



RESEARCH PAPER

**Facebook Photo Activity Associated with Body Image Disturbances
in Young Adults**

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ABSTRACT

The present research was extended and replicated to identify the Facebook Photo activity associated with Body Image Disturbances in young adults. Individuals around the world use social media for interaction. The problem arises when they start sharing their lives, as it leads to comparing self to others. 300 young adults (males & females) aged 19-40years were included. A quantitative correlational survey design was employed. Facebook and Total Internet Use (Rideout, 2010), Weight Satisfaction subscale of the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BES; Mendelson et al. 2001), Drive for Thinness a subscale of Eating Disorder Inventory (Garner et al., 1983), Sociocultural Internalization of Appearance Questionnaire (Keery et al., 2004), Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS) (Thompson, Heinberg, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1991) and Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998) were utilized. Research outcome suggested that young adults are satisfied with their weight and does not desire for a thin body image as it has been noted that social media sites now promote uneven body type and complexions to motivate individuals and increase empowerment. Different social media sites can also be explored with different age groups of cities across Pakistan.

KEYWORDS Appearance Comparison, Body Image, Disturbances, Facebook, Self-Objectification, Young Adults

Introduction

Individuals in the world tend to develop their own body image and maintain it through the psychological and social factors of the world. For some people their body becomes the source of dissatisfaction. Individual tend to believe that they can only look good and be acceptable to the world if they have the perfect ideal body image, through this people only feel good and perceive ourselves as perfect human beings (Grogan, 2007). Grogan (2007) has defined body dissatisfaction as when a person feels negative about their own body. This includes what judgments he or she holds about their own body size, shape and muscle tone and the inconsistencies between the ideal body type and the body type they own. There have been many risk factors specifically for females who are negative towards their body.

Females tend to compare their body to the standard of western body type which is the pressure from the social media and they think that this is the ideal thin body type beauty (Kevin, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). During this process, they tend to get dissatisfied with their body and the drive to thinness increases if they are unable to meet the standards (Keery, Berg, & Thompson, 2004). This research has also

suggested that there is more influence of media exposure towards girls as compared to boys. There have been many studies focusing on the fact that media like television or magazines has caused the body image disturbances but there are few known sources that talk about the internet to be one of the causes of it too.

Objectifying something is to see something in a way that an object is seen or perceived. When females are unable to meet the standards of a perfect body, it leads to objectifying self. The object is then controlled and manipulated in a way that satisfies the individual. Women are seen as an object more than men (Encyclopedia of Body Image and Human Appearance, 2012). Sexual objectification culturally is perceived to treat a person as a sex object the one that is providing pleasure to the other person. Women around the globe are perceived to be a sexual object and so this develops the common day to day issues that women face which includes body shame, eating disorder, depression, sexual dysfunction lower self-esteem and many other.

To summarize, the body image disturbances are observed more in females than males through comparing themselves and their body to people around them. Driving for thinness, dissatisfied with their body image and objectifying themselves to please people or for them to perceive themselves better can all be caused through social media sites like Facebook.

Literature Review

The understanding of body image in accordance to Pakistan and its relationship with different other variables like weight dissatisfaction, greater thin idealization, self-objectification and appearance comparison is still quite low.

McShirley (2015) has given four different factors that can determine the body image of an individual. Firstly, when an individual sees his or her body, they perceive what they want to see which is not always correct. Secondly, the feeling of an individual towards their body whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the different body parts, overall shape or weight of the body. Furthermore, how an individual think about his or her body which then leads to lastly the behavior towards all these as individual will react accordingly.

There have been vast number of researches on females related to body image as there have been more disturbances reported in females (Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1986) but now, there have been an increase in the reporting of the males' body image (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). The study by Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin (1988) was conducted on 92 men and women to observe the connection between self-esteem, dieting, exercising and body satisfaction. It was reported that men desired for heavier body as compared to females who desired for thinner body image. It was also noted that females tend to exercise more for thinner body image as compared to men.

There have not been much studies conducted in Pakistan to see the impact of media on body image disturbances or dissatisfaction among young adults. From few of the studies, a research study was conducted in Pakistan by Khan, Khalid, Khan and Jabeen (2011) to observe the media's impact on university students' body image. Research targeted 7 different private universities of the largest city of Pakistan; Karachi, over a two week's period. It was seen through the research that the individual's body image was being negatively affected by impact of media. It was also confirmed that females were more prone towards this affect than males.

Sadly, it has been noted that in Pakistan people especially females focus more on 'white' skin. Advertisements show extra white skin, slim and soft body models to portray beauty. Females tend to believe that if they are not 'white' enough they will not be accepted in the society especially not for marriage material. Females even tend to believe that a whiter looking skin and exposing thin body is one of the platforms for better carrier growth. A study had been conducted to find the effects of white beauty products on females. For this, 100 females were analyzed which further concluded that Pakistani culture is suffering through 'snow white syndrome' (Ashfaq, Ahmad, Qureshi, & Shah, 2014).

Objectification theory was originally proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). Objectification theory proposes that females try to objectify themselves because they want to meet the standards of the media they are affected by. This increase in the objectification leads to other issues which are different eating disorders and the increase in the shame towards their own body. It is been researched that men are also treated as objects like women and as a result has decreased their well-being (Rollero, 2013). It has also seen that this has been caused more through social media.

According to Psychoanalytic Theory, Erik Erikson and Joan Erikson during the 20th century formulated the eight stages of psychosocial development. An individual to have a healthy developmental stages from infancy to late adulthood should pass through all these stages and be successful via learning from each stage and moving on to the next one (Erikson, 1950). For this research, the theory of the sixth stage of psychosocial development, Intimacy versus Isolation (young adults) fits appropriately. During this stage of life, young adults are ready to share their lives with someone whom they feel intimate towards. If the relationships and intimacy is successful and they are comfortable towards the commitment then the sense of safety and care is developed and if they are not successful, then the isolation phase takes place where they think no one is interested in them or that they are not the worth (McLeod, 2008). This stage comes right after they know the sense of worth of their life which is the identity stage. So, while the individual is in this stage they are trying to look better for the significant other. They do the investment which is libidinal and objectify themselves to get in to a relationship. Hence, this can lead to great thin idealization, weight dissatisfaction, and increased appearance comparison or body shame.

In the light of above mentioned literature and research objective, the following hypothesis was designed.

- H1: Higher usage of Facebook will correlate with greater thin ideal internalization and lower weight satisfaction in young adults.
- H2: Higher usage of Facebook will correlate with thinness drive, self-objectification and appearance comparison in young adults.
- H3: Higher Facebook appearance exposure will correlate with greater thin ideal internalization and lower weight satisfaction, by using photo-related features in relation to overall Facebook usage, in young adults.
- H4: Higher Facebook appearance exposure will correlate with drive for thinness, appearance comparison and self-objectification, by using photo-related features in relation to overall Facebook usage, in young adults.

Material and Methods

The quantitative correlation survey research design was utilized in the research.

Demographic and Sample Size

The research included both males and females (N=300, Females n=200, Males n=100) with age ranging from 19 to 40 years. Through non-probability convenience sampling the young adults were approached. Individuals use of Facebook and number of pictures uploaded were kept noted in order to correlate with the variables.

Internalization of thin ideal

This scale Sociocultural Internalization of Appearance Questionnaire developed by H. Keery et al. (2004) is a 5-item scale used to get the amount to which the individuals idealize themselves through adopting from media. The options in the questionnaire ranged from 1 to 5 that is 1 being definitely disagree to 5 being the definitely agree and then they were summed up. The higher the scores the more it indicates greater internalization.

Physical Appearance comparison Scale (PACS; Thompson et al., 1991)

The Physical Appearance Comparison Scale (PACS; Thompson et al., 1991) has been used to find the comparison between the appearance of oneself and the others'. The ranges were 1 = "never" to 5 = "always."

Weight Satisfaction

The Weight Satisfaction subscale of the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BES) developed by Mendelson et al. (2001) is an 8-item scale which focuses on what the individual feel about their body and the weight. The range was from 0 = "never" to 4 = "always." If the score was higher, it indicated a greater level of weight satisfaction.

Drive for Thinness

Drive for Thinness a 7-item subscale of the Eating Disorder Inventory by Garner, Olmsted and Polivy (1983) that will be used to analyze the fear of individuals of being fat and why they drive for thinness. Ranges of the responses are 1 = "never" to 6 = "always." High scored on this scale will show a greater thinness drive.

Self-Objectification

A 10-item scale by Noll and Fredrickson (1998) in which the participants rank their 10 body attributes in an order that lays an impact on their self-concept on physical appearance. Responses ranged from 0 being least impact to 9 being the greatest impact. Five attributes were physical competence and five were physical appearance. The calculation is based on the scores that is the difference between the sum of appearance that they ranked and the sum of competence that they ranked. If the scores were positive, it means that there will be greater prominence on appearance which would in turn show greater self-objectification.

Facebook and Total Internet Use

It was developed to evaluate the use of Facebook and internet by an individual (Rideout, 2010).

Facebook Appearance-Related Exposure

This was used to make a list of 24-items of FB activities that an individual has which was compiled on the basis of popular published features. The ranged from 1 being the almost never or never to 5 being the nearly every time I log on which makes it a 5-point Likert scale. This was indicated by the participants on basis of their typical use of FB feature.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Cronbach's α Reliability of the Scales

Construct / Variable	Cronbach's α	No. of Items
Facebook and Total Internet Use (FBQ)	0.930	16
Facebook Appearance-Related Exposure (FBQ-P)	0.840	8
Sociocultural Internalization Appearance	0.884	5
Physical Appearance Comparison Scale	0.950	12
Weight Satisfaction	0.872	7
Drive for Thinness	0.884	7
Self-Objectification	0.830	10

Table 2
Pearson Correlation Showing the Correlation Between the Variables

Variables		Internet Daily Usage	FB Daily Usage	Appearance Exposure Score
Internalization	r	0.061	0.068	-0.085
	p	0.292	0.241	0.141
Physical Appearance Comparison	r	0.052	0.011	-0.015
	p	0.366	0.844	0.798
Weight Satisfaction	r	-0.131	-0.052	0.137
	p	0.023*	0.37	0.018**
Drive For Thinness	r	0.042	0.036	0.013
	p	0.471	0.532	0.82
Self-Objectification Score	r	0.02	0.052	0.084
	p	0.729	0.365	0.149

Note: * p < .05 ** p < .01

The first hypothesis states that higher Facebook use would correlate with the thin ideal internalization and lower weight satisfaction in young adults. The hypothesis claimed that the higher use of FB will correlate with both lower weight satisfaction and thin ideal internalization but according to the results, there was no level of significance observed. Through the results it was seen that the young adults regardless of higher use of Facebook does not get effected or desire to get thin. They are satisfied with the weight they carry and does not idealize for a thin body. The emergence and advancement of social media has also made some positive changes in the culture. People are now motivating individuals especially females to be proud of themselves regardless of their looks. Magazines, Television and fashion shows are now promoting people with dark complexions and uneven body. A well-known brand of Pakistan, Generations, has now come-up with new way of advertising their clothes. They have used older age and plus size women to promote body love, empowerment of women

and breaking the stereotypes about body image (Sulaiman, 2018). With these kinds of campaigns, individuals tend to get motivated and are not affected by their body image.

The second hypothesis was postulated that higher Facebook use would correlate with appearance comparison, drive for thinness and self-objectification. As hypothesis, higher use of FB will correlate with appearance comparison, drive for thinness and self-objectification in young adults, according to the data that was analyzed it was observed that the hypothesis was rejected and there was no significance noted. According to the results it was observed that young adults have higher use of Facebook, which is for more than three hours per day, but they do not compare their appearance with others they see on Facebook. It was also observed that higher FB use does not correlate with the drive for thinness in the young adults, which means that they are satisfied with their appearance and weight and does not desire for a thin body. Furthermore, they do not objectify themselves as they are satisfied with their current weight and appearance. As we know that Facebook is a Social Networking Site (SNS), it has an impact on lives of people who use it. There have been many studies conducted in different cultures but there are few studies which discussed about the impact of media on Pakistani culture. A similar study was conducted in Karachi, Pakistan whose aim was to look at the effect of media on university students and their body image (Khan, Khalid, Khan, & Jabeen, 2011). Amongst few of the researches, a cross-sectional study was conducted in seven different universities of Karachi, Pakistan. A total of 783 both male and female students were selected, from ages between 18 to 25 years. The findings suggested that media effects males' body image dissatisfaction negatively and females' body image dissatisfaction positively. According to the test study it was also noted that that 155 males from the total of 376 mentioned that they are not influenced by their families to change their perceived body image. Similarly, 145 males mentioned that they are not influenced by their peers to change or desire for an ideal body image. This suggests that males do not tend to get effected by the environment or media as much as females do but there are very few researches conducting in Pakistan on males' body image disturbances.

Third hypothesis was that the higher Facebook appearance exposure will correlate with greater thin ideal internalization and lower weight satisfaction, by using photo-related features in relation to overall Facebook usage, in young adults. According to the results, it is clear that higher FB appearance exposure has a weak positive correlation with weight satisfaction but there is no significance level observed with greater thin ideal internalization in young adults. There can be different reasons in accordance to our culture, one of them which is related to the study is that Pakistani culture is an Islamic culture and many females are not comfortable to upload or share their pictures on social media. This leads to them being satisfied with themselves even though they do get effected by SNS but they do not try or desire reduce their weight.

Lastly, the fourth hypothesis was that higher Facebook appearance exposure will correlate with drive for thinness, appearance comparison and self-objectification, by using photo-related features in relation to overall Facebook usage, in young adults. As the results portray, there is no significance level noted hence, the hypothesis was not proved. It was discussed previously that many different brands are now using media to voice the empowerment of both men and women but more focus is towards the females. These brands have portrayed that no matter what complexion or body size an individual carry, they still look beautiful and so women should not be objectified in terms of zero size. Through these brands and media strategies, females now in recent years have encouraged themselves and others to be happy with the body image they carry.

Conclusion

To conclude, the current research has examined the overall relationship between the FB photo-activity and disturbed body image of young adults. This replicated study revolved around the self-objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) which means that females increases the shame and anxiety as they perceive others' ideal body to be the primary source of their view of themselves. There have been many literatures found relative to females, but very few discussed about the males being affected particularly in Pakistan. Therefore, the research also examined the effect of social media that is Facebook, on males' disturbed body image. The current research's statistical outcome suggests that social media has no effect on young adults both males and females. The population of Karachi, Pakistan according to the results are satisfied with their weight and does not desire for a thin body image because according to Pakistani culture individuals do not upload or share much of their own pictures publicly as compared to other cultures. It is also noted that social media sites are now promoting uneven body image and dusty complexions to motivate individuals especially females to motivate themselves and increase empowerment in themselves (Muzaffar, et. al., 2020).

Recommendations

- Different Social Networking Sites can also be approached in order to explore their effect on individuals.
- Comparisons among the cities of Pakistan can also be explored in order to understand the diverse culture of Pakistan.
- Comparisons between different age group can also be conducted.
- Different prevention programs according to the advancements of Social Networking Sites can be considered in schools and colleges to prevent further issues.
- The current sample of the research focused on young adults but for future, adolescents of Pakistan both males and females should be explored.

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