SWITCHING BETWEEN RINSTA AND FINSTA: MALAYSIAN YOUTH'S

NAVIGATION OF SOCIAL PRESSURE ON INSTAGRAM

JASS LAU MING YAN

A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN

PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF

BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION (HONS) JOURNALISM

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

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JASS LAU MING YAN

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APPROVAL SHEET

This research paper attached hereto, entitled "Switching between Rinsta and Finsta: Malaysian Youth's Navigation of Social Pressure on Instagram" prepared and submitted by "Jass Lau Ming Yan" in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.

Date: 3 October 2025

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Supervisor

Supervisor's name: Dr. Tan Huey Pyng

ABSTRACT

This study explores how Malaysian youth aged 18–24, during their phase of Emerging Adulthood, use multiple Instagram accounts— "Rinsta" (main account) and "Finsta" (secondary account)—as a strategy to manage social pressure. Although social media like Instagram is designed to encourage free expression, many youths create secondary accounts to express their "authentic self" while maintaining a curated, idealised image on their main accounts. This behaviour reflects a contradiction between the desire for self-disclosure and the need for social validation. Through qualitative focus group discussions, this study investigates the effectiveness of switching between accounts to alleviate social pressure among Malaysian youth. The findings aim to provide insight into the psychological impacts of digital identity management and its implications for youth well-being in the social media age.

Keywords: *Instagram, Rinsta, Finsta, Malaysian youth, social pressure, self-presentation, self disclosure, authenticity*

Subject: HM1176-1281 Social influence. Social pressure

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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1.1 Research Background

1.1.1   Self-Presentation Among Youth on Social Media

In this digital age, social media has become an essential communication tool in people's daily lives. It is also considered a virtual community and network, providing a platform for individuals to share and exchange information (Govender & Ramnarain, 2013). However, while this platform allows young people to freely express themselves, it has also given rise to numerous complex issues, particularly concerning psychological well-being.

According to the concept of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2000), individuals aged 18 to 25 are in a phase of identity exploration and instability as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. As a result, young people may change how they present themselves on social media in response to the need for identity formation (Buckingham, 2007). Besides, people are often pressured to maintain a flawless image, as identity expressions on social media are typically idealised and symbolic, sometimes even meticulously crafted by businesses to attract consumer consumption rather than reflecting genuine selves (Bouvier, 2012).

These pressures are most prevalent among young people, as they frequently compare their authentic selves to others' idealised online personas, often resulting in a profound sense of inadequacy that fosters feelings of inferiority and anxiety (Abakumova, 2025). Therefore, they tend to present only their 'positive sides' on social media to avoid such anxiety and diminish this sense of disparity. This involves posting photos and videos that appear happier and more polished, aiming to create a favourable impression for others (Singh & Srivastava, 2018).

Schlosser (2020) explains the differences between self-disclosure and self-presentation on social media. Self-disclosure is more about expressing the true self, and it occurs more in the online environment, where anonymity and simplified information are present. On the other hand, self-presentation is the choice of most people and mainly involves managing one's image (Schlosser, 2020). This is influenced by factors such as synchronicity, complex audiences, and public feedback. While the content of self-presentation can be true, people typically choose information that helps enhance their image.

Social media has a significant impact on young people's self-presentation and identity formation. Among numerous social platforms, Instagram serves as a prime example, being one of the most popular social media platforms among young people. Due to its highly visual and interactive nature, Instagram may encourage users to intensify their tendency towards self-presentation, thereby placing greater emphasis on an idealised self-image. Meanwhile, the main account may not offer many opportunities for young people to express their authentic selves, prompting some to create secondary accounts (Finsta) where they can share their true selves in spaces they perceive as safer and less prone to criticism. This behaviour allows young people to maintain an idealised image while simultaneously achieving genuine self-disclosure.

It reflects how Instagram's design both amplifies social pressures and influences young people's online behaviour and thinking patterns. They must carefully consider where, how, and to whom they disclose personal information to feel relatively safe or accepted. However, beyond the pressures of online self-presentation, young people also face offline social pressures at different life stages. These offline pressures often interact with online behaviour, thereby influencing how young people present themselves on social media platforms (Bhubjal & Verma, 2024).

1.1.2   Social Pressures Across Different Stages of Emerging Adulthood

During emerging adulthood (ages 18–25), individuals experience different life stages such as late secondary school, university, or early careers, each presenting different characteristics of social pressures. Peer pressure is most evident among secondary school students, encompassing concerns about friendships, romantic relationships, and academic performance, with these pressures often affecting females more than males (Brown, 1982). Expectations from family, parents, and teachers further compound these pressures, potentially affecting academic performance and social engagement (Phelan et al., 1994). Such stresses are frequently exacerbated by the use of social media. This platform may intensify the strong desire for acceptance by peers, thereby amplifying emotional distress and occasionally increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours (Bhubjal and Verma, 2024).

For university or college students, social pressures usually concern academic achievement and interpersonal relationships (Ruiz & Lopez, 2024). Simultaneously, they continue to explore and shape their identity within novel and expansive social circles (Charulatha, 2024). According to Ruiz & Lopez (2024), social pressures for young professionals newly entering the workforce are often centred on workplace demands, including performance expectations, career advancement, and work-life balance. Meanwhile, broader societal pressures frequently influence young adults, heightening their sense of urgency to achieve significant life goals such as financial stability and starting a family. All of these pressures may impact mental wellbeing and overall happiness.

These societal pressures are often amplified by Instagram's highly visual and socially interactive nature, making it a platform through which we can more easily understand how young people engage in self-presentation and identity management. For instance, the

generalisation of curated content reinforces mainstream societal standards of aesthetics and lifestyle, especially through the idealised narratives presented by influencers (Casaló et al., 2020; Putra & Afrilian, 2025), thereby allowing real-life pressures to deeply influence online behaviour.

1.1.3   Instagram and Social Pressure

Instagram is an application designed specifically for users to share photos and videos. This high interactivity enables users to stay updated on others' activities at any time, but it also has features allowing users to freely set privacy restrictions (Hu et al., 2014). For example, users can choose to set their accounts to private, so only approved followers can view their content. Compared to Facebook and Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat are perceived as more specialised media and are more popular with young people (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

In contrast to Snapchat, which emphasises privacy and intimate communication, Instagram is more oriented towards self-presentation and public identity. Rather than focusing on forming deep personal connections, Instagram users place more importance on personal identity and self-promotion, and this includes surveillance and the collection of information about others (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

In Malaysia, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms among young people. According to NapoleonCat (2024), as of March 2024, there were 15.89 million Instagram users in Malaysia. Users aged 18–24 made up 32.7% of the total user base, making them the second-largest age group after users aged 25–34. Middle-aged Malaysians are the most active users, frequently using Instagram to access news and information, which has changed their media consumption habits. Furthermore, this demographic perceives Instagram as facilitating social connections, enabling users to maintain relationships with friends and family

at any time, thus providing convenience for their social needs (Hiram et al., 2015). This social connectivity is also important for young people who use Instagram to stay connected with friends and family while discovering new content. These interactions foster social connections and cultivate a sense of belonging within communities (Morais et al., 2024; Huang & Su, 2018).

However, adolescents often use social media not merely to satisfy social needs but also as a platform for self-expression. While recording daily life, they can also explore identity formation. These considerations often shape their definition of 'Instagram-worthy' content, typically linked to the need for validation, making their mental wellbeing and sense of self-worth more likely to be affected (Saletti et al., 2022). Moreover, as a social media platform offering entertainment as well, Instagram enables users to temporarily escape daily pressures. This is particularly common among adolescents, who frequently spend more time on engaging and visually striking content (Huang & Su, 2018).

As more and more people use Instagram, this platform offers users a high level of freedom for self-expression and has shaped a "visual culture" that affects how individuals see themselves and others online (Marwick, 2013). This mindset often influences how people form impressions of others in real life while overlooking the complexity and multifaceted nature of individual personalities. According to Leary and Allen (2011), in real life, people often manage multiple facets of their self-presentation simultaneously and adjust how they present themselves according to different audiences. In contrast, social platforms such as Instagram often encourage users to portray a more singular, carefully curated image, which may not reveal the full range of a person's characteristics.

The content created by Instagram influencers is one of the main factors that influence young people's behaviour on social media. They become opinion leaders because of the

originality and uniqueness of their content thus influencing consumer behaviour (Casaló et al., 2020). According to Putra and Afrilian (2025), Instagram's aesthetic standards are often reinforced by these influencers, who present ideal lifestyles through their images. While this trend makes it easier for young people to access new information, it also comes with negative effects such as self-doubt and body dissatisfaction (Eatson et al., 2018). Even when they are aware that the content is edited or idealised, they still compare themselves to it. This can lead to negative emotions and affect their mental well-being

Peer influence and social comparison among young users are also considered as social pressures on Instagram. Chua and Chang (2016) found that young people compared themselves to their peers to seek peer recognition and present a better self-image online to know themselves and to define their identities. Besides that, a study conducted by Hassim et al. (2020) found that Malaysian youth tend to compare themselves with others on Instagram. Many young users tend to edit their photos before posting, which reflects low self-esteem and a tendency to present deceptive images that portray an unrealistic, seemingly superior reality. These phenomena are related to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). It is one of the social pressures that compels young people to maintain a sense of social belonging by constantly keeping in touch and updating on social media (Przybylski et al., 2013).

As these societal pressures continue to grow, particularly the pressure to maintain an idealised image and conform to mainstream societal norms, many young people are seeking alternative ways to manage and cope with these pressures. Currently, they adopted new strategies to manage their online image, with the growing phenomenon of having multiple accounts on Instagram.

1.1.4   The Rise of Multiple Instagram Accounts Among Youth

In response to the pressure of self-presentation on Instagram, many young users have created multiple accounts to express different sides of themselves. They typically refer to their main account as "Rinsta" (real Instagram) and their secondary account as "Finsta" (fake Instagram) (Kang & Wei, 2020). Research shows that Rinsta is usually open to a larger social circle and emphasises idealised and positive images, which increases social pressure; Finsta is shared only with close friends and is often used to post everyday moments and express negative emotions, offering a more relaxed and authentic space for self-expression (Purwaningtyas & Alicya, 2020; Sokowati & Manda, 2022; Budiyanto & Aisyah, 2022; Yoanita et al., 2022; Huang & Vitak, 2022).

The motivations for using Rinsta and Finsta are also different. Kang and Wei (2020) argued that young users are more likely to use Rinsta to fulfil needs such as social interaction, self-expression, social curiosity, archiving and escapism from the pressures and imperfections of daily life. Meanwhile, they also tend to present their actual self, ideal self, deceptive self, and impressive self more strongly on Rinsta than on Finsta. Another study highlights how young people practice "intimate reconfiguration" by reshaping their Finsta audiences, usually limiting access to close friends (Xiao et al., 2020).

Finsta thus serves as a tool for escaping social expectations of maintaining a perfect image while also supporting emotional expression, identity exploration, and personal connection (Kang & Wei, 2020). However, even on second accounts, youth are still influenced by the expectations and gaze of their followers, creating what researchers call an "illusion of freedom" (Purwaningtyas & Alicya, 2020; Sokowati & Manda, 2022). This point is supported

by Budiyanto and Aisyah (2022), who highlight that even though youth recognise the difference between their main and second accounts, the presentation on the second account is still a form of public identity.

This situation can be explained through Goffman's theory (1959), "backstage" represents a private space for the performer, but even backstage, privacy is not absolute because other performers are also present. Although young people created a secondary account to escape social pressure, they were still under surveillance. This creates a contradiction about whether they are effectively reducing the social pressure.

Therefore, while creating multiple Instagram accounts allows young people to show their authenticity, it also reflects the complex relationship between individual freedom and societal expectations. When people interact and disclose themselves on social media like Instagram, it may seem free, but their freedom is actually limited (Yoanita et al., 2022). This phenomenon not only reveals the challenges of identity management in the digital age but also reflects the contradictory relationship between young people's need for social validation and their desire for self-disclosure.

Numerous cases of multiple account usage indicate that users have normalised the social pressure on Instagram, as they have not abandoned the platform but instead manage multiple accounts simultaneously. Brady and Crockett (2023) stated that Instagram's algorithm prioritises content that is more likely to receive likes, comments, and shares. Such content is typically carefully curated, aligns with mainstream aesthetic standards, or evokes strong emotions. This mechanism inadvertently reinforces users' compliance with and acceptance of social pressure, gradually normalising such pressure as a routine social experience. While

young people continue to adopt multi-account strategies, there is currently limited research on whether this behaviour alleviates pressure or inadvertently exacerbates it.

1.2 Problem Statement

Social media is supposed to be a platform for freedom of expression, but underneath it, young people have to use multiple image management to avoid social pressure. They have the option to use Instagram's privacy features, such as turning off public settings and screening followers, to reduce social anxiety, yet they choose to create a secondary account to express their "authentic self" in another way. However, young people continue to use their Rinsta (main Instagram accounts) to maintain their idealised self-image.

This reflects the complex and contradictory relationship young people face between the need for self-disclosure and the pursuit of social validation. To some extent, they seem to have accepted and normalised the social pressure brought by social media, meanwhile seeking to fulfil their need for self-expression through the creation of Finsta accounts. Thus, this raises the question of whether the use of multiple accounts truly helps them alleviate the social pressures of Instagram.

Meanwhile, although Finsta provides a way for young people to escape social pressure on Instagram, for those in the Emerging Adulthood phase, where identity is still being formed, the sense of freedom offered by Finsta may be nothing more than an "illusion of freedom". In Malaysia, young people aged 18-24 years old are one of the main active user groups on Instagram, and they are also in the stage of "Emerging Adulthood" seeking social validation. Since this age group is navigating an emotionally and socially unstable phase of life, understanding their online behaviours, especially how they manage multiple Instagram

accounts can provide insight into their mental well-being and the pressures they face on social media.

1.3 Research Objective

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of switching between Rinsta and Finsta accounts to help Malaysian youth aged 18–24 alleviate social pressure on Instagram. It seeks to understand their thoughts and experiences of using Finsta to protect their privacy while still maintaining an idealised self-image on their main accounts. Besides that, this objective also helps us understand whether young people can truly express their authentic selves on Finsta, even when they are still being watched by others. Additionally, the use of Finsta may also show how young people accept and normalise the social pressure that exists on Instagram. Ultimately, this research seeks to raise awareness of the psychological impact that social media imposes on youth, especially during the sensitive phase of Emerging Adulthood, and to contribute to a broader understanding of digital self-presentation and mental well-being in the social media age.

1.4 Research Questions

One of the key aspects of this research is to understand the experiences and feelings of young people when switching between Finsta and Rinsta to help them relieve social pressure. By analysing their behaviour to understand their motivations and thoughts, we can assess how effective the use of multiple accounts is in helping them relieve social pressure.

Secondly, this study also explores how young people perceive the social pressure that is inherent on Instagram. This helps to reveal whether the use of Finsta is a conscious way of resisting social pressure, or if it reflects an acceptance and rationalisation of such pressure

within the framework of social media. This aligns with the research objective, as young people's perceptions of social pressure influence how effective switching between multiple accounts is in helping them manage it. If they believe that social media pressure is unchangeable, then using Finsta might only serve as a temporary escape rather than truly reducing the pressure. On the other hand, if they see the pressure as unreasonable and wish to resist it, their use of Finsta may be more intentional and self-directed.

Based on these considerations, the study poses the following two research questions:

Q1: How do Malaysian youths aged 18–24 switch between Rinsta and Finsta in managing their social pressure on Instagram?

Q2: How do Malaysian youth perceive the normalisation of social pressures on Instagram?

1.5 Research Significance

Most previous research has focused on the different usage between main Instagram accounts (Rinsta) and secondary accounts (Finsta), often describing Finsta as a way for young people to manage their self-image (Yoanita et al., 2022; Huang & Vitak, 2022; Xiao et al., 2020). However, few studies have explored the effectiveness of switching between Rinsta and Finsta in alleviating Instagram social pressure. Moreover, there is a lack of research in Malaysia on how young people use Finsta to cope with social pressure on Instagram. This study fills that gap by examining how Malaysian youth use Finsta to manage social pressure, providing insight into the relationship between self-disclosure and the desire for social validation. The findings of this study could enrich existing theories on the use of social media and could also contribute to our further understanding of how young people manage their online identities.

Besides that, this research helps uncover how young people navigate social pressures on Instagram, offering valuable information to parents, educators, and counsellors. This can assist in better supporting youth in managing social pressure and self-image issues. Additionally, the study may provide insights into mental well-being interventions aimed at reducing the negative impact of social media among youth. The self-presentation tactics analysed in this study are closely linked to Instagram's features and platform mechanisms, thus the results may provide valuable insights for social media developers. The study could inform the development of features like more regulated algorithmic restrictions and improved privacy options that better support users' mental well-being.

This study focuses on Malaysian youth aged 18 to 24, a group situated in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, where issues of identity negotiation and peer pressure are especially pronounced. Previous research has explored young people's self-presentation trends on other platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, and BeReal, and examined strategies including Close Friends stories, private accounts, and anonymous accounts. These studies have enhanced our understanding of how youth manage their online image in recent years and the typical social pressures they encounter. However, this research directs its focus specifically on Instagram. Compared with other platforms, young people are more inclined to create secondary accounts on Instagram, which are non-anonymous yet selectively shared with trusted peers. Such practices provide a deeper perspective for revealing the contradictions youth face in their self-presentation and self-disclosure.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1 Research on Instagram

Research on Instagram over the past decade has expanded across psychology, communication, politics, marketing, and education, reflecting the platform's central role in digital culture (Adeyanju et al., 2021; Irsandi et al., 2024; Bast, 2021; Pasha et al., 2024). Its visual-centric nature, interactive features, and broad youth adoption make it a key site for exploring issues of self-presentation, digital culture, and social relationships. To better understand these dynamics, research on Instagram has primarily focused on its usage patterns, emerging trends, platform features, and the influence of content on user behaviour and perceptions (Alfonso-Fuertes et al., 2022; Thorgren et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2019).

Instagram usage patterns are shaped by several key factors that influence user engagement and content visibility. Common user engagement patterns, which include likes, comments, and shares, are essential for individuals and businesses aiming to enhance their online presence (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Additionally, staying informed about content creation trends, such as the popularity of reels and stories, allows users to produce more engaging content that resonates with their audience (Altschuler, 2022). Hashtag usage patterns also play a critical role, as utilising relevant and trending hashtags can significantly increase the discoverability of posts (Highfield & Leaver, 2016). Finally, keeping up with Instagram algorithm updates is crucial, as these changes directly affect the visibility of posts in users' feeds, necessitating adaptive content strategies (Brady & Crockett, 2023). These features are designed to boost content exposure, expand audience reach, and ultimately enhance the overall user experience on the platform.

Notably, the relationship between mental health and young people is one of the most controversial research topics in recent years. Many reviews highlight that higher Instagram use is consistently linked to adverse mental health outcomes, including depressive symptoms, body image concerns, disordered eating, and even self-harm, with effects often shaped by factors such as social comparison, self-esteem, and exposure intensity (Adeyanju et al., 2021; Faelens et al., 2021; Moss et al., 2022). Young people are a particular focus of this research, as they are especially vulnerable to peer pressure that often results in heightened social comparison and lower self-esteem (Hassim et al., 2020; Hogan, 2010; Chua & Chang, 2016). Meanwhile, Alfonso-Fuertes et al. (2022) suggested that the platform's influence on self-esteem and body image needs further research into mitigating these impacts while maximizing its benefits for communication and marketing strategies.

Beyond mental health, studies also examine platform features and consumer behaviour, showing how visual elements like gaze direction, product salience, and aesthetic appeal can significantly influence user engagement and purchase intentions (Herle, 2025; Valentini et al., 2018; Alexandrina, 2025). The study by Sabu and Baranidharan (2024) highlighted that industries such as fashion and beauty are strongly associated with Instagram, as influencer credibility and brand aesthetics play a central role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, some scholars have critiqued the saturation of influencer culture, arguing that marketing practices on Instagram often promote idealised lifestyles that can contribute to negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, social comparison, and lower self-esteem among young users (Casaló et al., 2020; Putra & Afrilian, 2025).

Moreover, Instagram's influence on political discourse is a significant area of research, including the dissemination of political information, the role of influencers in political

campaigns, and the platform's potential for political mobilisation. Studies have shown that political actors and parties strategically use Instagram's visual affordances to enhance campaign visibility and connect with citizens (Bast, 2021; Filimonov et al., 2016). Instagram's focus on images, which can be accompanied by lengthy captions as well as a range of other communication tools, suggests that the platform has high potential for political communication. Research also highlights the platform's role in shaping political engagement and trust, particularly through populist leaders' use of authenticity cues (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018). However, challenges such as misinformation and political polarisation persist, raising questions about the democratic implications of Instagram-mediated political communication (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021).

Instagram has also been increasingly studied in the field of education. Research highlights its use as a tool for language learning, student engagement, and informal knowledge sharing. For example, Instagram has been integrated into English language teaching to improve vocabulary, writing skills, and learner motivation, while also fostering greater interaction between teachers and students (Pasha et al., 2024; Shafer et al., 2018). Furthermore, an increasing number of educators are using Instagram to establish professional communities where they share teaching concepts, resources, and experiences, highlighting the platform's potential in educational practice and teacher professional development (Carpenter et al., 2020). Similarly, social campaigns and educational initiatives benefit from the platform's visual and interactive features, which enhance the spread of knowledge and encourage user participation (Irsandi et al., 2024). However, these opportunities are accompanied by risks such as misinformation, addiction, and privacy violations, highlighting the need for media literacy and critical engagement.

Overall, research on Instagram demonstrates that the platform is far more than a social networking application; it has become a multifaceted arena shaping personal identity, consumer culture, political discourse, and educational practices. In these diverse fields, Instagram emerges as an expansive communication network, where information circulates rapidly and widely. Its visual nature, combined with high interactivity and algorithmic filtering, determines not only what content reaches specific audiences but also how effectively it engages them. This makes content highly influential on user behaviour while simultaneously placing great importance on how creators choose to present themselves. Across different domains, the act of self-presentation becomes central, yet it also brings new challenges, particularly in relation to social pressure, identity management, and phenomena such as context collapse, which will be the focus of the following section.

2.2 Self-presentation and Social Pressure

Self-presentation on Instagram is significantly influenced by social pressure and individual psychological factors, particularly social anxiety. Individuals with higher social anxiety tend to engage in more control behaviours on Instagram, such as selective sharing and editing of content, to manage their self-image and avoid negative evaluations (Polletta, 2020). This need for control is linked to a desire for affiliation and a preferred impression, where users aim to present themselves favourably to their audience.

Therefore, scholars have examined how Instagram users adopt different self-presentation strategies to manage their identities. For instance, humblebragging is a tactic where users mask self-promotion with modesty. However, it often backfires as it is perceived as insincere and makes users seem less likable, which in turn undermines their social engagement

on the platform (Fatfouta & Dufner, 2023). This reflects the dilemma many users face: while striving to maintain an idealised image of their lives, they simultaneously risk negative evaluations from their audiences.

Instagram's technical features also shape self-presentation practices. The platform's dual affordances, which are permanent main feed and time-limited stories, encourage users to reveal different facets of themselves, each with its own norms and expectations (Yenilmez Kaçar, 2023). Main feed posts often require greater effort in impression management due to their persistence and broad visibility, while stories are typically used for more casual, spontaneous, or less polished content. However, despite these flexible formats, many young users increasingly create secondary or "Finsta" accounts to share what feels more authentic (Kreling et al., 2022). This trend raises questions about whether the proliferation of strategies reduces social pressure or instead generates new forms of fatigue, as users may feel caught between managing multiple identities and switching between various presentation strategies.

To better understand this process, Goffman's (1959) concept of impression management provides a useful lens, as it explains how people present themselves differently depending on the situation and the audience, aiming to meet the "lowest common denominator" of what is socially acceptable. On social media, audiences are often mixed, making it difficult for users to distinguish contexts as clearly as in face-to-face interactions. As a result, users tend to choose a form of self-presentation that is broadly acceptable and least likely to offend others, which is termed the "lowest common denominator". This means that they do not carefully tailor their behaviour for every possible audience but instead base their presentation on the expectations of the most sensitive or most important viewers, such as parents, teachers, or employers (Hogan,

2010). While this serves as a protective strategy, it also creates pressure and may lead to a loss of authenticity.

When applied to online platforms like social media, impression management becomes more complicated due to "context collapse" (Hogan, 2010). It means the phenomenon where multiple social contexts merge into a single digital space, leading to challenges in maintaining different identities as well as audiences, often described as a "crisis of self-presentation" (Moore, 2019; Ijaz et al., 2022). It is considered a crisis because when self-presentation does not align with the expectations of particular audiences, users risk being misunderstood, rejected, or disliked. This is in contradiction to the goal of impression management, which is to preserve social acceptance and a positive image.

For example, a user may want to complain about work to his friends on Instagram, but the presence of his employer as a follower prevents him from doing so openly. Therefore, young people posting photos on Instagram may have to consider the reactions of their parents, classmates, and superiors at the same time. For fear of 'offending' any one group of people, users tend to choose more neutral content. Therefore, context collapse is a long-standing issue exacerbated by online relationships, declining traditional kinship, and privacy concerns, contributing to the decline of personal content sharing (Borkovich et al., 2016).

Davis and Jurgenson (2014) further divide context collapse into two types: context collusions and context collisions. "Context collusions" happen when users intentionally bring different social groups together, for example, to build social capital, share resources, or express themselves more fully. On the other hand, "context collisions" refer to situations where different audiences meet unexpectedly, often leading to awkwardness, misunderstandings, or consequences.

In this case, a main Instagram account (Rinsta) may involve collusions, as it usually has a larger and more mixed audience, and young users often feel the need to maintain a positive image. However, a secondary account (Finsta) can also lead to context collapse or even collisions because authenticity on social media is always constrained by the perceived composition of the audience (Kreling et al., 2022). Sometimes, Finsta users may assume that certain followers are not part of the intended audience for specific content. For instance, a user may feel comfortable posting personal frustrations on a Finsta when the audience is limited to close friends. However, if one of those friends is also close to the person being complained about, the user may hold back from posting.

Impression management and context collapse are two interconnected phenomena that shape identity presentation in digital environments. While impression management provides individuals with the tools to curate their digital personas, context collapse presents challenges in maintaining distinct identities across different audiences. By understanding these concepts, individuals can develop strategies such as multiple social media accounts to navigate the complexities of online communication and maintain their self-image in the face of context collapse.

2.3 Surveillance and Privacy Concerns

The pressure to maintain an idealised self-image, such as constantly showcasing a polished persona and a seemingly perfect life on social media is intertwined with young people's concerns about surveillance and privacy. This pressure arises not only from the persistence and visibility of online content but also from imagined surveillance, where users anticipate how different audiences might evaluate their posts. Even though platforms provide

privacy settings, these controls remain limited and uncertain, leaving users with a continuous sense of vulnerability and unease about their digital presence.

The constant pressure to manage an idealised self-image creates an invisible form of social pressure for young people. These anxieties mainly stem from concerns about privacy and digital surveillance, as online content is highly persistent and visible (Cover, 2012). Young adults recognise the pervasive nature of social media surveillance but feel like "captives" to it, as they believe their participation is mandatory in the digital age (Nevzat, 2023). Despite this awareness, many young users engage in privacy-protective behaviours, adjusting their settings proactively rather than reactively (Tufekci, 2012).

However, it may be understood as a form of imagined surveillance, where youth adjust their behaviour on social media based on who they think might be watching to meet perceived expectations (Boyd, 2014). This aligns with Goffman's (1959) theory of impression management, which suggests that people present themselves in ways that meet their social expectations. Therefore, the pressure of being watched partly comes from internal psychological factors, which are closely tied to the desire to maintain an idealised self-image, rather than entirely from external surveillance.

Although many young people use multiple accounts as a strategy to resist surveillance, Duffy and Chan (2018) argue that such actions, including deleting or withholding "risky" content, are often forms of compliance with dominant social norms rather than genuine resistance. This reflects impression management, as users consciously avoid posting content that might provoke disapproval or offend certain audiences to protect their social relationships.

For instance, someone who dislikes K-pop culture may refrain from expressing this opinion on their Rinsta to avoid criticism from followers who support it. Instead, they may choose to express such frustrations on a Finsta, where they believe close friends will be more understanding and tolerant. This avoidance illustrates not only the effects of social pressure and context collapse but also a broader compliance with the unwritten rule on Rinsta to showcase positivity and maintain an idealised persona. By shifting negative or "imperfect" expressions to Finsta, young users demonstrate how the social pressure on Rinsta has become normalised in their digital practices.

Furthermore, Cohen (2015) argued that young adults are socialised to leverage social media to craft themselves into marketable self-commodities and to "ensure their digital footprint is positive and consistent". This explains why many youths actively manage their social media presence. However, the need for popularity drives some young individuals to engage in social surveillance, particularly on platforms like Snapchat, which can lead to negative mental health outcomes such as loneliness and depressive symptoms (Vanherle et al., 2023). Snapchat's unique features, such as the "snap map," enable users to monitor peers' activities in real time. While this fulfils a desire for social connection, it also increases exposure to social comparison and feelings of exclusion.

Moreover, Duffy and Chan (2018) argued that young people's online self-presentation has become a form of invisible labour, driven by the need to build a marketable personal brand and gain social and professional recognition. This process requires constant visibility and ongoing engagement; it inevitably exposes individuals to greater surveillance and reduces their control over personal boundaries. In this sense, the growing sense of lost privacy on social media is not only the result of peer comparison but also of dominant societal expectations that

pressure them to meet the standards of multiple social circles. As a result, the boundaries of their social lives are increasingly blurred.

Although social media platforms offer privacy settings, privacy protection is not fully under individual control. Sometimes, a person's privacy can be easily violated by the actions of others, system settings, or algorithms (Butcher, 2013). This means that the low sense of privacy experienced by young people on social media may also come from the platform's weak privacy features. For example, Instagram does not notify users when their content is screenshotted, and users do not know how their personal data might be used, shared, or analysed by the platform or third parties.

Therefore, Marwick and Boyd (2014) argued that online privacy is influenced by audience, social norms, and technical architecture; privacy technologies should pay more attention to the interpersonal network. When these privacy mechanisms are inadequate, young people may turn to practices such as using secondary accounts to better manage their privacy. However, it remains unclear whether Finsta on a unified platform like Instagram can truly reduce social pressure. Addressing this question requires examining what young people need on social media, how they wish to present themselves, and to what extent they feel comfortable engaging in self-disclosure; these expectations may sometimes conflict with their privacy needs.

2.4 Subjective Authenticity among Youth

The significance of authenticity among youth on social media is increasingly recognised as they navigate complex online environments. According to "OUP accepted manuscript" (2022), authenticity often defined as the alignment between online and offline identities, is crucial for young users who face challenges such as context collapse, where diverse audiences

converge, complicating self-presentation. This dynamic leads to the creation of secondary accounts, like Finsta, where teens express their true selves away from mainstream expectations.

Additionally, platforms like BeReal promote authenticity by encouraging spontaneous sharing, yet users remain sceptical about the genuine nature of social media overall (Reddy, 2024; Reddy & Kumar, 2023). Although BeReal's platform design (such as random posting prompts and the absence of filters) seems to foster spontaneity, users still carefully consider how they will be perceived by others. In this sense, what counts as "real" is still shaped by algorithms, audience expectations, and social comparison. Similarly, the so-called *illusion of freedom* on Finsta, where young people believe they are sharing more authentically but are still influenced by imagined audiences. These examples highlight a paradox: authenticity itself can become performative, underscoring the need to further investigate how young people perceive and negotiate authenticity online.

Perceived authenticity on social media is linked to better mental health outcomes, suggesting that young individuals who feel authentic online experience fewer symptoms of stress and depression (Bunker et al., 2023; Smallenbroek et al., 2017). Young individuals often utilise selfies and other forms of self-presentation to express their identities, with authenticity being perceived as subjective and context-dependent (Nguyen & Barbour, 2017). Young people are not expressing their 'only true self,' but rather deciding what image can be considered 'true' based on different contexts (such as friends, family, and public audiences). In other words, authenticity is not absolute but relative and context-dependent.

Knoll et al. (2015) suggested that authenticity has two key components: authentic self-awareness and authentic self-expression. Authentic self-awareness means a person reflects on

and understands their values, interests, and personality. Besides that, these insights can then be expressed on social media and serve as authentic self-expression. On the other hand, authentic self-expression happens when a person acts in line with their values, preferences, and needs (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Another way to define authenticity is through state authenticity, which refers to the personal and subjective feeling of "being oneself" in the moment, rather than focusing on one's public image (Sedikides et al., 2017). This means that even though young people often use secondary accounts to share negative emotional content, something usually seen as less ideal does not automatically mean they are being more real or true to themselves. Authenticity should instead be judged based on how their actions match their thoughts and feelings.

Kreling et al. (2022) argue that while self-presentation on social media is often criticised as fake or performative, most users do experience a sense of authenticity while using the Instagram Stories feature. Moreover, Altschuler (2022) suggested that the use of Instagram Stories allows for more spontaneous and perceived authentic self-presentation compared to traditional posts, indicating that the format can influence authenticity perceptions. Stories with privacy features like "close friends" make users feel more like they are "being their true selves", which increases their sense of authenticity. Restricting the audience can reduce the risk of judgement from a wider group, such as parents, teachers, or employers. Young people can post more spontaneous, imperfect, or humorous content without excessive self-censorship. It indicates that privacy control plays a key role in helping young people feel authentic and is a major reason why young people use secondary accounts.

However, managing multiple accounts involves more than just choosing between Posts and Stories, it also reflects different platform design features. Even though Instagram offers the Stories function, some young people still prefer to use a second account. Since authenticity is a subjective feeling, it is necessary to analyse diverse personal perspectives to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how youth perceive and navigate authenticity on Instagram.

2.5 Narcissism and Social Media

The emphasis on image management on Instagram may be linked to narcissistic tendencies. Narcissism is considered a potential psychological risk factor for problematic social media use, as these platforms offer numerous opportunities for self-presentation, such as posting selfies, status updates, and photos, thus satisfying narcissists' need for attention and admiration (Casale & Banchi, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2024). Besides that, narcissistic youth may use social media to combat feelings of loneliness, which can amplify their attention-seeking behaviours (Wang et al., 2023).

Compared to adults, teenagers are more willing to engage in self-disclosure and express emotional empathy online, but they also tend to view their online behaviour from a self-centred perspective (Hawk et al., 2019). Additionally, young people are more susceptible to developing addictive behaviours related to social media, which are often linked to narcissism and self-esteem (Andreassen et al., 2017). Narcissistic individuals are inclined to use social media for self-presentation and to attract attention from others. Meanwhile, those with lower self-esteem may turn to social media to seek validation or escape from reality.

McCain and Campbell (2018) divide narcissism into grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissists are more likely to engage in active social behaviours, such as posting self-promotional content frequently and showing little concern for

privacy. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists are more sensitive to social pressure and more focused on image management. They often experience anxiety on social media, leading them to take multiple selfies, edit their photos, and carefully manage what they post.

Narcissistic tendencies help explain why many young people feel the need to maintain a perfect image on Instagram. Vulnerable narcissism may explain why young people use Rinsta and Finsta differently, as the anxiety surrounding self-presentation pushes them to create secondary accounts to relieve stress. However, narcissism may not be the only factor driving the use of multiple accounts. Some young people may passively adopt these image-related pressures due to broader social expectations. For example, when maintaining a polished image becomes the norm on Instagram, those who do not conform may feel left out; this behaviour is considered a fear of missing out (FOMO) (Przybylski et al., 2013).

These insights suggest that both individual psychological factors such as narcissism and self-esteem and collective cultural expectations such as the normalisation of idealised images and FOMO shape how young people navigate Instagram. In practice, these pressures often manifest through strategies of self-presentation, including the use of multiple accounts (Rinsta/Finsta) to balance authenticity and social expectations. This makes it important to investigate how youths specifically switch between Rinsta and Finsta to cope with these pressures and how they interpret the broader normalisation of social pressure on the platform.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, introduced in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), which conceptualises social interaction as a theatrical performance in which individuals manage impressions before the audience. Since its inception, the theory has undergone significant development across various fields,

demonstrating both its adaptability and enduring relevance, particularly in relation to research on self-presentation and image management.

In its earliest stage, Goffman's dramaturgical framework was applied to daily face-to-face interactions, where individuals perform roles before particular audiences (Goffman, 1959). Early extensions of his theory explored institutional contexts: Hargreaves (1972) studied teacher–student dynamics in classrooms, while Strong and Dingwall (1979) examined clinical consultations, both demonstrating how impression management sustains authority and professional boundaries. Methodologically, these studies were primarily qualitative, relying on ethnographic observation and case studies to capture subtle role performances. This period established dramaturgy as a valuable lens for studying interpersonal and institutional communication.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the framework expanded into psychology and organisational research. For example, Tedeschi and Reiss (1981) operationalised impression management in experimental social psychology, while Leary and Kowalski (1990) proposed a two-component model to distinguish motives and strategies. In organisational contexts, Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989) examined how employees navigate career advancement through impression management. Unlike earlier ethnographic work, these studies often used surveys and experiments, demonstrating a shift toward more structured, quantitative methodologies while showing that dramaturgy could be applied to formalised environments.

With the rise of mass media, dramaturgical theory was adapted to mediated communication. Meyrowitz (1986) argued that television collapsed boundaries between public and private spheres, while some scholars highlighted how broadcast media and politics adopted theatrical strategies (Scannell, 1996; Corner and Pels, 2003). Methodologically, this phase

marked diversification, with scholars using discourse analysis, content analysis, and media ethnography. These approaches underscored how impression management extended beyond interpersonal encounters to institutionalised and mass-mediated contexts.

Since the 2010s, Goffman's framework has been widely applied to the study of self-presentation on digital platforms, particularly social media. Scholars conceptualised social media profiles as "exhibition spaces" (Hogan, 2010) and described the phenomenon of "context collapse" where diverse audiences complicate identity work (Moore, 2019). Empirical studies, often using surveys and interviews, have examined how young people use social media to present themselves, linked with social relationships, idealised images, and identity formation (Cover, 2012; Boyd, 2014).

Furthermore, Goffman's theory highlights how individuals manage impressions on social media under the pressure of audience expectations, and research shows that such impression management is closely tied to youth mental health, with studies identifying correlations between social media use, FOMO, social comparison, and symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hassim et al., 2020; Merunková & Šlerka, 2019; Riccio, 2013). Much of this work relies on qualitative or mixed methods approaches, allowing researchers to capture both the subjective experiences of young users and the measurable outcomes of their online behaviours.

In recent years, a growing body of literature highlights how users develop diverse strategies to adapt Goffman's backstage to the digital sphere. Young people often create multiple accounts or rely on tactics such as privacy settings to manage audiences and mitigate the pressures of constant surveillance (Bilqis et al., 2024; Qian, 2022). These practices function as self-presentation strategies that negotiate both social expectations and platform logics.

Moreover, recent studies also link Goffman's theory to algorithmic visibility. Users may feel pressured to conform to algorithmic expectations, which can undermine their ability to express authentic preferences and identities (Smith, 2020; Zhao et al., 2013). Research in this strand similarly tends to adopt qualitative interviews, ethnographies, or mixed methods, as these approaches are well-suited to examining how individual strategies intersect with broader platform dynamics. In this sense, Goffman's dramaturgical concepts remain central to understanding how identity and impression management unfold in contemporary digital environments.

Goffman's concepts of the "frontstage" and "backstage" are particularly useful in analysing social media behaviour. The "front stage" refers to how individuals present themselves in public to meet social expectations, while the "backstage" is a private space where they can be more authentic and less filtered. In the context of Instagram, Rinsta (real Instagram or main account) serves as the "front stage" where users curate idealised versions of themselves to gain social approval. In contrast, Finsta (fake Instagram or secondary account) functions as the "backstage," offering a more intimate space for self-disclosure without the pressures of public scrutiny.

Therefore, the proliferation of multiple accounts and different impression management illustrates the continuing relevance of Goffman's dramaturgical framework. His concepts provide a flexible lens to capture how young people negotiate authenticity, privacy, and social expectations in a platform-driven environment, demonstrating why dramaturgy remains a powerful theoretical foundation for contemporary studies of digital identity. Goffman's framework helps explain the tension between self-expression and social validation in youth digital identity management.

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research method that focuses on how people make sense of their experiences, actions, and social environments, with an emphasis on capturing their personal meanings and perspectives (Fossey et al., 2002). In addition, this study conducted interviews with Malaysian youth aged 18 to 24 to explore how they navigated between Rinsta and Finsta accounts, particularly about managing social pressure on Instagram. The aim was to understand their perceptions of the social pressures inherent on Instagram, how the act of switching between accounts impacted their self-presentation, and whether this strategy truly alleviated social pressure or simply reinforced societal expectations.

Furthermore, this study adopted an interpretive qualitative research approach, which goes beyond analysing what participants say to deeply explore how they express themselves and why they express it that way (Wiesner, 2022). Accordingly, when participants describe their experiences on Rinsta and Finsta, the analysis examined the social and emotional factors that influence these behaviours, such as the need for self-disclosure, the desire for peer approval, or the desire to avoid criticism, in addition to noting what they post or how frequently they switch accounts. Such underlying meanings were revealed by studying patterns in participants' narratives, focusing on repeating themes, contradictions, and how they interpret their actions in connection to social norms and pressures on Instagram.

3.2 Research Method

Focus group discussions were conducted in this study to explore the perceptions of three groups within the 18-24 age range, which are late secondary school students, university or college students, and young working professionals across Malaysia. Focus groups are a method

of bringing together several people to discuss a common topic, allowing the researcher to gather a wide range of opinions and explore how ideas are formed and negotiated in a social context (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These groups were selected because they were in different stages within the Emerging Adulthood phase, each facing distinct social pressures and life changes (Arnett, 2000).

For example, secondary school students (around 18) are under pressure from important examinations (e.g., STPM, UEC) and transitioning into adulthood, with influences from family and peers; university students experienced academic pressure, loneliness, peer pressure, and relationship dynamics; while young professionals encountered pressures related to entering the workforce and dealing with colleagues and superiors. These diverse experiences offered a broad range of perspectives on the use of Finsta and Instagram's social pressures.

The focus group discussion included open-ended questions designed to prompt discussion on participants' experiences with multiple Instagram accounts. Initial questions focused on general usage patterns (e.g., reasons for creating multiple accounts, types of content posted), followed by more probing questions explored social pressures, audience management strategies, and perceived differences between Rinsta and Finsta. Follow-up questions were used to clarify or expand upon participants' responses, enabling a deeper understanding of underlying motivations and emotional impacts.

3.3 Research Sampling

This study adopted purposeful sampling and snowball sampling to select participants who are relevant to the research objective. Purposeful sampling aims to select information-rich participants who are knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon under study (Palinkas,

2015). Furthermore, Snowball Sampling is a non-probability sampling method where initial participants recruit others from their acquaintances who share the target characteristics, allowing the sample to gradually expand like a "snowball" (Naderifar et al., 2017). The selection criteria are Malaysian youth aged 18 to 24 who were currently using secondary Instagram accounts (Finsta).

A total of 12 to 16 Malaysian youth aged between 18 and 24 years old were recruited and divided equally among three groups: late secondary school students, university/college students, and young working adults. The decision to limit the number of participants to 12-16 was made to ensure that focus group discussions remain manageable, providing enough diversity of perspectives while still allowing each participant adequate opportunity to contribute.

In addition, snowball sampling was used as a supplementary strategy, as active Finsta users are often connected to others who also maintain secondary accounts. By asking participants to recommend peers within their networks, this method increased the likelihood of reaching individuals who meet the study's criteria, especially since Finsta accounts are often private and not easily identifiable. The number of participants was adjusted based on data saturation; additional participants were recruited when the data collected were deemed insufficient.

Purposeful sampling, combined with snowball recruitment, ensured that participants represent different life stages within emerging adulthood while also making recruitment more effective. This allowed for a richer understanding of how different social environments and pressures influenced their experiences with switching between Rinsta and Finsta accounts.

3.4 Data collection

This study collected qualitative data through focus group discussions. Three focus groups were conducted, each representing a different stage of emerging adulthood. The focus groups were conducted online via Microsoft Teams, which enabled participation across geographical locations and provided features such as free access, recording, and auto-transcription. Each session lasted approximately 120 to 180 minutes. With participants' consent, all sessions were video-recorded, and additional notes were taken to capture participants' facial expressions, body language, and group interactions. These visual and nonverbal cues helped reveal the emotions behind participants' statements, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation. The recordings were transcribed to facilitate systematic analysis and reduce the risk of misinterpretation.

While online platforms offer convenience, they may also present challenges, including unstable internet connections and device incompatibility. To mitigate these risks, participants were given clear instructions in advance, such as ensuring a stable internet connection and using devices with functional cameras and microphones. Test links were also provided prior to the sessions to troubleshoot potential technical issues. In cases where Microsoft Teams was not accessible or failed to function properly, Zoom was designated as a backup platform as it offers free accessibility and a recording function. Additionally, participants who experienced disconnection were allowed to rejoin the session, and moderators provided a brief recap to ensure continuity.

The design of the interview questions was shaped by prior studies on the use of multiple Instagram accounts. For example, Huang and Vitak (2022) examined how young people

negotiate privacy boundaries and audience expectations when creating secondary accounts. Their interviews probed how users decide which audiences to include or exclude, which established the need to explore participants' motivations for creating Finsta, as well as how youths categorize and filter their audiences across different accounts to cope with social pressures.

Furthermore, Kang and Wei (2022) demonstrated that Rinsta and Finsta serve distinct purposes in users' self-presentation. Their study assessed how content types, posting frequency, and motivations differ across accounts, which suggested the importance of asking about differences in self-presentation and the feelings associated with account switching. By drawing on this framework, the interview questions explored how Malaysian youths navigate these shifts and whether such practices contribute to or alleviate social pressure.

Finally, Xiao et al. (2020) provided a qualitative perspective on Finsta use as a coping mechanism for social pressure, highlighting how secondary accounts can function as "intimate reconfigurations" of social media space. Their interviews explored how youths interpret Finsta as a space for vulnerability, reciprocity, and emotional relief. Inspired by this, questions focused on how participants perceived social pressure on Instagram and whether using the platform was a way to resist or normalise these pressures.

3.5 Data analysis

This study adopted thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data that were collected from the focus group discussions with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework,

focusing on youth experiences with multiple Instagram accounts. The process involved becoming familiar with the data through repeated reading, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing potential themes, refining and naming these themes, and finally producing a comprehensive analytical report. This approach is well-suited for exploring the nuanced experiences of Malaysian youth in emerging adulthood, particularly their motivations for using multiple Instagram accounts, strategies for audience management, and experiences of social pressure and self-presentation.

Coding was conducted inductively to allow themes to emerge directly from the data, ensuring that participants' voices and meanings remain central to the analysis. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the coding process was organized by using Microsoft Excel to create a structured coding sheet. It allowed the researcher to track, compare, and refine codes systematically, as well as to group them into broader themes that represented key patterns within the data.

Chapter 4   Findings and Analysis

This chapter discusses the findings and analysis of three focus group discussions conducted with 12 participants. Data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, permitting new themes to emerge from the transcripts. Additionally, the analytical process drew upon Goffman's theory to establish themes such as selective presentation and audience management. These themes proved effective in analysing participants' multi-account management practices and motivations. These themes were also the most frequently mentioned by participants. Coding commenced with line-by-line reading of transcripts to capture participants' descriptions of their Rinsta and Finsta experiences. Furthermore, these initial codes were refined and categorised under broader themes related to impression management, privacy concerns, emotional expression, social needs, the prevalence of multiple accounts, and social pressure on Instagram.

Group	Participant	Job/Occupation	Gender	Number of Accounts	Using Frequency	Account Status (R / F)	Rinsta Followers	Finsta Followers
Working Adults	P1	Videographer	Female	2	Similar	Both Private	≈400	17
	P2	Journalist	Female	3	Similar	R-Public, F-Private	≈200	12
	P3	Teacher	Female	2	Rinsta	Both Private	≈500	6
	P4	Fashion Designer	Male	3	Rinsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈1300	33
University Students	P5	Dietary Student	Female	2	Finsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈800	≈40
	P6	Advertising student	Female	2	Finsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈500	≈40
	P7	Advertising student	Male	2	Finsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈1000	62
	P8	Journalism Student	Female	2	Similar	Both Private	≈200	≈10
	P9	Form 6 students	Male	2	Rinsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈160	≈10

High School Students	P10		Male	2	Rinsta	R-Public, F-Private	≈207	3
	P11		Female	2	Finsta	Both Private	≈520	18
	P12		Female	2	Finsta	Both Private	≈660	33

Table 1: Participants' Demographics and Instagram Usage.

The following table summarises the participants' demographic information and Instagram usage patterns. Participants are designated as P1–P12 and typically maintain two accounts. Some possess a third account, such as P2, which serves as a personal diary visible only to herself. P4, meanwhile, maintains an account for professional purposes as an artwork gallery. Overall, the frequency of multi-account usage is balanced, with no significant tendency for participants to favour a single account. Participants' Rinsta may be set to public or private, whereas all Finsta accounts are private. Finsta follower counts are generally low (approximately 10–50 individuals), compared with Rinsta, which may exceed a thousand followers for some participants. These patterns reveal a distinct separation between public self-presentation and private sharing spaces.

This study did not specifically examine gender differences in participants' online behaviours and attitudes. However, to enhance data diversity, each group included participants of different genders. Findings indicate that the purposes, methods, and motivations for using multiple accounts did not show significant gender-based variations. Nevertheless, participants' motivations and considerations for maintaining multiple accounts varied based on their professions and social roles. Therefore, this study incorporates participants' occupations as one of the factors in analysing online behaviours during data analysis.

According to RQ1, the first half of this chapter focuses on participants' usage patterns and motivations for maintaining multiple accounts. Analysis reveals how participants compare

their Rinsta and Finsta experiences. These comparisons prove crucial for understanding how each account fulfils distinct social, emotional, and identity-related needs. Research indicates that the online environment on Rinsta is the primary catalyst for creating Finsta; thus, this chapter begins by describing the participants' usage on Rinsta. Therefore, the first half of the chapter analyses: 1) Impression management on Rinsta, 2) Motivations for using Finsta, and 3) Benefits and limitations of using Finsta.

Based on RQ2, the latter part of this chapter centres on the normalisation of social pressure. It first analyses how participants define the authenticity of self. It is followed by an examination of the necessity of multi-account usage, analysed sequentially for Rinsta and Finsta. Finally, it explores their perceptions of social pressure and their strategies for adaptation. Drawing from interview data, the latter section centres: 1) Finsta serves only as a tool for self-presentation and cannot fully represent participants' authenticity, 2) the widespread adoption of Finsta and 3) the continued necessity of Rinsta.

4.1 Rinsta: The Self that Plays by the Rules

Based on participants' responses regarding multiple account usage and motivations, a significant correlation exists between self-presentation and audience management. For instance, some participants prioritise self-expression, utilising the platform as a space to showcase diverse facets of their personality. Others emphasise privacy as the primary factor for creating Finsta, aiming to confide 'secrets' to trusted individuals. Audience composition serves as the determining factor in how participants present themselves, making audience segmentations the main cause of privacy concerns. Therefore, this subsection sequentially addresses: 1) Rinsta's

privacy concerns, 2) maintaining an ideal self-presentation, and 3) Rinsta's role as a "social name card."

4.1.1 Everyone is Watching: Privacy on Rinsta

Participants on the Rinsta usually draw followers from their immediate social circles, such as family, relatives, and close friends, though many also include casual acquaintances. These might encompass individuals met through university events, colleagues, students of working participants, long-lost classmates, or even strangers such as account fans or friends of friends. For instance, P2 mentioned that among her followers were individuals whose Instagram accounts she had exchanged at events, yet whose faces she could no longer recall. Furthermore, P5 explained why one might add strangers or acquaintances through Rinsta: *"I usually accept their follow requests. Refusing feels rather impolite; it's a matter of saving face."* It suggests some young people view accepting follows or following back as a social ritual, regardless of the depth of the relationship.

Despite some participants setting their Rinsta accounts to private, the low acceptance threshold for unfamiliar users significantly increased their privacy concerns on Instagram. Most participants refrained from sharing emotional or relationship-related content on Rinsta simply to prevent unfamiliar individuals from gaining access to their private updates. P11 shared experiences negatively impacted by privacy breaches and unwanted surveillance: *"Whenever I'm feeling low or venting about something, there's always someone unconnected (or someone linked to the subject I've mentioned) checking and spreading that content."*

When asked whether they had ever hesitated over which account to use for sharing specific content, some participants indicated they were more likely to deliberate on whether the content was "appropriate" for posting on Rinsta. Such hesitation arose when sharing emotional

captions, low-quality content, or frivolous and humorous photos or videos, or when posting similar content frequently within a short period. They expected the consequence of being unfollowed by others, with some participants further worrying about becoming the subject of gossip or facing judgment.

P8 shared her thoughts on how her audience might react if she posted content that didn't meet her ideal standards on her main account: *"If you post too frequently, people might say, 'Why is this person always posting? It's so annoying.' If the photos aren't well-taken, they'll say, 'This person's photography skills are dreadful.' Sometimes when you post selfies, people might think, 'She's not even that good-looking, why bother posting this?'"* Her concerns indicate that participants worry about the risk of criticism and reputational damage that often comes with posting non-ideal content on Rinsta.

The risk of criticism also caused psychological distress for some individuals, such as P1, who perceived such scrutiny as a loss of privacy. Furthermore, P6 believed the likelihood of being discussed or criticised by others was controllable: *"When I post such content, it becomes a topic of conversation for others, so it's better to share 'safe' content."* She concurred that sharing only happy and idealised images is sufficiently safe and avoids becoming a topic of discussion.

4.1.2 Crafting the Ideal Self

All participants agreed that content shared on Rinsta should represent the highlights of their lives, memorable and "worth sharing". Some referred to this as "official" or "formal" content, deeming it sufficiently "safe" for public display. Examples included attractive personal photographs, gatherings with friends, culinary delights, aesthetically appealing scenarios, and stories or posts tagged by friends. These contents were often polished and visually appealing.

Most participants carefully curate their appearance and consider typography, ensuring posts meet specific aesthetic standards before sharing. In this regard, P3 described the standard for appealing photographs: *"On the main account, you need to 'act a bit' — the posts have to look like I think I look really good and polished."* Other participants, meanwhile, considered positive and happy moments, socialising with friends, and travel experiences as "appropriate" for Rinsta. All these elements form the definition of "Rinsta-worthy" content across different participants.

When asked what others expect to see on Instagram, P8 shared her perspective based on her own expectations of how others present themselves on the platform: *"Humans are visual creatures, I think everyone likes to see things that look nice or pretty."* Besides that, participants' online presentations follow an unwritten rule, which is that negative emotional content is rare and "unacceptable" in the public eye. For example, content expressing sadness, anger, and complaints about others. As P2 shared her perspective on what people currently expect to see on Instagram: *"I think everyone wants to see positive things, right? No one wants to pay attention to someone who's constantly venting."* Therefore, participants' responses consistently revealed that maintaining an ideal image on Instagram constitutes adherence to an unwritten social norm, and this behaviour is usually voluntary.

4.1.3 Rinsta as a Digital Name Card

Most participants viewed their Rinsta image as a tool for shaping initial impressions within social circles. They considered maintaining a positive image on Instagram essential for fostering social connections. This perspective was highlighted among participants from group university and group high school. P9 shared their strategy for using Rinsta: *"My main account is more restrained and polished, basically for others to see. It serves as my 'public face,' and*

what people see there is the version they encounter when they first meet me." His response demonstrates how their pursuit of an online public image is closely tied to their offline persona. It also represents the self-presentation management approach adopted by all participants across their accounts.

Some participants, being professionals or university students with internship experience, had specific considerations for their online behaviours based on work requirements. P3 is a teacher, and she believed it was "inappropriate" to display emotional vulnerability on the Rinsta platform, which was followed by students and colleagues, to maintain a strict image and avoid losing students' respect. This also restricted her content posting: *"It's like when I took some swimsuit photos, I didn't dare to put them on my main account because I was afraid my students would talk about it. I care about how people see me."* She believes educators must dress prudently and generally maintain a conservative image in public settings.

Some participants use Rinsta as a personal portfolio for professional reasons. For instance, fashion designer P4 frequently posts content showcasing his style and fashion sense. The platform also helps him expand his industry network, increase visibility, and secure job opportunities, hence his focus on maintaining a positive image: *"My main account has a lot of connections, especially within the industry. It includes a lot of designers, stylists, photographers, and so on. I hesitate to post certain things because I worry it might affect my reputation"*. Another participant, P6 (an advertising student), also noted that the platform serves as a vital tool for creative professionals to showcase their work.

Overall, whether employed or still in school, participants perceive Rinsta as a platform for promoting a favourable image within their social circles. However, this unspoken social norm has fostered internalised pressure, contributing to the rise of Finsta.

4.2 Motivation for Finsta

According to participants, the motivation for creating a Finsta differs from the motivation that keeps participants using it. Most participants indicated that when everyone had a Finsta, it represented a prevailing trend, thereby attracting them to create such accounts. However, after using Finsta, most participants shared the same perspective as P4: *"At that time, everyone had one, so if I didn't have one, I felt a bit lame. After I started using it, I realised it's actually a useful tool for me to post things I like or things that don't feel suitable for my main account."* This also demonstrates that young people's social media behaviour can be altered by Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), with Finsta serving as an alternative presentation space that continues to attract young users.

Finsta content possesses a special characteristic: participants consider such content inappropriate for posting on Rinsta. Thus, all participants regard Finsta as an alternative channel for presenting another facet of themselves. The composition of its followers represents the most significant difference from Rinsta and is also the core factor influencing self-presentation. Therefore, they are more inclined to post on their Finsta: 1) content of venting emotions, 2) mundane daily life.

4.2.1 Safe Space to Vent

All participants viewed Finsta as a safer space for self-expression than Rinsta, primarily due to the significantly higher threshold for followers on Finsta accounts. Participants' Finsta follower counts ranged between only 3-62 people. All participants keep their Finsta accounts private, enabling them to filter followers autonomously. Acceptance criteria usually hinge on familiarity and trustworthiness, with participants describing ideal followers as *"true friends,"* *"friends who share my values,"* *"friends who won't judge or distort my words,"* *"friends who*

know how to keep secrets," and *"friends I've known for a long time."* Therefore, most participants perceive Finsta as a safeguard for personal privacy.

P7 shared his special criteria for adding friends on Finsta*: "I follow the rule of only following people on my Finsta who also have a Finsta, because I feel that this respects each other's privacy."* He believes privacy must be exchanged for privacy, reflecting credibility and fairness. This indicates that some participants maintain extremely strict boundaries regarding privacy and their audience.

Nearly all participants placed significant emphasis on the need for emotional expression, yet they worried that sharing content might impact their social lives if disseminated by others. As a result, they preferred smaller, more secure circles to fulfil these needs. P8 noted that compared to Rinsta, concerns before posting on Finsta were significantly reduced: *"The followers there are smaller in number, and they really know me, so I don't have to carefully maintain the image I show to others. I don't have to worry about being misunderstood, criticised, or judged for what I post. Compared to my main account, I feel much freer to share, to rant, and to express my true feelings."* Additionally, P2 observed that Rinsta followers tend to prefer positive content*: "People probably want to see someone being positive and cheerful every day, but I'm not like that. So I have a spam account. I need a more private space to express my negative feelings."*

Participants typically utilise Finsta to vent their emotions, using it as a daily outlet for stress relief. P3 stated that regardless of her life stage, she relies on Finsta to confide in her daily frustrations. Now employed, she also uses Finsta due to work-related concerns: *"From my past—like school, course mates, and friends—up to now, even when I'm complaining about my boss, I use it"* Generally, participants' analysed grievances concern individuals within their

current social circles. For instance, P6 (a student) complains about assignment partners, while P2 (working adult) vents about colleagues. These individuals either follow their Rinsta accounts or are connected to those who are following them, hence the limitations on this venting space.

If such content were posted on a Rinsta, P4 noted it *"I might upset people."* Meanwhile, participants were more likely to vent frustrations encountered in real life via their Finsta, as P12 stated: *"My friend's behaviour really annoyed me, but I didn't dare to tell him face-to-face because I was afraid we'd argue. So I just posted about it on my spam account."* This demonstrates that while participants release their emotions, they also use Finsta as a strategy to limit their audience, thereby maintaining positive social relationships.

Beyond concerns that venting to others might damage social relationships, some participants also worry that certain deeper emotions are unsuitable for posting on their main accounts. P7 believes maintaining a public persona on his main account is crucial; thus, he only shares his emotional side on his Finsta: *"I might post more image-building or surface-level things on my main account. But on my spam account, I post more things that come from the heart—like spamming a lot of my thoughts and feelings about my trips."* This suggests some young people perceive emotional content as undermining their idealised image, potentially viewing it as a sign of psychological fragility.

4.2.2 Sharing Daily Life and Memories

Another way all participants utilise Finsta is by treating it as a platform to document mundane daily life deemed unworthy of highlighting on Rinsta. Examples include meals, work, complaints, scenery, and similar content. When asked content wouldn't appear on Rinsta, P2 reflected the concerns of most participants: *"If I start posting all these very personal and trivial parts of my life on my main account, I think they would be shocked. It would feel like I'm treating*

them as really close friends, and they might not even want to see that." Her hesitation reveals both a concern for privacy and an unspoken boundary with the casual acquaintances on Rinsta.

Most participants view Finsta as a space to share humorous content with friends, such as "ugly photos" and amusing short videos. As P7 remarked: *"On your main account, you probably won't see things like someone's bare upper body, but on their spam account, you might. They also post a lot of things like their 'ugly' photos, which makes it very different from what everyone usually posts."* P7 considers this an entertaining pastime and an outlet for emotional release. Another participant, P9, added *"Sometimes I post something that feels kind of funny, but it doesn't really fit the public image I'm trying to create on my main account. So most of the time, I post these things on my spam account."* In other words, some participants felt that the ideal image on Rinsta did not encompass humour or silliness.

Some participants' Finsta content relates to fandom culture. They worry that frequently expressing affection for idols on their main account might annoy other followers, hence the need for a dedicated space to share freely. As P5 explained: *"I want everyone to see how handsome my idol is. But then I thought, if I post it there, will everyone be like, 'Why is she always posting about this guy?' Would it be annoying?"* P8 similarly stated: *"I really like posting videos of my idols or things related to them. It can get a bit intense, about 20 stories a day, and I feel like maybe others aren't really interested in that kind of content."* Therefore, these participants are more inclined to seek sharing outlets on their Finsta to avoid annoying their Rinsta followers.

4.3 Finsta Usage: Benefits and Drawbacks

Beyond creating a safe space for expression and sharing daily life through Finsta, participants' usage indicates that fostering deeper connections with close friends effectively

alleviates their stress. However, even on the Finsta platform, they still encounter privacy concerns.

4.3.1 The Social Reward of Finsta

The depth of emotion and unfiltered presentations led over half of the participants to believe interactions on Finsta strengthened bonds of friendship. Some participants felt grateful for the sense of trust conveyed. As P5 remarked, *"I feel like they really trust me. They share things and let me see their authentic side. Nowadays, some people use 'close friends' on their private accounts. I feel like even on a private account, if they put me in their close friends list, it means I get to see a deeper, more personal side of them."* Some participants expressed gratitude and pleasure that *"earning trust on Finsta"* was a source of happiness.

Similarly, P4 expresses gratitude for this, viewing it as recognition of genuine friendship: *"I actually feel quite fortunate to see sides of my friends rarely displayed on their main accounts. For instance, they might suddenly post deeply emotional content—things I wouldn't normally see."* The emotional content he refers to is typically friends' heartfelt reflections on their life experiences. The promotion of spaces for free expression on Finsta has encouraged young people to voice their thoughts more readily within their close social circles, while also providing avenues for greater mutual understanding.

Freedom of expression also encourages more young people to share their daily lives on their Finsta. Some participants believe that tools enabling insight into friends' daily lives also serve as a means of maintaining emotional bonds. P5 shared her purpose for using Finsta to stay connected with friends: *"My friends from secondary school are people I want to keep updated about my life. So sometimes we use private accounts to share our lives and see how each other is doing."*

For some participants, Finsta serves as both a safe haven for venting frustrations and a place to satisfy curiosity. As P11 described her experience witnessing others' complaints: *"Everyone has a bit of a gossip side. I want to know what's going on, so I DM (direct message) them to ask about it."* When asked how she felt upon encountering such posts, she admitted: *"I suddenly get excited when I see it."* Therefore, some participants view others' complaints as a form of entertainment.

However, P1 indicated that frequent emotional posts from friends on Finsta could become irritating*: "I think it depends on how often they post these kinds of things. If they only post it once in a while, I might take a look and see whether I should reply to their story or ask what's going on. But if it's someone who posts this kind of long, emotional rant three to five times a week, I would find it really annoying."* While most participants welcomed the trust and closeness with friends, a minority admitted it could be a source of bother.

Despite this, most participants gave positive feedback regarding the freedom of expression afforded by Finsta, with their overall usage experience also tending towards the positive. However, this is predicated upon Finsta maintaining a certain degree of freedom. Participants indicated in subsequent analysis that they also encounter context collapse on Finsta accounts where followers are strictly filtered.

4.3.2 Restricted Freedom

When asked whether they had ever hesitated or been unwilling to share certain content with specific followers on their Finsta, eight participants described experiences of hesitating to post due to their followers in various situations. Meanwhile, only four individuals from different groups responded that they had never encountered this situation. They expressed complete trust

in their close friends, as described by P7: *"If I want to post something, I just post it. Anyone who can see my spam account is someone I trust."*

P7 has the most Finsta followers among all participants, totalling 62. Even with a large following, he strictly screens only those he deems worthy of accepting follow requests. The other three participants, namely P3, P8 and P10, possessed comparatively fewer followers, with only approximately three to 10 Finsta followers each. The remaining eight participants who experienced restrictions on freely posting content due to specific Finsta followers had follower counts ranging from a minimum of around 10 to a maximum of approximately 40. Given the inconsistency in follower numbers, no consistent trend emerged, such as the notion that a higher follower count necessarily hinders free self-expression. This study posits that audience management, rather than follower count, is the primary factor causing participants to experience context collapse on their Finsta.

Most of the time, the eight participants experience conflicts with friends on their Finsta in real life. When they wish to vent on Finsta as usual, they feel constrained because these friends are on their follow list. P11 mentioned using the "hide stories from specific people" privacy setting: *"if I want to vent about someone in my spam account, I've had a little conflict with. I would hide it from that person, but everyone else can see that I'm ranting."* Most participants consider emotional venting essential.

P6 shared that even individuals not directly involved in conflicts might mistakenly feel targeted: *"Sometimes I complain about school assignments, and I have one or two close friends in my private account. To avoid misunderstandings, I use the close friends list."* Some participants prefer to use the Close Friends setting to restrict who can view their specific posts on Finsta. Another scenario arises when mutual friends of some participants follow each other's

private accounts, prompting concerns that these close friends might disclose secrets to the individuals involved, ultimately damaging social relationships.

P5 experienced hesitation when they wanted to share updates about life but felt constrained because family followed their Finsta. As P5 shared: *"When I go out for supper with my friends late at night and I post photos, I don't want my family to see it. And I also buy albums, and sometimes I share them on my spam account. But if my family knew I spent so much money on albums, I'd be in trouble. So I hide those stories from them."* It indicates that even when it comes to family members on Finsta, young people may need to maintain their privacy under certain circumstances.

P2 shared her experience of wanting to share something she was proud of but worrying it might make others uncomfortable, choosing to share it only with her followers in the Close Friends list. She explained this was both to prevent her friend from misinterpreting it as showing off and an act of consideration for her feelings: *"I don't think it is troublesome, I feel that putting in a bit of extra effort to avoid misunderstandings is something I should do as a friend."*

Similar to P6, she acknowledged the distress caused by the constraints, but she reached a compromise with herself: *"It might feel troublesome, but if I post something for them to see, dealing with the aftermath might be even more troublesome. So instead of not showing them and causing more issues, I'd rather post it in the close friends list. That way I can vent and avoid these problems."* This indicates that while some participants experience limited freedom of expression on their Finsta accounts at times, they view this merely as a strategy for managing interpersonal relationships and do not find it particularly inconvenient.

However, four participants indicated that setting up a close friends list or hiding posts/updates from friends on their Finsta caused them to feel irritated and constrained. As P9

noted: *"It's also kind of tricky, it feels like there's something I want to say, but I can't just say it openly."* This indicates that even on Finsta, some participants still struggle to freely express their emotions at times. It also reflects lingering trust deficits towards Finsta friends who follow their Finsta.

It is worth noting that although P8 herself maintains strict boundaries regarding who follows her Finsta, she has shared instances where her friends have added acquaintances they have known for only a short time or with whom they are not particularly close. This suggests that a minority of young people may not hold high boundaries for who they allow to follow their Finsta. As a result, some individuals may have ulterior motives for maintaining multiple accounts, which could make their privacy requirements more difficult to fulfil.

4.4 Finsta as Part of Me

When asked which account better reflected their authentic selves, there were eight participants who felt that they maintain both accounts authentically reflect their multifaceted selves through different lenses. Only four participants explicitly stated that their Finsta is more authentic. Meanwhile, the eight participants felt that displaying a more spontaneous and emotional side on their Finsta did not represent a more authentic version of themselves, but rather another facet they seldom revealed to unfamiliar audiences. These participants shared P9's perspective, as he elaborated on his definition of authenticity: *"I think being 'real' should be a combination of both accounts, because if someone truly knows me, they would know that I'm not just one side. A single account only shows the personality I want to present."*

P8 expressed a similar viewpoint: *"I think it doesn't mean that my account isn't 'me' or isn't authentic. It just reflects my own considerations and selective choices about what I should*

or shouldn't post." Their statements underscore the necessity of selective presentation via multiple accounts. P10 further explained that even when posting polished or staged photographs on Rinsta, he doesn't perceive this as less authentic; the differences in content across the two accounts merely represent distinct phases of his identity.

When asked whether they believed their friends appeared more authentic on Finsta than on Rinsta, all participants' responses aligned with their perceptions of Finsta's self-authenticity. If they perceived their own Finsta presence as more genuine, they also deemed their friends' Finsta behaviour more authentic. Vice versa, if they emphasised that Finsta served merely as a strategic presentation rather than a reflection of authenticity, they likewise assumed their friends' motivations on Finsta aligned with their own.

In this regard, only P6 provided a different perspective, suggesting that while some friends use their Finsta to showcase different facets of their personality, others present a more authentic version of themselves there than on their main account. She explained: *"They clearly do curate an image they want others to see, such as purposely going to a certain place to take photos for posting. For me, I would say I don't do that; I just post what I like and choose which account to post it on."* She added that curated appearances (such as photo editing) represent a form of performative online behaviour. Her sharing reveals the varying degrees of curation and performativity among young people on Rinsta, while also demonstrating that different youths hold diverse definitions of authenticity.

Meanwhile, only four participants - three working adults and one high school student - explicitly stated that the content on their private accounts better represented their authentic selves. They believed the content on Finsta was less curated and less concerned with others' judgements, representing a more genuine portrayal. As P1 remarked: *"I feel like my main*

account has a lot of audiences, so I want to show them what I think is the best. With my second account, I feel it's more 'real' because I post things as I really am."

It aligns with P3's perspective, she explained: *"The followers on my Finsta are all close friends, I can show my true self there."* When asked to define her authentic self, she answered: *"It's like saying whatever I want to say, without hesitation. I don't have to edit my words, check my stories for mistakes, I can just post immediately after writing."* P3's definition of authentic self-presentation aligns with that of the other three participants. These participants believe that content that has not been carefully curated is more genuine and better reflects their true emotions.

4.5 Finsta: A Trend among Gen Z

All participants agreed that Finsta's user base primarily consists of peers and the young generations. P3 answered: *"I think most young people do this — maybe those born after 1995 and younger. People born around 1990 are already considered the older group, so they usually don't have Finsta. Some of them don't even have an Instagram account."* Other participants mentioned that those with Finsta are typically their friends or younger individuals. Thus, it can be regarded as a trend among the Generation Z (post-2000 generation) and younger age groups.

All participants agreed that possessing a Finsta has become a common strategy for managing their online image. When asked how they would react if peers declared they didn't have a Finsta, some expressed scepticism. As P9 remarked: *"I feel like maybe they have a Finsta, but they just don't want to tell me."* Rather than believing the other person genuinely has no Finsta, some participants felt this might be a white lie fabricated to protect privacy. This reflects that possessing a Finsta is a highly common phenomenon.

When asked about the perceived common reasons, their responses aligned with the motivations for using Finsta, centring on two primary factors: privacy concerns and the need for self-expression. As P1 explained: *"Nowadays, there is no online privacy anymore. Even if some people don't follow your Instagram, they can still find out about your posts through other people."* This precisely demonstrates that in today's online environment, young people also recognise that personal privacy has become increasingly difficult to control.

Based on a secure and reliable audience, they believe that expressing emotions through Finsta is also a core reason for its widespread popularity. Meanwhile, another need is to showcase different facets of the self, and they require a dedicated space to express diverse personalities. As P2 said: *"Everyone wants to have another space where they can express their real self without letting the whole world judge them. My life doesn't need to be shown to everyone."*

Regarding their views on the necessity of a Finsta, all participants responded that it was "case-by-case" and "not essential". Some participants considered those without a Finsta to be "authentic and cool" as well as straightforward, perceiving them as unconcerned with others' opinions. Some even expressed admiration – for instance, P12 remarked: *"I would be quite surprised, and I really admire that they can be so bold."* to these people. As P10 noted: *"There are parts of ourselves we prefer not to reveal to others. If someone posts private content or personal complaints on their Instagram and chooses not to keep it concealed, I would consider that quite bold, as it suggests they are unafraid of potential judgment or gossip from others."* P1 shared this perspective, believing such individuals genuinely possess independent thought and refuse to follow the crowd by using Finsta; to her, this embodies a truly cool personality.

Some participants felt this depended on individual needs. Certain individuals require maintaining a positive image on Instagram due to the nature of their work or social circles; others find this unnecessary, with a single account sufficient for self-expression and stress relief. P2 observed that such individuals typically possess extroverted personalities, as they are unconcerned with others' opinions. Furthermore, some participants suggested this phenomenon often stems from less frequent use of social media platforms like Instagram, allowing greater focus on real-life pursuits. P5 shared a friend's experience: *"My friend is very focused on studying and he's really good at it. I think maybe he uses social media less, so that's why he doesn't have a Finsta."*

Furthermore, P6 characterised individuals without Finsta as *"A person who isn't emotionally overwhelmed",* suggesting such people may possess relatively narrow social circles, thereby enabling them to freely present a singular facet of themselves online. When asked who they think needs a Finsta, P4's response indicates it depends on whether they care about others' thoughts: *"I think if you care a lot about your image and what others think, then having a Finsta is quite necessary. But if you're the type who don't care—if people want to criticise, let them—then you don't really need one."* This demonstrates that participants perceive those who typically maintain Finsta as being relatively more emotionally expressive and complex, hence requiring additional outlets for emotional release.

Some participants perceived these individuals as emotionally detached and typically rational, thus requiring no space for emotional release. Below is the explanation of P3: *"My boyfriend doesn't have a spam account. He's the type of person who doesn't feel the need to express himself. He prefers to deal with his emotions privately and focus on himself rather than share things with others."* She also described these people as rather dull, lacking any excitement

in their lives. Therefore, based on participants' responses, it is evident that the prevalence of Finsta has reached a stage where young people can use Finsta to make rough guesses about a person's personality.

4.5.1 More Convenient than "Close Friends List"

When asked whether Instagram's privacy settings could replace Rinsta, all participants agreed they could not. Most explained that the "Close Friends" feature was complicated and required more time to curate their audience. P5 elaborated: *"Among so many friends, if I have to go through each one and add them to my Close Friends list, it's troublesome and a waste of time; having a Finsta is much simpler."* Most participants shared similar views, as managing and filtering their main accounts with large follower bases proved significantly more difficult. As P8 shared their struggles with the Close Friends feature: *"Sometimes I make mistakes, like adding too many, missing someone, or selecting the wrong people."*

Another concern they raised was that frequent use of the Close Friends feature on Instagram could easily be noticed by followers not included in the list. As P9 stated: *"I used Close Friends and shared my story with some people, but then they told others who weren't included in my Close Friends list about what I posted. This made those people curious about why they weren't added, which I found quite troublesome"* Instagram's Close Friends feature can easily spark attention because followers may notice they weren't included by seeing others on the list. This situation can strain social relationships, as P6 noted: *"If my friend finds out that I didn't add them to the list, it would be really awkward."* While P10 added, *"This might cause them to hold some grudges or perhaps develop some misunderstandings."* Participants also indicated that the feature of hiding stories or posts from specific followers raises similar concerns.

Another reason they find Finsta irreplaceable is that it allows them to post more freely, with most participants describing it as an excellent platform for uploading digital memories. It also serves as an ideal space for reflecting on the past, not limited to 24-hour Stories, but allowing shared posts that remain permanently saved and easily revisited. P2 responded: *"I want to keep a record of these moments—whether good or bad—because they capture my most authentic feelings at that particular time. Some of it is also for my own reference, so I feel that my main account or certain other features just cannot achieve this."*

4.6 Rinsta Still Essential

Only three participants from different groups indicated they had considered or deleted their Instagram accounts to avoid social pressure, but all eventually returned to the platform. P1 shared her struggles with social comparison: *"Instagram can be toxic because everyone presents their best self. As a normal human being, you can't help but compare yourself to others, which affects your mental state. Seeing peers already achieving so much can make you feel like you are useless, like trash—like you can't do anything well."* This indicates that the idealised image standards on Instagram can easily lead to low self-esteem. She returned to Instagram because she felt bored and needed to seek entertainment by scrolling through social media.

Additionally, P6 shared how she felt exhausted by social pressures in real life and didn't want to experience that stress again on social media, leading her to consider deleting her account. However, she also admitted that Instagram remains an important channel for her to connect with the outside world, which is why she continues to use it. P11 revealed she once contemplated deactivating her account due to privacy concerns—content from her first Instagram account was frequently discussed by unrelated individuals. Eventually, she chose to

return to the platform because social media remains an essential outlet for her emotional expression.

Meanwhile, the other participants stated they had never paused their Instagram use due to social pressure. P5 highlighted the importance of sharing life experiences and shared her perspective on social pressure: *"Honestly, there aren't that many 'audiences' in your life anyway. So why not just follow your own feelings and share what you want to share?"* Additionally, P8 admitted to worrying about others' judgments but believed one shouldn't alter their online behaviour for others. As she explained: *"I don't think there's any need for me to give up my authentic self just because of other people's comments. If others don't like it, then let them be the ones to adjust. Why should I be the one who compromises?"* She also mentioned that she could utilise Instagram's audience management features, such as setting up a Close Friends list or Finsta accounts, making it unnecessary to completely stop using Instagram.

When asked whether it was possible to delete their Rinsta accounts and use only Finsta, all participants stated this was both impossible and unrealistic. Only P1 considered it possible, as she believed she had other means of communication with her close social circle and that losing contact with casual acquaintances was not important. However, the other participants indicated they needed both a space for self-expression and a desire to satisfy their curiosity about others' lives. As P2 said: *"It's not just about having a space to express myself, but also to see how others express themselves. So I tend to be curious and want to know what others are up to."*

Other participants viewed it as a vital tool for connecting with others. P8 emphasised the importance of establishing connections with the outside world through a positive image (Rinsta). *"People need social interaction, especially now that we're in university."* Her

perspective aligns with other group participants, revealing that individuals across different age groups rely on Instagram to fulfil social needs within diverse social circles.

Professionals like P4 declare, *"You might as well kill me if you want me to delete my main account."* As a fashion designer, he relies heavily on Instagram to expand his connections and seek opportunities. Both his followers and career resources have been built through Rinsta, making it impossible for him to delete the account.

Although participants like P3 don't need social media platforms to secure job opportunities, she admits she can't bear to delete her account: *"I've accumulated so many followers and followings, and I've built up all the big data for this account."* The data system she refers to is the personalised content algorithm generated by her long-term online behaviour, which has made her dependent on Instagram's suggested content. Another two participants, P5 and P9, also admitted that their Rinsta accounts hold countless precious memories. As P5 put it: *"Sharing your life is sharing your memories."* She now uses her two Instagram accounts as photo backup libraries, allowing her to revisit emotions and memories anytime. These cases vividly reveal Instagram's addictive functionalities.

P6's response regarding Instagram's social pressures reveals her understanding of the platform's algorithm: *"With the way social media is built, it's designed to make you dependent on it so that it can make money. The whole app is designed to capture your attention. Even though it creates pressure, I have to admit that I do have a certain level of dependence on it."* Her insight into social media's mechanics is clear, while also showing how young people compromise themselves to fit in with social media trends.

Overall, even though all participants were aware of social pressure, they acknowledged their dependence on their Rinsta, necessitating the use of Finsta to alleviate the social pressure.

At the same time, Finsta served a purpose for most participants, whether in maintaining social relationships or expressing emotions. Participants' views on the normalisation of Finsta also reveal their growing importance among young people. This phenomenon represents a unique form of online self-management characteristic of the Gen Z.

Chapter 5   Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that participants maintain distinct roles for their Rinsta and Finsta accounts. They consciously utilise multiple accounts to fulfil self-presentation and image management needs, while also satisfying their desire for self-disclosure. Participants' responses also indicate they recognise the social pressures associated with Instagram, particularly Rinsta, stemming from the need to maintain an idealised image. However, they acknowledge Rinsta remains crucial within their social circles as a tool for maintaining connections, building personas, and accessing information. Therefore, they require an alternative platform to express their less-than-perfect selves.

Due to strict audience control, participants perceive Finsta as a relatively high-privacy expression platform, offering a more convenient and secure space for self-expression compared to Instagram's privacy features. Thus, participants consistently agree that using Finsta is a common and crucial self-presentation management strategy. By understanding Finsta's necessity for participants, this research also reveals its high prevalence among young people.

While prior research primarily focused on differences in multi-account usage (Purwaningtyas & Alicya, 2020; Budiyanto & Aisyah, 2022; Yoanita et al., 2022; Huang & Vitak, 2022), this study further uncovered participants' purposes for sharing and documenting life on Finsta, the social benefits gained from interacting with friends. These uses have been less frequently mentioned in previous studies, which typically focused on Finsta's higher level of privacy. Regarding Sokowati and Manda (2022) point about the illustration of freedom issues on Finsta, this study also found that participants frequently encounter context collapse on Finsta, leading them to adjust their audience visibility settings. This indicates that Finsta does not fully allow free expression.

Previous studies have raised questions about whether Finsta exacerbate social pressure (Xiao et al., 2020). Further exploration in this study reveals that participants exhibit a certain degree of internalised social pressure, reflecting a phenomenon of social pressure generalisation. Meanwhile, this study also uncovered findings differing from prior research (Kang & Wei, 2020): participants held different views on the notion that Finsta enable more authentic self-presentation. They tended to frame it as impression management rather than a more genuine self.

5.1 Rinsta: Idealised Image under Peer Surveillance

Research findings indicate that young people perceive it as necessary to maintain an idealised self-image on the Rinsta. Their definition of idealisation extends beyond attractive appearance, lifestyle, and social circles to encompass refraining from posting negative emotions, and even sentimental, trivial, or humorous content. They explained that this stems from a fear of criticism and gossip, while also considering that Rinsta followers typically expect to see idealised content. Secondly, as Rinsta's audience management functions as a social medium without filtering based on familiarity, they wish to maintain privacy from acquaintances.

On the one hand, the unwritten rules governing the maintenance of an idealised image on Rinsta stem from social pressures, such as the fear that criticism or gossip might damage one's personal image and undermine social relationships. Moreover, when most Instagram users similarly cultivate idealised personas, young people are more likely to engage in social comparison as they seek peer validation (Chua & Chang, 2016). This represents an environment-driven alteration of their online presentation.

On the other hand, the findings showed that participants voluntarily maintain an idealised image because they rely on Instagram as a social tool to expand and maintain their social engagement. Malaysia's Instagram user base is dominated by youth, where cultivating a favourable Rinsta image represents the most efficient channel for self-presentation. Despite the constraints imposed by context collapse stemming from large followers, they willingly sacrifice diverse self-disclosure needs (e.g. humour, trivial, and emotional content) to secure greater social capital.

Social capital refers to resources and value acquired through social relationships, while youth utilise social media to present personal profiles and expand their social networks to gain social capital (De Zúñiga et al., 2017). This study finds that their Instagram serves as a crucial platform for securing job opportunities and showcasing skills, necessitating the maintenance of a curated image. However, beyond career opportunities, social capital also encompasses social support, such as expanding one's social circle and gaining recognition. Therefore, some youth may also be motivated by social support as one factor in maintaining their ideal image.

Meanwhile, the study by Gangneux (2021) on the normalisation of profile screening on social media revealed that young people viewing others' profiles constitute normal and reasonable daily behaviour, primarily aimed at managing social risks. They engage in this practice to determine whether individuals are safe and trustworthy, often targeting romantic partners, friends, colleagues, and others. Additionally, they experience imagined surveillance, viewing others' profiles while also anticipating that others view theirs.

The phenomenon of profile screening explains why most participants in this study cited concerns about Rinsta's low privacy and the risk of being gossiped about. It also explains why

most emphasised their need for Rinsta to access others' information and maintain external connections. Moreover, young people readily perceive the necessity of maintaining an idealised image as highly significant, given their constant state of imagined and actual surveillance.

When people realise that both themselves and others present only an idealised facet of themselves on Rinsta, and as more become aware of privacy concerns, they increasingly adopt layered self-presentation. The prevalence of multiple Instagram accounts exemplifies this trend. Thus, obtaining information by surveilling others' profiles becomes a rather superficial approach to social interaction. Therefore, when expanding one's social circle, alongside utilising social media, it is necessary to gather information through multiple channels – such as observing more facets of individuals in real life – to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. This approach also facilitates the establishment of deeper relationships.

5.2 Finsta: Limited but Enhanced Expression

The findings suggest Instagram's built-in privacy features are useful yet deemed them less efficient and convenient than using Finsta. For instance, even when setting Rinsta to private, users cannot entirely filter out acquaintances due to the need to expand their social circle. When posting, manually adjusting visibility settings for Close Friends or hiding stories proved troublesome, as users felt errors were easily made when filtering through large follower counts. Moreover, they expressed concern that followers not included in visibility lists might experience social awkwardness upon discovering the presence of those contents. Under the premise of curating a trusted audience, Finsta offers them a safer and more convenient space for self-expression.

This aligns with the research finding of Raina Rahmadani and Lilis Ratnasari (2025), where Gen Z engages in deeper, more authentic self-disclosure within Instagram Close Friends based on the intimacy of their friendships. This mechanism mirrors the usage of Finsta, which similarly restricts visibility to only the closest audience. As young people tend to express their emotions more freely, record trivial daily moments, and reveal sides beyond their Rinsta personas, youth view mutual Finsta followings as a channel for gaining trust and deepening intimacy. Xiao et al. (2020) also view Finsta as a secure space built upon deep relationships, enabling users to temporarily escape the social pressures of Rinsta's personal branding – the constant maintenance of an idealised image. Thus, Finsta facilitates the establishment of profound connections and enhances self-disclosure, creating a virtuous cycle.

However, youth are also experiencing context collapse on their Finsta, meaning they feel constrained in their expression due to certain followers even within this space. This aligns with Sokowati and Manda's (2022) illustration of freedom, indicating that even on Finsta, users conform to social expectations and cannot be considered truly free spaces for self-expression. For some young people, however, utilising Finsta's visibility settings to screen certain audiences constitutes a form of control and management for positive social relationships; they do not perceive such restrictions as causing any inconvenience. Furthermore, some people never filter their audience on Finsta, demonstrating complete trust in their closest friends.

While Finsta cannot entirely circumvent social pressures such as context collapse and social expectations, its smaller and comparatively safer audience effectively encourages young people to engage in freer self-disclosure. Finsta offers them a temporary respite, allowing them to shed the constant need for strict image management on Rinsta. Compared to using a single

account, multiple accounts provide young people with greater and more diverse control over how they present themselves.

However, it also demonstrates a phenomenon whereby some people are extremely strict in screening their finsta followers to increase their freedom of self-disclosure, while others are laxer about the boundaries of close friends they accept as followers. Therefore, they cannot fully trust certain followers. This may lead to young people's privacy needs on social media becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy, as Finsta's high degree of freedom of expression relies on a strong trust in its audience. As Finsta grows more prevalent within young people's social circles, might this prompt them to lower their boundaries with Finsta followers to align with social trends? Meanwhile, might young people then begin seeking alternative strategies for online self-presentation, such as third accounts or other platforms offering greater privacy?

5.3 Rethinking Authenticity

This study also examined participants' definitions of authentic self-presentation; most did not agree with the statement that "Rinsta is less authentic and Finsta more authentic", considering this a rather superficial view. They perceived multi-account usage merely as a method for managing diverse self-presentations, viewing each facet as controllable and freely adaptable to different audiences. This aligns with Goffman's concept (1955) of impression management, wherein every instance of self-management constitutes part of the authentic self, though selectively presented according to the audience. Goffman's theory also explains that individuals are perpetually influenced by social expectations, making it impossible to fully present an authentic self.

This aligns with the statement of Sokowati and Manda (2022). Although their participants perceived Finsta as more genuine, the authors criticised judging self-presentation authenticity based solely on the distinction between Rinsta and Finsta usage. They suggested that young people's diverse self-presentation management is itself a form of authenticity. This study explicitly asked participants to define their authentic selves, and they spontaneously stated that Finsta represent only a fragment of their identity.

This also extends to diverse platform usage patterns, as participants do not exclusively use Finsta for confiding secrets or negative emotions—matters typically considered private. Instead, they utilise Finsta to document mundane daily experiences, with some participants indicating it serves as a platform for uploading and archiving memories. These diverse uses blur the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity, as the study of Kreling et al. (2022) contends that the authenticity of social media content fluctuates rather than being fixed. Different individuals hold varying definitions of authenticity, and different content possesses differing degrees of authenticity.

It demonstrates that young people perceive themselves as consciously managing and presenting their identities, rather than being driven by social pressures to craft idealised personas. This reflects an aspect of autonomy within social media. West et al. (2023) categorize social media influences into supporting and suppressing autonomy effects, positing that enhancing the former while reducing the latter improves mental wellbeing. Supporting autonomy promotes self-management, autonomous choice, and self-awareness; conversely, suppressing autonomy manifests through external influence, coercion, involuntary use, and diminished personal control.

When participants indicated that managing multiple accounts did not compromise authenticity, it demonstrated they were not entirely influenced by others in using Finsta, but rather autonomously used multiple accounts for image management. This indicates they exercised self-awareness and control over how they wished to express themselves when creating and using Finsta. Thus, high levels of control contribute to young people's development of self-awareness and personality formation (West et al., 2023).

5.4 Finsta as Resistance and Reinforcement of Platform Social Norms

The primary motivation for most participants to create a Finsta was initially to follow the trend, reflecting characteristics of FOMO. However, their subsequent reliance on Finsta stemmed not from following trends but from perceiving it as an essential tool for expressing emotions, safeguarding privacy, and documenting life. It could be argued that the idealised image norms of Rinsta have become social conventions, while Rinsta's numerous privacy risks have catalysed the widespread adoption of Finsta, making multi-account management a common strategy for self-presentation.

Research indicates that young people perceive Finsta as non-essential, with their necessity depending on individual social needs. Conversely, participants in this study believe their social demands compel them to maintain multiple accounts as an autonomous form of self-management. They also observe that peers without Finsta tend to be more independent, courageous, and indifferent to others' opinions, often leading simpler lives with stable emotions. Reflecting on their own use of Finsta, participants indirectly acknowledged their heightened sensitivity to others' opinions, their vibrant lives with complex social circles, and their need for an outlet for more intricate emotions. Gen Zers without Finsta are described as a minority and

distinctive group, indirectly suggesting that most young people are facing increasing social pressures and the growing need to vent emotions through social media.

Finsta adoption continues to rise, as multiple participants expressed suspicion that peers without Finsta accounts might be lying to avoid privacy exposure. This indicates heightened surveillance on Rinsta platforms and diminishing privacy, leading young people to doubt claims of not needing Finsta for privacy management. Meanwhile, does Finsta serve as a tool for young people to resist mainstream social pressures, or does its creation of new expressive spaces constitute tacit acceptance and reinforcement of Rinsta's social pressures?

This study found that although young people mentioned social comparison creating a toxic psychological environment on Instagram, none of the participants described the social pressure on Rinsta as unbearable or distressing. Even though they were aware that curating and presenting idealised content constitutes a performance for a wider audience, they only described maintaining an ideal image as normal and necessary behaviour. They also believed that social pressure could be alleviated by using Finsta.

These concepts demonstrate that social pressure on Instagram has become internalised and pervasive. Youth acknowledged their deep understanding of Instagram's mechanisms for attracting greater user engagement, yet also confessed to their own high dependency on the platform. The internalisation of social pressure can be examined through the platform's mechanisms. For instance, algorithmic systems increasingly recommend idealised, appealing, and highly discussed content (Pellegrino, 2024). Additionally, persistent notification mechanisms capture user attention through features like suggested users, live stream alerts, or recommended content tailored to interests (Jandevi, 2025). Finally, the instant feedback system enables users to receive rapid responses—such as likes, shares, views, comments, and replies—

shortly after posting. This feedback signals which types of content garner greater visibility and more positive reception (Felippe & Michelon, 2025).

As users continually encounter this more highly regarded, idealised content alongside immediate evaluations, they naturally develop concepts of "what constitutes suitable social media content." These concepts subsequently alter self-presentation behaviour, manifesting as the selective presentation of an idealised image mentioned by each participant. Furthermore, this idealised image intensifies social pressures such as social comparison, as individuals highlight only what they perceive as their best aspects (Pellegrino, 2024). This study, however, found that youth who were acutely aware of their social pressure perceived themselves as more autonomous. They believed managing their audience was the optimal way to manage social pressure, employing various privacy management tools such as Finsta and Close Friends lists to mitigate these pressures.

Malaysian Gen Z is regarded as possessing strong autonomy, independence and self-confidence in politics, the workplace and consumption (Tjiptono et al., 2020). With a solid educational foundation and the advantages of being digital natives, they ought to possess the capacity for independent thought and critical evaluation of information. However, when confronted with peer pressure and comparative social pressures on social media, young people tend to conform to social norms. Their autonomy manifests in self-censorship displayed online rather than in resistance to these pressures. The development of Gen Z's mental well-being on social media presents a contradiction with the defining characteristics of their era.

5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examines the paradoxical phenomenon among Malaysian youth regarding autonomy in managing multiple Instagram accounts and their susceptibility to external social pressures. The use of Finsta effectively alleviates social pressures, even if audience restrictions occasionally arise. Compared to Rinsta, Finsta affords greater freedom to express emotions and share experiences, enhancing self-disclosure while fostering deeper social relationships. However, despite maintaining Finsta, young people's self-management strategies on Rinsta remain unchanged. They persist in conforming to mainstream norms, maintaining an idealised persona. Consequently, Finsta serves merely as a temporary refuge from social pressures, while young people continue to face the expectation of upholding an idealised self on Instagram. This pressure may intensify, as most participants in this study expressed the view that selectively presenting an idealised image constitutes normal and necessary online behaviour.

The research findings invite reflection: when the authenticity of self-presentation on social media is context-depended, and young people increasingly master selective presentation management strategies, might traditional social pressures—such as social comparison—be redefined from a different perspective? Young people compare only selectively presented facets, and the personal information displayed is neither comprehensive nor profound. Individuals can gain a more comprehensive understanding of others through multiple channels of interaction, such as real-world communication, rather than relying solely on the selective content presented on social media. This argument extends to research on mental well-being and social media, enabling users to redefine social comparison and reconsider the necessity of maintaining an idealised image that has become internalised.

Meanwhile, this study also identified the high prevalence of online surveillance among young people and their extremely low trust in Instagram's privacy features. They expressed a preference for using Finsta as a privacy management tool, stating that the platform's built-in privacy functions were not as convenient. Therefore, this research recommends that platforms could enhance privacy settings, such as introducing notifications for screenshots or shared content, thereby increasing users' control over their privacy.

The phenomenon of Finsta not being entirely free for open expression indicates that some young people maintain blurred boundaries regarding their Finsta audiences. This study also found through participant sharing that even when using Finsta, a minority of young people do not necessarily screen their audience based on high levels of intimacy or trust. This suggests that young people's online privacy needs are becoming increasingly complex and difficult to satisfy. In future, they may employ more online self-presentation strategies to fulfil both self-disclosure and privacy requirements.

This study broadens existing literature by examining not only the efficacy of multi-account management in alleviating social pressure but also introducing the phenomenon of internalised social pressure. Findings demonstrate that young people are aware of social pressure yet currently show no desire to alter this environment, believing Finsta enhances manageability. Participants noted that despite facing social pressure, Instagram remains an essential social tool. Future research could thus focus on the relationship between social capital and social pressure on social media as exchanging Instagram handles has become a common social practice among young Malaysians. Future researchers may also investigate whether the prevalence of social pressure on social media can be reduced or reversed.

This study involved only 12 participants, primarily from the Malaysian Chinese community, due to the short data collection period and limited resources. Furthermore, data collection relied on participants' self-reported experiences and perceptions. Given that the research group comprised 18–24-year-olds—demonstrating more mature and autonomous social media awareness than adolescents (under 18)—future studies could explore the relationship between adolescents and multi-account management.

Furthermore, whilst this study concentrated on Instagram, future research could extend to examine self-presentation management across other platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Rednote, BeReal and others. As these platforms also encourage social interaction and self-presentation, they facilitate research into the characteristics of self-presentation management among young people.

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