

Social Media Impact on Body Image and Body Standard among Young Women

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact between social media usage body image among young women. It is also examining the relationship between exposure to idealized body standard and young women body standard. The social media becoming an integral part of daily life, social media usage, social comparison and exposure to idealized body standards have been linked to body dissatisfaction. Past research has examined the connection between young women body image and their use of social media. The quantitative methods were applied and data were collected by distribution of questionnaires to 430 respondents aged 18-29 years old at Klang Valley. The finding shown there is the relationship between social media usage and young adult's body image and positive relationship between exposure to idealized body standard ang young women image. This research highlight on sensitive content producers must be when creating material that could affect how people perceive their bodies. By being aware of the impact idealized portrayals can have on young women, content producers can create more responsible material that encourages self-acceptance. For future research suggest to examine the effect of social media exposure on male body image would offer a more thorough knowledge of how various gender experience.

Keywords

Social media, body image, social media usage, young women, body standard

1. Introduction

A social media is an online platform that people use to create social networks or relationships with other individuals who have like hobbies, pursuits, backgrounds, or connections in real life, whether they be professional or personal. Social networks have a big influence on youth. The fact that social networks are now a part of people's life is becoming more and more evident. Many teenagers read their friends' and family's status updates and tweets on their laptops, tablets, and smartphones. People are under pressure to adapt alternative lifestyles as a result of technological innovation. Social networking platforms have the potential to help young people develop their social skills. A web-based method of data communication is social media. Social media networks allow users to converse, share information, and produce digital content. Social media can take many different forms, including blogs, social networking sites, photo and video sharing, instant messaging, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds, and more.

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2. Problem Statement

The growing dependence on social media platforms, especially those that prioritize visual material like Instagram and TikTok, has raised worries regarding the detrimental effects on people's perceptions of their bodies. The ubiquitous presentation of manipulated, idealized, and unrealistic physical appearances encourages continual comparison, which fuels body dissatisfaction. Young women are more affected by this problem because they are more susceptible to social pressures and outside affirmation. The long-term implications on behaviour, self-esteem, and general well-being are still poorly understood, despite increased awareness of these detrimental impacts. Therefore, in order to develop measures to lessen its negative impacts and promote healthier, more inclusive depictions of beauty, it is imperative to explore how social media influences body image. Take for example, the past case is the controversy surrounding the 2018 #DoItRight campaign by a popular Malaysian cosmetics company, Deeja Cosmetic, which was criticized for promoting unhealthy beauty standards. The campaign, which heavily promoted skin-whitening products, featured advertisements with the tagline "white equals beauty," implying that fair skin is superior. This case will point out the harmful effects such messaging could have on young people, especially women, who may feel pressured to alter their appearance to fit these unrealistic beauty standards. The backlash against the campaign highlighted how social media amplifies beauty standards and how this can negatively affect body image, leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

It seems that teens are always willing to follow trends, whether or not they have anything to do with fashion or body image. Trends are always changing. Every youngster grows up with social media, and they are unable to live without it. Many students claimed that social media had impacted their self-perception regarding their appearance. Despite realizing that social media posts do not always represent the whole picture, they nonetheless find it difficult to resist the need to compare oneself to others on the platform (The New York Times, 2022). Images of people with flawless bodies and faces are often shared on social media, but most of them employ filters or other manipulation tools to make their photos look better. This creates an unattainable standard of beauty that can lead to male and female body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Pedersen, 2023).

Firstly, in aspect of social media usage. People who are increasingly exposed to material that prioritizes appearance and beauty standards on social media as they spend more time there. The direct relationship between body image perception and the amount of time spent on social media, however, is not well understood (Vall-Roqué, Andres & Saldana, 2021). Extended exposure to unrealistic and idealized portrayals of beauty can cause low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction (Panjraht & Tiwari, 2021). Comprehending the precise correlation between the amount of time spent on these platforms and its influence on body image among young adults is crucial in comprehending the function of social media in shaping one's self-concept and advocating for healthier virtual practices.

Social media frequently presents idealized body standards that highlight idealized ideas of beauty, like perfect skin, muscularity, and thinness. Exposure to these idealized norms on a regular basis can warp perceptions of what constitutes a normal body shape and look, which can lead to body dissatisfaction and the promotion of excessive dieting and cosmetic operations (Silva & Steins, 2023). Despite the widespread use of these standards, little is known about the precise relationship between repeated exposure to these idealized images and how it affects one's perception of one's body. Addressing cultural pressures and promoting healthier, more accurate images of beauty in the media require an understanding of this link. This research focuses on the growing concern over the impact of social media on body image, particularly among teenagers and young adults. With platforms like Instagram and TikTok emphasizing visual content, users are frequently exposed to manipulated, idealized images that set unrealistic beauty standards.

2.1 Research question

- What is the relationship between social media usage and young adult's body image?
- What is the relationship between exposure to idealized body standard and young adult's body image?

2.2 Research objective

- To identify the relationship between social media usage and young adult's body image.
- To examine the relationship between exposure to idealized body standard and young adult's body image.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Body Image

Body image is a person's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about their own body—especially with regard to how it looks—are referred to as their body image. Body pleasure, body esteem, and the mental image of one's physical self are all components of this multifaceted concept. There are two types of body image: positive and negative. A negative body image is frequently linked to feelings of discontent and a desire to alter one's appearance. A person's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about their own body—especially with regard to how it looks—are referred to as their body image. Body pleasure, body esteem, and the mental image of one's physical self are all components of this multifaceted concept. There are two types of body image: positive and negative. A negative body image is frequently linked to feelings of discontent and a desire to alter one's appearance.

Moreover, body image can be influenced both directly and indirectly by the media, family, and social environment. The interplay of these factors may encourage exaggerated peer comparisons and unrealistic looks. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to these factors because of their transitional stage, which is marked by fast growth and development and ongoing physical changes. Gillen & Markey (2016) stated, the current definition of positive body image includes adopting a positive, protective lens when processing incoming body-related information, accepting one's body as it is, feeling comfortable and confident that show outwardly, and appreciating and focusing on the body's unique functions and assets even when they are imperfect and/or do not reflect cultural standards of attractiveness. Regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, or race or ethnicity, body image issues can impact everyone. These issues, which have serious ramifications for both mental and physical health, stem from a complex interplay of social forces.

3.2 Social Media Usage

Past research studies looked into the connection between social media, body image, and self-esteem have focused mostly on Facebook use (Engeln et al. 2020). But in recent times, there has been a significant surge in the usage of other social media platforms like Instagram (Bue & Harrison, 2020). The published content on these other platforms is very aesthetic and visually appealing, and they allow for more varied interactivity and image editing (Bue, 2020). According to Holland and Tiggemann's (2016) findings, worries over body image are associated with a rise in the usage of social media, including Facebook.

Young women between the ages of 18 and 34 are more likely to use Instagram than men. Instagram is a photo- and video-based social media network (Karim et al., 2020). Consequently, there is an effect on body image, beauty standards, and scepticism particularly among the youngest Instagram users, who are the most vulnerable (Verrastro et al., 2020). All social networking sites (SNS) (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok) were used more frequently during lockdown, and a statistically significant increase was observed in the percentage of women who followed Instagram accounts that emphasize attractiveness. Additionally, it was shown that there were substantial correlations between the younger age group (14–24) and the frequency of Instagram use and body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and low self-esteem, as well as between the older age group (25–35) and the frequency of Instagram use and drive for thinness. The younger generation's drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction were linked to following appearance-focused Instagram profiles, whereas the older group (25–35) merely had this urge. Connecting with Instagram profiles that emphasize looks and using the platform more frequently were strong indicators of increased drive for thinness (Vall-Roqué et al., 2021).

In conclusion, young women who spend more time on social media, particularly platforms like Instagram, are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, engage in physical appearance comparisons, and develop lower self-esteem. The visually appealing and highly interactive nature of platforms such as Instagram encourages users to focus on aesthetics and often promotes idealized beauty standards, which can negatively impact their body image.

3.3 Exposure to Idealized Body Standard

The advent of "fast fashion" in today's world has contributed to the emergence of fashion influencers and fashion bloggers, who use social media sites like Instagram to further their careers. An individual with a substantial following on social media who produces information about fashion and has the ability to influence the decisions made by their audience, also referred to as "their followers," particularly with regard to purchases, is considered a fashion influencer. similar thing on Instagram in an attempt to sway their followers' buying choices. Unfortunately, research has shown that, despite their intentions to inspire, these influencers can contribute to the growth of feelings of jealousy and social comparison, which negatively impacts one's self-esteem and body image. The fact that these influencers and traditional celebrities are more alike with their audience could be one reason for the

sociological comparison (Panjrath & Tiwari, 2021). This is why they were seen as influential. Young women life can be profoundly impacted by celebrities, particularly in regards to looks and body image. Celebrities are frequently looked up to by young adults who may try to imitate their appearance and sense of style. This may result in pressure to meet arbitrary and frequently unhealthy ideals of beauty. They may feel under pressure to gain muscle or lose weight in order to resemble celebrities, for instance, because of their well-known emaciated or muscular physiques (Harris & Griffiths, 2023).

Young women who are unhappy with their bodies and have low self-esteem may also be affected by the media's constant portrayal of celebrities as having ideal bodies and appearances. They make comparisons between themselves and these idealized portrayals of beauty may experience feelings of inadequacy as well as negative body image-related thoughts and actions (Gupta et al., 2022). In conclusion, fashion influencers and celebrities on social media play a significant role in shaping body image among young adults. While influencers aim to inspire their followers, their portrayal of idealized beauty standards often leads to feelings of jealousy and social comparison. The constant exposure to these idealized images on platforms like Instagram can make young women more susceptible to negative self-perception, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and contributing to a distorted body image.

4. Research Methodology

This research using quantitative method. According to Rana, Gutierrez and Oldroyd (2021), numerical data is gathered and analysed using the quantitative technique to address scientific research concerns. The quantitative approach is used to investigate causal relationships, uncover trends, average data, summarize, and extrapolate findings to larger populations. In addition to ranking priorities and assessing the level of evidence of effectiveness, it enables us to measure effect sizes and ascertain the strength of correlations. According to Creswell (2014) quantitative method is to measures direct observations in order to identify links between variables. Monitoring and testing the cause-and-effect relationship between two or more variables (dependent and independent) is therefore necessary.

4.1 Population and sampling

For this research, the respondent's population that has been chosen is in Klang Valley., Targeting a particular demographic group, the sampling technique used in this study is simple random sampling. Young women in Klang Valley, Malaysia, between the ages of 18 and 30, make up the target population. In simple random sampling, every member of the specified group has an equal chance of being selected, which helps ensure that the sample is representative of the broader population.

5. Result and Discussion

The respondents' pre-test demographics that are age and educational. There were 107 female who responded. There were 23 (21.5%) respondents who were between the ages of 18 to 21 make up the second lowest group. Moreover, 74 (69.2%) respondents who were between the ages of 22 to 25 that make up the highest group age. There were 8 (7.5%) respondents who were between the ages of 26-27. Finally, there are respondents who are the age 28 to 30 that answered this questionnaire with a total of 2 (1.9%) respondents.

For the education level, there were 62 (57.9%) of respondents was those with a Bachelor's Degree, followed by those with Foundation with 4 (3.7%) respondents and for Diploma 40 (37.4%) respondents and lastly, in master's degree there is 1 (.9%) respondent.

For the marital status, the group with the largest percentage o' respondents are 319 (74.2%) respondents was those were single, whereas 111 (25.8%) respondents were married.

Table 1: Demography of respondents

Demography Factors	n	%
Age		
i) 18-21 years	23	21.5
ii) 22-25 years	74	69.2
iii) 26-27years	8	7.5
iv) 28-30 years	2	1.9
Education Level		
i) Foundation	4	3.7
ii) Diploma	40	37.4
iii) Degree	62	57.9
iv) Master	1	.9

Marital status		
i) Single	319	74.2
ii) Married	111	25.8

According to Table 2, the body image variable indicates a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = .945$ and $\alpha = .908$ for social media usage. For the last variable which is exposure idealized body standards. Overall, the Cronbach's alpha value is acceptable for the objectives of this study.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha for Pre-Test Analysis

Variables	n	%
Body image	10	.945
Social media usage	11	.908
Exposure to idealized body standards	15	.923

5.1 Hypothesis Testing

In this section, hypothesis testing is covered as following:

5.1.1 Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between social media usage and young women body image.

In this section, the differences between social media usage and the impact on young women body image will be explained as the first objective of the study is to examine the relationship between these two variables. This revealed a moderate relationship between social media usage and the impact on young women body image, with a significant value or ($r = .589$, $p > 0.01$). The result in Table 4.7 indicated that these two factors will have an impact on one another, therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Correlation between social media usage and young women body image

Social media usage	Young women body image
r	.775**
n	392
p	.000

5.1.2 Hypothesis 2: The relationship between exposure to idealized body standards and young women body image

The second objective of the study is to analyze the relationship between exposure to idealized body standard and the impact on young women body image, whereby the hypothesis relating the two will be examined. A strong relationship between exposure to idealized body standards and the impact on young women body image, with a significant value of ($r = .879$, $p > 0.01$). The outcome in Table 4.9 demonstrated these two elements correlated and the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4: Correlation between exposure to idealized body standards and young women body image

Exposure to idealized body standard	Young women body image
r	.775**
n	392
p	.000

This research successfully achieved the objective of the study which is to identify the relationship between social media usage and young adult's body image. The hypothesis is that there is a relationship between social media usage and young adult's body image. The result is .589 which is these two variables have moderate relationship and will have an impact to one and another. The way that young women use social media, greatly influences how they feel about their bodies. Users are encouraged to compare themselves to others based on appearance because these platforms are very visual and interactive, which frequently results in low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. The

prevalence of idealized beauty standards, enhanced by image editing and filters, might lead to irrational expectations regarding physical appearance. The pressure to meet these expectations is more likely to affect young adults, particularly women, and can have a negative impact on how they view themselves. Social media's growing impact on body image as it becomes a more crucial part of daily life emphasizes the need for more understanding of its psychological consequences. Past research clearly demonstrates a connection between young women body image and their use of social media.

6. Conclusion

According to the finding of this study, the researcher holds the view that young women perceptions of their bodies are greatly influenced by social media. Aside from that the researcher finds that there is a positive outcome when using social media by posting body positivity content in decreasing the negative impacts of idealized portrayals. Promoting self-acceptance and diverse representations of beauty can aid in reducing the negative effects of appearance-focused social media. It is the mission of social media companies, influencers, and brands to promote a more positive online atmosphere by implementing more truthful and inclusive content. The researcher also finds that regarding young adults' body image issues more generally, the study offers insightful information to legislators, educators, and mental health specialists. Campaigns for awareness and educational initiatives that draw attention to the negative effects of social media exposure on body image can encourage users to interact with content more critically. In order to lessen the detrimental effects of idealized beauty standards on young adults' self-esteem and general well-being, society should encourage healthy social media practices and honesty in online interactions. For future research on this topic, it would be advisable for researchers to expand since this study mainly focused on female responders, hence researcher can examine the effects of social media exposure on men body image would offer more thorough knowledge based on gender experience.

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