American Psychological Association

Technology, Mind & Society
2021 Conference Proceedings

© 2021 The Author(s)
ISBN:

http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xxxxxxx

"You Liked That Instagram Post?!" An Experimental Study on the Impact of Instagram Likes on Negative Emotions and Behaviors in Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Selena I. Quiroz[1] , Thao Ha[1], and Samantha F. Anderson[1]
[1]Department of Psychology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

During adolescence, engagement in romantic relationships and social media are both high. Research with adults indicates that social media can elicit jealousy and conflict within relationships, yet little research investigates these associations among adolescents. The current study utilized a between-subjects experiment to investigate the effects of one's romantic partner hypothetically 'liking' an Instagram post on negative emotionality and behaviors (N = 713; M_{age} = 13.73). Expectancy violation theory (Burgoon & Jones, 1976) acted as the guiding theoretical framework to examine violations of relationship-specific expectancies for online behavior. Results indicated that adolescents whose partner 'liked' an Instagram post from someone who was the same gender as the participant (gender match) felt more upset and jealous compared to adolescents whose partner 'liked' a post from someone who was a different gender from them (no gender match). A mediation model indicated these negative emotions mediated the association between a gender match and investigative behaviors (i.e., looking to see if their partner 'liked' other posts from the individual), such that a gender match was associated with higher negative emotions which in turn was associated with higher investigative behaviors. Findings suggest that adolescents perceive these individuals as threats to their relationship and their partner 'liking' Instagram posts from these individuals violates their expectancies, eliciting negative emotions and behaviors. Future research should further investigate the complicated interactions that adolescents experience on social media within the context of their romantic relationships as these types of events may occur frequently and may negatively impact emotional wellbeing over time.

Keywords: adolescence, social media, romantic relationships, negative emotions, jealousy

This article was published [to be completed by publisher].
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1340-3426
The authors acknowledge the following people: We greatly appreciate the efforts from the superintendent, the principals, and the staff of the schools in facilitating data collection, and the students who participated in this study.
This research was supported in part by start-up funds from Dr. Thao Ha, Dr. Adam Rogers (Brigham Young University), and Dr. Olga Kornienko (George Mason University). This study was registered with OSF (https://osf.io/zvx4u) . The authors have the following conflict of interest to disclose: The authors do not have any conflicts of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Selena I. Quiroz, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, 85281, United States. Email: selena.quiroz@asu.edu