

**SOCIAL MEDIA & BODY IMAGE: A STUDY OF A PUBLIC SECTOR****UNIVERSITY IN ISLAMABAD****Shahab Hussain<sup>1</sup>, Asmaa Shahid<sup>2</sup>****Affiliations:**

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*This study delves into the profound impact of social media on body image perceptions and overall dissatisfaction among young adults at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. In today's digital age, social media pervades the lives of young people, shaping their self-perceptions and influencing their social interactions. This research aims to understand how the constant exposure to curated and often idealized images on social media platforms contributes to the development of unrealistic body standards, fostering feelings of inadequacy and pressure to conform to societal beauty ideals. Employing a quantitative research approach, the study focused on a sample of 200 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18 to 30 years. Data collection utilized systematic sampling techniques and involved the administration of questionnaires via Google Forms. The study drew upon Social Comparison Theory to understand how individuals evaluate their own appearance by comparing themselves to the seemingly flawless images and physiques presented on social media platforms. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The findings revealed a significant correlation between social media usage and body image dissatisfaction among young adults. Frequent comparisons with idealized images of influencers and celebrities on social media platforms were found to be a major contributor to negative body image perceptions, leading to a range of negative emotional and psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These findings underscore the urgent need for interventions that address the detrimental effects of social media on young adults' mental health. This may include the development and implementation of comprehensive media literacy programs designed to equip young people with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the digital world and resist the pressures to conform to unrealistic beauty standards. Furthermore, fostering a more inclusive and diverse representation of body images on social media platforms is crucial to promoting healthier body image perceptions and enhancing the overall well-being of young adults in the digital age.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Body Image, Young Adults, Social Comparison, Body Dissatisfaction

**Introduction**

"The endless scroll, a seemingly innocuous pastime for many, can have a profound and insidious impact on self-perception. For countless young people, the curated realities presented on social media platforms, with their emphasis on flawless bodies and idealized lifestyles, contribute to a growing sense of inadequacy and body dissatisfaction. This study examines how social media use, with its inherent focus on visual appearances and social comparison, shapes the body image and self-esteem of this generation." Social media platforms showcase an idealized version of reality, where individuals meticulously craft their online personas, often showcasing only



their most flattering angles and accomplishments. This curated presentation of "perfection" can create unrealistic beauty standards and foster a culture of comparison among users. Constant exposure to these filtered images can lead to body image dissatisfaction, feelings of inadequacy, and even mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. The word social media was initially coined in 1994 at Tokyo virtual media situation, entitled Matisse. The primary social media sites were shaped announced in these initial phases of the Internet. The word Social media is referred to an extensive series of online sites, for example business networks, blogs, collaborative projects, forums, posting pictures. Product reviews, micro blogs, gaming sites, sharing videos. Applications of media are quite varied which not just restricted to posting photos or publicizing and promotion given the extensive variety of social media sites (Aichner et al., 2021).

Social media has formally been named the television as the primary source of media exposure and utilization. Just as how the discovery of television media transformed the daily life in the early 1920s, the social media have same revolutionizing effect on current culture and individual life. According to (Aziz, 2017) the social media took popularization with the platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter which has gathered billions active users on daily life. There is a widely association between social media and body image. People are more exposed to images of "perfect" bodies and beauty standards as a result of the growth of social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. As a result of this concerns arise regarding how social media affects people's body picture. Research already exposed that usage of social media platform can contribute to body dissatisfaction, particularly among young women. The constant bombardment of pictures of thin physiques caused increased negative body comparison. Additionally, social media can spread unrealistic beauty standards and promote the habit of editing images to alter their own appearance to other. The influence of different media sites on body shape is a global issue that affects individuals across various cultures and regions. Different research demonstrated that the usage of social media platforms are linked with rise in body dissatisfaction and negative self-evaluation in countries around the world, particularly among young, moreover social media platforms is connected to the promotion of toned body ideals, which can contribute women (Fardouly et al., 2015).

### ***Statement of the Problem***

As social media platforms continue to grow and gain prominence in the lives of young people, it is vital to investigate the impact they have on shaping body perceptions, and overall dissatisfaction of the young adult. There is different ratio of the male and female who got influence from the social media like studies says that comparatively the females are highly impact form the social media as compared to the male gender. Another problem is that due to the usage of social media a sense of comparison with other people emerge which is in itself very bad for the individual because social media always show the unrealistic body which make sense of dissatisfaction among people because they are unable to meet those idealistic body figure. The role of internet base content such as the Instagram have very serious impact on people, especially the adults whose age are in between 18 to 25 because they spent most of their time on social media platform. Due to the usage of the social media the adults specially girl have adopted a very unhealthy attitude and behaviour towards their own body like eating disorder they do strike diet to get in the slim body sample male do use different kind of supplement for the muscular body.

### ***Research Question***

1. How does social media influence the body image of youth at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad?

### ***Research Objectives***

1. To analyse the prevalence of social media usage among youth.
2. To examine the extent of influencer of social media on body image among youth.

### ***Significance of the study***

This study investigates the significant influence of social media on young people's body image and mental



health. The findings can inform policymakers, educators, and social media platforms to develop interventions that promote positive body image and mental well-being among young adults. The research can provide valuable evidence to policymakers for creating regulations that address the negative impacts of social media on body image and mental health. The study findings will help in guiding Educators to develop educational programs that promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among young people. This can empower them to navigate social media content critically and develop a healthy body image. Further it can Enhance Media Literacy in the development of programs targeted towards young adults, equipping them to critically evaluate social media content and its potential influence on body image. It can be beneficial in Reducing Exposure to Harmful Content and reducing young adults' exposure to unrealistic and potentially harmful body ideals prevalent on social media platforms. And it will Encourage Responsible Content Creators to promote responsible content creation and prioritize user well-being.

### **Literature Review**

This session is about the previous study literature on the research topic social media and body image. For this researcher draws different indicators related to how social media influence the body image of youth. Different researches and literature is explained according to the research objectives.

### ***Usage of Social Media among Youth***

Social media platforms and technologies have become cultural phenomena, particularly among the millennial generation, which is comprised of youth between of 18 and 29 years of age. Yusop and sumari (2013) in a study discovered, among other things, that American teenagers and young people have dramatically increased the social media usage since year 2006. Sending messages, and other private materials on these platforms, as well as daily messages to friends, are among the social relationship activities in which they are reported to be more actively involved. Technology known as social networking enables two-way engagement and communication between certain people and/or organizations in an online setting. Many of these social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, were created using micro blogging technology, which facilitates blogging activity with updates that are shorter in length. Social networking sites' user-friendly design encourages both young people and adults to utilize them widely. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2010) these two kinds of people use social networking sites for a variety of activities.

Over the past ten years, there has been a substantial rise in the use of mobile and social media by children and teenagers, as well as in mental well-being and the need for treatment for mental health disorders. Studies have revealed a noteworthy connection between using electronic devices and social media platform for more than three to four hours a day and high chances of depression disorder adolescent girls. The unfavourable impacts of spending more time mobile or online activities, however, were considerably protected from young people who maintained high amounts of direct socializing (Abi-Jaoude, Naylor, & Pignatiello 2020). According to Pew explore Centre study, 73% of young people use social media sites to keep up with current information's, 31% use them to learn about health, and 17% use them to explore sensitive health issues like drug use or sexual health (Plaisime et al., 2020).

Social media is becoming more projecting in Pakistan over time. It has been estimated that 30 million people in Pakistan use the internet media daily, and the number is growing. Pakistan has 120 million mobile contributors, making it the fifth-largest cellular telephone market in Asia. Facebook sums over one million monthly supporters and adds 44,000 new members every day, these figures are according to one report. 30% of Pakistan's Facebook followers were women, while 70% of them were men, according to data from April 2013. One of the most important means of communication between Pakistanis who have been evacuated and are now living in the US, Europe, and the Gulf States is Facebook. Social media refers to a variety of platforms, including blogs, forums, Video sites, social networks, wikis and many more. These websites allow users to participate digitally in



both their local communities and the global community to a network of interconnected communication technologies (Ali, 2016).

### ***Role of Social Media in shaping Body Image***

People now spend a great deal of time using the Internet, particularly through mobile devices, which provide a large variety of other tasks beyond sending, and receiving messages. The relationship between physiological perception and Internet use has been the subject of recent studies in particular. Internet use, for instance, has been connected to difficulties with the body, such as an addiction with being overweight or avoiding body shape (Franchina & Coco, 2018). All the cultures identify idealized photos by which men and women are judged as valuable members of their gender. These pictures form a vital part of our body image that is, how we believe, experience, and perform with regard to our physical attributes. Media tools like (TV, magazines, movies, and social networking sites) offer a platform to show, communicate, and develop what an ideal physique looks like. Even though both sexes are exposed to idealized body images in the media, research show that women are more susceptible to body image issues than males (Nagar & Rukhsana, 2017). Use of social media is connected to problems with body image, especially if users engage in certain activities there, for example comparing their appearance to others. These results are comparable to old media (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016).

With the use of social media and cosmetic surgery, Western media aggressively encourages the pursuit of a slender ideal for girls that is mainly unrealistic to achieve through healthy approaches. Sociocultural theories place a strong prominence on the part of media compressions to meet aesthetic standards in the progress of body image and the promotion of media standards as a personal objective. These planned pathways may ultimately be appropriate to the Japanese setting, where the growing number of media supporting a Western beauty models has greatly influenced contemporary Japanese views of beauty and so contributes to Japanese people's support for Western appearance ideals (Ando et al., 2021).

### ***Role of social media in building youth perceptions***

Social media platforms, from Twitter and Facebook to YouTube and Instagram, have revolutionized how we consume news. They've become powerful tools for social movements and offer unprecedented access to information. In Pakistan, social media has significantly altered news consumption patterns, providing a plethora of sources while raising concerns about the reliability and trustworthiness of information (Zulqarnain, 2023).

Today's youth use social media at a speedily increasing rate. Social networking sites have sensible nonsexual uses, but present a danger for wrong or sexualized activities. Posting naughty or sexually suggestive images or videos, as well as sexualized discussions in chat rooms or social network posts are all examples of risky social media habits. Sexting is a behaviour that involves transmitting sexually explicit or provoking photographs over text messages or other mobile media. Studies that collect opinions about risky behaviours using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Whether a person suffers negative consequences as a result of their dangerous action may have an impact on how they see it. Sexting has frequently not been found to be distressing if the sex message was just sent to a close friend or romantic partner (Virden et al., 2014)

Educators might be different on the worth of using media in the lecturer rooms. Some educational institute teachers use trendy social media, such as movies, or other entertainment videos as a class reward to fill time, keep students calm and silence, or as a short break from class desk work. even though co-viewing media with students is more advantageous than ask their students to watch famous media alone, teachers and school leaders who co-view offensive content (such as repressive behaviours) with students might serve as a silent support of that content. Such practices lessen or reduce the use of popular media as a means of developing critical thought (Boske & McCormack, 2011).

### ***Social Media and Beauty Standards***

The word beauty is a subjective term or phenomena and explanation of this word or different for every



individual. Media platforms probably would play a significant part in bordering a definite body shape to meet the criteria for to look attractive. Although this concept again multiple, it nevertheless possesses some inherent properties. Today's society has made it important to have plumper lips, enhanced eyes, a defined jawline, a contoured nose, high cheekbones, and a toned body, especially on social media platforms. As a result, numerous applications are catching on to these beauty fundamentals, which are also reflected in Snapchat and Instagram filters. These software and filters allow people to edit or change their photographs in order to conform to the standards of beauty even if they cannot afford costly cosmetic procedures or plastic surgery. It is frequently used by young ladies to improve their lips, eyes, and complexion and to give their faces more tone (Siddiqui, 2021).

There are many different ways to define beauty, and one's idea of beauty undoubtedly has a big impact on how they perceive their own personal attractiveness. It's a clever double meaning to say that beauty lies in the eye of the observer. It's reasonable to think a person's own self or somebody outside of them could both be the beholder of beauty. In other words, one might admire my beauty for themselves or for others. However, standards of beauty are typically set by others through the media, societal customs, and fashion trends and don't seem to come from one's own sight (Sekayi, 2003).

Social media influencers and celebrities play an essential role in growing the perception of beauty. Everyday scrolling through such pictures permits opinion of beauty which is based on visualized practice. Social media influencers that promote particular beauty ideals have an impact on the cosmetics we use, the aesthetic procedures we undergo, and the lifestyle choices we make. The opinions and suggestions of YouTube and Instagram celebrities were appreciated more highly by survey respondents than those of traditional movie or television stars. Influencers have a significant impact on the demographics of young women since they are open about the operations, they have had done to enhance their looks. The same survey discovered that at least 8 of the top 10 YouTube beauty influencers admitted to getting lip filler injections. Viewers who are interested in cosmetics and beauty frequently encounter influencers with artificial lips (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzou, 2023).

Social media has made easy the widespread propagation of pictures that conventional a particular sense of attractiveness, highlighting features like enhanced eyes, plumper lips, toned bodies, high cheekbones, and contoured noses. Additionally, the accessibility of photo-editing tools and filters on social sites adds to the pressure to meet these aesthetic standards.

### ***Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health***

As we see now a days numerous people managing with the problems of mental illness, just because of usage of social media, social media has become a well-known fixture in the lives of people. Studies illustrated that of social media usage by people with a variety of mental diseases, just like anxiety, and other mental diseases, is comparable to that of the overall population. Youth use social media on spending 97% of their time, compared older age who spent 70% of their time (Naslund et al., 2020). Many experimental research has evaluated the general effects of consistent use of social media on users' bodily and mental well-being, despite a fact that the social media concept is still quite new (Bashir and Bhat 2017).

Recent researches show that persons with mental issues use mobile technology like cell phones more frequently and have greater access to it. Research study from year 2015 initiate that youth used social media extra regularly than older generation with approximately half of a model of psychiatric patients using social media. 79% of schizophrenia inpatients and outpatients who acknowledged accessing social media claimed they use social media platforms minimum once time per week. One of the research projects which is done in 2017 stated that social media use among mental populations has lately increased. The rate between those getting treatment for major mental problems and low-income clusters in the total population are comparable (Naslund et al., 2020).

### ***Social Media usage And Feelings of Inadequacy in Body Image***

Social media usage is widespread and expanding quickly on a global scale. With over 1.3 billion regular



users, Facebook is currently the most widely used social networking platform. The usage social media in women is slightly higher than other more gender and this gender struggles more than others with body dissatisfaction. There is currently no conceptually motivated experimental research looking at how Facebook affects young women's body image issues, despite the fact that existing research has shown a positive association between Facebook usage and body dissatisfaction. (Fardouly et al., 2015).

When a user spends a lot of time on social media platforms so it is may be linked to body image dissatisfaction that develops as a result of that use. According to research, there is a direct association between undergraduates' frequent use of Facebook and their anxieties about their bodies. Measures were employed to gauge body image dissatisfaction and a desire to achieve the thin-body ideal (Choudhury, 2021).

COVID-19 effects all walk of life including education. Therefore, trend of education changed, and world goes toward online education. As social media applications are easily accessible for the higher secondary level students in Islamabad, and it became the part of their life, so it is important to shape the social media and make it the learning tool for the young generation. Sociocultural theories suggest that female who constantly compare their appearance to that of others may fight with poor body image and body dissatisfaction. Women commonly compare their appearance to that of others when judging it, and a larger tendency to done this is associated with a complex body dissatisfaction. Given that 10 million new pictures are posted to platform after every hour, Facebook provides different ways for regular appearance connected comparisons, which may rise young women's body image concerns (Fardouly et al., 2015).

A large amount of research has acknowledged the significance of idealized media figures particularly for boys with muscular ideal bodies and girls with slim ideal bodies, in shaping attitudes of young people. Dissatisfaction with one's body image is a feature in social comparison, which may be done with effortlessness on Internet media by comparing one's appearance to that of celebrities or peer. Moreover, the capacity to compare people on the basis of their physical appearance in social situations determines one's ability to assess one's own worth and that of others. This is the case because young people judge their own physical features by contrasting them with others people, and body image is a key part of self-examine and especially throughout teenage years (Franchina & Coco, 2018).

Body dissatisfaction, a negative behaviour about one's own physical structure, is a part of the greater notion of body image, and high degree of body dissatisfaction, which rise during adolescence, are especially dominant among teenage girls. Understanding the determinants of body dissatisfaction is crucial since it has a negative impact on wellbeing. Use of social media is one activity that has been associated with sense of body dissatisfaction. Teenagers are not all similarly susceptible to social media's harmful effects on body dissatisfaction. Individual characteristics including the feeling for social comparison and media literacy have been shown to reduce the effects of social media on body dissatisfaction (Vries & Vossen, 2019).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Researcher used social comparison theory along with its applications to the topic of research at hand.

#### ***Social Comparison Theory***

The Social Comparison Theory, present by psychologist name "Leon Festinger" in year 1954, which implies that seek to evaluate themselves by comparing their opinions, skills, beliefs, and societal status to those of others. According to the theory that people involve in social comparison as a mode to assess their own abilities, opinions and to establish their personal and social significance. People often use the process of comparison to establish judgments about themselves and their role in society.

The theory highlights that individuals lack the ability to judge themselves objectively, mainly in part where there are no obvious measures or standards of comparison. In these circumstances, people turn to social comparison to get some references. For instance, when evaluating their physical beauty or body image, individuals frequently compare themselves to those they see as alike to or related to themselves, like peers' group, friends



circle and the media figures. According to “social comparison theory the social comparison is of two types:

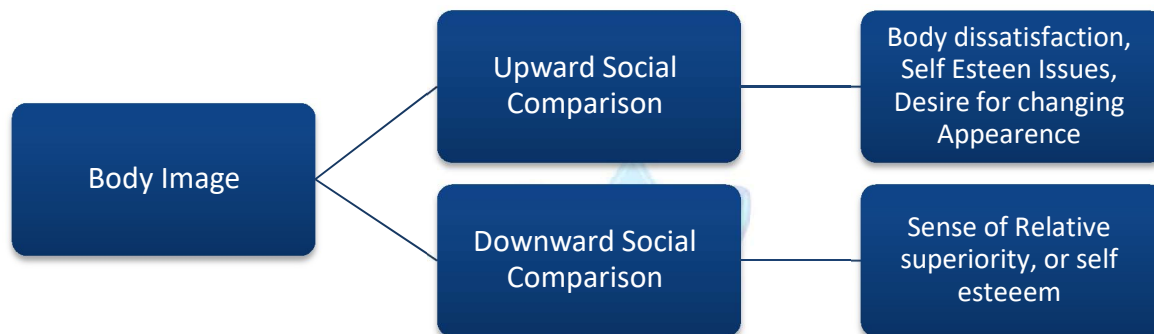
1. Upward social comparison
2. Downward social comparison

Upward social comparison is type of comparison happens when individuals compare themselves with other people, they believe to be more skilled or competent in a certain aspect. For example, someone may compare their physique against that of a famous person or a peer they look up to. Downward social comparison: In this type of comparison, People compare themselves with people they believe to be less successful or less accomplished in particular aspects. This comparison might give one a sense of relative superiority and raise their self-esteem (Nortje, 2020).

**Model of Social Comparison Theory**

**Figure 1**

*Social Comparison Theory Model*



**Application of Theory**

In the background of the research topic shows role of social media in defining body image, social Comparison Theory can be used to explicate how social media affect the people impressions of their own bodies by encouraging comparisons with others they come across online. This sociological perspective illuminates the connection among usage of social media, body image, and the mental effects that youth and individuals feel.

Social media sites, like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, have proliferated in both young people's and adults' daily lives. These platforms are full up with pictures and videos of people demonstrate their bodies, frequently showing an idealized and more focused version of themselves. As a result, users are constantly exposed to pictures of bodies and beauty standards that are frequently unrealistic and may not represent reality.

According to the social comparison theory, individuals evaluate their own qualities along with self-respect by associating themselves to others in their social surroundings. This social comparison process is heightened in the framework of social media as well as the body image. Youth and people are continuously exposed to pictures of other people, which include influencers and celebrities, who seem to represent the societal values of charm and beauty. Additionally, the impact of social media on the body image is not only on a person but also societal. As many individuals involves in the social comparison on social media platform, a shared perception of beauty and pleasant appearance emerges. This collective perception can further enable particular beauty standards and body standards, influencing not only a person self-esteem but also wider social norms and values about appearance.

**Propositions**

Social media sites influence body image by nurturing both upward and downward social comparisons.

1. The perceptions of body image are influenced by comparisons with perfect beauty standards existing on different social media platforms.
2. Constant exposure to perfect body images on social media platfo4ms make it to negative body image and negative body dissatisfactions.



## Conceptualization and Operationalization

Researcher has conceptualized and operationalized the two variables of the research topic. Conceptualizations and operationalization are the two key steps which are used by the researchers as tool while doing study. In conceptualization researcher explain the concepts used in the study with help of different definitions provided by scholars. While in operationalization, the researcher describes the descriptions in the way they used in this research.

### *Conceptualization*

Conceptualization refers to the method of creating brief and clear concepts or ideas that shape the foundation of your research study. It includes definition of key variables or constructs that you would like to study in your research study.

**Social Media.** Social media is the online platform which provides the user with the widespread services that cater to modified interests. The user of social has the capability to produce an online identity, make relationships as well as generate and share the content material. The modern world with full of technology has transformed the community's interaction with each other's. Starting from the traditional media such as newspaper, radio, television and today the most widespread source for data is social media sites. Social media has formally been named the television as the primary source of media exposure and utilization. Just as how the discovery of television media transformed the daily life in the early 1920s, the social media have same revolutionizing effect on current culture and individual life. The social media took popularization with the platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc., which has gathered billions active users on daily life (Asif & Sandhu, 2023; Aziz, 2017).

The word social media is the tools which permit mankind to post or to trade videos, data's, pictures, and many more content between each other by using these social media networks. Siddiqui and Tejinder stated that social media platforms is primarily described as relatively affordable and extensively reachable online tools that enable everyone to circulate and met information, which work together on a mutual undertaking (Siddiqui & Singh 2016)

**Body Image.** Body image is generally referred as a person insights and perception about their own body appearance which include shape and size (Pryde & Prichard, 2022). The notion of body image primary framed as vital and essential psychological concept by an author who named Schilder he stated it in his book which was translated in English at 1935. Schilder illustrated the word body image as the "picture of our own body which we shape in the brain which make a way to seems to ourselves" in his work name monograph. The term has recently been modified to include "the mental image we have of the shape, size of our physiques, as well as our emotional state towards our individual bodily features." (Slade, 1994).

Body image is described as a set of self-evaluations that each person makes in relation to their physical appearance. There are many elements that influence how people perceive their bodies, and if they are used improperly, they can cause distortions and disorders. Media has the capacity to spread both positive and negative messages about healthy bodies because it is frequently regarded as a major contributor to the dominant norm of body ideals (Aziz, 2017)

### *Operationalization*

Operationalization is process in which academic openly clarifies the variables that the researcher uses in their study by numerous explanations. In that procedure academic tells the finest explanation of the research as well as measurer his/her research with best explanations of scholars.

**Social Media.** Within framework of the research study the word "social media" refers to digital platforms and programs that make it easier for people to share knowledge, different kind of content and interactions etc. This includes platforms for instance Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other alike platforms, which users may use it occasionally, rarely, very often, or never use it. The term covers a variety of activities, including sharing images and updates, involving with several types of content and communicating with others within the online social





setting.

In the context of this study "social media" represents the digital platforms and online spaces, just like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram etc. where people involve in content sharing, online interaction and social networking. Social media use can range from occasional to frequent participation to total disengagement. This explanation encompasses different activities such as sharing photographic and textual content, joining discussions, and making networks within the online field.

**Body Image.** In the context of this research, the word "body image" is describe as a people thoughts, perception, attitudes and feelings towards their own physical shape, size and appearance. It comprises how participants sight themselves in comparison to societal beauty standards and ideals, along with their emotional reactions to images and other content they see on social media. Body image contains features such as body satisfaction, self-esteem the influence of media description on appearance, and the possible impact of experience to several kinds of social media content on participants' emotional comfort and self-perception.

The term "body image" is operationalized in the context of this study to refer to the emotional and cognitive understanding that a person has of their own physical appearance, which includes things like body form, body size, and physical attractiveness. This operationalization investigates into the method in which participants evaluate themselves in regard to current societal standard of beauty and physical attractiveness and shape, and explores the implications for their self-esteem and general sense of comfort. Additionally, the operational definition considers the variety of emotional responses carried on by exposure to various social media platforms' content, with a stress on examining potential associations between such exposure and the person's emotional health.

### **Research Methodology**

This study has been conducted for answering key objectives and questions which have been raised by the researcher before and after reviewing the prevailing works on the topic of social media and body image.

### **Research Design**

The quantitative research methodology has been used for conducting this research study. The study is quantitative because it is based on a statistical explanation and tries to understand how the use of social media influences the body image. In this research study quantitative research design was used to gather data due to limited time and moreover involves numerical analysis due to quantitative approach.

### **Universe of the Research**

Area of concern from which the data was collected is Quai-I-Azam University Islamabad. The researcher explored the influence of society on the body image of young adults in QAU. Furthermore, there is huge diversity in this university as students belong from different cultures, class that is why researcher selected this area for the better understanding about research topic.

### **Unit of Analysis**

In this study, the unit of analysis was Undergraduate and postgraduate male and female students of QAU. Students aged 18 to 30 were the Target of the researcher at the time of data collection. The reason behind the age of these students is that they are more engaged in social media platforms and greatly influenced by them.

### **Sampling Technique**

The selected sampling technique for data collection is the systematic sampling. In this approach, the whole population was split into three major disciplines which is Social Science, Natural Science, and Biological Science. Questionnaires were then circulated among students from different departments at QAU Islamabad. In these cases, systematic random sampling is more efficient since it rationalizes the sample selection procedure, saving time and energy.

### **Sample Size**

The total population of university is 13559 according to data given in Times higher education. In the



search of dependable and generalizable results, researcher selected a sample size of 200 respondents

***Tool for Data Collection***

A self-administered questionnaire has been produced to collect quantitative data however its questions are close-ended and based on the Likert scale.

***Tool for Data Analysis***

For analysing the data, a software tool is used which named as Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Researcher collects data and entered it in the software (SPSS) by giving codes to responses of respondents.

***Technique for Data Analysis***

The data gathered by researcher was in numeric form so, statistical analysis was appropriate to find the result. In this study, to analyse the numerical data and to interpret all the collected data. Descriptive statistical techniques as well as inferential statistical techniques were used. Descriptive techniques were applied to analyse the data and to present in the frequency distribution Pre-testing. Pre-testing is one of the most essential portions of the research methodology which refers to the process of testing your research tool such as a questionnaire.

***Pre-Testing***

Researcher checked the responses of the respondents on small scale and distributed 10 questionnaires to the people to check the flaws. The Pre-testing of the tool helps to refine the tool before going to the field for the data collection.

***Ethical Concerns***

Research ethics are a fundamental part of the study. It was ethical duty of the researcher that before entering in the field or giving questionnaire the researcher asked for the consent from the respondents. Researcher also promised to keep the collected data confidential and use it for research purposes only. The data collected by the researcher was totally based on the choice of respondents and they were given a free hand to leave the questionnaire at any time.

**Results and Discussion**

There are two main parts of this study. The first part is descriptive statistical procedures was adopted to explain both variables, and in the second part inferential statistical procedures were employed to test different hypotheses to see the association between variables.

***Descriptive analysis***

As the descriptive analysis is the statistical procedure for evaluating and analyzing the frequencies and percentages of the collected data. In addition, descriptive statistics analyze the frequencies and number of respondents. We explain the collected data in the form of frequency and numbers, in this section, tables are presented that evaluate the number of respondents and figure out or count responses in different categories.

**Table 1**

*Gender of the Respondents*

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Male	110	55.0
2.	Female	90	45.0
3.	Total	200	100.0

The table demonstrated the gender of the respondents. Our simple consist of 55 % and 45 % female students whereas the total simple size of the study is 200 in which the male the students are more outstanding in number as compared to male students. The researcher tried gender balance in the data collection.



**Table 2**

*Age of the Respondents*

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	18-21	80	40.0
2.	22-25	87	43.5
3.	26-30	33	16.5
	Total	200	100.0

The above table demonstrated the age of respondents in which 40% of survey participant age belong to 18-21 years of age whereas 43.5% of respondent belongs to the group of 22-25 years of age. Whereas, 16.5% of respondents belong to group of 26-30 years of age. According to above table, majority of the survey respondents are 22 to 25 years of age group.

According to table out of the total respondents, there is majority 43.5% respondent with the frequency of 87 who has the age group between 22-25 years. While minimum of participants belongs to 26 to 30 years of age group with frequency 33 and percentage 16.5%.

**Table 3**

*Degree of the Respondents*

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	BS	105	52.5
2.	MPhil	80	40.0
3.	PhD	15	7.5
	Total	200	100.0

Above table displays the respondents from degree program. Where 52.5% of the survey respondents were students of BS program with 105 frequencies, and 40.0% of the respondents were MPhil students and 80 frequencies whereas 7.5% of the respondents were students of PHD with 15 frequencies. Additionally, as per the table out of the total respondents, there is majority 52.5% respondent with the frequency of 105 who has the BS degree. While minimum of the respondents belongs to the group PHD with frequency 15 and 7.5 percentage.

**Table 4**

*Faculty of Respondents*

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Social Sciences	128	64.5
2.	Natural Sciences	43	21.5
3.	Biological Sciences	29	14.5
	Total	200	100.0

In the table the total number of respondents on basis of faculty. Major faculties in Quaid-i-Azam University are social sciences, natural sciences and biological sciences. In this research 64.0% respondents were taken from social science with 128 frequency, 21.5% respondents were taken from natural science with frequency 43 and 14% respondents were taken from biological science with frequency 29. Moreover, as per the table out of the total respondents, there is majority 64% respondent with the frequency of 128 who belongs from social sciences. While the minimum of the respondents belongs biological sciences with frequency 29 and percentage 14.5%.

Demographic snapshot of the respondents. In terms of age, the majority (43.5%) were between 22 and 25 years old, followed by the 18-21 age group (40%). The 26-30 age group comprised the smallest proportion (16.5%). Regarding academic background, the largest group consisted of Bachelor's (BS) students (52.5%), followed by M.Phil. students (40%) and Ph.D. students (7.5%). Finally, the majority of respondents (64%) belonged to the Social Sciences faculty, while Natural Sciences (21.5%) and Biological Sciences (14.5%)



represented smaller proportions.

**Table 5**

*Data Collected through questionnaire*

Sr. No.	Items	SDA	D	N	A	SA
1.	Do you think that social media has influenced your perception of an ideal body shape?	32	22	29	43	74
2.	Do you think that the content you see on social media platform affects your body image?	12	17	31	42	98
3.	Do you think that social media promote unrealistic body standards?	11	11	26	39	113
4.	Do your parents bother while using social media?	5	8	1	72	114
5.	Do you believe that women are more susceptible to body image issues influenced by media ideals as compared to men?	3	4	16	43	134
6.	Have you ever experienced feelings of inadequacy due to what you see on social media?	5	15	23	41	116
7.	Do you compare your body to images of social media influencers or celebrities?	17	25	11	29	118
8.	Do you feel pressure to change your appearance based on what you see on social media?	20	25	11	23	121
9.	Do you know that many images on social media are filtered or edited?	11	20	2	36	131
10.	Do you think at images shared on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, snapchat are realistic portrayals of people's appearances?	5	15	23	41	116
11.	Do you think teenagers and adults are more vulnerable to the impacts of social media on body image than older individuals?	12	5	20	37	126
12.	Have you ever used filters or editing tools to alter your images before posting them on social media?	22	16	8	22	132
15.	Have you ever unfollowed or muted accounts that made you feel negatively about your body?	24	25	19	23	109
17.	Have you ever experienced a decrease in self-esteem or mood due to negative body comparison on social media?	11	18	1	31	139
18.	Do you feel pressure to conform to social beauty standards due to social media exposure?	29	6	4	30	131
19.	In your opinion, do social media influencers contribute to the normalization of certain cosmetic procedures and beauty standards?	16	15	4	37	1281
20.	De you feel good when you see images of yourself that have been edited using filters to conform to beauty ideals?	10	16	14	23	127
22.	Have you ever taken any steps to limit your exposure to body related content on social media?	106	18	4	12	60
24.	Do you get ideas for different cosmetics and herbal products from social media?	18	12	2	36	132

The table above indicate the data gathered during survey which shows great agreement among students regarding body image and social media. 37.0% respondents come in the category of strongly agree and 21.5 % of the respondents fall in the category of agree. Whereas 16.0% said that they are strongly disagree and 11.0% of



the respondents come in the category of disagree. While 14.5% of participants expressed their views as a neutral about the question. As per the table majority of the respondents replied in strongly agree option.

Which 49.0% respondents come in the category of strongly agree while 21.0 % respondents are agreed. Whereas 6% respondents marked strongly disagree and 8.5% of respondents come in the category of disagree. While 15.5% of the respondents expressed their views as a neutral about the question. As per the table majority of the respondents replied in strongly agree option. This table is also demonstration that majority of respondents has replied in strongly agree about question that social media platform effect their body image which frequency is 98 and where the minimum respondents replied in strongly disagree which have 12 frequencies.

As per the table majority of the respondents replied in strongly agree option. The table is also explained that the majority of the respondents has replied in strongly which frequency is 113 and where the minimum respondents replied in strongly disagree and disagree which have 11 frequencies. Above data explain the outcome about question “ever unfollowed or muted accounts that made you feel negatively”. In finding it is stated that 54.5% respondents strongly agree with the question and 11.5% respondents optioned agree regarding question. Whereas 12.0% respondents are strongly disagreeing and 12.5% respondents are disagreeing regarded the question. Moreover 9.5% of the respondent’s option neutral about the question. As per the table most of the respondents responded option strongly agree. This table is also explained that many respondents are strongly agree with statement that they unfollowed or muted accounts that made you feel negatively and the frequency of that respondents is 131 and where the minimum respondents replied about that question in neutral which frequencies are 19.

**Inferential Analysis**

A statistical technique which is used to test the specific hypothesis through chi square. The data is presented in the form of inferential statistics for drawing conclusion about the target population of the study. The hypothesis is tested with the help of cross tabulation and chi square. It’s helping to know the significant relationship between two variables.

**Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>).** There is significant relationship between exposure to different social media platforms and ideal body image among youth.

**Table 6**

*Cross Tabulation*

		<b>Influence of social media on perception of an ideal body image</b>					
		<b>SDA</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Exposure to different content on social media platform and the body image</b>	<b>SDA</b>	9	3	0	0	0	12
	<b>D</b>	0	17	0	0	0	17
	<b>N</b>	0	2	29	0	0	31
	<b>A</b>	23	0	0	19	0	42
	<b>SA</b>	0	0	0	24	74	98
<b>Total</b>		32	22	29	43	74	200

In the presented cross tabulation, this investigates the connection between exposure to different content on social media platforms and conceptions of an ideal body image. The data replicates the answers of a total of 200 respondents.

A substantial portion of the 74 participants who strongly agreed with the statement the influence of social media on perceptions of an ideal body image reported engaging with various types of content on these platforms. On the other hand, in the category of agree, 24 people acknowledged experience to such content. In this group, it is noteworthy that no respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that influence of social media on body image perceptions.

In the strongly disagree category, 9 participants said they have access to a variety of social media content,



while 3 people in the same category had a neutral opinion on its influence. Within the strongly disagree category, no respondents strongly agreed or agreed that exposure to such content influenced their ideal body image perceptions.

For those who showed disagreement with the statement influence of social media on perceptions of a perfect body image, 17 participants stated experience to several content on these media platforms. However, none of the respondents in this category strongly disagreed, strongly agreed, or agreed with the influence of social media on their body image perceptions.

In neutral category, Respondents reported neither disagreed nor agreed with the influence of social media on perceptions ideal body image whereas 29 respondents reported exposure to various content on these platforms. In this neutral category No respondents strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, or disagreed.

The offered cross tabulation jointly emphasizes the connection between exposure to various content on social media platforms and perceptions of the perfect body image. It becomes obvious that a series of exposures align with changing degrees of agreement or degree of disagreement with social media impact on body image perceptions among the surveyed respondents.

**Table 7**

*Chi-Square*

	<b>Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	488.877 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	410.470	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

a\*.13cells (52.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.32.

The results of Chi-Square Tests deliver an important insight into the association between exposure to different content on social media sites and the perceptions of an ideal body image. With 16 degrees of freedom and a Pearson Chi-Square value of 488,877, the statistical significance is outstandingly obvious ( $p < .001$ ). This specifies that the observed frequencies within the above table differ significantly from what would be predicted under the assumption of independence among exposure to various content on social media platforms and the perceptions of an ideal body image. With the same degrees of freedom, the Likelihood Ratio another measurement used to evaluate the connection, produces a result of 410.470. Similar to that, the related p-value is extremely significant ( $p < .001$ ). This emphasizes how strongly the two variables are associated and provides evidence that they are not separate variables.

In conclusion to this, the Chi-Square Tests confirm a noteworthy connection between exposure to diverse content on social media platforms and the perceptions of a perfect body image. This connection is strongly supported by the Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio statistics ( $p .001$ ). Even while certain cells have lower expected numbers than others, the statistical results are still impressive overall.

**Discussion**

The result findings demonstrated in this research study highlight an important impact of social media on people perceptions of body image and the beauty ideals. This discussion will investigate into the implications of these results and the wider implications for society.

The study's findings display that a considerable percentage of respondents are strongly agree with the statement that social media has influenced their perception of an ideal body shape. This is consistent with sociocultural theories that contend social media platforms frequently promote unrealistic body ideals, such as women's extreme slenderness and men's masculinity. These unrealistic ideals can lead people to internalize these standards, which can cause them to have negative opinions about their own bodies (Choudhury & Vishnu, 2021). Among the respondents the majority of them either strongly agreed or agreed with statement, which suggests that social media meaningfully influences how people perceive their bodies.

The study's findings provide solid evidence that media has a big influence on in what way people perceive



the ideal body shape. Given that the majority of respondents strongly agree with this statement, so it is clear that social media have a noteworthy influence on in what way people perceive and judge their own physiques, often highlighting unrealistic ideals.

In the same way, a substantial number of respondents strongly agreed that the content they see on social media sites influences their perception of their bodies. About this research study's result and findings, the abundance of pictures of influencers, celebrities and peers' group on social media platforms can have an important influence on by what means people view their own physiques (body) (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). This finding underlines the necessity for critical media literacy and self-awareness, as people are continuously bombed with digitally altered and perfect images that can make them dissatisfied with their own bodies image.

According to the study which highlights that a considerable number of respondents feel that the content they meet on social media straightly influence their body image. Constant exposure to image of celebrities, digitally altered photographs, and peers' bodies can cause negative body impressions and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the study discloses that a large majority of respondents strongly agree with the statement that social media foster unrealistic body ideals. This is steady with the Tripartite Influencer Model, which suggests that social media, along with the broader media site, and peers group spreads unrealistic standards of beauty (Choudhury & Vishnu, 2021). Such unrealistic ideals beauty, particularly when showed through digitally different images, can cause mental health problems and even body dissatisfaction.

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents strongly agree that social media foster unrealistic body standards. This supports sociocultural theories and the tripartite influence model, which highlight how social media helps to maintain unrealistic beauty standards and promotes negative body image beliefs.

The study also throw light on the perception that women are more vulnerable as compared to men to body image problems which influenced by social media standards. A vast majority of respondents are strongly agreed with this statement that women are more susceptible as compared men. This is in line with research show that women are more likely than males to feel pressured by society to live up to unachievable beauty standards (Nagar & Rukhsana, 2017). It emphasizes the necessity for society to encounter and reconsider these standards in order to support more positive body image perceptions for individuals of all genders.

The study proposes that women are more vulnerable to body image problems effected by social media standards as compared to men, with a substantial majority of survey respondents are strongly agreeing with this statement. This highlights the societal pressure sited on women to imitate to unrealistic beauty ideals for better gender-inclusive illustrations in social media.

Additionally, the study shows that a significant amount of survey respondents strongly agreeing with this statement that many individuals compare their own bodies to images of social media celebrities or influencers. This continuous social comparison can cause self-esteem problems and negative body image (Franchina & Gianluca, 2018). It underscores the importance of encouraging self-worth and self-acceptance that is not merely built on external appearance.

### **Conclusion**

The findings result disclose that numerous survey respondents regularly compare their own bodies to the body of social media celebrities and influencers, with a substantial quantity strongly agreeing with this statement. This constant societal comparison can contribute to having a negative body image, which emphasizes the importance of encouraging self-acceptance that goes beyond outward appearances.

Another important result is that young adults and teenagers are considered to be more susceptible than older people from the effects of social media on their perception of the body image. It has been observed that the millennial age, in especially, is more actively involved in social relationships on these social media platforms since they have grown up with easy access to social media platforms (Yusop & Melati, 2013). The possible long-term influences on the mental well-being of younger generations are the cause for this concern.

The study also shows that young adults and teenagers are considered as more vulnerable to the influences



of social media sites on body image as compared to older people. This is mainly concerning assumed the prevalent usage of social media among young adults as well as among teenagers' generations, underlining an importance of addressing these problems early.

Last but not least, the survey finds that a substantial number of respondents have seen a decline in mood or self-esteem as a result of unfavorable body comparisons on social media sites. This is consistent with the theory put forth by Franchina and Gianluca (2018) that social comparisons made online might lower one's self-esteem and cause a negative opinion of oneself. It highlights the worth of developing resilience and self-assurance in the face of social media demands. Numerous respondents have experienced a reduction in mood or self-esteem due to the sense of negative body comparisons on social media platform, with a substantial number of them strongly agreeing with this notion. This highlights how vital it is for people to develop resilience and self-confidence to ensure to bear the social media pressures.

Sociocultural theories, just like the Tripartite Influencer Model, have long claimed that social media platforms promote unrealistic body standards. This concept was more authenticated by the study's findings, which disclose that a substantial number of respondents strongly agreed that social media has important influence on in what way they perceived the perfect body shape. These unrealistic ideals body, regularly categorized by masculinity for men and extreme slenderness for women are internalized by people, and then cause a negative self-perception among individuals. This phenomenon, especially among teenagers and young adults who use social media platforms extensively emphasizes the importance of addressing these concerns through education and awareness efforts. The literature analysis and study findings both show that social media sites regularly promote unrealistic body standard, triggering people to internalize these ideals and have a poor perception of their own bodies. This effect is mainly marked among teenagers and young adults who are extensively social media users. However, the study's discussion investigated into social media content, underlining the impact of images of celebrities, influencers, and peers in altering individuals' body image. Respondents awesomely agreed that the content they met on social media straightly affect their perceptions about their bodies. Constant exposure to digitally manipulated and apparently beautiful pictures is concerning, as it frequently preserves unrealistic beauty expectations. Its requirements a demand for more media literacy and self-awareness among users in order to distinguish between idealized online personalities and the reality of human variation. This pressure to conform to digitally generated beauty standards can be especially harmful to self-esteem and one's mental health. Social media content, such as images of celebrities, influencers, and peers' group having a tremendous influence on by what means people perceive their own image. The study disclose that respondents strongly agree that the content they meet on social media platforms direct impact on their body image. Because users are constantly exposed to digitally changed and idealized pictures, they must develop more self-awareness media literacy in order to make difference between real-world diversity and online personalities.

This is consistent with existing research that has showed how societal pressure on women to adhere to unachievable beauty ideals is greater. To develop well body image beliefs across both genders, society must challenge and re-explain these ideals. Online and offline, diversity, inclusivity and representation should be fostered. There were strong gender differences in susceptibility to body image concerns, with women are more vulnerable than men. It is well recognized that women face societal pressure to imitate to unattainable beauty ideals. This highlights the importance of a social alteration to reconsider beauty ideals and promote diversity, inclusivity, and representation of all genders. One astonishing finding was people's tendency to equivalence their own bodies to the social media influencers or celebrities. This frequent social comparison, made easier by the availability of edited pictures, adds to poor body image and self-esteem difficulties. Encouragement of self-worth that goes beyond outward appearance is critical in minimizing the negative consequences of social comparison. People regularly do comparison about own bodies to influencers and celebrities which cause poor self-worth. Encouragement of self-worth that goes beyond outward appearance is serious for justifying the negative impacts of repeated social comparison provided by edited internet pictures.





Finally, social media has a significant influence on body image, mental health and beauty standard. It is a difficult socioeconomic issue that needs varied solutions. Media literacy initiatives should be shaped to support people in critically assessing and distinguishing online content. Moreover, social media beauty representations must become more diverse and inclusive, reflecting the truth of human diversity. Furthermore, educational programs and interventions should target younger generations in order to equip them with the skills necessary to navigate the digital terrain without jeopardizing their self-worth. To address these issues, users, media outlets, and governments must work together to create a more pleasant and easygoing online environment for all people, irrespective of their appearance.

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