

## Exploring the Influence of Social Media Engagement on Perceived Body Image among College Students

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### Introduction

Over the past 20 years, social media has become a prominent force in the day-to-day lives of individuals across the world (Mukherjee et al., 2022). One 2019 report estimated that 3.725 billion people are active social media users – approximately 48 % of the worldwide population (Santarossa et al., 2017). Social media use has been linked with positive outcomes, for example, allowing individuals to connect across distance barriers. However, research has suggested that social media use can also have undesirable psychological effects. For example, social media use has been linked with decreases in self-esteem (Jarman et al. 2021) and increases in depression (Grogan 2021), for an alternative perspective. In general, exposure to appearance-related Internet content is positively correlated with body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and internalization of the thin ideal depicted in media (Holland et al., 2016); social media platforms are a significant source of this type of content. A variety of studies have demonstrated positive associations between social media use and body dissatisfaction (Burnette et al., 2017).

The study on perceived body image amongst college students holds significant relevance in today's society as it has far reached implications for their overall health and mental wellbeing. (Baker et al., 2019). The way that individuals view themselves plays a crucial role in determining their self-esteem levels, body satisfaction metrics, and psychological wellbeing (Bowen et al., 2017). However, it appears that many college students face challenges when it comes to feeling satisfied about their physical appearance (Ando et al. 2021). The influence of social media platforms exacerbates the problem by promoting narrow beauty ideals and influencing societal views on body standards (Kim et al., 2015; Wut et al., 2022). Multiple studies confirm the harm of social media use with detrimental impacts on college students' body image satisfaction levels. This is primarily due to exposure to unrealistic images and persistent engagement in comparing oneself with others (Wang et al. 2010)

According to (Duarte et al. 2015), body image refers to people's subjective views, thoughts, and feelings about their own bodies, including their size, shape, and appearance. Regarding one's sense of worth, psychological stability, and general mental health, it is of utmost importance. Low self-esteem is linked to negative body image, which can result in emotions of dissatisfaction, embarrassment, and diminished confidence (Cohen et al., 2015). In addition, it may exacerbate psychological problems like depression, anxiety, and disordered eating patterns (Engeln et al. 2020). Negative body image is associated with decreased well-being and decreased participation in social activities, while good body image is associated with improved overall mental health outcomes and higher life satisfaction (Truasheim et al., 2023; Yang et al. 2020). Promoting a healthy self-image and encouraging improved mental health outcomes need understanding and resolving body image issues.

Body image issues are common among college students and have a big impact on their physical and mental health. Numerous studies have emphasised how common it is for people in this population to feel insecure about their bodies. For instance, according to study, between 50 and 70 percent of college students' express unhappiness with their physical appearance (Walker et al. 2021). The greater likelihood of participating in harmful weight management behaviours is one sign of the detrimental consequences of body image issues on college students' physical health. According to a study by (Aji et al., 2022), college students who are unhappy with their bodies are more prone to use severe weight-control techniques including fasting, utilising diet pills, or inducing self-induced vomiting. These actions may have a negative impact on their physical health, leaving them more susceptible to eating disorders, nutritional inadequacies, and disturbed metabolisms. Additionally, students' mental health in college is substantially impacted by issues with body image. Negative body image is linked to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and disordered eating behaviours, according to numerous studies (Harrison and Tiffany 2021; Sherlock et al., 2019). Body dissatisfaction can be a factor in low self-esteem, social isolation, and generally poor psychological health. Additionally, among college students, body image issues may affect relationships, academic performance, and general quality of life. The detrimental impact of body image disorders on college students' physical and mental well-being highlights how critical it is to treat these problems. The creation of interventions that encourage body acceptance, self-esteem, and a positive body image can improve general wellbeing and lower the risk of mental health issues in this at-risk group (Hicks et al., 2016).

Social media's emergence and broad use have had a big impact on many parts of people's life, including how they perceive their bodies. Understanding the historical context of social media's growth can help us comprehend its impact on how people perceive their bodies (Guo et al., 2022). Early in the 2000s, social media platforms like Friendster, MySpace, and LinkedIn became increasingly popular as they offered online venues for networking and connection (Robinson et al. 2017). But the beginning of Facebook in 2004 was a watershed moment. According to (Ibrahim et al. 2022), Facebook's user-friendly layout, broad accessibility, and incorporation of features like photo sharing and status updates contributed to its explosive growth. These factors also paved the way for the future rise of other social media platforms. The success of Facebook led to the emergence of additional platforms, each with its own distinct characteristics and target market. When Twitter was founded in 2006, users could exchange brief messages and participate in conversations that were happening right then. As a platform for exchanging photos, Instagram was introduced in 2010 and enables users to pick and share visually appealing images (Chatzopoulou et al., 2020). In order to cater to a younger audience, Snapchat, which was first released in 2011, popularised ephemeral messaging with augmented reality filters (Papaioannou and Tao 2021).

The development of mobile networking technology, the accessibility of smartphones, and the transition to visual-based communication are all factors that have contributed to the historical background of

social media's ascent. These elements have helped social media become widely used and integrated into people's daily lives (Best et al., 2014). According to (Lewallen et al., 2016) in 2021, there are 4.48 billion active social media users globally. The widespread use of social media has changed how people see themselves, other people, and their bodies (Grogan and Sarah 2021). Social networking sites now have significant sway over cultural views and standards of beauty. Users can curate and post carefully chosen, frequently idealised photographs of themselves and other people on these platforms, which fosters a culture of comparisons and self-evaluation (Boursier et al., 2020). Regular exposure to well edited and filtered photographs on social media might lead to the development of unrealistic body ideals and body dissatisfaction. According to research (Haferkamp et al., 2011), exposure to idealised images on social media is linked to greater body dissatisfaction, unfavourable comparisons to others, and internalising cultural beauty standards. As people seek social validation and acceptance through involvement with others' posts on social media, the interactive element of these platforms—including likes, comments, and shares—further magnifies their effects on how people perceive their bodies (Fardouly et al., 2018). **Succeeding part of this paper is organised as Literature Review, Research Methodology, Data Analysis and result, Discussions and Conclusion.**

## Literature Review

### *Social Media Engagement Among College Students*

Social media engagement refers to a range of actions people take while interacting with social media platforms, such as liking, commenting, sharing, and contrasting their own postings with those of others (Barry et al. 2022). These interactions are essential in determining how people use social media and how they perceive it. Engagement on social media can have a big impact on how college students see their bodies in the context of body image (Hicks et al., 2016).

The possible influence of social media usage on how people perceive their bodies has been noted in research. According to (Truasheim et al., 2023), using social media exposes people to idealised images, which can lead to body dissatisfaction and the internalisation of thin-ideal norms. Engaging with these idealised images, such as liking or commenting on articles that depict a particular body ideal, can help to uphold societal beauty standards and affect how people perceive their own bodies (Sabiston et al. 2019).

Additionally, the comparison-based nature of social media interaction has been noted as a major influencer of perceived body image. According to (Fardouly et al. 2018), social media appearance comparisons, such as contrasting one's own body with that of others, are linked to higher body dissatisfaction in women in their twenties. Social media platforms provide ongoing access to carefully selected photographs of other people's bodies and lives, which encourages social comparison processes and fosters negative body image beliefs (Richard 2014).

It is crucial to recognise that social media involvement is a complex idea that includes a range of actions and attitudes. The importance of social comparison and interaction with other people's posts on social media platforms was underlined by (Rounsefell et al. 2020). They discovered that higher levels of body dissatisfaction among college students were linked to higher levels of upward social comparisons, which occur when people compare themselves to someone, they find more attractive (Hawes et al., 2020).

### **Perceived Body Image Among College Students**

Conducting research in the area of social media engagement and its influence on perceived body image among college students holds significant importance due to its potential impact on the development of interventions and strategies to promote healthier body image perception and improved well-being (Best et al. 2014). In today's digital age, where social media plays a central role in the lives of college students, understanding the specific dynamics of social media engagement and its consequences for body image

is crucial. By investigating the relationship between social media engagement and body image perception, researchers can identify the specific activities and behaviours that contribute to negative body image outcomes among college students (Baker et al. 2019). This knowledge can inform the design of targeted interventions that address these behaviours and encourage healthier engagement practices. For example, interventions may focus on promoting self-compassion, resilience, and positive self-comparison strategies to counter the negative effects of social media engagement on body image perception (Voelker et al., 2015).

Furthermore, delving into the underlying mechanisms through which social media engagement impacts body image perception can provide valuable insights for intervention strategies. This includes exploring factors such as exposure to idealized images, social comparison processes, and the endorsement of specific body ideals (Boursier et al., 2020). Understanding these mechanisms can guide the development of interventions that directly address these factors, such as promoting media literacy skills, challenging unrealistic beauty ideals, and fostering positive online communities that promote body positivity and inclusivity (Al-Yahya et al. 2020). Considering the broader implications for college students' mental health is also crucial in this research area. Negative body image perception has been linked to various psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, and disordered eating (Scully et al., 2023). By exploring the mental health consequences of social media engagement and its impact on body image, researchers can develop interventions that not only target body image concerns but also address the broader mental health challenges faced by college students in the digital era. These interventions may involve promoting self-esteem, healthy coping strategies, and fostering a supportive online environment that encourages positive self-expression and acceptance (Klein and Kendyl 2013).

In summary, conducting research on the influence of social media engagement on perceived body image among college students is vital for the development of interventions and strategies. By identifying specific engagement behaviours, understanding underlying mechanisms, and considering mental health implications, interventions can be tailored to promote healthier body image perception and overall well-being among college students in the digital age.

### **Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Perceived Body Image**

The connection between college students' use of social media and their discontent with their bodies has received a lot of attention in the literature. (Richard M Perloff 2014) emphasised the effects of exposure to idealised images on social media in a thorough review. According to the review, such exposure was linked to college students' greater body dissatisfaction and internalisation of thin-ideal standards. This shows that young adults' impressions of their bodies and feelings of discontent with them may be influenced by the idealised and frequently unattainable body models portrayed on social media platforms. Additional research has concentrated on certain social media sites and their impacts on how people perceive their bodies. For instance, (Fardouly et al., 2018) looked at the connection between young women's Facebook use and body dissatisfaction. According to their findings, women in college who used Facebook more frequently expressed greater body dissatisfaction and comparisons of their looks. Similar to this, (Wut et al. 2022) investigated how social comparison affected Facebook. They found that college students with higher degrees of body dissatisfaction made upward social comparisons with those on the platform who were more attractive than themselves.

Additionally, the impact of image-focused sites like Instagram has been researched. According to (Cohen et al. 2015), increased Instagram use and engagement with appearance-related content were significantly correlated with college students' body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. Higher Facebook use was linked to more appearance comparison, body surveillance, and body shame, according to (Robinson et al. 2017) study on the connection between Facebook use and body image

dissatisfaction among female college students. In a long-term study, (Fardouly et al. 2018) found that higher social media use among female college students predicted rising body dissatisfaction over time.

Collectively, this research shows that using social media might negatively affect college students' perceptions of their bodies. Negative body image impressions and dissatisfaction are caused by exposure to idealised images, participation in appearance comparisons, and the interactive aspect of social media platforms(Guo et al., 2022). For college students to have a positive body image and overall well-being, it is essential to recognise and address these effects.

Social media platforms have the capacity to affect how people perceive their bodies through a variety of methods that help people internalise beauty standards and grow dissatisfied with their bodies(Holland et al.,2016). Many research has illuminated these pathways, emphasising the importance of exposure to idealised and unrealistic beauty standards, social comparison, and the validation of particular body ideals. Social media exposure to idealised and unattainable beauty standards is a major factor in how people perceive their bodies. According to research by (Rodgers et al., 2016), young women who were exposed to more idealised photographs on Facebook reported feeling less satisfied with their bodies. Similar to this, (Richard M. and Perloff 2014) emphasised that college students internalise thin-ideal standards as a result of exposure to these idealised photos on social media platforms. Another process that affects how people perceive their bodies is social comparison, which is made easier by social media platforms. According to (Marks et al., 2020), female college students who used Facebook more frequently compared their appearance more frequently. The frequent exposure to peers' carefully manicured lives and carefully chosen photographs encourages upward social comparisons, in which people assess their own appearance in contrast to others they find more attractive, which feeds body dissatisfaction(Santarossa et al., 2017).

Additionally, social media sites promote particular body ideals that exacerbate issues with body image. According to research by (Holland et al.,2016), young women who are exposed to social media fitspiration content, which promotes a specific body ideal through fitness and exercise, report having higher levels of body dissatisfaction and negative emotions. Such body ideals can be internalised and lead to unhappiness with one's own body if they are supported and reinforced on social media platforms(Robinson et al. 2017).

There is a study gap in understanding the precise impact of social media involvement on perceived body image, despite the fact that multiple studies have examined the connection between social media use and body image perception among college students. The existing literature has mostly ignored the specific actions and behaviours connected to social media involvement and has instead concentrated on general social media use or exposure to idealised representations.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Research Approach***

This study will employ a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between social media engagement and perceived body image among college students. This approach will allow for the systematic examination of numerical data to identify patterns, associations, and potential predictors.

### **Research Design**

A cross-sectional research design will be used to collect data at a single point in time. This design is suitable for exploring relationships between variables and will provide insights into the influence of social media engagement on perceived body image among college students.

## **Participants**

### ***Sample Selection***

A convenience sampling method will be utilized to recruit participants for the study. College students from various academic disciplines and backgrounds will be invited to participate. This approach will help ensure diversity in the sample and increase the generalizability of the findings.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

Participants must meet the following criteria to be included in the study: (a) currently enrolled as full-time college students and (b) possess active social media accounts.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size will be determined through a power analysis based on effect size estimates from previous research on similar topics. A sufficient sample size (N=252) will be calculated to ensure adequate statistical power for the proposed analyses.

## **Data Collection**

### ***Questionnaire Development***

Two questionnaires will be developed to assess the variables of interest: social media engagement and perceived body image. Existing validated scales will be adopted and customized to suit the context of the study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Participants will be invited to complete the questionnaires through an online survey platform. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant before they begin the survey. Participants will be assured of their confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation.

## **Measures**

### ***Social Media Engagement***

The social media engagement questionnaire will comprise items that assess the frequency of social media use, types of platforms used, time spent on social media, and interactions with posts related to body image (likes, comments, shares).

### **Perceived Body Image**

The perceived body image questionnaire will include items assessing participants' perceptions of their own body image, self-esteem, body satisfaction, and tendencies to compare their bodies with others'.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Descriptive Analysis**

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, will be calculated for the social media engagement and perceived body image variables.

### **Inferential Analysis**

Correlation analysis, specifically Pearson's correlation coefficient, will be conducted to explore the relationships between social media engagement and perceived body image variables. Multiple regression analysis will be performed to identify potential predictors of perceived body image.

### Ethical Considerations

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before data collection. The study will adhere to ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality, data storage, and participant anonymity.

### Limitations

Potential limitations of the study include the use of self-report measures, potential sampling bias, and the cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships.

### Analysis and Result

#### Demographic Profile

Collecting demographic details from college students is vital to understand how social media affects perceived body image. These details reveal variations across age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds, helping tailor interventions and account for confounding factors. Additionally, demographic data enhances the study's generalizability and ethical considerations, guiding future research directions.

**Table 1**  
***Demographic Profile***

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-20 years old	69	27.4
	21-23 years old	132	52.4
	24 and above	51	20.2
	Total	252	100.0
Gender	Male	120	47.6
	Female	132	52.4
	Total	252	100.0
Graduation	PG	126	50.0
	UG	126	50.0
	Total	252	100.0

Field of Study	Commerce and Management	234	92.9
	Science	15	6.0
	Humanities / Arts	3	1.2
	Total	252	100.0
Socioeconomic Status	High-income	3	1.2
	Middle-income	219	86.9
	Low-income	30	11.9
	Total	252	100.0
Body Mass Index (BMI)	Underweight	33	13.1
	Normal weight	210	83.3
	Overweight	9	3.6
	Total	252	100.0

**Source: Authors Compiled**

The demographic profile presented in Table 1 sheds light on the composition of the study's participants. The age distribution showcases a significant representation of participants aged 21-23 years (52.4%), followed by those aged 18-20 years (27.4%), and individuals aged 24 and above (20.2%). Gender distribution is nearly equal, with (47.6%) males and (52.4%) females. Moreover, the split between postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) students is even, each constituting 50% of the total. The majority of participants (92.9%) are pursuing studies in Commerce and Management, with smaller percentages from science (6.0%) and Humanities/Arts (1.2%). In terms of socioeconomic status, most participants are categorized as middle-income (86.9%), followed by low-income (11.9%), and a minor percentage falls into the high-income bracket (1.2%). Lastly, the distribution of Body Mass Index (BMI) reveals that a substantial proportion have normal weight (83.3%), followed by underweight (13.1%), and a small number fall within the overweight category (3.6%). This demographic diversity provides a comprehensive foundation for analysing the potential influence of social media engagement on perceived body image across various demographic categories.

**Social Media Usage**

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of the lives of college students, fundamentally transforming how they communicate, share information, and interact with their peers.

**Table 2**

***Social Media Usage***

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour per day	18	7.1



3-4 hours per day	123	48.8
5 hours or more per day	6	2.4
1-2 hours per day	105	41.7
Total	252	100.0

Table 2 presents the distribution of social media usage patterns among the surveyed students. The data reveals that a significant portion of students spend a substantial amount of time on social media, with 48.8% indicating usage for 3-4 hours per day and (41.7%) reporting 1-2 hours per day. A smaller proportion, 7.1%, engages with social media for less than 1 hour per day, while only (2.4%) spend 5 hours or more daily. These findings highlight the prevalence of extended social media engagement among students, with nearly (92%) spending 1-4 hours on these platforms daily. This data underscores the considerable influence of social media on students' daily routines and emphasizes the need to comprehend its potential impact on various aspects of their lives, including body image perceptions and overall well-being.

### Social Media Engagement

The prevalence of social media platforms has deeply integrated them into students' lives, reshaping communication and information consumption. Amid this, questions arise about the influence of extensive social media use on students' body image perceptions, alongside concerns about mental well-being. This study delves into this connection, recognizing the need to comprehensively comprehend the interplay between social media engagement and students' perceptions of their own bodies.

**Table 3**  
**Social Media Engagement**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
"I spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms	252	3.92	.745	.047
"I feel compelled to check social media frequently throughout the day	252	3.50	.934	.059
"I find myself comparing my life to others' lives on social media	252	3.07	1.165	.073
"Social media has become an important part of my daily routine	252	3.54	.894	.056
"I feel a sense of anxiety or fear of missing out (FOMO) when	252	2.82	1.084	.068

I'm not on social media				
"I believe social media helps me stay connected with friends and family	252	3.88	.933	.059
"I use social media to seek validation or attention from others	252	2.88	1.161	.073
"I actively engage with posts, comments, or discussions on social media	252	2.94	1.086	.068
"I find social media enjoyable and entertaining	252	3.94	.747	.047
"Social media enhances my social life and relationships.]	252	3.23	.982	.062
"I feel that my self-worth is influenced by the number of likes or comments I receive on social media	252	2.60	1.158	.073
"I believe social media negatively impacts my productivity or focus on important tasks	252	3.50	1.020	.064
"I feel that social media contributes to a distorted perception of reality	252	3.46	.867	.055
"I have experienced negative emotions (e.g., sadness, envy) after using social media	252	3.23	1.053	.066
"I feel pressure to present an idealized version of myself on social media	252	3.05	.964	.061
"Social media makes me feel more self-conscious about my body	252	3.04	1.087	.068
"I compare my body to others' bodies I see on social media	252	2.67	1.086	.068
"Social media has influenced my perception of an 'ideal'	252	2.99	1.054	.066

body				
"I feel pressure to look a certain way because of what I see on social media	252	2.86	1.050	.066

Table 3 outlines various aspects of social media engagement and their associated mean scores, standard deviations, and standard errors of the mean. The data reveals notable trends in students' interactions with social media platforms. Notably, students reported spending a significant amount of time on social media platforms (M = 3.92, SD=.745) and feeling compelled to frequently check them throughout the day (M = 3.50, SD=.934). The inclination to compare one's life to others' lives on social media is moderately observed (M = 3.07, SD=1.165), while social media's integration into daily routines is also apparent (M = 3.54, SD=.894). Feelings of anxiety or fear of missing out (FOMO) when not on social media are somewhat prevalent (M = 2.82, SD=1.084), while social media's positive role in connecting with friends and family is acknowledged (M = 3.88, SD=.933). However, the use of social media for validation or attention-seeking purposes is moderate (M = 2.88, SD=1.161), and the active engagement with posts, comments, or discussions exhibits a similar pattern (M=2.94, SD=1.086). Interestingly, the perception that social media enhances self-worth through likes or comments is moderately low (M = 2.60, SD=1.158). Participants also expressed concerns about social media negatively impacting productivity (M =3.50, SD=1.020) and contributing to a distorted reality (M = 3.46, SD=.867). Additionally, experiencing negative emotions after using social media is moderately noted (M = 3.23, SD=1.053), and there is a mild tendency to feel pressure to present an idealized self-image (M = 3.05, SD=.964) and compare one's body to others' bodies (M =2.67, SD=1.086). Overall, the data underscores the multifaceted nature of students' social media engagement, encompassing both positive and potentially negative effects on body image perceptions and self-esteem.

### Perceived Body Image

Perceived body image holds significant influence over college students' self-esteem and mental well-being, crucial during the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood. In the modern era, media, particularly social media, exacerbates societal pressures and unrealistic beauty ideals, intensifying the impact on body image perceptions. Recognizing the profound implications, investigating the factors contributing to perceived body image among college students is imperative for informed interventions fostering positive self-perception and psychological resilience.

**Table 4**  
**Perceived Body Image**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
"Social media makes me feel more self-conscious about my body	252	3.04	1.087	.068
"I compare my body to others' bodies I see on social media	252	2.67	1.086	.068
"Social media has influenced my perception of an 'ideal' body	252	2.99	1.054	.066

"I feel pressure to look a certain way because of what I see on social media	252	2.86	1.050	.066
"Social media negatively affects my body image and self-esteem	252	2.80	1.023	.064
"Social media makes me more dissatisfied with my body	252	2.74	1.084	.068
"I feel the need to edit or filter my photos before posting them on social media	252	2.98	1.187	.075
"Social media promotes unrealistic beauty standards that affect how I feel about my body	252	3.08	1.085	.068
"I have compared my body to images or influencers on social media and felt worse about myself as a result	252	2.57	1.200	.076
"Social media encourages body shaming or negative comments about appearance.	252	3.12	1.019	.064
"Social media can trigger feelings of insecurity or inadequacy regarding my body	252	3.06	1.041	.066
"I feel the pressure to conform to societal beauty standards because of social media	252	2.75	.926	.058
"Social media enhances my body positivity and acceptance	252	3.07	1.046	.066
"I have unfollowed or muted accounts on social media that negatively impacted my body image	252	2.94	1.041	.066
"Engaging with body-positive content on social media has improved my body image perception.]"	252	3.10	.936	.059

Table 4 presents diverse facets of perceived body image among the college students, displaying mean scores, standard deviations, and standard errors of the mean. The data underscores the nuanced relationship between social media engagement and body image perceptions. Notably, students report feeling more self-conscious about their bodies due to social media (M = 3.04, SD=1.087) and engaging in body comparisons with others on these platforms (M=2.67, SD=1.086). The influence of social media on the perception of an 'ideal' body is evident (M = 2.99, SD=1.054), along with the pressure to conform to appearance ideals (M=2.86, SD=1.050). Moreover, students' express concerns about the negative impact of social media on their body image and self-esteem (M = 2.80, SD=1.023), leading to increased body dissatisfaction (M = 2.74, SD=1.084). The need to edit or filter photos before posting is moderately prevalent (M = 2.98, SD=1.187), and the perception of unrealistic beauty standards propagated by social media is also acknowledged (M = 3.08, SD=1.085). Interestingly, students report comparing their bodies to images or influencers on social media and feeling worse about themselves as a result (M = 2.57, SD=1.200). Furthermore, the role of social media in encouraging body shaming and negative comments is recognized (M = 3.12, SD=1.019), while triggering feelings of insecurity or inadequacy regarding one's body is also evident (M = 3.06, SD=1.041). Conversely, social media can enhance body positivity and acceptance (M = 3.07, SD=1.046), and engaging with body-positive content is perceived as improving body image (M = 3.10, SD=.936). Collectively, the data emphasizes the complex interplay between social media engagement and the multifaceted dimensions of body image perceptions among college students, shedding light on both the adverse and potentially beneficial impacts.

### Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Perceived Body Image

The intricate relationship between social media engagement and perceived body image is a subject of intense exploration, especially among college students, given their susceptibility to online influences. Research underscores that exposure to idealized body images on social media can lead to body dissatisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2015) due to upward social comparisons (Festinger, 1954), while the promotion of diverse body positivity through online communities can offer a contrasting positive influence (Holland et al., 2017). This dynamic interaction emphasizes the need to comprehensively understand and address the impact of social media on body image perceptions for effective interventions and mental well-being.

**Table 5**  
**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.489 <sup>a</sup>	.239	.236	3.15290
a. Predictors: (Constant), SME				

Table 5 presents the model summary of a linear regression analysis examining the relationship between social media engagement (SME) and its predictive impact on perceived body image. The model indicates that the predictive value of social media engagement on perceived body image is statistically significant, as denoted by the R value of .489. The R Square value of .239 suggests that approximately (23.9%) of the variance in perceived body image can be explained by social media engagement. The Adjusted R Square value of .236 takes into account the number of predictors in the model and indicates a slightly adjusted percentage of variance explained. The standard error of the estimate, at 3.15290, reflects the average deviation of observed values from predicted values in the model. Overall, the model suggests that social media engagement has a notable influence on perceived body image among the participants, as indicated by the statistically significant R value and substantial proportion of variance explained.

**Table 6**  
**ANOVA Result**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	779.521	1	779.521	78.417	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2485.193	250	9.941		
	Total	3264.714	251			
a. Dependent Variable: PBI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), SME						

Table 6 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model examining the relationship between social media engagement (SME) and the dependent variable, perceived body image (PBI). The ANOVA table shows that the regression model significantly explains variance in perceived body image, as indicated by the significant F-statistic of (78.417) with a p-value (Sig. of .001). This suggests that the variation in perceived body image is not due to random chance but is influenced

by social media engagement. The regression model's ability to predict perceived body image is further emphasized by the substantial sum of squares for the regression component (779.521) compared to the residual sum of squares (2485.193). This indicates that the regression model effectively captures a significant portion of the variability in perceived body image. Overall, the ANOVA results provide strong evidence that social media engagement is a significant predictor of perceived body image among the participants in this study.

**Table 7**  
**Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.471	.939		3.697	.000
	SME	.482	.054	.489	8.855	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PBI

Table 7 displays the coefficients of the regression model investigating the relationship between social media engagement (SME) and the dependent variable, perceived body image (PBI). The coefficients indicate the estimated impact of the predictors on the outcome variable. The constant term is (3.471), which represents the estimated perceived body image score when social media engagement is zero. The coefficient for SME is (0.482), indicating that for each unit increase in social media engagement, the perceived body image score is estimated to increase by (0.482) units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of (0.489) indicates the relative strength of the relationship between social media engagement and perceived body image after accounting for the scale of measurement. The t-statistic of (8.855) is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the coefficient for social media engagement is statistically different from zero. This suggests that social media engagement is a significant predictor of perceived body image. Overall, these coefficient values emphasize that increased social media engagement is associated with higher perceived body image scores among the participants in the study.

**Discussion**

The analysis of the relationship between social media engagement (SME) and perceived body image (PBI) reveals intriguing insights into the impact of digital interactions on young adults' self-perception. The statistically significant positive correlation observed ( $r = .489, p < .001$ ) aligns with previous research indicating that heightened social media engagement is associated with more positive perceptions of body image (Table 7). This finding supports the idea that exposure to diverse body representations, body-positive content, and empowering narratives on social media platforms can foster improved body image perceptions among college students (Best et al. 2014; Ho, Lee, and Liao 2016). The positive standardized coefficient (Beta = .489) signifies the strength of the relationship between SME and PBI after considering the variables' scales.

The substantial influence of social media engagement on perceived body image is noteworthy, with each unit increase in SME corresponding to a 0.482-unit increase in PBI. This aligns with existing literature indicating that increased social media usage provides opportunities for individuals to challenge traditional beauty standards, partake in body-positive discussions, and appreciate a broader

spectrum of body types (Chatzopoulou et al. 2020). Conversely, the mere exposure to unrealistic body ideals and the constant comparison with digitally manipulated images can contribute to negative body image outcomes (Fardouly et al., 2018; Richard M Perloff 2014). The highly significant t-statistic ( $t = 8.855$ ,  $p < .001$ ) reinforces the robustness of the relationship, underscoring the impact of social media engagement on body image perceptions.

It's important to acknowledge that while social media can positively influence body image perceptions, it can also perpetuate unrealistic standards and intensify appearance-related pressures (Haferkamp et al., 2011). The balance between positive and negative effects of social media on body image is complex and varies based on individual experiences and content consumption patterns. Therefore, interventions promoting media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible social media usage are crucial to maximize the benefits and minimize the potential harms associated with these platforms.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illuminates the intricate relationship between social media engagement and perceived body image among college students. The findings underscore the significant impact of social media on body image perceptions, revealing both positive and negative associations. Heightened engagement with social media platforms appears to correlate with more positive body image perceptions, potentially stemming from exposure to diverse representations and body-positive content. However, the study also acknowledges the potential risks of exposure to unrealistic beauty standards and appearance-focused pressures. These results emphasize the need for balanced approaches in leveraging the potential benefits of social media while promoting media literacy and psychological resilience to mitigate potential adverse effects on body image perceptions and well-being.

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