



Exploring the Relationship Between Instagram Use and Body Image Issues Among Teenagers

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine how Instagram usage is associated with the body image anxiety problems in adolescents and how social comparison can mediate the association. The method of the research is quantitative survey and descriptive statistical analysis, Pearson correlation, and linear regression and also qualitative interviews to understand the subjective experiences of Instagram users. The findings of the quantitative study revealed that, the duration of Instagram use and social comparison had significant positive effect on body image anxiety and that social comparison was the primary mediator. Qualitative data show that the teens are usually feeling pressured by unrealistic beauty standards and lower in self-confidence when exposed to social comparison, despite the fact that positive content can offer emotional support. To sum up, the negative influence on the mental health of adolescents should be minimized by implementing interventions based on social media education and promoting positive body images.

INTRODUCTION

In the current age and era in the digital world, social media is part of our daily life and in particular, the teens. As one of the most popular social media, Instagram provides its users with several opportunities to share photos and recordings, leave comments and likes to any materials posted by other users. According to the recent statistics, over a billion monthly active users are registered on Instagram which was a huge number and a considerable percentage of them is people of the teenage age group (Saini & Goswami, 2020). One such issue is the implication of Instagram usages on the mental health and living conditions of the Instagram users. A particularly significant issue is the way adolescents that are constantly exposed to edited and perfect images can develop a negative attitude toward their body image and self-perception (Jain et al., 2023; Re & Bruno, 2024; Digennaro & Tescione, 2024). The teens are at the developmental phase of self-identity, and they are thus very susceptible to external factors, which means that they compare themselves to Instagram unrealistic beauty standards (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014; Nyambura, 2019).

In earlier studies, it has been revealed that social media is harmful to both body image and self esteem particularly to young women. A study by Fardouly et al. (2015) established a linkage of social comparison on social media with poor mood and the body image problem in young women. Moreover, Perloff (2014) emphasized that the impacts of the social media on the body attitudes issues can be addressed in terms of a number of theoretical frameworks including social comparison theory and objectification theory. Nonetheless, most studies have discussed the correlation between the use of social media in general and body image issues, whereas not many of them discussed the effects of one of the most visual social media, Instagram, on the body image of teenagers. This study hence tries to investigate how using Instagram can be connected with body image issues during adolescence in the context of the Indonesian culture. In the current age and era in the digital world, social media is part of our daily life and in particular, the teens. As one of the most popular social media, Instagram provides its users with several opportunities to share photos and recordings, leave comments and likes to any materials posted by other users. According to the recent statistics, over a billion monthly active users are registered on Instagram which was a huge number and a considerable percentage of them is people of the teenage age group (Daneshjo, 2023; Amson, 2024). One such issue is the implication of Instagram usages on the mental health and living conditions of the Instagram users. A particularly significant issue is the way adolescents that are constantly exposed to edited and perfect images can develop a negative attitude toward their body image and self-perception. The teens are at the developmental phase of self-identity, and they are thus very susceptible to external factors, which means that they compare themselves to Instagram unrealistic beauty standards (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

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The effects of social media on Instagram, that is, comments and likes, are the same and affect self-view and body image. It will examine how such social interactions would result in body image issues in the case of adolescents (Vogel et al., 2014). Addressing these practical and conceptual gaps is expected to contribute to the better understanding of the way exposure to ideal standards of body imagery on Instagram influences the self-perception and mental health of adolescents and also suggest the effective interventions.

METHODS

The current research design was an explanatory sequential mixed-method in which the authors examined the connection between the use of Instagram and body image anxiety among adolescents. The quantitative methodology was carried out to first test the statistical correlations between the main variables, and a qualitative step to

gain a more in-depth explanation of subjective aspects of adolescent lives. This design made it possible to gain a deep insight into the effects of Instagram on body image perceptions by the combination of numerical data and personal stories. Methodological triangulation also enhanced the validity of the findings as the mixed-method approach was used.

The target population was composed of adolescents aged 13-18 years, who were active users of Instagram. Purposive sampling was applied to select the participants with certain inclusion criteria: the age of participants must be in the given range, and they should have an active account on Instagram and use it on a regular basis. The study filtered out respondents who gave incomplete answers or failed to do so or did not fulfill the conditions. A sample of the subjects that participated in the quantitative part was then chosen to the semi-structured interviews to reflect various experiences and degrees of Instagram use to guarantee the abundance and topicality of the qualitative information.

The standard and structured research instruments were used to collect data. The use of Instagram was quantified using a questionnaire that evaluated the frequency and time of use and engagement patterns with visual content. Body image anxiety was measured with the help of the Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI), and social comparison tendencies were measured with the help of the Social Comparison Rating Scale (SCRS). A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate all items on a five-point scale (1, strongly disagree; 5, strongly agree). These reliable measures provided accuracy and constancy in the measurement of the main constructs of the research. Moreover, a semi-structured interview guide was created to investigate the perceptions of beauty standards, social comparison experiences, emotional reactions, and the impact of negative and positive content on the adolescents because of Instagram use.

Data collection was done in two phases. Online questionnaires were also used to collect quantitative data by sending questionnaires to participants to make the process as user-friendly and efficient as possible. The respondents were free to participate and they had to give an informed consent before filling the survey form. After the quantitative analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the chosen participants in order to gather qualitative data. These interviews enabled the exploration in depth into the lived experiences of adolescents and their perceptions about the use of Instagram and body image. All interviews were carried out privately, with the consent of the participants and transcribed to be analyzed further.

The statistical package of the social sciences (SPSS) was used in the analysis of quantitative data. The description of the demographics of the participants and the distribution of the main variables were summarized by the use of descriptive statistics. To test the relationships among Instagram use, social comparison and body image anxiety, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out. They were then subjected to multiple linear regression to determine the predictive value of the use of Instagram and social comparison on body image anxiety. Before inferential tests, statistical assumptions such as normality, linearity and multicollinearity were tested to determine the suitability of parametric tests. The findings were an empirical evidence on the mediating role of social comparison in the correlation between the use of Instagram and body image anxiety.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data to determine repetitive patterns and meanings among the transcripts of the interviews. The type of data familiarization, coding, theme development, and data interpretation were the steps of the analytical process. Themes Four key themes were identified, including pressure to achieve perfection and social validation, internalization of unrealistic beauty ideals, psychological and behavioral effects of body image, and dual role of

positive content on Instagram. These themes were used to supplement the quantitative results and provide them with some context and depth to understanding the study in general.

Validity and reliability were also well considered to achieve rigor and credibility of the research. Standardized tests with known psychometric measures were applied and internal consistency was measured in terms of Cronbach coefficient of alpha with the acceptable level being above 0.70. Adaptation of previous validated studies and review by experts ensured content validity. In addition, the triangulation of methodology, which involved integration of quantitative and qualitative data, contributed to the credibility and strength of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to analyzing the particular results of this study, several steps of analysis were carried out in order to achieve the reliability and theoretical strength of the results. Descriptive statistics were used as the first step of data analysis with the purpose of describing the overall trends of the variables placement and display distribution of age, the time the participants spent on Instagram, body image anxiety levels, as well as social comparison rates, among the adolescents. Before the inferential analysis, the diagnostic actions were carried out to ensure that certain assumptions including normality, linearity, and the lack of multicollinearity were held true which in effect guaranteed the favorability of parametric methods. Afterward, Pearson correlation was used to examine the magnitude and the direction of the bivariate relationships between the Instagram use, social comparison, and the degree of the body image anxiety. This correlation procedure played a critical idea of establishing patterns that were significant in light of statistics but in accordance with what theory has already established in the previous studies. Multiple linear regression was performed to estimate the predictive abilities of the use and social comparison on Instagram of the anxiety of adolescent body image. This inferential model allowed the subtler interpretation of the role of behavioral factors (i.e., the amount of hours spent on the platform) and cognitive-emotional ones (i.e., upward comparison) in leading to psychological distress. In order to back up these numerical findings, qualitative data using semi-structured interviews was also conducted and provided depth of interpretation in that it will provide insight on how adolescents actually perceive and internalize visual information and social feedback on Instagram themselves. The combination of quantitative trends and qualitative stories enhances the validity of the results and enables a more extensive debate of the psychological effect of using Instagram during youth. Compiling the statistical findings in a tabular form, it is possible to comment on the findings critically in relation to the existing theoretical and empirical studies.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Age (years)	16.0	1.5	13	19
Duration of Instagram Use (hours/day)	2.0	1.0	0.5	4.0
Body Image Anxiety Score (BICI)	55.0	10.0	20	80
Social Comparison Score (SCRS)	30.0	8.0	10	50

As it can be seen in the table above, the subjects are teenagers (their average age is 16 years; SD = 1.5 years; the youngest and oldest responders are 13 and 19 years old, respectively), and the time they spend on Instagram is rather high 2 hours per day (SD = 1.0; 0.5 and 4 hours). The mean body image anxiety score (BICI) was 55 (SD = 10.0; 20580), and it represented a moderate to a high level of anxiety, and a

social comparison score (SCRS) was averagely 30 (SD = 8.0, 1050, a moderate tendency to compare oneself to others). The relatively high BICI-SCRS score variation would imply that not all people are similarly influenced by their exposure to social media social media, because the exposure might adversely affect most of them, including referrals to their body image in particular but also their social media activity in general, as they spend more time on Instagram and are prone to make comparisons with other Instagram users. These data provide initial indications of a potential relationship between Instagram use, body image anxiety, and social comparison that requires further analysis to explore more complex patterns of relationships.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Pearson Correlations between Instagram Use, Body Image Anxiety, and Social Comparison

Variable	Duration of Instagram Use	Body Image Anxiety Score	Social Comparison Score
Duration of Instagram Use	1.00	0.40**	0.45**
Body Image Anxiety Score	0.40**	1.00	0.55**
Social Comparison Score	0.45**	0.55**	1.00

**p < 0.01

The facts provided in the table show some important and theoretically relevant correlations that support the idea of the psychological consequences of Instagram use among adolescents. To start with, the relationship between the use of Instagram and body image anxiety is rather strong and positive ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$), which implies that the longer the people spend there, the more anxious they become about their image. This falls in line with the literature that has been established so far, claiming that being exposed to the perfect images of people and appearance-oriented content in social media might lead to a twisted perception of oneself and dissatisfaction with the own body. Second, social comparison tendencies also have a strong relationship with Instagram use ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), and the association suggests that increased time spent on Instagram, people are also likely to engage in more frequent social comparisons, especially based on appearance. This argues in favor of the notion that Instagram is an ideal platform to gage upward social comparison due to the visual-based platform and exposure to curated lifestyles made possible by the algorithm. Most conspicuously, social comparison and body anxiety are strongly correlated in a positive way ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), which means that individuals who simply compare themselves with others tend to feel more anxious about the appearance. In combination, these results show a possible chain of mediation: Instagram use leads to heightened social comparison, and this, in turn, causes greater body image anxiety in adolescents using social media platforms heavily, which indicates a key requirement of critical media literacy and psychological treatment in this group of adolescents.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3. Linear Regression Results for Predicting Body Image Anxiety

Variable	Coefficient (β / β)	Std. Error	t	p-value
(Constant)	15.5	3.2	4.84	<0.001
Duration of Instagram Use	0.30	0.08	3.75	<0.001

Social Comparison Score	0.50	0.07	7.14	<0.001
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According to the statistics depicted in the table above, two predictors of body image anxiety are statistically significant, but the consequences of the two findings are not the same to the extent of quantity and theoretical meaning. The value of the parameter estimate of $\beta = 0.30$ ($p < 0.001$) implies that one extra episode of active time is associated with the body image anxiety by 0.30 units per every hour at Instagram. Even though this has been an effect that is significant at a statistical significance, the smallish coefficient shows that time might not be the strongest predictor of anxiety per se and that quantity of time is simply a limiting metric overlooking content or context of use. More conspicuous is the coefficient 0.50 ($p < 0.001$) of social comparison, as the coefficient depicts a greater level of influence on body image anxiety; one unit increment in the comparison tendency level causes 0.50 unit increment in the level of anxiety. This greater effect implies that the way people psychologically process content, specifically upward comparison, has an effect compared to amount of time people spend online. Thus, although both the variables demonstrate considerable predictive value on the measure of anxiety, the data is important to provide critical emphasis on the power of internal cognitive processes at the cost of sheer quantity of behavior.

Model Summary:

$$R^2 = 0.35$$

The regression model explains 35% of the variance in body image anxiety. Both predictors duration of Instagram use and social comparison were statistically significant. However, social comparison emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that psychological engagement with social media plays a more influential role than mere exposure duration. This finding underscores the mediating role of social comparison in the relationship between Instagram use and body image anxiety.

To complement the quantitative analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore adolescents' subjective experiences regarding Instagram use and its influence on body image. The thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) pressure for perfection and validation, (2) internalization of unrealistic beauty standards, (3) psychological and behavioral impacts on body image, and (4) the dual role of positive content. These findings provide deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying the statistical relationships identified in the quantitative results.

Pressure for Perfection and Social Validation

Participants consistently reported experiencing pressure to present idealized versions of themselves on Instagram. The pursuit of likes and positive comments emerged as a significant source of emotional validation, shaping self-worth and confidence.

“When I post photos on Instagram, I feel pressure to make them perfect. If my photos don't get a lot of likes, I feel like I'm not good enough.”

This statement reflects the participant's perception that Instagram fosters pressure to present an idealized self-image. Social validation in the form of likes and comments becomes a measure of self-worth, reinforcing appearance-contingent self-esteem and contributing to body image anxiety.

“I feel anxious before uploading a photo because I worry about how people will judge my appearance.”

This response indicates the presence of fear of negative evaluation, suggesting that Instagram functions as a space of social scrutiny. Such anxiety demonstrates how digital interactions shape adolescents' psychological well-being and self-perception.

"I usually edit my photos many times before posting them so they look more attractive."

This statement highlights the normalization of photo editing practices to conform to idealized beauty standards. It reflects the internalization of aesthetic norms perpetuated by social media and the desire to gain social acceptance.

"Getting many likes makes me feel confident, but when my posts receive little attention, I feel insecure."

This finding demonstrates adolescents' emotional dependence on online validation. Confidence fluctuates according to digital feedback, emphasizing the role of Instagram in shaping self-esteem and reinforcing psychological vulnerability.

Internalization of Unrealistic Beauty Standards

Another prominent theme emerging from the interviews was the perception of unrealistic beauty ideals on Instagram. Participants frequently reported feelings of inadequacy when comparing themselves to influencers and curated online personas.

"Instagram's beauty standards are very unrealistic. I often feel inferior because I can't meet these expectations."

This statement illustrates the participant's awareness of unrealistic beauty ideals on Instagram. The internalization of these standards leads to feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction with personal appearance.

"Many influencers look perfect, and it makes me feel like my body is not good enough."

This response reflects upward social comparison, in which adolescents evaluate themselves against idealized representations. Such comparisons contribute to negative self-perceptions and body dissatisfaction.

"I often compare myself with models and celebrities on Instagram, and it makes me feel less attractive."

This quotation underscores the influence of celebrities and influencers in shaping body ideals. The comparison process amplifies insecurity and reinforces unattainable standards of beauty.

"Sometimes I wish I had the same body and face as the influencers I follow."

This quote suggests internalizing digital beauty standards and aspirational identification with influencers, which can undermine the acceptance of the self and enhance body image anxiety. The constant exposure to idealized and edited images on Instagram promotes the use of externally developed beauty ideals by adolescents as their self-assessment criterion. Inspirational identification makes the influencers seem like role models where they make people imitate their looks and lifestyle as well as desirable perfection. Nevertheless, the inaccessibility of these digitally enhanced images may cause the gap between the real and ideal self-images, which causes feelings of feeling inadequate, dissatisfied, and having low self-esteem. It is an indication of the upward social comparison process where people compare themselves with those who they perceive to be superior, thus, strengthening negative body images. Therefore, internalization of such beauty standards leads to the increased vulnerability of the psyche and body image anxiety, which illustrates the significant impact of social media, on shaping the self-concept and emotional well-being of adolescents.

Psychological and Behavioral Impacts on Body Image

The interviews further revealed that Instagram exposure affects not only adolescents' perceptions but also their behaviors. Participants reported feelings of insecurity, diminished self-confidence, and engagement in unhealthy practices to achieve perceived ideals.

"After seeing other people's photos on Instagram, I often feel insecure about my appearance."

This statement demonstrates the direct psychological impact of exposure to curated images, which fosters self-doubt and negative body evaluation.

"I sometimes avoid taking pictures because I feel that I am not attractive enough."

This response reveals avoidance behavior stemming from low self-esteem, indicating the broader social and emotional consequences of body dissatisfaction.

"I've tried strict diets to achieve the body shape I see on Instagram."

This quotation highlights maladaptive behavioral responses, such as extreme dieting, reflecting the internalization of unrealistic body standards promoted on social media.

"I feel stressed when I cannot look as good as people I follow on social media."

The given statement explains the emotional pain adolescents undergo due to the unceasing social comparison on Instagram. The constant bombardment of users with idealized and filtered images prompts them to compare their own physical appearance to unrealistic standards of beauty, which can make them feel inadequate, insecure, and undervalued. These comparisons, especially upward social comparisons, enhance negative self-perceptions and further bolster dissatisfaction with one's body. This failure to fulfill these perceived ideals, in turn, results in psychological tension, such as anxiety and stress over personal appearance. This observation proves the fact that Instagram consumption is one of the primary causes of body image anxiety because teens absorb externally created ideals and equate their sense of self-worth with that of external approval. In addition, it is consistent with Social Comparison Theory, which states that people can compare themselves with other people, and Objectification Theory, which can describe how experience with idealized imagery can promote self-surveillance and appearance-based self-assessment. Thus, it is the depth of psychological influence of social media on adolescent self-concept that is emphasized in the statement, and the importance of Instagram as a key sociocultural issue in influencing the perception of body image.

The Dual Role of Positive Content on Instagram

The findings also highlight the dual nature of Instagram as both a risk factor and a potential protective platform. While exposure to idealized images contributes to body dissatisfaction, body-positive and motivational content can promote self-acceptance and psychological resilience. Participants acknowledged that inclusive and empowering representations help mitigate negative perceptions of body image. However, they also emphasized that such positive content remains overshadowed by the dominance of unrealistic beauty standards. This imbalance underscores the importance of digital literacy and responsible content curation in fostering healthier online environments.

"Content promoting body positivity helps me accept my body and feel more confident."

This response demonstrates that Instagram can serve as a supportive platform by promoting self-acceptance and enhancing psychological well-being.

“Seeing people with diverse body types on Instagram makes me feel less alone.”

This statement highlights the importance of inclusive representation, which fosters a sense of belonging and reduces feelings of inadequacy.

“Motivational posts encourage me to appreciate myself rather than compare with others.”

This quotation indicates that positive and inspirational content can mitigate the negative effects of social comparison by promoting self-esteem and resilience.

“Although there is positive content, unrealistic beauty standards still dominate my feed.”

This statement reveals the imbalance between empowering content and idealized imagery. Despite its benefits, positive content is often overshadowed by dominant beauty norms.

Platform Design and Social Comparison as sources of anxiety on body image among adolescents

Our study results enrich our knowledge on the role of Instagram use in body image anxiety development in adolescents by prioritizing the mediating aspect of the role of social comparison. Instead of merely relying on the number of screen time or platform usage, findings redirect the topic to how and on what basis adolescents utilize the platform and how they interact with the design features of the platform that influences the interactions that occur. This concurs with emerging evidence implying visual-focused social platforms such as Instagram foster conditions within which appearance-based comparison appears and is usually emotionally laden (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

More importantly, the findings substantiate the assumption that the adolescent users do not present themselves as whipping posts of even the media products. Instead, the central focus is their internal, cognitive and emotional processes, especially the disposition to upward comparison, which makes body image anxiety one of their most critical experiences. This can be adequately explained by the social comparison theory developed by Festinger (1954): knowing that they are in some way inferior to others who are regarded to be better, individuals engage in negative self-evaluations. On Instagram, where computers design follows an algorithmic approach to perfected and typically filtered photographs, these comparisons almost seem inevitable. This also compounds psychological insecurity in adolescents which are still undergoing the formation of their identity and self (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Lawrence et al., 2023).

Moreover, in this study, it has been identified that not every Instagram content is as harmful. According to the interview data, although there are some positive body-affirming information available and capable of compensating negative influences, it is overwhelmingly imbalanced by narrow beauty ideal-promoting information. This is indicative of the argument presented by Cohen et al. (2017) that social media presents an opportunity to provide a healthy environment of identity development, in the event that social media platforms and feed algorithms properly consider diversity and authenticity over unrealistic beauty ideals. This potential is guttered by the supremacy of filtered and idealized images, which encloses societal standards of beauty to an extreme that is normalized and makes a psychological trap of self-worth based on external approval.

In addition, the qualitative data reveal one theme that repeats itself: the emotional reliance on feedbacks (likes, comments) to buttress one in appearance. This is consistent with what Perloff (2014) asserts as the development of appearance-contingent self-worth in the context of social media in which adolescents get socialized

to consider the digital acceptance as identical with personal worth. This performance-posting behavior seems even compounded by the interface of Instagram, which supports and prompts the distribution and the reception of the post with the greatest appearance. In this way, it might be argued that the technological design of Instagram is not neutral to how users behave, but it acts ex ante to influence and encourage user behaviors that could be harmful to teenage mental health (Romero Saletti & Van den Broucke, 2024; Orben et al., 2024).

The other dimension that should not be neglected is the gendered aspect of the body image anxiety that the present study recognizes without deeply disaggregating the data. According to the previous research (Griffiths et al., 2018; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014), although women and teens particularly are usually more influenced by the thin-ideal images, boys are currently also subjected to muscularity ideals depicting self-perception. These norms on the underlying content and body ideals are relevant since they show that both groups receive pressure but it is not on the same basis; thus interventions on the platforms should be gender-sensitive and should not use the one model fits all approach.

Notably, this study problematizes the naive story telling that time invested online is the key risk factor of body image issue. Alpha and beta coefficients, used in the regression analysis, reveal that social comparison had a greater effect than the time of exposure, and thus, it appears that the psychological involvement, the way adolescents perceive and react to content, is more important than the screen time (Boers et al., 2019). This is in line with the research findings of Vogel et al. (2014) that it is not only diffusion of social media but the extreme social comparison that is related to subsequent negative self-evaluations. The implication is, of course, that media literacy should not aspire to achieve minimal media consumption only but to develop a critical consciousness and emotional/mental toughness within an online environment.

The outcome also questions the greater formations that exist in societies and support judgement of value by appearance. Here, the objectification theory by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) is applicable because this theory provides an explanation of how frequent exposure to idealized bodies has made individuals (women or girls) adopt an observer view of their bodies in what has been referred to as self-objectification. This theoretical framework can be proved through the data collected during the interviews in this study: some of the participants confessed to changing their outlook or to adjusting their behavior according to the way they think they might be viewed on Instagram. This supports the necessity to introduce systemic interventions within the platform, but also at the school, family, and peer culture levels that support or shift such norms of objectification (Boer et al., 2020).

Lastly, as much as the research enlightens the important mechanisms in development of body image anxiety, it uncovers possible ways through which body image anxiety can be prevented. Those who read accounts of positive body images and those who connected with those instilling authenticity indicated reduced distress, correlating with a study by Cohen et al. (2017) on the same subject concerning the place of body positivity as a protection. Nevertheless, the fact that such content is not as widespread as the mainstream beauty culture diminishes its effect. There is an urgent need, the tone of policies and strategies of content curation of the platforms should be shifted toward prioritizing inclusive and positive representations, and this fundamental change cannot be done on an individual user level, but requires both institutionalized efforts of both tech companies and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present research critically emphasize the fact that there is a strong correlation between Instagram use and the increased body image anxiety in adolescents and social comparison is a critical mediating factor here. The quantitative findings prove not only that the long-lasting use of Instagram is linked with a higher level of feeling anxiety, but also that the degree of social comparisons, which are frequently compared with idealized, edited images, is the direct contributor to the feeling of anxiety. Notably, this statistical association is further supported by the qualitative data that depict the inner conflicts that adolescents are forced to live with as they state that they are coerced to Live up to ideals of beauty that are unrealistic, hence losing their self-worth and self-confidence. Such stratification of approach shows that Instagram, as a possible medium of self-discovery and belonging, turns out to be the form of mental defenselessness in most cases ruled by limited beauty ideals. The occasional presence of body-positive content, while offering some emotional reprieve, is insufficient to counterbalance the overwhelming prevalence of idealized imagery. These findings reflect a broader sociocultural failure to equip young users with the media literacy needed to navigate the digital landscape without internalizing harmful norms. Therefore, the study calls for more than superficial interventions: it demands robust, systemic efforts in the form of media literacy education, algorithmic regulation of harmful content, and active promotion of diverse, inclusive representations. Only through such multidimensional strategies can we hope to mitigate the detrimental mental health consequences that disproportionately affect adolescent users in the social media age.

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