The Effects of Social Media on Body Image and Mental Health- A Study

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Abstract

The world of social media is always changing, with new platforms and services being released on a regular basis. This progression is being accompanied by a number of separate trends at the same time. The environment is continually being changed by innovations in consumption habits of social media, such as the ascendancy of short-form video content and the role of influencers. This may be seen as an example of how the environment is continually being molded. The advent of social media has made it possible for individuals to connect with one another, communicate with one another, and express themselves in ways that were before impossible. On the other hand, it raises worries about the influence it has on people's mental health and their perceptions of their own bodies. The influence of social media platforms on users' mental and physical health is complex and multidimensional. Even if it has the potential to reinforce poor body image and have a detrimental impact on mental well-being, it also has the potential to serve as a platform for positive change and support. Different people will have different experiences because of factors such as their vulnerability to social comparison and the mental health disorders they already have. It is crucial for individuals to engage in digital self-care practices, curate their online experiences, and seek professional assistance when necessary in order to reduce the harmful effects of the internet. It is essential to foster body positivity, self-acceptance, and digital well-being as a means of reducing the adverse effects that social media can have on one's mental health and physical appearance.

Keywords: Social Media, Mental Health, Body Image, Influence

Introduction

The effects of social media on body image and mental health have been the subject of extensive research and discussions in recent years. While social media platforms can offer many positive opportunities for connection, self-expression, and information-sharing, they also have potential negative impacts on individuals' self-esteem and mental well-being, particularly in relation to body image.

The term "social media" refers to many online platforms and websites that give users the ability to generate content, share it with others, engage with it, and make connections with other people. The use of social media platforms has grown to become an essential component of today's methods of communication and has an important impact on many different facets of society.

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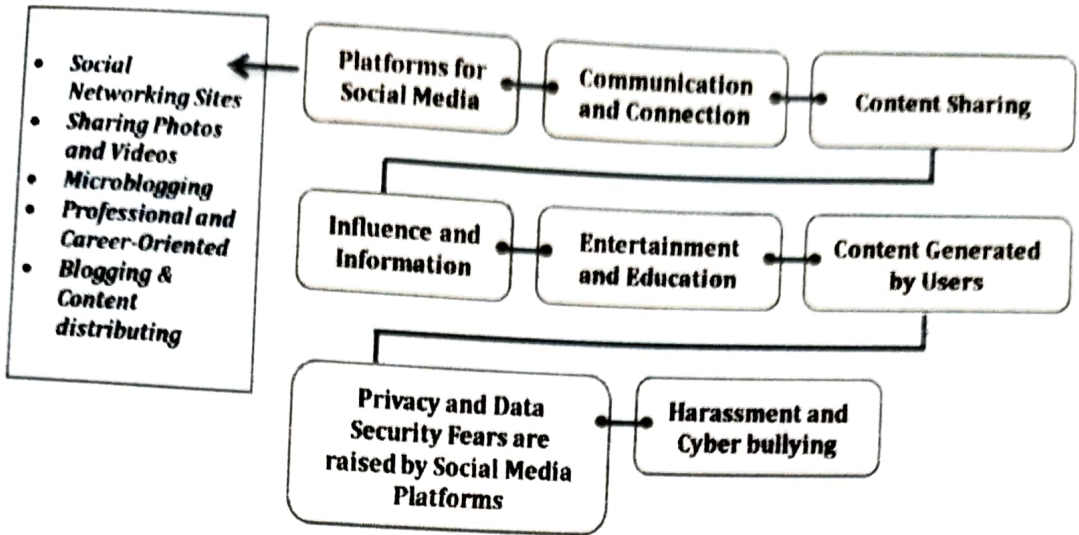(Deemed to be University)
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Figure 1: Major Aspects & Groups of Social Media (Self-prepared by Authors)

The following is a list of important aspects of social media:

1. **Platforms for Social Media:** There are a lot of distinct platforms for social media, and each one serves a little different function than the others.

The following are some of the most typical types of groups:

Social Networking Sites: Sites that focus on linking users with other people are known as social networking sites, and some examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Sharing Photos and Videos: Websites such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are designed largely for the dissemination of visual content such as photos and videos.

Microblogging: Microblogging is becoming increasingly popular, and one prominent example of a microblogging network is Twitter, which allows users to publish brief updates.

Professional and Career-Oriented: LinkedIn was developed specifically for the purposes of professional networking and the search for new employment opportunities.

Blogging & Content distributing: WordPress, Tumblr, and Medium are some of the most popular platforms for distributing longer-form content.

Communication and Connection: Despite differences in location, social media makes it easier for individuals and communities to communicate with one another and form connections with one another. It enables users to maintain relationships with friends and family, connect with new people, and participate in groups centered on a variety of interests.

2. **Content Sharing:** Users are able to exchange a wide variety of content with one another, including text, photographs, videos, links, and many other types of media. This content may be available to the whole public or it may be restricted to a particular audience

3. **Influence and Information:** Both in terms of swaying public opinion and the dissemination of information, social media has evolved into a potent and effective instrument in recent years. It has been utilized in a variety of settings, including marketing, political campaigns, and social movements, among others.

4. **Entertainment and Education:** Social media platforms are frequently used for enjoyment, such as viewing movies, reading articles, and playing games. Educational purposes are also frequently explored on these platforms. They also provide essential educational resources, such as courses, tutorials, and other instructional stuff to their users.

5. **Content Generated by Users** A significant amount of the information found on social media platforms is content that was generated and published by users themselves. The democratization of the content generation process enables a variety of viewpoints and voices to be heard.

6. **Privacy and Data Security Fears are Raised by Social Media Platforms** The use of social media platforms raises privacy and data security fears among users. Personal information about users may be collected, and adjusting their privacy settings is necessary in order to exercise control over who can view their content.

7. **Harassment and Cyberbullying:** Unfortunately, social media may serve as a venue for the expression of hate speech, as well as harassment and cyberbullying. There are policies and systems in place at several venues to deal with these challenges.

The use of social media can have an effect on one's mental health, and this influence can be either beneficial or detrimental. However, for people who are struggling, it has the potential to be a source of support and connection as well as a contributor to feelings of social isolation, comparison, and addiction. Governments and groups have been working toward the goal of regulating social media in order to address problems such as the spread of false information and hate speech, as well as concerns over users' right to data privacy. When it comes to the role that social media businesses play and the obligations they have in molding public conversation, ethical problems naturally arise.

Body Image

An individual's view, thoughts, and feelings regarding their own body in terms of its size, shape, look, and overall physical attributes are collectively referred to as their "body image." It takes into account not just how a person thinks of themselves but also how they feel and think about their own bodies. The way a person perceives their own body can have a tremendous influence on their sense of self-worth, mental health, and overall well-being (Sheikh, 2019). The term "body positivity" refers to a movement that encourages the acceptance and love of all different body shapes, regardless of the beauty standards that are prevalent in society. It teaches people to accept and cherish their bodies in their natural state and to reject ideals of beauty that are unattainable or destructive.

Physique image distortion occurs when an individual has an erroneous perception of their own physique, as is the case with those who suffer from this condition. This might take the form of body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), a mental health disease in which a person is too preoccupied with perceived flaws or defects in their appearance. Body dysmorphic disorder can present itself in a variety of ways. The media, including periodicals, commercials, and social media platforms, frequently promote idealized and inaccurate depictions of the human body (Khanna, 2019). Assessment of Effect of Digital Branding on Brand Image of A Bank. A Study on. Especially among young people, being exposed to these images can lead to negative judgments of one's physique and feelings of dissatisfaction with one's appearance.

Variations attributable to Culture Societal and cultural standards contribute significantly to the formation of an individual's body image. It's possible that other cultures have varying standards of what constitutes attractiveness and beauty, which can have an effect on how individuals regard their own bodies. A poor perception of one's own body is strongly linked to the development of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Panwar, 2019). These mental illnesses frequently involve an unhealthy preoccupation with one's body weight, shape, and appearance. The opinions and comments of an individual's peers and members of their family have the potential to influence that person's body image. A more positive body image can be achieved with the support and encouragement of loved ones, as opposed to the opposite, which can be achieved with harsh comments or criticism. It has been shown that having a favorable picture of one's body is linked to having better levels of both self-esteem and self-confidence. On the other hand, having a negative picture of one's body might result in low levels of self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Concerns about one's own body image are not exclusive to either the male or female gender. Problems with one's body image might affect either a man or a woman. However, men and women frequently face different cultural pressures and norms, which might play a role in determining how these worries materialize in their lives (Veeranki, 2017).

Improving your body image requires you to work on creating self-acceptance and compassion for yourself. This can be accomplished through a variety of approaches, including psychotherapy, introspection, the cultivation of mindfulness practices, and the confrontation of negative thought patterns. Acquiring the skills necessary for literacy in the media can assist individuals in critically analyzing and deconstructing unattainable beauty standards that are given in the media. Realizing that many photographs are digitally altered or modified helps lessen the effect that the media has on one's perception of their own bodies. It can be helpful for those who are battling with difficulties related to their body image to locate a community that is supportive, whether it be in-person or online. A sense of belonging and comprehension can be gained through the exchange of experiences and methods of coping strategies with other people who have similar perspectives and perspectives.

Review Literature

The influence of social media on body image and mental well-being has garnered growing attention and scholarly investigation in the last ten years. Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted to explore the intricate interplay among these variables, uncovering a spectrum of favorable and unfavorable consequences. According to a study conducted by **Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, and Halliwell (2015)**, the consumption of idealized pictures on social media platforms has been associated with the development of negative body image perceptions, particularly among younger adults. The persistent comparison to these carefully selected photos contributes to diminished self-esteem and the imposition of societal expectations regarding physical attractiveness. In her work, **Perloff (2014)** examined the potential association between extensive utilization of social media and the manifestation of depressive and anxious symptoms. This connection may be attributed to the presentation of unrealistic ideals on these platforms, leading to social comparison. The issue of cyberbullying pertaining to beauty and body shaming is a matter of considerable importance. In their study, **Tiggemann and Slater (2014)** examined the impact of negative comments and criticism on social media platforms on individuals' body image dissatisfaction and mental distress. Social media platforms have witnessed the emergence of communities focused on body positivity and mental health assistance. **Tiggemann and Slater (2014)** have observed that social media platforms can serve as a means for individuals to exchange narratives pertaining to their encounters with body image concerns, as well as their triumphs and difficulties in addressing these issues. This process can contribute to the cultivation of a sense of inclusion and encouragement. Social media does not exclusively serve as a platform for negative content. **(Khupse, 2017)**, these platforms are utilized by a multitude of accounts and organizations to further the ideals of promoting a positive body image, fostering self-acceptance, and enhancing mental well-being. The study conducted by Mabe, **Forney, and Keel (2014)** examined the potential impact of positive messages disseminated through social media platforms.

Research Methodology

Following the gathering of a sufficient number of prior studies, the process of data collection was initiated by using the snowball sampling approach. A total of 80 unique pieces of data were gathered from two different private institutions. In order to evaluate the effects of social media, a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was developed. This questionnaire covers sociodemographic characteristics, body image, mental wellbeing, details regarding social media usage, as well as gender and age demographics. The dimension of the consequences of social media encompasses things like the types of social media used, the amount of time spent on them, the positive features, etc. There were ten different factors considered for the influence of social media. The questionnaire that was produced was evaluated for both its content and its appearance validity. Only 74 of the original 80 obtained data were considered for this selection. The data were pre-processed and then reviewed for any errors that might have been there. The data were run through the Cronbach alpha test, which was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. The test revealed that the reliability of the questionnaire is 0.894, indicating that it is reliable. In the end, the data obtained are analysed with the help of SPSS program.

Objective of the study

- To identify & analyse items of social media which effects on body image & mental health.
- To suggest findings & conclusion

Results & Discussion

Table 1 : Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.894	12

Table 2: Total Item Statistics

Description	Scale_Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	26.023	159.717	.819	.894
Media Literacy	27.451	127.997	.834	.893
Body Image Concerns	19. 818	130.958	.881	.894
Comparison and Idealized Images	15.987	144.889	.827	.894
Negative Self-Perception	22.776	159.651	.849	.892
Cyberbullying and Shaming	19.627	143.786	.858	.891
Filter and Editing Tools	21.756	132.221	.821	.876
Positive Aspects	28.842	143.189	.856	.894
Preventive Measures	31.121	154.175	.853	.894
Mental Health Impacts	23.356	162.110	.865	.893

Note: Out of 80 data, 74 data were taken for the interpretation

Table 3: Case Processing Summary

Description		Freq. (N)	%
Cases	Valid	74	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	0.0
	Total	74	100.0

Interpretation: The preliminary investigation demonstrates that social media exerts significant influence on body image and mental health, as indicated by the responses. However, it is important to note that this phenomenon has both positive and bad implications. The study has the potential for further expansion through the inclusion of a larger sample size and the utilization of varied research methods, which may introduce variability in the findings.

Findings of the study

- Social media frequently portrays a perfected portrayal of individuals' lifestyles and physical appearances. It is a common occurrence for individuals to frequently share meticulously selected and modified visual content that may not faithfully depict the true nature of reality. Unhealthy comparisons may arise if individuals frequently engage in self-comparisons against unattainable ideals.

- Numerous studies have demonstrated a robust correlation between the duration of social media usage and the prevalence of body image dissatisfaction, particularly among the demographic of young people and teenagers. The continuous exposure to photos portraying bodies that appear to be flawless might result in diminished self-esteem and heightened societal expectations to conform to these ideals.

- The continuous exposure to meticulously curated and edited photos can potentially contribute to the development of unfavorable self-perception. Individuals may have feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction with their own physical appearance, perhaps leading to notable implications for their psychological well-being.

- Social media platforms have the potential to serve as a conducive environment for the proliferation of cyberbullying, body shaming, and the dissemination of unpleasant comments. Certain individuals, with a particular emphasis on women, may become the focus of attention due to their physical appearance, resulting in the development of tension, anxiety, and despair.

- Numerous social media platforms provide users with filter and editing functionalities that have the potential to further manipulate or alter the perception of reality. Although these tools provide an entertaining aspect, they also have the potential to perpetuate unattainable ideals of beauty and adversely affect individuals' perception of their own bodies and self-worth.

- The use of social media platforms can potentially contribute to the phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), wherein individuals experience a sense of anxiety or unease due to the perception that they are not partaking in the same experiences as their peers. This phenomenon has the potential to exacerbate anxiety and foster sentiments of inadequacy.

- It is imperative to acknowledge that social media does not include inherent destructive qualities. Social media platforms have the potential to serve as valuable sources of support and connection, facilitating the exchange of personal experiences and the formation of groups with shared interests. Certain individuals also utilize social media platforms as a means to advocate for body positivity and the acceptance of oneself.

- In order to alleviate the adverse consequences, it is imperative for individuals to engage in the practice of digital self-care. This may encompass the curation of one's social media feeds, the imposition of restrictions on screen time, and the acknowledgment that the content encountered may not invariably reflect actuality.

- The adverse impacts of social media on body image might potentially contribute to the development of mental health conditions, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. It is imperative to possess an understanding of these potential ramifications and to actively pursue assistance from qualified professionals if deemed required.

- The acquisition of knowledge pertaining to media literacy, critical thinking, and the psychological aspects behind social media might enhance individuals' ability to effectively navigate and analyze the various forms of content they come across. This has the potential to enable individuals to critically examine and challenge unattainable ideals of beauty, so fostering a more positive and balanced outlook on one's own body.

Conclusion

It can be observed that social media possesses the capacity to exert both beneficial and detrimental impacts on body image and mental well-being. It is crucial to possess knowledge of the potential challenges and implement measures to minimize their impact. Promoting a culture that embraces body positivity, self-acceptance, and mental well-being is of significant importance for society, including both virtual and physical realms. An

individual's self-concept encompasses various dimensions, among which body image constitutes a significant component. This particular element can exert a significant impact on an individual's psychological well-being, as well as the overall quality of their existence. In order to cultivate and sustain a positive body image that may be enhanced and maintained in the long term, it is imperative to foster body positivity, self-acceptance, and a healthy rapport with one's own physical form. The intricate nature of the association between social media, body image, and mental health is undeniable. Although it is acknowledged that negative consequences such as body image dissatisfaction and cyberbullying are prevalent, it is important to recognize that there are also beneficial elements associated with online platforms, such as the presence of supportive groups and the availability of educational materials. Additional investigation is required in order to comprehend the intricacies and formulate approaches for fostering a salubrious utilization of social media while minimizing its potential adverse consequences.

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