The Benefits of Instagram on Teenagers' Mental Health

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Abstract: *In an era where digital platforms dominate daily life, Instagram has emerged as a popular social media, especially among teenagers.,because its function of diversity which allows users to share photos and videos and interact with other users. Many critics believe that Instagram has negative effects on teenagers' mental health, such as cyberbullying, fear of missing out (FOMO), and pressure to conform. However, despite concerns about its potential negative impact on mental health, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that Instagram can also yield positive outcomes for adolescents in this research paper.*

Keywords: *Instagram; Teenagers; Mental Health; Benefits*

1. Introduction

Instagram is a highly interactive platform where users can interact with other users through likes, comments and private messages. This makes Instagram a good place to build social relationships and keep in touch with friends.Instagram enables teenagers to express themselves creatively and connect with their peers in a variety of ways. Through sharing photos and videos, adolescents can showcase their talents, hobbies, and experiences, fostering a sense of accomplishment and boosting self-esteem. Furthermore, Instagram facilitates a sense of belonging and community among teenagers. Participating in online communities and engaging with positive content can foster a sense of connection, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Moreover, it is also a wonderful learning platform. Teenagers can learn new knowledge and skills they are interested in by paying attention to relevant experts, teachers and bloggers, etc. For instance,if they interest in the economy , can search professional teachers and bloggers who have made achievements in this field.And at the same time , in this process it can promote their independent mind and learning skills, people can choose different areas according to their own conditions.While concerns regarding the impact of social media on teenagers' mental health are valid, it is essential to acknowledge Instagram's potential for positive influence. This research paper explores the aspects of Instagram on teenagers' mental well-being, as well as how it helps shape teenagers' views of the modern world.

2. A good Platform of Mental health community

Platforms like Instagram have the power and ability to connect mental health communities that are supportive of each other. Celebrities and influencers engage with mental health support publicly on Instagram to encourage their followers to join this "social campaign". Ordinary people usually advocate for mental health using hashtags that are specifically created for this purpose like #MentalHealthAwareness, #AnxietyAwareness, #SelfLove, #EmotionalWellbeing, and #Mindfulness. This method supports mental health in an active and positive voice, but some other people who have depression or have had depression share their experiences and feelings using a hashtag called #Depression, which may seem like a passive and negative voice but it helps the audience to understand what these people have gone through, therefore sympathizing with them to better understand the importance of mental health. This way, people are able to have conversations and discussions about mental health on this public platform, fostering a community that protects and cares for everyone's mental health.

In a research done in 2020, some researchers have found that Instagram's use of hashtags greatly and immediately connects people and the topics they discuss online. The researchers applied a more inclusive hashtag practices method, which was described as: *Our modified hashtag method targets key hashtags, in our case #depressed, and also moves beyond them to (a) incorporate the posts immediately preceding and following a root post in a sample set, (b) more inclusively sample content associated with the hashtag*

to combat filtering bias, (c) consider collocated hashtags and (d) draw on contextual cues in the interplay between posts' visual content, captions and profile management.[1].As the result, the researchers were able to show that Instagram's hashtags *act as an expansive, multi-faceted 'semiotic technology', actively dispersing the ways users might connect with others or express themselves visually.*[1] Indeed, Instagram's ability to be able to engage people with mental health content globally is undeniable, which refutes unfavorable and biased opinions that assert that Instagram affects mental health in a negative way.

3. The Benefits of Instagram Hashtags

Hashtags are the primary tool that Instagram uses to group similar people and ideas together, giving them a sense of belonging and confidence to speak of their experiences and opinions. The convenience of hashtags is mainly shown through how people are able to see everything other people post by clicking on the hashtags that interest them. According to the same researchers mentioned before, Instagram seems to *...offer a new kind of access, a new visibility for the lived experience and life-worlds of serious forms of mental ill-health like major depressive disorder (MDD) or more common non-clinical depressive episodes.*[1] Instagram can very much act as a social platform for both people who have mental health issues and people who don't have them but who are eager to support these kinds of topics. Therefore, because of the diversity and inclusive environment, different forms of mental health illnesses are able to be seen and understood by the public crowd in a worldwide context.

The researchers also found that relating to mental health inspiration, Instagram uses *...pictorial or graphic text messages related to mental health and wellbeing, Inspirational posts express either supportive or recovery-oriented ideals...*[1]. Many people with mental illnesses turn to the Internet to search for help and support, and to feel a sense of belonging as they connect with other people who are in similar conditions. One of the studies shows that *...one significant feature of online support is the display of empathy through reciprocal self-disclosure, or the telling of "second stories" that echo and elaborate on personal stories previously posted in the forum*[2] (Lindgren, Simon, 2021). Instagram serves as a platform for people to tell their narrative stories and personal experiences related to mental health, therefore fostering a tight community bonded by shared similarities and experiences. Through empathizing with each other, young adults are able to tell their struggles and issues and feel a sense of connection, which is crucial to their mental health protection and growth. Through postings of pictures and texts, they openly discuss their mental health journeys without having to reveal their true identity, which also gives them privacy and the confidence to tell their true stories.

Oftentimes, people on Instagram use motivational picture quotes that *...constitute a widespread means of communicating about mental health issues on Instagram.*[2] Motivational pictures often appear as where inspirational texts are overlaid on images that are sometimes poetically written, designed to send messages regarding mental health and well-being. In real life, many teenagers repost these kinds of pictures on their Instagram stories, increasing the exposure of mental health awareness on online platforms by sharing this information with others.

One of the research studies specifically focused on how Instagram contributes to proactive mental health by utilizing the hashtag #SelfCare, which has amassed more than 24 million posts in 2021. Self-care strategies help young adults to improve their moods, reduce stress, and most importantly, bring awareness to how significant mental health is to individual and shared growth. Of course, as mentioned before, celebrities and influencers who have a large number of followers have the ability to bring up significant levels of awareness and support for mental health by sharing their personal experiences. For instance, the studies indicate that: *A famous celebrity, Demi Lovato, increased the public's interest in mental health and self-care strategies through the open dialogue of her personal struggles with her mental health disorder and addictions. If the spread of positive events is publicized by celebrities ,there is no doubts that the chances of the big hit must go viral on Instagram.Public figures' endorsements of a culture of self-improvement and encouraging awareness of self-worth make mental health struggles more relatable, thus causing self-care to become more achievable* [3]. Public figures are able to increase self-care popularity and exposure by actively participating in this "social campaign", contributing to the unity of mental health community.

4. The positive impact of Instagram during the epidemic

Another research study focused on how social media like Instagram can help tackle mental health issues after the COVID-19 pandemic hit. During the pandemic, various lockdowns and strict policies

were reinforced to protect public safety, however, these actions also resulted in people getting diagnosed with psychiatric illnesses like depression and anxiety. Therefore, since meeting with friends and therapists to discuss mental health issues may seem feasible during or right after the pandemic, online resources become very significant for those who are searching for a sense of belonging and community. The study explains that to help tackle mental health issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, *...several doctors provide free consultations over the Internet, as well as mental health education for everyone.*[4] This convenient and efficient way of coping with stress and depression greatly helped people who felt overwhelmed during the pandemic.

In addition, social media like Instagram helps people to connect with others, reducing the intensity of their feelings of loneliness and isolation from others caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the outbreak of the epidemic, people's activities are very limited, but the network can be unrestricted. We can see that at this time, the number of views,videos, pictures and other interactions on major platforms have been significantly improved.The study shows that: *The peak of social media volume has risen during the stay-at-home protocol, and social media use has been a coping mechanism to withstand the feelings of isolation. The definite increase of social media usage during pandemics can thus be leveraged for formulating targeted campaigns.*[4] Communication becomes necessary during times like this, and online platforms provide the perfect space for people to connect and have conversations with one another even when they are thousands of miles away from each other. Aside from casual chats between individuals, Instagram also provides valuable information regarding the pandemic which is extremely significant because people rely on this kind of public platform to keep up with the newest policies, updates, and many other info. For instance, the study shows that social media like Instagram keep people informed *...about the statistics of the pandemic, the number of people infected, the death toll, the recovery rate, high-risk areas or COVID-19 hotspots, and various measures that the government is taking*[4]. As the common people have more knowledge about what is going on outside, they will feel a sense of security and connectivity, therefore less feelings of isolation and anxiety will occur. During hard times like this, social media platform transforms from being a major stressor to a source of relief for people, because it has become the first and only way that people can communicate with each other.

In another research study that focuses on South African university students' use of Instagram to get involved with mental health, researchers assert that: *Social networking sites (SNS) are also increasingly being utilized by young adults to access mental health-related content for purposes of education, awareness, and support.*[5] In this study, researchers used big data on Psychology students at a South African university, exploring their use of Instagram to access and promote mental health-related topics. As a result, they have found that: *The most common types of mental health content accessed by participants included mental health awareness and psycho-education, inspiration, coping strategies, as well as memes and humor. The most significant qualitative themes from the findings included using Instagram to improve awareness and management of one's own and other people's mental health symptoms, develop better coping mechanisms, find self-care tips, experience connectedness and social support, normalize mental health difficulties validate and alleviate negative feelings.*[5] Overall, the findings of this specific study indicate that Instagram acts as a reliable and easily accessible source for mental health information.

A research study published in the National Library of Medicine uses quantitative studies to picture mental health on Instagram. On this social media platform, influencers actively promote care for mental health, especially against depression and anxiety, which are the most prevalent mental illnesses among young adults and the majority of the population. Academic studies have shown that Instagram is regarded as *...a platform that individuals can use to enhance their health. For instance, Instagram users can inspire others to follow their examples, leading to higher levels of well-being, or allow individuals to connect with like-minded people. Studies have also uncovered that social media messages can help to reduce mental health issues and the stigmatization associated therewith.*[6] On social media like Instagram, there are multiple types of peer support for mental health, especially for people who are having hard times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Four forms of support can be distinguished: informational support, esteem support, emotional support, and network support. At this point, the role of the influencer comes into play again, according to the study, *...influencers thus started to thematize their personal mental health struggles, utilizing the diverse and varied presentation modes available on Instagram, which can increase both the visibility and relevance of the mental health discussion on social media.*[6] Influencers informally affect the attitudes and opinions of their followers by posting mental health-related things that make their followers become aware of such issues. In the case of spreading messages, influencers and celebrities have similar functions because both of them are deemed credible and reliable by the public crowd, therefore anything they say or do greatly affects what the public crowd says or does. This method can certainly be used to benefit and increase the exposure of mental health-related messages and inspirations among people.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research studies mentioned above strongly suggest that Instagram is able to promote mental health awareness and protection at a very large scale, appealing to everyone to contribute to helping others. On Instagram, celebrities and influencers engage with mental health support publicly to encourage their followers to join this unique campaign. The use of hashtags on Instagram also helps connect people in a mental health community, where people who suffer mental health problems and those who don't come together and understand each other. Moreover, as a popular media platform, Instagram also helps people tackle isolation and other mental health issues during and after the COVID-19 pandemic hit. People go on Instagram not only to seek the newest updates about COVID-19 policies and news but also to look for a connection with each other during a hard time. As a result of all these cumulative research studies, it is mostly certain that even though Instagram has its own flaws, the benefits that it brings to young adults' mental health are undeniable. In the future, many others may be able to use Instagram as a way of communicating and spreading messages that are crucial for individual and shared growth.

I hope that teenagers can make full use of the beneficial effects of Instagram , which can strengthen their connection with family and friends, and at the same time, they can share their photos, videos and other beautiful moments with users around the world, enhance interaction, establish good interpersonal relationships, drive away loneliness (this deadly risk is comparable to a new health killer who smokes 15 cigarettes a day), and reduce the incidence of mental health problems; Various communities on Instagram can provide users with a lot of timely help. Spiritual support and encouragement can satisfy people spiritually. The exchange of information technology and skills can make the participants learn from each other and grow together, which is difficult for a person to study hard.

In the meantime, as a platform favored by the majority of users, Instagram has thousands of videos, pictures and other works with different styles, different fields and innovations constantly updated every day, which is beneficial to divergent thinking with teenagers and the improvement of creativity. It is the source of inspiration for artistic creation and content, and also a gathering place for learning new skills.Last but not least,parents should supervise their adolescent boys and girls, while they surf on Instagram,and guide them to stay healthy and helpful surroundings,we all know that things on internet are virtual,sometimes we can't even tell which one is true or not,that why we need adults;On the other hand ,individual privacy of teenagers must be protected,once individual information is stolen,we can't imagine what gonna happen next,so parents must be careful; While enjoying the benefits brought by Instagram, the time we spend on it should be controlled,most of teenagers are lack of self-discipline,and can easily addict it,because of its attractive content.

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