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# The Emotional Impact of 'APAL': Understanding Self-Deprivation in Contemporary Society

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## Abstract:

The concept of 'apal', or envy, plays a significant role in shaping individuals' self-perception and emotional well-being within society. Rooted in social comparison and external expectations, 'apal' often leads to self-deprivation, where individuals diminish their sense of worth and potential. This study explores how 'apal' influences self-deprivation through emotional experiences such as shame and anxiety, and how societal expectations, peer comparisons, and social media amplify these effects. Using an ethnographic research design, this qualitative study was conducted in Paoay, Atok, Benguet. Data were gathered from 15 participants through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Thematic analysis was used to interpret patterns related to 'apal', self-deprivation, and identity formation. Findings reveal that 'apal' is primarily driven by social comparisons and societal pressures, leading to emotional distress, diminished self-worth, and identity loss. Participants also identified strategies to cope, including authentic self-expression, resilience, and balancing societal expectations. The influence of 'apal' is guided by relational dynamics and is further explained through Relational Theory, Self-Presentation Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the Looking-Glass Self. 'Apal' fosters a cycle of comparison, emotional struggle, and self-deprivation. By understanding its relational and societal roots, this study highlights the need to foster environments that support authenticity, mental well-being, and reduced social comparison.

**Keywords:** *Apal*, envy, self-deprivation, social comparison, identity, emotional well-being, ethnography, social media, societal expectations

## Introduction:

The concept of “apal,” or envy, is a complex emotion that has long been studied in psychological and sociological contexts. Envy, often viewed as a negative or destructive feeling, can influence various aspects of individual well-being, including self-esteem, identity, and interpersonal relationships. While envy is commonly associated with a desire for what others have, its impact extends far beyond mere desire it can deeply affect an individual’s perception of self-worth, leading to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and self-deprivation. This emotion becomes particularly potent in societies where external success is highly valued, and individuals are constantly exposed to comparisons with others, both in person and online. In the contemporary digital age, the pervasive influence of social media platforms has heightened the visibility of peer comparisons, amplifying the effects of “apal” and further complicating the way people relate to their sense of self.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to shed light on the intricate ways in which “apal” contributes to self-deprivation and shapes one’s identity in modern society. As societal pressures to conform intensify, individuals are increasingly confronted with conflicting demands: the desire to express their authentic selves and the pressure to adhere to social norms or idealized standards. By understanding how envy intersects with these pressures, this study aims to offer valuable insights into the emotional experiences tied to identity formation, particularly in the context of peer comparisons and the influence of social media. Given the growing prevalence of mental health challenges related to social comparison, this research holds significant implications for addressing the emotional struggles many individuals face today, particularly among younger generations.

One relevant case study that exemplifies the dynamics of “apal” is the experience of young adults navigating the pressures of social media. Research conducted by Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell (2018) examined the effects of

social media on self-esteem and identity formation in adolescents and young adults. The study found that individuals who spent more time on social media reported higher levels of envy and lower self-esteem, particularly when comparing their own lives to the highly curated and idealized representations they encountered online. This phenomenon was especially pronounced among young women, who were found to experience heightened feelings of inadequacy and self-deprivation when exposed to images of beauty, success, and wealth on platforms like Instagram. The study highlights how social comparison, fueled by the visibility of others’ seemingly perfect lives, can exacerbate feelings of envy and lead to a disconnect from one’s true identity.

This research also aligns with findings from another case study involving workplace environments. In a study conducted by Gretchen Spreitzer (2007), individuals in high-pressure corporate settings were observed to experience self-deprivation as a result of peer comparison and the pursuit of externally defined markers of success, such as promotions and salary increases. The study found that employees who constantly compared their achievements to those of their colleagues reported feelings of inadequacy and a diminished sense of self-worth. This case study underscores the broader societal implications of envy in relational dynamics, illustrating how envy can affect not only personal relationships but also professional environments.

By drawing on these case studies and situating them within the broader context of societal pressures, this research seeks to deepen the understanding of how “apal” operates in both personal and collective spheres. The ultimate goal is to provide recommendations for fostering environments that encourage authentic self-expression, reduce the harmful effects of social comparison, and support individuals in embracing their true identities without the weight of external judgment.

## Review of Related Literature:

“Apal” or envy is a complex and often painful emotion that arises when individuals feel

inadequate or inferior compared to others. This emotion typically involves a longing for something someone else possesses, whether it's material wealth, success, status, or qualities. It is often described as a social comparison process that highlights discrepancies in one's own life, fostering negative self-perceptions. Self-deprivation refers to the voluntary withholding of one's desires, needs, or pleasures, often due to societal pressures, personal beliefs, or negative self-perceptions. The role of "apal" in shaping self-deprivation is a significant topic, as it reveals how individuals may adjust their behaviors, sometimes choosing to withhold or deny themselves certain privileges because of social comparisons or feelings of inadequacy.

Research on envy or "apal" has evolved from focusing on its emotional consequences to examining its behavioral effects, especially in terms of self-deprivation. Studies suggest that envy is not only a psychological state but also a key driver of behaviors that contribute to social dynamics, particularly in environments that emphasize material success and status.

"Apal" can significantly impact self-esteem, leading to feelings of inferiority and diminished self-worth. Smith et al. (1996) demonstrate that "apal" often results in lowered self-esteem and negative self-perception, as individuals feel they fall short of others' accomplishments or possessions. When individuals feel envious of others, they may experience a sense of being "unworthy" of similar success or status. This can lead to self-deprivation, where they deny themselves material comforts or lifestyle choices to avoid the discomfort of comparison.

Moreover, Lange and Crusius (2015) found that "apal" often serves as an emotional signal of inadequacy, which leads individuals to make comparisons that reinforce feelings of failure. These feelings can drive self-deprivation, as individuals attempt to cope with their perceived inadequacy by withdrawing from desired luxuries, material goods, or social engagements. This withdrawal serves as an attempt to manage envy

by minimizing exposure to the sources of comparison.

Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) asserts that people assess their own worth by comparing themselves to others. These comparisons often influence their behaviors, including their tendency to either align with others or withdraw to maintain a sense of social balance. Negative social comparisons can spark feelings of "apal", which, in turn, may lead individuals to either strive for more or engage in self-deprivation by avoiding indulgences or material goods they believe they don't deserve.

Tesser and Smith (1980) further explain how social comparisons that induce "apal" lead to cognitive distortions. These distortions, such as the tendency to focus on negative attributes of the self and others, often contribute to a cycle of self-deprivation. When an individual compares themselves to someone perceived as more successful, they may perceive their own achievements as insufficient, leading to the rejection of what they have as inadequate or undeserved.

Cultural values play a significant role in shaping how "apal" manifests and how individuals respond to it. In individualistic societies, "apal" may drive people to acquire more material wealth or success to match or exceed others. Van de Ven et al. (2015) explain that in these cultures, individuals often strive to close the gap between themselves and others by acquiring material goods or increasing their social standing, even if it means engaging in behaviors that contribute to "apal" in others.

In contrast, collectivist societies may influence individuals to experience "apal" in more socially cohesive ways, such as feeling deprived to maintain harmony or avoid drawing attention. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus helps explain how individuals in different cultural contexts internalize societal expectations. In collectivist environments, there is often a stronger sense of social conformity, which can heighten the likelihood of self-deprivation when individuals

feel envious of someone’s social or material status.

Furthermore, Cohen-Charash and Mueller (2007) highlight that in organizational settings, envy can prompt individuals to engage in self-deprivation to avoid being perceived as competitive or overly ambitious. This phenomenon can mirror behaviors in larger societal contexts, where individuals suppress desires or deny themselves success in order to align with collective values.

“Apal” can drive consumption patterns, as individuals may either overconsume in an attempt to match others or underconsume to avoid appearing inferior. In consumer-driven societies, the desire to keep up with peers often leads to excessive spending or, conversely, self-imposed limits to avoid feelings of envy. Studies on consumer behavior, such as Zhu and Lee (2021), show how “apal” fuels both consumer indulgence and self-deprivation. People may refrain from purchasing certain goods or services not due to financial constraints, but as a means of distancing themselves from the perceived materialism or status-seeking behaviors of others.

This form of self-deprivation is often rooted in a desire to maintain social dignity or avoid “apal”. Parker (2011) further suggests that “apal” within consumer culture can provoke individuals to curtail indulgence, especially when they feel that enjoying material goods might trigger “apal” in others or contribute to a perception of being superficial.

While “apal” can sometimes motivate self-improvement, it often has detrimental effects on mental health, leading to dissatisfaction, anxiety, or depression. Studies such as Lange and Crusius (2015) have shown that “apal” activates negative emotions that significantly reduce emotional well-being. Furthermore, Suls and Wheeler (2000) argue that “apal” can lead to chronic negative emotional states, making individuals more prone to self-deprivation as they attempt to avoid situations that may trigger further feelings of inadequacy.

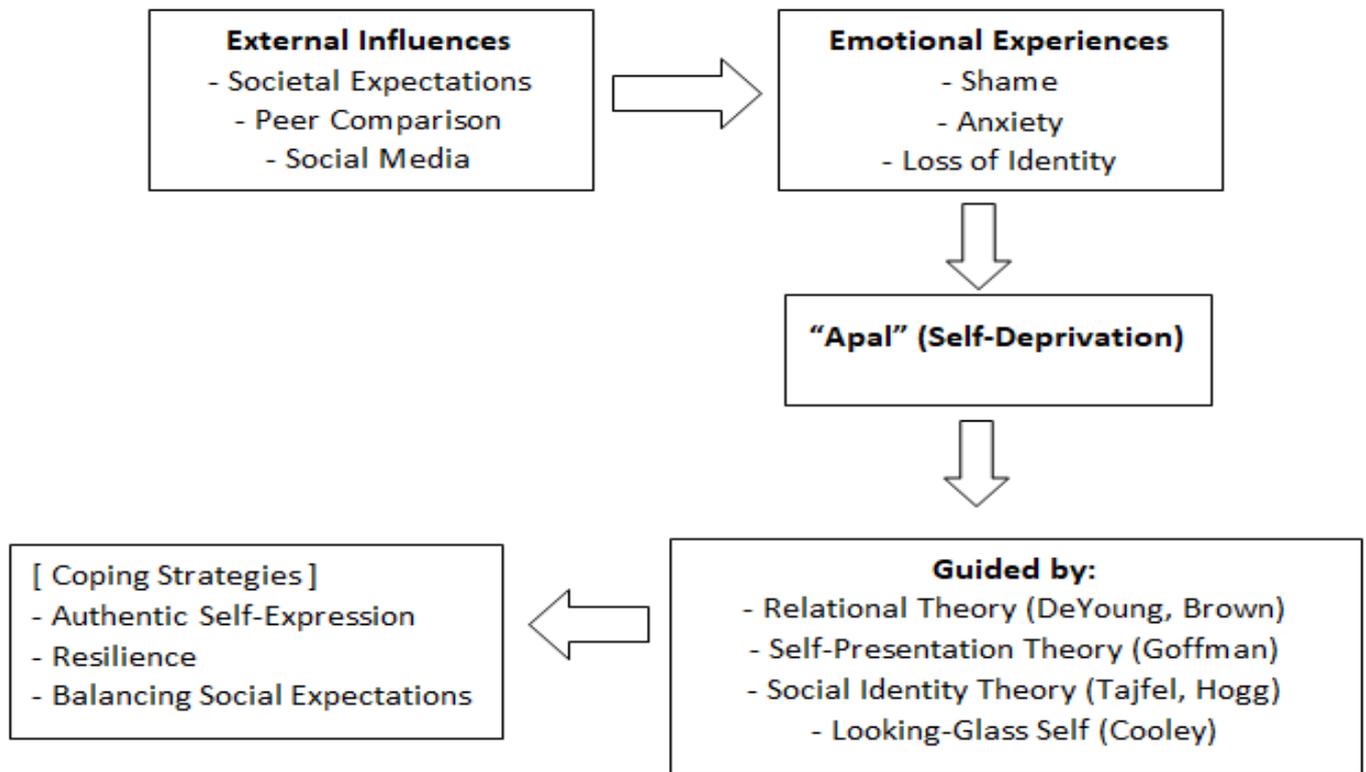
Self-deprivation as a result of “apal” can further compound feelings of isolation and disconnection. According to Parker (2018), envy-driven self-deprivation can create a sense of alienation, as individuals may feel disconnected from both their own desires and from others due to their efforts to fit into societal expectations. This isolation often leads individuals to become trapped in a cycle of comparison and denial of self-worth, reinforcing social stratification and making it difficult to break free from patterns of deprivation.

In social contexts, envy-driven self-deprivation can reinforce social stratification, as individuals may feel compelled to adopt behaviors that align with the expectations of higher social classes or groups, even if it comes at the cost of personal fulfillment. Cohen-Charash and Mueller (2007) highlight that such behavior can deepen class divides, as those who feel inferior may withdraw or engage in behaviors that perpetuate their sense of exclusion.

The relationship between envy or “apal” and self-deprivation is complex and multifaceted. “Apal” can act as both a motivating force for improvement and a source of psychological distress, influencing individual behavior and social interactions. Its impact on behavior is shaped by individual psychological factors, social comparison processes, and cultural norms. Further research is needed to explore how different cultural contexts and societal structures influence the role of envy in shaping self-deprivation, as well as the potential psychological benefits or drawbacks of self-deprivation in response to envy.

This review has highlighted that while “apal” can sometimes serve as a catalyst for personal growth, it often results in negative emotional and social outcomes, particularly when it leads to self-deprivation. Understanding the mechanisms behind envy and self-deprivation will continue to be a critical area of exploration in both psychology and sociology.

### Conceptual Framework



When examining emotional experiences, DeYoung (2015) defines shame in relational terms, suggesting that it arises from misattunement between the self and a dysregulating other. In this view, shame is an experience of one's self disintegrating in response to a perceived relational failure. Similarly, Brown (2006) describes shame as the intense feeling of believing that one is flawed and, consequently, unworthy of love, belonging, and connection. This relational aspect of shame resonates with Rachel (2022), who argues that societal pressures to belong often outweigh internal desires to nurture the true self, leading to anxiety, disconnection, and a loss of personal identity. Rachel's perspective adds an essential layer to understanding how social pressures, compounded by shame, affect individual well-being. Both DeYoung (2015) and Brown (2006) emphasize the relational nature of shame. DeYoung's view highlights misattunement in relationships as a central cause of shame, while Brown focuses more on the existential experience of feeling unworthy of connection. This relational perspective suggests that emotional experiences, such as shame, are not isolated but occur within the dynamics of

interactions with others. For instance, shame often arises when individuals feel rejected or misunderstood, a phenomenon observable in both close relationships and broader societal contexts.

In contrast, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981; Hogg, 2003) posits that part of one's identity and self-esteem is shaped by the social groups to which one belongs. Individuals are motivated to maintain positive self-concepts by aligning with favorable in-groups and distancing themselves from out-groups. The theory suggests that societal expectations, which define "acceptable" behavior and traits, influence how individuals view themselves relative to others. For instance, marginalized groups often internalize stigmatizing labels imposed by society (Goffman, 1963), contributing to feelings of inadequacy and self-deprivation. While both relational theory and social identity theory focus on external influences on the self, they offer different explanations for how shame and self-deprivation arise. Relational theory emphasizes the impact of one-on-one interactions (misattunement, rejection), whereas social identity theory highlights the broader influence of group memberships and societal expectations. These perspectives complement

each other, illustrating how shame can stem from both personal relationships and societal structures. For example, shame in relational theory might manifest when an individual perceives rejection from a loved one, leading to feelings of worthlessness. However, social identity theory suggests that shame may also emerge from societal expectations, such as being judged based on gender, race, or social class. In this manner, societal pressures can amplify relational issues, heightening feelings of inadequacy. The looking-glass self (Cooley, 1902) further supports this perspective, suggesting that individuals internalize the judgments of others, shaping their self-concept based on how they believe they are perceived. This theory aligns with social identity theory by emphasizing the profound impact that external perceptions have on the development of shame and self-esteem.

Additionally, the theory of self-presentation (Goffman, 1963) provides an important lens through which individuals navigate societal expectations. In their efforts to maintain positive social identities, individuals often present a curated image of themselves to meet societal standards. This can lead to self-deprivation or emotional distress, as individuals may feel they are not living authentically. This theory extends Brown's (2006) view of shame by highlighting how the desire for social approval can conflict with the desire for authentic self-expression.

By integrating these theories, a comprehensive framework for exploring the concept of "apal" is formed. Relational dynamics and social identity both play crucial roles in how individuals experience shame, anxiety, and self-deprivation. While relational theory focuses on interpersonal connections, social identity theory broadens the lens to include how societal groups and norms shape self-concept. Furthermore, it has been observed that many individuals today feel pressured to conform to societal norms, often resulting in self-deprivation, a concept referred to as "apal." This struggle can lead to feelings of shame, anxiety, and a loss of identity. Although it is well-known that societal expectations and peer

comparisons influence self-perception, a clearer understanding of how "apal" manifests in various contexts is still needed. Additionally, the role of social media in these experiences warrants further exploration.

The objective of this research is to address these gaps, based on observations and data gathered from informants, with the following goals: (a) To explore the relational and societal factors that contribute to the experience of "apal" and its influence on self-deprivation; and (b) To identify coping strategies individuals use to navigate the tension between authenticity and societal expectations influenced by "apal. To guide this research, the following questions will be addressed: (1) How do relational and societal factors shape the experience of "apal" and its impact on self-deprivation? And (2) What coping strategies do individuals use to manage "apal" while maintaining their sense of authenticity?

By exploring these areas, this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how "apal" affects individuals' well-being and identity in contemporary society.

### **Methodology:**

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically ethnography, to explore the role of "apal" (envy) in shaping self-deprivation within society. Ethnography focuses on understanding cultural practices and lived experiences through immersive fieldwork and interaction with participants. The research was conducted in Paoay, Atok, Benguet, involving 15 participants who had experienced "apal" in relation to peer comparisons and societal pressures. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observations, allowing for a rich, contextual understanding of the phenomenon. Purposive sampling was employed to select individuals with relevant experiences of "apal". The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns related to self-deprivation, emotional experiences, and identity formation. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality through

pseudonyms, and allowing participants to review the final analysis for accuracy. The study followed ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and ensure integrity throughout the research process.

### Results and Discussion:

This study involved interviews with fifteen respondents, each providing valuable insights into the phenomenon of "apal" and its impact on self-perception and identity. While most participants agreed to have their first names included for transparency and credibility, some requested to remain anonymous for various reasons. As a result, certain responses are attributed to other informants based on their preferences for confidentiality. Despite these varying levels of comfort with the use of personal identifiers, all participants offered thoughtful and detailed responses, contributing significantly to the study's objectives. The diversity of viewpoints and experiences shared by the respondents allowed for a nuanced understanding of how "apal" manifests in different contexts, influenced by societal expectations, peer comparison, and personal insecurities.

In line with the study's objectives, this discussion is structured to connect the research problems to the themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. It begins by defining the relational dynamics of "apal," followed by an exploration of how it contributes to self-deprivation. The emotional experiences associated with "apal," including shame, anxiety, and the role of peer comparison, are also discussed. Additionally, the influence of societal expectations and social media on the experience of "apal" and self-perception is explored. Lastly, this discussion highlights the strategies that individuals use to balance being true to themselves amidst external pressures. Through this framework, the study underscores the complex ways in which "apal" impacts emotional well-being and identity, offering valuable insights into how individuals can reframe these experiences and foster personal growth and self-appreciation.

### Connecting "Apal" to Self-Deprivation: Understanding Relational Dynamics:

This study explored how the relational dynamics related to "apal" contribute to self-perception. The responses from informants provide a clearer understanding of how "apal" influences emotional experiences and leads to self-deprivation, a psychological state in which individuals diminish their own sense of worth or potential.

#### *Comparison to Others*

A recurring theme in the responses is that "apal" arises from comparing oneself to others. As Faith describes, "*Awan pammatik ti bagik isunga maapal ak nalang ti kayan ti daduma,*" ("*I lack confidence, so I feel 'apal' when I see what others have*"), highlighting how comparison to others can trigger feelings of inadequacy. Similarly, Emil mentions, "*I feel disappointed in myself because I did not do my best to be in their shoes,*" underscoring how these comparisons lead to self-doubt and disappointment. In both cases, "apal" fosters a relational dynamic where self-worth is constantly evaluated based on others' successes.

#### *Self-Doubt and Inadequacy*

From the insights provided "apal" often sparks internal conflict and self-doubt. Individuals who experience "apal" question their own abilities and value. Faith shares that she feels "apal" due to a lack of self-confidence, and as she reflects, she sees herself as "mediocre." This internalized conflict where people focus on their perceived deficiencies directly leads to self-deprivation. The more individuals compare themselves to others, the more they question their worth, which contributes to emotional self-sabotage and undermines their own potential.

#### *Contribution to Self-Deprivation*

"Apal" contributes to self-deprivation in several ways. Jane acknowledges, "*Actually, we have all this kind of attitude towards others. It only depends on how we handle it.*" This resonates with this research, as it suggests that the way individuals manage their comparisons can either prevent or exacerbate self-deprivation. When

people focus too much on others' success, instead of appreciating their own progress, they often internalize feelings of inadequacy. Khimberly further explains, "*Maminsan man ket gapu iti estado t kabibiyag dtoy ta nga makapanunut t adu nga what if,*" ("*Sometimes it's due to our life status that makes us wonder what if.*") This constant focus on what others have leads to self-doubt and a diminished sense of self-worth, which contributes to self-deprivation.

Another key aspect is that "apal" can lead to an inability to recognize one's own value. Faith describes how she feels "apal" because of low self-confidence, which prevents her from acknowledging her own strengths. This resonates with the idea that when individuals are fixated on what others possess, they fail to appreciate their own achievements. This lack of self-recognition ultimately reinforces feelings of worthlessness, which feeds into self-deprivation.

#### *Need for External Validation*

It is also observed that external validation plays a significant role in the experience of "apal." Emil shares, "*Maybe I feel apal because some people sometimes look down on you when we are not in their status,*" revealing how societal judgments can intensify feelings of self-deprivation. When individuals tie their self-worth to external markers of success such as career achievements or financial stability, they may feel deprived if they do not meet these external expectations.

#### *Perfectionism and "Apal"*

Finally, it also indicates that "apal" can foster perfectionistic tendencies. Louella discusses how comparing her achievements to others makes her feel like a failure: "*I sometimes have this feeling because there's something that other people have that I think should also be present in my life.*" This perfectionism where individuals focus on perceived shortcomings instead of celebrating their successes further contributes to self-deprivation, as it creates unrealistic standards that individuals feel they must meet to be worthy.

### **Exploring Emotional Experiences Related to "Apal": Shame, Anxiety, and Their Impact on Identity:**

The second objective of this study is to explore the emotional experiences tied to "apal," such as shame and anxiety, and to examine how these emotions impact personal identity. The responses of the informants reveal key emotions related to "apal" and how they shape self-perception.

#### *Emotional Experiences Connected to "Apal"*

Shame is deeply connected to "apal," often emerging from feelings of inadequacy or self-criticism. Faith describes feeling "apal" as "*a pity upon myself that I can't be as great as them,*" which stems from self-doubt and insecurity. She notes, "*It became a sense of comparison between me and others,*" as she views others as superior. Clavelle similarly explains, "*Apal is the feeling I get when I base my self-worth on whether I'm doing worse than others.*" This comparison triggers shame, which distorts their self-worth and can make them feel inferior or unworthy.

Anxiety also arises with "apal," often due to the fear of judgment or failure. Madel acknowledges, "*Maybe it's because of my imperfections and flaws,*" expressing how anxiety emerges from feeling unable to meet societal standards. Khimberly adds, "*agpanunot kadagiti positibo a banag kas iti kayak to met a gun uden dayta a banag iti umno nga panawen*", ("*I think about the positive things I should be doing, but I'm also anxious about my life status*"), illustrating how "apal" is linked to the fear of not measuring up. The anxiety from "apal" often leads to preoccupation with "what ifs," hindering authentic living and creating a sense of constant unrest.

#### *Impact on Identity*

The emotional experiences of shame and anxiety significantly shape identity by distorting self-perception. For Faith and Clavelle, "apal" makes them feel inferior, with Clavelle noting, "*Apal is the feeling I get when I base my self-worth on whether I'm doing worse than others.*" Their self-worth becomes tied to external success, which is unstable and ultimately leads to feelings of

inadequacy when those standards are not met. The internalization of shame and anxiety causes these feelings of inferiority to become central to their identity.

This ongoing cycle of comparison and self-judgment can hinder personal growth. Jane reflects, "*We all have negative reactions to anything we encounter in life,*" while Khimberly acknowledges that focusing on others often creates anxiety. Over time, individuals may avoid opportunities due to fear of failure, preventing them from reaching their full potential. The pressure to conform to societal standards can suppress authentic identity, leading to an identity crisis where people lose touch with their true selves.

### **Investigating How Societal Expectations, Peer Comparisons, and Social Media Influence Experiences of "Apal"**

The third objective of this study is to investigate how societal expectations, peer comparisons, and social media influence experiences of "apal." The responses of the informants indicate that external factors, such as societal standards, peer pressure, and social media, significantly shape how individuals experience envy and jealousy.

#### *Societal Expectations*

Societal expectations often drive individuals to measure their worth against external standards like career success, wealth, and lifestyle. Clavelle explains, "*Society pushes us to be wary of other people. It defines success by comparing people based on different standards.*" When people feel they fall short of these standards, they experience "apal." Faith shares, "*I feel like I'm mediocre,*" reflecting how societal pressures contribute to feelings of inadequacy. These societal expectations foster comparison, anxiety, and shame, leading individuals to devalue themselves when they perceive others as more successful.

#### *Peer Comparisons*

Peer comparisons are another major source of "apal," especially when people measure their success against others. Madel describes "apal" as

arising from "*the urge to be like them, to have what they have,*" highlighting how peer success can trigger envy. Similarly, Lailanie notes that "apal" comes from "*discontentment*" with one's life when comparing it to others' seemingly better circumstances. Peer comparisons emphasize what one lacks, fueling feelings of inadequacy and jealousy.

#### *Social Media Influence*

Social media plays a powerful role in exacerbating feelings of "apal" by showcasing idealized versions of others' lives. Louella observes that "*I sometimes feel apal because there's something that other people have that I think should also be present in my life.*" Social media often highlights achievements like financial success, career stability, and emotional wellness, creating a contrast between one's reality and the curated lives of others. Steffany also mentions how "*less social media*" can help cope with "apal," as constant exposure to others' success can heighten feelings of inadequacy. The pressure to match the success of peers or influencers can make individuals feel like they are falling behind, amplifying the experience of "apal."

### **Identifying Strategies Individuals Use to Balance Being True to Themselves with Societal Pressures**

The fourth objective of this study is to identify how individuals balance being true to themselves with societal pressures. The responses of the informants reveal several strategies that help them navigate this tension while preserving their identity.

#### *Reframing and Self-Awareness*

A key strategy for balancing societal pressure is reframing one's perspective. Louella mentions, "*I try my best to ignore it or to divert my attention towards something else,*" using self-reflection to redirect her focus away from "apal." By reminding herself that success is personal, she has developed self-awareness that reduces feelings of inadequacy. Madel also reframes her emotions by praying and reminding herself that "*I am unique in*

*my own special way,*" helping her focus on her strengths rather than comparing herself to others.

#### *Embracing Individual Strengths and Values*

Focusing on one's own strengths and values helps individuals stay true to themselves. Clavelle explains, *"Instead of treating others as competition, I try to see their wins as inspiration."* By celebrating her own path, she navigates societal expectations without losing her identity. Khimberly emphasizes focusing on *"agpanunot kadagiti positibo a banag"*, (*"positive thoughts and strengths"*), to cope with "apal" and avoid feeling inferior when comparing herself to others.

#### *Acceptance and Letting Go of Perfectionism*

Acceptance is crucial for managing societal pressure. Jane reflects, *"Always remember that we are not perfect... we all have negative reactions to anything we encounter in life."* By acknowledging imperfection, she focuses on personal growth rather than comparing herself to others. Fev also highlights the importance of focusing on what's important to her and putting in effort, saying, *"Rather than fixating on external standards, I put in action my own apal."*

#### *Reaffirming One's Purpose and Personal Goals*

Reaffirming personal goals helps individuals stay grounded in their values. Steffany advises, *"Less social media,"* and using "apal" as motivation to *"do better"* and focus on her own aspirations. Lailanie suggests, *"Always be grateful for what you have in life and learn to celebrate others' victories,"* emphasizing that celebrating others' success doesn't diminish her own goals.

#### *Social Support and Role Models*

Finally, seeking social support and having role models is crucial. Madel prays and seeks spiritual guidance to stay grounded, saying, *"In times like this when I feel it, I usually try to pray."* Similarly, other informants stress the importance of staying connected to supportive people, with one saying, *"Push yourself to do something else better than them or make yourself busy for your future than to feel apal for other people, make it as a reason to keep going in life to become a good*

*person, good living, and a happy life."* This guidance helps individuals stay focused on personal growth, using support to overcome comparisons and external pressures.

#### **Conclusion:**

This study aimed to explore the relational dynamics associated with "apal" or envy, specifically how it contributes to self-deprivation and affects personal identity. Through the responses of the fifteen participants, several key insights emerged regarding how feelings of inadequacy, comparison, and self-doubt stem from societal pressures, peer comparison, and the influence of social media. These experiences, as demonstrated in the participants' answers, often lead individuals to question their worth and limit their potential, resulting in a cycle of self-deprivation.

The findings address how relational factors such as comparison, self-doubt, and a desire for external validation fuel the experience of "apal," leading to diminished self-worth and a reluctance to pursue personal growth. The emotional experiences of shame, anxiety, and longing highlight the psychological toll these feelings take on individuals. These experiences often result in identity crises and a disconnect from personal authenticity, further reinforcing the societal expectations that individuals feel compelled to meet. Social media, in particular, magnifies these feelings by showcasing idealized versions of success and happiness, making it even harder for individuals to escape the cycle of comparison.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws from both functionalist and postmodern lenses. A functionalist perspective may suggest that feelings of "apal" serve a collective function, perhaps reinforcing societal standards and norms. However, this viewpoint is critiqued through a postmodern lens, which challenges the notion of a fixed identity and reveals the tensions between authenticity and societal expectations. This tension is central to understanding the impact of "apal" on self-deprivation and identity loss.

Although this study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the relational dynamics and emotional experiences associated with "apal," some questions remain unanswered. For example, how can societal structures and cultural norms be transformed to reduce the prevalence of "apal" and promote healthier forms of self-perception? How might collective efforts to reshape social media and peer comparisons create space for more genuine expressions of identity? These are important questions for future research, as they can guide efforts to better understand and mitigate the negative effects of "apal" in society.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into how "apal" impacts individuals' emotional well-being, identity, and personal growth. By critically reflecting on the relational dynamics of "apal," efforts can be made to foster environments where self-expression, diversity, and authenticity are celebrated, and where the negative effects of comparison and envy are minimized.

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