

Project Dissertation Report on

**IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM ON SELF-
EXPRESSION AMONG YOUTH IN DELHI**

Submitted By:

Dhruv

(24/DMBA/72)

Under the Guidance of

Dr. Veenu Shankar

Assistant Professor



DELHI SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Delhi Technological University

Bawana Road Delhi 110042

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project report titled “**Impact of Instagram on Self-Expression Among Youth in Delhi**” is a Bonafide work carried out by **Dhruv (24/DMBA/72)** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Delhi. This project has been completed under my supervision and guidance and is a genuine and original work to the best of my knowledge.

Date:

Dr. Veenu Shankar
(Assistant Professor)

DECLARATION

I, **Dhruv**, hereby declare that the Major Research Project titled “**Impact of Instagram on Self-Expression Among Youth in Delhi**” submitted by me, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA), is a record of original work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of **Dr. Veenu Shankar** at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University. I further declare that this work has not been submitted previously by me or any other individual for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title in this or any other university or institution.

Date:

Dhruv

MBA (Batch 2024–26)

Roll No: 24/DMBA/72

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platform among youth where millions of people share photos, videos and personal updates on a daily basis. Through such platforms, an individual can highlight various dimensions of their life through posts, stories and reels, and get instant responses in terms of ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘views’. Such a continuous process of sharing and receiving responses has transformed the way individuals express themselves online. At the same time, the exposure of content and interactions with the audience may lead to comparisons and judgements and create a sense of social validation which might influence how openly individuals choose to express their thoughts, personality and identity. This study was carried out with the aim of studying the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth residing in Delhi especially to investigate the role of engagement (likes, comments, and views), feedback and social pressures on the usage of the platform. The research follows a quantitative approach using a primary data collection through a questionnaire administered to 200 respondents within the age group of 18-24 years. A convenience & snowball sampling method was used to select participants and the questionnaire was distributed through online platforms. The data collected was analysed using tabulation, percentages and graphical representation in order to establish trends associated with Instagram use and the behaviour of its users. According to the results of the analysis, Instagram is widely used by all respondents involved with most of them using Instagram daily for a considerable amount of time. At the same time, the frequency of posting their content is relatively low indicating that although users spend much time on the social network, they are more concerned about consuming other user’s content than posting their own one. The most common type of content shared on Instagram involves personal photographs and stories highlighting its importance in personal representation. In addition, the study finds that engagement factors such as likes, comments and views affect users’ actions to different extents. A positive feedback may result in encouragement of self-expression and low engagement may result in hesitation and reduced motivation for some users to participate in the activity. This research has shown the fact that a lot of users are considering the reactions of others before posting online since they fear being judged. The role played by the trends and popularity of certain users or influencers as well as comparing oneself with others in social media activity also reveals the

existence of the fact that self-expression on the Internet is affected not only by personal factors but also by external ones. The results obtained have further highlighted that most of the respondents believe there are gender-based differences between males and females attitudes while expressing themselves on Instagram. The study concludes that Instagram is a platform that allows self-expression and shapes it. While it provides opportunities for creativity and communication, it also creates validation and social pressure that affect self-representation.

Keywords: Instagram, Youth, Self-Expression, Engagement, Social Validation, Feedback, Self-Presentation, Gender Differences

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become an important part of our daily lives, especially for youth. With time, Social media has evolved into something beyond a communication medium; it has become an identity creation medium itself. Among them, Instagram has gained a lot of popularity among people, especially the youth population. Through various features such as posting pictures, messaging, creating stories liking and commenting, Instagram enables its users to communicate in various ways and express themselves. The ease of use through smartphones and internet connectivity has made Instagram one of the important tools for communication in today's world.

Self-expression, which means the ability of individuals to express themselves through thoughts, emotions and identity, is something that is taking place more frequently on the internet rather than in real-life scenarios. Self-expression was once limited to personal experiences, but due to the development of social networking sites, this process has become much more expansive. Instagram offers an environment where users have the freedom to showcase certain aspects of their lives through images, videos, and captions. The act of showcasing oneself through social media is usually affected by the motive of leaving a good impression on others. The use of engagement indicators such as likes and comments becomes part of this dynamic as people modify their content based on how they engage with them (Trifiro, 2018). This makes for an ongoing cycle of posting, reacting and modifying that is driven not only by personal intent but also by audience reactions.

Instagram has become increasingly significant among youth. It is now being studied for its ability to influence behaviour and identity. Instagram provides chances for creativity, communication and social interaction enabling individuals to explore with various types of self-expression. It can also be used as an exploratory platform for developing one's identity, where individuals experiment with how they present themselves and the way they would like to be perceived by others. However, on the other side, since Instagram uses highly visual media, there are chances for people to come across images that might impact their perception of themselves and others (Taj & Hemmige, 2023). In other words, there exists a digital space where self-expression does not only become an individual's personal identity but also an

experience influenced socially through being constantly exposed to content representing particular values and lifestyles.

Another important aspect regarding Instagram usage includes the role of engagement and feedback. Likes, comments and views become social validation that affects how users view their content and consequently, how they choose to express themselves. These features provide immediate interaction because it gives instant feedback from the audiences. Positive feedback may encourage users to share more openly while low or negative engagement can lead to hesitation or selective sharing (Mann & Blumberg, 2022). In the long run, this can shape the user's pattern of posting behaviour, choice of content, and even the confidence users feel when expressing themselves online. This highlights that digital goes beyond communication and go deeper in shaping user behaviour and perception.

Social media trends along with influencer and peer influence play an important role in determining the type of content produced by people and posted on these sites. Instagram trends often set patterns and people tend to follow them and post similar type of content. Moreover, influencers also have an strong impact on user behaviour through their style of posting and lifestyle. Peer interactions further reinforce these patterns, as individuals observe and respond to the content shared within their social circles. Also, differences in the users' experiences could be seen especially regarding the sense of perceived pressure and expectations associated with self-expression online (Fuat et al., 2024). These differences reveal that there are different social and psychological elements influencing the behaviour of users on Instagram.

The increase in the use of Instagram as a form of communication and self-expression raises important questions regarding the role that the application plays in terms of improving confidence and making decisions as well as in the formation of one's identity. The more time someone spends with the content, the clearer the difference between their online and real identity becomes. This platform enables people not only to express themselves but also to constantly create an environment where they continuously evaluate their own content in relation to others. This makes it essential that we study the impact that digital platforms on not only the information exchanged but also the mindset and behavioural pattern of individuals in a social environment.

The focus of this study is analysing the impact of Instagram on self-expression among the youth of Delhi. This involves identifying the role of engagement, feedback, and social influence in the formation of personal self-expression along with exploring patterns of confidence, hesitation and perceived pressure in digital self-expression. By analysing all these factors, the study aims at developing a better understanding of the way that Instagram functions as a platform for self-expression as well as its impact on young users in the digital environment.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Rapid growth in terms of the widespread use of internet and availability of smartphones has changed the way of communication among individuals. Social media networks have been identified as one of the most commonly used medium of communication especially among youth. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter provide an easy means of interaction, sharing information among users express themselves instantly. Among all of these, Instagram has been widely used because of its visual appeal and interactive features.

Instagram was launched in 2010 as a photo-sharing app, however, with time it has developed into an application that supports photos, videos, reels, live streaming and stories. All of these features encourage the users to get involved actively in generating content and engaging online. Being among the most engaged communities on social media platforms, youth make use of Instagram for communication, creativity and identity presentation.

Self-expression has also evolved due to the rise of social media. Self-expression used to be restricted to personal interactions and physical social environments previously. However, nowadays, social media has become a platform that allows people to have a bigger platform for presenting their selves. On Instagram, people can decide what they want to show to other people through editing their posts.

At the same time, Instagram creates a platform where validation through likes, comments and followers is very important. While some users get inspired by positive feedback, others may be under social pressure to meet certain standards. The influence of influencers along with their lifestyle, also impacts user behaviour and perception. According to research studies, these

elements play a critical role in the confidence and communication behaviour of young individuals.

Social comparison, online pressure, and digital identity have become more prevalent in the past few years. Since youth use Instagram frequently in their daily routine, it is essential to understand the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth. Therefore, this study will focus on the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth in Delhi.

1.2 PROBLEM STATMENT

Instagram has emerged as an important tool for communication, interaction and expression among youth. While Instagram provides an opportunity for users to be expressive and present their personalities, it is also a platform that subjects its users to continuous audience judgment and validation through likes. The number of likes, comments, views and followers may influence how one portrays oneself on the Internet and may also affect their confidence in expressing themselves online.

Most young users modify or filter their posts in order to gain positive engagement and social approval. Some individuals have fear of negative feedback or lack of interest that might come from sharing their personal opinion, feelings or identity. This is further increased by the influence of various trends and peers within the social networking environment.

Despite Instagram providing a space for self-expression, not much is known about the impact of engagement and feedback on the level of confidence and behaviour shown by youth when expressing themselves online. In addition, differences in experiences related to confidence, hesitation and perceived pressure among male and female users also require attention.

Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth in Delhi by analysing the relationship between engagement, online feedback and self-presentation behaviour.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between Instagram engagement (likes, views, comments) and self-presentation among youth.
2. To understand how online feedback affects the confidence of youth in expressing themselves on Instagram.
3. To study gender differences in confidence, hesitation and perceived social pressure while expressing oneself on Instagram.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses around analysing the impact of Instagram usage on self-expression among youth in Delhi. The study mainly examines the relationship between Instagram usage, feedback received and social interaction and its effect on the self-presentation of youth.

This study focuses on youth belonging to the age group of 18-25 years, as it falls under one of the most active groups in terms of Instagram usage. The factors studied include engagement (likes, comments, views), confidence to express oneself and social pressure when posting content.

The significance of the study is that social media platforms such as Instagram has become an essential means of communication and self-identification for youth. Understanding the influence of self-expression can help in highlighting its positive and negative aspects. This can be a basis for further study concerning social media usage by youth.

However, the study is limited to participants residing in Delhi and examines only Instagram. Therefore, the results may not necessarily reflect the experiences of users in other locations or other forms of social media platforms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Instagram has emerged as a powerful social media tool which has influenced the way youth express themselves. The visual aspect of the platform allows users to build and share different versions of themselves on their posts, stories and reels. Previous research has shown that Instagram has a significant impact on self-representation as users are likely to edit their posts based on reactions from their followers and social norms (Shehzad et al., 2025; Trifiro, 2018). In this regard, digital self-presentation is a process of ongoing negotiation. Research studies support this idea, showing that people tailor their online presence to the context and audience they are communicating with, with a tailored construction of digital identity (Zhong et al., 2017).

Social comparison and exposure to idealised content play a significant role in Instagram's self-expression. There are also concerns about the negative impact of these curated and appearance-oriented images on users' self-esteem and body image (Lockhart, 2019; Taj & Hemmige, 2023). This focus on comparison can lead people to compare themselves to unrealistic standards that are set online. Moreover, as engagement signals like likes and comments get linked to personal worth, users could suffer from diminished self-confidence and self-doubt (Boluso et al., 2022; Khan & Ahmed, 2023). Consequently, Instagram is not just an platform for self-expression but also a place where individuals may feel pressure to follow social expectations and online standards.

This is also influenced by the engagement factors like likes, comments and followers which directly impact users confidence and willingness to express themselves. The power of online feedback is a social validation that influences individuals perception of not only their content but also their identity (Trifiro, 2018; Mann & Blumberg, 2022). Positive feedback can increase confidence and encourage active involvement, however, low or negative feedback can lead in hesitation and reduced self-expression. Additionally, overusing the platform such as posting too often and checking responses constantly has been associated with increased dependence and emotional distress (Dhiman, 2024; Tewari & Sharma, 2022). In this way, validation through engagement is closely related to social acceptance perceptions (Buncaras, 2025).

In addition to individual behaviours, social media has a wider impact on identity formation and psychological health of youth. Such platforms allow chance to be creative, communicate and explore one's identity giving individual an opportunity to express oneself in front of wider audiences (Siddique et al., 2025; Martinez & Vasquez, 2023). Some of the problems associated with such chances include social comparison, the need to portray oneself perfectly, and cyberbullying. Systematic review evidence also suggests that excessive use of social media causes anxiety, depression and psychological disturbances among youth (Balamurugan & Vijayarani, 2025; Khalaf et al., 2023). However, mindful use has been found to have positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem and healthy social interactions emphasizing the dual nature of these platforms (Avci et al., 2025; Rani, 2025).

Moreover, social media has been found to influence social interactions among youths, their attitudes towards lifestyle decisions and culture. Digital platforms have revolutionized the way young people communicate, and they have also introduced new ways of communicating and expressing themselves (Siddique et al., 2025). Trends, influencers and peer interaction have a big impact on content creation and presentations of identity. Some research also shows that social media contributes positively to community engagement and participation (Hammoudi, 2018), however, there are issues around addiction, fear of missing out (FOMO) and decreased productivity from overuse (Tewari & Sharma, 2022).

Earlier studies of Instagram and the digital culture also highlight the significance of visual content in online self-expression. Selfie culture is one such form of digital communication that has been described as an important means by which people express their identity and are able to get instant social validation (Souza et al., 2015). These trends highlight the growing importance of visual communication in the shaping online interactions and identities.

Overall, Existing literature shows that Instagram has a significant and multifaceted on self-expression of youth in general. Besides encouraging creativity, identity formation and social connection, the platform also brings certain challenges such as social comparisons, validation pressures and mental health issues. The findings provide further justification for developing a wider perspective when understanding the relationship between engagement behaviour, feedback mechanism and gender in defining Instagram self-expression among youth.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out on a sample population of **200** respondents within the age group of 18-24 years old in Delhi. This study follows a quantitative approach in analysing the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth. A questionnaire was designed and distributed online through social media platforms and personal networks to ensure wider reach and accessibility among the target group.

Convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques have been applied in the survey, where the participants were chosen depending on their availability and interest in taking part in the study and referred other participants to take part. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions that included multiple choice and Likert scale questions designed to gather responses related to Instagram usage patterns, content sharing behaviour, engagement in terms of likes, comments and views as well as the influence of online feedback on confidence and self-expression.

The information obtained from the data collection was then organised and analysed using tabulation methods. The responses obtained were shown in frequency and percentage form and further depicted using tables and graphs to identify patterns and trends among the respondents. All the responses were done after taking informed consent and privacy of all respondents was ensured at all times.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18-20	40	20
21-22	106	53
23-24	54	27
Total	200	100
Gender		
Male	81	41
Female	119	60
Third Gender	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Total	200	100

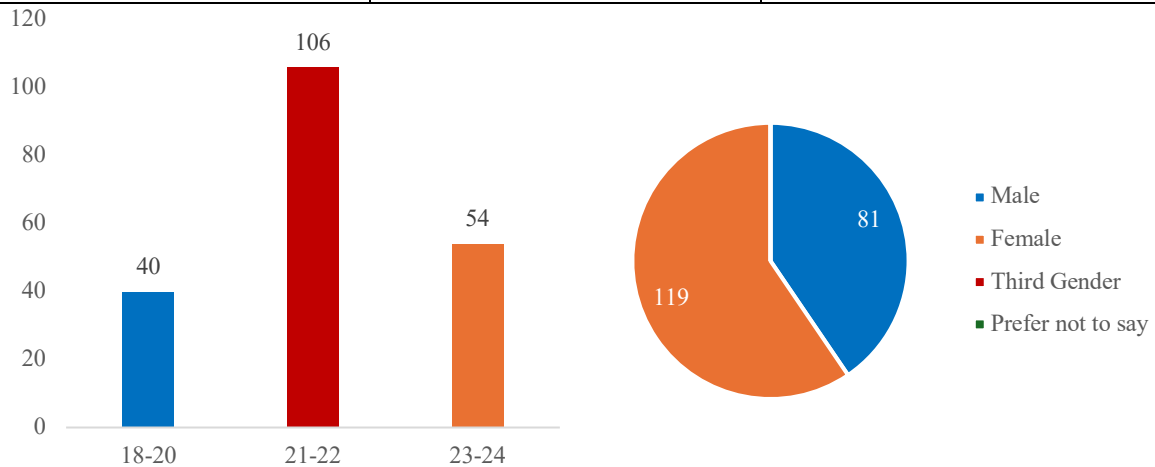


Figure 1: Age & Gender

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 200 respondents included in the study. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (53%) fall within the 21-22 age group. This is followed by 27% in the 23-24 category and 20% in the 18-20 group. The data indicates that the sample is largely concentrated within the early twenties age group.

In terms of gender, 60% of the respondents are female while 40% are male. No respondents identified as third gender or preferred not to disclose their gender. The distribution reflects a higher representation of female respondents within the sample.

Table 2: Frequency of Instagram Usage Among Respondents

Usage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	184	92
Weekly	9	5
Fortnightly	3	2
Rarely	4	2
Never	0	0
Total	200	100

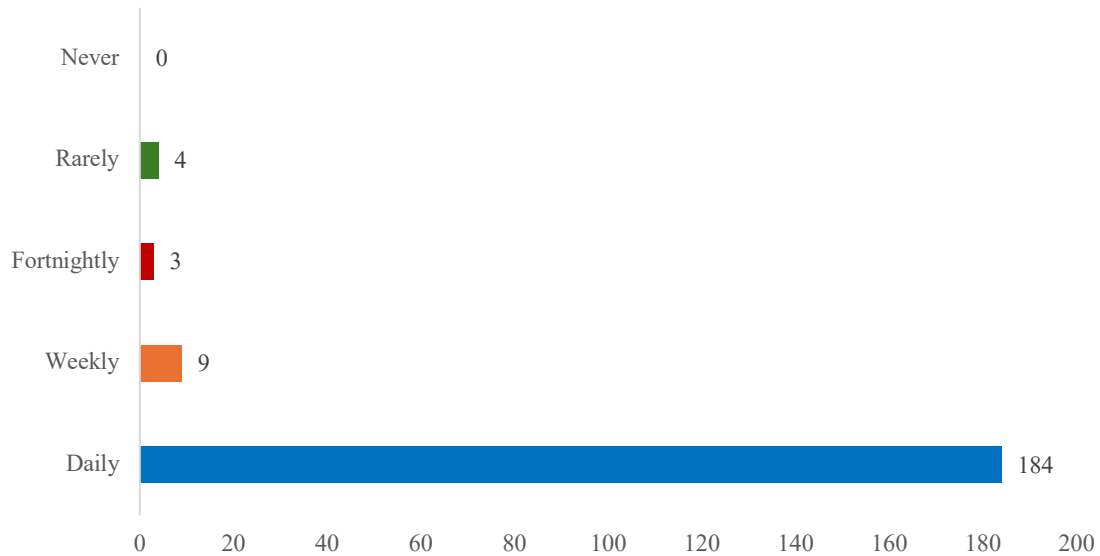


Figure 2: Frequency of Instagram Usage Among Respondents

Table 2 presents the frequency of Instagram usage among respondents. A significant majority (92%) reported using Instagram on a daily basis. In comparison, 5% use the platform weekly while 2% use it fortnightly and another 2% use it rarely. None of the respondents selected “never”. The data clearly indicates that Instagram usage is highly frequent among respondents with daily usage dominating across the sample.

Table 3: Average Time Spent on Instagram

Time Spent	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 30 minutes	12	6
30 minutes to 1 hour	38	19
1-2 hours	63	32
2-4 hours	58	29
More than 4 hours	29	15
Total	200	100

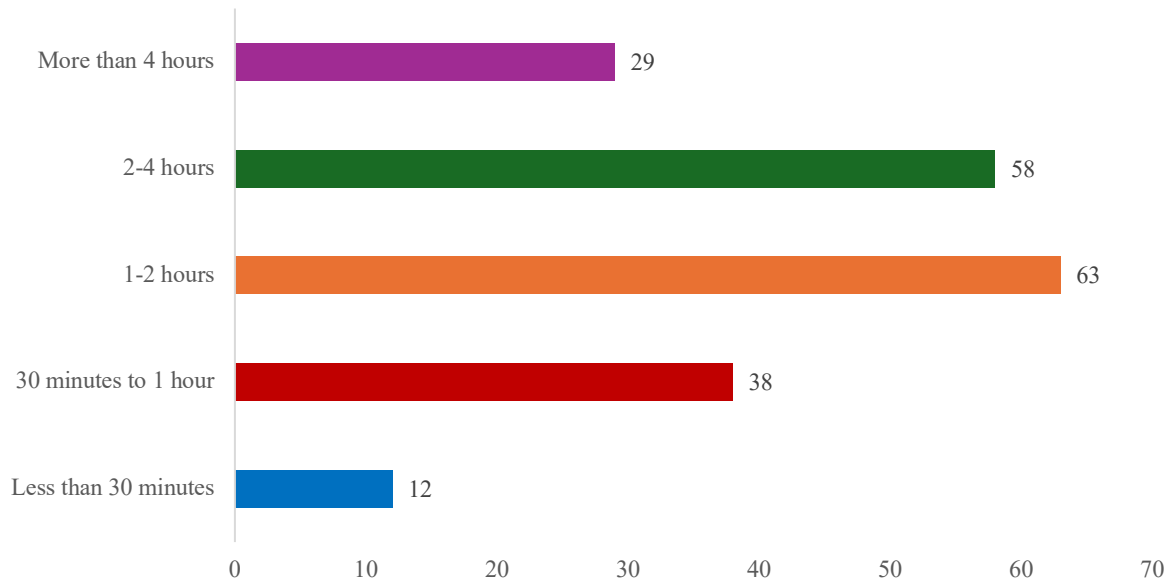


Figure 3: Average Time Spent on Instagram

Table 3 shows the amount of time respondents spend on Instagram each day. The largest proportion (32%) reported spending 1-2 hours daily, followed by 29% who spend 2-4 hours. Additionally, 15% of respondents spend more than 4 hours on the platform. On the lower end, 19% spend between 30 minutes to 1 hour, while only 6% spend less than 30 minutes. The distribution suggests that most respondents fall within moderate to high usage categories with comparatively fewer users in the low usage range.

Table 4: Rank of Types of Content Posted on Instagram

Type of Content	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total
Stories	123	41	36	200
Posts	14	128	58	200
Reels	63	31	106	200

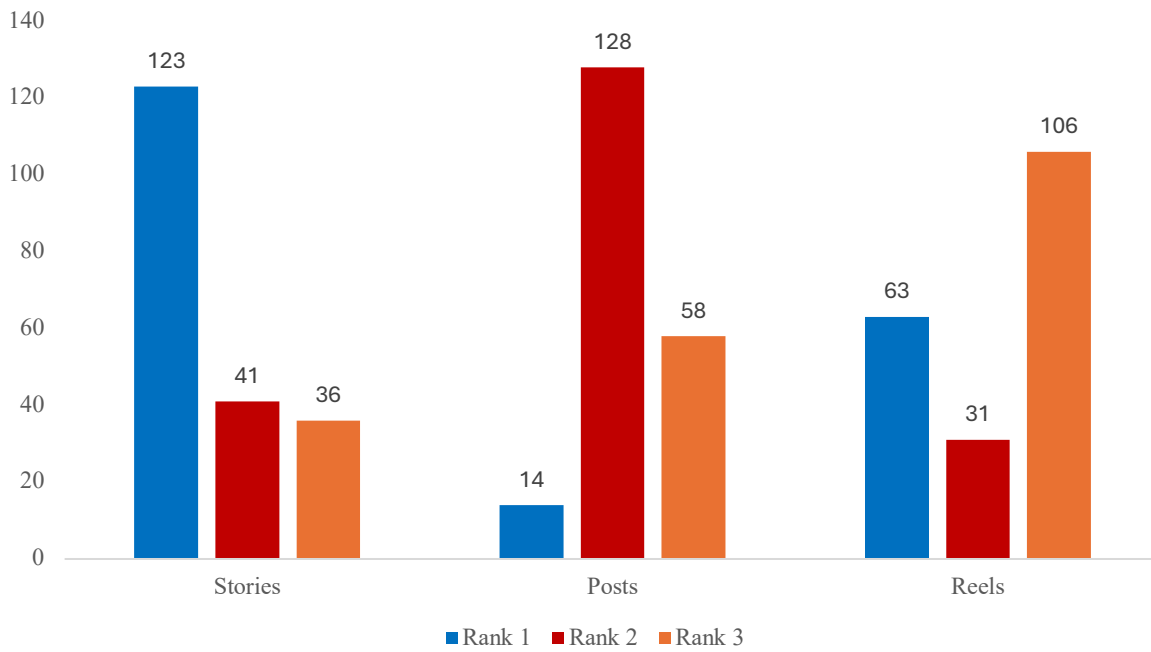


Figure 4: Rank of Types of Content Posted on Instagram

Table 4 displays the ranking of different types of content posted by respondents. Stories are the most preferred with 123 respondents placing them in the first rank. Reels received 63 first-rank responses while Posts were ranked first by only 14 respondents. For the second rank, Posts lead with 128 responses, followed by Stories (41) and Reels (31). In the third rank, Reels have the highest count (106) indicating that they are the least preferred among the three formats. The overall ranking pattern shows that Stories are the most preferred content type followed by Posts while Reels are comparatively less preferred.

Table 5: Frequency of Posting Content on Instagram

Posting Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	32	16
Weekly	43	22
Fortnightly	30	15
Rarely	86	43
Never	9	5
Total	200	100

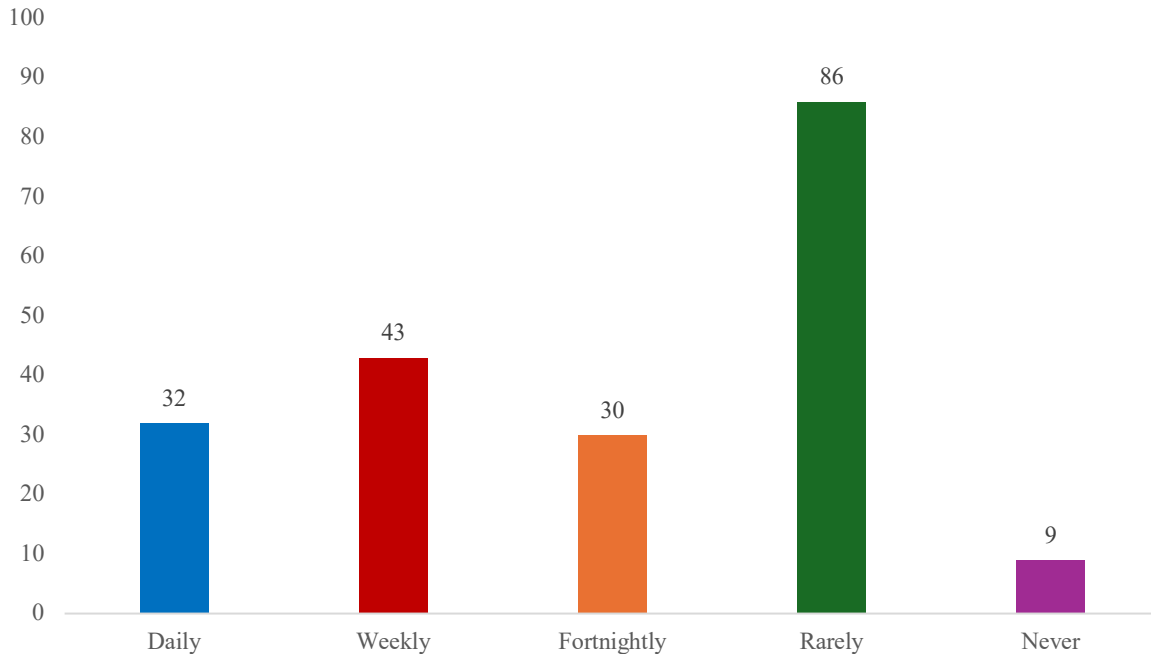


Figure 5: Frequency of Posting Content on Instagram

In Table 5, the frequency with which participants post content on Instagram is presented. The biggest percentage (43%) of participants post rarely. Others (22%) post weekly while 16% post daily. Moreover, 15% post fortnightly, while 5% never post at all. It is evident that there are more people posting less often than those who post regularly each day. This indicates that many users are more involved in viewing and engaging with content rather than actively creating and posting content themselves.

Table 6: Types of Content Shared on Instagram

Type of Content	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Personal photos or selfies	142	71
Memes or humorous content	67	34
Creative or artistic content (art, photography, edits, etc.)	61	31
Lifestyle or daily activities (vlogs, outings, routines)	55	28
Others	9	5

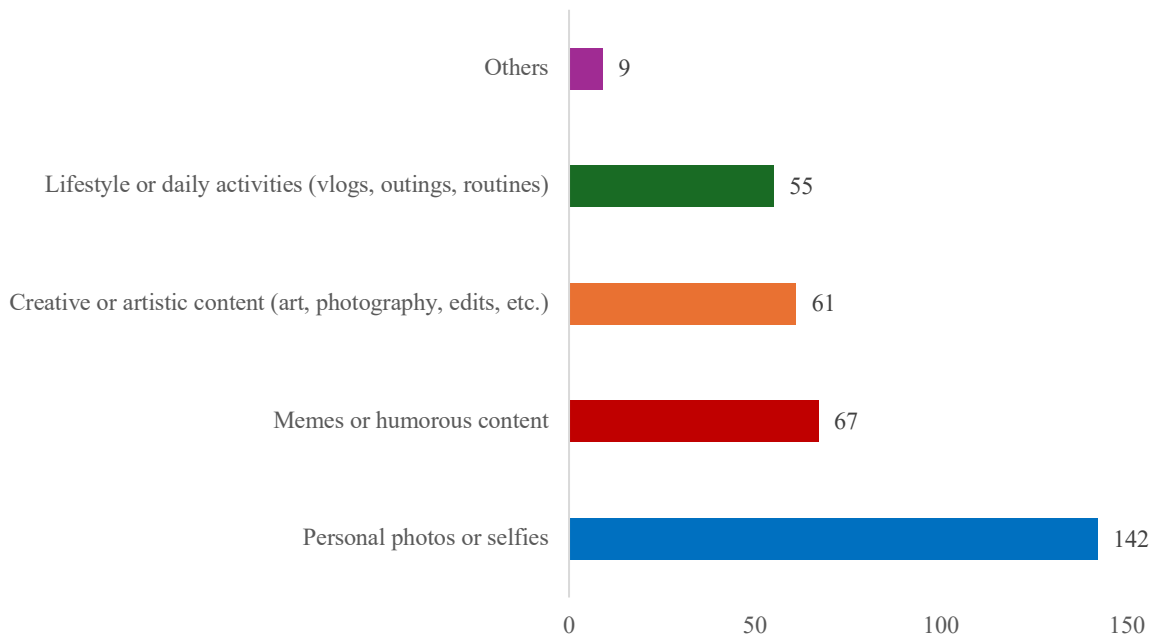


Figure 6: Types of Content Shared on Instagram

Table 6 describes the type of content that the participants post on Instagram. Personal pictures or selfies is the type of content that is posted most frequently by the participants at 71%. Memes or humorous content is preferred by 34% then comes the creative or artistic content preferred by 31% and lastly the lifestyle content is posted by 28%. A very small number (5%) of the participants select ‘other’ as their type of content. These include posts like gym-related content, sports, news, educational content and personal opinions.

Table 7: Importance of Likes, Views & Comments

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	43	22
Important	49	25
Neutral	35	18
Slightly Important	40	20
Not Important	33	17
Total	200	100

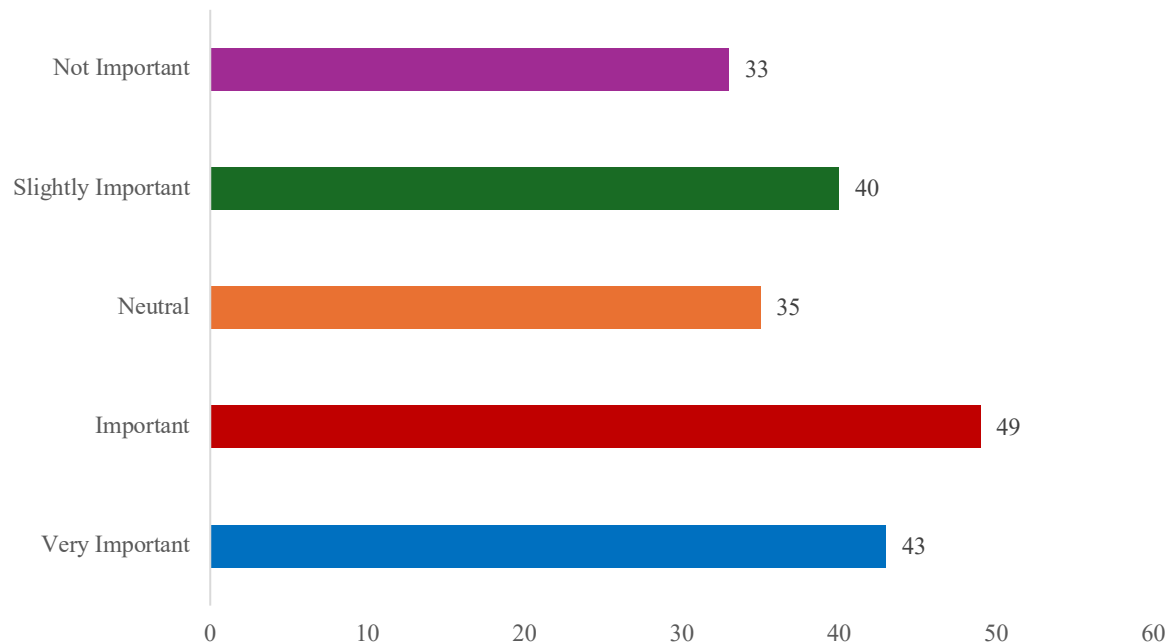


Figure 7: Importance of Likes, Views & Comments

In Table 7 the perception of the respondents towards the importance of likes, views and comments is shown. Overall, 47% perceive them as significant (25%) or very significant (22%) while 20% perceive them as slightly significant and 17% as not significant. This indicate that engagement hold significance for a large section of respondents and may influence how users perceive their content and online presence.

Table 8: Consideration of Other's Reactions Before Posting

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Always	34	17
Often	58	29
Sometimes	65	33
Rarely	24	12
Never	19	10
Total	200	100

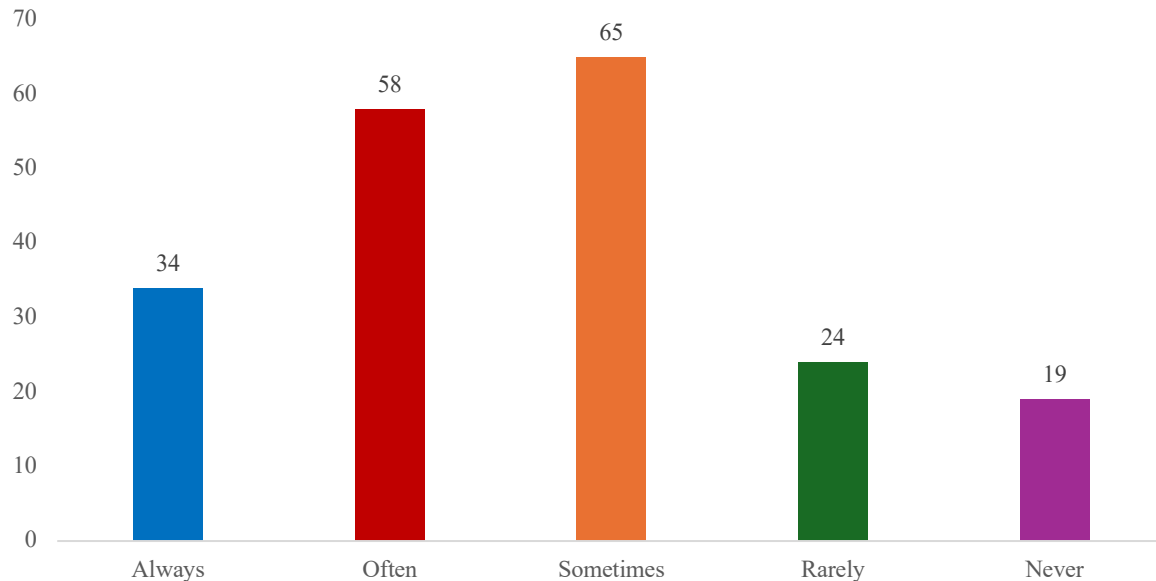


Figure 8: Consideration of Other's Reactions Before Posting

Table 8 highlights how frequently users think about the reaction of others before posting anything. As per results, the largest number of users (33%) chose to respond with “sometimes” whereas the second highest number of users (29%) opted for “often” followed by the third-largest group of respondents (17%) who responded with “always.” Other responses include “rarely” (12%) and “never” (10%). The data indicates that respondents are distributed across all levels with a greater concentration in the middle categories.

Table 9: Role of Instagram in Self-Expression

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	39	20
Agree	83	42
Neutral	69	35
Disagree	6	3
Strongly Disagree	3	2
Total	200	100

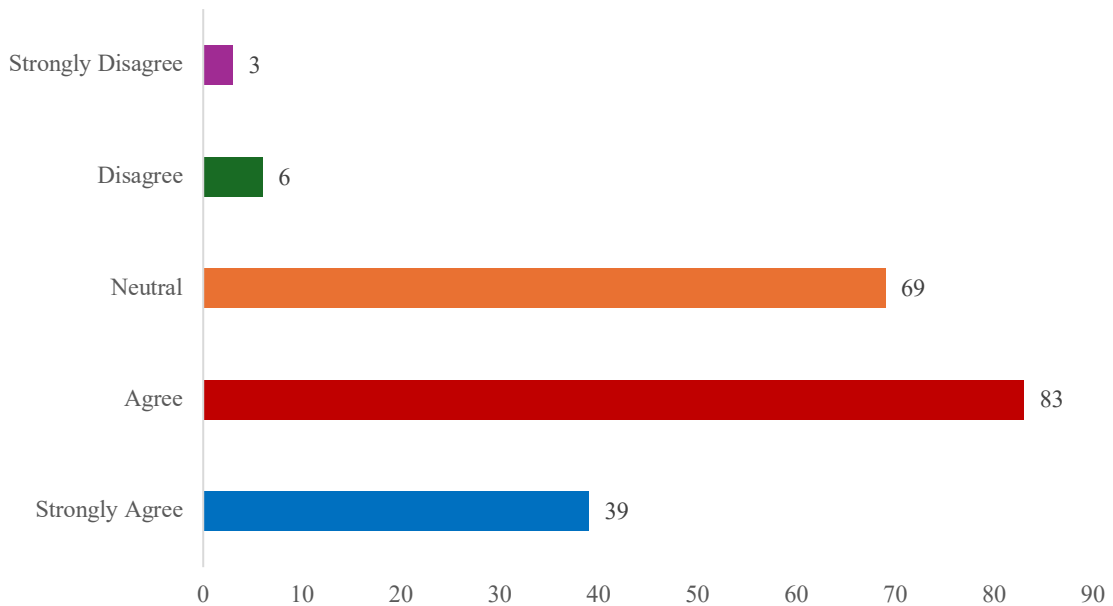


Figure 9: Role of Instagram in Self-Expression

Table 9 presents the opinion of the respondents about the contribution of Instagram in expressing themselves, their thoughts, their personality, or their creativity. The majority of the respondents falls into those who agreed, with 42% answering “agree” and 20% replying “strongly agree”. Also, 35% are neutral while only a few answered either “disagree” (3%) and “strongly disagree” (2%). This suggest that Instagram is generally perceived as a platform that allows users to express themselves creatively and personally.

Table 10: Impact of Engagement on Self-Confidence

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	36	18
Agree	60	30
Neutral	65	33
Disagree	23	12
Strongly Disagree	16	8
Total	200	100

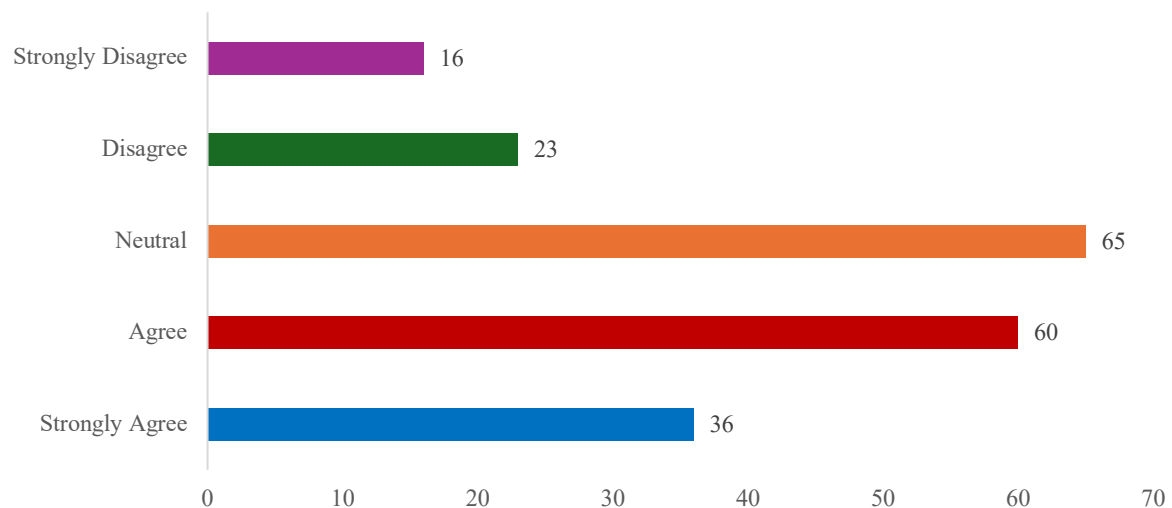


Figure 10: Impact of Engagement on Self-Confidence

In Table 10 respondents' opinions regarding whether likes, comments and views affect their confidence while expressing themselves on Instagram. The highest percentage of respondents (33%) remained neutral on this statement. However, 30% respondents selected "agree" and 18% selected "strongly agree" indicating that engagement does influence confidence levels for many users. Whereas, 12% respondents selected "disagree" while 8% selected "strongly disagree". This reflects that engagement indicators may have varying levels of influence on users' confidence and self-expression.

Table 11: Avoidance of Posting Due to Fear of Judgement

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very often	26	13
Often	44	22
Sometimes	65	33
Rarely	32	16
Never	33	17
Total	200	100

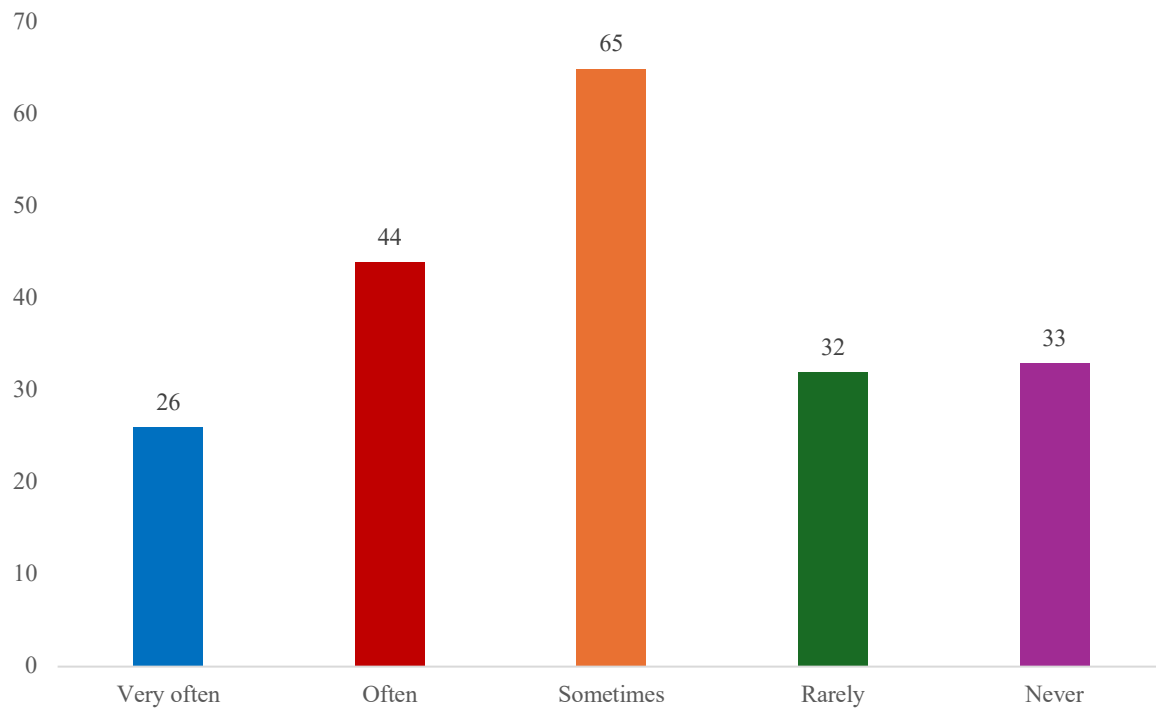


Figure 11: Avoidance of Posting Due to Fear of Judgement

Table 11 presents how often respondents avoid posting due to fear of judgement. The highest proportion (33%) selected “sometimes” followed by 22% who selected “often” and 13% who selected “very often”. Additionally, 16% reported “rarely” while 17% selected “never”. The data shows that fear of judgement exists among a considerable number of respondents and may influence their willingness to express themselves openly on Instagram.

Table 12: Effect of Positive Feedback on Self-Expression

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely	39	20
Very much	73	37
Moderately	63	32
Slightly	13	7
Not at all	12	6
Total	200	100

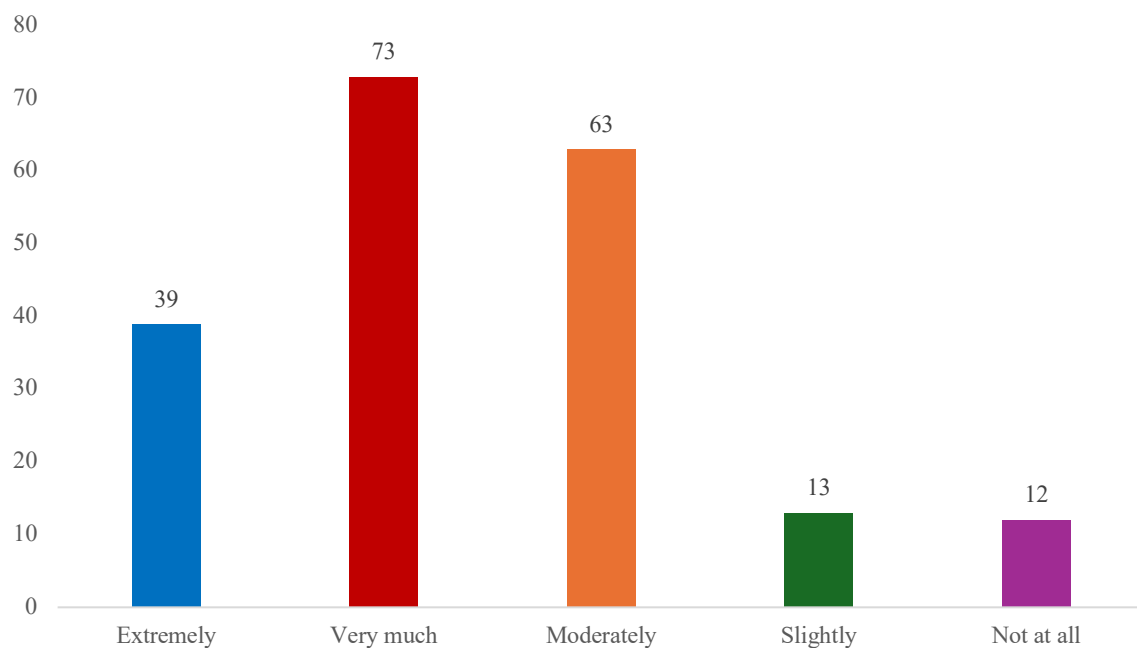


Figure 12: Effect of Positive Feedback on Self-Expression

Table 12 shows the extent to which positive feedback encourages respondents to express themselves. The highest proportion (37%) selected “very much” followed by 32% who selected “moderately” and 20% who selected “extremely”. Smaller proportions selected “slightly” (7%) and “not at all” (6%). The distribution indicates that that positive engagement and encouraging responses on Instagram play an important role in motivating users to express themselves more openly.

Table 13: Emotional Response to Low Engagement

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Not affected	33	17
Slightly Affected	58	29
Neutral	71	36
Disappointed	28	14
Very Disappointed	10	5
Total	200	100

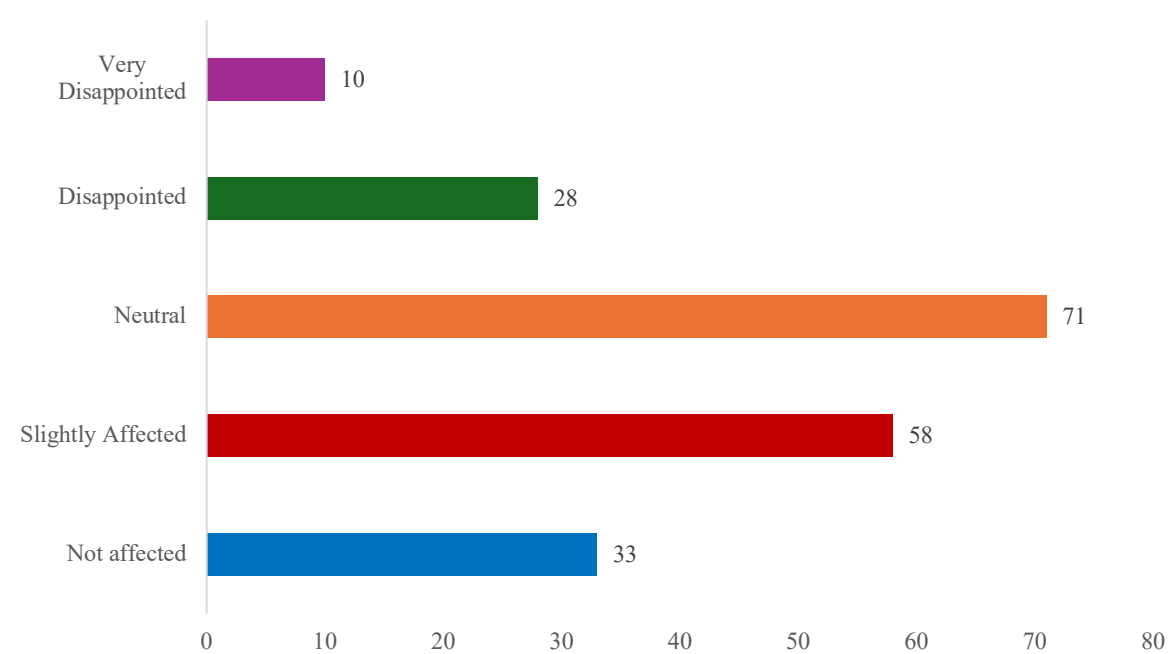


Figure 13: Emotional Response to Low Engagement

Table 13 presents how respondents feel when they receive little or no engagement. The largest proportion (36%) selected “neutral” followed by 29% who reported being “slightly affected”. Additionally, 17% indicated “not affected” while 14% felt “disappointed” and 5% selected “very disappointed”. This indicates that emotional reactions towards low engagement differ among users with many respondents showing moderate emotional impact.

Table 14: Influence of Social Media Trends & Influencers

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	38	19
Agree	65	33
Neutral	66	33
Disagree	22	11
Strongly Disagree	9	5
Total	200	100

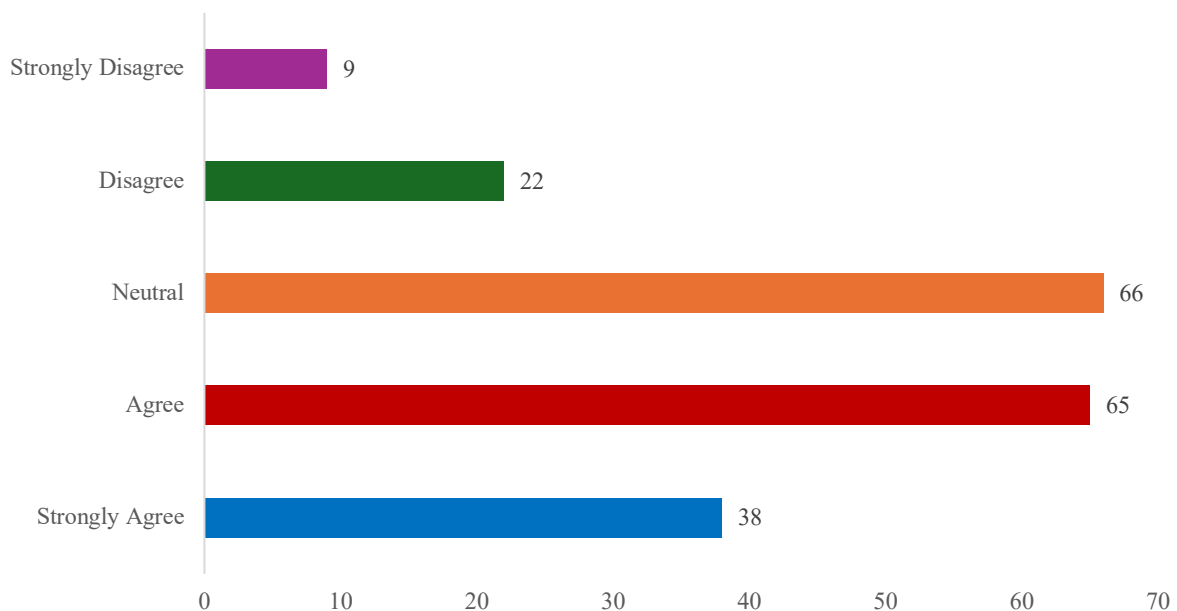


Figure 14: Influence of Social Media Trends & Influencers

Table 14 shows respondent's views on whether trends and influencers affect their self-expression. The highest proportion is equally distributed between "agree" (33%) and "neutral" (33%) followed by 19% who selected "strongly agree". Meanwhile, 11% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. The distribution reflects responses across agreement and neutrality with fewer respondents in the disagreement categories.

Table 15: Perceived Gender Differences while Expressing on Instagram

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	134	67
No	17	9
Not Sure	49	25
Total	200	100

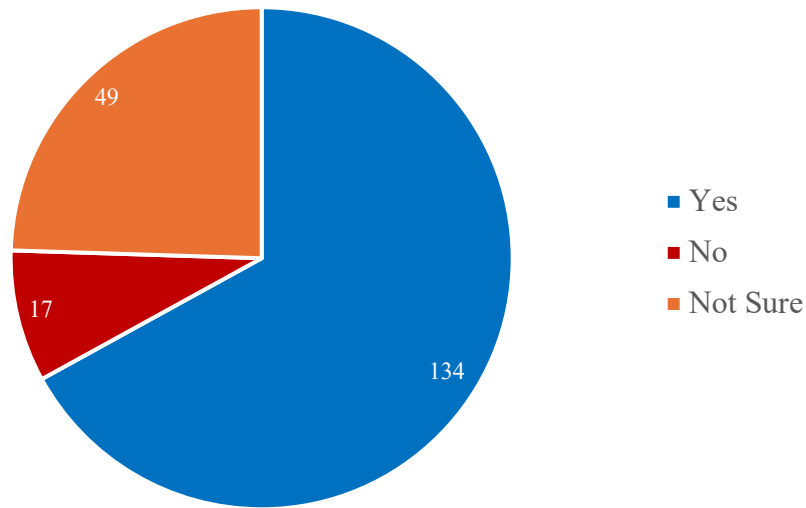


Figure 15: Perceived Gender Differences while Expressing on Instagram

Table 15 presents respondents' opinions regarding whether males and females experience different levels of pressure while expressing themselves on Instagram. A clear majority of respondents (67%) selected "yes". In comparison, 25% respondents selected "not sure" while only 9% selected "no". The data shows a clear concentration in the "yes" category. This suggest that most respondents believe that gender differences exist in terms of confidence, hesitation and social pressure while using Instagram for self-expression.

Table 16: Comparison with Others on Instagram

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Always	25	13
Often	39	20
Sometimes	53	27
Rarely	45	23
Never	38	19
Total	200	100

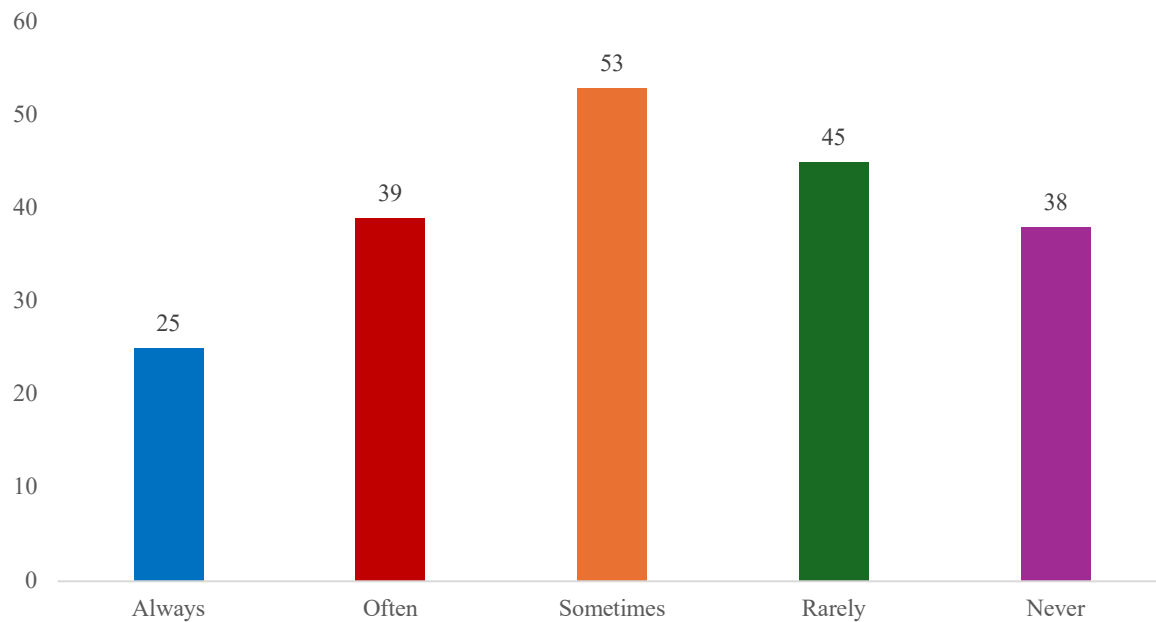


Figure 16: Comparison with Others on Instagram

Table 16 shows how often respondents compare themselves with others on Instagram. The highest proportion (27%) selected “sometimes” followed by 23% who selected “rarely” and 20% who selected “often”. Additionally, 19% reported “never” while 13% selected “always”. The indicates that social comparison is present among respondents to varying degrees with many users engaging in comparison at moderate levels.

4.1 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to examine the internal consistency of the variables used in the study. Cronbach's Alpha helps in understanding whether the questionnaire items used in the study are reliable and measure similar concepts related to Instagram usage and self-expression.

Table 17: Interpretation of Cronbach's Alpha Values

Alpha (α)	Interpretation	Meaning
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent	Very high internal consistency
$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good	High internal consistency
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$	Acceptable	Adequate for research
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable	Marginal, interpret with caution
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor	Low reliability
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable	Items may not measure the same construct

Table 18: Reliability Analysis using Cronbach's Alpha

Category	Variables Included	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Engagement Behaviour	Instagram usage, time spent, posting frequency	0.4089	Low Reliability
Social Validation	Likes importance, others' reactions, confidence	0.6223	Moderate Reliability
Self-Expression	Self-expression, positive feedback, fear of judgement	0.6291	Moderate Reliability
External Influence	Trends, social comparison, low engagement	0.4618	Low Reliability
Overall Scale	All variables combined	0.8183	Good Reliability

The results of the reliability analysis indicate different levels of consistency among the variables used in the study. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.8183 shows good reliability which means that the questionnaire overall is reliable for studying the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth.

The categories related to Social Validation and Self-Expression showed moderate reliability indicating that the variables under these categories are reasonably related to each other and measure similar aspects of user behaviour and self-expression on Instagram. On the other hand, Engagement Behaviour and External Influence showed lower reliability values because the variables included under these categories represent different patterns of Instagram usage and online experiences.

Overall, the results suggest that the questionnaire is suitable and reliable for conducting the present research study.

4.2 LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between positive feedback received on Instagram and self-expression among youth. The analysis was used to understand whether positive feedback encourages users to express themselves more openly on Instagram.

Table 19: Model Summary of Linear Regression Analysis

Statistic	Value
R ²	0.227
Adjusted R ²	0.223
F-value	58.34
Significance (p-value)	0.000
Sample Size	200

Table 20: Regression Coefficients Analysis

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Interpretation
Positive Feedback	0.412	0.000	Significant Positive Effect

The results of the linear regression analysis indicate that positive feedback has a significant positive impact on self-expression among youth on Instagram. The findings suggest that users are more likely to express themselves openly when they receive encouraging responses such as likes, comments and appreciation from others on the platform.

The analysis shows that positive feedback plays an important role in increasing confidence and motivation among users while sharing their thoughts, personality and creativity on Instagram.

4.3 FINDINGS

The following are the major findings of the present research study:

1. Most of the respondents (92%) reported using Instagram daily while 32% spent around 1-2 hours and 29% spent 2-4 hours on the platform every day.
2. Despite high Instagram usage, active content posting remains comparatively low as 43% respondents reported posting rarely while only 16% reported posting daily.
3. Stories emerged as the most preferred form of content sharing with 123 respondents ranking them first, while Reels were commonly ranked third.
4. Personal photos and selfies were found to be the most commonly shared type of content selected by 71% respondents. This was followed by memes and humorous content (34%), creative content (31%) and lifestyle-related content (28%).
5. The study found that engagement indicators such as likes, comments and views influence user behaviour to a large extent. 25% of respondents considered engagement as “important,” and 22% considered it as “very important”. However, 18% of respondents were neutral towards online validation.
6. The audience’s perception was seen to have an influence on posting behaviour of the respondents. About 33% of the respondents admitted that they “sometimes” take into account how others will react to their posts while 29% chose “often” and 17% chose “always”.
7. Instagram was viewed as an app that allows users to showcase themselves, where 42% of people responded in agreement while 20% strongly agreed that Instagram helps them express their thoughts, personality and creativity. There is only a minimal percentage of people who disagree with this view.

8. The findings indicate that engagement affects confidence levels among users. Around 30% respondents agreed and 18% strongly agreed that likes, comments and views influence their confidence while expressing themselves online. At the same time, 33% respondents remained neutral showing that the impact differs across users.
9. Fear of judgment was also observed among respondents. About 33% respondents reported that they “sometimes” avoid posting due to fear of judgment while 22% selected “often” and 13% selected “very often.”
10. Positive feedback was found to encourage self-expression among users. Around 37% respondents stated that positive feedback motivates them “very much” while 20% selected “extremely” and 32% selected “moderately.”
11. Emotional responses toward low engagement varied among respondents. Around 36% respondents were neutral when they received low engagement while 29% reported being slightly affected. Meanwhile, 14% felt disappointed and 5% felt very disappointed.
12. Around 33% respondents agreed that trends and influencers influence their self-expression while another 33% remained neutral. This reflects mixed but noticeable levels of influence.
13. 27% respondents stated that they sometimes compare themselves to other people on Instagram while 20% selected “often” and 13% selected “always”.
14. A majority of respondents (67%) believed that males and females experience different levels of pressure while expressing themselves on Instagram whereas only 9% disagreed.
15. Overall, the findings suggest that self-expression on Instagram is influenced not only by personal choice but also by engagement patterns, audience feedback, social comparison and perceived social expectations present within digital environments.
16. The regression analysis indicated that positive feedback on Instagram positively influences self-expression among youth and encourages users to express themselves more openly on the platform.

4.4 DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to determine the impact Instagram has on self-expression among the youth in Delhi in terms of engagement (likes, comments, and views), online feedback and social pressure. It is quite evident that although it is one of the most popular social media platforms today, Instagram is not always freely open or unbiased. In fact, it is influenced by

factors such as the amount of engagement a post receives, kind of reaction from other users and how individuals perceive their posts in the context of judgment. This suggests that self-expression on social media can sometimes be dependent on reactions from others.

One of the main observation of the study is the clear gap between frequent use and infrequent posting. Despite the majority of participants using Instagram daily, minority is actively involved in posting content. The findings indicates that even though people act actively as viewers, they appear to be less active in self-expression. It might be noted that people become more hesitant to act since people usually reflect on whether or not they will share something with others.

One such factor causing hesitation is the fear of judgment from others on the way they are perceived by the viewers. From the results obtained from this study, it can be seen that most individuals will always think about how they will be perceived before making any posting since it is this fear that makes them hesitate from doing so. In this case, it can be concluded that Instagram is not only a platform where one can post but also a place where social pressure can affect one's actions.

An equally significant issue highlighted by the study is engagement factors like likes, comments and views. It is found that these factors play the part of social approval measures. Positive feedback helps build confidence while lower engagement causes feelings of insecurity or demotivation among people to share content on the platform. This proves that self-expression through Instagram is highly connected with approval. Therefore, the users feel engaged with others through acceptance and appreciation. This leads to adjustments made in their behaviour to get positive reactions from the audience.

The linear regression analysis conducted in the study further supported the relationship between positive feedback and self-expression among youth. The results indicated that positive responses such as likes, comments and appreciation encourage users to express themselves more openly on Instagram. This suggests that online validation plays an important role in influencing users' confidence and willingness to share their thoughts, creativity and personal experiences on the platform.

The study also further emphasizes the existence of emotions associated with engagement. Although there are not many people who react emotionally, some users show signs of disappointment and concern because their content is not given the same level of importance as expected by them. It also shows the importance of psychological satisfaction of digital feedback. There are some users who are indifferent in nature, but reactions vary from person to person.

Moreover, the effect of social comparison, trends and influencers is another factor that contributes to user behaviour. Most participants indicated that they engage in social comparison and are impacted by trending content. It implies that self-expression is not purely personal and is also influenced by other factors and standards that exist within the platform. Being exposed to carefully constructed and ideal content may encourage users to modify their own posts to fit certain standards.

An important finding of the study is regarding the belief about gender differences in self-expression. Many of the respondents feel that men and women face different level of pressure while expressing themselves through Instagram. It suggests that the influence of social norms and expectations can differ among people and certain individuals may find themselves under more stress while trying to express themselves through social media platforms.

Overall, the discussion highlights that self-expression in Instagram is not only about individual decision making but depends on various factors such as engagement patterns, feedback, comparison with others and perceived judgment. Although Instagram allows individuals to show their creativity, communicate and express their identities, it also leads individuals to think twice before showing themselves to others. This makes Instagram a platform through which youth control and select what to share.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, recommendations are:

1. Instagram is massively adopted among youth, there should be an encouragement towards using the social media in a balanced manner.

2. Likes, comments and views can have an effect on decisions that the users make. That is why it is necessary to make people understand that being active online cannot determine their self-worth as individuals.
3. Users need to be taught that they can share their thoughts without being afraid of any other person's judgment.
4. Encouraging positive online behaviour can ensure that the individual feels comfortable and confident enough to share his opinion.
5. It is important to make people aware on how Instagram filters its content to reduce unnecessary comparisons and pressures among users.
6. As gender differences have been identified in terms of self-expression, future research may consider investigating this issue in depth.
7. Future research may include larger and more diverse sample size and use qualitative research techniques such as interviews for deeper understanding.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

1. The study only focused on those who belonged to the age category of 18-24 in Delhi, therefore, the findings cannot be applied to any other age group and place.
2. As convenience and snowball sampling were used, the results might not completely represent all Instagram users.
3. The study applied a quantitative research approach which limited to obtain any in-depth insight into personal experiences and emotions.
4. The study only focused on Instagram without comparing with other social media platforms such as Snapchat or Facebook.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to examine the impact of Instagram on self-expression among youth in Delhi focusing on engagement, online feedback and perceived social pressure. Based on the analysis of the data collected, It is clear that there is a very strong impact of Instagram on the representation and socialization process among youth.

According to the findings of the study, Instagram is actively used by the youth on a daily basis and consumes a significant amount of time in their daily lives. Even though usage is high, there has not been much content creation by users, as majority of them post infrequently. This shows a clear difference between consumption and production of content, indicating that although users are deeply engaged with the platform, they are generally careful and selective when it comes to expressing themselves.

The findings of the study indicate that there are several factors affecting self-expression on Instagram, and these include likes, comments, and views as well as the nature of feedback received from others. Feedback has a motivational impact on users since positive feedback motivates users to be more open and expressive. While, low or lack of engagement will have opposite effect as they will hesitate or lose their motivation to post something. This shows the influence of social validation on behaviour of users and suggests that self-expression can be associated with how content is received by the audience.

Another important conclusion that came out of this study was the existence of perceived social pressure in online platforms. Most of the users become very conscious of what others might say regarding their posts due to fear of judgment. From this, it is clear that self-expression on Instagram is not entirely free because it is always based on the influence of others' opinions and judgments towards it.

One more significant point highlighted in this study is the impact of trends and influencers on the behaviour of users. The posts made by other users, trends, and influencers are taken into consideration when analysing the way in which individuals portray themselves and select their content for posting. Therefore, the self-expression on Instagram does not only depend on one's own choice but also by the digital environment and social influences surrounding users.

These findings indicate that there is a difference in self-expression based on one's gender. Most of the respondents think that self-expression on Instagram among males and females differs in terms of the pressure and hesitation that both of them have, as well as the level of their confidence.

Overall, the study shows that Instagram is not only a mode of communicating and entertaining but most importantly, as a platform where self-expression is constantly shaped through engagement patterns, feedback mechanisms and perceived social pressure. Even though the platform provides space for creativity, connections, and self-expression, the platform also causes users to think twice before sharing their ideas resulting in a controlled forms of self-expression among the youth.

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ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM ON SELF-EXPRESSION AMONG YOUTH IN DELHI

Hello!

I am a student at Delhi School of Management, DTU conducting a research study as part of my academic project.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences, opinions and behaviour of respondents regarding the topic of study. Your responses will be used strictly for academic purposes only and will remain completely confidential and anonymous. No personal information provided by you will be disclosed or used outside this research.

I kindly request you to answer all the questions honestly and based on your personal experience. Your participation and valuable responses will greatly contribute to the success of this study.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Section A: Demographic Details

1. Name

2. Age

☐ 18–20

☐ 21–22

☐ 23–24

3. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Third Gender

☐ Prefer not to say

Section B: Instagram Engagement and Self-Expression

4. How often do you use Instagram?

- ☐ Daily
 - ☐ Weekly
 - ☐ Fortnightly
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Never
-

5. On an average how much time do you spend on Instagram per day?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
 - ☐ 30 minutes to 1 hour
 - ☐ 1–2 hours
 - ☐ 2–4 hours
 - ☐ More than 4 hours
-

6. Rank the type of content you post on Instagram from most to least frequently.

Content Type Rank 1 Rank 2 Rank 3

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Stories | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Posts | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reels | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
-

7. Which category best describes the content you usually post on Instagram?

- ☐ Personal photos or selfies
 - ☐ Memes or humorous content
 - ☐ Creative or artistic content (art, photography, edits, etc.)
 - ☐ Lifestyle or daily activities (vlogs, outings, routines)
 - ☐ Others: _____
-

8. How often do you post content on Instagram?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Fortnightly
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

9. How important are likes, views or comments on your posts?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not Important at all

10. How often do you think about how others will react before posting something on Instagram?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

11. Do you agree Instagram helps you express your thoughts, personality or creativity?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. Do likes, comments or views on your posts affect how confident you feel about your self-expression?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. How often do you avoid posting something because you think people might judge you?

- ☐ Very Often
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

14. How much does receiving positive feedback on Instagram encourage you to express yourself openly?

- ☐ Extremely
- ☐ Very Much
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Slightly
- ☐ Not at all

15. How do you feel when you receive little or no engagement on your post?

- ☐ Not affected
- ☐ Slightly affected
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disappointed
- ☐ Very disappointed

16. Do you agree social media trends or influencers influence how you express yourself online?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Do you think male and female experience different levels of pressure while expressing themselves on Instagram?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Sure

18. How often do you compare your post or appearance with others on Instagram?

- ☐ Always
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Never
-