



Body Shape Concerns, Social Media Addiction and Appearance Internalization In Young Girls

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Abstract

Media has always had a substantial influence on how young women perceive their bodies and appearance. Nowadays young girls are increasingly using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, for various appearance related activities. This kind of appearance related social media use may lead to girls internalizing the appearance ideals that they see on social media sites; as a result they may develop a sense of dissatisfaction with their own bodies and appearance. This study aimed to explore if there is any relationship between social media addiction, appearance internalization and concerns about body shape. The study also investigated if social media addiction and sociocultural influences of multiple dimensions of social media predicted unique variance in concern with body shape. Participants were 200 female high school and college students aged 16 years -22 years who completed self-report questionnaires of the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS; Andreassen et al., 2012) The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3; Thompson Et Al., 2004) and The Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper, Taylor, Cooper and Fairburn, 1987) Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationships between variables. Multiple Regression analysis was computed to see if the predictor variables significantly predicted unique variance in body shape concerns in young girls. Results indicated that social media addiction, socio cultural attitudes towards appearance, internalization general, internalization athlete, pressure and information were significantly positively associated with body shape concerns. The results revealed that social media addiction, internalization general and socio cultural influences of different forms of media were significant predictors of body shape concern in young girls.

Keywords: young girls, Body Shape Concerns, Social Media Addiction, Appearance Internalization.

Introduction:

Present day society has set unrealistic often unattainable standards of beauty equating beauty with everlasting youth, fitness and a "size zero" body. Sociocultural influences that stem from mass media, family and peers have lead to younger women being overly concerned about their shape, size and appearance. They begin to feel pressurized by TV shows, fashion and fitness magazines to lose weight, become thin to look pretty and improve the way they look. They often start comparing themselves to the beautiful movie stars, models and athletes that they see on television, movies, advertisements bill boards and magazines and may develop a desire to look like them. Nowadays the trend is changing, apart from being exposed to different forms of media like television, magazines, movies, young girls nowadays are increasingly spending more time on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, for various

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appearance related activities such as sharing and posting photos of themselves, reading articles and tips on how to acquire that perfect body and flawless face. Social media also exposes them to various posts, images messages, articles and advertisements of toned, fit and beautiful people. Madden et al., (2013) reported that 91% of teens post photos of themselves on social media. Not only do they see pictures of beautiful celebrities on social media but their own friends and acquaintances post pictures of themselves where they often use various beauty effects and filters to hide their flaws, make their skin look lighter, eyes bigger, nose smaller etc. Young girls often compare their own appearance and body to the pictures of their friends and celebrities that they see on these sites and they begin to wish they looked like all those beautiful, thin people and they negatively evaluate their own appearance and feel unhappy about their own looks. They don't realize that the pictures they see of models and celebrities involve a lot of professional make up, photo shopping and other beauty effects. This kind of media that focuses on physical appearance makes young girls susceptible to internalizing these appearance ideals and develop body dissatisfaction (Meier & Gray, 2014) (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). As a result of body dissatisfaction many girls begin to worry about their shape and may feel like indulging in unhealthy behaviours like dieting, vomiting and exercising excessively in order to get the perfect body. They may avoid social gatherings and other situations because they feel bad about their shape. They worry that people around them will notice the flaws in their body and may begin to compare their physical appearance with that of others (Cooper and Fairburn, 1987). Research indicates that internalization of appearance ideals is a risk factor for body dissatisfaction and eating disorders (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Hence, the authors felt there was a need to investigate if social media addiction, internalization of the thin ideal and athletic ideal and other media influences such as pressures and information would predict concerns about body shape. Identification of these risk factors could provide implications for the effective prevention of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in young girls.

Review of Literature:

Ridgway and Clayton (2016) explored associations of body image satisfaction, Instagram selfie posting and negative romantic relationship outcomes in 420 Instagram users in the age range 18 to 62 years. Results indicate that body image satisfaction was significantly associated with increased selfie posting and Instagram related conflict, which was related to negative romantic relationship results.

Meier and Gray (2014) examined the relationships between body image and activity on facebook among 103 middle and high school girls. The results indicated that elevated appearance exposure but not overall facebook usage was significantly correlated with weight dissatisfaction, desire for thinness, thin ideal internalization and self objectification.

Tiggemann and Slater (2013) examined the relationship between internet exposure and body image concerns in 1087 adolescent girls aged 13-15 years and reported that time spent on the internet was significantly correlated with internalizing the thin ideal, body surveillance and drive for thinness.

Rodgers, et al.,(2013) examined the association between internet addiction, body image esteem, body image avoidance and disordered thinking among 392 French young adults, results indicated that body image avoidance was associated with internet addiction symptoms among both males and females. Internet addiction and body image avoidance were both significant predictors of disordered eating among women.



Khan and Khalid (2011) investigated the impact of media on 783 Pakistani University students body image and found that media had a negative impact on an individual's body. Their results revealed a statistically significant association between high media exposure and body image dissatisfaction.

Methodology

Objectives:

- The study aimed to explore relationships between social media addiction, appearance internalization and concerns about body shape.
- To investigate the predictors of body shape concerns in female adolescents.

Measures:

- *The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale* (BSMAS; Andreassen et al., 2012) is an adaptation of the Bergen Facebook addiction scale (BFAS; Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg and Pallesen., 2012). It consists of six items, each item is answered on a five point likert scale ranging from 1 = very rarely to 5= often. It yields a composite score ranging from 6-30. A higher score is indicative of higher social media addiction. In the instructions BSMAS involves replacing the word Facebook with social media such as twitter, instagram and like. Internal consistency of the BSMAS was good. Cronbach's alpha = 0.88.
- *The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3* (SATAQ-3; Thompson et al., 2004). The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 is the most widely used and validated measure of appearance internalization and assess the socio cultural influence of multiple dimensions of media on body image. It has 30 items and four sub scales that assess internalization (general, athlete, pressures and information). The subscales assess 4 dimensions of media influence. Information has 9 items that indicate various media (eg: TV shows, movies and magazine articles) are considered an important source of information for beauty and being attractive. Pressure has 7 items that indicate that TV or magazine pressurize people to be thin or diet. Internalization General has 9 items that indicate that media (TV, magazines) may influence people to internalize the appearance of models, celebrities and actors that they see on TV or in magazines. Internalization Athlete has 5 items that endorse the athletic, fit and toned body. The SATAQ-3 has acceptable psychometric properties. Alphas included the following values: Information (0.94), Pressures (0.94), Internalization Athlete (0.89), Internalization General (0.94) And The Total Scale Score (0.94). The SATAQ-3 subscales had excellent convergent validity with measures of body image and eating disturbance.
- *Body Shape Questionnaire* (Cooper, Taylor, Cooper and Fairburn, 1987) consists of 34 items used to measure concerns about body shape. The concerns about body shape may vary in intensity in ranging from a mild dissatisfaction with certain parts of the body to extreme dissatisfaction with one's body shape to the extent that individuals hate their body shape and feel ugly. It assesses negative feelings about one's body size, shape and weight. Items are scored on a uniform six point Likert scale ranging from 1= never and 6= always. It yields a composite score that ranges from 34 to 204. A higher score is indicative of higher body dissatisfaction. The body shape questionnaire has acceptable psychometric properties. The concurrent and discriminant validity of the measure have been shown to be good.



Participants and Procedure:

Participants were 200 female high school and college students (age range 16 years to 22 years). Measures were administered either in person or online at colleges in Chennai city. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling from two schools and two colleges in Chennai city. The purpose of the study was explained through the description in the online form and a verbal explanation about the study was given to those who were administered the scale in person. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality was assured to the students before the participants completed the questionnaires.

Statistical Analyses:

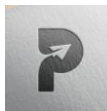
Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationships between the variables. Multiple Regressions were computed to see if the predictor variables social media addiction, sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, internalization general, internalization athlete, pressure and information, significantly predicted unique variance in the outcome variable body shape concerns in young girls.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1:

Correlations among Body Shape Concerns, Social Media Addiction, SocioCultural Attitudes Towards Appearance, Internalization General, Internalization Athlete, Pressure and Information.

Body Shape Concerns	Social Media Addiction	Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance	Internalization General	Internalization Athlete	Pressure	Information
Body Shape Concerns						
Social Media Addiction	.220**					
Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance	.325**	.075				



Internalization General	.327**	.102	.654**		
Internalization Athlete	.212**	.066	.545**	.438**	
Pressure					
Information					
	.308**	.122*	.600**	.572** .349**	
	.157*	.102	.340**	.210**	
					.227** .256**

Note

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

The Pearson's Correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationships among variables. The dependent variable Body Shape Concerns was significantly positively correlated with Social Media Addiction, $r(198) = 0.220, p < 0.1$. Body Shape Concerns was significantly correlated with Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance, $r(198) = 0.325, p < 0.1$. Body Shape Concerns was significantly positively correlated with Internalization- General, $r(198) = 0.327, p < 0.1$. Body Shape Concerns was significantly positively correlated with Internalization- Athlete, $r(198) = 0.212, p < 0.1$. Body Shape Concerns was significantly positively correlated with Pressure, $r(198) = 0.308, p < 0.1$. Body Shape Concerns was significantly positively correlated with Information, $r(198) = 0.157, p < 0.5$. Social Media Addiction was significantly positively correlated with Pressure, $r(198) = 0.122, p < 0.5$. Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance was significantly positively correlated with Internalization- General, $r(198) = 0.654, p < 0.01$. Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance was significantly positively correlated with Internalization- Athlete, $r(198) = 0.545, p < 0.01$. Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance was significantly positively correlated with Pressure, $r(198) = 0.600, p < 0.01$. Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance was significantly positively correlated with Information, $r(198) = 0.340, p < 0.01$. Internalization- General was significantly positively correlated with Internalization- Athlete, $r(198) = 0.438, p < 0.01$. Internalization- General was significantly positively correlated with Pressure, $r(198) = 0.572, p < 0.01$. Internalization- General was significantly positively correlated with Information, $r(198) = 0.210, p < 0.01$. Internalization- Athlete was significantly positively correlated with Pressure, $r(198) = 0.349, p < 0.01$. Internalization- Athlete was significantly positively correlated with Information, $r(198) = 0.227, p < 0.01$. Pressure was significantly positively correlated with Information, $r(198) = 0.256, p < 0.01$. The correlation coefficients although significant were of moderate strength.

**Table 2:****Summary statistics for multiple regression analysis of the predictors of body shape concerns in young girls.**

Predictors	R^2	ΔR^2	$F(df)$	p	β	t	p
Internalization general	.11	.10	23.70(1,198)	.000	.18	2.11	.036
Social media addiction	.14	.13	16.32(2,197)	.000	.19	2.85	.005
Sociocultural attitudes towards appearance	.16	.15	12.73(3,196)	.000	.19	2.21	.038

A step wise multiple regression was computed to test if the predictor variables Internalization-General, Social Media Addiction, SocioCultural Attitudes Towards Appearance, Internalization Athlete, Pressure and Information would significantly predict unique variance associated with Body Shape Concerns in adolescent girls. The predictor variable Internalization- General, was first entered in the stepwise multiple regression as it was the predictor variable that correlated most strongly with the dependent variable Body Shape Concerns. The results of the regression indicated that Internalization- General explained a significant proportion of variance in body dissatisfaction ($R^2=0.11$), $F(1,198) = 23.70$, $p = 0.000$ This shows that Internalization- General explained 11% of the variance in body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls. The addition of Social Media Addiction at step two made a significant contribution to the variance in body dissatisfaction. The two predictors Internalization- General and Social Media Addiction together contributed to 14% of the variance in body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls ($R^2 = 0.14$), $F(2,197) = 16.32$, $p = 0.000$. The addition of Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance in step three also made a significant contribution to the variance in Body Shape Concerns. Three predictors, Internalization- General, Social Media Addiction and Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance together contributed to 16% of the unique variance in Body Shape Concerns among adolescent girls ($R^2 = 0.16$, $F(3,196) = 12.73$, $p= 0.000$). The results of the regression analysis indicated that Internalization- General significantly predicted body dissatisfaction ($\beta= 0.18$, $t(196)=2.11$, $p= 0.036$) as did Social Media Addiction ($\beta = 0.19$, $t(196)= 2.85$, $p= 0.005$) and Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance ($\beta = 0.19$, $t(196)= 2.21$, $p= 0.038$). After three steps the analysis stopped and no more predictors, were entered even though three additional predictor variables (such as Internalization Athlete, Pressure and Information) correlated significantly with the dependent variable Body Shape Concerns. These remaining predictors did not enter the equation because these predictor variables were highly inter correlated. With Internalization General, Social Media Addiction and Socio Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance already in the equation none of the other predictor variables like Internalization Athlete, Pressure and Information predicted unique variance in Body Shape Concern scores. Multi co linearity treatment was not computed in this analysis and therefore Internalization Athlete, Pressure and Information were not built into this regression model.



Conclusions:

From the results of the study it can be concluded that social media addiction, internalization general and socio cultural influences of multiple dimensions of media significantly predicted unique variance in Body Shape Concerns in young girls.

Implications:

The results implied that body shape concerns were significantly predicted by internalization general, indicating that TV or magazines influence young girls to internalize the appearance of the models, actors and celebrities that they see on TV and magazines and often this comparison leads to body shape concerns and negative feeling about their own body and size.

Body shape concerns were also significantly predicted by social media addiction indicating that using social media excessively especially for appearance related activities can make young girls feel dissatisfied with their own body size, shape, weight. Body shape concerns were also significantly predicted by socio cultural attitude towards appearance implying that high appearance internalization may lead to body dissatisfaction in young girls.

The results of the study indicated a need for psycho-education and awareness among young girls about the impact social media and other forms of media exposure has on their body image and about the importance of reduction of appearance related activities on social media as it makes them feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their bodies. Young girls could un-follow or not see posts by friends, models and celebrities who post highly made up, edited and photo-shopped, perfect images of themselves. Young girls can be given some kind of training to enhance the acceptance of their own body and to increase their levels and body esteem.

Limitations:

1. The primary limitation of this study was the small sample size which consisted of only 200 students.
2. The study was exclusive to female students.
3. The study was also limited to only Chennai city.
4. The study was also limited only to school and college students in the age range of 16 to 22 years. Women in their late twenties, thirties and forties were not included.

Suggestions for Further Research:

Body image concerns are now a universal phenomenon, including subjects from all genders, from wider age range and a larger sample will provide more insights about this area.



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