



## PERSPECTIVE

## The darker side of social media - Living the InstaLie

Scroll down and like, scroll down even further and like again- sounds familiar? Yes, it is that same old routine that sneakily devours many hours of our lives. The double-tap has become almost second-nature and not snapping highlights of your day for your snapstory isn't even an option anymore. But between the numerous status updates, shares and likes, lurk issues far more concerning both for the individual and the society as a whole.

The phenomenon of social media has taken over our lives, crawling into every little aspect of it. Whether it is to quickly catch up with an old friend abroad or to wish an acquaintance a happy birthday, the role of social media is immense. But what happens when things go too far? Exactly where does one stand when the line between what is online and what is real gets blurred?

"I used to feel underappreciated since my boyfriend wouldn't post pictures with me while all my other friends were all about PDA. I genuinely started believing they had the perfect relationship and I didn't. It was only at one of our slumber parties that I realised things aren't as colourful as they

made it seem online," Mona, a college student explained.

What one often forgets is that things in reality are not what they seem like on social media. Sugarcoated in such a manner, the world of social media gives people an impression that the grass is greener on the other side. We "aww" at that couple who constantly uploads photos, tagging them as #relationshipgoals or marvel at that friend whose posts consist of motivational lines on how to be happier. But we fail to see exactly what goals are truly important and can not differentiate between the flowery words of our friend's status and what they may actually be feeling.

When one is provided with such a partisan view of other's lives, it is easy to think that other people have it better. You constantly compare your real life to the virtual one of others. You stare for hours at pictures of other girls captioned #nomakeup, and slouch a little more as you realise that you'd never look half that pretty. You cringe a little when you watch your neighbour take the world tour that you cannot afford and your confidence goes down a tad bit every time

you see one of your friends get a promotion while you've been stuck in the same job for years.

"Social media creates unrealistic expectations. I started working out 7 days a week because I wasn't as skinny as those Instagram models, and even after working out, I would cry every night because I felt too fat. Yes, I knew a lot of that was photoshopped, but somewhat my mind just wouldn't comprehend it," Alisha, a working woman, explained.

Negativity is a leech that feeds off of one's insecurity. Your brain starts wondering whether you are good enough and all your shortcomings cloud over you. The search for validation starts; guess where you choose to find it? That's right. Social media again. The constant need to let the world think you have an amazing life takes over, and you post half-hearted statuses on trending topics you don't really care about or upload pictures pretending to enjoy things that don't really matter to you. So, while you hide beneath swarming likes, loves and wows, you feel better about yourself for successfully being able

to create a picture-perfect illusion online.

In fact, people even admitted to having been so used to social media that they've actually forgotten how to properly talk to people in real life. "I can write the perfect caption for literally any photo, but I still struggle to say hi while meeting people," Zaman, a social media enthusiast, says.

And thus the cycle continues. Everyone puts so much effort in being part of this illusion that they lose themselves in the process. They forget to enjoy the things that actually make them happy. What no one stops to ask is why has it come to a point where one's self-worth relies on others' perception. Are we so involved in capturing the moment for instagram that we have forgotten to be in the moment? One really needs to step back and think. It is okay, even natural, to not be perfect. What is not okay is to measure one's self-worth by likes. Social media was created for us, not the other way round.

By Adiba Mahub Prama  
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