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Research Article

The 'Influencers' of Instagram: A Discriminant Analysis of Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation Among Those Whom People Follow

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Abstract

Social media influencers are the individuals who shape audience's attitudes through various blogs, tweets, and use of various social media. These individuals have established their credibility in some industry, have a large audience whom they can influence or persuade to act on their recommendations. Social media influencers are what they are due to their attractive behaviour exhibited in social media platforms. This study aimed to investigate Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem, and Fear of Negative Evaluation of these stars of social media. Data was collected from 500 Instagram users (aged 18-30 years), who were classified into 250 active social media users and 250 passive social media users. Machiavellianism was assessed using Mach-IV Scale (Mach-IV), Self-Esteem using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Fear of Negative Evaluation using Brief FNE scale (BFNE). The obtained results have highlighted the discriminating power of Machiavellianism, self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation between active and passive users, and the probable cause behind the findings.

Keywords: social media; self-esteem; active social media users; Instagram; passive social media users; Machiavellianism; fear of negative evaluation.

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Social media influencers have taken the world by storm since the last decade. They have become unelected and informal world leaders, since these are the individuals who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media (Freberg et al., 2011). They are the users of social media, who have established their credibility in a particular industry, have a large audience and can influence or persuade them to act based on their recommendations (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). It is apparent and unquestionable that social media use has grown exponentially since the last decade. According to statistical data of 2022, 58.4% of the world's population or an approximate 4.64 billion people use social media (Chaffey, 2022). Instagram is one of the currently popular social media sites. Founded by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, around 2010, Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking site. Instagram is essentially an 'insta-ntaneous' method to capture and share pictures or videos from life, as it happens, with friends, family and acquaintances. Instagram has approximately 500 million daily active users. Interestingly, India has the highest number of Instagram users with 180 million users. Of the 1.386 billion active users of Instagram, 30.94% of it access Instagram regularly (Dean, 2022). By 2025, the social media platform will have around 1.44 billion monthly active users, representing 31.2 percent of the global internet user population (Dixon, 2024).

This recent trend of social networking has generated considerable research in the field. The research has been largely confined to users who only view content mostly and less on those who create most of the content on these sites. More specifically, most research in this branch has been focused on passive social media usage (PSMU), giving less focus to active social media usage (ASMU). According to Verduyn et al. (2015), active social media usage refers to online behaviours that facilitate 'direct exchanges' among users such as liking, commenting, sending messages, and otherwise engaging with other users. Passive social

media usage (PSMU) has been defined as the monitoring of others without direct engagement. PSMU has been referred to as 'composed communication' (Burke & Kraut, 2016), 'lurking' (Osatuyi, 2015) etc. by other researchers. In the current research, ‘active social media user’ of Instagram has been defined as an Instagram user who has been on Instagram for more than one year, has more than 1.000 followers, posts Instagram posts or stories at least once in two weeks, and has an average of likes per post on Instagram that is one-third of the total number of followers the user has. A ‘passive social media user’ would be an Instagram user who has been on Instagram for more than 1 year, posts less than two Instagram posts or stories per month, and spends, on average, more than 30 minutes per day on Instagram. Thus, the active users would constitute those people whose content reaches a large number of people- the social media influencers. So, these are the active social media users or ASMUs which become social media influencers because of their involvement over other users’ lives on social media.

The study sought to analyze contemporary trends in social media usage. On social media the so called ‘cool-culture’ is the ideal culture. It makes a person more socially acceptable if he or she portraits an image that is considered ideal for most of the people. The cool-culture of social media shares many of the traits of the ‘cool syndrome’ or Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is a concept or rather, a personality trait put forth by psychologists Richard Christie and Florence L Geis, that refers to a personality trait centered on manipulativeness, callousness, and indifference to morality (“Machiavellianism", 2022). The study was meant to investigate if the depiction of ideal image by Instagram influencers is actually a mask used by the machiavellianistic individuals. The current study operationally defines Machiavellianism as the extent to which social media influencers are willing to manipulate the content they put on social media so as to garner fame and popularity.

Similarly, the pictures posted on the Instagram generally portrait the high self-esteem of the influencer. Since it is expected that influencers generally put the best of their images might be after putting dozens of filters. According to William James, self-esteem is the feeling of self-worth that one derives from the ratio of their actual successes to their pretensions. Individuals compare their potential successes formed out of values, goals and aspirations with their actual successes. The feeling of self-worth derived out of this comparison determines one's self-esteem (Carr, 2004). The study intended to investigate the reality behind the self-esteem of influencers. In the context of the current study, self-esteem refers to the sense of self-worth one derives out of their comparison between their actual self and the self they portray on social media.

Given the challenge of curating and sharing high-quality images to influence others, the pursuit of social approval reflected in likes and follower growth can serve as a motivating reward for these efforts. Thus, social approval must be imperative for influencers. Hence influencers might be constantly preoccupied with the fear of loss of social approval, in other words with the Fear of Negative Evaluation. The construct of fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was first put forth by David Watson and Ronald Friend in 1969, in the psychological test to measure the same. Fear of negative evaluation has been defined as apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively, by Watson & Friend (1969). It is essentially the fear of the loss of social approval. The study intended to investigate the role of Fear of Negative evaluation for Instagram users. In context of current study, fear of negative evaluation has been considered as the extent to which the social media users are afraid of being negatively evaluated by other users or the society in general, based on the content they put on social media platforms.

Method

Objectives

The following key objectives were derived from these underlying intentions of the study:

1. To investigate if Machiavellianism can discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.
2. To investigate if self-esteem can discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.
3. To investigate if fear of negative evaluation can discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. Machiavellianism will discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.
2. Self-esteem will discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.
3. Fear of negative evaluation will discriminate Instagram users into ASMUs or PSMUs.

Participants

The study sample comprised 500 Instagram users aged between 18 and 30 years. It included 260 female and 240 male participants, all of whom came from middle to upper socio-economic backgrounds. The sample included mainly the students (UG, PG, PHD), teaching staff, non-teaching staff and administrative staff from 10 higher educational institutes of India. The sample was classified into two groups: active and passive Instagram users, with 250 participants in each group. The sampling method used was convenient sampling and data was collected through online Google forms.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for ASMUs were Instagram users who have been using Instagram for more than 1 year, with more than one-thousand followers, posting content or Instagram stories at least once in two weeks, and with an average of likes per post on Instagram that is one-third of the total number of followers the user has (a minimum of 300 likes per post). The inclusion criteria for PSMUs were Instagram users who have been using Instagram for more than 1 year, posting Instagram posts or Instagram stories less than twice per month, and spending on average more than 30 minutes per day.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria for ASMUs were Instagram users who have been using Instagram for less than 1 year, with less than 1000 followers, posting content or Instagram stories less than once in two weeks, and/or with an average of likes per post on Instagram that is less than one-third of the total number of followers the user has, that is, less than 300 likes per post. The exclusion criteria for PSMUs were Instagram users who have been using Instagram for less than 1 year, posting Instagram posts or Instagram stories twice or more per month, and/or spending on average less than 30 minutes per day.

Measures

Machiavellianism: MACH-IV questionnaire developed by Christie and Geis (2013) was used. The questionnaire consists of twenty items, 10 assessing high Machiavellianism and 10 assessing low Machiavellianism. Participants have to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree to the statements on a 6-point Likert scale: 1- ‘Strongly Disagree’, 2 - ‘Disagree’, 3 - ‘Slightly Disagree’, 4 - ‘Slightly Agree’, 5 - ‘Agree’ and 6- ‘Strongly Agree’. The reliability coefficient ranged from 0.70 to 0.76 as reported by many studies. Higher the score, higher the Machiavellianism.

Self-Esteem: Rosenberg’s (1965) 10-items Self-Esteem Scale was used. The scale used a 4-point Likert scale. RSE demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. The test demonstrates concurrent, predictive and construct validity using known groups. The RSE correlates significantly with other measures of self-esteem, including the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory.

Fear of Negative Evaluation: The Brief fear of negative evaluation scale, developed by Leary (1983) was used. The Brief FNE scale follows a 5-point Likert scale with 12 items. Score of

the respondent is the sum of all item responses, the minimum of which is 12 and maximum, 60. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.90. Validity of the Brief FNE was tested by correlating it with the original FNE scale and was found to be 0.96.

Procedure

The study aimed to explore variables that contribute to social media usage behaviour. The independent variables of the study constitute Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation and the dependent variable is social media usage behaviour, the two levels of the latter being active and passive social media use. The research studied how Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation vary between active and passive social media users. The study also aimed to explore to what extent Machiavellianism, and Self-Esteem predicts active social media use and to what extent fear of negative evaluation predicts passive social media use. The data was collected using online questionnaires.

The study was conducted while giving respect to all the ethical guidelines of field. Online consent form was circulated before actually collecting the data. Only the participants who gave willful consent for participation were enrolled for this study. Further, to give respect to all gender orientations, non-binary option was added as the first option followed by female and then male, in the consent forms as well as in the demographic sheet. Instructions for filling the data were clearly mention on online forms. For any kind of queries, the contact number and email id of administrator were mentioned on the forms. The participants who were interested in knowing about their scores and interpretation of those scores were given especial appointments (either telephonically or in-person) as per their convenience. The participants were given the option of ‘prefer not to mention’ against every information asked in demographic sheet. Once data was collected from the sample of 500 social media users, discriminant analysis was conducted to analyse the obtained data.

Results

The independent variables Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation underwent normality tests first in order to determine whether parametric or non-parametric tests were to be used to analyse the data.

Table 1.
Skewness, Kurtosis and Shapiro Wilk's Significance for Machiavellianism, Self-esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation

Variable	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Shapiro Wilk's significance**
Machiavellianism	-0.023	-0.307	0.790
Self-esteem	-0.242	0.049	0.099
Fear of Negative Evaluation	-0.163	-0.922	0.055

The results in Table 1 depicts the analysis of normality for all three independent variables, which are Machiavellianism, Self-esteem and Fear of Negative Evaluation showed that these variables are nearly normally distributed and may be subjected to statistical analysis meant for normally distributed variables.

Discriminant Analysis

The purpose of discriminant analysis was to find the best predictor variable from Machiavellianism, self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation to discriminate between active and passive social media users.

Table 2.
Group Statistics of Active Social Media Users and Passive Social Media Users

SMU		*M*	*SD*	Valid N (list wise)	
				Unweighted	Weighted
ASMU	FNE	30.44	9.323	250	250.000
	SE	19.54	3.739	250	250.000
	Mach	70.74	9.139	250	250.000
PSMU	FNE	32.77	9.274	250	250.000
	SE	22.51	4.852	250	250.000
	Mach	73.49	8.135	250	250.000
Total	FNE	31.65	9.263	500	500.000
	SE	21.07	4.533	500	500.000
	Mach	72.08	8.653	500	500.000

Table 2 indicates that all 500 cases were used in the analysis. Also, the weighted number of observations is equal to the unweighted number of observations in each group.

Table 3

Wilk's Lambda, F and Significance of Machiavellianism, Self-esteem, and Fear of Negative Evaluation

	Wilks' Lambda	*F*	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
FNE	.984	.669	1	498	.423
SE	.889	4.803	1	498	.037
Mach	.972	1.018	1	498	.328

The results in the Table 3 shows the ANOVA results, the smaller the Wilk's lambda, the more important that predictor variable is to the discriminant function. Thus, self-esteem is the most significant to discriminate between ASMU and PSMU, followed by Machiavellianism. Fear of negative evaluation has the least discriminant function, i.e., fear of negative evaluation discriminates the least between ASMU and PSMU.

Table 4.

Correlation between Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem, and Fear of Negative Evaluation

Pooled Within-Groups Matrices				
		FNE	SE	Mach
Correlation	FNE	1.000	.339	.121
	SE	.339	1.000	.094
	Mach	.121	.094	1.000

Table 4 depicts the within groups correlation matrix that shows negligible correlation between the predictors (i.e., Machiavellianism, Self-esteem, and Fear of negative evaluati

Table 5.

Wilks' Lambda and Canonical Correlation

Function	Wilks' Lambda	% of Variance	Cumulative%	Canonical Correlation
1	.873(.001***)	100.00	100.00	.767

****p* < .001

Results in Table 5 show that the Wilks' Lambda of .873 has significant value ($p < .001$) thus the group mean differ significantly. The small significant value indicates that the discriminant function does better than chance at separating the groups. The canonical value of .767

suggests that the two-groups discriminant model explains 58.36% (Canonical Correlation squared) of the variation in the grouping variable, i.e., whether a respondent belongs to active social media users (ASMU) or passive social media users (PSMU).

Table 6.
Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients of Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem, and Fear of Negative Evaluation

Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients	
Variable	Function
	1
FNE	.004
SE	.910
Mach	.339

Table 6 depicts that Self-esteem has the highest canonical discriminant function coefficient, it has the highest discriminating ability for the groups of dependent variables, followed by Machiavellianism and Fear of negative evaluation. The Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients suggests which variable has the highest explanatory power. That is, it gives insight into which independent variable has the highest power to explain the classification into two levels of the dependent variable. In this case, it was checked if Machiavellianism, Self-esteem, or Fear of negative evaluation had the highest power to explain the ASMU and PSMU classification. The results showed that Self-esteem had the highest explanatory power at 0.910, followed by Machiavellianism at 0.339 and then Fear of negative evaluation has the least explanatory power at 0.004.

Table 7.
Pooled Within-Groups Correlations Between Discriminating Variables and Standardized Canonical Discriminant Functions for Machiavellianism, Self-Esteem, and Fear of Negative Evaluation

Structure Matrix	
SE	.946
Mach	.433
FNE	.301

Table 7 shows that Self-esteem has the largest absolute correlation with the groups of social media users, followed by Machiavellianism and Fear of negative evaluation, thereby again

suggesting Self-esteem as the best predictor for the groups of social media users. Loadings around .30 or less may be removed from the model. Since the value for Fear of negative evaluation (= .301) is nearly around .30, and has also been found to have lowest discriminatory and explanatory powers too, this predictor variable may be dropped from the model. This indicates that Fear of negative evaluation is not discriminating well between ASMU and PSMU.

Table 8.
Predicted Group Membership of ASMU and PSMU in Percentage

		SMU	Predicted Group Membership		Total
			ASMU	PSMU	
Original	Count	ASMU	125	125	250
		PSMU	63	187	250
	%	ASMU	**50.0**	50.0	100.0
		PSMU	25.0	**75.0**	100.0
Cross-validated	Count	ASMU	125	125	250
		PSMU	100	150	250
	%	ASMU	**50.0**	50.0	100.0
		PSMU	40.0	**60.0**	100.0

a. 73.5% of original grouped cases correctly classified.
b. Cross validation is done only for those cases in the analysis. In cross validation, each case is classified by the functions derived from all cases other than that case.
c. 57.0% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified.

The classification results in the Table 8 suggest that 73.5% of original grouped cases are correctly classified. This implies that the model is a good fit for the study.

Discussion

The present study has been an attempt to understand which of the predictor variables; Machiavellianism, Self-esteem or Fear of negative evaluation is the best discriminant to the classification of Instagram users into ASMUs and PSMUs. Results of discriminant analysis revealed that Self-esteem and Machiavellianism predicts a user's membership in ASMU-

PSMU category significantly, while Fear of negative evaluation was not found to discriminate well between ASMUs and PSMUs.

Self-esteem has been found to be the best discriminant in this study. This implies that based on self-esteem an Instagram user could be categorized as ASMU or PSMU. The possible explanation for this could be that although parenting style of the parent, social comparisons, good personal adjustment, positive affectivity, personal autonomy, internal locus of control, greater self-knowledge, setting appropriate goals, fulfilling personal commitments, ability to manage stress well etc. (Baumeister, 1997, as cited in Carr, 2004), does influence self-esteem as a personality factor, situational factors in the context of social media usage, like the number of likes received on one's profile (Burrow & Rainone, 2017) and hours spent on social media (Jan et al., 2017) etc. influence self-esteem as well. This could be the reason why self-esteem is said to change during life's transition stages (Carr, 2004). Thus, as self-esteem changes with one's usage pattern, it implies that there exist situational factors in addition to personality factors that influence a user's self -esteem. Now consider here the trend of self-esteem for both groups of users. Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation of one's own worth. So sometimes an individual might feel an enhanced self-esteem by the way others perceive him or her. Social approval often enhances self-esteem for some people (Kimble & Helmreich, 2013). Just as found by MacDonald et al. (2003), the social approval or disapproval tends to influence the self-esteem of some people. Similar to this is social acceptance, where self-esteem is increased with a higher social acceptance. Self-esteem is also viewed through an association with specific self-evaluations. In most such cases these specific self-evaluations are determined through appearance and popularity. Along with these are the social qualities such as kindness and understanding, which increase social acceptance and therefore self-esteem too (Anthony et al., 2007). So, for some, an ideal 'public image' might be necessary for maintaining a high self-esteem. And when it comes to the cyber world, the index for social approval, social acceptance and overall view of self in the eyes of the world comes from likes, comments and followers. These are the ASMUs who sometimes try to become people-pleasers by posting their random acts of kindness and understanding of the world, or sometimes through the uploads of self-pictures of perfect beauty, seeking likes, comments and followers. Every lost follower or every disapproval in the form of dislike might be threatening to their self-esteem, making them undergo an everyday struggle of getting more likes, comments, and followers. Thus, they get trapped in the vicious cycle of approval-disapproval from their followers. Platforms like Instagram might be a tool for these ASMUs to maintain, retain and heighten their self-esteem through social

approval and acceptance. Hence self-esteem as a construct is significantly discriminating into ASMUs and PSMUs where ASMUs are likely to be more into

Instagram usage due to the feed which Instagram provides to their self-esteems. A previous study has also found similar results that showed that the number of likes individuals received on their Facebook profile pictures was positively associated with self-esteem (Burrow & Rainone, 2017), implying self-esteem would be higher in ASMUs.

The second-best discriminant for this study was found to be Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is less discriminatory than self-esteem could be due to Machiavellianism, being a personality trait that is relatively stable and not affected by any situational factors. Hence, Machiavellianism being a personality trait alone and self-esteem being influenced by both personality and situational factors, may be the reason why self-esteem is a better discriminant than Machiavellianism in categorising a user as an active or passive social media user. Yet, Machiavellianism significantly discriminates between ASMUs and PSMUs, which suggests that being Machiavellianism can make a user either ASMU or PSMU. Before understanding the likelihood of belonging to which group, it is pivotal to understand the characteristic behaviours of a Machiavellian. Machiavellians generally are sly, distrusting, deceptive and manipulative people. They are characterized for their striving for money, power and status, and their use of cunning influence tactics. They believe in actively promoting themselves (Abell & Brewer, 2014), suggesting that they need social admiration. For machiavellians, every act of cunningness is justified if it brings politically correct results (Ramsay, 2012). Further, machiavellians are sensitive to social context (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012). These people often use emotional manipulations (Austin et al., 2007) to achieve their goals. Summarizing all these characteristics, one major conclusion can be drawn for the personality of machiavellian which is that machiavellians are self-promoting individuals in the social world and if self-promotion becomes their goal for social admiration, status and power, they can use any of the manipulative tactics to win it over. At this point consider the environment that the cyber world provides to social media users. The users of the online world have all the freedom to hide their identity or display altogether some other identity. In contrast to real world interactions, the information or images uploaded on social media have layers of filters over them. The emotions displayed through these images generally are in contrast to real life events. According to research conducted by Brunel University in London, people who are insecure, regularly post updates about their relationship status in order to attract attention, and likes, so as to distract themselves from their feelings of insecurity. In the same way, some tend to post about their achievements so as to get the boost of likes and comments, reinforcing their own sense of self. In this sense, the Facebook ecosystem can

form a sort of validation for the personality traits and types (Connor, 2015). This could be applicable for various other domains of social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc. So, deception, lying and manipulation to gain likes and comments, to influence the viewers of social media, to make an exceptional impression on viewers, and to prove others that one is leading a life different and wonderful than others: all these acts on social media are likely to feed the fragile egos of those machiavellians on social media. If we compare the environment of social media and the personality of machiavellians, both are fully compatible. The online world provides these machiavellians every opportunity which makes them express their personalities. Hence this cyber world becomes the ideal platform for machiavellians for expressing their traits and characteristics. If ASMUs and PSMUs are to be compared, ASMUs are more involved in online behaviours that facilitate 'direct exchanges' among users such as liking, commenting, sending messages, and otherwise engaging with other users, where they try to win over their audience every time and giving importance to their online-image, whereas PSMUs generally monitor others online without any direct engagement. So, the ‘social media influencers’ or the AMSUs are more likely to be machiavellians when it comes to social media usage, specifically the Instagram usage in this study. Hence machiavellians as a construct is significantly discriminating into ASMUs and PSMUs where ASMUs are more likely to be machiavellians. Few previous studies have also found similar results like higher levels of machiavellians predicting less congruence between the true self and the Instagram-self (implying social media influencing), indicating inauthenticity on social media (Geary et al., 2021); and machiavellians women being more dishonest in their self-promotion (Abell & Brewer, 2014), an integral part of social media influencing.

Besides these two variables, Fear of negative evaluation was not found to be discriminating well between ASMUs and PSMUs. This suggests that fear of negative evaluation might not be any criteria to categorise an individual either as ASMU or PSMU. PSMUs are calm users who undergo composed communication on online platforms (Burke & Kraut, 2016) such as Instagram. Since people with insecurities generally upload more on social media than the people who are secure (Connor, 2015), PSMUs might not be taking others' opinions as an index for their evaluation. ASMUs on the other hand frequently post images, acts or videos on Instagram. Since their intent is to get more and more likes, comments and followers, whatever they post might reveal the best (although fake) version of their personality, acts or thoughts. They are more likely to display an image which is publicly pleasing. Since they are posting a self-created ideal version online, they might not have any fear of negative evaluation from the online community. They generally know that whatever they post has high

social acceptance. Hence, they might not fear any negative evaluation of it. ASMUs are the social media influencers. Their intent is to influence others. Thus, they behave often on social media in ways that increase their social acceptability and furnishes their public image. In layman's terms, these ASMUs, in a way, are selling their image online where they know what their customers (i.e., online community) demand. What they display on Instagram is exactly what the online community cherishes. Since they display ideal or nearly perfect information (in the form of images, videos, thoughts, acts etc.) on Instagram, they rarely fear negative evaluation from the online community. Overall, fear of negative evaluation as a construct could not significantly discriminate between ASMUs and PSMUs.

All these findings from this study have added a new perspective into the existing literature on these variables. Still the study did have some limitations. The sample was categorised into Active social media users (ASMU) and Passive social media users (PSMU). Due to the criteria set for classifying the sample into ASMU and PSMU, it was difficult to obtain sample that fulfilled all the criteria for both the categories. Hence, convenient sampling was used. Due to the difficulty in obtaining sample, the sample was confined to a group of only 500 participants. Another limitation of this study could be that gender as a variable was not considered in this study. This could be left for the ambit of future research. Future research could also aim at obtaining data from the actual giants of Instagram- the social media influencers with thousands or millions of followers. Users of other social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. could be included in future research. So far, this study is considered it as set a foundation as the research literature on the variables considered in this study is nearly negligible considering the influence of social media platforms such as Instagram on its users. This study has been an attempt to be a base for successive research in this area.

Conclusions

The discriminating power of variables with regard to active and passive social media users has given insight and added to the knowledge pool about what variables discriminate between social media influencers and passive users, and what doesn't. These findings are of importance as very less studies have been conducted on social media influencers. An analysis of variables like Machiavellianism, self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation has bridged the research gap that existed pertaining to traits of social media influencers. Self-esteem being the best discriminant followed by Machiavellianism, to discriminate between active and passive users is a new finding in this area of research in social media usage.

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