

Conference Paper

Social Comparison as a Predictor of Self-Esteem Amongst Instagram-Using Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Self-esteem is based on positive or negative evaluations of oneself, whereas social comparison is the effort of defining oneself through comparison with other people. Online social comparison is different from offline social comparison. An individual's self-esteem can be predicted from their interactions on social media through social comparison. This research aims to understand the idea of self-esteem amongst the Instagram users. In the process, this study explores the idea of comparison, and evaluates the social comparison as a predictor of self-esteem. This research uses descriptive and predictive methods, with a population of 2016 students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang. The sample was taken using the saturation sampling technique or census. The research uses the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure. The data were further analysed with a descriptive analysis technique using mean value, whereas the hypothesis test uses the simple linear regression technique. The results show that H_0 is rejected with a significance level of 0.000, R-value of 0.382, and R-squared value of 0.146, which implies that social comparison contributes towards the existence of self-esteem by 14.6%.

Keywords: Social comparison, self-esteem, college students

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1. Introduction

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, social media use has increased significantly. The government's policy to implement social limitations affects people's communication and interaction pattern. The majority of people use social media to communicate while being in quarantine. One of the social media alternatives used is Instagram. According to data from Hootsuite, Instagram ranked fourth as the most-used social media application ("Digital 2020," n.d.). In this pandemic, the use of Instagram increased by 40%. Instagram

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Story uploads also increased to 6.1 times daily, accompanied by the stories' impression increase of 21% (Junawan & Laugu, 2020).

The class of 2016 students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang tend to spend their time, especially during pandemic, using Instagram. This behaviour can evoke negative feelings, such as jealousy towards what other people show on Instagram, low self-esteem, and worthlessness. This issue shows that these students' use of Instagram might lower their evaluation towards themselves.

Self-esteem is the positive and negative evaluation of oneself that shows the individual's worth and abilities (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-esteem is also defined as a person's positive and negative self-evaluation or the level of belief that oneself is worthy (Leary & Baumeister, 2000 as cited in Jiang & Ngien, 2020). In other words, self-esteem is the conformity or nonconformity that indicates how far an individual believes that he or she is meaningful, worthwhile, and decent.

Refnadi (2018) states that individuals with high self-esteem tend to show positive emotions and satisfaction towards their own characters and abilities, such as gratitude. This is shown by a positive self-image that can accept suggestions, happiness, and is able to adapt well. Quite in the same vein, Rosenberg (1965) believes that the high level of self-esteem might improve good initiation and feelings. Additionally, these individuals view themselves as someone worthwhile or meaningful towards others, and they can judge that other people accept them (Chang, 2019). In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem tend to exhibit negative impacts, such as anxiety, depression, physical and mental health risks, aggression, and delinquency (Meidina, 2016). A study (Trzesniewski et al., 2006, as cited in Erol & Orth, 2011) showed that individuals with low self-esteem in their adolescence have the inclination towards physical and mental health issues, economic difficulties, delinquent behaviours, antisocial behaviours, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, and depressive feelings in their early adulthood stage.

Factors that affect self-esteem include family, social, and psychological environments, and gender (Coopersmith, 1967 as cited in Ardiansyah, 2019). Social environment factor is the self-esteem that is developed when an individual becomes aware that he or she has functions on the values in their environment (Ardiansyah, 2019). Acceptance, appreciation, and treatment from others can affect self-esteem. In this case, Instagram is the social environment factor that contributes towards the development of self-esteem.

Humans have the tendency to compare themselves with others as an effort to satisfy their needs in affiliation, self-evaluation, self-development, and self-improvement (Schachter, 1959). Feinstein et al. (2013) states that Instagram users often compare themselves with other people's appearance, ability, popularity, and social skills. Social

comparison is the humans' attitude in testing their own opinion and ability against other people to establish a personal identity (Festinger, 1954). Social comparison of ability is judgemental and competitive (Yang, Holden, & Carter, 2018). It is usually done to understand how good one has accomplished compared with others. Meanwhile, social comparison of opinion includes arguments, values, and beliefs that are usually free from judgement and competitiveness (Suls et al., 2000 as cited in Yang et al., 2018). Therefore, when an individual does a social comparison of opinion, they tend to find out what other people would do in the same situation without judging their opinion.

Online social comparison is indeed different from offline social comparison. Midgley (2013) argues that there are several differences between the two. First, online social comparison is exhibited more often than offline social comparison, because Instagram makes it easier for an individual to make friends with anyone, meaning that they have too extensive access to information. Second, an individual can compare themselves more with others using the Instagram Story's features. Third, online social comparison is more to the "upward" (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014) direction compared to the "downward" offline social comparison (Wheeler and Miyake, 1992 as cited in Midgley, 2013).

Through Instagram, individuals are more selective in showing themselves, and they choose to show positive emotions, such as joy (Lin & Qiu, 2012). In other words, individuals can impress others offline too, but Instagram directs ideal pictures or photos shown by others to them more easily (Midgley, 2013).

An individual's self-esteem can be predicted from their interactions on social media through social comparison (Vogel et al., 2014). According to a study by Wang et al., (2017) even the passive use of Instagram, meaning only observing others on Instagram, can be used to predict social comparison. This is in line with the results of a study by Lup et al., (2015) which found that social comparison significantly causes depression symptoms and improves the rate of following strangers on Instagram, leading to depression symptoms as well. Thus, social comparison might be exhibited by anyone depending on their personalities and motivations, as well as their intensity of using Instagram (Verduyn, Gugushvili, Massar, Täht, & Kross, 2020).

Social comparison might be a positive behaviour when the individual focuses on imitating the positive things to foster a positive self-evaluation. However, social comparison might also pose negative impacts, such as low self-esteem, negative self-evaluation, jealousy, and other negative feelings (Krasnova, Widjaja, Buxmann, Wenninger, & Benbasat, 2015). Ergo, from the explanations and phenomena elucidated above, the researchers in this study conducted a research entitled "Social Comparison

as a Predictor of Self-Esteem on Instagram-User Students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang”.

2. Methods

The current study uses a quantitative research method. The researcher intended to understand the self-esteem and social comparison of Instagram users. The variables studied in this research are independent variable, or X, which is social comparison, and dependent variable, or Y, which is self-esteem. The population of this research is the active class of 2016 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang. The total class of 2016 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang as per February 2020 is 163 students.

The sample was taken using a saturation sampling technique or census using all population members. The sample in this study is the Instagram users of class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang. Therefore, the sample in this study is 163 respondents, consisting of 159 respondents who filled in the questionnaire and 4 respondents who did not fill in the questionnaire.

The data were collected using a Likert scale from two adapted instruments with a back-to-back translation procedure (Brislin, 1970), namely the self-esteem scale (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) developed by Rosenberg and used by Donellan et al., (2015), in which there are 10 valid items with a reliability level of 0.799. In addition, we used the social comparison scale (The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure) developed by Gibbons and Buunk (1999) based on the aspects from Fesringer, in which there are six valid and five invalid items with a reliability level of 0.722. A revision on linguistic errors was conducted on the invalid items after the initial test.

There are two analysis techniques used in this research, which are descriptive analysis and hypothesis testing using SPSS 16.0. The descriptive analysis uses mean to categorise and describe the sample with score categories of high and low. Before testing the hypothesis, an assumption test, which consists of Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test and ANOVA linearity test, was administered. When the test of assumptions was fulfilled, a hypothesis testing can be conducted using simple linear regression analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

According to table 1, the low and high categorisation of self-esteem shows that there are 85 and 75 of respondents with low self-esteem and high self-esteem respectively. It can be concluded that 53.4% of the respondents have lower self-esteem compared to the other 46.54% who have high self-esteem. The social comparison variable shows that there are 90 respondents with high social comparison level and 69 respondents with low social comparison level. In other words, 56.60% of the respondents have a high level of social comparison, whereas the other 43.40% have a low level of social comparison.

TABLE 1: Score Categorisation

Variable	N	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Mean	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Self-esteem	159	27	51	4.473	38.03	Low = $X \leq 38.03$	85	53.45%
						High = $X \geq 38.03$	74	46.54%
Social comparison	159	24	57	6.712	41.79	Low = $X \geq 41.79$	90	56.60%
						High = $X \leq 41.79$	69	43.40%

After conducting descriptive analysis, the next step is to test the normality and linearity test on the data obtained. The normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis shows that the self-esteem and social comparison variables have a significance level above 0.05, meaning that both variables are normally distributed. The linearity test using ANOVA shows that the correlation between the two variables has a significance level below 0.05, meaning that there is a linear and significant correlation between self-esteem and social comparison variables.

Based on table 2 on the results of the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis, the self-esteem and social comparison variables have a significance level above 0.05, meaning that both variables are normally distributed. The linearity test shows that the correlation between the two variables has a significance level below 0.05, meaning that there is a linear and significant correlation between self-esteem and social comparison variables.

When the test of assumptions is fulfilled, a hypothesis testing can be conducted using the simple linear regression analysis technique. Table 2 shows the R-value of 0.382, which means that the social comparison variable has a significant contribution towards the existence of self-esteem variable. Moreover, the R-Squared value is 0.146, which

further explains that social comparison contributes 14.6% towards the existence of self-esteem. The significance is $0.000 < 0.05$, meaning that social comparison is a predictor of self-esteem on Instagram-user students of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang.

TABLE 2: Hypothesis Test

Variable	R	R-Squared	Sig
Social comparison towards self-esteem	0.382	0.146	0.000

The significance values in the hypothesis test indicate that social comparison is a predictor of the self-esteem possessed by the Instagram-user students of class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang. This research shows that social comparison brings a relatively low determination towards these students' self-esteem. This means that social comparison can estimate self-esteem even though there are many other variables that can predict.

One of the factors that contribute towards self-esteem is social comparison. This is proven by the results of this research that show that social comparison has a fairly significant influence on the Instagram-user students of class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education of the State University of Malang. The higher the social comparison done by these students, the lower their self-esteem, and vice versa, meaning that the two variables correlate to each other. This is in line with a research by Yang et al. (2018) which shows that social comparison on Instagram can predict the freshmen's self-esteem.

Social comparison is a process of comparing oneself with others to determine their view on social reality (Baron & Bryne, 2011). According to Ven et al. (2011), an individual's motivation to do social comparison is not only to self-evaluate, but also to improve their own ability. Hence, social comparison is essentially aimed to evaluate one's ability and opinion compared to those of others. Nowadays, however, social comparison is not limited to ability and opinion, but also on emotional and personal aspects. It might be done on aspects related to achievements, income, and relationship as well.

An individual tends to do social comparison with others when they do not have an accurate standard. This means that they use objective reality as the basis of their judgement. However, without objective reality, they will use social reality instead, which is other people's opinion or ability as the basis of judgement or measurement. They will compare themselves with other people with similarities, such as similar gender, occupation, education background, and field of work. This is believed to be an effort to obtain a positive description of themselves (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2012).

The results of descriptive analysis using mean show that the majority of the self-esteem scores of the Instagram-user students are low. Moreover, most of the social comparison scores of these students are high. Thus, the higher the social comparison, the lower the self-esteem, and vice versa.

The results of the simple linear regression test show that the influence of social comparison on self-esteem emergence is considerably low. This is because social comparison is not the sole factor that affects an individual's self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967, as cited in Ardiansyah, 2019) states that self-esteem is affected by various factors, including family, social, and psychological environment, as well as gender. Albeit the diverse factors that might have influence on self-esteem, the current study is relevant with the results of the previous studies by Yang et al. (2018) and Bergagna and Tartaglia (2018) that show that social comparison can determine the social-media users' self-esteem.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the analysis results and discussion in the previous chapter, the conclusions are as follows: (1) The majority of Instagram users in class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education at the State University of Malang have low self-esteem, (2) The majority of Instagram users in class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education at the State University of Malang have a high level of social comparison, and (3) Social comparison is a predictor of self-esteem on the Instagram users in class of 2016 of the Faculty of Psychology Education at the State University of Malang.

The active Instagram-user students who have high social comparison should find the unique features of their personal attributes. In addition, they should decide who to follow on Instagram in order to filter their social media life from other users that might pose negative impacts to themselves. The Instagram-user students who have low self-esteem should put more attention to their personal attributes. By keeping in mind that every individual has their own uniqueness, the physical, social, and ability aspects of self-esteem might be improved.

Future researchers can establish criteria in determining the sample, such as the motives behind the individuals' Instagram use, the categories of pictures that are mostly viewed, and the numbers or comparison of the numbers of followed strangers and followed actual friends. Additionally, future researchers can also add more relevant variables. We encourage others to provide more theoretical reviews on variables such

as gender, parenting style, identity formation style, and other psychological conditions to edify the readers and future researchers.

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