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Impact of Use of Social Media on Perceived Body Dysmorphia Among Young Females

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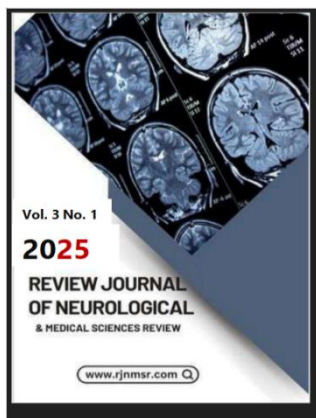
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Abstract

The purpose of current study was to examine the impact of social media use on perceived body dysmorphia among young females. The size of sample was 250 females with age range from 18-25. Cross sectional survey was utilized in the study. The body dysmorphic concern questionnaire Oosthuizen (1998) and the social media use questionnaire Tuck and Thompson (2023) were used. Convenient sampling technique was utilized for data collection. Data was analyzed in spss-25 version and results were calculated through Correlation analysis, Reliability analysis, ANOVA and regression analysis. Results of the study shows that use of social media have significant impact on perceived body dysmorphia as ($R^2=.49^{**}$, $p<0.01$). Difference is statistically in-significant between the participants with thin-flat, fat-broad and normal body type females, ($F=2.24$). Further results shows that participants with a dark color complexion score high on perceived body dysmorphic concern questionnaire ($F=9.74$) as compare to other skin types (fair and whitish). Moreover, females who use Instagram more frequently score high on body dysmorphic concern questionnaire ($F=4.43$) as compare to other social media platforms (Engeln et al., 2020). Further, females who use intagram more frequently score high on social media use scale ($F=3.93$). Further ($p<0.05$) which shows the significance of the study results. The study's findings indicated that females who spent more than 5 hours on social media score high on body dysmorphic scale ($F=6.40$) as compare to females who spent 1-3h and 3-5hours on social media. Moreover participants who spend more time on social media score high on social media use scale (($F=12.2$). Further use of social media positively predict body dysmorphia among young females as ($R^2=24\%^{**}$, $p<0.01$) which shows 24% variance in body dysmorphia is caused by use of social media.

Keywords: Social media use, Body dysmorphia, Body type, Skin type

Introduction



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Social media has had a huge impact on how the world has altered in recent years. Individuals are depending more and more on the newest technologies. Social networking apps, gaming websites, streaming websites, and other websites are examples of new technology. People use social media websites and applications frequently, especially young adults use them frequently throughout the day (Adroitte, 2015).

People who use social media more frequently become accustomed to the standard and information that are posted there and compare themselves to its standards which can result in body dysmorphia and low self-esteem (Orben et al., 2020). Social media usage is frequently influenced by gender and age. Previous studies have revealed that women are more interested in Instagram as compare to Facebook or Twitter. Instagram is used more frequently than other applications by young people (18–25 years old) (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018).

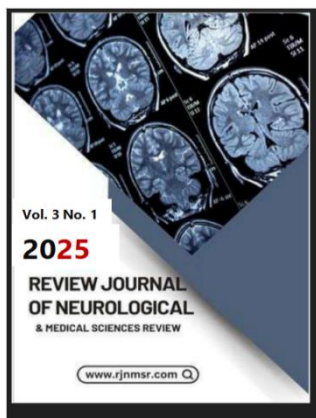
Overuse of social media content might lead to body dysmorphia. Due to developmental stage of individuals, there is heightened sensitivity to social media information for identity formation and tendency to experience discomfort or dissatisfaction with their body image as they enter puberty. Teenagers are more vulnerable to body image or body dysmorphic disorders (Erikson, 1950).

According to their degree of body satisfaction and tendency to compare themselves to others on social media young adults especially women are negatively impacted by social media platforms like Instagram. Body perception issues are frequently linked to the emergence of body dysmorphic disorder symptoms and there is an association between Instagram usage and the prevalence of body dysmorphic disorder symptoms among users (Hendrickse et al., 2017).

Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok frequently work together to promote each other's products in exchange for money or free merchandise. Social media began to become increasingly well-known and visible as influences marketing took off. People share their ideas and personal experiences with their followers, social media are frequently viewed as more trustworthy and relatable than traditional models or celebrity endorsers. In general, the rise of social media and its increasing role in influencing consumer behavior have led to the emergence of social media in the field of fashion marketing. Their influence is expected to persist as they have grown to be a crucial part of the fashion brands and industries (Kamran, 2020).

Social media use has been ingrained in people's lives due to the rise of smartphones and increased internet access (Ho et al., 2017). People use social networking sites like Facebook for two hours a day on aver age, according to recent research (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). This is in contrast to the 45 minutes a day that was observed nearly ten years ago (Miller & Tiggemann, 2010). According to research young adults from age 18–29 year old utilize more social media platforms (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Term "digitized dysmorphia" describes the distinction between women's real appearances and the idealized norm of feminine beauty upheld by social media. Digital dysmorphia frequently manifests itself as digital photographs. It entails altering and removing parts of oneself that are thought to be ugly then posting the



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retouched images on social media (Dibley, 2016). According to Buhlmann et al., (2010) body dysmorphic disorders are on the rise in both Eastern and Western countries as a result of this fact especially in young females. People are now more vulnerable in their relationships and emotions as a result of it.

A person suffering from body dysmorphia may not feel satisfied with their entire body or only certain aspects of it. Body dysmorphia is persistent body image disorder that arises from the perception of a discrepancy between one's intended and actual body images, is brought on by dissatisfaction which also causes anxiety. Body dysmorphia is linked with repeated behaviors like touching body parts that are deemed disabled, wearing excessive makeup, frequently staring in the mirror and thinking certain thoughts like comparing one's appearance to others. These repetitive behaviors are associated with anxiety brought on by the comparison of oneself with the beauty standards presented on social media (Negrin et al., 2018).

Around the age of 12 or 13 body dysmorphia usually starts and 70% of people with BDD report that their disorder started before the age of 18. Particularly in teenagers who are more susceptible to the content of social media, body dysmorphia and suicide are intimately associated. According to a Journal of Clinical Psychiatry study 27.5% of them had attempted suicide and 78% had thought about it (Feusner et al., 2010).

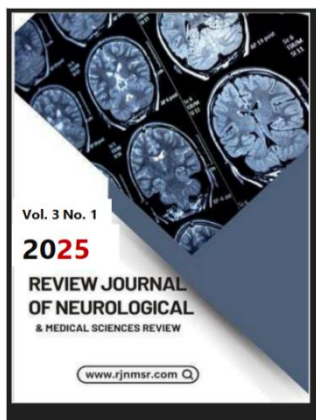
Females are more likely to be diagnosed with body dysmorphia disorder, accounting for almost 60% of cases. Females are more worried with facial hair, color weight, acne, complexion, body size and height (Himanshu et al., 2020). In addition to other mental health problems anxiety and depression are common among women who experience body dysmorphia. To achieve their ideal body type they could also take part in risky behaviors like extreme dieting, excessive exercise or even plastic surgery (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Adolescent physical and mental health may suffer as a result of these activities since they go through a critical developmental stage and are more likely to act impulsively. This is especially true because these habits can exacerbate negative self-image and body dissatisfaction.

According to current estimations, the prevalence of BDD in the general population ranges from 1.7% to 2.9% (Buhlmann, 2010; Rief et al., 2006; Veale et al., 2016). Research has shown that BDD may be more prevalent in women. The skin, mouth, lips and teeth have been proven to be the areas of appearance that women are most worried about (Malcolm et al., 2021). But women have also been found to be much more concerned about their legs (thighs and/or calves). It has been observed that women are significantly more self-conscious about their thighs and/or calves (Malcolm et al., 2021). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that compared to people without BDD, those who live with the disorder have a suicide attempt rate that is more than twice as high (Angelakis et al., 2016).

Hypothesis

The objectives listed above are used to create the following hypotheses:

1. Social media use will have significant positive correlation with perceived body dysmorphia among young females.



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2. Social media use will positively predict perceived body dysmorphia among young females.

Method

Research Design

Research design followed in current research was cross sectional.

Sample

The sample of current study based on ($N=250$) which was drawn through convenient sampling approach. Our research follows a quantitative research method. The study's sample ranged in age from 13 to 25. Sample was selected from institutes in Islamabad and Azad Kashmir (Rawalakot).

Instruments

Social Media Use Questionnaire Social Media Use Scale (SMUS) was developed by Tuck and Thompson (2023). Social Media Use Questionnaire (SMUS) was used to assess the social media use among young adults. This scale consist of 17-items which are measuring the use of social media. It consist of 9 points likert scale. Reliability of scale is under acceptable range that is $>.60$. SMUS heavy emphasis that media is pertinent to this study. The Social Media Use scale have four subscales. 1-5 items are within Image-Based sub dimension. 6-8 are within Comparision-Based sub dimension. 9-12 are within Belief-Based sub dimension. 13-17 are within Consumption-Based sub dimension. There is no reverse-keyed items.

Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire Oosthuizen et al., (1998) created the seven-item Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire (DCQ) as a means of measuring symptoms related to borderline personality disorder. A four-point response scale with the options "Not at all" at 0 and "Much more than most people" at 3 is used to evaluate the responses. The DCQ's seven components can all be added up to produce a single, subscale-free total score. There is no statment having reverse score. Reliability of scale is under acceptable range that is $.97$. The total score can vary from 0 to 21. Given that perceived body dysmorphia is our dependent variable, this scale aids in analyzing the physiological worries and anguish associated with perceived defects. An example item is "Have you ever spent a lot of time covering up defects in your physical appearance or bodily functioning?"

Procedure and Ethical Guidelines

Data was collected from institutes of Azad Kashmir (Rawalakot) and Islamabad. During the hours that they were at college, or university, students were approached and asked to reply after their permission was obtained. The research was approved ethically by Riphah International University in Islamabad. The goal of the study and the voluntary nature of participation were explained to the participants. To guarantee accurate responses, additional participants were instructed to provide only a brief explanation of the statements they find difficult to understand. In addition, participants were told that if they did not want to continue participating, they could leave the study at any point or at any level. The participants received gratitude for their cooperation and time.



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Results

The following chapter elaborates the result of the study and main study to understand the possibility of already formulated objectives and hypothesis of present study. Study ($N=250$) was carried out on college and university students with an age range of 18-25 years old females to examine the psychometric properties and distribution of data.

Table 1: *Correlation among use of social media and perceived body dysmorphism ($N = 250$)*

Variables	1	2
1. DCQ	-	.492**
2. SMUS		-

Note: **= $p < 0.01$, $N=250$, DCQ= Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire, SMUS = Social Media Use Scale

Table 1 indicates that there is positive relationship among social media use and perceived body dysmorphism. Further table illustrated that there is significant relationship between variables as the ($p > 0.01$). When one variables increase other will also increase.

Table 2: *Linear Regression Analysis to predicts body dysmorphism from use of social media among females ($N = 250$)*

Variables	B	S.E	β	t	p	95% CL
LL	UB					
Constant	13.8	.28	-	48.8	.00	13.3 14.4
SMUS	.05	.00	.492	8.89	.00	.041 .065
F	79.05**					
R ²	.24					

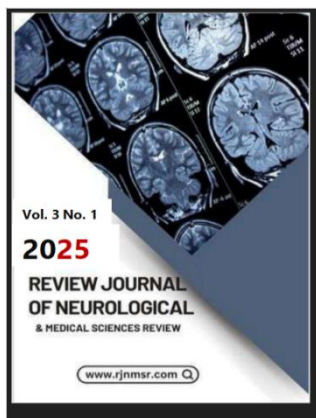
Note: B= Unstandarized coefficient Beta, SE= Standard Error of the coefficient, β = Standardized coefficient, LB= Lower bound, UB= Upper bound, Significance level=** $P < 0.01$

Table 2 indicates that social media use positively predict body dysmorphism among participants .Further table shows R square =(.242, 24.2%) variance in body dysmorphism is caused by social media in participants. Further ($p < 0.01$) which confirms the study results.

Discussion

Current study explore the impact of social media use and excessive time spent on social media perceived body dysmorphism among young females. The objectives were designed to investigate the impact of social media use, identify the prevalent social media platforms associated with perceived body dysmorphism. The findings revealed several significant insights.

The reliability analysis of scales have been found to be acceptable after analysis of all demographic variables. Psychometric properties of scales shows that data is aproximately normally distributed. Further, value of correlation was significant which shows that there is positive relationship among use of social media and perceiving body dysmorphism. Results are consistent with study conducted by Khan et



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al., (2022) in which correlational studies consistently showed that social media use, particularly Snap-chat and Instagram, can increase the incidence of Body Dysmorphic Disorder in young females.

Social media use will have significant positive correlation with perceived body dysmorphia among young females. The study result indicated that there is positive relationship among social media and perceived body dysmorphia. When one variable increase other variable will also increase. These results are consistent with study conducted by Stice and Shaw (1994) a positive relationship was found between use of media and body dysmorphia due to watching beauty ideals and comparison of oneself with the unstandardized beauty ideals on social media. It means that higher use of social media higher will be the comparison which lead towards more concerns about body image and cause body dysmorphia.

Findings of Stice and Shaw (1994) states that magazine and television exposure also have relationship with the body image concerns. Use of social media adversely affects body image (especially women) which leads to increase in depression feeling, body dysmorphia, unhappiness, shame, guilt, and decreased confidence.

Regression analysis showed that 24% variance in body dysmorphia is caused by use of social media in participants. Results are consistent with study conducted by Bilal et al., (2021) to examine the relationship between body image dysmorphia and social media in a Pakistani sample. The findings of the study significantly predicted excessive social media bring body dysmorphia among females. The body image dissatisfaction was found to be significantly associated with social media usage.

Social media use will positively predict body dysmorphia among young females. Results of the study positively predict body dysmorphia among young females high the use of social media high will be the body dysmorphia. These results are consistent with the study conducted by Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) social media use is associated with body image concerns, particularly if the users are engaging in certain kinds of activities on social media, such as making appearance comparisons to others. These effects are similar to those found for traditional media (e.g., magazines). Studies consistently shows that social media usage is associated with body image concerns among young females and association may strengthen over time. Furthermore, appearance comparisons play a role in the relationship between social media and body dysmorphia.

Recommendation and Implication

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, educational campaigns and interventions should be developed to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among young females, enabling them to navigate social media content more effectively rather than comparing themselves with unrealistic beauty ideals. Second, collaborations between social media and mental health professionals, and researchers can help develop guidelines for responsible content creation that promotes positive body image and diversity. Lastly, policymakers and social media platforms should consider implementing measures to regulate or label digitally altered or unrealistic content shared by social media platforms to mitigate the negative impact on body image and mental well-being.



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The findings will guide future studies while assessing impact of social media use for comparing their body images. Government should raise awareness regarding positive use of social media. The current study provides that excessive time spent on social media demolish mental health and lead towards anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction.

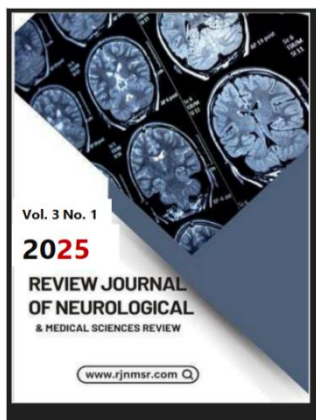
Conclusion

The findings of current study provided a basic framework to understand the impact of social media use for comparing body image and perceived body dysmorphia in young females. Based on a survey of 250 female participants aged 18 to 25, the results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the use of social media for comparison of body image and body dysmorphia. The results of the study shows that there is significant relation between use of social media and excessive time spent in perceiving body dysmorphia among females.

The results shows that dark color females have more tendency to perceive body dysmorphia and they spent more time on social media to compare their body images. Further, results shows that females with normal body type also possess body dysmorphia and they also have positive attitude towards using social media for comparing themselves. Furthermore, study elaborated the factors like social comparison, self-objectification which are the main psychological reasons underlying the negative impact of social media on young female's body image. Thus, the current study suggests limiting the time spent on social media and to not watch content for comparing looks and body images with beauty ideals which has negative impact on psychological well-being. Further the study also suggest government bodies to maintain restriction on unrealistic beauty ideals content shown by social media platforms and take strict actions against online bullying, negative comments on posts.

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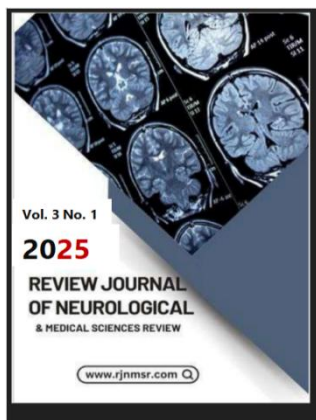


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