THE INFLUENCES OF INSTAGRAM TOWARDS YOUNG FEMALES' MENTAL HEALTH
IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Instagram on the mental health of young females in Selangor, Malaysia, focusing on their usage motivations and psychological effects. With the widespread adoption of social media, it is crucial to understand its influence on mental well-being. The research aims to identify the primary reasons young females in Selangor use Instagram and to assess how their engagement with the platform affects their mental health. This study used a qualitative research approach which employs a questionnaire to 50 respondents, active Instagram users who are aged 15 to 40 years old. The data in this study gathered by using Google Form and analyzed by using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to have a better understanding of the diverse impact of Instagram on mental health of the young females. Initial findings show that Instagram is used for social connection, following influencers, discovering trends, and seeking validation. However, these motivations also lead to psychological issues such as feelings of inadequacy, social comparison, and pressure to present an idealized image, negatively affecting self-esteem and mental health. Conversely, some users find Instagram beneficial for self-expression and social connectivity. The study highlights both positive and negative aspects of Instagram, aiming to inform policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals about its complex effects on young females and guide strategies to enhance its benefits while mitigating adverse impacts.

KEYWORDS: young female, mental health, usage motivation, psychological issues, social media

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

The arrival of social network sites (SNS) are great for self-presentation and social engagement, which has opened up a number of new avenues for social relationships. Therefore, SNS have become extremely popular all over the world recently. With 2.75 billion monthly members, Facebook is the most popular social network; however, Instagram has recently achieved the significant milestone of one billion active users each month (Statista, 2020). The users of Instagram are able to share image-based content, such as photos and videos, together with a written description. This content can be interacted with by other users through liking, sharing, or commenting on the post. According to recent estimates, the majority of teenagers and young adults check their Instagram account at least once a day. It shows that Instagram gains popularity among teenagers and young adults (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Social networking sites (SNS) are growing in popularity, thus SNS is a major source of information for the social comparison effect. The perception of comparative information can have both positive and negative consequences when it comes to social comparison with others. Several research indicate that an Instagram user's real-life experiences can be impacted by his psychological views (Dibb, 2019). This comparison may have an indirect impact on people's psychological well-being because actualization needs and psychological well-being are strongly correlated (Kusuma & Yuniardi, 2019). Therefore, this paper aimed to study the influences of Instagram towards the mental health of young females, and to highlight psychological factors that perform due to this current issue.

1.2 Problem Statement

Multiple studies have connected higher levels of social network sites (SNS) use to poor psychological consequences (Huang, 2017, as cited in Faelens, 2021). For instance, using social networking sites has been linked to eating disorders and results with a negative body image, especially posting, viewing, and commenting on image-based content (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016, as cited in Faelens, 2021). Furthermore, several meta-analyses revealed evidence of the use of SNS and the symptoms of depression in connection to each other. For example, there is a low positive relationship between the frequency of SNS and the time spent on SNS with the symptoms of depression (Keles et al., 2020 & Yoon et al., 2019). Moreover, research in Keles et al., (2020) results that greater SNS intensity was positively correlated with psychological distress and anxiety. As a result, social capital has been proposed as a potential protection against mental illness developing.

Communication is the motivation for the use of SNS. Social networking sites (SNS) provide social capital benefits by making it easier to build new connections and maintain existing relationships (Verduyn et al., 2017, as cited in Faelens, 2021). Putnam (2000) identifies between the bonding and bridging kinds of social capital. Bonding social capital refers to advantages like social support, which are frequently given by SNS users with whom one has close relationships, like family and close friends. On the other hand, bridging social capital describes the advantages that come from weaker relationships such as acquaintances. These relationships can open doors to new information and different perspectives. Both forms of social capital appear to be increased by active SNS use, when users engage with their relationships through chat, status, or photo updates. This could therefore improve wellbeing (Putnam, 2000, as cited in Faelens, 2021).

Instagram is barely included in the studies and meta-analyses described above because it is a relatively new social media platform. Since each platform has unique features, further research is required to determine whether previous results about the influences of SNS towards mental health can be applied to Instagram. Unlike other widely used SNS like Facebook or Twitter, Instagram uniquely concentrates on visual content such as pictures and videos. Consequently, there is a possibility that Instagram differs from other social networking sites concerning the intermediary processes that connect it with mental health, indicating the necessity for a comprehensive analysis on the influences of Instagram towards mental health (Faelens, 2021).

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the primary motivations for Instagram use among young females in Selangor, Malaysia.

2. To study psychological impact caused by Instagram on young females' mental health in Selangor, Malaysia

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the motivations of young females in Selangor, Malaysia to use Instagram?

2. How does Instagram usage impact the mental health of young females in Selangor, Malaysia?

1.5 Significance of Study

The primary objective is to identify the motivations behind the use of Instagram, offering crucial insights into the psychological and social needs driving young women to engage with the platform. This research can inform mental health professionals and researchers about the specific features of Instagram that are potentially addictive, guiding the development of features that promote healthy usage patterns. The secondary objective is to examine the psychological impact of Instagram, aims to uncover how the platform affects self-esteem, social comparison, and overall well-being in young females. By highlighting the potential risks such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy, the study can raise awareness among users, parents, and educators, leading to better management of social media use. In addition, the results may guide therapies, offer strategies for appropriate social media use, and influence the creation of features that promote mental health. In summary, this research provides insights to improve mental health outcomes and foster a supportive online community, benefiting young women, mental health professionals, researchers, social media users, and policymakers in Selangor, Malaysia.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Instagram Usage Pattern

Frequency and Duration of Use

Young women in Selangor, Malaysia, use Instagram frequently and in different ways. They log on multiple times a day for sessions ranging from a few minutes to over an hour. This widespread use is a reflection of how Instagram has been integrated in daily life, frequently achieving its peak during breaks, right before bed, and right after waking (Trifiro, B. M., & Prena, K., 2021). Due to its mobile device accessibility, the platform is easily accessed and updated throughout the day, indicating its importance as a primary tool for communication and entertainment among young females in the region.

Motivations for Use

There are many unique and complex reasons for young women in Selangor to use Instagram. Based on MDPI (2018), the main reasons include seeking social affirmation, engaging in creative expression, and social connection. Plenty of users use the platform to connect with friends and family, follow influencers for entertainment, and look at inspiring content, such as travel or fashion. The research aligns with the results from (Trifiro, B. M., & Prena, K., 2021), which highlights Instagram's contribution to the development of self-presentation and identity creation via deliberately selected posts and stories.

Content Engagement and Creation

Young women actively engage with a variety of content on Instagram, including posts from friends, influencers, and brands. They frequently like, comment on, and share content to maintain social connections and stay updated on trends. In addition, many female users create their own content through photos and stories, showcasing significant life events and daily activities. This user-generated content not only reflects personal interests but also serves as a means of self-expression and social interaction within their digital communities (MDPI, 2018).

Psychological Impact

Instagram's usage patterns significantly influence the mental health of young women in Selangor, Malaysia. The platform encourages social comparison, which can result in feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, even as positive interactions and encouraging comments on posts can boost self-esteem and build a sense of belonging. This scenario is increased by Instagram's curated and idealised content, which often portrays unrealistic standards of beauty and lifestyle. Research emphasises how crucial it is to balance usage in order to reduce these negative consequences and encourage young female users to have pleasant experiences online (Trifiro, B. M., & Prena, K., 2021).

2.2 Application of Theory

2.2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

According to Katz et. al. (1970), the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) investigates how people actively seek out media to meet different social and psychological needs. It claims that media consumers are active participants who select media according to their needs and preferences rather than passive consumers. For example, information searching, self-identification, social integration, and entertainment.

In the context of Instagram, UGT contributes to the understanding of the platform's various impacts on mental health and esteem. Instagram can be a useful tool for young women to connect with friends and family in order to get social validation and support, which can boost their self-esteem. Through shared content, they might also utilise the platform to explore different aspects of their own identities and develop their own personal identities. However the same platform can also satisfy users' demands for enjoyment by exposing them to idealised content, which could result in unpleasant social comparisons and a lowered sense of self-worth. UGT highlights the critical to comprehend the motivations of media consumption. It is easier to create interventions that support better media habits and reduce negative effects on mental health by understanding why people utilise Instagram.

2.2.2 Social Comparison Theory

According to Leon Festinger's (1954), the Social Comparison Theory posits that people are naturally inclined to evaluate their own thoughts and abilities by comparing them to those of others. Self-evaluation, self-enhancement, and self-improvement all rely on this comparing process.

Upward and downward social comparisons are defined by the theory. Comparing oneself to someone viewed as being better is known as upward social comparison, and it can lead to low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy when people believe they do not fulfil the standard. On the other hand, downward social comparison is comparing oneself to people who are thought to be inferior. While this can instantly increase self-esteem, it can also result in an unstable self-image that is reliant on others' perceived shortcomings.

In the context of Instagram, downward comparisons might provide temporary boosts to self-esteem but encourage reliance on outside validation, while upward comparisons frequently result in poor self-evaluations because of exposure to idealised photos. On the other hand, by encouraging self-acceptance and offering encouraging comments, interacting with body-positive Instagram posts and encouraging communities could reduce these negative impacts. As a result, the theory highlights the opposing impacts of Instagram on mental health and emphasises the importance of responsible and balanced usage to promote steady self-esteem and general wellbeing.

2.3 The Influence of Instagram on Young Females' Mental Health

2.3.1 Self-esteem

Increase in Self-esteem

Instagram can be a tool for improving self-esteem, especially when utilised for social support. Sepas et. al. (2021) discovered that young women frequently have higher self-esteem when they use Instagram to interact with friends and family, get encouraging comments, and take part in supportive networks. These interactions can foster a sense of belonging and validation, which are crucial for maintaining positive mental health. The platform's ability to facilitate meaningful

connections and provide emotional support can counteract some of the negative effects of social comparison. For example, peer affirmation on personal posts, might increase users' sense of self-worth and overall well-being. This dual nature of Instagram's influence emphasizes the importance of how individuals utilize the platform, highlighting that it can be both a source of distress and a tool for social support.

Decrease in Self-esteem

Faelens et al. (2021) studied the negative impacts of Instagram on young women's self-esteem. According to their research, regular exposure to the platform's idealised and frequently unrealistic photographs severely reduces one's sense of esteem. This adverse impact is especially noticeable when users participate in upward social comparison, making negative comparisons between themselves and individuals who are thought to be more successful, happy, or attractive. These kinds of comparisons frequently result in low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. The study also emphasised how this issue is facilitated by Instagram's principles of only showcasing the best moments and portraying an idealised life. Regular exposure to these well chosen photos can create an unattainable standard of perfection, which can lead to users' persistent dissatisfaction and consistently negative self-evaluations.

2.3.2 Self-acceptance

Body Positivity

Instagram has become an effective medium for body positivity initiatives, which challenge traditional beauty standards and encourage self-acceptance. According to Cohen et al. (2021), exposure to body-positive content on Instagram can lead to improvement in body satisfaction and reduction in the negative impacts of social comparison. The body positivity initiatives help people have a more positive body image and experience less body dissatisfaction by encouraging people to accept their bodies for what they truly are. The positive aspects of celebrating various forms of beauty and showcasing a variety of body shapes on these platforms may counteract the negative effects of exposure to imagined images. In addition, body positivity influencers frequently share their own experiences of overcoming problems with body image, which inspires and supports those facing similar challenges. In addition, body positivity influencers frequently share their own experiences of overcoming problems with body image, which inspires and supports those facing similar challenges. This feature of Instagram has the potential to foster mental well-being through encouraging a more accepting and inclusive definition of beauty.

2.3.4 Social Comparison and Anxiety

Upward Social Comparison

The tendency to engage in social comparison is a natural part of human behavior, and the visual and interactive e features often reinforce this natural behavior. Kelly et al. (2020) found that young women are more likely to experience greater levels of anxiety and despair if they regularly compare themselves to others on Instagram. This is especially true in the case of upward social

comparison, in which people measure themselves against those they believe to be in better circumstances. This constant comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and even depression, due to the possibility that users will believe their lives do not measure up to the seemingly perfect lives portrayed by others.

Downward Social Comparison

Mental health can be significantly impacted by downward social comparison on Instagram, as users compare themselves to those who appear less fortunate or successful. While these kinds of comparisons could provide short-term confidence boosts by instilling a sense of superiority, however the long-term consequences could be harmful. Masciantonio et. al. (2021) discovered that although negative comparisons can at first boost self-esteem, they frequently encourage a dependency on outside approval, which results in an unstable self-image and reduced psychological health. This dependence on using other people's failures to make oneself feel better may arise to a fragile sense of self-worth. The frequent usage of Instagram by young women in Selangor, Malaysia, might lead to an endless cycle of comparison that is harmful to their overall mental health and true self-esteem. Instagram users may constantly look for comparisons that temporarily boost their confidence but eventually make them feel less secure and dissatisfied with their own lives. This problem grows worse by the curated and false portrayals of life on the platform. This phenomenon highlights the need for solutions that focus on the unique effects of Instagram use on mental health, especially for vulnerable groups like young women.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The term "research methodology" encompasses the specific steps or procedures used to identify, select, analyze, and present information relevant to a particular study. In academic research, the methodology section is essential because it allows readers to evaluate the overall validity and reliability of the study. Selecting appropriate methods is critical for the coherent development of research. This chapter will cover the sampling methods, research design, measurement techniques, and procedures used in this study. It will also address ethical considerations and the reliability of the research process.

3.2 Research Approach

This study will utilize a quantitative research approach. Quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data, which helps identify trends, compute averages, develop hypotheses, identify causality, and extend findings to larger populations (Bhandari, 2022).

3.3 Sampling

Sampling framework refers to the tools or techniques used for selecting samples from a larger population. In this study, a probability sampling method will be employed. This technique involves selecting a random sample from the population of interest. The target population for this research is young females in Selangor, Malaysia.

3.4 Research Design

Research design refers to a structured plan that utilizes empirical data to response research questions. There are four primary types of quantitative research designs: experimental, quasi-experimental, descriptive, and correlational. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs are used to explore cause-and-effect relationships, while descriptive and correlational designs are useful for quantifying variables and understanding their relationships (McCombes, 2021). For this study, an experimental design will be utilized to investigate the influences of Instagram towards young females' mental health in Selangor, Malaysia and to examine the Instagram usage pattern that influences these motives and topics of interest.

3.5 Measurement

Data analysis tools and methods are essential for examining collected data. In this study, quantitative data analysis methods will be used to process sample data. A descriptive research design is essential to present findings in a clear and acceptable manner, enhancing the accuracy of the results.

3.6 Data Collection Method

Data collection refers to the process of gathering relevant information from external sources on a specific topic. In this study, quantitative data collection methods will be employed. According to Houston (2024), quantitative data is measurable and is often collected using closed-ended or multiple-choice questions in surveys, polls, or questionnaires. This study will use a quantitative

survey approach to gather data. Information will be collected from 50 young females from Selangor, Malaysia using a questionnaire consisting of 29 questions, including 22 closed-ended questions and 7 demographic questions. A five-point Likert scale will be utilized to measure the frequency of responses, to easier the analysis of the response patterns.

3.7 Procedure

This study will employ an online survey using Google Forms to explore the influences of Instagram towards young females' mental health in Selangor, Malaysia. The analysis will consider variables such as daily Instagram usage, Instagram usage pattern and motives to use Instagram. The survey questionnaire is divided into four sections; which consists section A: demographic profile, section B: Instagram usage pattern, section C: perception and self-esteem and section D: mental health and well-being). Ethical clearance will be provided on the first page of the Google Form to inform participants of the study's ethical considerations. After designing the form, it will be randomly distributed to young females in Selangor, Malaysia. The target sample size for the questionnaire is 50 young females in Selangor, Malaysia.

3.8 Reliability and Ethical Consideration

This study ensures data reliability and validity through the use of primary quantitative research methods. These methods are crucial for collecting credible data from external sources and for conducting objective analysis. As a result, the study's findings are expected to be perceived as credible and trustworthy by readers.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The questionnaire was administered from 15 August to 30 August 2024. This google form took approximately seven to ten minutes to fill in. A total of 50 young females from Selangor, Malaysia had participated in the Google survey form.

4.2 Data Analysis

Section A: Demographic Background

Question 1: What is your gender?
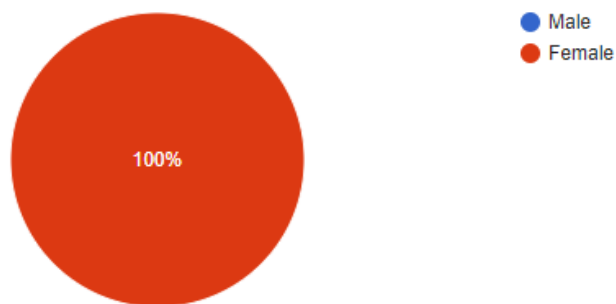
Figure 4.1 What is your gender?

What is your gender?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	0	0
Female	50	100
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.1 What is your gender?

Based on Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 above, the data shows that only female respondents participated in this survey. There are a total of 50 female respondents, which equally to 100% of female respondents, and 0% of male respondents that were involved in this research. This result meets the criteria of the research topic, which the target population for this research is young females in Selangor, Malaysia.

Question 2: Which age range you are from?
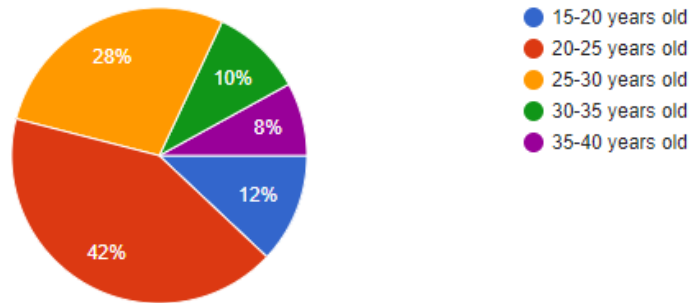
Figure 4.2 Which age range you are from?

Which age range you are from?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-20 years old	6	12
20-25 years old	21	42
25-30 years old	14	28
30-35 years old	5	10
35-40 years old	4	8
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.2 Which age range you are from?

Based on Figure 4.2 and Table 4.2 above, the data illustrated that the most age group of young females that participated in this research is the range of 20 to 25 years old. There are a total of 21 young females under this range of age group, which equals to 42% among all 50 respondents. The second most age group of young females are 25 to 30 years old, which consists of 14 young females that equals to 28% of respondents. This result indicates that Instagram is popular among young females between 20 to 30 years old.

Question 3: What is your race/ethnicity?

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

Copy

50 responses

● Malay
● Chinese
● Indian

22%

48%

30%
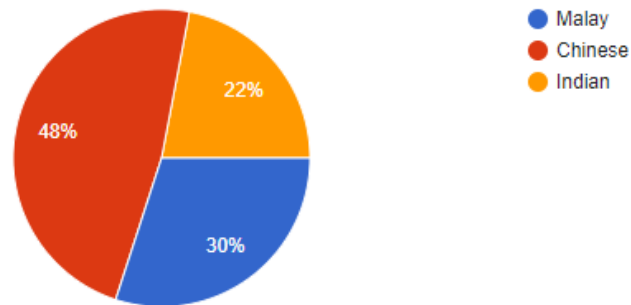
Table 4.3 What is your race/ethnicity?

What is your race/ethnicity?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Malay	15	30
Chinese	24	48
Indian	11	22
Total	*50*	*100*

Figure 4.3 What is your race/ethnicity?

Figure 4.3 and Table 4.3 above showed that Chinese young females have the highest number of respondents. There are a total of 24 Chinese females, equally to 48% among all the respondents. This survey also involved 15 Malay young females, equally to 30%, and 11 Indian young females, equally to 22%.

Question 4: Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have? (You may choose more than 1)

4. Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have? (You may choose more than 1)

Copy

50 responses
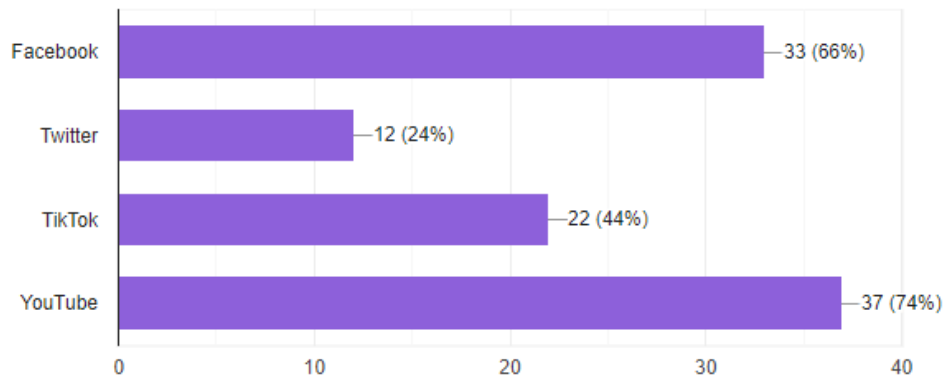
Figure 4.4 Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have?

Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	33	66
Twitter	12	24
TikTok	22	44
YouTube	37	74
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.4 Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have?

Figure 4.4 and Table 4.4 showed a significant number of young females reported using multiple social media platforms besides Instagram. The most popular platform YouTube gain 37 respondents, which is the highest number of respondents, equally to 74%, followed by Facebook, with 33 respondents, equally to 66%. YouTube and Facebook emerged as the leading alternatives, indicating that young females diversify their online activities across various social media channels, engaging with different types of content and interactions available on each platform.

Question 5: On average, how many hours do you spend on Instagram daily?
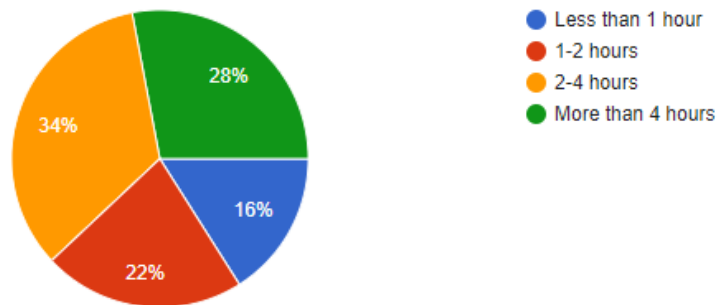
Figure 4.5 On average, how many hours do you spend on Instagram daily?

On average, how many hours do you spend on Instagram daily?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	8	16
1-2 hours	11	22
2-4 hours	17	34
More than 4 hours	14	28
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.5 On average, how many hours do you spend on Instagram daily?

Based on Figure 4.5 and Table 4.5, 17 among 50 young females indicated spending 2-4 hours daily on Instagram, equally to 34%. Another notable group with 14 respondents, equally to 28% spend more than 4 hours each day on Instagram. The results showed that Instagram plays a substantial role in young females' daily routines.

Question 6: How long have you been using Instagram?

6. How long have you been using Instagram?

50 responses

Copy

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- More than 3 years

66%

8%

22%
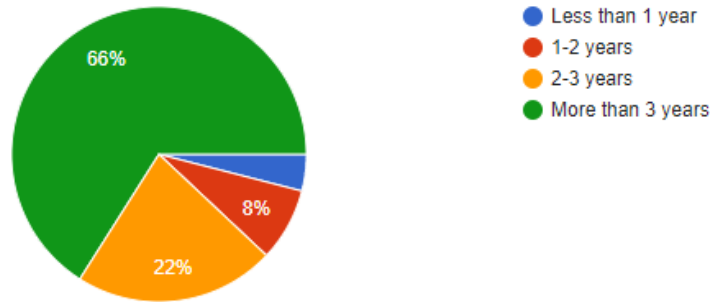
Figure 4.6 How long have you been using Instagram?

How long have you been using Instagram?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	2	4
1-2 years	4	8
2-3 years	11	22
More than 3 years	33	66
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.6 How long have you been using Instagram?

Looking at Figure 4.6 and Table 4.6 above, the survey revealed that most young females have been using Instagram for an extended period. Specifically, 33 respondents, equally to 66% have been active on Instagram for more than three years, proving the platform's long-standing appeal. A smaller group of young females with 11 respondents, equally to 22% have used Instagram for 2 to

3 years, while fewer respondents reported using it for 1 to 2 years or less than one year, showing

that Instagram remains a consistently popular choice among young females over time.

Question 7: What activities you usually do in Instagram?
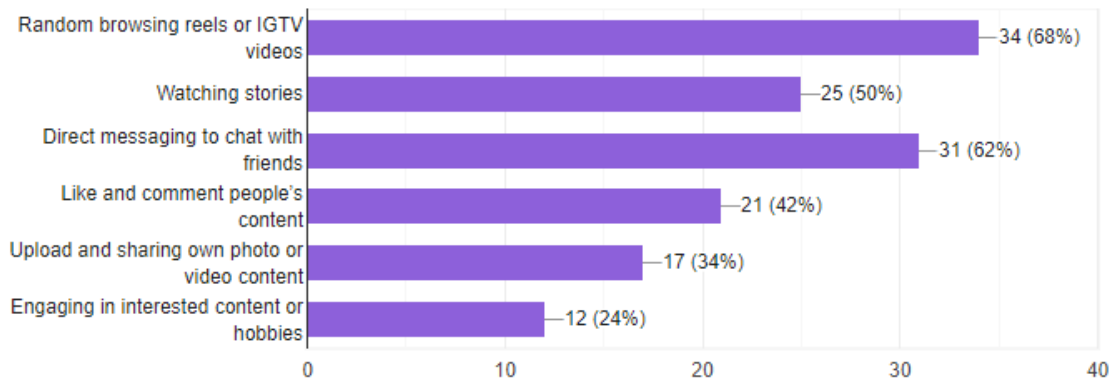
Figure 4.7 What activities you usually do in Instagram?

What activities you usually do in Instagram?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Random browsing reels or IGTV videos	34	68
Watching stories	25	50
Direct messaging to chat with friends	31	62
Like and comment people's content	21	42
Upload and sharing own photo or video content	17	34
Engaging in interested content or hobbies	12	24
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.7 What activities you usually do in Instagram?

Based on Figure 4.7 above, the most significant activities that young females typically engage in random browsing of reels or IGTV videos, with 34 young females, equally to 68% of respondents. Instagram serves as a key source of entertainment, offering a diverse range of visually appealing content that captures their interests. Many students also participate in direct messaging to chat with friends, with the number of 31 young females, equally to 62% of respondents, highlighting Instagram's role as a communication tool. Along with watching stories, suggesting a preference for consuming visual and ephemeral content, which consists of 25 young females, equally to 50% of respondents. Engaging with others' content by liking and commenting is another common activity, which consists of 21 young females, equivalent to 42% of respondents, showing active participation in social interactions. Additionally, 17 respondents, equally to 34%, upload and share personal photos or videos, indicating diverse use cases that cater to personal expression. 12 young

females, equally to 24% engaging in content related to specific interests or hobbies, fostering a sense of community and connection with like-minded individuals.

Section B: Instagram Usage Pattern

Question 1: I use Instagram to connect with friends and family.

I use Instagram to connect with friends and family.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	4	8
2	4	8
3	4	8
4	7	14
5	31	62
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.8 I use Instagram to connect with friends and family

According to Figure 4.8 above, the data above show that there is a significant percentage which is 62%, equivalent to 31 young females who strongly agree that the motive of using Instagram is to connect with friends and family. Instagram usage among young females serves as a tool to connect with family and friends. It allows them to communicate by exchanging messages, leaving comments, and liking posts, helping to maintain close relationships. Through Instagram, young females can stay updated on the lives of their loved ones, share personal moments, and express their thoughts and emotions. The platform also enables young females to strengthen family ties,

keep in touch with distant relatives, and engage in meaningful conversations, making it a valuable

medium for fostering social connections with both family members and friends.

Question 2: I use Instagram to seek entertainment.

I use Instagram to seek entertainment.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	6	12
4	9	18
5	32	64
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.9 I use Instagram to seek entertainment

Looking at table 4.9, the data showed that 64% of respondents, which is equal to 32 young females,

frequently use Instagram to seek entertainment. Many young females use Instagram as a source of

fun and distraction. The platform is full of engaging content, from funny videos to short reels,

providing quick and easy entertainment. Whether they're looking for something lighthearted to

pass the time or following trends that catch their interest, Instagram offers a variety of ways to stay

entertained. Instagram's ability to suggest content based on personal interests makes it a popular

choice for entertainment among young females.

Question 3: I use Instagram to share my own life and experiences.

I use Instagram to share my own life and experiences.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	3	6
2	5	10
3	7	14
4	7	14
5	28	56
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.10 I use Instagram to share my own life and experiences

Based on Table 4.10, there is 56% equivalent to 28 young females who strongly agree that they use Instagram to share their own life and experience. Instagram gives young females a platform to share their personal lives with friends and followers. They can post photos, videos, and stories that reflect their everyday moments, milestones, or special events. It's a way for them to stay connected with others by showing events happened in their lives, such as an accomplishment, a trip, or simply a day out. This sharing helps young females express themselves and receive support or feedback from their social circles, creating a sense of community.

Question 4: I use Instagram to engage with content related to my hobbies and interests.

I use Instagram to engage with content related to my hobbies and interests.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	0	0
2	1	2
3	9	15
4	9	15
5	31	50
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.11 I use Instagram to engage with content related to my hobbies and interests

Referring to Table 4.11 above, the result shows that 50% of respondents, which is equivalent to 31 young females, strongly agree that they often use Instagram to explore content that aligns with their personal hobbies and interests. They can follow accounts or hashtags that focus on topics they enjoy, such as fitness, cooking, or art. Instagram offers a way to dive deeper into these interests, providing inspiration and new ideas. By engaging with this type of content, young females can stay up-to-date on the latest trends in their hobbies, learn new skills, and connect with others who share the same interests.

Question 5: I use Instagram to keep track of trends and popular topics.

I use Instagram to keep track of trends and popular topics.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	5	7
2	1	1
3	11	15
4	10	14
5	33	46
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.12 I use Instagram to keep track of trends and popular topics

Table 4.12 above shows that there is a total of 46% which is equivalent to 33 young females, often use Instagram to stay updated on trends and popular topics. Instagram offers young females a way to follow the latest fashion, lifestyle, and social trends by observing content that aligns with their interests. Through Instagram, young females can easily keep track of emerging topics, whether it's in beauty, entertainment, or current events. By engaging with trending content, young females can stay in the loop with popular topics, enabling them to participate in relevant conversations, stay fashion-forward, and keep their interests aligned with current trends.

Question 6: I use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities.

I use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	4	6
2	3	4
3	8	12
4	8	12
5	27	40
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.13 I use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities

According to Table 4.13 above, the data above show that there is a significant percentage which is 40%, equivalent to 27 young females who strongly agree that they use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities. By keeping up with their posts and stories, they can see what their favorite public figures are up to and draw inspiration from their content. Whether it's advice, lifestyle tips, or just seeing a glimpse of their day-to-day life, influencers and celebrities play a big role in shaping what's popular. For many young females, following these figures is also a way to feel connected to the broader world of entertainment and culture.

Question 7: I use Instagram to showcase my talents and hobbies.

I use Instagram to showcase my talents and hobbies.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	6	12
2	6	12
3	8	16
4	7	14
5	23	46
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.14 I use Instagram to showcase my talents and hobbies

Looking at Table 4.14, the data showed that 46% of respondents, which is equal to 23 young females, use Instagram as a platform to display their talents and hobbies to a wide audience. Whether they're passionate about art, music, photography, or fashion, Instagram allows them to share their work with others through posts, stories, or reels. This gives them the opportunity to receive feedback, build followers, and even connect with others who appreciate or share their interests. By showcasing their skills, young females can gain recognition and express themselves creatively, all while engaging with a supportive community.

Question 8: I use Instagram to interact with people who have similar interests.

I use Instagram to interact with people who have similar interests.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	1	2
2	3	6
3	9	18
4	13	26
5	24	48
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.15 I use Instagram to interact with people who have similar interests

Referring to Table 4.15 above, the result shows that 48% which is equivalent to 24 young females strongly agree that Instagram allows them to connect with others who share similar interests. They can join conversations, comment on posts, or follow groups related to their hobbies or passions. This makes Instagram a great tool for finding and interacting with people who have similar tastes, whether it's in fashion, fitness, or even social causes. These interactions can create a strong sense of community for young females, as users actively support and engage with each other, fostering deeper connections and a feeling of belonging.

Section C: Perception and Self-esteem

Question 1: Using Instagram makes me feel more connected to others.

Using Instagram makes me feel more connected to others.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	3	5
2	4	7
3	4	7
4	12	20
5	27	45
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.16 Using Instagram makes me feel more connected to others

Based on Table 4.16, there is 45% equivalent to 27 young females who strongly agree that using Instagram makes them feel more connected to others. Many young females use Instagram because it helps them maintain a sense of connection with friends, family, and acquaintances. Through messaging, sharing posts, and engaging with others' content, they can stay updated on the lives of people they care about, even if they're far away. This constant communication allows young females to feel more involved in each other's daily lives, thereby strengthening bonds for lasting relationships.

Question 2: I often compare myself to others on Instagram.

I often compare myself to others on Instagram.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	7	14
2	10	20
3	7	14
4	6	12
5	20	40
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.17 I often compare myself to others on Instagram

According to Table 4.17 above, the data above show that there is a significant percentage which is 40%, equivalent to 20 young females often compare themselves to others on Instagram. It's common for young females to compare themselves to others on Instagram, as the platform is filled with curated content showcasing the best moments of people's lives, including their appearance, achievements, or lifestyle. However, this comparison can sometimes create pressure to meet similar standards, leading young females to become increasingly aware of how their own lives measure up against those they admire.

Question 3: I feel happy when I receive likes and comments on my posts.

I feel happy when I receive likes and comments on my posts.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	0	0
2	2	4
3	8	16
4	13	26
5	27	54
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.18 I feel happy when I receive likes and comments on my posts

Looking at Table 4.18, the data showed that 54% of respondents, which is equal to 27 young females, strongly agree that they feel happy when they receive likes and comments on their posts. Receiving likes and comments brings a sense of validation and joy to many young females using Instagram. Positive feedback on their posts often boosts their mood, making them feel acknowledged and appreciated by their peers. The engagement from others also reinforces their presence on the platform, encouraging young females to continue sharing their experiences.

Question 4: Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs.

Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	5	10
2	9	18
3	5	10
4	7	14
5	24	48
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.19 Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs

Based on Table 4.19, there is 48% equivalent to 24 young females who strongly agree with the statement "Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs". For some young females, looking at other people's posts can lead to feelings of inadequacy. When comparing their own lives to the seemingly perfect images shared by others, it's easy to feel like their experiences are lacking. This can sometimes result in feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction in young females, as the reality of their life may not always match what they see on their feed.

Question 5: Instagram has helped me find like-minded individuals.

Instagram has helped me find like-minded individuals.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	1	2
2	6	12
3	10	20
4	9	18
5	24	48
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.20 Instagram has helped me find like-minded individuals

Referring to Table 4.20 above, the result shows that 48% which is equivalent to 24 young females strongly agree that Instagram has helped them to find like-minded individuals. Instagram serves as a space where young females can discover and connect with people who share similar interests and values. Through following specific accounts, engaging with content related to their hobbies, and participating in communities, they can build relationships with like-minded individuals. These connections can offer both social support and inspiration, providing a valuable network where they can share experiences, exchange ideas, and motivate each other to pursue their passions.

Question 6: Instagram helps me express myself creatively.

Instagram helps me express myself creatively.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	3	6
2	7	14
3	11	22
4	10	20
5	19	38
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.21 Instagram helps me express myself creatively

According to Table 4.21 above, the data above show that 38% of respondents, equivalent to 19 young females, strongly agree that Instagram helps them express themselves creatively. Young females often use Instagram as a creative outlet, where they can express their individuality through photos, videos, and written captions. Whether they are passionate about fashion, art, photography, or writing, the platform gives them the opportunity to showcase their talents and creative ideas to a broader audience. This freedom to share personal work helps young females to develop and explore their creative identity.

Question 7: I feel insecure about my appearance after using Instagram.

I feel insecure about my appearance after using Instagram.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	6	12
2	7	14
3	8	16
4	6	12
5	23	46
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.22 I feel insecure about my appearance after using Instagram

Table 4.22 above shows that there is a total of 46% which is equivalent to 23 young females often feeling insecure about their appearance after using Instagram. Some young females experience insecurity about their appearance after using Instagram, as the platform often promotes idealized and filtered images. Constant exposure to highly edited or styled posts can cause users to feel inadequate about their own looks. This can lead to self-esteem issues, particularly when young females feel like they don't match the beauty standards commonly seen on their feed.

Section D: Mental Health and Well-being

Question 1: I feel that Instagram has a positive impact on my self-esteem.

I feel that Instagram has a positive impact on my self-esteem.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	6	12
2	3	6
3	11	22
4	8	16
5	22	44
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.23 I feel that Instagram has a positive impact on my self-esteem

Looking at Table 4.23, the data showed that 44% of respondents, which is equal to 22 young females, strongly agree that Instagram has a positive impact on their self-esteem. Many young females feel that Instagram enhances their self-esteem, by sharing their experiences and receiving positive feedback. For example, they feel more confident in themselves when they receive likes and encouraging comments. This sense of recognition can help them embrace their identity and celebrate their unique qualities, leading to a more positive self-image over time.

Question 2: I ever experienced anxiety or depression related to Instagram use.

I ever experienced anxiety or depression related to Instagram use.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	8	16
2	7	14
3	5	10
4	6	12
5	24	48
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.24 I ever experienced anxiety or depression related to Instagram use

According to Table 4.24 above, the data above show that there is a significant percentage which is 48%, equivalent to 20 young females strongly agree that they ever experienced anxiety or depression related to Instagram use. This is due to the constant exposure to idealized lives, comparisons, or negative interactions can create emotional distress. As a result, young females may experience feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and concern about not meeting perceived standards. Therefore, it is essential for young females to manage their Instagram usage to protect their mental health.

Question 3: I feel a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community.

I feel a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	2	4
2	5	10
3	10	20
4	11	22
5	22	44
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.25 I feel a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community

Table 4.25 above shows that there is a total of 44% which is equivalent to 22 young females strongly feeling a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community. For some young females, Instagram fosters a sense of community and belonging. Engaging with like-minded people and participating in conversations helps them feel connected and supported. This social interaction makes young females feel part of a group, reinforcing their sense of belonging in the online world, and can even lead to lasting friendships beyond the app.

Question 4: I feel inadequate or insecure about myself when using Instagram.

I feel inadequate or insecure about myself when using Instagram.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	7	14
2	6	12
3	5	10
4	12	24
5	20	40
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.26 I feel inadequate or insecure about myself when using Instagram

Looking at Table 4.26, the data showed that 40% of respondents, which is equal to 20 young females, strongly feel inadequate or insecure about themselves when using Instagram. Some young females feel insecure or inadequate while using Instagram, particularly when they compare themselves to others. Seeing highly curated posts, perfect images, or luxurious lifestyles can lead to feelings of not being good enough, causing self-doubt and lowering confidence in their own achievements or appearance. This pressure to conform to unrealistic standards can have a lasting impact on their self-esteem and mental health.

Question 5: I often receive emotional support from my Instagram connections.

I often receive emotional support from my Instagram connections.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	5	10
2	3	6
3	6	12
4	11	22
5	24	48
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.27 I often receive emotional support from my Instagram connections

Table 4.27 above shows that there is a total of 48% which is equivalent to 24 young females often receiving emotional support from their Instagram connections. By sharing personal challenges or moments, they often receive encouraging messages or comments from their followers, friends, or communities. This sense of support helps young females feel understood and less isolated during tough times. It not only provides comfort but also strengthens their resilience, empowering them to face their challenges with greater confidence.

Question 6: I feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on Instagram.

I feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on Instagram.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	9	18
2	3	6
3	9	18
4	8	16
5	20	40
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.28 I feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on Instagram

Referring to Table 4.28 above, the result shows that 40% which is equivalent to 20 young females strongly feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on Instagram. Many young females feel the pressure to maintain a flawless image on Instagram, as the platform encourages users to present the best of themselves. This focus on perfection often leads them to hide their flaws and challenges, creating stress as they try to keep up appearances and meet the expectations of their audience. This can create a cycle of anxiety and self-doubt, as they worry about how others perceive them rather than focusing on their genuine selves.

Question 7: I feel relax and relieve stress when using Instagram.

I feel relax and relieve stress when using Instagram.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	2	4
2	4	8
3	11	22
4	12	24
5	21	42
Total	*50*	*100*

Table 4.29 I feel relax and relieve stress when using Instagram

Based on Table 4.29, there is 42% equivalent to 21 young females who strongly feel relaxed and relieve stress when using Instagram. For some young females, using Instagram is a way to unwind and relieve stress. Scrolling through lighthearted content, engaging with fun posts, or following accounts that bring joy can help them relax after a long day. The platform provides a distraction from daily pressures, offering a break and a chance to recharge, making it a valuable tool for managing stress in their lives.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on the influence of Instagram on the mental health of young females in Selangor, Malaysia. It examines Instagram's impact on self-esteem, anxiety, social comparison, and well-being, integrating our research with existing literature on social media's psychological effects. Practical strategies will be recommended for reducing negative mental health impacts while promoting Instagram's potential to enhance positive outcomes. The chapter also addresses the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research, concluding with a summary of Instagram's significant role in shaping young females' mental health in Selangor.

5.2 Summary of Statistical Analyses

This study investigates the influences of Instagram on the mental health of young females in Selangor, Malaysia. The research focuses on the impact of Instagram on key mental health factors such as anxiety, self-esteem, social comparison, and overall well-being. The study simplifies quantitative data into significant findings, highlighting the influence of Instagram on daily life and its role in impacting mental health. This summary offers a framework for understanding how Instagram specifically affects young females by identifying the data from the research.

5.3 Descriptive Analysis

Data was collected from 50 young females from age 18 to 40 years old at Selangor, of which equally to 100% of respondents were young females. Findings reveal that 66% of respondents have been using Instagram for more than three years, and 62% spending more than 2 hours daily on the platform. This result indicates that Instagram plays a substantial role in their daily routines.

Users are primarily attracted to Instagram for its engaging visual content, social interactions, and ephemeral features like Stories and Reels, aligning with Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which suggests that individuals seek social connections and self-expression through the platform. Visual content stands out as the most preferred aspect, with 68% of young females browsing reels or IGTV videos. Social interaction is another key aspect of Instagram, with 62% of respondents engage in direct messaging, and 42% of respondents actively liking and commenting on posts, illustrating how the platform's role in facilitating connections. However, the interactive nature of Instagram can also lead to comparisons with others, reflecting aspects of Social Comparison Theory (SCT). Overall, Instagram serves as a vital space for social engagement while presenting opportunities for self-expression and connection.

The data indicates that Instagram provides social benefits and opportunities for engagement and interactions. However, the platform also presents risks related to self-esteem, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy. By applying Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the research discusses how users seek social connection and self-expression, while Social Comparison Theory (SCT) reveals the negative impacts of comparing oneself to others. A comprehensive understanding of both the positive and negative impacts of Instagram is essential, as Instagram's design and usage patterns play a significant role in shaping mental health outcomes.

5.4 Discussion of Findings

5.4.1 Instagram Usage Patterns: A Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) Perspective

The Instagram usage pattern among young females in Selangor, Malaysia, can be strongly linked to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which explains that individuals actively engage with media to satisfy specific needs such as social connections, entertainment, and self-expression. Research shows that social media, including Instagram, is often used to maintain relationships, share experiences, and engage with hobbies, which fulfills personal and social needs (Faelens et al., 2021). The data shows that 62% of young females strongly agree that they use Instagram to connect with friends and family, and 48% of young females strongly agree that Instagram allows them to connect with others who share similar interests. This result shows that young females utilize Instagram stay connected with friends and family, offering a sense of belonging and maintaining relationships, whether through private messages or public interactions such as comments and likes. This reflects UGT's premise that people use media to maintain social relationships and a sense of community.

Additionally, Instagram serves as a platform for entertainment and inspiration, allowing users to explore content related to their hobbies and interests. Research shows that young females often use Instagram to curate a personalized feed based on their interests, utilizing features such as reels, stories, and posts to enhance their social experience and emotional well-being (Clayton et al., 2021). Furthermore, Instagram's algorithm prioritizes content that garners high levels of interaction, encouraging users to share their experiences, talents, and interests to gain visibility and engagement (Sarah Roziman, 2020). The findings reveal that 64% of young females frequently use Instagram to seek entertainment, highlighting that young females actively seek content that provides enjoyment and fulfills their emotional needs. Meanwhile, 46% of young females often

use Instagram to stay updated on trends and popular topics, benefiting from the platform's personalized content curation based on their interests. Additionally, 40% of young females strongly agree that they use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities, reflects UGT's idea that users engage with content that allows them to connect with aspirational figures. These statistics indicate that Instagram effectively fulfills their desire for entertainment, personalization and inspiration. UGT explains this as a form of entertainment gratification, where users actively seek content that caters to their emotional and social needs. The algorithm-driven content delivery, which prioritizes engaging material, further aligns with UGT's focus on how users select media to meet their needs for pleasure and information.

In terms of self-expression, Instagram allows users to showcase their personal lives, share experiences, and display talents, enhancing self-presentation and identity development, which is a core element of UGT's self-presentation gratification. The data showed that 46% of young females use Instagram as a platform to display their talents and hobbies to a wide audience. Besides, 56% of young females strongly agree that they use Instagram to share their own life and experiences. This aligns with the self-expression gratification that many individuals seek on social media, allowing them to manage and curate their identities for various audiences (Choi et al., 2020). This behavior is key to UGT's view of media use, which suggests that young females use Instagram to shape and show their identity, to manage others' perceptions towards them.

The ability to interact with others who share similar hobbies or interests, enhancing their sense of community and belonging. 50% of young females responded that they often use Instagram to engage in interested content or hobbies, further emphasizing that Instagram fulfills their desire for social interaction and identity formation. Research has shown that active social media use, such as engaging with niche communities through hashtags and direct communication, fosters a sense of

belonging and connection among users, especially those who engage with like-minded individuals (Valkenburg et al., 2021). By using Instagram, young females find a space for both personal connection and social fulfillment, consistent with UGT's principles of using media to build and sustain social ties.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) highlights how Instagram meets various psychological and social needs for young females in Selangor. By allowing users to keep up with the latest trends and connect with like-minded individuals, Instagram provides multiple gratifications through its user-friendly features and social networking capabilities. As a result, it has become an essential part of daily life for many young females.

5.4.2 Perception and Self-Esteem of Young Females on Instagram: A Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) Perspective

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) emphasizes how young females utilize Instagram to meet specific needs, influencing their perception and self-esteem. A substantial 54% of young females strongly agree with the statement "I feel happy when I receive likes and comments on my posts," highlighting the emotional gratification derived from social validation. This digital affirmation serves as a source of immediate emotional reward, reinforcing positive feelings about oneself. Additionally, 45% of young females strongly agree that "Using Instagram makes me feel more connected to others," indicating that the platform serves as a vital space for social interaction and community building. This finding aligns with research suggesting that social media enhances feelings of connection and belonging, which are crucial for mental well-being (Valkenburg et al., 2022). This sense of connectedness is particularly significant for young women, as it helps combat

feelings of loneliness and isolation, promoting a more positive self-image and mental health overall.

Furthermore, 48% of young females believe that "Instagram has helped me find like-minded individuals," reinforcing the idea that social media facilitates the formation of supportive networks that promote self-acceptance (Ruggs et al., 2021). This ability to connect with peers creates a sense of belonging and validation, which is especially important for young women as they navigate their identities in today's digital world. Instagram also functions as an important outlet for creative expression, with approximately 38% strongly agreeing that "Instagram helps me express myself creatively." This aspect of social media usage emphasizes the importance of self-expression, as it enables individuals to showcase their talents and interests, contributing to a positive self-image (Choi et al., 2020). Instagram provides a space for creative expression and sharing personal stories, which allow users to present their personality and build confidence, which helps boost their self-esteem through online space.

However, the relationship between Instagram use and mental health is complex, with studies showing that while social media can foster positive self-esteem, it can also lead to negative outcomes when users engage in unfavorable comparisons (Faelens et al., 2021; Clayton et al., 2021). Overall, UGT illustrates that young females actively turn to Instagram to satisfy social, emotional, and creative needs, fostering improved self-perception and self-worth in a digitally connected environment.

5.4.3 Perception and Self-Esteem of Young Females on Instagram: A Social Comparison Theory Perspective

Social Comparison Theory explains how individuals determine their self-worth by comparing themselves to others. On platforms like Instagram, young females in Selangor are frequently exposed to curated images and narratives that reflect others' successes and lifestyles.

Upward Social Comparison

When young females in Selangor are exposed to curated content on Instagram, they often engage in upward social comparisons, where they evaluate their lives against others who seem more successful or attractive. This kind of comparison has been linked to a decrease in self-esteem and negative mental health outcomes, as individuals may feel that they do not measure up to these idealized images. 40% of young females strongly agree with the statement "I often compare myself to others on Instagram"; 48% of young females strongly agree with "Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs"; and 46% of young females strongly agree with "I feel insecure about my appearance after using Instagram", highlight how upward comparisons can negatively impact self-perception and mental health. The frequent exposure to such content exacerbates insecurities about appearance and life satisfaction. Recent research highlights how upward comparisons on social media, especially in relation to body image or lifestyle, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, particularly in relation to body image and overall self-worth (McComb & Mills, 2021). This pattern of comparison may lead to further psychological distress, reinforcing a cycle of negative self-evaluation and dissatisfaction. In the context of Social Comparison Theory (SCT), these upward comparisons play a significant role in shaping the self-esteem and mental health of young females, as they constantly measure themselves against

unrealistic standards set by Instagram, deepening the emotional and psychological impact of these comparisons.

5.4.4 The Influences of Instagram on Young Females' Mental Health

Instagram significantly impacts the mental health of young females. This suggests a tendency for negative self-comparisons and pressure to present an idealized image. However, Instagram also offers benefits, such as emotional support and a sense of belonging, which can enhance self-esteem.

Anxiety and Depression

A notable 48% of young females strongly agree that they have experienced anxiety or depression related to their Instagram use. This significant finding underscores the pervasive impact of Instagram on mental health, suggesting that many individuals are feeling the pressure of online interactions, which can be particularly due to the social media landscape that often emphasizes perfection. This aligns with Social Comparison Theory (SCT), which posits that individuals evaluate their self-worth by comparing themselves to others. In this context, 40% of young females strongly agree with the statement, "I feel inadequate or insecure about myself when using Instagram" highlighting the detrimental effect of negative self-comparisons. The constant exposure to curated, idealized images can lead to feelings of inadequacy and may exacerbate existing mental health issues, as young females may feel that they do not measure up to the perfect standards set by those they follow. This ongoing comparison can worsen existing mental health problems, creating a cycle where anxiety and depression make each other worse.

Additionally, 40% of young females strongly agree with feeling pressured to present a perfect image of their life on Instagram, further indicating the emotional burden that Instagram can impose.

This anxiety can lead to fears of judgment and rejection, making feelings of anxiety and depression worse. Young females may feel trapped in a cycle of seeking validation through likes and comments while becoming more isolated as they try to meet societal expectations.

A study by Nesi et al. (2021) supports these observations, showing that frequent social media use is linked to increased anxiety and depression among adolescents, particularly those engaging in social comparison. Additionally, girls displayed more intense emotional responses to their interactions on social media. This underscores the double-edged nature of platforms like Instagram, which can offer community support but also foster harmful comparisons and feelings of inadequacy.

Self-Esteem

Instagram can have a substantial influence on self-esteem among young females, with a notable percentage reporting positive effects. 44% of young females strongly agree that Instagram has a positive impact on their self-esteem, while 48% of young females often receive emotional support from their Instagram connections. The act of receiving positive feedback and emotional support from their community can reinforce self-esteem, creating a sense of accomplishment and worthiness. Additionally, 44% of young females strongly agree with "I feel a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community", showing that interacting with their Instagram community makes them feel connected.

When young females engage with their Instagram communities, they often connect with others who share similar interests and experiences, fostering relationships that contribute to a sense of identity and acceptance. Research from Keles, McCrae, & Grealish (2020) showed that positive

interactions on social media can enhance self-esteem by fostering feelings of acceptance and validation. Instagram empowers young females to express themselves creatively, allowing them to embrace their individuality and share their achievements. This self-expression fosters a sense of belonging and validation from peers, leading to an increase in self-esteem and solidifying their self-worth.

However, Instagram's dual nature complicates its impact on self-esteem. While it provides a space for emotional support and validation, it also encourages constant comparison among young females. Sepas et al. (2021) found that problematic Instagram use can lead to psychological distress when users seek validation through likes and comments. This need for external validation can increase stress as young women compare themselves to idealized images. It shows that Instagram can help boost self-esteem through positive interactions, but it can also hurt it by causing feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. This struggle can hurt self-acceptance, as young females may prioritize external validation over their true selves.

Stress Relief

Interestingly, some users report feeling relaxed and relieved of stress when engaging with Instagram. 42% of young females strongly feel relaxed and relieve stress when using Instagram, suggesting that the platform can serve as a significant source of emotional relief. This observation highlights the potential of Instagram to function as an escape from daily stressors, particularly for young females who may face unique pressures in their personal and social lives. Research indicates that social media can provide a sense of community and support, contributing to lower stress levels and improved emotional well-being (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020). By facilitating

interactions with friends and fostering a sense of belonging, Instagram allows users to unwind and distract themselves from their everyday challenges. Therefore, while concerns about the negative impacts of Instagram are valid, it is important to acknowledge its potential benefits, especially for young females navigating the complexities of modern life.

5.5 Implications of Study

The implications of this study on the influences of Instagram on young females' mental health in Selangor are significant, particularly understanding how Instagram shapes perceptions and self-esteem. As a prominent platform, Instagram allows young females to navigate social interactions while seeking validation through likes and comments. Utilizing the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this research explores the motivations for Instagram usage, emphasizing that young females engage with the platform not only for social connection but also for self-expression, creativity, and escapism.

While Instagram can provide a space for stress relief and self-acceptance, it also presents challenges related to social comparison. Many young females may measure their worth against curated images of peers and influencers, potentially leading to heightened anxiety and depression. This underscores the importance of understanding how social comparison can negatively impact mental health in a society that emphasizes appearance and lifestyle.

Additionally, the findings suggest that Instagram serves as a resource for personal development, with users seeking content that inspires them academically and creatively. By exploring diverse interests such as fashion, wellness, and lifestyle, this study contributes to the literature on social media's role in shaping identity and fostering community.

In short, these implications extend to mental health professionals and educators, highlighting the need to promote healthy social media habits. By fostering critical engagement with Instagram, young females can better navigate social pressures and enhance their overall well-being, emphasizing the importance of inclusive content that supports diverse interests and positive self-image.

5.6 Limitations of Study

Sampling and Demographic

One of the limitations in this study relates to the sample size and demographic scope. Delios et. al. (2022) emphasizes that research findings from specific regional or cultural contexts may not fully represent larger populations, due to distinct social, economic, and cultural factors that can significantly influence outcomes. This highlights the importance of considering regional diversity when interpreting results. Although the research focused on young females from Selangor, Malaysia, this specific demographic may not fully represent the larger population of young females across different regions of Malaysia or internationally. By incorporating a more diverse demographic, including different age groups, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds, researchers can enhance the generalizability of the findings. The limited geographical focus might lead to findings that are influenced by the cultural, social, or economic nuances of Selangor, which may differ significantly from other areas. This reduces the generalizability of the results, making it difficult to extend the conclusions to broader populations.

Geographical and Cultural Context

This study was geographically constrained to Selangor, Malaysia, which limits the diversity of the cultural and social context explored. Wilkinson & Marmot (2003) highlights health behaviors and outcomes are deeply influenced by geographical and cultural contexts. The authors demonstrate that results from one region or cultural group may not be applicable to others due to variations in societal norms and economic conditions (as cited in Bhugra et. al., 2022). Instagram usage patterns, perceptions of mental health, and societal attitudes may differ significantly across regions, and the results may not reflect the experiences of young females from other cultural or geographical settings. The specific cultural norms and social influences within Selangor could skew the findings, making them less applicable to other areas where such factors vary.

Lack of Depth in Data

One limitation of this study is the lack of depth in the data due to the exclusive use of quantitative methods. Flick (2022) emphasizes the depth and richness that qualitative research can provide, which quantitative methods often lack. The study argues that qualitative approaches allow for more detailed exploration of personal experiences, essential in understanding complex mental health issues. While the survey data provide an overview of Instagram's influence on young females' mental health in Selangor, it does not delve into the personal motivations behind their Instagram use or how their experiences with the platform relate to their mental well-being on an individual level. A qualitative approach, such as interviews or open-ended responses, could offer more detailed insights into the emotional and psychological aspects of Instagram use.

Narrow Focus on Instagram

The study's exclusive focus on Instagram is another limitation. While Instagram is a major social media platform, many young females also use other platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, which may influence their mental health in combination with Instagram. Primack et al. (2017), as cited in Naslund et al. (2020) found that individuals using multiple social media platforms, specifically between 7 and 11 platforms, had three times greater odds of experiencing high depressive symptoms and 3.2 times greater odds of high anxiety symptoms compared to those using two or fewer platforms. This highlights the increased mental health risks associated with extensive social media use. By concentrating solely on Instagram, this study does not account for the broader impact of social media usage across multiple platforms, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how digital interactions influence mental well-being.

Survey Fatigue and Incomplete Responses

Based on Ghafourifard (2023), survey fatigue occurs when respondents become overwhelmed or disinterested in surveys, causing them to provide less thoughtful answers. This fatigue can result in skipped questions, blank response fields, or default answers, leading to incomplete and potentially unreliable data. Survey fatigue is another potential limitation, as respondents completing the Google Forms survey might have lost focus or provided incomplete or rushed answers, leading to data that may not fully reflect their true experiences or emotions. This could affect the quality and reliability of the results, as participants may not have provided thoughtful or accurate responses throughout the entire survey, particularly when faced with repetitive or lengthy questions.

Limited Examination of Other Influencing Factors

Lastly, the study did not extensively investigate other factors that could mediate the relationship between Instagram usage and mental health, such as work-related stress, socioeconomic background, cultural expectations and existing psychological conditions. According to Brailovskaia et al. (2022), relationship between work overload and social media addiction found that excessive social media use, combined with stress, leads to higher levels of depression and lower life satisfaction. Additionally, research from Nazari et al. (2023) highlights that problematic social media use is more common among individuals with certain demographic and socioeconomic profiles, such as lower income, unemployment, and being single, which also correlates with poorer mental health outcomes. These factors might significantly impact how young females experience Instagram's effects on their mental health. Without considering these moderating influences, the findings provide only a partial view of the complex relationship between social media use and mental well-being. Future research should address these factors to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Studies

To enhance the understanding of Instagram's influence on young females' mental health in Selangor, Malaysia, future research should consider several key recommendations.

Expand Sampling and Demographic Diversity

Future studies should aim to broaden the sample size and include participants from various regions of Malaysia and beyond. Studies from Zhang et. al. (2023) highlight the importance of diverse samples to ensure that results represent different backgrounds, which can influence the impact of

social media on mental health. This approach will help capture a wider range of experiences and perspectives related to Instagram usage and mental health.

Incorporate a Longitudinal Design

Thomas (2022) explained that in a longitudinal study, the same group of individuals is repeatedly tested to observe any changes that develop over a period of time. Adopting a longitudinal study design would allow researchers to track changes in young females' mental health over time and establish causal relationships between Instagram usage and psychological outcomes. By observing the same participants at multiple points, researchers can gain insights into how extended exposure to Instagram influences mental health and identify trends that might emerge over time, comprehensive understanding of its effects on well-being.

Explore Multiple Social Media Platforms

Future research should consider the combined impact of various social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, on young females' mental health. A comparative study could reveal how different platforms interact and influence users' mental well-being, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of digital interactions and their overall impact (Zhang et. al., 2023). Understanding these dynamics could help in developing mental health support strategies.

Utilize Qualitative Methods

Incorporating qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide richer insights into the personal motivations behind Instagram usage and its emotional effects on young females. Green and Thorogood (2018) highlight how qualitative research can uncover insights that quantitative methods may overlook, thereby enhancing the understanding of health issues and informing practice and policy. The book also addresses ethical considerations and the role of reflexivity in qualitative research. This would allow for a deeper exploration of individual experiences and help uncover the complexities of Instagram's influence on mental health.

Address Survey Fatigue

To mitigate survey fatigue, future researchers could design shorter, more engaging questionnaires or utilize mixed methods that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Research suggests that survey fatigue often leads to incomplete or rushed responses, impacting the reliability of data (Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health, 2023). This approach could improve the quality of responses and ensure that participants provide more thoughtful and accurate reflections on their experiences with Instagram. Additionally, employing interactive elements in surveys might keep respondents more engaged and attentive.

Examine Additional Influencing Factors

Future studies should investigate other contextual factors that may influence the relationship between Instagram usage and mental health. Research from Clark et. al. (2018) claimed that exploring contextual factors like family dynamics, academic pressures, or cultural expectations can deepen understanding of how these influences interact with social media use and mental health. By examining these factors, researchers can gain a better understanding of the variables that shape young females' experiences on Instagram, contributing to a richer discourse on mental health in the digital age.

By implementing these recommendations, future research can provide a more nuanced understanding of Instagram's impact on young females' mental health, ultimately informing strategies to promote healthier social media usage and enhance well-being in diverse populations.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals the multifaceted influence of Instagram on the mental health of young females in Selangor, Malaysia. Utilizing the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the research shows that Instagram helps users fulfill various needs such as social connection, self-esteem, and stress relief. Many participants reported feeling more connected to others, experiencing happiness from receiving likes and comments, and benefiting from creative self-expression. These findings reflect the positive aspects of Instagram, where the platform serves as a space for community, emotional support, and personal satisfaction.

However, the study also emphasizes the negative impacts of Instagram, primarily through the lens of Social Comparison Theory (SCT). Many young females reported frequent social comparisons, including both upward and downward comparisons. Upward comparisons, where young females compare themselves to those they perceive as better off, often led to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and anxiety. On the other hand, downward social comparisons, where young females comparing oneself to those perceived as worse off, can temporarily boost self-esteem but may still reinforce unhealthy comparison habits. The pressure to present a perfect image online, along with constant exposure to idealized content, increased negative feelings like stress and low self-esteem. These negative effects highlight growing concerns about social media's impact on mental health, as young females engage in social comparisons that contribute to mental health challenges.

To address these challenges, it is crucial to encourage responsible social media practices, boost digital literacy, and create supportive online communities. Promoting responsible practices helps users understand the impact of their online behavior and encourages them to engage thoughtfully. Encouraging healthy habits, such as setting time limits and taking breaks, helps users avoid excessive scrolling and fosters real-life connections. Additionally, providing mental health

resources can guide users to seek help when needed, making them feel supported. For instance, access to hotlines and online therapy options that empower users to take proactive steps in managing their well-being. Future research should explore how these influences differ across various demographics and regions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Instagram's overall influence. Lastly, by involving mental health professionals in developing resources, the platform can ensure the information provided is effective in promoting mental well-being.

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Appendix A Survey Questionnaire

The Influences of Instagram towards Young Females' Mental Health in Selangor, Malaysia

Dear respondents,

I am Loi Yuen Wah, a final year student from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Sungai Long Campus) currently pursuing Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Broadcasting. As part of the requirement to complete my program, I am conducting a final year research project.

The aim for the research questionnaire is to identify the influences of Instagram towards young female's mental health in Selangor, Malaysia. The questionnaire consists of THREE (3) sections and will take around ten (10) minutes to complete the whole survey. Please answer ALL questions in ALL sections. Your responses will be kept strictly CONFIDENTIAL and PRIVATE.

Please be informed that accordance with Personal Data Protection Act 2010 ("PDPA") which came into force on 15 November 2013, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman ("UTAR") and policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies / guidelines are hereby bound to make notice and require consent in relation to collection, recording, storage, usage and retention of personal information.

Section A: Demographic Background

Kindly response to the questions by ticking in the circle to which most suitable for you that each item describes below.

1. What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

2. Which age range you are from?

○ 15-20 years old

○ 20-25 years old

○ 25-30 years old

○ 30-35 years old

○ 35-40 years old

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

○ Malay

○ Chinese

○ Indian

○ Other: _____

4. Except for Instagram account, which social media account you have? (You may choose more than 1)

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ TikTok

☐ YouTube

5. On average, how many hours do you spend on Instagram daily?

○ Less than 1 hour

○ 1-2 hours

○ 2-4 hours

○ More than 4 hours

6. How long have you been using Instagram?

◯ Less than 1 year

◯ 1-2 years

◯ 2-3 years

◯ More than 3 years

7. What activities you usually do in Instagram?

☐ Random browsing reels or IGTV videos

☐ Watching stories

☐ Direct messaging to chat with friends

☐ Like and comment people's content

☐ Upload and sharing own photo or video content

☐ Engaging in interested content or hobbies

Section B: Instagram Usage Pattern

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I use Instagram to connect with friends and family.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I use Instagram to seek entertainment.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I use Instagram to share my own life and experiences.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I use Instagram to engage with content related to my hobbies and interests.	○	○	○	○	○

5. I use Instagram to keep track of trends and popular topics.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I use Instagram to follow influencers and celebrities.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I use Instagram to showcase my talents and hobbies.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I use Instagram to interact with people who have similar interests.	○	○	○	○	○

Section C: Perception and Self-esteem

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Using Instagram makes me feel more connected to others.	O	O	O	O	O
2. I often compare myself to others on Instagram.	O	O	O	O	O
3. I feel happy when I receive likes and comments on my posts.	O	O	O	O	O

4. Seeing other people's posts on Instagram makes me feel like my life is not as good as theirs.	○	○	○	○	○
5. Instagram has helped me find like-minded individuals.	○	○	○	○	○
6. Instagram helps me express myself creatively.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I feel insecure about my appearance after using Instagram.	○	○	○	○	○

Section D: Mental Health and Well-being

Below you will read through a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you. The following rating scale to make your choices where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel that Instagram has a positive impact on my self-esteem.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I ever experienced anxiety or depression related to Instagram use.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I feel a sense of belonging when interacting with my Instagram community.	○	○	○	○	○

4. I feel inadequate or insecure about myself when using Instagram.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. I often receive emotional support from my Instagram connections.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. I feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on Instagram.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. I feel relax and relieve stress when using Instagram.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯