

## Body Image and Social Media Usage among Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

Body image pertains to individuals' perceptions, thoughts, and emotions regarding their physical appearance. It encompasses self-perception when observing oneself and is influenced by cultural norms and values. Social media platforms function as digital spaces where users can establish personal profiles, share a variety of content, connect with friends online and offline, meet like-minded individuals, and engage with and express appreciation for the content generated by others. The glorification of idealized body images on social media could exacerbate feelings of dissatisfaction with one's own body, impacting body image perceptions and potentially leading to psychological consequences such as decreased self-esteem and confidence. This research investigates the relationship between body image and social media usage among a sample of 120 young adults. Data collection utilized purposive sampling, targeting participants aged 18 to 25 residing in Delhi NCR. The Body Self-Image Questionnaire-Short Form (BSIQ-SF) was employed as the assessment tool. Despite categorizing the sample into two groups based on social media usage (less than 5 hours and more than 5 hours), no significant difference in levels of body image was observed between the two groups.

**Keywords:** *Body image, Social Media, Body Dissatisfaction*

Over time, body image perceptions have evolved under the influence of cultural, artistic, and societal changes. From ancient ideals to modern digital influences, historical factors have shaped beauty standards. Recognizing this history is essential for addressing societal pressures and promoting inclusive body perceptions.

Body image encompasses individuals' perceptions, thoughts, and emotions about their bodies, influenced by societal norms and values. It includes self-perception when looking in the mirror and is shaped by ideals promoted through media, family, and friends. Essentially, it reflects one's personal connection with their body, suggesting that individuals have influence over it through appropriate coping mechanisms.

Body image is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond mere appearance and bodily function, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Perceptual body image relates to how individuals view themselves, often distorted by self-criticism and judgmental statements. Affective body image involves feelings and satisfaction with one's

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appearance, heavily influenced by societal standards and media exposure. Cognitive body image pertains to the thoughts and beliefs individuals hold about their bodies. Lastly, behavioral body image refers to actions taken in response to one's body image, such as unhealthy exercise or eating habits stemming from dissatisfaction. Emphasizing body function and appreciating its capabilities can lead to healthier behavioral patterns.

Social and cultural influences significantly shape our body image, with social media playing a pivotal role in fostering dissatisfaction. Exposure to idealized body representations on social platforms contributes to unfavorable body evaluations, as individuals strive to meet unrealistic standards. Moreover, familial dynamics can impact body image, with both explicit comments and implicit modeling affecting adolescents. Peer interactions also play a role, with social comparisons and fat-talk contributing to negative body perceptions.

Social media platforms encompass online tools that facilitate visual interaction, communication, and the development of digital identities. Through these platforms, users share text, images, and videos to express themselves and maintain social connections. While social media serves various purposes, including information sharing and entertainment, it also raises concerns regarding privacy, online conduct, and its impact on mental well-being.

The extensive use of social media profoundly affects individuals' lives and relationships, particularly influencing the formation of idealized body images, especially among adolescent girls and boys. Comparisons with celebrities and influencers on social media contribute to body image concerns, impacting both genders, often regardless of parent-child dynamics. Social media's portrayal of the thin-ideal image, significantly contributes to body dissatisfaction, driven by societal pressures and media influences.

Despite its positive aspects such as social support and educational opportunities, social media also brings about negative consequences such as social comparison and emotional distress, leading to feelings of inadequacy. Users often strive to present an idealized version of themselves online, affecting their body consciousness and self-perception. Recognizing these influences is essential for developing strategies to mitigate negative effects and promote mental well-being in the digital age.

Raheem, Mafas & Aw, Kar. (2023) investigated body image dissatisfaction detection via social media, a topic of ongoing discussion. They underscored the profound impact of technology, particularly social media, on individuals' body perceptions and mental well-being. The rise of influencers and celebrities on these platforms has fueled unrealistic body standards, contributing to widespread discontent. The research highlighted the media's role in shaping beauty norms, with education level influencing susceptibility to social media influence.

Nidhi, Roy, Choudhury, Nidhi, and Nethra, Vishnu (2021) investigated how social media usage impacts body image dissatisfaction, particularly among different user profiles. Social media platforms often promote unrealistic body ideals, contributing to negative perceptions of one's own body. This pressure to maintain an ideal appearance on social media can lead to lowered self-esteem and increased body surveillance. The review aimed to understand the relationship between social media use duration and body image perceptions in young adults.

Rai A & Sharma R. (2021) in their study explored the relationship between self-perception, body image, and self-esteem among 120 young adults from Delhi NCR. The participants,

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equally divided between males and females aged 18-25 years, completed questionnaires assessing all three variables. Analysis revealed no significant differences in self-perception, body image, or self-esteem levels between male and female young adults. However, significant correlations were observed between all three variables across both genders. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of self-perception, body image, and self-esteem among young adults, regardless of gender differences.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Objective*

To study the difference on the level of body image among young adults with Social Media usage of less than and more than 5 hours.

#### *Sample*

A comparative study was conducted to explore how social media usage relates to body image among young adults. The study included 120 participants, divided equally into two groups: those who used social media for less than 5 hours and those who used it for more than 5 hours. Purposive sampling was employed to collect the sample, with participants aged between 18 and 25 years and residing in Delhi-NCR, required to have accounts on at least one social media app.

#### *Instrument*

*Body self-image questionnaire-short form (BSIQ-SF)*: The Body Self-Image Questionnaire-short form (BSIQ-SF), developed by David A. Rowe in 2015, is a condensed version of the original questionnaire, which contained 51 items. This shortened scale comprises 27 items and is designed to evaluate an individual's body image. It includes nine subscales, with respondents rating each item on a scale ranging from 1 (not true at all of myself) to 5 (completely true of myself). Subscale scores range from 3 to 15, with higher scores indicating a more positive body self-image.

#### *Procedure*

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media usage and body image among young adults aged 18-25 years. A total of 120 participants were divided into two groups based on their social media usage: those who spent less than 5 hours and those who spent more than 5 hours. Purposive sampling was utilized, and participants completed the Body Self-Image Questionnaire-short form (BSIQ-SF). Consent was obtained from participants who met the inclusion criteria, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Data analysis incorporated statistical methods, highlighting the voluntary nature of participation and the option to withdraw at any time.

### RESULTS

*Table No. 1 Mean, SD & t-value for Body Image among young adults who have Social Media Usage less than 5 hours & more than 5 hours.*

Group	N	Mean	S.D	t-test	P- value
Social media usage less than 5 hours	60	77.13	13.66	0.56	Insig.
Social media usage more than 5 hours	60	78.47	11.42		
Total	120				

*\* Insignificant at both levels ( 0.05 & 0.01)\**

### DISCUSSION

The current research sought to investigate the correlation between social media usage and body image among young adults. With a sample size of 120 participants, the study divided them into two groups based on their social media usage. The results suggest that, within the parameters considered and with the variables selected, spending more than 5 hours on social media does not seem to significantly affect body image among young adults compared to those who use it less.

The term body image refers to an individual's mental representation of their body, comprising both a perceptual aspect concerning feelings about body size, shape, weight, and performance, and an attitudinal aspect concerning how these attributes influence behavior. Assessment of body image involves gauging an individual's contentment or discontent with their body shape relative to subjective significance.

Social media platforms, which are internet-based applications, facilitate user connectivity and content sharing. These platforms serve as virtual communities where individuals can establish personal profiles, interact with friends both digitally and in person, connect with like-minded individuals, and engage with and endorse content generated by others. Visual interaction is a key component of social media, which encompasses online platforms tailored for networking, sharing, and relationship building. Users have the ability to create and modify profiles, establish connections, and share various forms of media, including text, images, and videos.

The table summarizes an overview of the investigation into the correlation between body image and social media usage among young adults, classified into two groups: those with less than 5 hours of social media usage and those with more than 5 hours. It offers insights into the diversity and significance of observed patterns within each group. The mean body image score for individuals with less than 5 hours of social media usage was recorded as 77.13, slightly lower than the mean score of 78.47 for those with more than 5 hours. Variability in scores, reflected by the standard deviation, was 13.66 for the less than 5 hours group and 11.42 for the more than 5 hours group. A t-test was conducted to compare both groups, yielding a t-value of 0.56. The resulting p-value was considered insignificant, indicating that, when considering both groups collectively, there is no statistically significant difference in body image scores based on social media usage duration. These findings suggest that, when analyzing body image scores as a whole, irrespective of social media usage duration, no significant difference is observed. The insignificant p-value supports the idea that any discrepancies in mean scores are likely due to random chance rather than a meaningful correlation with social media usage duration.

### CONCLUSION

The research aimed to investigate the relationship between body image and social media usage among young adults. Notably, there was no significant discrepancy found in body image among those with less than 5 hours of social media use. Limitations encompass a narrow focus on Indian culture, a cross-sectional design inhibiting causal inference, and a sample size too small for broad generalization. The study did not specifically target platforms like Instagram or Snapchat, prompting recommendations for future investigations. Prospective areas of interest include examining different facets of the body image and exploring associations with problematic social media use, personality traits, and peer relationships. Despite its limitations, the study's findings provide valuable insights for future research endeavors and intervention initiatives.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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