

The Relative Contribution of Virtual Self-Image Via Social Media to Personality Authenticity and its Relationship Among a Sample of Students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla

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ABSTRACT:

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between virtual self-image and personality authenticity among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. It also sought to determine the extent to which personality authenticity could be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image. The study was conducted on a sample of 214 male and female students who use social networking sites, selected from different faculties of Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. The study adopted the descriptive correlational method and employed the Virtual Self-Image Scale developed by Shaimaa Salman (2023) and the Personality Authenticity Scale developed by Salam Hadi and Raqia (2024). The findings revealed a high level of personality authenticity among the participants. They also indicated a statistically significant correlation between virtual self-image and personality authenticity. Furthermore, personality authenticity could be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image (open self, conservative self, and hidden self).

Keywords: Self-identity; Virtual self-image; Personality authenticity.

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a profound transformation in communication and interaction through social networking sites, which are defined as online platforms that enable users to create and share content with a vast number of other users. These platforms constitute virtual environments that allow individuals to express themselves while exchanging opinions and experiences. They have attracted users from all age groups, particularly adolescents and young adults, who perceive them as spaces where they can express themselves directly or indirectly without restrictions or limitations, owing to the privacy, anonymity, and identity concealment these platforms provide.

According to Afifi (2025), *"virtual environments enable individuals to embody symbolic representations of their identities and present themselves to others, and these representations may differ from their real selves."* This representation is referred to as the **virtual self**, although it is also described by other terms such as **virtual identity**, **digital identity**, and **virtual self-image**. Some researchers argue that the virtual self represents a false identity deliberately created by individuals to establish a place for themselves in the virtual world, which has compelled people to conform to others and present themselves in the way they wish to be perceived. Individuals can alter their gender, age, occupation, and even their names. Consequently, they are able to adopt multiple identities other than

their real ones by using pseudonyms, fictitious images, and modified personal information while concealing their true identity (Al-Nimri, 2024).

Today, *"we live in an era in which technology has the power to blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, between the real and the virtual. Through avatars and digital profiles, inhabitants of virtual worlds can create customized virtual identities that are shaped according to their intentions and expectations. Virtual environments are no longer constrained by material realities or existential limitations; rather, they provide individuals with a blank canvas on which they can easily design their desired virtual identities, thereby creating unprecedented opportunities for redefining identity and completely reconstructing the self"* (Batoool et al., 2023).

In the same context, Salman (2023) argues that *"an active user within the virtual community constructs a self-image according to personal choices and intentions. Moreover, the images, symbols, signs, and interactions provided by the virtual community contribute to presenting a clearer and often enhanced image of the self compared with what occurs in real-life society. Consequently, users continually attempt to present themselves in the manner they desire in search of recognition and validation from others regarding the self-image they display."*

Accordingly, every individual tends to present the best version of themselves in order to create a favorable impression that reflects what they aspire to be, whether this corresponds to their **actual self** (real self) or their **ideal self**. Environmental conditions, situations, and personal beliefs all influence the formation of self-image. The self-image constructed through social networking sites represents the self within the virtual environment and is sometimes shaped by the evaluations and comments of others, consciously or unconsciously. This self-image becomes part of the information derived from such evaluations, whether positive or negative, indicating that self-image may be influenced by the surrounding environment (Nugraha, 2021). In other words, it may be shaped by others' evaluations and strive to present an idealized identity that seeks admiration and social acceptance, portraying the individual as worthy of appreciation and esteem. Such a process may generate an illusory sense of importance and uniqueness (Afifi, 2025). However, at a deeper level, individuals may experience an internal conflict between this projected identity and their genuine beliefs, thoughts, and goals, leading them to deviate from their authentic selves and lived experiences. This reflects a form of psychological alienation from one's true self and identity.

Within this framework, Neufeld-Wall (2023) defines **self-alienation** as *"the absence of a sense of identity resulting from the subjective feeling of not knowing oneself. When individuals fail to understand themselves, they create a gap between the image they present and their true selves. A discrepancy emerges between self-awareness and actual experience, causing individuals to feel detached from themselves because they do not behave in accordance with their inner desires."*

Conversely, when individuals perceive their behavior as originating from themselves or from intrinsic motivations, they experience a sense of being true to themselves. This feeling represents one of the key indicators of **personality authenticity**.

Authenticity is considered one of the fundamental concepts in psychology. Originating from existential psychology, it refers to an individual's ability to live in harmony with their genuine values, emotions, and thoughts, free from the social masks and external pressures that encourage conformity to others' expectations (Bochaver, 2023). Carl Rogers associated this concept with psychological well-being and self-congruence, considering it the ultimate goal of healthy psychological

development. He argued that authenticity naturally emerges through the tendency toward self-actualization and autonomy, emphasizing the importance of acting and expressing oneself authentically and congruently. He further suggested that psychological problems may arise from the absence of authenticity, namely, the incongruence between the true self and the self presented to others (Mayton, 2018; King, 2023).

Authenticity reflects the congruence between an individual's awareness and their behaviors or emotional expressions. Behavioral and emotional expressions that are consistent with awareness of one's physiological states, emotions, and perceptions indicate that the individual is being true to themselves according to the beliefs and values that characterize authentic living. Authenticity also depends on the extent to which individuals accept others' influence and believe that they should conform to others' expectations. The social environment reinforces the internalization of others' opinions and exerts external pressures, thereby playing a significant role in shaping authentic living as well as self-alienation (Chew & Ang, 2023).

Pooja (2021) notes that individuals with authentic personalities *"are open to every experience without concealing or distorting it from their awareness. They live fully in the present moment and trust their emotions and inner experiences to guide their behavior in the real world, even when the environment is unfavorable. They also demonstrate creativity in responding to life's demands rather than relying on conventional patterns of behavior."* Authenticity is manifested when individuals express their true selves in an essential and genuine manner without fear of self-exploration or reliance on automatic or compensatory defenses. An authentic person embraces all of their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. As individuals become increasingly authentic in their relationship with themselves, they develop greater awareness of the multiple facets of their identity and strive to integrate them into a coherent self-structure. They exhibit neither denial, distortion, nor exaggeration of external evaluative information and demonstrate a relative absence of interpretive biases such as defensiveness and self-enhancement when processing self-related information. Moreover, they behave consistently with their own values, preferences, and needs rather than acting falsely merely to please others, obtain rewards, or avoid punishment, and they present themselves to others as they truly are (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

The foregoing discussion highlights a fundamental debate concerning the potential disconnect between individuals' real selves and their virtual selves. This raises important questions regarding how individuals present themselves on social networking sites, the extent to which such self-presentation corresponds to their actual self-image, and whether it genuinely reflects their individuality and autonomy rather than conformity to others. Accordingly, the present study was undertaken to examine the relative contribution of virtual self-image to personality authenticity among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

2. Research Problem

Awareness and the expression of one's true self play a central role in the concept of authenticity. As King (2023) noted, "with the increasing digitization of contemporary society, authenticity research has expanded beyond the immediate physical world to explore how authenticity extends into the growing digital environments in which contemporary individuals are increasingly immersed." This development has become particularly significant given that virtual environments have introduced multiple forms of self and identity. The emergence of virtual selves has made it more difficult for

individuals to identify their authentic selves and, consequently, to live and behave in accordance with them. Therefore, authentic self-expression on social networking sites and the extent to which it accurately reflects the individual's real-world self have become important topics deserving scholarly investigation.

The present study seeks to contribute to this growing body of research by examining the relationship between virtual self-image and personality authenticity as a psychological construct that extends beyond merely describing observable behaviors associated with social media use. Moreover, this study addresses the scarcity of research examining these two constructs simultaneously.

Among the Arab studies that have addressed these concepts is the study by Afifi (2025), which investigated the direct effect of virtual self-image on both personality authenticity and mental health among students at Benha University. Similarly, King (2023) examined how authentic self-expression on social media platforms is associated with personality, self-concept, and self-disclosure behaviors among a sample of students at the University of Sydney. In addition, Lv et al. (2022) explored the influence of personality traits on online self-disclosure, examining the mediating and moderating roles of perceived value and authenticity among a sample of Chinese university students.

Accordingly, the significance and research gap of the present study lie in the limited number of studies investigating the predictive role of virtual self-image in personality authenticity. Therefore, the current study seeks to answer the following research question:

To what extent does virtual self-image on social networking sites contribute to personality authenticity among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla?

3. Research Questions

1. What is the level of personality authenticity among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between personality authenticity and virtual self-image among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla?
3. Can personality authenticity be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla?

4. Research Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesized that the level of personality authenticity will be high among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between virtual self-image and personality authenticity among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.
3. Personality authenticity can be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

5. Research Objectives

The present study aims to:

- Determine the level of personality authenticity among the study participants.
- Examine the relationship between virtual self-image and personality authenticity among the study participants.
- Investigate the extent to which personality authenticity can be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image.

6. Significance of the Study

6.1. Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of the present study stems from its focus on university students, who represent the youth segment of society. Investigating this population is particularly important, especially with regard to factors that may influence their academic achievement and future professional development. The study is also significant because it addresses the concept of personality authenticity, a relatively recent construct in psychological research that contributes to a better understanding of human behavior. Furthermore, individuals' awareness of their authenticity and their ability to express it are important factors that promote psychological flourishing.

The study is also important because it examines virtual self-image, a construct that highlights a new dimension of the self associated with virtual environments. Given the increasing prominence of these environments in contemporary life, they have become an important focus of psychological research due to their potential influence on individuals' behavior in virtual settings and, to some extent, on their overall quality of life.

6.2. Practical Significance

The practical significance of the present study lies in its potential contribution to the development of counseling, therapeutic, and awareness programs that promote the positive and balanced use of social networking sites while encouraging authentic rather than deceptive self-expression. Such efforts may contribute to the development of authentic personalities characterized by sound psychological well-being and reduced vulnerability to psychological problems that may arise from discrepancies between individuals' genuine beliefs and values and the identities they present to others. Furthermore, the findings of this study may stimulate further research aimed at achieving a deeper understanding of personality authenticity and virtual self-identity.

7. Operational Definitions of the Study Variables

7.1. Personality Authenticity

Personality authenticity is defined as the extent to which an individual is aware of themselves, confident in their abilities, and knowledgeable about their goals, beliefs, and core life values, while living in accordance with these values, goals, and beliefs (Hadi & Al-Dulaimi, 2024).

Operationally, it is measured by the score obtained by a student at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla during the 2025/2026 academic year on the Personality Authenticity Scale developed by Hadi and Al-Dulaimi (2024), which comprises the following dimensions:

- **Self-alienation:** Refers to an individual's lack of self-knowledge or sense of disconnection from themselves, resulting in feelings of estrangement from the self, that is, an incongruence between conscious awareness and actual experience.
- **Authentic living:** Refers to behaving naturally and consistently with one's beliefs, goals, preferences, and core values. It reflects an individual's ability to be true to themselves.
- **Acceptance of external influence:** Refers to the extent to which an individual accepts the opinions of others, is influenced by and conforms to their expectations, and feels the need to gain others' approval in everything they do.

7.2. Virtual Self-Image

Virtual self-image refers to the mental image that users seek to present through social networking sites, which function as integrated virtual communities where individuals attempt to satisfy their social needs and actively participate in expressing their opinions about societal issues, either through their real identity when expressing constructive views or through a false identity to avoid social sanctions when expressing opinions that conflict with societal norms (Salman, 2023).

Operationally, it is measured by the score obtained by a university student on the **Virtual Self-Image Scale** developed by Salman (2023). The dominant type of virtual self-image is determined by the highest score among its dimensions within the virtual environment. Virtual self-image consists of the following dimensions:

- **Hidden self:** Reflects an individual's desire to express opinions, emotions, and thoughts, expand social relationships without social restrictions, and avoid social sanctions by using fake accounts and pseudonyms while remaining distant from relatives and acquaintances.
- **Active self:** Reflects an individual's desire to reinforce their real-life self-image through the virtual environment by increasing popularity, expressing constructive opinions, affirming their role in society, compensating for deficiencies in real-life social interactions through online communication, and sharing significant life experiences with others.
- **Socially sensitive self:** Reflects an individual's need to affirm their influence on others by seeking admiration and attracting attention. It includes feelings of distress and frustration when posts or comments receive little interaction, as well as feelings of despair and failure when viewing others' achievements and comparing themselves with them.
- **Open self:** Reflects an individual's desire to follow societal events and developments, learn about the characteristics of other societies, and use the virtual environment to communicate with different cultures.
- **Conservative self:** Reflects an individual's effort to reinforce their real social presence within virtual environments by presenting an ideal social image to others while exercising caution regarding the opinions they express and the content they publish under their real identity. It also includes maintaining account privacy, restricting profile access to friends, and protecting the account from unauthorized access.

8. Study Delimitations

8.1. Human Delimitations

The study was conducted on a sample of 214 male and female students from Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

8.2. Spatial Delimitations

The study covered students from the various faculties of Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

8.3. Temporal Delimitations

The study was conducted during the 2025/2026 academic year.

9. Theoretical Framework of the Study Variables

9.1. Concept of Personality Authenticity

The concept of authenticity dates back to ancient philosophers. Socrates argued that "the unexamined life is not worth living," while Aristotle contributed to the concept by emphasizing the relationship between individuals' self-knowledge and their behavioral self-regulation (Kernis

& Goldman, 2006). The concept of authenticity gained increasing recognition over the past few decades with the emergence of the positive psychology movement, which also stimulated growing interest in authenticity as a psychological construct (Selim & Abu Halawa, 2018).

9.1.1. Definition of Personality Authenticity

The concept of authenticity is primarily rooted in Carl Rogers' person-centered theory, which emphasizes the principle of congruence. Nevertheless, during the past two decades, several additional conceptualizations of authenticity have emerged. Some definitions focus specifically on individual behaviors and acting in ways that reflect one's personal values and emotions, whereas others emphasize relational processes and emotional interactions. Other scholars have adopted a broader perspective, arguing that the original conceptualizations of authenticity are overly restrictive (Wood et al., 2008).

In general, authenticity is defined as an individual's engagement in daily life in a manner that is consistent with their true self, without pretense, concealment, or submission to irrational pressures or influences that conflict with their personal beliefs and life perspectives. It represents the behavioral embodiment of the principle: "Be yourself, not someone else." Lenton et al. (2013) further describe authenticity as an individual's sense of satisfaction and comfort with themselves and with others, accompanied by self-awareness as a free, independent, and unique person who possesses competence and self-worth (Khalaf & Abdullah, 2024).

Bochaver (2023) defines authenticity as self-awareness, honesty with oneself, autonomous behavior, authentic relationships with others, and a desire for autonomy and independent thinking. Likewise, Mengers (2014) defines authenticity as an individual's awareness of their thoughts and emotions and the consistency of these internal experiences with their behaviors, free from external pressures (Al-Obaidi, 2021).

9.1.2. Dimensions of Personality Authenticity

According to Wood et al. (2008), authenticity consists of three fundamental dimensions (Bunker et al., 2024):

1. **Self-alienation:** Refers to the inevitable discrepancy between an individual's conscious awareness and their actual experiences, reflecting a lack of self-knowledge or a sense of disconnection from oneself.
2. **Authentic living:** Refers to the perceived congruence between an individual's awareness and behavior. It involves behaving and expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with one's values and beliefs.
3. **Acceptance of external influence:** Refers to the extent to which an individual conforms to the expectations of their social environment, which, in turn, influences both self-alienation and authentic living.

In contrast, Kernis and Goldman (2006) proposed a four-component model of authenticity consisting of the following dimensions:

1. **Self-awareness:** Refers to an individual's awareness of their thoughts, emotions, motives, and perceptions, as well as their understanding of their desires, values, strengths, and weaknesses. Awareness of one's emotions facilitates complete self-acceptance by integrating contradictory aspects of the personality into a coherent and unified sense of self, rather than acknowledging only those aspects that are consistent with one's self-image.

2. **Unbiased processing:** Refers to the objective processing of self-relevant information without distortion or defensive judgment. It involves evaluating both positive and negative aspects of oneself, including one's emotions and self-knowledge, in an impartial manner.
3. **Authentic behavior:** Refers to acting consistently with one's values, emotions, and motivations rather than yielding to socially desirable behaviors or external pressures. Authentic behavior reflects personal values and needs instead of actions intended merely to satisfy others.
4. **Relational orientation:** Refers to honesty and authenticity in close interpersonal relationships. It involves presenting oneself genuinely in interactions with peers and colleagues and is characterized by openness, sincerity, honesty, and transparency in close relationships.

9.2. Virtual Self-Image / Virtual Identity

The concept of identity has a long and well-established history, having been extensively explored within the social sciences. Erik Erikson advanced the understanding of identity through his work on identity development during the 1950s, recognizing the influence of various social and cultural changes on individual identity, in addition to the impact of globalization and modern technological innovations (Batoool et al., 2023). These technological developments have led researchers to identify the existence of the virtual self, or the digital embodiment of the self represented through an avatar, which possesses the physical and psychological characteristics necessary to facilitate a wide range of cognitive, cultural, social, and emotional experiences within virtual environments.

9.2.1. Definition of Virtual Self-Image / Virtual Identity

Virtual self-image is defined as the image that individuals construct and present through various social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and others, to express their personal thoughts and emotions. This image may be either authentic or fabricated, and it influences individuals' feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Afifi, 2025). The self-image that individuals construct in the virtual world enables them to describe themselves and reflects their personality. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between one's real self-image and one's virtual self-image (Nugraha, 2021).

Virtual identity refers to the digital identities that individuals create based on their personal identities according to their preferences within the online environment. Through these virtual identities, individuals can present, modify, or conceal specific information about their real lives. Consequently, they may attempt to behave or appear differently from who they truly are in order to gain acceptance and appreciation through social networking platforms (Al-Nimri, 2024). Furthermore, virtual self-identity reflects an individual's personal self-schemas, beliefs, and thoughts, as well as their perceptions of others' opinions, their self-perception, and their aspirations regarding who they should become in the future. These factors may lead individuals either to behave authentically while using social networking sites or to construct a false self that they impose upon themselves, believing that such a self enables them to adapt more effectively to their surrounding social environment (Fakhro & Mousa, 2024).

9.2.2. Dimensions and Components of the Virtual Self / Virtual Self-Image

According to Afifi (2025), virtual self-image consists of three dimensions:

1. **Private virtual self-image:** Refers to the image individuals present to users of social networking sites through which they express their beliefs, thoughts, and personal characteristics. This image may represent either their authentic self or a fabricated one.
2. **Social virtual self-image:** Refers to the image individuals develop about themselves based on how they perceive others' reactions toward them. It also reflects their perceived social competence and their influence on others through their use of social networking platforms.
3. **Ideal self-image:** Refers to individuals' sense of self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, and their perception of occupying a distinguished position within the virtual community.

In contrast, Al-Biblawi (2018) argued that, according to the self-theories of Rogers and Higgins, the virtual self constitutes a fourth dimension of the self in addition to the real self, the ideal self, and the ought self. As a psychological phenomenon within the self-concept system, the virtual self represents an individual's psychological presence within a digital virtual world. It is governed by dynamic processes of convergence with and divergence from the real, ideal, and ought selves. From this perspective, virtual self-image is considered a distinct dimension of the self: when it is congruent with the other dimensions of the self (the real, ideal, and ought selves), it reflects psychological well-being; conversely, when it diverges from them, it may serve as an indicator of psychological maladjustment.

Methodology and Instruments

1. Research Method

Since the present study aimed to examine the relationship between virtual self-image and personality authenticity among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla, the descriptive correlational method was considered the most appropriate approach for achieving the study objectives.

Study Sample

The study sample consisted of 214 male and female students from Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique from the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts and Languages, Law and Political Science, and Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences.

2. Research Instruments

To collect the required data, the study employed the following two instruments:

2.1. Personality Authenticity Scale

The present study used the Personality Authenticity Scale developed by Hadi and Al-Dulaimi (2024). The scale consists of 21 self-report items distributed across three dimensions: self-alienation, authentic living, and acceptance of external influence.

Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree, with corresponding scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Accordingly, the total score ranges from 21 to 105, with a hypothetical mean of 63.

The items are distributed across the three dimensions as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of the Personality Authenticity Scale Items Across Its Dimensions

No.	Dimension	Item Numbers	Number of Items
01	Self-Alienation	7 – 6 – 5 – 4- 3 – 2-1	7

02	Authentic Living	14 – 13 – 12 – 11 – 10 – 9 – 8	7
03	Acceptance of External Influence	21 – 20 – 19 – 18 – 17 – 16 – 15	7
Total Number of Items		21	

Psychometric Properties of the Personality Authenticity Scale

To verify the suitability of the scale for use in the main study, several psychometric properties of the instrument were examined using a pilot sample consisting of 60 male and female students from the faculties of Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. The obtained results are summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Summary of the Psychometric Properties of the Personality Authenticity Scale

Validity	Reliability
Internal consistency validity was assessed, and the item–dimension correlation coefficients for the Personality Authenticity Scale were all statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level, ranging from **.386 to **.846.	The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) for the Personality Authenticity Scale was 0.73 , while the coefficient corrected using the Guttman formula was 0.85 .
Extreme-group validity was examined by comparing the upper and lower groups. The upper group's mean score on the Personality Authenticity Scale was 30.50 (SD = 2.56), whereas the lower group's mean score was 20.69 (SD = 1.35). The calculated t-value was 13.57, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating statistically significant differences between the upper and lower groups.	The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Personality Authenticity Scale was 0.86 .

2.2. Virtual Self-Image Scale

The Virtual Self-Image Scale was developed by Shaimaa Salman (2023). The scale consists of 30 items distributed across five dimensions: hidden self, active self, socially sensitive self, open self, and conservative self.

Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree), with corresponding scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Accordingly, the total score ranges from 30 to 150, with a hypothetical mean of 90.

The items are distributed across the five dimensions as follows:

Table 3. Distribution of the Virtual Self-Image Scale Items Across Its Dimensions

No.	Dimension	Item Numbers	Number of Items
01	Hidden Self	6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1	6
02	Active Self	13 – 12 – 11 – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7	7
03	Socially Sensitive Self	18 – 17 – 16 – 15 – 14	5
04	Open Self	23 – 22 – 21 – 20 – 19	5

05	Conservative Self	30 – 29 – 28 – 27 – 26 – 25 – 24	7
Total Number of Items		30	

Psychometric Properties of the Virtual Self-Image Scale

To ensure the suitability of the Virtual Self-Image Scale for use in the main study, several psychometric properties of the instrument were examined using a pilot sample consisting of 60 male and female students from the faculties of Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. The obtained results are summarized in the following table:

Table 4. Summary of the Psychometric Properties of the Virtual

Validity	Reliability
Internal consistency validity was assessed, and the item–dimension correlation coefficients for the Virtual Self-Image Scale were all statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level, with the exception of Item 24, which was significant at the 0.05 level. The correlation coefficients ranged from **.326 to **.823.	The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) for the Virtual Self-Image Scale was 0.83, while the coefficient corrected using the Guttman formula was 0.91.
Extreme-group validity was examined by comparing the upper and lower groups. The upper group's mean score on the Virtual Self-Image Scale was 100.00 (SD = 6.01), whereas the lower group's mean score was 61.44 (SD = 8.05). The calculated t-value was 15.35, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating statistically significant differences between the upper and lower groups.	The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Virtual Self-Image Scale was 0.84.

3. Results Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion

3.1. Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis states that:

It is hypothesized that the level of personality authenticity is high among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

To test this hypothesis, a one-sample t-test was conducted to examine the significance of the difference between the hypothetical mean of the Personality Authenticity Scale and the sample mean obtained by the study participants. The following table presents the results.

Table 5. Results of the One-Sample t-Test Comparing the Sample Mean with the Hypothetical Mean of the Personality Authenticity Scale

Statistical Indicators	Number of Items	Hypothetical Mean	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Test	Significance Level
Personality Authenticity	21	63	72.72	9.98	14.25	0.00

As shown in Table 5, the sample obtained a mean score of 72.72 on the Personality Authenticity Scale, with a standard deviation of 9.98, which is higher than the hypothetical mean of 63. The results of the one-sample t-test revealed a t-value of 14.25 at a significance level of Sig = 0.000 and 378 degrees of freedom, indicating a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 significance level. These findings indicate that the study participants demonstrated a high level of personality authenticity.

This finding suggests that students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla possess a high level of personality authenticity, reflecting strong self-awareness, confidence in their abilities, and clarity regarding their goals, beliefs, and personal values, while living consistently with those values and beliefs. This finding is plausible, as university students at this stage of their academic development have typically accumulated a variety of educational and life experiences that contribute to the development of their personalities and competencies, making them more aware of their actions and more conscious of their behaviors.

This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Bochaver (2023), who reported that authenticity becomes increasingly evident with age through the development of autonomy, the ability to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic experiences, and the capacity to differentiate between the true self and external influences. It is also supported by Self-Determination Theory, which posits that individuals are authentic when their actions reflect their true or essential selves—that is, when they act autonomously and make decisions independently (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Furthermore, this finding may be interpreted in light of the model proposed by Wood et al. (2008), who conceptualized personality authenticity as comprising three dimensions: self-alienation, authentic living, and acceptance of external influence. According to this model, an authentic individual is one who is able to achieve an appropriate balance among these three dimensions.

The findings of the present study are consistent with those reported by Al-Obaidi (2021), Hadi and Al-Dulaimi (2024), and Jawad (2025), all of whom concluded that university students generally exhibit a high level of personality authenticity.

3.2. Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis states that:

There is a statistically significant relationship between personality authenticity and virtual self-image among the study participants.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores obtained on the Personality Authenticity Scale and those obtained on the Virtual Self-Image Scale.

The results are presented below.

Table 6. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Between Personality Authenticity Scores and Virtual Self-Image Scores

Statistical Indicators Variables	Sample (N)	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Confidence Level	Significance Level	Statistical Decision
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Virtual Self-Image	214	0.49	0.00	0.01	Significant
Personality Authenticity					

As shown in Table 6, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between the scores on the Personality Authenticity Scale and the Virtual Self-Image Scale was 0.49, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level. This result indicates a statistically significant positive correlation between personality authenticity and virtual self-image.

The existence of this relationship can be interpreted in light of the theoretical literature on both personality authenticity and virtual self-image. Individuals with a high level of personality authenticity tend to behave in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs, values, goals, and inner convictions. In other words, they demonstrate congruence between who they are and how they express themselves. Consequently, social networking sites become a natural extension of their real identities rather than a space for distortion or deception. Their virtual self-image therefore reflects their true selves, authentic values, and genuine identities, allowing them to express themselves honestly, freely, and autonomously.

This interpretation may apply to the present study sample, particularly in light of the findings related to the first hypothesis, which demonstrated that the participants exhibited a high level of personality authenticity. Conversely, individuals with lower levels of authenticity may experience self-alienation and be more susceptible to external influence. As a defensive coping mechanism, they may use social networking sites to compensate for perceived personal deficiencies by presenting idealized or fabricated versions of themselves that are inconsistent with their true selves, values, beliefs, and goals. Several studies investigating how young people perceive personal authenticity on social networking sites support this interpretation. These studies indicate that young people conceptualize authenticity as self-consistency, referring to the congruence between their online and offline behaviors. Authenticity is determined by the extent to which individuals believe that their actions are consistent with their perception of their true selves. Furthermore, these studies suggest that users' engagement and activity on social networking sites are associated with positive emotions and a stronger sense of presenting themselves authentically online (Neufeld-Wall, 2023).

The findings of the present study are consistent with those reported by Afifi (2025), as well as the studies conducted by Yuxiang Lv et al. (2022) and Ashleigh King (2023) on personality authenticity and self-presentation through social networking sites.

3.3. Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis states that:

Personality authenticity can be predicted from the dimensions of virtual self-image among students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.

To test this hypothesis, standard multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive ability of the independent variable, virtual self-image—represented by its five dimensions (hidden self, active self, socially sensitive self, open self, and conservative self)—for predicting the dependent variable, personality authenticity, represented by its three dimensions (self-alienation, authentic living, and acceptance of external influence). The following results were obtained.

Table 7. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Multiple Regression Model Predicting Personality Authenticity from the Dimensions of Virtual Self-Image (Hidden Self, Active Self, Socially Sensitive Self, Open Self, and Conservative Self)

Statistical Indicators	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	Adjusted Coefficient of Determination (Adjusted R^2)
Regression	4995.804	5	999.161	12.803	0.000	0.49	0.24	0.22
Residuals	16232.930	208	78.043					
Total	21228.734	213	/					

As shown in Table 7, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) between the dependent variable, personality authenticity, and the independent variable, virtual self-image (represented by the dimensions of hidden self, active self, socially sensitive self, open self, and conservative self) was 0.49, with a significance level of Sig = 0.000, indicating statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.24, indicating that the independent variable, virtual self-image, accounted for 24% of the total variance in the dependent variable, personality authenticity. This proportion of explained variance was statistically significant, as evidenced by the F-value of 12.803 at Sig = 0.000, confirming the overall significance of the regression model. Accordingly, it can be concluded that virtual self-image exerts a positive effect on personality authenticity, while the remaining 76% of the variance may be attributed to other factors not included in the model.

To determine the unique contribution of each dimension of the independent variable in predicting the dependent variable, Table 8 presents the t-values, regression coefficients, and their corresponding levels of statistical significance for each dimension of virtual self-image. The results are summarized as follows.

Table 8. Regression Coefficients, t-Values, and Their Statistical Significance for the Dimensions of Virtual Self-Image (Hidden Self, Active Self, Socially Sensitive Self, Open Self, and Conservative Self) as Predictors of Personality Authenticity

Statistical Indicators Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta) " β "	t-Value	Significance Level
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Dependent Variable	Personality Authenticity	45.375	3.599	/	12.608	.0000
Independent Variable	Hidden Self	0.390	0.189	0.168	2.066	0.040
	Active Self	-0.153	0.148	-0.091	-1.035	0.302
	Socially Sensitive Self	0.122	0.194	0.050	0.632	0.528
	Open Self	0.711	0.189	0.286	3.760	0.000
	Conservative Self	0.450	0.143	0.212	3.141	0.002

As shown in Table 8, the open self-dimension made the greatest contribution to explaining the variance in the dependent variable, personality authenticity, with a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.286$ and a t-value of 3.760 at Sig = 0.000, indicating statistical significance. This result suggests that the open self accounted for 28.6% of the explained variance in personality authenticity.

The conservative self ranked second, with a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.212$ and a t-value of 3.141 at Sig = 0.002, also indicating statistical significance. This dimension explained 21.2% of the variance in personality authenticity.

The hidden self ranked third, with a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.168$ and a t-value of 2.066 at Sig = 0.040, which was likewise statistically significant. This dimension explained 16.8% of the variance in personality authenticity.

These findings confirm the statistical significance of the regression coefficients for these three dimensions, indicating that the open self, conservative self, and hidden self dimensions of virtual self-image significantly contributed to the regression model. In contrast, the active self and socially sensitive self dimensions did not demonstrate significant predictive power for personality authenticity, indicating that they did not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

Accordingly, the regression model can be expressed by the following equation:

$$\text{Personality Authenticity} = 45.375 + (0.711) \times \text{Open Self} + (0.450) \times \text{Conservative Self} + (0.390) \times \text{Hidden Self}$$

The findings of this study may be interpreted in light of the positive influence of certain dimensions of virtual self-image—namely the open self, conservative self, and hidden self. These results suggest that when individuals present a realistic image of themselves on social networking sites, free from

distortion, idealization, or deception, and genuinely express their beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and goals, their virtual self-image serves as an indicator of a high level of personality authenticity.

This interpretation appears particularly applicable to the participants in the present study, who were found to exhibit a high level of personality authenticity. University students tend to develop an open style of self-expression through which they communicate their preferences, choices, orientations, emotions, and thoughts without being excessively influenced by external judgments. Their openness is also reflected in their conscious awareness of societal events and developments, enabling them to engage with social networking sites in a positive and constructive manner. Consequently, their online self-presentation demonstrates a high degree of congruence between their presented self and their true self.

This interpretation is further supported by the model of personality authenticity proposed by Kernis and Goldman (2006), which conceptualizes authenticity as comprising four interrelated components: self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behavior, and relational orientation. According to this framework, authentic individuals are aware of their emotions (self-awareness), are capable of acknowledging and processing these emotions without distortion (unbiased processing), express them genuinely through their behavior (authentic behavior), and maintain sincere and authentic relationships with the external world (relational orientation).

4. Conclusion

The present study concludes that social media platforms have become a psychological space that reflects users' psychological makeup through the way they present themselves, a presentation that is associated with and predictive of their personality authenticity. This conclusion is supported by the findings of the current study, which aimed to examine the predictive power of the dimensions of virtual self-image on social media in explaining personality authenticity among a sample of students at Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. The findings revealed that the participants demonstrated a high level of personality authenticity. Furthermore, a statistically significant correlation was found between personality authenticity and virtual self-image among the study participants. The results also indicated that personality authenticity could be predicted through the dimensions of virtual self-image (open self, conservative self, and hidden self). In contrast, the dimensions of the socially sensitive self and the active self did not have a significant effect on personality authenticity.

Study Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Conduct further studies on virtual self-image and personality authenticity in relation to demographic variables such as gender, age, and academic specialization.
- Investigate the relationship between personality authenticity and other psychological variables, such as psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and self-efficacy.
- Examine virtual self-image or virtual self-identity in relation to clinical variables, such as depression, anxiety, and digital addiction.
- Develop or adapt personality authenticity scales that incorporate additional fundamental dimensions, including self-awareness, unbiased processing, behavior consistent with internal values, and relational orientation.
- Standardize and develop virtual self-identity scales that assess additional dimensions, such as the private self, the social self, and the ideal self.

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