Body Satisfaction and Time Spent on Social Media

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**Abstract**

Social media has become one of the most used and influential parts of today’s society. It has become a source of income, a potential career opportunity, and a source for users to present and display themselves on a huge platform for the whole world to observe. Our society has evolved into a world where our appearance is being constantly questioned and judged. Due to this, there have been recent concerns and reports of insecurity and body dissatisfaction among social media users worldwide. Using the variables of social media and body satisfaction, this study hopes to understand how the amount of time on social media can impact an individual's overall body satisfaction. This research will present why this study is important and what other studies have found previously.. Using Likert scale questions, this study asks 41 social media participants to share their feelings regarding how they feel about their bodies and appearance.

Key Words:

Social Media, Body Satisfaction

**Body Satisfaction and Time on Social Media**

In 2019, research conducted by the Mental Health Organization found that 1 in 5 adults felt shame and disgusted by their body image and teenagers showed even higher numbers (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). Our society has evolved into a world where our appearance is being constantly questioned and judged. Another factor that has been introduced over time is the various social media platforms that dictate our everyday lives. Due to both of these variables coinciding with one another, this research will investigate if the increased amount of time on social media platforms decreases body image satisfaction. Before introducing the problem and data, it is important to first define each variable. According to the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, “body satisfaction, a separate construct from body image, denotes an investment in and concern with appearance” (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). When defining the second variable, being social media platforms, social media platforms will include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok. Today, 3.96 billion people worldwide use social media (Pew Research Center, 2019). This is a substantial amount of people that are participating and viewing social media on a daily basis which indicates that these participants are being affected at some capacity whether that being positive or negative. Social media is filled with unrealistic expectations and standards of health and attractiveness on all platforms. As viewers, participants are consuming this unrealistic media and subconsciously assuming that viewers themselves should look like these social media influencers or celebrities. These unrealistic posts are communicating to users that their body and appearance needs to look a certain way in order to be successful or noticed in society. Due to the abundant amount of negativity and unrealistic images and messages that are presented and communicated on these platforms, it is important to identify and understand how impactful this is on users.

**Literature Review**

Prior to the research presented in this paper, research was conducted at King University where they found that 87% of women and 65% of men compare their bodies to images they see on social media (King University, 2019). In that comparison, a stunning 50% of women and 37% of men compare their bodies unfavorably (King University, 2019). In their research they surveyed and asked around 5,000 social media users in order to identify if their hypothesis, measuring time on social media and body satisfaction, would be supported. This research study found that millennials and generation Z more often find themselves negatively comparing their body images with those of their peers, celebrities, and influencers on social media. King University dove deeper and found one of the leading causes for this comparison being the emergence of new editing apps that can alter an individual’s appearance such as facial structure and body (King University, 2019). These apps include, FaceApp, Peachy, Selfie Holics, and many more. The study further explains that with these apps, social media users are more inclined and pressured to use these apps in order to receive positive attention and feedback. Overall, the King University concluded that this “disconnect between perception and reality increases the distance between what users feel about themselves in real life and what they think about their online persona” (King University, 2019).

Another study conducted by the Environmental Research and Public Health, compared eating disorders and how much people use social media. The research highlights how eating disorders are rapidly increasing, especially among young women, and how the false ideals of bodies are displayed on social media (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). According to the study, 90% of young people, specifically aged 18-29, reported that they are exposed to an array of content that consists of unrealistic body images and expectations of beauty (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). Additionally, this study found that Instagram was the most influential of these body images and beauty expectations due to Instragram having a surplus of Instagram models and influencers that are constantly posting (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). Researchers found that social media “objectification suggests that the media’s sexual objectification of women’s bodies modifies their body appearance and self image causing body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). Overall the research presented that 93% of women wanted to change at least three different zones of their body and that these women had a medium probability of developing an eating disorder due to consuming media on social media platforms (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019).

An additional study was also conducted investigating specific social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat and measured users' body satisfaction by the Liebert Incorporation and researchers. The research found that Facebook was the most used platform and the platform that users spent the most time on (Griffiths et al., 2018). Within this study they surveyed and tested 2, 733 men and women that used Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat (Griffiths et al., 2018). They found that their first hypothesis was supported that the increased amount of time a user spent on social media had a direct correlation to the user’s body satisfaction (Griffiths et al., 2018). They found that these users that did spend more time on the listed platforms had lower body satisfaction, more susceptible to eating disorders, and masculinity dissatisfaction (Griffiths et al., 2018).

**Method**

**Subjects**

This study included a convenience sample totaling 41 completed survey responses anonymously. Requirements to be able to participate in this survey as stated in the survey were: 18 years of age and a user of the stated social media platforms. Out of the 41 participants, there were 5 male participants that completed the survey.

**Procedures**

This study was sent out online through Ball State studies COMM email. Participants were asked to answer each question honestly and truthfully to the best of their ability. Three research questions regarding social media and body satisfaction were used to first identify the participants' demographics. Twenty eight of the research questions were used to identify the participants' body satisfaction due to their experience and time on social media. The end of the survey assured participants that all entries and results would be kept anonymous and take no longer than 6 minutes to complete. The survey was accepting responses from May 5 at 5:00 PM until April 5th at 12:00 PM.

**Instrumentation**

This study was designed to understand the relationship between social media users and the impact it has on user’s body satisfaction. While completing this survey, Ball State’s Qualtrics and SPSS was used in order to accurately collect and analyze data. The survey, Body Satisfaction and Time Spent on Social Media, included 31 items. Out of these 31 items, 27 of the items were scaled. After the results were collected and analyzed through SPSS, Cronbach's Alpha presented a reliability of .950.

**Results**

Results of the correlation indicate that body satisfaction (M=2.27, SD=.77) was not as significantly related to hours on social media (M=2.68, SD=1.11) r(38)=.121, *p* >.46).

**Discussion**

This study explores how a user’s time on social media influences their body satisfaction. This study is very important with the consistent and increasing amount of social media users and the increasing amount of time users are spending on social media. Social media users are becoming younger, while social media platforms are only growing and expanding worldwide. The hypothesis stated earlier does not show that the amount of time on social media affects body satisfaction. This is due to the amount of hours on social media increasing while body satisfaction also increased which indicates insignificant results. This indicates that there was not enough research and participants in this study to make this study significantly accurate. Due to not enough participants incorporated in this study, it does not directly align with results presented in the priorly stated research projects. The other research projects that were presented in the literacy review all found that the amount of time on social media did negatively affect body satisfaction.

**Limitations & Future Direction**

The main limitation of this study was not receiving enough participants to answer and complete the study survey. In the future, having more participants will enhance the accuracy of the study and help the research be more understandable. It would also be wise to limit the age limit of social media users being used in this study. Most social media users are millennials and generation z. By using only these generations, the study could generate more accurate results. If this research were to be conducted again, it would be beneficial for these aspects to be incorporated and modified in order to enhance results.

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