



Examining the relationship between Exposure to Avengers Action Figures and Men's Body Dissatisfaction and Eating Disorders in Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Received: March 26, 2024
Revised: May 17, 2024
Accepted: May 19, 2024
Available Online: May 20, 2024

Keywords:

Avengers Action Figures
Men Body Dissatisfaction
Eating Disorders

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

This study investigates the relationship between social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders among males in five major cities of Pakistan. The sample comprised 400 male participants drawn from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The Social Comparison Theory serves as the theoretical framework for examining how individuals' perceptions of their bodies are influenced by comparisons with others. Results revealed significant correlations between eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction as well as social comparison tendencies. More specifically, there was a larger tendency toward disordered eating practices and higher degrees of body dissatisfaction among those who participated in upward social comparison. The results emphasize the importance of considering social comparison processes in understanding body image concerns and eating disorders among males in Pakistan. Implications for intervention and prevention efforts aimed at promoting positive body image and healthy eating behaviors are discussed. The implications of these findings extend to intervention and prevention strategies geared towards fostering positive body image and cultivating healthy eating behaviors among this demographic.

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1. Introduction

An action figure represents a character from a film or television series, often embodying an idealized physique. Exposure to such figures not only triggers dissatisfaction with one's muscles but also leads to various psychological challenges. With the advent of magazines and action figures, societal consciousness about body image has surged, particularly among men in Pakistan. Male characters in the Avengers movie series epitomize supernatural, idealized physiques, prompting many men to compare themselves unfavorably. The term "ideal body image" denotes the culturally sanctioned body size signifying achievement in physical perfection. Different cultural and ethnic groups, as well as social circles, may have distinct notions of the "perfect" body image (Grogan, 2021). The media profoundly influences individuals' self-perception by portraying what is deemed attractive, setting standards for appearance that individuals believe others should find appealing. This encompasses various physical attributes such as hair, complexion, and facial features (Shabangu, 2016). Body image reflects an individual's perception of their own body and associated feelings, which can range from positive, fostering high self-esteem and healthy behaviors, to negative, resulting in body dissatisfaction and psychological distress. Internal and external factors both play significant roles in shaping body image perceptions. Body dissatisfaction, characterized by negative perceptions and emotions regarding one's physique, is a key indicator of stress related to body image. It has been linked to various psychological disorders, including eating disorders, in both clinical and non-clinical populations (Galioto & Crowther, 2013). The societal pressure to

conform to a muscular, strong physique, often equated with qualities like resilience and capability, adds to this burden.

Exposure to idealized male bodies, as shown in the Avengers movie series action figures, exacerbates body dissatisfaction and lowers self-esteem among men. The prevailing media ideal for male attractiveness emphasizes traits like height, muscularity, and leanness, further fueling dissatisfaction. Such exposure not only impacts psychological well-being but also influences eating patterns, potentially contributing to disordered eating behaviors. Studies indicate that being exposed to pictures of muscular and slim male bodies leads to increased body dissatisfaction, particularly among men who internalize societal standards and engage in upward social comparison (Galioto & Crowther, 2013). This highlights the need to critically examine the portrayal of idealized bodies in media and its repercussions on individuals' well-being. The impact of social media on body image and symptoms of eating disorders is not limited to young women and teenage girls alone; recent research suggests its impact on males, including those who identify as sexual minorities, remains significant. Present research uncovered a notable connection between male engagement with social media and increased tendencies towards body dissatisfaction, symptoms of eating disorders, and even contemplation of using anabolic steroids. Notably, image-centric platforms like Instagram exhibited stronger associations with dissatisfaction regarding muscularity and symptoms of eating disorders compared to non-image-centric platforms like WordPress. However, no discernible differences were observed concerning dissatisfaction with body fat or height, or the manifestation of eating disorder symptoms (Kapa, Litteral, Keim, Jackson, Schofield, & Crerand, 2022). These insights underscore the pervasive influence of social media on male body image and the complexities surrounding its implications for mental health.

1.1. Problem Statement

Concerns over body image have become more prevalent, particularly among men, as periodicals, visual media, and action figures have become more widely distributed. People's opinions and self-esteem are often significantly shaped by the media's portrayal of desirable body forms. There is still a notable gap of study on male body image in the literature, despite the wealth of information on eating disorders and body consciousness. In attempt to close this gap, this study looks at the connection between media exposure and disordered eating practices in Pakistani men as well as body dissatisfaction. In particular, it looks at how men's opinions of their own bodies are affected and insecurities are exacerbated by the representation of idealized masculine forms, such those found in action figures from the Avengers film series. With the growing popularity of action figures and their pervasive presence in media representations, understanding how Pakistani men relate to these idealized images is crucial. By exploring this relationship, the study endeavors to shed light on the nuanced dynamics between media exposure and body image concerns among men in Pakistan, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the societal influences shaping male body image perceptions. Present research explores the impact of exposure to action figures from the Avengers movie series on body dissatisfaction levels among men in Pakistan. Furthermore, it investigates the correlation between body image dissatisfaction and the manifestation of disordered eating behaviors among men in Pakistan.

1.2. Hypotheses

H1. The action figures from the Avengers movie series positively correlated with increased levels of body dissatisfaction among men in Pakistan.

H2. There is significant positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and the manifestation of disordered eating behaviors among men in Pakistan.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Throughout the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the Avengers film series presents a cast of legendary superheroes who are notable representatives of masculine physicality. Nevertheless, research in this area has mostly focused on the influence of media on female body image, leaving a significant gap in our knowledge of male body image, particularly in the context of Pakistani culture, despite the pervasive incidence of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction. This study seeks to address this gap by delving into the relationship between exposure to action figures from the Avengers movie series and male body image among the youth in Pakistan. By exploring the interplay between media representation and body dissatisfaction, the researcher aims to shed light on how these idealized depictions impact the mental well-

being and eating behaviors of male individuals. As individuals increasingly spend time engaging with these action figures and idealized body images through various media platforms, such exposure can potentially exacerbate feelings of self-consciousness and dissatisfaction with one's own body. The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the evolving landscape of body dissatisfaction and body consciousness, particularly within the context of Pakistani society. With the proliferation of magazines, action figures in movies, and social media, the pressure to attain the perceived ideal body has intensified. Men are bombarded with images of muscular, lean, tall, and dark-skinned individuals, fostering unrealistic standards that may contribute to body dissatisfaction and, subsequently, disordered eating and mental health issues. By uncovering the impact of action figures from the Avengers movie series on body image and body dissatisfaction, this research aims to provide insights that can inform potential interventions and solutions to mitigate these issues within the Pakistani cultural context.

2. Literature Review

Action figures have been found to have a variety of consequences on eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, and ideal body image. Numerous research works have highlighted the negative consequences of media exposure to idealised body ideals on body image-related behaviours and attitudes. The possible negative consequences of social networking sites, especially for young women, were highlighted by one study. Their study investigated the potential effects of thin-idealized images—like those on Instagram—on people's moods and degrees of body dissatisfaction. The findings showed that viewing such pictures increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction, particularly in those who were more likely to internalise the slender ideal and compare their looks to others. Anixiadis (2019) found that there was a correlation between negative mood changes and thoughts connected to the slender ideal, suggesting that a minority of women may be especially susceptible to the negative impacts of exposure to these images.

A significant group versus time interaction was seen by Ata, Ludden, and Lally (2007), indicating that the only group to demonstrate a decrease in body dissatisfaction with time was the control group, which was shown images unrelated to body appearance. The lack of difference in diet intention between the groups, however, suggests that labelling media pictures to lessen identification and body dissatisfaction is not very successful. In a 2012 study, Bair et al. investigated the connections among 421 female undergraduates regarding Internet media exposure, eating disorders, internalisation of the thin ideal, and body dissatisfaction. Their research showed that eating disorders were linked to greater usage of appearance-focused media and the Internet, with thin-ideal internalisation acting as a mediating factor in this association. In particular, for those with high levels of thin-ideal internalisation, this study highlights the need of addressing Internet media consumption in the prevention and treatment of eating disorders (Bair, Kelly, Serdar, & Mazzeo, 2012). In comparison to their Yugoslavian counterparts, Ruiz-Lázaro, Imaz-Roncero, and Pérez-Hornero (2022) discovered that eating disorders, sadness, anxiety, and low self-esteem were more common in girls. Moreover, the impact of Western cultural standards on eating habits and body image, emphasising possible risk factors for eating disorders. Barlett, Vowels, and Saucier (2008) looked into how touching action figures affected young adult men's impressions of their bodies. They have proposed that media pressure to adhere to the muscular "ideal" masculine physique influences men's self-perceptions, altering variables such as body satisfaction, body esteem, and self-esteem. A meta-analysis of 25 studies found a clear link between media pressure and increased body dissatisfaction in men. Both correlational and experimental investigations found negative effect sizes, implying that media pressure contributes to males feeling bad about their bodies, regardless of study design.

However a study explores that slim, athletic, and curvy body ideals increased state social comparison among women. As a result, body surveillance increased but body admiration decreased. Furthermore, the relationship between seeing idealised images and having a negative body image was impacted by trait social comparison, with state social comparison serving as a mediating factor (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). This study emphasises how social comparisons of traits and states interact intricately to shape women's opinions of their bodies. Adolescent boys' goals of physical fitness can include risks akin to those associated with girls' desire of thinness, as noted by Botta (2003). A survey of college and high school students revealed that eating and body image issues are strongly predicted by the media for both

genders. A study investigated that the impact of celebrities on disordered eating and body dissatisfaction revealed a widespread influence of celebrities' bodies on people's perceptions of their bodies. The role of Instagram was investigated by Feltman and Szymanski (2018), who observed that it had an impact on how people perceived their bodies, especially women. In contrast to having little influence on male body image dissatisfaction, exposure to appealing Instagram photographs increased female body dissatisfaction. Cohen and Blaszczynski (2015) investigated the connection between body dissatisfaction, social media use, and appearance comparison. Their findings demonstrated that, in contrast to conventional media, exposure to social media photographs increased body dissatisfaction and appearance comparison. Furthermore, 'selfie' behaviours on social media and eating disorders and body image difficulties in young women were found to be significantly correlated by Cohen, Newton-John, and Slater (2018). In their 2020 study, Couture et al. examined the effects of Instagram photos and captions, highlighting the rise in body consciousness and the pressure from society to meet slender standards. Dakanalis, Timko, Clerici, Zanetti, and Riva (2014) examined the moderating effects of poor impulse control, social anxiety, and media use on eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction among men in college. The hypothesis that media portrayals contribute to body dissatisfaction is supported by the findings of a study by Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002), which revealed that exposure to thin media images resulted in more negative perceptions of body image, especially among younger people and those with pre-existing thinness schemas.

A review of research on the impact of media on females' attitudes and behaviours related to disordered eating and body image was carried out by Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002). They underlined how media exposure contributes to the maintenance of the ideal of the slender beauty and how it affects individuals' body dissatisfaction and disordered eating habits. In their study, Lup, Trub, and Rosenthal (2015) examined the relationship between Instagram use and depressed symptoms, emphasising the role of social comparison and the amount of strangers one follows on the platform. Mabe, Forney, and Keel (2014) investigated the connection between women's use of Facebook and disordered eating, finding that regular Facebook use was associated with greater levels of disordered eating behaviours and weight worries. According to Marino et al. (2018), who looked at the relationship between eating disorders, body image issues, sexual orientation, and media influence in college men, gay men may be more susceptible to media influence and thus have a higher incidence of eating disorders. Mulgrew et al. (2021) investigated how admiration and enjoyment from one's body can lessen the detrimental effects of media representations of the ideal slim person. In a meta-analysis evaluating the connection between social comparison and body dissatisfaction, T. A. Myers and Crowther (2007) found that unfavourable self-comparisons based on appearance were linked to higher levels of body dissatisfaction, especially in women. They found that posting appearance-focused content on social media was associated with a lower level of body dissatisfaction, particularly among boys. According to a study, the effects of body-positive imagery on social media on female viewers' perceptions and body image, sexualized and digitally altered body-positive images may undermine the goals of the body-positive movement by endorsing conventional beauty standards and self-objectification more frequently (Brathwaite, DeAndrea, & Vendemia, 2023). The aforementioned studies highlight the complex relationship between media exposure, social comparison, and body image concerns in young adults and adolescents. This underscores the need for additional study and preventive treatments to successfully address these issues.

3. Theoretical Framework

The social comparison theory by Festinger (1957) provided the base for present research. According to this theory, people frequently engage in social comparison to evaluate their beliefs, abilities, and characteristics (Festinger, 1957). Social comparison encompasses three primary types: upward, downward, and lateral. Upward social comparison takes place when individuals measure themselves against others they perceive as superior. This comparison often leads to a desire to improve one's own situation or achieve similar outcomes. Downward social comparison, on the other hand, involves contrasting oneself with those who are less fortunate, with the goal of boosting self-confidence or feeling better about one's own skills or attributes (Festinger, 1957). Finally, lateral social comparison involves comparing oneself to others who are perceived to be similar in status or ability. In the context of the current study, which focuses on the negative effects of upward social comparison, individuals may engage in this type of comparison when exposed to media portrayals of idealized body

types, such as those seen in action movies like the Avengers series. Watching these movies may lead individuals to compare their own bodies to the muscular and athletic figures depicted on screen (Alon, Sousa, & Lu, 2021). This comparison can result in body dissatisfaction, as individuals may feel inadequate or dissatisfied with their own appearance in comparison to the idealized images they see. Over time, persistent body dissatisfaction can contribute to the development of disordered eating behaviors, as individuals may resort to unhealthy eating habits in an attempt to achieve the perceived ideal body type. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the negative consequences of upward social comparison, particularly in the context of media consumption and exposure to idealized body images. By understanding how exposure to these images influences individuals' perceptions of their own bodies and contributes to disordered eating behaviors, the study seeks to shed light on the potential harmful effects of media portrayals of unrealistic body standards and inform interventions aimed at promoting positive body image and preventing eating disorders. The relevance of the social comparison theory to the current study lies in its explanation of how individuals' perceptions of themselves are influenced by comparisons with others, particularly in the context of media consumption (Jiang & Ngien, 2020).

Researchers can more clearly define the harmful effects of exposure to idealised body images in media content, such as action films like the Avengers series, by comprehending the mechanisms driving social comparison. The idea of upward social comparison, in which people measure themselves against others they consider to be superior, is central to the social comparison theory. When it comes to media consumption, people could be exposed to pictures of performers and fictional characters who have extremely idealised body types, which could set aspirational ideals. People who are constantly exposed to false body ideals may compare themselves negatively and become dissatisfied with their own bodies. Moreover, cultural norms and gender roles might make the negative effects of upward social comparison on body image dissatisfaction worse. Men, for instance, could experience pressure to live up to the muscular and athletic body ideals that are portrayed in action films, which could increase their body dissatisfaction and increase their risk of developing disordered eating habits in an attempt to achieve these goals. Furthermore, the potential influence of media portrayals on people's conceptions of themselves is increased by the ubiquitous nature of media and the easier availability to content through platforms like social media and streaming services (Ward, Rosenscruggs, & Aguinaldo, 2022). People are continuously exposed to comparisons that could have a detrimental effect on their body image and aid in the development of eating disorders because of the constant onslaught of pictures that promote unattainable beauty standards. The current study tries to provide mechanisms by examining the detrimental impacts of upward social comparison in the setting of media intake.

4. Methodology

The quantitative research methodology utilized in this study aims to investigate how action figures from the Avengers movie series influence the body image of men in Pakistan. The study examines their impact on eating behaviors and body dissatisfaction within this demographic. Adapted questionnaires were employed to collect data from (n=400) males residing in five major cities across Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad (including Rawalpindi), Faisalabad, and Multan, as identified by GeoGames.org. The participants had an average age of 20.5 (SD= 3.75) years, ranging from 22 to 40 years old. Data was collected from individuals who reported watching at least five series of Avengers movies per week, with a focus on the number of hours spent engaging with the series on platforms such as Netflix and online streaming services. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used in the data collection process to guarantee a wide variety of participants. The Media Usage and Influence Questionnaire Scale (adapted from Brederbecke et al. (2020); Rosenberg (1965) was one of the research instruments. It had ten items and measured how often and to what extent participants watched Avengers films as well as the messages they were exposed to about their body image. To fit the needs of this specific study, the majority of the questions were modified. This scale had components that measured the pressure to enhance muscular tone, gain weight, and decrease weight. Furthermore, a De Maynard (2009) -adapted body image questionnaire was used, which included three subscales: body shame, appearance control beliefs, and viewing the body as an outside observer. The subscale "A" assessed individuals' frequency of body monitoring and thinking about their body's appearance versus its sensation. This subscale comprised 10 items addressing various aspects of body image concerns, such as weight

management and clothing-related anxieties. The "Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire," a 33-item scale created to measure different elements of eating behaviour, was borrowed by Van Strien, Frijters, Bergers, and Defares (1986) in order to assess disordered eating behaviours. Emotional eating (13 items), external eating (10 items), and controlled eating (10 things) are all included in this scale. However, only 25 items that were appropriate for this study were modified by the researchers. Each item was answered by the participants on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting never and 5 denoting very often. Higher scores indicated a tendency towards disordered eating behaviours.

One example question was, "Do you feel like eating when you're upset emotionally (SD=2.9)?" (indicating emotional eating); "Do you eat more than usual (SD=16.7) if food tastes good to you?" "How often do you try not to eat in the evening because you are watching your weight (SD=6.8)?" (signalling external eating). (with reference to moderation in eating). With Cronbach's coefficients of 0.93 for restrained eating, 0.92 for emotional eating, and 0.91 for external eating, the subscales in this study had a high degree of reliability. A Likert scale was used to measure the data, enabling participants to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with items on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Prior to completing the questionnaires, participants provided demographic information including age, gender, occupation, and education level. Two variables were measured in the study: predictor variables, encompassing media usage and images from the Avengers series, and criterion variables, including body shame, body surveillance, and body control. The overall sample (n=400) demonstrated good reliability (α=0.87). Upon collecting all the data, responses were recoded and total scores were computed using statistical software such as SPSS for further analysis and interpretation.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Pearson Correlation

To investigate that exposure to action figures from the Avengers movie series positively correlated with increased levels of body dissatisfaction among men in Pakistan, the researchers have applied Pearson's correlation. The following table presents summary of the test.

Table 1: Summary of correlation between Avengers movie series and body dissatisfaction among men in Pakistan (n=400).

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Avenger Movies exposure	3.68	0.61	.167**	
2. Body Dissatisfaction	3.42	1.04	.153**	.234**

**p<.01

Note: Avenger Movies exposure represents the extent of exposure an individual has had to the Avengers movie series. The mean value for this variable is 3.68, with a standard deviation of 0.61. while the variable body dissatisfaction measures the level of dissatisfaction individuals feel regarding their bodies. This variable measures individuals' dissatisfaction with their bodies, encompassing feelings of dissatisfaction, discomfort, or negative perceptions regarding physical appearance or body image. The mean value for this variable is 3.42, with a standard deviation of 1.04. The correlation coefficient between "Avenger Movies exposure" and "Body Dissatisfaction" is .167, which indicates a positive correlation. This positive correlation suggests that as exposure to Avengers movies increases, so does body dissatisfaction, though the correlation is relatively weak. Additionally, (**p<.01) indicate that both correlations are statistically significant at the .01 level. Moreover, the correlation between "Avenger Movies exposure" and "Body Dissatisfaction" (r = .167) is lower than the correlation between "Body Dissatisfaction" and itself (r = .234), suggesting that while there is a relationship between Avengers movie exposure and body dissatisfaction, it is not as strong as the relationship between body dissatisfaction and itself. However, H1 is accepted.

5.2. Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 2 aimed to explore that there will be a significant positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and the manifestation of disordered eating behaviors among men in Pakistan. To measure H2, simple linear Regression Analysis was applied. The following table presents an overview of regression analysis.

Table 2: Summary of correlation between body image dissatisfaction and disordered eating behavior (n=400)

	B	SE	β	t-test	p-value	R	R²
Body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders	.118	.019	.294	8.63	<.001	.767 ^a	.067

Note. (400)=1.343, $p < .001$

Table 2 shows the summary of regression analysis which was applied to find that explore that there will be a significant positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and the manifestation of disordered eating behaviors among men in Pakistan. Results show that there was statistically significant effect of Avenger movies series, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors ($\beta = .294$, $p < .001$). However, the correlation between body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders is statistically significant ($r = 0.294$, $p < .001$). Hence, H2 is accepted.

6. Discussion

Body dissatisfaction remains a pervasive issue influenced by societal standards and media representations, including those portrayed in action figures based on idealized body ideals (Quittkat, Hartmann, Düsing, Buhlmann, & Vocks, 2019). The Avengers movie series, renowned for its portrayal of characters with "perfect" and "supernatural" bodies, exacerbates this phenomenon, leading to detrimental effects on body image perceptions (Galli, Shodahl, & Otten, 2022). Exposure to action figures from the Avengers movie series has been identified as a potential contributor to body dissatisfaction among men, tapping into the innate tendency of individuals to compare themselves to idealized representations. As visual beings, people often engage in self-evaluation by comparing their own bodies to those portrayed as ideal in media, which can lead to negative thoughts and feelings about their own physical appearance (Deinema, 2020). The study of social comparison theory looks into how people evaluate themselves in relation to cultural norms, especially when it comes to body dissatisfaction in popular culture like the Avengers film series. According to Festinger (1957) theory, people usually assess their own skills and traits by contrasting them with those of others, especially those who are thought to be ideal or superior. Watchers of the Avengers films engage in upward social comparison, evaluating themselves in light of the characters' portrayed standards of excellence and perfection. Regarding the Avengers films, viewers may internalise these ideals as the ideal, leading to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with their own bodies, since characters are shown as tall, dark, strong, and slender.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the association between body dissatisfaction among men in Pakistan and exposure to Avengers action figures. The results showed a strong correlation between the two variables. A significant proportion of the 400 male respondents who participated in the survey agreed that action figures play a part in body dissatisfaction, especially for younger people (ages 23 to 28). This emphasises how susceptible this population is to media effects and how strongly idealised body images are portrayed in popular culture. However, as P. N. Myers and Biocca (1992) pointed out, this never-ending cycle of comparison can result in people feeling dissatisfied because they think they don't measure up to the standards that society and the media have set. As Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, and Halliwell (2015) note, the impact of media portrayals on people's judgements of their own value and physical attractiveness delves into the widespread influence of social comparison processes on body image issues. Therefore, it becomes essential to implement treatments that support body acceptance and challenge unattainable beauty standards, as recommended by Tiggemann and Slater (2014), in order to lessen the negative impacts of social comparison on body dissatisfaction. Moreover, celebrities and social media influencers—whose bodies are frequently exalted and imitated—are also included in media portrayals of beauty standards, even beyond action figures. Studies have indicated that individuals who internalise these norms as measures of their own value may experience increased body dissatisfaction when exposed to photos of attractive celebrities and Instagram influencers (Casale, Gemelli, Calosi, Giangrasso, & Fioravanti, 2021).

According to Social Comparison Theory, being exposed to media portrayals of idealised bodies, like those in the Avengers film series, sets off an upward social comparison process. Users are faced with an endless stream of comparisons due to this process, which is

exacerbated on social media platforms where carefully chosen pictures of "perfect" bodies are prevalent (Fardouly et al., 2015). While some research suggests that exposure to idealised pictures may not always result in chronic body dissatisfaction, individual susceptibility or coping mechanisms may be important Chang, Li, Loh, and Chua (2019), other studies, such as those by Jackson, Llewellyn, and Smith (2020); Smith, Forrest, Perkins, Kinkel-Ram, Bernstein, and Witte (2021), support this theory. But over time, the cumulative exposure to these kinds of images from various media platforms can still lead to a sense of dissatisfaction Tiggemann and Slater (2014), highlighting the media's larger impact on defining societal beauty standards and personal perceptions of oneself (Derenne & Beresin, 2006). This cycle of comparison is exacerbated by the constant exposure to these idealised images on social media and other media channels. According to Fardouly et al. (2015), social media's profusion of well chosen pictures of "perfect" bodies encourages comparisons and exacerbates users' body dissatisfaction. The current study's findings support earlier studies by showing a strong correlation between guys in Pakistan who are dissatisfied with their bodies and those who have been exposed to Avengers action figures. This study examines how media depictions impact people's perceptions of their bodies.

Culturally sensitive treatments are essential in the Pakistani cultural setting, where traditional gender conventions may further magnify the impact of media depictions on body image dissatisfaction (Brennan et al., 2023). According to the research, Pakistani men's body dissatisfaction may be made worse by exposure to Western media and idealised body representations from action figures. This emphasises the necessity for culturally appropriate interventions. Banik (2023) asserted, however, that people's reactions to media portrayals of idealised bodies are greatly influenced by cultural variables. The current study was corroborated by a study by Mebarak Chams et al. (2019), which found a substantial link between young men's increased body dissatisfaction and frequent media viewing (particularly the Avengers series). Comparably, a long-term study by Cai, Gui, Wang, Yang, Mao, and Wang (2021) looked into the relationship between body dissatisfaction and engagement with superhero media, specifically the Avengers series, and the individuals' reported levels of interest. Additionally, looking at pictures of strong superhero characters significantly increases one's unhappiness with one's body. Feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with one's own physique are exacerbated by media exposure to idealised body ideals (Garcia-Garcia, Orts-Escolano, Oprea, Villena-Martinez, Martinez-Gonzalez, & Garcia-Rodriguez, 2018; Kim, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). On the other hand, research by Jackson, Llewellyn, and Smith (2020); Smith et al. (2021) found that eating disorders are exacerbated by the thin ideal that is depicted in the media. Similarly, Chang et al. (2019) looked into how college-aged men's opinions of their bodies were affected by action figures and other media depictions.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Chang et al. (2019) investigating men's perceptions of their bodies among men who regularly interact with action figures and other media discovered that people frequently see these representations as aspirational rather than as having a direct impact on their dissatisfaction with their bodies. Kim (2021), who claimed that there was no discernible difference in body dissatisfaction and media influence, are also backed by their study. However, according to a study by Ward, Rosenscruggs, and Aguinaldo (2022), people who interacted with action figures on a frequent basis over time reported feeling more satisfied with their bodies. Moreover, social comparison theory asserts that people frequently evaluate their own skills and qualities by contrasting them with those of others, especially those who are viewed as ideal or superior (Festinger, 1957). Characters in the Avengers film series possess qualities and physical attributes that are frequently out of reach for the common person. Because they believe they don't measure up to the standards set by society and the media, viewers may become dissatisfied when they compare their own bodies to these idealised images (P. N. Myers & Biocca, 1992). This never-ending cycle of comparison and discontent emphasises the substantial influence of media representations on people's views of their own value and physical appearance, which in turn contributes to the prevalence of body image issues (Fardouly et al., 2015). As it discusses premise 2, the study investigates the consistent relationship between men's body dissatisfaction and exposure to idealised body images, which are frequently shown in media and popular culture like the Avengers movie series (Quitkat et al., 2019). People who are dissatisfied with their bodies frequently develop disordered eating behaviours in an attempt to achieve the "perfect" bodies that are portrayed in these media portrayals (Galli, Shodahl, & Otten, 2022; Opara & Santos, 2019). The purpose of the current study was to investigate the relationship between men's disordered eating

behaviours and body dissatisfaction in Pakistan and their exposure to Avengers action figures. Regression analysis supported the impact of seeing Avengers films on these variables, and the results showed a substantial positive association between disordered eating behaviours and body image dissatisfaction (Garcia-Garcia et al., 2018). Moreover, there was a statistically significant association between eating disorders and body dissatisfaction, highlighting the intricate interactions between these variables. While some research backs up the idea that being around action figures in the media increases body body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors (Galli, Shodahl, & Otten, 2022; Quittkat et al., 2019). For example, Jackson, Llewellyn, and Smith (2020); Smith et al. (2021) propose that long-term body dissatisfaction may not always result from exposure to idealised images. Chang et al. (2019) discovered that although this kind of exposure might have a short-term effect on self-esteem, it is unclear how it would ultimately improve body dissatisfaction. Still, it is clear that the media has a widespread impact on how people perceive their bodies. Particularly social media sites have been linked to a rise in eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction in young males (Derenne & Beresin, 2006). The ongoing cycle of body image issues can be furthered by the frequent exposure to idealised body pictures on media platforms, which can encourage feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance.

Drawing on social comparison theory, Festinger (1957) argues that exposure to idealised body models, as those in media representations like the Avengers movie series, sets off an upward social comparison process. People often compare themselves to the idealised norms they see in the media, which can leave them feeling inadequate and unsatisfied (P. N. Myers & Biocca, 1992). Due to the abundance of carefully chosen photos of "perfect" bodies on social media sites, users may find themselves comparing things more frequently (Fardouly et al., 2015). Jackson, Llewellyn, and Smith (2020); Smith et al. (2021), on the other hand, found inconsistent results suggesting that exposure to idealised images might not always result in chronic body dissatisfaction, which could indicate differences in individual sensitivity or coping mechanisms (Chang et al., 2019). However, even if the immediate impact on body dissatisfaction may vary, the cumulative exposure to such images across different media platforms can still contribute to a sense of dissatisfaction over time (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Therefore, while the direct causal relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction may be nuanced, the broader influence of media on shaping societal beauty ideals and individual self-perception remains undeniable (Derenne & Beresin, 2006).

7. Conclusion

In summary, this study investigates how male body image and discontent are affected by action figures from the Avengers, specifically in the setting of Pakistan. The results show a strong link between male eating problems and body dissatisfaction with exposure to these figures. It's clear that cultural depictions, like those in the Avengers film trilogy, increase the pressure on society to adhere to ideals of a muscular, bulky figure. Even with a wealth of study on female body image and the impact of the media, there is still a significant knowledge vacuum on male body image issues, especially in the context of Pakistani culture. By investigating the connection between exposure to Avengers action figures and perceptions of male body image, this study seeks to close this gap. In addition, the study's emphasis on male body image in the context of Pakistani culture illuminates the particular sociocultural elements affecting this population's impressions of their bodies. This study highlights the need to take social comparison processes into account in order to fully understand how media depictions affect men's perceptions of their bodies. This study examines the impacts of upward social comparison, in which people negatively compare themselves to idealised body types portrayed in the media, using the social comparison theory and a survey approach. These kinds of comparisons can lead to disordered eating behaviours and cause body dissatisfaction. This study examines how people compare by using social comparison theory, emphasising the consequences of not living up to the exaggerated expectations set by media like the Avengers movie.

7.1. Limitations, Future Recommendations

The study offers a number of suggestions for improving next research on problems related to men's body image in Pakistan. It highlights the importance of extending research efforts from micro to macro levels and raises the possibility of more thorough studies on the impact of body image on men. It is also suggested that qualitative research approaches be

used in order to have a deeper understanding of the circumstances and underlying causes of these problems. In order to provide a deeper insight, the proposal also supports the use of mixed research approaches. For example, one such example would be investigating the impact of popular culture on men's opinions of their bodies. The research's conclusions demonstrate its broad applicability to a wide range of professions and demographics. It provides assistance to guys who are dissatisfied with their bodies, emphasising coping mechanisms and addressing psychological issues that may arise. Notwithstanding its merits, the research admits a number of drawbacks, such as a limited sample size, dependence on a solitary method for gathering data, difficulties in procuring truthful answers, and concerns regarding accessibility and availability. Throughout the study, ethical considerations took precedence, guaranteeing participants' rights and well-being through free permission, anonymity, and respect to ethical guidelines. Future research can examine the ways in which media depictions affect men's and women's perceptions of their bodies by taking into account occurrences such as the Avengers film series.

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