

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENVY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS**

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In today's digital era, social networks have evolved from being mere communication platforms into complex socio-psychological environments that shape individual identity, emotional well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Within this space, individuals are continuously engaged in social comparison, a phenomenon that often intensifies feelings of envy.

Envy is a negative emotional state that arises when an individual perceives others to possess desirable qualities, resources, or opportunities that they themselves lack. It can significantly impact self-esteem, personal values, and psychological stability.

Currently, the manifestation of envy on social media, its formation in the consciousness of young users, and the underlying psychological mechanisms are pressing issues for scientific exploration.

According to Henri Tajfel's theory of social identity, individuals define themselves as members of particular social groups and assess themselves based on this affiliation. This process draws a psychological boundary between the "ingroup" and the "outgroup." The behavior of social media users often aligns with this theory. For example, a person may wish to be associated with successful influencers or entrepreneurs on Instagram and strive to become a member of that group. This internal motivation — "I should be like them" — develops from social identification. If the person fails to achieve this perceived group membership, feelings of envy may arise, particularly in those with low self-confidence, reduced self-worth, or a sense of social exclusion.

Leon Festinger's theory of social comparison posits that people evaluate themselves and their values by comparing themselves to others. On social media, the constant visual exposure to others' achievements — such as travels, purchases, lifestyle, and successes — triggers comparisons. When users feel inferior as a result of these comparisons, envy emerges. This is especially common among passive users who mainly observe and evaluate others, reinforcing their own sense of inadequacy.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that people learn not only through direct experience but also by observing others. Known as "modeling," this process

leads individuals to adjust their behavior based on others' actions and outcomes. Similarly, emotional responses on social media, including envy, may form through observation. For example, when a user sees someone's financial or social success, they may seek to emulate or surpass them. If they cannot achieve this, envy develops. According to Bandura, envy can be learned socially, particularly in environments where envy is culturally normalized or encouraged.

In the context of modern life where social networks play a central role, emotional regulation, social comparison, and the formation of reactions are reaching new dimensions. Envy becomes a key emotional response, closely tied to social media activity.

Firstly, envy arises when individuals perceive others' achievements, opportunities, or social status. This aligns with Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, which describes how individuals feel dissatisfaction or inadequacy when comparing themselves to others.

Secondly, the visual nature of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok — which highlight users' lifestyles, possessions, and achievements — serves as a trigger for envy. The phenomenon known as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) drives people to compare their lives constantly, further increasing envy levels.

Thirdly, research shows that passive users (observers who rarely post) experience envy more intensely than active users. Psychologically, this stems from self-perception as a "second-class person," devaluing one's own achievements and experiencing a heightened sense of social inferiority.

Fourthly, envy differs by age and gender. For example, young women are more likely to experience envy related to appearance, personal milestones, or material success — influencing their engagement on social networks.

From a psychological perspective, envy can be categorized into constructive (motivating) and destructive (damaging) forms. Constructive envy may drive personal growth and competitiveness, while destructive envy can lead to denial of personal values, resentment, and social withdrawal.

Thus, envy on social media is not only a personal emotional reaction but also a broader social concern. It highlights the need for psychological interventions, digital education, and media literacy training, especially among youth.

In conclusion, social media exerts a powerful influence on individuals' emotional worlds, often manifesting through envy. Understanding this relationship is an urgent task for contemporary psychology, requiring both preventive and corrective approaches.

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