What emotions are teens expressing through Instagram comments based on the 2025 AP test score release?

Shayan Patel (Mentors: Bradley Kerr & Nora Ibrahim)

West Chester East High School
University of Wisconsin-Madison

SMAHRT SOCIAL MEDIA & ADOLESCENT HEALTH RESEARCH TEAM

Department of Pediatrics — UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

UW Health Kids

Introduction

- According to the APA, nowadays, **60%** of teens face **academic stress**

- Particularly, a very stressful part in a teen's academic journey is **AP testing**

- A study done by the NIH states that out of 233 teens, **46.5%** of them used social media/the internet to study for 5+ hours a day

- As the study suggests, it is common to see teens share their AP study tips and worries on the **internet**; however, this is **before** they take their test

- Based on pre-existing studies, it was unclear on how teens shared their mental wellbeing regarding AP tests on the internet **after** their scores were released

- **The purpose of the study was to determine the presence of mental wellbeing references in Instagram comments on the 2025 AP test score release day**

Methods

Design

- We performed a content analysis of **Instagram comments** relating to teens reacting to their **2025 AP scores**

Subjects

- Our subjects were teens who commented about their 2025 AP test scores. We chose the first **5 posts** from **2025** with at least **500,000 views** that used the hashtag **#apexam**
- We then recorded the first **20 comments** from each post. This provided us with a total of **100 comments**
- We didn't include any comments that were only emojis or that didn't mention AP scores

Measures

- Each comment was categorized based on which **emotional variable** they displayed by looking at emoji usage, diction, etc. There were **7** different variables, all being different **emotions**
- The **positive** variables were "happy" and "alright", while the **negative** variables were "frustrated", "embarrassed", "disappointed", and "stressed". Another variable was "unclear/other". **Note that each comment may have expressed multiple emotional variables in one**
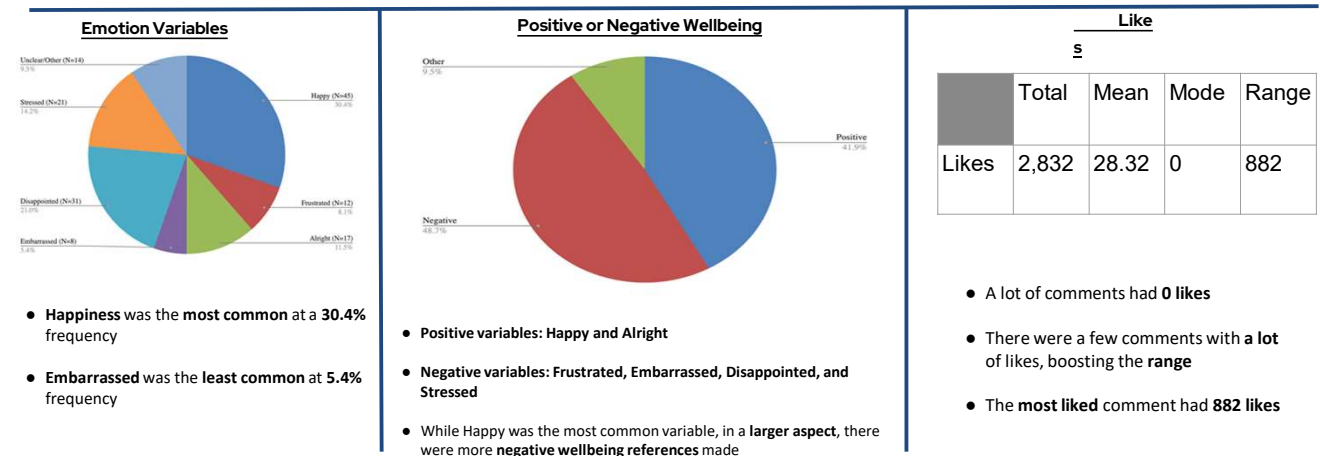- The **likes** for each comment was also recorded

Analysis

- We recorded the amount of times each variable was present, and also converted them into percentages

- We also distinguished the broader difference in **positive wellbeing and negative wellbeing** expression in the comments

- The total number of **likes** for the 100 comments was recorded, and we recorded the **mean, range, and mode**

Results

Subject Information

- **N= 100 comments**

- **The average amount of likes per comment was 28.32**

- **5 different posts** each with different themes regarding AP

Emotion Variables

Unclear/Other (N=14) 9.5%
Stressed (N=21) 14.2%
Disappointed (N=31) 21.0%
Embarrassed (N=8) 5.4%
Happy (N=45) 30.4%
Frustrated (N=12) 8.1%
Alright (N=17) 11.5%

Positive or Negative Wellbeing

Other 9.5%
Negative 48.7%
Positive 41.9%

	Total	Mean	Mode	Range
Likes	2,832	28.32	0	882

Likes

- **Happiness** was the **most common** at a 30.4% frequency

- **Embarrassed** was the **least common** at 5.4% frequency

- **Positive variables: Happy and Alright**

- **Negative variables: Frustrated, Embarrassed, Disappointed, and Stressed**

- While Happy was the most common variable, in a **larger aspect**, there were more **negative wellbeing references** made

- A lot of comments had **0 likes**

- There were a few comments with **a lot** of likes, boosting the **range**

- The **most liked** comment had **882 likes**

Conclusions

Key findings

- Interestingly, while **happiness was the most common emotional variable**, overall, there was **more negativity** when it came to teens expressing their wellbeing
- **Embarrassed was the least common emotional variable**, which may be because when a teen feels embarrassed they may feel uncomfortable sharing online
- Most comments had **0 likes**

Limitations

- There were only **2 positive** variables, and **4 negative** variables, so the wellbeing pie chart may have been **skewed** towards showing **more negativity**

Implications

- Could be used for curriculums to focus even more on emotionally **preparing students** for the test
- Could be used in future studies to test the effects of **increasing** University/College standards on **teen mental health**
- Could be used in the future to determine if any **accomodations/further support** are needed prior to AP testing

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