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Instagram and Negative Mental Health

Social networking service such as Facebook and Twitter are very convenient and attractive media for many people. In fact, we will not be able to talk about this modern society without a social media. This is because they became an integral part of our lifestyle in the past several years. Many years ago, we did not have many choices to collect information such as global news. However, now we can get many information from our phones even if we do not watch TV news or newspaper. Particularly, Instagram is growing so rapidly in the past few years. People who use Instagram mainly post their pictures such as selfie and share them with their friends. According to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/), there are nearly 1 billion active users all over the world. Comparing to the most popular SNS Facebook, the number of active users is still small, but Instagram keeps growing and has a great influence especially among teens. On the other hand, according to [Young Health Movement (YHM) and RSPH’s survey](https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/instagram-ranked-worst-for-young-people-s-mental-health.html) of almost 1,500 young people (aged 14-24), Instagram has the most negative effects of social media on young people’s mental health although YouTube has a positive effect. From this information, Instagram represents an American zeitgeist now and the future because it has a strong relationship to a mental health for teenager.

[Other research](https://www.health.com/depression/multiple-social-media-sites-depression-anxiety) reported that young adult people who use social networking service for a long time likely to get a depression and anxiety. Now we know how social media affects a mental health of young people, but we do not know why they have a depression and anxiety while using a social media. There should be some specific causes and reasons. The first reason why many SNS especially Instagram users have mental health problems is their low self-esteem. According to [Merriam- Webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-esteem), self-esteem can be defined as a confidence and satisfaction in oneself. [One web article](https://www.cosmopolitan.com/health-fitness/a8601466/why-dont-i-look-like-her-how-instagram-is-ruining-our-self-esteem/)  states many people post their selfie retouched in order to show themselves in the best possible way on Instagram. However, most of them compare themselves to other users and have an inferiority complex toward popular Instagramers. At the worst case, they try to be like another person. This is because they do not like their physical features such as their figure and face. Making an effort to be beautiful is not bad thing, but overthinking about beauty sometimes drives them crazy. Almost all people have any problems, so they do not have to try to become perfect.

Second, *FOMO* (fear of missing out) is the other cause of young Instagram users’ mental health problems. According to [Time.com](https://time.com/4358140/overcome-fomo/), the word, FOMO was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013, and it means a feeling of anxiety or insecurity over the possibility of missing out on something, as an event or an opportunity. Maybe it is a little difficult for some people to understand this feeling. This is because in the past, there was not many ways to contact with family members or friends who lived far away, but now we can easily check their accounts on SNS or talk by a videophone even if they are in different countries. Thus, many people will think people in this time period do not feel lonely compared to people in old times. In fact, it is not so simple. Many people are struggling with too much information. New information keeps changing constantly, so we need to check screens of our phones many times not to miss them. Unfortunately, unless they choose not to check their phones, information flow is endless.

Third, bullying is the other cause of teen Instagram users’ mental health problems. These days, bullying is not only problem in a classroom. On the internet, many people insult each other with rude and thoughtless words. This is because there are many websites that they can post anonymously. Although all of them need to register and make their accounts to post comments on Instagram, a lot of people who you do not know can visit and see your account. Therefore, there is a possibility to be hurt with thoughtless words. According to a 2017 survey conducted by [Ditch the Label](https://www.ditchthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Annual-Bullying-Survey-2017-1.pdf), more than one in five 12-to-20-year-olds people experience bullying specifically on Instagram. Moreover, [one web article](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/10/teens-face-relentless-bullying-instagram/572164/) mentions most bullying happen in direct message, Instagram Stories, or in the comments section of friends’ photos. It looks like impossible to check all comments and prevent bullying. In fact, according to a [web article of NBCnewyork.com](https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Instagram-filter-powered-by-artificial-intelligence-hopes-to-stop-bullies-before-they-comment-512489791.html), Instagram made a new AI comment filter to detect offensive comments. If this system works well, they may be able to decrease the number of bullying.

Of course, I know some people will disagree with my opinion and tell me several advantages of Instagram. For example, Instagram is good for business or building one’s network. However, social networking service particularly Instagram is too early for young children. They should learn about the fear of internet and how to protect their personal information. This is because once they post their selfie or pictures including personal information on the internet, they stay forever as a digital tattoo. At the worst case, it eliminates a possibility of their future. For instance, some teenagers lost their jobs and future because of their thoughtless Instagram posts.

In conclusion, Instagram represents an American zeitgeist now and the future. This is because it has a strong relationship to a mental health for teenager. In my opinion, even if technology keeps developing quickly, the number of people who have mental health problems will not decrease. I think it is very important for us to keep an appropriate distance and get along well with social networking service such as Instagram. Then people will be able to come to like themselves and have a high self-esteem.