

The Negative Relationship Between Social Media and Body Image of Women

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Abstract. Nowadays, women are plagued by body anxiety, and social media is gradually destroying women's confidence and deepening women's body image. It's not just teenage women, adult women are also suffering from body images. On social media, women are always troubled by body image and attacked by the outside world. The purpose of this paper is to determine how social media affects women's body image and to identify the types of women who are most influenced by it. This article provides the background information about social media and body image, and also consider the factors that social media influence women in daily life. The paper finds that most of female is struggle with body image and suffer from the body sham. It is clear that social media and body image force many women struggle with poor mental health, and even affect their physical health, in the end of the article, the solutions about addressing the body image in social media, family and individual are provided. Through this article, women's mental health and body anxiety will be paid attention to, and hopefully more women will come out of body anxiety. Future research should focus more comprehensively on women's body image, such as life habits, age, interests and hobbies.

Keywords: Social media, body image, female.

1. Introduction

It is easy to see that people rely on social media such as Twitter and Instagram to share their life and illustrate their attitudes. Many women have been subjected to body shame from all over the world on social media, resulting in a large number of female groups with body images. Many women are compromising their physical and mental health by trying to meet social media beauty standards. However, the association between social media and female body image was not thoroughly explored in the prior study, and unfavorable comments were not taken into account. Consequently, the goal of this essay is to analyze how social media influences women's perceptions about their bodies.

This article will be divided into 4 parts. Body image and social media will be studied in detail. In the third part of the article, the relationship between social media and body image is summarized, and the influence of the two on women is combined. In the last part of the article, some suggestions and methods on how to ease the body image of women will be proposed.

2. Body Image

2.1. Definition

Body image is a psychological condition that includes a person's feelings and conceptions about their physical appearance. It is the mental image of how they see their physical appearance [1]. It can be defined as a sophisticated construct that includes internal, subjective representations of one's own physical appearance, physiological experience, attitude toward one's own body generally, and size, form, and beauty in specifically [2, 3]. Internal shame associated to one's body is a negatively valanced self within the affective component of body image. When a person assesses their overall selves and believes they fall short of internalized and valued body ideals, they are cognizant of this failure [4]. Unfortunately, body image can result in low self-esteem, and self-doubt. Body image has been associated with depression and other symptoms. The harm of body image to women is not only spiritual, but also physiological, and it lasts for a long time, gradually changing the way women think.

2.2. Measurement

The most of the previous studies consider questionnaires to determine the level of women's body image. A study collected data using a validated visual analog scale, consisting of 8 pictures depicting girls of different silhouettes [5]. The first three girls in the photo are very thin, the next two are of normal weight, and the last three are overweight. Participants are asked to outline what they believed represented their current weight.

2.3. Body Image Affect Women

Many women are objectified when they experience body shame. People feel inferior when they are body shamed, and negative comments have an impact on women's mental and even physical health. Teenagers who have a negative body image are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, despair, and eating disorders. Many females who struggle with their bodies later develop mental problems like anorexia. More unhealthy eating habits, such as frequent eating, overeating, or limiting one's food intake, may result from having a more negative body image [6]. Positive body image subsequently contributes to the development of young people's self-esteem. A low level of self-esteem is brought on by having an unfavorable and unfavorable perception of one's own physique, which results in sadness and dissatisfaction with oneself [4]. It is clear that body image affects women's daily life even women's physical health and mental health.

In addition, a trait body-related guilt may surface and persist in the disruption of cognitive resources, which may cause the individual to pay less attention to general cognitive or motor activities [7]. After suffering body shame, many women have bad psychological states, such as fear of going out, reducing outdoor activities, and starting to lose weight, also they suffer from anorexia in order to meet beauty standards.

3. Social Media

3.1. Background Information

According to growing data, six billion people will have utilized social media globally by 2027, up from over four billion in 2021 [8]. Considering that everyone may choose which social media accounts to follow and can post either positive or negative remarks. It can have a variety of effects on the user. Better health comes first, followed by the development of wholesome relationships, quick information, and easy connections to others [9]. The time of using social media is also increasing, which makes women more vulnerable to body shame and leads to their own internal body image.

3.2. The Effect of Social Media on Body Image

To start with, social media reduces women's self-satisfaction. The standards and labels of women's beauty on the Internet can reduce women's sense of self-satisfaction, and it has a negative effect on women. In addition, women who are exposed to social media for longer are more likely to be dissatisfied with their body appearance [10]. Obviously, the longer women use social media, the more likely they are to be affected by body image. Nowadays, the information on social media is uneven, everyone will be judged by the beauty from the outside world. Social media accelerates the dissemination of information and aggravates the degree of body image.

The concept of "negative body image" describes how someone feels and perceives their physical appearance. Individual experiences and social beauty standards are just two of the numerous factors that could influence this attitude. People's daily life is the use of social media, when the beauty label and the standard of beauty ordinary appear in the sight, it will imperceptibly change people's view of themselves and the view of beauty.

People will be very sensitive and nervous about their body mass index or they will receive unfavorable assessments about their body image for the negative comments in order to preserve likes and positive comments [11]. This frequently results in poorer self-esteem, which raises social anxiety

and posting anxiety on social media due to heightened fear of receiving unfavorable feedback [12]. Another risk factor for eating disorders in women is appearance concern brought on by unfavorable judgment [12].

3.3. Factors Affecting the Relationship between Social Media and Body Image

3.3.1 The Features of Social Media

As social media grows in popularity and influence, and people can share their lives and speak freely and it not only improves people's lives, but also this often brings negative effects, and raises awareness of women's body image issues. Social media is one of the primary contributors to female students' discontent with their bodies, according to the participants. The interviewees asserted that their dissatisfaction with their bodies is caused in part by the attractive bodies they see on Facebook or Instagram [3].

Firstly, social media allow more people interact with each other without limitation. For example, people can send the direct message to the people who live in the other countries, which means when a woman is subjected to body shame, not only do women have to suffer negative comments from those around them, but they also have to endure attacks from the Internet. What is more, on social media, posts are anonymous, so people can comment a lot of nasty things and be reckless about the consequences. The affordances of social media like anonymity, so they do not have responsibility of these bad comments. These people feel free without the moral roles in their real lives and post bad comments on female who are thought to be sensitive.

Secondly, marketing on social media always create anxiety. Consumers are regularly encouraged to improve themselves by skinny models appearing in commercials [13]. Many advertisers choose perfect models, especially for beauty ads, and set beauty standards in slogan or advertising content. Many women compare themselves to the model, which resulting in an unconscious body image.

Lastly, social media contain different culture. Previous studies have demonstrated that culture has a substantial impact on how beauty ideals are formed and that these values differ for women from various cultures [14]. Especially in Asia, pale skin and a slim figure have become the standard of beauty. Women are constantly objectified by men, according to the traditional belief that developed throughout history. As a result, those who are dissatisfied with their real life are more prone to abuse women online. They can engage in malicious behavior toward women, such as private text harassment or constant negative comments attacks.

3.3.2 Internal Factors

Body weight is one of the key determinants of one's level of contentment with one's physical appearance; as a result, those who are overweight typically exhibit low levels of satisfaction [15]. Therefore, on social media, women with imperfect appearance are often attacked from the outside world. In addition, it is thought that one of the influences on female body image anxiety is the mindset of society toward women as shown in the media. Some of the group labels that have been used for women throughout time indicate that abilities, marriages, etc. have been highly constrained [16]. Different labels and standards on social media bring a lot of trouble to women, which leads to women who do not meet the standards will feel very anxious.

Self-esteem is the general subjective emotional assessment of a student's self-worth that occurs when they take selfies. Selfies help people feel more cheerful and more self-assured [17]. Women with high self-esteem tend to be more influenced by social media and pay more attention to their posts. It might be embarrassing for the publisher if a person shares a collection of images to social media but only receives a small number of likes or comments [18]. According to the article "Why Self-Esteem is Important and Its Dimensions," someone with high self-esteem will be able to recognize their own worth and values [17].

4. Summary

4.1. Family

The influence of family on body image is significant. Recently, women's living environment brings them great pressure on appearance and psychological pressure. In particular, underage women need to be protected by their families more, because their values are still unstable and easy to be influenced by the outside world. Parents should protect their daughters from the interference of wrong values, rather than blaming their appearance defects.

When a family places more value on looks and attractiveness, their daughters become more self-conscious and focused on their size. This behavior in girls may be a result of parents' dissatisfaction with their own physical characteristics. It is important for parents to take care of their daughters' mental and physical health. Parents are one of the main factors for women's body image. Many parents are not satisfied with their daughters, which results in women being attacked not only by the outside world but also by their families on social media. In a Facebook survey, more than 50 women spoke of body shame at home from their loved ones [18]. Parents should immediately stop judging their daughters and guide their daughters to be better in the right way, not in the way of body shame.

4.2. Individual

Women are often objectified, so some women's thoughts have been solidified by the outside world. Women need to establish an independent thinking system from themselves and not be affected by others' comments.

As an individual, women can learn to discern messages on social media. Anxiety-creating messages and body shame should not be factors that affect women. In the face of complex information and malicious from social media, women could timely resolve negative emotions and find experts to adjust their psychology. It is crucial for women to move away from the outside world's defined standards of beauty.

4.3. Social Media

Social media has had an impact on women's mental health, such as self-esteem, and physical health, such as weight loss. What is more, social media has gradually become one of the main factors affecting women's body image. On social media, different negative comments come from all over the world, which has a great impact on women

4.3.1 Reject Potential Value Leads

In addition, the tag of body image should be reduced on social media. For example, there are topics such as "putting coins on your collarbone" and "measuring your waistline with lipstick" on Chinese micro-blogs, so as to formulate beauty standards, and conduct aesthetic training and subconscious comparison and suppression on women, and once these topics are formed, they will not only develop in the Internet space, but also affect women's daily life. Women in the workplace or in school will suffer from the topic of the patriarchal society, in order to achieve the standard of beauty, some women will disregard their health.

4.3.2 User Protect

On social media, developers should filter out body shame or insults to women's character. When the user receives an attack, the user who issued the attack should be blocked immediately and should be punished. The system should shield the outside world from malice towards women, and in the delivery of advertising to reduce envy of the definition of beauty standards, rather than to achieve the effect of marketing, so that women buy cosmetics that appear to meet beauty standards.

5. Summary

This paper finds that social media will aggravate female body image, and social media is one of the main factors causing female body image. The Internet's impact on women's body image has grown over time as it developed and changed, and more women are experiencing serious psychological and physical effects as a result of being exposed to body image. Additionally, this essay provides background information on body image issues women face today due to social media and the notion of body image. The influence of social media on women and the promotion of body image is illustrated. Finally, this paper gives a solution to body image, and it provides solutions for female body image from both public and personal aspects. Through this paper, it hopes that more people can pay attention to women's survival problems and high-pressure living environment, and more people can understand the harmfulness of body image, so as to break away from self-doubt and free judgment. Social media has a significant impact on women's body image, according to the research. This paper can help women suffering from body image to understand their symptoms, or women with psychological problems in this aspect can be resolved, and more people can pay attention to body image. This review can provide some reference for research in related fields.

However, there are some drawback here. Previous studies, lack the problem of body image development in female age group, and usually lack the definition of body image value in studies. What anxiety level or physical appearance can display body image. Future research should pay more attention to women in a more comprehensive way, such as studying women's body image from life habits, age, interests and hobbies.

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