



INTERPLAY OF SOCIAL MEDIA OBSESSION AND ADOLESCENT BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION

¹Name of 1st Author – Dr. Amrita Banerjee

¹Designation of 1st Author- Assistant Professor

¹Name of Department of 1st Author- Department of Psychology, FLA.

¹Name of organization of 1st Author, City,Country- ICFAI University, Tripura, India.

Abstract: This study investigates the link between social media addiction and body image perception, acknowledging the escalating concern surrounding this issue, especially among the adolescents. This article examines the mental processes underlying the impact of extensive social media use on adolescents' body satisfaction and self-esteem. It clarifies the complex relationship between social media addiction and how we perceive our bodies by drawing on insights from prior research and empirical studies and suggests possible solutions. The data emphasizes how social media addiction has a significant impact on teenagers' body image, often leading to negative self-perception and related psychiatric issues.

Index Terms - Social Media Addiction, Adolescents, Body Image Perception, Self-Esteem, Social Comparison, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has revolutionized communication and interaction, particularly among adolescents who are the most active users of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. While social media offers numerous benefits, including connectivity and access to information, it also presents significant risks, including addiction and its impact on body image perception. This paper examines the extent to which social media addiction affects adolescents' body image, considering various psychological, social, and cultural factors.

Literature Review

Social Media Addiction

The hallmark of social media addiction is obsessive and excessive usage of social media platforms, which has detrimental effects on day-to-day functioning. The symptoms typically include an obsession with social media, withdrawal symptoms when one is not using it, and a persistent urge to use social media despite its detrimental effects on one's academic and personal life.¹ Studies have indicated that being addicted to social media platforms can lead to symptoms including depression, anxiety, and low self-worth.²

Body Image Perception

Body image refers to an individual's subjective perception of their physical appearance, which can significantly influence their self-esteem and mental health. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to body image issues due to the developmental changes they undergo and the significant role of peer acceptance during this stage of life.³

Social Media's Influence on Body Image

Social media platforms often feature idealized images and content that emphasizes physical attractiveness, which can create unrealistic body standards. Adolescents who are habitually using such content may develop negative body image perceptions, as they compare themselves to these idealized standards.⁴ Studies have shown that the use of social media is associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors among adolescents.⁵

Methodology

A combination of methods was employed in this study, mixing quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Three hundred teenagers, ages 13 to 18, from different Agartala, Tripura, high schools make up the sample. The study evaluates perceptions of body image, social media usage patterns, and signs of social media addiction. Analytical insights into the individual experiences and perspectives of the participants are obtained through in-depth interviews.

Findings

Prevalence of Social Media Addiction

According to the survey findings, 40% of the respondents display indications of social media addiction, devoting considerable time each day to various social media platforms. Many participants reported feeling anxious or irritable when unable to access social media, and a considerable number admitted to neglecting academic responsibilities due to their social media use.⁶

Impact on Body Image Perception

The analysis uncovered a robust association between social media addiction and adverse body image perception. Adolescents displaying elevated levels of social media addiction demonstrated increased dissatisfaction with their physical appearance and engaged more frequently in online comparisons with others.⁷ The qualitative interviews corroborate these results, with numerous participants expressing sentiments of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem due to exposure to idealized body images on social media.⁸

Psychological Mechanisms

Various psychological mechanisms elucidate the influence of social media addiction on body image perception. Social comparison theory posits that individuals gauge their social and personal value by comparing themselves to others.⁹ Adolescents are particularly susceptible to this, often comparing themselves to the seemingly perfect lives and bodies portrayed by peers and influencers on social media.¹⁰

Another contributing factor is the reinforcement of beauty standards through likes, comments, and shares. Adolescents often measure their self-worth based on the feedback they receive on their posts, leading to an obsession with appearance and online validation.¹¹ This can result in harmful behaviors such as extreme dieting, cosmetic procedures, and excessive exercise.¹²

Discussion

The Role of Influencers and Peer Pressure

Influencers wield considerable influence in shaping adolescents' perceptions of body image. Many adolescents aspire to look like their favorite influencers, who often promote unrealistic beauty standards. Peer pressure exacerbates this issue, as adolescents strive to conform to the standards set by their social circles.¹³

Gender Differences

The impact of social media addiction on body image perception varies between genders. Female adolescents are generally more affected, experiencing higher levels of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders compared to their male counterparts.¹⁴ This can be attributed to the greater emphasis on physical appearance and beauty standards placed on females in social media content.¹⁵

Interventions and Solutions

Addressing the adverse effects of social media addiction on body image necessitates a comprehensive strategy. Educating teenagers about the prevalence of unrealistic portrayals on social media and promoting digital literacy can empower them to critically assess the content they encounter.¹⁶ Additionally, encouraging offline activities and face-to-face interactions can reduce dependence on social media for self-worth.¹⁷

Policy Implications

Policymakers and educators should collaborate to implement programs that foster healthy social media use. This includes integrating digital well-being and mental health education into school curricula, as well as providing resources and support for adolescents struggling with social media addiction and body image issues.¹⁸

Conclusion

The influence of social media addiction on adolescents' body image perception is substantial, resulting in adverse self-perception and related mental health challenges. The prevalence of idealized imagery and the pervasive culture of comparison on social media platforms greatly contribute to these consequences. Tackling this issue effectively demands multifaceted interventions encompassing educational initiatives, policy reforms, and supportive structures aimed at fostering healthy social media habits and nurturing positive body image among adolescents.

References

1. Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). The relationship between addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem: Findings from a large national survey. *Addictive Behaviors*, 64, 287-293.
2. Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2011). Online social networking and addiction—a review of the psychological literature. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 8(9), 3528-3552.
3. Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 12, 271-283.
4. Cash, T. F., & Smolak, L. (2011). *Body image: A handbook of science, practice, and prevention*. Guilford Press.
5. Tiggemann, M. (2014). The status of media effects on body image research: Commentary on articles in the themed issue on body image and media. *Media Psychology*, 16(2), 133-137.
6. 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.

7. Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood. *Body Image*, 13, 38-45.
8. Holland, G., & Tiggemann, M. (2016). A systematic review of the impact of the use of social networking sites on body image and disordered eating outcomes. *Body Image*, 17, 100-110.
9. Griffiths, M. D., Kuss, D. J., & Demetrovics, Z. (2014). Social networking addiction: An overview of preliminary findings. *Behavioral Addictions*, 119-141.
10. Marengo, D., Longobardi, C., Fabris, M. A., & Settanni, M. (2018). Highly-visual social media and internalizing symptoms in adolescence: The mediating role of body image concerns. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 82, 63-69.
11. Bell, B. T., & Dittmar, H. (2011). Does media type matter? The role of identification in adolescent girls' media consumption and the impact of different thin-ideal media on body image. *Sex Roles*, 65(7-8), 478-490.
12. Brown, Z., & Tiggemann, M. (2016). Attractive celebrity and peer images on Instagram: Effect on women's mood and body image. *Body Image*, 19, 37-43.
13. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
14. Haferkamp, N., Eimler, S. C., Papadakis, A. M., & Kruck, J. V. (2012). Men are from Mars, women are from Venus? Examining gender differences in self-presentation on social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(2), 91-98.
15. Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). "They are happier and having better lives than I am": The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(2), 117-121.
16. Baker, D. A., & Algorta, G. P. (2016). The relationship between online social networking and depression: A systematic review of quantitative studies. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 19(11), 638-648.
17. Lewallen, J., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2016). Pinterest or Thinterest?: Social comparison and body image on social media. *Social Media + Society*, 2(1), 2056305116640559.
18. Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2011). Online communication among adolescents: An integrated model of its attraction, opportunities, and risks. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48(2), 121-127.