

Correlation of Social Media Use with Adolescent Body Image

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Abstract. The use of social media (SM) is a topic that has been widely discussed. As adolescents are at a special period in their lives, it is worth exploring the influence of SM on their body image (BI) cognition. This paper synthesizes recent studies on the association between adolescent social media use (SMU) and body image and examines the relationship between adolescent body image cognition and related behavior changes and social media use. Adolescent social media use was positively correlated with unrealistic body management goal setting and there are gender differences. Whether gaining or losing weight, males want a higher muscle mass. While female is more concerned about weight loss in body management. For behavioral change, greater social media use is associated with more frequent use of body management medications. Increased use of social media is detrimental to weight loss. This article highlights the significant impact of social media on adolescent body images. This paper will also point out some future research directions by comprehensively reviewing the relevant research in recent years.

Keywords: Adolescents; social media; body image.

1. Introduction

Body image refers to two parts of person's judgments. The first part is about the individual's judgement of the body, it related to how the feelings and evaluation of one's own body size. This is related to an individual's self-assessment of their own body.

And the second part is the manner of the individual's body, including attitudinal, affective and cognitive to individual's body [1]. For example, if someone have a pox, different people will judge the obviousness of the pox and the severity of the impact on his or her appearance. The judgments made by individuals are largely influenced by cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, and other variables.

For teenagers, their body image is strongly influenced by personal traits such as self-esteem and self-evaluation but can also change with external influences. As teenagers are in the adolescent stage of their lives, they are more sensitive to self-judgment and external judgment. The influence of the outside world has been shown to be noteworthy in the study [2].

One of the significant factors is social media. Body image issues are widespread among adolescents due to the substantial physical transformations they undergo during puberty, which may lead to highly fluctuating perceptions of their own bodies. Body image can be strongly influenced by cultural information and social criteria of appearance and attractiveness. There are data showing body image problems among adolescents have become common due to the thin female image and strong male image that is prevalent in all Western societies [2].

Social media refers to an interactive network formed based on modern network technology. Such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. Social media enables people to freely create and share content, interact and communicate with other users, and form social networks and communities [2]. Social media content includes text, images, and videos. Use of social media includes going through of social media, interacting with others on social media and putting up one's own content. According to Jillian's research, western adolescent use of social media is a factor that is likely to have a significant impact on adolescent body image self-assessment [2].

It is noted that social media has been increasingly used and mentioned more frequently in recent times, which seems to indicate that it has become an important part of people's lives, especially teenagers

[3]. The use of social media has brought about profound changes in the patterns of social interaction in contemporary society. This phenomenon has complex implications and provides a platform for many changes in society. These effects are not only positive, but also present challenges, such as social isolation, unhealthy comparisons, and the spread of harmful information [3].

2. Unrealistic Cognitive and Body Management Goals Setting Related To Social Media Use (SMU)

2.1. Social Media and Incorrect Perceptions

First, the use of social media can lead to incorrect perceptions. Young Asian men watching fitness images increase physical dissatisfaction, negativity, and the urge to engage in body-changing behaviors [4]. These effects are worth noting. They can lead to a distorted cognitive of body and deformed muscular aesthetic of the body image, leading to setting unrealistic fitness goals. Additionally, through long-term use of social media, some people may have high expectations of body shape. Due to a serious mismatch between body expectations and reality, people may set unrealistic body management goals [5]. Jacqueline V. Hogue, & Jennifer S. Mills's study has shown that distorted self-perceptions to body and expectations due to adaptation to social media are highly likely to occur in young women. In particular, browsing content on social platforms that overly idealizes body shapes of similar age can affect young women through peer pressure. Women tend to perceive themselves as less slim as they view other people's images on social media. When young women were exposed to more content from their peers on social media who were perceived as attractive, their perception of their body image became more negative than before. The propensity for upward appearance comparisons on social media platforms could potentially exacerbate body image anxieties among young adult females.

2.2. Gender Difference of the Unrealistic Goals

It is worth noting that the influence of SMU on adolescents of different genders is different, which may be related to cultural influences. For males, it mainly manifests as making males feel insufficiently muscular [4]. For females, the influence of SMU on body image (BI) mainly manifests as enhancing their desire to lose weight and be slim as mentioned above [6]. In Yee et al. 's research, the study examined the effects of men's viewing of neutral, thin-skinned and robust social media content on cognition and mood, respectively. No matter what type of fitness trend content male watch, men tend to increase their muscle percentage. And while watching social media content about fitness trends that focuses on skinny beauty can make males less dissatisfied with their bodies, it can still lead to lower moods. In other words, in the dissatisfaction with the impression of the female body, this dissatisfaction is mostly the desire to have a lighter weight. And most of the dissatisfaction with men's body is related to the unsatisfactory proportion of muscle despite of gaining or losing weight. When it comes to weight loss, women are more concerned about weight loss, while men are more concerned about body fat loss.

3. Positive Impact of Watching Ideal BI Content

A study was conducted to examine the effect of viewing body-positive online posts on the emotions and BI among young female [6]. The participants, who were primarily students between the ages of 18 and 25, were paired at random to view Instagram pictures that were either appearance-neutral, slim-ideal, or body-positive. The findings indicated that brief exposure to body-positive posts was linked with enhancements in positive mood, body satisfaction, and body appreciation among young women, as compared to viewing slim-ideal or appearance-neutral posts. For instance, there was a decrease in participants' levels of body dissatisfaction and anxiety. Comparing appearance-neutral postings to slim-ideal and body-positive posts, however, revealed that the latter were linked to a rise in self-objectification. That is say, watching social content that is positive and encourages acceptance of diverse beauty can improve mood. But there is an increased risk of the idea of self-objectification.

There is also a lack of specific and comprehensive research on viewing social media content that actively embraces one's body.

4. Actions Related to BI Arising from SMU

Dieting and eating disorders associated with changes in BI cognition caused by SMU. Because SMU can lead to BI concerns and psychological distress, eating disorders are more susceptible for people who are more exposed to social media [7]. In addition to the previously mentioned BI distortion, SMU has led to an increase in more form of idealized perceptions. Eating disorders are strongly associated with distortion of the BI and idealization of the appearance. Prior study explains that many posts on Instagram sharing low-calorie diets can lead to people's pursuit of too low-calorie diets, which can lead to dieting and even anorexia [7]. In addition, 49% of the participants who interacted with the supplement had many symptoms consistent with anorexia. In other words, there is a correlation between the following of overly healthy eating on social media and the occurrence of eating disorders. Moreover, interacting with content from acquaintances was linked to notably lower satisfaction with one's appearance compared to content from total strangers. Frequent use of social media has been associated with heightened BI distortions, increased instances of vomiting and laxative use, and extended time spent across multiple social media accounts [8]. Furthermore, dedicating more time to image-centric platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube can also foster intentions for unscientific physical modifications [8]. Exposure to weight loss content correlates with diminished body appreciation, heightened anxiety about negative physical evaluations, and more frequent episodes of overeating. The frequency of vomiting and laxative use was higher among people who were more exposed to social media's weight loss contents. In addition, women with more exposure to social media had higher rates of binge eating and laxative use than men who had been exposed to social media for the same amount of time.

Increased social media usage and screen time are correlated with an increased relative risk of weight swings and dieting [9]. Screen time and SMU have an impact on how well an individual can manage body to achieve his or her goals. Screen use that has an impact on weight change includes computer and mobile phone use. This insinuates that not only might social media screen time intensify a person's inclination and attempts to lose weight, but it could also boost the chances of putting on weight. This association is well worth studying. This seems to signal the overuse of social media, although it reinforces the desire to change weight. But for people trying to lose weight, the risk of weight gain is positively correlated with social media and screen time.

The findings suggest that, On the whole, an increase in screen time corresponds to a higher occurrence of dieting for weight loss in the sample, with a 14% rise in dieting prevalence for every additional hour of Sulfur individuals who experience weight gain, social media usage is linked with reduced muscle strengthening. A positive correlation exists between social media usage and dieting behavior.

The body culture of social media displays may be an influencing factor in the above behaviors. [10]. The study used Experience Sampling Phase. Participants were solicited to answer prompts in order to complete brief surveys at various semi-random instances throughout the day over a designated period. Studies have shown that people are more susceptible to the influence of acquaintances and celebrities. Browsing acquaintance social media can be more affected than browsing celebrity social media. The data shows that people are more sensitive to the content promoted by acquaintances and celebrities than the social media messages of strangers. People will be more inclined to compare themselves to the social media presence of their acquaintances. That said, living in a culture where social media is more likely to display idealized BIs is more likely to be distorted and dissatisfied with one's own image.

5. Future Direction

According to the studies this article mentioned before, the BI and SMU's connection remains exploration. This paragraph of the article mainly focuses on the aspects where more research should be done in the future to study the impact of SMU on adolescent BI to fill the research gap.

The impact of social media on male BI is under-researched [4]. Indeed, most of the current social media studies on adolescent BIs are female [4]. More research on male's BI can be helpful for scholars to have deeper insight of BI [11]. Besides, comparison BI features of different gender is useful. It is better able to help in the clinical treatment of behavioral and belief problems caused by poor BIs.

Studies in which only adolescents were the subject were insufficient for deeper understanding of teenager's BI. Many studies focus on youth that including later adolescence and early adulthood. For example, Jacqueline&Jennifer's research studies were only conducted from the second half of adolescence to adulthood. While differences in adolescence and early adulthood have been overlooked. Adolescents are more attentive and need a sense of freedom, hobbies related to exploration and newer and stimulating information. [12] These traits have the potential to influence their social media preferences. These are different from the needs of other life stages and are worth investigating in terms of how social media affects adolescent BI. The changes in BI that accompanied the whole adolescence were still to be studied. Changes in BI of adolescents at different ages would be worth a comparative study. The BI characteristics of adolescence and preadulthood are worth comparing.

Finally, it would be valuable to learn more about the positive effects of social media on adolescent BI. Such research could potentially aid adolescents in deriving pleasure from social media while circumventing some of the adverse impacts of social media-induced BI perceptions on adolescent conduct [6]. Engaging with family members and viewing their social media content is less prone to provoke negative BI perceptions [6]. This reflects the fact that family members' social media content is less likely to cause comparisons and self-doubt. Family members' social media may have a more positive impact on teens because of familiarity. Family support and good family relationships have been shown to be a protective factor for adolescent mental health, showing a reduced effect on the probability of adolescent mental health problem occurrence [12]. As a positive influencing factor on adolescent BI and the role of reducing negative emotions in social media, family support is worthy of attention [13].

6. Conclusion

The influence of social media usage on adolescent BI is mainly adverse. This article highlights significant impact of social media on adolescent BIs. This paper will also point out some future research directions by comprehensively reviewing the relevant research in recent years. For BI's cognition, adolescent SMU is positively correlated with unrealistic body management goal setting and higher dissatisfaction of body. In addition, there are gender differences in body management expectation. Males tend to focus on increasing muscle mass in their body management goals whether gaining or losing weight, while females are more concerned about weight loss. Spending time on social media increases the likelihood of incorrect body management in teens. Among adolescents who spent more time using social media, they were more likely to adopt dieting behaviors and use vomiting and laxatives, and were more likely to be anorexic and binge eating.

This paper provides a specific summary and explanation of the impact of adolescent BI on receiving SMU. This allows educators to have a better understanding of the social media impact on teens and to better help them. This article reminds clinicians to consider more factors, especially the influence of social media, when treating adolescents with BI problems. Due to the lack of research on male BI and the study of the change of adolescent BI with age, the comparison of BI characteristics of different genders and adolescents of different ages' teenagers needs to be explored. Research on the potential

positive effects of social media, such as the effects of positive content and family support on adolescent BI, is also up for study.

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