

# EMOTIONAL RESPONSES OF BROWSING FACEBOOK: HAPPINESS, ENVY, AND TIE STRENGTH



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## Background

From a self-presentation point of view, Facebook users often post about their positive life events, successes, and entertaining status updates (Utz, 2015). Thus feelings of **happiness** and **envy** might be the most typical positive and negative emotions after reading positive posts on Facebook. The feeling of happiness can be explained by the effects of **emotional contagion** (Cheshin, Rafaeli, & Bos, 2011; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993), i.e., the tendency for two individuals to emotionally converge; whereas the feeling of envy can be explained as a result of **upward social comparison** (Festinger, 1954). Also, on Facebook, it is possible to read posts from both strong and weak ties because of the “context collapse” that social media create (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

## Research Questions:

- RQ1:** What are the most prevalent **momentary emotional outcomes** of reading a post on Facebook?  
**RQ2:** What is the role of **tie strength** in explaining emotional outcomes such as happiness and envy?

## Study 1: Correlational Examination

### Procedure & Measures

#### Online Survey

207 American respondents  
Mean age: 41.7  
Male: 36.2%  
Daily FB user: 81.2%

#### Report the Four Most Recent Posts in News Feeds

#### Social Media Use, Demographics, & Personality

#### Content of posts

#### Emotional responses

#### Relationship closeness

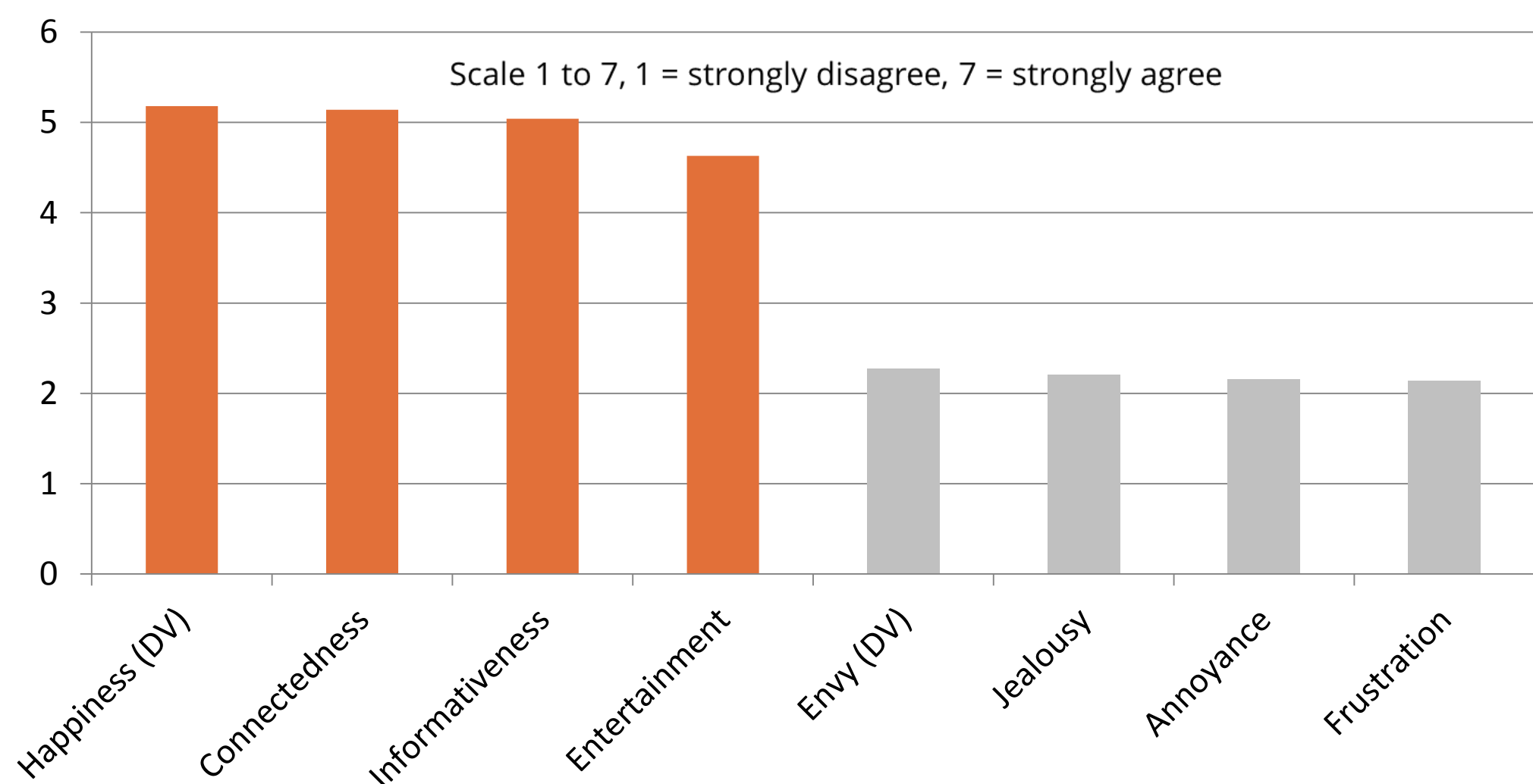
#### Use of Facebook

#### Age, gender

#### Self-esteem

## Results

To what extent do you feel the following emotions after reading a post from your Facebook Friend?



### Results of the Random-Effects Multi-Level Linear Models

	Happiness	Envy
Positive content	0.625***	0.161***
Relationship closeness	0.095**	-0.031
Positive content X Relationship closeness	0.078*	0.016
Mood	0.178**	-0.028
Self-esteem	0.045	-0.258***
Constant	-0.018	0.010
N	587	574

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Note. Random effects models were preferred based on the results of Hausman tests. All variables were standardized before putting into the models.

-Correlational results can be confounded

-Positive emotions > negative emotions

-Tie strength moderates happiness, but not for envy

-Use experimental design

-Further distinguish benign and malicious envy

## Study 2: Experimental Examination

### Procedure & Measures

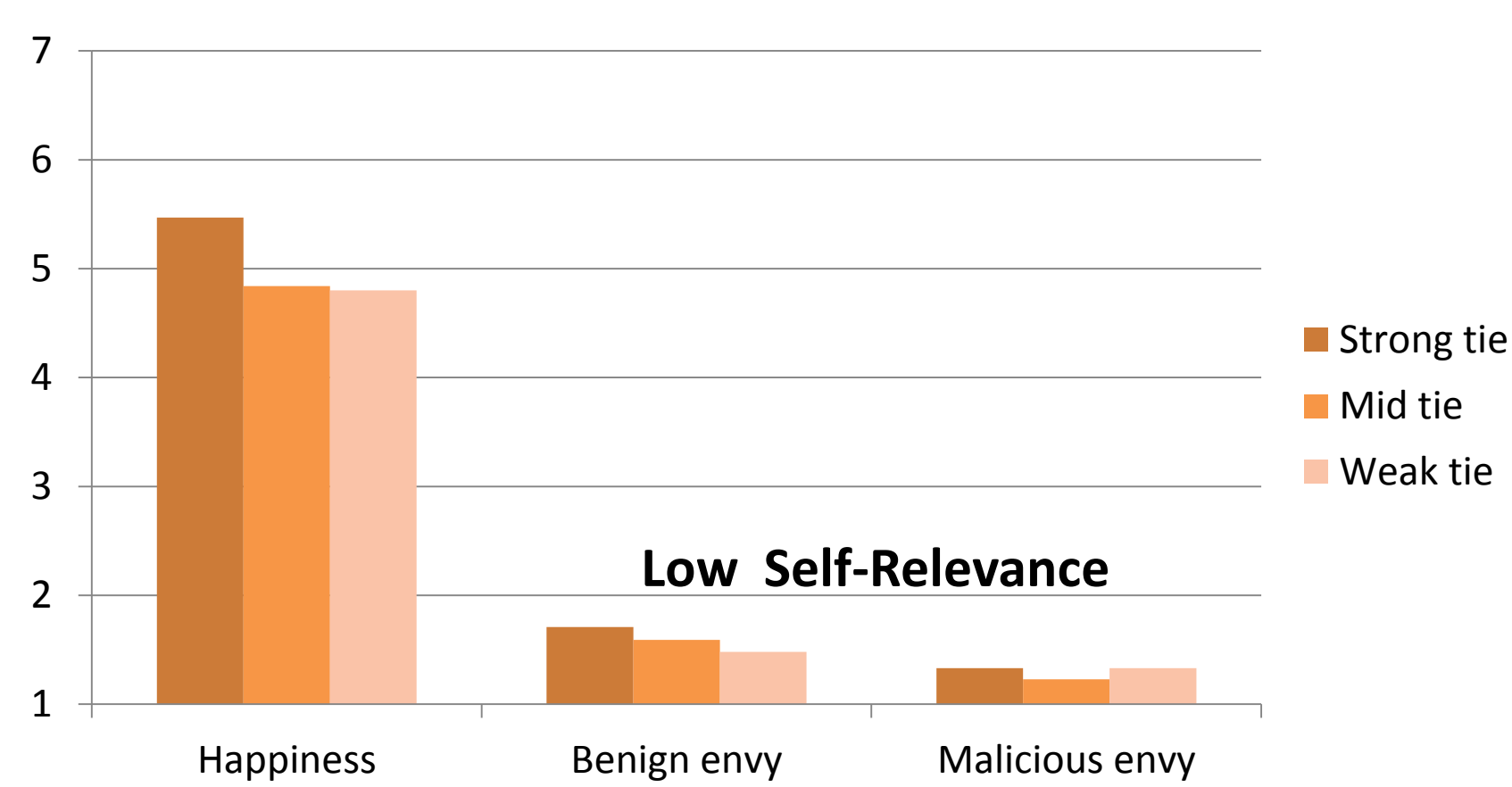
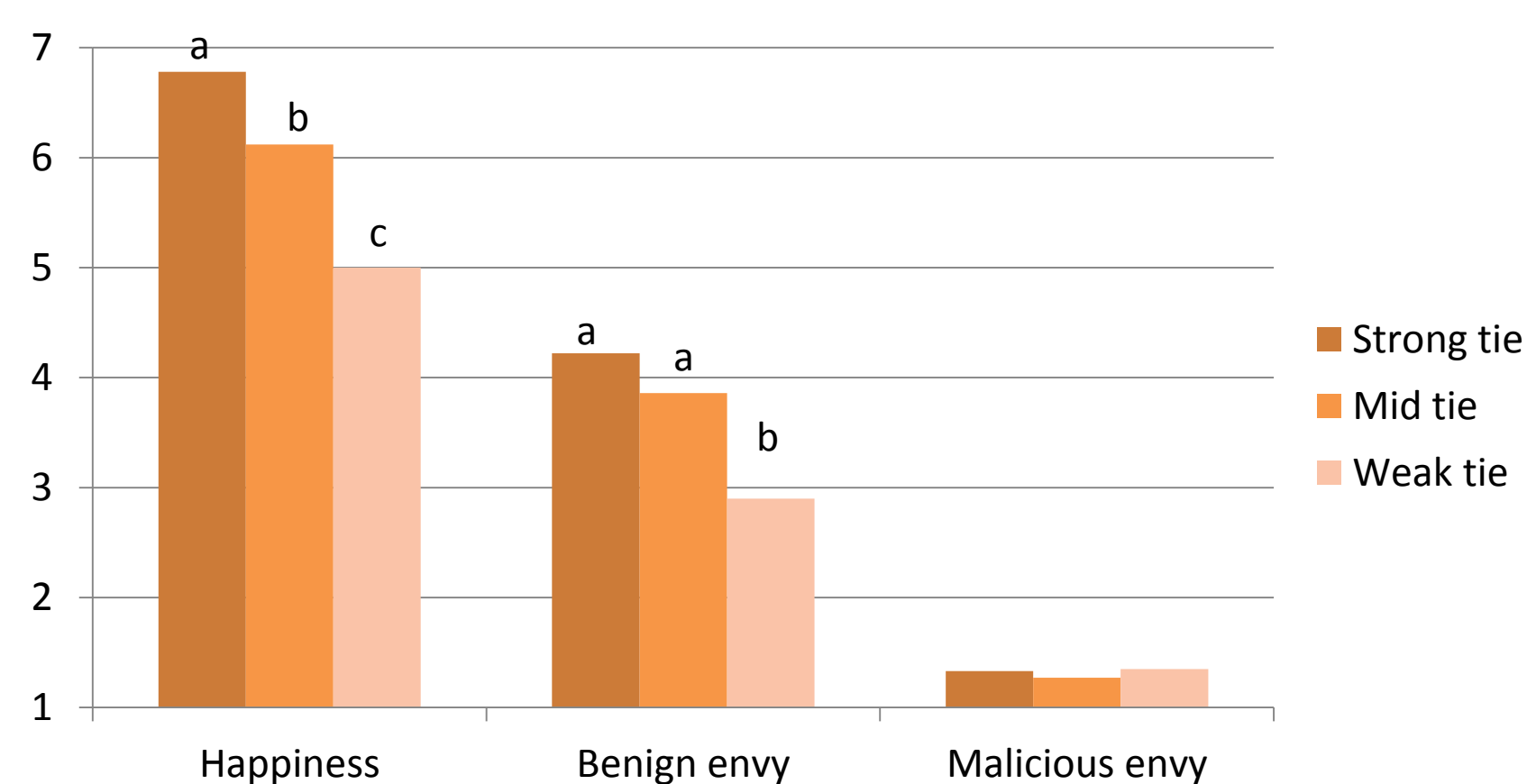
Sample: 194 German participants

Manipulated & measured tie strength (between subject): strong, mid, & weak tie

Measured emotions: happiness, benign envy, malicious envy

Designed two scenarios: vacation & iPhone 6

## Results



	Benign envy		Malicious envy	
	Vacation	iPhone	Vacation	iPhone
Relationship closeness	0.013***	0.005**	-0.001	-0.001
Dispositional envy	0.209*	0.167**	0.251***	0.158**
Self-relevance	0.294***	0.187***	0.020	0.049
Perceived control	-0.081***	-0.010	-0.023†	-0.023†
Age	-0.004	0.025**	-0.010†	-0.005
Male	-0.256	0.126	0.297	0.014
Constant	0.559	0.133	0.761**	0.955***
R2	0.49	0.23	0.23	0.11
N	143	143	143	143

† $p < 0.1$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

## Conclusions

- Positive emotions are more prevalent than negative emotions while browsing Facebook.
- Users are happier when a positive post comes from a strong tie rather than a weak tie.
- Similarly, users experience more benign envy when a post comes from a strong tie.
- The experience of malicious envy is independent of tie strength.