



## Relationship between Body Image Dissatisfaction and Social Media Usage in Young Women

Ahmad Bilal<sup>1</sup>, Sehrish Wazir<sup>2</sup>, Bushra Farooq<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

Email: [ahmadbilal4@gmail.com](mailto:ahmadbilal4@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Applied Psychology, Government Sadiq College Women University, Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

Email: [sehrishwazir15@gmail.com](mailto:sehrishwazir15@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

Email: [bushraf268@gmail.com](mailto:bushraf268@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

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Young women have been found to experience body image dissatisfaction as a consequence of excessive social media usage and vice versa. Therefore, the current study was conducted to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and social media use in young women aged 19-23 years in a Pakistani sample. A sample of 401 young women from different cities of Punjab province completed an online Google Form-based questionnaire containing informed consent, demographic sheet, and two scales namely social networking usage scale and socio-cultural attitude towards appearance questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4). The findings of the study significantly predicted excessive social media usage from body dissatisfaction. The pressure sub scale of body image dissatisfaction was found to be significantly associated with social media usage. There were found no differences in body image dissatisfaction and social media usage in single and married young women. However, urban women were found to have high levels of body image dissatisfaction than rural women. The study concluded that body image dissatisfaction could lead to excessive social media usage in young women. The future directions and limitations of the study were discussed.

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Corresponding Author's Email: [ahmadbilal4@gmail.com](mailto:ahmadbilal4@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Exposure to the media is cited as a reason for the development of dissatisfaction with the body or negative thoughts and feelings towards the body (Grogan, 2017). While eating disorders most frequently occur in late teens (19–23 years), risk factors predict the onset of eating disorders in earlier times appear and rise during teens (Rohde et al., 2015). Previous studies have shown that adolescent body dissatisfaction is a strong and consistent forecast of future symptoms of eating disorders (Grogan, 2017; Rhode et al., 2015). Exposition and sensitivity to media images that reflect idealized and unrealistic cultural standards are greatly affected by body dissatisfaction. For this reason, it is important that the risk factors contributing to the development of female dissatisfaction and malnutrition are understood for future interventions, especially in connection with heavy media use, the symptom understanding of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders during adolescence. The intersection of social, psychological and physical changes characterizes adolescence as a development period. Women avoid groups of same-sex friends throughout their childhood and want to communicate more with their opposite sexes and engage in romantic activities (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). The development of status hierarchies in and between social groups creates more complexity among peer groups (Brown & Larson, 2009).

Merriam Webster (2014) defines social media as a way to share the information, ideas, personal messages, and other content in an online community (as social networking and

micro-blogging web sites), through which users can create online community (as videos). While the term was first used in 2004, the use of social media went up over the last few years. This 10-year-old sentence is now a family term. People seem to be more connected than ever, whether it's tweeting in real time during a bachelor party or creating a Facebook profile for their cat. Today, approximately 73% of adult online users use some type of social media (Smith et al., 2013).

Body image is a multifaceted construct that refers to an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with their body and physical appearance (Cash, 2002). Physical dissatisfaction refers to negative perceptions of body shape and weight (Stice et al., 1994). It is worth noting that young women in Western society have a high degree of dissatisfaction with their bodies, so they are often referred to as "normative dissatisfaction." (Tiggemann, 2011). In a recent survey of Australians, almost half of young women (18-29 years) reported being dissatisfied with their appearance. Body dissatisfaction has been consistently implicated in the etiology and maintenance of eating disorders, obesity, low self-esteem, depression, unhealthy dieting, excessive exercise, and cosmetic surgery. Given the prevalence of dissatisfaction with the body and its harmful effects, most studies so far have focused on negative body image and its influencing factors (Cash & Smolak, 2011). However, in the past ten years, body image literature has surpassed the mainstream focus. A more comprehensive investigation into the construction of positive body image is through changes in body image (Halliwel, 2015). Positive body image is defined as a structure different from negative body image, including love, respect, acceptance and appreciation of one's own image. Importantly, positive body image is related to variables other than physical satisfaction, such as better mental health and adaptive health behaviors (Andrew et al., 2015; Swami & Tovee, 2009). Accordingly, leading researchers in the field have argued that further research into positive body image may be crucial for prevention and treatment efforts aimed at improving body image (Tylka, 2011) and disordered eating (Cook-Cottone, 2015; Piran, 2015), by encouraging a focus on psychological and physical well-being in addition to preventing pathology.

## **2. Literature Review**

Theories focusing on risk factors for dissatisfaction usually highlight developmental and socio-cultural factors (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995). Developmental theories of body picture dissatisfaction highlight the importance of late body picture formation in children's and adolescent developmental factors, such as pubertal timing, overweight, early sexual abuse (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995). In contrast, sociocultural image dissatisfaction theories address the influence of factors such as socio-cultural ideals, mass media influence and gender-based socialization in body image development (Heinberg & Thompson, 1995). The following subset of potential risk factors for body image dissatisfaction in college women had been examined in the wide range of variables with the potential for negative effects: a) developmental teasing, (b) a history of childhood and adolescent excess weight, (c) the present weight or body mass index and (d) the perceived influence of media on appeal.

Although the objectification idea approaches are the end result of the complicated socio-cultural surroundings wherein ladies live, the mass media have acquired a huge percentage of blame for growing and selling the ultra-skinny sort of frame this is presently appeared as 'ideal' with the aid of using Pakistani cultures. Correlational and experimental research had been achieved to hyperlink the publicity of thinness-depicting media with the massive un-fulfillment of the lady frame, extended funding in look and extended aid for disordered consuming behavior (Grabe et al., 2008).

Research has begun to examine the relationship between social media and corporate images with the recent proliferation of social networking (SNS). SNS, such as Facebook and Instagram are websites which enable quick sharing of photos, videos and comments generated by users through their personal profiles (Perloff, 2014). Facebook has more than 2.4 billion users, and Instagram has more than one billion users with more than 95 million photos every day sharing only on Instagram (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). SNS like Facebook or Instagram, with over 80 percent of women aged 18-29 who use Facebook and more than 60% who use Instagram, is especially popular with young women (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). SNS was described as a dominant way in which people perceive social standards. Research suggests that younger girls spend plenty extra time on on-line media than on conventional kinds of media inclusive of magazines and TV (Bair et al., 2012). SNS are predominantly peer

generated, they offer sufficient possibility for comparisons with comparable others (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). SNS are generated primarily by peers and offer ample opportunity to compare appearance to similar others (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). A content analysis of the inspiration in the common photo sharing SNS found that pictures tend to be sexually objectivizing, focusing on ultra-thin women (a combination of the terms "thin" and 'inspiration') (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015). Furthermore, evaluation of the textual content accompanying those pictures found out that customers generally tend to evaluate bodies with the skinny-perfect pictures displaying a preference to be skinny for perfection, to sense disgusted with fat, to benefit weight (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016).

There are several gaps in the literature regarding the relationship between social media use and young women's body image. First, the use of SNS has been regarded as homogeneous to date and most studies have generally measured total use of SNS, typically using one item, measuring the time spent with SNS. In fact, since SNS use is heterogeneous and involves both active involvement and passive consumption, the overall evaluation of time of use can mask significant effects. A modern approach is required to measure SNS use, especially appearance-focused work, to provide an important insight into the effects of body image. Second, they commented in the suggestions of Prieler and Choi (2014) that most research to date has focused on young populations to broaden the scope of corporate image study in connection with social media effects and that future research would investigate age groups other than women. Statistics on the use of social media show that young adults (18-29) are the highest social media users, in particular young women (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Similarly, the 'positive body' trend in social media is emerging which is designed to encourage positive physical images. This kind of content needs to be studied in order to better understand how exposure to social media's "body positiveness" can influence body image in comparison with more dominant look-ideal contents.

Therefore, the present study was conducted with an aim to find out the association between social media use and body image dissatisfaction. The study also aimed to find out the demographics as related to social media use and body image dissatisfaction in young women. The hypotheses of the Study are given below;

- H1:** The sub-scales of body image dissatisfaction are positively correlated with social network usage.
- H2:** The body image dissatisfaction predicts and leads to high social network usage.
- H3:** The unmarried persons have high body image dissatisfaction and social network usage than married people.
- H4:** The urban living persons have high body image dissatisfaction and social network usage than rural people.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Research Design & Participants**

The cross sectional survey method was used in this study to collect data. A total of 401 females were selected for the study from the different cities of Punjab through purposive sampling. The sample size was calculated using Raosoft online sample size calculator with 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error.

#### **3.2 Instruments**

##### **3.2.1 Demographic Sheet**

This sheet comprises of the respondent name (optional), age, marital status and residential area.

##### **3.2.2 Social Networking Usage Scale (SNS)**

The SNS usage scale was designed (Gupta & Bashir, 2018) to assess the four numbers of domains, including academic; socialization; entertainment; and informativeness. It has a total number of 19 items that are assessed on a 5-point scale (Always = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2, and Never = 1) indicating whether they feel pressure toward or away from a number of activities and to what degree. The current SNS alpha scale of Cronbach ( $\alpha=.83$ ) therefore shows good internal reliability.

### 3.2.3 Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4)

The SATAQ-4 has 22 items that use a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". These items are divided into five domains or subscales: Two are for internalization that have 5 items each. Within the internalization of the ideal of thinness, the desire to have a body with little body fat is measured. Within the internalization of the athletic ideal, the desire to have a muscular and toned body is measured. Likewise, the three are pressure subscales having 4 items each, which assess the pressure exerted by family, friends, and the media to have a slim and toned body in each of the subscales. The original version of SATAQ-4 shows a high internal consistency in the population where it was applied (university women), having a Cronbach's alpha for the global scale of 0.93, and a Cronbach's alpha between 0.88 and 0.97 for each of the domains (Llorente et al., 2015).

### 3.3 Procedure

The permission was taken from the author of questionnaire to use questionnaire in research. The questionnaire containing demographic sheet and two scales was distributed through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0). The correlation, linear regression, and independent sample t-test, were used to test the hypotheses. The ethical considerations were maintained.

## 4. Results

The Table 1 gives the frequency distribution of demographic variables included in the study. The mean age of the participants was around 21 years with 19 and 23 years as the minimum and maximum age. The 81% participants were unmarried while 88% participants lived in urban areas.

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables (n=401)**

Demographic Variables	Characteristics	n	%
Marital Status	Married	75	18.7
	Unmarried	326	81.3
Residential Area	Urban	354	88.3
	Rural	47	11.7
Age (years)	M (SD)	Min	Max
		21.31 (1.44)	19

**Table 2: Correlations among Body image dissatisfaction scale and social network Usage (n=401)**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Internalize-General Scale	25.57	6.13	-				
Athletic Scale	6.68	1.92	.56**	-			
Pressure Scale	22.13	5.01	.68**	.64**	-		
Info Scale	17.18	3.04	.59**	.35**	.47**	-	
SNU	44.52	9.99	-.09	-.04	-.13**	-.07	-

\*\*p<.01, Note. SNU=Social network usage

The Table 2 describes the correlations for testing a relationship among body image dissatisfaction sub-scales and social network usage. There is a statistically significant relationship among all sub scales of body image dissatisfaction. On the other hand, only pressure scale is negatively and significantly correlated with social network usage.

**Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression (n=401)**

Predictors	R <sup>2</sup>	F(df)	Sig.	β	SE	T	Sig.
Internalize-General Scale				-.01	.12	-.17	.85
Athletic Scale	.02	2.39 (4,396)	.05	.08	.34	1.27	.20
Pressure Scale				-.17	.15	-2.31	.02
Info Scale				-.01	.20	-.27	.78

Outcome=SNU; Predictors=Scales of body image dissatisfaction

The Table 3 gives the regression analysis to predict social network usage from body image dissatisfaction. The overall regression model was not found statistically significant. Only, the pressure sub scale significantly predicted social network usage.

**Table 4: Result of t Test (n=401)**

Marital Status	Married (n=75)		Unmarried (n=326)		t	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Internalize-General Scale</b>	27.22	6.30	26.42	6.09	1.01	399	.31
<b>Athletic Scale</b>	6.81	1.47	6.65	2.01	.77	144.79	.44
<b>Pressure Scale</b>	22.58	4.57	22.02	5.11	.86	399	.38
<b>Info Scale</b>	17.29	3.47	17.15	2.94	.30	99.70	.75
<b>SNU</b>	44.61	9.11	44.50	10.19	.08	399	.93

The Table 4 gives the results of t test computed to find out marital status differences in body image dissatisfaction and social network usage. The results of t test are not statistically significant. There are no marital status wise differences in body dissatisfaction and social network usage.

**Table 5: Result of t Test (n=401)**

Residential Area	Urban (n=354)		Rural (n=47)		t	df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Internalize-General Scale</b>	27.07	5.99	22.85	5.95	4.54	399	.000
<b>Athletic Scale</b>	6.77	1.90	6.00	1.95	2.62	399	.009
<b>Pressure Scale</b>	22.35	4.91	20.46	5.50	2.43	399	.001
<b>Info Scale</b>	17.36	2.97	15.80	3.20	3.34	99.70	.001
<b>SNU</b>	44.09	9.65	47.72	11.91	-2.00	54.31	.005

The Table 5 gives the results of t test computed to find out residential area differences in body image dissatisfaction and social network usage. The results of t test are statistically significant for all scales of body image dissatisfaction whereas results are not significant for social network usage. The urban people have high levels of body image dissatisfaction than rural people.

## 5. Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the association between body image dissatisfaction and social media usage and to predict the increased social media use from body image dissatisfaction in young women. After the data analysis, results showed that greater number of unmarried respondents participated in the study compared to married respondents. Higher number of participants from urban areas participated as compared to respondents of rural areas.

The first hypothesis of the study "the sub-scales of body image dissatisfaction are positively correlated with social network usage". The results of the study reveal that the sub scales of body dissatisfaction are positively correlated with each other but the pressure sub scale is only correlated with social media usage. The social media platforms were the most difficult platforms with regard to the negative results of body images as compared to other platforms such as print media. This was consistent with the negative appearance-related outcomes of a previous study that indicated that time spent on social media led to a higher tendency to experience body image concerns like face, hair and skin-related discontent (Fardouly et al., 2015; Jiotsa et al., 2021).

Dissatisfaction with the body, negative thoughts, and feelings about one's appearance are a form of negative self-esteem (Kim & Aubrey, 2015). The main purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which the use of social media was associated with the different aspects of body dissatisfaction. The heavy use of social media platforms, excessive internalization and excessive-searching social comparisons boom the opportunity of dissatisfaction with the body. The effects additionally display that low shallowness will increase

self-criticism, which ends up in greater dissatisfaction together along with your body (Fardouly et al., 2018; Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014).

The second hypothesis of the study was "dissatisfaction with the body image forecasts and leads to high social network utilization." The study results showed that body discontent poses a substantial threat to the well-being of women by increasing the odds of using social media usage (Stice & Bearman, 2001). In order to counteract dissatisfaction with the body, it is important to know which factors are related to women's dissatisfaction with the body. Studies have shown that women who use social media are more likely to show greater dissatisfaction with their bodies (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Women have a stronger connection between social media and physical dissatisfaction (Kleemans et al., 2018). Current research focuses on the individual characteristics of susceptibility to social media dissatisfaction with the body and examines the inhibitory effects of social environmental factors (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). As a preceding study (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016) and a socio-cultural model (Thompson et al., 1999), it is shown that ladies who use social media regularly have a more effect on their bodies which is simply dissatisfaction.

The third hypothesis of the study was "the unmarried persons have high body image dissatisfaction and social network usage than married people". The results of t test for computing differences was not statistically significant. There were found no marital status wise differences in body dissatisfaction and social network usage. Both the single and married women were found to be equally effected by body image dissatisfaction and social media usage. This was consistent with a previous study (de Varies et al., 2016). The younger and single ladies who use social media have a tendency to be extra disillusioned with their bodies. This locating is constant with the truth that energetic social media customers are extra disillusioned with their bodies (Fardouly & Vartanian 2015; Schaefer et al., 2014; Thompson et al. 1999).

The fourth hypothesis of the study was "the urban living women have high body image dissatisfaction and social network usage than rural people". The results of t test computed to find out residential area differences in body image dissatisfaction and social network usage revealed statistically significant difference for all scales of body image dissatisfaction whereas results were not significant for social network usage. The urban women have high levels of body image dissatisfaction than rural women. Understanding the susceptibility factors and situational factors related to the dissatisfaction of young women's body is essential to reduce the risk of dissatisfaction with body image and other related issues (Eke et al., 2014). Spending extra time on social media systems can result in needless self-criticism, which could result in a loss of satisfaction.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research shows that social media is a new way to involve people in inappropriate processes, such as comparing body types in a targeted way. The study concluded that excessive dissatisfaction with one's body led to excessive social media usage. Demographics such as living in urban area could affect body dissatisfaction in young women.

The further research need to focus on finding out the higher-risk social media platforms based on the results of body imaging and prevent the use of these specific platforms. Moreover, future research should measure the processes that promote social media addiction in order to better clarify the meditation processes that influence attitudes and behavioral outcomes. The effective control measures should be developed to reduce user participation in inappropriate social media usage so that its negative effects could be mitigated. The social media platforms can be a good place for future health communication and behavior change activities to reach particularly vulnerable people in a positive way.

## **7. Limitations**

This study did not assess whether users actually followed the processes that prompted them to use social media when using social media, such as company comparison. The user is an important factor to consider. Other reasons not investigated in this study (social support, identity establishment, social influence, popularity, etc.) should also be investigated. More research is needed to understand why users have different social media motivations and how to promote responsive applications on social media to reduce the harmful effects of improper

use. Likewise, more research is needed to determine the impact of positive/protective processes (such as social support) and social media, and then maintain these processes to offset the negative impact of these processes.

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