

## Couples' mental health and increased Instagram consumption

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**Abstract:** *This study looks at how Instagram affects couples' mental health in the digital age, highlighting both its benefits and drawbacks. Instagram has one billion active users per month, making it the most popular platform for sharing content that involves images. It talks about the possible negative effects of using Instagram, such as low self-esteem, cyberbullying, and social comparison. The study advises couples to set reasonable limits, use Instagram with awareness, and be open and honest about their online relationships. To support couples in navigating the digital world while placing a high priority on their mental health, mental health professionals should include discussions on digital dynamics in couple's therapy sessions. Instagram may have a detrimental effect on a couple's mental health by encouraging social comparison, jealousy, problems with trust, and excessive social media use. It can foster understanding and bring up pleasant memories, but it can also result in miscommunication and emotional distance. Although there is little data linking Instagram use to mental health, research has indicated that using the platform to browse Instagram might lessen loneliness while influencers' popular practice of broadcasting on the platform can make people feel more alone. Instagram and other picture-based platforms can help users establish a more robust social presence, which increases their effectiveness in reducing loneliness. The study identifies methodological difficulties in examining the mental health of spouses and makes recommendations for further research. It also covers relationship growth, social comparison dynamics, communication styles, and privacy concerns, as well as the ramifications for couples and therapists. It calls for more research and professional development to address the evolving digital couple's therapy landscape. The present study concludes by examining the impact of Instagram on mental health in a range of age groups*

*and highlighting areas that require more investigation or development to alleviate the negative impacts of social media use on mental health.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, Consumption, Modern relationship, Miscommunication, Mental health*

## Introduction

There has been some variation in the research findings about the relationship between couples' mental health and Instagram use. Not to mention that relationship dynamics, personality characteristics, and the type of information seen can all have an impact on how Instagram use affects mental health. Instagram's effect on the mental health of couples and its applicability in the current digital era is covered in this paper. This research paper gives a general summary of Instagram's broad use and the growing worries about its potential implications on the mental health of couples. The paper's aims are delineated in the possible hazards linked to Instagram usage, comprehension of the fundamental workings, and discourse on tactics to encourage positive interactions on the internet. The probable harms of Instagram to the mental health of couples are discussed here. It addresses several elements that might lead to psychological suffering, including poor self-perception, cyberbullying, and social comparison. The paper includes pertinent studies and data demonstrating the links between Instagram use and mental health issues of couples including depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem.

With one billion active users per month, Instagram is the most widely used platform for sharing image-based material with commentary. Teenagers, young adults and couples who regularly check their accounts are especially fond of it. The consequences of Instagram use on a couple's mental health and general well-being have drawn the attention of researchers, and there is a growing body of literature on this subject [1]. To identify important psychological characteristics and summarise the present state of growing research on the association between Instagram usage intensity and mental health, this study will be conducted. Dissatisfaction with one's physique and look is frequently the outcome of social comparison, in which people assess their appearance by contrasting themselves with media standards. For people who struggle with mental health concerns or anxiety related to their body image, this can be very detrimental. Depression is frequently the result of the urge to evaluate oneself on Instagram and compare oneself to others. Depression has

been linked to social comparison and jealousy, as people use Instagram to compare and seek acceptance from others. Instagram affects a couple's life greatly overall, which emphasises the significance of tackling Instagram's detrimental impacts on mental health [1].

This paper examines how Instagram has affected modern society, emphasising how it has shaped people's behaviours, interpersonal connections, and cultural dynamics. The development of Instagram, self-presentation, social relationships, and cultural trends are all examined. Additionally, the study looks at how it promotes digital communities, shapes social norms, and aids in communication and expression. In addition to criticising Instagram's possible detrimental effects on mental health, body image, self-esteem, cyberbullying, social comparison, and unattainable beauty standards; it also recognises Instagram's beneficial contributions to society, such as activism and social good [2]. In addition, privacy issues and social media companies' obligations to protect user privacy are covered in the paper. It also foresees upcoming developments and difficulties in the constantly changing social media environment. It looks at how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn help people start relationships, keep them going over time, affect how people communicate, and mould intimacy and sharing. It also looks at the development of online communities, the phenomena of social comparison, and relationship satisfaction. But it also talks about issues including possible misconceptions, privacy problems, and cyberbullying. The research underscores the necessity of responsible digital involvement by projecting future trends and repercussions at the nexus of social media and interpersonal connections. The significance of ethical digital involvement is emphasised in the study's conclusion.

### **What defines Instagram?**

Instagram is a mobile location-based social network software that lets users upload images and videos with digital effects applied. The software, originally named Burbn, was created in San Francisco, California, by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger with the goal of fusing the

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functionality of well-known social networking platforms like Foursquare []. Instagram is a hybrid of “instant camera” and “telegram,” enabling users to digitally recapture the nostalgia of the instant photos made popular by Kodak Instamatic and Polaroid. In addition to allowing users to “like” and comment on images, follow other users’ feeds, and link their Instagram accounts to other social media platforms, the app includes 20 filters that alter the lighting and tone of photos. Due to Instagram’s contentious terms of service, some users have migrated to other photo-sharing platforms, such as Pheed and Flickr. The platform fosters widespread cooperation by means of user-generated content, advancing value via topic communities and connections between users [].

Instagram has a complicated and wide-ranging effect on couples’ mental health. It can increase a feeling of nostalgia and belonging by promoting connection, fostering shared interests, and offering a virtual scrapbook of memories. However, it can also result in unreasonable expectations, communication difficulties, social comparison, and privacy issues. It is recommended that couples use Instagram with awareness, establish appropriate boundaries, and be transparent about their digital contacts. Mental health practitioners should incorporate conversations on digital dynamics into their couple’s treatment to enable couples to effectively traverse obstacles and make beneficial use of social media []. Longitudinal research, cultural factors, and focused interventions to encourage responsible Instagram usage are some of the next topics to be pursued. In conclusion, in order for couples to manage the digital world while putting their mental health first, it is imperative that they comprehend the link between couples and Instagram’s influence.

1. **Social Comparison and Self-Esteem:** Users frequently post well chosen and idealised photos of their life on Instagram. Regular exposure to these romanticised portrayals may cause social comparison, which may have an adverse effect on one’s self-esteem. If couples believe other relationships are more glamorous or successful than their own, they may feel inadequate or unsatisfied.

2. **Jealousy and Trust:** Relationship problems with jealousy and trust may be exacerbated by Instagram. Feelings of uneasiness might arise when one observes their spouse interacting with others, like or commenting on images. If one spouse is worried about the other's internet activities, there may be a breakdown in trust and communication.
3. **Time Spent on Social Media:** Neglecting in-person interactions due to spending too much time on Instagram or social media in general might lower the quality of time spent with others. An over-dependence on digital communication might result in emotions of emotional detachment or loneliness inside the partnership.
4. **Benefits:** On the plus side, couples may use Instagram to preserve a sense of connection, share happy memories, and deepen their relationship—especially in distance relationships. Experiences and activities that are shared can be enhanced by following relationship-focused accounts and having similar interests.
5. **Miscommunication and misunderstandings:** On Instagram, unclear postings or conversations might lead to misunderstandings. Relationship disputes may arise from a lack of context or incorrect interpretation of likes and comments.
6. **Celebrating Relationship Milestones with Instagram:** Creating a feeling of shared history and happy recollections, some couples utilise Instagram to celebrate and record significant moments in their relationship.

It is essential to acknowledge that the influence of Instagram on the mental well-being of couples is extremely contextualised. While some couples can experience difficulties, others could feel that the platform improves their relationship. Positivity may be increased via open communication, building trust, and establishing sensible limits on social media use. Researchers are still delving into the complex correlations that exist between social media usage and mental health, and more

recent research may shed light on the specifics of Instagram use in romantic relationships [].

## **Mental Health**

A persistently depressed state or lack of interest in activities are hallmarks of depression, a mental disease that has a substantial negative impact on life. The symptoms might come on suddenly or over a period of time []. They can include exhaustion, lack of interest, angry outbursts, decreased appetite, and in certain cases, suicidal thoughts. Anxiety disorder is a mental illness characterised by strong feelings of fear, worry, or anxiety that make it difficult to go about daily tasks. Elevated heart rate, hyperventilation, a sense of impending danger, an inability to control worry, and a strong desire to cease going through worrisome circumstances are all signs of anxiety disorders []. Anxiety episodes are extremely difficult to control and can escalate to a peak in a matter of minutes. Stress is a feeling of mental or physical tension that can be brought on by any thought or circumstance that makes you feel uneasy, angry, or disappointed. It can affect not just feelings or mood but also physical health, resulting in headaches, fatigue, loss of energy, and even the use of drugs or alcohol. Stress that is mild or momentary usually passes quickly, while chronic stress lasts for a long time. The subset of psychological well-being known as self-esteem comprises an individual's positive and negative self-perceptions. Both good and negative societal and personal factors can have an impact on one's sense of self-worth. A person's self-esteem can be high or low, positive or negative, depending on their emotional state, self-perception, and thoughts about their connections with others [].

## **Instagram and Mental Health**

On the social media platform Instagram, individuals may share photos from their daily lives. Nonetheless, little research has been done on the relationship between Instagram use and mental health. A 2016 research

looked at the association between individuals in a partnership that used Instagram, loneliness, and social comparison. According to the study, Instagram browsing was linked to lower levels of loneliness, whereas influencers' activity, broadcasting, was linked to higher levels of loneliness []. More loneliness was indicated by those who engaged in upward social comparison.

In contrast to text-based platforms, picture-based ones like Instagram—create a stronger social presence, which makes them more effective in preventing loneliness, according to a 2018 research. According to research, there was a correlation between reduced degrees of loneliness and the use of image-based sites like Instagram. The forms of Instagram use and their connection to depressive moods in teenagers were the main topics of a 2020 longitudinal research. After using Instagram twice a day, participants were prompted to complete the survey. Based on the results, it appears that those who used Instagram for the first time throughout the day had higher levels of depression than those who used it twice. Instagram use may boost teenager's psychological health and a study discovered that teenagers' self-acceptance increased when they received likes on uploaded images []. However, when Instagram photographs don't get the necessary amount of "likes," self-acceptance can decline just as quickly as it can soar.

## Conceptual Framework

### Key Concept:

- Utilising Instagram (Independent Variable)
- Dependent variable: Mental Health of Couples
- Mediating Factors (such as impulses towards comparison and communication habits)
- Moderating factors (personal mental health, relationship satisfaction, etc.)



**Hypotheses:**

- **H1:** There is a negative correlation between couples' mental health and increased Instagram use.
- **Expected:** The mental health of couples who use Instagram more frequently will be worse.

**Data Collection:**

Data Collection Method	Sample Size	Duration
Surveys (Quantitative)	30 couples	10 days

**Variables and Measurements:**

S. No.	Instagram Use	Relationship Satisfaction	Number of Respondents
1	1-2 hours/ day	Good	8
2	3-5 hours/ day	Average	13
3	More than hours/ day	Bad	9

**Data Analysis:**

The study examined relationship satisfaction and Instagram usage statistics. The most popular usage, which varied depending on the responder, fell into the 3-5 hours per day group. With a fairly balanced distribution between the "Good" and "Bad" categories, a sizable majority of respondents stated that their relationship satisfaction was average. The categories that contributed to the connection were determined by analysing the data. Considering the significant level of the sample's relationship satisfaction with Instagram use was the study's last step. Recognising the study's shortcomings and taking any biases in the data into account was critical.

**Discussion:**

30 couples participated in the study, which looked at the connection between relationship happiness and Instagram use. The utilisation pattern was modest, and the satisfaction ratings were not all the same. The results corroborate other research on the connection between relationship happiness and social media use. Adapting treatments and counselling techniques for couples experiencing difficulties with Instagram use is one way to address the practical issues. Future studies should examine certain facets of Instagram usage and take self-reporting bias into account.

**The impact's underlying mechanisms**

In order to better understand how Instagram affects the mental health of couples, this study will concentrate on social interactions, self-presentation, and carefully constructed online personas. It also covers the effects of Instagram use on the mental health of couples and how addicting it can be. Digital well-being practices, mindfulness, media literacy, and cultivating supportive online networks are some of the strategies that support improved mental health outcomes []. In controlling Instagram use, the paper places a strong emphasis on personal accountability, digital self-care, and setting appropriate limits. It also covers moral issues including user empowerment, transparency, content control, privacy, and data usage. The paper's conclusion emphasises the necessity of user knowledge, Instagram usage that is responsible, and group efforts by users, platforms, and legislators to develop a more positive digital environment that promotes psychological well-being. The study emphasises the intricate connection between Instagram use and the mental health of couples and the necessity of coordinated actions by users, platforms, and legislators.

## Digital Context for Couples Relationships

Significant parts of life, frequently greater than job or financial possessions, are couple connections. From evolutionary, communicational, and economic viewpoints, among others, they are examined. In a couple's love relationships, there are discernible stages, and as these phases shift, new requirements arise. An increasing number of couples relationships, particularly those of young adults are formed, maintained, and ended via online platforms []. While Instagram platforms offer quick and simple communication channels for couples to share joys and keep the lines of communication open even after their relationship ends, dating services offer a virtual environment for beginning a relationship. But using Instagram may also lead to conflict, especially when there are unfavourable circumstances involved, like envy. With a frequent selfie post linked to bad relationship results and envy from followers' too-flattering responses, Instagram plays a significant yet unfavourable role in romantic relationships as well. As a result of the potential for heightened tension and envy between partners, the significance of online communication tends to diminish in committed relationships []. It's important to think about how Instagram could affect love relationships and how having an extensive online presence could affect them.

### Positive Influences

Couples may use Instagram as a forum to promote shared interests, commemorate and share important life events, and compile an online scrapbook of memories. By maintaining closeness and contact through comments, direct messages, and shared information, enhances communication. Instagram also helps to build a community that is conducive to relationships by encouraging thankfulness and admiration through affirmations posted in public []. Real-time communication and visual updates can assist in bridging the gap in long-distance relationships by creating a sense of presence even while physically separated. However, there are obstacles to overcome, such as privacy concerns and

comparison traps. Recognising possible issues, recognising potential hurdles, and learning to strike a healthy balance are strategies for getting over roadblocks and maintaining equilibrium when using social media in pairs [1].

### **Negative Influences**

This paper examines how social media, especially Instagram, affects modern relationships and the possible harm it may do to a pair. It talks about how social comparison, unattainable beauty standards, trust difficulties, and the possibility of misinterpreting online behaviour to cause conflict in real life may all be caused by Instagram's carefully selected material [2]. There is also discussion of communication issues, such as the possibility that significant in-person encounters might be replaced by digital communication, which would lower the relationship's overall communication quality. Concerns about privacy are covered, along with the possible negative effects of revealing too much information and the need to set personal limits. Expectations of unrealistic relationships are examined, with the possibility of disappointment when actual relationships do not live up to the idealised representations [3]. Along with the psychological effects of unfavourable encounters and public confrontations on relationship well-being, cyberbullying and internet harassment are also covered. Spending too much time on Instagram might cause one to miss in-person conversations, which can impede spending meaningful time with others. Setting limits, developing resilience, and having open communication are all effective coping mechanisms for couples dealing with unfavourable influences on Instagram [4]. In order to minimise possible problems, the text's conclusion emphasises the need to take a thoughtful approach to using social media, encouraging communication, and establishing healthy limits.

## **Individual Differences and Moderating Factors**

A number of variables to determine how Instagram affects mental health look at coping strategies, digital literacy, personality features, attachment types, communication patterns, reasons for using Instagram, cultural and social factors, and the implications for support and intervention []. Extraversion, introversion, neuroticism, and openness are some of the personality factors that affect how people use Instagram and how susceptible they are to social comparison and emotional reactions. Different attachment patterns, including avoidant, anxious, and secure, have an influence on how people use Instagram and how that use affects their mental health. Self-expression, obtaining information, and fostering social connections are among the reasons people use Instagram []. In order to moderate the association between Instagram use and outcomes related to mental health, coping strategies are vital. Additionally influential are media and digital literacy

People's interpretation of material on Instagram is also influenced by their level of digital and media literacy, and the ability to use critical thinking skills is essential for navigating the platform and removing dangerous content. Individual views of Instagram usage are shaped by cultural and socioeconomic factors, with cultural expectations and conventions reducing the influence of Instagram on mental health across a variety of demographics. Recognising individual variations can help develop tailored support systems and treatments, resulting in more individualised approaches to mental health promotion. As a result, this study adds to our understanding of Instagram's effects on mental health and emphasises the need for more research to examine the relationship between user characteristics and Instagram use [].

## **Methodological Challenges and Future Research Directions of Couples Mental Health**

The difficulties in studying couples' mental health are covered in this paper, along with sample strategies, measurement problems, technology,

long-term studies, diversity and inclusion, intervention research, qualitative approaches, and cooperative research. It examines the shortcomings of cross-sectional studies, emphasises the need of validated instruments, longitudinal studies, and technology in research, and stresses the need of taking socioeconomic, cultural, and interpersonal structures into account []. The promise of digital tools and interventions is also covered in the article, although privacy and ethical issues are also emphasised. In closing, the report highlights methodological issues with couples' mental health research and suggests creative avenues for further investigation. This will assist researchers in enhancing the calibre and relevance of their results, which will ultimately result in couples' support systems and successful therapies [].

### **Instagram Implications for Couples and Therapists**

How Instagram affects couples and therapists, with a particular emphasis on relationship development, social comparison dynamics, communication styles, and privacy issues. It also covers how therapists may help couples dealing with issues linked to Instagram usage during couples therapy, the value of integrating digital literacy, how to create appropriate limits, and coping mechanisms for couples experiencing difficulties with Instagram use []. The paper urges more study and professional growth to handle the changing digital dynamics of couple's therapy. In the ever-changing digital world, therapists and couples may promote healthy, communicative relationships by incorporating digital literacy into therapy practice and carefully exploring Instagram [].

### **Social Media and Its Repercussions**

As of July 2012, there were around 172 million users of social media, a 5% increase in users over the previous year []. Nonetheless, there has been a rise in interest in research on participants' mental health. Researchers came to the conclusion that social media users have greater levels of anxiety and despair. Participants in a previous research of young

adults in the US who utilised seven or more social media sites showed higher levels of anxiety and despair.

In a different study, Lin et al. (2016) discovered that those with regular social media usage had higher depressive symptoms than those with infrequent use. Various writers have proposed distinct explanations for the correlation between social media and anxiety and depression, such as age and its link to self-worths. Women scored higher than males on studies by Andreassen et al. (2017) and Hardy and Castonguay (2018) about addictive social media usage, however this tendency was more prevalent in young individuals than in older adults. An examination of the relationship between social media and wellbeing that was released in 2017 used a different methodology. According to the writers, depending on how it's utilised, social media may have a good or bad effect. Social media usage and well-being are positively correlated when it comes to higher levels of connection, and negatively correlated when it comes to actions that don't satisfy users' approval requirements [].

Users of Instagram, a phrase used to refer to websites and applications that emphasise collaboration, content sharing, communication, and engagement, have increased. But it has been shown that this has a detrimental effect on users' mental health. Instagram usage has been linked to poor mental health in the past, with a study that intends to investigate the disparate ways have encountered Instagram. The project intends to investigate possible impacts and long-term implications as well as fill in research gaps regarding the influence of Instagram on cohort mental health. Future investigations into how Instagram affects mental health across a range of age groups will be aided by the results.

Instagram now plays a big role in people's lives and affects their mental health in a lot of different ways, such as personal, behavioural, and economic. Due to Instagram's growing popularity and influence over a wide range of spheres of life, there is, nevertheless, a dearth of studies on the effects of Instagram uses on mental health [2]. In addition to comparing the levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem, this study intends to investigate the wider effects of Instagram. Due to their

upbringing in the heyday of Instagram and the internet, it is anticipated that Generation Z will report higher rates of poor mental health.

## Conclusion

A study's conclusion should reiterate important findings, highlight major discoveries, and discuss how these findings affect the goals of the investigation. It should also include a summary of the goals of the study and a discussion of how those goals have been met. Practical suggestions for the next interventions or activities, together with detailed methods or approaches to deal with the concerns brought up, have to be given in light of the findings. Stakeholders, practitioners, and legislators should take these results' consequences into account. The study should highlight opportunities for improvement or more research to address these shortcomings as well as recognise them.

Although social media and mental health are generally associated negatively, some research points to possible positive interactions. Depending on why people use social media and how they use it, there are different effects on mental health. For results to be more broadly applicable, future research should concentrate on a variety of age groups. This study fills in the gaps in the literature by evaluating the ages taken into account and cohort differences on the impact of social media on individual mental health.

Instagram has become a more potent tool for isolating us from others than for fostering social connections, particularly in the year of quarantine when the majority of human interaction has been facilitated by complex virtual social networks. Online connections frequently have an unsettlingly close sense to them while also feeling manufactured. According to futurologist Marshall McLuhan's well-known dictum, "the medium is the message," any media's effects on society and on an individual basis or couples stem from the additional dimensions that each technological advancement or personal extension of ourselves brings into our lives. As evidenced by Dunbar's Number theory, which holds that people can only appreciate and recognise a certain number of other



people, the internet can lead to a terrible sense of isolation. Studies of comments left on far-right Instagram sites have shown that this feeling of isolation and dehumanisation may reach catastrophic heights. Our social intelligence may short circuit due to the tension between empathy and hatred on the internet, creating unhealthy interactions that we are ill-prepared to handle. The actual effects of social networking on our relationships and mental health remain a mystery to modern psychology.

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