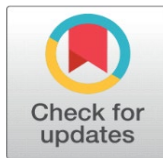


THE SILENT PRESSURE: ANALYZING INSTAGRAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO ANXIETY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Globally, social media use has been rapidly increasing, particularly among today's youth. Social media has ingrained itself into everyone's everyday life. Nonetheless, the largest demographic of social media users is college students, aged 18-21. Instagram is one of the most popular apps among college students. The goal of this study is to draw attention to the relationship between current generation students' use of Instagram and their anxiety levels. Prior studies have mostly examined how youth mental health is affected by the full range of social media applications. The possibly negative effects of Instagram, the most popular social media app, on anxiety levels, particularly in the 18-21 age range, are not directly addressed by any of the studies. For the younger generation, this could be a cause for concern.

College students who use Instagram for three to four hours a day are more likely to experience worry, procrastination, and lack of sleep, according to the hypothesis. A structured questionnaire that was distributed to a random sample of 100 college students helped to validate the hypothesis. The survey obtained responses from 100 participants. Each subject responded to a series of 15 questions. In addition to this survey, the researcher gathered information about psychological and developmental aspects of anxiety from a variety of publications, journals, and magazines. Despite the perception that Instagram fosters more self-expression and community building; there is a definite correlation between increased Instagram usage and a marked decline in motivation and an increase in restlessness. The same is supported by the paper's findings.

Keywords: Social Media, College Students, Instagram, Impact, Anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

Constant use of social media, particularly Instagram, has been linked to higher anxiety levels in youths between the ages of 18-21. The term "social media" describes the wide range of apps that help users connect with others and produce and share an infinite amount of content, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, YouTube, WhatsApp, and others. In 2011, the World Health Organisation classified "teenagers" as those between the ages of 18-21. Throughout the last 20 years, social media has changed and is still changing. Instagram is a photo and video sharing software that allows users to submit material with additional filters and frequently identify content through geolocation tagging. These "posts" can be shared with the entire world or just a chosen few. (Meta Platforms, 2010). 72% of teenagers use Instagram on a daily basis, and two-thirds of them experience negative effects from the app in their everyday lives, according to the

Pew Research Centre (2023). While the effect of social media on the psychological health of youth is being researched, the precise implications of Instagram on anxiousness levels within a specified age group of 18-21 years has yet to be looked at. This research investigates how using Instagram excessively raises anxiety levels. It also investigates how today's teens view themselves and passive hostility.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It seems clear that there is a connection between teen anxiety and Instagram. These days, "Gen Z" has unrestricted access to the Internet and, as a result, social networking apps like Instagram. A study by Woods and Scott (2016) found that teens who use social media for one-third of the day are 78.6% more likely to report mental health conditions like melancholy and anxiety. Similar to this, UNICEF's Henry Fersko (2018) asserts that apps like Instagram are made to encourage excessive use by "tapping into our desire for affirmation and fear of rejection." This is corroborated by B.F. Skinner (1930)'s "Variable Reward Schedule" theory, which applies to teens who often check Instagram in order to receive dopamine boosts in the form of "likes" and "comments."

According to a research by Kross et al. (2013), using Instagram can result in social isolation, a rise in "Fear of Missing Out," and a decline in wellbeing. Students anxiety levels are rising as a result of all these things. To further, Nakshine et al. (2022) said that teens that are exposed to a lot of "blue and intense light" are less attentive and productive, which has an additional negative effect on their academic performance. Third-party tagging in comments made by students, in particular, encourages "talking behind one's back" rather than confronting the other, according to Laprise (2015). Adolescence become more passive-aggressive and overthink things as a result, which makes the receiver anxious. Additionally, Brown & Tiggerman (2016, pp. 37–43) discovered that exposure to "Photoshopped" Instagram photos of slender and attractive celebrities causes self-comparison and body image dissatisfaction, particularly in adolescent girls. Lastly, a survey in 2023 revealed that they were more likely to procrastinate everyday duties and have higher anxiety levels.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. PRIMARY RESEARCH: STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Overview: The main instrument used was a structured questionnaire. It was given to 100 college students (adolescents), ages 18-21, who were chosen at random from the sample.

Questionnaire Design: There were fifteen questions covering a range of topics pertaining to Instagram use, including motivation, sleep patterns, daily usage, and perceived influence on productivity.

Participants were guaranteed anonymity in order to maintain confidentiality. The information gathered will be kept private and used only for this study.

Benefits include:

- First-hand information from the target demographic;
- Quantitative analysis of replies, allowing for statistical inferences;
- Response uniformity ensured by the organised format, making comparison and analysis simpler.

The following are possible drawbacks:

- Subject to biases as respondents may give socially acceptable replies;
- Limited to the viewpoints of the 100 students sampled, who may not be representative of the larger teenage population;
- The accuracy and honesty of respondents determine how precise the results are.

4. SECONDARY RESEARCH: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview: A thorough literature review was carried out to support the primary data.

Sources: A variety of articles, websites, earlier research papers, journals, and periodicals provided information for this review.

Benefits:

- Helps validate or compare the primary research findings;
- Gives the study a wider context by incorporating findings from other studies.
- Provides historical viewpoints or patterns on the subject.

Possible drawbacks include:

- The reliability of the sources determines the validity of the results;
- Outdated or irrelevant data may not directly relate to the current study; and
- Confirmation bias may occur if only sources that corroborate the original research findings are taken into account.

In summary, this approach aims to present a comprehensive understanding of the subject by fusing insights from earlier studies with first-hand accounts of youngsters. In addition to ensuring depth, the mix of primary and secondary research expands the study's breadth. Nonetheless, it is crucial to approach the results with knowledge of the possible drawbacks of both study techniques.

5. INSTAGRAM AND ANXIETY

'Comments' & 'Likes'

Instagram has a feature that enables users to "like" and "comment" on a specific image or video. The adolescence brain's need for approval is fuelled by these affirmations. They develop a craving for dopamine as a result of the increased secretion of this "feel-good" neurotransmitter. This is consistent with Skinner's (1930) "Variable Reward Schedule" Theory, which was initially tested on mice but is thought to apply to people. Likes and comments appear at random, and they persistent Instagram checking is increased when they believe a reward is being given at random (Haynes 2018).

This causes the emphasis to change from genuine relationships to continuously getting validation. Anxiety levels rise and self-doubt about inadequacy grows if this validation is not obtained. Additionally, Instagram's algorithm occasionally withholds "likes" before delivering them in big bursts. As a result, when a user submits a post, they are unhappy to see that it receives little attention at first, but later, they receive a lot of them. Adolescence has the most active dopamine centres in their brains, and they react "robustly" to the flood of positive social reinforcement. This exacerbates Instagram addiction and has an additional effect on teens' attentiveness. Self-doubt and anxiety levels are further elevated when one is unable to obtain the desired number of likes (Haynes 2018).

FOMO, or "fear of missing out,"

According to reports, "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) is the primary anxiety trigger on Instagram. Comparisons come to mind when one constantly examines peer-uploaded films and images and what other people are doing. Anxiety about performing the same or better is caused by this. Their self-esteem is damaged and they judge themselves because they fear that others will think less of them (Hattingh et al., 2022). People appear to be enjoying their best lives when their actions are documented. Students who are susceptible to peer pressure so become enmeshed in the idealistic realm of perfection. Students are negatively impacted and FOMO is triggered. This further exacerbates their anxiousness by impairing their capacity to make logical decisions. They are continuously inspired to record every moment of their lives by the many features like hashtags, captions, 24-Story, and highlights that never expire. Teenagers' anxiety levels rise exponentially as a result, and there is more rivalry to have the best profile (Hattingh et al., 2022).

Sleep Deprivation & Screen Time

Instagram addiction increases exposure to "blue and intense" light emitted by gadgets.

This damages eyesight by impairing the synthesis of melatonin, which is necessary for restful, deep sleep. Adolescents frequently fall victim to the "five more minutes" trap, which leads to endless hours spent on Instagram. It reduces the quantity of quality sleep and has a detrimental effect on vision. Teenagers who spend more time on Instagram spend more time doing exciting activities while looking at their phones, which raises their psychophysiological arousal and interferes with their sleep (Nakshine et al., 2022) for students who are enrolled in school, 7-8 hours of sleep is necessary. Instagram use, however, impedes this and affects concentration and productivity levels. College students' grades and performance in extracurricular activities frequently reflect their lack of productivity and lack of attention. Acute anxiety is brought on by the inability to perform well on tests. Given that 86% of teenagers sleep with their phones next to them, nighttime notifications also contribute to disturbed sleep (Lenhart et al., 2010). One common problem has been described as being awakened by incoming notifications. Therefore, increased Instagram use affects college students' eyesight and sleep in addition to raising anxiety levels.

6. AGGRESSION IN PASSIVE FORM

It's usual to act passive-aggressively on Instagram. College students have discovered strategies to avoid in-person interactions and resolve disputes over Instagram rather than facing one another. Nowadays, nobody cares to express their annoyance or irritation to the other person. Behaviours such as commenting with "third-party tagging" or not liking someone's Instagram post to express anger at a peer have led to an epidemic of their own. It frequently causes anxiety in the recipient to like images, videos, and remarks that they genuinely dislike in order getting even with the originator. "Third-party tagging," which involves tagging pals in well-known Instagram images that discuss another friend's experience, makes the creator nervous because they can see the "negative" comments. Adolescence anxiety levels rise when they witness others' passive aggressiveness and begin to question themselves. Additionally, Instagram's "direct messaging" (DM) feature lets users text one another and provides "read receipts." Teenagers frequently "leave each other on read" to express their rage, which causes them to neglect one another. Teenagers get too preoccupied with what went wrong as a result, which keeps them distracted all the time (Laprise, 2015). In addition to being a convenient way out, these passive-aggressive behaviours seriously harm kids' mental health.

7. IMAGE OF THE BODY

Increased exposure to Instagram photos showing "attractive and thin celebrities and fellow peers are associated with high dissatisfaction levels, caused by social comparison," according to an experimental study by Brown & Tiggerman (2016, p. 37-43). Similarly, it was discovered that teens are negatively impacted by "photoshopped" Instagram images since they frequently assume the images are authentic and unaltered (Kleemans et al., 2018, p 93-110). Adolescence has dangerous self-doubt about their appearance and start comparing themselves to others. College students also worry about why they can't accomplish the same because of the quantitative and qualitative illusions created by Photoshopped images and a deluge of "likes" and "comments." This was supported by research showing that the more "likes" and "comments," the more attractive a person is viewed to be, which in turn leads to more teenage unhappiness and appearance comparison (Hayden & Brown, 2018). College Students, particularly adolescent girls, may starve themselves to reduce weight and improve their appearance as a result of this increased unhappiness, which can result in major issues like anorexia. As a result, Instagram has a detrimental effect on how people perceive their bodies and can lead to major anxiety issues for Adolescence mental and physical health.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

Table1 Details of the Age Group of Respondents

Age group (years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
18-19	25	25%
19-20	52	52%
20-21	23	23%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 52% of respondents belong to the age group of 19-20 years, 25% of respondents belong to the age group of 18-19 years and 23% of the respondents are 18 years of age. This indicates the maximum number of respondents was from the age of 20-21.

Table2 Most Frequent Use of Social Media Application.

Tools of social media	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	52	35%
Snapchat	27	18%
WhatsApp	43	29%
YouTube	15	10%
Twitter	6	4%
Others	7	4%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 35% of respondents use Instagram the most, 29% of respondents use WhatsApp the most, 18% of the respondents use Snapchat the most, 10% of the respondents use YouTube the most and 4% of respondents use Twitter and other tools of social media, each. This indicates the maximum number of respondents use Instagram the most.

Table3 Number of Hours Spent on Instagram

Hours	No. of respondents	Percentage
1-2	40	40%
3-4	57	57%
More than 4 hours	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 57% of respondents spend 3-4 hours on Instagram daily, 40% of respondents spend 1-2 hours on Instagram daily and 3% of the respondents spend more than 4 hours on Instagram daily. This indicates the maximum number of respondents who use Instagram for 3-4 hours in an average day.

Table4,5,6: Details of Appreciation of Validation through Likes and Comments

Question asked: Does receiving a like on your Instagram post, make you excited?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	83	83%
No	3	3%
Sometimes	14	14%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 83% of respondents are excited by receiving a like on their Instagram post, 14% of respondents are excited sometimes and 3% of respondents do not get excited. This indicates the maximum number of respondents do get excited when they receive a like on their post.

Question asked: Does not receiving a like on your post, make you unhappy?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	80	80%
No	10	10%
Sometimes	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 80% of respondents are unhappy if they do not receive a like on their post, 10% of respondents are unhappy sometimes and 10% of respondents do not get unhappy. This indicates the maximum number of respondents do get unhappy when they do not receive a like on their post.

Question asked: Have you ever deleted a post because it did not receive enough likes?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	60	60%
No	22	22%
Maybe	18	18%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 60% of respondents have deleted their Instagram posts due to not getting enough likes, 22% of respondents have not and 18% of respondents may have. This indicates the maximum number of respondents have deleted an Instagram post due to not receiving enough likes.

Table 7 Prevalence of FOMO

Question asked: Have you ever felt like you are missing out on activities your peers are engaging in?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	59	59%
No	23	23%
Sometimes	18	18%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, 59% of respondents have felt FOMO, 23% of respondents sometimes feel FOMO and 18% of respondents have not felt it. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have felt FOMO.

Table 8 Relation between Instagram and Sleep Levels

Question asked: How many hours do you sleep for, on a daily basis, ever since you started using Instagram?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
7-8	13	13%
6-7	29	29%
5-6	48	48%
Less than 5	10	10%

Total	100	100%
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Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 48% of respondents sleep for 5-6 hours, 29% of respondents sleep for 6-7 hours, 13% of respondents sleep for 7-8 hours and 10% of respondents sleep for less than 5 hours. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents sleeps for 3-4 hours.

Table 9.1 Passive Aggression on Instagram

Question asked: Have you ever been left on 'read' by a fellow peer?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	75	75%
No	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 75% of respondents have been left on 'read' by their peers and 25% of respondents have not been left on 'read'. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have been left on 'read'.

Table 9.2 Passive Aggression on Instagram

Question asked: Have you ever felt anxious after being left on read'?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	71	71%
No	12	12%
Sometimes	17	17%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 71% of respondents have felt anxious after being left on 'read' by their peers, 17% of respondents may have felt anxious and 12% of respondents have not felt anxious. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have felt anxious when left on 'read' by their peers.

Table 10.1 Body Image and Instagram

Question asked: Have you ever compared yourself to pictures of your peers online?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	65	65%
No	10	10%
Maybe	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 65% of respondents have compared themselves to pictures online, 25% of respondents may have compared themselves and 10% of respondents have not compared themselves to pictures online. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have compared themselves to pictures of their peers online.

Table 10.2 Body Image and Instagram

Question asked: Have you tried to change yourself after looking at pictures on Instagram?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	57%
No	30	30%
Maybe	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation:

From the table above, it is inferred that 57% of respondents have tried to change themselves after looking at pictures on Instagram, 30% of respondents have not tried to change themselves and 13% of respondents may have tried to change themselves.

This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have tried to change them after looking at pictures on Instagram.

Table 11 Nervousness and Instagram

Question asked: Do you think you are more nervous in your day-to-day life after using Instagram?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	51	51%
No	18	18%
Maybe	31	31%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 51% of respondents have been more nervous/irritated/annoyed, 31% of respondents may have been observing these behavioral changes and 18% of respondents have not observed these changes. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents have experienced an increase in feelings of nervousness and irritation in their day-to-day lives.

Table 12: Procrastination and Instagram

Question asked: Have you begun to do your work at the last minute, more frequently?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	85	57%
No	30	30%
Maybe	13	13%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: From the table above, it is inferred that 57% of respondents have begun procrastinating more, 30% of respondents have not begun procrastinating more and 13% of respondents may have increased their frequency of procrastination. This indicates that the maximum number of respondents has begun to procrastinate more.

9. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The evidence unequivocally shows that Instagram has a detrimental impact on adolescence anxiety levels and mental health in their daily lives, despite the claims of others that it has expanded global reach and had positive impacts, particularly during the epidemic when the globe was at a standstill. Millions of individuals worldwide benefited from

several efforts to spread awareness about the epidemic and other topics. Students can benefit from staying up to date on current topics because Instagram's large user base makes it simple to raise awareness through its handle. College students were inspired to attempt new things and broaden their interests in order to find new passions while they were at home by the reels that people from all over the world shared. However, Instagram's drawbacks—such as adolescence elevated anxiety levels—far exceed its benefits.

This study looked at how adolescence anxiety levels were affected by their use of Instagram. The results showed that student's levels of worry and self-doubt had clearly increased. The findings also showed that Instagram's high rate of addiction and anxiety is contributing to an increase in inefficiency.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Instagram might improve the effectiveness of the current heavy-usage alerts. Rather than making it an optional feature, the corporation should encourage all customers to set timers for themselves.
- Instagram may also be able to detect and provide assistance to users who may be experiencing mental health issues, as well as highlight instances in which images of people have been digitally altered.
- Adolescence are encouraged to monitor how much time they spend on screens each day and to turn their phones to "do not disturb" while they sleep to prevent annoying alerts.
- Large-scale advertising and social media cautions ought to be implemented in schools & colleges. In conclusion, despite its benefits, it is clear that Instagram has had a significant impact on student's anxiety levels.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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