

The Impact of Social Media Usage on Loneliness and Body Appreciation Among Queer Individuals

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ABSTRACT

This research is primarily concerned with seeking to understand the relationship between social media usage, loneliness, and body image among young queer individuals. A total of 100 respondents were employed in the study. The Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS) was used to assess social media use, the UCLA Loneliness Scale for feelings of loneliness and the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) for perception of one's body image. Findings revealed a strong correlation between social media and loneliness implying that the increase in use of social media is associated with an increase in the feelings of disconnection among queer social media users. Social media usage was also negatively correlated with body appreciation. These findings point out the particular problems that the queer community faces in online communication, which include the ever-present exposure to heteronormative standards, identity-based discrimination, and the need for validation, among others. This research calls for greater attention to the experiences of the queer community, the dynamics of social media life, and the need to make these spaces more inclusive for all.

Keywords: *Social Media, Loneliness, Body Image, Queer Individual, Mental Health, Social Media Usage*

Over the past twenty years, social platforms have turned into a crucial part of our day-to-day life, altering how individuals connect, communicate, and interact across the globe. Social media platforms have evolved significantly since the early 2000s, when early social platforms enabled users to create their own personal profile and connect with acquaintances. Social media has grown rapidly due to technological advancements, especially the widespread use of smartphones and high-speed internet, which has made it available to billions of people globally. By 2019, social media users numbered over 3.5 billion, and this number has continued to grow, with over 5 billion users as of 2024 (Statista, 2024).

Social media's primary purpose has shifted dramatically from its early iterations of simple text-based communication to the highly interactive platforms of today. Services now allow users to participate in real-time conversation as well as share photos, videos and live updates. The introduction of platforms like Instagram in 2010 and TikTok in 2016 further shaped social media by emphasising visual content and short-form videos, particularly

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attracting younger audiences. Social media usage has also been significantly influenced by algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), which tailor content to individual users, thereby keeping them engaged for extended periods (Tufekci, 2015). Over the years, moulding and integrating itself within people's daily routines and activities.

Despite these benefits of modern media and technology, there is a basic problem that needs to be addressed. People frequently compare themselves to others after viewing idealised photos online, particularly on visually-focused platforms like Instagram, which can have a negative impact on their self-worth and feelings about their beauty. Exposure to idealized images, particularly on visually driven platforms like Instagram, has been linked to negative impacts on body perception and self-esteem through the mechanism of social comparison (Perloff, 2014).

Social Media and Mental Health

Researchers are paying more attention to how social media affects mental health as it gets more and more integrated into daily life. There are many benefits to these platforms, including the ability to establish networks, get support, and remain in touch. However, there is mounting evidence that increased usage of social media platforms can also have detrimental consequences on psychological health, with numerous reports of both positive and negative effects.

It's getting more difficult to overlook social media's drawbacks. Excessive use of social media, especially in adolescence, is associated with increased levels of stress. Such platforms often curate polished portrayals of people's lives, promoting idealized versions of happiness, success, and beauty that may feel unattainable. Users may feel inadequate as a result of these comparisons, which can lead to self-doubt and exacerbate mental health conditions including melancholy and anxiety. (Fardouly et al., 2015). Apps like Instagram, which are primarily focused on visual material, frequently display flawless images that encourage unrealistic lifestyles and physique ideals. It has been demonstrated that this type of exposure lowers self-esteem and increases body dissatisfaction. (Perloff, 2014). Seeing such stuff all the time can cause social differentiation and comparing oneself, which is the practice of segregating one's life to the highlights of others', which typically makes one feel worse about oneself. (Festinger, 1954).

Social media's addictive qualities and frequent disruption of important daily routines, such as sleep, are also causes for increasing concern. Due to social media's constant activity, many users end up scrolling through the night. Sleep deprivation has been connected to this "night scrolling" behaviour, which can exacerbate anxiety and melancholic signs. (Shensa et al., 2018). Through personalised algorithms, the platforms aim to maintain user engagement, which can quickly result in a cycle of reliance that impairs emotional stability and mental health in general.

In the context of one's perception of their own body, there is a low sense of value and even the behavior of food is disorganized. Filters, editing apps, and the pressure to appear visually presentable can affect a user's self-image. Teenagers, especially, might feel pressured to adhere to unrealistic beauty standards in exchange for social acceptance, quantified in likes, comments, and followers (Perloff, 2014). This forms a feedback loop where looks become the main aspect in how users consider themselves valuable and socially significant. While there is body-positive content, emphasising acceptance and diversity, it still lingers in the background compared to more conventional content on thinness, muscularity, and other

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defined parameters of beauty. Therefore, the interaction between body image and social media continues to be an evolving area of interest for both mental health researchers and practitioners.

Despite the promise of greater connectedness, online platforms have been ironically linked. Users can have hundreds of virtual "friends" or "followers" yet still feel isolated from meaningful relationships. Research has shown it is linked to feeling lonelier—especially when it starts to take the place of real-life interactions (Primack et al., 2017). Just passively scrolling through posts without engaging—like reading updates without commenting or replying—can make people feel left out or even jealous. Seeing others post about exciting or happy moments can lead someone to feel like their own life doesn't measure up, which only deepens the feelings of alienation (Huang, 2017). Rapid responses such as likes, or brief comments may not give the type of support individuals really need.

Besides, excessive use of social media may replace traditional offline activities that have been long employed to alleviate loneliness, such as hobbies, sports, and socializing with friends or family. This substitution of real-world contact with screen time further reduces chances for forming meaningful connections.

Queer Population and their Vulnerability

Researchers have shown increasing interest in the mental health of queer individuals, as they report higher levels of psychological distress compared to heterosexual and cisgender populations. Queer individuals regularly experience social stressors derived from marginalization, stigmatization, and social discrimination (Meyer, 2003).

Queer individuals are typically faced daily with challenges ranging from marginalisation and discrimination to inadequate support in mainstream structures such as the family, schools, and religious communities. In reaction to these conditions, some found recognition, affirmation, identity, and inter-relationships through cyberspaces. Although it provides room for articulation and support, it might also put them at greater risks of cyberbullying, harassment, and comparison (Craig et al., 2021).

The Minority Stress Model is generally accepted as one of the best explanations for such inequalities, suggesting that chronic stresses rooted in societal stigma, internalised homophobia or transphobia, and anticipated rejection increase vulnerability to mental health problems (Meyer, 2003). Some of these stressors may be experienced at a very young age and might accumulate over time, causing multifaceted psychological consequences. Research shows that young queer individuals are at a high risk, with high accounts of self-conscious behavior, suicide concept formation and suicide efforts (Russell and Fish, 2016). The Trevor Project (2021) has indicated that more than 40% of LGBTQ+ youths consider attempting suicide, in which non-binary youth account for a high number.

Another major barrier is the lack of accessible, affirming mental health care. Many queer individuals hesitate to seek help because they're afraid of being judged or have previously had negative experiences with healthcare providers (McCann & Brown, 2020). As a result, those who often need support the most are also the least likely to receive the kind of care that's understanding and respectful of their identity—trapping them in a cycle that's hard to break. Cultural shame around mental health compounded by queer identity can further lead to internalised shame, making it even harder to access services.

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Social and familial rejection is another significant factor. Queer youth who face high levels of family rejection are eight percent more likely to reveal attempts to harm themselves compared to peers with open families. In addition, queer people are frequently denied access to community support, particularly in rural or conservative areas. The lack of a visible role model and inclusive spaces can create deep isolation. Although online groups can at times assist in bridging this gap, they do pose new hazards, such as cyberbullying and access to dangerous content.

Ecological Systems Theory, introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), focuses on the fact that individuals develop in a group of nested environmental systems, which contributes to influencing their thoughts, actions, and general welfare. These systems vary from immediate, direct environments such as family and friends (microsystem) to further-reaching societal and cultural effects (macrosystem). Applying this concept to queer groups and social media, the theory assists in elucidating how internet environments impact outcomes for mental health. Social networking sites are potentially a component of the exosystem—settings in which an individual has interactions indirectly but significantly affecting their existence. For the majority of queer users, particularly those who do not have affirming offline spaces, such sites provide important access to affirming communities, representation, and identity-affirming content. On the other hand such sites can also reflect and affirm prevailing societal norms, including beauty, gendered expectations, and heteronormativity, which can possibly lead to body dissatisfaction and exclusion. In general, queer populations are not intrinsic to their identities but rather are the result of the social contexts they experience.

Use and satisfaction theory (Katz, Blueler, and Gurevich, 1973) helps understand how people want to actively want various forms of media to meet some needs. In the language of social media, the theory suggests that its users do not engage with platforms passively but with a specific purpose—whether to have fun, socialize, find their identity, or seek affirmation. To queer people, social media might be a viable mode of self-expression and a way to network, especially when offline places are characterized by exclusion or stigma. Yet this place of support and publicity sometimes brings with itself a potentially severe psychological burden, chiefly when such validation becomes reliant on external parameters like comments, likes or followers. Such reliance might heighten tendencies for social comparison, critical sensitivity, and negative impacts on mental health.

Important differences emerge when comparing the social media experiences of queer individuals with those of cisgender and heterosexual individuals, particularly regarding identity, discrimination, and the need for validation. The cisgender and heterosexual populations are probably the only ones benefiting from using social media sites without being burdened about having to prove, time and again, that indeed they exist as a gender identity.

Queer individuals are often in the position of trying to manoeuvre their identity within places that perhaps won't even confirm their existence. Many websites are still primarily dominated by cisnormative and heteronormative representations of life, leading to feelings of exclusion, invalidation, or invisibility among queer people. In contrast, cisgender heterosexual users are unlikely to face such barriers, given that their life experiences are readily accepted and displayed online.

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For heterosexual and cisgender individuals, social comparison can primarily revolve around lifestyle, beauty, or achievement. Yet for queers, this comparison can be further compounded by the existence of unrealistic, idealised portrayals of gender and sexuality. For instance, queers may compare themselves not only physically but also according to their conformity or otherwise to heteronormative constructs of gender roles and sexual conduct. This can cause further body dissatisfaction and mental illness, as they have more societal pressure to conform to certain standards that do not typically consider their identities. The detrimental consequences that social platforms have on psychological issues like worry, melancholy, or decreased sense of worth tend to be magnified for queer individuals due to the various factors that stress them.

While anyone could be a target of online attacks, many times these attacks are aimed at the very fabric of what defines an individual's orientation, and such verbal violence would emanate much deeper for a queer person than for others. Worst yet, the very need for acceptance, in a time when it is rare to find, is acute among queer persons. In summary, although both queer and cisgender, heterosexual individuals are under the same pressures of social comparison, bodily perception, and psychological health in the realm of social platforms, queer individuals have the added pressure of living through these experiences within a heteronormative and cisnormative context. Their experiences are marked by the need for validation and exposure to discrimination.

Need for Future Studies

Despite the increasing interest in psychological influences of social media, current literature often normalizes conclusions in diverse populations without accounting for the fine experiences of marginalized communities, including the LGBTQ+ community. While existing research has identified relationships between social media usage, loneliness, and body image, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these dynamics specifically affect the queer population. Furthermore, most studies have focused on adolescents or general adult samples, overlooking the unique mental health experiences of queer individuals. Empirical evidence is also limited regarding specific aspects of social media use, such as validation-seeking behaviors, exposure to idealized body images, participation in queer communities, and their association with feelings of loneliness. Therefore, future research should prioritize exploring the lived experiences of queer adults across various platforms and contexts.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Taddi et al. (2024) conducted a cross-sectional study to examine the effects of the frequency of social media use on adolescent mental health and potential psychological risks. The study found a strong association between frequent social media use and increased levels of depression among adolescents. Notably, many respondents reported engaging in compulsive behaviours such as late-night scrolling, which contributed to psychological distress and poor sleep quality. These behaviours were linked to significant declines in both physical and emotional well-being. The research underscored the urgent need for further investigation into the complex relationship between digital activity and adolescent mental health, as well as the importance of developing targeted interventions.

Berger et al. (2022) explored how online platforms contribute to the psychological wellbeing of LGBTQ+ youth by offering safe spaces to form meaningful connections, navigate identity development, and access peer and community support. Their findings emphasized the platforms' potential in promoting mental health literacy and highlighted the importance of

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integrating these digital resources into therapeutic practices tailored to the unique needs of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Stefanita and Buf (2021) examined the widespread influence of social media, emphasizing its significant psychological impact on marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals. They noted that hate speech is a complex and broadly defined phenomenon, encompassing various forms of hostile expression targeted at different communities. Through their literature review, the authors highlighted the severe psychological harm caused by online hate speech directed at the LGBTQ+ population, especially when based on sexual orientation or expressed through derogatory language. Their study underscored the urgent need for a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of hate speech affect mental health.

Vogel et al. (2021) examined the relationship between online platform use, internalized shame related to sexual and gender minority (SGM) identity, perceived emotional support, and depressive symptoms among youth. The study found that lower perceived emotional support and higher levels of internalized SGM stigma were significantly associated with increased depressive symptoms. These associations remained significant even after accounting for actual time spent on social media. The findings also suggested that engagement with controversial online platforms is linked to heightened minority stress and mental health difficulties among SGM youth.

Cavalcante (2020) explored how LGBTQ+ youth use Tumblr as a space for queer discourse and collective identity formation. The study highlighted the platform's dual role—serving as a community-building space while simultaneously exposing the vulnerabilities of queer identities within the corporatized and often precarious digital environment. The nuanced user experiences on Tumblr reflect both empowerment through shared expression and the challenges of navigating visibility in a commercialized social media landscape.

Naslund et al. (2020) reviewed literature on the rising usage of online platforms among those who have mental illness. It was noted that although social media is capable of being used as a method of imparting evidence-based psychological health programmes and increasing care engagement, it also carries risks that must be managed thoughtfully. The researchers endorsed responsible use of those platforms within intellectual fitness, calling for collaboration among researchers, clinicians, and carrier users to maximise blessings whilst protection is ensured.

Escobar-Viera et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between online platform use and depressive symptoms among LGB individuals. Cyberbullying emerged as a prominent factor, consistently associated with increased depression and suicidal ideation. However, qualitative findings also revealed that social media can serve as a supportive space, enabling LGB individuals to share experiences and receive affirmation. Despite these benefits, the constant need to monitor and manage one's online identity was identified as a psychological burden. The study concluded that while social media can help reduce feelings of isolation, it also exposes users to harmful experiences. The authors emphasized the need for consistent terminology and methodology in future research, along with greater attention to the mental health needs of the LGB community.

Ceglarek and Ward (2016) investigated the relationship between social networking site usage, social support, identity development, and mental wellbeing among sexual minority

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youth. Their online survey included 146 sexual minorities and 477 heterosexual participants, both of whom used social media at similar rates. However, sexual minority youth were more likely to use these platforms for identity exploration and social connection. Notably, general identity-related use of social media was associated with reduced mental wellbeing, whereas use specifically focused on sexual identity development correlated with improved psychological outcomes. The study underscores the nuanced role of social media in supporting marginalized youth and highlights the importance of understanding how usage patterns differ by sexual orientation and impact mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

Examining the relationship between social media usage, loneliness and body appreciation among queer individuals.

Objectives:

1. To understand the relationship between social media usage and feelings of loneliness among queer individuals.
2. To understand the relationship between social media usage and body appreciation among queer individuals.

Hypothesis:

- **HA1:** There will be a statistically significant positive correlation among Social Media Usage and loneliness among queer individuals.
- **HA2:** There will be a statistically significant negative correlation among Social media usage and body appreciation among queer individuals.

Research:

This investigation used a quantitative in nature, correlational method of research. This method was used to investigate the degree and effectiveness of the links among three behavioral variables such as online social network usage and feelings of isolation.

Participants:

The study involved a sample of 100 queer participants selected through convenience sampling. Individuals within the age range between 18 years to 40 years old who used social media regularly were invited to participate. All individuals provided consent before partaking in the research. The sample consisted of participants from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds to ensure diversity and representation.

Variables:

- a) Independent variable: social media usage
- b) Dependent variables- loneliness, body appreciation

Measures:

- **Social Media Usage Scale-** Developed in 2024 by Tuck and Thompson, this study used to evaluate various social media engagement patterns. Four different aspects of social media behavior are assessed by this 17-item test. The frequency of these behaviors in the previous week is indicated by the frequency reactions, which is given on the 5-point likert scale. Three separate studies with college students were used to test and improve social media use scale (SMUS). From 0.77 to 0.83 for each

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section with alpha values of cronbach, the scale demonstrated strong reliability, and the results validated its four-part structure. Because of this, it's a reliable and strong tool for learning about the various ways people use social media.

- **UCLA Loneliness Scale-** The updated UCLA Loneliness Scale was utilised in this study to gauge loneliness. This scale, which was first built by Russell, Peplau and Ferguson in 1978 and modified in 1996, contains 20 items that anticipate a person's social engagement or separation. The 4-point scale ranges from "never" to "often", the participants' response. With an alpha of 0.89 of Cronbach, the scale has conducted extensive testing and continuously displays high reliability.
- **Body Appreciation Scale-** In 2005, the body appropriation scale (BAS) created by and and Wood-Barcalow was used to gauge the sentiments of the participants about their body in the study. Positive body image—things like accepting, respecting, and appreciating one's body—is the focus of this 10-item survey, which has a 5-point rating system. The BAS is a highly regarded instrument for body image research because of its strong validity and excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$).

Procedure:

Data were collected through an online survey disseminated via social networking sites and direct communication. Participants were first presented with an information sheet outlining the objectives of the study, followed by an informed consent form. Upon providing consent, they completed three standardized scales along with demographic questions. The survey remained open for a period of four weeks, during which responses were gathered and subsequently analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were computed, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the variables.

Ethical Considerations:

The participants were assured of confidentiality of their responses. Respondents were informed that taking part in the investigation was entirely optional and that they would not face any consequences if they left at any time.

RESULTS

Table 1

Correlations

Variable	1	2	3
1. Social Media Usage	-		
2. Loneliness	.76**	-	
3. Body Appreciation	-.56**	-.47**	-

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

Pearson's correlation was calculated between the IV (Smus) and DVs (UCLA, BAS) Table 1 indicates an important positive correlation between the use and loneliness of social media ($r = .760$, $p < .01$), and significant negative correlations between social media usage and body appreciation ($r = -.561$, $p < .01$), and between loneliness and body appreciation ($r = -.469$, $p < .01$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

		SMUS	UCLA	BAS
N	Valid	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		87.71	52.83	10.85
Std. Error of Mean		1.48	.89	.305
Median		86.00	52.00	10.00
Mode		81a	51a	10
Std. Deviation		14.838	8.97	3.05
Skewness		0.09	.01	4.56
Std. Error of Skewness		.24	.241	.241
Kurtosis		.40	.36	23.319
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.48	.48	.48
Range		.87	51	20

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the three variables: Social Media Usage (M = 87.71, SD = 14.84), Loneliness (M = 52.38, SD = 8.97), and Body Appreciation (M = 10.85, SD = 3.05), indicating relatively high average online media usage and loneliness, alongside low body appreciation among those who partook in the study.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to analyze the relationship between the use of social media platforms, loneliness, and body appreciation among young queer individuals. The results provided meaningful insights into how these variables interact within this specific population.

In line with the hypotheses, significant correlations were found between social media usage and loneliness, social media usage and body appreciation, and loneliness and body appreciation. These reflect important dynamics for queer individuals in the context of social platforms.

The findings support the idea that higher levels of social media usage are linked with increased loneliness. While these platforms are often promoted as tools for connection, the outcomes of this study show that they may not always create meaningful relationships for queer users. In fact, online interactions might sometimes feel shallow or inauthentic, leaving individuals feeling emotionally disconnected even after engaging online. This echoes earlier research showing that for marginalized groups, digital spaces can sometimes intensify isolation instead of reducing it (Primack et al., 2017).

Another important finding showed a moderate negative correlation ($R = -0.469$, $p < 0.001$) between social media use and body appreciation. Simply put, the more time people spent on online platforms, the less positively they felt about their bodies. This supports the hypothesis that social media can harm body image. Constant exposure to idealized beauty standards online can make people feel inadequate. For queer individuals, who often navigate complex gender and identity norms, these comparisons can significantly affect how they see and appreciate their own bodies.

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Finally, the study found a moderate negative correlation ($R = -0.561$, $p < 0.001$) between loneliness and body appreciation. This means that individuals who felt lonelier were also more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their body image. Together, these results demonstrate the emotional and psychological challenges queer individuals may face when using social media, both in terms of connection with others and self-perception.

This research also showed that low body appreciation is linked with higher loneliness. A negative self-image may lead to more social withdrawal, suggesting that body image issues and loneliness are deeply connected for queer individuals.

The findings align with earlier studies exploring the impact of social media on loneliness and body image, especially for queer individuals. Loneliness can make people feel more insecure and inadequate, and social media—which often shows idealized lives and appearances—can worsen these feelings. For queer individuals, who may already struggle with internalized stigma and body concerns, this combination can be particularly damaging. Research has repeatedly shown that exposure to beauty-related content on social media negatively impacts body image, especially among LGBTQ+ users. For example, Tiggemann and Slater (2014) found that exposure to idealized images increases body dissatisfaction. This study expands on that finding by showing that these trends strongly affect queer users as well.

The link between body dissatisfaction and loneliness also supports earlier findings. Parisinotto et al. (2012) showed that loneliness is often associated with a more negative body image. For queer individuals, emotional isolation can intensify body dissatisfaction, as previously shown by MacInroy et al. (2019). This research strengthens the idea that body image issues and loneliness overlap and create significant mental health challenges.

A major theoretical framework supported by this study is Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954). Social media often acts as a mirror, encouraging users to compare themselves to others. For marginalized queer users, these comparisons can worsen feelings of loneliness and body dissatisfaction.

The study also supports the Body Image Disturbance Model (Cash & Smolak, 2011), which states that external influences like media and social interaction negatively shape body image. Queer individuals who spent more time on social media reported feeling more lonely and less positive about their bodies, suggesting that harmful online standards can worsen mental health struggles.

Importantly, the study also acknowledges the positive potential of online queer communities. LGBTQ+ forums, support groups, and creators can provide a sense of acceptance, validation, and solidarity. These spaces offer individuals—especially those who lack support in their immediate environment—a platform to connect with others who truly understand their experiences. Engaging with diverse and body-positive content can help queer users appreciate their bodies and resist harmful beauty standards. In this way, social media can offer both challenges and opportunities for queer individuals.

Understanding the broader context of social exclusion and digital spaces is key to understanding the relationship between online platform use, loneliness, and body image in the queer community.

Implications of the Findings

The findings have important practical applications for improving mental health and body image among queer individuals. Educational programs that raise awareness about the effects of excessive social media use among queer people could be highly beneficial. Such programs could encourage individuals to reflect on their online habits and the emotional impact of the content they consume.

Social media companies could also take steps to promote healthier usage by implementing moderation policies that reduce body-shaming and support authentic, diverse representations of queer bodies and experiences. Rather than fostering harmful comparisons, this would create a more welcoming online environment.

Interventions could focus on building safer, more supportive online spaces specifically for queer individuals. Setting up online support groups or networks that promote positive body image and self-expression would be an effective way to reduce loneliness and boost mental health. Research has shown that coworker support, especially in safe online spaces, significantly reduces feelings of loneliness and improves mental well-being (Williams, 2019).

Additionally, these findings can help counselors and mental health professionals better understand the specific challenges queer clients face, especially in relation to social media. Therapy could focus on addressing body image issues and loneliness arising from online experiences.

Limitations of the Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it also has several limitations. First, the sample size of only 100 queer participants limits how widely the findings can be generalized to the broader LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, because the study relied on self-reported questionnaires, there may be biases such as participants presenting themselves in a socially desirable way or misremembering their experiences.

Although the study found links between social media use, body appreciation, and loneliness, it does not prove causation. It is unclear whether these experiences change over time as a direct result of social media usage.

Moreover, the study did not analyze specific platforms, the nature of online interactions, or the level of offline support participants had, which could have influenced the results. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and use methods like longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to better understand these complex relationships over time.

CONCLUSION

By exploring the relationship between social media use, loneliness, and body appreciation, this study sheds light on the mental health struggles faced by queer individuals—an often overlooked group in psychological research. The findings show that while social media can create connection, it can also lead to loneliness and body dissatisfaction. Queer individuals are particularly vulnerable to these effects because of existing social pressures and marginalization.

The study emphasizes the need for interventions that support queer individuals both online and offline, promoting positive body image, healthy online behaviors, and stronger social

connections. Despite its limitations, this research provides a valuable foundation for future studies. Moving forward, researchers should use more robust and diverse approaches to capture the full psychological effects of social media use on queer mental health over time.

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