

The impact of social media usage on self-esteem and body image satisfaction in young women

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at how young women's use of social media affects their self-esteem and how happy they are with their bodies. 102 women between the ages of 18 and 25 who used Instagram and Facebook often filled out a poll about their use of social media, self-esteem, body happiness, and online comparisons of looks. The results showed that spending time on social media was a strong indicator of lower self-esteem and body happiness. The link between using and being unhappy with your body was mediated by social differences. Self-esteem and happiness with their bodies were lowest among young women who changed their photos before sharing them and cared a lot about the feedback (likes) their photos got. Previous study has shown that social media has a bad effect on how young women see themselves and how they feel about their looks. Using social media in safer ways and doing less of what could be dangerous could help reduce these risks.

Introduction

In the past few years, social media has become an important part of the lives of young women. Millions of teenage and young adult girls post pictures and comments about their daily lives on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. But more and more people are worried about what this regular use of social media will do to important parts of mental health, like self-esteem and happiness with one's body. Several studies (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016, Meier & Gray, 2014) have found that young women who use social media a lot have a lower opinion of themselves and are less happy with their bodies. Orth and Robins (2014) say that a person's self-esteem is how they evaluate their own value and worth as a whole. It changes and grows depending on how it interacts with other people. The way a person sees, thinks, and feels about how they look is called their body image happiness (Grogan, 2008). Rayner et al. (2013) found that body dissatisfaction is linked to sadness, eating disorders, and low life happiness in young women. Body dissatisfaction is also a strong predictor of total self-esteem. Young women who use social media are often shown things that promote unrealistic beauty standards and make them compare themselves to others. This makes them unhappy with their bodies and lowers their self-esteem.

Literature Review

In the past few years, there have been more studies on how the success of social media has changed the health of young women who use it. Several studies (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016) show that teenage girls and young women who use social media are more likely to have a bad view of their bodies, eat poorly, be depressed, and have low self-esteem.

Analysis of social media content

Several content analyses of popular image-focused social media sites like Instagram and Facebook (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018; Kleemans et al., 2018) show that most visual representations of beauty

support false thin-ideal beauty standards as desirable (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018; Kleemans et al., 2018). Chaukas-Bradley et al. (2019) says that college-aged women who use Instagram also choose and edit their photos to show off their best features. These results show that young women on social media see a lot of pictures of their peers that are made to look perfect.

Social Comparison and Body Image Concerns

People may have a bad body image because they tend to compare themselves to these pictures that look perfect on the internet. A meta-analysis of more than 100 studies (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016) found that social comparison on social media was linked to body image problems in teenage girls and young women. Fardouly and Vartanian (2015) found that college women who said they often compared their looks to those of other people on Facebook were less happy with their weight and wanted to be thinner. (Vogel et al., 2014) found that young girls who made more online comparisons of their looks were less sure of how beautiful they were. Kleemans et al. (2018) found that seeing idealized peer photos on Instagram instead of neutral peer photos made people feel less happy with their bodies. Based on these data, it seems that women's self-image could be hurt if they use social media that focuses on looks to compare themselves to more successful people.

Self-Esteem and Disordered Eating are Associated

People who are unhappy with their bodies are more likely to have disordered eating views and habits if they use social media more. Mabe et al. (2014) found that disordered eating was more likely to happen among female college students who used Facebook. Meier and Gray found in 2014 that teenage girls who saw more thin-ideal photos on Instagram had more eating anxiety and were unhappy with their weight. Walker et al.'s (2015) study shows that bad social comparisons on Facebook can weaken the link between using the site and disordered eating.

When young women use social media in a bad way, they tend to feel less good about themselves. Niu et al. (2016) found that women who spent a lot of mental energy looking for support on social media had less self-worth and more problems with how they looked. Experiments show that too much time spent on social media can have negative effects on things like body image, eating habits, and how people see themselves.

More and more research suggest that using appearance-focused social media platforms regularly leads to social comparisons upward and the internalization of unattainable beauty ideals, which hurts young women's self-esteem, satisfaction with their bodies, and eating habits. More intervention study is needed to show that using social media has an effect on how well you feel.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the correlation between frequency and duration of social media usage and levels of self-esteem among young women.
2. To examine the relationship between exposure to idealized body images on social media platforms and body image satisfaction in young women.
3. To explore the potential mediating role of social comparison processes in the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem/body image satisfaction.
4. To assess the influence of specific social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat) on self-esteem and body image satisfaction in young women.
5. To provide recommendations for interventions and educational programs aimed at promoting healthy social media habits.

Research Methodology

For this study, 102 young women were taken aged 18-25 years old who use social media regularly

Research Design

- Quantitative correlational study

- This allows for statistical analysis of the relationships between key variables

Measures

- **Social Media Usage** - assessed using SONTUS (Social Networking Time Use Scale) developed by Olufadi (2016) is a questionnaire or scale consisting of 29 items to measure time spent on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, etc.
- **Body Image Psychological Inflexibility Scale (BIPIS)** -The BIPIS was developed by Glenn M. Callaghan, Emil K. Sandoz, Sabrina M. Darrow, and Timothy K. Feeney. The scale contains 16 items, rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The BIPIS is highly relevant for measuring body image satisfaction, especially as it explores the underlying processes contributing to distress, dissatisfaction, and interference in daily functioning.
- **Self-Esteem** - assessed using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Morris Rosenberg (1965) the scale consists of 10 items that assess individuals' overall feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance. It is a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."
- Additional scales can be used to assess related constructs like disordered eating, depression, appearance comparisons.

Procedure

- Participants completed online survey containing the measures of social media usage, body image satisfaction, self-esteem and other variables. Informed consent was sought confidentiality was also ensured.

Analysis

- Correlation analysis to assess bivariate relationships between variables
- Regression models to predict outcomes like self-esteem and body satisfaction based on social media use
- Mediation analysis to test if social comparison acts as a mediator in the relationships
- Appropriate statistical tests for comparing groups or mean values on outcomes

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Media Usage	3.2 hours/day	1.5
Self- Esteem	15.3	5.2
Body Satisfaction	12.1	6.0

This table provides an overview of the study's main variables, including mean values and standard deviations. It offers insights into the central tendencies and variability within the dataset for social media usage, self-esteem, and body satisfaction.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix between Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Social Media Use	-		
2. Self-Esteem	-0.42***	-	
3. Body Satisfaction	-0.38**	0.53***	-

***p<0.001, **p<0.01

The correlation matrix illustrates the relationships between study variables. It reveals significant negative correlations between social media usage and both self-esteem and body satisfaction, suggesting that higher social media use is associated with lower self-esteem and body satisfaction.

Table 3: Regression Predicting Self-Esteem

Predictor	B	SE B	β
Social Media Use	-0.81	0.22	-0.32**
R ² =0.18, F(1,99)=13.79, p<0.001			

This regression analysis indicates that social media usage is a significant predictor of reduced self-esteem. It reveals that for every unit increase in social media use, self-esteem decreases by 0.81 units.

Table 4: Regression Predicting Body Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE B	β
Social Media Use	-0.96	0.33	-0.23*
R ² =0.09, F(1,99)=8.43, p<0.01			

This regression model demonstrates that higher social media usage is associated with lower body satisfaction, with a reduction of 0.96 units in body satisfaction for every unit increase in social media use.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis Path Coefficients

Path	B	SE	z	p
X→M (a)	0.63	0.10	6.23	<0.001
M→Y (b)	-0.91	0.13	-7.00	<0.001
X→Y (c')	-0.41	0.15	-2.73	0.006
X→Y (c)	-0.96	0.13	-7.23	<0.001

This table presents the path coefficients for a mediation analysis. It shows that social media use (X) influences body satisfaction (Y) indirectly through appearance comparisons (M). The coefficients indicate significant mediation effects.

Table 6: Group Differences in Self-Esteem by Social Media Use

	Low Use	High Use
Self-Esteem	15.8	13.7
t(98)=2.12		p=0.036

Grouped by social media use, this table reveals that individuals with high social media use have significantly lower self-esteem compared to those with low social media use.

Table 7: Group Differences in Body Satisfaction by Social Media Use

	Low Use	High Use
Body Satisfaction	14.2	10.4
t(98)=-2.67		p=0.009

This table demonstrates that individuals with high social media use report significantly lower levels of body satisfaction compared to those with low social media use.

Self-Esteem	No Manipulation	Manipulation
Low	10%	25%
Moderate	45%	35%
High	55%	40%

Table 8: Self-Esteem by Photo Manipulation Behavior

This table shows that individuals who manipulate their photos before posting online tend to have lower self-esteem. It provides insights into the relationship between photo manipulation behaviors and self-esteem.

Body Satisfaction	Low Likes	High Likes
Low	35%	20%
Moderate	40%	45%
High	25%	35%

Table 9: Body Satisfaction by Photo Feedback

In this table, it is evident that individuals who receive more 'likes' on their photos tend to have higher levels of body satisfaction. It highlights the potential impact of social media feedback on body satisfaction.

Table 10: Body Satisfaction by Social Media Platform

Platform	Low Satisfaction	Moderate Satisfaction	High Satisfaction
Instagram	30%	45%	25%
Facebook	20%	50%	30%
Snapchat	15%	40%	45%

This table explores the relationship between social media platforms and body satisfaction. It presents the percentage distribution of individuals with low, moderate, and high body satisfaction based on their usage of different platforms.

Instagram: Among users, 30% report low body satisfaction, 45% report moderate satisfaction, and 25% report high satisfaction. Instagram appears to have a relatively balanced distribution of body satisfaction levels.

Facebook: On Facebook, 20% of users report low body satisfaction, 50% report moderate satisfaction, and 30% report high satisfaction. This platform has a higher proportion of users with moderate satisfaction compared to others.

Snapchat: For Snapchat users, 15% have low body satisfaction, 40% have moderate satisfaction, and 45% have high satisfaction. Snapchat appears to have the highest percentage of users with high body satisfaction, suggesting a positive relationship with this platform.

Results

According to the descriptive data (Table 1), participants claimed to use social media for an average of 3.2 hours each day. Out of a possible maximum score of 30, the mean self-esteem score was 15.3, suggesting generally relatively low levels. The average score for body satisfaction, which ranges from a high of 25 to a low of 12.1, was similarly only fairly good.

Table 2's correlational analysis revealed a strong inverse relationship between using social media and one's self-esteem and level of body satisfaction ($r=-0.42$, $p<0.001$). This shows that poorer self-esteem and body image assessments were linked to increased social media use.

While accounting for other variables, regression models (Tables 3 and 4) show that social media use was a significant predictor of both lower self-esteem ($B=-0.81$, $p,0.001$) and poorer body satisfaction ($B=-0.96$, $p<0.01$). Social media usage explained 9% of the variation in body satisfaction ratings and 18% of the variation in self-esteem scores.

The results of the mediation analysis (Table 5) showed that the use of social media and body dissatisfaction was significantly mediated by participation in appearance-related social comparisons.

More specifically, more social media use was associated with more appearance comparisons, which was associated with decreased body satisfaction.

According to usage, there were significant differences in self-esteem ($p=0.036$) and body satisfaction ($p=0.009$) between the low and high social media use groups (Tables 6 and 7). On both outcomes, the high usage group performed worse on average than low users.

According to a moderation study, certain social media habits and encounters had an effect on results. In comparison to those who did not edit their images before uploading them, young women showed lower self-esteem (Table 8). Additionally, getting more "likes" on uploaded images was linked to feeling better about one's body (Table 9).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how young women's use of social media affects their sense of self-worth and pleasure with their bodies. The findings support earlier study and demonstrate that increased social media use has a detrimental impact on one's self-perceptions and attitudes regarding their attractiveness. The conclusion that social media use strongly predicts poorer self-esteem draws attention to the negative effects of excessive online activity on self-evaluation. Online peer representations that are well controlled and the frequent possibility for social comparison seem to lower young women's self-worth. This is consistent with past research showing how social media use affects female teenagers' self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014).

Additionally, increased social media use was linked to worse body image satisfaction. According to content evaluations of image-focused platforms like Instagram, the promotion of unattainable beauty ideals online encourages body dissatisfaction (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018). According to earlier study (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015), increased participation in appearance-based social comparisons also mediated the link between use and body image distress. Our discovery that photo alteration and influencing other people's feedback (via likes) affected self-perception is particularly alarming. Risks to young women's mental health are exacerbated by their obsession with projecting an idealized picture of themselves online in order to get approval from others.

This study offers solid evidence that young women's use of social media, particularly their passive intake of idealized information and participation in relationships that are appearance-focused, has detrimental effects. Potential intervention options include increasing media literacy, lowering social media usage, and prioritizing real self-expression over idealized self-presentation.

Implications

The research has several significant implications for various stakeholders, including individuals, educators, mental health professionals, policymakers, and social media platforms:

Individual Awareness and Well-being: Understanding negative impacts of social media use can empower young women to make more informed choices about their online habits and adopt healthier behaviors.

Mental Health Interventions: These interventions may include cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques, mindfulness practices, and self-esteem-building exercises tailored to address social media-related concerns.

Education and Media Literacy: Young women can be taught how to critically evaluate and interpret social media content and empower them to navigate online environments more effectively and resist unrealistic beauty standards

Policy Development: Policies related to advertising standards, disclosure of digitally altered images, and age-appropriate content filters can significantly reduce negative impacts.

Platform Design and Responsibility: This might include implementing tools for users to manage their time spent on social media, providing resources for mental health support, and promoting body-positive content.

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