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English 102

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Instagram: A False Mirror

Imagine you are sitting in the doctor's office waiting to be called into a room. While you're waiting you decide to go through your phone filled with apps, you click on the popular social media app Instagram where pictures of friends and family pop up. You are scrolling through your feed and suddenly you stop to view an Instagram model whose account popped up. You start going through her account not only is she stunningly beautiful but her body is amazing, she has a slim waist with toned abs and perfect breasts, and then you feel the insecurity that wasn't there before but is suddenly taking over as you are comparing yourself to this perfect female specimen. You have never doubted how you looked before and while you may not have sculpted abs you are healthy and happy. So why are you feeling insecure now? Does Instagram force feed the image of perfect on women? While there are body positivity movements today and it seems like the world is becoming a more accepting place. I still question does Instagram cause women to feel insecure about their bodies? In the search to answer if Instagram causes women to feel negatively about their bodies I have found studies that discuss issues from mental illness to eating disorders that arise after viewing these images. It is clear that Instagram while being mostly a positive influence isn't just a harmless social media site.

In the first article that I found it discusses how Instagram models who have either cosmetically altered their bodies or gone through extreme dieting and fitness agendas are promoting the thin ideal. The thin ideal is the woman who has a small waist and little to no body fat. While it is perfectly okay to be a small woman with little to no body fat these models have taken it to the next level. With the help of implants, intense work out routines, and strict diets that how these influencers are able to look this way. Then everyday women who don't have the same life styles feel ashamed with their bodies when comparing themselves to these models. The first article states that when women look at the social media sites there are "two outcome variables: drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction." (Hendrickse, Joshua) this means that women want to change the way they look they are upset with their bodies and want to be skinner. According to the article this leads to a number of long term issues of body dissatisfaction along with "depression and sexual dysfunction" (Hendrickse, Joshua). This is a bigger issue for women it is not just momentary desire to feel skinnier it impacts women and leads to life long lasting issues.

While Instagram has a lot of users is not going to affect women of all ages but mostly the women of younger ages. The women who are young and whose brains are still developing the women that I'm focusing on are in the ages of 18 years old to 30 years old. In the second article, I have found it discusses how women developed eating disorders in order to strive to be as small or look similar to the women they view on Instagram. The study specifically looks at women in the united states and women in Australia, and while the testing pools were small when compared to all Instagram users the evidence supports the claim that Instagram promotes self-objectification and that struggle with "appearance comparisons with celebrities"

(Fardouly, Jasmine) and other social media influencers. This struggle to look as good as the social media influencers is what leads to the eating disorders which younger women already struggle with and depression. These articles that I found support the idea that Instagram negatively affects the way women view themselves. Other social media influencers have come out discussing how the type of accounts who have models with unrealistic bodies are negatively impacting the way younger women feel about themselves. One celebrity in particular made fun of celebrities who try to promote detox tea or weight loss lollipops to look just like them. These celebrities are promoting a product that they know does not work but they are doing it anyway because Instagram make more off of regular people wanting to look like the celebrities. This is an example of how Instagram is force feeding women the idea of perfection and making women feel dissatisfied with their bodies.

More and more people are recognizing that Instagram promotes a thin ideal and forces people to be ashamed of how they look. A blog account called "Mind That Ego" discusses a more personal view on how Instagram has lasting effects on not just women but everyone. This blog is not a scientific article but emphasizes the more personable side of the argument that is everyone struggles with body satisfaction but seeing these models with unrealistic bodies gives women an unrealistic idea of how their body should look. This blog gives readers a more emotional connection to the issue that is being discussed. It illustrates that it is not just a small group of people who feel this way but a larger community that feels the same insecurities when comparing themselves to these influencers. Out of curiosity and an even more personal side of the argument I decided to interview and ask average everyday women between the ages of 18-25 years old some questions pertaining to Instagram and how it makes them feel about their

bodies. All of these women are within the health normal body weight for their age and none has had cosmetic surgeries or extreme fitness routines. The first question I asked was do you think that women feel negatively about their bodies after looking at these pictures of Instagram models . Here are the pictures I used for the article



The woman's response was “ yes I do believe that women feel bad about themselves after looking at this, I am a size two and even I feel incredible insecure after seeing this. The second question I asked was “after viewing this model how do you feel about your own body?” the second woman responded “ personally it never really has an effect on how I view my own body, but I think about how others might feel seeing those figures every day and it also makes me question what these figures do for a living and If they even get to enjoy real food.” The third question I asked was “ How do you feel about these models promoting products to help the average person look like them” the third woman answered “ I see it as lying to the public and its causing people to

having eating disorders or really just keeping them from being fully happy with themselves by creating the idea of perfection but at a cost.” Ive decided to keep all three womens names anonymous but after this interview I was able to obtain the more personal side that gives and answer to my research question which is yes, instagram does negatively impact the way women feel about their bodies.

Overall women do feel negatively about their bodies after viewing instagram models and images of celebrities with unrealistic bodies. Those women got their bodies to look like that with extreme dieting exercise plans and cosmetic alterations. Promoting the idea that they are perfect is unrealistic and give the impression that how you look now is not good enough. Instagram should stop profitting off using celebrities to promote unrealistic products in order to look just like they do. The models and the thin ideal are causing our women to feel ashamed of their bodies dissatisfied with how they look. Its leading to depression and suicide in cases all over the world. This thin ideal and using these models for it is causing women to develop eating disorders and sexual dysfunction to where they don't even view themselves as being sexy or gorgeous. They are comparing themselves in a false mirror one that is already fixed to look a certain way. Instagram should be supporting women who look more realistic and relatable. Or better yet women who are role models to young women, people who make a difference should be who instagram is paying. Not these models that causing women to instantly feel bad about themselves.

Work cited page

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