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ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF INSTAGRAM ON BODY IMAGE AND EATING
DISORDERS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

ELLIE CUOCO
SPRING 2022

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submitted in partial fulfillment
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Abstract

Throughout the past decade, as social media begins to grow in popularity, individuals' mental health is being sacrificed. Therefore, providing others with the knowledge of the effects will tend to decrease these numbers. The purpose of this paper is to delve into the link between Instagram and body image and eating disorders in young adolescents. Women are more likely to suffer body dissatisfaction and develop an eating disorder when encountering Instagram body ideals. Implementing lesson plans, including parents, and engaging school personnel is an excellent way to start the conversation and address adolescent body dissatisfaction to counter the known negative effects of social media usage. The implications of this research blend education and psychology with the idea that providing others with knowledge can decrease the mental health struggles of adolescent females.

Keywords: *Instagram, mental health, body image, eating disorders, fitspiration*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every day, around 55 million photographs are uploaded to Instagram. Social media has become ingrained in our daily lives with the majority of people spending hours going through Instagram photos. Instagram was created in October 2010 and has swiftly grown in popularity, with 1 million users in the first two months of its inception (Hu & Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). Many Instagram users have been able to interact with others and build relationships because of the social media site. The main draw of Instagram is the ability to share photographs and videos with one's followers. Many users of this software praise the photo's quality, which can be edited within the application as well as body-altering application prior to posting an image. Because of the attraction of this application, likes are also a component of the attraction. Users flock to this social media network because of the massive amount of exposure they may get by using hashtags, following others, and remaining active. Maintaining an active presence on this network leads to an increase in followers and engagement on one's posts. In general, Instagram is a highly engaging social media site that encourages users to stay connected and attached to the application.

Statement of the Problem:

Social media is a well-known internet-based form of communication. For most individuals, the opportunity to share highlights from reality and start interactions with other app users makes it extremely fascinating and addictive. It is simple to make comparisons when images of idealized self-presentation are featured on one's page. Therefore, many researchers have found that utilizing social media negatively affects individuals' psychological well-being. Since Instagram is bottomless, it produces a never-ending stream that users may scroll through. As a result, increasing social media usage will exacerbate the known negative repercussions.

Most of the literature on the subject focuses on the effects of social media on girls. However, the impact of social media on men is mostly ignored in the literature. One reason for this discrepancy in research participants is women are more susceptible to the impact of social comparison. My research aims to learn more about the detrimental effects of social media, particularly Instagram, on body image and eating disorders in young adolescent females. Due to the widespread use of social media among all generations, this fundamental societal issue is pertinent. With the increased usage of social media, it is projected that this will only get worse over time. As a result, many adolescents' psychological well-being has deteriorated. Subsequently, this topic is so important today; that there has been a high quantity of studies done to substantiate the negative link between social media and well-being. This work will build on past research and attempt to fill in some gaps in the literature, as well as provide education-focused suggestions to decrease the impact of this crisis on adolescent females.

Significance of the Research Question:

As social media is still growing in popularity, there is no indication that individuals' well-being will improve without intervention. It is well known that adolescents are gaining access to social networking sites at a younger age, with the resulting consequences. As a result, it is critical for all social media users to comprehend the repercussions of being on social media. This work focuses on adolescent girls, who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of social media. Although everyone is affected, it is widely known that girls are at a higher risk. Young women who are active on social media sites, as well as parents who need to monitor their children's use of social media, need awareness of this issue. Because of this common problem, therapists should be aware as well. Therapists must have a thorough awareness of the issues that affect their patients. Because all social media users are in danger of being harmed by social

media, understanding the repercussions of their activities should encourage users to be more thoughtful when sharing and viewing images.

Understanding the effects of social media will raise awareness of the issue and, ideally, lead to a reduction in social media usage among younger users. Also, obtaining an education on the negative impact of social media use can make users conscious of the problem and help them reflect and consider the impact of the images on their mental health. This research will highlight the negative impact of Instagram on body image and help improve the psychological well-being of others. By expanding the information available on social media, this knowledge will contribute to the advancement of the psychology area. With the goal of filling in the gaps in knowledge on social media and men, this study will demonstrate a new perspective on how social media should be used and understood by both genders.

Research Problem and Research Question:

The goal of this research is to see the relationship between Instagram and body image and eating disorders among young adolescent girls. This knowledge will benefit Instagram's active users, such as girls who utilize the service to keep connected. This research aims to the following research question:

- What impact does Instagram have on body image and eating disorders on young adolescent girls?

Theoretical Framework:

Researchers frequently employ the Social Comparison Theory to examine how people rate themselves in comparison to others. In 1954, Leon Festinger proposed the Social Comparison Theory as the psychology field learned more about other people's social conduct.

On the matter, he came up with nine different hypotheses. In the *Journal of Human Relations*, Leon Festinger presented his first journal article on Social Comparison Theory.

The first hypothesis is that “there exists, in the human organism, a drive to evaluate his opinions and his abilities” (p. 117). This hypothesis focused on how opinions and abilities appear to be linked. “A person's cognition about the situation in which he exists and his appraisals of what he is capable of doing (his evaluation of his abilities) will together have bearing on his behavior” (Festinger, 1954, p. 117). As a result, most people’s assessment of their own abilities will be based on the assessments of others.

The second hypothesis was that “to the extent that objective, non-social means are not available people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others” (p. 118). He claimed in this theory that objective opinions and physical abilities are unavailable for evaluation, but subjective judgments of opinions and talents are dependent on how one compares to others. They arose from investigations based on "levels of aspiration"(p.119). These studies investigate the volatility of ability ratings in the absence of comparison with others. These comparisons will determine whether the person considers something to be good.

The third hypothesis is “the tendency to compare oneself with some other specific person decreases as the difference between his opinion or ability and one's own increases” (p.120). This notion is based on comparing and evaluating one's own abilities against those of others. To make an accurate comparison, the other person's position must be within a reasonable range of their own, either ahead or behind.

The fourth hypothesis “there is a unidirectional drive upward in the case of abilities which is largely absent in opinions” (p.124). Upward social comparison occurs when individuals

“compare themselves with people who are more capable than or superior to oneself, giving the individual motivation for self-enhancement” (Lee, 2020, p. 2). Individuals would seek out others who perform better than themselves as inspiration to perform better. As a result, others are forced to compete for their consent.

The fifth hypothesis explains that “there are non-social restraints which make it difficult or even impossible to change one's ability. These non-social restraints are largely absent for opinions” (p.125). This is a statement concerning a person's inability to change. Even though the individual believes they should, they are unable to do it. Festinger (1954) gives the example of someone's ability to run faster or be more intelligent. Even though an individual may be motivated to achieve these changes, several obstacles stand in the way.

The sixth hypothesis in Festinger's theory is that “the cessation (end) of comparison with others is accompanied by hostility or derogation to the extent that continued comparison with those persons implies unpleasant consequences” (p.129). This is related to the dread of being rejected by a group. Returning to the earlier notion of unidirectional upward drive, rejection can result in individuals being dismissed because of their inability to conform to the norms of the group.

The seventh hypothesis is that “any factors which increase the importance of some particular group as a comparison group for some particular opinion or ability, will increase the pressure toward uniformity concerning that opinion within that group” (p.130). Meaning, if an individual's viewpoint or ability is unimportant to them, there will be no reason to evaluate them. However, the more significant the person's opinion or ability is to them, the more driven they will be to change.

The eighth hypothesis states that “if persons who are very divergent from one's own opinion or ability are perceived as different from oneself on attributes consistent with the divergence, the tendency to narrow the range of comparability becomes stronger” (p.133). Previous research has shown that when people know that someone's ability in a group is considerably better than others, they stop comparing themselves to that person.

The final hypothesis states,

When there is a range of opinion or ability in a group, the relative strength of the three manifestations of pressures toward uniformity will be different for those who are close to the mode of the group than those who are distant from the mode. Specifically, those close to the mode of the group will have stronger tendencies to change the positions of others. Relatively weaker tendencies to narrow the range of comparison and much weaker tendencies to change their own position compared to those who are distant from the mode of the group. (p.133)

Like the last hypothesis, there was also evidence supporting this hypothesis already. In previous studies, Festinger and colleagues formed a group in which some people were led to believe that much of the group agreed with them, while others disagreed. Individuals who held opposing viewpoints communicated less than those who held similar viewpoints, according to him.

Moving forward, Thomas Wills (1981) improved on Leon Festinger's social comparison theory. He added a downward social comparison to the idea to make it more complete. He hypothesized that “persons can increase their subjective wellbeing through comparison with a less fortunate other” (Wills, 1981, p. 245). This involves social comparisons with those who are in worse situations. He claims that this is the more favorable comparison among others because it makes the individual feel better about their own circumstances. The idea that *I am better off than*

someone else offers a person comfort in knowing that they are not the worst in the group. When it comes to Wills' idea, he feels that people will use it as a "scapegoat" for their own problems. As a result, those with poor self-esteem are more inclined to engage in downward social comparison. The primary premise of this idea is that it will improve the well-being of those who are subjected to it. As a result, the bulk of those who would be targeted by this comparison would be of lower social rank.

In the subject of social psychology, the social comparison theory is a well-known theory. For decades, social comparison theory has been discussed in psychology journals. While more studies have been done since Festinger's work, the theory's foundation has not changed. The consequences of social comparison on an individual's mental health have been studied recently. In a study done in 2020, Jim Kyun Lee discovered that users of social networking sites (SNSs) spent an average of 82 minutes on SNSs in 2020, compared to 76 minutes in 2019 (Lee, 2020). It is commonly recognized that spending a substantial amount of time on social networking sites can have a negative impact on one's mental health (Lee, 2020). As a result, social comparison becomes increasingly common throughout the day.

My research is focusing on the relationship between Instagram and teenage girls' body image and eating disorders, and this idea is relevant to my present research. This theory aids in the connection of the various factors in the existing literature. The social comparison theory is used to explain why Instagram has such a negative impact on young girls. Most of the studies on this theory focus on how people perceive themselves. By incorporating this theory into research, it opens a discussion on why people compare themselves to others and the consequences of doing so. Since Instagram is primarily used to share images, it is unavoidable that users will compare themselves to others. My study will delve into the intricacies of the impact of Instagram

and social comparison theory on the self-esteem and body image of young females. Due to the prevalence of social comparison in today's culture and on social media, examining how they align with one another will yield an increase in knowledge that can be used to combat the problem.

Positionality Statement:

My overall identity and inherent biases are essential to unpack to ensure candidness with the research process. My research question examines the relationship between Instagram and young adolescent girls' body image and eating disorders. From my personal experience as an active social media user, I can attest to the way social media has a great effect on adolescents' perception of their self-image. For example, individuals I follow perpetuate the idealization of female beauty, which can be damaging to young women, especially since these posts are often shared multiple times a day.

As a twenty-one-year-old female who has grown up with a social media presence during prominent years of my maturation, I have personally encountered the challenges discussed in the literature. The challenges inherent in social media, with the posting of 'body idealized' images, have impacted how frequently and how intentionally I use social media daily. Growing up with these types of social media platforms, unhealthy depictions of the ideal female body have been normalized. I acknowledge that one aspect of my positionality is that I believe that female Instagram users often use the platform to portray an idealized and unattainable body image, and I believe this has negative repercussions for female mental health. Additionally, as part of my positionality, I can acknowledge that I, too, am guilty of being caught up in social media, so I understand the allure of the application for young women.

Currently, I also believe that social media has a greater effect on women than men. Women encounter and are more receptive to what they see on social media. From experience, I believe this to be true. I believe that young women are more likely to develop body image difficulties than men based on their Instagram usage. In my opinion, the Instagram feed negatively influences women based on individuals they follow, individuals they search for, and individuals the platform recommends to them. My gender is key to my positionality; however, while I can empathize with the experiences of women, I acknowledge I do not understand how the platform is experienced by men. I am aware that my bias limits my perspective on how men perceive social media and the effects it has on their body image.

As I have grown older, I have become more aware of my inherent biases and how they alter and can limit my research. I present this positionality statement to maintain an open mind while researching despite any prior beliefs I may have had on this topic and the experiences I have had with Instagram. As someone who is passionate about mental health in adolescents, I will not have my perceptions of social media impact the research I will present.

Key Terminology

Body Dissatisfaction: individuals having negative thoughts and feelings about their bodies.

Body Image: “a combination of the thoughts and feelings that you have about your body. Body image may range between positive and negative experiences, and one person may feel at different times positive or negative or a combination of both. Body image is influenced by internal (e.g. personality) and external (e.g. social environment) factors” (NEDC, NA)

Eating Disorders: “fatal illnesses that are associated with severe disturbances in people’s eating behaviors and related thoughts and emotions. Preoccupation with food, body weight, and shape” (NIMH, 2021).

Fitspiration: current trend of the early 21st century on social media where images of women's bodies images are "designed to motivate people to exercise and pursue a healthier lifestyle"

(Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015)

Instagram: social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos to followers.

Orthorexia Nervosa: an eating disorder that involves an unhealthy obsession with proper eating (Turner & Lefevre, 2016).

Social Comparison: individuals evaluate their own appearance by comparing themselves with the sociocultural thin ideals of beauty presented in the media (Festinger, 1954)

Conclusion:

The overall goal of this research is to investigate the link between Instagram and body image and eating disorders in young adolescent girls. I believe that the findings will pique the curiosity of not only young adolescent girls but also all social media users. My research will be focused on social comparison theory, which examines how people assess their personal worth by comparing themselves to others. In view of that, social media users frequently compare themselves to others, focusing on looks, talent, and popularity.

This research will investigate the relationship between Instagram and body image. This will add to the corpus of evidence on the impact of social media platforms on people's attitudes toward their bodies. Instagram and disordered eating are other concepts that will be connected. By connecting these components, the detrimental effects of appearance-based social comparison will be seen. Additionally, fitspiration has become increasingly popular in recent years, and this research will relate to the negative impacts on young adolescent girls. In the final analysis, this research will fill in some gaps about how Instagram affects men as well. Ultimately, this work

will result in educationally focused implications designed to target the mental health crisis participated by social media use.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This research will examine the relationship between Instagram and body image and eating disorders among young adolescent girls. The importance of looking into this association for today's youth cannot be overstated. The purpose of this research is to spread knowledge about the consequences of social media usage on individuals' well-being. Many people are unaware that social media has a significant impact on their mental health. As a result of this research, I will provide valuable recommendations to combat the consequences of using social media.

This research will concentrate on the many effects of social media on adolescents. First, the research will investigate the relationship between Instagram and body image. Then a connection will be established between Instagram and eating disorders. Next, the research will examine the topic of fitspiration and how it affects the well-being of adolescents. Finally, I will attempt to fill in the gaps about the effects of Instagram on men. Chapter three will detail the negative implications of social media on individual well-being and provide recommendations for parents and therapists seeking to help adolescents navigate using technology.

Instagram and Body Image

In the last few years, a lot of studies have been done on the effects of social media on the mental health of inactive users. More specifically, this research discussed the effects of Instagram on adolescent girls' body image. A quantitative study by Brown and Salomon (2019) “revealed 89% of U.S. teens reported using at least one social media platform, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Google+, or Tumblr, and almost one in four reports being online almost constantly” (p. 541). Since the majority of teenagers use social media on a regular basis, their well-being will be considered.

Sexualizing Instagram Photos

While Instagram is essentially a photo-sharing app, the images posted on it depict sexualized female bodies. As a result, young women's body image worries are on the rise (Guizzo, Canale, Fasoli, 2020). Young ladies have an unattainable objective due to these distorted ideas of the *beautiful* physique. With the rise in Instagram usage, negative body image implications are associated with not resembling idealized female forms.

In a correlational study conducted by Skowronski, Busching, and Krahe (2022), the researchers studied the association “between adolescents’ use of sexualized Instagram images and body image concerns.” Three separate sexualized photos of women were displayed to the 313 participants, all taken from public Instagram profiles. After each photo, the participants were asked to rate using a Likert scale from 1 (= never) to 5 (= very often) on how often they see similar photos on their Instagram feed, the “extent to which they strive toward appearance ideals” (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), the importance of the 10 body attributes (i.e. weight, physical fitness, etc.) (1= not at all important to 10= very important), a scale consisting of 11 items about body surveillance (i.e. I think about how I look many times) (1= strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree), “how often they check Instagram on an average day” (1= not at all to 7= more than 20 times), and how much time they spend on Instagram (1= no time at all to 7= 4 hours or more). The study discovered that girls outperformed boys across the board. Sexualized Instagram images were linked to thin-ideal internalization and the increased value of appearance in the young ladies who took part in the study. As a result, sexualized and idealized images have a negative impact on adolescent body image.

Guizzo, Canale, and Fasoli (2021) used 247 young females in a qualitative study to see if exposure to sexualized (vs. non-sexualized) images affects body dissatisfaction and cosmetic surgery intentions. To compare results, participants took a pretest and a posttest. Researchers

found that participants who were exposed to sexualized Instagram photos reported more body dissatisfaction than those who were exposed to non-sexualized images. Regarding cosmetic surgery intentions, there was no significant effect. Therefore, the results found viewing sexualized Instagram images has a negative effect on body image and body dissatisfaction.

The Idealized Female Body; Body Dissatisfaction and Surveillance

Slim ideals and photo-edited images are the types of female idealized bodies that are coveted (Guizzo, Canale, Fasoli, 2020). These photos are scrutinized from appearance-based perspectives, and while these images increase body image concerns, they also correspond with body dissatisfaction. When watching a series of photographs of women with idealized bodies, body dissatisfaction is prevalent.

McComb and Mills (2021) did a qualitative investigation to see if exposure to idealized images of young women causes appearance-based social comparison. They expected in this study that women who compare themselves to idealized body images will have a higher level of concern about their physical appearance, as well as a higher level of appearance and weight dissatisfaction, and a lower level of confidence. The majority of the participants had an upwards appearance when compared to idealized body pictures, which resulted in greater weight and appearance dissatisfaction, as well as a drop in confidence. When young women compare themselves to others who are deemed "idealized," they believe their own bodies to be inferior.

Betz, Sabik, and Ramsey (2019) did a qualitative study to see how different body ideals affect women's body image (thin, athletic, and curvy). The researchers gave each of the 200 participants a survey to fill out, which included questions like "real women have a thigh gap" (p. 102), "real women have curves" (p.102), "real women have muscles," and "there is no wrong way to have a body" (p.102) for the control condition. The survey used a Likert scale that varied

depending on the situation that the participants were given. The findings revealed that all three body ideals had a stronger impact on body surveillance, with the curvaceous ideal condition having the most impact on body surveillance. Any exposure to all three body ideals, on the other hand, resulted in a rise in social comparison. This led to a decrease in body appreciation and body esteem. Like past research, the thin ideal was consistent in creating body dissatisfaction when engaging in social comparison.

“Selfie”!

"Selfies" are one of the types of photographs that users will view on their Instagram feed. Selfies are photographs of oneself taken using a smartphone. This new term emerged and has grown in popularity in tandem with the rise of Instagram. However, Instagram is a newer social networking platform, and the term “selfie” is new as well; therefore, there is limited research on the correlation between selfies and body image and body dissatisfaction.

Grogan, Rothery, Cole, and Hall (2018) used in-depth interviews with self-described selfie posters in a qualitative study to better understand the young women's experience of taking selfies on social media. The individuals were continually pursuing the *perfect look*, according to their findings. Some women are self-conscious about their looks and body image, which causes them to continually scrutinize their flaws (i.e weight, shape, tone). Finding accurate information on this issue is difficult. As a result, the researchers tried to fill the gap between selfies and body image.

A qualitative study conducted by Mills, Musto, Williams, and Tiggemann (2018) investigated the impact of selfie-taking on women's body image and mood. They expected that people who uploaded selfies to their social media profiles would have a lower mood and be more self-conscious about their bodies than the control group. The study looked at three different

scenarios: retouched selfies, untouched selfies, and a control condition. Participants were instructed to snap a selfie, and in the retouch condition, they were instructed to use a photo editing tool to retouch the shot to their satisfaction. Participants in the untouched and control groups were asked to take selfies until they were satisfied. Written questions were also given to the control condition. Anxiety levels increased in all three circumstances, according to the findings. The individuals in the untouched selfie state showed less confidence than the selfie takers in the other conditions. This indicates that participants were aligned with the hypothesis the researchers predicted.

The Relationship between Instagram and Disordered Eating

Over the last few years, it has become clear that social media has an impact on an individual's overall well-being. Researchers are now investigating how social media contributes to eating disorders among active users. A significant amount of the content that is posted can be labeled as "pro-anorexia." With so many extreme dieting profiles, these posted images will be visible to adolescent girls, which glorify a thin and unrealistic female body image.

Eating Disorders/Orthorexia Nervosa

Restrictive eating habits, obsessive eating behaviors, and irregular or rigid eating patterns are widespread in the population. Individuals with eating disorders might have a wide range of symptoms. Even though eating disorders are ubiquitous, social media increases the risk of developing one. Users of social media photo-sharing apps can compare and idealize others' bodies; this leads to body insecurity and body dissatisfaction (Morris & Katzman, 2003). While some people use social media to interact with others, others use it to shame others into unhealthy eating habits because their physical appearance does not resemble the thin ideal.

Marks, Foe, and Collet (2020) examined social media use, body image, and eating disorders in a literature review. This literature review introduces Orthorexia as an eating disorder defined as a hyper fixation on healthy eating. They discuss the symptoms that overlap with obsessive-compulsive disorder and anorexia nervosa. Marks, Foe, and Collet (2020) emphasized that “of the individuals that have social media, 54 percent use it to discover and share food experiences, and 42 percent use it to seek advice about food” (The Hartman Group, 2012, p. 3). This shows a connection between social media usage and developing an eating disorder. As shown, food is a significant percentage of content on social media, as “over 100 million posts are tagged ‘health,’ 57.8 million posts are tagged ‘eat clean’ and 44.5 million [posts are tagged] ‘clean eating’ on Instagram” (p. 3). On the other hand, orthorexia is not listed in the DSM-5, but researchers have linked so many people to this disorder that it may be severe enough to be classified as a clinical illness.

Turner and Lefevre (2017) conducted a quantitative study investigating the relationship between social media usage and Orthorexia Nervosa symptoms. In a survey of 680 surveyed participants, 49 percent met the orthorexia requirements. This study found that individuals with a higher Instagram usage showed more signs related to orthorexia. In conclusion, they shared a high prevalence in the healthy eating community on Instagram for many participants who developed Orthorexia Nervosa symptoms.

A quantitative study conducted by Wilksch, O’Shea, Ho, Byrne, and Wade (2019) examined the relationship between social media usage and disordered eating in young adolescents. There were 996 participants in the study in grades 7 and 8; 534 were girls, with the average age being 13.08 years old. The researchers gave out multiple surveys to the participants investigating disordered eating and social media usage conditions and behaviors. Girls scored

significantly higher than boys within the cognitions and behaviors of disordered eating. In the survey, 51.7 percent of girls and 45 percent of boys reported having at least one disordered eating behavior. They concluded that disordered eating and “social media usage were significantly associated with each other in adolescent girls and boys.”

Edited Images Are Harmful

Within the Instagram community, editing images to make them look better is not a new concept. It is normal to edit pictures on Instagram. Edited images on Instagram include warping your body so you look smaller, enhancing the colorization in the photo, etc. However, these modified images influence people's perceptions of reality. These edited images impact adolescent users' ideals of body image and put them at risk for eating disorders.

Wick and Keel (2020) conducted a quantitative study investigating the relationship between posting edited photos and eating disorder risk. The researchers administered questionnaires to 2,485 participants in a cross-sectional and experimental study with women accounting for 76 percent of the total participants. Six hundred and sixty participants acknowledged manipulating their images to change their physical appearance before sharing them on Instagram. Of the individuals who edit their photos, women accounted for 33 percent compared to 7 percent of men. The findings revealed that people who shared modified photos had a higher risk of disordered eating than those who did not share modified photos.

Lee-Won, Joo, Baek, Hu, and Park (2020) conducted research and created a quantitative study to investigate the link between self-photo editing and disordered eating. Researchers gathered 396 people who completed a survey based on questions about disordered eating and modified images. Some questions included, “Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?”, “Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?”, “Have you

recently lost more than 14 pounds in three months?”, “Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?”, “Would you say that food dominates your life?” These disordered eating questions were based on a Likert scale: yes (1) or no (0). The findings suggest that self-photo editing can enhance disordered eating via rumination on eating, body shape, and weight.

Fitspiration

In the early 2010s, fitspiration became a well-known trend across all social media platforms. Fitspiration is a term used to describe "fitness inspiration," according to a content analysis by Carrotte, Prichard, and Lim (2017). Social media users use this trend to obtain exercise-related photographs, videos, and material such as exercise suggestions, recipes, and cuisine. Typical content individuals will see with this trend is “before and after ” images where there is an apparent change in the body. Individuals on social media are likely to experience a drop in overall wellbeing as fitspiration grows. Many adolescents turn to social media for health and health behavior norms, leading to body dissatisfaction.

Let’s Get Physical

Getting physical exercise is a well-known activity that helps individuals’ well-being and supports staying in shape. Exercising throughout the week has improved mood (Sharma, Madaan, & Petty, 2006). This is due to increased blood flow to the brain, which activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which controls our stress response. Exercise targets a variety of internal parts of the body such as the limbic system, which controls motivation and mood; the amygdala, which helps regulate emotions, such as fear (i.e., the fight or flight response); and the hippocampus, which plays a significant role in memory formation as well as mood and motivation, all communicate with one another once one part of the brain is activated (Sharma, Madaan, & Petty, 2006). Therefore, exercising helps reduce negative moods and

improves self-esteem and cognitive functioning. Fitspiration has a considerable influence on the fitness community. Fitspiration's effect on teens may be harmful to their physical and emotional health.

The qualitative study by Cataldo, De Luca, Giorgetti, Cicconcelli, Bersani, Imperatori, Abdi, Negri, Esposito, & Corazza (2021) presents evidence relating to the mental health effects of fitspiration. They discovered several problematic behaviors connected with fitspiration users were recorded, such as exercising when sick, fainting, being injured, or feeling guilty when one's fitness schedule is disrupted. Fitspiration-related content encourages people to engage in these problematic activities and pushes them to their limits. They suggest that experiencing pain is viewed as a different sort of satisfaction and pleasure. According to the data, women who shared fitspiration photographs had considerably higher ratings on compulsive exercise behaviors, which can be another form of addiction. Fitspiration content uploads relating to athletic and muscular fitness-idealized images have been shown to cause more body dissatisfaction than displaying slim ideal body images (Prichard et al., 2018). Women's body dissatisfaction has also been linked to a negative or depressed attitude about their bodies. Restrictive eating and calorie counting are two eating behaviors related to fitspiration posts, both of which can lead to insufficient nutrition and, as a result, deterioration in everyday functioning.

McComb and Mills (2022) did a study to add to the body of knowledge about women's body image and how the curvy ideal affects it. There were 402 female participants in this study who were asked questions before and after seeing visuals linked to the condition. Participants who compared themselves to slim-thick images reported higher weight and appearance dissatisfaction and lower body satisfaction than those who compared themselves to thin-ideal imagery. They had four different hypotheses related to body image. The first hypothesis was

that “instruction to engage in social comparison to any of the three body ideals would result in increased weight and appearance dissatisfaction and lowered overall body satisfaction, relative to the control condition” (p.168). The second hypothesis was “the combined effect of instructed social comparison, and to the thin and slim, thick ideals would result in greater weight and appearance dissatisfaction and lowered overall body satisfaction. Relative to the fit ideal condition” (p.168). The third hypothesis was “instructed social comparison to the slim, thick ideal would result in greater weight and appearance dissatisfaction and lowered overall body satisfaction, relative to the thin ideal condition” (p.168). The last hypothesis was “those who were high on physical appearance perfectionism (on either domain) would experience worsened body image following instructed comparison to any of the three body ideals, relative to those who were low on the physical appearance perfectionism” (p.168).

The impact of exposure to fitspiration photos on women's body image has been studied by Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015). They predicted that “exposure to fitspiration images would result in greater body dissatisfaction and lower state appearance self-esteem than exposure to a set of control images” (p.63). The selected control images were travel pictures, another trend on Instagram commonly associated with nature. A set of fitspiration photos was presented to the 130 female participants as well as a collection of travel-related images comprised of landscapes, monuments, buildings, and people. After being exposed to the photographs, they were given a questionnaire that asked about social networking use, mood and body dissatisfaction, “self-esteem, inspirational goals, state appearance comparison, and trait appearance comparison” (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). The average amount of time spent on social media every day varied between 10 and 30 minutes for the individuals. Compared to travel photographs, the results showed that exposure to fitspiration images promotes body dissatisfaction and lowers

overall appearance and self-esteem. Even though fitspiration has a negative impact, there was a good link between travel and fitspiration and general inspiration.

In an experimental design, Robinson, Prichard, Nikolaidis, Drummond, Drummond, and Tiggemann (2017) investigated the impact of athletic and muscular fitness idealized images against traditional thin idealized pictures on women's body dissatisfaction and exercise activity. There were three sets of 15 photos, each with a distinct racial background, a range of activities, and physical attractiveness ratings. Compared to ideal muscular images, exposure to idealized media images that emphasized thinness, such as athletic and slim outstanding images, had a detrimental influence on body dissatisfaction. The muscular ideal resulted in the most dissatisfaction with one's body.

Holland and Tiggemann (2017) looked at disordered eating and obsessive exercise in women who use Instagram to share their fitness goals (fitspiration). They gathered 101 women who post fitspiration and 102 women who post travel photographs on Instagram as participants. The researchers used existing scales and questionnaires to assess the possibility of disordered eating and compulsive eating. The results found that women who posted fitspiration on Instagram scored higher on disordered eating, drive for muscularity, and compulsive exercise (Holland and Tiggemann, 2017). Overall, there is a higher significance between women posting fitspiration and disordered eating and compulsive eating, potentially damaging their mental and physical health.

Instagram and Men

Many studies on social media and its effects on teenagers have focused on adolescent girls. With this gap in the literature, it is difficult to say whether the same results can be transferred to adolescent boys. Men have idealized images and struggle to mirror unattainable

body goals like women. These impossible standards for men's body image result in harmful effects. Men's idealized body image is muscular and slender. Thus, individuals who cannot achieve this preferred picture may experience body dissatisfaction (Guitzow, Guidry, Schneider, & Hoving, 2020). One of the leading causes of male body dissatisfaction is social media, which contributes to the mental health effects.

Tiggemann and Anderberg (2020) conducted a quantitative study focused on image type (fashion, inspiration, scenery) on men's bodies and faced pleasure and appearance comparisons. There were 284 participants in this study who were shown 14 photos of men. The first group consisted of individuals with a substantial Instagram following and male models. The male models were deemed to have the idealized body; muscular and slender. Fashion, fitspiration, and scenery were the three categories of photographs displayed. After presenting a collection of pictures, the participants were asked a series of questions assessed on a Likert scale. Men would have to score the person in the photo on attractiveness, having a decent figure, stylishness, and muscularity, with one being the least appealing and five being the most attractive. According to the findings, only bare-chested fitspiration photographs resulted in poorer body satisfaction. The same men in the photo but with clothes on, on the other hand, did not affect body satisfaction.

A qualitative study led by Chatzopoulou, Filieri, and Dogruyol (2020) investigates how exposure to fitness hashtags impacts male Instagram users' opinions of body image and behavior. They used in-depth interviews in this study, and the discussions were graded on levels of engagement. Low body involvement was linked to a desire to get an "instabod" and engage in the body change. According to the findings, the participants' desire to mimic their lifestyle and body image is influenced by their positive attitude toward Instagram and fitness trends. Even though studies have shown that the willingness to adhere to an ideal body image may make

males feel worse about their bodies, men desire an increased body image engagement. This leads to increasing body image engagement levels to achieve the desired and preferred body image.

Paulson (2020) did an exploratory study to investigate the effects of exposure on male ideal body image, body satisfaction, drive for muscularity, and body composition. To obtain these looks, men struggle with the social pressure to look a certain way. Men with objectifying traits (big chests, washboard abs, etc.) were shown to the participants, who were then asked to rate whether they met the ideal body image for men on a Likert scale. The findings revealed that males shown photographs of the perfect male form scored lower on appearance satisfaction than those shown neutral photos.

A quantitative study led by Casale, Gemelli, Calosi, Giangrasso, and Fioravanti (2021) investigated the impact of exposure to appearance-focused images on body image. To see the effect of the photographs on the participants, this study decided to use a pre/post-test. The participants were asked to judge the person's attractiveness in the picture after they were shown the images. According to these findings, there were no significant differences in body dissatisfaction between the pre-and post-tests (Casale et. al., 2021).

Summary

The effects that accompany active users on social media will persist as it becomes more dominant in our lives. Instagram allows users to scroll through their feed, which includes friends, models, cuisine, and workout accounts, among other things. These types of accounts instigate the effects to occur. According to studies, gazing at models or others with idealized bodies cause body dissatisfaction in many people. This is due to the unrealistic body images that are promoted on social media. These impacts will only get worse as changed and manipulated images become more widespread. These images can also contribute to eating disorders like Orthorexia Nervosa.

Individuals are affected by accounts that are packed with fitspiration postings through harmful behaviors and body dissatisfaction. Even though the impact of Instagram on males are still being studied, it has been discovered that men are also influenced by glorified bodies on social media.

Chapter 3: Revisiting Problem of Practice

This paper seeks to answer the question: what impact does Instagram have on body image and eating disorders in young adolescent girls? To do so, the researcher combed through a large body of research in hopes of shedding light on the effects of social media on young teenagers' body image and the prevalence of eating disorders in this age range. As indicated in Chapter 1, most social media research has focused solely on its influence on girls. This is since women are more likely than males to utilize social media for personal reasons. Men are more likely to use social media for business goals. The significance of this issue is that, as the problem grows, the repercussions remain the same. Social media users' general well-being continues to deteriorate because of the content they consume on the platform. Leon Festinger's Social Comparison Theory provided the theoretical underpinning. The Social Comparison Theory has based on the premise that people evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others. Some terms highlighted in the research are body dissatisfaction, body image, eating disorders, fitspiration, Instagram, Orthorexia Nervosa, and social comparison.

The current research focused on how body image and eating disorders were impacted by Instagram use throughout the paper. This paper aimed to inform the audience about the consequences of Instagram usage on body image and eating disorders among adolescents. Throughout the research, it has been shown that viewing sexualized photos increases body dissatisfaction. Individuals who post selfies are more likely to have a lower mood and be more self-conscious about their bodies. Research has found that there is a correlation between Instagram and eating disorders. Orthorexia is a new eating disorder added to the DSM-5, and there are a percentage of Instagram users that fit the criteria of this disorder. Fitspiration images

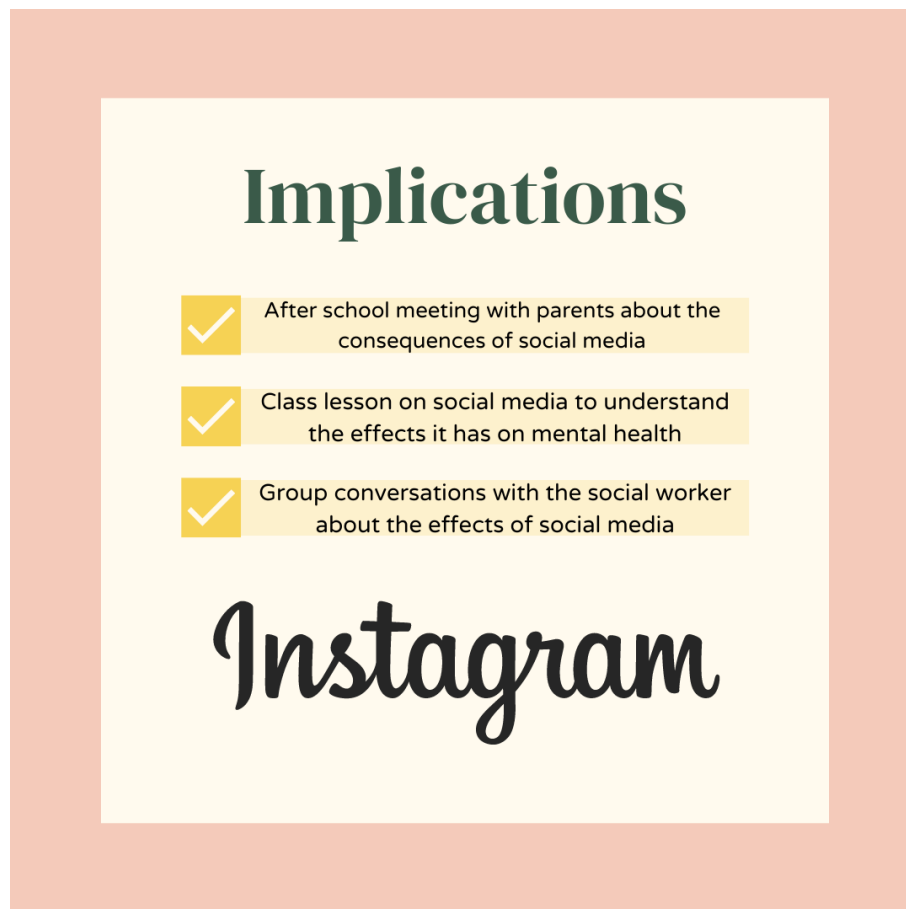
contribute to Instagram users' negative feelings about their body image, and they are more likely to experience eating disorders. Fitspiration relates to several problematic behaviors harmful to your physical health. Research has found inconsistent results relating to body dissatisfaction when looking at the relationship between Instagram and men.

Implications

Figure 1 explains the implications of this research and blends education and psychology with the idea that providing others with knowledge can decrease the mental health struggles of adolescent females. Figure 1 explains the three implications that will be further articulated in chapter 3.

Figure 1:

Education Implications for Parents and Students.



Note. This image was created using Canva.

The Responsibility of Informing Parents

As there is a significant correlation between Instagram and mental health difficulties in adolescents, it is critical to find a solution to reduce the amount of harm. Providing an after-school meeting for parents to discuss the dangers of social media is one idea that will benefit adolescents. This might supplement the parent-teacher conferences parents are required to attend each year. They will go over the three key platforms where they see teens becoming more active users during these talks. The speaker will then go over the impact these platforms have on their children's body image and the risk of developing an eating disorder. Explaining to parents what each condition is and the signs and symptoms that follow is vital because having an eating disorder is exceptionally harmful and, on the rise, due to social media use. These discussions should be held in smaller groups so that parents are more inclined to listen and offer questions.

It's crucial to comprehend the effects of social media on adolescents and why their mental health is deteriorating. As individuals scroll through their preferred platforms, they constantly compare themselves to one another. This stems from the social comparison theory, in which individuals evaluate their appearance by comparing themselves with the thin sociocultural ideals of beauty presented in the media (Festinger, 1954). As a result of the idealized body image that men and women are expected to have, it is hard to avoid comparing oneself to the ideal. Instead of assisting in representing many body types, social media magnifies the idealized form and makes it more difficult for users to reach. It is reassuring to see someone who has the same body type as you because it shows that they are at ease in their skin and that not everyone has the perfect body. However, this is rarely seen on social media. As a result, having this conversation

with parents may assist other people in feeling more comfortable with their bodies and posting unedited images of themselves.

This suggestion might assist parents in monitoring or boosting their children's confidence in social media. As the risk of eating disorders rise and new types of disordered eating come to researchers' attention, parents must be aware of these issues. Because Orthorexia Nervosa is a relatively new diagnosis in the DSM -5, it is not very common. However, the research on this illness in adolescents is eye-opening. Individuals engaged on social media and allowing its effects to impact them are growing the prevalence of this condition related to social media. As a result, if parents are aware of these diseases and the indicators that accompany them, they can assist adolescents in receiving the help they require, thereby lowering their ratings.

Since the purpose is to raise awareness about the problem among all active social media users, this implication is critical. Although these dialogues are aimed at adolescents, they can also benefit adults' mental health regarding social media. By raising awareness among active users, the number of unhappy people with their bodies and at risk of developing eating disorders will diminish. These debates are intended to discuss a problem that many people tend to ignore or are unaware exists.

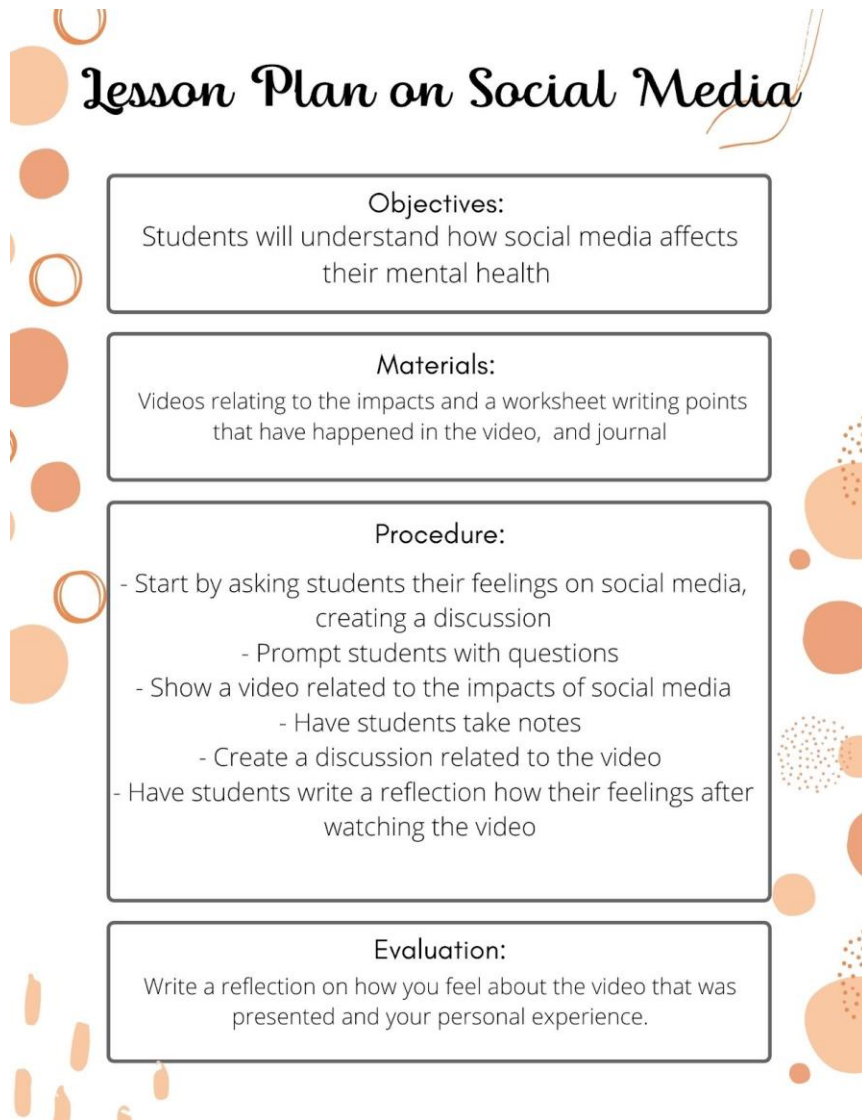
Integrating Social Media and Mental Health Correlations into Lesson Plans

The school can have a more direct impact on raising awareness. By introducing a class lesson on social media into health classes, students will be able to grasp the effects it has on their mental health. This lecture will introduce all-important body concepts and provide examples of extremes. By seeing what can happen when people do not grasp the consequences, students will hopefully reconsider what they share and whether it can harm someone. An example of an activity would be the students participating in an activity in which they will describe what they

see on their feed on any social media platform and their initial reaction to that specific post. Students will learn how their thoughts can harm their mental health in this practice.

Due to the increase in active social media users due to renowned users implementing trends that are harmful to their following, this is a critical area of concern. Fitspiration, for example, is a well-known trend that is ostensibly a positive trend that aids people in becoming more motivated to exercise. While individuals who publish it believe they are assisting the public, they encourage body dissatisfaction or even the development of an eating disorder. As a result, offering a lesson plan that encourages students to refrain from posting manipulated or unrealistic photographs of themselves will improve mental health.

This lesson plan aims to demonstrate how social media affects students' mental health, particularly their initial reactions to posts and the feelings underlying them; it ties to the Social Comparison Theory. It is easy to judge another individual and regularly compare their lives to yours. The consequences will be stated in the lesson plan as well. Because no one is ever satisfied with what they have, social comparison is harmful to everyone's mental health. This lesson plan will help students become conscious of their first thoughts and, ideally, desire to change them to more positive ones. Figure 2 provides a model lesson plan for educators to shape based on their needs and students' grade level.

Figure 2:*Lesson Plan Outline*The graphic is titled "Lesson Plan on Social Media" in a black, cursive font. It features a vertical column of four rectangular boxes, each with a black border and white background. The boxes are decorated with orange circles and dots of varying sizes. The first box is labeled "Objectives:" and contains the text "Students will understand how social media affects their mental health". The second box is labeled "Materials:" and contains "Videos relating to the impacts and a worksheet writing points that have happened in the video, and journal". The third box is labeled "Procedure:" and contains a list of four steps: "- Start by asking students their feelings on social media, creating a discussion", "- Prompt students with questions", "- Show a video related to the impacts of social media", and "- Have students take notes", followed by "- Create a discussion related to the video" and "- Have students write a reflection how their feelings after watching the video". The fourth box is labeled "Evaluation:" and contains "Write a reflection on how you feel about the video that was presented and your personal experience.".

Lesson Plan on Social Media

Objectives:
Students will understand how social media affects their mental health

Materials:
Videos relating to the impacts and a worksheet writing points that have happened in the video, and journal

Procedure:

- Start by asking students their feelings on social media, creating a discussion
 - Prompt students with questions
- Show a video related to the impacts of social media
 - Have students take notes
- Create a discussion related to the video
- Have students write a reflection how their feelings after watching the video

Evaluation:
Write a reflection on how you feel about the video that was presented and your personal experience.

Note. This image was created using Canva.

According to research, body dissatisfaction and the development of eating disorders are only becoming worse as more people use social media more frequently. Providing students with a lesson based on social media can help them become more interested in the topic and more motivated to learn because they use social media. I would implement this lesson by having my experiment within the class to see what topics are more reliable to students. An educator could give them a questionnaire on the types of posts they see on their feed and what they enjoy skimming through a few weeks before the class. You may also include questions on how they feel based on their feed in the questionnaire. This will assist students in identifying their students' interests and tailoring the lesson to those interests.

Creating Discussions with your Social Worker about Social Media

Another method to start a discourse at school is to have group discussions with a social worker about the consequences of social media. Having a debate about a topic, in my experience, helps highlight the importance of it because other people's opinions, comments, and recommendations will be provided alongside your own. Hearing from others can expand your mind to new ideas you have not considered before, and it can even change your view about the matter if you listen to someone else. For this reason, having a conversation and enabling fresh ideas to be presented will be good.

Adolescents would benefit from this implication since it permits them to speak openly about the subject. They have a secure environment to express worries and grievances and offer counsel to others. These group discussions can also help students connect with others in the group who share their feelings about social media and posts. Making these connections can help students make new friends by bonding over topics discussed in the group. Furthermore, further information is spoken about; therefore, learning will occur during these groups.

For this implication, these group conversations can be offered twice a week and at different times so other people can join. This way, more people can be in the conversation and spread awareness. During these interactions with the social worker, the students would be asked a few questions and expected to respond with advice, experience, or a different inquiry. These will get the conversation going by posing open-ended questions that are broad enough to cover. These group discussions with the social worker will be identified as voluntary, so students do not feel pressured to attend and speak.

Future Direction

While most of the research focuses on the impact of social media on women's body image, the effect of social media on men is an area where research and expertise are limited. Since research on this topic is sparse, many individuals are unsure whether the implications are the same or different depending on gender and body ideals. While men are often overlooked when it comes to mental health, if this under-researched area is adequately addressed, it will highlight the relevance of the implications that social media has on both genders. There would be more knowledge about how social media affects individuals if this gap in the research was filled. The effects of modified images on women's body satisfaction should be investigated more in the future. Due to modified images, the perception of women's bodies has become unrealistic and unattainable. Research should continue to follow trends in social media as new platforms emerge.

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