The influence of narcissism, sense of self and subjective well-being on Instagram usage

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Objectives: Instagram the fastest growing social networking site, but research on psychological aspects of usage is scarce. This study investigated whether scores on five measures would predict Instagram usage.

Design: A survey design using 5 validated measures was used.

Methods: Following ethical approval, the survey was distributed online. Data collection ceased when 200 Instagram users self-identified. This sample (45 male; 155 female) completed the Facebook Intensity Scale (amended for Instagram), Narcissistic Personality Inventory, Sense of Self Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale and Scale of Positive and Negative Experience. Together the latter two measured subjective wellbeing. Data were analysed using ANOVA.

Results: Participants scoring highly on NPI were greater users of Instagram ($p<.001$). Those scoring high on SWB were also greater users of Instagram ($p<.023$). The sense of self showed no effect on Instagram use.

Conclusions: It is not surprising that people scoring highly on NPI would crave the positive reinforcement provided by Instagram 'likes' and followers. Nor is it surprising that those with a strong sense of self are less likely to need this reassurance. In accordance with theories from positive psychology, we suggest that those with high scores on SWB are more frequent users of Instagram because they want to share their positivity with others. Follow-up studies could investigate this further and also explore the long-term effects of Instagram use to determine whether it increases narcissism and SWB. Future work could also compare Instagram users with other social media users to determine which characteristics underlie engagement with Instagram.