

Research Paper

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

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ABSTRACT

Body image is an individual's subjective impression and attitudes toward their body, including thoughts, feelings, and behaviors concerning body form, size, and attractiveness. Physique dissatisfaction, or unpleasant thoughts and emotions about one's physique and look, is common. This condition occurs at any stage of life and affects both men and women (Fiske et al., 2014). Social media is a collection of digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and with each other through various forms of communication. It has also been demonstrated that the mass media has a detrimental effect on body image and is thought to have a ubiquitous influence in forming ideals of physical attractiveness. Males are just as likely as females to experience body image issues as a result of using social networking sites, viewing advertisements, fashion magazines etc regardless of culture or age group. There have been fewer efforts made toward the maladaptive behaviours associated with boys and men than those on social media concerning girls and women (Nagata et al., 2021). The present study aims to study the media's effect (including both social media and mass media) on male body image concerns. The participants are Indian boys and men aged 16-35 years who have only heterosexual orientations, have never met with a mental diagnosis, and are active users of social media, purposive sampling will be implied to identify these participants, they will be from the urban metropolitan city populations either pursuing their studying or working professionals, in middle-class families. This will be done to minimise the external factors of socio-cultural and major economic disparities that might otherwise affect the study results. This will be a quasi-experimental study, implying a mixed-method approach. We will apply pre-test and post-test administration to our target population. The BSIQ - SF (Body et al.: Short Form) and the MMIS (Harrison, 2009) (would be used as a pre-test, followed by providing different visual stimuli to the controlled and experimental groups, and finally, the Modified Multidimensional Facebook Intensity Scale, alongside the other two scales as well for a post-test measure. After the experimentation, detailed semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a few of the participants who will have the highest scores for body image dissatisfaction and a few of them will have significantly good regard for their body image. All ethical measures will be taken care of during the conduction of the experiment. Through this study, we anticipate obtaining the results that show that men are as vulnerable to exposure to social media as women.

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Body dissatisfaction, encompassing negative thoughts and emotions about one's body and appearance, is widely prevalent among human beings. An individual's subjective assessment of one's looks and the perceived difference between one's ideal and actual physical appearance are two aspects of body dissatisfaction (Grogan, 2021). This is not a trait that an individual may depend on. Instead, one's attitude towards one's appearance depends on cognitive and affective processes, and as such, it can change depending on a range of societal, psychological, and personality factors. This phenomenon can happen at any stage of life and is noticeable in both men and women (Fiske et al., 2014). A lack of psychological well-being and a lower sense of life satisfaction are linked to body dissatisfaction (McLean et al., 2016). The relationship between exposure to beauty standards and body dissatisfaction can be explained by cultural socialisation in several ways. Parents, peer groups, and the media are the three primary sources of social influence.

Social media has been an excellent platform for people to communicate, share information, and view themselves and others. It is well-established that media, especially advertising, shapes people's views, choices, and actions (McLean et al., 2013). Although social media's effect on women's body image has long been well-documented, more recently, its more profound effects are being realized in men's body image dissatisfaction. Meta-analytical research supports the detrimental impact of media content that objectifies people in the context of hegemonic beauty ideals on men's body dissatisfaction and other aspects of body image (Barlett et al., 2008). Social media companies frequently use scantily clad models and suggestive imagery to promote their brands and goods. These commercials try to convince the male spectator that he can achieve the man's figure in the commercial by using specific gym equipment, even if those particular visuals and others are essentially unachievable. Social media advertisements are not the only media that use scantily dressed, toned male models to promote items; numerous mass media channels also feature impossibly thin or muscular male models (Attia & Walsh, 2007). These male models' physical types are referred to as ideal body images. The stereotypical male body type for men is described as vital, with broad shoulders tapering down to a thin waist and well-developed arm and chest muscles (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2006). Users themselves are featured on social media, instead of only models and celebrities (Manago et al., 2008). Individuals tend to frequently post only the most beautiful photographs of themselves—which can be altered and enhanced—on their social media profiles. This leads to an idealized representation of themselves (Zhao et al., 2008). On social media, people frequently share comments and other content regarding looks in addition to photographs, which may affect how users feel about their appearance. Findings reveal that men alter and upload selfies to social networking sites to present their "best" selves for approval from others (Fox & Vendemia, 2016). Despite cultural and age influences, the two genders (males and females), are equally exposed to negative body image because of the usage of social networking sites (Nagata et al., 2021).

Mass media, defined as channels of communication that disseminate information to large, diverse audiences simultaneously (American Psychological Association, n.d.), significantly influences individuals' self-esteem, body image, and confidence. While extensive research has focused on women's experiences, emerging studies highlight that men, particularly heterosexual men, are also susceptible to the impacts of media portrayals. Recently men have been increasing their efforts to maintain their leanness and gain muscle. This has been attributed to what is known as an "Adonis complex of attractiveness" (Pope et al., 2000, p. xiii). The ideal male body of the 21st century has become less and less attainable (Pope et

al., 1999). This causes real-ideal disparities, which lead men to depression and low self-esteem (Pope et al., 2000). A comparison of the most popular magazines showed that although female-oriented publications contained many more dieting articles and advertisements, male periodicals contained many more advertisements for fitness and body-building (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992). Consequently, the print media persuades men to construct their bodies through exercise, whereas women are urged to regulate their body weight through dieting. Both male and female periodicals also push different body images. For example, men are exposed to a muscularity culture just as women are exposed to the thinness culture that dominates Western society (Heinberg, 1996).

Theoretical framework

Tripartite Model of Influence- The Tripartite Model suggests that peer, parental, and media pressure on body image dissatisfaction is mediated through internalizing ideals and social comparison (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Internalization of cultural beauty standards and social comparison are the two mediational links that connect factors to eating disorders and poor body image. Body fat dissatisfaction and muscularity are the two dual body image pathways in the updated Tripartite Model of Influence (Van Den Berg et al., 2002).

Self-Discrepancy Theory - Self-Discrepancy Theory, formulated by Edward Tory Higgins in 1987, claims that a discrepancy between the ideal self and actual self stimulates individuals to alter their actual self. A discrepancy between the authentic and ideal selves leads to emotions like guilt, humiliation, and embarrassment. When individuals cannot match their actual selves with their ideal selves, they may engage in destructive behaviours (Heron & Smyth, 2013).

Social Cognitive Theory- Social Cognitive Theory suggests that people learn behaviours by observing others (Bandura, 2008). By watching others, individuals can learn to link particular behavioural norms and results. Male Instagram users can identify and reaffirm their ideals regarding food, exercise, and body type through modelling (Simpson & Mazzeo, 2016).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Luo, Maafs-Rodríguez, and Hatfield (2024) reviewed how social media campaigns promote healthy behaviours. The study analyzed campaigns on healthy eating, exercise, and weight management, revealing mixed effects on attitudes, behavior, and physical outcomes. It highlighted the need for better-designed campaigns to maximize positive impacts. Silva and Steins (2023) studied how Instagram content affects body dissatisfaction. In their experiment, 226 people viewed images of either diverse body types or beauty ideals. Those exposed to idealized images experienced higher dissatisfaction, especially women, but men also reported mood changes. The study emphasized how social comparison and beauty standards worsen body dissatisfaction and suggested promoting body diversity.

Lonergan et al. (2021) explored men's social media habits and body image concerns. Men frequently edit and post selfies, seek muscularity-related content, and compare themselves to others, which increases the risk of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. The study called for social media literacy programs tailored to male experiences. Gültzow et al. (2020) analyzed 1,000 Instagram posts depicting men, finding that highly muscular and lean bodies received more likes and comments. While many posts emphasized health and fitness over appearance, they still contributed to body dissatisfaction. Trends promoting lean and muscular physiques can create unrealistic expectations and related health issues.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

Fox and Vendemia (2016) examined how social media users engage in self-presentation. In their study of 1,686 users, both men and women edited and posted images to appeal to their audience. Women altered images more frequently and felt worse after comparing themselves to others, but men also experienced dissatisfaction. The study showed that social media intensifies body image concerns by reinforcing beauty standards and encouraging social comparison.

Wiseman, Sunday, and Becker (2005) examined media's influence on adolescent body image, showing that media impacts self-perception across different cultural backgrounds. While focused on teenage girls, the study also reviewed effects on boys, emphasizing the need for critical media awareness. Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn (2004) studied media exposure and male body image by showing 158 men TV ads with either idealized male bodies or neutral images. Those exposed to idealized ads felt more depressed and dissatisfied with their muscles. Unlike past studies, no individual factors affected mood or body image changes.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study: To understand the impact of mass media content and social media platforms on men's body image issues.

Objectives of the study:

- To investigate how social media's hegemonic beauty standards affect men's contentment with their bodies.
- To find out potential differences in body dissatisfaction between social media posts featuring body diversity and those featuring hegemonic beauty standards.
- To understand the extent to which mass media can influence, how men perceive their body image. To study the detrimental impacts of mass media exposure because of the social comparison process with the media's portrayal of cultural ideals of thinness and beauty.

Variables

- Independent Variable: Social Media, Mass Media, Hegemonic Beauty, Media Exposure, Screentime.
- Dependent Variable: Body Image Dissatisfaction, Social Comparison

Hypothesis

- **H01:** There is no significant impact of hegemonic beauty portrayed on social media on men's perception of body image.
- **H02:** Social comparison through social media does not significantly impact men's perception of the ideal body.
- **H03:** Mass media content consumption has no significant impact on internalization of beauty standards among men.

Research question: How does exposure to idealized male body types in media impact body image issues among men across various age groups?

Design: Quasi-experimental (Exploratory) Research Design, Mixed Method Study

Sample

- Sample: Indian Men between the ages of 16-35 years. The sample consists solely of the urban population, mostly from the metropolitan cities of India, all participants belong to a middle-class or an upper-middle-class family. The minimum qualification of all participants is class 12th pass and all the participants are either students or working.
- Sample size: 90 (Divided into two experimental and one control group consisting of 30 members each), 10 (5 each from age-groups 16-25 and 26-35) participated in the semi-structured interview.

Method of sample collection:

- Inclusion criteria: Straight Indian males who use social media and fit the age group (adolescents, young adults, and adults)
- Exclusion criteria: Females, other genders, young adolescents, children, individuals with pre-diagnosed psychological disorders, and people who do not use social media.
- Tools: Jamovi, Google Forms for data collection, BSIQ - SF (Body et al.: Short Form), the Body Appreciation Scale, and a modified Facebook Intensity Multidimensional Scale, Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3), semi-structured interviews.

Method of Analysis

A systematic (thematic) analysis is used to identify, categorize, and code the patterns and themes within the research data, mainly from the interview transcripts and observations. It's an iterative and flexible approach to discovering the research's in-depth meanings and concepts. Using thematic analysis was the most appropriate measure for the study as the different perspectives of the participants can be categorized into different themes. This enabled us to get a clear idea of all the potential factors and impacts on the self-esteem, body-image perceptions, and social comparison behaviors of individuals across the age groups 16-35, consuming mass media content.

Ethical Considerations and Measures

While researching the "Impact of Social Media on Body Image Dissatisfaction in Men," many ethical considerations and measures were taken into account so that the study can be carried out with utmost responsibility and moral conduct. Here are some key considerations and measures that we adhered to:

1. Transparency and Honesty: We have disclosed the purpose of our study, that the study holds no possible risks or benefits, and that the information collected from the participants will be used only for the study.
2. Informed Consent: The nature, purpose, procedures involved, and potential risks of the study were fully explained to participants. Consent was free of any pressure or constraint, and the participant could withdraw at any point in the study or interview without experiencing any adverse consequences.
3. Confidentiality and Anonymity: The protection of participants' privacy was of paramount importance. In this respect, we pseudonymized all personal data to make identification impossible. The interview was recorded but no personal information was used for the identification of the participant. The responses were made anonymous.

4. Bias and Sensitivity: We realized the biases that could affect our study; thus, we used randomization to divide the experimental and control groups and avoid creating any prejudice or stereotypes among our sample population. We ensured we were sensitive and understanding of the individual differences of our sample while conducting the interventions on our experimental groups.
5. Debriefing: We debriefed all participants at the end of the study and paid extra attention to the experimental group exposed to hegemonic beauty standards and the stereotypical perfect body image, thus receiving a harmful intervention during the study. We ensured that they received the positive intervention again after the end of the research so that the perception created in their mind due to the harmful intervention was clarified. We also informed the participants that we would be available for support if they faced any disturbances from being involved in the study.
6. Participant Screening and Support: Out of the 125 responses we received, we had to screen out participants based on our exclusion criteria. Some of them did not identify themselves as males, a few of them had an underlying psychiatric illness as informed by their guardians or close friends, a few did not fill in the required demographic details in an appropriate manner, and a few had randomly opted for the options without reading the questions which could be understood by the disorganization in their responses in case of a similar question repeated twice, these responses had to be screened because these might have affected the credibility of our research.

Procedure

- Google Forms were formulated to collect data for the research study.
- The forms consisted of a consent form, demographic details, and two questionnaires.
- The Body Appreciation Scale and the Modified Multidimensional Facebook Intensity Scale were circulated, collecting 137 responses.
- -Both the scales employed a five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.
- We studied the technological mechanisms on social media—such as feed algorithms, filters used, or targeted ads of the 137 responses, we had to screen out 42 based on our exclusion criteria, unmatched algorithms (didn't show much engagement with hegemonic beauty-specific content or no regular engagement with social media) and biased responses, finally having 95 participants who perfectly fit in within our inclusion criteria and gave unbiased responses.
- Our final sample consisted of 90 participants who had willingly agreed to participate further in our study. We used systematic sampling to divide them into three groups consisting of 3 groups each. Of the 3 groups, 2 were experimental groups to receive interventions, and the other was a control group.
- The participants were exposed to specific unhealthy fitness, hegemonic beauty standards, and ideal celebrity imagery posts, videos, and ads for 1.5 hours every day continuously for a month.
- After one month, the first experimental group received a positive intervention where participants received two sessions on body diversity and positive body image.
- The sessions were conducted through different social media platforms like YouTube videos, positive trends regarding body image on X, Instagram content appreciating and encouraging body diversity, and podcasts talking about positive body image.
- Continuous discussions were initiated encouraging and appreciating body image positivity and body diversity.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

- The second experimental group received a harmful intervention where participants received two sessions on perfect body image, hegemonic beauty standards, and maintenance of social standards by having a perfect body proportion.
- The participants were encouraged to think of social comparison through the media's portrayal of cultural ideals of thinness and beauty.
- They were shown YouTube videos on forming a well-shaped body, side effects of not having a perfect body, masculinity identification through body muscle proportion, trends regarding body image maintenance on X, and Instagram posts of famous celebrities and models flexing their perfect body-shape and perfect muscle proportions.
- The control group did not receive any intervention.
- Subsequently, the Body Self-Image Questionnaire (BSIQ) was administered again as a post-test method.
- The group that received the negative intervention was given a debriefing.
- The sessions provided to the group receiving the positive intervention were also administered to the group receiving the negative intervention to erase any negative perspectives.
- All the participants were asked to fill out the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ), which is also a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.
- Among all the responses, 5 responses (highest scorers in body image dissatisfaction) from each age-group (16-25 and 25-35) were selected for semi-structured interviews, a total of 10 interviews were taken. Each went for approximately 45-60 mins.
- All experimental sessions and interviews were conducted through Google Meet.
- The interview recordings were converted into transcripts, and the thematic analysis method was applied to code the data to obtain the results.
- The Jamovi application was used to perform the statistical analysis.
- The results were analyzed and interpreted to determine the conclusions of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The final sample consisted of 90 participants, Indian Men between the ages of 16-35 years, following the inclusion criteria strictly. We calculated descriptive statistics to determine our participants' body image satisfaction level and social media usage rate. We included mean, median, mode, SD, variance, and skewness-Kurtosis in our descriptive statistics records. The Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality determined the normality of our population, and our sample was found to be normally distributed ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$). The mean value for the Body Appreciation Scale was 37.7, determining that our sample partially appreciates their body. A mean value of 84.4 was obtained from the BSIQ scale, which denotes that our sample is dissatisfied with their body (< 85). The MMFI scale marked a mean value of 37.8, which accounts for our sample having a moderate rate of social media usage. A mean value of 4.22 obtained from the SATAQ-3 questionnaire, denoting that our population has high social comparison and beauty internalisation with the mass media content. We also obtained the descriptive statistics data for our participants' screen time. The mean value of their screen time was found to be 5.33 hrs. This means that most of the participants of our sample use their social media for 5 hours per day on average.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

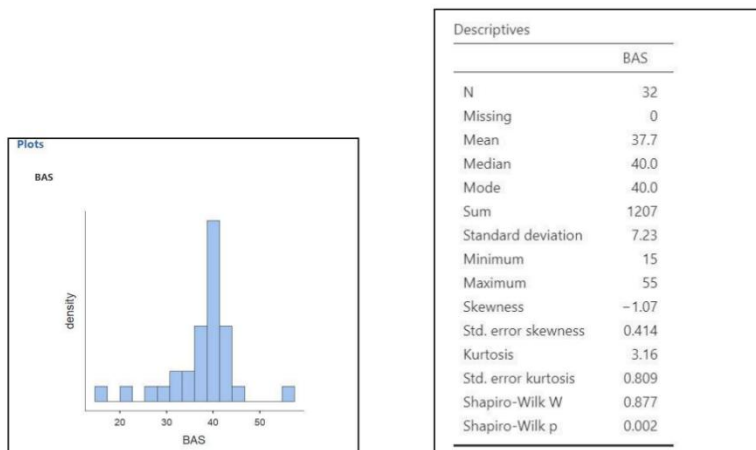


Fig 1: Descriptive statistics data of BAS

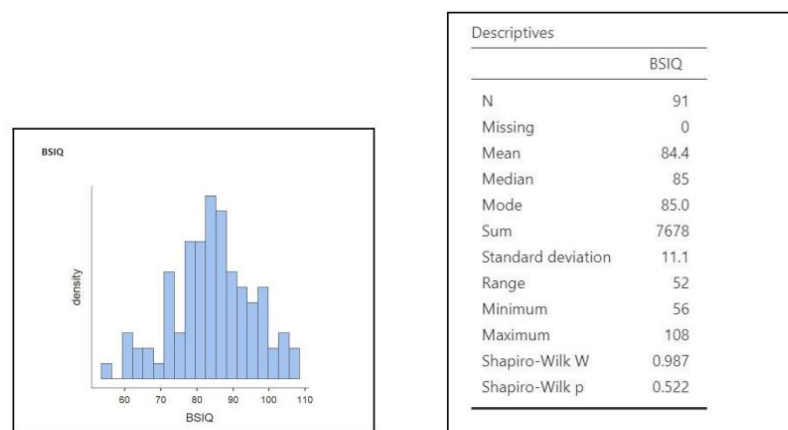


Fig 2: Descriptive statistics data of BSIQ

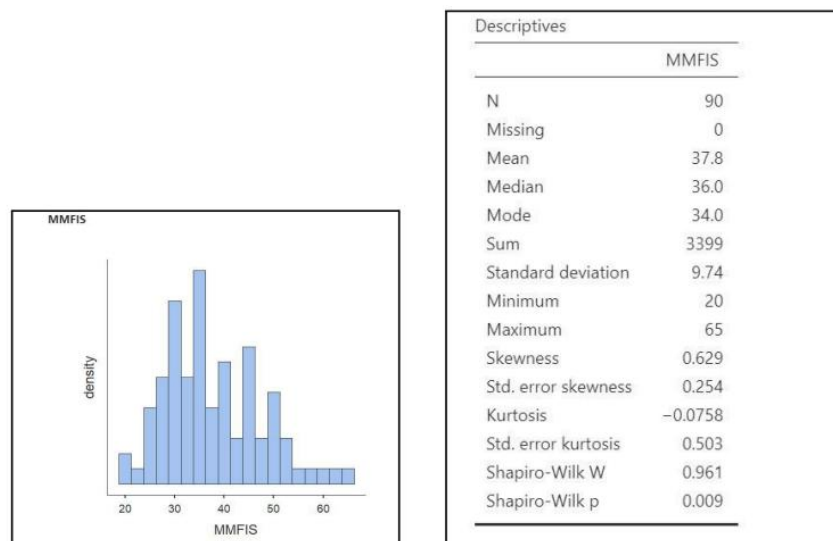


Fig 3: Descriptive statistics data of MMFI

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

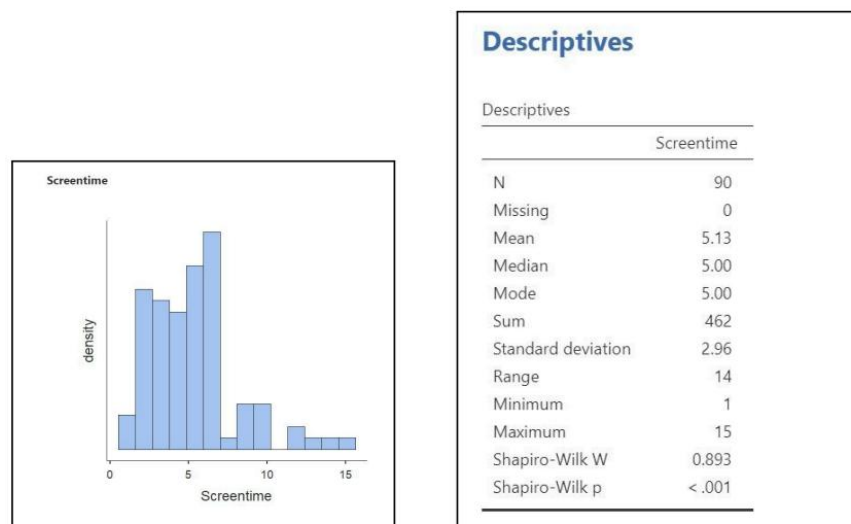


Fig 4: Descriptive statistics data of Screentime

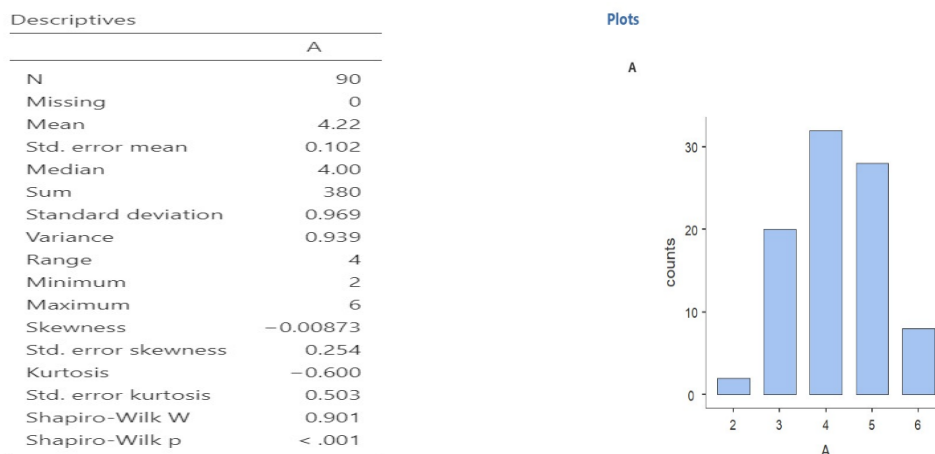
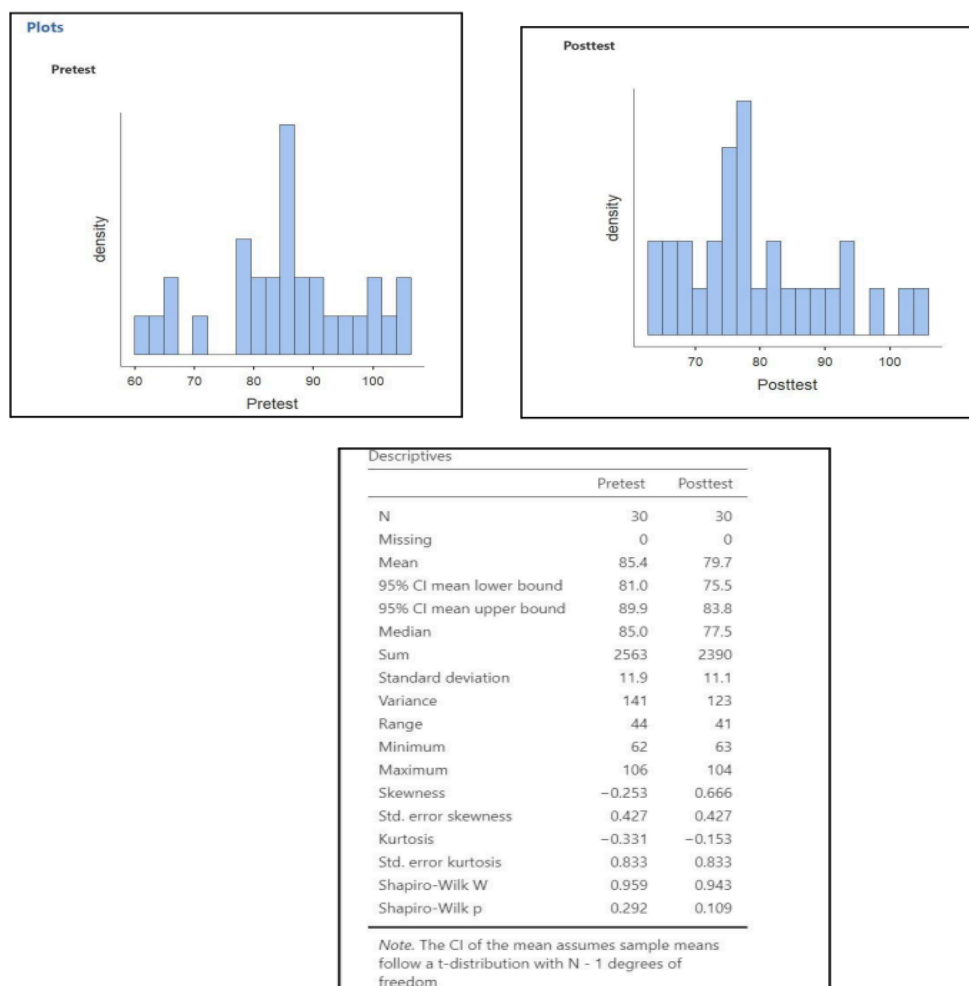


Fig 5: Descriptive statistics data of SATAQ-3

We calculated the descriptive statistics for the Pre-test and Post-test results of all the 3 groups - the 2 experimental groups (obtaining positive and negative intervention) and the control group. The pre-test mean value of the BSIQ scale for the 30 participants chosen to receive the harmful intervention was 85.4, slightly above 85, thus denoting that those participants were partially satisfied with their body image. This value declined to 75.5 in the post-test, thus denoting that the sample is dissatisfied with their body image (< 85) since the sample receiving negative intervention showed a normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk, $p > 0.05$), a paired sample T-test was conducted to get the difference between the pre-test and post-test values. The T-test score was 2.06, indicating that the harmful intervention administered to the participants did have an impact on their perception of their body image, thus proving that hegemonic beauty standards portrayed in social media affect men's body image. We can, therefore, conclude that we reject our null hypothesis H01, which says that there is no significant impact of hegemonic beauty portrayed on social media on men's perception of body image.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study



Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples T-Test

			statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Pretest	Posttest	Student's t	2.06	29.0	0.048	5.77	2.80

Note: $H_a: \mu \text{ Measure 1} - \mu \text{ Measure 2} \neq 0$

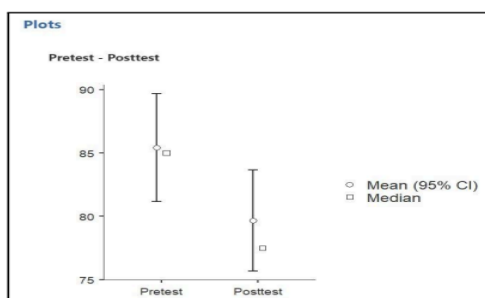
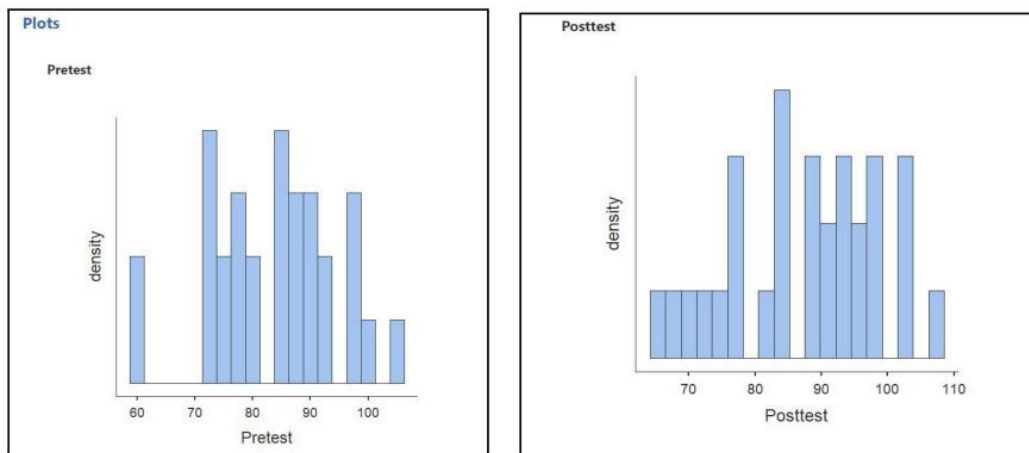


Fig 6: Descriptive statistics and Paired Sample T- Test findings for pre-test and post-test scores of sample obtaining Negative Intervention

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

The pretest mean value of the BSIQ scale for the 30 participants chosen to receive the positive intervention was 83.5, which is well below 85, thus denoting that those participants were dissatisfied with their body image. This value raised to 87.5 in the post-test, thus denoting that the sample is partially satisfied with their body image (>85). This indicates that the positive intervention administered to the participants impacted their perception of their body image, thus proving that if social media promotes body diversity and accepts all body types without stereotyping them, the men's perception of their bodies will change. Since the sample receiving positive intervention showed a normal distribution (Shapiro-wilk $p > 0.05$), a paired sample T-test was conducted to get the difference between the pre-test and post-test values. The T-test score was -1.41 (between -2 to +2), usually indicating no significant difference. Thus we see that the positive impact is not as effective as the negative impact of the hegemonic beauty standards.



Descriptives		
	Pretest	Posttest
N	30	30
Missing	5	5
Mean	83.5	87.5
95% CI mean lower bound	79.4	83.3
95% CI mean upper bound	87.6	91.7
Median	85.0	89.0
Standard deviation	10.9	11.3
Variance	120	127
Minimum	60	65
Maximum	105	107
Skewness	-0.226	-0.328
Std. error skewness	0.427	0.427
Kurtosis	-0.253	-0.775
Std. error kurtosis	0.833	0.833
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.978	0.967
Shapiro-Wilk p	0.771	0.457

Note. The CI of the mean assumes sample means follow a t-distribution with N - 1 degrees of freedom

Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples T-Test

			statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Pretest	Posttest	Student's t	-1.41	29.0	0.169	-4.00	2.84

Note. $H_a: \mu \text{ Measure 1 - Measure 2} \neq 0$

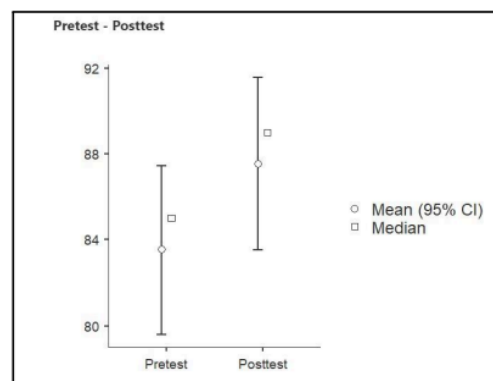
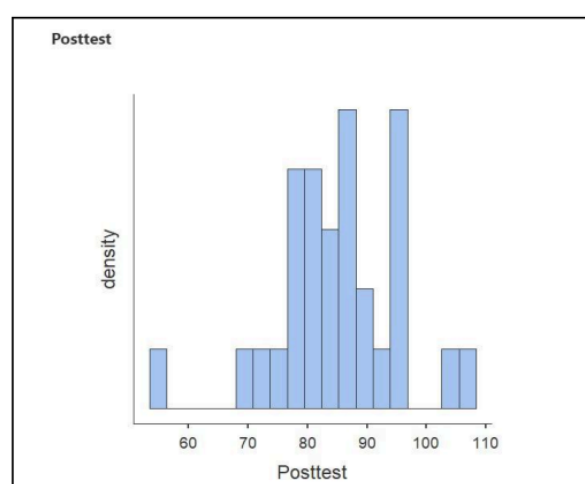
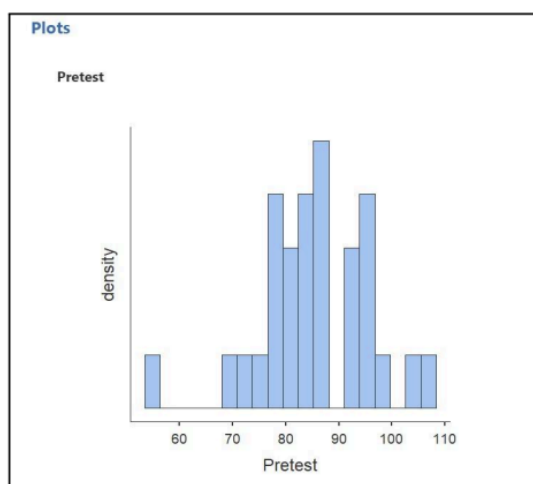


Fig 7: Descriptive statistics and Paired Sample T- Test findings for pre-test and post-test scores of sample obtaining Positive Intervention

The pre-test mean value of the BSIQ scale for the 30 control group participants was 85.6, slightly above 85, thus denoting that those participants were partially satisfied with their body image. This value remained almost similar (85.3) in the post-test, thus indicating that the sample is still partially satisfied with their body image (> 85) since the control group showed a normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk $p > 0.05$), a paired sample T-test was conducted to get the difference between the pre-test and post-test values. The T-test score was 1.12 (between -2 to +2), usually indicating no significant difference. This score aligns with the objective of our study, where the participants who received no intervention in terms of exposure to social media show no significant difference in their perception of their body image.



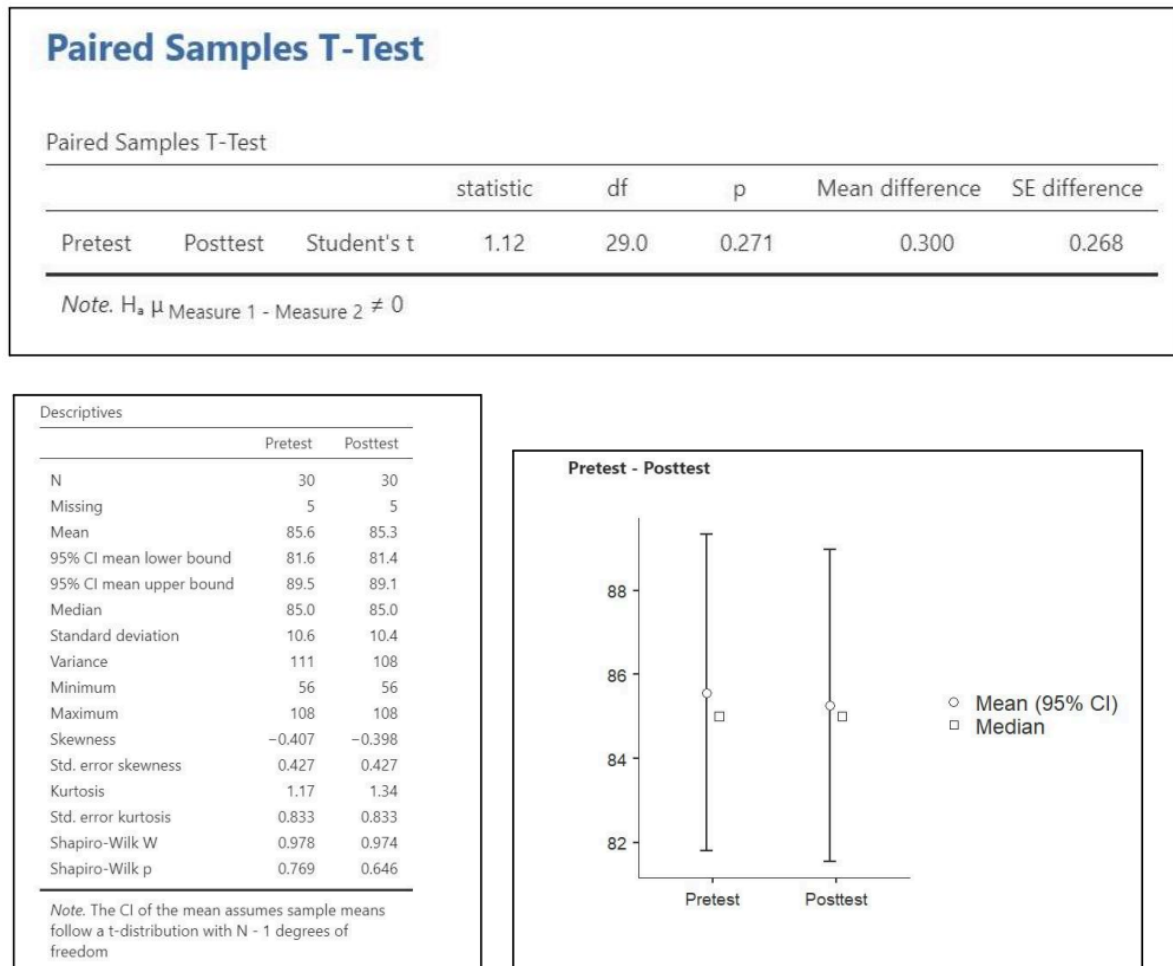


Fig 8: Descriptive statistics and Paired Sample T- Test findings for pre-test and post-test scores of the control group

Focusing on our second dependent variable, Social Comparison, we conducted a correlational analysis to analyze the relationship between social media usage time (screen time) and social comparison rate among our participants. The mean value of social comparison seen in the participants was 11.6 (the minimum value being 3 and the maximum 25) since our total sample was not normally distributed ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$), we conducted the Spearman's correlational matrix to find the correlation between Social Comparison and Screentime. The results showed a 0.098 correlation between Social Comparison and Screentime, thus denoting a weak positive correlation between the two variables. Thus, we fail to reject our null hypothesis H02, which says that Social comparison through social media does not significantly impact men's perception of the ideal body.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

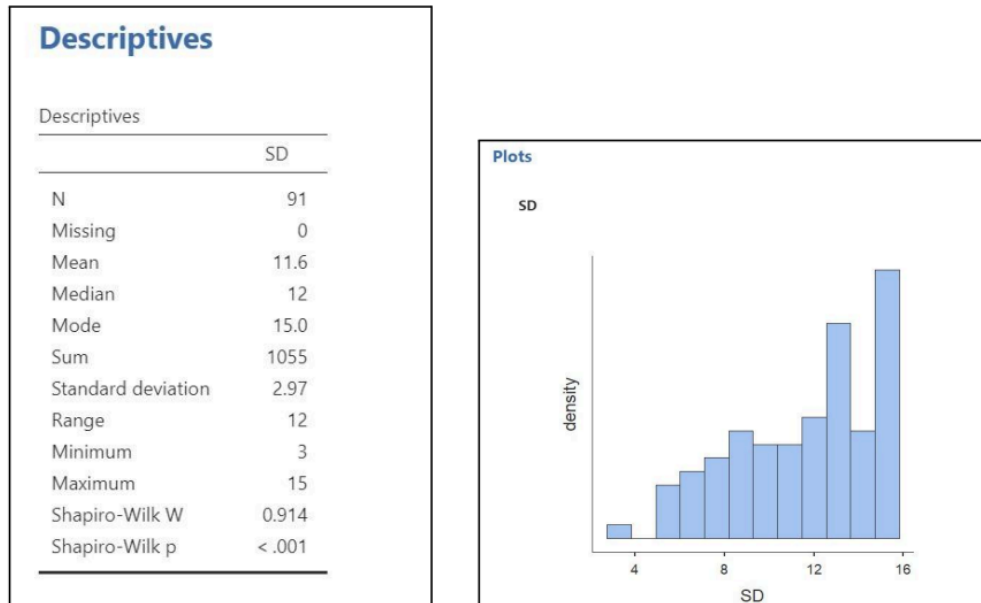


Fig 9: Descriptive statistics data of Social comparison

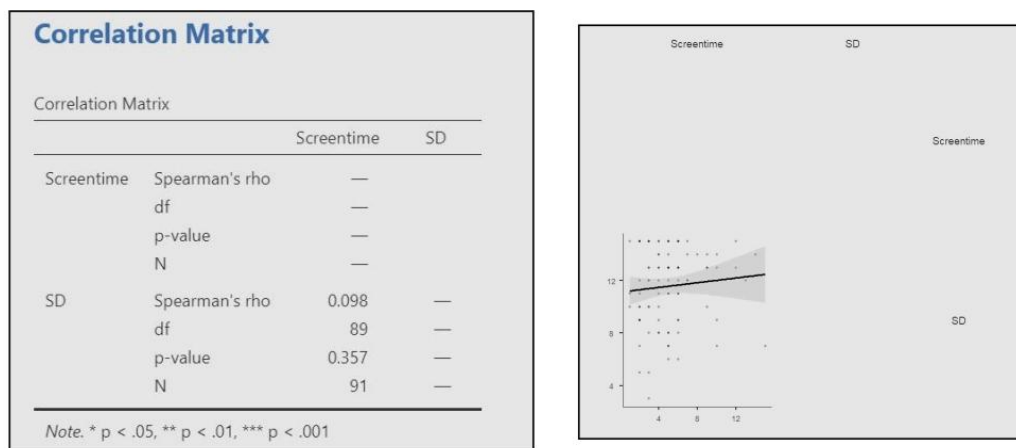


Fig 10: Spearman's Correlational matrix for Social comparison vs Screentime

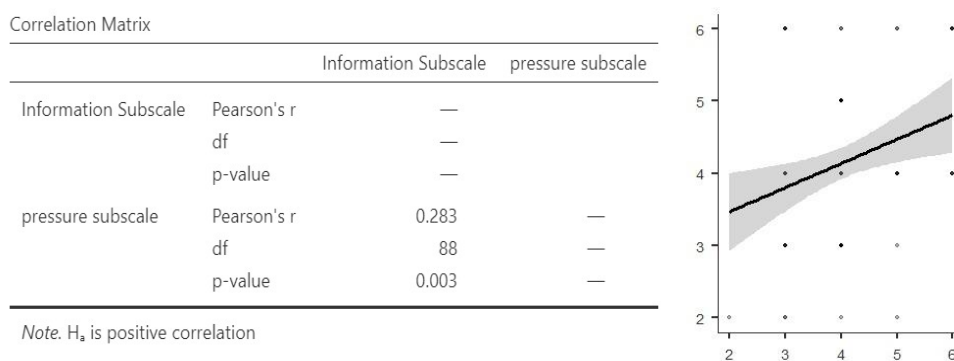


Fig 11: Correlation between Mass Media Content consumption and Pressure of Ideal Image

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

Correlation Matrix

		Information Subscale	Internalization Subscale
Information Subscale	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
Internalization Subscale	Pearson's r	0.382	—
	df	88	—
	p-value	< .001	—

Note. H_a is positive correlation

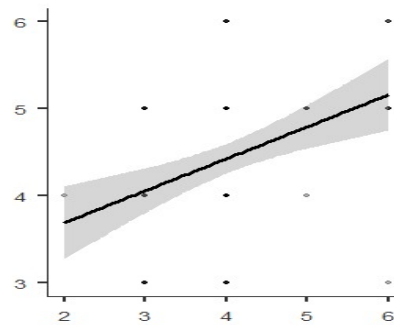


Fig 12: Correlation between Mass Media Content consumption and Internalisation of Ideal Image

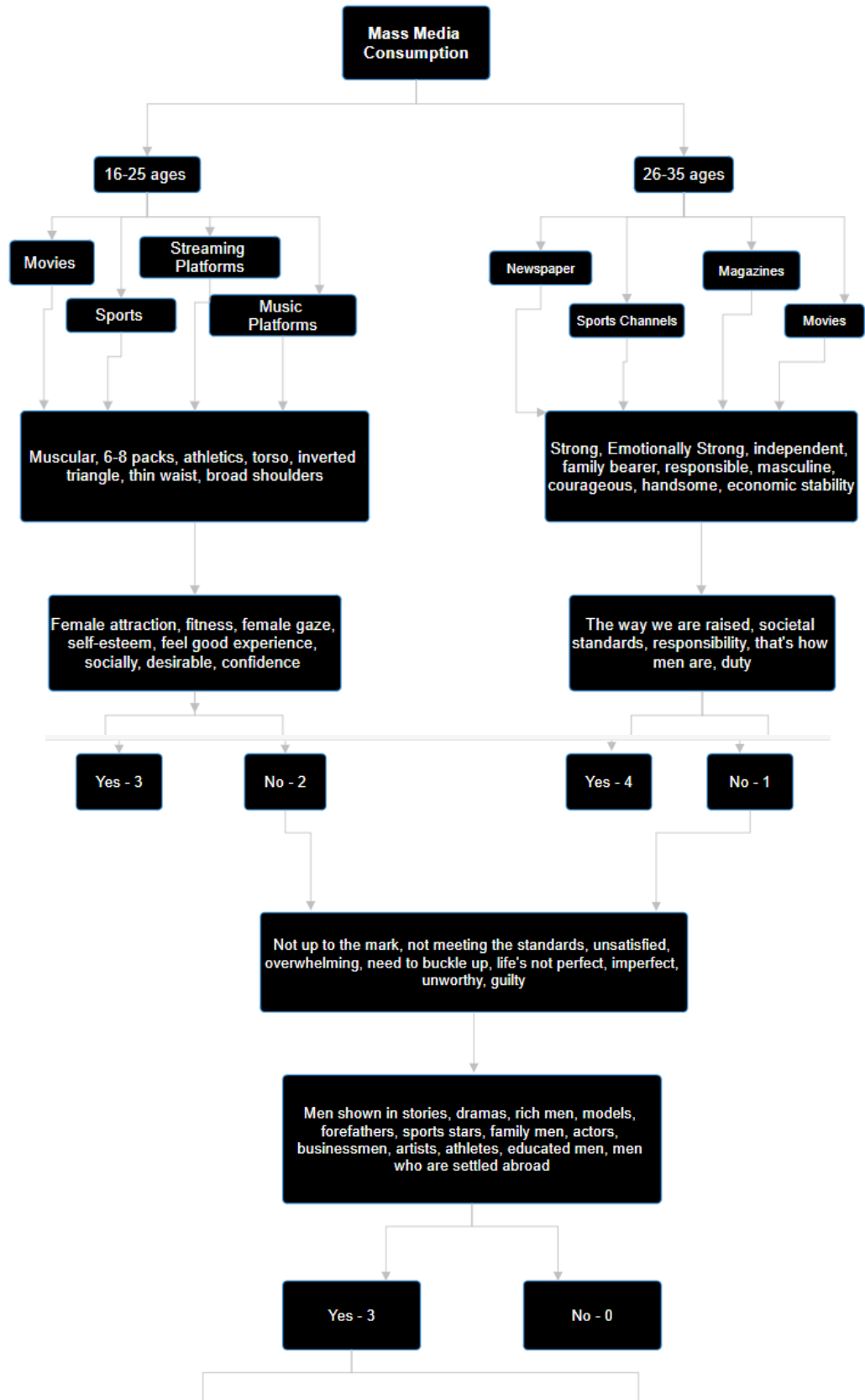
The SATAQ-3 scale showed a normally distributed sample (p -value < 0.05), thus we conducted the Pearson's correlational matrix to find the correlation between the Information Subscale and Pressure subscale, and the Information Subscale and internalization subscale. The results showed a 0.283 correlation and 0.382 correlation respectively, thus denoting a strong positive correlation between the two variables. Thus, we reject our null hypothesis H_{03} , which says that Mass media content consumption has no significant impact on internalization of beauty standards among men.

By further analyzing the social media usage behaviour of our participants from the BAS, we found that 49 out of the 90 participants, which is 54.4% of our sample, feel social media impacts their perception of their body, and 95.91% of them (47 of 49) responded that the impact is negative. When asked about what aspect of social media impacts the body-image perception the most, 57.14% of participants (28 out of 49) responded that the images they view on the social media platforms impact their thoughts about their bodies the most. To know more about the specific social media applications that are affecting the body satisfaction rate of men, we analyzed the responses of the Modified Multidimensional Facebook Intensity Scale; it was found that the application that is used by the most number of men was Instagram (80 out of 90), forming an 88.88% of the sample population. The average number of hours they spent on Instagram per day was 5 hours. Thus, we can say that Instagram plays a major role in shaping the perspective of body types in the minds of its users. Men are no exception; the content, images, and advertisements shown on Instagram glorify and promote stereotyping of the perfect body image and hegemonic beauty standards, lowering body satisfaction rates among men. They become more conscious about their body shape and tend to feel dissatisfied with their body image.

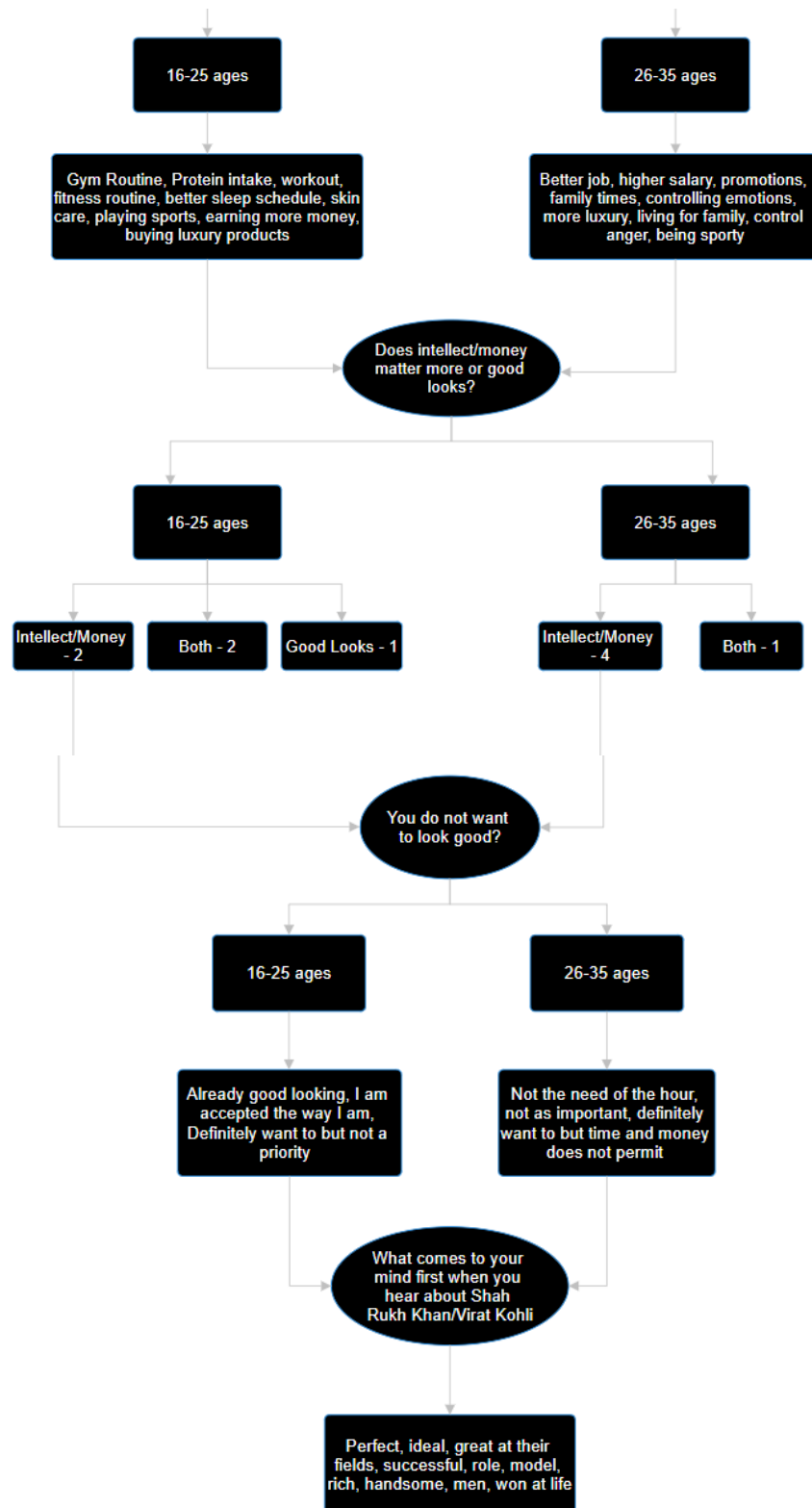
Thematic (Systematic) Review

All the participants' answers were analysed to find the impact of mass media exposure on body-image perceptions of men. The answers were interpreted in two group 16-25 age group and 26-35 age group, to analyse the difference in the degree of awareness of self-esteem, self-image, internalization and social comparison issues. Finally, the most repetitive answers were clustered together to form a flowchart to simplify and highlight the results formulated from the study.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study



Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study



The themes that appeared from the transcript show how mass media consumption influences men's perceptions of masculinity, self-worth, and priorities across two age groups (16-25 and 26-25). Its analysis shows clear division between the age-groups, how their concerns and aspirations differ and how they perceive the mass media content. Movies, streaming services, sports, and music are the main media that younger men are exposed to. In these settings, men are mostly portrayed in terms of their physical attributes, such as strong

bodies, broad shoulders, six- to eight-pack abs, and athletic builds. By establishing a link between fitness and desirability, this imagery fosters the idea that being attractive is a sign of confidence, self-worth, and social acceptance. Many people in this age range are motivated by the desire to get attention from women and preserve the positive feelings that come from being physically attractive and in good shape. On the other hand, men's media consumption changes to include newspapers, magazines, and sports channels as they get older. During this stage, the emphasis on masculinity shifts from physical characteristics to mental fortitude, self-reliance, accountability, and financial security. Being a provider, a family carrier, and someone who can withstand life's challenges are today more important qualities for a strong man than simply having muscles. By presenting strong, attractive, and financially stable role models, the media perpetuates this idea and establishes a new standard for what it means to be a successful guy. The issue of self-worth arises with these changing expectations. Many men experience emotions of guilt, inadequacy, and the drive to better themselves because they believe they fall short of the standards that society and the media have set. The idea that life is not flawless and that men need to "buckle up" in order to live up to the expectations that are put on them is pervasive. In popular culture, men are glorified as wealthy businessmen, famous actors, accomplished athletes, and powerful individuals who have "won at life." This reinforces the feeling of inadequacy. Many people feel dissatisfied with their progress because of the disconnect these images cause between their goals and reality. Age affects how people react to this pressure. Younger men are committed to improving their physical appearance through rigorous exercise programs, eating a lot of protein, participating in sports, according to skincare recommendations, and even working harder to increase their income so they can purchase upscale goods. In contrast, older men are more concerned with securing their financial future, advancing in their careers, getting promoted, and supporting their families. Personal attractiveness becomes less important than stability, self-control, and long-term success. A crucial aspect explored in the transcript is whether men prioritize intellect and financial success over good looks. Among younger men, opinions are divided—some believe intelligence and money matter most, some value both equally, and a smaller group still prioritises physical appearance. However, as men grow older, the overwhelming preference shifts toward intellect and financial security, reinforcing the idea that looks fade, but stability and success remain crucial in defining a man's worth. Despite these evolving priorities, the desire to look good never truly disappears. Younger men often feel they are already attractive or at least socially accepted, while older men acknowledge the importance of appearance but see it as secondary to career and financial responsibilities. They want to focus on looking good, but time and financial constraints often make it difficult. When asked about prominent figures like Shah Rukh Khan and Virat Kohli, the immediate association is with perfection, success, wealth, and excellence in their fields. These men are seen as role models, reinforcing the idea that to be ideal, one must achieve greatness in their domain, whether in entertainment, sports, or business. The admiration for such figures highlights how societal perceptions of masculinity are rooted in accomplishment, financial success, and the ability to stand out in one's field. The underlying pressure to meet unrealistic standards remains constant, but men's responses to it change with age. The journey from seeking external validation to striving for financial and intellectual success reflects the evolving definition of masculinity in today's world. Overall, this systematic analysis provides a detailed picture of how men's self-perception is shaped by media and societal expectations. Thus through this analysis we can understand that younger men are more open towards their feelings about their body-image, they acknowledge their insecurities and body perceptions, they are more open towards the ideal men perceptions portrayed in mass media. However, elder men do not acknowledge their body-image ideas, although they possess insecurities towards their body,

they desire the perfect men image, they too feel the pressure portrayed through mass media and internalise the ideal body image comparisons but they tend to ignore or avoid the feelings or concerns regarding these by hiding them behind the shields of intellect, emotional and economic stability.

CONCLUSION

This mixed-method study aimed to understand the impact of both social and mass media on Indian men's body image perceptions. Drawing data from 90 participants aged 16–35, the research utilized quantitative assessments and qualitative interviews to uncover how media consumption contributes to body dissatisfaction. The study specifically focused on hegemonic beauty portrayals, social comparison behaviors, and media-induced internalization of ideal body types.

The findings clearly show that exposure to idealized male body images, particularly on platforms like Instagram, has a significant negative impact on men's self-perception. A majority reported dissatisfaction with their bodies, triggered largely by photo-based content, advertisements, and influencer portrayals. Importantly, participants exposed to negative interventions exhibited reduced body satisfaction, confirming H01 to be false. Similarly, the study rejected H03, as media consumption strongly correlated with internalization of beauty ideals. However, H02 was not rejected, showing that social comparison, while present, did not significantly change perceptions in isolation.

The research question—How does media exposure impact male body image?—was effectively addressed. Media influences men in nuanced ways: younger men chase visual perfection, while older men internalize pressures more subtly, valuing financial and intellectual success but still struggling with body ideals.

To combat these issues, media literacy campaigns, male-targeted body positivity movements, and school- or workplace-based intervention programs should be introduced. Social media algorithms must diversify male representations, and platforms should collaborate with mental health advocates to promote realistic imagery.

Culturally, men must be encouraged to recognize and express body-related insecurities without shame. Community leaders, educators, and influencers play a crucial role in shifting narratives from appearance to holistic well-being. Acknowledging that body dissatisfaction is not gender-exclusive is vital to creating inclusive mental health discourse.

By exposing the hidden insecurities many men carry and the media mechanisms fueling them, this study provides a foundation for change—both at the individual and societal level.

Need for the Study

Most studies on body image and social media focus on women, leaving a gap in understanding its effects on men. Addressing this gap is crucial for a comprehensive view of the issue.

As media has become an integral part of our daily life, men are increasingly exposed to idealized male physiques. Understanding its impact is essential to mitigate negative effects. Unrealistic societal standards of the male body, amplified by social media, contribute to body dissatisfaction. This research examines how these pressures affect men's self-perception.

Impact of Media on Body Image of Men – A Mixed Method Study

Most men still don't acknowledge their feelings about themselves and their bodies, the few who do so mostly don't understand the root of the feelings. Through this research, we want to bring forth the causes, address and make men cautious of their feelings, so that they can seek assistance and further prevent themselves from any mental fatigue.

Limitations

The factors that couldn't be taken into account like parenting style and relationship status might also affect such perceptions about body image. The interventions and interviews had to be conducted online because the participants were from various parts of the country. Some of the participants chose to not switch on their cameras while the interventions were given and interviews were taken through Google Meet. The Modified Multidimensional Facebook Intensity Scale considered only a few social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and TikTok). However, various other social media platforms are being widely used (e.g., YouTube) that might have had a more significant impact on their perspective about their body. Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire could have more personalised and specific questions related to mass media, although we tried to fill the gap by our interview, some aspect of mass media still seems uncovered.

Future Implications

Further research can be conducted with a larger sample, and all the participants might receive both positive and negative interventions, and responses might be sought after each intervention from the entire sample. Through this, the individual and other factor differences in the two groups receiving both interventions differently might be reduced.

Having uncovered the causes of body-image dissatisfaction to a large extent we would like to focus on its psychological impacts specifically and bring forth interventions and strategies to prevent the same.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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