

A Study on Body Image Disturbances, Social Media Addiction, and Satisfaction with Life Among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Social media's prevalence exposes Emerging adults (EA) to idealized images, subtly molding their perception of themselves and their lives. This study aimed to find the gender difference, if any, on the levels of Body image disturbance (BID), Social media addiction (SMA), and Satisfaction with life (SWL) and to determine relationships between the 3 variables and predict the influence of BID and SMA on SWL. The study included 190 participants (79 male & 111 female) aged 20 – 30 years. Body Shape Questionnaire-16B, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale were used to measure the study's variables. Employed t-tests and chi-square tests to analyze parameters. Utilized Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis to study correlations and influences between variables. The findings revealed that levels of SWL, but not BID or SMA, differed statistically significantly between males and females. Females reported higher life satisfaction than males, which was statistically significant. The study found a negative correlation between SMA and SWL and a negative correlation between BID and SWL. SMA and BID were found to be positively correlated. The study observed that, while SMA had a statistically significant impact on SWL, BID had a higher influence. It can be concluded that relationships exist among all three variables, with both SMA and BID significantly influencing SWL. Further research is needed to identify precise mechanisms for these relationships.

Keywords: *Body Image Disturbance, Social Media Addiction, Emerging Adults, Satisfaction with Life*

In industrialized nations, emerging adulthood is widely acknowledged, encompassing the late teens to the mid-to-late 20s (Arnett, 2007). This phase involves identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities (Arnett, 2023). In contemporary society, emerging adulthood involves diverse experiences and emotions such as identity exploration, instability, self-focus, navigating the transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, and perceiving boundless possibilities.

Social media, defined as platforms facilitating online communication, networking, or collaboration (Russo et al., 2008), encompasses user-generated content with a social element. It denotes Web 2.0 capabilities involving creating, sharing, and collaborating on

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content or information online. Numerous studies show that social media serves purposes beyond information gathering and communication, being utilized more frequently and for diverse objectives. Originally, "addiction" referred to repetitive behaviors seeking substances like alcohol and other chemicals. However, the term now extends to excessive non-drug-related behaviors (Marks, 1990). Social media addiction, viewed through a biopsychosocial perspective (Griffiths, 2005), exhibits classic addiction symptoms: mood modification, tolerance, salience, conflict, withdrawal, and relapse. A Chinese study linked smartphone addiction in male students to game app use, anxiety, and poor sleep quality. For females, social networking site use, multimedia app use, depression, anxiety, and poor sleep quality were significant factors (Chen et al., 2017).

Body Image encompasses internal representations, thoughts, and feelings about external appearance (Grogan, 2021). Influenced by socio-cultural, racial, and ethnic factors, it's a complex phenomenon (Cash, 2012). When satisfaction decreases due to a subjectively negative perception of physical appearance, it's termed body dissatisfaction (Carter, Forrest, & Kaida, 2017). Body image disturbance, a cognitive and emotional process, involves a negative view of the body, indicating a maladaptive perspective with misconceptions, cognitive dissonance, disturbed emotional experiences, and engaging in harmful behavior to achieve an ideal image. Young adults and males exhibited a higher susceptibility to body image disturbances, whereas adolescents and females faced more severe disturbances (Garima, 2020). Body image dissatisfaction is associated with eating disorders, depression (Stice et al., 2000), and low self-esteem (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Several studies reveal the connection between social media use and body image disturbances. Research consistently shows internet and social media use is associated with body image concerns and disordered eating in women and adolescent girls (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Instagram's focus on images is identified as particularly harmful, impacting body satisfaction and comparison (Engeln et al., 2020). Exposure to appearance-focused Instagram profiles were shown to increase women's body dissatisfaction (Casale et al., 2021). Internet use, especially on appearance-focused social media, is associated with worsening eating and body image issues (Rodgers & Melioli, 2016). Time spent online, body surveillance, and the drive for thinness are highly correlated. Facebook users exhibited significantly higher body image concerns than non-users in one study (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013).

Shin and Johnson (1978) describe life satisfaction as a cognitive assessment of one's overall life. It is a unique element within Subjective Well-Being, reflecting a global evaluation of life quality (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Fergusson et al. (2015) found significant associations between psychiatric disorders (major depression, suicidality, alcohol dependence, anxiety disorder, and substance dependence) and repeated assessments of life satisfaction. Social media addiction is associated with lower life satisfaction, negatively affecting well-being and mental health (Sahin, 2017). Whereas another study indicates no direct link between life satisfaction and social media use, but that it serves as a predictor for negative affect, self-esteem, and positive affect (Güven, 2019). Additionally, research finds that currently overweight women report increased binge eating, lower social self-esteem, and reduced life satisfaction (Annis, Cash & Hrabosky, 2004).

Limited research explores correlations between body image disturbances, social media addiction, and life satisfaction, especially within the Indian population, particularly among emerging adults. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating these connections in the

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Indian cultural context, offering insights distinct from existing literature, which lacks representation from the Indian population.

METHODOLOGY

Aims and objectives

- Assess the levels of Body image disturbance, Social media addiction, and Satisfaction with life in male and female Emerging adults.
- Investigate the relationships among Body image disturbance, Social media addiction, and Satisfaction with life.
- Explore the impact of body image disturbance on satisfaction with life and the influence of social media addiction on satisfaction with life.

Sample

Purposive sampling was done to obtain the sample in this Ex post facto non-experimental hypothesis testing research. The minimum required sample size for the study conducted in 2023 was estimated to be 185 subjects (95% confidence limit).

The sample size was derived from the following formula:

$$n = \frac{\left(Z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}} + Z_{1-\beta} \right)^2}{[FZ(\rho_1) - FZ(\rho_0)]^2} + 3$$

$$FZ(\rho_1) = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left[\frac{1 + \rho_1}{1 - \rho_1} \right]$$

$$FZ(\rho_0) = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left[\frac{1 + \rho_0}{1 - \rho_0} \right]$$

ρ_0 - Population correlation coefficient, ρ_1 - Sample correlation coefficient, $Z_{1-\alpha/2}$ - Critical value for the desired confidence level, $1-\beta$ - Critical value for the desired Power, Power of 80% (Beta=0.20).

The study's inclusion criteria encompassed emerging adults between the ages of 20 and 30 who were proficient in reading and writing in English. Conversely, participants diagnosed with psychiatric disorders or neurological conditions, those unwilling to take part, and those who did not fit into the inclusion criteria were excluded from the research. Ten responses were excluded based on the exclusion criteria out of the initial 200 received. The study, approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Institute, comprised 73 male and 111 female emerging adult participants.

Instruments

A Google Forms questionnaire, with an informed consent form, collected data covering:

1. **Socio-demographic details:** name/initials, age/date of birth, gender and area of residence (Rural, Urban or Sub-Urban).
2. **Body Shape Questionnaire – 16B (BSQ – 16B)** (Cooper et al., 1987; Evans & Dolan, 1993): A self-report measure of body shape preoccupations, featuring 16 items on a six-point Likert scale (1-6).
3. **Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)** (Andreassen et al., 2012): Assesses social media addiction and past-week usage experience with 6 items on a five-point Likert scale (1-5).
4. **Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)** (Diener et al., 1985): A 5-item scale measuring global cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. Participants use a 7-point scale (1-7) to indicate agreement/disagreement with each statement.

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Procedure

Men and women aged 20-30, termed as emerging adults, were invited for the study. Decliners were excluded. Participants' socio-demographics were recorded using a sheet, followed by their completion of the Body Shape Questionnaire, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale via Google Forms. Responses were then scored and interpreted.

IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0 (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp) analyzed collected data. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage analyses for categorical variables, and mean & SD for continuous variables, were used. The Independent samples t-test assessed significant differences between bivariate samples in Independent groups. Pearson's correlation evaluated variable correlations. Multiple regression analysis predicted the influence of body image disturbance, social media addiction, and satisfaction with life. The chi-square test examined significance in qualitative categorical data, but Fisher's Exact was used for 2x2 tables with expected cell frequencies less than 5. In all the above statistical tools, the probability value of .05 was considered as significant level.

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency of socio-demographic variables in participants (N = 190).

Socio-demographic variables	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20 – 25 years	170	89.5
26 – 30 years	20	10.5
Gender		
Male	79	41.6
Female	111	58.4
Area of residence		
Rural	15	7.9
Urban	139	73.2
Sub-Urban	36	18.9

Out of 190 participants, 89.5% were aged 20-25 and 10.5% were in the 26-30 range as displayed in Table 1. The majority i.e. 58.4% were females, and 41.6% were males. Regarding residence, 73.2% were urban, while 18.9% and 7.9% were from suburban and rural areas respectively.

Table 2: Analysis and comparison of male and female participants' scores and interpretations of Body image disturbance (BSQ-16B), Social media addiction (BSMAS), and Life satisfaction (SWLS) using the Pearson chi-square Test

Pearson chi-square	BSQ-16B*	BSMAS+	SWLS**
Value	.792	.34	10.14
Df	3	1	6
p-value	.851	.854	.119

*BSQ-16B = Body Shape Questionnaire – 16B,

+BSMAS = Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale,

**SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale

Males and females were analyzed and compared in terms of scores and interpretations of body image disturbance (BSQ-16B), social media addiction (BSMAS), and life satisfaction

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(SWLS) using the Pearson chi-square Test as shown in Table 2. No statistically significant differences were found between males and females in BSQ-16B scores (chi-square = .792, df =3, p = 0.851) and in BSMAS scores (chi-square = .034, df = 1, p = 0.854). Similarly, there was no significant difference in SWLS scores (chi-square = 10.14, df = 6, p = 0.119) between males and females.

Table 3: Difference between male and female participants based on their scores on Body image disturbances, Social media addiction, and Satisfaction with life.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Body Image	Male	79	39.6	14.9	-.487	0.627
Disturbance	Female	111	40.8	16.8		
Social Media	Male	79	16.0	4.3	1.776	0.077
Addiction	Female	111	14.8	5.1		
Satisfaction	Male	79	20.5	6.1	-2.396	0.018
With Life	Female	111	22.6	6.0		

Male participants had mean scores of 39.6 (± 14.9), 16.0 (± 4.3), and 20.5 (± 6.1) on the BSQ, BSMAS, and SWLS, respectively as shown in Table 3. For female participants, the mean scores were 40.8 (± 16.8), 14.8 (± 5.1), and 22.6 (± 6.0) on the BSQ, BSMAS, and SWLS, respectively. The t-values for BSQ, BSMAS, and SWLS were -.487, 1.776, and -2.396, with corresponding p-values of .627, .077, and .018. Although females exhibited higher body image disturbances and males showed higher social media addiction scores, these differences were not statistically significant. However, females had significantly higher satisfaction with life than males ($p \leq 0.050$).

Table 4: Correlation between body image disturbances and satisfaction with life as well as social media addiction and satisfaction with life.

	Body Image Disturbances		Social Media Addiction	
	r-value	p-value	r-value	p-value
Satisfaction with Life	-.340*	.0005	-.247**	0.001

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

Body image disturbances and satisfaction with life exhibited a significant negative correlation ($r = -.340$, $p = 0.0005$), highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) as shown in Table 4. Similarly, social media addiction and satisfaction with life showed a negative correlation ($r = -.247$, $p = 0.001$), highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Correlation between body image disturbances and social media addiction.

	Social Media Addiction	
	p-value	r-value
Body Image Disturbances	.270**	.0005

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

Conversely, there was a positive correlation between body image disturbances and social media addiction, with an r-value of .270 and a p-value of 0.0005, also highly statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) as shown in Table 5.

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Table 6: Regression analysis to find the influence of independent variables (body image disturbances and social media addiction) on the dependent variable (satisfaction with life).

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	29.500	1.547		19.071	0.000	26.449	32.552
Body Image Disturbances	-.112	0.027	-.295	-4.195	0.0005	-.165	-.060
Social Media Addiction	-.212	0.089	-.167	-2.378	0.018	-.387	-.036

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with life.

In the multiple regression analysis assessing the impact of independent variables (Body image disturbances and Social media addiction) on the dependent variable (Satisfaction with life), a highly significant influence emerged from body image disturbance scores on life satisfaction ($t = -4.195$, $p = .0005$) as shown in Table 6. The analysis of the influence of social media addiction scores (BSMAS scores) on overall life satisfaction (SWLS) revealed a statistically significant impact ($t = -2.378$, $p = .018$) between the independent and dependent variables.

DISCUSSION

The present study involved data from 79 male and 111 female emerging adults, examining their levels of body image disturbances, social media addiction, and satisfaction with life. It aimed to explore relationships between these variables and assess the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable—satisfaction with life.

Table 4 results indicate higher body image disturbances in females, but it lacks statistical significance. Regarding social media addiction, males exhibited higher scores than females, but the disparity is not statistically significant. A prior study contradicts this, revealing no gender differences in Facebook intensity or addiction in a Polish study exploring the link between Facebook addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Blachnio et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, in the current study, females exhibited significantly greater life satisfaction than males, with statistical significance at $0.01 \leq p \leq 0.050$. This finding aligns with other research, such as a study on university students in Lebanon, revealing that women generally reported slightly higher average life satisfaction levels compared to males (Hawi & Samaha, 2017).

Table 4 indicates a highly significant negative correlation between body image disturbances and satisfaction with life at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This aligns with a study on 247 Argentinean adolescent students, where body dissatisfaction was inversely correlated with life satisfaction (Góngora, 2014). Therefore, it can be inferred that heightened disturbance in body image is associated with diminished life satisfaction.

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The present study identified a highly significant negative correlation between social media addiction and satisfaction with life at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This correlation is consistent with previous research, including a Polish study of 381 Facebook users (62.8% were women) where a negative correlation between Facebook addiction and life satisfaction was found (Blachnio et al., 2016). Similarly, a study in Turkey involving 612 university students revealed a moderate correlation and a negative relationship between social media addiction and life satisfaction (Sahin, 2017). Therefore, it suggests that heightened social media addiction is associated with diminished life satisfaction.

Table 5 in this study reveals a highly statistically significant positive correlation between body image disturbances and social media addiction at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This finding is substantiated by other studies. A meta-analysis reviewing 63 independent samples indicated a minor yet significant positive correlation between social media use and body image disturbance (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). An American study showed that idealized social media photos, with or without disclaimers, negatively influenced women's perceptions of their bodies (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Additionally, a study on 881 women at a university in the US's Midwestern region found that more time spent on Facebook was associated with more frequent comparisons of one's own body and weight to others, increased attention to others' physical appearance, and more negative feelings about their own body (Eckler, Kalyango, & Paasch, 2017).

In contrast, another study indicated that social media alone may not impact people's feelings about their bodies, specifically their body dissatisfaction. This was demonstrated in a study involving 204 university students in Saudi Arabia, where 47.1% spent more than 4 hours on social media, yet 71.1% exhibited low levels of body dissatisfaction, with no significant difference between males and females (Alruwayshid et al., 2021).

The findings of the present study align with earlier research on adolescent girls by Tiggemann & Slater (2013), who studied 1087 adolescent girls in Southern Australia and confirmed their main prediction that Facebook use and Internet exposure would be positively correlated with body image concerns. Similarly, a study on 598 adolescents in Northern Italy revealed comparable results, demonstrating a positive correlation between time spent on Facebook and highly visual social media and concerns or issues with body image and internalizing symptoms (Marengo et al., 2018). Therefore, it suggests that increased social media addiction may contribute to heightened disturbances in body image.

Table 6 indicates a highly statistically significant influence of body image disturbance on satisfaction with life. This aligns with a study on 247 adolescents in Argentina, where life dissatisfaction emerged as one of the most significant predictors of body dissatisfaction (Góngora, 2014), reinforcing the findings of the current study.

Analyzing the impact of social media addiction scores (BSMAS scores) on overall life satisfaction (SWLS) reveals a statistically significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. This is corroborated by various studies, such as Sahin's (2017) research on Turkish university students, which found a negative, low-level, and significant relationship between life satisfaction and social media addiction, supporting the present findings. However, a study on university students in Lebanon contradicted the current study's findings, indicating no significant influence and concluding that social media addiction had no direct impact on life satisfaction (Hawi & Samaha, 2017).

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As a result of the findings of this study, it can be concluded that while both independent variables are statistically significant predictors of the outcome variable, i.e., satisfaction with life, the influence of the independent variable body image disturbances was found to be highly statistically significant than the influence of the variable social media addiction, which was also statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explores the relationships between Body Image Disturbance, Social Media Addiction, and Life Satisfaction in emerging adults, investigating gender differences in their levels. Additionally, it seeks to understand how body image disturbances and social media addiction impact life satisfaction.

No statistically significant gender differences were found in Body Shape Questionnaire, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale scores and interpretations. Although females had higher body image disturbances, it wasn't statistically significant. Men scored higher in social media addiction, but the difference wasn't significant. Women reported significantly better life satisfaction.

Conclusively, body image disturbances and life satisfaction had a negative correlation, as did social media addiction and life satisfaction. A positive correlation was observed between body image disturbances and social media addiction. Regression analysis revealed social media addiction significantly influenced life satisfaction, while body image disturbance had a highly significant influence. Other studies both supported and contradicted these findings.

Limitations

The study's limitations include its small sample size of less than 200 individuals, hindering the generalizability of results. The exclusion of non-English speakers due to questionnaire language restricts broader participant inclusion. The study only considers male and female genders, omitting the transgender community and other groups as the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ – 16B) is designed solely for males and females, necessitating more inclusive research. Additionally, the study's focus on a small portion of a state in India limits its representativeness, overlooking the country's diverse regions in language, religion, and culture. This study also doesn't delve into the processes or factors affecting variables, making it challenging to ascertain the correlation's root causes. Further research is required to understand these factors better.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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