

## Instagram Addiction and Materialism in Youth: The Mediating role of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

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### Abstract

**Background:** This study investigated the relationship between Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth.

**Research question:** It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship among these variables. Further, susceptibility to interpersonal influence would mediate the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism.

**Research Methodology:** A sample of 153 young adults was drawn with an age range of 18-25 years ( $M = 21.86$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ) using convenient sampling. Assessment measures including, The Instagram Addiction Scale (TIAS; Sholeh and Rusdi 2019), Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence Scale (Bearden et al. 1989), and Material Values Scale (MVS; Richins 2004), were administered.

**Results:** The results of Pearson correlation suggested that Instagram addiction had a significant positive correlation with susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth. The results of Multiple hierarchical regression suggested that the Instagram addiction and susceptibility to interpersonal influence were significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. Sobel z-test for mediation indicated that susceptibility to interpersonal influence and informational influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism. Results of independent sample t-test indicated that there were no significant gender differences found among study variables except for the normative influence where females scored significantly higher than the males.

**Keywords:** Instagram addiction, susceptibility, interpersonal influence, materialism, youth

### Introduction and Literature Review

Social media is now an essential part of our daily lives with its popularity increasing significantly. Current statistics reveal a staggering 3.96 billion active users of social media globally, representing almost half of the world's population, which relies on these platforms for various purposes (Pekpazar, et al., 2019). SNS addiction, according to Andreassen and Pallesen (2014), is the overuse of SNSs due to an uncontrolled impulse that has negative effects in other parts of one's life.

Instagram is a popular social networking application for sharing images and videos. It is one of the social networking sites with the quickest growth. Instagram addiction is the excessive use of Instagram, including a constant urge to frequently post and share visual content (pictures and videos) on social media. as well as the impulsive checking of the number of notifications (through comments and likes) for the uploaded photos and videos as well as the excessive stalking of others' profiles and shared posts for the sake of enjoyment, medium appeal,, expressing oneself convenience, time passing, information and for being socially interactive (Kircaburun and Griffiths, 2018). Instagram incorporates popular features, including video and photo uploading, along with the option for liking or commenting on

others' posts. The platform has also introduced the feature of live stories, enabling users to share real-time content with the followers (Kircaburun and Griffiths 2019).

According to a study by Hwang and Jeong (2020), the use of Instagram and materialistic values were positively related. Another study by Kim et al. (2021) revealed that individuals displaying elevated materialism demonstrated a greater inclination towards making purchase intentions and exhibited increased engagement with sponsored content on Instagram.

According to Brown's addiction personality theory, addiction is comprised of three distinct components: *Salience*: This component involves engaging in a physical activity or using the internet in an obsessive manner, leading to a preoccupation with the activity. The person may repeatedly partake in this activity to the extent that it starts to negatively impact other aspects of their life. *Mood Modification*: In this aspect, the affected individual uses sports, internet surfing, chatting, socializing, gaming, gambling, or watching pornographic content on the internet as a means of controlling their mood. These activities serve as coping mechanisms to regulate their emotional state. *Tolerance*: The individual experiences the urge to escalate the frequency and duration of these activities, progressively to achieve the same level of satisfaction as before. Over time, they may develop a tolerance to the effects of the activity, requiring more engagement to attain the desired outcome (Ardiana and Tumanggor 2020).

Interpersonal influence involves the collective pressure within a group to adopt certain behaviours or preferences. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence refers to an individual's tendency to change their behaviour or opinions in response to social pressures. This phenomenon pertains to the desire of individuals to associate themselves with or improve their self-image in the perception of others. This can encompass a readiness to comply with others' expectations concerning buying choices. Essentially, this construct represents a multidimensional aspect of how predisposed a person is to being influenced by external factors (Bearden et al. 1989).

Achenreiner (1997) conducted a study, investigating materialistic attitudes and susceptibility to influence in children. The research findings revealed a significant positive correlation between susceptibility to peers' influence and materialism. In another study by Tan et al. (2015), a significant relationship was found between materialistic orientations and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Moreover, LaFerle and Chan (2008) found that higher levels of perceived peer influence were positively associated with increased materialism.

Susceptibility to interpersonal influence comprises two primary forms: The *Normative Influence*: It's when we tend to follow what others expect or like. It refers to consumers' inclination to comply to others' expectations and the desire to use products that align with their desired image, consistent with those expectations. *Informational Influence* pertains to an individual's inclination to seek information about the services or products from others. This form of influence involves the tendency of people to make choices based on information they obtain directly from others or by observing the behaviour of others. The aim is to reduce uncertainty and gain insights into the products or services through the information derived from others. In this process, individuals look to others as a valuable source of information to guide their decisions and mitigate any uncertainties they may have (Chakraborty and Sheppard 2016). According to research by Roberts et al. (2008), one's susceptibility to peers' normative influence has a more significant role than parental informational influence in predicting materialism.

The social comparison theory centres on the idea that individuals utilize others as a reference point to evaluate their own performance or assess the validity of their original ideas. Additionally, the theory suggests that people's abilities and most effective roles are influenced not only by their absolute performance but also by how they compare to others on performance-based characteristics (Ehren 2009).

Materialism can be described as the significance people attach to possessing and obtaining material possessions to attain important life goals or desired states (Richins 2004). For those embracing materialism, possessions and their acquisition become paramount in guiding their lifestyle. They place a higher value on possessions and the pursuit compared to other aspects of life (Bindah and Othman 2012). Youth spend their money on materialistic possessions, such as cars, houses, and an affluent lifestyle, in order to gain acceptance within society and attain life satisfaction (Mazahir et al. 2016).

The concept of materialism put forth by Richins and Dawson (1992) revolves around two fundamental processes: acquisition and possession. These processes play a central role in shaping and directing the plans and behaviours of individuals with materialistic tendencies, as they strive to achieve certain desired outcomes. Within their concept of materialism, three key themes emerge, highlighting the significant aspects of this value orientation. Firstly,

acquisition assumes a central and organizing role in the life of materialists. It shapes their behaviours, providing a framework of their goals and plans that direct their daily pursuits. Secondly, materialists view acquisition as a means to attain happiness and overall well-being. They believe that both acquiring and possessing goods are vital for experiencing satisfaction and contentment in life. Lastly, materialists utilize possessions as a means of showcasing their success or social status. They gauge both their own and others' achievements based on the quantity and quality of possessions amassed (Richins and Dawson 1992)

The cultivation theory is originated in 1969 from Gerbner's Cultural Indicators Project. Signorelli and Morgan (1990) proposed a fundamental hypothesis that heavy viewers of television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that mirror the stable and recurring patterns portrayed in the television world. On the basis of the cultivation theory, previous research has indicated that media usage can heighten perceptions of consumption and lead heavy users to adopt materialistic tendencies. This notion is supported by substantial evidence showing that traditional media, such as TV, can contribute to the development of materialism (Sirgy et al. 2012). Additionally, recent studies have found a connection between new media addiction, like smartphone addiction, and materialism among adolescents. One underlying reason for this association is that new media, particularly smartphones, has become a prominent platform for advertising. These advertisements often promote materialistic values. Consequently, individuals who are addicted to such media are more likely to be exposed to advertising content, leading to increased materialistic tendencies (Wang et al. 2020).

Among the youth, materialism contributes to the growing demand for luxury goods. Notably, materialistic youth tend to respond positively to media advertisements and endorsements from celebrities (Mazahir et al. 2016). One study indicated that the use of social media was related to materialism (Pellegrino 2022). Studies have shown that social networking sites (SNSs) can influence youths' perceptions of material possessions and financial success, much like the impact of television representations. Regular exposure to messages and content promoting the acquisition and consumption of material goods may heighten young people's materialistic tendencies (Ho et al. 2019).

### **Rationale of the Study**

The current study aims to explore the interrelationships among Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and materialism in youth, a relationship that has not been thoroughly examined in existing literature. These variables are believed to be connected, as evident from previous research. Individuals addicted to Instagram are more likely to be susceptible to interpersonal influence, as they observe and are influenced by others' lives, experiencing social pressures, and feeling the need to conform to gain acceptance by modifying themselves based on others' opinions. Such addiction to Instagram has been found to predict social comparison in youth (Jiang and Ngien 2020). Additionally, the social networking sites (SNSs) can influence youths' perceptions of material possessions and financial success. Regular exposure to content promoting the acquisition and consumption of material goods may heighten young people's materialistic tendencies (Ho et al. 2019). Moreover, susceptibility to peers' influence has been found to predict materialism in youth (Achenreiner 1997). Considering that social networking sites have also become common avenues for advertising, it is likely that individuals with high SNS addiction could potentially become more materialistic as a result of their exposure to advertisements on these platforms. Given the relatively high incidence rate of SNS addiction among youth (Kuss and Griffiths 2011), and Instagram being the social networking sites with the quickest growth (Kircaburun and Griffiths 2018), there is a lack of sufficient existing literature on Instagram addiction, particularly in the context of youth in Pakistan. The prevalence of advertising through Instagram, involving the hiring of bloggers and PR influencers, can significantly influence youth's lifestyles, possessions, and materialistic tendencies. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine the link between Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and materialism among youth in Pakistani culture. This study seeks to shed light on this significant area of research and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth.

## Hypotheses of the study

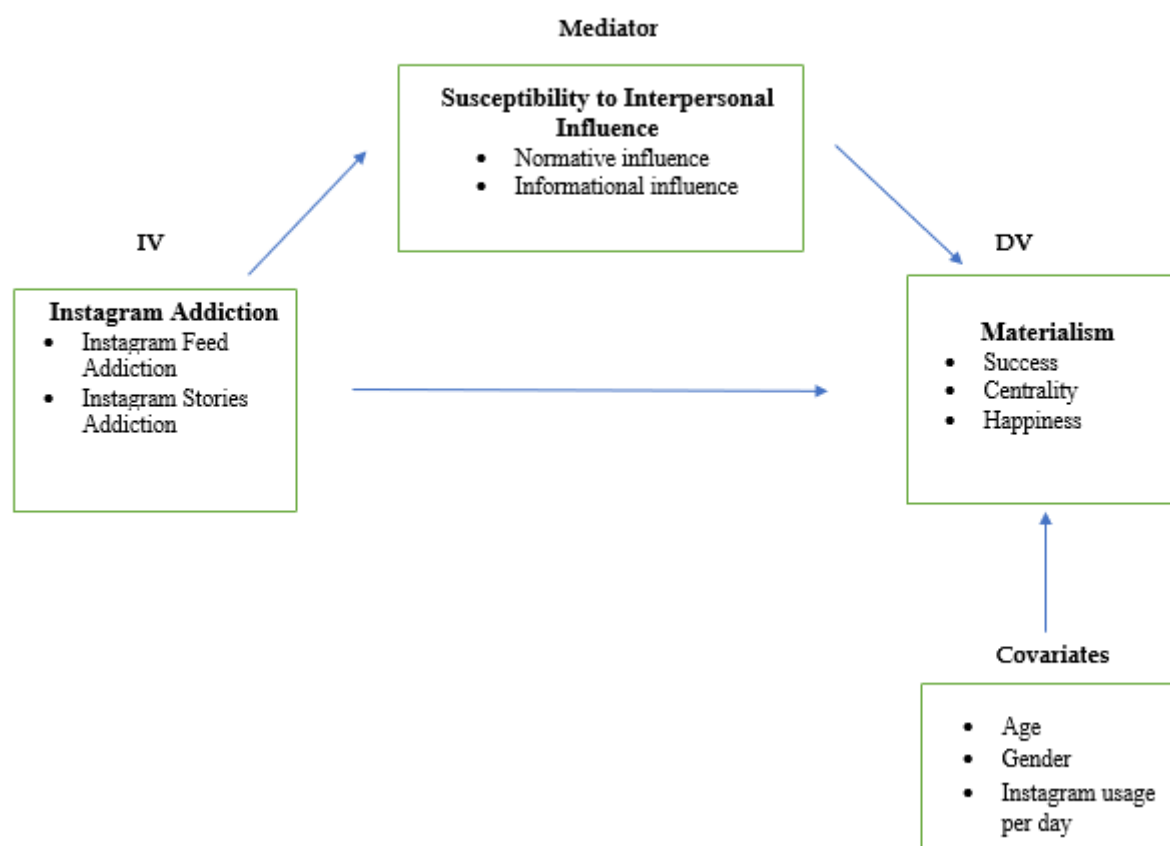
Following hypotheses were formulated:

**H1:** There would be a positive relationship between Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth

**H2:** Susceptibility to interpersonal influence would act as a mediator between Instagram addiction and materialism.

**H3:** There would be gender differences in Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth

Figure I: Conceptual Framework of the Study for Mediation



## Method

### Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional research design was used in this study.

### Sample

The data was collected using a non-probability convenience sampling strategy. Data was collected from 2 public and 2 private sector universities of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Only those individuals were included in the study who were Instagram users and had at least Intermediate level education. Obtained Sample included educated young men and women (age range 18 to 25 years). Sample size of 153 (computed using G-Power Analysis) was included in the study.

## Measures

The following measures were used

### Personal Information Sheet

It was constructed by researcher to gather information from the participants. It had information about gender, age, education, family income, family system, employment status and Instagram usage per day and per week.

### The Instagram Addiction Scale (TIAS; Sholeh and Rusdi 2019)

The Instagram Addiction Scale comprises two scales: the Instagram Feed Addiction Scale and the Instagram Stories Addiction Scale. Each scale consists of 20 items, representing addiction components such as salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. These items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The purpose of these scales is to assess the addictive behaviour of Instagram users in relation to both their feed and stories consumption. The scale also has two short versions comprising of 12 and 6 items in each subscale. The total score for the Instagram Feed Addiction Scale (IFA-6) is obtained by summing the scores of each item, which ranges from 6 to 30. Similarly, the total score for the Instagram Stories Addiction Scale (ISA-6) is computed by adding up the scores of each item, also ranging from 6 to 30. A higher total score reflects a higher degree of addiction. None of the items are reverse scored. The Cronbach's Alphas for the Instagram Feed Addiction Scale and the Instagram Stories Addiction Scale were found to be 0.89 and 0.91, respectively, indicating good internal consistency (Sholeh and Rusdi 2019).

### Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence Scale (Bearden et al. 1989)

The SUSCEP scale is a tool designed to assess individuals' susceptibility to interpersonal influence. The scale comprised 12 items. The first factor of the scale includes four informational items that includes items 1, 4, 7, and 10, while the second factor consists of eight normative influence items including 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 items. Seven-point scale is used to rate each item, that ranges from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). None of the items is reverse scored. The overall coefficient alpha for the SUSCEP Scale was found to be .89. Furthermore, the reliabilities calculated for the normative and informational factors were 0.82 and 0.88, respectively (Bearden et al. 1989).

### Material Values Scale (MVS; Richins 2004)

The Material Values Scale (MVS) consists of 15 items. These items represent 3 subscales: success, centrality and happiness. Five-point scale is used to rate each item, that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items 3, 6, 7, 10, 14 and 15 are reverse scored. The overall coefficient alpha for the scale was found to be .86. For the subscales, the Cronbach's alpha was .77, .72 and .78 for the success, centrality and the happiness respectively. The nine-item version exhibited acceptable psychometric properties and effectively measured materialism at a general level. Cronbach's alpha for this nine-item scale was .82 (Richins 2004).

### Ethical considerations

Permissions were taken from authors of the assessment measures. Permissions were taken from the concerned authorities for data collection. Consents were taken from the participants and they were instructed about the right to withdraw from study at any time they wanted. The participants were made assured that the information which is required from them will be kept completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone who is not directly involved in the research. The confidentiality of information and anonymity of the participants was maintained.

### Statistical Analyses

Descriptive Analysis was used along with determining reliabilities of the measures for current sample. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between variables. Mediation through Multiple Hierarchical regression analysis was used for predicting study variables and to determine the role of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence. Independent sample t-test was used to determine the gender differences among study variables.

**Table I***Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=153)*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f (%)</i>
Instagram usage (hours per day)	2.93	2.35	
Instagram usage (hours per week)	17.82	16.40	
Age (in years)	21.86	2.06	
Gender			
Male			68(44.2%)
Female			85(55.2%)
Educational level			
Intermediate			13(8.4%)
Graduation (BS/MSc)			116(75.3)
Post-Graduation (MPhil/MS/ PhD)			24(15.6%)
Family System			
Joint			41(26.6%)
Nuclear			112(72.7%)
Employment Status			
Employed			20(13%)
Student			117(17%)
Unemployed			16(10.4%)
Family income (in rupees)	135470.6	118933.2	
Personal income (if any)	9320.26	33587.60	



## Results

Table II

*Descriptive Characteristics and Reliability Analysis of the Study Variables (N = 153)*

<i>Scale</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Medians as Cut off</i>	<i>α</i>
<b>Instagram Addiction</b>	34.05	8.35	12-54	36	.83
IFA	17.14	4.44	6-27	18	.70
ISA	16.91	4.51	6-27	18	.70
<b>SUSCEP</b>	44.25	13.99	16-77	48	.88
Normative Influence	17.47	4.98	5-28	32	.87
Informational Influence	26.8	10.67	8-51	16	.74
<b>Materialism</b>	30.8	6.4	15-45	27	.88
Centrality	10.5	2.41	6-15	9	.78
Happiness	10.8	2.27	4-15	9	.72
Success	9.54	2.57	3-15	9	.72

**Note.** TIAS= The Instagram Addiction scale; IFA= Instagram Feed Addiction; ISA= Instagram Story Addiction; SUSCEP= Susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale; MVS= Material Values Scale;  $\alpha$ = Cronbach alpha

All reliability coefficients for each scale and subscale surpass the suggested value of .70. Consequently, these scales demonstrate acceptable reliability levels from .70 to .88. The level of Instagram addiction found in the sample was 34.05 which is just a bit below the cut off score (median) of the scale that is, 36. This shows that the Instagram addiction lies at a quite high level in our sample. Also, the sample had a relatively high score on Informational influence ( $M = 26.8$ ) and on Materialism ( $M = 30.8$ ).

Table III

*Correlation Matrix to assess the relationship between Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth (N= 153)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
1. IG use/day			-	.20**	.12	.25**	.25**	.22**	.09	.09	.07	.27**	.26**	.23**	.22**
2. Gender			-	-	.20*	-.01	-.03	.02	-.00	.17*	-.08	.02	.09	.07	-.11
3. Age			-	-	-	.09	.07	.10	.01	.06	-.02	-.05	.01	-.06	-.09
4. TIAS	34.05	8.35	-	-	-	-	.93***	.93***	.51***	.30***	.54***	.38***	.30***	.32***	.39***
5. IFA	17.14	4.44	-	-	-	-	-	.74***	.54***	.32***	.56***	.40***	.34***	.32***	.40***
6. ISA	16.91	4.51	-	-	-	-	-	-	.42***	.24***	.44***	.31***	.22***	.30***	.32***
7. SUSCEP	44.25	13.99	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.77***	.96***	.43***	.40***	.30***	.42***
8. NI	17.47	4.98	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.54***	.30**	.30***	.25**	.17*
9. II	26.8	10.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.43***	.40***	.28***	.47***
10. Materialism	30.8	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.90***	.87***	.87***
11. Centrality	10.5	2.41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.70***	.65***
12. Happiness	10.8	2.27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.62***
13. Success	9.54	2.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Note.** IG= Instagram; TIAS: The Instagram Addiction Scale; IFA= Instagram Feed Addiction; ISA= Instagram Story Addiction; SUSCEP= Susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Instagram usage per day had significant positive correlations with Instagram addiction ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Instagram feed addiction ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Instagram stories addiction ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), materialism and with all of its subscales in youth. It showed that greater the Instagram usage, greater is the Instagram addiction and greater is the materialism (centrality, happiness and success). Results showed a significant positive correlation between gender and normative

Influence ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ). Instagram addiction had a significant positive correlation with susceptibility to interpersonal influence (SUSCEP) ( $r = .51, p < .001$ ), its subscales, materialism ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ) and all its subscales. SUSCEP had a significant positive correlation with materialism ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ) and all of its subscales.

**Table IV**

*Mediation through Multiple Hierarchical Regression for determining the mediating role of susceptibility to interpersonal influence between Instagram Addiction and materialism in youth (N=153)*

			Material Values subscales						
Variables	MVS Total		Centrality		Happiness		Success		Criterion
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	B	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	
Step I for Mediation									
Step I	.08*		.07*		.05*		.08*		MVS
Gender		-.03		.05		.04		-.14	
Age		-.08		.71		-.09		-.09	
Instagram use per day		.28**		.25**		.23**		.26**	
Step 2	.11***		.06**		.08***		.12***		
TIAS		.35***		.25**		.29***		.36***	
Step II for Mediation									
Variables	SUSCEP Total		SUSCEP Subscales						
			Normative Influence		Informational Influence				
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	B			
Step I	.03		.09**		.02				SUSCEP
Gender		-.02		.15		-.09			
Age		-.01		-.003		-.01			
Instagram use per day		.06		.02		.07			
Step 2	.25***		.08***		.28***				
TIAS		.52***		.29***		.55***			
Step III for Mediation									
Variables	MVS Total		MVS Subscales						Criterion
			Centrality		Happiness		Success		
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	B	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	
Step I	.08*		.07*		.06*		.08*		MVS
Gender		-.03		.05		.04		-.14	
Age		-.08		-.03		-.09		-.09	
Instagram use per day		.28***		.25**		.233**		.26**	
Step 2	.11***		.06**		.08***		.12***		
TIAS		.35***		.25**		.29***		.36***	
Step 3	.08***		.09***		.02*		.07***		
SUSCEP		.33***		.34***		.19*		.32***	

**Note.** TIAS: The Instagram Addiction Scale; SUSCEP= Susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale; MVS: Material Values Scale; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

The results of hierarchical regression analysis (for step I of Mediation analysis) for predicting materialism in youth suggested that the overall model explained 19% variance in materialism, 13% in centrality and happiness and 20% in success. In Step I, the model was significant at  $F(4, 148) = 3.15, p < .05$  and explained 8% variance in materialism, while 7, 5 and 8% in subscales respectively. Standardized values of beta depicted that Instagram usage per day was significant predictor of materialism in youth. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(5, 147) = 6.83, p < .001$  and explained 11% variance in materialism in youth while 6, 8 and 12% in subscales respectively. This showed that Instagram addiction was a significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. In Step II of Mediation, the results showed that the overall model explained 28% variance in SUSCEP, 17% and 30% in subscales respectively. In Step I, the model was non-significant at  $F(4, 148) = 1.05, p > .05$  and explained 3% variance in susceptibility to interpersonal influence, 9% (significant) in Normative Influence (NI) 2% (non-significant) in Informational influence (II). Standardized value of beta depicted that gender was the only predictor of NI in youth. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(5, 147) = 11.43, p < .001$  and explained 25%, 8% and 28% variance in SUSCEP, NI and II. This



showed that Instagram addiction was a significant positive predictor of susceptibility to interpersonal influence in youth.

In step III of mediation, the overall model explained 27% variance in materialism 22%, 16%, 27% in subscales respectively. In Step I, the model was significant at  $F(4, 148) = 3.15, p < .05$  and explained 8% variance in materialism while 7, 6 and 8% in subscales respectively. Standardized value of beta depicted that Instagram usage per day was significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(5, 147) = 6.83, p < .001$  and explained 11% variance in materialism while 6, 8 and 12% in subscales respectively. This showed that Instagram addiction was a significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. In Step 3, the model was significant at  $F(6, 148) = 8.83, p < .001$  and accounted for 8% variance in materialism while 9, 2 and 7% in subscales respectively. It showed that susceptibility to interpersonal influence was significant positive predictor of materialism in youth.

Sobel z-test was run to analyse mediation results. It indicated that susceptibility to interpersonal influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism (Sobel  $t = 3.45, S.E = .04, p < .001$ ). Susceptibility to interpersonal influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and centrality (Sobel  $t = 3.44, S.E = .05, p < .00$ ), happiness (Sobel  $t = 2.16, S.E = .01, p < .05$ ) and success (Sobel  $t = 3.44, S.E = .01, p < .001$ ).

Table V

Mediation through Multiple Hierarchical Regressions for role of susceptibility to interpersonal influence between Instagram Addiction and materialism in youth (N=153)

Variables	MVS Total		Material Values subscales						Criterion
			Centrality		Happiness		Success		
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	
Step I for Mediation									
Step 1	.08*		.07*		.06*		.08*		MVS
Gender		-.03		.05		.04		-.14	
Age		-.08		-.03		-.09		-.09	
Instagram use per day		.28***		.25**		.23**		.26**	
Step 2	.13***		.09***		.08***		.13***		
IFA		.36***		.37**		.22		.34**	
ISA		.02		-.095		.09		.04	
Step II for Mediation									
Variables	SUSCEP		SUSCEP Subscales						
	Total		Normative Influence		Informational Influence				
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	B	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$			
Step 1	.03		.09**		.02				SUSCEP
Gender		-.02		.15		-.09			
Age		-.01		-.003		-.01			
Instagram use per day		.06		.02		.07			
Step 2	.28***		.09***		.30***				
IFA		.51***		.31**		.52***			
ISA		.05		-.007		.07			
Step III for Mediation									
Variables	MVS Total		MVS Subscales						Criterion
			Centrality		Happiness		Success		
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	B	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	
Step 1	.08*		.07*		.06*		.08*		MVS
Gender		-.03		.05		.04		-.14	
Age		-.08		-.03		-.09		-.09	
Instagram use per day		.28***		.25**		.23**		.26**	
Step 2	.13***		.09***		.08***		.13***		
IFA		.36**		.37**		.22		.34**	
ISA		.02		-.09		.10		.04	
Step 3	.07***		.07**		.03		.09***		
Normative Influence		.05		.09		.13		-.09	
Informational Influence		.30**		.26*		.09		.41***	

**Note.** IFA= Instagram Feed Addiction; ISA= Instagram Story Addiction; SUSCEP= Susceptibility to interpersonal influence; MVS= Material Values scale; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

The results of hierarchical regression analysis (for step I of Mediation analysis) for predicting materialism in youth suggested that the overall model explained 21% variance in materialism while 16, 14 and 21% in subscales

respectively. In Step 1, the model was significant at  $F(4, 148) = 3.15, p < .05$  and explained 8% variance in materialism while 7, 6 and 8% in subscales respectively. Standardized value of beta depicted that Instagram usage per day was significant predictor of materialism in youth. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(6, 146) = 6.23, p < .001$  and explained 13% variance in materialism while 9, 8 and 13% in subscales respectively. This showed that Instagram feed addiction was a significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. In Step II of Mediation, the overall model explained 31% variance in SUSCEP while 18% in NI and 32% in II. In Step I, the model was non-significant at  $F(4, 148) = 1.06, p > .05$  and explained 3% variance in SUSCEP, 9% (significant) in NI and 2% (non-significant) in II. Standardized value of beta depicted that gender was the only predictor of NI in youth. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(6, 146) = 10.83, p < .001$  and explained 28% variance. Instagram feed addiction was a significant positive predictor of SUSCEP in youth.

In step III of mediation, the results showed that the overall model explained 28% variance in materialism while 23, 17 and 30% in subscales respectively. In Step 1, the model was significant at  $F(4, 148) = 3.15, p < .05$  and explained 8% variance in materialism while 7, 6 and 8% in subscales respectively. Instagram usage per day was significant positive predictor of materialism. In Step 2, the model was significant at  $F(6, 146) = 6.23, p < .001$  and explained 13% variance in materialism while 9, 8 and 13% in subscales respectively. Instagram feed addiction was a significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. In Step 3, the model was significant at  $F(8, 144) = 6.80, p < .001$  and accounted for 7% variance in materialism while 7, 3 and 9% in subscales respectively. Informational influence was significant positive predictor of materialism in youth.

Sobel z-test was run to analyse mediation results. It indicated that Normative Influence did not significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism (Sobel  $t = 0.52, S.E = .02, p > .05$ ). Informational Influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism (Sobel  $t = 2.78, S.E = .04, p < .00$ ). Informational Influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram feed addiction and materialism (Sobel  $t = 2.59, S.E = .09, p < .00$ ).

**Table VI**

*An independent sample t-test to compare level of Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in young men (n=68) and young women (n=85)*

Variables	Men (n=68)		Women (n=85)		<i>t</i> (151)	<i>p</i>	95%CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Instagram Addiction	34.12	7.50	34.00	9.03	.095	.92	-2.56	2.82	0.01
IFA	17.29	4.00	17.01	4.80	.40	.69	-1.15	1.71	0.06
ISA	16.82	4.06	17.00	4.90	-.20	.84	-1.60	1.30	0.04
SUSCEP	44.25	12.7	44.24	15.01	.006	.99	-4.5	4.52	0.00
Normative Influence	16.53	5.04	18.22	4.82	-.21	.03	-3.3	-.11	0.34
Informational Influence	27.72	9.26	26.01	11.7	.98	.32	-1.72	5.13	0.16
Materialism	30.66	5.88	30.88	6.77	-.21	.83	-2.28	1.83	0.03
Centrality	10.22	2.46	10.67	2.37	-1.15	.25	-1.23	.33	0.19
Happiness	10.60	2.13	10.92	2.37	-.85	.39	-1.04	.41	0.14
Success	9.84	2.27	9.29	2.77	1.30	.19	-.28	1.37	0.22

**Note:** IFA= Instagram Feed Addiction; ISA= Instagram Stories Addiction; SUSCEP= Susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale.

Results of independent sample t-test indicated that there were no significant gender differences found among study variables except for the normative influence where females scored significantly higher than the males.

## Discussion

This research investigated that Instagram addiction (Instagram feed addiction, Instagram stories addiction) had a significant positive correlation with susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Normative Influence, Informational Influence). Results also suggested that Instagram addiction was a significant positive predictor of susceptibility to interpersonal influence in youth. Instagram feed addiction was a significant positive predictor of Susceptibility to interpersonal influence (normative influence, informational influence). Previous literature has not found any link between these exact variables. However, associations between the similar constructs from the existing literature can be considered consistent with the findings of our present study. According to Jiang and Ngien (2020), frequent use of

Instagram by young people is associated with an increased social comparison in them. Since the users are able to view the profiles/content of people, influencers and even celebrities and are more likely to observe other people's lives, be influenced by them, succumb to social pressures, and feel the need to change themselves, hence they can be more susceptible to the interpersonal influence.

It was also revealed that Instagram addiction (Instagram feed addiction, Instagram stories addiction) had a significant positive correlation with the materialism (centrality, happiness and success). Instagram addiction was found to be a significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. Instagram feed addiction was found to be a significant positive predictor of materialism (centrality, happiness and success). These findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of the researches from previous literature. In one study, Social media intensity was found to be a strong predictor of materialism (Pellegrino 2022). In another study, it was discussed that the social networking sites (SNSs) can influence youths' perceptions of material possessions and financial success. Regular exposure to content promoting the acquisition and consumption of material goods may heighten young people's materialistic tendencies (Ho et al. 2019).

Further results suggested that susceptibility to interpersonal influence (normative influence, informational influence) had significant positive correlation with the materialism (centrality, happiness and success). Susceptibility to interpersonal influence was significant positive predictor of materialism in youth. It also suggested that normative influence did not predict materialism and any of its subscales while Informational influence was a significant positive predictor of materialism and its subscales including centrality and success. These results can be interpreted with reference to the previous literature. Achenreiner (1997) conducted a study that investigated a significant positive relationship between susceptibility to peers' influence and materialism. In a study conducted by Tan et al. (2015), a significant relationship was found between materialistic orientations and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. LaFerle and Chan (2008) found that that higher levels of perceived peer influence were positively associated with increased materialism.

Sobel z-test indicated that susceptibility to interpersonal influence significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism (centrality, happiness and success). Informational Influence, also significantly mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and materialism. If we review the previous literature, we can see that Susceptibility to interpersonal influence has acted as a mediator in various researches. Bandyopadhyay (2017) conducted a study to investigate how self-esteem and consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence can impact impulsive buying tendencies. The study's findings indicated that consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence mediates the relationship between self-esteem and impulsive buying tendencies.

Lastly, it was seen that there were no significant differences in the scores of Instagram addiction (Instagram feed addiction, Instagram stories addiction) in young men and women. These findings of our current study are relatable with the findings of the studies found in the previous researches. In a study conducted by BALCI and Karaman (2020), findings suggested that there were no significant differences in the level of Instagram addiction based on the gender of the participants. No gender differences were seen in the scores of materialism (Centrality, Happiness and success). In a study conducted by Keech et al. (2020), researchers investigated gender differences concerning various aspects, including materialism. The study's results revealed that there were no significant differences observed in materialism.

In the present study, no gender differences were seen in the scores of and susceptibility to interpersonal influence in males and in females. Gender differences were only observed in the Normative influence. Results indicated that the females scored higher on Normative influence than males. Lee (2009) conducted a study to explore gender variations in various variables including peer influence among adolescent consumers in Hong Kong. The study revealed that female adolescents scored significantly higher than male adolescents across various factors, including peer influence.

## Conclusion

Conclusively, it can be seen from the findings of the current study that all the measures used were reliable as reliability coefficients of all the scales was above .70. Instagram addiction had a significant positive correlation with and also found to be a significant positive predictor of susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth. Moreover, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and Informational Influence acted as significant mediators between Instagram addiction and materialism and most of their subscales. In most of the study variables, there were no gender differences found except for the normative influence where females scored significantly higher than the males.

## Limitations & Suggestions

The study's sample (young adults) was limited to university students, collected using convenient sampling. Only self-report measures were used in the study to gather responses. Qualitative research may surface up interesting factors associated with the study variables in our culture. Additional comprehensive research is required to explore the variables which can predict materialism in youth. More research should be conducted on a more diverse sample, for broad generalization of the findings

## Implications

This study has contributed in indigenous literature highlighting Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence and materialism in youth. Instagram addiction is a relatively novel concept that has not been extensively studied indigenously. Hence, this research can serve as a reference point for future researchers to explore deeper into this phenomenon. The findings of this research could be used to raise awareness about the potential risks of Instagram addiction, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and materialism among youth. Public education campaigns could be designed to inform young people, parents, and educators about the negative effects of excessive Instagram use and its connection to materialistic behaviours. The implications of this research could also prompt social media platforms, including Instagram, to implement measures that promote responsible usage and safeguard the well-being of young users.

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