RESEARCH PAPER

Effects of Negative Body Images on Social Media among Youth in Pakistan

[1]Muhammad Manshoor Hussain Abbasi*, [2]Faiqa Khan and [3]Matiullah Khan

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
2. BS-Psychology Student, Department of Humanities COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
3. BS-Economics and Management Student, Department Global Business Course (GBC), University of Hyogo School of Management and Economics, Kobe, Japan

*Corresponding Author	manshoor_hussain@comsats.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of negative body image on social media among youth, utilizing semi-structured interviews with influencers, psychologists, youth, and social media managers. Negative body image is the subjective perception of one's body as flawed or undesirable, often leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and distress. The primary objective is to understand the multifaceted nature of negative body image exacerbated by extensive social media exposure. Key questions revolve around societal and governmental responsibilities, the promotion of natural beauty, and the effectiveness of support systems. Twenty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted with diverse participants. Thematic analysis was employed to extract insights into the complexities of negative body image. The study acknowledges the limitations of sample size and potential theme overlap while recognizing the strength of its diverse participant pool. The findings underscore the adverse mental health effects linked to pervasive social media usage. Women are predominantly affected, but men are increasingly vulnerable. The study emphasizes the necessity for nuanced interventions to address these challenges effectively. The study advocates for comprehensive support systems to promote youth self-acceptance in the digital age. It highlights the importance of societal and governmental roles in fostering a culture that promotes natural beauty and healthy body image perceptions.

KEYWORDS	Body Image Perceptions, Extreme Social Media Exposure, Governmental Roles, Mental Health Outcomes, Negative Body Image

Introduction

Social media, a powerful communication tool, especially popular among the youth in Pakistan, raises concerns about its impact on mental health and body image perceptions. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, while revolutionizing communication and identity creation, often promote unrealistic beauty standards, contributing to heightened concerns about body image. In Pakistan's society, where physical appearance holds significant value, the pervasive use of social media intensifies pressure on the youth, fostering negative self-perceptions and lower self-esteem (Tiggeman & Slater, 2013; Perloff, 2014; Muzaffar, et. al 2019 & Muzaffar, et. al 2020).

Literature Review

Negative Body Image and Social Media

Negative body image is dissatisfaction with one's own body and a low opinion of one's physical appearance (Duane, Tiggemann, & Marika, 2004). Feeling unhappy or dissatisfied with one's own body, frequently comparing it to others and believing that it does not meet certain beauty standards, as if one's appearance does not match their perceived "ideal" images by viewing photographs of others on social media, where people frequently post their best work (Fardouly, et al., 2015). Body dysmorphia & eating disorders were related to high levels of social media addiction. Some cross-sectional studies conclude that almost 93% of men and women are dissatisfied with their body type which is somehow connected to social media addiction. People compare themselves with others having unattainable or unrealistic images on social media, which creates a feeling of unhappiness (Rizwan, et al., 2022).

Youth Perceptions of Negative Body Images on social media

Hargreaves and Tiggemann's research links exposure to "thin ideal" TV ads in early adolescence to increased body dissatisfaction. This emphasizes the need for interventions promoting positive body image and media literacy in combating unrealistic beauty ideals among young people. (Hargreaves, & Tiggemann, 2003). A study found that weight-based victimization in schools negatively impacts adolescents' emotional well-being and body image, leading to increased body dissatisfaction. The results emphasize the urgency of interventions to address weight stigma and promote body positivity in schools for healthier body image perceptions among young individuals(puhl & Luedicke, 2012).

Theoretical Perspective

The study on social media's impact on Pakistani youth's body image incorporates Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Comparison Theory. It explores how exposure to diverse body images on social media influences social comparisons and personal motivations. The integrated approach aims to understand the complex processes shaping body image opinions.

Material and Methods

Research Design

Qualitative research was chosen to explore "how" and "why" aspects, offering nuanced insights. Valuable in education, it delves into complexities beyond numerical responses (Cleland, 2017).

Sample

In this study, data were systematically collected from diverse participant groups, including young people, psychologists, influencers, and social media managers. A total of 24 individuals, evenly distributed, participated from various institutes and workplaces. Participants were intentionally chosen for their diverse perspectives rather than specific issues. To explore complex research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted, providing nuanced insights from participants with different backgrounds.

Data Collection

Purposive sampling was employed for participant selection, ensuring a comprehensive representation. Semi-structured interviews, lasting 20-25 minutes, were

the primary data collection method. A dual-method approach, combining inductive and deductive thematic analysis, was used to interpret the collected data. Participants were thoroughly informed of the study's goals, and informed consent was obtained.

Research Instrument

The research instrument included purposefully designed tools for data collection, such as interview questions guided by the 5Ws and 1H rule. Questions were structured to elicit detailed answers, promoting inclusivity and diverse viewpoints from young people, influencers, psychologists, and social media managers.

Procedure

The participant selection process involved purposive sampling to gradually incorporate individuals from diverse domains. The transcription process was methodically managed to derive insights from recorded responses. Themes within transcriptions were underlined, facilitating later analysis. Thematic analysis involved systematically categorizing text.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to make sense of the gathered data, focusing on identifying main opinions and repeated thoughts in interviews. This helped comprehend important concepts arising from the discussions.

Transcription

Participants' voices were recorded, transcribed, and carefully reviewed. Different themes related to each question were identified through multiple listening sessions. Data from four groups were collected and grouped into categories. Themes were highlighted, and important quotes were extracted, streamlining the study for a focused analysis.

Thematic Analysis

Meaningful themes were marked with various colors, focusing on main subjects and key themes. Rigorous checks were performed to ensure clarity and objectivity, confirming the relevance and suitability of identified themes.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Social media promoting negative body image.

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Instagram	Fitness freak Models	*"I think so instagram pay kioke instagram pay aydin koi na Koi fitness model bani hoti hai, fitness freaks log bohut zyada hain."*
	Tiktok	Makeup Body Dances	*"tiktok kioke yaha par makeup k sath and body k sath, larkian kch specific dances kar re hoty hain, kch na kch esa tyar hokr ati hain jo k realistic ni hai."*
Influencers	Media platform	Instagram Likee tiktok	*"Sabse zyada instagram par hai jaha sabse zyada log body shaming kar re hain, kioke waha har trah ka person hai, har trends hoty hain."*
	Self-perception	Negative body perception	*"Its about log usko khud negative perceive kar re hain."*

Social media managers	Media platforms	Specifically, TikTok Instagram	*"its on every platfrom. Specially on tiktok."*
	Check and balance	Monetization	*"ye har us platform par hai jaha zyada check and balance ha"*
		Liked content	*". Instagram par agar ap ek content dekh re hain to apko woi content nazar ayga."*
Psychologists	Media platforms	Instagram tiktok	*"mere mutabik aj kal instagram or tiktok k trends ki waja se log apni body ko le k conscious ho gae hain"*
	Perfect beauty standards	Self-comparison Celebrity image	*". Ye faulty image apny lea unki self-blaming ko promote karti hai. "* *". Because of the perfect beauty standards jo udr prevalent hoty hain."*

Table 1 indicates that the thematic analysis of the stance that social media promotes negative body image shows among all the four categories' participants think Instagram and TikTok are the two main social media platforms that portray unrealistic beauty standards, and the audience tends to conform to those beauty standards which lead to negative body image. The prime reason highlighted by the participant is that Instagram monetization of the content and unrealistic celebrity image causes the viewer to compare themselves with what they see online.

Table 2
Self-image comparison on social media

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Comparison	Bodily comparison Skin complexion	*"few years ago i used to make alot of comparison between my body and what i was seeing online."*
	Reason	Filters Models	*"Sometimes when someone is looking very pretty then obviously i make comparison with myself.*
Influencers	New to blogging	Self-comparison motivation	*"Me khudko motivate karti rejti hu. Par zyada influence ni leti me."*
	Influencer's influence	Self-acceptance	*." A little bit i guess, when i started my blogging page, jab me compare karti thi cuz i m too slim, thats why like mjha bad comments b ajaty thy k ap bohut patli hain, par ab mery mein acceptance agai hai kafi had tak."*
Social media managers	content	Editing tools Cyberbullying	*"The proliferation of filtered and edited photos on social media, setting unrealistic beauty standards."*
	Unrealistic beauty standards	Self-conscious	*"The trend of showcasing transformations from the past to the present, coupled with negative comments and cyberbullying, contributes to people feeling self-conscious."*
Psychologists	Body image perception	Constant state of comparison Filters and editing tools	*"Sabko pata hai social media par zyada filters wagera use hoty hain, to phr definitely samny wali chez apko zyada ideal nazar arai hoti hai"*
	Parental neglect	Leads to comparison.	*"Ap family me compare kar re hoty……. Or ye chez jab social media par ati hai, to is comparison ko le kar chal re hoty"*
	Role models	Influencers trends	*"Influencers se influence hokar idealised hokar beauty standards se and comparison kar k dusro k sath, bohut zyada impact hojata hai"*

Table 2 highlights the frequency and the potential reason for self-comparison with online content. According to young people who are more active on Instagram, people compare skin complexion, body, and physique with social media influencers and bloggers. The potential reason for this comparison is the heavy number of filters and models. According to social media influencers, people who are new to blogging compare themselves with other bloggers. Influencer's influence causes lack of self-acceptance

which leads to negative body image. According to social media managers, the prevalence of filters and editing tools set unrealistic beauty standards which cause self-consciousness. According to psychologists the reason for self-comparison hits back to family roots. The potential reason for this could be parental neglect.

Table 3
Social media influence on self-perception

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Psychological affects	Anxiety stress Low self esteem Depression	*"I think it can cause strong psychological effects on young people self-esteem. I see many kids now a days they use TikTok, Instagram , they look different pictures, videos and vlogs of different models.*
	Influence of social media	Models Makeup Bloggers	*"We have this thing so much inculcated in our society that everyone uses social media as the part of their daily routine. Due to this i guess when we are making any plans with friends, then i our first thing is to make content for social media , to post pictures on instagram, to make snaps and reels. We are so in this, our 90% life is on social media then obviously we are being influence by social media"*
	perspective	Self-comparison Self-consciousness	*"Jab log aty hain social media par they automatically start comparing their bodies with others, agar koi imperfection hogi to they start comparing with others and then they use filters to complete their beauty."*
Influencers	Mental dilemma	Mental health issues depression	*"wo filters use karty par young log dekhty to influence hota hai, log comparison me par jaty r depression m jaty."*
	Instagram algorithm	Fashion and life Glam blogs	*"Social media ka role is trah se hai k social media is specially designed for those to show your fashion etc."*
	Global problem	Global media influence Influence of western standards Unrealistic beauty standards	*"This leads to heightened self-consciousness as people strive to conform to these standards."* *"To un chezo ko dekhty hoy hmari self worth bharti hai. US mein ye chez itni serious hain k waha to larkian suicide karleti hain. Pakistan me abi is had tak ni ay."*
Social media managers	Negative body image	Filters Cosmetic surgeries	*"jisky pas pesa hai, treatment kar ra hai jisky pas technology hai wo filters use kar k khud ko bhtar karta hai."*
Psychologists	Social life	Dissatisfaction Validation Natural body image Social life replacement	*"Unko apni appearance se dissatisfaction hoti hai. Unko har time har chez k lea validation chahea thy. Jese keh kahi jana hai to wo bar bar pochty keh hum thek lg rahy k nahi."* *"basically, agar ek banda social media ko zyada time dera hai wo apni ek social life se hat kar usko as a replacement use kar ra hai"*
	Psychological disorders	Body dysmorphia Bulimia nervosa Anorexia nervosa	*"jese ek ko bulimia nervosa tha, wo jab khana khati thi to vomit kardeti thi usko lagta tha k wo bohut moti hai, isky elawa sometimes is trah k case thy k jo shaded diet me thy, r unko lagta tha k wo agar diet chorengi to society accept ni karegi unko* *body dysmopormia ki rk patient thi jo mere pas ati thi, uski skin dekhny mrbto bohut flawless thi , pyari thi wo larki lekin usko ye hota tha keh mere skin par acne hai."*

Table 3 shows the answer to the question that how social media affects self-perception. According to the responses to this question social media affects human perception and individuality in different ways. It lowers self-esteem, leads to stress and

other psychological disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, body dysmorphia etc. the high influence of social media and glamourous trends audience is trapped in a continuous need of validation. These trends and unrealistic beauty standards cause an increase in cosmetic surgeries across the globe.

Table 4
Negative body image affects self-esteem and well-being.

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Self-comparison	Hair Skin Body	*"Overall self-esteem par Bhout bara impact is negative body image ka jab ek insan apni ek body ya apni skin me comfortable ni hota to wo kisi b chez me comfortable zone a ni raha hota*
	Insecurities `	Low self-esteem	*"If I talk about 2,3 years back, my hair was curly, as I watched videos on TikTok a lot. On Instagram people with straight hair make their hairstyle, i was lot impressed by them and I feel like why my hair are not like theirs. Why cannot I make my hair like this."*
Influencers	Negative thought process	Fakeness Lying	*"negative sochny lg jaty hain. Mene dekha hai log to conscious ho jati hain, jhot bolny shuru ho jati hain."*
	Beauty standards	Skin complexion Photo Editing	*"sabse zyada ajata hai fair wali chez ajati hai. Hum apni photos ko bht edit karty, par samny waly logo me self-love ni Hai, usko self-esteem kam hojati k me esi ni hu. Psychological effects me depression me par jaty. Meri frnd slim thi, wo healthy"*
Social media managers	Psychological issues	Low self-esteem Depression Lack of self-worth	*"self-esteem low ho jati hai is trah se k log jab khudko is qabil he ni samjhty, log itna comparison karny lg jaty hain, then zahiri bat unki self worth kam hojaygi apni nazar mein,"*
	The psychological and emotional impact	Depression Anxiety Stress Lack of confidence Dissatisfaction Social isolation	*"The exposure to offensive content can lead to shattered confidence, stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction with appearance, eating disorders, insomnia, hormonal changes, low self-esteem, depression, and social isolation."*
	Physical impacts	Insomnia Hormonal changes Eating disorders	*"Stress and anxiety, dissatisfaction about one's appearance, isky elawa logo ko eating disorder hojaty, insomnia, sleep disturbances, hormonal changes issues ajaty hain. Emotional me low self-esteem hojati, depression, sadness, socially isolate karlete hain."*
Psychologists	Psychological disorders	OCD Depression Anxiety Eating disorders Social anxiety	*"it can affect self-esteem cause <u>depression, anxiety even keh eating disorders</u> mein b log chaly jaty. Dieting itni strict kar re hoty to ye eating disorders ko b lead kar ra hota hai. Isky sath OCD and social anxiety in logo me bohut zyada hoti hai."*
	Personality traits	Lack of self-satisfaction Low self-esteem Low confidence	*"Jab apko self-satisfaction ni hoti to jab apki self-esteem and confidence kam hojati hai. agar wo ni kr pati to wo confidence ni feel kregi. Jab confidence ni feel kregi to depression mei jaygi. Logo se interact ni kregi to is trah se bohut zyada affect hota hai."*

Table 4 indicates that Negative body image affects self-esteem and well-being in a way that leads to many physical symptoms like insomnia, sleep disturbances,

hormonal changes, and eating disorders. According to the respondent self-comparison of hair, skin and complexion leads to more insecurities. These insecurities can lead to many psychological and emotional disturbances that can pile up into a giant disorder like Depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Moreover, a negative body image can also cause physical symptoms like insomnia hormonal imbalance and eating disorder.

Table 5
Gender and cultural factors influencing negative body image.

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Gender-based factors	More in female Gender-based standards	*"social media se khass ni farq parta hoga jabke larkio ko parta hai, larkian bohut sensitive hoti. Males ki body ka acha hona, height matter karti, the one with short one is not much liked by everyone. And for females, fair colour, height, good background, a good husband or boyfriend matters a lot."*
	Cultural factors	Difficulty finding a souse.	*"culture is playing a role, nowadays you see that people want, everybody wants k they should be slim or achy lgein. Even on instagram har logo ko unho pasand krta. Even in Pakistan har banda unhi logo ko pasand karta hai jo perfect nazar aray hon."*
Influencers	Gender	Female Both	*"gender ki bat karein to boys want to look to like person jinki bodies ho r girls b celebrities ki trah dikhna chahti hain. R ye sab phr isi chakar mein filters use karty hain."*
	culture	Western influence Unrealistic beauty standards Trends	*"cultural me hmary chez hai k larki patli honi chahea, gori honi chhae jiski waja se log social media par jab aty hain yo filters use karty hain gora hony k lea"*
Social media managers	Gender	Women	*"Women suffer a lot is culture ki waja se. Idk why if a man, does not have six packs, society will tolerate it. Par agar women 1kg b fat gain karlegi to society uski dhajiya ura degi"* *"Gender ki bat karein hmary lea female ko target karna asan hota hai, root cause hum hmesha larkio ko kehty. Culture me b ye hai k mazhabi bat ajati hai,"*
	Societal standards	Body shaming Trolling Dressing Globalization	- *"The current social media trend in Pakistan has shifted toward body shaming and trolling, previously considered negative. This cultural shift has affected both genders, but women, given societal sensitivities, often bear the brunt of online negativity."*
Psychologists	Gender standards	Muscular Pretty and fair	*"bht zyada interlink hain ye dono cheze ek dusre k sath, agar hum Pakistani culture ko dekhein, they should be pretty and fair par ab dynamics are changing ab zyada kaha jata hai keh larkian healthy honi chahea"*
	Culture	Individualistic Collectivistic Asian culture	*"Asian culture me ye zyada hai keh larki patli honi chahea, kisi b family me jab b koi bachi thori c b moti hoti hai, usko kehty hain k tm abi se 10 bacho ki ma lagti ho, ye chez hmary culture ki bohut zyada effect karti hai.tmse shadi karega,50% boys like thick girls and 50% like skinny girls"*

Table 5 shows cultural factors that impact both genders. According to respondents, both genders are equally affected by social media influence promoting negative body image. However, it has been seen that females are more influenced than males. There is a constant race for females to look pretty and males to look muscular which can in turn affect their mental health. Some cultural factors play a key role like

family background, unrealistic beauty standards made up by society and a perfect candidate for marriage.

Table 6
Standards of body image

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people			
Influencers	Personal life	Diet Appearance Beauty Lifestyle	*"log unko dekh k physical appearance par comparsion me par jaty. Logo ka phone use bht zyada hai. I think logo ko khudko awareness honi chahea r influencers ko b dekhana chahea k har chz positive ni hoti."* *"kioke influencers apna normally life style share kar re hoty haij par amm log usko dekh kar impress hoty hain, relate karty hain. Comparsion m ajaty hain."*
Social media managers	Social media	Algorithm Content Education Dressing	*"Instagram is strict keh koi colour ya race k mamly mein chez na ho,"* *"content bana raha hai wo wo zyada responsible hai kioke unkonye cheze dekhni chahea k log kitny educated hain. Dressing karty esi jo am banda afford ni karsakta. Log impress hoty hain copy krty hain system detect karleta hai r ye din ba din improve hora hai,"*
	Responsibility	Collective Individual factors Awareness	*"Responsibility is collective; individual users share and promote content, sometimes unintentionally endorsing offensive material. Celebrities, despite not being directly responsible, indirectly contribute by setting high standards"*

Table 6 shows that Standards of body image mainly depend upon what a person sees. As the world revolves around social media platforms people have developed a concept of beauty in their minds of what they see online. Like diet, appearance and lifestyle portrayed on social media by influencers. There are many individual and collective reasons like perceptions. According to the data collected, it is perception that leads to negative body image.

Table 7
Healthier body image

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Insinuative	Bare skin promotion Focus on inner beauty. Building a foundation	*"black lives matter wahi se start hua. To hum apny end par change start karsakty hain to karein, lekn baray level par change zyada years bad ayega. Hum negative na rahein . People consider that the one gets more likes are pretty is trah ni hota, algorithm k according to Instagram chal ra hota hmeh positive rehna cahhea r humeh agar koi chz pasand ni arai to hmeh usko b like karna chahea kioke logo ko lgta k like jo hai pyary logo ko milty h"*
	Awareness	Mindset Self-acceptance	*"ap khudse motivate ho khudse, khudpr mehnat karein, agar ap start karein to apko motivation ajati, apko apni self ko accept karna chahea,"*
Influencers	Self-focus	Self-acceptance Awareness Awareness campaign Counselling	*"Self-acceptance is very important, jb ap khudko accept karlege, shukar ada karlengy, logo ki life ko apni life r body k sath compare ni karegy then he ap is chez ko guzar sakty hain. Family counselling is important too, unko bacho ko bachpan se bar bar ni kehna chahae"* .
Social media managers	Role of NGOs	Awareness about healthy body Reduce body shaming	*"Connect with NGOs to address and reduce the prevalence of body shaming in our society."* *"Additionally, those individuals who believe they have a substantial audience should actively promote a healthy body image"*

Psychologists	Role of culture	Colour shaming Acceptance through families	*"Ye chez culture me hai, ye bacha kis par hai, kala hai gora hai. To ye chez hmeh family ki traf se thek karni chahea."*
	Role of government	Government platforms Ethical guidelines	*"Government ko platforms par guidelines r ethics deny chahea k kis trah k content acceptable hai."*
	Essence to self-image	Focus on positivity. Mindfulness Reduce social media usage	*"Jo young hai jinme ye chez develop hogai hai unko social media se time nikal kar mindful activities leni chahea. Wo apni inner chez par focus karein aoni positivity ko enhance karein jis se unka confidence build ho keh jese wo dikhty hain wo accept karein khudko."*
	Parental influence	Siblings' comparison Body shaming Skin complexion	*"Parents bohut bara role Play karty hain apny bacho ki zindagi me, bacho ko mock no karna chahea k uski looks esi hai, jese b tum dikhty ho you are beautiful. Social media pr b log ab promote kar re hoty k you are beautiful, media me acceptance ayi hai, har trah ki body shapes ko lea jata hai."*

Table 7 shows what participants think about healthier body image. According to the participants of all four categories, a healthier body image depends upon the promotion of natural beauty without the use of filters and editing, a positive mind can lead to a healthier body image by staying positive and focusing on positive aspects of life. family, society, and government all can play a healthy role in promoting a healthier body image. Family should not compare siblings; society should accept a woman with darker skin color and government can start awareness campaigns for acceptance of natural healthy body image.

Table 8
Strategies and intervention

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatim
Young people	Ask help	Talk with your best friends. Supporting Family Siblings	Maybe like my siblings or my parents. Yes, they did support me and they were like 'You look nice in this hair, Allah has created everyone differently'. So they used to say such things to me, which boosted my confidence.
Influencers			.
Social media managers	Campaigns	NGOs Awareness campaigns at educational institutes	awareness is important. Schools, colleges mein, campaign's chalani chhaea, interventions zarori hai. We have to be aware of them and educate them
	Social media	Scanning offensive material online	- facebook r insta ki companies ka system din ba din update hota jara hai keh har offensive chez ko promote na kea jay. Text to 5min me scan hojata hai
Psychologists	Therapies	CBT Group therapy Family therapy	me wese CBT use krti, effective he yahi. Kioke isme problems thought patterns ka hota jo keh negative hoty hain. Ap psychoanalysis ki traf b jasakty hain ap unky past ko b dekh sakty hain, unka child hood kesa raha, integrative approach ap use krlein usme ap different molarities use krlein. Lekn prominent hai isme CBT is effective.
	Psychological techniques	Self-compensation	Therapy techniques k like hum relaxation use karty hain, humne zyada relaxation he karwai

	exercises, literacy education Relaxation techniques	hain, kioke jo aty thy wo already medicines p thy

Table 8 shows that many strategies and interventions can be used to help negative body image issues. The first and foremost important strategy is to talk with friends and family. On the other extreme, many therapies are helpful interventions like CBT, group therapy, family therapy and some relaxation techniques.

Discussion

Unravelling Social Media's Influence on Body Image in Pakistani Youth

The study reveals that social media, TikTok, and Instagram contribute to negative body image among Pakistani youth, fostering unrealistic beauty standards and perpetuating continual comparisons. This aligns with Social Comparison Theory, emphasizing the distortion of reality online. The impact on well-being is significant, leading to social isolation, anxiety, and despair, supporting the theory that irrational comparisons deteriorate both mental and physical health. Gender and cultural inequalities exacerbate the fight for self-acceptance, especially for women, as deeply embedded beauty criteria in Pakistani society are intensified by social media's echo chamber. This strengthens the Uses and Gratifications Theory, showing how users actively seek content that reinforces their fears, magnifying societal impact on body image. In summary, the study highlights the detrimental consequences of social media on body image, emphasizing its link to mental and physical health issues, along with cultural and gender dimensions.

Factors promoting negative body image in youth.

The study finds that social media contributes to negative body image, but it's not the only factor. Family background, parental neglect, sibling comparisons, and individual perceptions of influencers also play a role. Women, influenced by societal pressure, create unrealistic beauty standards, causing emotional distress. Men also experience negative body image due to societal expectations for muscularity. The study underscores the complexity of factors influencing body image issues beyond social media alone.

A study that was published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders found that there is a direct link between body image problems and social media use, especially in adolescent girls (Tiggeman & Slater, 2013). The constant comparison with seemingly perfect bodies might provoke feelings of inadequacy and encourage people to aim for unreachable beauty standards. Moreover, the profusion of "fitspiration" content featuring extremely muscular and thin bodies could encourage unhealthy dietary behaviours. **"***I think it can cause strong psychological effects on young people's self-esteem.***"** Research findings consistently support the research questions that social media plays a significant role in promoting negative body image. A study that was published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology shows a link between the growth in eating disorders and body dissatisfaction among young adults and the increase in social media usage. People's perceptions of their bodies can be distorted by constant exposure to digitally altered images, which can lead to dissatisfaction and an urge to conform to unrealistic beauty standards (F & J, 2005). Furthermore, a 2020 study that was written in the Body Image journal found that using photo-based social media platforms is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in appearance-centred behaviours, like comparing one's body to others and seeing oneself as an object (Sarpila, Koivuka, & Aberg, 2022) .

Consequently, these behaviours lead to negative self-perceptions about one's physical appearance and feelings of inadequacy. As one of the participants quoted *"The exposure to offensive content can lead to shattered confidence, stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction with appearance, eating disorders, insomnia, hormonal changes, low self-esteem, depression, and social isolation."*

Desire for Change

Highlighting participants' expressed desire for change, indicating a yearning for environments that accept uniqueness and promote individuality. This section underlines the potential for a shift in societal narratives.

Call to Action

Proposing a call to action, this section emphasizes the role of social media platforms in intentionally selecting content that upholds natural beauty and encourages body positivity. It also advocates for educational efforts and open dialogues within families and communities to foster a nurturing climate for self-acceptance.

Conclusion

Qualitative observations are essential for shaping digital literacy programs and guiding individuals to approach social media critically. The focus on users' responses to visual content informs the development of instructional programs, aiming to enhance media literacy and address issues like the influence of idealized body images. Learning initiatives, rooted in qualitative research, seek to equip users with skills for assessing social media content, fostering a more knowledgeable and critical online community. Additionally, qualitative studies exploring the link between negative body image and social media provide nuanced insights for developing culturally sensitive interventions. In conclusion, qualitative research is crucial for understanding the impact of idealized body images on social media, guiding the development of educational programs and interventions addressing the complex relationship between social media use and personal well-being.

Recommendations

Future research should prioritize larger sample sizes and diverse demographics to comprehensively understand the impact of social media on negative body image. Qualitative studies can delve into the lived experiences of individuals, including those who seek professional help for body image issues. Understanding how different social media platforms affect various demographic groups can inform tailored interventions. Collaborative design with users ensures effective solutions. Longitudinal studies can track evolving attitudes, aiding in the development of flexible interventions. Healthcare practitioners must be equipped to address body image concerns, while policy should prioritize support and DE stigmatization of mental health services. Social support and education play vital roles in promoting self-acceptance.

References

Cohen, R., & Blaszczynski, A. (2015, July). Comparative effects of Facebook and conventional media on body image dissatisfaction. *Journal of Eating Disorders, 3*(1), 23. doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-015-0061-3

Cleland, J. A. (2017, May 29). The qualitative orientation in medical education research. *korean journal of Medical education, 2*(29), 61-71.

Cash, T. F., & Smolak, L. (2012). *A Handbook of Science, Practice, and Prevention* (Second Edition ed.). Newyork: Guilford Press.

Cleland, J. A. (2017, may 29). The qualitative orientation in medical education research. *National library of medicine, 2*, 61-71.

Duane, H. A., Tiggemann, & Marika. (2004). Idealized media images and adolescent body image: "Comparing" boys and girls. *American psychological associations, 4*(1), 351-361.

Feltman, C. E., & Szymanski, D. M. (2018). Instagram Use and Self-Objectification: The Roles of Internalization, Comparison, Appearance Commentary, and Feminism. *Sex Roles, 78*, 311–324. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0796-1

Johnson F, Wardle J. Dietary restraint, body dissatisfaction, and psychological distress: a prospective analysis. J Abnorm Psychol. 2005 Feb;114(1):119-25. doi: 10.1037/0021-843X.114.1.119. PMID: 15709818.

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.

Hargreaves, D. A., & Tiggeman, M. (2004, Dec). Idealized media images and adolescent body image: "comparing" boys and girls. *Body image, 1*(4), 351-361. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2004.10.002

Muzaffar, M., Chohdhry, S., & Afzal, N. (2019). Social Media and Political Awareness in Pakistan: A Case Study of Youth, *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3 (II), 1-13

Muzaffar, M., Yaseen. Z., Safdar, S. (2020). Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns in Pakistan: A Case of Study of 2018 Elections, *Journal of Political Studies, 27* (2), 141-151

Puhl RM, Luedicke J. Weight-based victimization among adolescents in the school setting: emotional reactions and coping behaviors. J Youth Adolesc. 2012 Jan;41(1):27-40. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9713-z. Epub 2011 Sep 15. PMID: 21918904.

Perloff, R. M. (2014, may 29). social media effects on young womens body image concerns. *sex roles, 71*, 363-377.

Rizwan, B., zaki, M., javaid, S., jabeen, Z., Mehmood, M., Riaz, M., . . . omar, H. (2022, March). Increase in body dysmorphia and eating disorders among adolescents due to social media. *Pakistan Biomedical journal, 5*(3), 148-152.

Slevec, J., & Tiggeman, M. (2011, Dec). Media Exposure, Body Dissatisfaction, and Disordered Eating in Middle-aged Women A Test of the Sociocultural Model of Disordered Eating. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 617-627. doi:10.1177/0361684311420249

Sarpila, o., Koivuka, A., & Aberg, E. (2022). Did the pandemic increase social media induced appearence pressures? *A longitudinal amalysis of social media caused appearence related pressures before and during the Covid 19 pandemic*.

Tiggeman, M., & Slater, A. (2013, Sep). NetGirls: the Internet, Facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 46*(6), 630-3. doi:10.1002/eat.22141

Wu, H. L., & Volker, D. L. (2009, Dec). The use of theory in qualitative approaches to reserarch; Application in end-of-life studies. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 12*(65), 2719-32.