

## Intensity of Instagram Use, Social Comparison and Self-Esteem among Public University Students in Klang Valley

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### Abstract

Social media usage has ingrained itself into modern society. Some are concerned about how social media's high exposure, especially the usage of Instagram by young adults, may impact their subjective well-being. Instagram allows users to assess themselves through social comparisons with other users, which puts their self-esteem at risk. For university students to avoid psychological issues and reach their full potential throughout life, they must have a positive outlook on self-esteem. This study aimed to determine the relationship between intensity of Instagram use, social comparison and self-esteem among public university students in Klang Valley. A total of 220 students has participated and they were chosen by using a multi-stage cluster random sampling technique. The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. Measurements used were an Instagram Intensity Scale (Stapleton, Luiz, & Chatwin, 2017) to measure the Instagram intensity, Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) to measure social comparison and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to measure self-esteem. Findings demonstrated that intensity of Instagram and self-esteem were significantly negatively correlated ( $r=-0.20$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ), also between the ability comparison and self-esteem ( $r=-0.36$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). Besides, a significant positive correlation was found between opinion comparison and self-esteem ( $r=0.39$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). This study concluded that ability comparison and opinion comparison were significant predictors for self-esteem among the respondents. Thus, reducing ability comparison and encouraging opinion comparison are essential to foster students' self-esteem. The findings could pave the way for the university to address the issue of students' self-esteem comprehensively. Universities should focus on intervention programs that promote self-love to increase self-esteem and to increase awareness of social media addiction to protect mental health of young adults. Future research may explore on the influence of cultural sensitivity and gender differences towards self-esteem and social comparison among young adults.

**Keywords:** Instagram Use, Social Comparison, Self-esteem, Young Adults, University.

**Introduction**

Self-esteem is a person's belief of their own personal worth (von Soest, Wichstrom & Kvaalem, 2016) by self-assessing on how one appreciates and value themselves, whether positively or negatively. It is a vital element in self-concept to determine a person's subjective well-being in life. Self-esteem plays an important role in determining the future outcomes of an individual in every aspect of their life, such as in academic achievement, relationships, job satisfaction, mental health and many more. The Malaysia Youth Index (2020), indicates self-esteem as one of the important domains and indicators of significant self-development to produce a generation of eminent personalities. Self-esteem increases from the age of adolescence until middle adulthood and eventually decreases until old age (Orth & Robins, 2014). Most university students at the age of young adults are in the stage of building strong personalities (Arnett, 2014), so having high self-esteem is crucial for them to have a positive belief in their own capability for a better future. The rate of Malaysian students who suffer from mental health problems including factors of low self-esteem increased from 10% in 2011 to 20% in 2016 (Kotera, Ting & Neary, 2021). Lack of self-esteem can make students negatively evaluate themselves, having high self-doubt and perceive that other people judge them negatively. Thus, limit their ability to succeed and become hesitant to engage in learning (Fakaruddin & Ahmed, 2018).

People with high self-esteem are more satisfied with themselves compared to people with low self-esteem. They are more resilient when facing obstacles and easily bounce back from disappointment in life (Baumeister & Vohs, 2018). Thus, self-esteem is very important for the students to reflect positively from bad experiences and not easily give up. In contrast, people with low self-esteem really depend on extrinsic approval of others and they think others judging them as unworthy and incapable (Fatima, Niazi & Ghayas, 2017). University students are in the age of venturing new knowledge and skills, so low self-esteem will stifle their achievement in life since they have a negative belief of inadequateness, full of self-doubt and unworthiness. They will also face a problem in communication because they believe that others view them negatively. Hence, university students need to have a positive orientation of self-esteem to avoid having psychological problems and achieve the full potential of their own abilities throughout life.

The use of social media has become part of the society. With the convenience of smartphones, people can utilize social media whenever and wherever they are. Nowadays, social media is moving beyond just social networking. It served as a place to find entertainment, up-to-date information, express beliefs, preferences, and emotions. According to the Internet Users Survey 2020 by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commissions (MCMC), the highest percentage of social media users are individuals between the ages of 20 years old to 24 years old which is 34.1% are female users and 15.6% are male users. The extreme exposure of social media among young adults will bring up few concerns on how it will affect their subjective well-being including self-esteem. Previous studies have shown the negative effects of psychological distress and unstable emotion of students after engaging in a lot of time utilizing social media among students (Chen & Xiao, 2022). These worries include how social media use may damage self-esteem, particularly in relation to social comparison, which is a major issue affecting mental and physical health of young adults.

Instagram is a social networking site (SNS) that allows users to publish pictures to their accounts and interact with others by exchanging images. According to Internet Users Survey 2020 by the MCMC, the number of Instagram users keeps increasing, whereby the number is increased from 57% in 2018 to 63.1% in 2020 especially among young adults. Active users of Instagram in the world are approximately one billion with more than 15.7 million users are from Malaysia, an increase of around 700,000 users compared to the previous year (Statista.com, 2024). The number of Malaysian Instagram users has been increasing over the last five years. This indicates that Instagram is a preferred social media among young adults in Malaysia because of its simplicity in perceiving, comprehending, and sharing visual aspects. The features in Instagram such as Story, IGTV, Live buttons and Reels allow users to follow other users' activities. One of the signature features of Instagram is an explore page where individuals will have a lot of suggested posts from a public account to review. Instagram uses an algorithm to recommend who to follow, what photographs and videos to watch, and what to "like". Due to that, users will have a variety and unlimited posts from different profiles that align with their interests.

Previous research had been exploring on the relationship between intensity use of social media toward self-esteem. Most students use Instagram extensively due to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on the current lifestyle and trending issue (Nurzihan, Muhammad & Mohamad Nor (2020), while others want to meet social recognition demand (Ponnusamy et al., 2020). Consequently, excessive use of Instagram will lowering academic performance and increasing shyness among students because extreme exposure on social media will make individuals so comfortable dwelling in the online world, but they become socially awkward and lonely in social interaction. Students also utilize Instagram a lot since it can release their stress by watching interesting content from others (Norazlah & Normaliza, 2017). Additionally, the intense use of social media provides a sense of belonging as it offers social support and promotes healthy relationships with peers (Vogel et al., 2015; Verduyn et al., 2017; Choi, 2022). The higher frequency of Instagram use will enhance self-esteem through an ideal self-presentation and by the influence of positive images from other users (Rahilah et al., 2018; Salah & Saodah, 2020; Rahma & Setiasih, 2021). However, some other research shows negative impacts of extreme exposure of social media toward self-esteem such as loneliness, depression and anxiety (Reer et al., 2019). For example, Jan, Soomro and Ahmad (2017), found that higher frequency spent on Facebook will decrease self-esteem. These results seem to be different depending on the targeted social media whereby Instagram promoting a positive relationship with self-esteem in contrast to Facebook.

Social comparison is a process when a person relates themselves with others to value their own personal worth (Festinger, 1954). Social comparison is an inevitable behavior process in every person to have better self-assessment in terms of skills, opinion, emotion and achievement. This information will help individuals to understand their own progress and respond to it. People tend to compare themselves with someone perceived as superior or inferior. Gibbons and Buunk (1999), introduced two orientations of social comparison which were ability comparison and opinion comparison. Ability comparison is when a person compares their own abilities, achievement and skills with another person while opinion comparison is when a person compares their own belief, values and knowledge. Social comparison can produce negative impacts of low self-esteem or negative emotions such as

jealousy and hate. In the meantime, social comparison also gives positive impacts such as people became more inspired to become like their target.

Instagram users are exposed to many contents which allows for social comparison process to happen. They tend to engage more in upward social comparison rather than downward social comparison (Verduyn et al., 2020). Upward social comparison occurs when individuals compare themselves with others who have superior characteristics whereas downward social comparison occurs when individuals compare themselves with someone who has inferior characteristics (Festinger, 1954). Upward comparison is frequently done in the pursuit of self-improvement, since spotting people who outperform can give useful information that can be used to better one's own performance. Downward comparison emphasizes self-improvement to feel better about one's position in relation to others by contrasting oneself with a weaker objective (Festinger, 1954). Chua and Chang (2016), found that young adults are extremely particular about their posts, stories, and captions and simultaneously compared it with their peers. This proved that students actively promote positive self-presentation that is highly influenced by peer posts. This is quite a concern since the nature of Instagram posts tend to be positively biased where everyone shows off only the ideal side of their life and other users will keep up with the same intention. It will lead to a repeated upward social comparison that can trigger feelings of envy and jealousy. Midgley et al (2021), argued that intense negative social comparisons are influenced by false interpretations that someone appears to be better off without really knowing the real context. Students will become more sensitive when comparing their own lives with others whom they believe are having a perfect life. Alfasi (2019) discovered that upward social comparison is linked to stronger self-esteem declines, higher depression and loneliness levels. Nafisa and Aini (2022), also discovered that students that are actively involved in social comparison when using social media deprived self-esteem.

So, the intense use of social media such as Instagram gives a platform for the user to evaluate themselves by making social comparisons to other users, putting their own self-esteem at stake. People with low self-esteem are more likely to suffer from psychiatric problems, especially eating disorders, substance use disorders, and depressive disorders (Nguyen et al., 2019). Due to that, the last thing society wants is deprivation of self-esteem among young adults who are the stakeholders of a greater future. adults. Despite that, there is still lack of study being conducted on the use of Instagram toward self-esteem especially among young adults in Malaysia. Most of the research is focusing on Facebook as the most used social media in Malaysia (MCMC, 2020). However, youth as the highest social media users in Malaysia are more concentrated on Instagram than on Facebook. Students preferred Instagram due to the high opportunity to have positive representation by sharing ideal pictures of them (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). Since the features of Instagram and Facebook are different, there is an opportunity for research to explore on the attachment of young adults on Instagram and its effect on self-esteem. Social comparison in the context of Instagram is also a strong motive for this study since it is a fertile ground for social comparison to happen. The nature of Instagram itself is highly involved in positive-biased posts (Nurzihan, Muhammad & Mohamad Noor, 2020) that can influence young adults to easily compare the virtual life of others to their real life. Due to that, young adults who are amid identity exploration are vulnerable to feeling insecure and promoting a sense of insufficiency in their own life that leads to lower self-esteem. In view of this, the current study attempts to determine the relationships between the intensity of Instagram use and social comparison with self-esteem by focusing on the

Malaysian undergraduate students in the Klang Valley.

### **Methods**

This cross-sectional study uses a descriptive and correlational research design. It has been carried out among 220 undergraduate students from two public universities in Klang Valley i.e. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Research instruments used for the study were the 8 items Instagram Intensity Scale (Stapleton, Luiz & Chatwin, 2017) to measure intensity of Instagram use which is the frequency and duration of SNS usage and the emotional connection between the user toward SNS. There are a total of six in close-ended questions, whereby respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree (1 point) and strongly agree (5 point) and there were two self-reported assessments of Instagram behavior which is designed to measure on how respondents actively engaged as Instagrammer: the number of followers and the amount of time spent on Instagram. The higher mean score indicates a higher level of intensity of Instagram use. Scale items include "Instagram is part of my everyday activity and "I feel out of touch when I have not logged onto Instagram for a while". The score is computed by calculating the sum of scores of items 1 until 6. The alpha coefficient from the original scale was 0.83.

The 11 items of Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) by Gibbons and Buunk (1999), was used to measure social comparison. This scale can measure the tendency of individuals to engage in social comparison habits. There are two subscales based on social comparison orientation as proposed by Gibbons and Bunk in (INCOM) which is ability comparison and opinion comparison. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree (1 point) and strongly agree (5 point). Scale items include "I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity with other people) and "I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face. The score is computed by calculating the mean of all items in the scale. A lower mean score indicated a lower level of social comparison. The alpha coefficients from the original scale were 0.79 for abilities comparison and 0.67 for opinions comparison.

The 10 items Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure an individual's self-esteem. Scale items include "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane to others" and "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure." Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a four-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree (0 point) to strongly agree (3 point). The score is computed by calculating the sum scores of all items in the scale. The alpha coefficient from the original scale was 0.89.

A pilot study has been done before the actual data collection. A total of 30 young adults with similar characteristics as the respondents in the study have been involved in the pilot study. All instruments were reliable and within an acceptable level of internal consistency which were between 0.70 to 0.83. Collected data were coded, computed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviations, minimum and maximum) and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis) were employed in the descriptive and hypotheses testing.

**Results and Discussion**

Regarding the background of the respondents, as shown in Table 1, their age range were between 19-25 years old ( $M = 21.69$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ). Most respondents (128) were in the range of 22 to 25 years old (58%), while others (92) in the range of 19-21 years old (42%). For gender distribution, 125 of the samples were built up by females (57%) compared to 95 of the respondents were male (43%). Regarding the division of the respondents according to ethnic, the data revealed that 191 (86.8%) of the respondents were Malay, 18 (8.2%) were Chinese, 9 (4.1%) were Indian and 2 (0.9%) from other categories. By looking into the year of study, most of the respondents (95) were in their final year (43.2%), 56 respondents (25.5%) were in third year, 36 respondents (16.4%) were in their first year and the rest, 32 of them (14.5%) were in the second year. In addition, more than two-thirds of the respondents (155) were from social science faculties (70.5%) and the rest (65) were from science faculties (20.5%). Most of the respondents (135) were from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) (61.4%) and the rest (85) of them were from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) (38.6%).

Table 1

*Background of Respondents (n=220)*

| <b>Variable</b>                      | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| <b>Age:</b>                          |          |          |
| 19-21                                | 92       | 42.0     |
| 22-25                                | 128      | 58.0     |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |
| Mean                                 | 21.69    |          |
| Sd.                                  | 1.53     |          |
| <b>Gender:</b>                       |          |          |
| Female                               | 125      | 57.0     |
| Male                                 | 95       | 43.0     |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |
| <b>Race:</b>                         |          |          |
| Malay                                | 191      | 86.8     |
| Chinese                              | 18       | 8.2      |
| Indian                               | 9        | 4.1      |
| Others                               | 2        | 0.9      |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |
| <b>Year of Study:</b>                |          |          |
| Year 1                               | 36       | 16.4     |
| Year 2                               | 32       | 14.5     |
| Year 3                               | 56       | 25.5     |
| Year 4                               | 96       | 43.2     |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |
| <b>Major of Study:</b>               |          |          |
| Social Science                       | 155      | 70.5     |
| Science                              | 65       | 20.5     |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |
| <b>Place of Study:</b>               |          |          |
| Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)      | 135      | 61.4     |
| Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) | 85       | 38.6     |
| Total                                | 220      | 100.0    |

Table 2 summarizes respondents' intensity of Instagram use. More than half (59.5%) of the respondents reported higher attachment to the Instagram use (131 students). About 89 students (40.5%) had a low attachment toward Instagram ( $M=19.49$ ,  $SD=4.70$ ). Result of the self-reported Instagram behavior for Instagram Intensity Scale further shown how respondents actively engaged as Instagrammer through the number of followers and the amount of time spent on Instagram. It is highlighted that 40.9% of the respondents had more than 400 followers while 2.3 % from the respondents had between 11-50 followers. Regarding the duration spent of using Instagram in a day, it has been reported that 38.2% of respondents were using Instagram for 1-2 hours and 7.3% of respondents spent 10 to 30 minutes using Instagram.

Table 2

*Level of Intensity of Instagram Use, Social Comparison and Self-Esteem among Respondents (n=220)*

| Variable                                | n (%) | Frequency | Mean  | SD   | Min | Max |
|---|-------|-----------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| <b>Intensity of Instagram Use</b>       |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| Low                                     | 40.5  | 89        | 19.49 | 4.70 | 8   | 29  |
| High                                    | 59.5  | 131       |       |      |     |     |
| <b>Number of Followers:</b>             |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| >400                                    | 40.9  | 90        |       |      |     |     |
| 51-399                                  | 56.8  | 125       |       |      |     |     |
| <50                                     | 2.3   | 5         |       |      |     |     |
| <b>Time Spent on Instagram per Day:</b> |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| 1-2 hours                               | 38.2  | 84        |       |      |     |     |
| <1 hour                                 | 54.5  | 120       |       |      |     |     |
| <30 minutes                             | 7.3   | 16        |       |      |     |     |
| <b>Social Comparison:</b>               |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| <b>1. Ability Comparison</b>            |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| Low                                     | 47.3  | 104       | 19.24 | 5.73 | 7   | 29  |
| High                                    | 52.7  | 116       |       |      |     |     |
| <b>2. Opinion Comparison</b>            |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| Low                                     | 44.1  | 97        | 18.14 | 3.82 | 8   | 25  |
| High                                    | 55.9  | 123       |       |      |     |     |
| <b>Self-Esteem</b>                      |       |           |       |      |     |     |
| Low                                     | 43.6  | 96        | 17.40 | 4.59 | 9   | 28  |
| High                                    | 56.4  | 124       |       |      |     |     |

Regarding social comparison, results in Table 2 shows that about 52.7% (116 respondents) scored high on the ability comparison (M=19.24, SD=5.73). The result indicates that students who engage in higher comparison tend to compare their own skills, abilities and achievement with others in daily life. For opinion comparison too, more than half of the respondents (55.9%) score high which indicates that the students engage in comparing their values and belief with others in their daily life (M=18.14, SD=3.82). Table 2 also summarizes respondents'

score on self-esteem, where about 124 respondents (56.4%) scored higher on self-esteem and the rest (92 respondents) reported of lower self-esteem ( $M=17.40$ ,  $SD=4.59$ ).

Table 3

*Differences in Intensity of Instagram Use, Social Comparison and Self-Esteem among Male and Female Respondents (n=220)*

| Variables                          | Mean  |        | t       | p    |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|---------|------|
|                                    | Male  | Female |         |      |
| <b>Intensity in Instagram Use:</b> | 15.35 | 20.09  | -1.82** | 0.00 |
| <b>Social Comparison:</b>          |       |        |         |      |
| Ability Comparison                 | 19.38 | 19.13  | 0.32    | 0.75 |
| Opinion Comparison                 | 16.75 | 15.70  | 1.69    | 0.09 |
| <b>Self-Esteem:</b>                | 20.09 | 15.35  | -1.82** | 0.00 |

Note: \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

Findings from T-test in Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference in intensity of Instagram use among male and female public university students in Klang Valley ( $t = -1.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Female students are more attached to Instagram than male students. Similar findings have been also reported by that women have higher attachment to social media than men (Yesilyut & Turhan, 2020; Andreassen, Pallesen & Griffith, 2017). Krasnova, Veltri, Eling and Buxmann (2017) found that women and men have different motivation of using social media whereby women want to stay connected with others while men want to gain general information through social media.

In addition, there is no significant difference in the ability comparison among male and female public university students in Klang Valley ( $t = 0.32$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ ). Results in Table 3 shows that male have a slightly higher tendency than women to compare themselves with others in terms of achievements, skills and performance but the differences is not significant. A study from Griffith and Rask (2014), reported that male students are much more aware of their peers' ability than female students, so they tend to make higher social comparisons than women. However, in a study by Guimond and Chatard (2014), it was found that women are most likely to engage in social comparison rather than man due to women being more sensitive to other people's conduct and have a higher level of self-doubt than males.

Similarly, result in Table 3 also shows that there is no significant difference in opinion comparison among male and female public university students in Klang Valley ( $t = 1.69$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ ). Similar findings have also been reported by Hasanati and Aviani (2020), and Gerber et al. (2018) that opinion comparison does not significantly differ in gender. This is because opinion comparison serves the purpose of understanding more about certain things from the view of others which is critical for every person regardless of gender. As has been stated in Yang, Holden, and Carter (2018), opinion comparison brings a positive value in self-esteem since it serves the purpose of elucidating strong beliefs, attitudes and values as part of building the identity of every person.

Result on self-esteem in Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference in self-esteem among male and female public university students in Klang Valley ( $t = 1.75$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Male

students reported higher self-esteem than female students. In a study by Guimond and Chatard (2014) it was found that women have higher levels of self-doubt than men. Agam, Tamir and Golan (2015) indicated that women tend to have lower self-esteem than men due to the difference of gender roles. Male role as a masculine is consistent with having high self-esteem and the presentation of self-confidence in girls is considered as out of norm of gender. However, Zuckerman, Li and Hall (2016) highlighted that gender differences on self-esteem indicate only a thin line differences between men that claimed to have higher self-esteem than women. Jain and Dixit (2014) on the other hand found that there was an insignificant difference of self-esteem among gender.

Table 4

*Relationships between Intensity of Instagram Use, Social Comparison and Self-Esteem among Respondents (n=220)*

| Variables                  | Self-Esteem |       |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------|
|                            | r           | p     |
| Intensity of Instagram Use | -0.20**     | 0.000 |
| <b>Social Comparison</b>   |             |       |
| Ability Comparison         | -0.36**     | 0.000 |
| Opinion Comparison         | 0.39**      | 0.000 |

Note: \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

As shown in Table 4, findings from Pearson Correlation test showed that there is a significant negative relationship between intensity of Instagram use and self-esteem ( $r = -0.02$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Students from public universities in Klang Valley who have higher intensity of Instagram use tend to have low self-esteem. Result of the current study is consistent with past studies such as Vogel et al (2015), and Hawi and Samaha (2017), which revealed that young adults who were extremely exposed to social media such as Instagram tend to have lower self-esteem because of negative comparison with other users. A study by Midgley et al (2021), argued that such negative social comparison was due to false interpretations that someone appears to be better off than them without knowing the real context. Consequently, lower their self-esteem.

In addition, the Pearson Correlation test in Table 4, shows that there is a significant negative relationship between social comparison (ability comparison) and self-esteem ( $r = -0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In a study by Jiang and Ngien (2020) also found a significant relationship between ability comparison and self-esteem. Social comparison has influenced people to value more on social benchmarks rather than internal or personal traits which, will negatively affect self-esteem if a person feels that they failed to have a life that fulfills the aspiration. Krasnova et al (2017), proved that ability comparison sparks feelings of envy, frustration, resentment from the self-negative evaluation which, resulting in a person to be more judgmental and competitive (Yang, Holden, & Carter, 2018).

Furthermore, there is a significant positive relationship between opinion comparison and self-esteem ( $r = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It suggests that students from public universities in Klang Valley who have higher opinion comparison tend to have higher self-esteem. Students who engage in higher opinion comparison indicates that they usually relate their opinion, values,

knowledge with others in their circle. The opinion comparisons involve identifying new or similar thoughts with others that can function as inspiration, learning new knowledge and self-reflection that will lead to increasing self-esteem. Result of the current study was consistent with past studies such as Yang, Holden and Carter (2018) where opinion comparison brings a positive value in self-esteem since it serves the purpose of elucidating strong beliefs, attitudes and values as part of building identity.

Table 5

*Predictors of Self-Esteem among Respondents (n=220)*

| Variables                          | Self-Esteem |      |         |         |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------|---------|---------|
|                                    | B           | SE B | $\beta$ | p       |
| <b>Intensity of Instagram Use:</b> | -0.10       | 0.06 | -0.10   | 0.22    |
| <b>Social Comparison:</b>          |             |      |         |         |
| Ability Comparison                 | 0.35        | 0.05 | -0.29   | 0.00*** |
| Opinion Comparison                 | -0.16       | 0.06 | 0.34    | 0.00*** |

$F=23.657$ ;  $sig-F=0.000$

$R\ square=0.247$ ;  $Adjusted\ R\ Square=0.2$

Note: \*\*\* $p\leq 0.001$

Table 5 demonstrates the predictors of self-esteem among public universities' students in Klang Valley. A high beta coefficient independent variable is of great importance in the prediction of the criterion variable. However, according to the result in Table 5, intensity of Instagram use shows no significant p-value. Ability comparison and opinion comparison altogether predicted 25% of the variations of self-esteem ( $F=23.547$ ,  $R^2=0.237$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Opinion comparison emerged as the strongest unique predictor of self-esteem ( $\beta=0.34$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ), followed by ability comparison ( $\beta=-0.29$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). These results reveal that Klang Valley public universities' students heavily rely on social comparison to boost their self-esteem. Considering this, the current study offers insights into efforts to improve quality of life and reach a suitable degree of life satisfaction among young adults whereby these efforts would be more successful if opinion and ability comparisons were taken into consideration. In addition, we must not deny the influence of social media in the lives of these young adults, where social comparisons are virtually prevalent and have a negative and positive impact on everyone. The harsh use of social media is also crucial to be monitored to ensuring that early adults are not affected by negative things that will ruin their character-building phases.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The study on self-esteem among university students and the associated factors such as intensity of Instagram use and social comparison contributes to knowledge enrichment in the relevant field. This study provides further support for the influence of opinion comparison and ability comparison as significant predictors of self-esteem than other variables such as intensity of Instagram use as shown by the results. Students should acknowledge the importance of opinion comparison and seek the medium to engage more in opinion comparison from family, friends and significant others to enhance their self-esteem. Moreover, the result showed that most students who engaged more in comparing abilities, achievements and skills with other people will have lower self-esteem. Accordingly, students should be aware of their own self-thought and have strong positive self-concept to avoid feeling of insecurities with another person who they perceive as more superior than them.

Therefore, the results of this study are helpful for university students in determining the factors that affect their self-esteem, besides increasing their awareness about the importance of self-esteem.

The findings in this study could also pave the way for the university to address the issue of students' self-esteem comprehensively. Universities should focus on intervention programs that promote self-love to increase self-esteem and to increase awareness of social media addiction to protect mental health of young adults. This research yields important implications to guide mental health programs and social media literacy potentially leading to a more supportive environment for undergraduate students. Future research may explore on the influence of cultural sensitivity and gender differences towards self-esteem and social comparison among young adults by using a different research design and considering different location of study and sample size.

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