

Citation: Islam, R. U., & Wajid, M. (2023). Contested Self-image Because of Excessive Use of Social Media: A Qualitative Study of Female Instagram Users of Fast University Islamabad. *Global Multimedia Review*, VI(1), 24-29. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gmr.2023\(VI-I\).02](https://doi.org/10.31703/gmr.2023(VI-I).02)

URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gmr.2023\(VI-I\).02](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gmr.2023(VI-I).02)

DOI: 10.31703/gmr.2023(VI-I).02

Correspondent: Rida ul Islam (Graduate, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: rida.ul.islam08@gmail.com)

Contested Self-image Because of Excessive Use of Social Media: A Qualitative Study of Female Instagram Users of Fast University Islamabad



Cite us



Rida ul Islam*

Mishayam Wajid†

Abstract: *Adolescent girls and young women may be influenced by social media settings to participate in social comparison, leading to feelings of inadequacy and body dissatisfaction. Instagram usage was nevertheless frequently observed to have notable special effects on body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, and inappropriate dieting behaviours in an attempt to achieve an ideal body image. From this research, it was shown that most young girls think that in Pakistani culture, certain body types are marketed on Instagram and by Instagram influencers. Social media has grown in popularity, particularly among university students and adolescent girls. Instagram may be a harmful mirror in which young women see their bodies in a distorted way. To look better, respondents also said that they use Instagram to keep up with the latest fashion and cosmetics trends.*

Key Words: Social Media, Body Image, Instagram, Eating Disorders, Social Comparison, Body Dissatisfaction

Introduction

In today's hyper-connected world, many of our interactions with other human beings are virtual and mediated by social media platforms. Globally, the use of social media is rising quickly. (Sukamto, Hamidah, & Fajrianti, 2019). Statista (2020) predicts that by 2025, the number of social media users will have risen to 4.41 billion. It is anticipated that by 2020, it will have 3.6 billion users (Burnasheva & Suh, 2020). Social media is utilized for a variety of purposes, including accelerating communication and information access, promoting collaboration and support, providing a global network of entertainment, assisting users in developing their sense of self, and expanding job options. Social media utilizes internet-based technology. User-generated content can be shared, promoted, discussed, and changed by individuals and groups using social media. Peer and celebrity photo sharing are very prevalent on social

media platforms. Many adolescent girls (61%) practice aesthetically oriented social media platforms such as Instagram (Sukamto, Hamidah, & Fajrianti, 2019). Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has gained more than 600 million members, making it one of the most popular social networking sites. In addition, now more than 50 billion photographs are published on Instagram every day on average (Deane, 2017). Instagram is a photo and video-sharing software that enables users to alter their images and videos with filters and captions. It is advised that other users respond to these posts by retweeting, liking, and connecting. (Trifiro, 2018). Instagram, the world's fastest-growing social network, is a good example of how social media has evolved in modern culture. Instagram has been highlighted as a particularly troublesome social media platform for adults in emerging economies and has been connected to body image difficulties (Mahon & Hevey, May 2021). Users of Instagram can follow friends, strangers,

*Graduate, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

†Graduate, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

famous people, and models to get updates on their friends' antics as well as peeks into their opulent lifestyles and photo-shopped images. Instagram users are constantly bombarded with photos, many of which promote unrealistic beauty ideals similar to those portrayed in mainstream media. These photos have been exposed. It might inspire young women to upload photographs that conform to internet prettiness standards (Baker, 2018).

In Pakistan, social media is growing rapidly daily. Every day, thirty million individuals in Pakistan are said to be online, and the number is rapidly increasing (Ali, 2016). The conceptual framework of body image has been dramatically transformed by the excessive use of social media exposure in general. Body image is defined as a person's perception or thought process regarding their physical appearance and how others view it (Khan, Khalid, Khan, & Jabeen, 2011). People are conscious of their body image and physical attributes. Spending more time per day on social networking sites, where it is common practice to post images of oneself and compare them to others, has been connected to having a negative body image. Excessive usage of social media such as Instagram causes dissatisfaction among adolescent girls (Sabih, Jameel, Hassan, Mushtaq, & Shamama, 2021).

The research aims to observe the contested self-image because of excessive usage of social media (Instagram) among university girls in the Pakistani context. This research aimed to gain an understanding of how the usage of Instagram in different conducts might influence their self-image. To meet the aim a Qualitative research methodology is selected.

Literature Review

Social media offers several platforms for people to communicate with or deliver messages to one another. We can satisfy our needs using these venues that social media offers. It offers us a variety of interests, including online marketing, international communication, teamwork, content exchange, and more (Hussain, 2021). The two networks with the quickest growth rates, Facebook and Instagram, have connected millions of people. Individual identification, empowerment, entertainment, information, and social engagement are just a few of the varied reasons cited by Muntinga et al. (2011) for why people utilize social media. Social media has a crucial role in enhancing people's lifestyles and living conditions. Individuals have grown more fashionable, and their quality of life has improved as a result of social media's increased awareness. Their sense of style has improved, as has their standard of living. Everyone strives to appear sophisticated and

fashionable. On social media, people analyze others and try to imitate their lifestyles. The ability to dress and behave has improved (Kusuma, 2020). Thus Social media impacts the body image perception of an individual.

Instagram and its Effects

Instagram is the platform that is expanding the fastest. It differs from other applications in that images play a major role in it. Selfie culture has a connection to Instagram's popularity (Trifiro, 2018). Instagram's success has been linked to the miracle of the selfie, a self-portrait taken with a camera by the user. In 2016, the hashtag #selfie was used in over 255 million images, and the hashtag #me was used in 288 million photos. Selfies' popularity may be related to their ability to display one's individuality and obtain self-affirmation, as indicated by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Study. Instagram and Selfies are crucial in that they can meet a person's contradictory psychological urge to experience a connection as well as be approved by society (Bagautdinova, 2018). Other users may be exposed to idealized photographs of their peers as a result of the ability to offer excellent but unrealistic images that can lead to body image dissatisfaction and negative outcomes, according to Brown and Tiggemann (2016). Since females use Instagram more frequently than men, additionally they are likely to gain body deficiencies as an outcome of selfie exposure (Bagautdinova, 2018). Instagram had a greater influence on young females than other apps like Snapchat. Because it concentrates more on the body and lifestyle, "On Instagram, social comparison is even worse," says one user.

Impact of Social Media on Body Image

With the increasing amount of photos uploaded on social media every day, it has become a source for portraying beauty. Individuals purchase unrealistic realities like Truth after viewing idealized photographs. (Baker, 2018). Most women try to reach those unrealistic beauty standards when those standards become personalized. Body image, according to Szymanski (2011), is like the evolution of body features like skin colour, body shape, and size. It's all about how you look. It's important because it internalises social and cultural comparisons that could affect how valuable and attractive someone is. (Chang K. B., 2019). Nowadays, body dissatisfaction is a sickness. It affects primarily women in various countries across the world.

Social Media and Body Dissatisfaction

Women from many cultures, especially those from

countries with a lot of interaction with Western nations, have body dissatisfaction. As Strelitz (2004) anticipated, as countries develop their industries, they will experience a high level of influence in terms of their external beauty according to their cultural sphere of influence (Makwana, Lee, Parkin, & Farmer, 2018). Body dissatisfaction can lead to several issues, including bad eating habits, an inferiority complex, and the urge to be attractive in all situations. Especially in this day and age when celebrities with globally recognizable personalities set the bar for beauty by exhibiting their features to their fans which obtained a lot of appearance investment, body dissatisfaction is on the rise (Hussain, 2021). According to researchers, sites like Instagram, as Humans have an innate urge to compare themselves to others contribute to body dissatisfaction and cause us to be unhappy. Body dissatisfaction arises when an individual's impression of their body is unfavourable, and they see a disparity between their idealized and actual bodies. Body dissatisfaction and eating disorder rates were noticed higher in women than in men living in Australia (Brown, 2018). Instagram users are frequently exposed to a range of profiles, which allows them to contrast their appearance with that of other people. 277 students from Finland participated in a study that was done in America. The results of this study demonstrate that young women who spend most of their time in social environments are more worried and feel more bothered and more distressed about their bodies. Because they hold themselves in such high regard. (Patil, Bansal, & Saran, 2020). Female students' perceptions of their body image as the source of body dissatisfaction have been influenced by Instagram.

Excessive Use of Social Media Cause Comparison

Instagram provides information about a vast amount of other people, what they are doing, and how they are feeling. To acquire external fulfilment, people frequently compare themselves to their peers and media celebrities. Individuals with a high level of online connectivity can engage in comparison behaviour, which influences their purchasing decisions. The use of social media or social apps become a vital part of our lives because individuals consistently compare themselves to others (Lakhani, 2019). Instagram is a completely visual app that may have both beneficial and bad implications depending on how it is used. Forming a quick assessment of someone's level of love for you based on what they include or omit in a photo and how it compares to pictures of other people might have psychological benefits or drawbacks depending on the person using the app (Reed, 2020). Instagram users were engaged

in social comparison. In light of this, Instagram comparisons frequently point upward (Fardouly, 2017). According to several empirical studies, the appearance comparison takes into account the obvious impact of idealized photographs on body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2019).

Social Media Influence Eating Disorder

The main issues for young females are body image dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating patterns. The majority of girls think they are overweight and wish to shed weight. According to recent research, even though these girls' sizes fall within healthy weight levels, 44% of girls claimed that they were overweight, and 60% of girls were actively trying to lose weight (Morris & Katzman, 2003). It's good to know that body image distress is a symptom of an eating disorder. Negative body image, along with other psychological and physical health problems, are indicated by dissatisfaction with one's appearance and the adoption of behaviours like dieting, checking, and/or avoiding to alleviate misery (Rodgers & Melioli, 2015). Chaotic eating behaviours signify the principal indicators of an eating disorder. These may manifest as explicit behaviours or implicit attitudes, such as worries over food, weight, or appearance (e.g., binge eating, emotional eating, dietary restriction). Regular eating habits, whether in young people or adults are linked to ongoing stress, worry, and further psychological problems, as well as bodily health problems including excessive weight fluctuations, which can seriously disrupt their daily lives (Zhang, Wang, Li, & Wu, 2021).

Women's Presentation on Social Media and its Influence

Women use Social media to construct public images founded on the photographs, statements, and additional content they pick out to share. In the example of photography, this usually entails using camera angles, filters, and digital modification software like Photoshop to create the perfect image, allowing them to share images of themselves in the most flattering light possible. Advertising and its representation on social media focus on people's fears to persuade them to buy a product and to impact their body image perceptions. Through this presentation, girls learn how to look and reconcile their bodies with the view of "beauty" given by social media through this presentation (Hani, Marwan, & Andre, 2018). The social media site Instagram, which mostly focuses on images, commonly sets expectations for women's bodies. Instagram is well-known for being an important platform for people to study and classify body image inquiries. Individuals from all walks of

life can become active producers on this platform. According to some reports, the website is becoming increasingly well-liked as a location where users may set goals and targets for their body images (Hu, 2018).

Theoretical Frame Work

The Social Comparison Hypothesis holds that people compare themselves to others to determine their relative social standing and value (Festinger, 1954). This hypothesis can be used to explain a wide range of social and personal characteristics, such as how a person's size and form affect their attractiveness (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2019). According to his argument, people often look for standards to measure themselves to gauge their progress and position in life. These comparisons can be either upward or downward, according to this viewpoint. (Myers, 2010). The social comparison theory aids in comprehending how sociocultural and media influence body image. Women can look at and compare themselves in a variety of ways, but social media is seen to have the most powerful impact on body image. Women compare themselves to media pictures of a thin ideal that is unattainable and they will become dissatisfied with their bodies.

Research Methodology

The researcher used qualitative research as the demand of study to explore the local knowledge, relations, and experiences of people nearly the social media influence on their body image. Purposive sampling is a non-probability, expert, and judgmental sampling technique used to collect data from a predetermined population. The researcher uses In-depth Interviews as a tool to gather data from the respondents and focus on how and why questions to provide the opportunity for participants to tell their perceptions in their own words. It was after the explanation of the research and consent from participants, followed by open-ended and unstructured questions. An interview guide was used to specify the goal of the study. The locale of the study was Fast University Islamabad and this research focuses on young university female students from ages 18 to 25.

Discussion

Instagram has become integral in every household because of its excessive use. It promotes follower development and is better suited to user multimedia sharing as well as interactive interaction with followers. Instagram users may also vigorously follow their chosen celebrity. They continuously post different kinds of stuff on their profile and get numerous responses from their followers (Trifiro,

2018). The research focus is on how frequently Instagram is used by them based on the interviews. They stated that they use Instagram at least more than 2 hours per day, while others stated that they use Instagram on a daily basis and they used to log in always. Instagram is more appealing to the younger generation and other different societies than other social networking services. These findings reveal that young university female students spend more time on Instagram. Instagram has now become part of their daily routine they feel incomplete without using Instagram.

Conferring to the interviewees, the researcher came to know that the concerns of using Instagram regarding body image are making someone radically modify their way of life and make them feel that they are lacking out on new fashion and beauty trends that other people have, it is resulting in excessive emotions of hopelessness, low confidence, and loneliness, and make them feel that their body desires to be transformed. Likewise, the respondents claimed that the fancy shoots which they saw on social media attracted them a lot. In interviews, all participants admitted that social media, predominantly Instagram, has subsidized the stereotyping of females. This is for the reason that females copy/imitate Instagram models and personalities because they are observed to have flawless body images. They experience depression, loneliness, and inferiority complexes. Endless exposure to perfect and fanciful photos lets individuals consider improbable representations of reality as true and create a sense that their body needs to change.

Instagram provides a wealth of information about other people, what they are doing, and how they are feeling. People commonly compare themselves to their friends and media celebrities to get external contentment. Individuals who have a high level of internet connectedness might participate in comparison behaviour, which impacts their actions (Lakhani, 2019). The other respondents stated that they were not motivated through Instagram to modify their bodies to adhere to a convinced notion of body image, but they disputed that they had increased their sense of perfect body image perception to appear like someone they follow on Instagram. According to the respondents, social body comparison on Instagram has a variety of effects on university students' body image. Respondents said that because of social comparison, the change in their choices caused them to modify their way of clothing. These include that Instagram may encourage people to modify their appearance so that they can adapt to the ways of someone else, but this sometimes leads to negative effects because of carelessness. They also mentioned that they had

occasionally altered their dressing style and beauty products depending on an Instagram post they saw.

Instagram permits users to follow friends, outsiders, models, and celebrities. Letting them get what their friends are up to as well as celebrities' and models' extravagant lifestyles and doctored photographs. Instagram users are regularly assaulted with photographs, many of which promote unrealistic aesthetic ideals similar to those depicted in media (Baker, 2018). They also agreed that some Instagram celebrities make them feel that they do not fit in society, and when they look at photos of Instagram influencers it makes them feel worse about their appearance. Respondents expressed neutrality, stating that viewing modified and idealized bodies of Instagram influencers lowers their self-image and that they most of the time questioned themselves as to why their body shape is not similar to the specific Instagram influencer. Instagram influencers raised their desire to change their appearance after spending time seeing Instagram influencers' photographs. The respondents believe social media superstars influence university scholars. To achieve the ideal body image, female university students begin to change their lifestyle, which has a negative impact. Instagram influencers have an impact on young university students. Instagram Influencers occasionally motivated them to acquire beauty goods.

Instagram users are habitually wide-open to a different range of other profiles, allowing them to compare their appearance to their family, strangers, associates, and famous figures. As a result, based on her profile and images, the user establishes unrealistic hopes and dreams (Patil, Bansal, & Saran, 2020). Body dissatisfaction is on the rise in our modern period, where internationally renowned public celebrities create new magnificence goals for us by showcasing perfect bodies and attractive makeover traits expanded by a lot of appearance investment (Hussain, 2021). When they compare themselves to the beauty standards, they feel dissatisfied with their own body because they do not look good like them, they do not have beautiful dresses, and their shape is

not perfect, by comparing all of these elements, they feel dissatisfied with their own body. Perfect body image standards on Instagram cause body dissatisfaction among university girls.

Social media significantly impacted the development of eating and food-related disorders. They found out there is plenty of evidence that social media praises thinness and weight reduction while emphasizing the importance of beauty and looks (Wayles, 2020). Body image dissatisfaction and bad eating habits are major concerns for university girls. These university females are inspired by the beauty standards displayed on Instagram, and as a result, they adopt alternative eating habits. From the comments of respondents, it was demonstrated how Instagram influences the eating habits of female university students. Body image suffering is frequently viewed as an indication of an eating disorder. They sometimes follow their influences' diet plans to appear like them, and some other times they do it on their own.

Conclusion

Because of social body comparison on Instagram among female students, some female university students have changed their hairstyles, colours, and clothing choices in reaction to Instagram photos they have seen. It was also discovered Instagram influences female university students' eating habits as they are influenced by the beauty standards shown on Instagram, and as a result, they adopt unconventional eating habits. Excessive use of Instagram causes a social comparison among university female students. It was also discovered that using Instagram increases emotions of anxiety and depression among university female students. Instagram harms female university girls' body image perceptions by repeatedly showing them the ideal body type, affecting them to persistently associate themselves with false expectations. According to the findings, besides the effects of Instagram use female university students adopt this platform.

References

- Burnasheva, R., & Suh, Y. G. (2020). The influence of social media usage, self-image congruity and self-esteem on conspicuous online consumption among millennials. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(5), 1255–1269. <https://doi.org/10.1108/apjml-03-2020-0180>
- Rodgers, R. F., & Melioli, T. (2015). The relationship between body image concerns, eating disorders and internet use, Part I: A review of Empirical support. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1(2), 95–119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-015-0016-6>
- Ali, R. (2016). Social media and youth in Pakistan: Implications on family relations. *Global Media Journal*, 14(26), 1. <https://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/social-media-and-youth-in-pakistan-implications-on-family-relations.pdf>
- Bagautdinova, D. (2018). *The Influence of Instagram Selfies on Female Millennials' Appearance Satisfaction*. Graduate Theses and Dissertations. <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>
- Baker, N. (2020). *Focusing on college students' Instagram use and body image*. <https://doi.org/10.23860/thesis-baker-nicole-2018>
- Brown, H. E. (2018). *The Effect of Facebook on Body Dissatisfaction: Ethnicity as a Possible Moderator*. Bard College. Senior Projects Spring.
- Chang, K. B. N. (2019). They See Me Scrolling, and I'm Hating: Instagram Usage and its Effect on Self-Esteem and Body Image. *Instagram Usage and Its Effect on Self-Esteem and Body Image*. https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1310&context=senproj_s2019
- Deane, G. (2017, June). 'Is it Instagram Worthy?' An Exploration of the Impact of Instagram on Body Image. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.22730.16320>
- Hani, S., Azouri, M., & Azouri, A. (2018). The effect of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior: Case of the Lebanese jewelry industry. *the Arab Economics and Business Journal*, 13(2), 190–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aebj.2018.11.002>
- Hu, Y. (2018). Exploration of how female body image is presented and interpreted on Instagram. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 06(04), 95–120. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2018.64009>
- Hussain, T., Basit, A., & Shahid, H. F. (2021). Psychological Effects of Instagram on Females: Increase in Body Dissatisfaction & Facial Augmentation. *Journal of Peace, Development & Communication*, Volume 5(1), 86–97. <https://doi.org/10.36968/jpdc-v05-i01-08>
- Khan, A., Khalid, S., Khan, H. I., & Jabeen, M. (2011). Impact of today's media on university student's body image in Pakistan: a conservative, developing country's perspective. *BMC Public Health*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-379>
- Kusuma, A. (2020). *Impact of Social Media on Youth*. Bournemouth University. Research gate.
- Lakhani, E. (2019). *Ramifications of Social Media (Instagram) On Pakistani Weddings*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23749.40160>
- Mahon, C., & Hevey, D. (2021). Processing body image on social media: gender differences in adolescent boys' and girls' agency and active coping. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.626763>
- Makwana, B., Lee, Y., Parkin, S., & Farmer, L. (2018). *Selfie-Esteem: The Relationship Between Body Dissatisfaction and Social Media in Adolescent and Young Women*. Retrieved from the inquisitive mind.
- Morris, A., & Katzman, D. K. (2003). The impact of the media on eating disorders in children and adolescents. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 8(5), 287–289. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/8.5.287>
- Myers, T. A. (2010). *The impact of social comparison on body dissatisfaction in the naturalistic environment: The roles of appearance schema activation, thin-ideal internalization, and feminist beliefs*. <https://europemc.org/article/ETH/6413>
- Patil, M., Bansal, D., & Saran, B. (2020). Relationship between body dissatisfaction and social media. *Santosh University Journal of Health Sciences*, 5(2), 125–126. <https://doi.org/10.18231/j.sujhs.2019.028>
- Reed, K. R. (2020). *Fear of missing out and social comparison on Instagram, its effects on people's Psychological Well-Being*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/68961>
- Sabih, F., Jameel, M., Hassan, A., Mushtaq, A., & Shamama, S. (2021). *AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry*.
- Sukanto, M. E., Hamidah, H., & Fajrianthi, F. (2019). "Can I Look Like Her?": Body Image of Adolescent Girls who Use Social Media. *Makara Hubs-Asia*, 23(1), 60. <https://doi.org/10.7454/hubs.asia.1120519>
- Tiggemann, M., & Anderberg, I. (2019). Social media is not real: The effect of 'Instagram vs reality' images on women's social comparison and body image. *New Media & Society*, 22(12), 2183–2199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819888720>
- Trifiro, B. (2018). *Instagram Use and Its Effect on Well-Being and Self-Esteem*. Bryant University, Master of Arts in Communication.
- Wayles, K. (2020). *Instagram and Eating Disorders: An Empirical Study of the Effects*. Katherine Wayles.