

Social media use among teenagers: instagram concerns

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Since its release in 2010 the visual social networking site Instagram has gained over one billion monthly active users (Instagram, 2018) and is currently the most favoured application for the sharing of pictures (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). However, in 2018 The Royal Society for Public Health named Instagram the social networking site with the most negative impact on adolescents. The organization conducted a survey with nearly 1500 adolescents asking them to rate Social Networking Sites according to their impact on health and well-being. Instagram polled worst in the category of body - image, raising strong concerns about the relationship between the social media platform Instagram and teenagers' body - esteem, which is to define " as the appraisal and presentation of a person's body" (Mendelson, Mendelson & White, 2001, p. 90). This review will examine nine sources by comparing and analysing them.

To ensure the validity of this review, all sources were chosen by their recent date of publication as the platform Instagram had its start in 2010.

Additionally, a focus will be laid on teenage girls, as most studies that are accessible in this field only concentrated on females. With this in mind, this literature review will answer the research question: How does the use of the social media platform Instagram influence teenage girls' body-esteem? The main aspects that this review will evaluate, include the new trend 'fitspiration', the manipulation of images and the objectification of young girls on social media. First of all, these days, 'fitspiration', a newly offered " trend designed to inspire viewers towards a healthier lifestyle by promoting exercise and healthy food" (Tiggemann, Zaccardo, 2018) can be seen all over the different social networking sites, especially on Instagram. Currently,

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the corresponding Hashtag 'fitspiration' assembles more than 16 million posts in total (Instagram, 2018) of which a vast majority represent slim and fit women advocating only one certain body type to be healthy (Tiggemann et al.).

However, as research showed many teenage girls found themselves feeling crestfallen when looking at these posts and regarded the pictured women with envy (Clegg, et al. , 2018) when comparing their own bodies to those projected to be 'healthy'. Similar findings were demonstrated by Tiggemann and Zaccardo. , where the outcome of a survey revealed how the negative mood increased after the exposure to 'fitspiration' pictures (2015).

According to the outcomes of these conducted surveys, the trend of 'fitspiration' did the direct opposite: Rather than inspiring and motivating, it demoralised young girls and created a feeling of insecurity amongst them. Besides that, Instagram has become in general a renowned platform for defining the beauty standards of our century. With thousands of Instagram models and influencers sharing photos of their hourglass figure or flawless makeup, especially adolescent girls' body-esteem is affected. Indeed, 88% of teenage girls from a survey conducted in Singapore stated that they were specifically affected by the media's perception of beauty (Chua & Chang, 2015). With various free photo editing applications and programs, the market has created a chance for everyone - not only celebrities - to follow those high standards. However, young girls who have been shown edited and manipulated pictures appeared to have a lower body satisfaction than teenagers who were shown the originals (Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat &

Anschütz, 2016). Schurr, Berry and Walker detected a similar outcome: Despite realizing that the images were manipulated and edited, students still reported having negative feelings about their own physique after being exposed to such photographs. Furthermore, participants stated after the experiment, how they experienced paying attention to what they ate and feeling envious of the edited person in the picture (2013).

In summary, this means that exposing young girls to edited pictures, not only of their idols, but also of regular users, influences the way they view their own body in a negative way. Above all, another essential aspect that can be observed is the overly sexual presentation and perception of teenage girls' bodies after their use of Instagram. Specifically, Ramsey and Horan concluded after a survey that the content on Instagram is even more sexualized than on Facebook which is currently ranked as the most used social media site (2017). Part of this sexualized content is young girls objectifying themselves in their pictures. As research has shown, females would objectify themselves to a higher extent when posing for a publicly uploaded image than how they would in private (de Vries & Peter, 2013). That can be seen as a consequence of the discovery that having a more revealing picture was acknowledged as being more attractive by peers (Daniels, 2016). This acknowledgement can be shown through 'liking' someone's post.

Further, as Ramsey et al. showed, the more sexualized an uploaded picture was, the more likes it received and the more friends/followers the person got. While this might be thought to be linked to a higher body-esteem, a

study by Strelan, Mehaffey and Tiggemann actually examined how self-objectification diminished one's body satisfaction acutely (2003). Concluding, when using social media, an intensive objectification of the user takes place, which is linked to the reduction of one's body satisfaction and therefore body-esteem. To conclude, through careful examining the sources, it can be concluded, that the social media platform Instagram has an overall negative influence on adolescent girls and the way they generally perceive their own body and present themselves online. The trend fitspiration rather seems to daunt young girls instead of motivating and inspiring them.

Furthermore, manipulated pictures leave young girls with a distorted perception of beauty and body image and on social media, especially Instagram, a great sexualization of teenage girls takes place, which contrary to common beliefs, actually lowers body-esteem. Due to the fact that this literature review is limited, some aspects relating to body-esteem could not be discussed. An example for this is its important connection to self-esteem, which has often been examined to correlate to body-esteem. Crucial to point out is the fact that one notices when looking at different conclusions of many articles, often the literature differs from actual reports and statements of participants. This review tried to keep a focus on surveys including these personal statements to ensure the findings are valid and relevant.

However, for further research it would be beneficial for accessible literature to rely more on these personal statements instead of previous maybe even outdated studies, as social media is progressing and outcomes could change over time. Moreover, as most studies and reports focus only on the short-

term effects of the negative aspects of social media, it might be interesting to see the long-term effects as well.