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The Impact of Instagram Usage on Body-Esteem in Young Women in College

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The Impact of Instagram Usage on Body-Esteem in Young Women in College

Kirsten Etzinger

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS 25 APRIL 2023

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Abstract

Instagram as a platform is increasing in popularity, especially among young women. Young women may use Instagram to keep up with their peers, follow trends, or as a way to express themselves. However, it is evident that young women can be negatively affected by the content they are exposed to on Instagram. This study examines the impact that increased Instagram usage can have on body-esteem in young women in college by evaluating their degree of Instagram usage, motivation to use social media for body comparison, and feelings of body-esteem. An online survey was conducted with BGSU college-age female students and the results found that women are more likely to have increased positive emotions on looks, decreased negative emotions on looks, and increased weight perception as they post more on Instagram. In comparison, the number of hours spent on Instagram weekly and the motivation to use social media for body comparison only had an impact on the negative emotions of these individuals.

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1. Introduction

Instagram is a growing platform for young adults. In 2023, the number of Instagram users in the United States peaked at 127.2 million, an increase of 12.6 million since 2020 (eMarketer, 2023). From these users, 25.7% are aged 18-24 and 56.5% are women, indicating that young women are dominating the Instagram platform (NapoleonCat, 2023). Instagram is a popular site that makes sharing content very easy for users. There are many different uses for Instagram, ranging from entertainment, information seeking, socialization with friends and family, self-reassurance, and social comparison. Due to the ease of sharing and popularity the site has gained, “the online environment is filled with pictures of peers and opportunities for social comparisons” (Perloff, 2014, 369). As social media and the use of multiple social media sites have increased, it has become easier for individuals to compare themselves with others online, especially with unlimited access to other profiles (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). With increased comparison between others, it raises the question of whether Instagram can have detrimental effects on its users.

In past longitudinal studies, social networking was found to be a significant factor in increasing self-objectification and body surveillance among young women (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018). These studies indicate that young women could put more pressure on themselves to have the “ideal” body type, or to look more like their “perfect” peers if they are viewing their content on a regular basis. In fact, a 2021 study examining the effect of daily Instagram use on state self-objectification found that over a 13-day period, women reported an increase in state self-objectification when Instagram use was higher (Garcia et al., 2021). The content viewed on Instagram was not monitored, but the overall usage did have an impact on the women’s mood and the way they felt about their bodies.

Previous literature found that women were exposed to images of different body types and reported their feelings afterward. Women were more likely to report feelings of personal body dissatisfaction when viewing “ideal” body types that were different than theirs (McComb & Mills, 2021). This study indicates that the type of content on social media can have an impact in addition to the time spent. Even more concerning, social media is home to multiple types of content, so it is very likely that women will come across content showcasing the female body or posts that urge them to compare themselves to others, causing their levels of body-esteem to fluctuate. This study aims to examine the relationship between Instagram usage and body-esteem in young women in college. More particularly, this study analyzes the Instagram usage rate amongst women, positive feelings on looks, weight perception, negative feelings on looks, and the motivation to use social media for body comparison. Through this study, young women are able to become more informed about the role that Instagram and social media as a whole can play in their feelings.

1.1. Research Question

This study examined the relationship between Instagram usage and personal feelings of body-esteem among young women in college. The research question is, “what is the impact of Instagram usage on body-esteem in young women in college?” To address this research question, the content viewed on Instagram was compared to feelings on body-esteem perceptions to determine if there was an impact. These content categories represent lifestyle, fashion, travel, food, health and wellness, and advertisements. The research question also identified if young women in college tend to compare themselves to other users on Instagram, and if this tendency is more evident in users who spend more time on Instagram.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Instagram and Body-Esteem

Social media has become increasingly popular with young adults. Many users utilize the sites to post about their daily life activities. However, the role of “influencers” has become more popular. Influencers post anything from travel to food inspiration to lifestyle. Fitness influencers and body-positive influencers are two categories that have a large following. Fitness influencers generally post images of their bodies before starting their fitness journey in comparison to their current bodies, showing dramatic transformations into their “ideal” bodies. While these images promote a healthy lifestyle, their effect on young women can lead to some personal body dissatisfaction, or a decrease in body-esteem. In a 2019 study, young women were evaluated on their feelings about viewing fitness and body-positive images on Instagram. The findings of the study concluded that women had decreased levels of personal body satisfaction and a decrease in their mood when viewing images of “fit” and “ideal” models. This was different when viewing “body positive” (such as bigger or curvier) models, as they reported feeling better about their body image (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 1559).

Cohen et al.’s (2019) results were consistent with a similar study in 2021. The research was conducted to investigate if viewing ideal body shapes on social media influences a woman’s body-image. 402 women were asked to view images of Instagram models and rate how each image made them feel. Participants who compared themselves to slim-thick-ideal images had more weight and appearance dissatisfaction than those who compared themselves to thin models (McComb & Mills, 2021, p. 172). These two research findings indicate that women’s feelings could potentially be influenced by viewing images of different body types on Instagram.

According to Measure Protocol, the average Instagram user spends about 3.4 hours on the app each week (Measure Protocol, 2023). Given that Instagram users spend a considerable amount of time and effort posting on this social media platform, and that women's feelings could potentially be influenced by viewing images of different body types on Instagram, I hypothesize that there is a strong correlation between the number of hours female users spend on Instagram and their perceptions of their own body esteem. There will also be a strong correlation between the number of posts female users make on Instagram and their body esteem perceptions.

H1. The number of posts a college-aged female user makes on Instagram will have an influence on how they feel about their body-esteem, including (a) positive emotion on looks, (b) negative emotion on looks, and (c) weight perceptions.

H2. The number of hours a college-aged female user spends on Instagram will have an influence on how they feel about their body-esteem, including (a) positive emotion on looks, (b) negative emotion on looks, and (c) weight perceptions.

2.2. Instagram as a Platform for Body Comparison

Using Instagram as an outlet for social comparison can positively or negatively impact an individual's feelings. For instance, if an individual is viewing posts of others that they feel look worse than they do, they could have higher levels of body-esteem, and become more comfortable in their bodies. On the other hand, if an individual is constantly viewing posts of others that, in comparison, look better than them, they could start having negative feelings about their body and feel that they do not compare to the beauty standard. This is evident in a study conducted in 2017 by Puglia. In this study, the author looked at the tendency for body comparison on social media and found that "upward social comparisons to both media images and peers have been associated

with body dissatisfaction” (p. 9). The term “upward social comparisons” refers to viewing the content of users that you believe look better than you do. Puglia’s findings suggest that users are more susceptible to feeling dissatisfaction with themselves and their bodies when they are exposed to images of people that look different than them, and even “better” at that.

Puglia’s (2017) study also highlighted an interesting perspective when it comes to social comparison on social media. After surveying 339 women on their tendencies to use social media for body comparison, the author found that women are more motivated to compare themselves after observing body comparisons on social media. These findings suggest that if a female user uses Instagram more often and is exposed to the content of other women showing off their bodies and comparing themselves, the female user is more likely to do it herself. This suggests that female Instagram users could either post more to compare their bodies or have increased feelings of dissatisfaction due to viewing body-comparison content.

Given that women spend more time on Instagram comparing their bodies to others and viewing posts of other women’s bodies, I hypothesize that there is a strong correlation between their motivation to use social media for body comparison and their perceptions of their own body esteem.

H3. A college-aged female Instagram user’s motivation to use social media for body comparison will have an influence on how they feel about their body-esteem, including (a) positive emotion on looks, (b) negative emotion on looks, and (c) weight perceptions.

2.3. Body-Esteem and Fashion

Fashion is a very common form of self-expression among both males and females. You can tell a lot about an individual’s personality by looking at what they wear or how they choose

to style their clothing. Kodzoman (2019) investigated the relationship between clothing and self-expression by examining the way clothing makes an individual feel and the psychology behind why individuals choose certain brands and clothing items. The author discovered that “clothing may affect body image and self-feelings” and that clothing can even be used by individuals to “change the appearance of the body” (p. 92). This is a great viewpoint for my research, as it shows that individuals have feelings and motivations behind what they wear and how they express themselves. Clothing can help individuals feel more comfortable when viewing themselves and can even be used to hide what they view as insecurities.

In a 2006 study by Chattaraman and Rudd, young undergraduate women with a larger body size and lower self-reported body image reported that they tended to opt for clothing styles with more coverage and less revealing silhouettes (p. 58). Participants reported wanting to feel more concealed so they would not draw as much attention to themselves as the thinner girls often did. This is a common practice on social media, especially Instagram. Young women are more likely to feel comfortable posting in clothing that makes their bodies look more comparable to their peers (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020, p. 2189). Overall, fashion and how it is used in the media can have a strong influence on individuals and how they choose to express themselves. The comparison of young women’s bodies and the frequent posting of certain clothing aesthetics can drastically impact what one chooses to put on their body.

2.4. Self-Esteem and Academic Performance

An individual’s mood can often be an indicator of how well they perform certain tasks. It is often said that an individual will not be able to perform tasks well when they are not in the right mindspace, meaning that in order to do something effectively, one needs to have the

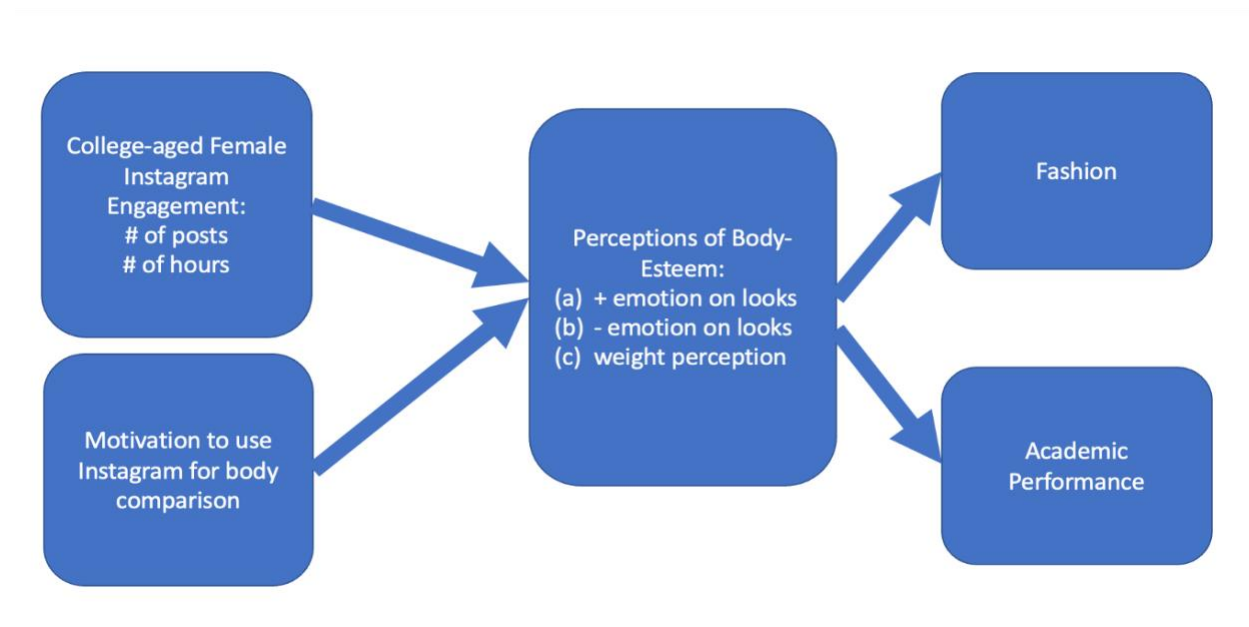
capacity to think problems through without distractions. A poor mood can be a distraction for many individuals and can often hinder success. Low body-esteem in young women can often impact their academic performance. In a 2018 study, researchers studied 262 university students to identify how self-esteem relates to academic achievement by asking students to report their feelings of self-esteem, academic achievement, and emotional exhaustion (Li, 2018). The results found a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Students who reported having lower self-esteem and lower body-esteem also reported having lower GPAs and more emotional exhaustion than students who reported having higher self-esteem (Li, 2018; Pettijohn et al., 2010).

Similar results to an earlier study by Fang (2016) showed that students with high self-esteem will have more motivation to achieve academic goals. This suggests that an individual with high levels of self-esteem will have the capability to set higher goals for themselves and achieve them. Additionally, this also suggests that students with low self-esteem do not strive to achieve high academic goals. At the end of the day, “students will study harder if they believe they can” (Li, 2018). Academic performance can be rooted in a student’s ability to believe in themselves, which can be influenced by their self-esteem. Self-esteem can come from many different aspects of an individual’s life, especially their body and appearance. It can be suggested that if an individual has low body-esteem, they may also struggle with academic performance. This could be a real problem that is overlooked. The following figure illustrates the main conceptual components of my study.

3. Proposed Study

The proposed study seeks to identify the relationship between Instagram usage and feelings about body-esteem in young women in college. A survey will be utilized to determine the relationship. The survey first filtered all participants to determine whether they: 1. are 18 years of age or older, 2. identify as women, and 3. use Instagram. The filter questions will ensure that all data is coming from participants in the selected population. The study will also ask participants two demographic questions to identify their race or ethnicity and sexual orientation. These demographic questions will show if individuals of different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations have different feelings about their bodies.

Figure 1. Conceptual research framework



The research-specific questions asked the participants questions about their Instagram usage, such as how much time they spend on Instagram each day, how often they post on Instagram each week, and what type of content they typically view on Instagram. Research-specific questions will also include two different scales. The first scale is an Instagram comparison scale. This scale asks participants to what extent they compare themselves to others on Instagram. The second scale is a body-esteem scale. This scale has 14 statements about personal feelings toward their body. Participants will be asked to identify how often they have felt or agreed with the statements in the past six months. The body-esteem scales will be compared to the results from the Instagram usage questions to determine if a relationship exists between the amount of time spent on Instagram and heightened feelings of body satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The survey for this study is relevant because it asks participants to analyze the way they use Instagram as well as their feelings about their bodies. The study is beneficial to the participants as it will give them an opportunity to better understand their feelings of body satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

4. Methodology

The research design chosen for this study was correlational, which was used for two reasons: to clarify understanding of important phenomena by identifying relationships among variables and to predict likely outcomes (Fraenkel et al., 2021, p. 332). A correlational design was most appropriate for this research study, as I examined how Instagram usage impacts body-esteem feelings in young women in college. 65 women enrolled at Bowling Green State University took part in the study. The survey was distributed in the third week of the Spring 2023

semester to students in the Life Design program, Honors College, College of Business, and Fashion Merchandising & Product Development program.

4.1. Instrumentation

The survey consisted of five different sections: 1) Filter, 2) Demographics, 3) Instagram usage, 4) Comparison, and 5) Body-esteem. The filter section included three items (see items 1-3 in Appendix A) to ensure that each respondent was 18 years of age or older, identified as a woman, and used Instagram. Due to the research question “what is the impact of Instagram usage on body-esteem in young women in college?”, the participants had to be filtered to avoid collecting data that did not fit the criteria of the research question being studied. If any participants answered “no” to any of the three criteria, the survey was redirected to the end, and no further data was collected.

The demographics of the participants were collected through two items (see items 4-5 in Appendix A). The demographic questions asked participants to identify their races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. The Instagram usage section of the survey included three items (see items 6-8 in Appendix A) to gather an understanding of how much time is spent on Instagram and how the platform is utilized. The three items asked participants to identify how many hours they spend on Instagram each day, the average number of times they post on Instagram each week, and the content they view on Instagram. The first two items were multiple choice, allowing one answer to be selected, while the third item allowed participants to select multiple answers, up to seven.

The comparison section included a *Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison Scale* of five items to assess the likelihood that individuals use Instagram to compare themselves

to others (Puglia, 2017, p. 40). The scale utilized a Likert scale for participants to identify how characteristic they are of a series of five statements regarding Instagram use. The comparison section of the survey was used to understand how often young women are likely to compare themselves on the Instagram platform, as well as to identify any relationships, if any, between Instagram usage and the urge to use social media for body comparison. The body-esteem section included a *Body Esteem Scale* of fourteen items to evaluate how the participants feel about their bodies and appearances (Puglia, 2017, p. 41). Sample statements from the body-esteem scale include “I like what I look like in pictures” and “I worry about the way I look.” The body-esteem scale utilized a Likert scale for participants to identify how often they have made these statements about themselves in the past six months, ranging from “never” to “always.” The body-esteem section of the survey was used to identify how participants feel about their bodies in comparison to how much time they spend on Instagram.

4.2. Procedures

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board to begin collecting data for the study. Approval from the Institutional Review Board included a consent form, a recruitment letter, and a review of target participants. The target participants for this study were students who are 18 years of age or older, identify as women, and use Instagram. The recruitment letter was the initial form of communication with all participants and was distributed via email and campus programs. The recruitment letter included a summary of my study, reasons why the study was useful to the participant, and a link to the survey if they wished to participate. The survey, initiated through Qualtrics, opened with a consent form that explained the nature of the study. Additionally, participants were informed that their risk was no greater than that of everyday

activities, that their information would remain anonymous, and that they would not be punished if they wished to exit the survey prior to completion. All participants had to agree to the consent form before proceeding to the survey questions.

The following research questions were used to guide this study: (i) Does the number of posts made each week on Instagram impact personal feelings about body-esteem? (ii) Does the number of hours spent on Instagram each day impact personal feelings about body-esteem? and (iii) Does the tendency to compare oneself on Instagram relate to personal feelings of body-esteem?

5. Results

This correlational study explored how Instagram usage might impact feelings of body-esteem, as well as examined the type of content typically viewed by users and the way in which the app is used by users. The hypotheses were tested using SPSS version 29.

5.1. Demographics

Sixty-five women who were students at Bowling Green State University participated in the survey. The demographic section asked participants to identify their race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. Out of 65 participants, the majority was White/Caucasian (90.8%), with 4.6% Black/African American, 3.1% Hispanic/Latinx, and 1.5% Biracial (African American and Asian American). The sample of 65 participants was predominantly heterosexual/straight at 80.3%, with 1.5% homosexual/gay/lesbian, 13.6% bisexual, and 4.6% other.

Table 1. Demographics

	N	Percent
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	59	90.8%
Black/African American	3	4.6%
Hispanic/Latinx	2	3.1%
Asian	0	0.0%
Native American	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Other	1	1.5%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual/Straight	52	80.3%
Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian	1	1.5%
Bisexual	9	13.6%
Questioning/Unsure	0	0.0%
Other	3	4.6%

5.2. Instagram Posts Each Week and Body-Esteem Scale

Linear regression model tests were performed to analyze Hypothesis 1 on the relationship between the number of posts made each week and positive emotions on looks, negative emotions on looks, and weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale*. To examine H1a, the regression test determines if positive feelings on looks were influenced by the number of posts made on Instagram each week. In Table 2, the number of Instagram posts made each week and positive

emotions on looks were analyzed. The positive emotion on looks comes from the *Body-Esteem Scale* items 1, 2, 3, 9, and 14. These items were tested for scale reliability and had a strong correlation, indicating that the respondents answered consistently across these 5 items (Cronbach's Alpha = .94). Thus, the 5-item of positive emotion was combined to produce mean scores. The results show that the number of posts made on Instagram had a significant impact on college-aged females' positive emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .002$). Therefore, H1a is supported that the number of posts made on Instagram each week influences positive emotions on looks.

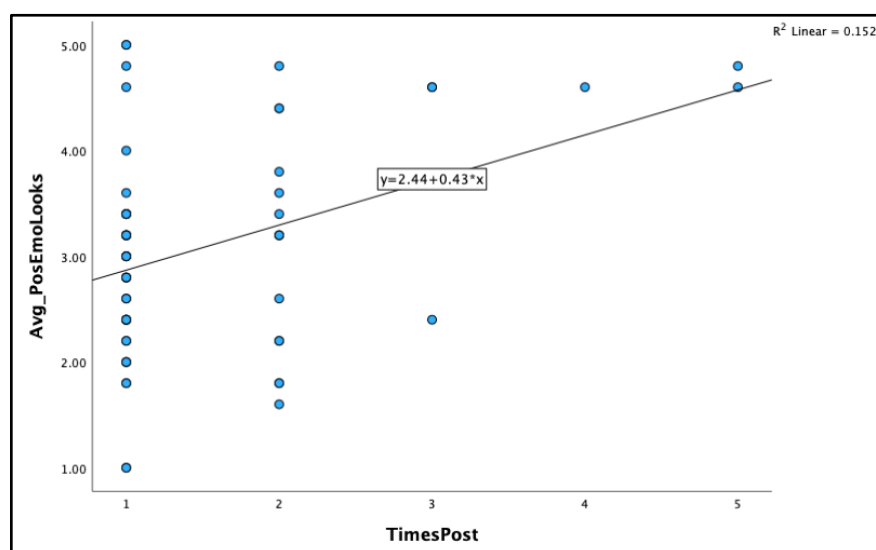
In Table 3, the relationship between the number of Instagram posts made each week and positive emotions on looks is shown. The table shows that as the number of posts increases, positive emotions on looks increase, indicating that a female user will have an increase in body-esteem the more they post on Instagram.

Table 2. Regression test of the number of posts made on Instagram each week and positive emotions on looks.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.443	.227		10.784	<.001
	TimesPost	.426	.129	.390	3.310	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_PosEmoLooks

Table 3. Relationship between the number of posts made on Instagram each week and positive emotions on looks.



To examine H1b, the regression test determines if negative feelings on looks were influenced by the number of posts made on Instagram each week. In Table 4, the number of Instagram posts made each week and negative emotions on looks were analyzed. The positive emotion on looks comes from the *Body-Esteem Scale* items 5, 7, 12. These items were tested for scale reliability and had a strong correlation, indicating that the respondents answered consistently across these 3 items (Cronbach's Alpha = .75). Thus, the 3-item of negative emotion was combined to produce mean scores. The results show that the number of posts made on Instagram had a significant impact on college-aged females' negative emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .042$). Therefore, H1b is supported that the number of posts made on Instagram each week influences negative emotions on looks.

In Table 5, the relationship between the number of Instagram posts made each week and negative emotions on looks is shown. The table shows that as the number of posts increases,

negative emotions on looks decrease, indicating that a female user will be happier or have an increase in body-esteem the more they post on Instagram.

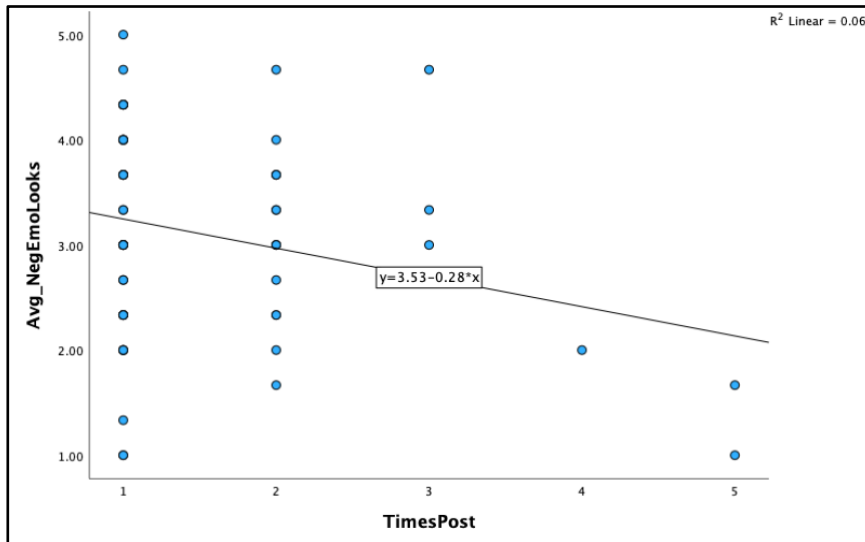
Table 4. Regression test of the number of posts made on Instagram each week and negative emotions on looks.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.525	.236	14.959	<.001
	TimesPost	-.278	.134	-.257	.042

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_NegEmoLooks

Table 5. Relationship between the number of posts made on Instagram each week and negative emotions on looks.



To examine H1c, the regression test determines if positive weight perception was influenced by the number of posts made on Instagram each week. In Table 6, the number of Instagram posts made each week and positive weight perception were analyzed. The positive weight perception comes from the *Body-Esteem Scale* items 4, 6, 10, and 13. These items were

tested for scale reliability and had a strong correlation, indicating that the respondents answered consistently across these 5 items (Cronbach's Alpha = .89). Thus, the 4-item of position weight perception was combined to produce mean scores. The results show that the number of posts made on Instagram had a significant impact on college-aged females' positive weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .005$). Therefore, H1c is supported that the number of posts made on Instagram each week influences positive weight perception.

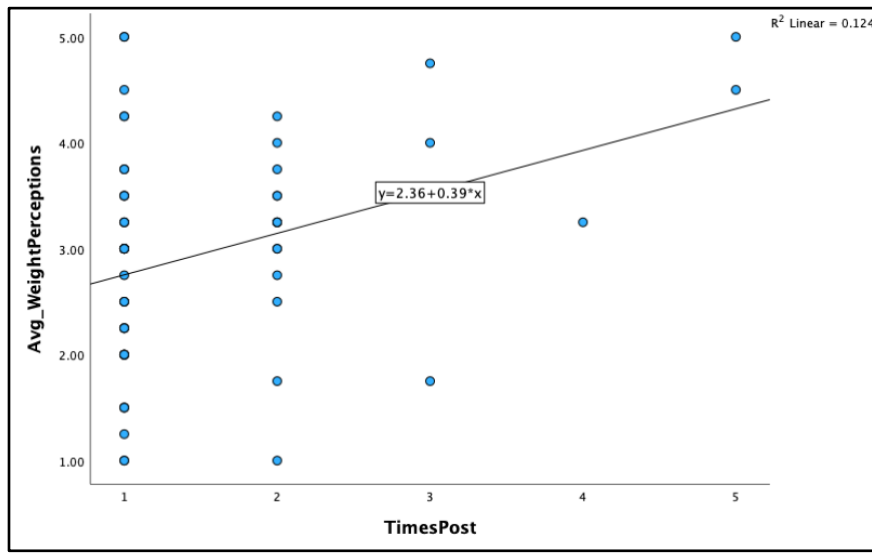
In Table 7, the relationship between the number of Instagram posts made each week and positive weight perception is shown. The table shows that as the number of posts increases, positive weight perception increases, indicating that a female user will feel more comfortable about their weight the more they post on Instagram.

Table 6. Regression test of the number of posts made on Instagram each week and positive weight perception.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.362	.234		10.086	<.001
	TimesPost	.392	.133	.353	2.944	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_WeightPerceptions

Table 7. Relationship between the number of posts made on Instagram each week and positive weight perception.



5.3. Instagram Usage (hours spent) and Body-Esteem Scale

Linear regression model tests were performed to analyze Hypothesis 2 on the relationship between the time spent on Instagram and positive emotions on looks, negative emotions on looks, and weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale*. To examine H2a, the test determines if positive feelings on looks were influenced by the number of hours spent on Instagram each day. In Table 8, the Instagram usage hours and positive emotions on looks were analyzed. The results show that the number of hours spent on Instagram does not have a significant impact on college-aged females' positive emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .224$). Therefore, H2a is not supported that the number of hours spent on Instagram influences positive emotions on looks.

Table 8. Regression test of the number of hours on Instagram and positive emotions on looks.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.715	.327		8.308	<.001
	InstaHours	.218	.178	.155	1.229	.224

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_PosEmoLooks

To examine H2b, the regression test determines if negative feelings on looks were influenced by the number of hours spent on Instagram each day. In Table 9, the Instagram usage hours and negative emotions on looks were analyzed. The results show that the number of hours spent on Instagram is marginally significant with college-aged females' negative emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .081$). Therefore, H2b is marginally supported that the number of hours spent on Instagram influences negative emotions on looks. The relationship could either be positive or negative for the user.

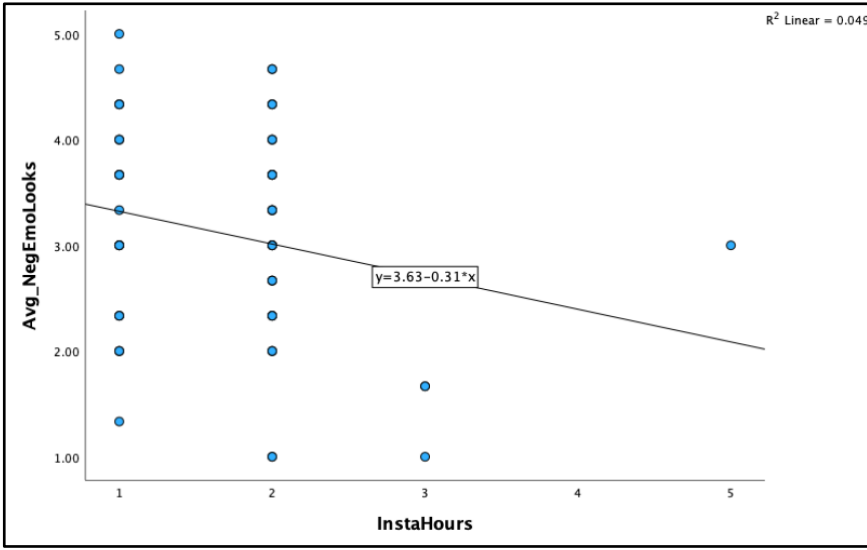
In Table 10, the relationship between the hours spent on Instagram each day and negative emotions on looks is shown. The table shows that as the number of hours increases, negative emotions on looks decreases, indicating that a female user will be happier or have less feelings of negative emotions on looks as they spend more time on Instagram each day.

Table 9. Regression test of the number of hours on Instagram and negative emotions on looks.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.630	.320		11.357	<.001
	InstaHours	-.309	.174	-.222	-1.776	.081

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_NegEmoLooks

Table 10. Relationship between hours on Instagram and negative weight perception.



To examine H2c, the test determines if positive weight perception was influenced by the number of hours spent on Instagram each day. In Table 11, the Instagram usage hours and positive weight perception was analyzed. The results show that the number of hours spent on Instagram does not have a significant impact on college-aged females' positive weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .398$). Therefore, H2c is not supported that the number of hours spent on Instagram influences positive weight perception.

Table 11. Regression test of the number of hours on Instagram and positive weight perception.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1					
	(Constant)	2.689	.334	8.041	<.001
	InstaHours	.155	.182	.108	.398

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_WeightPerceptions

5.4. Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison and Body Esteem Scale

Linear regression model tests were performed to analyze Hypothesis 3 on the relationship between the *Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison Scale* and positive emotions on looks, negative emotions on looks, and weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale*. The 5-item scale on motivation to use social media for body comparison was tested for scale reliability and had a strong correlation, indicating that the respondents answered consistently across these 5 items (Cronbach's Alpha = .86). Thus, the 5-item of motivation was combined to produce mean scores.

To examine H3a, the regression test determines if positive feelings on looks were influenced by the motivation to use social media for body comparison. In Table 12, the motivation to use social media for body comparison and positive emotions on looks were analyzed. The results show that the motivation to use social media for body comparison did not have a significant impact on college-aged females' positive emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .890$). Therefore, H3a is not supported that the motivation to use social media for body comparison influences positive emotions on looks.

Table 12. Regression test of motivation to use social media for body comparison and positive emotions on looks.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.036	.383		7.934	<.001
	Avg_Motivation	.017	.125	.018	.138	.890

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_PosEmoLooks

To examine H3b, the test determines if negative feelings on looks were influenced by the motivation to use social media for body comparison. In Table 13, the motivation to use social media for body comparison and negative emotions on looks were analyzed. The results show that the motivation to use social media for body comparison had a significant impact on college-aged females' negative emotion on looks from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p < .003$). Therefore, H3b is supported that the motivation to use social media for body comparison influences negative emotions on looks.

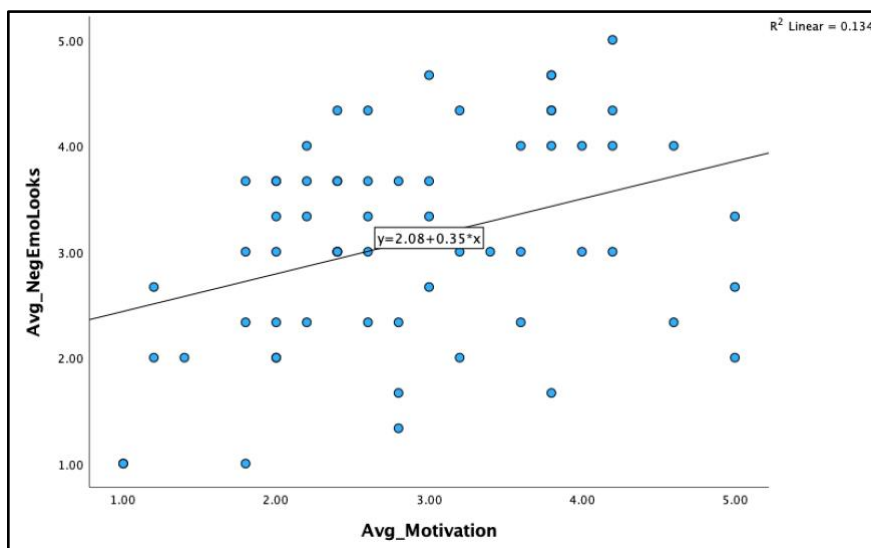
In Table 14, the relationship between the motivation to use social media for body comparison and negative emotions on looks is shown. The table shows that as the motivation to use social media for body comparison increases, negative emotions on looks increases, indicating that a female user will be sadder or have more feelings of negative emotions on looks if they are more motivated to use Instagram to compare themselves with other users.

Table 13. Regression test of motivation to use social media for body comparison and negative emotions on looks.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.083	.353		5.902	<.001
	Avg_Motivation	.354	.115	.366	3.072	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_NegEmoLooks

Table 14. Relationship between hours on Instagram and negative weight perception.



To examine H3b, the regression test determines if positive weight perception was influenced by the motivation to use social media for body comparison. In Table 15, the motivation to use social media for body comparison and positive weight perception were analyzed. The results show that the motivation to use social media for body comparison did not have a significant impact on college-aged females' positive weight perception from the *Body-Esteem Scale* ($p = .706$). Therefore, H3c is not supported that the motivation to use social media for body comparison influences positive weight perception.

Table 15. Regression test of motivation to use social media for body comparison and positive weight perception.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.813	.389		7.237	<.001
	Avg_Motivation	.048	.127	.048	.379	.706

a. Dependent Variable: Avg_WeightPerceptions

6. Discussion

6.1. Research Question 1

Does the number of posts made each week on Instagram impact personal feelings about body-esteem?

After analyzing the data from both scales, it is evident that Instagram has an impact on body-esteem in young women. The results show that the number of posts made each week on Instagram did have an impact on positive emotions on looks, negative emotions on looks, and weight perception. The results indicated that as the number of posts made each week on Instagram increases, the user will experience more positive emotions on looks, less negative emotions on looks, and more positive weight perception about their body. Overall, the user will feel happier and have more body-esteem. One interpretation of this result is that young women who are confident about their looks will want to post more on Instagram already, so posting more will only increase their confidence. Additionally, Instagram posts are generally from the waist up, so there is not as much of a focus on body weight as there is on facial appearance.

6.2. Research Question 2

Does the number of hours spent on Instagram each day impact personal feelings about body-esteem?

The results show that when women spend more hours on Instagram, they are more likely to have fewer negative feelings about their own looks. This could be attributed to the idea that spending a longer period of time on Instagram will allow you to see positive comments from your peers. Interestingly, the results did not show a relationship between hours spent on Instagram and positive emotions on looks or weight perceptions. That is, there was neither an

increase nor decrease in the participant's positive emotions on their looks or feelings on their weight as the hours on Instagram increased. This could be because Instagram primarily shows images from the waist up. If an individual is mainly looking at images of others from the waist up, they could be more focused on facial looks than body weight. Additionally, Instagram could be used passively, meaning that the user is simply scrolling through the pictures on their feed without feeling any emotion toward the images they are seeing. This could explain why their positive emotions are not being affected.

6.3. Research Question 3

Does the tendency to compare oneself on Instagram relate to personal feelings of body-esteem?

When comparing the motivation to use social media for body comparison and body-esteem, the results indicate that there is a relationship between the motivation to use social media for body comparison and negative emotions on looks. There was not a relationship between the motivation to use social media for body comparison and positive emotions on looks or weight perception. This result could indicate that women are more likely to feel worse about themselves when they are deliberately using the platform to compare themselves. If the user is using the platform to compare, they will always find something they do not like about themselves, such as their height or their facial structure. Body-esteem does not relate to just looks and weight, so there will always be something to dislike, even in the most confident young women. compare themselves on social media when they have positive feelings on their looks or weight. If the user is not using Instagram as a platform to compare themselves, then they will likely have more

positive emotions about their looks and their weight as they are not searching for specific features.

7. Limitations

Although the survey for this study was sent to multiple groups and organizations on campus, only a limited number of participants started and completed the survey. It is difficult to conclude that the results of the study would be the same if the participant size was larger. Thus, future studies on this subject should target larger organizations and groups to have a larger sample size. A larger sample size would help rule out any bias or inconsistencies in the data and further support the findings from this study. With a sample size of only 65 women, there is a chance that a majority of the women have the same feelings of body-esteem and answered the survey in the same manner. A larger sample size of 250 women has a higher chance of having more diverse views on body-esteem and could potentially produce different results.

Another limitation could be respondent bias, meaning that participants could have answered falsely on the survey when reporting their feelings on body-esteem. Respondent bias can be limited by ensuring respondents that responses are anonymous and confidential, however, there is no way to fully ensure that respondents are answering truthfully when taking a survey. Respondent bias can occur due to the participants wanting to make themselves feel better about their Instagram usage and body-esteem. To help limit respondent bias in future studies similar to this, it would be imperative to survey a larger sample of participants. A larger sample would draw out any bias or inconsistencies.

This study did not assess other social media site usage in comparison to feelings on body-esteem. While this study focused primarily on Instagram, body comparison and feelings on

body-esteem can be influenced by other social media sites, meaning that Instagram might not be the sole influencer in body-esteem. For example, participants could have reported low feelings of body-esteem that were the result of Snapchat or TikTok. Moving forward, all forms of social media should be included in the study to see if one site has a greater influence on body-esteem. This would help individuals target their social media use and determine if one site is affecting them more than the other.

8. Conclusion

With the increasing use of social media among young women, it is imperative to understand the impacts that Instagram and other social media sites may have on a young woman, especially their body-esteem. It has become more common for young women to have greater feelings on body-esteem, both positive and negative. The results of this study support previous empirical evidence that an increase in Instagram usage can have an impact on an individual's body-esteem. In this study, the correlation between posts on Instagram each week and positive emotions on looks was significant ($p < .002$), negative emotions on looks was significant ($p < .005$), and weight perception was significant ($p < .042$), therefore it is likely that Instagram usage does have an impact on body-esteem, but this impact can be either positive or negative. The positive emotions on body-esteem that can come from Instagram usage could come from positive comments from peers, viewing of similar content, or pre-existing feelings of body-esteem. Negative emotions on body-esteem that can arise from Instagram usage could come from viewing content of individuals that women perceive as looking better than them, negative comments from peers, or preexisting negative emotions around body-esteem.

Instagram usage might not be the sole factor in determining an individual's feelings of body-esteem, but it can be one of the influences or further emotions that an individual already

has. Further work should be done to examine the factors evident in Instagram use that could influence young women's body-esteem, as well as how these factors translate between different social media platforms. Additionally, future studies should examine how feelings of body-esteem, both positive and negative, can influence individuals' lives. Young women could be negatively affected by their daily activities from low feelings of body-esteem, especially academically. This study was conducted on a college campus and found that there is a relationship between increased Instagram usage and body-esteem, so it would be interesting to see how these emotions affect other areas of life. It is important to know if there is a relationship and how to combat the issue to ensure that young women can succeed.

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10. Appendix A

Survey

This is a 10-question survey that will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete. All answers are anonymous and will be used to determine if Instagram usage has an effect on body-esteem in college-aged women.

Disclaimer: This survey is targeted towards individuals 18 and older who identify as a woman.

Filter Questions

- 1. Are you 18 or over?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 2. Do you identify as a woman?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 3. Do you use Instagram?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Demographic Questions

- 4. What is your race/ethnicity?**
 - a. White/Caucasian
 - b. Black/African American
 - c. Hispanic/Latinx
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - g. Other_

- 5. What is your sexual orientation?**
 - a. Heterosexual/Straight
 - b. Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Questioning/Unsure
 - e. Other_

Research Questions

- 6. How many hours, per day, do you spend on Instagram?**
 - a. 0-1
 - b. 2-4
 - c. 5-7
 - d. 8-10
 - e. 10+

7. How many times do you post (including posts to stories and reels) on Instagram each week?

- a. 0-1
- b. 1-3
- c. 3-6
- d. 6-8
- e. 8+

8. What content do you view on Instagram?

- a. Lifestyle content
- b. Fashion content
- c. Travel content
- d. Food content
- e. Health/Wellness content
- f. Advertisements
- g. Other, please specify_

Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison (MEIS)

9. Please read each statement below and decide how characteristic it is of you. simple correlational analysis

1=not true at all 2=a little bit true 3=somewhat true 4=very true 5=extremely true

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I use Instagram to check out what others look like. (MEIS1) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. I use Instagram to compare the way I look with other people's looks. (MEIS2) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. I use Instagram to see what others think about how I look. (MEIS3) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. I use Instagram to compare my body with other people's bodies. (MEIS4) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. I use Instagram to see what others think about my photos. (MEIS5) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Body Esteem Scale (BESAA)

10. Please rate how often you have felt/agree with each statement in the past six months.

1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=often 5=always

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I like what I look like in pictures. (BESAA1) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. I'm proud of my body. (BESAA2) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. I like what I see when I look in the mirror. (BESAA3) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. I am satisfied with my weight. (BESAA4) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. I wish I looked better. (BESAA5) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. I really like what I weigh. (BESAA6) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. My looks upset me. (BESAA7) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. I'm as nice looking as most people. (BESAA8) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. I'm pretty happy about the way I look. (BESAA9) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. I feel I weigh the right amount for my height. (BESAA10) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k. Weighing myself depresses me. (BESAA11) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| l. I worry about the way I look. (BESAA12) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| m. I think I have a good body. (BESAA13) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| n. I'm looking as nice as I'd like to. (BESAA14) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |