

The Correlation Between Editability and Self-esteem

Shaohan Tang *

College of Communication, Boston University, Boston, MA, 02215, United State

* Corresponding author: tangela5@bu.edu

Abstract. The use of social media technologies is surging at an astonishing rate. The number of users who edit their photos before posting them to gain more attention and to boost their self-confidence is constantly increasing. In the meantime, their self-esteem is being influenced either positively or adversely. Many scholarly investigations focused on photo editing and its influence on the self-esteem of individuals utilizing social media platforms have predominantly affirmed the notable impact of this cultural phenomenon on users' self-esteem. By reviewing previous studies, this paper references and critically examines a collection of scholarly literature, focusing on the relationship between editability and self-esteem. The present argument proposes that the photo-editing proficiency of the majority of users has an evident effect on their self-esteem. A number of papers in this field have tackled subjects related to body image and social comparison, clarifying the connection between editability and self-esteem by examining these two concepts. This paper concludes that editability mainly influences the user's self-esteem, explaining the reason with two concepts -- social comparison and body image. The significance of this review is to assist researchers in finding studies that discuss editability and self-esteem, as well as related areas. Further research should delve more into how the use of filters and Photoshop apps affect the public's self-esteem.

Keywords: Editability, self-esteem, body image, social comparison, photo editing.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, augmented reality (AR) face filters have the capacity to realistically alter a user's look, offering a novel perspective on authenticity [1]. Javornik and other authors propose that the utilization of AR filters has the potential to foster self-acceptance among individuals, as it enables them to present their actual selves [1]. They argue that even minor changes possess the ability to disrupt an individual's self-concept, emphasizing the disparity between their actual and ideal selves, thereby diminishing their tolerance for imperfections. As a result, those who are influenced by AR filters are more inclined to exhibit lower levels of self-acceptance and experience a range of both positive and negative emotions. Furthermore, they highlight that motivations stemming from one's authentic or true self contribute to the enhancement of self-acceptance, whereas the desire to present an idealized self-version diminishes [1]. In addition, Bhatt reports that 600 million Instagram or Facebook users employ AR filters on a monthly basis, and about 76% of Snapchat users integrate them into their daily usage [2]. With the prevalence of selfies, research has focused on investigating how personality traits are connected to the posting of selfies. For example, Chae demonstrates that individuals with elevated levels of narcissism are more prone to share their selfies [3]. In addition, narcissism and the act of taking selfies are shown to exert mutual influence over each other over time [3]. Moreover, individuals displaying traits of exhibitionism and extraversion tend to post selfies with greater frequency [3]. Greater body dissatisfaction, body anxiety, and lower self-esteem often follow repeated exposure to thin-idealized media images, as shown by investigations [4].

Nowadays, many Internet users often find themselves experiencing feelings of envy upon encountering certain posts – significantly photoshopped selfies in particular – and start to imitate or criticize these posts, sometimes even distorting the very definition of body image. Consequently, individuals might begin to chase a distorted idea of "beauty" that conforms to current societal trends, which could potentially act as a catalyst for diminished self-esteem. The objective of this literature review is to investigate the correlation between editability and self-esteem. Within this review, an examination of the concepts and causes of editability and self-esteem will be conducted. Furthermore,

an exploration of how body image and social comparison affect the relationship between editability and self-esteem will be undertaken.

2. Editability

2.1. What Is Editability

The concept of editability enables individuals to refine the clarity of their arguments and engage in thoughtful reflection on their knowledge and intended message [5]. Moreover, the feature of editability allows communicators to carefully analyze the specific context in which their message is expected to be perceived. They can also retrospectively examine the actual context in which their message was viewed and subsequently adapt their ideas accordingly. In summary, the capacity for modification provided by social media platforms may facilitate a more deliberate dissemination of information, thereby enhancing individual self-expression, catering to specific target demographics, and improving the overall quality of shared information [5]. In this literature review, the primary focus is on the editability of images.

Based on previous research, editing self-portraits has been demonstrated to alter users' views on "self-objectification and self-concept clarity" [6]. In addition, recent years have witnessed a significant increase in research focused on the topic of photo-editing behavior, owing to its pervasive prevalence among social media users. According to the findings of Lee and Lee, photo-editing applications have the potential to alleviate the negative associations between internalizing beauty standards from the media and the pressure to conform, particularly in relation to body satisfaction [7]. They mention that the current popularity of photo-editing behavior necessitates additional research to comprehend its effect on how young women perceive their bodies. In conclusion, there may be a correlation between engaging in photo-editing activities and experiencing worries related to body image.

2.2. The Effect of Body Image

Engagement with Instagram is linked to negative body image, heightened anxiety, social pressures, and the digital compulsion to match an impractical beauty ideal. This affects not only male and female adolescents but also drives them to edit their online appearance to fit these benchmarks and attain popularity [3]. Chae highlights the phenomenon wherein people engage in self-comparisons with others to facilitate self-improvement [3]. Drawing from a study by Vendemia and DeAndrea, photoshopped Instagram selfies severely damaged the body image of young women, particularly among those who engage more earnestly in social comparison [8]. They also note that digitally altered online images of women endorsing the slim ideal tend to lose authenticity. After all, Vendemia and DeAndrea's research concludes that women's body image depicted by mass media depictions, especially those with distorted physical traits, tend to have a negative impact on women's body image [8]. Interestingly, professional models appear to be more tolerant of similar behavior when observed on social media compared to their peers. Viewers tend to assume that professional models post selfies for altruistic motives such as inspiring others to exercise and achieve a healthier body. Consequently, the models are seen as more positively smarter and/or more sincere than other SNS influencers. The authors suggest that female social media users may have seen slim and sexualized women in traditional media. Nevertheless, social media allows anyone to portray themselves as skinny and sexually objectifying [8].

2.3. The Relationship with Narcissism

When it comes to appearance, people who already have a sense of contentment with themselves often strive to present an even more appealing image to others -- for example, celebrities still use digitally reshaped selfies to achieve the effect of attention-catching and a sense of superiority among others [3]. Chae's study uncovers a correlation between narcissism and the act of taking selfies. Selfie-

takers may possess narcissistic tendencies, perceiving themselves as distinct and actively seeking validation from others [3].

3. Self-esteem

3.1. Concept

Self-esteem often refers to an individual's self-assessment or self-appraisal. It is defined as an individual's subjective perception and evaluation of their own worth, value, significance, or capabilities [9]. The results of the study done by Chae indicate that, in comparison to merely observing selfies taken by others, actively posting one's own selfies could potentially have a favorable influence on the self-esteem and body image of young women [3]. This research deepens the comprehension of the complex interrelationships among various forms of Instagram selfie interaction which encompasses both acts of viewing and uploading while also enhancing the understanding of body image issue encountered by young women [9].

According to the research by Verrastro and other authors, individuals may become deeply involved in the virtual realm, leading to a distorted perception of the female body [10]. Consequently, they conclude that women experience societal expectations to alter the visual representation of their uploaded photographs, driving them to use photoshop before posting their photos (or selfies especially). The resulting disparity between online and real-life images gives rise to feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction, which in turn are associated with difficulties in regulating behavior and emotions [10]. According to them, the influence of Instagram on the mental well-being of adolescents, especially young females, holds considerable importance due to its strong connection with self-esteem, body awareness, and body image. Moreover, the act of posting selfies on Instagram may have a positive influence over their self-image and self-beliefs, potentially bolstering their self-esteem [9]. As suggested by Kim, enhanced self-esteem might improve youngsters' body satisfaction [9]. Building on the aforementioned studies, it can be inferred that the self-esteem of Instagram users may have the potential to mediate between their selfie-posting behavior and body dissatisfaction [9].

3.2. The Relationship with Body Image

Yu and Jung's findings suggest that examining appearance self-discrepancy offers a more comprehensive insight into the influence of media on body image and self-esteem, as opposed to solely considering appearance self-schema as a moderator [4]. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research that specifically explores the effects of being exposed to realistic or nonidealized images of models on body image, especially in terms of its potential to improve self-esteem or foster a more positive body image among females. Yu and Jung explore the potential outcomes of increased body pleasure or reduced body anxiety [4]. The potential influence of self-schema and/or self-discrepancy on the consequences of viewing images featuring thin vs. non-idealized models, especially concerning the body image and self-esteem of young women, has not been thoroughly explored [4]. Moreover, Vendemia and DeAndrea's study has important influences on the field of body image studies and gives information on the influence of social media usage among women [8]. They claim that when individuals' peers serve as image sources rather than models, they present fewer noble justifications for their actions such as showcasing their accomplishments, evoking envy, or bragging. Furthermore, these individuals display a tendency to judge involved women more critically, viewing them as less clever and less trustworthy. Furthermore, it was revealed that viewers' awareness of photo manipulation has a mitigating influence on the negative repercussions linked with the promotion of a thin ideal, such as internalization [8]. Further evidence presented in Fardouly and Rapee's research reveals that women routinely compare their physical appearance with that of others [11]. This inclination becomes especially strong when making upward comparisons to more beautiful individuals. The findings of their research conclude that such comparisons have a negative impact on not only women's body image but also their mental state. In addition, it is noteworthy that women constantly compare their physical attractiveness to those perceived to be equally or less beautiful than

themselves, a practice that has the potential to positively influence their body image [11]. The study by Chang and other authors identifies a possible link between online peer interactions and body image problems in adolescent females [12]. They indicate that studies centered around peer appearance comparisons exhibit a substantial link with lower levels of body esteem. Nonetheless, the association observed between the act of uploading selfies and body esteem implies that contact with peers could contribute to gaining peer recognition and fostering a positive self-perception in youngsters [12].

3.3. The Relationship with Social Comparison

The phenomenon of social comparisons has the potential to shape the beauty standards of adolescent females [12]. Chang and fellow researchers discovered that the impact of peer influence, manifested through comparisons of appearances, detrimentally affects body esteem irrespective of the specific direction of those comparisons [12]. The observed correlation between the act of posting selfies and the level of body esteem among individuals implies the presence of underlying social psychological factors that drive young girls to present themselves online and nurture a positive body image that transcends the realm of mere social comparison [12].

4. The Correlation between Editability and Self-esteem

4.1. Positive and Negative Relationships

4.1.1. Positive relationship

Kim's study suggests that the practice of young women uploading selfies may potentially exert a positive influence on their body image concerns, as it may bolster their self-esteem with self-esteem acting as a mediator between the act of posting selfies and body dissatisfaction. Kim also mentions that posting selfies on Instagram may reduce body dissatisfaction [9]. The popularity of Instagram users' needs controlled selfie-posting's indirect influence, and selfie-posting affects body dissatisfaction indirectly through self-esteem only in individuals with moderate or low popularity needs [9]. Kim further concludes that selfies may benefit individuals who have lower popularity needs, and those who frequently post selfies might assimilate their idealized selves, leading to the formation of positive self-perceptions through the internalization of positive self-presentation. As noted by Kim, people snap, choose, and edit selfies to present a desired self on SNS (social networking site) [9]. Thus, SNS selfies allow for more selective self-expression than other SNS photos. Selfies might serve as a more effective means of internalizing an ideal self than photos taken by others [9]. In addition, Kim states that the positive self-image and enhanced self-worth of selfie posters could extend offline. Thus, Instagram selfie-posters may satisfy their desire for importance and validation by creating good self-images. Instagram users may boost their self-esteem through unconsciously internalizing positive features from their selfies [9].

4.1.2. Negative relationship

Chae's study found that when advertisements display digitally manipulated images of women, young women tend to develop a positive perception of the promoted product [3]. However, this exposure also has negative effects on women's self-esteem, leading to an increased urge to modify their physical appearance [3].

In another study, Vendemia and DeAndrea explored the circumstances that influence the tendency of female viewers (total of 360 participants, average age of 20.34, standard deviation of 2.74) to internalize the thin ideal. This internalization was examined in the context of viewing other women's selfies (photographs taken by the individuals themselves) on Instagram, which depicted the thin ideal [8]. The research also investigates the manner in which female viewers assess the women who shared these selfies. The findings reveal that the level of belief among female viewers that these individuals had digitally enhanced their selfies was inversely related to the probability of internalizing the thin ideal. Moreover, the degree to which female viewers perceived these women as having digitally manipulated their selfies, while also considering them as real-life acquaintances (rather than models),

was positively linked to a more discerning assessment of the women. This included attributing them with reduced intelligence and honesty [8]. The comments they made might originate from their low self-esteem and distorted perception on body image.

4.2. How It's Being Explained by the Concept Social Comparison and Body Image

4.2.1. Social comparison

Based on the finding of Chae, there seems to be a reverse correlation between the degree of satisfaction with one's facial appearance and the inclination to partake in comparing one's appearance with others [3]. Chae finds a correlation between diminished self-esteem and a lack of contentment with one's appearance. It turns out that the influence of social comparison is not just determined by narcissism characterized by high self-esteem [3]. Other factors such as self-uncertainty and negative affectivity, including neuroticism and poor self-esteem, also play a role in shaping social comparison tendencies [3]. According to Chae, individuals with narcissistic tendencies may employ downward social comparison as a means to uphold their exaggerated self-perception, whereas individuals with lower self-esteem may participate in upward social comparison as a means to assess themselves and seek opportunities for self-improvement [3]. Other individuals characterized by high levels of public self-consciousness often engage in the habitual practice of capturing self-portraits, also known as selfies, and actively participate in various social media platforms. These individuals tend to modify their selfies through editing techniques to uphold a favorable self-perception irrespective of their physical appearance [3]. Chae's further indicates that, although exposure of young women to advertisements featuring digitally altered female images results in a positive perception of the advertised product, this exposure also exerts negative effects on women's self-esteem, leading to an increased desire to alter their appearance [3]. Verrastro and other author uncovers an increase number of adolescents who modify their photos and post them online internalize Instagram's beauty ideal and experience higher body image anxiety and stress to conform to social media norms. In the meantime, heightened self-exposure may escalated social comparison tendencies [10]. Chae concludes that virtual plastic surgery, referring to digitally enhancing one's appearance, constructs an idealized version of oneself that is primarily tailored for online viewership [3]. This underscores the role of "audience" approval in the realm of self-presentation. Although selfies might be primarily for personal consumption, the act of editing implies a desire for the audience to react the digitally improved image with likes and comments [3]. Chae's research also highlights that people modify their selfies with the intention of appearing more attractive or resembling others based on social comparison [3]. Usually, selfie-takers and social media users have similar personalities and are usually extroverts and narcissists [3]. Furthermore, selfies may create a realistic illusion of unrealistic portrayals of women to social media users [8]. In other words, one's peers may post sexualized photos of their slender bodies. Vendemia and DeAndrea found that failure to achieve beauty standards set by peers and models online may increase societal pressure and body dissatisfaction among women [8].

4.2.2. Body image

The results of Kim's study indicate that in contrast to the passive observation of others' selfies, actively sharing one's own selfies has the potential to generate a boost the self-esteem and enhance the body image of young women [9]. This research augments the comprehension of the intricate connections between various forms of Instagram selfie engagement, such as viewing and uploading, and young women's body image concerns. The study also suggests that the act of young women uploading selfies help alleviate their body image concerns, as it may potentially enhance their self-esteem. According to Verrastro and other author's research, there exists a phenomenon where individuals become deeply involved in the virtual realm, leading to a distorted perception of the female body [10]. Consequently, they expect that women will experience societal expectations to alter the visual representation of their uploaded photographs, which drives them to use photoshop before posting their photos (or selfies especially). The resulting disparity in Verrastro et al. between

online and real-life images gives rise to feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction, which in turn are associated with difficulties in regulating social media users' behavior and emotions [10]. The impact of Instagram on the mental health of adolescents, particularly young females, is significant since it is closely associated with body image, self-esteem, and body awareness [10].

5. Summary

Throughout the entirety of this literature review, a recurring theme has been the correlation between editability and self-esteem, with a particular emphasis on exploring how social comparison and body image influence these two variables – an aspect not extensively explored in previous research studies. The review aims to raise public awareness regarding the effect of social comparison and body image on an individual's self-esteem through photo-editing capabilities. Moreover, the significance of this literature review is to encourage more users to share images that authentically represent themselves instead of following the unrealistic and distorted ideal of beauty on social media. Also, users may post images without makeup or showcasing the progression from the natural appearance with tags like “no makeup selfies”, “natural beauty”, or “the real self” to reduce the anxiety of the idealized body image, and thus dispel the compulsion to digitally edit the selfie before posting.

Further studies may delve more into how the use of filters and Photoshop apps may affect the public's self-esteem. Research could also center on exploring the consequences of body image and social comparison in order to aid in diminishing individuals' discord between their self-perception and societal beauty standards, as well as their evaluative framework regarding appearance and their discontentment with body shape. Ultimately, such efforts could lead to the cultivation of healthier body images and contribute to a broader shift towards more positive and authentic self-perceptions.

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