



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/snlpr.v2i2.689>
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The Phenomenon of Insecurity Social Media Users on Instagram Among Students at University of Swadaya Gunung Jati

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Abstract: The phenomenon of insecurity is increasingly experienced by college students alongside the growing use of social media, particularly Instagram. This study aims to identify the factors contributing to feelings of insecurity among active Instagram users at Swadaya Gunung Jati University, as well as the efforts made to address them. This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach using in-depth interviews with students as research informants. The results indicate that feelings of insecurity are primarily driven by internal and external factors. Internal factors include a lack of emotional support from family, unmet physiological needs, low emotional intelligence, and difficulties in expressing emotions. External factors stem mainly from Instagram use, particularly regarding self-presentation, social presence, and a tendency toward social comparison. Early-stage interactions on social media have not been able to meet the need for social acceptance and support, thereby causing feelings of insecurity. This study also found that students make various efforts to overcome feelings of insecurity through self-reflection, self-acceptance, and managing their use of social media.

Keyword: Insecurity, Social Media, Instagram, College Students, University of Swadaya Gunung Jati.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has ushered society into a new era known as Society 5.0, in which human life is increasingly oriented toward information and communication technologies. The continuous development of these technologies has also given rise to the concept of new media, referring to media forms that utilize the internet or technology-based online platforms. Today, internet use has become an integral part of daily life. Access is no longer limited to computers or laptops, but is readily available through smartphones.

The utilization of the internet (new media) has evolved significantly. Initially functioning merely as a means of delivering and receiving information, it has now developed into a tool supporting professional work, a source of entertainment, a medium for leisure

activities, and even a platform for business and corporate interests. This evolution has subsequently led to the emergence of a new form of communication known as social media.

According to data from the Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jaringan Internet Indonesia (APJII), the number of internet users in 2025 reached 229.4 million. Survey data indicate that Generation Z (aged 15–25) represents the largest group of internet users, contributing 25.54 percent of the total users (APJII, 2025). Furthermore, APJII reported that internet penetration among individuals with higher education reached 91.27 percent (APJII, 2025). University students are widely recognized as one of the most active groups utilizing social media. Surveys show that approximately 89.7 percent of students—particularly those aged 15–25—intensively use various digital platforms. This high usage rate is closely linked to the accessibility of technological devices such as smartphones and laptops, which have become inseparable from their daily activities. Through social media, students can communicate, interact, and expand both social and professional networks more easily and efficiently (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

Although often referred to as agents of change, university students are also among the groups most vulnerable to the impacts of internet usage compared to other populations. This vulnerability significantly influences various aspects of their lives. While social media offers new opportunities for communication, interaction, and information exchange, it also presents challenges that require deeper understanding. The intensity of social media use can shape students' awareness of social issues, influence their opinions, and determine their level of engagement in real-life activities. If not managed properly, excessive social media use may lead to shifts in mindset, academic distractions, reduced quality of face-to-face interactions, and minimal participation in real-world activities. Conversely, healthy usage can foster intellectual and social development (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Social media use among students is driven not only by social needs but also by the high level of creativity characteristic of this generation. Each platform serves different purposes and has become an inseparable part of students' everyday lives.

According to APJII data, in 2025 Instagram ranked fourth among the most frequently accessed social media platforms, accounting for 15.9 percent of total access, with 25.33 percent of its users coming from Generation Z. Students utilize Instagram to share and discover visual content, often seeking inspiration from influencers or peers. The platform provides a digital environment in which students can experiment with identity formation, seek validation through likes and comments, and express themselves in ways aligned with their social circles. On platforms such as Instagram, students share images that reflect their lifestyles, preferences, and interests, thereby constructing and reinforcing their self-image before their followers. This activity fulfills the need for self-presentation and social recognition, as students attempt to project an image consistent with broader community standards (Adiarsi et al., 2024).

Unconsciously, this process fosters a continuous need for validation, which may influence how students perceive and evaluate themselves. When individuals assess their self-worth based on responses or feedback from others on social media, a tendency toward social comparison often emerges—particularly comparisons with those perceived as more attractive or successful.

Excessive social media use also raises concerns regarding psychological effects, including the emergence of low self-confidence or feelings of insecurity. The phenomenon of insecurity has increased in recent years alongside the growth of social media usage. One notable case involved a student from Universitas Udayana, Timothi Anugrah Saputra, who died by suicide after experiencing physical bullying. Excessive feelings of insecurity can have severe consequences for mental health, including anxiety disorders and suicidal behavior. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) indicate that

approximately 280 million people worldwide suffer from anxiety disorders, with chronic insecurity identified as one contributing factor. A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that 65 percent of adolescents and young adults report feeling insecure about their appearance, abilities, or social status. High levels of insecurity can cause individuals to doubt their abilities, feel less meaningful in life, and struggle to appreciate their strengths or potential, as they focus primarily on their perceived shortcomings. This condition may ultimately reduce social engagement and peer interaction (Rahmi et al., 2024).

In today's digital era—characterized by constant information flow and social comparison—social media has become a space that indirectly shapes how individuals evaluate themselves. Many students who actively use social media report experiencing pressure to meet unrealistic standards, leading to dissatisfaction with themselves (Hilda & Purwanto, 2024). Such pressure includes expectations related to physical appearance, lifestyle, and academic achievement, which may ultimately generate feelings of inferiority. Insecurity, or low self-confidence, is a psychological condition that can negatively affect an individual's life. It can be defined as feelings of unease, discomfort, or self-doubt regarding one's appearance, abilities, or potential (Rahmadhani & Azis, 2024).

Insecurity may arise from various factors, including past traumatic experiences, social environmental influences, or even genetic and biological factors (Rahmadhani & Azis, 2024). In the context of social media usage, insecurity often emerges from excessive exposure to content portraying specific physical and lifestyle standards. Individuals who perceive themselves as failing to meet these standards may experience diminished self-confidence and feelings of inadequacy.

Research conducted by Rahmi et al. (2024) found that 75 students (21.9 percent of participants) were highly dependent on social media. Nearly all students in the study reported using social media daily, including within 15 minutes before going to sleep and immediately after waking up. This pattern raises concerns about excessive usage. Supporting this view, research by Valentina et al. (2022) on the impact of social media use on students' insecurity revealed that 83.5 percent of students felt insecure when interacting with others on social media. When experiencing insecurity, they tended to withdraw socially and engage in solitary activities they enjoyed. Students sometimes reported feeling less confident and frequently monitoring the number of "likes" received on uploaded photos, although they tended to ignore negative comments that could indirectly reinforce their insecurity.

The factors contributing to insecurity have also been examined in previous studies. Syauqii (2022) found that low self-confidence is often associated with excessive social media use, as exposure to photos and videos may trigger feelings of insecurity. This phenomenon is particularly relevant because students are in a transitional developmental phase toward greater maturity. Their experiences are influenced not only by physical characteristics (such as gender and ethnicity) but also by social background, knowledge, and personal experiences (Nurfalah et al., 2020).

Based on these phenomena and prior research findings, the urgency of this study lies in the significant psychological effects of social media usage—particularly Instagram—among university students, one of which is insecurity. Exposure to content portraying idealized physical standards and lifestyles frequently triggers social comparison and decreases self-confidence. Students, as young individuals in the process of identity formation, represent one of the most vulnerable groups in this regard.

This study offers several novelties compared to previous research. First, it specifically examines the phenomenon of insecurity among Instagram users within the local context of students at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, a population that has not been extensively studied. Most prior studies have focused on general populations or students in major

metropolitan areas; thus, this research contributes empirically grounded data from a more specific regional context. Second, this study does not merely assess the general level of insecurity but also analyzes the relationship between patterns of Instagram usage and the emergence of insecurity. Consequently, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors triggering insecurity within the dynamics of visual-based social media interaction.

The research questions of this study are as follows: (1) How does Instagram usage relate to insecurity among students at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati? (2) How does the phenomenon of insecurity manifest among Instagram-using students at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati? (3) What efforts are undertaken by students to cope with insecurity related to Instagram use?

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to examine the relationship between Instagram use and insecurity among students, to explore the phenomenon of insecurity among Instagram users within this population, and to identify the strategies employed by students to cope with such experiences. The findings are expected to provide insights that help students become more mindful, confident, and capable of managing feelings of insecurity arising from social media activities.

Ultimately, this study aims to promote greater awareness among students regarding healthier social media usage. By enhancing understanding, students are expected to better recognize their emotional boundaries, reduce tendencies toward unhealthy comparison, and utilize social media as a positive platform for self-expression and supportive relationship-building.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is a type of study that describes a person's life experiences; in other words, it is a method that examines how individuals perceive and interpret the experiences and meanings derived from phenomena (Yusanto, 2020). The participants in this study will explore the structure of life through their life experiences. The researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of how students at Swadaya Gunung Jati University use the social media platform Instagram.

It is important to carefully select research participants to ensure that they are representative of the broader social context. The purposive sampling technique was chosen based on specific considerations. This method is used when the researcher intends to explore in depth the perspectives or experiences of specific individuals only (Bado, 2021).

The data collection method involved structured in-depth interviews, in which pre-prepared questions were used to solicit informants' opinions on the research topic Ramadhani & Kusuma (2024). And the data for this study was collected by analyzing documents provided by several informants.

Data analysis is the process of processing data to generate new information, making the characteristics of the data easier to understand and more useful in finding solutions to problems, particularly those related to research. According to Bado (2021) Essentially, there are two main areas of focus in phenomenological research: First, the textural description of the meaning of experience, which explains what the research subjects experience in relation to a particular phenomenon. This section highlights objective aspects, such as empirical facts regarding events that the subjects actually experienced. Second, the structural description of experience, which describes how the subject experiences and assigns meaning to that experience. This section focuses on subjective aspects, including perspectives, judgments, feelings, expectations, and other personal responses arising from the subject's experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Informant Description

This study was conducted at Swadaya Gunung Jati University through structured interviews with six students selected using purposive sampling. The six informants selected were students from various academic programs and faculties. The following is a description of the informants for this study.

Table 1. Informant Description

No	Name	Age	Gender	Departments and Faculties
1	Risma Al Fauziyah	20 y/o	Female	Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Education and Science.
2	Najwa Khoirun Nisa	20 y/o	Female	Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Education and Science.
3	Rizky Agustian Maslo	21 y/o	Male	Department of Communication Studies, School of Social and Political Sciences
4	Linda Permatasari	20 y/o	Female	Department of Communication Studies, School of Social and Political Sciences
5	Ratu Triyanti Salsabila	20 y/o	Female	Department of Management, School of Economics and Business
6	Mutiara Rizka Nirmala	20 y/o	Female	Department of Management, School of Economics and Business

Source: Researcher’s Data (2026)

RESEARCH RESULTS

1. The Use of Instagram as a Social Media Platform Among Students at Swadaya Gunung Jati University

The rise of social media, particularly Instagram, has brought about significant changes in how individuals present themselves and view others. Prominent visual features, such as photo and video posts, as well as the number of likes and followers, often encourage individuals to engage in intense social comparison. This situation can trigger feelings of insecurity, especially when individuals feel unable to meet the ideal standards displayed on social media. Exposure to content showcasing physical perfection, lifestyles, and specific achievements has the potential to affect users’ self-perception and self-confidence. The following are the results of a study on social media indicators related to feelings of insecurity:

a) Self-Introduction

Self-presentation on Instagram has become one of the factors contributing to feelings of insecurity among college students. Participants tend to place great importance on the self-image they project through photos, videos, and Stories. Before sharing content, participants often worry about how others will judge them—such as being compared to others, receiving negative comments, or being deemed unattractive.

This situation was experienced by the informant, a Communication Studies student at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, who stated that:

“Yes, I sometimes have doubts and wonder if this is good enough or not, and whether my friends will give positive feedback or negative criticism. Even though I know it’s just my own overthinking.” (Informant 4: Linda Permatasari, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

This suggests that the student lacks confidence or feels insecure when posting on Instagram because they fear how others will judge them. The informant also added that when posting videos, the feeling of insecurity is much greater because, in their view, videos feel more personal due to the inclusion of voice and movement, leading them to frequently consider how their appearance, speaking style, and content will be received by others.

In addition, another opinion was expressed by an informant—a student in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program at the Faculty of Education and Science—who stated that:

“Yes, I’m the type of person who asks for advice or checks first before posting something—whether it’s a personal photo or not—so I tend to think it’s better to ask for advice first. That way, if it’s not appropriate, I won’t post it. I’m also the type who doesn’t keep posts up for long; I usually delete them after a short while.” (Informant 2: Najwa Khoirun Nisa, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus II)

The informants’ statements indicate that the process of self-presentation on Instagram is carried out with great caution and social consideration. Informants tend to seek advice or opinions from others before posting content—particularly personal photos—as a way to anticipate potential negative judgments. Their hesitation to post content and tendency to delete posts shortly after reflect a lack of confidence in presenting themselves in the digital public sphere.

b) Social Presence

Students are aware of their social presence on Instagram. Although Instagram provides a space for interaction through features such as likes, comments, and messages, the presence of other users does not always foster a sense of emotional closeness. Informants felt a sense of social connection at first, but these connections tended to be limited to online interactions and did not always reflect genuine closeness.

This situation corresponds to the experience of the informant, a student in the Communication Studies program at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, who stated that:

“It only feels real in the virtual world; I don’t feel particularly close to other people. Friends on Instagram stay on Instagram, and friends in the real world stay in the real world.” (Informant 3: Rizky Agustian Maslo, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

A similar view was expressed by Infoman, a student in the Management Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, who stated that:

“Even though there are interactions like likes, comments, or story replies, the connection doesn’t feel real. The kind of connection that truly feels real is usually only with people I already know in real life.” (Informant 6: Mutiara Rizka Nirmala, December 23, 2025, UGJ Campus I)

The second informant’s statement indicates that social presence on Instagram is perceived as limited and superficial. Interactions on Instagram—such as friendships, likes, comments, and story replies—are perceived as taking place solely in the virtual realm without fostering genuine emotional closeness. The informants perceive a clear separation between social interactions on Instagram and those in the real world, believing that genuine closeness is only felt with people they have met in person beforehand.

Meskipun terdapat aktivitas interaksi yang cukup intens di Instagram, hal tersebut tidak secara otomatis menciptakan rasa kehadiran sosial yang kuat. Interaksi yang terjalin cenderung bersifat simbolis dan tidak mendalam, sehingga tidak sepenuhnya memenuhi kebutuhan akan kedekatan dan pemahaman emosional. Kondisi ini menunjukkan bahwa kehadiran sosial di Instagram belum mampu menggantikan kualitas hubungan sosial di dunia nyata, dan dalam konteks tertentu justru dapat menimbulkan perasaan hampa. Temuan ini

bahwa keterbatasan kehadiran sosial di media sosial berpotensi menunjang perasaan *insecure* pada mahasiswa, karena interaksi yang ada tidak selalu memberikan rasa diterima dan dipahami secara utuh.

2. The “Insecure” Phenomenon Among Instagram Users at Swadaya Gunung Jati University

The results of this study will be presented through findings obtained from interviews regarding the phenomenon of insecurity among Instagram users among students at Swadaya Gunung Jati University. This study is based on Eric Patterson’s (2022) Theory of Insecurity and the Social Media Theory from Kaplan & Haenlein (2020), as a framework for analyzing the informants’ experiences and perceptions. All participants in this study are active users of the social media platform Instagram, who use it to seek information, engage in social interaction, and fill their free time in their daily lives.

Ownership of an Instagram account encourages individuals to present a self-image that is perceived as the best version of themselves in the digital space. This situation indirectly influences how individuals assess themselves and compare themselves to others, which in turn contributes to feelings of insecurity among college students. Data from the interviews indicate that the feelings of insecurity experienced by the informants are closely linked to their personal emotional state, family environment, and the use of Instagram as a space for interaction and self-presentation.

a) Lack of Emotional Support from the Family Environment

Families play a crucial role in providing the experiences and core values that shape an individual’s personality. Support from family members—whether parents or siblings—is particularly significant during the early stages of a person’s life. Family support can have either a positive or negative impact on an individual’s development. Support and affection from family can enhance mental health and self-confidence. Conversely, a family environment marked by stress and conflict can hinder their emotional and social development. For example, individuals who frequently experience conflict at home struggle to build healthy relationships with their friends. Therefore, it is crucial for families to provide a healthy and encouraging environment. By offering the right kind of support, families can help individuals develop healthy attitudes and behaviors, and prepare them to feel more confident.

In this study, the emotional support provided by families to the informants varied. As revealed in interviews with the informants—who are students in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program at the Faculty of Education and Science—they stated that:

“Her emotional support usually focuses on the future—she tells me not to give up because the journey is still long and there are goals to achieve.” (Informant 1: Risma Al Fauziyah, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus II)

The interview results indicate that families provide emotional support by offering positive affirmation to the informants regarding their determination to pursue their future aspirations. This helps address feelings of insecurity so that the informants remain confident in their efforts to achieve their goals.

Different interview results were reported by an informant, a student in the Communication Studies program at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, who stated that:

“Support from my family is there, though it’s minimal, because everyone is busy and every family’s culture is different. So, while there is support, it’s minimal; I draw my strength from within myself.” (Informant 3: Rizky Agustian Maslo, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

The results of the interviews indicate that not all students receive full emotional support from their families. The informant received minimal emotional support from their family due to their busy schedules. As a result, the informant had to rely on themselves for emotional support.

b) Unmet Physiological Needs

The fulfillment of physiological needs is a fundamental aspect of maintaining an individual's well-being, both physically and psychologically. Each individual has their own way of satisfying and fulfilling their basic physiological needs. In this study, all informants demonstrated an effort to adapt in fulfilling their basic physiological needs in a manner consistent with their circumstances and capabilities. Informants chose to meet their needs as necessary without forcing themselves to do things they were not yet capable of, with the aim of maintaining a sense of comfort and balance in their daily lives. This indicates the presence of adaptive strategies in dealing with limitations, so that informants continue to strive to maintain physical and emotional stability.

According to an interview with an informant—a student in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program at the Faculty of Education and Science—who revealed that:

“I meet my physiological needs by adapting to my circumstances. I make do with what's necessary and don't force myself to have or do things I can't yet afford. The most important thing is to feel comfortable and balanced.” (Informant 2: Najwa Khoirun Nisa, UGJ Campus II)

The results of the interviews indicate that the informants do not force themselves to meet their physiological needs and feel satisfied, because they do not push themselves beyond their limits; as a result, they feel comfortable and balanced in meeting the basic physiological needs they have consistently met.

However, the research findings also indicate that the fulfillment of physiological needs is inextricably linked to social support. When informants observe others whom they perceive as better able to meet their physiological needs, they experience feelings of insecurity or low self-confidence. The informants interviewed—students in the Communication Studies program at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences—revealed that:

“Yes, feelings of insecurity or low self-confidence arise when I see others leading a better lifestyle, such as frequently wearing expensive clothes or appearing to be more financially secure. These feelings usually surface when I see posts on social media or when I'm on campus.” (Informant 4: Linda Permatasari, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

The results of the interview concluded that the informant feels insecure when seeing social media posts or while on campus regarding other people's lifestyles—specifically concerning physiological needs—which the informant perceives as being better than what they themselves have. The informant also added that in such situations, they try to adapt to their surroundings, even though they are aware of their own limitations. This feeling of insecurity is characterized by feelings of inferiority and a tendency to compare oneself to others, especially when seeing others who appear more put-together and lead more organized lives. This situation indicates that the fulfillment of basic needs is not merely perceived as physical fulfillment but is also linked to an individual's self-assessment and self-esteem within a social context.

c) Lack of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in various situations (Mukhlisa et al., 2024). Emotional feelings are generally recognized through changes in mood, such as becoming more sensitive or easily fatigued;

some often find it difficult to clearly articulate what they are actually feeling. This condition makes it difficult for informants to manage their emotions effectively, so feelings of doubt and lack of self-confidence tend to persist and resurface easily, especially when facing situations that create social pressure, whether in real life or on social media. However, some other informants noted that they sometimes experience significant emotional changes.

According to an interview with Infoman, the interviewee—a student in the Management Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business—revealed that:

“Sometimes I also feel confused about my own feelings and find it hard to explain what I’m actually feeling.” (Informant 6: Mutiara Rizka Nirmala, December 23, 2025, UGJ Campus I)

In such situations, the informant tends to feel emotionally low because they do not understand their own feelings. However, when the informant finds themselves in such a situation, they take a deep breath to calm their heart and mind and offer themselves positive affirmations that they can handle their problems.

In contrast, the situation is the exact opposite of what Infoman experienced; the student interviewed, a Communication Studies major in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, revealed that:

“I’m aware of the feelings I’m experiencing; sometimes the emotions that surface are a mix of exhaustion, sadness, and anxiety, to the point where it takes me longer to clearly identify and understand those feelings.” (Informant 4: Linda Permatasari, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

The informant’s statements indicate that they possess an initial emotional awareness but still struggle to identify and understand emotions clearly and deeply. The emotions they experience arise simultaneously—such as fatigue, sadness, and anxiety—creating a mixed and unstructured emotional state. As a result, the informant requires more time to process and make sense of the feelings they are experiencing.

d) Lack of Transparency

The study found that students’ openness in expressing their feelings and personal issues remains situational. In general, informants tend to suppress their thoughts and emotions due to fear of negative judgment, concern that they might be seen as overreacting, and fear that their personal stories might be misinterpreted or spread. However, some informants also indicated that openness is possible under certain conditions, particularly when they feel sufficiently trusting and safe with the person they are sharing with. As expressed by an informant:

“Both are possible; sometimes it depends on the nature of the issue or problem. If I really need to, I’ll talk to a friend about minor problems, but for major problems, it’s better to keep them to myself.” (Informant 1: Risma Al Fauziyah, December 22, UGJ Campus II)

A similar view was also expressed by an informant who stated that:

“I choose to keep family matters to myself; I only share them with my immediate family, such as my biological siblings. When it comes to college life, I tend to talk to my closest friends within the student organization because we see each other so often.” (Informant 2: Najwa Khoirun Nisa, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus II)

The statements of both informants indicate that openness in discussing problems is situational and selective. Openness is largely determined by the severity of the problem at hand; minor issues may still be shared with friends or family, whereas more serious problems tend to be kept to oneself.

e) Lack of Hospitality

A lack of warmth in social interactions is one of the factors linked to feelings of insecurity among college students who use Instagram. Informants tend to act awkwardly and keep their distance when interacting with new acquaintances. This behavior stems from nervousness, a fear of saying the wrong thing, and concerns about being judged negatively by others. One such view was expressed by an informant who stated that:

“When I meet new people, I tend to keep my distance and act stiff because I’m afraid of saying the wrong thing.” (Informant 5: Ratu Triyanti Salsabila, December 23, 2025, UGJ Campus I)

Another perspective was shared by an informant who stated:

“When meeting new people, I tend to be a bit awkward and keep my distance at first. It takes me a while to feel comfortable, but once I get used to them, I can become more friendly and open.” (Informant 6: Mutiara Rizka Nirmala, December 23, 2025, UGJ Campus I)

The statements made by Ratu Triyanti Salsabila and Mutiara Rizka Nirmala indicate a tendency toward unfriendly behavior in the early stages of social interaction, particularly when dealing with strangers. Behaviors such as keeping one’s distance, acting stiff, and feeling awkward emerge as forms of caution and fear of saying the wrong thing or receiving negative judgments from others. This condition reflects low self-confidence in new social situations, which is closely related to feelings of insecurity. Nevertheless, Mutiara Rizka Nirmala’s statement also indicates that this unfriendly attitude is temporary and situational. As comfort and closeness increase, the informants are able to display a more friendly and open attitude.

Based on interviews with six student informants from Swadaya Gunung Jati University, all of the informants reported having experienced feelings of insecurity, albeit to varying degrees and in different forms, and for different reasons. This indicates that insecurity is a fairly common psychological phenomenon among students, particularly in today’s digital age.

The varying degrees of insecurity are evident in how each informant interprets and responds to these feelings of self-doubt. Some informants experience mild insecurity and are able to manage it on their own, while others feel a more pervasive sense of insecurity and have not yet fully overcome it. Some informants exhibit insecurity in the form of difficulty opening up, while others show it more prominently as self-dissatisfaction.

3. Efforts by Students at Swadaya Gunung Jati University to Address the Phenomenon of Insecurity Among Instagram Users

Feelings of insecurity are frequently experienced by students and arise in various situations, particularly when the informants feel they are being compared to others or find themselves in situations that involve social evaluation. The informants are aware of their doubts and lack of self-confidence, and thus make various efforts to overcome them.

The informant mentioned that feelings of insecurity arise when seeing qualities in others that the informant lacks. However, the informant also revealed that:

“I’ll ask myself what my strengths are; I realize that every person has a different personality and their own unique qualities. No one is lacking, and no one is superior.” (Informant 3: Rizky Agustian Maslo, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

In addition, when feelings of insecurity arise, the informant also tries to regain their self-confidence. As the informant explained:

“I am aware of my strengths and my weaknesses. If possible, I try to find a way around them. Life isn’t always perfect, but no matter what, I have to make peace with myself.” (Informant 3: Rizky Agustian Maslo, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

However, there are also students who feel insecure when they see other people’s posts, which make them feel inadequate. This is what the informant experienced. However, when

those feelings of insecurity arise, the informant can cope by hiding or muting the posts of the people who make them feel that way. As the informant explained,:

“Most often, I mute or hide posts from people who make me feel inadequate. I also try to remind myself that what they post is just a glimpse of the good parts of their lives—not the whole picture—so I shouldn’t always compare myself to others and should instead focus on the strengths I have.” (Informant 4: Linda Permatasari, December 22, 2025, UGJ Campus III)

From these two informants, it is evident that the approach taken to address feelings of insecurity involves engaging in self-dialogue or talking to oneself to recognize one’s strengths and weaknesses. The informants recognize that every individual has a unique personality and life experience, so there is no absolute standard for judging oneself as better or worse than others. This awareness reflects an effort toward self-acceptance as the first step in overcoming feelings of insecurity.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

This study examines the phenomenon of insecurity among Instagram users at Swadaya Gunung Jati University. Based on interview results, this phenomenon arises not only from social media use alone, but is also largely influenced by the individual’s internal state and immediate environment. The findings of this study are analyzed using Eric Patterson’s (2022) Theory of Insecurity and the Social Media Theory from Kaplan & Haenlein (2020).

Based on the research findings, it was found that some students do not fully feel emotional support from their families, which contributes to feelings of insecurity. Informants tend to keep personal problems to themselves—especially those related to family—and share them only with a very limited circle of people, or do not disclose them at all. This situation indicates a lack of safe spaces for students to openly express their feelings within the family environment.

A lack of emotional support from family can lead to an individual’s inability to manage emotions in a healthy way. According to Eric Patterson (2022), emotional support from one’s immediate environment, particularly family, plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of security and self-confidence. When these emotional needs go unmet, individuals tend to seek recognition and validation from other environments, including social media. In the context of this study, Instagram serves as an alternative space for students to gain attention and acceptance, albeit in a superficial manner.

In addition, limited emotional support from family also plays a role in how students cope with social pressure. When students do not feel sufficiently supported or understood by their families, they become more vulnerable to feelings of doubt, anxiety, and low self-confidence. This situation is exacerbated by students’ tendency to compare themselves to others on social media, which often portrays a seemingly more idealized version of life. Without adequate emotional support, students struggle to build the psychological resilience needed to cope with such social comparisons.

Feelings of insecurity arise from unmet physiological needs. This sense of unmet physiological needs can also stem from social media posts—particularly on Instagram—that showcase such aspects, causing students to feel insecure because they feel dissatisfied with their own unmet physiological needs while others seem to fulfill them. This situation can then trigger feelings of low self-esteem, envy, and social anxiety, as students begin comparing their economic circumstances to the seemingly more stable lives of others. As a result, the focus on meeting basic needs is disrupted by the pressure to follow a certain lifestyle. If this persists, students may experience prolonged stress that affects their mental health, academic motivation, and self-confidence in daily life.

In addition to physiological factors, a lack of emotional intelligence is also a key factor in the development of insecurity. Students struggle to clearly identify and understand the

emotions they are experiencing because these emotions are often a mix of fatigue, sadness, and anxiety. This limitation in self-awareness makes it difficult for students to effectively manage negative emotions. In the context of Patterson's theory (2022), this condition makes individuals more prone to getting caught up in feelings of doubt and a lack of self-confidence, especially when faced with intense social comparison on Instagram.

The research findings also indicate a lack of openness in expressing personal feelings and issues. Students' openness is selective and situational; minor issues may be shared with certain friends, while more significant problems tend to be kept to oneself. This attitude leads to negative emotions that are not properly expressed. According to Patterson (2022), the habit of bottling up feelings can foster a sense of insecurity and increase vulnerability to insecurity, as individuals do not receive adequate emotional support.

This lack of openness is closely linked to a lack of emotional support from the family. Research findings indicate that some students do not fully feel emotional support from their families, making them reluctant to disclose personal issues, particularly those related to the family itself. The lack of emotional support from the family environment deprives students of a safe space to openly express their emotions. According to Patterson (2022), family emotional support plays a crucial role in fostering an individual's sense of security and self-confidence. When these emotional needs go unmet, students tend to seek validation from other environments, including social media, which can ultimately reinforce feelings of insecurity.

Another factor is a lack of friendliness in social interactions, particularly when students meet new people. Awkwardness, keeping one's distance, and fear of saying the wrong thing manifest as forms of social anxiety and self-protection. Nevertheless, these behaviors are temporary and can give way to friendlier interactions once students feel more at ease. This suggests that a lack of friendliness is not a fixed trait, but rather a response to feelings of insecurity in new social situations.

When facing feelings of insecurity, students also demonstrated efforts to cope with them. These efforts include self-reflection, internal dialogue, acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses, and making peace with oneself. Additionally, students employ social media management strategies, such as muting or hiding posts that trigger feelings of insecurity. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2020), these actions reflect an individual's efforts to control their social media experience so that it does not negatively impact their psychological well-being.

However, aspects of self-presentation and social presence on Instagram also play a role in reinforcing feelings of insecurity. Students tend to be very cautious about how they present themselves on Instagram, such as seeking advice before posting, feeling hesitant, or even deleting posts shortly after uploading them. This indicates a pressure to project a self-image that aligns with social expectations. Meanwhile, social presence on Instagram is perceived as limited, as interactions like likes and comments have not yet been able to create genuine emotional closeness. This situation causes students to continue feeling emotionally unaccepted and misunderstood, even though they are active online.

The results of this study indicate that the phenomenon of insecurity among college students who use Instagram stems from the interaction between internal and external factors, including physical condition, emotional intelligence, self-disclosure, emotional support from family, and social interactions on social media. Therefore, managing feelings of insecurity requires not only individual awareness but also support from one's immediate environment and a healthier, more mindful use of social media.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study on the phenomenon of insecurity among Instagram users among students at Swadaya Gunung Jati University, it can be concluded that the use of Instagram plays a significant role in triggering and reinforcing feelings of insecurity among students. Instagram's visual features, which emphasize self-presentation, the number of likes and comments, and certain lifestyle posts, encourage students to engage in social comparison, which impacts their self-perception and self-confidence.

The phenomenon of insecurity experienced by college students is influenced not only by social media use but also by internal and external factors. Internal factors include a lack of emotional support from family, limitations in meeting physiological needs, low emotional intelligence, and a tendency to suppress feelings. Meanwhile, external factors primarily stem from interactions on Instagram that showcase ideal standards regarding appearance, lifestyle, and achievements, thereby triggering feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction with oneself.

This study also found that students employ various strategies to cope with feelings of insecurity. These strategies include self-reflection, self-acceptance, building inner resilience, and managing social media use in a healthier and more moderate way. Additionally, support from the social environment—such as family and friends—plays a crucial role in helping students reduce feelings of insecurity.

Thus, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of insecurity among college students is the result of a complex interaction between individual psychological factors and the dynamics of social media use. Therefore, awareness and strong digital literacy are essential so that students can use social media wisely, maintain their mental health, and build more stable self-confidence in the digital age.

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