

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

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the relationship between Instagram use and body image anxiety issues among adolescents, as well as the role of social comparison as a mediator. The research method involves a quantitative survey with descriptive statistical analysis, Pearson correlation, and linear regression, as well as qualitative interviews to explore the subjective experiences of Instagram users. The results of the quantitative analysis showed that duration of Instagram use and social comparison had a significant positive impact on body image anxiety, with social comparison functioning as the main mediator. Qualitative data reveals that teens often feel pressured by unrealistic beauty standards and experience decreased self-confidence due to social comparison, even though positive content can provide emotional support. In conclusion, interventions that focus on social media education and promotion of positive body image content are needed to reduce the negative impact on adolescents' mental health.

Keywords: Instagram Usage, Body Image Anxiety, Social Comparison, Positive Content

Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, especially among teenagers. Instagram, as one of the most popular social media platforms, offers various features that allow users to share photos and videos, comment and like content uploaded by other people. Based on the latest data, more than one billion monthly active users are recorded on Instagram, with a significant percentage coming from the teenage age group.

As the use of Instagram increases, concerns arise regarding its impact on the mental health and well-being of its users. One aspect of major concern is how constant exposure to idealized and filtered images can affect adolescents' self-perception and body image. Adolescents, who are in the development stage of self-identity and are particularly vulnerable to external influences, often compare themselves to unrealistic beauty standards displayed on Instagram (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

Previous research has shown that social media can have a negative impact on body image and self-esteem, especially among young women. Fardouly et al. (2015) found that social comparison on

social media was associated with body image concerns and poor mood among young women. In addition, Perloff (2014) stated that the effects of social media on body image concerns can be explained through various theoretical perspectives such as social comparison theory and objectification theory.

However, although many studies have addressed the relationship between social media use in general and body image problems, few have specifically examined the impact of Instagram, a highly visual platform, on teens' body image. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship between Instagram use and body image problems among adolescents, with a focus on the Indonesian cultural context.

Most previous research has focused on social media in general or on platforms such as Facebook. Instagram has the unique characteristic of being a highly visual platform, with an emphasis on images and videos, which may have a different impact on body image compared to other platforms (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). This research will specifically examine Instagram to fill this gap.

Most research on the impact of social media on body image was conducted in Western countries (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). There is still a lack of research that explores whether similar results also apply in different cultural contexts, including in Indonesia. This study will examine the Indonesian cultural context to provide a broader perspective.

Previous research has often focused on adolescent girls. However, it is also important to understand how young men are influenced by beauty standards displayed on Instagram, considering that the concept of masculinity is also often idealized on social media (Griffiths et al., 2018). This research will include young men and women to provide a more complete picture.

Most previous studies used quantitative or qualitative approaches separately. A mixed methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews can provide a more comprehensive picture of how Instagram use affects teens' body image (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Although there is evidence to suggest that social media impacts body image, the specific mechanisms through which Instagram influences adolescents' body image have not been widely explored. This research will investigate such mechanisms, such as social comparison, internalization of beauty standards, and negative or positive comments from peers (Festinger, 1954; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

While most studies highlight the negative impacts of exposure to idealized images, few explore whether positive content or accounts that promote healthy body image can mitigate such negative effects. This research will explore the role of positive content on Instagram in shaping teenagers' body image (Cohen et al., 2017).

There is a difference between active engagement (e.g. uploading photos and interacting with followers) and passive engagement (e.g. simply viewing photos without interacting). This research will explore how these two types of involvement influence adolescents' body image (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

Social interactions on Instagram, such as comments and likes, can influence self-perception and body image. This research will investigate how these social interactions contribute to body image problems among adolescents (Vogel et al., 2014).

By filling these practical and conceptual gaps, this research hopes to provide deeper insight into how exposure to idealized images on Instagram affects adolescents' self-perception and mental well-being, as well as provide recommendations for effective interventions.

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative Survey: A survey will be administered to a sample of teenagers aged 13-18. The survey will include questions on Instagram usage patterns, body image perception, and self-esteem levels. The data collected will be analyzed using statistical techniques to identify correlations between Instagram use and body image issues. Meanwhile qualitative interviews will be conducted with a subset of survey participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions. These interviews will explore how teenagers interpret and internalize the images they see on Instagram, and how this affects their body image and self-esteem.

Results and Discussion

The following is a presentation of the results of quantitative data analysis carried out using SPSS.

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

Pearson Correlation

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 table above shows there is a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$) which shows that the longer you use Instagram, the higher the level of body image anxiety. There is a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.45, p < 0.01$) which shows that the longer you use Instagram, the more often you engage in social comparison. There is a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.55, p < 0.01$) which shows that the more often you make social comparisons, the higher the level of body image anxiety.

Linear Regression

Table 3. Linear Regression Results for Predicting Body Image Anxiety

Variable	Coefficient (β /beta β)	Std. Error	t	p-value
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(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

The table above shows the coefficient $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$ indicates that every one unit increase in the duration of Instagram use increases the body image anxiety score by 0.30 units, with a significant effect. Coefficient $\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$ indicates that every one unit increase in the social comparison score increases the body image anxiety score by 0.50 units, with a highly significant effect.

Model Summary:

$R^2=0.35$, indicating that 35% of the variability in body image anxiety can be explained by this regression model, which includes duration of Instagram use and social comparison.

The conclusion from these quantitative results shows that duration of Instagram use significantly influenced levels of body image anxiety, with social comparison as the main mediator in the relationship, Instagram use and social comparison both contributed to levels of body image anxiety, with social comparison having a stronger influence, these findings support the importance of paying attention to the impact of social media use on youth mental health, and the need for strategies to manage unhealthy social comparisons on social media platforms.

The results of the qualitative interviews provide in-depth insight into teenagers' experiences and views regarding Instagram use and its impact on their body image. This data complements the quantitative analysis by revealing personal and subjective aspects of the phenomenon under study.

Experiences and Feelings When Using Instagram

Respondent A "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."

Respondent B "I felt happy when I got a lot of positive comments, but also felt dissatisfied with my own appearance after seeing photos of other people who looked better."

Respondents reported pressure to appear perfect on Instagram. This relates to quantitative findings showing that duration of Instagram use is positively associated with body image anxiety. The pressure to get likes and positive comments can exacerbate feelings of dissatisfaction with one's appearance.

Perceptions of Beauty Standards on Instagram

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

Respondent D "Many of us feel forced to diet or exercise harder just to look like an Instagram influencer. It makes me feel dissatisfied with myself."

Respondents view beauty standards on Instagram as unrealistic and feel pressured to meet these expectations. This supports quantitative results showing that social comparison (such as comparing oneself to beauty standards on Instagram) is closely related to body image anxiety. This anxiety may stem from feeling that they are not living up to the standards promoted on social media.

The Impact of Instagram Use on Body Image

Respondent E "After seeing other people's photos on Instagram, I often felt insecure. I felt like I couldn't achieve the same look."

Respondent F "I've tried various crash diets to get the body I saw on Instagram. It was very tiring and unhealthy."

These experiences reflect the significant negative impact that Instagram use has on body image. Respondents felt insecure and encouraged to take extreme measures such as strict diets. These findings are consistent with quantitative results showing a positive relationship between social comparison on Instagram and body image anxiety.

A Look at Positive Content on Instagram

Respondent G "Content from accounts that promote positive body image really helps me feel better about myself. They provide a different, healthier perspective on appearance."

Respondent H "While there is positive content, I feel like there is far more content that promotes extremely high standards of beauty. This often makes me feel worse about myself."

Respondents acknowledged that positive content on Instagram can provide emotional support and increase self-confidence. However, they also felt that this positive content was not enough to balance the negative impact of content that promoted unrealistic beauty standards. This underscores quantitative findings showing that despite the positive influence of content promoting healthy body image, the negative influence of content displaying high standards of beauty remains dominant.

Qualitative interview results add an important subjective dimension to the quantitative data, revealing how personal experiences and perceptions of social media influence body image. This research suggests the need for more comprehensive interventions, including the promotion of positive content and social media education to help teens manage the negative impacts of Instagram use.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the results and discussion of this study shows that Instagram use is significantly related to body image anxiety among adolescents, with social comparison functioning as the main mediator in this relationship. Quantitative data revealed that duration of Instagram use and social comparisons had a significant positive impact on levels of body image anxiety, while qualitative data added a subjective dimension by showing that adolescents felt pressured to meet unrealistic beauty standards and experienced decreased self-confidence due to social comparisons. Although positive content on Instagram can provide emotional support, the negative impact of content promoting high beauty standards remains dominant. These findings emphasize the need for interventions that focus on social media education and promotion of content that supports positive body image to reduce negative impacts on youth mental health.

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