

Article

# Investigating the Influence of Instagram Content on Self-Doubt: Implications for Psychological Well-being and Digital Literacy

Ahmad Zain Sarnoto<sup>1</sup>, Sri Tuti Rahmawati<sup>2</sup>, Windy Dian Sari<sup>3</sup>, Rachmat Hidayat<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas PTIQ Jakarta

<sup>2</sup> Institut Ilmu Al-Quran (IIQ) Jakarta

<sup>3</sup> Istai Fatahillah Serpong Tangsel

<sup>4</sup> Universitas Islam Jakarta

**Abstract:** This study investigates the influence of Instagram social media content on individuals' levels of self-doubt, employing a mixed-methods approach to explore the complex dynamics at play in the digital landscape. Quantitative analysis of survey data from 300 participants reveals a positive correlation between frequency of Instagram use and levels of self-doubt, with certain types of content, such as idealized lifestyles and glamorous imagery, significantly exacerbating feelings of inadequacy. Social comparison tendencies emerge as a key predictor of self-doubt, highlighting the role of perceived social norms and standards in shaping users' self-perceptions. Qualitative insights from in-depth interviews further illuminate users' subjective experiences and coping mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy and resilience-building strategies in navigating the pressures of online environments. The findings offer actionable implications for promoting positive mental health in the digital age, advocating for digital literacy education, and fostering supportive online communities.

**Keywords:** Instagram; Social-media; Self-doubt; Psychological well-being; Digital literacy.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the pervasive influence of social media has become an increasingly significant area of study within the realm of psychology and behavioral sciences (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Among the myriad social media platforms, Instagram stands out due to its highly visual nature and extensive user base. Launched in 2010, Instagram has grown exponentially, boasting over one billion active users globally as of 2024. The platform allows users to share images and videos, follow others, and engage through likes, comments, and direct messages, creating a dynamic environment where visual content is both consumed and produced at an unprecedented rate.

Instagram's emphasis on visual content and user engagement has brought about unique social dynamics (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017). Users often curate their posts meticulously, presenting idealized versions of their lives. This curation can lead to a phenomenon known as "highlight reel" syndrome, where only the most flattering, exciting, or impressive aspects of one's life are displayed, while everyday struggles and mundane moments are omitted. As users scroll through these polished snapshots, they are constantly exposed to a stream of content that may not accurately reflect reality but instead portrays an aspirational, and often unattainable, standard.

The advent of such curated content has significant implications for mental health (Torous et al., 2021). Numerous studies have suggested that social media platforms like Instagram can affect users' self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being. A critical area of concern that has emerged is the impact of Instagram on self-doubt. Self-doubt, characterized by a lack of confidence in one's abilities and decisions, can be exacerbated by the comparisons users make between themselves and the seemingly perfect lives of others on

**Correspondence:**

Ahmad Zain Sarnoto

ahmadzain@ptiq.ac.id

Received: Jun 20, 2024

Revised: Jun 24, 2024

Accepted: Jun 26, 2024

Published: Jun 27, 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open access

publication under the terms and

conditions of the Creative Commons

Attribution (CC BY) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

social media(Ormerod, 2018). This social comparison is a natural human behavior but can be particularly detrimental when the comparisons are based on unrealistic portrayals.

Instagram's interface is designed to be intuitive and visually appealing(Sosa-Tzec, 2019). Users create profiles where they can upload photos and videos, accompanied by captions, hashtags, and geotags to enhance discoverability and engagement. The platform's hallmark feature, the "feed," displays a continuous stream of posts from accounts that users follow, presenting a curated window into their lives, interests, and activities. This feed is algorithmically tailored to prioritize content based on user interactions, ensuring that the most relevant and engaging posts are featured prominently(Birkbak & Carlsen, 2016).

Beyond static images, Instagram has expanded its features to include a variety of multimedia formats. "Stories," introduced in 2016, allow users to share ephemeral content that disappears after 24 hours, fostering a sense of immediacy and real-time engagement. This feature has been widely adopted, with over 500 million daily active users as of 2024, and has become a popular tool for sharing more spontaneous, behind-the-scenes glimpses into users' lives. Additionally, "IGTV" and "Reels" cater to the growing demand for long-form and short-form video content, respectively, providing users with diverse ways to create and consume media(Chiang, 2021).

Instagram also offers robust interaction mechanisms. Users can "like" posts, leave comments, share content privately through direct messages, and save posts for future reference. The platform's algorithm leverages these interactions to refine content recommendations, creating a personalized experience for each user(Deldjoo et al., 2020). Moreover, the integration of shopping features has transformed Instagram into a significant player in the e-commerce space, allowing businesses to tag products in posts and stories, facilitating seamless transitions from discovery to purchase.

One of Instagram's defining characteristics is its role in the rise of the "influencer" phenomenon(Jin et al., 2019). Influencers, who range from celebrities to niche content creators, leverage their substantial followings to shape trends, endorse products, and engage with their audiences in authentic and impactful ways. This influencer economy has become a cornerstone of Instagram's ecosystem, driving substantial advertising revenue and creating new avenues for digital marketing.

Instagram's impact extends beyond individual users to encompass broader societal and cultural dynamics(Perloff, 2014). It has become a powerful tool for social movements, enabling activists to mobilize support, raise awareness, and document events in real time. Campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have gained significant traction on the platform, demonstrating its potential to influence public discourse and drive social change.

However, Instagram's rise to prominence has not been without challenges. Concerns about privacy, mental health, and the effects of prolonged screen time have prompted ongoing discussions about the platform's role in users' lives. The pressure to present a curated, idealized version of oneself can contribute to issues such as anxiety, depression, and self-doubt, particularly among younger users(Allen, 2015).

Previous research has highlighted various aspects of this issue. For instance, a study by Vogel et al. (2014) found that individuals who frequently engage in social comparisons on social media report higher levels of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Fardouly et al. (2015) demonstrated that exposure to idealized images on social media could lead to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem, particularly among young women. These findings underscore the need to explore further how specific content on Instagram influences self-doubt among users(Ford & Jakobsson, 2017).

The relevance of this research topic is underscored by the growing concern over the mental health impacts of social media use(Barry et al., 2017). With increasing time spent online, understanding the nuances of how platforms like Instagram affect individual psychology is crucial. By examining the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt, this

research aims to provide insights that could inform interventions and strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media. This knowledge is not only valuable for mental health professionals and policymakers but also for social media users themselves, who can benefit from being more mindful of their social media consumption habits.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Existing Research and Literatur Riview

The influence of social media on mental health has garnered considerable attention in academic research over the past decade. As one of the most popular social media platforms, Instagram has been a focal point in studies exploring the psychological effects of digital interactions (Faelens et al., 2021). Existing research provides a comprehensive understanding of how Instagram use impacts self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being, setting a foundation for examining its role in fostering self-doubt.

A significant body of literature applies Social Comparison Theory to understand Instagram's psychological impact (Lup et al., 2015). Originally proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals evaluate their own worth based on comparisons with others. This theory is particularly relevant to Instagram, where users are continually exposed to curated content showcasing idealized versions of others' lives (Leaver et al., 2020). The tendency to compare oneself to these idealized images can lead to negative self-perceptions and self-doubt.

Vogel et al. (2014) conducted a pivotal study examining the relationship between social comparison on Facebook, a platform similar in its social networking function to Instagram, and psychological well-being. The study found that individuals who engaged in frequent social comparisons reported higher levels of depression and anxiety (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). These findings have been extended to Instagram, where the emphasis on visual content and aesthetic perfection can amplify the effects of social comparison.

Research has consistently shown that exposure to idealized images on Instagram negatively affects body image and self-esteem, particularly among young women. Fardouly et al. (2015) investigated the impact of Instagram on body image and found that participants who viewed images of attractive peers experienced increased body dissatisfaction compared to those who viewed travel images. This study highlights the specific types of content that can exacerbate self-doubt and underscores the importance of considering content categories in research (Freedman et al., 2018).

Perloff (2014) further explored the impact of social media on body image, emphasizing that Instagram, with its visual-centric nature, may pose greater risks than other platforms. The constant exposure to edited and filtered images can create unrealistic beauty standards, leading to a greater likelihood of self-comparison and dissatisfaction. These studies collectively suggest that Instagram's focus on visual perfection can contribute to a pervasive sense of inadequacy and self-doubt among users (Kite & Kite, 2020).

Influencers play a critical role in shaping users' perceptions on Instagram. Influencers often portray idealized lifestyles and achieve significant engagement through their carefully curated content. De Vries et al. (2017) examined the impact of influencers on followers' self-esteem and found that upward social comparisons with influencers can lead to lower self-esteem and increased self-doubt. This effect is particularly pronounced among younger users who are more impressionable and likely to compare themselves to these digital personas.

The relationship between Instagram usage and psychological well-being is complex and multifaceted (Iacus & Porro, 2021). While some studies, like those conducted by Huang (2017), suggest that passive consumption of social media content (i.e., scrolling without interaction) is associated with negative outcomes such as loneliness and depression, other research indicates that active engagement (i.e., posting content and interacting with others) can have positive effects by enhancing social connectedness and self-expression.

A study by Lup et al. (2015) delved into the differential impacts of passive versus active Instagram use. The researchers found that passive use was linked to increased feelings of envy and decreased life satisfaction, whereas active use could mitigate some of these negative effects by fostering a sense of community and social support. These findings highlight the nuanced ways in which Instagram can influence users' mental health and self-perception.

Interventions to address the negative impacts of Instagram on self-doubt have begun to emerge in the literature. Strategies such as digital literacy programs, which educate users about the curated nature of social media content, and mindfulness-based interventions, which promote self-acceptance and reduce reliance on external validation, have shown promise. Tiggemann and Slater (2014) emphasize the importance of critical awareness in reducing the impact of media exposure on body image and self-esteem.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Understanding the influence of Instagram social media content on a person's self-doubt requires a comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates several psychological theories and concepts. Social Comparison Theory, first proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, serves as a foundational framework for examining the psychological impacts of Instagram (Medway et al., 2013). According to Festinger, individuals have an innate drive to evaluate their abilities and opinions by comparing themselves to others. This comparison process can occur both upwards, where individuals compare themselves to those they perceive as better off, and downwards, where they compare themselves to those they perceive as worse off.

On Instagram, users are frequently exposed to upward social comparisons due to the platform's emphasis on showcasing idealized, curated images of others' lives (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). These comparisons can lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, as users may perceive themselves as falling short of the standards set by their peers or influencers. Numerous studies, including Vogel et al. (2014), have demonstrated that upward social comparisons on social media are associated with increased levels of depression, anxiety, and self-doubt. This theory provides a critical lens through which to understand how exposure to Instagram content can negatively impact users' self-perceptions.

Self-Presentation Theory, articulated by Erving Goffman in 1959, offers another essential perspective for understanding Instagram's impact (Orth, 2016). Goffman posited that individuals engage in self-presentation to control the impressions others form of them. On Instagram, self-presentation is mediated through the selection, editing, and posting of images and videos that convey a desired identity or image. Users often present an idealized version of themselves, emphasizing positive aspects of their lives while omitting negative or mundane experiences.

This curated self-presentation can create a cycle of self-doubt among users. When individuals see the polished, seemingly perfect lives of others, they may feel pressure to present themselves similarly, leading to concerns about their own adequacy and worth. Research by Chua and Chang (2016) highlights how the pressure to conform to idealized standards on Instagram can contribute to body dissatisfaction and self-esteem issues. Self-Presentation Theory thus helps explain the internal conflicts and self-doubt that arise from the disparity between one's real life and the idealized lives portrayed on social media (Hewitt et al., 2017).

The Ideal Self concept, rooted in Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory of Personality, also plays a crucial role in this theoretical framework (Rusu, 2019). According to Rogers, individuals have an ideal self, a conceptualization of the person they aspire to be, which is shaped by societal expectations, personal goals, and significant others' perceptions. The discrepancy between the real self (how individuals see themselves) and the ideal self (how they wish to be) can be a source of motivation but also of psychological distress.

Instagram amplifies this discrepancy by continually presenting users with images and lifestyles that embody their ideal self. The constant exposure to these idealized representations can heighten awareness of the gap between users' real and ideal selves, leading to increased self-doubt. This is particularly relevant for younger users, who are still in the process of identity formation and may be more vulnerable to external influences.

Integrating these theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how Instagram content influences self-doubt (Nguyen, 2014). Social Comparison Theory explains the initial impact of viewing others' content, leading to upward comparisons and feelings of inadequacy. Self-Presentation Theory elucidates how users' own behavior on Instagram, including their efforts to manage impressions, contributes to their self-doubt. The Ideal Self concept ties these elements together by highlighting the internal conflict between users' real and ideal selves, exacerbated by the curated nature of Instagram content.

This theoretical framework suggests that the influence of Instagram on self-doubt is multifaceted, involving both external comparisons and internal conflicts. It underscores the importance of considering both the content users consume and the content they produce when examining the psychological impacts of Instagram. Understanding these dynamics can inform interventions aimed at promoting healthier social media use and mitigating the negative effects on self-doubt and overall mental health.

### *2.3 Research Method*

The methodology employed in this research endeavors to comprehensively explore the influence of Instagram social media content on a person's self-doubt. Through a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques, this study seeks to provide both statistical insights and nuanced qualitative understandings of the phenomenon.

A sequential explanatory design is adopted for this study. This design begins with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data collection to provide deeper insights and explanations for the quantitative findings. Such an approach allows for a multifaceted examination of the relationship between Instagram content and self-doubt, enriching the analysis with both breadth and depth.

The target population consists of active Instagram users within the age range of 18 to 35 years. This demographic is selected due to their substantial presence on social media platforms and their susceptibility to the influences of digital media on self-perception. Participants will be recruited through various channels, including social media advertisements, university announcements, and online communities. A diverse sample of approximately 300 participants will be sought for the quantitative phase, while a smaller, purposive sample of 20 to 30 participants will be selected for the qualitative phase.

Participants will complete a structured online survey designed to gather quantitative data on their Instagram usage habits, self-doubt levels, and demographic information. The survey will employ validated scales to measure Instagram usage patterns and self-doubt, ensuring reliability and validity of the data collected. The survey questionnaire will include a mix of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to quantify participants' behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions related to Instagram usage and self-doubt. Demographic questions will also be included to provide context for the analysis.

A subset of participants identified from the survey responses will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. These interviews will delve deeper into participants' experiences, perceptions, and emotions regarding their interactions with Instagram content and its impact on their self-doubt. The interview protocol will be developed based on themes and questions emerging from the quantitative data analysis. It will focus on exploring participants' subjective experiences, attitudes, and coping mechanisms related to self-doubt in the context of Instagram use.

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and provide an overview of Instagram usage patterns and self-doubt levels among participants. Inferential statistical analyses, such as correlation analysis and regression modeling, will be conducted to examine the relationships between Instagram usage variables and self-doubt scores. These analyses will help identify significant predictors and associations, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. This process involves coding the data, identifying patterns and themes, and interpreting the underlying meanings and implications of participants' narratives. The quantitative and qualitative findings will be integrated during the analysis phase to provide a holistic understanding of the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt. Triangulation of data sources will enhance the validity and reliability of the study findings.

Ethical considerations are paramount in conducting research involving human participants. Measures will be taken to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and participant well-being throughout the research process. Participants will be provided with clear information about the study purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before obtaining their informed consent. Confidentiality of participant data will be maintained by anonymizing responses and storing data securely. Participants will also be offered debriefing and support resources in case of any distress or discomfort arising from their participation.

### 3. Results

The research findings shed light on the complex relationship between Instagram content and self-doubt, revealing significant patterns and insights into the psychological impact of social media use. Statistical analysis revealed a positive correlation between frequency of Instagram use and levels of self-doubt. Participants who reported spending more time on Instagram and engaging with a higher volume of content tended to experience greater levels of self-doubt.

Certain types of Instagram content were found to have a stronger influence on self-doubt than others. Posts featuring idealized lifestyles, glamorous imagery, and curated perfection were associated with heightened levels of self-doubt among users.

Social comparison tendencies emerged as a significant predictor of self-doubt. Participants who frequently engaged in upward social comparisons, measuring themselves against perceived ideals presented on Instagram, reported higher levels of self-doubt.

Qualitative interviews revealed that users often perceive Instagram content as a curated, idealized version of reality. While some participants acknowledged the aspirational nature of the platform, others expressed feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt when comparing themselves to these idealized representations.

Influencers played a central role in shaping users' perceptions and self-comparisons. Participants expressed admiration for influencers' lifestyles but also acknowledged the pressure to live up to these unrealistic standards, leading to feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy.

Participants described various coping mechanisms to manage feelings of self-doubt, including limiting exposure to triggering content, seeking social support, and cultivating self-compassion. Digital literacy emerged as a key factor in mitigating the negative effects of Instagram use, with users learning to critically evaluate and contextualize the content they consume.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a nuanced understanding of the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt. While quantitative analysis reveals overarching trends and associations, qualitative insights offer deeper insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions of users. Together, these findings highlight the multidimensional nature of self-doubt in the context of social media use, emphasizing the importance of considering both individual behaviors and broader socio-cultural factors.

The research findings have significant implications for promoting positive mental health in the digital age. Strategies for fostering digital literacy, cultivating self-compassion, and promoting authentic self-expression on social media can help mitigate the negative effects of Instagram content on self-doubt. Additionally, interventions aimed at reducing the pressure to conform to idealized standards and promoting a culture of self-acceptance and resilience are essential for promoting well-being in online environments.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Consistency with Previous Research

The findings of the study both align with and extend upon previous research on the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt. The positive correlation between frequency of Instagram use and levels of self-doubt is consistent with previous studies (Vogel et al., 2014; Fardouly et al., 2015). This reaffirms the notion that increased exposure to social media content, particularly on visually oriented platforms like Instagram, can contribute to heightened levels of self-doubt among users.

The finding that certain types of Instagram content, such as idealized lifestyles and glamorous imagery, are associated with increased self-doubt corroborates findings from prior research (Perloff, 2014; De Vries et al., 2017). This suggests that the presentation of unrealistic standards and aspirational lifestyles on social media platforms can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among users.

Consistent with existing literature (Huang, 2017), the study found that social comparison tendencies on Instagram significantly predict self-doubt levels. This underscores the importance of considering users' propensity for comparing themselves to others' idealized representations in understanding the psychological effects of social media use.

While previous research has identified the negative impact of Instagram content on self-doubt, this study extends the literature by exploring coping mechanisms employed by users to mitigate these effects. By identifying strategies such as limiting exposure to triggering content and cultivating digital literacy, the study offers practical insights for promoting resilience and well-being in online environments.

The qualitative exploration of users' perceptions of Instagram content as a curated, idealized version of reality adds nuance to existing literature. While previous research has focused on the detrimental effects of idealized content, this study highlights the subjective nature of users' interpretations and the role of perceived authenticity in shaping self-doubt.

Contrary to some prior studies (Lup et al., 2015), which suggest that active engagement on social media platforms can mitigate negative effects, this study found that even active users may experience heightened levels of self-doubt. This contradiction highlights the need for further investigation into the mechanisms through which different forms of engagement influence psychological outcomes.

##### 4.2 Practical Implications for Social Media Users, Mental Health Professionals, and Policymakers

The findings of the study hold significant practical implications for various stakeholders involved in promoting positive mental health in the digital age. Social media users should cultivate digital literacy skills to critically evaluate and contextualize the content they consume. By recognizing the curated nature of social media platforms like Instagram, users can mitigate the negative effects of idealized content on self-perception and self-doubt.

Users are encouraged to set boundaries and limit their exposure to triggering content that exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. This may involve unfollowing accounts that promote unrealistic standards and actively curating their social media feeds to prioritize content that aligns with their values and interests.

Building authentic connections and seeking social support from trusted friends and family members can provide a buffer against the negative effects of social media on mental

health. Engaging in meaningful offline activities and nurturing real-life relationships can foster a sense of belonging and validation independent of online validation. Mental health professionals should incorporate discussions about social media use and its impact on self-esteem and self-doubt into their treatment plans. By addressing these issues proactively, therapists can empower clients with coping strategies and resilience-building techniques to navigate online environments more effectively. Mental health professionals can offer digital literacy education to help clients develop critical thinking skills and media literacy competencies. By educating individuals about the persuasive techniques and idealized portrayals prevalent on social media platforms, therapists can empower clients to maintain a healthy perspective and reduce vulnerability to negative influences. Therapists can support clients in developing coping mechanisms and resilience strategies to manage feelings of self-doubt triggered by social media use. Techniques such as mindfulness, self-compassion, and cognitive restructuring can help individuals challenge negative self-perceptions and build emotional resilience in the face of online pressures.

Policymakers should prioritize digital well-being initiatives aimed at promoting positive online experiences and mitigating the negative impacts of social media on mental health. This may involve partnering with tech companies to implement features that promote healthy usage habits, such as time management tools and content moderation algorithms. Policymakers can advocate for the integration of media literacy programs into school curricula to equip young people with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the digital landscape safely and responsibly. By teaching students how to critically analyze media messages and recognize online manipulation tactics, policymakers can empower the next generation to become savvy digital citizens. Regulatory measures should be implemented to address the proliferation of idealized and harmful content on social media platforms. Policymakers can work with industry stakeholders to establish content standards and advertising guidelines that prioritize user well-being and discourage the promotion of unrealistic beauty standards and lifestyles.

#### *4.3 Limitations of the Study*

While the study aimed to comprehensively investigate the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. These limitations may affect the validity, generalizability, and applicability of the results, and they warrant acknowledgment to ensure a nuanced understanding of the research.

The study's sample may not be fully representative of the broader population of Instagram users. Participants were primarily recruited through online channels and university settings, which may have led to an overrepresentation of younger, more educated individuals with greater access to technology. This limits the generalizability of the findings to more diverse demographic groups, including older adults, individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with varying levels of digital literacy.

The reliance on self-report measures, such as surveys and interviews, introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. Participants may have provided responses that they deemed socially acceptable or that aligned with perceived societal norms, rather than accurately reflecting their true thoughts, behaviors, and experiences. This bias could affect the validity of the data, particularly regarding sensitive topics like self-doubt and social comparison tendencies.

The constructs of interest, such as self-doubt and social comparison tendencies, are complex and inherently subjective. While efforts were made to use validated scales and standardized measures, variations in interpretation and understanding among participants may have influenced the reliability and validity of the results. Additionally, the use of single-item measures or subjective ratings may lack the precision and depth necessary to fully capture these nuanced constructs.

The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. While statistical associations were identified between Instagram use, content consumption, and self-doubt, the directionality of these relationships remains unclear. Longitudinal or experimental designs would be needed to elucidate temporal and causal dynamics, allowing for stronger inferences about the impact of Instagram content on self-doubt over time.

Qualitative data analysis involves subjective interpretation and judgment, which introduces the potential for researcher bias or overlooks certain perspectives. Despite efforts to enhance rigor through techniques such as coding reliability checks and member checking, alternative interpretations of the qualitative findings may exist. Additionally, the generalizability of qualitative findings may be limited by the specific context and characteristics of the study sample.

The study did not account for various external factors that may influence participants' Instagram use and self-doubt levels. Factors such as current events, personal life circumstances, or changes in social media algorithms could confound the results and limit the study's ability to isolate the effects of Instagram content on self-doubt. Future research should consider these external influences to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

## 5. Conclusions

The investigation into the influence of Instagram content on self-doubt has yielded valuable insights into the complex interplay between social media use and psychological well-being. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study explored the relationships between Instagram usage patterns, content consumption, and levels of self-doubt among users. The findings shed light on the nuanced dynamics shaping individuals' perceptions, behaviors, and emotions in the digital age. Quantitative analysis revealed a positive correlation between frequency of Instagram use and levels of self-doubt, highlighting the potential impact of prolonged exposure to social media content on mental health. Certain types of content, such as idealized lifestyles and glamorous imagery, were found to be particularly influential in exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among users. Additionally, social comparison tendencies emerged as a significant predictor of self-doubt, underscoring the importance of understanding users' motivations and interactions on social media platforms. Qualitative insights provided deeper understanding of users' subjective experiences and coping mechanisms in response to Instagram content. Participants described strategies for managing self-doubt, including limiting exposure to triggering content, seeking social support, and cultivating digital literacy skills. These findings underscore the importance of fostering resilience and self-compassion in navigating the pressures of online environments.

## References

- Allen, S. N. (2015). *Adolescents, social media, and the use of self-portraiture in identity formation*.
- Barry, C. T., Sidoti, C. L., Briggs, S. M., Reiter, S. R., & Lindsey, R. A. (2017). Adolescent social media use and mental health from adolescent and parent perspectives. *Journal of Adolescence*, 61, 1–11.
- Birnbak, A., & Carlsen, H. (2016). The world of Edgerank: Rhetorical justifications of Facebook's News Feed algorithm. *Computational Culture* (5), *Special Issue on Rhetoric and Computation*.
- Chiang, A. L. (2021). Navigating and Leveraging Social Media. *Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Clinics*, 31(4), 695–707.
- Deldjoo, Y., Schedl, M., Cremonesi, P., & Pasi, G. (2020). Recommender systems leveraging multimedia content. *ACM Computing Surveys (CSUR)*, 53(5), 1–38.
- Faelens, L., Hoorelbeke, K., Cambier, R., Van Put, J., Van de Putte, E., De Raedt, R., & Koster, E. H. W. (2021). The relationship between Instagram use and indicators of mental health: A systematic review. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 4, 100121.
- Ford, E., & Jakobsson, F. (2017). *Instagram perceptions and coherent impressions: an exploratory study regarding perceptions of personal brands*.

- Freedman, G., Green, M. C., Flanagan, M., Fitzgerald, K., & Kaufman, G. (2018). The effect of gender on attributions for women's anxiety and doubt in a science narrative. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 42(2), 178–191.
- Hewitt, P. L., Flett, G. L., Mikail, S. F., Kealy, D., & Zhang, L. C. (2017). Perfectionism in the therapeutic context: The perfectionism social disconnection model. In *The psychology of perfectionism* (pp. 306–330). Routledge.
- Iacus, S. M., & Porro, G. (2021). *Subjective well-being and social media*. Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Jaakonmäki, R., Müller, O., & Vom Brocke, J. (2017). The impact of content, context, and creator on user engagement in social media marketing. *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 50, 1152–1160.
- Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567–579.
- Kite, L., & Kite, L. (2020). *More than a body: Your body is an instrument, not an ornament*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Leaver, T., Highfield, T., & Abidin, C. (2020). *Instagram: Visual social media cultures*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lup, K., Trub, L., & Rosenthal, L. (2015). Instagram# instasad?: exploring associations among instagram use, depressive symptoms, negative social comparison, and strangers followed. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(5), 247–252.
- McFarland, L. A., & Ployhart, R. E. (2015). Social media: A contextual framework to guide research and practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(6), 1653.
- Medway, F. J., Cafferty, T. P., & Medway, F. (2013). *School psychology: A social psychological perspective*. Routledge.
- Meier, A., & Schäfer, S. (2018). The positive side of social comparison on social network sites: How envy can drive inspiration on Instagram. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(7), 411–417.
- Nguyen, A. J. (2014). *Exploring the selfie phenomenon: the idea of self-preservation and its implications among young women*.
- Ormerod, K. (2018). *Why social media is ruining your life*. Hachette UK.
- Orth, O. (2016). *Presentation of selfie: a modern understanding of Goffman's self on Instagram*.
- Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex Roles*, 71, 363–377.
- Rusu, M. (2019). The process of self-realization—From the humanist psychology perspective. *Psychology*, 10(8), 1095–1115.
- Sosa-Tzec, O. (2019). Design tensions: interaction criticism on Instagram's mobile interface. *Proceedings of the 37th ACM International Conference on the Design of Communication*, 1–10.
- Torous, J., Bucci, S., Bell, I. H., Kessing, L. V., Faurholt-Jepsen, M., Whelan, P., Carvalho, A. F., Keshavan, M., Linardon, J., & Firth, J. (2021). The growing field of digital psychiatry: current evidence and the future of apps, social media, chatbots, and virtual reality. *World Psychiatry*, 20(3), 318–335.
- Wheeler, L., & Miyake, K. (1992). Social comparison in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62(5), 760.