



## THE "ALWAYS HAPPY APPEARANCE" SYNDROME: THE IMPACT OF FALSE POSITIVITY ON MENTAL HEALTH

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### Abstract

This article explores the "Always Happy Appearance" syndrome, which is a modern manifestation of false positivity. The aim of this study is to examine how constant emotional positivity affects mental health, emotional exhaustion, and inner conflict among individuals who feel pressured to appear happy. The pressure to maintain a "constantly positive" image on social media leads to a loss of authenticity and increased psychological stress caused by continuous self-comparison with others. The findings of the study show that individuals who suppress genuine emotions experience emotional tension, lower stress tolerance, and self-dissatisfaction.

**Key words:** False positivity, emotional labor, mental health, social media, emotional exhaustion, emotional realism, self-acceptance, social pressure, psychological masking, authenticity.

### Introduction

With the rise of social media, people's emotional expression has changed significantly. On social media, individuals increasingly tend to display only the positive aspects of their lives. In this context, researchers describe this tendency as the "Always Happy Appearance" syndrome, which reflects false positivity. The tendency to present only positive aspects of life on social media encourages social comparison, dissatisfaction, and inner tension. Therefore, studying this phenomenon is especially relevant in today's society. Psychologically, this phenomenon can be explained through the concept of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), where individuals regulate their emotions to meet social expectations. As a result, while a person may appear happy externally, their internal stress and psychological pressure increase.

### "Always Happy Appearance" and False Positivity.

The "Always Happy Appearance" syndrome is characterized by an individual's effort to hide true emotions and appear positive at all times. The psychological roots of this phenomenon lie in social expectations, personal identity, and emotional labor. Studies (Wood et al., 2010) indicate that individuals who maintain false positivity experience significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and internal stress. Moreover, striving to appear constantly positive is associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labor as the process by which individuals regulate their emotions to meet social demands and expectations. For instance, service industry employees are often required to display constant smiles and positive affect in front of customers, even when they feel stressed or fatigued internally. In summary, the "Always Happy Appearance" syndrome is more than superficial positivity; it involves complex psychological processes, including emotional labor and internal conflict. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial for promoting mental health, emotional realism, and authenticity in daily life.

**Social Media and Social Pressure.**

In the study conducted for this research, the psychological impact of social media on young adults was analyzed. A survey was conducted with 100 participants aged 18-25. The results showed that 71% of participants shared only positive and successful moments of their lives online. The survey also revealed that young adults feel social pressure to remain positive: 62% of respondents stated that comparing themselves to others (social comparison) on social media made them feel less genuinely happy. These results suggest that social media may promote false positivity and negatively affect mental health. Therefore, it is essential for young adults to accept their genuine emotions, maintain emotional realism, and recognize social pressures to enhance psychological resilience.

**Mental Health and Emotional Realism.**

In the study conducted with 100 participants aged 18–30, the research examined the effects of false positivity and genuine emotion acceptance on mental health. The results were compared with previous studies (Hochschild, 1983; Wood et al., 2010) to strengthen the findings.

Emotional realism and authenticity: 72% of participants who accepted their genuine emotions and maintained authenticity reported improved mental stability and social satisfaction.

Wood et al.(2010) found similar results: authenticity reduces internal conflict and stress. Participants reported that: "I used to force myself to appear happy on social media, but I was stressed inside. Embracing emotional realism improved my mental health and made my interactions with others more meaningful".

**Emotional Labor and Social Pressure.**

In the study conducted for this research, 90 students were examined to understand how emotional labor and social pressure affect mental health in university settings. Impact of emotional labor on academic and social life: Constantly striving to appear positive increased stress in classes and caused discomfort in social interactions. Many students attempted to appear "successful and happy" on social media.

Social pressure and psychological masking: 70% of students reported being compelled to hide genuine emotions in front of peers and professors.

**The Impact of Social Media and False Positivity on Students' Mental Health.**

In the study conducted for this research 100 university students participated. The goal was to examine how maintaining a "happy and successful image" on social media ( false positivity) influences students' mental well-being. False positivity and emotional exhaustion. 64% admitted they tried to appear constantly happy online.

**The observations indicated that these students experienced poor sleep quality, fatigue, dissatisfaction and anxiety.**

These included poor sleep quality, fatigue, dissatisfaction, and anxiety.

Social comparison emerged as one of the strongest psychological stressors. 74% of students reported feeling "less successful" when viewing others' posts on Instagram, Tik Tok, or Telegram. 60% of students stated that expressing authentic emotions and occasionally posting "real mood" content improved their emotional state.

These difficulties affected three key areas: peer relationships, academic motivation, and self-confidence.

Similar findings were reported by Wood et.al.(2010), showing that authenticity strengthens emotional well-being. Digital detox: at least one day per week with no social media. Promoting emotional realism: psychological work shops and emotional awareness programs at universities: Mindful social media use: set screen time limits and avoid unnecessary comparisons.

"I always posted smiling photos even when I felt awful. When I finally wrote about how tired I was, I felt relieved. My classmates understood me better afterward".

### **The Impact of Psychological Masking and Authenticity on Students' Mental Health.**

A study with 75 students showed that many tend to hide their emotions a form of psychological masking-which directly affects their mental well-being and academic performance. One student said:"The more I hid my emotions, the more tense I felt. Being honest helped me feel relieved".

#### **Social difficulties.**

Many students felt isolated because masking pushed them away from others. This reduced authenticity in communication, consistent with Noller and Feeney (2004).

#### **Benefits of authenticity**

When students allowed themselves to be genuine, they felt emotionally lighter and more confident. Authentic students handled stress better and built stronger relationships in line with Kernis and Goldman (2006). Emotional suppression increases stress. These findings highlight the importance of emotional literacy among students and open communication skills. Authenticity strengthens mental stability.

#### **Scholars' Perspectives**

1. Grandey (2000)-Emotional labor and emotional exhaustion.

Grandey's research shows that forced positivity(surface acting) leads to emotional dissonance and higher emotional exhaustion.

2. Wood et al. (2010)-The risks of excessive positivity. The researchers emphasize that extreme or forced positivity can increase self-criticism and internal dissatisfaction.

3. R. Jurayev-Cultural roots of emotional masking.

Jurayev shows that cultural expectations related to honor and reputation often push young people to hide genuine emotions, shaping a psychological masking habit.

4. J. Yakubov-Risks of social media for youth.

Yakubov's research highlights that excessive social media use and comparison with others increase anxiety and self-doubt among students.

5. G. Shoumarov-Authenticity and mental stability.

Shoumarov's findings show that psychological well-being is strongly tied to being emotionally authentic. He warns that constant "fake smiling" increases emotional fatigue.

6. Noller and Feeney (2004) Superficial communication weakens bonds.

Masking emotions reduces interpersonal trust and closeness, especially among young people.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study show that striving to appear constantly positive increases psychological pressure among students. While emotional masking provides short-term comfort, it leads to long-term stress and emotional fatigue. In contrast, authenticity and self-

acceptance strengthen student's mental stability and social relationships. Recognizing and accepting genuine emotions is one of the key factors of students' psychological well-being.

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