



THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS.



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Introduction

- Social media such as Instagram is extremely popular, especially among adolescents and young adults.
- Adolescents and young adults are also at increased risk for the development of a depressive disorder (Mojtabai et al., 2016).
- Instagram use is associated with mental health issues among adolescents and young adults, such as, but not limited to, depression, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction (Yurdagul et al., 2021).
- Recent research suggests that it is not necessarily time spent on social media that is problematic, but instead what people are doing on social media during that time (Wick & Keel, 2020).
- The present study involved a secondary analysis of data collected by Wick and Keel (2020) to determine which aspects of Instagram use area correlated with increased depressive symptoms.

Methods

Participants

- N= 80 (93% female)
- Mean age = 18.71 (SD = .97)
- 91.3% White, 7.5% Black, 6.3% Asian, and 1.3% Other.
- 24% of Hispanic or Latino origin
- Mean BMI = 22.64 (SD = 3.23)

Measures and Data Analytic Procedure

- Depressive symptoms were assessed using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977; $\alpha = .75$).
- Twelve questions from the Instagram use questionnaire (Wick & Keel 2020) were selected based on their potential to contribute to problematic Instagram use .
- A series of Pearson correlations were run between each individual question included from the Instagram use questionnaire and participants' CES-D score.

Table 1.

Correlations between Depressive Symptoms and Various Aspects of Instagram Use.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Depression Symptoms	*												
2. Time Spent on Instagram	.12	*											
3. Privacy of Instagram Account	-.31**	.039	*										
4. Frequency of Posting Photos on Instagram	-.21	-.20	.14	*									
5. Frequency of Comparison Photos with Peers' Photos on Instagram	.14	.30**	-.27*	0.30	*								
6. Importance of "Likes" Received on Instagram Photos	.18	.33**	-.20	-.12	.51**	*							
7. Importance of Comments Received on Instagram Photos	.27*	.04	-.16	-.14	.33**	.55**	*						
8. Importance of Receiving More Likes/Comments on Instagram Photos Than Peers	.28	-.001	.01	.04	.22	.52**	.50**	*					
9. Frequency of Taking Photos for the Purpose of Posting Them on Instagram	.32**	.15	-.12	-.36**	.36**	.32**	.21	.07	*				
10. Frequency of Deleting Photos Once Posted to Instagram	.32**	.17	-.04	.17	.09	.18	.11	.17	.08	*			
11. Engagement in Photo-Editing on Instagram	.13	.04	-.11	-.11	.26*	.33**	.09	.19	.35**	.14	*		
12. Body Satisfaction After Posting Edited Photos	.17	.02	-.13	-.09	.28*	.25*	.17	.23*	.22*	.05	.51**	*	
13. Comfort With Posting Unedited Photos on Instagram	.26*	.04	-.38**	-.02	.42**	.27*	.24*	.22	.31**	.21	.33**	.41**	*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Results

- Results indicated that having a public Instagram account, caring about comments on Instagram photos, taking photos for the sole purpose of posting them to Instagram, frequently deleting photos on Instagram, and experiencing discomfort posting unedited photos on Instagram were positively correlated with depressive symptoms in college students (see Table 1).
 - Effect sizes ranged from small to moderate ($r = .26$ to $.32$).
- Other aspects of Instagram use, including frequency of photo comparison, time spent on Instagram, and frequency of posting photos on Instagram were not significantly correlated with depressive symptoms in our sample of college students.

Discussion

- Overall, our results support previous research that photo-based social media activities are problematic and associated with mental health issues (Wick & Keel, 2020).
- Importantly, some aspects of Instagram use, such as frequency of posting photos, were not correlated with depressive symptoms.
 - This suggests not all Instagram use is deleterious and it therefore may not be necessary for users to avoid Instagram use altogether.
- Limitations of the present study include lack of gender and racial/ethnic diversity in our sample and the correlational nature of the study, thus preventing causal conclusions from being drawn.
- Future studies on this topic should utilize a more representative sample in terms of gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as utilize a longitudinal experimental designs to determine if these specific aspects of social media use cause increased depressive symptoms and for how long.

References

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