Modern Day Challenges Of College Students: Relationship Between Motivation To Use Social Media For Body Comparison And Dimensions Of Body Self-Image

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Abstract: Body self-image refers to how one perceives their own bodies on the basis of different aspects like fitness, fatness, overall appearance, and some other aspects. The motivation to compare one's body through social media describes a person's inclination to evaluate their own physical appearance in relation to others they see online. The present study was done on 200 college students to study the relationship between social media use with the motivation of body comparison and dimensions of body self-image. The tools used were motivation to use social media for body comparison and subscales of body self-image questionnaire-short form (BSIQ-SF). Correlation design was used and the results showed a significant negative relationship between motivation to use social media for body comparison and investment in ideals ($r = -0.145*$), other correlations with BSIQ-SF subscales were not significant. Regarding BSIQ-SF subscale interrelations, positive significant correlations emerged between investment in ideals and health fitness influence ($r = 0.179*$), social dependence ($r = 0.267***$), and attention to grooming ($r = 0.377***$). Negative significant correlations were found between overall appearance evaluation and other variables like fatness evaluation ($r = -0.516***$) and negative affect ($r = -0.496***$). The study is significant because it provides the basis for developing psychological interventions, educational policies, empirical evidence that would help in the reformation of societal standards of beauty and perception of a 'perfect body', by forming an essential reference for further studies in this field of research.

Index Terms - College Students, Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison, Dimensions of Body Self-image, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern day, social media offers ways to share alluring appearances, which might often encourage people to compare their physical features to others, sometimes leading to doubts about one's body image. The motivation to compare oneself to others, consciously or sub consciously could be a key reason to use social media. It can shape how one sees themselves, affect the satisfaction with their body, and judge their fitness.

Motivation to use social media for body comparison (MSMBC) reflects a person's tendency to engage with online platforms in order to compare their own body with that of others. Body self-image refers to the perception of one's own body on various criterions like overall appearance evaluation, fatness evaluation, influence and evaluation of health and fitness, investment in ideals, attention to grooming, height dissatisfaction, social dependence, negative affect.

In Indian Context, among Indian girls, Body Dissatisfaction has been related to a lot of socio-cultural factors and self-consciousness partially (**Rajagopalan & Shejwal, 2014**). Self-objectification is reinforced by social

media and is predicted by depressive symptoms and disordered eating **(Tiggemann & Slater, 2015).** A strong correlation has been found between Instagram use and body image concerns (**Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016**). Studies have also found appearance-based comparison is a key mediator between social networking and disordered eating outcomes **(Holland & Tiggemann, 2016)**. Young women who engage more in appearance-based social media activities have found to be experiencing heightened body dissatisfaction **(Cohen et al., 2017)**.

Appearance-related content on Facebook influences young women's body image and mood, engaging in appearance based comparisons on social media platforms is associated with greater body dissatisfaction and negative mood **(Fardouly et al., 2018)**. Through a number of studies it has been proved that there is higher body dissatisfaction among females than males, across all age groups **(Quittkat et al., 2019)**. A study has shown that social media can have a negative impact on body image dissatisfaction and on negative affect like guilt and sadness **(Bennett et al., 2019)**. A meta-analysis confirmed the negative relation between social media use and body image disturbance **(Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019)**. It was further observed that body comparison motivations were more common among females, who subsequently reported greater body image concerns **(Aggarwal, 2020)**. Another study showed that exposure to idealized images on Instagram had adverse effects on mood and body satisfaction **(Brown & Tiggemann, 2021)**. A study conducted on Spanish adults aged 18–40 showed a positive correlation between the frequency of Instagram use and body dissatisfaction, as well as low self-esteem. The tendency to compare one's appearance with others mediated this relationship **(Álvarez-Bell, García, & Ruiz, 2022)**. A study on early adult women found that higher levels of social media engagement were associated with increased body image dissatisfaction. This underscores the potential impact of social media on self-perception **(Lukman, Muis, & Hamid, 2023)**. More recently it was found that frequent appearance comparisons were linked to increased body dissatisfaction and a drive for thinness **(Giorgi et al., 2024)**. A study analyzed teens' Instagram direct messages and revealed that body image discussions often involve both supportive exchanges and body-shaming behaviors **(Alluhidan et al., 2025)**.

II. Research Method

2.1 Objectives
2.1.1 To study the relationship between Motivation to use social media for Body Comparison and dimensions of body self-image.

2.1.2 To the study the relationship between dimensions of body self-image i.e. OAE (Overall Appearance Evaluation), HFI (Health Fitness Influence), II (Investment in Ideals), HFE (Health and Fitness Evaluation), A.G. (Attention to Grooming), SD (Social Dependence), HD (Height Dissatisfaction), FE (Fatness Evaluation), N.A. (Negative Affect).

2.2 Hypotheses
2.2.1 There is a significant relationship between motivation to use social media for body comparison and dimensions of body self-image.

2.2.2 There is a significant relationship between dimensions of body self-image i.e. OAE (Overall Appearance Evaluation), HFI (Health Fitness Influence), II (Investment in Ideals), HFE (Health and Fitness Evaluation), A.G. (Attention to Grooming), SD (Social Dependence), HD (Height Dissatisfaction), FE (Fatness Evaluation), N.A. (Negative Affect).

2.3 Variables
Predictor Variable:
Motivation to use Social Media for Body Comparison (MSMBC)
Criterion Variable:
Dimensions of Body Self-image: OAE (Overall Appearance Evaluation), HFI (Health Fitness Influence), II (Investment in Ideals), HFE (Health and Fitness Evaluation), A.G. (Attention to Grooming), SD (Social Dependence), HD (Height Dissatisfaction), FE (Fatness Evaluation), N.A. (Negative Affect).

2.4 Sample
The present study employed purposive sampling technique and the total sample size was 200 college students, both male and female students were included and undergraduate and post graduate students were selected.

2.5 Research Design

Correlational design has been used for the present study.

2.5 Tools Used

2.5.1 **Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015)**

This is a 5 point scale, developed by **Nesi and Prinstein (2015).** This scale ranges from 1 'not true at all' to 5 'extremely true'. The scale has good reliability with a correlation of α=0.832.

2.5.2 **Body Self-image Questionnaire-Short Form (BSIQ-SF) (Rowe, 2005)**

This is a 5 point scale and is a short form of Body Self-image Questionnaire. BSIQ-SF has 27 questions, which pertain to one of the following subscales- OAE = 'Overall Appearance Evaluation'; HFI = 'Health Fitness Influence'; II = 'Investment in Ideals'; HFE = 'Health-Fitness Evaluation'; AG = 'Attention to Grooming'; HD = 'Height Dissatisfaction'; FE = 'Fatness Evaluation'; NA = 'Negative Affect'; SD = 'Social Dependence'. The scale has been proven valid by the following scores (CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.04). Factor loadings being significant (p < 0.05) Internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales' final version of the BSIQ' ranged from 0.68 to 0.92 **(Rowe, 2005)**.

III. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Pearson's product moment correlation was used for data analysis in the present study. The correlation matrix has been displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix									
	MSMBC	**OAE**	**HFI**	**II**	**HFE**	**SD**	**HD**	**FE**	**NA**	**AG**
MSMBC	—									
OAE	.019	—								
HFI	−.095	−.111	—							
II	−.145*	−.181*	.179*	—						
HFE	−.069	.337***	.010	.145*	—					
SD	−.057	−.466***	.197**	.267***	−.092	—				
HD	−.043	−.159*	.141*	.227**	.002	.241***	—			
FE	−.041	−.516***	.126	.186**	−.362***	.536***	.223**	—		
NA	−.075	−.496***	.051	.283***	−.229**	.551***	.107	.582***	—	
AG	−.083	−.202**	.143*	.377***	.096	.347***	.224**	.165*	.235***	—
Note. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001										

Note. *MSMBC* = Motivation to Use Social Media for Body Comparison; *OAE* = Overall Appearance Evaluation; *HFI* = Health Fitness Influence; *II* = Investment in Ideals; *HFE* = Health-Fitness Evaluation; *SD* = Social Dependence; *HD* = Height Dissatisfaction; *FE* = Fatness Evaluation; *NA* = Negative Affect; *AG* = Attention to Grooming.

Table 1 shows that no significant correlations were found between MSMBC and overall appearance evaluation, health fitness influence, health-fitness evaluation, social dependence, height dissatisfaction, fatness evaluation, negative affect, attention to grooming. However, MSMBC was significantly negatively correlated with Investment in Ideals ($r = –0.145$, p< 0.05). This shows that motivation to use social media for body comparison is decreased as investment in ideal increases. It also shows that motivation to use social media for body comparison show a negative yet not significant relationship with overall appearance, health fitness influence, health fitness evaluation, social dependence, height dissatisfaction, fatness evaluation, negative affect and attention to grooming.

Table 1 also depicts that overall appearance demonstrated several significant relationships. It was negatively correlated with fatness evaluation, social dependence and negative affect which were significant at 0.001 level with the values as, $r = –0.516$, $r = –0.466$, and $r = –0.496$ respectively. Attention to Grooming was significant at 0.01 with r = -0.202. Height Dissatisfaction and Investment in Ideals were significant at 0.05 level with r = -0.159 and r = –0.181 respectively. OAE was only positively correlated with health-fitness

evaluation which was significant at 0.001 with $r = 0.337$. This reflects that higher satisfaction with appearance aligns with more favourable health-related self-perceptions.

Health-Fitness Influence is positively related to social dependence, $r = 0.197$ which is significant at 0.01 level. Investment in ideals $r = 0.179$ and height dissatisfaction $r = 0.141$ and attention to grooming $r = 0.143$, both significant at 0.05 level. Investment in Ideals showed positive correlations with social dependence which were significant at 0.001 level with the values as, $r = 0.267$, attention to grooming, $r = 0.377$, negative affect, $r = 0.283$, and height dissatisfaction $r = 0.227$. Fatness evaluation was significant at 0.01 level, $r = 0.186$ and height fitness evaluation $r = 0.145$, significant at 0.05 level. This suggests that greater investment in idealized appearance standards is associated with heightened self-consciousness, emotional vulnerability, and dissatisfaction with body features.

Health-Fitness evaluation is negatively linked to fatness evaluation significant at 0.001 level $r = -0.362$ and negative affect $r = -0.229$, significant at 0.01 level. Social dependence related positively with all the dimensions at 0.001 level, height dissatisfaction, $r = 0.241$, fatness evaluation, $r = 0.536$, negative affect, $r = 0.551$ attention to grooming, $r = 0.347$. Height dissatisfaction correlated positively with fatness evaluation, $r = 0.223$ and attention to grooming, $r = 0.224$, both significant at 0.01 level. Fatness evaluation correlated positively with negative affect, $r = 0.582$, significant at 0.001 level and attention to grooming, $r = 0.165$, significant at 0.05 level revealing that body dissatisfaction is accompanied by negative emotional states and greater social dependency. Negative Affect also has a positive relationship with attention to grooming, $r = 0.235$, which is significant at 0.001 level.

The correlation analysis between MSMBC and the BSIQ-SF subscales revealed only one negative significant relationship i.e. with investment in ideals, suggesting that individuals more motivated by social media for body comparison are less invested in conventional appearance ideals. All other relationships were non-significant, including positive non-significant correlations with overall appearance evaluation, and negative non-significant correlations with health fitness influence, health-fitness evaluation, social dependence, height dissatisfaction, fatness evaluation, negative affect, and attention to grooming.

In contrast, the interrelationships among BSIQ-SF subscales revealed multiple positive significant correlations, such as between investment in ideals and HFI, HFE, SD, and AG; social dependence with FE, NA, and AG; and fatness Evaluation with negative affect. Additionally, health fitness influence was positively correlated with height dissatisfaction and attention to grooming. Negative significant correlations were found between overall appearance evaluation and several variables including investment in ideals, social dependence, height dissatisfaction, fatness evaluation, negative affect, and attention to grooming, indicating that more positive appearance evaluation is associated with lower body dissatisfaction and emotional distress. Seeing oneself as fat relates to higher emotional distress, social dependence and perceived poor health. These patterns suggest body dissatisfaction impacts mental and social well-being. A few relationships were non-significant, such as HFE with AG (positive) and HFE with SD and HD (negative). Overall, while MSMBC had limited significant associations, the BSIQ-SF subscales were meaningfully interrelated, particularly around dissatisfaction, emotional strain, and appearance concerns.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The results of the current study corroborate with some earlier studies, McLean, Jarman and Rodgers (2022) found that Social media use had weak direct effects but was mediated by appearance-ideal internalization and social comparison, this explains why MSMBC was not directly related to OAE, HFI, HFE, or FE, but tied to investment in ideals. Al-Kharabsheh et al. (2025) found that hours of daily social media use were not significantly associated with body image concerns, the present study also reported that there are no significant correlations between MSMBC and OAE, HFI, HFE, or FE.

Daniels and Van Niekerk (2011) found that Exercise significantly improved OAE, HFE, FE, and reduced NA. No changes were found for II, AG, or SD. The present study supports the findings that OAE correlates positively with HFE and negatively with FE and NA. Another study done by Joo et al. (2018) found that the nine-factor structure is confirmed for (OAE, HFI, HFE, FE, II, AG, NA, SD, HD) with good internal consistency ($\alpha = .74–.92$). The present study also supports this as the result show reliability of the constructs and allows confidence in correlations reported. Further, Varghese and Simon (2023) found that Social desirability correlated positively with OAE, and negatively with FE, SD, and NA. This aligns with the

present study that OAE is positively related to adaptive perceptions, while FE, SD, and NA are negatively linked with appearance.

V. Conclusion and Implications

No significant correlations were found between MSMBC and Overall Appearance Evaluation (OAE), Health Fitness Influence (HFI), Health-Fitness Evaluation (HFE), or Fatness Evaluation (FE), thus the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between motivation to use social media for body comparison and dimensions of body self-image is partially rejected. The second hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of body self-image i.e. OAE (Overall Appearance Evaluation), HFI (Health Fitness Influence), II (Investment in Ideals), HFE (Health and Fitness Evaluation), A.G. (Attention to Grooming), SD (Social Dependence), HD (Height Dissatisfaction), FE (Fatness Evaluation), N.A. (Negative Affect), is partially rejected as MSMBC was significantly negatively correlated with Investment in Ideals (II), $r = -0.145$, $p < 0.05$. OAE demonstrated significant relationships. It was negatively correlated with Fatness Evaluation, $r = -0.516$, $p < 0.001$, Negative Affect, $r = -0.496$, $p < 0.001$, and Social Dependence, $r = -0.466$, $p < 0.001$. Additionally, OAE was positively correlated with Health-Fitness Evaluation, $r = 0.337$, $p < 0.001$. Investment in Ideals (II) showed significant positive correlations with Attention to Grooming (AG), $r = 0.377$, $p < 0.001$, Negative Affect (NA), $r = 0.283$, $p < 0.001$. Fatness Evaluation correlated positively with SD, $r = 0.536$, $p < 0.001$, NA, $r = 0.582$, $p < 0.001$, and HD, $r = 0.223$, $p < 0.01$.

The current study sheds light on how intrinsic factors like motivation to use social media shapes the way college students in India perceive their bodies. The present study reveals that students who are not motivated about being invested in ideals tend to be more focused on grooming, influenced by health trends. However, they could have social dependence. It also highlights that feeling good about one's appearance is closely related to better emotional health and less concern about evaluation of fatness. These findings highlight the need for awareness of both the positive and negative correlations, especially on campuses by experts, around healthy body image and the often less spoken psychological toll of social media. It also calls for more culturally relevant research and supportive spaces where mixed method studies are employed to have a balanced understanding of the implications and motivations of social media use and the relationship with body self-image.

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