.g., Vitak & Ellison, 2013), other research found that visibility may hinder support-solicitation primarily because of increased self-presentational concerns (e.g., Buehler, Peterson, & High, 2018; Oh & Larose, 2016). Specifically, individuals have the impression management needs to present themselves as competent and socially desirable (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), but support-seeking behaviors can face-threatening because others may consider support seekers as incapable and weak (Goldsmith, 1992). Given this, Oh and LaRose (2016) have found that people had increased impression management goals when they shared a stressful story on a public SNS channel compared to a private SNS channel. Namely, SNS visibility increases impression management concerns, which hinder support-seeking behaviors. Therefore, the current study hypothesizes:

H8(a): Perceived visibility is negatively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.

As stated above, people tend to share their emotions to intimate others (Rimé, 2009). However, with the increase of visibility, the closeness of SNS network may decrease because the network can comprise of diverse audiences with different extents of relational closeness ranging from close friends and family members to acquaintances and even strangers. Previous research has shown that, compared to channels with low visibility (e.g., private messages on Facebook), individuals expressed less negative emotions through channels with high visibility (e.g., status updates on Facebook), while expressing comparable amounts of positive emotions on both types of channels (Bazarova, Taft, Choi, & Cosley, 2013). Consequently, perceived high visibility of

SNSs may also hinder emotion expression behaviors. Specifically, the current study hypothesizes:

H8(b): Perceived visibility is negatively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.

Based on the functional approach of self-disclosure, perceived visibility may be associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking and emotion expression goals. Therefore, the present study hypothesizes:

H9: (a) Emotion expression goals and (b) support-seeking goals mediate the association between perceived visibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Visibility control. Visibility control refers to “the extent to which a platform affords individual determination of what content linked to their persona is visible to others” (Devito et al., 2017, p. 743). In other words, visibility control indicates whether a platform affords users an ability to control who has access to what of their private information on SNSs. For example, using privacy settings, such as boundary control functions, may improve perceived abilities to control information visibility. Although a SNS platform offers the same privacy setting functions to all users, factors such as SNSs use experiences may affect people’s understanding and use of these privacy management functions (e.g., Litt, 2013), which can result in variations in perceived visibility control.

As perceived visibility control implies the ability to control information flow and audiences, different levels of visibility control may lead people to have different disclosure behaviors (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). For example, using privacy settings predicted increased self-disclosure and intended disclosures (Stutzman, Capra, & Thompson, 2011; Vitak, 2012). Specifically, perceived low levels of visibility control may cause increased privacy risks or

concerns about negative outcomes related to disclosures (e.g., Petronio & Durham, 2015; Sleeper et al., 2013). Privacy concerns and risks can impede people from disclosing private information, such as negative and emotional information, which represents perceived vulnerability and sensitivity (Child & Petronio, 2018; Vitak, 2012). In addition, disclosing inappropriate information to unintended audiences can cause a series of negative outcomes from regrets to breaking up a relationship and even job losses (Wang et al., 2011). Given these negative outcomes, when users feel they are unable to share information with intended audiences, they are not motivated to share personal information on SNSs (e.g., Sleeper et al., 2013). Conversely, when they perceive high levels of visibility control, they are willing to share previously unshared content, such as negative emotional content (Sleeper et al., 2013). Overall, when perceived visibility is high, people may have reduced privacy concerns and increased audience control. Therefore, when individuals have high visibility control, they may feel secure to seek social support on SNSs because they are able to manage the audiences to control their impressions and reduce privacy risks. Furthermore, high visibility control may also lead to an increased willingness to express emotions because people are capable of selecting the targets to whom they would like to share emotions. Consequently, perceived visibility control on SNSs may be positively related to both support-seeking and emotion expression goals. Specifically, the current study hypothesizes:

H10: Perceived visibility control is positively associated with (a) emotion expression goals and (b) support-seeking goals on SNSs.

Given disclosure goals may function as a mediator, this study also explores whether perceived visibility control is associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking and emotion expression goals. Specifically, the present study hypothesizes:

H11: (a) Emotion expression goals and (b) support-seeking goals mediate the association between visibility control and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Depressive Symptoms, Disclosure Goals, and Distress Disclosure

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders with a lifetime prevalence of 20.6% and a 12-month prevalence of 10.4% among US adults (Hasin et al., 2018). Although people who disclose distress to others may experience social rejection (Coyne, 1976), a great number of research has shown that self-disclosure is beneficial for decreasing depressive symptoms (e.g., Horesh & Apter, 2006; Radcliffe, Lumley, Kendall, Stevenson, & Beltran, 2007). Therefore, this study also investigates the association between depressive symptoms and distress disclosures on SNSs.

According to the fever model of disclosure, psychologically distressed people tend to disclose more than those without psychological distress (Stiles, 1987). The fever model assumes that as a fever, which indicates both diseases and restorative processes, disclosure indicates the existence of distress as well as functioning as the curative factor to reduce distress. Therefore, people with high levels of depressive symptoms may disclose more distress because they have more negative thoughts and emotions than people with low levels of depressive symptoms. Supporting this fever model, research has shown that high trait anxious students had more self-disclosure when presenting an anxious event than presenting a happy event (Stiles et al., 1992). In addition, from the perspective of social skills, Segrin and Flora (1998) found that depressed people used more negative language when talking to a friend than non-depressed people. In the SNS context, research also found that depressed people displayed more depressive symptoms via status updates on Facebook compared to non-depressed people (e.g., Bazarova et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2013). Therefore, the current study hypothesizes:

H12: Depressive symptoms are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Based on Beck's cognitive theory of depression (Beck, 1963), depressed people have more negative thoughts regarding themselves, the world, and the future than non-depressed people. Particularly, depressed people may exclude positive thoughts automatically and primarily have negative cognitions. According to the theory of social sharing (Rimé, 2009), individuals tend to express their emotions to others when they have negative experiences, feelings, and thoughts. People with depressive symptoms have increased negative thoughts and feelings; therefore, people with low to medium depressive symptoms may be more likely to be motivated by emotion expression goals to disclose their distress on SNSs. Previous research has shown that depressed people feel comfortable to express their negative emotions on SNSs (Park, McDonald, & Cha, 2013).

Likewise, people with more depressive symptoms may also be more likely to seek social support online as they have increased distress to be coped with. Although a variety of research has shown that depressive symptoms may be negatively associated with support-seeking behaviors because of the stigma of mental illness or the lack of effective supportive resources (e.g., Corrigan, 2004; Vanderhorst & McLaren, 2005; Wright, Banerjee, Hoek, Rieffe, & Novin, 2010), some research suggested that depressive symptoms can be positively associated with maladaptive variants of support-seeking such as reassurance-seeking (Joiner, Metalsky, Katz, & Beach, 1999; Starr, 2015). Differing from traditional offline contexts, SNS platforms may offer opportunities for people with depressive symptoms to seek social support (Rains, 2018). Compared to face-to-face context, due to the technological affordances such as reduced nonverbal cues, asynchronicity, and availability to a wide range of supportive resources (Rains,

2018; Walther, 1996), people with depressive symptoms may have reduced face threats and pressure and increased chances to solicit social support on SNSs (e.g., Caplan, 2003). As Caplan (2003) suggested, individuals with psychosocial issues such as depressive symptoms and anxiety have negative perceptions toward their social competence (Segrin, 2000), and thus they may develop a preference for online interaction as they perceived online contexts to be safer and less threatening than face-to-face contexts. As such, research has shown that depressed people perceived SNSs such as Twitter as a comfortable space to seek and receive social support (Park et al., 2013). Other evidence also suggested a positive link between depressive symptoms and support-seeking on SNSs (e.g., Frison & Eggermont, 2015). Therefore, people with more depressive symptoms may be more likely to be motivated by support-seeking goals to post on SNSs. Taken together, this study hypothesizes:

H13: Depressive symptoms are positively associated with (a)emotion expression goals and (b)support-seeking goals on SNSs.

As noted above, based on the functional model and disclosure decision model, disclosure goals may mediate the associations between individual differences and disclosing behaviors (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000). Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H14: (a)Emotion expression goals and (b)support-seeking goals mediate the association between depressive symptoms and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

Subjective Risks: Anticipated Negative Evaluations

As assumed by the disclosure decision model, after disclosure goals have been activated, subjective risks affect disclosure patterns (Omarzu, 2000). Specifically, when a particular disclosure goal is salient, the perceived disclosure risks may influence the depth of disclosure. For example, distressing information is relatively intimate (Howell & Conway, 1990);

consequently, when perceived disclosure risks are high, people may have decreased willingness to disclose their distress even if disclosure goals of expressing emotions and seeking support are salient.

The subjective risks include social rejection, negative reactions, or betrayals of others (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2009; Omarzu, 2000). On SNSs, anticipated negative reactions or evaluations from others may be a key consideration. Negative disclosure is an inherently risky communicative activity because receivers may consider the discloser as inadequate or weak (Nadler & Jeffrey, 1986) and reduce their liking of the discloser (Rains & Brunner, 2018). However, building a positive public image is the primary motivation for people to use SNSs (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Anticipated negative evaluations of distress disclosures from others imply that others may form negative impressions toward the communication actor. Particularly, given the publicness of SNSs, anticipated negative evaluations may imply greater risks as people may consider a large number of targets in their online networks instead of one target in dyadic interactions form negative impressions toward themselves. Therefore, when users anticipate negative evaluations of distress disclosures from their SNS audiences, even if disclosure goals are salient, they may have a decreased tendency to disclose distress information in order to protect their public images. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that anticipated negative evaluations of distress disclosures from SNS audiences as a type of disclosure risks moderate the associations between disclosure goals and the tendency of distress disclosures on SNSs.

H15: Anticipated negative evaluations moderate (a) the association between emotion expression goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs and (b) the association between support-seeking goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. Specifically, the positive

associations between disclosure goals and distress disclosure tendencies are stronger when anticipated negative evaluations are low compared to when anticipated negative evaluations are high.

Figure 1 depicts all the hypotheses of this study in a conceptual model.

Method

Participants

After receiving approval from the author's Institutional Review Board, this study recruited college students from communication courses at a large state university in the southwestern United States in exchange for extra credit. Four-hundred and thirty-seven participants completed this study. Those who completed this study under 4 minutes and 30 seconds (the median for completion time was 9 minutes and 44 seconds; $n = 12$) and aged under 18 years ($n = 1$) were removed from the dataset. Also, for the sake of interpretability as gender was included as a covariate, one case who indicated themselves as nonbinary for gender was removed. In addition, because some participants completed this study more than once, only their first responses were kept in the dataset, which resulted in 398 cases in the final sample.

The mean age of participants was 20.12 years ($SD = 1.83$) and 63.3% were female ($n = 252$). Participants in this study racially identified as White/European American ($n = 252$, 63.32%), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 55$, 13.82%), multiracial ($n = 44$, 11.06%), African American ($n = 17$, 4.27%), Asian ($n = 17$, 4.27%), "other" ($n = 8$, 2.01%), Pacific Islander ($n = 3$, 0.75%), and Native American ($n = 2$, 0.50%).

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete an online survey via Qualtrics about their SNS use, perceptions, and disclosure behaviors on SNSs. Upon opening the survey, participants were

presented with a screening question asking whether they are users of at least one of the following SNSs: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and/or Tumblr. Those who did not use any of these SNS platforms were screened out. Eligible participants were asked to select two of the six SNSs (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Tumblr) that they use the most frequently; one of those two was then randomly selected as the focus for their survey. Participants were then asked about their use, perceptions, and disclosure behaviors specific to that SNS.

Measures

Network closeness. This study adapted Vangelisti and Caughlin's (1997) Psychological Closeness Scale to measure network closeness. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement to seven statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1= *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) designed to assess how close they perceive their relationships with their network on that specific SNS. Sample items include "I am close to my (Platform) network," "I often talk about personal things on (Platform)," and "I like my (Platform) network" (see Appendix for the full scale). Answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .87$).

Perceived network accessibility. Because no established measure has been found to assess this construct, the researcher developed a four-item measure to assess the perceived accessibility of one's online network on SNSs. The items are "it is easy for me to access my (Platform) network," "it is convenient for me to connect with my (Platform) network," "I feel I have connections with my network on (Platform) anytime and anywhere," and "at least a part of my (Platform) network is available whenever I want to talk." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding these items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), and answers were averaged to create this measure ($\alpha = .90$).

Perceived visibility. The measurement for visibility was adapted from previous studies (Devito et al., 2017; Fox & McEwan, 2017). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with eight statements, such as “If they want to, other people are able to see my posts on (Platform),” “It is possible people are able to see my posts without signing in to (Platform),” and “My posts on (Platform) are private (reversed),” on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*; see Appendix for the full scale). Answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .88$).

Perceived visibility control. The current study adapted five items from the scale of visibility control in Devito et al. (2017). On a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the items, including “I can manage my privacy setting on (Platform),” “I can specify who will or will not be able to see a specific post on (Platform),” and “I can make my post easy for certain people to find on (Platform)” (see Appendix for the full scale). Answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .78$).

Depressive symptoms. This study used the 10-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale to measure depressive symptoms (CES-D-10; Andresen, Malmgren, Carter, & Patrick, 1994; Radloff, 1977). The scale asks participants how often in the last week they felt a particular way. For example, participants were asked to indicate the frequency they feel the description of the following statements: “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me,” “I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing,” and “I felt depressed” (see Appendix for the full scale). Questions were answered on a four-point scale (0 = *rarely or none of the time* (less than one day) to 3 = *most to all of the time* (5-7 days)) and answers were summed to create the measure ($\alpha = .81$).

Support-seeking goals. This study adapted High and Scharp's (2015) scale assessing general motivations to seek support to measure disclosure goals of seeking support on a specific SNS. The item that "when something is bothering me, I have a strong goal of talking to other people about it" cannot reflect the nature of seeking social support and thus was not included in this study's measurement. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding four statements, such as "I'm motivated to post on (Platform) to seek comfort from my (Platform) network when I have a problem" and "When I'm feeling bothered, I want to post on (Platform) to seek support from my (Platform) network" (see Appendix for the full scale). These questions were answered on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), and answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .95$).

Emotion expression goals. This study adapted the venting motive of Social Sharing Scale (Duprez et al., 2015) to measure disclosure goals of expressing emotions on a specific SNS. Specifically, participants indicated their level of agreement regarding seven statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), such as "I post on (Platform) to share my emotions", "I post on (Platform) to vent out my feelings", and "I post on (Platform) to get emotions off my chests" (see Appendix for the full scale). Answers were averaged to create this measure ($\alpha = .96$).

Anticipated negative evaluations. Anticipated negative evaluations were measured using eight items adapted from Lim and colleagues' (2013) scale assessing interpersonal costs of seeking support. Participants were asked to assess anticipated negative evaluations of disclosing distress on a specific SNS. Sample items include "If I post distressing information on (Platform), people's view of me would be more negative," "If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would think me less worthy," and "If I post distressing information on

(Platform), people on (Platform) would have a poor impression of me” (see Appendix for the full scale). These items were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), and answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .96$).

Distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. This study adapted Kahn and Hessling’s (2001) Distress Disclosure Index to measure the distress disclosure tendency on SNSs. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with 12 statements, such as “When I feel upset, I usually post on (Platform),” “I prefer not to post about my problems on (Platform) (reversed),” and “When something unpleasant happens to me, I often post about it on (Platform)” (see Appendix for the full scale). These statements were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*), and answers were averaged to create the measure ($\alpha = .87$).

Covariates. As gender can affect SNSs use and self-disclosure (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012; Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990), the current study included gender as a covariate. In addition, because general distress disclosure tendencies, SNSs use, and posting frequency may affect distress disclosures on SNSs, these three variables were also included as covariates. For general distress disclosure tendencies, six items from Kahn and Hessling’s (2001) Distress Disclosure Index were used for measurement. Sample items included “when I feel upset, I usually confide in my friends” and “I usually seek out someone to talk to when I am in a bad mood,” and answers were averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .93$). For SNSs use, participants were asked to estimate how many minutes/hours they spend on a specific SNS on a typical day (1 = *15 min or less* to 9 = *7 hours or more*). In addition, to measure posting frequency, participants were asked to answer how often they make a post on a specific SNS on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *Never* to 5 = *Very frequently*).

Analysis Strategy

All hypotheses were tested using Preacher and Hayes' mediation and moderation macro for SPSS using 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2017). To test the effects of network closeness, perceived visibility, perceived visibility control, and depressive symptoms, a series of statistical models were analyzed using model 14 with support-seeking goals and emotional expression goals entered in as parallel mediators, anticipated negative evaluations as the moderator, and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs as the dependent variable. Given this study hypothesized that perceived network accessibility only related to the disclosure goal of support-seeking, to test the effects of perceived network accessibility, the model with support-seeking goals as the mediator, anticipated negative evaluations as the moderator, and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs as the dependent variable was conducted.

In addition, for each model, all the other variables of interest were included as covariates. Furthermore, each model included gender, general distress disclosure tendencies, SNS use, and posting frequency as covariates. Also, as the model analysis does not allow missing values, one case which missed answering the full scale of distress disclosure tendencies was excluded, which resulted in 397 cases for the model analyses. Furthermore, given network closeness was highly correlated with perceived network accessibility and the interactions between disclosure goals and anticipated negative evaluations were tested, to lessen multicollinearity among variables, network closeness, perceived network accessibility, perceived visibility, perceived visibility control, support-seeking goals, emotion expression goals, and anticipated negative evaluations were centered at their means¹.

¹ Given the distributions of both support-seeking and emotion expression goals were positively skewed, support-seeking and emotion expression goals were also transformed to test the models. However, transformed data resulted in similar results with non-transformed data. Therefore, untransformed support-seeking and emotion expression goals were used in this study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among the variables of interest are presented in Table 1.

Forty percent of participants answered questions about Instagram ($n = 160$), 36.93% answered questions about Snapchat ($n = 147$), 16.33% answered questions about Twitter ($n = 65$), 5.03% answered questions about Facebook ($n = 20$), 0.75% answered questions about LinkedIn ($n = 3$), and 0.75% answered questions about Tumblr ($n = 3$). A series of ANOVAs were conducted to test the differences in network closeness and perceived SNS affordances among SNS platforms. Given only three participants completed the surveys specific to LinkedIn and specific to Tumblr, for the sake of interpretability and validity, cases answering questions about LinkedIn and Tumblr were removed from this series of ANOVAs. An overview of all the means, standard errors (SE), and significant contrasts using Tukey HSD criterion for significance are provided in Table 2.

The ANOVA with network closeness as the outcome variable was significant, $F(3,388) = 23.862, p < 0.001$. Pairwise comparisons showed that Snapchat had the highest network closeness, and differed significantly from Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. In addition, Instagram had significantly higher network closeness than Twitter. The ANOVA predicting perceived network accessibility was also significant, $F(3,388) = 24.609, p < 0.001$. Specifically, Snapchat showed the highest perceived network accessibility and differed significantly from all the other platforms. Furthermore, Instagram showed higher perceived network accessibility than Twitter. Also, the ANOVA predicting perceived visibility was significant, $F(3,388) = 26.667, p < 0.001$. Results showed that perceived visibility was highest for Twitter, and pairwise

comparisons showed that Twitter significantly differed from all the other platforms. Also, Instagram had higher perceived visibility than Snapchat. Lastly, the ANOVA predicting perceived visibility control was also significant, $F(3,388) = 14.713, p < 0.001$. Snapchat and Facebook had the highest perceived visibility control. In addition, Snapchat significantly differed from Twitter and Instagram in perceived visibility control.

Before conducting the main analyses, a preliminary analysis was conducted to test the effects of SNS platforms on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs in a regression model with the two disclosure goals as parallel mediators and with anticipated negative evaluations as the moderator, while controlling for gender, SNS use, posting frequency, general distress disclosure tendencies, and depressive symptoms. As shown in Table 3, the results showed that SNS platforms were not significantly associated with support-seeking goals, emotion expression goals, or distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. Given the null results, the SNS platforms were not included in the main analyses.

Main Analyses

Network closeness, perceived visibility, perceived visibility control, and depressive symptoms. First, a series of regression models with two disclosure goals as parallel mediators and with anticipated negative evaluations as the moderator were tested. The first of the mediators was support-seeking goals and the model was significant, $F(9, 387) = 8.070, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.158$. Specifically, as shown in Table 4, network closeness had a significant positive association with support-seeking goals ($b = 0.421, p < 0.001$), and depressive symptoms also had a significant positive relationship with support-seeking goals ($b = 0.042, p = 0.002$). In addition, males had higher levels of support-seeking goals for disclosure on SNSs than females ($b = 0.366, p = 0.017$), and posting frequency was positively associated with support-seeking goals ($b =$

0.172, $p = 0.012$). However, other variables were not significantly associated with support-seeking goals. Therefore, H3b and H13b were supported, yet H6, H8a, and H10b were rejected (see Table 5 for a summary of results regarding hypothesis testing).

The second mediator tested was emotion expression goals, and the model was also significant, $F(9, 387) = 6.838, p < 0.001, R_2 = 0.137$. As shown in Table 4, network closeness was significantly associated with emotion expression goals ($b = 0.295, p < 0.001$), and depressive symptoms were significantly associated with emotion expression goals ($b = 0.053, p < 0.001$). However, contrary to what was expected, perceived visibility control had a significant negative relationship with emotion expression goals ($b = -0.146, p = 0.045$). In addition, posting frequency was positively associated with emotion expression goals ($b = 0.135, p = 0.034$). Nevertheless, other variables were not significantly associated with emotion expression goals. Therefore, H3a and H13a were supported, but H8b and H10a were rejected.

The model predicting distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs was significant as well, $F(14, 382) = 32.817, p < 0.001, R_2 = 0.546$. Specifically, both of support-seeking goals ($b = 0.255, p < 0.001$) and emotion expression goals ($b = 0.271, p < 0.001$) were significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. In addition, anticipated negative evaluations had significant negative relationship with distress disclosure tendencies ($b = -0.080, p = 0.001$). Also, perceived network accessibility was negatively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs ($b = -0.086, p = 0.031$). Furthermore, gender was significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs ($b = 0.257, p < 0.001$), where males had more distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs compared to females. However, other variables were not significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. Therefore, as shown in Table 5, H1 and H2 were supported. However, H4 and H12 were rejected.

Perceived Network Accessibility. Given this study hypothesized that perceived network accessibility predicted distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs only via support-seeking goals, the model with support-seeking goals as the mediator and with the anticipated negative evaluation as the moderator was tested to examine the effects of perceived network accessibility. The model predicting support-seeking goals was significant, $F(9, 387) = 8.070, p < 0.001, R_2 = 0.158$ (see Table 6 for results). However, perceived network accessibility was not significantly associated with support seeking goals ($b = -0.075, p = 0.371$). In addition, the model predicting distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs was also significant, $F(12, 384) = 26.234, p < 0.001, R_2 = 0.451$. However, perceived network accessibility had a significant negative relationship with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs ($b = -0.103, p = 0.019$). Therefore, H6 was not supported.

Mediation of disclosure goals. The results of indirect effects via support-seeking goals are shown in Table 7. Results showed that the indirect effect of network closeness on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking goals was significant at each level of anticipated negative evaluations. In addition, the indirect effect of depressive symptoms on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs was also significant at each level of anticipated negative evaluations. However, other indirect effects via support-seeking goals were not significant. Therefore, H5b and H14b were supported, whereas H9b, H7, and H11b were not supported.

The results of indirect effects via emotion expression goals were shown in Table 8. Specifically, the indirect effects of network closeness, perceived visibility control, and depressive symptoms on the tendency of disclose distress on SNSs via emotion expression goals were significant at each level of anticipated negative evaluations. However, the indirect effect of perceived visibility on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs was not significant. Therefore, as shown in Table 5, H5a, H11a, and H14b were supported, whereas H9a was not supported.

Moderation of anticipated negative evaluations. As shown in Table 4, the interaction between support-seeking goals and anticipated negative evaluations on distress disclosure tendencies was significant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.009$, $b = -0.047$, $p = 0.006$). This interaction is depicted in Figure 2.1. The interaction was probed by testing the conditional effects of support-seeking goals at three levels of anticipated negative evaluations, 1SD below the mean, at the mean, and 1SD above the mean. Support-seeking goals was significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs at each level of anticipated negative evaluations (-1 SD: $b = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$; Mean: $b = 0.255$, $p < 0.001$; +1 SD: $b = 0.186$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H15b was supported. In other words, the positive association between support-seeking goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs were stronger when anticipated negative evaluations were low compared to when anticipated negative evaluations were high.

The interaction between emotion expression goals and anticipated negative evaluations on distress disclosure tendencies was also significant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.007$, $b = 0.044$, $p = 0.020$). Similarly, the interaction was probed by testing the conditional effects of emotion expression goals at three levels of anticipated negative evaluations. The interaction was illustrated in Figure 2.2. Although emotion expression goals were significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs at each level of anticipated negative evaluations (-1 SD: $b = 0.208$, $p < 0.001$; Mean: $b = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$; +1 SD: $b = 0.335$, $p < 0.001$), it appears that the positive association was stronger when anticipated negative evaluations were high compared to when it was low, which is opposite of what this study predicted. The results showed that when emotion expression goals were low, anticipated negative evaluations can be strongly related to distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs; whereas when emotion expression goals were high, anticipated

negative evaluations did not predict a remarkable difference in distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs because people had strong desires to express emotions on SNSs (see Figure 2.2).

Additional Analyses

Because perceived network accessibility and network closeness were highly correlated with each other ($r = 0.696$), it might be problematic to include both variables into one model. Therefore, a model testing the effects of perceived network accessibility *without* network closeness was also conducted. The model predicting support-seeking goals was significant, $F(8, 388) = 6.044, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.111$. The results showed that perceived network accessibility was significantly associated with support-seeking goals ($b = 0.151, p = 0.03$). In addition, the indirect effect of perceived network accessibility on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking goals was also significant at each level of anticipated negative evaluations (-1SD: 95% CI [0.011, 0.129]; Mean: 95% CI [0.010, 0.112]; +1SD: 95% CI [0.009, 0.099]).

In addition, as high visibility implies self-presentational concerns (e.g., Oh & Larose, 2016), this study assumed that visibility may be associated with disclosure goals and behaviors due to increased self-presentational risks. However, visibility is not equivalent to self-presentational concerns. Thus, it might be the interaction between visibility and self-presentational concerns matters. As such, this study also tested the interaction effect of perceived visibility and anticipated negative evaluations on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. Specifically, model 15 in PROCESS macro was used with previous model components and one more interaction between perceived visibility and anticipated negative evaluations. The results showed that only when anticipated negative evaluations were high, perceived visibility was negatively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs ($b = -0.069, p = 0.041$), whereas when anticipated negative evaluations were low to medium, perceived visibility was not

significantly associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs (low: $b = 0.009$, $p = 0.761$; medium: $b = -0.030$, $p = 0.205$). This interaction is depicted in Figure 3.

Lastly, although perceived visibility may have the potential to influence disclosure goals and behaviors, if people perceive greater abilities to control the visibility of their messages, high visibility might be not problematic. Therefore, the interaction between perceived visibility and visibility control was also tested. Specifically, model 21 in PROCESS was used with previous model components and one more interaction between perceived visibility and perceived visibility control on both support-seeking and emotion expression goals. The results showed that only when perceived visibility control was low, perceived visibility was negatively associated with support-seeking goals ($b = -0.189$, $p = 0.015$), whereas when perceived visibility control was medium to high, perceived visibility was not significantly associated with support-seeking goals (medium: $b = -0.050$, $p = 0.321$; high: $b = 0.090$, $p = 0.162$). In other words, in those cases when people feel incapable of controlling the visibility of their information, the increased visibility that the platform affords appears to decrease their support-seeking behaviors. This interaction is depicted in Figure 4. However, the interaction on emotion expression goals was not significant.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the factors that might drive people to publicly disclose distress on SNSs and to investigate the mediating roles of disclosure goals as well as the moderating effect of anticipated negative evaluations. Based on the functional approach of self-disclosure (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000) and research on perceived SNS affordances and self-disclosure, this study further extends the functional model of self-disclosure on SNSs by testing the potential effects of network closeness, three types of perceived SNS affordances, and depressive symptoms on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-

seeking and emotion expression goals. Although the functional model of self-disclosure assumes that situational cues and individual differences influence the salience and accessibility of disclosure goals, this model does not specify the circumstances and individual differences that might activate disclosure goals and motivate disclosure behaviors. The current study contributes to this literature by specifying the situational and individual factors that might be associated with disclosure goals and distress disclosures on SNSs. In addition, instead of focusing on a specific platform, this study concentrated on network characteristics and affordances across SNS platforms and thus can shed light on more nuanced and durable theoretical knowledge regarding SNSs. Taken together, by integrating personal network characteristics, SNS affordances, individual states, subjective risks, and disclosure goals, this study offers a more comprehensive model to understand public distress disclosures on SNSs.

The Functional Model of Self-Disclosure on SNSs

The functional approach of self-disclosure assumes that people strategically disclose personal information to achieve their goals (V.J. Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000). Extending this functional approach to the context of social media, Bazarova and Choi (2014) proposed that online self-disclosure is also strategic as situational factors such as publicness affect disclosure characteristics via disclosure goals. Further extending the functional model of self-disclosure on SNSs, this study integrated network characteristics, SNS affordances, individual differences, and subjective risks to examine the phenomenon of public distress disclosures on SNSs. Compared to positive disclosures, negative disclosures on SNSs are more complicated because of conflicts among self-presentational concerns, privacy concerns, and disclosure needs. Previous research has shown that people consistently express positive emotions on public or private online channels, whereas expressing fewer negative emotions in a public

context (Bazarova et al., 2013). This study found that general distress disclosure tendencies ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.44$) were not associated with the tendency to disclose distress on SNSs ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.96$), which also implies that people may restrain distress disclosures on SNSs. Given the complicated nature of public distress disclosures on SNSs, it is theoretically and practically meaningful to explore predictors and motivations of this phenomenon from a functional perspective. In line with the functional approach of self-disclosure, this study found that people strategically disclose their distressing information on SNSs, primarily for seeking social support and expressing emotions. In addition, support-seeking and emotion expression goals mediated the associations between situational and individual factors and distress disclosures on SNSs, which confirms the importance of examining disclosure goals for understanding disclosure behaviors.

Although disclosure goals are essential for inducing disclosure behaviors, subjective risks appear to influence disclosure decisions. Consistent with the functional approach, this study found that anticipated negative evaluations as subjective risks moderated the associations between disclosure goals and distress disclosures on SNSs. Distress disclosures are risky communicative activities because receivers may form unfavorable impressions toward senders (Nadler & Jeffrey, 1986). Unlike traditional dyadic contexts, the intersection of people, technologies, and practice results in complicated public networks in the online context (Boyd, 2008), which can accentuate people's self-presentational concerns (Bazarova et al., 2013). As such, when people disclose their distress on SNSs, anticipated negative evaluations are important subjective risks which can prevent people's disclosure behaviors. Specifically, although support-seeking goals are activated, anticipated negative evaluations can decrease people's distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.

In addition, the results showed that the interaction between emotion expression goals and anticipated negative evaluations also matters. When people are slightly motivated to express emotions on SNSs, anticipated negative evaluations moderately hinder distress disclosures on SNSs. However, when people have strong desires to express emotions, they disclose their distress on SNSs regardless of others' negative evaluations. In other words, when people have a strong desire to express emotions, their goals of venting out emotions may override their goals of managing impressions. Taken together, the current study confirms the functional perspective of broadcasting distress disclosures on SNSs, with the significance of disclosure goals and subjective risks.

Network Closeness and Perceived Network Accessibility

This study found that network closeness (i.e., how close the users consider the group of people with whom they have connections on a specific SNS) was positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via both support-seeking and emotion expression goals. Namely, network closeness as a type of network characteristic can activate online disclosure goals of seeking social support and expressing emotions, which, in turn, are positively related to disclose distress tendencies on SNSs. These findings are consistent with previous literature that people are more likely to seek social support from and express emotions to intimate others (e.g., Chow & Buhrmester, 2011; Rimé, 2009). However, this study did not find a direct association between network closeness and distress disclosures on SNS. Namely, support-seeking and emotion expression goals fully mediated this association, which reveals that the motivations to disclose may be necessary for enacting disclosure behaviors.

The additional analysis revealed that perceived network accessibility (i.e., to extent to which users perceive their networks on a particular SNS are easily accessible) was only

positively related to distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via support-seeking goals when excluding network closeness in the model. These results imply that when seeking social support, the importance of network closeness may override the importance of network accessibility. A close network indicates great exchanges of affection, empathy, trustiness, and caring among network members, which can motivate people to solicit social support, especially emotional support, when they experience distress (Cheng, Meng, & Liu, 2018; Herz, 2015). Also, people have reduced self-presentational concerns when interacting with intimate others (Leary et al., 1994). Therefore, seeking support from close networks is not risky but rewarding. However, accessible weak ties cannot function as strong ties and thus do not motivate people to seek social support.

Interestingly, the results also showed that there was a negative direct association between perceived network accessibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. In other words, when people are not motivated by seeking social support to post online, the higher the perceived network accessibility is, the less likely people are to disclose their distress on SNSs. It might be because high network accessibility means the network is available and responsive most of the time. Namely, a large number of network members are able to see and respond to one's post in a short time. However, when people do not intend to solicit supportive feedback from their networks, they may worry about the inappropriateness of expressing negative emotions to such an accessible network and the negative impressions some people may form toward them. Previous research has shown that people sometimes feel more comfortable to disclose negative thoughts and feelings when their online networks show loose connections and relatively slow responses (Park et al., 2013). Therefore, the high perceived network accessibility may result in increased cautiousness, pressures, and uncertainties to disclose distress. As such, future research

may want to investigate whether perceived network accessibility can cause increased self-censorship before posting distressing information.

Together, the findings from the current study suggest that although SNSs afford users the ability to easily access a variety of groups of people which can be potential support providers, the intimacy and trustiness of support providers are more important in terms of motivating people to solicit social support online. The social compensation hypothesis suggests that some people may use online platforms to initiate relationships to compensate for their lack of offline network resources (e.g., Zywicki & Danowski, 2008), which provides people possessing insufficient offline resources with opportunities to seek support online. However, for these people, although SNSs improve the accessibility of potential online support providers, they still need to build strong connections with these online networks to be motivated to seek online support effectively.

Perceived Visibility and Visibility Control

Perceived visibility refers to the extent to which users consider the information on a specific SNS to be visible and easy to locate. For example, the audiences on Facebook are friends (i.e., both the sender and the receiver need to accept each other in the network), whereas the audiences on Twitter can be anyone who follows the sender; therefore, posts on Twitter may be considered as more visible than on Facebook. Perceived visibility control refers to whether users perceive they have the ability to control who has access to their information. For example, by using privacy settings such as blocking, people may feel increased abilities to control the visibility of their information. It is noteworthy that perceived visibility and perceived visibility control are two distinct constructs with a small correlation ($r = -0.161$). In other words, although perceived visibility and perceived visibility control are theoretically overlapping to some extent,

they are unique and may be influenced by different factors. Therefore, to further distinguish these two constructs, future research may entitle perceived visibility control with a more appropriate term.

This study did not find significant associations between perceived visibility and disclosure goals, which may point out the importance of the interactions between perceived visibility and other variables. In other words, the existence of the associations between visibility and disclosure goals may be influenced by other factors. One interaction of importance may be between visibility and self-presentational concerns. The reason why this study assumed negative links between perceived visibility and disclosure goals is that high information visibility implies increased self-presentational risks (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), which can hinder support-seeking and emotion expression behaviors. However, while perceived visibility is positively associated with self-presentational concerns (e.g., Buehler et al., 2018), perceived high visibility may not necessarily be equivalent to great self-presentational concerns because self-presentational concerns can also be influenced by individual factors such as self-esteem, self-objectification, and public self-consciousness (e.g., Fox & Rooney, 2015; Nezlek & Leary, 2002).

Given that, under the condition of high visibility, some people may still have low levels of self-presentational concerns when seeking social support and expressing negative emotions because of individual differences. As such, increased visibility does not necessarily lead to reduced disclosure goals of soliciting support and expressing emotions. Instead, self-presentational concerns may play an important role in the associations between visibility and disclosure goals. Namely, for people with high self-presentational concerns, the increase in visibility can lead to enhanced need to manage impressions and thus people would reduce support-seeking and emotion expression behaviors. Nevertheless, for people with low self-

presentational concerns, although high visibility implies increased risks, they would not change their disclosure behaviors because they do not care about the impression others form toward them. Supporting this explanation, this study found that only when anticipated negative evaluations were high, perceived visibility was negatively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. However, when anticipated negative evaluations were low, people disclosed distressing information on SNSs no matter how visible their posts were.

The other noteworthy interaction was between perceived visibility and visibility control. It is reasonable that when people perceive high levels of control over the visibility of their information, the high visibility that a platform affords would not be a concern because people are capable of managing the outlet of information by using information management strategies such as privacy settings. In support of this argument, this study found that only when people feel incapable of controlling the information visibility on SNSs, visibility was negatively associated with support-seeking goals. However, when perceived visibility control was high, people would like to seek social support on SNSs regardless of the visibility. Taken together, previous research showed that perceived visibility can increase impression management goals (Buehler et al., 2018; Oh & Larose, 2016); however, this study suggested that when exploring the link between perceived visibility and disclosure goals/behaviors via the underlying underpinnings of self-presentational risks, perceived visibility may need to be considered together with impression management concerns. In addition, even if high visibility can indicate increased concerns and thus potentially hinder disclosure behaviors, perceived high levels of visibility control can attenuate the negative effect of visibility.

Regarding perceived visibility control, the results showed no significant association between visibility control and support-seeking goals but there was a significant negative indirect

association between visibility control and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs via reduced emotion expression goals, which were inconsistent with what this study predicted. One possible explanation for the negative link between visibility control and emotion expression goals pertains to the implications of perceived visibility control. Those who perceive high levels of visibility control may be people who have great privacy concerns and thus habitually use privacy settings (Baruh, Secinti, & Cemalcilar, 2017) because people may not feel capable of controlling the visibility of their information if they are not familiar with privacy management tools. However, people with high privacy concerns may not be motivated by venting out to disclose on SNSs as emotional messages, especially negative emotional messages, are intimate and private (Howell & Conway, 1990). Therefore, this study found a negative link between perceived visibility control and emotion expression goals. Compared to emotional messages, support-seeking messages can be either highly private (e.g., disclosing negative stressful events) or not private (e.g., seeking information about travelling). Therefore, people may not necessarily have increased privacy concerns when seeking support, which may explain the lack of the link between perceived visibility control and support-seeking goals.

In addition, the perceptions of visibility control may also imply people's concerns for the appropriateness of their social behaviors, given research has found that perceived visibility control was positively associated with self-monitoring (Devito et al., 2017). However, venting negative emotions is considered inappropriate (Caltabiano & Smithson, 1983), which may also explain the negative link between perceived visibility control and emotion expression goals. As such, future research should investigate the associations between perceived visibility control and privacy concerns, use of privacy management strategies, and concerns for appropriateness of social behaviors.

Depressive Symptoms

These results also revealed that depressive symptoms as a type of individual differences were positively associated with disclosure goals of seeking support and expressing emotions, which, in turn, predicted increased online distress disclosure tendencies. However, it is important to note that this study collected data from college students, most of whom had relatively low depressive symptoms. The question regarding whether these positive links exist among those with major depressive disorders may likely require further investigation given that previous research has shown that clinically depressed people may have more thought suppression and less emotional disclosure compared to non-depressed people (Campbell-Sills, Barlow, Brown, & Hofmann, 2006; Rude & McCarthy, 2003).

The above findings confirm the idea that SNS platforms offer opportunities for people with psychosocial issues such as depressive symptoms to seek social support and express emotions and feelings. Specifically, previous literature suggested that depressive symptoms may be negatively associated with social support solicitation because of the stigma of mental illness or perceived insufficient supportive resources (Corrigan, 2004; Vanderhorst & McLaren, 2005; Wright et al., 2010). Also, depressive symptoms were found to be positively associated with emotional suppression (Kahn & Garrison, 2009). However, this study supports the literature built in online contexts that SNSs may make people with psychosocial issues such as depressive symptoms feel safer, more efficacious, and more comfortable to engage in online interactions given the affordances such as reduced nonverbal cues, asynchronicity, and network accessibility (Caplan, 2003; Rains, 2018; Walther, 1996).

While previous research has shown that depressed people posted more psychological distress on SNSs than non-depressed people (Bazarova et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2013), this

study found that there was a linear association between depressive symptoms and negative disclosures among people without clinical depression. Further, this study extends the previous literature by revealing the underlying underpinnings predicting distress disclosures on SNSs. In other words, depressive symptoms are positively related to people's willingness to seek support and express emotions, which then predict increased distress disclosures on SNSs. In addition, the fact that no significant direct association between depressive symptoms and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs confirms the full mediation that disclosure goals performed. Although efforts have already been made to detect and intervene with depression by analyzing online posts and messages (e.g., Guntuku, Yaden, Kern, Ungar, & Eichstaedt, 2017), identifying the disclosure goals of negative posts can help researchers, health practitioners, and website designers better intervene with mental health issues by taking advantage of the characteristics of technologies.

SNS Affordances versus Platforms

This study also found that SNS platforms differed in terms of network characteristics and perceived affordances, probably because they have different functions and features. For example, Snapchat allows ephemeral social interactions (i.e., messages dissolve after several seconds of being sent), which offers opportunities for more private communication (Utz, Muscanell, & Khalid, 2015). As such, Snapchat has been reported to have the highest network closeness, network accessibility, and visibility control, and the lowest visibility. However, both Twitter and Instagram approve nonreciprocal following, which allows one's audiences comprising of a great number of strangers (Waterloo et al., 2018); consequently, Twitter and Instagram showed the highest perceived visibility and lowest perceived visibility control.

Although SNS platforms have different affordances and previous research showed that people have different use behaviors and motivations on different SNS platforms (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Waterloo et al., 2018), this study did not find that SNS platforms resulted in differences in terms of disclosure goals and distress disclosure tendencies. Instead, network characteristics and perceived affordances potentially affected disclosure goals and behaviors on SNSs. These findings emphasized the importance of studying affordances when investigating the associations between situational factors and online disclosures. Focusing on affordances not only reveals the underlying causes resulting in different disclosure behaviors across SNS platforms, but also contributes to more durable theorizing related to online behaviors independent of a specific platform.

Limitations

This study has some limitations regarding the sample and research design that merit some discussion. First, this study used a convenience sample comprised entirely of undergraduate students. Although it is an important population to study because they are primary users of SNSs, future research should test the validity of these results using more diverse samples.

Second, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, this study is not able to make causal inferences among the associations investigated in the current study. It is possible that there might be other alternative explanations for these associations. For example, it might be that people who disclose their distress on SNSs receive social rejection from others, which improves their depressive symptoms, rather than depressive symptoms preceding distress disclosures on SNSs. Also, there might be a bidirectional relationship between network closeness and distress disclosures on SNSs. Specifically, network closeness causes people to disclose their distress, and increased distress disclosures may further strengthen the perceived intimacy of their network.

Future longitudinal or experimental studies may be required to elucidate the causal ordering for these variables.

Third, this study used a self-reported measure to investigate people's tendencies to disclose distress on SNSs. Although understanding the general distress disclosure tendency on SNSs is informative and important, future research may examine the actual disclosure behaviors such as distressing posts to validate the results.

Fourth, given that this study has a fair number of hypotheses, the family-wise error rate might be high. However, given the number of hypotheses below twenty, the concern of inflating type 1 error might be small. Future research may use other statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling to test these hypotheses in order to reduce the possibility of inflating type 1 error.

Lastly, there might be several other variables which can affect the associations investigated in the current study, such as self-presentational concerns and disclosure goals of relationship maintenance. Consequently, future studies may further include these variables to understand disclosure goals and distress disclosures on SNSs.

Conclusion

SNSs offer opportunities for people to recover from distress via venting of negative emotions and receiving social support. Given that, this study answered essential questions regarding under what conditions, motivated by what goals, and which groups of people tend to post distressing information on SNSs. The results emphasize the importance of disclosure goals for understanding disclosure behaviors. Also, this study implies that, although network accessibility can be a catalyst for emotional disclosures, the intimacy and trustiness of one's network are possibly more important in terms of enhancing support-seeking and emotion

expressions on SNSs. Another implication of this study is that the potential effects of perceived visibility on disclosure goals and behaviors may depend on perceived visibility control and self-presentational concerns. In addition, this research also reveals why people with mental health issues, such as depressive symptoms, would like to talk about their distress on SNSs, which can shed light on how health practitioners and website designers should exploit technologies to better help people with psychosocial issues. Taken together, this study advances our knowledge regarding online self-disclosure by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of distress disclosures on SNSs.

Appendix

Network Closeness (Adapted from Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997)

1. I am close to my (Platform) network.
2. I like my (Platform) network.
3. I often talk about personal things on (Platform).
4. My (Platform) network's opinions are important to me.
5. I am satisfied with my relationships with my network on (Platform).
6. I enjoy spending time on (Platform).
7. My relationships with my network on (Platform) are important to me.

Perceived Network Accessibility

1. It is easy for me to access my (Platform) network.
2. It is convenient for me to connect with my (Platform) network.
3. I feel I have connections with my network on (Platform) anytime and anywhere.
4. At least a part of my (Platform) network is available whenever I want to talk.

Perceived Visibility (Adapted from Devito et al., 2017; Fox & McEwan, 2017)

1. If they want to, other people are able to see my posts on (Platform).
2. It is possible people are able to see my posts without signing in to (Platform).
3. People can find my posts on (Platform) using (Platform)'s own search.
4. People can find my posts on (Platform) using an outside search engine, like Google or Bing.
5. It is possible that people who read my post share it with other people on (Platform).
6. It is possible that people who read my post share it outside of (Platform), on another platform or website.

7. My posts on (Platform) are private. (R)
8. Only when a person and I follow each other, can this person see my posts on (Platform).
(R)

Perceived Visibility Control (Devito et al., 2017)

1. I can manage my privacy setting on (Platform).
2. I can specify who will or will not be able to see a specific post on (Platform).
3. If I set specific preferences for who I want a post to be visible to, (Platform) will remember those preferences for the next time I post.
4. I can make this post easy for certain people to find on (Platform).
5. I am able to control who is allowed to see my profile on (Platform).

Depressive Symptoms (CES-D-10; Andresen et al., 1994; Radloff, 1977)

1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.
2. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
3. I felt depressed.
4. I felt that everything I did was an effort.
5. I felt hopeful about the future (R).
6. I felt fearful.
7. My sleep was restless.
8. I was happy (R).
9. I felt lonely.
10. I could not "get going."

Support-Seeking Goals on SNSs (Adapted from High & Scharp, 2015).

1. I'm motivated to post on (Platform) to seek comfort from my (Platform) network when I have a problem.
2. When I'm feeling bothered, I want to post on (Platform) to seek support from my (Platform) network.
3. When I have a problem, I'm motivated to post on (Platform) to get help from my (Platform) network.
4. I post on (Platform) to seek comfort from my (Platform) network when I need it.

Emotion Expression Goals on SNSs (Adapted from Duprez et al., 2015)

1. I post on (Platform) to share my emotions.
2. I post on (Platform) to express my emotions.
3. I post on (Platform) to vent out my feelings.
4. I post on (Platform) to let off steam.
5. I post on (Platform) to get emotions off my chests.
6. I post on (Platform) to let my emotions out.
7. I post on (Platform) to express repressed resentment.

Anticipated Negative Evaluations (Adapted from Lim et al., 2013)

1. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would think worse of me.
2. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would view me as inferior.
3. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would think less of me.

4. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would view me as inadequate.
5. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people's view of me would be more negative.
6. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would think me less worthy.
7. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would have a poor impression of me.
8. If I post distressing information on (Platform), people on (Platform) would judge me negatively.

Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs (Adapted from Kahn & Hessling, 2001)

1. When I feel upset, I usually post on (Platform).
2. I prefer not to post about my problems on (Platform) (R).
3. When something unpleasant happens to me, I often post about it on (Platform).
4. I typically don't post things that upset me on (Platform) (R).
5. When I feel depressed or sad, I tend to keep those feelings to myself (R).
6. I try to post about my problems on (Platform).
7. When I am in a bad mood, I post about it on (Platform).
8. If I have a bad day, the last thing I want to do is posting about it on (Platform) (R).
9. I rarely post on (Platform) when I am having a problem (R).
10. When I'm distressed, I don't post about it on (Platform) (R).
11. I usually post on (Platform) when I am in a bad mood.
12. I am willing to tell my (Platform) network my distressing thoughts.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations among Model Constructs

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Network Closeness	4.62	1.15	--											
2. Perceived Network Accessibility	5.16	1.26	.696***	--										
3. Perceived Visibility	4.06	1.47	.052	.062	--									
4. Perceived Visibility Control	5.61	1.00	.244***	.354***	-.161**	--								
5. Depressive Symptoms	9.31	5.52	-.046	-.118*	-.006	-.119*	--							
6. Support-Seeking Goals	2.48	1.51	.318***	.176***	.022	-.022	.133**	--						
7. Emotion Expression Goals	2.37	1.40	.247***	.125*	.048	-.069	.200***	.625***	--					
8. Anticipated Negative Evaluations	3.82	1.45	.180***	.061	.058	-.011	.051	.203***	.066	--				
9. Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs	2.23	0.96	.141**	.018	-.010	-.114*	.116*	.616***	.638***	-.008	--			
10. General Distress Disclosure Tendencies	4.79	1.44	.269***	.178***	.019	.139**	-.152**	.097	.060	-.001	.038	--		
11. SNS Use	3.96	1.59	.324***	.319***	.026	.055	.035	.151**	.167***	.031	.166***	-.025	--	
12. Post Frequency	3.53	1.27	.453***	.445***	.099*	.136**	-.109*	.224***	.193***	.170***	.166***	.139**	.399***	--
13. Gender (Men = 1)		36.7%	-.169**	-.156**	.034	-.069	.006	.033	-.039	.038	.116*	-.150**	-.155**	-.225***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2

Significant Results of ANOVAs with SNS Platform as the Predictor

Outcome Variables	Platform	Mean	SD	Contrasts	Differences
Network Closeness	Snapchat	5.149	0.983	Snapchat-Instagram	0.666***
	Instagram	4.483	1.080	Snapchat-Twitter	1.133***
	Twitter	4.015	1.120	Snapchat-Facebook	1.270***
	Facebook	3.879	1.035	Instagram-Twitter	0.468*
Perceived Network Accessibility	Snapchat	5.753	0.973	Snapchat-Instagram	0.750***
	Instagram	5.003	1.172	Snapchat-Facebook	1.02**
	Facebook	4.738	0.883	Snapchat-Twitter	1.365***
	Twitter	4.388	1.495	Instagram-Twitter	0.615***
Perceived Visibility	Twitter	4.969	1.347	Twitter-Instagram	0.595*
	Instagram	4.374	1.510	Twitter-Facebook	1.350**
	Facebook	3.619	1.668	Twitter-Snapchat	1.604***
	Snapchat	3.366	1.074	Instagram-Snapchat	1.009***
Perceived Visibility Control	Snapchat	6.020	0.802	Snapchat-Twitter	0.627***
	Facebook	5.730	0.897	Snapchat-Instagram	0.685***
	Twitter	5.394	0.974		
	Instagram	5.335	1.073		

Note: Post hoc analyses used Tukey HSD criterion for significance, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Sample size: Instagram ($n = 160$), Snapchat ($n = 147$), Twitter ($n = 65$), Facebook ($n = 20$). Cases answering questions about LinkedIn ($n = 3$) and Tumblr ($n = 3$) were excluded because of small sample size.

Table 3

PROCESS Moderated-Mediation Models, with SNS Platforms as the Predictor, Predicting Two Mediators of Disclosure Goals and Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs (N = 397)

Variable	Support-Seeking Goals			Emotion Expression Goals			Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs		
	b	95% CI		b	95% CI		b	95% CI	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
<i>Constant</i>	-2.451***	-3.288	-1.613	-2.090***	-2.869	-1.311	1.891***	1.483	2.299
<i>Covariates</i>									
Depressive Symptoms	0.045***	0.019	0.072	0.057***	0.033	0.082	-0.004	-0.016	0.009
Gender (Men = 1)	0.344*	0.035	0.653	0.078	-0.210	0.366	0.266***	0.120	0.411
General Distress Disclosure Tendencies	0.118*	0.015	0.221	0.079	-0.017	0.175	0.000	-0.048	0.049
SNS Use	0.081	-0.022	0.183	0.072	-0.023	0.168	0.028	-0.020	0.076
Posting Frequency	0.246***	0.108	0.384	0.229***	0.100	0.357	0.034	-0.032	0.101
<i>Main Variables</i>									
Snapchat	0.306	-0.025	0.638	0.014	-0.294	0.322	0.091	-0.064	0.246
Twitter	0.084	-0.358	0.526	0.318	-0.093	0.729	0.145	-0.063	0.353
Facebook	0.191	-0.509	0.891	0.049	-0.602	0.700	-0.108	-0.433	0.218
LinkedIn	1.592	-0.083	3.267	-0.746	-2.304	0.813	0.647	-0.154	1.448
Tumblr	0.534	-1.163	2.231	0.149	-1.430	1.728	0.107	-0.683	0.897
Anticipated Negative Evaluations							-0.081**	-0.129	-0.033
Support-Seeking Goals							0.243***	0.182	0.303
Emotion Expression Goals							0.279***	0.216	0.342
<i>Interactions</i>									
Support-Seeking Goals X Anticipated Negative Evaluations							-0.052**	-0.086	-0.018
Emotion Expression Goals X Anticipated Negative Evaluations							0.055**	0.018	0.093
R ²	0.114***			0.107***			0.537***		

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001; the reference category for SNS platforms was Instagram.

Table 4

PROCESS Moderated-Mediation Models Predicting Two Mediators of Disclosure Goals and Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs (N = 397)

Variable	Support-Seeking Goals			Emotion Expression Goals			Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs		
	b	95% CI		b	95% CI		b	95% CI	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
<i>Constant</i>	-1.519***	-2.364	-0.675	-1.412***	-2.205	-0.619	1.744***	1.336	2.151
<i>Covariates</i>									
Gender (Men = 1)	0.366*	0.067	0.665	0.082	-0.199	0.363	0.257***	0.114	0.401
General Distress Disclosure Tendencies	0.059	-0.044	0.162	0.040	-0.057	0.137	0.011	-0.037	0.060
SNS Use	0.028	-0.071	0.126	0.056	-0.037	0.148	0.046	-0.001	0.092
Posting Frequency	0.172*	0.039	0.304	0.135*	0.010	0.260	0.061	-0.003	0.125
<i>Main Variables</i>									
Network Closeness	0.421***	0.243	0.598	0.295***	0.128	0.461	0.000	-0.087	0.087
Perceived Network Accessibility	-0.075	-0.240	0.090	-0.067	-0.222	0.088	-0.086*	-0.165	-0.008
Perceived Visibility	-0.025	-0.122	0.073	0.008	-0.084	0.099	-0.026	0.072	0.021
Perceived Visibility Control	-0.127	-0.279	0.025	-0.146*	-0.288	-0.003	-0.049	-0.121	0.023
Depressive Symptoms	0.042**	0.016	0.068	0.053***	0.029	0.077	-0.005	-0.017	0.008
Anticipated Negative Evaluations							-0.080***	-0.128	-0.033
Support-Seeking Goals							0.255***	0.195	0.314
Emotion Expression Goals							0.271***	0.209	0.333
<i>Interactions</i>									
Support-Seeking Goals X Anticipated Negative Evaluations							-0.047**	-0.081	-0.014
Emotion Expression Goals X Anticipated Negative Evaluations							0.044*	0.007	0.080
R ²		0.158***			0.137***			0.546***	

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 5

A Summary for the Results regarding Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses		Results
H1	Emotion expression goals are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
H2	Support-seeking goals are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
H3	a: Network closeness is positively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.	Supported
	b: Network closeness is positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.	Supported
H4	Network closeness is positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
H5	a: Emotion expression goals mediate the association between network closeness and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
	b: Support-seeking goals mediate the association between network closeness and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
H6	Perceived network accessibility is positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.	Rejected
H7	Support-seeking goals mediate the association between perceived network accessibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
H8	a: Perceived visibility is negatively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.	Rejected
	b: Perceived visibility is negatively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.	Rejected
H9	a: Emotion expression goals mediate the association between perceived visibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
	b: Support-seeking goals mediate the association between perceived visibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
H10	a: Perceived visibility control is positively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.	Rejected
	b: Perceived visibility control is positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.	Rejected
H11	a: Emotion expression goals mediate the association between visibility control and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
	b: Support-seeking goals mediate the association between visibility control and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
H12	Depressive symptoms are positively associated with distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
H13	a: Depressive symptoms are positively associated with emotion expression goals on SNSs.	Supported
	b: Depressive symptoms are positively associated with support-seeking goals on SNSs.	Supported
H14	a: Emotion expression goals mediate the association between depressive symptoms and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported

	b: Support-seeking goals mediate the association between depressive symptoms and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported
H15	a: Anticipated negative evaluations moderate the association between emotion expression goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Rejected
	b: Anticipated negative evaluations moderate the association between support-seeking goals and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs.	Supported

Table 6.

PROCESS Moderated-Mediation Models Predicting the Mediator of Support-Seeking Goals and Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs (N = 397)

Variable	Support-Seeking Goals			Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs		
	b	95% CI		b	95% CI	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
<i>Constant</i>	-1.519***	-2.364	-0.675	1.554***	1.109	1.998
<i>Covariates</i>						
Network Closeness	0.421***	0.243	0.598	0.023	-0.072	0.119
Perceived Visibility	-0.025	-0.122	0.073	-0.024	-0.074	0.026
Perceived Visibility Control	-0.127	-0.279	0.025	-0.066	-0.146	0.013
Depressive Symptoms	0.042**	0.016	0.068	0.005	-0.008	0.019
Gender (Men = 1)	0.366*	0.067	0.665	0.249**	0.092	0.405
General Distress Disclosure Tendencies	0.059	-0.044	0.162	0.012	-0.041	0.066
SNS Use	0.028	-0.071	0.126	0.058*	0.007	0.109
Posting Frequency	0.172*	0.039	0.304	0.075	0.005	0.145
<i>Main Variables</i>						
Perceived Network Accessibility	-0.075	-0.240	0.090	-0.103*	-0.189	-0.017
Anticipated Negative Evaluations				-0.106***	-0.158	-0.054
Support-Seeking Goals				0.401***	0.351	0.456
<i>Interactions</i>						
Support-Seeking Goals X Anticipated Negative Evaluations				-0.039*	-0.069	-0.008
R ²	0.158***			0.451***		

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7

Conditional Indirect Effects of Different Predictors on Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs via Support-Seeking Goals with Anticipated Negative Evaluations as Moderator

Predictor	Moderation Level	b	SE	Bootstrapping 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Network Closeness	- 1 SD	<i>0.135</i>	<i>0.037</i>	<i>0.069</i>	<i>0.211</i>
	Mean	<i>0.107</i>	<i>0.029</i>	<i>0.055</i>	<i>0.169</i>
	+ 1 SD	<i>0.078</i>	<i>0.027</i>	<i>0.034</i>	<i>0.140</i>
Perceived Network Accessibility	- 1 SD	-0.035	0.037	-0.108	0.036
	Mean	-0.030	0.032	-0.095	0.032
	+ 1 SD	-0.026	0.028	-0.082	0.027
Perceived Visibility	- 1 SD	-0.008	0.017	-0.041	0.026
	Mean	-0.006	0.013	-0.032	0.021
	+ 1 SD	-0.005	0.010	-0.025	0.015
Perceived Visibility Control	- 1 SD	-0.041	0.026	-0.095	0.011
	Mean	-0.032	0.021	-0.076	0.009
	+ 1 SD	-0.024	0.017	-0.059	0.006
Depressive Symptoms	- 1 SD	<i>0.014</i>	<i>0.005</i>	<i>0.005</i>	<i>0.024</i>
	Mean	<i>0.011</i>	<i>0.004</i>	<i>0.004</i>	<i>0.019</i>
	+ 1 SD	<i>0.008</i>	<i>0.003</i>	<i>0.003</i>	<i>0.015</i>

Note: Lines that are italicized are significant

Table 8

Conditional Indirect Effects of Different Predictors on Distress Disclosure Tendencies on SNSs via Emotion Expression Goals with Anticipated Negative Evaluations as Moderator

Predictor	Moderation Level	b	SE	Bootstrapping 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Network Closeness	<i>- 1 SD</i>	<i>0.061</i>	<i>0.023</i>	<i>0.024</i>	<i>0.111</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.080</i>	<i>0.027</i>	<i>0.031</i>	<i>0.137</i>
	<i>+ 1 SD</i>	<i>0.099</i>	<i>0.034</i>	<i>0.036</i>	<i>0.172</i>
Perceived Visibility	<i>- 1 SD</i>	<i>0.002</i>	<i>0.010</i>	<i>-0.019</i>	<i>0.021</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.002</i>	<i>0.013</i>	<i>-0.023</i>	<i>0.027</i>
	<i>+ 1 SD</i>	<i>0.003</i>	<i>0.016</i>	<i>-0.028</i>	<i>0.034</i>
Perceived Visibility Control	<i>- 1 SD</i>	<i>-0.030</i>	<i>0.016</i>	<i>-0.066</i>	<i>-0.002</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>-0.040</i>	<i>0.019</i>	<i>-0.078</i>	<i>-0.003</i>
	<i>+ 1 SD</i>	<i>-0.049</i>	<i>0.024</i>	<i>-0.097</i>	<i>-0.003</i>
Depressive Symptoms	<i>- 1 SD</i>	<i>0.011</i>	<i>0.004</i>	<i>0.005</i>	<i>0.020</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.014</i>	<i>0.004</i>	<i>0.007</i>	<i>0.024</i>
	<i>+ 1 SD</i>	<i>0.018</i>	<i>0.005</i>	<i>0.008</i>	<i>0.029</i>

Note: Lines that are italicized are significant

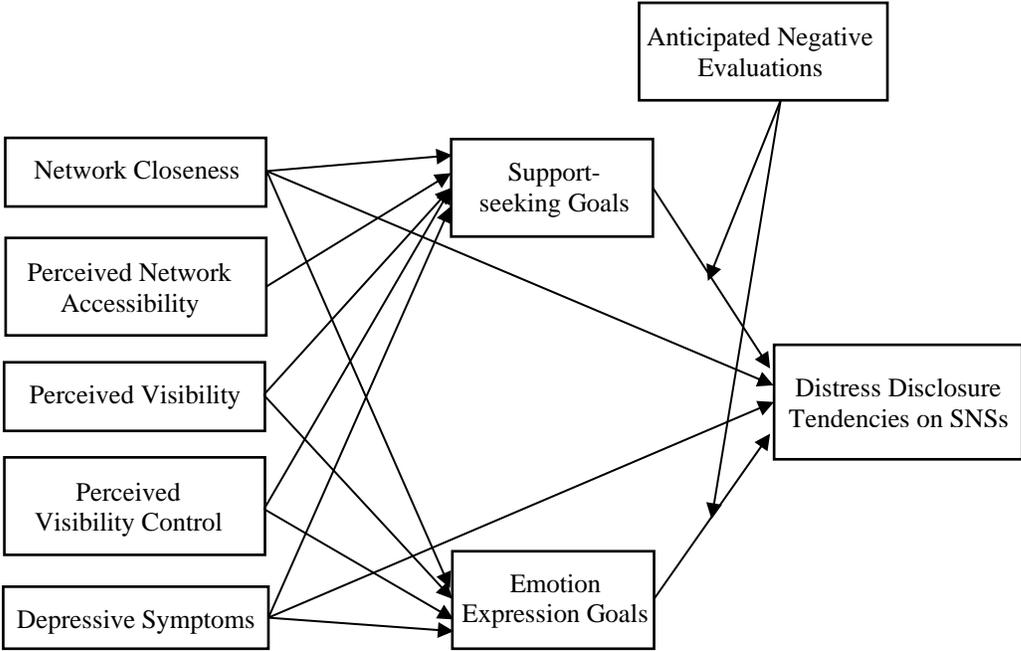
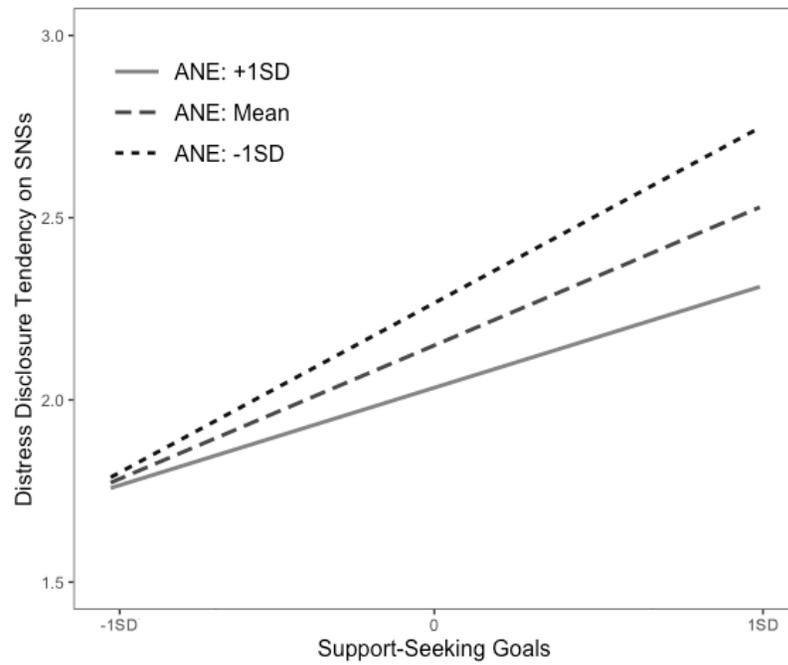
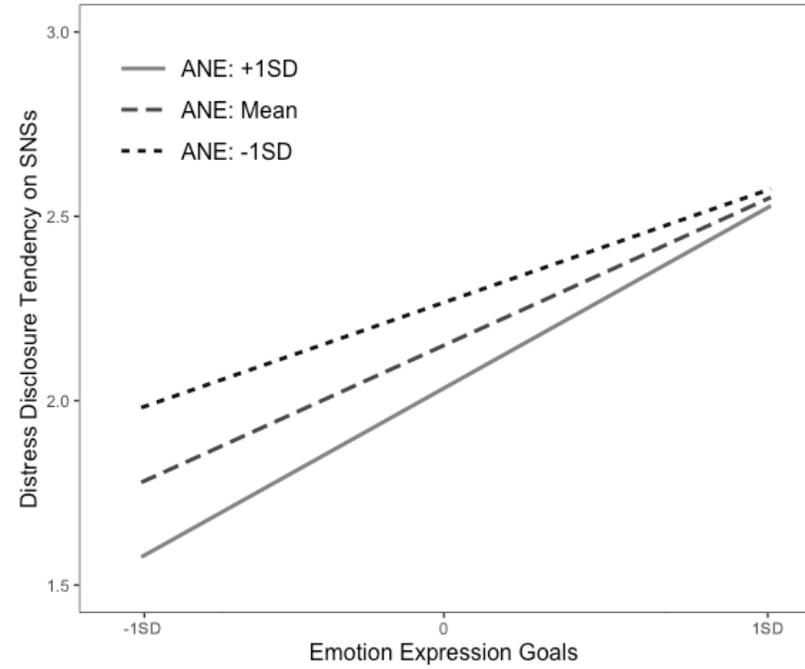


Figure 1. Conceptual model for this study.



[1]



[2]

Figure 2. Simple slopes for the interactions between disclosure goals and anticipated negative evaluations on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. ANE = Anticipated negative evaluations.

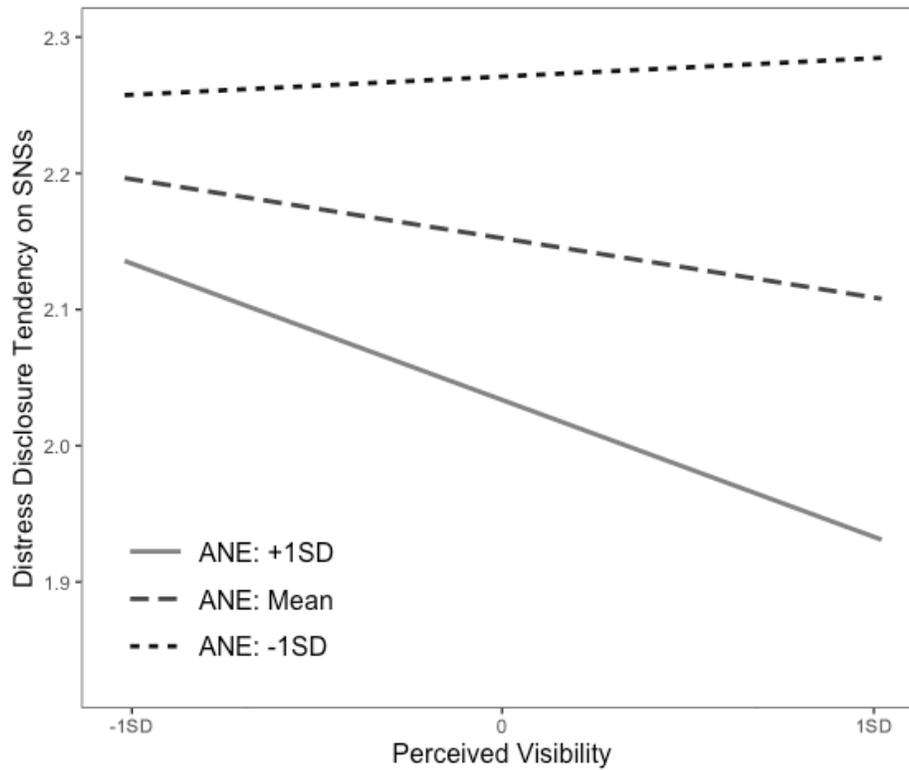


Figure 3. Simple slopes for the interaction between perceived visibility and anticipated negative evaluations on distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs. The association between perceived visibility and distress disclosure tendencies on SNSs was only significant when anticipated negative evaluation was 1SD above the mean. ANE = Anticipated negative evaluations.

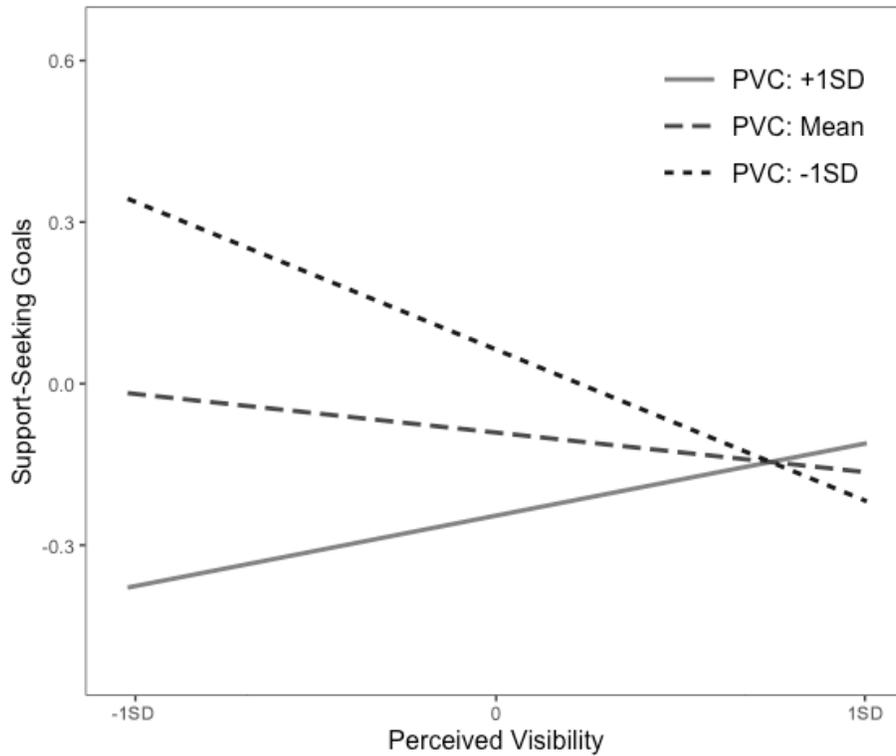


Figure 4. Simple slopes for the interaction between perceived visibility and visibility control on support-seeking goals on SNSs. The association between perceived visibility and support-seeking goals was only significant when perceived visibility control was 1SD below the mean.

PVC = Perceived visibility control.

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