



## Buying likes to belong: Huron professor looks at deceptive Instagram behaviour

**LONDON, ON** - For some, accumulating likes on Instagram is the ultimate goal, but one that comes at a very real cost.

Huron University College Psychology professor Dr. Tara Dumas's recent study published in *Computers in Humans Behaviour* has been attracting attention and was recently featured on popular Psychology website PsyPost.

The study, which surveyed a total of 463 emerging adults who use Instagram, found that deceptive like-seeking behaviour occurred among 12-55% of the sample. Deceptive like-seeking behaviours include dishonest methods of obtaining likes, such as buying likes/followers or changing one's physical appearance with editing software.

"It was during discussions with my students that I first learned of the great lengths that some young people go to secure likes from other people on Instagram. I learned that a subset of these behaviours involve an element of deception such as buying followers or changing one's physical appearance in photos using software before uploading them to Instagram."

"I found this surprising and also interesting from a social comparison and self-validation perspective. I discussed this with my colleague, Dr. Maxwell-Smith at Western University and we both agreed that there appeared to be a great need for more research in this area," Dr. Dumas says.

Deceptive like-seeking behaviour (for which there were no apparent benefits) was associated with narcissism and a decreased sense of peer belongings. Filters and hashtags--classified as normative like-seeking behaviour--were associated with stronger senses of peer belonging. "There was no clear trend with one type of like-seeking behavior being associated with a greater number of likes received more than the other," Dr. Dumas concludes.

Although the results are correlational in nature and do not assess causality, Dr. Dumas stresses that multiple avenues for further study are possible. "For our part, Dr. Maxwell-Smith and I are currently examining how social dynamics within young people's friend groups predict their like-seeking behaviour on Instagram."

"I think an important next step is to explore the potential outcomes/consequences of deceptive like-seeking behavior," Dr. Dumas says. As she puts it, "I also hope our research helps to encourage larger discussions around the role of social networking sites in young people's lives, why some individuals are moved to adopt more manipulative routes to gain online recognition and the implications of this for our society."

Dr. Dumas co-authored this paper with a Huron Psychology student. This unique opportunity for undergraduates to actively research alongside their professors speaks to Huron's commitment to exceptional undergraduate education focused on one-one-one mentorship throughout a student's four years.