

Self-Identity in the Digital Age: A Preliminary Study of College Students' Interactions on Instagram

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Abstract. This study aims to examine how college students construct and negotiate their self-identity through visual representation practices on the Instagram platform. In the digital era, social media has become a new space for individuals especially students to express themselves, build personal image, and manage impressions in front of the public. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing netnographic observation and in-depth interviews with several students from the University of Bengkulu as informants. The findings reveal that Instagram is strategically used as a performative space, where students consciously curate visual content that reflects the positive, productive, and ideal sides of themselves. Popular posts include academic activities, organizational experiences, internships, and lifestyle content that emphasize aesthetics and personal branding. Visual curation is carried out with careful planning, from photo selection, filters, and captions to tone consistency and feed arrangement. This reflects impression management practices as described in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. Students' digital identities are flexible and continuously revised in response to social dynamics, trends, and the need to impress audiences ranging from peers, lecturers, and family to potential employers. However, this practice also creates social pressure to appear flawless and admirable. The more authentic, vulnerable, and complex aspects of self are often hidden and only expressed in more private digital spaces, such as close friends stories, direct messages, or secondary (finsta) accounts. Thus, self-representation on Instagram is not merely a reflection of personality but a socially constructed performance that is constantly negotiated.

Keywords: Digital Communication; Dramaturgy; Instagram; Self-Identity; Visual Curation

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has given birth to fundamental changes in the communication and social interaction patterns of contemporary society. In the last two decades, social media has become a global phenomenon that has not only changed the

way individuals communicate, but has also reconstructed almost all aspects of human life (Shi & Ko, 2023). Interpersonal communication is now no longer dependent on physical space and actual time, but is widely distributed through real-time and interactive digital networks. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) present a new space for expression, where individuals not only interact with others but also display a curated self-image. This creates a new phenomenon where the representation of personal identity has shifted significantly from being private and internal to being public and visual (Trifiro & Prena, 2021). The younger generation as a digital native group is the main actor in this transformation, considering that they grow and develop along with the development of digital communication technology (Illahi & Aditia, 2022). Data from We Are Social shows that social media users in Indonesia are dominated by the 16–24 year old age group, with penetration reaching more than 87% and an average social media usage time reaching 3 hours 18 minutes per day (Amelia & Amin, 2022). This fact confirms that social media is not just a communication tool, but has become the main arena for the younger generation in forming and negotiating their social identity.

One of the most significant changes brought about by social media is the paradigm shift in the formation and meaning of self-identity. Identities that were previously formed through face-to-face interactions and direct social environments are now also constructed through digital performativity, namely the way individuals present themselves on social media based on narrative, visual, and audience interaction choices (Aditia & Hektanti, 2023). In the digital space, identity becomes fluid, negotiable, and heavily influenced by social validation mechanisms such as likes, comments, and shares. A study conducted by Nisak et al., (2022) shows that social media users, especially teenagers, tend to present their ideal selves rather than their real selves as a strategy to gain social acceptance. This is reinforced by a Pew Research Center survey which states that more than 50% of teenagers feel that the pressure to appear perfect on social media has an impact on their perception of themselves (Sheldon et al., 2021). In Indonesia, a UNICEF and KPPPA survey also noted that around 30% of teenagers experience anxiety due to pressure to follow viral aesthetic and lifestyle standard (Asry et al., 2022)s. This phenomenon deserves scientific attention because it indicates that social media has become the main mediation in the process of representation and reflection of self-identity, where the boundaries between reality and digital construction are increasingly blurred.

One of the most dominant visual-based social media platforms that plays a strategic role in the construction of self-identity for the younger generation, including students, is Instagram. Instagram is a visual-based social media platform launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, then acquired by Meta Platforms Inc. (formerly Facebook Inc.) in 2012 (Anjeli & Jamil, 2024). This application is designed to allow users to take, edit, and share photos and videos instantly via mobile devices, as well as interact through comments, likes, direct messages, and various other interactive elements such as Stories, Reels, and Live. The latest report by We Are Social and

Meltwater shows that Indonesia ranks fourth highest in the world in terms of the number of Instagram users, with 99.15 million active users (Choi, 2022). Among this number, the 18–24 age group dominates at 38.9%, which demographically directly overlaps with the student population. The dominance of this age group indicates that Instagram is not only a medium for self-expression, but also a social arena where students actively shape and negotiate their identities.

The concept of identity in the study of social psychology and communication refers to an individual's understanding of who they are in a particular social and cultural context. During college, individuals are in a phase of intense identity development, marked by the process of exploring values, roles, and life orientations (Domunco, 2021). Social media, especially Instagram, offers a performative space that allows individuals to present themselves selectively, strategically, and visually. Self-representation is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions, but is mediated by algorithms, digital aesthetics, and social expectations internalized through platform culture.

Students as active Instagram users often utilize features such as feed, story, reel, and bio as a medium to construct self-narratives. Visual appearance, curated captions, selected locations, and the number of interactions such as likes and comments, are important elements in forming the self-image that they want to display. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of self-presentation proposed by Goffman (1959) in dramaturgy theory, where individuals play certain roles to influence the perception of their social audience. Instagram, in this framework, becomes a digital stage that allows students to play various versions of themselves according to their social context and goals.

In practice, identity construction on social media is heavily influenced by platform logic and algorithms that work behind the scenes. Instagram's algorithm actively regulates content visibility based on user interactions and preferences, which indirectly creates social pressure to display "appearance-worthy" or Instagrammable content. A study by Vasilevich & Wetzel (2022) revealed that exposure to idealized content on Instagram correlates with increased feelings of insecurity and decreased self-satisfaction among young users. This suggests that while social media offers a wide space for expression, it also has the potential to be a source of social stress and psychological distress.

Students not only face pressure to project an ideal version of themselves, but also experience an intense process of social comparison. The social comparison theory developed by Festinger (1954) explains that individuals have a natural tendency to compare themselves to others in order to evaluate themselves. In a digital environment like Instagram, this comparison can be toxic because it is based on a highly filtered, edited, and curated representation of themselves (Dekhil & Sarnou, 2022). As a result, students can feel alienated from their true identities because they are constantly trying to conform to the image formed by collective digital norms.

Not all dynamics of identity formation on Instagram are negative. On the contrary, several studies state that social media can also function as a medium for self-

empowerment. Research by Geusens & Beullens (2021) shows that social media allows individuals to express various aspects of their identity that cannot always be expressed in offline life. Instagram, in this case, provides a space for students to explore their social, political, gender, and cultural identities more openly, reflectively, and interactively.

The phenomenon of using social media to build identity cannot be separated from the culture and socio-technology of society. Indonesia, as a country with high cultural diversity, presents complexity in how self-identity is understood and displayed in the digital space. Students from different socio-cultural backgrounds have different strategies in presenting themselves on Instagram. Identity representation is the result of negotiations between personal values, social pressures, and algorithmic dynamics that shape everyday digital behavior. At the academic level, the issue of students' digital identity through social media is still relatively limited in its discussion, especially in the local context of Indonesia. Digital identity is basically a social construction that is dynamic and multidimensional. It is formed through the process of interaction between individual agency and digital social structures. Students as research subjects are in a strategic position because they are in a critical self-exploration phase, while also having digital competencies that allow them to actively participate in shaping the social media ecosystem.

In daily practice, students also use Instagram as a means to build personal branding, expand social networks, and even develop professional potential in the creative and digital entrepreneurship fields. Some use their accounts to share educational content, social campaigns, and document academic and non-academic achievements. This phenomenon shows that identity representation is not only personal, but also strategic and functional in supporting long-term life agendas. Interestingly, in some cases, students also use digital identity as a form of resistance to dominant social norms. Through Instagram, they can express criticism of social inequality, voice marginal issues, and form solidarity-based communities. Digital identity in this case becomes a political arena that allows student agency to be actualized more openly and democratically. However, the flexibility of digital identity also holds a paradox. The ability to form and change identity instantly has the potential to create shallow and fragmented identities. Students can experience identity dissonance when the digital version of themselves is not in line with real-life experiences and values. This can lead to a crisis of authenticity, namely the individual's uncertainty about who they really are behind the social media screen.

The issue of authenticity becomes increasingly complex in an era where digital aesthetics, body image, and "ideal" lifestyles are massively produced and reproduced through popular culture on social media. Students as consumers and producers of digital content are caught in the dynamics between the desire to appear authentic and the need to remain socially relevant (Lestari et al., 2024). The tension between the need for social validation and the desire to be themselves forms an existential dilemma that colors their daily interactions on platforms such as Instagram. Therefore, it is important for communication science and media studies to explore more deeply how the process

of forming students' digital identities takes place in a reflective and contextual context. Through this understanding, it can be revealed how digital space is not only a communication channel, but also a symbolic arena that helps define the meaning of being oneself in contemporary digital society.

Instagram in this framework is no longer just a photo sharing application, but a social interaction field full of symbolic meaning, where identity, power, social norms, and technology intersect. Students, as central actors in the digital ecosystem, represent an identity transformation that is no longer linear and stable, but adaptive, fragmented, and full of digital intervention. However, there is still a gap in studies that specifically highlight how students' self-identity is constructed and negotiated through everyday interactions on Instagram. This study, entitled *Self-Identity in the Digital Era: An Initial Study of Student Interaction on Instagram*, is here to fill this gap. With an exploratory and qualitative approach, this study offers novelty in the form of a focus on students' subjective experiences in navigating their digital identities. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to digital communication literature as well as offer practical insights related to the dynamics of self-representation in the era of social media.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a theoretical basis from Erving Goffman's dramaturgy to analyze the dynamics of the formation of students' digital identities through their interactions on Instagram social media. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to capture the complexity of subjective experiences and the construction of meaning that cannot be explained quantitatively. Goffman's dramaturgy theory, introduced in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* is used as the main conceptual framework to understand how individuals manage impressions in social interactions that now often take place in digital spaces (Ebarvia, 2021). Goffman's theory allows researchers to understand how students as social actors present their "selves" on the front stage through photo uploads, visual stories, captions, and comment interactions, while aspects that are not shown to the public are associated as the back stage. Identity in this framework is not something essential or fixed, but rather performative, contextual, and continuously negotiated in social interactions mediated by technology.

The unit of analysis in this study is the Instagram account of a student at the University of Bengkulu who actively interacts on the platform. The selection of informants was carried out purposively with the following criteria: active students of at least the third semester who use Instagram regularly and show involvement in building self-representation through uploads, bios, stories, and reels. Informants were selected from 5 study program backgrounds within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Bengkulu to ensure the diversity of the identity contexts constructed. The number of initial informants was set at 5 people and will be adjusted following the principle of theoretical saturation, namely when the data obtained no longer produces new information conceptually.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews aimed at understanding students' motivations, strategies, and perceptions in shaping their digital identities. Interview questions were developed based on dramaturgical categories such as appearance, setting, role, and audience. In addition, netnographic observations were conducted on the informants' Instagram accounts for 2–4 weeks to record interaction patterns, visual styles, upload frequency, use of story and reels features, and forms of audience engagement. Documentation techniques were carried out by recording and archiving relevant uploads, screenshots, and metadata that support the analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis with an inductive approach. The analysis process began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes to identify units of meaning, which were then categorized into conceptual themes in accordance with Goffman's dramaturgical analysis tools. The main focus of the analysis lies in how students manage impressions in digital spaces, how they navigate the pressure to appear ideal versus the desire to appear authentic, and how interactions with audiences reshape their understanding of themselves. A study by Marwick and Boyd (2011) on "context collapse" and performative pressures on social media was also used as empirical support, stating that users, especially the younger generation, often experience conflict in presenting themselves when the audience consists of different social groups. Pew Research Center research (2022) also shows that 71% of Instagram users aged 18–29 feel compelled to upload "visually appealing" content in order to gain social recognition, strengthening the relevance of Goffman's theory in the context of social media.

To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation techniques (interviews, observations, documentation) were used, member checking by reconfirming the findings with informants, and continuous reflection by researchers. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the understanding of digital identity which is not only technological, but also contains complex social, cultural, and symbolic content. In the context of the younger generation such as students, Instagram is not just a space for self-expression, but also an arena where social norms, public expectations, and impression management practices intertwine to form the dynamics of identity in the digital era.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Self-Representation through Visual Curation on Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that focuses on sharing photos and videos. The application was first launched on October 6, 2010, by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Since then, Instagram has grown rapidly and was acquired by Facebook in April 2012 for around 1 billion USD (Gulatee et al., 2021). Instagram allows its users to share photos and videos, edit them with various filters, and share them with their followers. Additional features such as Instagram Stories, IGTV, and Reels enrich the user experience by providing more ways to share engaging visual content. To date, Instagram

has more than 1.4 billion monthly active users, with the majority of users aged between 18 and 34 years, most of whom are teenagers and young people.



Figure 1. Instagram Social Media Logo

Instagram has a huge appeal to children and teens because the platform allows them to build and express their visual identity. Through the use of features such as photos, videos, and stories, teens can share moments from their lives and create an image of themselves that they want to present to the world. Instagram serves as a space where children interact with peers, celebrities or even influencers that they admire. According to research by Sciara et al., (2023), the image-focused social media platform Instagram has a significant impact on adolescent identity development. Children often compare themselves to friends or celebrities that they follow which can influence their perception of themselves.

Specifically for students, Instagram has become a performative space where self-representation is consciously constructed through what is called visual curation. Visual curation refers to the process of selecting, arranging, and editing visual content including photos, videos, feed layouts, captions, emojis, and the use of filters to create a certain self-image that one wants to present to the public. In this context, Instagram is not only a medium for self-expression, but also an arena for ongoing social, cultural, and symbolic identity negotiations.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews and netnographic observations of Instagram accounts belonging to students of the University of Bengkulu, it was found that visual curation practices were carried out intensively and with great consideration. Students showed a strong tendency to display positive, ideal, and productive aspects of their lives. The uploads that dominate include: documentation of academic activities such as seminars and graduations, involvement in student organizations, internship or part-time work experiences, and lifestyle activities such as traveling, self-care, and artistic interests. These visualizations are often packaged with certain aesthetics, such as uniform color tones, consistent filters, and neat feed grid arrangements.

Table 1. Forms of Student Self-Representation on Instagram

Aspect	Description	Field Findings
Uploaded Content	Students choose to highlight the positive and productive aspects of their lives.	Posts include seminars, graduation, organizational activities, internships, traveling, and self-care moments.

Visual Aesthetics	Visuals are consciously curated to appear attractive and consistent.	Instagram feeds feature matching color tones, similar filters, and neatly arranged grid layouts.
Impression Management Strategy	Content is selected with consideration of diverse audiences and prevailing social expectations.	Careful timing of uploads, tailored caption language, and emojis adjusted to audience preferences.
Identity Editing and Revision	Digital identity is periodically edited and updated to remain relevant.	Older posts are deleted or archived when they no longer align with the current self-image.
Performative Pressure	There is social pressure to appear perfect and gain digital validation.	Anxiety over low likes or comments; frequent self-comparisons with influencers or public figures.
Front vs. Back Stage Dichotomy	The public Instagram identity is idealized, while personal or vulnerable sides are often hidden.	Personal topics like failures or negative emotions are shared only via close friends or secondary accounts (finsta).

Source: Research Results (2025)

According to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theoretical framework, this action can be understood as a form of impression management that occurs on the front stage. Students act as social actors who consider their audiences, which can consist of peers, lecturers, family, and potential employers, and design their digital appearance to meet the varying expectations of each of these groups. The choice of content, language style, and upload time are part of a script designed to maintain the consistency of the identity narrative that they want to form.

One informant revealed that he routinely evaluates and deletes or archives old posts that are considered no longer in line with the self-image he currently wants to present. This shows that digital identity is not static, but is a project that is continuously edited, updated, and negotiated. This process is similar to the concept of "editing the self" proposed by Liu & Rathbone (2021), where individuals manage self-representation in social media with visual and narrative strategies to remain relevant, interesting, and accepted by the audience.

On the other hand, the practice of visual curation also has a paradoxical side. Although it allows individuals to express themselves and control their public image, it also creates high performative pressure. As mentioned in the research of Haoran et al., (2023) the use of image-based social media such as Instagram can trigger intense social comparison, especially in terms of physical appearance. Users tend to feel compelled to always appear perfect, aesthetic, and attractive in order to gain social validation in the form of likes, comments, and number of followers. This can have an impact on the emergence of body image issues, feelings of inferiority, and social anxiety. In addition, the self-representation formed on Instagram is often selective and idealistic. Many things

are not shown personal difficulties, academic failures, emotional stress because they are considered unfit for public consumption or can damage the ideal image. This phenomenon emphasizes the dichotomy between the front stage and the back stage in Goffman's dramaturgy. On the back stage, students have a more authentic and complex identity, but that space is rarely shown openly on Instagram, except through more private features such as close friends stories or second accounts (finsta/fake Instagram).

3.2 Social Demands and the Desire to Appear Authentic

In the era of connected social media, individuals are not only forming their personal identities, but also facing complex social pressures regarding how they should present themselves in the digital space. One of the main tensions experienced by users, especially students, is the tug-of-war between the social demands to project an image that conforms to public norms and expectations, and the internal desire to present an authentic self according to who they really are.

Based on the results of netnographic observations and in-depth interviews with a number of active Instagram user students, it was found that their social media experiences are inseparable from efforts to balance the two drives. On the one hand, students feel compelled to meet social expectations in their friendship, academic, and professional environments. Their posts are often adjusted to what is considered socially "appropriate" and "appropriate", such as achievements, organizational contributions, productive lifestyles, or portraits of success. In fact, several informants mentioned that they felt the need to censor aspects of their personal lives that were considered "not Instagrammable" or potentially inviting negative judgment.

This phenomenon shows that social media, especially Instagram, is not only a space for free expression, but also a space for social surveillance, where users observe and judge each other. In this context, users experience what Altheide calls "media logic," a condition in which media formats influence how individuals think, feel, and act. Instagram's highly aesthetic, curative, and performative visual format forms implicit norms about how one should appear in order to be accepted or admired by their digital audience. But on the other hand, there is a strong need for students to continue to present an authentic self, namely a self that is not only curated to meet external demands, but also represents their true values, feelings, and identity (Srinivasan, 2024). This desire to appear authentic arises as a response to the saturation of fakeness or pretense that often occurs on social media. Several informants stated that they try to share simple moments, personal reflections, or even failures and worries, as a form of openness and honesty.

This desire to appear authentic is also closely related to the concept of "authentic self-presentation" proposed by (Gordon, 2023), namely a form of self-representation that is in line with one's personal identity without having to hide or manipulate certain elements just for social validation. However, this process is not always easy. Most informants stated that they experienced ambiguity in deciding whether a content was worth sharing publicly, because they were worried about not being in accordance with the audience's expectations or were afraid of being considered too "weak", "uncool", or "unprofessional".

According to the perspective of social psychology, this condition illustrates the presence of cognitive dissonance, which is the tension that arises when a person's actions are not in line with their personal values or beliefs. When students feel they have to pretend to be an ideal version of themselves on Instagram, but deep down they want to show another, more human and vulnerable side, then feelings of discomfort arise that can have an impact on mental well-being.

One strategy used by students to overcome this dilemma is to separate public and private spaces. Some informants manage more than one Instagram account, namely a well-curated main account for professional and social purposes, and a second account (often referred to as a "finsta") used to share more spontaneous, honest, or even humorous content without the pressure to appear perfect. This allows them to express various dimensions of identity more flexibly. Within the framework of Giddens' (1991) identity theory, this kind of practice reflects what is called a "reflexive project of the self", namely an identity project that is continuously formed and built through self-reflection and ongoing social interaction. Instagram, in this case, becomes an arena for this project, where students not only present their identities to the world, but also continue to negotiate the meaning of who they really are amidst social demands and personal desires.

3.3 Discussion of Identity as Performance in Digital Space according to Goffman's Dramaturgical Perspective

In the study of symbolic interactionism sociology, Erving Goffman through his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* introduced the concept of dramaturgy as an approach to understanding how individuals present themselves to others in social life. Goffman describes social life as a theater stage, where each individual plays a role as an actor who plays a certain role in the context of social interaction. This concept is very relevant in understanding the phenomenon of self-representation on social media, including Instagram, which has become a contemporary arena for students to "play their identities" strategically in digital space.

Within the framework of dramaturgy, there are two main areas: the front stage and the back stage. The front stage refers to the area where individuals present themselves to the public and regulate the impression they wish to convey, while the back stage is the private space where individuals can be more natural, as they are, without performative pressure. In the context of Instagram, a user's main account can be considered the front stage, where visual content, captions, and interactions are consciously curated to form a certain image. In contrast, the back stage may be manifested in the form of a personal account (second account), a closed group, or even an offline space where individuals can express themselves more authentically.

The results of netnographic observations and in-depth interviews show that student Instagram users are very aware of the role they play on the platform (Gordon, 2023). They engage in various forms of impression management to ensure that their digital identities align with the expectations of their audiences, be they peers, lecturers, family, or professionals. The choice of feed aesthetics, the use of filters, the choice of

upload time, and even the choice of words in captions are all part of a dramaturgical strategy to construct the desired “self.”

For example, an informant stated that she only uploaded photos of herself attending academic activities or campus organizations as a form of representation that she was active and accomplished. Another informant said that she never uploaded content that showed sadness or worry because she felt it would “damage the positive image” that she had built. This shows that digital space is not just a place to share moments, but an arena for identity construction that involves representation.

According to Goffman, social actors do not only present themselves to get attention, but also to gain social legitimacy. On Instagram, this form of legitimacy can be seen through the number of likes, positive comments, or an increase in the number of followers (Aditia & Imran, 2024). Thus, social media becomes a stage that not only allows the performance of identity, but also creates a logic of performativity, where a person's digital existence is increasingly considered legitimate if it receives validation from others. This can lead to the formation of a “hyper-reality self”, namely an exaggerated or idealistic representation of identity, which is not always in line with the real conditions of the user.

In practice, students also do what Goffman calls a performance team, which is a group of individuals who support each other in maintaining a certain impression. On Instagram, this team can be close friends who provide positive comments, like consistently, or even help take photos that support the image they want to display. This dynamic shows that identity performance in digital space is not done individually, but involves complex social collaboration. However, dramaturgy also shows that social performance is not always smooth. Goffman mentions a “breakdown” or failure of performance when individuals are unable to maintain the image that has been built (Haruta et al., 2021). On social media, this can happen when users experience personal events that conflict with their digital identity, such as academic failure, interpersonal conflict, or mental stress (Gulatee et al., 2021). Several informants admitted that they felt pressured to continue to maintain a positive impression, even when their real life was not going well. This creates tension between the digital persona and personal reality, which can have an impact on mental health and self-confidence.

The consequence of the dramaturgical approach to digital life is the understanding that identity on social media is situational, flexible, and contextual. Identity is not something static, but rather a performative process that is continuously formed, negotiated, and adjusted to the audience and social situation. Instagram, with all its visual and interactive features, provides a wide space for users to develop and modify their identities, but also demands vigilance towards the social expectations attached to every performative action carried out.

4. Conclusion

This study found that Instagram social media has become an important space in the process of forming and representing digital identity. Students actively curate the

visuals of the content they upload, considering aesthetic elements such as color, feed layout, filters, and captions used. This process is not just about sharing everyday moments, but more than that, it is a conscious strategy to build an ideal self-image that is in accordance with social expectations. Self-representation through Instagram often displays positive aspects such as academic achievement, organizational activities, a healthy lifestyle, or artistic personal expression. This reflects that students use Instagram as a performative media to show the best version of themselves, as well as a means to gain social validation from their surroundings.

This study also reveals a tension between the desire to appear authentic and social demands to present themselves ideally. In Goffman's dramaturgy perspective, students play social roles in digital space like actors on stage who are showing their identities to the audience. They not only consider what will be displayed on the front stage (main account), but also edit their identities by archiving or deleting content that is considered no longer in accordance with the desired self-image. This phenomenon shows that digital identity is dynamic and continuously reconstructed based on social context, symbolic power relations, and the individual's desire to remain relevant in virtual social interactions. Although Instagram provides great opportunities for self-expression, the pressure to appear perfect and gain recognition can have an impact on the emergence of social anxiety, decreased self-esteem, and body image distortion. Thus, digital spaces such as Instagram are not just places to share, but also complex fields that bring together social performance, collective expectations, and the psychosocial dynamics of its young users.

Notes on Contributors

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Rafinita Aditia is affiliated with the University of Bengkulu, particularly the Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. Her academic interests center on digital communication, self-representation, and identity construction in online spaces. Her research focuses on how university students navigate and negotiate their digital identities through visual representation practices on social media platforms, especially Instagram. Using a qualitative approach, she explores issues of performativity, aesthetic strategies, and impression management in the digital age. She is also actively involved in digital literacy initiatives and communication development programs in higher education.

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Rany Claudia is affiliated with the University of Bengkulu, under the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. Her research interests include digital culture, social identity construction and the dynamics of online interaction. She examines how social media reshapes the ways individuals particularly young adults construct their social presence and express personal narratives. With a sociological and critical lens, she investigates the intersection between social structures, normative pressures, and individual agency in everyday digital communication practices.

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