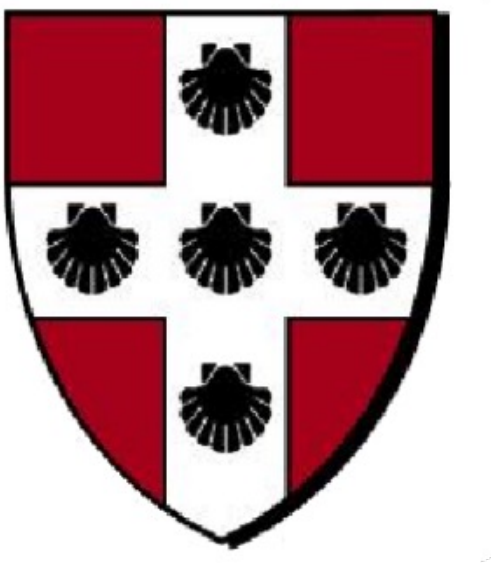




Emotional Experiences on Instagram: How do they predict the types and intensity of Instagram activities by gender?



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Introduction

This study aimed to examine how emotional experiences on social media predict Instagram Engagement. Social media is an important part of the life of college students today, and it plays an important role in students' social lives. Emotions such as feeling excluded on social media have been shown to be psychologically painful for college students (Smith, Morgan, & Monks, 2017). In addition, previous research showed that depression and anxiety can lead to intense social media usage and such effects can differ by gender (Oberst, Wegmann, Stodt, Brand, & Chamarro, 2017). This study focused on how social image usage, specifically Instagram usage, affects a wide range of emotional experiences and whether gender plays a role in Instagram's effects on emotions.

Methods

114 college students (55.3% females, 43.9% males) participated in this study. Participants' average age was 20.56, with a standard deviation of 2.22. Informed consent debriefing was provided. Data was collected through Cloud Research, a participant-sourcing platform. All participants received informed consent before the study began and debriefing after the study.

The following research measures were included:

- Inclusion (SN-PEQ Landoll, La Greca, and Lai [ADAPTED])
- HOSPITAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION SCALE (HADS)
- FOMO Scale (Przyblski, 2013)
- NEED THREAT SCALE (Williams, 2009 [ADAPTED])
- EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE MEASURES (Prof. Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture and Emotion Lab)
- ENGAGEMENT WITH INSTAGRAM (Prof. Rodriguez Mosquera, Culture and Emotion Lab)

A factor analysis was then conducted for the scales above, which allowed us to develop sub-variables under each scale based on how participants viewed the items in the scales as groups. Then, reliability tests were performed on the sub-variables created. All reliabilities were higher than .70.

Results

1. Analysis of Variance

Analyses of variance were computed for each scale (with the dependent variables being the variables created based on the factor analyses) with gender as an independent factor and age as the covariate. Given the limited space here, only significant univariate main effects of gender are reported. In univariate terms, gender had a significant effect on *Social Comparison Emotions* ($F(1, 110) = 6.665, p = .011$) such as envy and jealousy, *Exclusion from Peers* ($F(1, 95) = 4.557, p = .035$) *Anxiety/Stress* ($F(1, 92) = 5.768, p = .018$), and *Enhancing-visibility Activities* ($F(1, 90) = 5.616, p = .020$) such as posting pictures and stories. The level of means for all variables is shown in Table 1.

Mean Comparisons by Gender

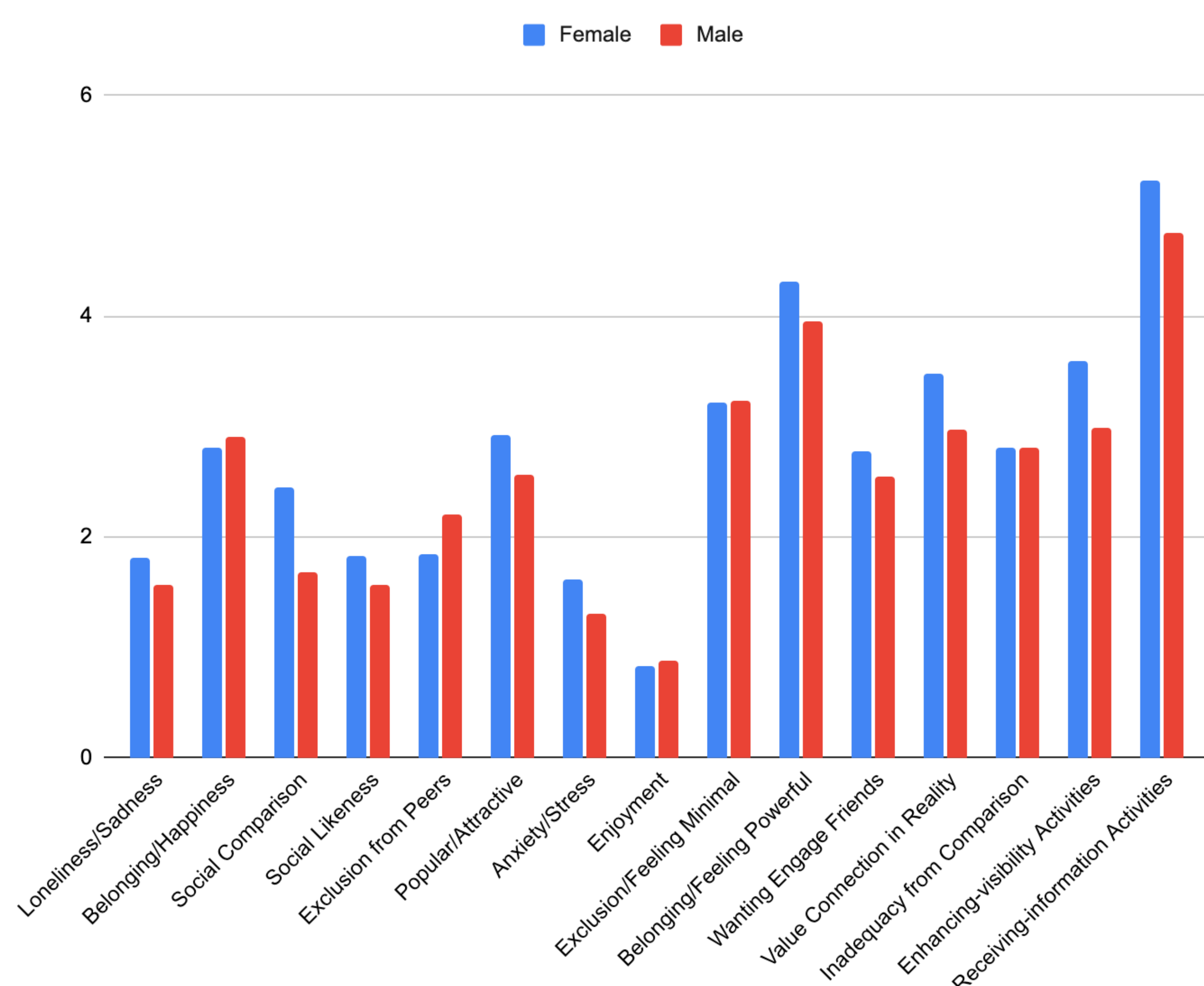


Table 1. Mean Differences

2. Regression Models

Three hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, one with the dependent variable *Receiving-information activities*, and two with the dependent variable *Enhancing-visibility activities* separately for female and male participants. Based on correlations among the independent variables, independent variables were entered as follows in all regression analyses: the variables exclusion from peers, anxiety/stress, enjoyment, and FOMO were entered as predictors in the first step. In the second step, the variables exclusion and feeling minimal, social comparison emotions, social likeness emotions, and belonging/happiness were entered as predictors. In the third step, the variables loneliness/sadness, and belonging and feeling powerful were entered as predictors.

2.1 Receiving-information activities

The variables entered in the second and third steps both significantly increased the variance explained in *receiving-information activities*. Thus, the regression model in the third step was interpreted. The variables *anxiety/stress* ($\beta = .305, p = .011$), *social comparison emotions* ($\beta = .322, p = .028$), and *belonging/feeling powerful* ($\beta = .386, p = .029$) were significant predictors. The variable *loneliness/sadness* ($\beta = -.248, p = .078$) was marginally significant. The more participants felt anxious and stressed, social comparison emotions like envy and jealousy, and feelings of belonging and power, the more they engaged in receiving-information Instagram activities. The less participants felt loneliness/sadness, the more they engaged in receiving-information Instagram activities.

2.2 Enhancing-visibility activities

The variables entered in the second and third steps both significantly increased the variance explained in *enhancing-visibility activities* of female participants. Thus, the regression model in the third step was interpreted. For female participants, the variables *anxiety/stress* ($\beta = .329, p = .020$) and *belonging/feeling powerful* ($\beta = .784, p = .002$) were significant predictors. The more female participants experienced anxiety and stress, and feelings of belonging and power, the more they engaged in enhancing-visibility activities.

Only the variables entered in the second step significantly increased the variance explained in enhancing-visibility activities of male participants. Thus, the regression model in the second step was interpreted. For male participants, the variables *anxiety/stress* ($\beta = .565, p = .003$), *social comparison emotions* ($\beta = -.507, p = .008$), and *belonging/happiness* ($\beta = .373, p = .022$) were significant predictors. The more male participants felt anxious and stressed and experienced feelings of belonging and power, the more they engaged in enhancing-visibility Instagram activities. And the less they felt social comparison emotions like envy and jealousy, the more they engaged in enhancing-

Discussion

- Belonging/Happiness was the most intensely experienced emotion on Instagram. Further, female participants reported experiencing more social comparison emotions like envy and jealousy compared to male participants.
- In terms of types of activity on Instagram, female participants engaged in enhancing-visibility activities significantly more compared to male participants. And on average, participants engaged more in receiving-information activity compared to enhancing-visibility activities.
- More anxiety/stress and belonging/happiness increased both types of activities for both female and male college students.
- The standardized beta of anxiety/stress was higher for male participants compared to female participants, which is consistent with the previous finding that anxiety triggers higher SNS involvement in male participants (Oberst, Wegmann, Stodt, Brand, & Chamarro, 2017).
- Social Comparison emotions positively predicted receiving-information activities for both female and male participants, but it negatively predicted male participants' engagement in visibility-enhancing activities.
- Future studies may test other factors leading to the different level of Instagram activity engagement of male and female participants. For example, number of followers and topic of interest on Instagram. Researchers may also test the effects of number of years spent in college on the relationship between emotional experiences and types of activities on social media.

References

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