



Research Paper: Content Analysis of Young People's Attitude towards the Positive and Negative Effects of Instagram



Zahra Sayyad Amin*¹

¹ Master of Clinical Psychology, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad university, Khalkhal, Iran

Citation: Sayyad Amin, Z. (2024). Content Analysis of Young People's Attitude Towards the Positive and Negative Effects of Instagram. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 4(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2024.445101.1092>

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2024.445101.1092>

Article info:

Received date:

26 Oct 2023

Accepted date:

15 Dec 2023

Keywords:

Content Analysis,
Instagram, Society, Youth

Abstract

Objective: Social networks have become widely popular among young people in recent years. This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the content of young people's attitude towards the positive and negative effects of Instagram.

Methods: The approach of the current research is qualitative and its method is qualitative content analysis. Among the students of Islamic Azad University of Shiraz, 13 students were selected in a purposeful way until the theoretical saturation of the data and were subjected to a semi-structured interview. Coding of the interviews was done in three steps and manually.

Finding: The coding of the interviews shows 5 components of increasing awareness (with the subcomponents of enhancing awareness in various fields, learning techniques and skills, increasing media literacy), strengthening relationships (with the subcomponents of awareness of the conditions of friends and relatives, holding celebrations and occasions and strengthening group connection), addiction to Instagram (with the subcomponents of excessive use of Instagram, failure to handle other tasks and unpleasant mental states when not using Instagram), physical and psychological problems (with the subcomponents of negative effects on sleep, negative effects on attention and concentration, experiencing negative and unpleasant emotions and physical pains) and disruption in social ties (with the subcomponents of increased social comparisons, inequality and injustice, mistrust of others and social scandal).

Conclusion: According to these findings, it can be concluded that the expansion of social networks, especially Instagram, in recent years has been associated with positive and negative individual and social consequences, which are necessary and vital to pay attention to by the relevant institutions.

* **Corresponding author:**

Zahra Sayyad Amin

Address: Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad university, Khalkhal, Iran

Tel: +98 (936) 823 4960

E-mail: [sazahraaa@gmail.com](mailto:szahraaa@gmail.com)



© 2024, The Author(s). Published by Rahman Institute of Higher Education. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

1. Introduction

It has been decades since the Internet entered our society, but in recent years, with the advent of smartphones and the creation of social networks, we have seen the increasing prevalence of social networks in our daily lives. Nowadays, we spend many hours on our phones spending time on different social networks (Amiri & Dowran, 2020).

One of these widely used social networks in our country is Instagram. Instagram regained its popularity in 2012 and gradually became one of the most used social networks after Telegram. So that today there are millions of people on Instagram (Fuciu, 2019).

Social networks, like any other emerging phenomenon, are associated with positive and negative consequences. For example, things like building relationships, finding a way to express opinions, showing empathy and kindness, providing support, entertaining, enforcing rules, helping people improve their performance in career and academic fields, publishing news, building a business, creating Intellectual reference is one of the advantages that social networks such as Instagram bring to themselves. But at the same time, social networks can be associated with disadvantages for individuals and society. Preservation of privacy, cyber harassment, sedentary lifestyle, spread of rumors and false information, and waste of time are among the negative consequences expressed for social networks (Rook, 2015; Sarkar et al., 2015; Venegas-Vera et al., 2020). What has

made social networks in the center of attention more than ever before is the development of information technology and digital infrastructure. If in the past social networks were only formed on the scale of neighborhoods and cities, today with the cheap access to digital tools (Internet, smartphones and software), a large part of people on the planet can expand their communication network regardless of time and place. Considering that a large part of our society is made up of people and social networks, especially Instagram, are used by this group of people more than other groups, it is necessary to know more about their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the content of young people's attitude towards the positive and negative effects of Instagram with a qualitative approach.

2. Methods

2.1. Statistical Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

The approach of the current research is qualitative and its method is qualitative content analysis. Among the students of Islamic Azad University of Shiraz in academic year of 2022-2023, 13 students were selected in a purposeful sampling method and were subjected to a semi-structured interview until the theoretical saturation of the data. Students were selected who were active on Instagram daily and continuously for at least 2 years. All participants were undergraduates and majored in psychology. The demographic characteristics of the research participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The demographic characteristics of the research participants

Participants	age (year)	Gender	year and daily duration of Instagram use
1	19	Male	2 (years)/4 (hours)
2	18	Female	3 (years)/6 (hours)
3	22	Female	5 (years)/7 (hours)
4	18	Female	3 (years)/4 (hours)
5	24	Female	4 (years)/2 (hours)
6	19	Male	3 (years)/5 (hours)
7	21	Male	4 (years)/6 (hours)
8	19	Female	4 (years)/8 (hours)
9	18	Female	2 (years)/3 (hours)
10	26	Female	7 (years)/5 (hours)
11	35	Female	4 (years)/3 (hours)
12	20	Female	3 (years)/5 (hours)
13	23	Male	4 (years)/4 (hours)

2.2. Instrument

Semi-Structured interview: A semi-structured interview is a method that combines a set of open-ended and predetermined questions -questions that encourage discussion. Its characteristics are: 1) the interviewer and the respondents participate in a formal interview; 2) the interviewer prepares and uses an interview guide. It is a list of questions and topics that should be addressed during the conversation; 3) the open nature of the question defines the topic to be discussed but provides opportunities for the interviewer and the interviewee (Kallio et al., 2016).

Interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and three stages of open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is a process in which the data are

separated into meaningful units and can be used at the beginning of the study. The main purpose of open coding is to conceptualize and label data. Open coding becomes possible during the data analysis stage and searching for codes. During open coding, theorists break down, analyze, compare, label, and categorize data. In axial coding, the emphasis is on characterizing a phenomenon by considering the conditions that lead to its creation. In general, axial coding is the process of relating subcategories to a single category. It is a complex flow of inductive and deductive thinking that involves different stages. Axial coding, like open coding, is done through comparisons and posing questions. In axial coding, the use of these methods is more focused and goes towards discovering relationships and relating categories to each other in line with a biased

paradigm. The process of choosing a category is for the central category and linking all other categories to that central category. Its main idea is to expand the main story line around which everything is formed. It is believed that this central concept is always present. Specifically, selective coding deals with the process of systematically selecting the main and central category and relating it to other categories, validating relationships, and filling in gaps with

categories that need further refinement and expansion. Coding continues until a point where your information is no longer added to that main category, then coding stops. This stage is called saturation (Williams & Moser, 2019).

3. Results

Data coding showed 5 components along with 17 sub-components (Table 2).

Table 2
Components and subcomponents extracted from the interviews

Components	subcomponents			
Increasing awareness	enhancing awareness in various fields	learning techniques and skills	increasing media literacy	
Strengthening relationships	awareness of the conditions of friends and relatives	holding celebrations and occasions	strengthening group connection	
Addiction to Instagram	excessive use of Instagram	failure to handle other tasks	unpleasant mental states when not using	
Physical and psychological problems	negative effects on sleep	negative effects on attention and concentration	experiencing negative and unpleasant emotions	physical pains
Disruption in social ties	social comparison	increasing inequality and injustice	mistrust of others	social scandal and stigma

Increasing awareness

The component of increasing awareness included three sub-components of enhancing awareness in different fields, learning techniques and skills, and increasing media literacy.

Enhancing awareness in various fields

The participants announced that through Instagram, they were able to learn about various topics in science, art, politics, and art. Participant 3 said, "I was able to learn a lot about psychology through Instagram."

Learning techniques and skills

The participants believed that they learned different skills through Instagram. Participant

10 said: "My drawing became much better through Instagram pages."

Increasing media literacy

The participants stated that they have been able to look at the news with a more critical thinking regarding whether the news is right or wrong, and their media literacy level has increased compared to the past: Participant 1 said: "I used to accept all the news very quickly, but now I try to pay more attention to the source of the news."

Strengthening relationships

The component of strengthening relationships included three sub-components: awareness of the conditions of friends and relatives, holding celebrations and occasions, and strengthening group bonds.

Awareness of the conditions of friends and relatives

The participants stated that by following their friends and acquaintances, they can know about their condition. Participant 4 said, "My sister lives in another city, and seeing her posts and stories, I can be aware of her situation."

Holding celebrations and occasions

The participants stated that they can be aware of different occasions. Participant 7 said, "I find out about my friends' birthdays through Instagram."

Strengthening group connection

Participants stated that interactions on Instagram helped them maintain relationships with their classmates or other groups they belong to. Participant 11 said, "I'm on the college Futsal page and I'm talking to the kids there."

Addiction to Instagram

The component of Instagram addiction includes three subcomponents: excessive use of Instagram, failure to attend to other tasks and duties, and unpleasant mental states if Instagram is not used.

Excessive use of Instagram

The participants stated that sometimes they use Instagram too much. Participant 3 said, "Sometimes I'm always on Instagram during the day, so I don't get to do anything else."

Failure to handle other tasks

The participants stated that sometimes they stop doing other things because of using Instagram. Participant 12 said, "Many times I miss work and life because of this Instagram."

Unpleasant mental states when not using

Participants stated that it would make them feel bad if they could not use Instagram. Participant 2 said, "I'd go crazy if I couldn't use Instagram all day."

Physical and psychological problems

The component of physical and mental problems included four sub-components of negative effects on sleep, negative effects on attention and concentration, experience of negative and unpleasant emotions, and physical pains.

Negative effects on sleep

The participants stated that using Instagram a lot made them stay up at night and suffer from sleep deprivation. Participant 6 said, "I'm always on Instagram until three o'clock in the morning and that's why I feel sleepy on the days I have university."

Negative effects on attention and concentration

The participants stated that the high use of Instagram caused their level of attention and concentration to increase. Participant 1 said,

"Using Instagram a lot has made me unable to focus well on the contents of the books. I can't focus well on any long text."

Experiencing negative and unpleasant emotions

The participants stated that they always feel anger and fear because of reading bad news. Participant 8 said: "Instagram is full of negative news that makes everyone feel bad."

Physical pains

The experience of headache or pain in the arm and shoulder area was among the things that the participants expressed. Participant 13 said, "Many times I get a headache when I browse Instagram a lot."

Disruption in social ties

The component of rupture in social ties included four sub-components of increasing social comparison, inequality and injustice, mistrust of others and social scandal.

Social comparison

Some participants mentioned their social comparisons with others. Participant 6 said, "I always compare bloggers' homes and lives with ours, and it makes me feel bad."

Increasing inequality and injustice

Participants mentioned experiencing a sense of inequality and justice. Participant 9 said, "When I see the pages of some actors, I feel that I have less than them. I feel that I have been wronged."

Mistrust of others

Participants indicated distrust of others. Participant 10 said, "A person sees so much fake news and fake people that he can no longer trust anyone."

Social scandal and stigma

Participants mentioned another negative consequence of Instagram is scandal and social stigma. Participant 12 said, "Every day you see bad news about someone. One of my

friends had his film released in Instagram and he was so sick that he took a semester off."

4. Discussion

This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the content of young people's attitude towards the positive and negative effects of Instagram. The findings of the research showed 5 components of increasing awareness, strengthening relationships, Instagram addiction, physical and mental problems, and breaking social bonds along with 17 sub-components.

This finding is consistent with previous researches (Meier & Schäfer, 2018; Stein et al., 2021). For example, Meier & Schäfer (2018) illustrated the effects of Instagram on social comparison and feelings of envy in everyday life. In the research of Stein et al. (2021), it was also shown that social comparison in social networks leads to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem among users.

In general, it should be said that any form of technology has positive and negative consequences. Social networks are also associated with inappropriate consequences despite their advantages. Although social networks have been able to cover many hours of our day as entertainment, they also inform us about world news. Through them, we have learned different things and have been introduced to different things, from different jobs to different regions. However, if social networks are used excessively and incorrectly, they will also have negative consequences. They can cause us mental and physical problems and prevent us from

accomplishing other goals and important tasks that we have.

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach and is influenced by the judgments of researchers. However, it showed what attitude students have towards the advantages and disadvantages of using Instagram.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the research showed that Instagram is associated with various personal and social advantages and disadvantages, which can be beneficial in using this social network.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the students who interviewed us in this research.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been reported.

References

- Amiri, M., & Dowran, B. (2020). Smartphone use from a user's perspective: A qualitative study. *Addiction & Health*, 12(3), 205. <https://doi.org/10.22122/ahj.v12i3.271>
- Fuciu, M. (2019). The rise of Instagram—Evolution, statistics, advantages and disadvantages. *Revista Economică*, 71(4), 51-63. <http://economice.ulbsibiu.ro/revista.economica/archive/71404fuciu.pdf>
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a firm interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2017.0708>
- Rook, K. S. (2015). Social networks in later life: Weighing positive and negative effects on health and well-being. *Current directions in psychological science*, 24(1), 45-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414551364>
- Sarkar, A., Agarwal, S., Ghosh, A., & Nath, A. (2015). Impacts of social networks: A comprehensive study on positive and negative effects on different age groups in a society. *International Journal of Advance Research in Computer Science and Management Studies*, 3(5), 177-190. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325416897>
- Stein, J. P., Krause, E., & Ohler, P. (2021). Every (Insta) Gram counts? Applying cultivation theory to explore the effects of Instagram on young adults. *Psychology of popular media*, 10(1), 87. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000268>
- Venegas-Vera, A. V., Colbert, G. B., & Lerma, E. V. (2020). Positive and negative impact of social media in the COVID-19 era. *Reviews in cardiovascular medicine*, 21(4), 561-564. <https://doi.org/10.31083/j.rcm.2020.04.195>
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45-55. www.imrjournal.org/uploads/1/4/2/8/14286482/imr-v15n1art4.pdf