Tolerance for Disagreement in Communication via Instagram

Dora Njegovan[*], Bianka Frigan[*], Tihana Babić[**]

[*] VERN University, Zagreb, Croatia
[**] Algebra University College, Zagreb, Croatia
donjegovan@vernnet.hr, bifrigan@vernnet.hr, tihana.babic@algebra.hr

Abstract - **Instagram represents the most used social media in the Republic of Croatia among the age group between 18 and 34 year olds, which serves them to publish edited photos and videos. Nowadays, Instagram also represents one of the dominant digital communication channels and the ability to communicate successfully as one of the most important life and business skills is equally important in the virtual world. Successful communication requires tolerance, and intolerance leads to a lack of understanding in communication and disagreements that can lead to efficient or unsuccessful cooperation. The research presented in this paper aimed to determine how students self-assess their tolerance for disagreement on Instagram, whether they enjoy when there is a disagreement in communication via Instagram, if they find it amusing, if they try to resolve it, or if they try to avoid the disagreement. The research was conducted on a sample of students from Algebra University College and VERN University in the winter semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The results showed that students consider the differences in opinions to be generally useful, they prefer talking to others who have the same beliefs as them and agree with their opinions.**

Keywords - tolerance; disagreement tolerance; communication; digital communication; Instagram

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms like Instagram allow billions of users to post, create and share different information and content. They also allow users to use them for communication with different people around the world. There are many different social media platforms, and Instagram, along with Facebook, represents the most used social media in the Republic of Croatia, among the age group between 18 and 34 year olds [1],[2].

Nowadays, Instagram also represents one of the dominant digital communication channels, and the ability to communicate successfully as one of the most important life and business skills is equally important in the virtual world.

Successful communication requires tolerance, and intolerance leads to a lack of understanding in communication and disagreements, which can lead to efficient or unsuccessful cooperation. Instagram tends to have a lot of cyber bullyingon the platform, even though the platform does not promote violence on the internet, which mostly comes from disagreeing on different topics. That's why this research was conducted to see how VERN' University and Algebra University College students tolerate disagreement in communication via Instagram.

II. INSTAGRAM

Instagram represents one of the dominant digital communication channels. The studies according to the Paw Research Centre that were conducted in 2018, show that Instagram, together with YouTube, is one of the most popular platforms among adolescents [3].

The last update (28/06/21) shows that the total number of daily Instagram users has come to 1.9 billion users worldwide. Daily, there are more than 500 million Instagram stories posted by active users and the monthly number of users is more than two billion, according to the latest update (22/02/22) [4].

Instagram is a social media platform where people can upload photos and videos and share them with their followers or specific group of people/friends. They can also like, comment, and share other posts with their friends. If a person wants to have an Instagram account, they must be 13 or older. If the accounts represent someone younger than 13, they must state in the account bio that the account is managed by a guardian of the child [5].

Other research has shown that most teens describe the effect of social media as positive (31 %) or negative (24 %), but the largest number of them (45 %) say that the effects are neither positive nor negative [3].

Instagram tends to have a lot of cyber bullyinginvolving violence on the platform, even though the platform does not promote violence on the internet. Violence, in general, comes from disagreeing on certain topics, which leads to discussions and intolerance for others' beliefs [6],[7].

III. COMMUNICATION ON INSTAGRAM

The word "communicate" comes from the word "common", which in Latin means "to share" [8]. Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between two or more people. Effective communication is crucial in all areas of life, from personal relationships to business and politics. Firstly, communication is essential because it allows individuals to connect and build relationships with others [8].

Tolerance is an essential aspect of effective communication. Communication involves the exchange of ideas, opinions, and information among people, and tolerance allows people to express themselves freely without the fear of discrimination or judgment. "Tolerance does not imply condescension, but benevolence, readiness for respectful dialogue and cooperation" [9], it "is the

ability and skill to tolerate something foreign, to put up with someone else's opinion or character" [9]. "Mastering linguistic tolerance helps to solve the problem of verbal aggression in communication, reduce the level of discourse, reduce the negative impact of discourse, express a tolerant attitude to the object, and ultimately achieve a communicative intention" [9].

It is necessary to consider tolerance in the context of social media, taking into account that very often people do not have the feeling that there are people on the other side, because of "the lack of effective feedback about the damage and pain that their behavior can cause the victims, as well as the opinion that their behavior cannot be considered immoral because there are no visible consequences and the distance from the damage caused by their activities" [10],[11].

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The research was conducted among VERN' University and Algebra University College students in the academic year 2022/2023, during January and February 2022.

The goal of the research was to examine how people react to intolerance on social media platforms such as Instagram.

The survey was conducted on Google Forms, where the participants anonymously answered 13 statements and the students could choose to which level they agree or disagree with each statement. Each statement had five possible answers according to the Likert scale of agreement.

The statements which were used in the research were adjusted according to Gilbert Hoffman's research [12]. Convenience sampling was chosen as a sampling method , and the total number of respondents to all survey questions was 141 (N =141).

B. Research Sample

The participants were female and male students from the age of 18 to 27+. Most were from the age of 18 to 21 (33.3 %), 27 % were from the age of 21 to 24, 19.9 % were from the age of 24 to 27, while 19.9 % of themwere 27+ years old. 63.1 % (89) were female and 36.9 % (52) male students from VERN' University and Algebra University College.

78.7 % were attending the bachelor's degree program and 21.3 % attended the master's degree program.

VERN' University (66 %)
- Economics of entrepreneurship (19.4 %)
- Film, television, and multimedia design (1.1 %)
- Journalism (1.1 %)
- Public relations and media studies (18.3 %)
- Business informatics (3.2 %)
- Technical management (1.1 %)
- Tourism (10.8 %)
- Internet of Things (IoT) (2.2 %)

- Cyber communications and network science (16.1 %)
- IT management (8.6 %)
- Management of sustainable tourism development (4.3 %)
- Entrepreneurial management (1.1 %)
- Accounting and finance (2.2 %)
- Human resources management (8.6 %)
- Management of business communications (2.2 %)

Algebra University College (34 %)
- Software engineering (29.2 %)
- System engineering (8.3 %)
- Multimedia computing (8.3 %)
- Data science (6.2 %)
- Digital marketing (27.1 %)
- Visual communications design (20.8 %)

C. Research results

Students from VERN' University and Algebra University College were first asked if they use Instagram. If they answered "no", the survey ended for them (from a total of 141 participants, 14 (9.9 %) do not use Instagram). If they answered "yes" (91.1 % of the respondents), they were given 13 statements, which included the following:

1. IT IS MORE FUN TO ENGAGE IN A DISCUSSION WHERE THERE'S A LOT OF DISAGREEMENT

The research results have shown that most of the students, ie. 36.5 % of students, don't have an opinion on this given statement *"It's more fun to engage in a discussion on Instagram where there's a lot of disagreement"*. 28.6 % strongly disagree, 20.6 % disagree with the statement, 7.9 % strongly agree and 6.3 % agree with the statement (as presented in Table 1). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 1 was N = 126.

TABLE 1 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 1 (N = 126)

It is more fun to engage in a discussion on Instagram where there's a lot of disagreement	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	36	28.6 %
Disagree	26	20.6 %
No opinion	46	36.5 %
Agree	8	6.3 %
Strongly agree	10	8 %

2. ENJOYING TALKING TO PEOPLEON INSTAGRAM WHO HAVE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

Results have shown that 10.4 % of students strongly agree, and16.8 % agree with the following statement *"I enjoy talking to people on Instagram who have different points of view than mine"*. 22.4 % agree while 22.4 % strongly disagree. 28 % of students don't have an opinion

(as presented in Table 2). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 2 was N = 125.

TABLE 2 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 2 (N = 125)

I enjoy talking to people on Instagram who have different points of view than mine	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	28	22.4 %
Disagree	28	22.4 %
No opinion	35	28 %
Agree	21	16.8 %
Strongly agree	13	10.4 %

3. PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS

Results have shown that 16.8 % of students strongly disagree and 24.8 % disagree with the following statement *"I don't like to be a participant in communication on Instagram where people have different opinions",* while 12.8 % strongly agree and 16.8 % agree with the statement. 28.8 % of students don't have an opinion on this statement. The total number of student respondents to survey statement 3 was N = 125 (as presented in Table 3).

TABLE 3 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 3 (N = 125)

I don't like to be a participant in communication on Instagram where people have different opinions	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	21	16.8 %
Disagree	31	24.8 %
No opinion	36	28.8 %
Agree	21	16.8 %
Strongly agree	16	12.8 %

4. TALKING TO OTHERS WITH THE SAME BELIEFS

The results have shown that most students (36 %) agree and 16 % strongly agree with the statement *"I prefer talking to others who have the same beliefs as mine".* 8 % disagree, 8 % strongly disagree when it comes to talking with others who have the same beliefs as them, and 32 % of survey respondents don't have an opinion on this statement (as shown in Table 4). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 4 was N = 124.

TABLE 4 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 4 (N = 124)

I prefer talking to others who have the same beliefs as mine	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	10	8 %
Disagree	10	8 %
No opinion	40	32 %
Agree	44	36 %
Strongly agree	20	16 %

5. DIFFERENCES IN OPINION ARE USEFUL

The fifth survey statement: *"Differences in opinion are generally useful"* has 51.2 % of students agreeing with the statement, 32 % strongly agreeing, 0.8 % of students strongly disagreeing and 2.4 % disagreeing with the statement. 13.6 % of survey respondents don't have an opinion on this statement (as presented in Table 5). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 5 was N = 125.

TABLE 5 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 5 (N = 125)

Differences in opinion are generally useful	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	1	0.8 %
Disagree	3	2.4 %
No opinion	17	13.6 %
Agree	64	51.2 %
Strongly agree	40	32 %

6. CHANGING THE SUBJECT OF THE CONVERSATION WHEN THERE IS A DISAGREEMENT

Most students, 39.2 % of them, have responded to the statement *"I prefer to change the subject of the conversation on Instagram when there is a disagreement",* that they don't have an opinion. 16 % disagreed and 24 % strongly disagreed, while 11.2 % agreed and 9.6 % strongly agreed with the statement (as shown in Table 6). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 6 was N = 125.

TABLE 6 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 6 (N = 125)

I prefer to change the subject of the conversation on Instagram when there is a disagreement	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	30	24 %
Disagree	20	16 %
No opinion	49	39.2 %
Agree	14	11.2 %
Strongly agree	12	9.6 %

7. TENDING TO CREATE DISAGREEMENT IN CONVERSATION BECAUSE IT SERVES A PURPOSE

The results have shown that 52 % of students strongly disagreed with the statement *"I tend to create disagreements in Instagram conversations because they serve a useful purpose",* while only 5.6 % strongly agreed. 4 % of them agreed and 21.6 % disagreed with the statement. 16.8 % of students have no opinion when it comes to creating disagreements in conversations on purpose (as shown in Table 7). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 7 was N = 125.

TABLE 7 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 7 (N = 125)

I tend to create disagreements in Instagram conversations because they serve a useful purpose	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	65	52 %
Disagree	27	21.6 %
No opinion	21	16.8 %
Agree	5	4 %
Strongly agree	7	5.6 %

8. ENJOYING DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHERS ON INSTAGRAM ABOUT TOPICS THEY DISAGREE ON

Most students, 33.9 % of them, strongly disagreed and 16.9 % disagreed with the statement *"I enjoy discussions with others on Instagram about topics where we disagree".* 29 % of students marked the statement with "No opinion", while only 8.9 % strongly agreed and 11.3 % agreed with the statement (Table 8). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 8 was N = 124.

TABLE 8 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 8 (N = 124)

I enjoy discussions with others on Instagram about topics where we disagree	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	42	33.9 %
Disagree	21	16.9 %
No opinion	36	29 %
Agree	14	11.3 %
Strongly agree	11	8.9 %

9. DISSLIKING TO DISAGREE WITH OTHER PEOPLE

The same percentage of students, 22.4 %, marked "No opinion" and "Strongly agree" on the statement *"I don't like disagreeing with other people on Instagram",* while 25.6 % "Agree". The same results have shown that 13.6 % of students strongly disagreed and 16 % disagreed with the statement (as presented in Table 9). 22.4 % of students have no opinion. The total number of student respondents to survey statement 9 was N = 125.

TABLE 9 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 9 (N = 125)

I don't like disagreeing with other people on Instagram	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	17	13.6 %
Disagree	20	16 %
No opinion	28	22.4 %
Agree	32	25.6 %
Strongly agree	28	22.4 %

10. RATHER LEAVE THE CONVERSATION THAN CONTINUE TO DISAGREE

Most students, 25 % of them, strongly agreed with the following statement *"If I could choose, I would rather leave the conversation than continue the disagreement",* while 15.3 % of them strongly disagreed (as shown in Table 10). The second marked answer to the statement was "No opinion" (24.2 %). 12.9 % of students disagreed and 22.6 % of them agreed. The total number of student respondents to survey statement 10 was N = 124.

TABLE 10 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 10 (N = 124)

If I could choose, I would rather leave the conversation than continue the disagreement	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	19	15.3 %
Disagree	16	12.9 %
No opinion	30	24.2 %
Agree	28	22.6 %
Strongly agree	31	25 %

11. AVOIDING TALKING TO PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT OPINIONS

The results show that most students, 33.9 % of them, don't have an opinion. 19.4 % of students disagreed and 17.7 % strongly disagreed with the statement *"I avoid talking to people on Instagram who I don't think will agree with me".* 12.9 % agreed with the statement and 16.1 % strongly agreed (as shown in Table 11). The total number of student respondents to survey statement 11 was N = 124.

TABLE 11 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 11 (N = 124)

I avoid talking to people on Instagram who I don't think will agree with me	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	22	17.7 %
Disagree	24	19.4 %
No opinion	42	33.9 %
Agree	16	12.9 %
Strongly agree	20	16.1 %

12. ENJOYING DISAGREEING WITH OTHERS

To the twelfth survey statement: *"I enjoy disagreeing with others on Instagram",* 51.6 % of students marked their answer as "Strongly disagree" and 15.3 % marked "Disagree", while only 4.8 % of students strongly agreed with the statement (as shown in Table 12). 22.6 % of students have no opinion on the following statement, while 5.6 % agreed with the statement. The total number of student respondents to survey statement 12 was N = 124.

TABLE 12 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 12 (N = 124)

I enjoy disagreeing with others on Instagram	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	64	51.6 %
Disagree	19	15.3 %
No opinion	28	22.6 %
Agree	7	5.6 %
Strongly agree	6	4.8 %

13. DIFFERENCES ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION

The largest number of respondents (36.8 %) had no opinion on the (final) 13th statement: *"Differences in opinion on Instagram encourage me to communicate"*. The second largest number of respondents (22.4 %) strongly disagreed and 18.4 % disagreed with the statement (as presented in Table 13). 13.6 % agreed and 8.8 % strongly agreed. The total number of student respondents to survey statement 13 was N = 125.

TABLE 13 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENT 13 (N = 125)

Differences in opinion on Instagram encourage me to communicate	Frequency of responses	Students in percentages
Strongly disagree	28	22.4 %
Disagree	23	18.4 %
No opinion	46	36.8 %
Agree	17	13.6 %
Strongly agree	11	8.8 %

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research conducted for the purposes of this paper was carried out on a sample of students from VERN' University and Algebra University College in Croatia, during the academic year 2022/2023. The students that were surveyed in the research were from different study fields and were between the ages of 18 to 27+.

The goal of this research was to see how students from VERN' University and Algebra University College react to disagreements in communication via Instagram, whether they enjoy when there is a disagreement in communication via Instagram, if they find it amusing, if they try to resolve it, or if they try to avoid it.

The results show that most students who participated in the research think that differences in opinions are generally useful, but the research also shows that they don't like disagreeing with others on Instagram. Also, it shows that they like to hear each other's opinions, but don't like discussing them.

In addition to the stated above, from the answers of the participants, it is not entirely clear why, but it can be noted that a quarter or even a third of students do not have an opinion about any of the statements that were featured in the research.

It can be concluded that even though the surveyed students said that the differences in opinion are generally useful, they prefer talking to those who have the same beliefs as them and agree with their opinions.

This research results gave a closer look at tolerance for disagreement in communication via Instagram, although it was conducted on a small sample of students from VERN' University and Algebra University College in Croatia. Numerous studies have been conducted around the world among young people on Instagram and the impact it has on their quality of life, but as far as communication itself is concerned, more research has been conducted on the subject of cyberbullying than on tolerance for disagreement in communication via Instagram. The focus of this research on the tolerance of disagreement in communication via Instagram is the contribution of this paper, which is manifested in the approach to cyber communication, that is, on Instagram from a different angle; the focus was shifted from harmful consequences to the possibilities of tolerance. The research results can be used for researches to follow, on different social media platforms, or comparisons with students from other universities.

REFERENCES

[1] NapoleonCat, "Instagram users in Croatia", December 2022, Available at https://napoleoncat.com/stats/instagram-users-in-croatia/2022/12/ [accessed: 10. 2. 2023.]

[2] NapoleonCat, "Facebook users in Croatia", December 2022, Available at https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-croatia/2022/12/ [accessed: 10. 2. 2023.]

[3] M. Anderson, J. Jiang: "Teens, social media & technology", DC: Pew Research Center, Washington, 2018. Available at https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/ [accessed: 10. 2. 2023.]

[4] S. Aslam: "Instagram by the numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts", Omnicore, 2018. Available at https://www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/

[5] Instagram Help Center, 2023, Available at https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573 [accessed: 16. 2. 2023.]

[6] P. Suciu, "Cyberbullying Remains Rampant On Social Media", Forbes, 2021. Available at https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573 [accessed: 25. 4. 2023.]

[7] D. M. B. Tarigan, L. Riwu, S. Monika, "Use of Cyberbullying Language on Instagram Social Media", ICSS 2022. Available at https://www.shs-conferences.org/articles/shsconf/pdf/2022/19/shsconf_icss2022_01047.pdf [accessed: 25. 4. 2023.]

[8] K. E. Rosengren: "Communication: An Introduction", SAGE Publications Ltd, London, 2000.

[9] J. Zhu: "Manifestation of Tolerance in the Aspect of the Communicative-Pragmatic Approach", Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research, volume 517, Atlantis Press, 2020. . Available at https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125951682.pdf [accessed: 20. 2. 2023.]

[10] V. Bilić: "Načini učenja, online aktivnosti i ishodi odgoja net-generacije", Istraživanje paradigmi djetinjstva, odgoja i obrazovanja, Učiteljski fakultet, Zagreb, 2015, pp. 593-607.

[11] T. Babić: „Promjena komunikacijske paradigme u visokom obrazovanju pod utjecajem društvenih medija, Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2021. Available at https://www.academia.edu/42565081/Dru%C5%A1tveni_mediji_i_upravljanje_komunikacijama [accessed: 20. 2. 2023.]

[12] G. Hofmann: "Komunacijske kompetencije fizioterapeuta", Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2023. Available at https://repozitorij.ffzg.unizg.hr/islandora/object/ffzg:4022 [accessed: 16. 2. 2023.]