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The effects of Social Media to Self-esteem

Members

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Today, people are increasingly using social media to communicate with one another, consume news, and share information. In the United States, roughly 70% of the population has utilized social media (Pew Research Center, 2018). In Singapore, where this study was conducted, a similar percentage was discovered. According to a 2017 research by Digital, 70% of Singaporeans use social media (A. Tan, 2017). Given that the government's "Smart Nation" policy aims to use information communication technology to improve living and develop a tighter community among Singaporeans, the high adoption of social media is especially relevant to Singapore (Hoe, 2016). As Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, pointed out during the Smart Nation launch, social media is a great way to stay in touch with family, friends, and people we don't see very often (Smart Nation and Digital Government Office, 2014).

In line with the rise in social media use, there are growing concerns that it may cause users to develop social anxiety (Jelenchick et al., 2013). The state of avoiding social connections and looking restrained in such encounters with other people is known as social anxiety (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Managing a big network of social media acquaintances, feeling jealous of their lifestyles, and the "fear of missing out" on activities in online contacts have all been linked to social anxiety, according to researchers (Hampton et al., 2015). Despite the widespread worry about social media's harmful consequences, there are three major gaps in the present literature. For starters, there is a paucity of research into the mediating mechanisms that underpin the link between social media use and social anxiety. The emphasis on the direct effect obscures the complexities of how social media use affects emotional well-being. According to Street (2003), certain mediators that can alter the impact of interactive media on health outcomes must be identified. Important media effects may be obscured if this underlying process is not examined. Second, the majority of studies have focused on Facebook. Because social media's technological features are rapidly expanding, it's critical to look into new social media platforms. Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms. Instagram had about 700 million users as of April 2017. (Zhan et al., 2018). Instagram's ability to enhance photographs with a variety of enhancement filters is one of its most distinguishing features. This feature altered people's online personas, and peer portrayals of idealized beauty may influence viewers' emotional and psychological responses (Chua & Chang, 2016). Third, the vast majority of previous study on this topic was conducted in the United States and Europe, with quite limited empirical evidence in Singapore. Singapore has a distinct hybrid culture that combines the East with the West. On one hand, ethnic Chinese account for more than 75% of Singapore's population. As a result, Eastern culture has had enormous ramifications, such as the repression of individualism in order to maintain harmonious social connections, a large power distance, and personal achievement via hard work and endurance (Leong et al., 2014). Western culture, on the other hand, has a significant influence in Singapore. Singapore, for example, is still predominantly an Anglophone country, with English being the most often spoken language by roughly 37% of population (Bolton & Ng, 2014). In addition, Singapore's contemporary administrative unit is a Western creation that dates back to British colonialism (Ang & Stratton, 1995). Furthermore, young people in Singapore are big fans of Western movies and music (Fu, 2014).



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This project seeks to conduct a survey in the setting of Singapore to evaluate how Instagram use may affect individuals' social anxiety by studying its underlying working processes, in order to cover the three research gaps indicated above. As a result, we suggested a conceptual framework based on a three-stage model of health promotion utilizing interactive media (Street, 2003; Street & Rimal, 1997). Stage 1 is the implementation and use of interactive media, which leads to Stage 2, which is the interaction between the user, the media, and the message. The interplay of user, medium, and message characteristics, such as users' education level, health status, need for information, media's ease of use, degree of interactivity, modalities, and message's topic, format, genre, readability, and credibility, determines what happens during Stage 2. Stage 3 health outcomes are influenced by the user-media-message interaction, which can lead to intermediate results (e.g., motivation, knowledge, self-efficacy, attitude modification, and problem-solving abilities) (e.g., health improvement, lifestyle change, and better emotional well-being). In this study, we proposed that Instagram use may have an indirect effect on people's social anxiety, which is mediated through social comparison and self-esteem. The following part contains a review of the literature to demonstrate the potential mediation routes.



Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Path 1: From Instagram to Social Comparison to Anxiety in Social Situations

The personal judgment of real or imagined social settings causes social anxiety (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). According to previous study, social comparison might make people feel uneasy in social situations. People's biological predisposition to evaluate their circumstances, talent, and general identity in relation to others, based on information they get about others, is known as social comparison (Festinger, 1954). According to P. Gilbert (2000), upward social comparison (e.g., comparing oneself to those who are thought to be superior in a certain area) can lead to greater social anxiety. Some people rank lower than others, which may enhance mental access to negative self-imagery and self-assessment during interactions with others, leading to increased social anxiety (Stein, 2015). Even downward social comparison (for example, comparing oneself to those who are thought to be inferior) can exacerbate social anxiety. According to Antony et al. (2005), those who have a stronger tendency toward upward or downward social comparison are more concerned about how they are perceived by others. Because of this anxiety, they would make efforts to shape their own behaviors to comply to specific standards or norms, regardless of whom they compare themselves to (P. Gilbert, 2001). Excessive self-consciousness as a result of social comparison can lead to a perception of social ineptness and even fear of social interactions over time (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The positive association between social comparison and social anxiety has been demonstrated in previous empirical studies. Weeks et al. (2009), for example, discovered that social comparison was positively connected to social interaction anxiety and the fear of public scrutiny in a survey study. Mitchell and Schmidt (2014) tested the causal association between comparison and social anxiety and found it to be true. In their systematic evaluation of cognitive behavioral therapy, Gregory and Peters (2017) found that attitudes about social comparisons were relevant in impacting social anxiety disorder.

People on social media frequently expose themselves selectively and establish their desired identities or features (e.g., emotions, personality traits, opinions; Vogel et al., 2014). When users are informed about other people's life updates via social media postings, they will unknowingly engage in social comparison (D. T. Gilbert et al., 1995). The number of followers, likes, comments, and retweets generated by social media generates omnipresent comparison information and accessible feedback. People can easily build impressions of individuals using such information. In comparison to the physical situation, social media comparison information is more prominent and visible (Appel et al., 2016). Furthermore, social media facilitate the maintenance of offline social networks as well as the creation of new online social networks, thereby enhancing the impact of social media use on social comparison (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).



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The favorable association between social media use and social comparison has been proven empirically. De Vries and Kühne (2015), for example, performed a survey of young adults in the Netherlands and found that higher levels of Facebook use were linked to more social comparison. In a study of Instagram users, a similar association was discovered, suggesting that social media can predict individual differences in social comparison orientation and behavior (Stapleton et al., 2017). Patients use social media to compare themselves to other patients to see how "terrible" their health issues are and how effectively the therapies are working, according to a systematic review of social media use in health care (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

Given the foregoing, one possible link between Instagram use and social anxiety would be indirect, mediated via social comparison. As a result, the following theory is proposed:

H1: Using Instagram will have an indirect influence on social anxiety, which will be mediated by social comparison.

Path 2: Instagram use leads to social comparison, which leads to low self-esteem and social anxiety.

Self-esteem is a person's positive or negative self-evaluation, or the degree to which he or she thinks of themselves as valuable (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). For a variety of causes, low self-esteem can exacerbate social anxiety. First, people with low self-esteem have fewer interactions with others, which makes it difficult to form close or supportive relationships that are necessary for one's well-being (Fatima et al., 2017). Second, people with poor self-esteem are more likely to rely on external social approval to feel better about themselves. They frequently believe that people look down on them and interpret others' replies as unfriendly, which can lead to heightened social anxiety (Cuming & Rapee, 2010). Third, people with poor self-esteem are more likely to victimize themselves and blame others for their social failures rather than taking responsibility for their own choices. Avoidance of people, strange situations, and a general social alienation would result from such habits, raising the likelihood of social anxiety (Tracy & Robins, 2003).

A number of empirical investigations have shown a link between low self-esteem and social anxiety. Self-esteem, for example, was found to be a negative predictor of social anxiety in a survey conducted in Pakistan, with the effect being higher among males (Fatima et al., 2017). Another Chinese study discovered a link between higher self-esteem and reduced social anxiety, indicating that self-esteem enhancement can be utilized as a preventive therapy to minimize social anxiety (J. Tan et al., 2016).



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Low self-esteem is thought to be exacerbated by social comparison. Because social media has promoted social comparison norms, the more time people spend on social media, the more likely they are to believe that others have better lives and are happier and more successful, lowering their self-esteem (Stapleton et al., 2017). Furthermore, social comparison may lead one to believe that external circumstances or socially acceptable benchmarks are more essential than one's own internal and personal characteristics. The sense of self-esteem will be diminished when one sees his or her innate characteristics to be less relevant in achieving social acceptance (J. B. White et al., 2006).

The negative relationship between social comparison and self-esteem has been well-documented in the past. Vogel et al. (2014) discovered that participants who scored higher on social comparison orientation had lower self-esteem and a weaker self-perception balance in a survey research of college students. Another study found that people's self-reported self-esteem was worse when they thought their social media acquaintances had better lives (Wang et al., 2017). The majority of prior study has focused on Facebook usage, however Instagram offers certain unique technological characteristics that may increase users' social comparison and its impact on self-esteem. With more improvement filter options, Instagram users, for example, are more likely to choose and exaggerate good life events than Facebook users (Lup et al., 2015). In addition, unlike Facebook, which is more text-based and encourages users to show off their intellectual or literary prowess, Instagram is mostly used for photo and video sharing. Visual content increases social presence, which increases impression formation, and images are also simpler to remember than text-based information (Johnson & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2016). (Noldy et al., 1990). As a result, on Instagram, social comparison and its consequences on self-esteem become increasingly prominent.

Our second hypothesis, as previously stated, is based on another mediation route linking Instagram use to social comparison, self-esteem, and, ultimately, social anxiety:

H2: Instagram use will have an indirect effect on social anxiety, with social comparison and self-esteem acting as mediators.

In conclusion, as shown in Figure 1, this study investigated a mediation pathway in which Instagram use increased social comparison, which led to lower self-esteem, which in turn led to increased social anxiety.