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Simi Datta
Student, M.Sc. in Applied Psychology, Swami Vivekananda University Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Pratati Guria
Student, M.Sc. in Applied Psychology, Swami Vivekananda University Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Kaajal Mondal
Student, M.Sc. in Applied Psychology, Swami Vivekananda University Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Dr. Nilanjana Mitra
Assistant Professor and Head, Dept. of Psychology, Swami Vivekananda University Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Psycho-social effects of social media & peer-pressure on body image

Simi Datta, Pratati Guria, Kaajal Mondal and Dr. Nilanjana Mitra

Abstract
The present study investigates the effect of media and social media on body image and how it affects mental health. To examine the influence of social media and peers on body image, interview-method research was employed. A purposive sampling strategy was used for data collection for the age group of 15 to 25 years, who use social media regularly and have no history of any kind of eating disorder or body dysmorphia. In the Qualitative method, an in-depth interview was taken and thematic analyses were done. It has been concluded that the methodology for investigating the effects of social media and peers on body image by employing an interview-methods research design and using appropriate data analysis techniques, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between social media, peers, and body image.

Keywords: Social media, peer pressure, body image, mixed-method

Introduction

A person's views, emotions, and ideas about their own body are all part of their body image, which is a psychological construct. One's sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and general psychological health are all greatly impacted by it. Social norms, cultural values, personal experiences, and interpersonal relationships are some of the variables that impact one's body image. Because body image affects mental health and quality of life, it is a topic that psychologists study extensively. The cognitive component, or a person's ideas and views about their body, is one facet of body image. One's physical appearance, comparisons to society standards, and internalized messages about attractiveness are a few examples of these kinds of ideas. Body dissatisfaction and bad body image can result from cognitive distortions such as unfavorable self-perceptions or excessive fixation with faults. The affective component of body image relates to the emotional responses and feelings associated with one's body. Positive body image is characterized by acceptance, appreciation, and satisfaction with one's body, while negative body image involves feelings of shame, embarrassment, and dissatisfaction. Individuals with negative body image often experience emotional distress, low self-esteem, and impaired mental well-being. Social and cultural influences have an impact on one's body image. Humans aspire to an idealized body image, which is influenced by societal beauty standards that are frequently promoted by the media and advertising. Body dissatisfaction and concerns about body image result from these ideals, which frequently emphasize muscularity for males and thinness for women.

Social media and peer pressure on our body image and mental health

Social media and peer pressure can have significant effects on body image and mental health. Here are some key ways in which they can impact individuals:

1. **Comparison and Unrealistic Standards:** Social media platforms often present idealized and unrealistic body standards through carefully curated images and content. This constant exposure to "perfect" bodies can lead to upward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves unfavorably to others. The pressure to conform to these unrealistic standards can contribute to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and negative body image.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Nilanjana Mitra
Assistant Professor and Head, Dept. of Psychology, Swami Vivekananda University Kolkata, West Bengal, India

2. **Cyberbullying and Body Shaming:** Cyberbullying and body shaming can flourish on social media sites. Based on their appearance, people may be the target of disparaging remarks, cruel remarks, and body-focused criticism.

3. **Highlight Reel Effect:** People frequently showcase their best qualities, including their looks, on social media. The distorted belief that everyone else has a "perfect" body or life can result from this selective self-presentation, which can fuel feelings of inadequacy, envy, and anxiety.

4. **Influencer Culture and Product Promotion:** Influencers on social media platforms often promote products, services, and lifestyles that emphasize body ideals. This can create pressure to conform to certain beauty standards, leading individuals to engage in excessive exercise, restrictive eating, or even resorting to harmful practices to achieve the desired appearance. Such behaviors can contribute to the development of eating disorders, and disordered eating.

5. **Peer Pressure and Conformity:** Peers, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood, exert significant influence on body image perceptions. Friends, classmates, or acquaintances may engage in body-focused conversations, dieting behaviors, or appearance-related activities that create pressure to conform. The fear of social exclusion or not fitting in can contribute to body dissatisfaction, unhealthy body comparison, and compromised mental well-being.

Numerous studies were conducted on the topic "influence of social media, mass media and peer pressure on body image" which affects our mental as well as mental health these are as follows:

Mass Media and Body Image
In a research study, Puglia (2017) [12] compared the impact of social media on our body image and its effect on our motivation and body comparison tendencies from the age group of 19 to 25-year-old women. There was a total of 339 out of which 204 women were found dissatisfied conducted at university in Southeastern U.S College. In this study, two surveys were done: The lab survey and the Nightly survey. In the Lab survey demographic information was taken their name, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and scales like the Body Comparison Orientation Scale of the body, Eating and Exercise Comparison Orientation measure (BEECOM) (Fitzsimmons-Craft, Bardone Cone and Harney, 2012), The Motivations for electronic interaction scale (MEIS) and Body esteem scale for adolescents and adults (White, 2001). Somehow all the results showed a negative correlation with social media's influence on body image. The second survey was a Nightly survey which was given after the completion of the lab survey, a total of 58 women participated in it. These survey questionaries were given at 6 p.m. by email. This survey was of 9 days. In this the results were negatively correlated with body image and social media, hence this study showed that there is no significant role of social media and body image.
A study by Saiphoo and Vahedi (2019) [15], on A Meta-Analytical of the Relationship Between Social Media Use and Body Image Disturbance aimed to provide a qualitative review of cross-sectional research. A total number of 36552 people (both male and female) participated in this study and

62 variables were used. Interview method was used and the study indicates that social media use is linked to body image disturbance.

Jasmine Fardouly and Lenny R. Vartanian (2016) [5], studied many longitudinal research, correlational research, and experimental research articles of others about social media and body image concerns and made an overview. In correlation, experimental and longitudinal studies focused on social media effects especially Facebook on body image. All the research showed that body distortion and social media are connected.

Rekha and Maran (2012) [14] researched to explore how advertisements affect respondents' body image perception and dissatisfaction. For this purpose, a sample of 915 females belonging to the age group of 12 years was taken from Chennai. This study's findings revealed that approximately 30% of female respondents feel pressured by advertisements. The results demonstrate a connection between advertisement pressure and negative effects on body image and dissatisfaction in women.

Nagar and Virk (2017) [10] prepared an exploratory study on the effect of acute media image for a sample number of 60 young adult women of 18-22 age group and a 2 (intervention group) x 2 (time) mixed-group design was used. The participant was divided into two groups one was presented with a thin ideal media image and the other group was presented with a control image. As a result, the people who were exposed to the thin-ideal image faced more body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem after the experiment.

Rajarathnamani (2007) [13] had exploratory research on 728. It was decreased to 704 people from 10 different colleges and people were further divided into two groups one was aided and another one was unaided; both groups had 352 in it; which was further divided into science and arts 172 (88 boys and girls) in both the group. The study tried to find out the effect of media on the body image perception of college students. This research discovered that the majority of women want to be thinner and men want to be more muscular.

David (2021) [4] researched the effect of film therapy on body image dissatisfaction among adolescents. A total of 205 people from age groups 18 and 19 participated in it, out of which 8 people backed out and 100 people showed evident signs of body image dissatisfaction. The study involves a mixed research method. The pre-test-post-test approach was used to investigate the influence of film-based counseling or film therapy on teenagers suffering from body image dissatisfaction in this study. The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-34) was given to the participant.

Peer pressure and body image
Hogue & Mills (2019) [6], did a study on 118 females from the ages of 17 to 27 to know the effects of active social media engagement with peers on body image. This study was subdivided into an attractive female (56 peers) and a family member (62). This study investigates the effect of photo-based ASME (association between body image and social media engagement) on peers as compared to family members. It was cross-sectional research. Scales like Visual Analogue Scales (VAS), and State Body Image Scale (SBIS) were used. After the scales experiment was done on them, they were asked to see the picture of their friend on Instagram or Facebook for 5 minutes then comment on it, and then leave. This study showed that the sample was

affected by their peers the most compared to the family members. Only 18 people denied that they felt anybody's dissatisfaction by seeing attractive females.

Craig *et al*., (2007) [3] found that this study explored the phenomenon of "fat talk" among college women, where they engage in negative discussion about their bodies for impression management. For this purpose, participants were taken 100 female participants in a mixed experimental design with various audience conditions. Results of the study revealed that measured changes in body image before and after using the Body Esteem Scale and Body Weight Figure Assessment. This study by Kenny *et al*. (2017) [8] explores the impact of peer influence on adolescent body image. A total number of 111 adolescents aged 13 to 18 years (both boys and girls) from the Republic of Ireland participated in this study. From 111 there were 59 females and 52 males from which 17 focus groups were made. The method used was the interview method. For the result, the thematic model was used like theme one was peer modeling, theme two was pressure to conform, and so on. This research proved that peer pressure does negatively affect our body image in both males and females.

A research paper on the effects of peer pressure and sexual activity on body image was done by Miller in 2010 [9]. There were 29 number of participants. Scales like Attitude Towards Condoms Scale, Peer Pressure, Popularity, Conformity Scale, and Body Esteem Scale were used. This research indicates that there are no significant relationships among participants' body image, peer pressure experience, and their rate of sexual activity.

Self-esteem and body image

Neeraj (2020) [11] conducted a study on 600 college teachers from different colleges. Out of which, 300 were male 300 were female of the age group between 31 to 60 years the subjects were also divided into three groups based on their age i.e., 31 to 40 years, 41 to 50 years, and 51 to 60 years. The International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) long version (2002), the Eating Attitude Test (26-EAT), Rosenber's self-esteem scale, and the Body Composition technique were used in this study. In this study, it has been found that the 41 to 50 years age group had higher mean values of the physical activity level scores than the 51 to 60 years age group of female college teachers.

Society and body image

Holland and Tiggemann (2016) [7], investigated that mass media and social networking sites impact 'body image' and 'eating disorders ',' body dissatisfaction ',' drive for thinness', and 'drive for muscularity'. For this purpose, specifically, 20 study's findings show that certain Social Networking Sites (SNS) activities such as Photo viewing, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and uploading as well as seeking negative feedback through status updates, emerged as particularly problematic behaviors. This hypothesis is that some studies found appearance-based social comparison mediating the relationship between Social Networking Site use and body image, and eating concerns.

Basistha (2020) [1], conducted a study on 443 people age group of 18 to 21 both men and women. The semi-structured interview schedule of five sections was developed for the present study which includes personal information, economic status, etc. Scales like Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire– Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-

AS), Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, Social Physique Anxiety Scale, Beck's Depression Inventory-II, WHO Quality of Life- BREF and Sociocultural Attitude Towards Appearance Questionnaire – 4 (SATAQ-4) was used. A quantitative study by Koshy (2015) [16], about the perception of body image, social physique anxiety, self-esteem, and body fat was done in 2015. It was a comparison between exercise and non-exercise adolescent girls. 1115 girls from 13 to 15 years were selected as a sample randomly. They were divided into two groups the exercising group (439) and the non-exercising group (676). Scales like The Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS), The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), and Body-Image Questionnaire, developed by Michele Koleck, Marilou Bruchon-Schweitzer, Florence Cousson-Gélie, Jerome Gilliard, Bruno Quintard was used. Body fat measurements like skin fold measurement and many more. The result shows that those who actively do exercises are more confident and have a positive body image compared to non-exercising girls.

Social Media

Burnette *et al*., (2017) [2] present a to examine the social media appear to contribute to body dissatisfaction in adolescents. For this study, the total participants were 38 girls, aged 12 to 14 years, and the relationship between social media use and body image in early adolescent girls. The hypothesis is that the study explored how young adolescent females use social media and its importance in body image. It highlights the importance of understanding social media's influence on adolescents for better prevention and intervention. Findings indicated that the roles of parental involvement and school environment in the link between social media and appearance concerns.

Objectives

This research aims to examine and synthesize the existing research on the impact of social media and peers on body image. By exploring various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and communication studies, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Specifically, the objectives of this review are as follows:
1. To examine the influence of social media on body image perceptions and body dissatisfaction.
2. To explore the role of peer interactions in shaping body image and related outcomes.
3. To investigate the potential moderators and mediators that influence the relationship between social media, peers, and body image.
4. To identify the psychological outcomes associated with negative body image.

Methodology

A research design using interview methods was used to determine the influence of social media and peers on body image. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the subject by combining qualitative data.

Sampling Design

Participants were chosen who are highly active on social media and belong to the target age range (e.g., adolescents or young adults). Participants were recruited from various social media platforms and educational institutions. In-depth Interviews were taken with 34 people, whose age ranged between 15-25 years. In-depth interviews: Some participants

are invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. These interviews discuss their experiences with social media, peer influence, and body image. Open-ended questions encourage participants to share their opinions, feelings, and beliefs. For data analysis, thematic analysis was done. Qualitative data of the interviews where transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Common themes related to social media, peer influence, and body image were identified and coded through; open, focused and axial coding. Patterns and connections between topics are explored to develop a deep understanding of the topic.

Ethical Considerations
Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant research ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Steps were taken to protect participants' privacy and anonymity throughout the research process.

Result
The themes of the qualitative finding are as follows:
1. Frequency of Engagement on Content Preferences (in hours)
2. Influence and Impact of social media and media (Agreement and Disagreement)
3. Harmful effects of social media and peers on body image
4. Social Media vs. Traditional Media Comparison
5. Aspects of social media, peers, or social media on body image and mental health
6. Impact of Filters, body comparison culture, and Photo Editing on social media
7. Views on Influencers and Body Image Movements
8. Self-esteem, Self-Love, Acceptance, Physical Health, and Well-Being
9. Responsibility for Social Media Use and Self-Awareness and Mental Health Support
10. Effects of Pornography
11. Consequences and impact of body image from porn
12. Potential impact of pornography on individuals
13. Steps taken by the porn industry that can promote body positivity
14. Positive Role of peers in shaping individuals' self-esteem and body image
15. Types of media content have the most significant impact on body image concerns
16. Influencers' Responsibility for Body Positivity

Discussions and Conclusions
The responses show a range of beliefs about the impact of social media on body image. Some participants believe that social media promotes unrealistic beauty standards, while others acknowledge its potential positive aspects, such as providing a platform for body positivity and self-acceptance. Peers and the media, including social media, traditional media, and pornography, play an important role in individuals; self-esteem and body image. Some believe that peer pressure and media coverage concerning standards can be beneficial, while negative perceptions can cause dissatisfaction. Participants disagree on whether influencers and content producers must promote body positivity. Some believe that influencers should take responsibility for the content they create and its potential impact on viewers and; body image, while others emphasize individual choice and

personal responsibility. The use of filters and photo manipulation on social media is seen as damaging to body image while maintaining unrealistic standards. However, it is also recognized that these tools can be used for recreational purposes. Recommendations to promote body positivity include realistic portrayals in the media, age restrictions on certain content, and sex education. The demand is for greater acceptance of different body sizes and looks. Parental guidance and support and positive peer influence are considered key factors in developing a healthy body image. Open communication and knowledge of social media and its impact are emphasized. Participants emphasized the importance of balanced media content that promotes both physical and mental well-being. They recommend reducing exposure to content that promotes a negative self-image. While many acknowledge external influences, individual responsibility for self-esteem and self-acceptance is also emphasized. Strategies include self-love, exercise, and focusing on personal growth.

Taken together, the data reflect the complexity of the relationship between media, peers, influencers, and body image. This highlights the need for a nuanced approach that takes into account individual differences and personal choices. Promoting body positivity, realistic standards, and healthy self-esteem emerge as key goals when addressing body image issues in the context of contemporary media and social influences.

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