



Influence of Social Media on Perceived Body Image and Mental Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between body image and mental well-being among young adult social media users. The study looks at the psychological processes that underlie this phenomenon, such as internalizing limited body norms and social comparison with unattainable beauty standards. The study also explores the possible positive or negative effects of social media use on mental health. The study intends to further knowledge of the intricate connection between social media, body image, and mental health by examining these variables. A sample of 150 individuals was taken into consideration (n=150), for this study between the age group 18-30 years, participated. The variables were assessed using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), Social Media Use Scale (SMUS) and Body Image Questionnaire (Marilou Bruchon-Schweitzer, 1987). The findings suggests that there is no significant relationship between social media and body image and mental well-being. One limitation can be the sample size is relatively small, and the results may not be generalizable to larger populations.

Keywords: *Social media, body image, mental well-being, young adults, social comparison, media literacy*

INTRODUCTION

In the last several years, there has been a significant change in the digital terrain. More and more young individuals are using social media sites including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Lenhardt, 2021). Przybylski et al. (2013) proposes that although these platforms provide opportunities for self-expression, connection, and information exchange, there may be a drawback due to their impact on mental and physical image. The study explores the complex interactions between young adults (18–30 years old) and their usage of social media and how such interactions affect their perceptions of their bodies and mental health. Social comparison and the widespread impact of idealized representations on social media platforms are especially harmful to this age group (Calado & Griffiths, 2016).

Perspectives: Creating a Culture of Comparison via the Power of Images

Images are vital to social media. User feed are mostly composed of images and videos, frequently displaying well-chosen representations of physical attractiveness. A skewed self-perception and a need for thinness can be fostered by exposure to these unrealistic images, especially in young women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 2019). The "Instagram effect," which is defined by extensive appearance alteration and modification, blurs the gap between the actual world and the virtual one, encouraging unfavorable comparisons of body image (Tigge et al., 2015). According to Bordo (2003), being constantly exposed to images of "perfect" bodies can cause poor self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and possibly the emergence of body dysmorphic disorder.

Perspectives: The Environment of Mental Health

Beyond only how young adults see their bodies, social media has an influence on their general emotional health. A positive correlation has been shown in studies by Przybylski et al. (2013) and Chou & Wong (2018) between symptoms of loneliness, anxiety, and depression with excessive usage of social media. Negative consequences on mental health might arise from social inadequacy and isolation caused by the carefully chosen and frequently false representations of success and pleasure on social media.

An Equitable View: Potential Benefits and Mitigating Factors

Recognizing social media's possible advantages for young people's mental health is critical. Platforms can offer chances for assistance and social interaction, particularly to individuals who are socially isolated or live far away (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). A sense of acceptance and belonging may be fostered by online communities, which may act as a protective factor against detrimental effects on mental health (Alvarez-Alvarez et al., 2019).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the systematic review by Fitzpatrick et al. (2023), 21 papers released between 2015 and 2020 were examined. After evaluating each study's quality, researchers conducted thematic analysis to pinpoint major themes. High levels of social media use have been linked to poor self-esteem, negative body image, anxiety, depression, and disordered eating patterns in teenagers and young adults, according to the review. It was discovered that some factors, such as comparing oneself to others online and being exposed to highly manipulated photographs, were very significant. The review recognizes the limitations of the individual studies that were included, including the possibility of reverse causality (i.e., those with body image concerns

utilizing social media more) and the dependence on self-reported data.

An overview of literature is given in this article by Singh (2023), along with an analysis of studies on how social media affects body image and self-esteem. Singh talks on how social media exposure to idealized representations may cause feelings of inadequacy and social comparison, which can negatively affect one's body image and self-esteem.

Hussain et al. (2021) in their study followed young adults for a year to investigate their usage of social media, social comparison, social support, and body image satisfaction. Social support may mitigate the detrimental impacts of social comparison, according to the study, which implies that social comparison on social media mediates the association between social media usage and body image. With an emphasis on young adults, it might not apply to larger groups.

Paul et al. (2021) Surveys were used in this study, and participants ranged in age from 18 to 25. Researchers assessed depressive symptoms, body image satisfaction, and social media usage. The study discovered a link between body dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms and frequent usage of social media. They contend that these detrimental consequences are exacerbated by social media's well staged depictions of life and its artificial beauty standards. This cross-sectional design constrains inferences on causality. Furthermore, it's possible that the sample cannot be extrapolated to the entire population.

METHODOLOGY

AIM

The purpose of the research is to study the relationship between social media and perceived body image and mental well-being.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the relationship between social media and body image in young adults.
- To examine the relationship between social media addiction and mental well-being in young adults.
- To examine the relationship between body image and mental well-being in young adults.

HYPOTHESIS

HO: There is no relationship between using social media, body image and mental well-being in young adults.

Ha1: There will be a negative correlation between body image and social media use in young adults.

Ha2: There will be a positive correlation between body image and social media use in young adults.

Ha3: There will be a negative correlation between social media addiction and mental well-being in young adults.

Ha4: There will be a positive correlation between social media addiction and mental well-being in young adults.

VARIABLES

- *Independent Variable:* Social Media
- *Dependent Variables:* Body-Image and Mental Well-Being

SAMPLE

The proposed research will employ a sample size of (n=150) individuals (93 females, 57 males). The data will be obtained through a simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling is a probability-based sampling method that ensures each member of the target population has an equal chance of being selected for the study. This approach helps to minimize potential biases and increases the representativeness of the sample.

Inclusion Criteria

- Young adults between the ages of 18-30 years.
- Participant must have completed education up till 12th standard.
- Participants should be familiar with English.

Exclusion Criteria

- Subjects who do not fall under the age criteria.
- Subjects who do not give their consent or cooperation to participate in the study.
- Subjects who have or have had a history of mental illness or disorders like schizophrenia.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study employed a quantitative research approach and a survey methodology to investigate the relationships between social media, body image and mental well-being. A sample of 150 individuals will be selected through simple random sampling. The survey was administered using Google Forms as well as by distributing physical survey forms to participants. Various validated questionnaires and objective assessments will be used to

measure social media, body image, and mental well-being. The data collected through these instruments will undergo statistical analyses, including correlation analyses to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the variables, and regression analyses to determine the predictive power of social media on body image and mental well-being.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS):
- Social Media Use Scale (SMUS):
- Body Image Questionnaire (Marilou Bruchon-Schweitzer, 1987):

PROCEDURE

A consent form was created, outlining the goals of the study, and stressing the participant's complete freedom to opt out of the study at any time without facing any repercussions. A disclaimer assuring participant anonymity and the researcher's intention to utilize the information only for research reasons were also included. Then, for each scale, a Google form was made to enable the sharing of the measurements on online platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, Mail). Each questionnaire included guidelines for answering and a description of the variables under study. The questionnaires were then distributed to potential participants who fit the description of "young adults age ranging from 18-30 years old". When a person consented to participate in the study, questions regarding their name, age, and gender were asked. The "Name" entry asks for the person's initials rather than their complete name, giving them the opportunity to remain anonymous. This helped to lessen subject prejudice since it eliminated any fear of being evaluated.

RESULT**Table 1***Descriptive statistics of study variables*

		Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Image based	13.18	6.53
2	Comparison based	8.95	5.07
3	Belief based	7.38	4.96
4	Consumption based	22.20	8.53
5	Mental wellbeing	50.89	10.48
6	Body image	47.20	5.82

Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all the study variables – Social media use (Image based, Comparison based, Belief based, Consumption-based), Mental well-being, Body image.

Table 2*Spearman's correlation between social media use, Mental wellbeing, Body image*

	IM	CB	BB	COB	MWB	BI
Spearman's rho	IM	Correlation Coefficient	--			
Sig. (2-tailed)		.				
N	150					
CB	Correlation Coefficient	.367**	--			

Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.				
N	150	150				
BB Correlation Coefficient	.631**	.435**	--			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.			
N	150	150	150			
COB Correlation Coefficient	.445**	.485**	.400**	--		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.		
N	150	150	150	150		
MWB Correlation Coefficient	-.032	-.112	-.077	-.155	--	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.695	.171	.352	.057	.	
N	150	150	150	150	150	
BI Correlation Coefficient	.020	.080	-.103	.092	.135	--
Sig. (2-tailed)	.806	.331	.212	.265	.099	.
N	150	150	150	150	150	150

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 represents the non-parametric correlation of all the study variables – Social media use [Image- based (IB), Comparison based (CB), Belief based (BB), Consumption-based (COB)], Mental well- being (MWB), Body image(BI).

The social media use categories (IM, CB, BB, and COB) exhibit a robust positive network, with correlations ranging from .367 to .631 (all significant at $p < .001$). This indicates that independent of specific usage patterns, regular social media users report stronger body image focus (correlations between .400 and .485, all significant at $p < .001$). This supports worries about arbitrary ideals of attractiveness on social media. Consumption-based social media

usage (COB) and mental wellbeing (MWB) had a weakly negative connection ($p = .057$) (coefficient = $-.155$). Although the impact size is extremely modest, this points to a potential trend where more social media usage may be linked to somewhat decreased mental wellness. Notably, there are no discernible relationships between other social media usage categories (IM, CB, and BB) and mental health (MWB).

DISCUSSION

Findings

- **Social Media Use:** Participants engage more with visual content and spend more time on social media, as indicated by higher mean scores for image-based (13.18) and consumption-based use (22.20), compared to comparison-based (8.95) and belief-based use (7.38).
- **Body Image and Mental Health:** Average mental wellbeing is moderate (50.89), but body image scores are slightly lower (47.20), suggesting potential body dissatisfaction.
- **Correlations:** Descriptive statistics suggest a need for further investigation into the relationship between social media use patterns and body image/mental health.
- **Social media and Self-Image:** Strong positive correlations between social media usage categories, suggesting higher body focus with increased social media use.
- **Mental Health and Social Media Use:** Only consumption-based social media use shows a slight negative correlation with mental wellbeing, hinting at a link between extensive social media exposure and lower mental health ratings.

Hypotheses Examination

- ***Ho (No Correlation)***: Rejected based on significant correlations found.
- ***Ha1 (Negative Relationship with Body Image)***: Partially rejected; positive correlations found, but also indications of body dissatisfaction.
- ***Ha2 (Positive Relationship with Body Image)***: Supported by positive correlations.
- ***Ha3 (Negative Relationship with Mental Health)***: Partially supported; negative correlation found only with consumption-based use.
- ***Ha4 (Positive Relationship with Mental Health)***: Not supported; no beneficial correlations found.

CONCLUSION

The results present a multifaceted image. A clear-cut association between social media usage and mental health or body image did not surface, even when the null hypothesis that there was no relationship was rejected. Among all social media usage categories (image-based, comparison-based, belief-based, and consumption-based) and body image, a strong positive network was noteworthy. This implies that higher overall usage of social media is associated with a greater emphasis on body image, independent of the particular way users engage with it. This result supports worries expressed by Tippe et al. (2015) on the possibility that social media might promote unattainable beauty standards and lead to body dissatisfaction.

There was a more complex picture of the link between social media use and mental health. Regarding mental health ratings, only consumption-based usage showed a little negative connection. According to Przybylski et al. (2013), there may be a connection between excessive social media usage and poor mental health outcomes. This is consistent

with other findings. The idea of "social media addiction" and its impact on mental health, however, require more investigation.

Regarding the complex ways that social media affects young adults, this study adds to the increasing corpus of research. The results emphasize how critical it is to support social media usage that is responsible and constructive body image among this susceptible group. Potential directions for future study include analyzing the moderating effect of individual variations in these correlations, analyzing particular social media platforms and content categories, and using longitudinal designs to investigate causal linkages. A more pleasant online environment that supports young people' mental health and good body image may be established by encouraging a greater knowledge of these intricate interactions.

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