



The Role of Social Media in Shaping Beauty Standards and Self-Esteem

Sumaiya Shabeer¹, Qudsia Naeem², Rida³, Maria Bashir⁴ & Syed Jawad Zareen⁵

¹Department of Psychology, University of Poonch, Rawalakot, Email: sumiyashabeer1@gmail.com

²Department of Psychology, University of Poonch, Rawalakot, Email: qudsiakhan147@gmail.com

³Department of Psychology, University of Poonch, Rawalakot, Email: ridahassan362@gmail.com

⁴Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Poonch Rawalakot

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Poonch Rawalakot, Email: Jawadzareen@upr.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: September 03, 2025
Revised: October 02, 2025
Accepted: October 15, 2025
Available Online: November 04, 2025

Keywords:

Social media use; Beauty standards; Self-esteem; Young adults; Body image

Corresponding Author:

Syed Jawad Zareen

Email:

Jawadzareen@upr.edu.pk



ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media use on beauty standards and self-esteem among young adults aged 18–30. In the digital era, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat play a significant role in shaping perceptions of attractiveness through exposure to idealized and filtered images. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from university students through standardized self-report measures, including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and indicators of social media usage and beauty standard internalization. Descriptive and correlational analyses revealed a significant positive relationship between social media use and the internalization of contemporary beauty standards. However, the direct relationship between social media use and self-esteem was not statistically significant, suggesting that self-esteem may be influenced indirectly through other psychological mechanisms. The findings highlight that frequent exposure to idealized online content reinforces narrow beauty ideals, which may contribute to appearance-related concerns. This study underscores the importance of media literacy, body positivity initiatives, and responsible social media engagement to promote psychological well-being among young adults.

Introduction

In the digital age, social media platforms have developed into powerful tools for affecting how individuals view others and themselves. Social media is the primary source of information, engagement, and identity expression for persons between the ages of 18 and 30, who are frequently referred to as "digital natives." Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok all promote unrealistic beauty standards that are often modified and filtered. Young individuals' perceptions of their own value and attractiveness may be impacted by this. While this exposure could encourage self-expression

and social interaction, it also runs the risk of encouraging unattainable ideals that fuel body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Understanding this relationship is crucial to creating interventions that support resilience and a positive self-image in youth.

Variables

Social Media (IV)

Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, and other online apps and platforms allow users to create, share, and engage with content (e.g., beauty postings, peer or influencer comparisons, time spent, type of content consumed, etc.).

Historical Background

The idea of social media first surfaced in the early 2000s as internet access grew, and digital technology developed. Online networking and personal interactions were the main goals of the earliest platforms, like Friendster (2002), Myspace (2003), and Facebook (2004). With **02** time, social media evolved from simple communication tools to highly visual and engaging platforms.

With the ability to share films, pictures, and personal lifestyles, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram all elevated multimedia content. Short-form entertainment and visual self-presentation were further highlighted by two later apps, TikTok (2016) and Snapchat (2011). . Social media has permeated every aspect of modern life, impacting not only how individuals interact with one another on a social level but also how they acquire knowledge, create identities, and interpret cultural norms like self-worth and beauty standards.

Social Media Use

The ways in which people use social networking sites, such as how often they use them, what kinds of content they consume, and how they participate with them (passively versus actively).

Active Use

Active use includes things like posting, content creation, commenting, and direct communication.

Passive Use:

Observing, perusing, or looking at stuff without doing anything else. **03**

Aspects of Using Social Media:

1. Frequency and intensity refer to the amount of time people spend on platforms each day.
2. Type of material: The types of material that are consumed, such as entertainment, fashion/beauty, education, fitness, or news.
3. Engagement Patterns _ Interaction levels, such as sharing, liking, commenting, following influences or observing silently.
4. The term "purpose of use" refers to the reasons for using a device, such as escapism, knowledge seeking, social contact, or self-presentation.
5. Passive (consuming content with little interaction) versus active (publishing, interacting).

Theories

1. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974) states that people use social media to fulfill needs including information seeking, entertainment, sociability, and self-expression.

2. The Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) states that people assess themselves by contrasting themselves with others on social media, which usually has a detrimental impact on self-esteem.
3. Goffman's 1959 Self-Presentation Theory contends that social media users may manage the impressions they make by selecting and revising their online content. **04**
4. According to Gerbner's (1976) Cultivation Theory, users' frequent exposure to online information shapes their views of reality and social norms.
5. Richer communication platforms with images, videos, and interaction are more effective at influencing attitudes and behavior, according to Daft & Lengel's Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Variations in Social Media Use by Demographic.

Age

It is most used by those between the ages of 18 and 24 for identity development, amusement, and social interaction increased deliberate use, usually for networking, job opportunities, and news, between the ages of 25 and 30.

Gender

Self-presentation, fashion and beauty-related content, and social engagement are all more common among women.

Despite being more influenced by appearance norms, men are more likely to use platforms related to sports, fitness, news, and gaming.

Economic Situation (SES):

Higher SES groups have access to a greater variety of venues, international trends, and technological advancements.

Groups with lower socioeconomic status might have less access and depend more on mobile-based platforms. **05**

Differences in Culture:

Displaying one's lifestyle, body image, and individualism are highly valued in Western countries.

Fairness, slimness, and shared ideals are important aspects of self-presentation in Asian and South Asian societies.

Urban vs. Rural

City dwellers are subject to influences and trends from around the world. Social media is frequently used by rural inhabitants to interact with others and find local information.

Dimension

The frequency of use, the kind of content ingested (fashion, fitness, makeup, and influences), and the degree of interaction (likes, comments, sharing, and following influential people)

Beauty Standards (IV)

Historical Background

Throughout human history, there have been standards of beauty that often reflect the social, cultural, and economic conditions of different times. Ancient cultures such as Egypt and Greece equated beauty with symmetry, proportion, and jewelry and cosmetics. During the Renaissance,

fuller body types were praised as representations of fecundity and riches. During the Victorian era, having delicate features and pale complexion was **06** idolized as a sign of sophistication and status. Narrow standards of beauty, such as muscularity for men and slimness for women, were promoted by the 20th century's mass media, including television, movies, and magazines. By the twenty-first century, globalization and digital media, especially social media—had sped up the spread of ideas of beauty, encouraging fads like toned, flawless skin, and youthful looks. Today's culturally constructed ideals of beauty are greatly influenced by digital manipulation, filtering, and influencer culture.

Definitions

Beauty Standard

Requirements for skin tone, body shape, facial characteristics, and fashion that are often part of culturally manufactured ideas of what it means to be pretty.

Body Image

Thoughts, feelings, and impressions of a person regarding their physical appearance.

Internalization of beauty ideals is the process through which people take cultural norms of beauty as their own personal standards.**07**

Dimensions

Physical Dimensions

Body shape and size (e.g., muscularity, curves, slimness).

Youth, symmetry, and clear skin are examples of facial features that skin tone and texture, Hair type, volume, and style.

Cultural Perspectives

Differ depending on the society (e.g., browned skin in Western cultures, light skin ideal in South Asia). Influenced by customs, media, and societal norms.

Social Aspects

Peer and media pressure. The influence of ads, influencers, and celebrities. Appearance- based social validation and approval.

Psychological Aspects

Convergence of beauty ideals self-worth and body satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Theories

1. The Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) states that comparing oneself to others, especially those portrayed in the media, can have an impact on one's level of contentment with one's looks.
2. Women internalize an observer's perspective due to society's emphasis on their bodies, which increases self-objectification and body monitoring, according to Objectification Theory **08** (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).
3. Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1976): Constant exposure to media pictures cultivates views of beauty as "normal" and desirable.

4. Thompson et al.'s sociocultural theory states that one's body image and self-esteem are influenced by the media, peers, and family, all of which promote cultural standards of beauty.
5. Evolutionary Theory: This theory claims that some characteristics of beauty, such as symmetry, youthfulness, and clear skin, are universally attractive because they are associated with views of fertility and health.

Demographic Differences

Genre

Because society expects women to be youthful, slender, and perfect, they are frequently evaluated more on their appearance. The requirements for male muscularity, height, and fitness are getting stricter.

Age

Young people (18–25) are more prone to embrace beauty standards due to peer pressure and identity building. There may be pressure on older folks to feel and look younger than they are. **09**

History

Being slender, tanned, and fit are valued in Western cultures. South Asian societies place a high priority on fairness, long hair, and delicate features. In African societies, larger bodies may be seen as a sign of fertility and health.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Globalized beauty trends (including cosmetics, fashion, and cosmetic surgery) are often followed by groups with higher socioeconomic status. Localized or conventional beauty standards may be held by lower SES groups.

Urban vs. Rural

City dwellers are more likely to be exposed to globalized, media-driven norms.

Traditional or natural beauty criteria may be valued more highly by residents of rural places.

Self esteem

Background in History

Self-esteem is a well rooted philosophical and psychological idea. In the 18th century, philosophers such as David Hume demonstrated a link between happiness and self-worth. Self-esteem was first used in psychology in the 19th century by William James (1890), who defined it as the ratio of our achievements to our pretenses (expectations). Carl Rogers, who recognized that healthy growth required unconditional positive regard, highlighted self-esteem as the foundation of self-concept in humanistic psychology throughout the 1950s. Morris Rosenberg created one of the most popular tools for evaluating self-esteem in 1965: the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSES). As time went on, self-esteem emerged as a significant psychological concept associated with motivation, mental health, well-being, and social functioning. Many studies are now being conducted on the topic of body image, social media, and cultural effects.

Definitions

Self-esteem is an individual's general opinion of their own value or worth.

A broad feeling of one's own value and self-esteem is known as global self-esteem. Domain-Specific Self-Esteem: Your perception of yourself in specific domains, such as your academic performance, appearance, or interpersonal relationships.

States Self-Esteem: Transient shifts in one's sense of value brought on by experiences in specific contexts.

Self-Esteem as a Quality: A consistent and long-lasting perception of one's own value across time and situations.

Characteristics of Self-Esteem High versus Low self-worth:

High → connected to resilience, self-assurance, and good mental health.

Low → associated with despair, anxiety, insecurity, and a poor self-perception.

Explicit vs. Implicit Self-Esteem

Self-evaluations that are clear, intentional, and mindful. Implicit, automatic, and unconscious self-associations.

Positive vs. low self-esteem

Positive qualities include self-acceptance, self-respect, and realistic self-perception.

Negative: sensitivity to external validation, self-criticism, and self-doubt.

Theories

1. William James's 1890 theory: self-esteem = success + pretenses. The difference between objectives and achievements determines it.
2. The 1950s Humanistic Theory of Carl Rogers states that self-esteem is derived from one's self-concept and is fostered by unconditional, positive regard and acceptance.
3. The sociometer theory (Leary & Baumeister, 2000) states that a person's sense of self-worth is a psychological measure of their level of social acceptability and belonging.
4. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943): Self-esteem is a basic human need that comes in second only to self-actualization.
5. The Social identification Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) states that social identification and group participation contribute to one's sense of self-worth.

Demographic Differences

Age

Young adults (18–25) often experience fluctuations in their self-esteem because of identity formation and peer comparisons. Self-esteem typically increases between the ages of 25 and 50 and then somewhat decreases as people age.

Genre

Compared to men, women frequently express lower levels of self-esteem, especially when it comes to beauty and body image. Men's feelings of self-worth may be more influenced by accomplishments, position, or competence.

Effect of Social Media Use (IV) on Self-Esteem (DV2) Positive Effects:

Active users who post regularly may experience a brief increase in self-esteem when they receive positive feedback (likes, comments). Social networking can provide social validation and a sense of belonging.

Negative Effects:

Passive browsing lowers self-esteem by promoting upward social comparison or comparing oneself to "better-looking" people. Frequent exposure to filtered or altered images fosters unrealistic expectations, appearance anxiety, and discontent. Self-esteem starts to rely on approval from other people (following and likes).

Self-Esteem (DV) and Beauty Standards (IV2) Self-worth:

Internalizing the Ideals of Beauty Self-esteem is linked to looks when people make unattainable beauty standards, such as being slender, muscular, or having perfect skin—their personal objectives.

Failure to meet these criteria leads to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem. In contrast to others: The inclination to evaluate oneself against those deemed "more attractive" is a consequence of being exposed to idealized pictures. This often results in feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

Objectification:

Constantly focusing on one's outward appearance can lead to self-objectification or seeing oneself as an object that requires evaluation. Because of this increased concern and body monitoring, self-esteem declines. Effects according to gender: Due to increased pressure to meet beauty standards (fairness, thinness), women often express reduced self-esteem. Men are under more pressure to be muscular and fit, which affects their confidence.

Cultural Repercussions: When people don't fit in with collectivist societies, which place a lot of emphasis on beauty standards like fair skin and thin figures, they may feel more threatened by their own self-esteem. Although body acceptance initiatives can lessen the effects, more individualistic cultures may still see a decline in self-esteem.

Moderation of beauty standards (IV) between social media use (IV1) and self-esteem (DV)

Moderation of Beauty Standards (IV2) in Relation to Social Media Use and Self-Esteem (IV1)
Main Idea: The association between social media use and self-esteem can be moderated by internalization, or beauty standards. Internalization of High Beauty Standards Self-esteem (DV) is significantly impacted negatively by social media use (IV1).

Why? Because those who strictly follow social norms of beauty are more prone to evaluate themselves against online ideals. Example: After scrolling through Instagram influencers, a young lady who firmly believes that "thinness = beauty" feels terrible about herself, which lowers her self-esteem.

Social media use may have a less pronounced or insignificant impact on self-esteem when beauty standards are not internalized. Users who reject or fight unattainable beauty standards are less affected by comparisons. For example, a man who maintains a steady or positive sense of self-worth can watch fitness videos on social media without feeling inferior.

Moderation of Visual Representation

Social media usage (IV1) and self-esteem This connection's quality is dependent upon... Beauty Standards Internalization (Moderator/IV2) more adverse impact from high internalization Impact decreases as internalization decreases.

Rationale

Social media has become an essential element of the life of young adults, influencing their views of attractiveness and self-worth. People between the ages of 18 and 30 are especially vulnerable because this stage includes self-presentation, peer pressure, and identity building. The constant marketing of idealized photos on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok leads users to internalize beauty ideals that are often unachievable. People's self-esteem may benefit or suffer depending on how they react to such stuff. Understanding these interactions is crucial because: It illustrates the impact of social media use on mental health. It points out that one important element that could either explain or regulate this link is beauty standards. It offers guidance for creating awareness campaigns and interventions that support young adults' body positivity and healthy media consumption.

Conceptual Foundation Explanation:

Social media use as a sole independent variable (IV1) Internalized Beauty Standards:

IV2 Self-Esteem moderator, dependent variable (DV)

Logic of a Structure: Influences of Social Media Use Self-confidence.

When Beauty Standards are internalized, this relationship becomes stronger. Figure illustrating the Conceptual Framework: Social Media Usage (IV1) Self-Esteem (DV) (The internalization of beauty standards determines strength)

Beauty Standards (Moderator / IV2) (Visually: A direct arrow connecting social media self-esteem to beauty standards, which operate as a moderating arrow to influence the strength of that relationship.)

Objectives

To investigate the relationship between 18-to-30-year olds' use of social media and their sense of self.

To investigate how internalizing beauty standards affects one's sense of self.

Identifying beauty standards lessens the negative effects of social media use on self-esteem. to ascertain whether the influence of social media on ideals of attractiveness and self-worth varies according to age, gender, and cultural background.

Hypotheses

H1: Self-esteem will be significantly negatively impacted by social media use among 18- to 30-year-olds.

H2: Social media use will be positively associated with internalization of beauty standards.

H3: Internalization of beauty standards will be negatively associated with self-esteem.

H4: (Moderation Hypothesis): The relationship between social media use and self-esteem will be moderated by internalization of beauty standards, such that higher internalization will strengthen the negative effect of social media use on self-esteem.

Operational Definitions

Using social media (IV1)

Conceptual: how users interact with social networking sites and how much of them are incorporated into daily life.

Operational: The Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) assigns

Ratings to items on a scale of 1 to 7. Score: The average of every item, with any reverse scoring applied if required. Interpretation: Higher denotes higher integration and more utilization. Other signs of behavior: Daily social media usage minutes (self-report or phone usage log). Number of commonly used platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and X). The Active-Passive Index is calculated by dividing the weekly minutes spent scrolling by z (weekly posts, comments, and messages). In comparison to passive use, higher = more active. Determine a z-score composite of use (optional) if the behavioral and standardized SMUIS indicators are both.70.

Internalization of Beauty Standards (Moderator / IV2)

Conceptual: The degree to which a person conforms to media or culturally imposed standards of beauty.

Operational: The main scale is the SATAQ-4/4R internalization subscales. athletic, muscular, and low-body-fat.

Score: Mean for each subscale; if supported by the factor structure, a standardized average of the two is optional.

It is implied that a higher level denotes a greater absorption of notions of beauty.

Self-Esteem (DV)

Conceptual: a thorough evaluation of one's value.

Functional: The main scale is the 10-item, 4-point Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

Score: Mean after reverse scoring of negative items, or sum (10–40).

Interpretation: Higher equates to higher self-esteem worldwide.

Controlled Variables:

Controlled variables are known as covariates. To lessen confounding, these are input at Step 1 of regression. Years of age self-report that is quantitative (18–30).

Constant coding Self-report of gender (male, female, another identity, or prefer not to be recognized) is the gender metric. Dummy variables (female = 1, else = 0; extra dummies for other identities) are used in the coding process.

The state of the economy (SES) Measure: Parental education (highest of either parent) or monthly household income levels.

Coding: Parental education is ordinal (or dummies); income is ordinal dummies.

Why control: SES is linked to pressures on appearance, platform mix, and device access.

Residence (rural or urban) Measure: Self-report where you now live.

Urban = 1, Rural = 0 (or three-level if peri-urban) is the coding scheme.

Control is necessary since different people are exposed to different types of international beauty content. Measure: Self-report minutes per day (or screenshot log) for the average amount of time spent in front of a screen each day.

Continuous coding; if necessary, winsorize extreme values.

Why exert control? Apart from social media, the total amount of time spent on electronics may affect self-esteem. Passive-Active Utilization

Measure: As previously stated, (posts, comments, and messages as opposed to scrolling).

Standardized continuous index is used for coding.

Why exert control? Passive use is more closely associated with comparison processes. Body mass index, or BMI, is a suggested but optional metric. Weight and height as indicated by the self = $BMI = \text{kg/m}^2$. Continuous coding (take care when dealing with missing data). Why exert control? Body satisfaction and self-esteem relate to BMI. Initial Contentment with one's body image (optional)

A short body image scale is used as the metric.

The measure is a short body image scale, like the abbreviated Body Image

States Scale. Coding: Average score.

Why control: Distinguishes media influences from trait body worries.

A quick mental health assessment is optional. Measures include the GAD-2 (anxiety) and PHQ-2 (depressive symptoms).

Coding is adding scores. Why control: Regardless of media, global affect might lower self-esteem.

Status of Relationship (optional)

Measurement: Single, married, or in a relationship. Dummies in coding.

Why control: Comparison objectives and sources of social approval are different.

Data Rules & Scoring (short specifications)

After reverse scoring, compute scale means (preferred); each scale requires $\geq 80\%$ item completion.

You can use Cronbach's alpha (.70) to confirm the dependability. Prior to developing the interaction term (SMUIS Internalization), concentrate on internalization and SMUIS. If the percentage of missing data is less than 10%, person-mean imputation is used; if not, the case is excluded from that analysis. SMUIS mean (primary); + behavioral z-composite (secondary) is the one-line variable map IV1.

SATAQ-4 Internalization (Thin, Muscular, or Standardized Composite) is the moderator (IV2).

DV: The meaning (or sum) of RSES.

Controls include body image (mean), age (years), gender (dummies), SES (income dummies; parental education), residence (urban=1), screen time (minutes/day), Active–Passive index (z), BMI (kg/m²), and Relationship (dummies), GAD-2, and PHQ-2.

Method

Research Design

This study will employ a cross-sectional, quantitative survey. An online survey will be used to gather data at one point in time. The poll will measure self-esteem, social media use, exposure to beauty-related content, appearance comparison, internalization of beauty ideals, and more. The design is non-experimental since no variables are changed. Rather, the study will look at the inherent relationship between social media and self-esteem. Young adults in the 18–30 age range will be gathered from colleges, companies, and online communities. A practical sample approach of 250–400 respondents will be used to ensure a trustworthy study. Every response will remain anonymous. The survey will contain questions about social media use, brief comparison and internalization items, and established measures such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (for self-esteem). The association between social media use and standards of attractiveness and self-esteem will be investigated using regression and correlation analysis. Group differences and indirect effects can also be tested using mediation and moderation analysis. **22**

Sample

Population

The populace Students at universities made up the study population.

Participants were gathered from various workplaces, online communities, and institutions using a convenience sample technique. Individual involvement determines the ultimate sample size. Incomplete replies were eliminated, and only people who utilized social media frequently were included.

Measures

In this study, three main metrics were employed. A four-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," was used to score 10 items on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to gauge self-esteem. The Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire (DCQ), which inquired about obsession with perceived physical defects, was used to gauge dysmorphic concern. Lastly, tailored questions like "How many hours do you spend on social media each day?" and "What kinds of accounts do you most frequently follow?" were used to gauge social media use.

Reliability and Validity

All the scales employed in this study were proven to be accurate in earlier psychological research. Numerous studies on self-worth have used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which has demonstrated good construct validity. It has been **23** demonstrated that DCQ is a valid tool for evaluating appearance-related concerns. The tailored social media questions had face validity since they accurately represented the study's goals. When reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, both standardized scales showed satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.70$)

Procedure

Conscious Consent An informed consent form was given to participants prior to the survey starting. The goal of the study was explained, confidentiality was upheld, and the significance of volunteer involvement was underlined. Participants gave their consent before continuing.

Instructions

Written instructions on how to fill out each questionnaire piece were given to the participants. They were told to answer each question truthfully, drawing from their personal social media experiences and viewpoints.

Administration of Scales

After reading the instructions, participants filled out the Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire (DCQ), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the tailored social media questions in the correct order. The scales were provided in an easy-to-understand manner to prevent confusion. **Information Gathering** An online poll was used to get the data. Participants filled out the questionnaire whenever it was convenient for them, and the database automatically entered their answers. No identifying information was gathered to preserve anonymity. **24**

Debriefing

Following completion of the questionnaire, each participant received a debriefing statement. They received gratitude for their efforts, a clear explanation of the study's purpose in simple terms and contact details for counseling services in case any of the questions caused them discomfort. **Processing Data** All replies were securely stored and only the researcher had access to them. Incomplete or repetitive responses were eliminated from the data to ensure accuracy. The data was kept confidential and used only for scholarly purposes

Results

The purpose of this research is to determine how social media may influence people between the ages of 18 and 30 on issues pertaining to attractiveness standards and self-worth.

Specifically, the study examines whether social media may have an impact on these topics.

- 1) Increased endorsement of contemporary beauty standards is associated with frequent usage of social media.
- 2) How does social media usage relate to beauty standards, and how does it lower our sense of self-worth?

Descriptive statistics were employed for the three major variables of self-esteem, acceptance of beauty standards, and social media use. A Pearson correlation was then used to test the first and second hypotheses. Reported N were for analysis (for missing data), and when appropriate, effect sizes (Pearson r and r^2) with two-tailed levels of significance were displayed.

Descriptive Analysis:

To determine the mean and standard deviation for each of the variables employed in the current study, descriptive statistics were computed before hypothesis testing. The usage of social media ($M = 27.97$, $SD = 3.51$), acceptance of beauty standards ($M = 23.63$, $SD = 3.87$), and self-esteem were all found to be correlated. The participating subject group had a moderate degree of severity, with an SD of 1.74 and an M of 6.07 . There were 249 individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 in the sample. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27.

Hypothesis 1 of the Main Hypothesis Testing: It was predicted that there would be a strong link between young people's usage of social media and their acceptance of beauty norms. The Pearson correlation test revealed a strong positive correlation between the usage of social media and the acceptance of beauty standards. According to the data, people between the ages of 18 and 30 who use social media more often have a higher internalization. hence reinforcing theory 1 of the standards of beauty.

Table 1:

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social Media	27.9797	3.50679	246
Beauty Standards	23.6305	3.86882	249
Self-Esteem	6.0723	1.74446	249

Testing the Main Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

The theory was that there would be a strong correlation between young adults' social media use and their acceptance of beauty norms. According to the Pearson correlation results, social media usage and the endorsement of beauty standards are strongly positively correlated. According to the results, people between the ages of 18 and 30 who use social media more often exhibit a higher level of internalization. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported by beauty standards. 27

Testing Secondary Hypotheses

H2: Young adults' self-esteem is correlated with their use of social media. Outcome The connection between social media use and self-esteem was not statistically significant ($r = .091$, $p = .154$).

This suggests that the participants' self-esteem was not directly related to greater use of social media. Consequently, the second hypothesis is rejected.

Additional assumption 3: Self-esteem will be correlated with the standard of beauty.

The connection between beauty standards and self-esteem was likewise insignificant, $r = .085$, $p = .180$.

This indicates that, at least in this sample, self-esteem is not significantly related to the internalization of social media beauty ideals.

A summary of the findings

1. Beauty Standards and social media: According to a large body of evidence, as people spend more time on social media, they become more receptive to the idealized beauty standards. positive correlation ($r = .198$, $p = .002$).
2. Self-esteem and social media: There was no statistically significant relationship between the two ($r = .091$, $p = .154$), demonstrating that social media usage alone had no impact on self-esteem.
3. There was a positive but statistically weak correlation between self-esteem and beauty standards ($r = .085$, $p = .180$).

The overall findings suggest that social media has a strong impact on how people see beauty, but its impact on self-esteem is indirect and potentially negative. be impacted by other social or psychological variables.

The Outcome Model

Considering the results, the outcome model can be summarized as follows:

Social media usage results in beauty norms (a significant advantage).

Beauty Standards (Non-Significant Effect) -> Self-Esteem

Social Media Use as a Result of Self-Esteem (Non-Significant Effect)

This idea holds that social media exposure influences beauty standards but does not directly impact self-esteem. The link between self-esteem and other factors may be mediated by additional variables such as physical fulfillment, social comparison, or personality features.

Discussion

This research aims to determine how university students' usage of social media influences their body image and sense of self. The goal of this study is to determine the impact of social media usage on individuals' self-perceptions, as well as the sort of content they engage with, like beauty influencers, celebrities, or body-positive websites. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between the type of content people engage with and how they view themselves. It aims to determine whether excessive social media use and exposure to unrealistic beauty standards are correlated with low self-esteem and body unhappiness. The goal of the research is to highlight these links to show how social media, particularly among younger people who use it more often, may have an impact on one's psychological well-being and standards of beauty. The study also aims to compare how social media influences students from different groups' views of their bodies and self-worth. It aims to ascertain whether the effects of social media vary depending on demographics to identify which groups are more affected by unrealistic beauty norms. the quantity of time spent online, and the kind of material consumed, as well as gender.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA), employing principal components extraction and varimax rotation, was performed to evaluate the internal structure of the multi-item tools. The data were found to be suitable for factor analysis since the KMO for sample adequacy was above the permissible range and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant (p. 001). Both the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Body Dysmorphic Disorder questionnaire placed a strong emphasis on a single item that reflected dysmorphic symptoms. The extracted factors gave All-item factor loadings exceeded the advised threshold (. 40), and there was enough of an explanation of the overall variation. Remember that the two distinct independent variables were the variables, the amount of time spent on social media and the type of material seen, are one- item analyses, therefore they were not included in the factor. analysis: rather, they were treated as observed variables in later analyses. Internal consistency and correlation studies were carried out to guarantee that the measurements properly captured the intended concepts. The intercorrelation pattern matched the theory: greater scores on dysmorphic body symptoms were associated with poorer self-esteem. The multi-item scales were determined to have enough internal consistency. There was a strong correlation between the scale scores and the single-item indicators of social media use and content type (e.g., following appearance-focused accounts and spending more time on social media). Time spent online was linked to reduced self-esteem and higher rates of dysmorphic symptoms. All these results support the measure's construct validity and suitability for

the planned comparative and correlational investigations. Before doing additional statistical analyses, the data's normality was assessed to see if the parametric analysis assumptions were satisfied. For each study variable, descriptive statistics such as skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. The data showed a normal distribution, with the Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Questionnaire, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and custom having skewness and kurtosis values. The normality hypothesis was supported by visual inspections of histograms and Q-Q plots, as well as by the fact that the use of social media fell within the allowed range. As a result, the information was considered acceptable for additional parametric analyses.

Prior to analysis, fundamental assumption tests were carried out to ensure the data's suitability. According to the data, it was multicollinearity-free, normally distributed, and linear. Homoscedasticity was demonstrated by the residuals' uniform distribution. Every assumption made by parametric testing was, in general, fulfilled

Students with lower self-esteem use social media more often. The first hypothesis is that spending more time on social media causes university students to have lower self-esteem. This idea was supported by the study's findings. Students who use social media more frequently report feeling less confident and content with themselves, indicating a negative association between social media use and self-esteem.

Earlier research has shown that this result is consistent. For instance, Attah et al. (2022) and Perloff (2014) discovered a link between increased social media usage and a propensity for comparison and a decline in self-esteem. These studies demonstrate the negative impacts that social media may have influence people's opinions of themselves.

According to the Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others, this conclusion is consistent. When viewing idealized pictures on social media, users may feel inferior and have lower self-esteem.

The results emphasize the importance of instructional programs that teach young adults how to assess what they read online and how to use social media responsibly. Counselors and instructors can use these insights to develop workshops that promote self-acceptance and digital well-being.

Policymakers and social media companies should limit the usage of unrealistic filters and back initiatives that increase awareness of body positivity and adolescent mental health.

The second theory posits that the increased use of social media among university students is the cause of their increased dissatisfaction with their physical appearance. This notion was supported by the study's findings, which demonstrated a significant correlation between social media use and body discontent. Students who used social media more frequently reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction. According to time spent on Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, they were more insecure or unhappy with how they looked.

These findings are in line with previous studies. For instance, Molina Ruiz et al. (2022) found that frequent Instagram users tend to have greater levels of body discontent because they are continually exposed to images that have been idealized and altered. This pattern illustrates how cultural influences and beauty filters can have a negative impact on how teenagers view themselves.

According to the theory of objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), regular exposure to idealized media material causes individuals, especially women, to begin to see themselves as objects of beauty. This notion may account for the findings. This exposure increases both body

monitoring and misery. These findings suggest that parents, instructors, and colleges should teach children about the detrimental effects of unattainable online beauty standards and promote them to read material that is uplifting and accepting of the body.

On a broader scale, social media companies and lawmakers should monitor and limit the distribution of extremely harmful information to protect users' mental health. promoted genuineness and body diversity on all platforms while avoiding the use of modified or filtered images.

Limits and tactics

Even though this research explains how social media affects college students' dysmorphia and sense of self, there are still a few restrictions that must be addressed. These restrictions may have limited the applicability of the findings due to the study's sample, methodology, structure, and data collecting methods.

Despite the study's fundamental adherence to APA standards, its readability may have suffered due to formatting and header hierarchy discrepancies. The topics were logically structured, but enhancing the transitions between themes could have resulted in a more coherent delivery. Moreover, most of the study's explanations were written down instead of represented by visual models or diagrams, which may make them harder for readers to grasp. to those who are not acquainted with it.

The amount of time spent on social media and the type of material seen are the two dependent variables, while self-esteem and body dysmorphia are the two independent variables. The study's underlying framework. However, none of the other relevant variables, such as gender, personality characteristics, social comparison orientation, or perceived peer pressure, that have been proven to influence these outcomes were considered. The framework may have been made simpler and the depth of study reduced by removing these intermediary or moderating factors. Additionally, the framework heavily relied on Social Comparison Theory while disregarding other psychological perspectives that may have provided a more complete account, such as self- discrepancy theory or cultivation theory. Most of the discussion focused on the detrimental effects of social media on how users see their bodies and themselves. Although this emphasis was important, it neglected social media's potential benefits, such as more opportunities for self- expression, social support, and body-positive material. This restricted perspective may have led to the interpretation of the findings more focused on the issues at hand. Moreover, the rationale was mostly taken from earlier publications instead of empirical evidence that is specifically adapted to the local or cultural context of Pakistani university students, which could influence the study's contextual significance. Although the study's objectives were straightforward, its scope was restricted. The study only looked at direct links between variables and did not consider indirect or interaction effects. In addition, the aims did not include examining cultural or gender-based inequalities, which might have enhanced the analysis. A more nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind social media influence could be gained through wider objectives, such as analyzing mediating factors like social comparison inclinations or self-objectification. The study used a correlational research approach, which is excellent for identifying connections between variables but not very good for figuring out causality. It is impossible to determine if excessive social media use is more prevalent among whether social media use causes low self-esteem or if those with low self-esteem are more likely to use social media. Additionally, utilizing this cross-sectional method, it is difficult to track changes in attitude or conduct over time. The fact that this approach relies on the honesty and precise self- reporting of the subjects is another drawback, since correlation does not account for any confounding variables. Future research might employ an experimental or

longitudinal approach to better assess causality and directionality across variables. Due to the study's focus on pupils from local universities, it is hard to apply the findings to other groups, such as adolescents, working professionals, and others, as well as people from various socioeconomic or cultural origins. Moreover, even if the sample size was statistically adequate, it might not have been enough to capture the diversity of social media experiences in colleges. Responses may have been influenced by the disproportionate distribution of genders, notably in topics related to gender, such as body image and self-esteem.

Two standardized self-report instruments, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Body Dysmorphism Questionnaire, were used in conjunction with specific queries about social media usage in the research. Self-report measures, despite their widespread usage, are susceptible to social desirability bias and memory errors. Participants may have overestimated or underestimated their use of social media or body dissatisfaction. Additionally, the customized questions were not officially validated by pilot testing or expert assessment, which could have had an impact on the items' reliability and construct validity. To improve quantitative results, future research should consider using triangulated methods such as behavioral tracking or interviews. The information was collected via in-person polls, and participants were required to fill out the surveys themselves. Although this approach had many drawbacks, it also ensured that all obligations were fulfilled and allowed for direct communication. Some participants might have been hesitant to answer honestly in person due to social desirability or peer pressure. Time constraints or external interruptions during the survey sessions may have influenced the answers' accuracy. Additionally, the treatment only accepted people who were physically present and willing to participate, which could have reduced the sample's diversity. Additionally, it was impossible to comprehend participants' attitudes beyond their numerical answers because there were no qualitative input or follow-up interviews. Although SPSS was used to conduct the appropriate statistical analysis, some of the links were either weak or not statistically significant. These outcomes may be influenced by uncontrollable factors, such as the participants' mental states or their interpretation of the items. Additionally, the study's correlational component suggests that caution should be used when drawing conclusions because correlations do not always indicate cause. When just numerical data is used without qualitative analysis, the depth of comprehension is limited.

Even though the conversation may have gone further, it was successful in connecting the results to the current body of theoretical frameworks and literature, of conflicting data or cultural factors. Most of the discussion focused on how the results differed from those of previous studies, with little emphasis paid to explaining the causes of these differences. Furthermore, it failed to adequately investigate how gender or cultural standards affect how Pakistani pupils see their bodies and value. The dialogue would have gained interpretive value and academic rigor from such contextual consideration.

Implications

1. The findings of this study highlight crucial strategies for future research on the effects of social media on body image and self-esteem. It's crucial to consider employing superior and more diverse research methodologies that truly comprehend the entire spectrum of these psychological impacts. Future studies should use long-term research approaches to examine how students' perspectives of their bodies and their relationship with their bodies evolve over time, even though one-time surveys are useful for identifying trends. Changes in confidence throughout time because of prolonged use of social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. Additionally, using methods such as interviews and focus groups could enable researchers to explore more deeply into people's personal

emotions and ideas about how young people perceive beauty standards and compare themselves online. The study's general applicability and relevance would increase if it included more participants from diverse genders, races, and economic backgrounds. Furthermore, it's crucial to pay closer attention to aspects unique to each platform, such as filters, comments, likes, and the way algorithms choose what users see. because these factors could affect how users see their psychology in various ways. Additionally, researchers might be able to explore the deeper feelings and thoughts underlying how young people behave by employing methods like focus groups and interviews. They may assess themselves online while also understanding societal beauty norms. The study would be more relevant and significant if there were more volunteers from various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, it's crucial to pay closer attention to platform-specific elements such as filters, comments, likes, and because these things might change how people perceive their psychology. the algorithms that decide what users see.

2. The conclusions also have significant theoretical implications, especially in terms of supporting and expanding current psychological concepts. The study supports the central tenets. That is, the social comparison theory, which states that individuals assess themselves by comparing themselves to others. The constant publishing of carefully selected, filtered, and ideal This process is sped up by images of beauty and success on social media. In addition, the findings support the self-discrepancy theory, which holds that A disparity between a person's real self and their ideal self might lead to unfavorable feelings, discontent, and a lower sense of self-worth. The amount of idealistic material that people Peer input affects what we see now. This personalization may make these earlier notions of self-image far more complicated and important in today's digital environment, which could lead to more frequent and severe harmful comparisons.
3. The significance of educational institutions acting and raising awareness effectively is highlighted by these results. Because college students utilize social media so often, colleges have a crucial role in encouraging positive online conduct. Schools might include media education to help students think critically about what they see online and understand that most social media images are not genuine. in their orientation or in student activities. Children may learn how to be safer online and avoid harmful comparisons based on appearances through these courses. Counseling centers should offer specialized treatments for problems related to body image disorders, low self-esteem, and dysmorphic disorder 39 symptoms. In addition, schools can start initiatives that emphasize self- acceptance, body diversity, and mental health resources. By creating safe environments and promoting open dialogues, schools can help students overcome prejudice and develop more favorable self-perceptions.
4. This study's valuable findings serve as a solid foundation for additional investigation into the variables and factors linked to social media usage and mental well-being. More experimental and longitudinal research is necessary to fully explore the relationships between social media usage, body dissatisfaction, and self-esteem, even if there is a clear link between these variables. It's also important to consider how different types of material, such as fitness photos, cosmetic trends, and posts from peers and influencers, influence body image. Cross-cultural studies should also be included in practical research because cultural norms and beauty standards may influence how people interpret and integrate these messages. Statistical methods, such as structural equation modeling, may be used to assess complicated correlations and pinpoint factors such self-compassion, peer support, and how often someone utilizes different platforms. The possible outcomes of these findings include enhanced treatments and a greater understanding of how digital environments affect how people see themselves.

5. The study's results also have significant policy implications. Colleges might help by creating rules that promote digital health. This could entail creating initiating campus-wide initiatives to foster body positivity, providing media literacy classes, and working with mental health specialists to develop programs that make use of tried-and-true strategies. To help to prevent harm, social media companies must also make prudent design choices. This means that they should reduce the amount of unrealistic beauty images shown, encourage make sure that all information is correctly tagged, especially images that have been, and that there is a wider variety of body forms and looks in users' feeds. changed. Government officials and educational authorities may integrate digital literacy on a wider scale. Ethical internet behavior can be fostered through national initiatives, which can also help to reduce the stigma surrounding body image issues.
6. The overall effects of this work are complicated and far-reaching. They highlight the need for research methods that are stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable. In theory, they stress the need for psychological ideas to evolve to keep up with advancements in technology. They support real-world university programs that help students develop their self-awareness, resilience, and confidence. They lay the groundwork for future studies that may shed light on the causes of cultural differences from a research perspective. In terms of policies, they call on governments and educational establishments to take steps to safeguard young people from the psychological harm that the overuse and misuse of social media may have. Researchers, teachers, lawmakers, and app developers can collaborate to address these challenges and enhance online experience for college students, promoting well-being, mental health, and a positive self-image.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the complex relationship between social media use and its impacts on university students' body image and self-esteem to understand how digital interactions and visual content affect people's perceptions of themselves in an increasingly online world. The study was prompted by the growing concern that frequent exposure to idealized depictions of success and beauty on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat may result in inflated self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and misleading self-comparisons. According to the findings, young adults who frequently use these platforms are frequently encouraged to compare themselves to carefully chosen and filtered images, which heighten peer pressure to meet limited beauty standards and feelings of inadequacy. The findings also have important legislative and practical ramifications, highlighting the need for educational institutions, especially universities, to foster critical thinking, emotional resilience, and digital literacy in their students. The negative psychological impacts of excessive social media use can be lessened with the support of initiatives like body diversity and mental health awareness campaigns, media literacy training, and body image treatment. To lessen user suffering, the study urges social media businesses to embrace more ethical design principles, such as restricting algorithmic reinforcement of unreachable beauty standards, encouraging varied representations, and identifying Photoshopped photographs. To provide children with the tools they need to utilize digital platforms responsibly from an early age, lawmakers and educators should also incorporate digital literacy and psychological wellness initiatives into national curricula.

Overall, by showing that the relationship between online settings and self-perception is complex, culturally impacted, and influenced by both individual and structural factors, this study adds to the expanding body of research on the psychological consequences of social media. To support young adults' emotional well-being, authenticity, and positive self-image in the social media age, society

can build a more inclusive and healthier digital ecosystem by recognizing these complexities and promoting cooperation among researchers, educators, legislators, and technology developers.

References

1. Attah, A. A., Fosu, A. A., & Anokye, R. (2022). Social media use and self-esteem among young adults. *Journal of Mental Health and Human Behavior*, 27(1), 15–22.
2. Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554–571. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554>
3. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700202>
4. Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), 173–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x>
5. Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signoriello, N. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x>
6. Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
7. James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology* (Vol. 1). Henry Holt and Company.
8. Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A., Wright, S. L., & Johnson, B. (2013). Development and validation of a social media use integration scale. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 2(1), 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030277>
9. Katz, E., Blumer, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
10. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. W. (2003). Patient Health Questionnaire-2: Validity of a two-item depression screener. *Medical Care*, 41(11), 1284–1292. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.MLR.0000093487.78664.3C>
11. Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 32, 1–62. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(00\)80003-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(00)80003-9)
12. Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
13. Oosthuizen, P., Lambert, T., & Castle, D. (1998). Dysmorphic concern: Prevalence and associations with clinical variables. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 32(1), 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.3109/00048679809062724>
14. Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex Roles*, 71(11–12), 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-0140384-6>
15. Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
16. Schaefer, L. M., Burke, N. L., Thompson, J. K., Dedrick, R. F., Heinberg, L. J., Calogero, R. M., Bardone-Cone, A. M., Higgins, M. K., & Anderson, D. A. (2015). Development and validation of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4). *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 39(1), 54–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684314549514>
17. Spitzer, R. L., Kroenke, K., Williams, J. B. W., & Löwe, B. (2006). A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder: The GAD-7. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 166(10), 1092–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.166.10.1092>

18. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. 44 Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47).
19. Brooks/Cole. Thompson, J. K., Heinberg, L. J., Alta be, M., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment, and treatment of body image disturbance*. American Psychological Association.