Investigating the association between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being moderated by perceived self-efficacy

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Bachelor thesis

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Abstract

Accidentally stumbling upon the news on social media platforms has become a prevalent phenomenon, resulting in various degrees of incidental news exposure among users. However, it is well established that the majority of current news contains negative information and sensationalism, which hold the potential to influence one's well-being negatively. Hence, this study aims to examine the relationship between incidental news exposure and emotional well-being. Additionally, since not all individuals appear to be affected in the same way, the second purpose is to investigate the potential moderator role of perceived self-efficacy. Three hundred and twenty-six respondents were recruited using the convenience sample method who completed an online survey, including scales measuring incidental news exposure on social media platforms, emotional well-being, and perceived self-efficacy. The Pearson correlation showed no association between how often an individual is incidentally exposed to news and emotional well-being. Moreover, the moderation analysis revealed that perceived self-efficacy was a non-significant moderator of that association. This study demonstrated that incidental news exposure is not correlated with deteriorated levels of emotional well-being, nor it is moderated by perceived self-efficacy; however, more research is needed to support the findings.

Keywords: incidental news exposure, negative news, emotional well-being, perceived self-efficacy

INCIDENTAL NEWS EXPOSURE, EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING & SELF-EFFICACY

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Introduction

Contemporary social media platforms offer not only communication and entertainment services but also efficiently share the latest news. Every major media organisation has expanded their businesses models by joining Facebook, Instagram, or similar platforms to spread news-related posts or videos on a daily basis. As a result, social media users can easily encounter the news by chance, resulting in various degrees of incidental news exposure (O'Reilly, 2007; as cited in Yamamoto & Morey, 2019). However, it has become clear that the majority of modern news contains negative valence and sensationalism (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020; Overgaard, 2021), which can negatively affect the reader's mental health (Hoyt et al., 2022). Currently, it is unknown whether accidentally stumbling upon the news can also lead to the deteriorated mental health of the consumer. In addition, it is not fully understood why some individuals appear to be more resilient when exposed to negative news and information (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020). Thus, the primary focus of this research is the investigation of the possible effect of incidental news exposure on social media platforms on mental health and how to cope with that effectively.

Incidental news exposure

According to Matthes and his colleagues (2020), incidental news exposure can be conceptualised as "exposure to news that people encounter without actively searching for it" (p. 1032). This phenomenon of being incidentally exposed to various kinds of news is typically associated with the invention of television in the 20th century. Television offered a powerful platform to inform the audience about particular matters, while people were initially motivated to watch television for different reasons rather than obtaining news-related content (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017). However, in more recent years, the likelihood of stumbling upon news accidentally has increased significantly due to the emergence of social media platforms and their successful applications that facilitate the sharing and production of the content (O'Reilly, 2007; as cited in Yamamoto & Morey, 2019). To exemplify it, a survey conducted by Matsa and Mitchell (2014) discovered that receiving the news on Facebook is an incidental experience since 78% of Facebook users reported that they mostly encounter the news on that platform when they were on that site for different purposes such as communication and entertainment. Furthermore, more than 40% of LinkedIn, Twitter, and Reddit consumers also stumble upon the news on

accident, without actively searching for it (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016). Therefore, these findings signify that incidental news exposure on social media platforms is highly prevalent among users.

News & well-being

When it comes to the nature of the news, the asymmetry between negative and positive news has been identified in modern news media (Overgaard, 2021; Soroka & McAdams, 2012). More specifically, it appears that negative information is prioritised over positive information, and this trend has become more assertive in recent decades (Overgaard, 2021). Moreover, it was discovered that the extent of sensationalism has also augmented in the past decades (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020). Sensationalism can be referred to as "a tendency to sensationalise the news, in which tabloid news topics displace socially significant stories and flashy production styles overpower substantive information" (Wang, 2012, p. 712). In terms of the content itself, most of the news coverage contains negative valence, encompassing themes such as natural disasters, crime, the bad economy, terrorism, and war (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020).

Not only is the modern news coverage skewed toward more negative and sensational content, but also a great body of literature suggests that humans themselves tend to react to a greater extent to negative news over positive news (Soroka & McAdams, 2012). This phenomenon is so-called negativity bias. For instance, the conducted psychophysiological experiment by Soroka and McAdams (2012) revealed that negative information is more arousing and more attention-grabbing than positive information. In addition, it has been found that individuals allocate more mental energy when contemplating and reflecting on negative things than they do about positive things (Abele, 1985; Fiske, 1980, as cited in Soroka & McAdams, 2012). As a consequence, Soroka and his colleagues (2019) suggested that this negativity bias explains the dominance of negative news coverage because individuals are more likely to select and consume such news, which might be beneficial for survival.

Taking into account the aforementioned findings, it is indicative that there is a high probability of being exposed to the negative news that may have a negative psychological effect on readers' mental health. Mental health can be referred to as subjective well-being, consisting of three major components of positive mental health: emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being (Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). For this research paper, emotional well-being is particularly relevant, which encompasses positive affect as well as negative affect

(Şimşek, 2011) because it is directly affected by negative news. According to Watson and his colleagues (1988), positive affect refers to the "extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert". In contrast, negative affect is defined as "a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that subsumes a variety of aversive mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness" (p. 1063). For example, the positive association between frequency of exposure to Covid-19-related news and increased levels of anxiety and depression has been discovered (Hoyt et al., 2022). Furthermore, the relationship between the amount of time spent watching the news concerning terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, and deteriorated mental health, more particularly, augmented levels of distress, anxiety as well as post-traumatic stress diagnoses, has been established as well (Hoyt et al., 2022). These findings suggest that watching or reading the negative and stress-inducing news can cause an increase in negative affects such as fear, nervousness, and anger, which would result in overall decreased levels of emotional well-being. Moreover, considering that the negative information is prioritised over positive information and human's greater attention to negative news in general, it is anticipated that the individuals, who are more often exposed to incidental news, would show lower levels of emotional well-being.

Psychological capital: perceived self-efficacy

It is important to note that not every individual is affected in the same way by negative information (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020), signifying that not everyone would demonstrate deteriorated emotional well-being. Some people appear to be more resilient and better equipped to cope with such information and remain unaffected when consuming the media (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013, as cited in de Hoog & Verboon, 2020). One of the potential explanations might be a difference in the utilisation of psychological capital, the so-called PsyCap. According to Avey and his colleagues (2010), PsyCap refers to "an individual's positive psychological state of development" (p. 20), which consists of four core resources: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency. These four psychological resources have been hypothesised to foster psychological resilience against stressors and buffer adverse circumstances (Riolli et al., 2012). For example, the relationship between PsyCap and well-being over time was found, indicating that PsyCap resources could be utilised in order to enhance subjective well-being (Avey et al., 2010).

It becomes evident that perceived self-efficacy might be especially significant in coping

with negative news. Perceived self-efficacy can be defined as "the belief of being able to exercise control over demanding and emotionally relevant situations" (Raeder et al., 2019, p. 2). To illustrate it, participants, who demonstrated a greater belief in their ability to control possible threats, had a tendency to express lower levels of anxiety (Muris, 2002, as cited in Raeder et al., 2019). Moreover, Milam et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. Furthermore, low levels of perceived self-efficacy are associated with decreased capabilities of discriminating fear learning, in other words, between safety and threat cues (Raeder et al., 2019). Ultimately, perceived self-efficacy is negatively correlated with depression, stress, and burnout (Yao et al., 2018). Considering all the findings, it is suggestive that individuals, who show higher levels of perceived self-efficacy, would be better equipped to deal with negative news, resulting in higher levels of emotional well-being. Hence, in this research paper, perceived self-efficacy will be used to investigate whether it acts as a protective factor against incidental news.

Objectives of this study

Overall, this study aims to investigate the relationship between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being. Moreover, it is of prime importance to comprehend how individuals could be better equipped to cope with incidental news in an effective way. Thus, this study also aims to expand the literature by examining whether perceived self-efficacy, one of the PsyCap resources, moderates the relationship between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being. Thus, these two aims lead to the following main research question of the paper: *To what extent does the incidental news exposure on social media platforms influence emotional well-being, moderated by perceived self-efficacy?* Corresponding to the research question, the hypothesis were proposed below:

H1: Higher incidental news exposure is associated with lower emotional well-being.

H2: Perceived self-efficacy moderates the relationship between incidental news exposure and emotional well-being, with higher levels of perceived self-efficacy leading to higher emotional well-being.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Moderation Analysis

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                        │  Perceived self-efficacy  │
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                                     │
                                     ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│  Incidental news exposure on │ ────────────► │   Emotional well-being    │
│       social media        │                    └──────────────────────────┘
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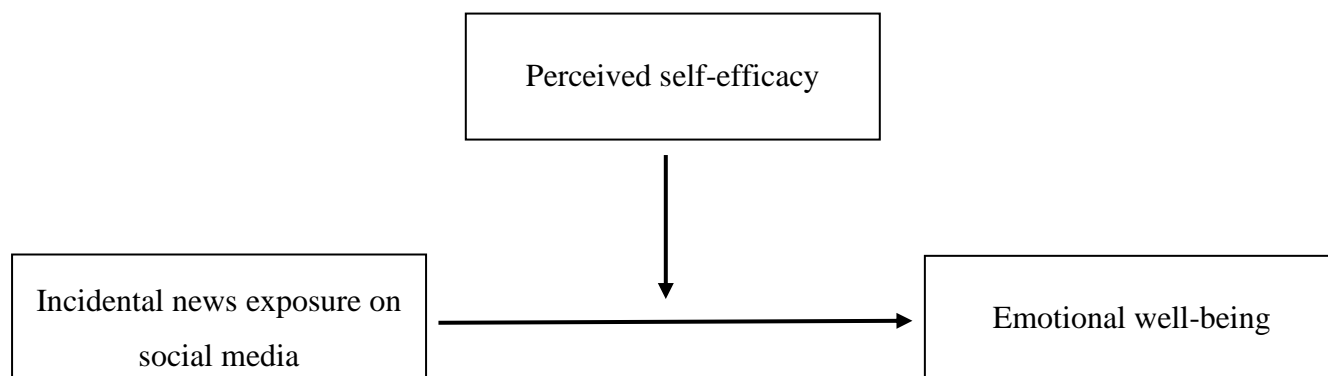
Method

Design

The cross-sectional survey study included the independent variable *Incidental news exposure*, the moderator variable *Perceived self-efficacy*, and the dependent variable *Emotional well-being*.

Participants

In order to be eligible to participate in the study, respondents had to be over the age of 18 and have sufficient English language skills.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) to test linear multiple regression: fixed model, single regression coefficient utilising a one-tailed test, a small effect size (f^2 = .02), and an alpha of .05. Results revealed that a total sample of 311 participants was required to accomplish a power of .80.

Out of 399 total respondents, 73 of them were excluded from the data analysis due to incomplete responses, non-consent, or were identified as potential bots by the Qualtrics platform. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 326 participants with ages ranging from 18 to 44 (M_{age} = 22.03, SD_{age} = 3.30). Moreover, 221 respondents identified as women, 101 as men, and two as non-binary, with two missing data points. In terms of nationality, 127 subjects were German, 83

were Lithuanian, 33 were Dutch, and 83 were from other European, North American, and Asian countries.

The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, and within the personal environment of the researchers to recruit participants by the method of convenience sampling. In addition, the study was placed on the Sona test-subject system, which is coordinated by the Behavioural, Management and Social Science (BMS) faculty of the University of Twente with the aim of distributing the questionnaire among the students. If participants successfully finished the study, they were granted 0.25 Sona credits necessary to complete their study programme.

The ethical approval for the study was obtained from the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente (#220375).

Materials

Incidental News Exposure Scale

Incidental news exposure on social media was measured using the questionnaire adopted from the study conducted by Barnidge and Xenos (2021). The participants were asked to answer the question *How often do you encounter or come across news when you have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news*? on six different sorts of social media platforms such as *photo-sharing websites or apps (e.g. Instagram, Vimeo, or Periscope)* and *social networking websites or apps (e.g. Facebook, Google+, or LinkedIn)* (see Appendix A). A 7-point Likert scale was used, where 1 = *Never* and 7 = *Very often*. Each subject's scores were added and divided by 6 to obtain the mean score of incidental news exposure, which was utilized as a final variable. Barnidge and Xenos (2021) discovered the internal consistency of the scale to be highly reliable, $\alpha = .90$. Whereas in this study, the internal consistency was found to be unsatisfactory, $\alpha = .49$.

Emotional Well-Being Scale (EWBS)

The EWBS is a self-report measure that assesses the subjective evaluation of one's own life while taking intentionality into account (Şimşek, 2011). The scale encompasses 14 different statements: seven concern positive emotional well-being (PEWB), while others relate to negative emotional well-being (NEWB). For instance, the item "I completely accept life as it is" refers to

positive emotional well-being, whereas the item "I feel pain about my life" is related to negative emotional well-being (see Appendix A). The EWBS utilises a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *Extremely*) to evaluate life in terms of affect. The final mean of the emotional well-being variable was estimated by adding each respondent's scores of PEWB and NEWB (reversed) and dividing by 14. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in a sample of undergraduate students (N = 393) with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85 for both factors (Şimşek, 2011). In this study, the reliability analysis revealed good internal consistency as well, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87. Moreover, EWBS showed good convergent validity since EWBS accounted for the unique variance for expected variables: life satisfaction, self-acceptance, self-esteem, depression, purpose in life, negative self, and positive relations with others (Şimşek, 2011; Şimşek & Kuzucu, 2016).

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)

The GSE is a 10-item self-report measure that is designed to assess a perceived self-efficacy, more precisely, "a broad and stable sense of personal competence to deal effectively with a variety of stressful situations" (Schwarzer, 1992; Schwarzer et al., 1999, as cited in Scholz et al., 2002, p. 243). The scale encompasses items such as *I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events* and *Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations* (see Appendix A). The subjects were asked to respond on a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all true* to 4 = *Exactly true*). Each subject's scores were added and divided by 10 to attain the final mean of the perceived self-efficacy variable. The GSE was found to have good internal consistencies across numerous studies ranging between .75 and .91 (Scholz et al., 2002). In this study, the reliability analysis indicated good internal consistency as well, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85. Furthermore, according to Scholz and his colleagues (2002), good re-test reliabilities of $r = .55$ and $r = .75$ were identified in the student sample of 2846 and among 140 teachers in Germany over one year, respectively. Ultimately, concurrent validity was determined by identifying appropriate positive correlations with self-esteem, internal control beliefs, and optimism, as well as negative correlations with general anxiety, performance anxiety, shyness, and pessimism (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Procedure

Respondents completed an online survey via the Qualtrics platform utilising a computer, smartphone, or any other electronic device that has an internet connection.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were presented with information concerning the purpose of the research, voluntary participation and confidentiality, withdrawal at any time, the way the data is going to be treated, and the researchers' contact details. Afterwards, respondents were asked to fill in the informed consent and indicate their age, gender, and nationality. Next, the first block of questionnaires was presented non-randomly, which measured the incidental news exposure on social media platforms and social media use. Whereas the rest four blocks of questionnaires were introduced in a randomised way that measured emotional well-being, perceived self-efficacy, life satisfaction, optimism, and anxiety. These blocks of questionnaires were randomised with the purpose of limiting the effect of question order bias. After completing all five blocks of questionnaires, participants were given a debrief about the nature of the study and its aims and were thanked for their participation. The average time of completion was approximately 8 minutes.

Data analysis

Data analysis was accomplished by the use of the statistical software SPSS (Version 27). An alpha value of .05 was utilised in order to establish the significance of the data analysis.

Next, the descriptive statistics of the incidental news exposure, emotional well-being, and perceived self-efficacy variables were calculated, which were used in all further data analysis. After that, a Pearson's *r* test was used to establish relationships between incidental news exposure, perceived self-efficacy, and emotional well-being. In this way, it was examined whether higher incidental news exposure is associated with lower levels of emotional well-being. Next, the ordinary least squares regression assumptions were checked to accurately interpret the moderation analysis (Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009). Subsequently, to investigate whether perceived self-efficacy acts as a protective factor on the above-mentioned relationship, a moderator analysis was performed using model 1 via PROCESS Macro version 4.1 for SPSS, developed by Andrew Hayes (2022).

Results

Testing of assumptions

The regression assumptions were analysed by reconstructing the moderation model into the multiple linear regression via SPPS with centred variables to minimise possible multicollinearity (see Appendix B). First of all, the normality assumption was examined by creating a histogram of standardised residual plots. The histogram showed that the standardised residuals are normally distributed; therefore, the normality assumption was satisfied. Next, the analysis of collinearity was utilised to investigate multicollinearity. The results showed that all three variables' variance inflation factors (VIF) were well below 10 and tolerance scores above 0.2, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity. Moreover, after plotting the standardised predictive values and studentized residuals, the scatterplots demonstrated no funnelling signs, indicating that the homoscedasticity assumption was fulfilled. After that, the partial residual scatterplots of the predictors showed that the linearity assumption was satisfied as well. Lastly, the Casewise diagnostics table identified two outliers; however, they were not excluded from further data analysis because they did not have a statistically meaningful impact if excluded. In conclusion, all relevant assumptions of the multiple linear regression were fulfilled.

The descriptive statistics of the variables of interest are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Minimum and Maximum Scores of the Variables (N = 326)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis	*Min*	*Max*
Incidental news exposure	3.81	.99	-.01	-.50	1.33	6.17
Perceived self-efficacy	2.99	.46	-.35	.11	1.60	4.00
Emotional well-being	3.74	.69	-.74	.18	1.43	4.93

Incidental news exposure and emotional well-being

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between incidental news exposure and emotional well-being (see Table 2). The results indicated that there was no significant correlation between the two variables, $r(326) = -.02$, $p = .706$.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix indicating the Relationships Between Incidental News Exposure, Perceived Self-Efficacy, and Emotional Well-Being

		Incidental news exposure	Perceived self-efficacy	Emotional well-being
Incidental news exposure	*r*		.05	-.02
	p		.35	.71
Perceived self-efficacy	*r*			.40**
	p			<.001
Emotional well-being	*r*			
	p			

** = Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Perceived self-efficacy as a moderator

In order to determine the moderating role of perceived self-efficacy on the relationship between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being, moderation analysis was performed. The results of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 3. The overall model was found to be significant $F(3, 322) = 20.11$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .16$. However, the interaction between incidental news exposure and perceived self-efficacy was found to be statistically non-significant ($B = -.03$, $p = .70$). Therefore, this result identifies perceived self-

efficacy as a non-moderator of the relationship between incidental news exposure and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the effect of perceived self-efficacy on emotional well-being was found to be statistically significant ($B = .59$, $p < .001$).

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Moderation of Perceived Self-Efficacy between Incidental News Exposure and Emotional Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE	Lower $CI_{95\%}$	Upper $CI_{95\%}$	t	p	R^2
							.16
Constant	3.74	.04	3.67	3.81	106.32	$< .001$	
Incidental news exposure	-.03	.04	-.10	0.04	-.79	.43	
Perceived self-efficacy	.59	.08	.44	.75	7.67	$< .001$	
Incidental news exposure x Perceived self-efficacy	-.03	.08	-.18	.12	-.18	.70	

Discussion

This study aimed to gain a better understanding of the association between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being. Moreover, this paper examined the potential moderating role of the perceived self-efficacy in the aforementioned relationship. However, incidental news exposure was discovered to be not associated with the emotional well-being of social media users. Additionally, perceived self-efficacy was identified as a non-significant moderator between incidental news exposure on social media platforms and emotional well-being.

Whereas past researchers have found a relationship between negative news and decreased levels of mental health (Hoyt et al., 2022), the present study has demonstrated that incidental

news is not correlated with emotional well-being. Consequently, the hypothesis that higher incidental news exposure is associated with lower emotional well-being is rejected. One interpretation of this finding is that the current operationalisation of the incidental news exposure might be ambiguous because it is unknown how the individuals comprehend and interpret the terms such as encountering or coming across (Matthes et al., 2020). Matthes and his colleagues (2020) postulated that due to this ambiguity, the incidental news exposure should be separated into two distinct levels: the first level would refer to the brief and passive scanning of the news, while the second level would concern more intensive and longer information processing if the content is perceived as relevant. Therefore, it can be argued that the second level of incidental news exposure has a much higher likelihood of causing a noticeable decrease in emotional well-being compared to the first level because of the greater allocated attention to the information. Once the scores between the first and second levels are differentiated, the obtained data of the incidental news exposure would become less problematic and ambiguous. Thus, it is recommended that future research specify and measure the incidental news exposure in two levels and, subsequently, examine the relationship between the second level of incidental news exposure and emotional well-being.

Another possible explanation for this finding is concerned with the nature of incidental news. Although the research findings suggest that most modern news disproportionally contains negative information over positive information (Soroka & McAdams, 2012; Overgaard, 2021; de Hoog & Verboon, 2020), it is unknown whether this also applies to the incidental news on social media platforms. It might be the case that the news, which is circulating among social media users, is not necessarily negative; thus, it does not cause an augmentation of negative affect. Additionally, social media platforms have specific features, namely unfriending or unfollowing, that enable the users to filter out the news as well as friends if they do not enjoy or agree with their content (Goyanes et al., 2021). As a consequence, there is a possibility that some users specifically filter out the negative news from their social media accounts because it elicits aversive mood states. Hence, it would be useful for future research to measure to what extent social media users are actually exposed to negative news.

It was also hypothesised that people with higher levels of self-efficacy have higher levels of emotional well-being when exposed to incidental news than people with lower levels of perceived self-efficacy. However, the moderation analysis revealed that perceived self-efficacy

was found to be a non-significant moderator in the association between incidental news exposure and emotional well-being. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not supported. This result can be explained by the fact that since higher incidental news exposure was not associated with lower levels of emotional well-being, perceived self-efficacy did not act as a protective factor due to the non-existent negative relationship.

Another potential interpretation for the non-existing moderation effect is that perceived self-efficacy might be a too broad construct for detecting such an effect. An alternative construct of perceived self-efficacy appears to be emotional self-efficacy, which is more narrow and developed to measure to what extent an individual believes he/she is able to "perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in situations that require them to do so" (Galla & Wood, 2012, as cited in Qualter et al., 2015, p. 35). It encompasses four distinct factors, two of which are particularly important for coping with negative news: 1) using and managing your own emotions and 2) identifying & understanding your own emotions (Qualter et al., 2015). Consequently, it can be hypothesised that scoring high on these factors above would likely result in possessing an effective psychological resource that helps manage negative emotions that occur after the incidental exposure to negative information on social media platforms. In conclusion, emotional self-efficacy may be an alternative construct to examine whether it acts as a protective factor against incidental news for future research.

In addition, the moderation analysis also indicated that the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and emotional well-being was statistically significant. This result is in line with prior research indicating that perceived self-efficacy, a part of psychological capital, was correlated with well-being over time (Avey et al., 2010). Moreover, it is consistent with the study finding that individuals, who possess higher levels of perceived self-efficacy, tend to report lower levels of anxiety (Muris, 2002, as cited in Raeder et al., 2019), which in turn could result in higher levels of emotional well-being. Therefore, it can be inferred that an increase in possession of perceived self-efficacy leads to an increase in emotional well-being.

Limitations and strengths

There are at least three potential limitations concerning the results of this study. The first limitation concerns the problematic reliability of the incidental news exposure questionnaire. The reliability analysis revealed that the Cronbach's alpha of that measure was .49, which is generally

considered low reliability (Suyidno et al., 2017). The low reliability could be explained by the fact that the incidental news exposure questionnaire is more suitable for the American population than for the European respondents due to the difference in the popularity of certain types of social media platforms. For example, it appears that Americans more often use microblogging websites (e.g. Twitter or Tumblr) than Europeans, such as Germans and Lithuanians (Statista Research Department, 2022). Therefore, it can be postulated that 41.1 % of the respondents, who answered "never" to that specific question, did not use these social media platforms at all while scoring higher on other types of social media, which, in turn, lowered the internal consistency. A second limitation refers to the assumption that respondents filled in the questionnaires honestly and truthfully. According to Anderen and Mayerl (2019), participants tend to systematically portray themselves in a more positive light rather than being entirely truthful. It is the so-called social desirability bias. As a result, the social desirability bias might affect the collected survey data to a certain extent. Ultimately, since the sample size consisted of mainly young adults ($M_{age} = 22.03$), the generalizability of the study findings may be limited to a certain extent. Taking into account these limitations, the results must be interpreted with caution.

In terms of the strengths, no missing values were observed in the data collection; therefore, the sample's representativeness was not affected. Furthermore, an appropriate number of respondents were recruited to discover the moderation effect. In fact, the post hoc power analysis findings using G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that there was enough statistical power (1-$\beta = 1.00$) to detect the obtained effect size of .19. Additionally, the measures of emotional well-being and perceived self-efficacy were found to be highly reliable, with Cronbach's alphas of .87 and .85, respectively (Suyidno et al., 2017).

Implications for future research

Although the current research has not found evidence that higher incidental news exposure is linked to lower levels of emotional well-being and its potential moderation effect by perceived self-efficacy, it raised crucial further research directions that would contribute to a better understanding of the subject. First of all, it would be advisable to resolve the ambiguity of the incidental news exposure phenomenon in order to obtain more precise results. Next, emotional self-efficacy, in particular, is needed to be investigated whether it acts as a protective factor against incidental news owing to its higher relevance and suitability than perceived self-

efficacy. Furthermore, it would be important to examine the relationships between incidental news exposure and other constructs that relate to well-being. For instance, such constructs might be anxiety, depression, or life satisfaction. In addition, it would be necessary to analyse other possible protective factors that might moderate these associations, such as optimism, hope, and resilience, which are the rest core resources of psychological capital. By investigating these relationships, a more diverse and comprehensive picture could be obtained in determining the effects of incidental news exposure and its moderators. Finally, it would be sensible to include possible confounding variables in the analysis that might explain the associations, such as the time spent using social media platforms and neuroticism.

Conclusion

Since incidental news exposure is a highly prevalent phenomenon among social media users, it is significant to explore how accidentally confronting the news might influence the user's well-being. Thus, by examining the potential psychological effect of incidental news exposure on emotional well-being, the present study established that incidental news exposure on social media platforms did not affect the individual's emotional well-being. In addition, perceived self-efficacy, one of the core resources of psychological capital, was statistically a non-significant moderator in that association. Nevertheless, more research needs to be conducted to support the current findings when the ambiguity of the incidental news exposure phenomenon is resolved.

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Appendix A

Table 4

Incidental News Exposure Scale

Instructions: how often do you encounter or come across news when you have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news? Please respond by using the following scale from Never to Very often.

	Never	2	3	4	5	6	Very often
Online message boards or forums or mobile apps (e.g. Reddit or Digg)							
Social networking websites or apps (e.g. Facebook, Google+, MySpace, or LinkedIn)							
Microblogging websites or apps (e.g. Twitter or Tumblr)							
Photo-sharing websites or apps (e.g. Instagram, Flickr, or Pinterest)							
Video-sharing websites or apps (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, or Periscope)							
Mobile messaging websites or apps (e.g. Snapchat or WhatsApp)							

Table 5

Emotional Well-Being Scale

Instructions: listed below are a number of statements concerning your feelings about your life. Please read each statement and then indicate to what extent you feel this way IN GENERAL. Please respond by using the following scale from Very slightly or not at all to Extremely.

	Very slightly or not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Life excites me					
I feel at peace with life					
*The life I lead saddens me					
*I worry about the life I lead					
I am content with life					
I completely accept life as it is					
Life gives me pleasure					
*I feel upset about my life					
*I feel pain about my life					
*The life I lead frightens me					
I appreciate the life I lead					
*The life I leads gets me down					
*I feel I'm wasting my life					
I get satisfaction from lime					

Note. * requires reverse coding

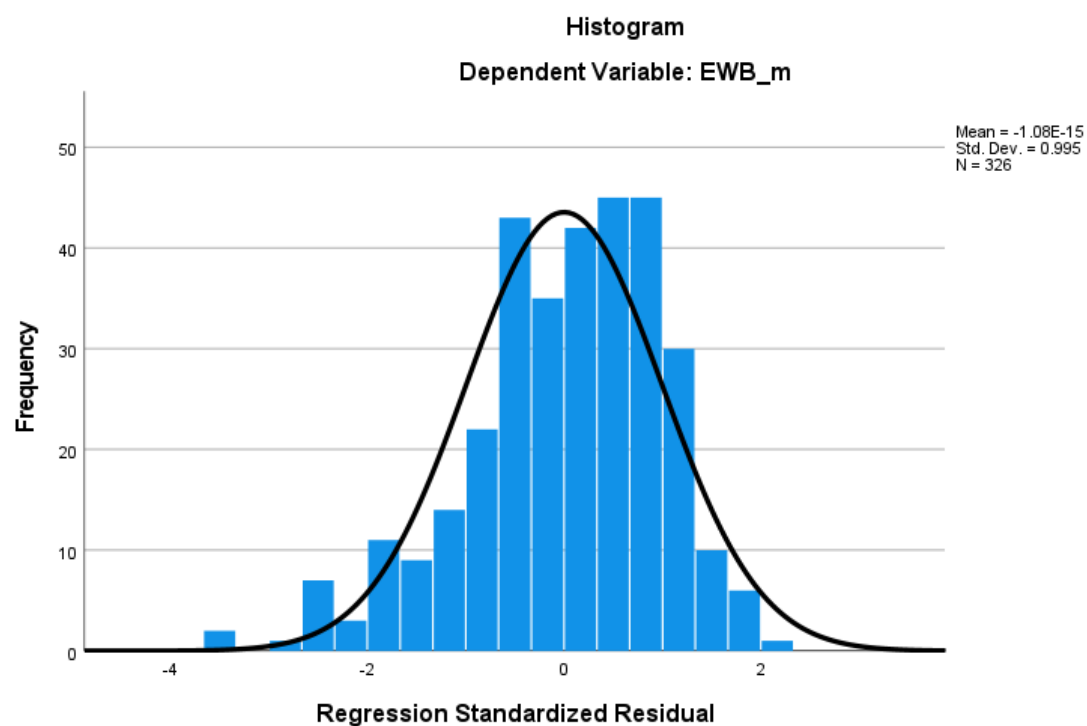**Table 6**

General Self-Efficacy Scale

Instructions: please respond by using the following scale from Not at all true to Exactly true.

	Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Exactly true
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough				
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.				
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals				
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events				
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations				
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort				
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities				
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions				
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution				
I can usually handle whatever comes my way				

Appendix B

Figure 2

The Histogram Showing Normal Distribution of Standardised Residuals


Histogram
Dependent Variable: EWB_m

Mean = -1.08E-15
Std. Dev. = 0.995
N = 326

Table 7

Collinearity Statistics for Main Predictors

| Predictor	Tolerance	VIF
Incidental news exposure	.993	1.007
Perceived self-efficacy	.998	1.012
Incidental news exposure x Perceived self-efficacy	.987	1.013

Figure 3

*Scatterplot of the Standardised Predictive Values and Studentised Residuals Demonstrating Homoscedasticity*

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: EWB_m
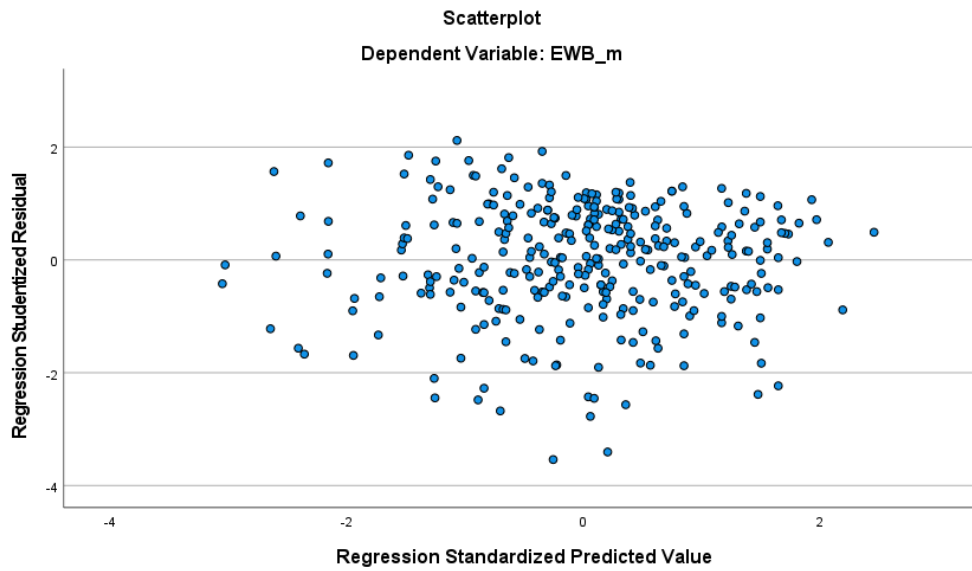
Figure 4

Partial Regression Plot of the Residuals Showing Linearity Between Incidental News Exposure and Emotional Well-being

Partial Regression Plot
Dependent Variable: EWB_m
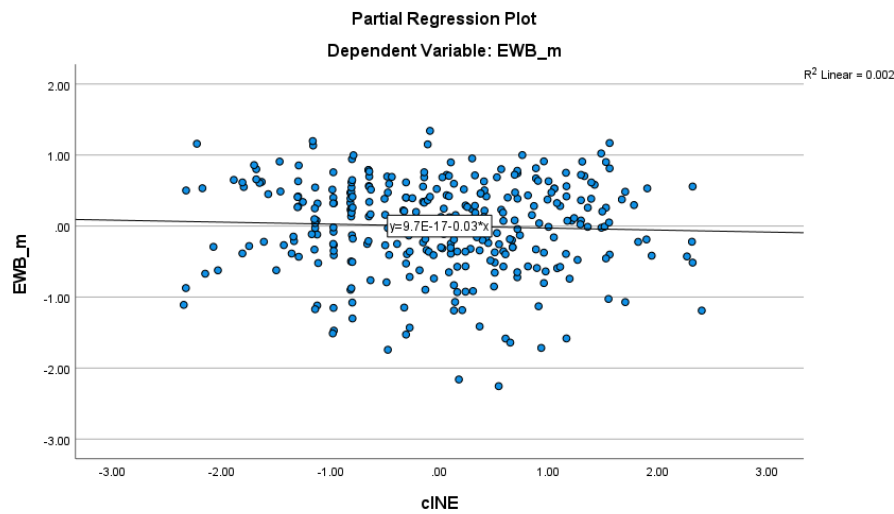
INCIDENTAL NEWS EXPOSURE, EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING & SELF-EFFICACY

Figure 5

Partial Regression Plot of the Residuals Indicating Linearity Between Perceived Self-Efficacy and Emotional Well-being
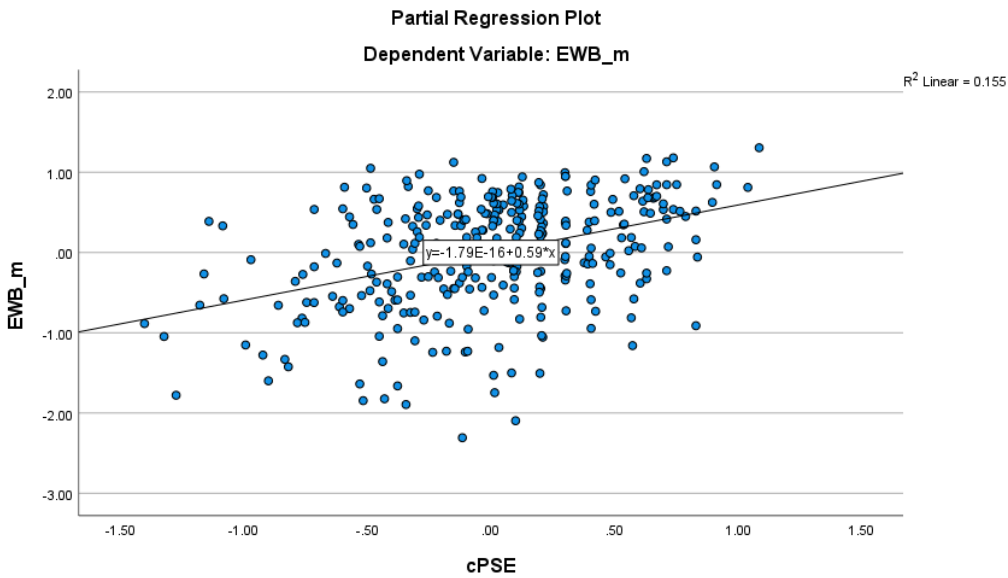
Figure 6

Partial Regression Plot of the Residuals Demonstrating Linearity Between Interaction and Emotional Well-being