

## The Relationship between Social Media Exposure and Social Comparison Level: Instagram as a Model

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### Abstract

This research designed to discover the relationship between the exposure of social media and social comparison level, taking Instagram as a model based on age, social status, educational level, job, frequency of opening Instagram daily and numbers of hours spend on the app per day as study variables to discover if there are relationships between these variables and social comparison level among Palestinian females Instagram users. This research is a descriptive study used the survey methodology that depended on pre-prepared questionnaire was developed by Sharma, et al. (2022). The internal consistency was checked by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The values of the test were above 0.9, point out excellent (1.0–0.90) reliability for all the constructs (Sharma, et al., 2022). The sample included 140 Palestinian females who have an effective Instagram application and use it periodically. Frequencies tables and One Way ANOVA test were used by SPSS program to examine the hypothesis of the study. Six statistical hypotheses were tested. Results from data analyzing found that there is no significant statistical relationship between the exposure to Instagram and social comparison level based on age, educational level, social status, job, frequency of opening the app per day and number of hours spend on the app per day. The research found that the sample's majority expressed that Others' Instagram posts inspire and motivate them. Also, half of the sample care about the way the others interact with their posts and think that people present themselves on Instagram in a different way compared to reality and that they don't make positive or negative judgments on others based on their number of likes and followers.

**Keywords:** social media, exposure, Instagram, social comparison level, relationship.

### Introduction

Social media sites have a special place in our daily lives, especially with the great development of smartphones and the permanent availability of the Internet (Al-Kandari, et al., 2016). The Middle East distinguishes itself by its relatively high level of social media usage relative to other regions, this shows the fact that the relation between the use of social media and national wealth are not as robust as they are for overall Internet usage and smartphone ownership (Poushter et al., 2018). Ipoke, a Palestinian social media specialist, released its annual report in its fifth edition which monitors the reality of media sites over 2020, the report reviews the changes made by Coronavirus on the use of social media platforms. According to the Ipoke report, the coronavirus pandemic has made a jump in social media usage figures around the world and the interest in visiting websites and news pages as well as video content has increased significantly, suggesting that users are on the cusp of an absolute new phase in increasing reliance on social media sites and the Internet (Ipoke, 2021).

The extensive exposure and reliance to these sites results in a variety of impacts on users including some psychological effects resulting from tracking the news of friends, colleagues and others who are usually being followed (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Users may unintentionally rush to compare their lives with those friends or influencers as a way of assessing and judging their personal lives and achievements either negatively or positively (Ibrahim, 2021). Following the above, this research seeks to discover the relationship between social media sites exposure and social comparison level among Palestinian females. The researcher chose Instagram among social media sites to study because it is a site based on photos and videos. This visual content of posts may help generate social comparison among its users. The researcher also decided to apply this study to women only because they are among the most used users of the Instagram app. As of January 2022, the percent of female Instagram users

was 49.3 percent around the world, despite the uniform compliance of women and men to Instagram in terms of intensity and frequency, women exposure it more (Statista, 2022). According to Ipoke website, the number of female users of the Instagram app in Palestine exceeds the number of males (Ipoke, 2021).

The study variables are age, educational level, social status, job, time spent on Instagram, how often the application is opened per day, to know if there is a relationship between these variables and practicing social comparison among Instagram female users. The study depends on a survey about Instagram and social comparison developed by Sharmaa et al. (2022). The researcher obtained approval from researchers to use this questionnaire in her research. This study is divided into introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

### **Social Media Websites and Exposure**

Social media websites utilize phone and the technologies of web to produce high- interactional platforms through that users within communities partake, produce debate, and modify contents that have been generated by them (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). By the end of the 2000's, social media had gained broad acceptance among users for several factors including technological reasons, such as development of software tools, computers and phones, and other social reasons like the growing demand of young age groups for these sites, In addition to the economic effects of affordability acquiring software, computers and mobile phones, With increased orientation towards using social media sites to promote and advertise (Dewing, 2010).

There is currently a rich and diversified ecological social media sites, whose scope and capabilities vary, some sites target the public at large, such as Facebook, Others, like LinkedIn, are more targeted professional networks, Flickr, YouTube, Myspace, and Instagram are all about sharing videos and photos. Twitter has led micro-blogging since it emerged in 2006 (Madway, 2010). These sites appeared as the new means through which people connect socially, through social interaction, and the construction of words, images, videos, and sound. In fact, it's more than just a new way of communicating; it's a complete online environment (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

As the global digital population grows, so does the scope and usage of social media sites. The use of these sites is now integral to people's daily routine. This use is no longer limited to younger age groups, it encompasses all ages, for business, social, dating, political and everyday communication issues. Major social media platforms are usually in hand in several languages. 53% of the world's citizens believe that visiting social media sites or messaging applications helps them feel connected with family and friends across geographic, political, and economic boundaries (Dixon, 2022; Lululemon Global Wellbeing Report, 2022). Kietzman, et al. (2011) mentioned several blocks representing social media functions, expressing the user's personal identity, having conversations, sharing posts, building reputations and relationships, joining groups, and revealing whether a person is available on the site. Serving scientific objectives is a benefit for social media sites that cannot be ignored as it enabled students to work together online and discuss assignments easier (Czeglédi, et al., 2019).

Exposure via new media, like social media, tends to be multidirectional, offer a variety of forms and content and encourage feedback, as a result, audiences have an increased potential for mass exposure in the development of these new media. These platforms have allowed for easier information sharing. Therefore, the time that users spend on various social media applications has increased (Zahara et al., 2020; Gadiparthi & Reddy, 2022). Measurement of the exposure level which is related to consumption level of public on shows, it can be through (1) duration, meaning the time spent watching the show; (2) Frequency, which is mean the numbers of time audience watch the show (Zahara et al., 2020). According to Boer et al., (2021) Social media usage intensity refers to the frequency of using social.

By applying an online questionnaire managed by Edelman Data and Intelligence (DXI) in 2021, the results of 2022 Global Wellbeing Report revealed that social media can make people feel connected, but heavier users who usually spend more than 3 hours using social media sites, feel stronger negative effects on their social wellbeing. The report also showed that users with intensive exposure to social media face emotions of missing out on social connections and makes them compare themselves to others while the social wellbeing was healthier among those who use one hour of social media per day (Lululemon Global Wellbeing report, 2022).

Instagram was developed in October 2010 and was bought by Facebook a couple of years later due to its growing popularity (Hang & Su, 2018). This platform is a photo-based social media app that allows people to take pictures and modify them using a selection of digital filters. It also started to offer Stories that enable users to include the photos and videos shared, add other filter options, mentions or links, location, surveys, countdown. After Facebook, this platform has the highest level of interaction among social media by 60% of all users log in per day (Dixon, 2022; Fondevila-Gascón, 2022; Smith, 2019). The Instagram app fills a diversity of needs and

motivations, including entertainment, self expression, exchange opinions, and satisfies the need of its users to practice a photography hobby (Al-Kandari et al., 2016).

### Social Comparisons

Social comparison related to the practice in which we compare ourselves to others, comparing oneself with relatively similar persons is the most desirable standard for comparing. It fulfils essential psychological functions such as the assessment of oneself and one's judgments, the regulation of emotions and well-being, decision-making and inspiration (Corcoran et al., 2011; Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990). Currently, with high attendance on social media sites, including Instagram, users are constantly exposed to pictures, stories, comments, captions and other popular indicators, which offer many opportunities for social comparison (Yang, et al., 2018).

This comparison might be competitive, related to achievements and performance and focuses on how well the person is doing in comparison with others. This type of comparison can affect one's self-perception negatively (De Vries & Kühne, 2015). The comparison also could be non- competitive but center around attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (Yang, et al., 2018), the aim of this comparing is to increase self-knowledge, build or modify one's self-awareness, and regulate behaviors and learn social norms. Studies that focused on opinions comparing argued that this comparison did not result in lower self-esteem (Festinger, 1954; Yang et al., 2018).

Social comparison based on achievements as well as opinions usually occurs only with feelings-based intermediates such as envy and inspiration (Park & Baek, 2018).

### Goals and Objectives

There are two goals in this research. The first goal is to educate people about the impacts of social media sites especially picture-based social media like Instagram in regard to the psychological health of its users. As its noticeable that the influence of media and social networks on audiences increases (Fondevila-Gascón, et al., 2020), because social networking sites enable individuals to access other people's lifestyles through different methods such as updates and photo dissemination (Ibrahim, 2021). In this context, Instagram can be regarded as one of the fastest growing media, a popular social network to exchange images for young people and it allows them to share a huge amount of visual and informative content also gives them the opportunity to share their life experiences (De Vries, et al., 2018).

Many media researches have linked the use of Instagram to some other psychological concepts such as narcissism, life satisfaction, depression, (De Oliveira & Huertas, 2015; Lup et al., 2015; Sheldon & Bryant 2016; Hwnag, 2019) and that the frequency of exposure on Instagram is linked with low self-esteem, physical look and body dissatisfaction anxiety , but social comparison has mediated the relationship between the usage of Instagram and each of these variables (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019), which means that exposure to Instagram is not an abstract exposure but has a lot of psychological effects on human well- being with the existence of mediation factors.

Marcus (2015) argued that with comparing to other social media platforms, Instagram rely on personal identity instead of relational identity as Instagram gives for people self-promote not for focus on social relationships. So, when it comes to narcissists personal identity creating, they usually seek to be viewed in a positive way, which explains why they use Instagram to try to look great, this is why narcissists manipulate specific images so that their life looks like it's going a certain great way (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). De Oliveira and Huertas (2015) have found a negative relationship between using Instagram to make life look "cool "and life satisfaction level. Regarding depression, those who primarily used Instagram to browse have showed greater odds of developing a depressed mood than others, and those with depression get more opportunities to post on Instagram (Lup et al., 2015). The American Academy of Facial and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS) noted that the activity of social media, especially image- based ones like Instagram could be linked to increased demands for cosmetic surgery because of the desires to appear better on social media platform (Lewallen, 2016). So, it can be said that Instagram has many influences that deserve to be studied.

The second goal of this study is to make people aware about Instagram social comparisons, because the negative effects of Instagram and other photo-based applications usually occur only with intermediate factors, the most important of which is the social comparison factor. That is, the abstract exposure to Instagram does not affect in negative way directly, but rather depends on their practice level of social comparison as an intermediate factor. The likelihood that users tend to social comparison rises when the content is visible, which is a fundamental feature of Instagram application (Thomas et al., 2017). Instagram is based on the idea of sharing photos and videos and thus gives the opportunity to present oneself more, so it can increase social comparisons (Lup et al., 2015). The time that users spend on Instagram increases their risk of engaging in social comparison because it gives the impression that others have a better life and generates negative feelings that harm individuals' well-being and

happiness (Vogel et al., 2014). The American Psychiatric Association also explained that over time social comparison leads to loss of social skills and fear of social interaction (William & First, 2013).

In Instagram, the social comparison goes beyond family and friends to practice social comparing with celebrities and influencers who have more points to compare, which can negatively affect self-esteem, especially since Instagram posts are exaggerated by the image editing feature which creates an unrealistic sensation of idealism (Ibrahim, 2021). Users on social media usually compare themselves to the abilities, look, social talent and popularity of others, thus increasing social anxiety, so Instagram does not directly affect social anxiety except with the social comparator's presence (Jiang, & Ngien, 2020). And individuals with high social comparison orientation often show a decrease in self-esteem (Ibrahim, 2021), while Lack of negative social comparison on Instagram was associated with higher self-esteem and satisfaction in life, weak levels of nervousness and depression (Jabłońska, & Zajdel, 2020).

Instagram provides information on the feelings and activities of a large number of people, therefore users resort to social comparisons after receiving information about others so that they learn about their situation and assess themselves, thus decide whether they are better or worse than the person they compare themselves to, If users end that they are worse than others, their disappointment increases, while they feel comfortable and proud, if they conclude that they are better off than others they following (Dijkstra et al., 2010). Personality traits and mood at the time of browsing social media sites usually affect social comparison level (Fikkers, et al., 2016). It is necessary to point out the existence of positive social comparisons that usually increase inspiration and motivation among social media users, especially if they compare themselves to those who are like them, not celebrities and influencers (Noon & Meier, 2019).

### **The study importance**

There are seven importance in this paper. First, many media studies in the Arab countries focus on the patterns of use and reliance on social networking sites, while these studies overlook the psychological implications of using social media sites, especially image-based ones which this study seeks to investigate it. This research notices that Arab studies address the effects of social media sites in general, but usually focus on Facebook and Twitter as the two most used sites in the Arab world. Arab studies on Instagram also focus on the motives for its use as a means of teaching English and as a marketing tool for vendors and as a means of communication for public relations services in Arab institutions. The lack of studies on the psychological implications of using Instagram and the scarcity of Arab studies, including Palestinian ones, addressed the subject of social comparison on Instagram, which this study tries to carry out.

Second, this study uses social comparison theory, a theory rarely used in media research in the Arab countries as media studies in Arab countries are often based on the employment of two basic theories: The theory of uses and gratifications and the theory of reliance on the media, to determine the motives of social media sites usage and the gratifications obtained of such use, and to find out the level to which social media sites are relied upon as a source of information and the most important cognitive, emotional and behavioral impacts of such use. Third, the study derives its practical significance from the fact that it seeks to verify the real impacts of using picture-based social media sites, especially Instagram.

Fourth, this study derives its importance from the fact that it addresses the concept of social comparison as an important factor in influencing users' psychological status, especially when they use highly image-based social media platforms like Instagram, since many media studies worldwide have shown that Instagram users' feelings of depression, poor self-esteem and low satisfaction in life are not linked to the pure use of Instagram, but to the existence of the social comparison factor as an intermediary (De Oliveira & Huertas, 2015; Lup et al., 2015; Jiang, & Ngien, 2020). Fifth, this study has a great importance as it addresses an important topic to which Arab and Palestinian studies have rarely addressed. Arab media studies in general and Palestinian did not address the subject of social comparison on Instagram except for one Egyptian study (Ibrahim, 2021), on the relationship between the usage of Instagram, self-esteem level and bodies image from the social comparison portal.

Sixth, the study can be important and add to the scientific media library because it seeks to verify the function of many variables in practicing the concept of social comparison on Instagram, these variables are: age, scientific level, social status, the number of opening times and the number of hours spend on the application. This study is distinct from others in that it has been applied to a sample of females from varying age, social and scientific groups to determine the level to which females are involved in the social comparisons process on Instagram. Seventh, the study's greatest importance is in seeking to draw the attention of parents and educational institutions to sensitize their family members and students to the need for self-acceptance and appreciation to avoid the negative outcomes

of using picture-based social media sites, especially Instagram, so that the negative impacts are usually based on the practice of social comparisons during the usage of social media sites.

### Study Problem

As a result of using Instagram, after logging in, users are endlessly subjected to a variety of profiles information, friends' updates, likes, uploaded pictures, etc. (Hwnag,2019). Such activities might urge users, particularly those who more frequently use Instagram or spend more daily time on, to automatically involve social comparison (Thomas, et al., 2017). Instagram is growing in very fast way, enabling users to share a huge amount of visual content and information, putting people in a fertile ground for social comparing (De Vries, et al., 2018). As of January 2022, 49.3 % of Instagram users worldwide were female. At the beginning of 2022, the number of the Palestinian social media users was equivalent to 64.3 % of the total population, and the numbers that have been published in Meta's advertisement tools point out that 52.3% of the eligible Palestinian users who are above 13 years old used Instagram in 2022 and that 53.9% of ads audience on Instagram in Palestine was females (Global digital overview report, 2022 ), which indicates that the Palestinian females are an essential audience on Instagram and use it actively. This study, therefore, investigates the factors that may affect and encourage the Palestinian females to get involved in social comparison on Instagram by searching the potential effects of the age, the educational level, the social status, the job, the frequency of opening the app per day and the number of times using the app per day on social comparison practicing.

### Theoretical Framework

This study relies on social comparison theory which established by Festinger (1954), based on the assumption that the individuals have a motive to evaluate their abilities and opinions (Festinger, 1954). This may happen based on physical reality, as in assessment one's ability to lift a weight through the actual attempt to do so, and that individuals compare themselves to others if unbiased evaluations are unavailable (Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990). People could utilize the information generated through these comparisons to get an idea of their abilities and limitations, and information that formulated by such comparison may generate self-threats (Morse & Gergen, 1970). One of the major principles of the theory is that other similar rather than dissimilar others are the most desirable standard of comparison. To accurately evaluate their skills and point of views, it was assumed that people generally preferred comparisons with people who looked like them (Mussweiler & Bodenhausen, 2002).

Social comparing process plays a big role in deciding how individuals usually evaluate themselves (Wayment & Taylor, 1995), these comparisons are perceptions and measurements serves the need for self-enhancement, self-evaluation, and self-improvement (Wood, 1989). Social comparison could be divided into three types with different functional goals: horizontal, or non-directional, upward, and downward ((Festinger, 1954). Horizontal, or non-directional comparisons related to the comparisons between equals which is most valuable for gathering information about the self (Hwang, 2019).

Researchers have suggested that individuals are more likely to compare themselves to those who are more equal and like them (Wills, 1981). Individual also usually compares him or herself with whom is worse off in downward social comparisons, which includes comparing oneself to those who one considers as lower-performing as oneself, because it serves to enhance self-esteem. Downward social comparison has related to positive mental health results such as reduced anxiety (Steers et al., 2014). Lastly, upward social comparison, also referred to negative social comparing, involves comparing oneself with who the person considers as higher performing as oneself (Hwnag, 2019).

In some cases, upward comparison could create threats to the self which may generate negative impacts such as recession and low satisfaction (Mussweiler & Bodenhausen, 2000). Some studies have shown that people who usually practicing upward social comparison have a low positive impact of comparison (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). The theory assumes that upward social comparison is based on competition by focusing on performance and achievement comparison, while the downward social comparison is based on identifying differences and similarities in ideas, values, beliefs, and social standing (Lee, 2014).

Communication studies indicate that the mood before browsing social media sites influences the type of comparison users engage in, as the bad mood before browsing was associated with a downward social comparison as an attempt to restore self-confidence, but it is worthy noted that upward social comparison was commonly preferred across both moods (Ibrahim, 2019). Browsing social sites may also impact positively or negatively on users' mood depending on their degree of inclination to make social comparisons as people who tend to make comparisons are naturally adversely affected after browsing other users' social information, while the mood may not be adversely affected after browsing social media sites in people who are not usually inclined to make social comparisons (Johnson & Westerwick 2014). Social comparison theory assumes that comparisons are usually

confined to two areas: abilities-based comparison and opinion-based comparison (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Regarding the abilities comparison, individuals usually judge their qualifications, characteristics, and achievement through comparing with others (Festinger, 1954). The people who do those comparisons are more competition-oriented (Wood, 1989). In contrast, social comparison based on opinions is not aimed at judgement and competition, but people usually resort to compare their opinion to others if they feel vague about certain issues and were unable to shape their own opinion about them to gather more information (Suls et al., 2000).

Social media offers people new ways to observe and compared to each other in an online environment, in this context, Communication studies combine the social comparison of abilities and opinions in a comprehensive comparative measure and link this measure to the quantity or intensity of social media use (Lee, 2014; Vogel, 2014). This study is based on using social comparison theory as a theoretical framework in researching the relationship between exposure to the Instagram app and the social comparison level, because Instagram as a photo-based platform gives a large amount of visual information about people and how they look and feel allowing its users to present themselves in an ideal way with a focus on good qualities which could give an impression of having a perfect life, this may provide a digital environment for social comparison practice. The theory of social comparison based on a basic idea in which people use the information available about others on social media platforms to understand their own situation by comparing themselves to them so that they decide they are worse or better off, If users conclude that they are worse off, this may lead to negative psychological effects while they may have positive feelings and self-confidence if they feel that they are better off than others.

There are several studies addressed the subject of social comparisons on social media platforms. The first one was done by Pedalino and Camerini (2022) which entitled: "Instagram Use and Body Dissatisfaction: The Mediating Role of Upward Social Comparison with Peers and Influencers among Young Females. This study aimed to test a mediation model connecting Instagram usage to bodies' dissatisfaction mediated by upward social comparisons with distant, close peers, and influencers of social media. The study sample was exclusively Italian females, included 291 Instagram users, all of them are under age 30. The young females answered an online survey, while the teenagers answered paper and pencil survey. The survey used scales developed by other researchers to test Instagram usage, upward social comparing, body view discrepancy, appreciation of the body. The research found proof of a connection between the others look on Instagram and low level of body appreciation with totally mediation of upward social comparisons with influencers. The study concluded that influencers on Instagram have a negative influence on the body image among females and that social comparison processes need to be considered. The study also found that upward social comparison with distant and close peers was remarkably and positively linked to lower level of body appreciation. The study showed that younger girls who aged 15 to 17 informed markedly lower level of body appreciation than young girls, which mean that younger females have a higher tendency to compare themselves with others.

Pedalino and Camerini (2022) corresponds to the present study in that it combines Instagram use with the social comparison among females. This helped in providing the current study with a better picture of the research problem. The second one was done by Sharma et al. (2022) which entitled: "The impact of Instagram on young Adult's social comparison, colorism and mental health: Indian perspective". This study attempt to explore the relationship between Instagram usage and social comparing, mental health, and colorism, focusing on Indian young adults. The study aimed to know if gender plays an important role in influencing social comparison, colorism, and mental health and to find the correlation between social comparison, colorism, and mental health. The study presented related research about social comparison, colorism, mental health, and social media. 726 participants were asked to answer an online survey divided into three sections each of them related to one of the study aspects. The questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale. The study found a positive relationship between the use of Instagram and social comparison rising, which means that frequent exposure to Instagram could lead users to compare their lives with others. The study also found that the age could determine Social Comparison, which means that younger users would be more likely to compare their own lives with others on Instagram. The results also indicated that users with more followers would automatically be exposed to more posts on their pages, which result in more social comparison. The hour's number did not significantly affect Social Comparison. In addition, it was found that social comparison could lead to colorism and mental health issues. However, the results found that gender have insignificant link with the three aspects of the study.

The current study used the questionnaire developed by Sharma et al. (2022) to investigate the relationship between Instagram exposure and social comparing. The questionnaire consists of 10 items and the current study asked for 6 demographic items which are: age, educational level, social status, frequency, and numbers of hours spend on the app. The third one was done by Ibrahim (2021), entitled: "The impact of young people's use of Instagram app on their social comparison level" which aimed to research the impact of Instagram exposure level and self-esteem, the image of body with the existence of social comparing as a mediator among Egyptian college students. The

study used social comparison theory as a theoretical reference and addressed several previous studies that linked Instagram with self-esteem and feelings of satisfaction, Instagram with body image, Instagram with anxiety and frustration. The study assumed that the intensity Instagram use influenced the level of social comparison with a statistically significant correlation between social comparison, acceptance of body image and users' level of self-esteem. This study used the survey method by applying a questionnaire to a purposeful sample of 300 Egyptian university youth aged 18-22. The study focused on several variables including the frequency of using Instagram app daily, the numbers of hours that the study sample using Instagram daily, and the rate of updating the study sample for their Instagram pages. The study found that the sample practices social comparison on Instagram on a medium basis, and that users tend to practice upward social comparison by comparing themselves to better ones, and that the follow-up strangers on Instagram increases the negative effects of comparison. The study found that there is a connection between the intensity of Instagram exposure and the level of social comparison among Egyptian university youth.

The current study has benefited from Ibrahim (2021) in formulating study questions, identifying the most important variables needed to achieve the study goals and in the theoretical framework construction. Ibrahim (2021) study was rich in previous studies regarding the psychological effects of Instagram by the existence of social comparison as an intermediary factor. The fourth one was done by Fagundes et al. (2021), entitled: "Use of Instagram, Social Comparison, and Personality as Predictors of Self-Esteem". This study intended to examine the power of Instagram intensity usage, social comparing and the five significant elements of self-esteem. The study provided a brief presentation about the intensity of Instagram use, the relationship between social networking sites and self-esteem, with the consideration of social comparison as a mediate factor between Instagram intensity use and self-esteem.

This survey study relies on an online questionnaire as a research tool. The sample of the study was 625 Brazilians from five different areas in the country, who have an Instagram account with an age average of 26.7 years. More than half of sample were women. Half of sample were still in bachelor's degree. The survey used contained sociodemographic questions: gender, age, the educational level, career, residence, and questions about the Instagram use such as the daily number of accesses, time spent on Instagram daily. Furthermore, the survey contained the intensity of Instagram usage, social comparison, personality, and self-esteem scales. The study found that social comparison based on abilities was a negative predictor of self-esteem while the age and social comparison based on opinion were shown as self-esteem positive predictors. The study also found that for women, there was a negative relationship between self-esteem and Instagram intensity usage with a mediation of social comparison. The study suggested that the harm of using Instagram relates to the practice of comparing himself.

The current study used Fagundes et al. (2021) to assist in the formulation of the study's questions and the formulation of demographic questions in the questionnaire used the questions refer to the measuring of Instagram exposure by identifying the concepts used in monitoring the time consumption on Instagram which refers to the numbers of hours and frequency of opening the app. The fifth one was done by Jabłońska and Zajdel (2020), entitled: "Artificial neural networks for predicting social comparison effects among female Instagram users". This study aimed to investigate the links between the intensive usage of Instagram and anxiety, life satisfaction, depression, self-esteem with a social comparing model. The research assumed that systematic exposures to social media network could cause social comparing, particularly among females who compare their self to others; they are exposed to mood decrease, character-objectification, concerns of body image, and lower impression of themselves. The study sample included 974 women aged 18–49 who have an Instagram account. More than half of the sample was girls in their 20s. The female respondents participated voluntarily on online survey through a link posted on social media. The results suggested links between the psychological data that had been analyzed and social comparison types. The results indicated that there is an important difference between the groups: positive, negative, and equal social comparison types. The positive comparison that related with high levels of upward identifications and downward comparison was associated with high intensity of Instagram using, high levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction and low depression. Those who labeled as negative downward identification and upward comparisons revealed higher levels of depression and anxiety with the lowest levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Members that scored equally on negative and positive scale, expressed exactly the opposite tendency regarding the negative group, and proven the lowest Instagram intensity usage.

Jabłońska and Zajdel (2020) corresponds to the current study in that it focuses on females as a target audience, on the Instagram app and on social comparison as a mediator in making a lot of psychological impacts on its users. The sixth study was done by Jiang and Ngien (2020), entitled: "The Effects of Instagram Use, Social Comparison, and Self-Esteem on Social Anxiety: A Survey Study in Singapore" which intended to search the impacts of using Instagram on users' social anxiety. The research assumed that the Instagram usage would have an indirect effect on social anxiety with a mediation by social comparing. The study also assumed that Instagram using wouldn't

have direct effects on social anxiety unless there is a social comparing and lack of self-esteem as intermediary factors.

The research used an online questionnaire included 388 individuals who have an effective Instagram account and use it daily. The method of Snowball sampling was also used to expand the size of the sample. The survey empirically tested a mediating path connecting the use of Instagram to social anxiety. The survey included certain variables: age, gender, education, income, and the frequency of using Instagram. The study used social comparison Orientation Measure that was developed by the Iowa-Netherlands in 1999. The study found that more frequent Instagram use was correlated with a higher level of social comparing, and that social comparison enhanced the social anxiety of users. The findings pointed out that social comparison remarkably decreasing self-esteem. The study also found that lower self-esteem was correlated with higher social anxiety. Thus, the study results illustrated that the use of Instagram failed to influence directly on social anxiety. Instead, its effect was entirely mediated by social comparison and self-esteem. As a result of this, the consideration indicates that using social media is linked to well or bad emotional health would be uninformative, since it fails to specify the underlying mechanism that social media play this role. Jiang and Ngien (2020) study resemble the current study in which it examines the impact of age, educational level, and the frequency of opening the app to cause social comparison on Instagram.

The seventh study was done by Yesilyurt and Solpuk (2020), which entitled: " Prediction of the Time Spent on Instagram by Social Media Addiction and Life Satisfaction" This research was conducted to reveal whether the social media addiction and life satisfaction level of collage students' differ by the time that they consume on Instagram, also, to explain the model where gender, age and the addiction of social media affected the time spent on Instagram. The study sample included 433 individuals of university students studying in two different education faculties based in Istanbul in the 2019–2020 fall semester. The study variables were gender, age and time spent on Instagram per day. The number of females within the sample is 339 with 97 males. The study found a poor negative association between social media addiction and life satisfaction. However, the study showed that student's satisfaction with life declines as the addiction of social media rises. The study also found that social media addiction differs according to the degree of the time spend on Instagram. It is found that the most variables that predict the time spent on Instagram are gender, and it is followed by age. Finally, the study showed that females spent times on Instagram more than males and that females at the age of 21–22 years spent more times on Instagram compared to other age groups.

The current study is consistent with Yesilyurt and Solpuk (2020) study in that the two of them studying the impact of Instagram and examine the possible relationship between the time users spend on Instagram and the psychological effects on them. Yesilyurt and Solpuk (2020) study found that females use Instagram more than males and this study focus on studying the effect of using Instagram on the females exclusively. The difference between the current study and Yesilyurt and Solpuk (2020) study is in focusing on the concept of social comparing on Instagram, this concept is the real gateway that leads to a lot of psychological effects on users. The eighth study was done by Hwang (2019) which entitled: "Why Instagram Social Comparison matters: Its impact on Depression". The study considered the probable negative psychological effects of social media platforms, by investigating the relationship between using social media sites, Instagram, and depression.

The researcher aimed to investigate the three forms of social comparison (horizontal, downward, and upward) comparisons that college students might practice on Instagram and their relationship with depression. The study provided a brief presentation about Instagram and used social comparison theory as a theoretical reference. The study asked about the possible relationship between the frequencies of using Instagram, hours spent by the users on the app, their activity type and the three forms of social comparing. The study also asked how horizontal, downward, and upward comparing can drive to depression and if social comparison could be an intermediary between Instagram use and depression. To answer the study's questions, a questionnaire was used as a tool and the study sample consisted of 245 university students who using Instagram app. Thy study found that looking at the status updates of other people and commenting on their pictures influences the upward social comparing. The frequency of using Instagram also calls horizontal, upward, and downward social comparing. The study found that depression was positively associated with upward social comparing, while downward social comparing has a negative association with depression. The study suggested that Instagram does not straight away influence depression, but it could lead to it if social comparing was available.

The current study used Hwang (2019) to help identify the variables and formulate research questions, especially regarding the frequency of using Instagram and the number of hours spent on it by users. Hwang (2019) study help in building the conceptual framework related to social comparison concept in terms of its directions. The ninth study was done by De Vries et al. (2018), which entitled: " Social comparison as a thief of joy: Emotional consequences of viewing strangers Instagram posts". The study aimed to investigate the emotional influence of



positive Instagram posts that regarding to strangers among users who have various tendencies to compare themselves with others. The study used social comparison theory as a theoretical framework. The study presented a brief presentation about Instagram, social comparison, and emotional contagion. This study is experimental research. 130 participants were asked to take selfies and post it on Instagram after viewing stranger's positive, neutral, or no selfie posts. The participants were also asked to finish an online survey after posting their photograph. De Vries et al. (2018) study tested if social comparison tendencies moderate the impact of viewing strangers' positive Instagram posts on negative and positive effects. The study assumed that the users of Instagram who view stranger's positive posts feel more negative and less positive effects than the users who view neutral or no posts from strangers. The study also assumed that the users of Instagram who view stranger's positive posts will have more positive impact than the users of Instagram who view neutral or no posts from strangers. The results showed that viewing strangers' positive posts on Instagram could decrease or increase positive affect. The study found that strangers' positive posts on Instagram reduce the positive affect among users who have high level of social comparison tendency, while positive affect increased among users who have low level of social comparison orientation. The study did not discover any negative differences between participants who didn't view any posts or viewed neutral, positive posts at any social comparison level.

The current study used De Vries et al. (2018) in building the theoretical framework, through presenting Instagram and social comparison aspects. The last study was done by Lee (2014), which entitled: "How do people compare themselves with others on social network sites? The case of Facebook". This study aimed to examine social comparing behavior on Facebook using college student's sample. The study used social comparison theory within its theoretical framework and sought to know if the use of Facebook relates with individual social comparison frequency and if the number of friends on Facebook relates with the individual's social comparison frequency on Facebook. Data were collected by an online survey from a sample of 199 students at Michigan State University. The study used a sample of college students, because it assumed that the college students have a tendency towards higher frequently engagement in social comparison behavior than adults. The demographic variables were gender, age, school year and the frequency of using Facebook. The study used the orientation scale of social comparing developed by Gibbons and Buunk (1999), while Self-esteem was assessed by using 7 items from the Rosenberg (1989) self-esteem scale. The study found that users who have a tendency toward social comparison are more likely to compare themselves with others on Facebook. According to the study, this could be referred to the assumption of considering users who have a high tendency toward social comparison are more likely to intensely using Facebook, or that users who use Facebook more frequently are more likely to be involved in social comparison on Facebook. The study also found that the users who are less certain about themselves are more frequently practicing comparing with others on Facebook. The study found a negative relationship between self-esteem and frequency of social comparing on Facebook. The current study used Lee (2014) study in presenting the aspect of social comparison in the theoretical framework.

## **Method**

### **Operational definitions of the variables**

This study was designed to examine the relationship between exposure to the Instagram app and the level of social comparison based on age, educational level, social status, job, the frequency of opening the app and the number of times using the app per day among Palestinian females who have an active Instagram account and use it periodically. Independent and dependent variables of the study were as follows:

### **Independent variables**

Age, Educational level, Social status, Job, Frequency of opening the app per day, Number of times using the app per day.

### **Dependent variables**

The exposure to Instagram app and social comparison level.

### **Identification of the population**

The population under investigation contained 2.63 million Palestinian females (PCBS, 2022), who have active Instagram account and use it regularly.

### **Sample**

The sample of this study was consisted of 140 Palestinian females who have an active Instagram account and use it periodically. The purposive sample was adopted in this study in which the members of the population were intends to select because of the previous knowledge that they are best able to provide information about the problem of the study (Apuke, 2017).

### Instrument

The study depended on a pre-prepared questionnaire investigates the relationship between Instagram and social comparing developed by (Sharma et al., 2022). The internal consistency of the survey was proven using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. All rates were over 0.9, indicating excellent (1.0–0.90) reliability for all the constructs (Sharma et al., 2022). The questionnaire consisted of 10 paragraphs addressing the relationship between Instagram and social comparing as well as 6 other items related to the demographic characteristics of the female respondents. The paragraphs of the questionnaire have been translated into Arabic and the questionnaire has been prepared via Google forms in preparation for posting it electronically on social media sites.

### Data collection

After posting the questionnaire electronically via social media sites, 140 responses were obtained. Responses were unloaded on the Excel file in preparation for unloading data on the SPSS software program and getting the results. The replies to the questionnaire were statistically analyzed according to age, educational level, social status, job, frequency of opining the app and number of times using the app per day.

### Data analysis procedures

In this study, quantitative research method was used in order to research the problem. Quantitative method deals with quantification and analysis variable for retrieving results. This involves the use and analysis of numerical data using certain statistical techniques. (Apuke, 2017; Gadiparthi, & Reddy2022). The current study used frequencies and One Way ANOVA test to answer the questions of the study and investigate the hypothesis.

### Limitation of the study

This study sought to discover the factors that could lead female users to go into social comparison on the Instagram app specifically. The study was limited to Palestinian female users who have active Instagram account. The questionnaire was posted on social media platforms to get responses during November 2022. This study was conducted during the fall semester of the school year 2022-2023.

### Findings

This section presents the findings of the study and its analysis. This research is a descriptive study uses the survey methodology. The main purpose of the present study was to research the relationship between Instagram exposure and social comparing level among Palestinian females based on age, educational level, social status, job, frequency of opining the app and the numbers of times using the app. The analysis of data is based upon the quantitative data of an online survey on Palestinian females. This section contains the presentation, statistical analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data collected from 140 Palestinian females who have an active Instagram app and use it regularly. The study depended on pre-prepared questionnaire was developed by (Sharma et al., 2022) that consisted of 10 paragraphs investigate the social comparison on Instagram in addition to 6 demographic variables. This section presents the results of quantitative technique that has been used in this study. This section examines the demographic data and frequencies for all items in the survey. This chapter also incorporates an overall hypothesis and an analysis of respondents' perceptions. The analysis of data gathered during the study is presented in both descriptive and Likert-style items.

### Demographic data

The first six items of the survey asked for "personal data" including the variables of age, educational level, social status, job, the frequency of using the app and the number of times using the app per day.

Table (1): The age data of the sample

The age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 18	13	9.3	9.3	9.3
18-21	35	25.0	25.0	34.3
22-25	56	40.0	40.0	74.3
Valid 26-29	10	7.1	7.1	81.4
30-33	13	9.3	9.3	90.7
More than 34	13	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that 40% of the female respondents were between 22 to 25 years old, similarly, 25% of the female respondents were between 18 to 21 years old. The table also shows that the percentage of female respondents who aged less than 18 is 9.3% and that the female respondents who aged more than 34 years old and between 30 to 33

obtained the same percentage of 9.3%, while the female respondents who aged between 26 to 29 obtained the lowest percentage with 7.1%.

Table (2): The education level data of the sample

The educational level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
high school education	18	12.9	12.9	12.9
Valid Bachelor's	110	78.6	78.6	91.4
postgraduate	12	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (2) shows that 78% of the sample have a bachelor’s degree, while 12.9% of the sample were females with secondary education, and about 8.6% of the respondents were females with postgraduate education.

Table (3): The social status of the sample

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	97	69.3	69.3	69.3
Engaged	4	2.9	2.9	72.1
Married	39	27.9	27.9	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (3) shows that 69% of the sample were single, 27.9% of the sample were married and 2.9% of the sample were engaged.

Table (4): The jobs of the sample

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Student	67	47.9	47.9	47.9
House wife	28	20.0	20.0	67.9
Working woman	45	32.1	32.1	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (4) shows that 47.9% of the sample who use Instagram were students, and 32.1% of the sample were working women, while 20% of the respondents were housewives.

Table (5): The frequency of opening the app daily.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid only once	9	6.4	6.4	6.4
3-2 times	23	16.4	16.4	22.9
More than 3 times	108	77.1	77.1	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (5) shows that 77.1% of the sample open Instagram more than three times a day. Similarly, 16.4% of the sample open Instagram two to three times a day, while 6.4% of the female respondents open Instagram once a day.

Table (6): The number of times using the app daily

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid less than one hour daily	31	22.1	22.1	22.1
From 1 to 2 hours per day	58	41.4	41.4	63.6
3 hours and more	51	36.4	36.4	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (6) shows that 41.4% of the sample use Instagram one to two hours daily. Similarly, 36.4% of the female respondents use Instagram 3 hours and more per day, while 22.1% of the sample use Instagram less than one hour daily.

Table (7): The first item of the survey

<b>My physical appearance gives me confident</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Neutral	7	5.0	5.0	9.3
Valid Agree	71	50.7	50.7	60.0
Strongly agree	56	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (7) shows that 90.7% (127) of the sample are agree and strongly agree with the first item of the survey which is: " My physical appearance gives me confident". That means that most of the sample gain their confident on Instagram from their physical look which consists with the nature of the photo- based platforms that focus on the appearance.

Table (8): the second item of the survey

<b>I think people present themselves on Instagram in a different way compared to reality</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
Disagree	2	1.4	1.4	2.9
Valid Neutral	17	12.1	12.1	15.0
Agree	62	44.3	44.3	59.3
Strongly agree	57	40.7	40.7	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (8) shows that 85% (119) of the sample agree and strongly agree with the second item of the survey which is: " I think people present themselves on Instagram in a different way compared to reality". This means that most of the sample believe that people usually have a tendency to only present themselves in positive way.

Table (9): the third item of the survey

<b>Others' Instagram posts inspire and motivate me</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	4	2.9	2.9	2.9
Disagree	16	11.4	11.4	14.3
Valid Neutral	27	19.3	19.3	33.6
Agree	79	56.4	56.4	90.0
Strongly agree	14	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (9) shows that 66.4% (93) of the sample are agree and strongly agree with the third item of the survey which is: " Others' Instagram posts inspire and motivate me". This suggests a positive impact of Instagram on most of the sample.

Table (10): the fourth item of the survey

<b>I care about the way others interact with my posts</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	9	6.4	6.4	6.4
Disagree	16	11.4	11.4	17.9
Valid Neutral	26	18.6	18.6	36.4
Agree	63	45.0	45.0	81.4
Strongly agree	26	18.6	18.6	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (10) shows that 63 % (89) of the sample are agree and strongly agree about the fourth item of the survey which is: " I care about the way others interact with my posts". This shows that more than half of the sample is interested in how others interact with their posts in terms of likes and comments.

Table (11): the fifth item of the survey

<b>I think Instagram is a way for me to stay in constant contact with my friends and keep up with the events of their lives</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Disagree	36	25.7	25.7	30.0
Neutral	19	13.6	13.6	43.6
Agree	58	41.4	41.4	85.0
Strongly agree	21	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (11) shows that 56.4% (79) of the sample agree and strongly agree with the fifth item of the survey which is: " I think Instagram is a way for me to stay in constant contact with my friends and keep up with the events of their lives".

Table (12): The sixth item of the survey

<b>I think people won't respect me and they won't interact with my posts unless I looked successful or good</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	15	10.7	10.7	10.7
Disagree	52	37.1	37.1	47.9
Neutral	23	16.4	16.4	64.3
Agree	39	27.9	27.9	92.1
Strongly disagree	11	7.9	7.9	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (12) shows that 47.8% (67) of the sample are disagree and strongly disagree with the sixth item of the survey which is: " I think people won't respect me and they won't interact with my posts unless I looked successful or good". This means that almost half of the sample think that the look and success are not the only reasons that motive the others to interact with them on Instagram.

Table (13): the seventh item of the survey

<b>After browsing other people's Instagram posts, I feel frustrated towards myself or envy others on the things they have or wish I could go to the places they go</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	28	20.0	20.0	20.0
Disagree	41	29.3	29.3	49.3
Neutral	29	20.7	20.7	70.0
Agree	29	20.7	20.7	90.7
Strongly agree	13	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (13) shows that 49.3% (69) of the sample are disagree and strongly disagree with the seventh item of the survey which is: " After browsing other people's Instagram posts, I feel frustrated towards myself or envy others on the things they have or wish I could go to the places they go". This means that almost half of the sample don't usually feel negative feelings towards others on Instagram after browsing their posts.

Table (14): the eight item of the survey

<b>I try to mimic the social habits that appear to me on Instagram such as dress methods, marriage habits, and celebration and socialization habits</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	23	16.4	16.4	16.4
Disagree	55	39.3	39.3	55.7
Neutral	23	16.4	16.4	72.1
Agree	33	23.6	23.6	95.7
Strongly agree	6	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (14) shows that 55.7% (78) of the sample are disagree and strongly disagree with the eighth item of the survey which is: "I try to mimic the social habits that appear to me on Instagram such as dress methods, marriage habits, and celebration and socialization habits". Which means that more than half of the sample don't compare themselves with others on Instagram, so that they don't attempt to mimic the social habits that appear on Instagram.

Table (15): the ninth item of the survey

<b>I compare my posts to others' Instagram posts</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	31	22.1	22.1	22.1
Disagree	55	39.3	39.3	61.4
Neutral	24	17.1	17.1	78.6
Agree	24	17.1	17.1	95.7
Strongly agree	6	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (15) shows that 61.4% (86) of the sample are disagree and strongly disagree about the ninth item of the survey which is: "I compare my posts to others' Instagram posts". This means that more than half of the sample admitted that they do not practice social comparison on Instagram.

Table (16): the tenth item of the survey

<b>I make positive or negative judgments on others based on their number of likes and followers</b>	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	26	18.6	18.6	18.6
Disagree	70	50.0	50.0	68.6
Neutral	19	13.6	13.6	82.1
Agree	22	15.7	15.7	97.9
Strongly agree	3	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	140	100.0	100.0	

Table (16) shows that 68.6% (96) of the sample are disagree and strongly disagree with the last item of the survey which is: "I make positive or negative judgments on others based on their number of likes and followers". This means that most of the sample don't usually make judgments based on the numbers of followers and likes of others, which gives an indicator that they don't have tendency to social comparison on Instagram.

This section includes the examination of the six hypotheses of the study. Quantitative data analysis results show that there is no correlation between age, educational level, social status, job, the frequency of opening Instagram, hours' numbers spend on Instagram daily and the social comparison level among the sample of the study.

H<sub>1</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the age variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in exposure level on Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the age variable.

Table (17): Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis by age variable  
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.682	5	.336	.910	0.369
Within Groups	49.500	134	.369		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

To check the validity of the previous null hypothesis, the One-Way ANOVA test was conducted to extract averages, standard deviations, df scores, calculated F values and statistical indicator level values for sample responses to study subjects on study areas and on the overall study tool. The following table shows the results of this test. From the table (17), there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the level of social comparison attributable to the age variable in the overall field, where the indicative level (0.369) is higher than the value ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis e of the age variable.

H<sub>2</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the educational level variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in the exposure of Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the educational level variable.

Table (18): Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis by educational level variable  
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.014	2	.507	1.385	.254
Within Groups	50.167	137	.366		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

From the table (18), there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the level of social comparison attributable to the educational level variable in the overall field, where the level of indication (0.254) is higher than the value ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis of the educational level variable.

H<sub>3</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the social status variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the social status variable.

Table (19): Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis by Social Status Variable  
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.073	2	.037	.098	.906
Within Groups	51.108	137	.373		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

From the table (19), there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the level of social comparison attributable to the variable social status in the overall field, where the level of indication (0.906) is higher than the value ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis of the social status variable.

H<sub>4</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the job variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the job variable.

Table 20: Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis by job variable

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.331	2	.166	.446	.641
Within Groups	50.850	137	.371		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

It is clear from table (20) that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the level of social comparison attributable to job variable in the overall field where the indicative level (0.641) is higher than the value ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis of job variable.

H<sub>5</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the frequency of opening Instagram app per day variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparing due to the frequency of opening Instagram app per day variable.

Table (21): One Way ANOVA Results by Variable frequency of App Openings per Day

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.290	2	.145	.391	.677
Within Groups	50.891	137	.371		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

It is clear from the table (21) that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the social comparison level attributable to the variable frequency of times an application is opened during the day on the overall field where the indicative level (0.677) is higher than the value ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis of the variable frequency of times the application is opened during the day.

H<sub>6</sub>: There are statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the number of hours spend on Instagram app per day variable.

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no statistically significant differences in the level of exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison due to the number of hours spend on Instagram app per day variable.

Table (22): Results of One-Way ANOVA analysis by variable number of hours using the app per day.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.808	2	.904	2.508	.085
Within Groups	49.374	137	.360		
Total	51.181	139			

\*p < 0.05

From the table (22), it is clear that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of indication of the relationship between Instagram exposure and the social comparison level attributable to the variable of number of hours using the app per day on the overall field, where the indication level (0.085) is higher than the value ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) and therefore accepts the null hypothesis of the variable number of hours using the application per day.

## Discussion

This part reports the analysis of data collection from 140 female users of Instagram in Palestine. Quantitative techniques were used to extract the results and have a perspective about the relationship between exposure to Instagram and social comparison level among Palestinian female users. Six statistical hypotheses were tested. Results from data analysis reported that there is no significant statistical relationship between the exposure to Instagram and social comparison level based on age, educational level, social status, job, frequency of opening the app per day and number of hours spend on the app per day. These results are contrary with Sharma, et al. (2022), Ibrahim (2021), Fagundes et al. (2021), Jabłońska and Zajdel (2020), Jiang and Ngien (2020) and Hwang (2019), which found a positive association between the use of Instagram and social comparing rising and that frequent



using of Instagram steers users to compare their lives with others. The current study is also contrary with Sharma, et al. (2022) which indicated that the age could determine Social Comparison, and that younger users would be more likely to compare their life with others on Instagram. However, the current study agreed with Sharma, et al. (2022) study in that the hour's number don't significantly affect Social Comparison.

The study revealed that most of the sample expressed that Others' Instagram posts inspire and motivate them, which indicates that Instagram has a positive impact on their feelings. These results are contrary with Ibrahim (2021) and De Vries et al. (2018) which revealed that positive posts on Instagram reduce the positive affect among users who have high level of social comparison tendency. Also, half of the sample considered that they gain confidence from their physical appearance. This suggests that the physical outlook factor is important to them so that they respect themselves, and this could be due to the dominance of image culture in the world of social networking sites, especially as photos that show attractive appearance can get greater interaction on Instagram. The results showed that about half of the sample care about the way the others interact with their posts, this confirms the nature of social media sites that depends on interaction without necessarily leading to the social comparison. About the half of respondents also think that people present themselves on Instagram in a different way compared to reality, this indicates the awareness of these females that Instagram is a digital world may not reflect the real world of its users and that they may seek to show everything that is only positive while hiding the negatives and disadvantages.

The results also showed that half of the sample don't make positive or negative judgments on others based on their number of likes and followers. Also, the findings revealed that more than the half of respondents don't compare they posts to others' Instagram posts and that they don't try to mimic the social habits that appear to them on Instagram such as dress methods, marriage habits, and celebration and socialization habits. Similarly, they expressed their disagreement with the idea consider that they would not be respected, and people would not interact with their posts unless they looked successful or good. In addition, they consider that they don't usually feel frustrated towards themselves after browsing other people's Instagram posts or envy others on the things they have. These results indicate that the study sample of Palestinian females who use Instagram are aware and usually not rush to hold social comparison with others after browsing Instagram and that they do not compare themselves to others on Instagram to evaluate themselves and their achievements. However, the sample of the study consider that the posts on Instagram help them to get inspired and increase their positive motivation and that Instagram is an efficient digital way to stay in touch with relatives and friends.

### Conclusion

This study sought to discover the relationship between the exposure to Instagram app and the level of social comparison among Palestinian females who have an effective Instagram app and use it regularly based on variables of age, educational level, social status, job, the frequency of opening the app daily and the number of hours spent on Instagram daily. This study is descriptive, used the survey methodology that depended on pre-prepared questionnaire, which was developed by Sharma, et al. (2022). The internal consistency of the survey was examined using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. All rates were over 0.9, indicating excellent (1.0–0.90) reliability for all the constructs (Sharma, et al., 2022). The survey included 10 items investigate the social comparison on Instagram. A purposive sample of 140 Palestinian females who have an effective Instagram app and use it regularly was adopted. Frequencies tables and One Way ANOVA test were used by SPSS program to examine the hypotheses of the study. Six statistical hypotheses were tested. Results from data analysis reported that there is no significant statistical relationship between the exposure to Instagram and social comparison level based on age, educational level, social status, job, frequency of opening the app per day and number of hours spend on the app per day.

The results indicate that the study sample of Palestinian females who use Instagram are aware about using Instagram, so they don't usually rush to practice the social comparison with others after browsing Instagram posts because they believe that people tend to present their lives in a positive and attractive way on Instagram and hide any negative sides. Also, the study found that the respondents of the survey do not compare themselves to others on Instagram to evaluate themselves and their achievements. The sample of the study consider that the posts on Instagram help them to get inspired and increase their positive motivation and that Instagram is a successful digital way to stay in touch with relatives and friends which gives the impression that they focus on the positive side of using Instagram. Based on the above, the current study found that there is a need for more media studies about social comparing on Instagram and other social media sites in the Arab world in general and Palestine to discover the real reasons that push users to practice social comparison on Instagram and its implications on their real lives.

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