Envy Sensitivity on Twitter and Facebook Among Japanese Young Adults

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ABSTRACT
Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have grown to be popular communication tools that, ironically, have a negative aspect of increasing users’ opportunity to feel envy. In this study, the authors examine the difference in the envy sensitivity people feel when online using several different social media and offline from social media (Study 1) and the types of people who are sensible to envy (Study 2), analyzing data gathering through questionnaire survey. The authors target Facebook and Twitter in this survey. As the results, Study 1 shows that people’s envy sensitivity differ between offline from social media, on Twitter and on Facebook. Study 2 shows that people’s envy sensitivity when on social media differed by their demographic categories. They also find that some types of usage objectives and user actions on social media are correlated with envy sensitivity. The authors hope that their findings will contribute to understanding the envy on social media and will help people avoid or cope with their envy.

KEYWORDS
Demographics, Envy, Social Media, Usage Objective, User Behavior

INTRODUCTION
Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have been widely used in people’s daily lives. People can register other users as their friends or follow other users to obtain their updates on social media. They can know how other users spend their lives or what other users are interested in these days. While social media has helped people to know others’ information and status updates, it has brought a negative aspect for them to feel unpleasant emotions like stress and depression while using social media (Boyd, 2006; Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, 2012; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009; O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

It is well known that people tend to post their positive events and self-presentational contents on online networks (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006), especially on social media (Bazarova, Taft, Choi, & Cosley, 2012; Page, 2012). This might cause people’s envy to others while browsing those contents. Envy is a negative feeling felt when people watch other people’s success and happiness. Smith and Kim (2007) said that “envy, the unpleasant emotion that can arise when we compare unfavorably with others, is a common experience for most people regardless of culture.”

Importance of Understanding Envy on Social Media
Many psychologists have conducted studies to understand envy until now. Because envy often appears as a hostile emotion prompting aggressive behaviors such as hating, avoiding, and insulting the targeted person (Foster, 1972; Smith & Kim, 2007), they consider that it is important to examine...
why people feel envy. An important process of feeling envy is social comparison in which people compare themselves with others for self-assessment (Festinger, 1954). The negative feeling felt in social comparison is envy (Collins, 1996; Alicke & Zell, 2008). In the social comparison process, social relationship with the people targeted by comparison is important (Goethals & Darley, 1977). Concretely, it has been reported that people tend to compare themselves with those who spend lives similar to theirs (Schaubroeck & Lam 2004; Tesser, 1991). As a result of social comparison process, people feel envy more sensitively toward similar ones than toward others (Parrott, 1991; Smith & Kim, 2007). It has also been reported that people feel envy sensitively if they make a social comparison considering the domain that is important or interesting for them (Tesser, 1991; Smith & Kim, 2007).

Studies about envy on social media have been started recently. The most of them targeted Facebook, which is the most popular social media, in their examination. Chou and Edge (2012) supposed that other users appear happy to many users on Facebook, which might evoke envy on other people. Furthermore, Krasnova, Wenninger, Widjaja, and Buxmann (2013) reported that many users feel stress from the envy they experience from Facebook use and that browsing updates on Facebook with envy negatively correlates with users’ life satisfaction. Tandoc, Ferruchi, and Duffy (2015) examined the relationships among Facebook usage frequency, envy, and depression. They also found that browsing updates on Facebook with envy causes depression in the user and that browsing without envy diminishes the user’s depression. Panger (2014) examined social comparison on Facebook and Twitter. He clarified that Facebook users do social comparison more frequently than do Twitter users. This result shows that users may feel envy differently between different social media.

While many studies have been conducted on envy on Facebook, there exists no study examining envy on other social media as far as we know. In these days, many kinds of social media are used in our lives. More studies about envy should be conducted not only on Facebook but also on other social media, which is important to understand the envy people feel on social media. Although there exists a study on social comparison between Facebook and Twitter, it is unknown that people feel more envy on Facebook than on Twitter. Facebook is a social media where a user has to ask another user to connect. They cannot be friends on Facebook unless the other user admits the offer. On the contrary, a user on Twitter can make a directed link to another user for checking his/her daily updates. The difference on connecting to people might influence how users feel envy on each social media.

While many studies traditionally had been conducted on envy before social media grew, there exists no study examining how differently people feel envy between on social media and offline from social media. A user can know others’ lives in detail and timely from their posts on social media. The words, images, or movies included in the posts may have more reality and impacts than gossip or talk in the real world. A user can also know others’ lives on social media even if they live far away or have never been seen by the user. Due to these differences, people feel envy differently between on social media and offline from social media.

As described above, methods of connection with other person differ between Facebook and Twitter. They are also different from the people’s connection offline from social media. Due to these differences, the type of people connected with a user might differ between Facebook, Twitter and offline from social media. Type of person targeted by envy might also differ between the three circumstances. As the traditional studies clarified, people tend to feel envy to a specific type of person (Tesser, 1991; Smith & Kim, 2007). This might cause the difference in envy sensitivity between the three circumstances.

In this study, first, we aim to know how differently feel envy between Facebook and Twitter and between on social media and offline from social media (Study 1). To examine this, we analyze how users’ envy sensitivity differ between the three circumstances. We also examine the type of people...
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