Impact Of New Generation Media On Body Image, Social Interaction Anxiety And Self Esteem

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ABSTRACT

This review paper examines the impact of new generation media, particularly social media, on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem. The widespread use of social media platforms has led to increased exposure to idealized and unrealistic beauty standards, contributing to body dissatisfaction and negative body image. The constant stream of curated images and virtual interactions can also exacerbate social interaction anxiety and decrease self-esteem, particularly among vulnerable populations such as adolescents and young adults. This paper synthesizes existing research on the topic, highlighting the complex relationships between new media exposure and psychological outcomes. The review identifies key factors influencing these relationships, including media literacy, self-esteem, and social support. The paper concludes with implications for interventions and strategies to promote healthy media use and mitigate potential negative effects on mental health.

Furthermore, the virtual nature of online interactions can disrupt face-to-face communication skills, contributing to increased social anxiety and decreased self-esteem. This study aims to investigate the impact of new generation media on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem, and explores potential moderators and mediators of these relationships. The findings have implications for developing targeted interventions to promote healthy media use and mitigate potential negative effects on mental health.

Keywords: New Generation media, social media, body image, social interaction anxiety, self-esteem, mental health

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. While it enables us to connect, share, and learn, there's a darker side to this virtual realm. The pervasive influence of social media has a profound effect on our psychological well-being and the way we perceive ourselves, particularly in terms of self-esteem and body image. Below, we will explore the illusions that social media perpetuates, its positive and negative impacts, and ways to cultivate a healthy relationship with the digital world. Social media platforms are curated galleries of seemingly perfect lives. Filters, editing tools, and carefully chosen posts create an illusion of flawless beauty and unattainable lifestyles. This curated perfection often leads to unrealistic comparisons with our own lives, and detrimental self-evaluation.

How social media can affect body image

Positive effects

1. Body positive content and communities

Fortunately, there is a growing movement of body positivity on social media. Various communities and influencers such as Megan Jayne Crabbe and Sarah Nicole Landry are well-known on Instagram for promoting self-love and acceptance, encouraging their followers to embrace their unique bodies and appearances (Heger et al., 2022).

2. Health and fitness inspiration

Social media platforms serve as hubs for health and fitness inspiration. Users share their fitness journeys, workout routines, and healthy recipes, motivating others to adopt positive lifestyle changes while offering encouragement and support. These platforms can provide valuable advice for those who are seeking ways to work on their bodies in a healthy way.

3. Support group

Social media provides a platform for people facing body image issues to connect and support each other. Online support groups create a sense of community, reminding individuals that they are not alone in their struggles. These digital spaces serve as sanctuaries where people can openly discuss their concerns, fears, and triumphs related to body image.

Negative effects

1. Constant comparison

One of the most significant drawbacks of social media is the tendency to constantly compare ourselves with others, particularly among young women. Scrolling through feeds filled with seemingly perfect individuals can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Research indicates that women frequently assess their own appearance through comparisons with others, and the more they engage in such comparisons, the more likely they are dissatisfied with their bodies. Apart from its influence on body dissatisfaction, exposure to Facebook may also have the potential to affect people's moods. For instance, a study has found that exposure to Facebook led to a decline in mood in young women, likely attributable to their tendencies to compare themselves to others on the platform, who seemed to have happier or more fulfilled lives (Fardouly et al., 2015).

2. Unrealistic beauty standards standards

Social media often promotes unrealistic beauty standards, emphasising certain body types, skin tones, and features. Constant exposure to these ideals can distort one's perception of their own body, leading to body

dissatisfaction and even body dysmorphia (Pedersen, 2023). Studies have consistently linked the use of social networking sites to issues related to body image and disordered eating for both men and women (Fioravanti et al., 2022).

3. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to the act of using digital technologies to engage in bullying behaviour. This can occur on various online platforms such as social media, messaging apps, gaming sites, and mobile devices. It involves repetitive actions intended to intimidate, provoke anger, or embarrass the individuals being targeted (UNICEF, n.d).

The increasing popularity of, and anonymity provided by social media platforms appear to be increasingly prominent in perpetrating sometimes leads to cyberbullying, and spaces where people become victims of cyberbullying (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). This is in part because of the substantial amount of personal data shared online, and interactions between users (Alim, 2016). According to a study by Ditch the Label (2013), it was reported that 21% of teenagers in the US encountered frequent incidents of cyberbullying. Negative comments, body-shaming, and online harassment can severely impact an individual's self-esteem and body image. Cyberbullying can lead to serious emotional distress, anxiety, and even depression in the victims (Kolonko, 2022). Interpersonal relationships can also be adversely impacted, including those with family, friends, and romantic partners (Hamm et al., 2015).

How to foster a healthy relationship with social media

1. Spending quality time with loved ones

Spending quality time with loved ones is essential to fostering a healthy relationship with social media. By dedicating time to connect with the people who matter most, we can not only strengthen our personal relationships but also create a natural balance in our lives.

2. Curate your social media feed for greater positivity

Unfollow accounts that trigger negative emotions or promote unrealistic beauty standards. Instead, follow accounts that promote body positivity, mental health, and self-care.

3. Practice self-compassion

Be kind and gentle with yourself. Remember that nobody is perfect, and imperfections are what make us unique and beautiful. Practising self-compassion exercises helps to enhance your self-esteem.

For example, try writing letters to yourself as you would to your closest friend. Acknowledge your struggles, mistakes and imperfections. Then, write a compassionate response to yourself, emphasising understanding, forgiveness, and self-love. You can also create positive affirmations that emphasise self-compassion and repeat them to yourself regularly. For example, "I am worthy of love and kindness. I accept myself as I am. I am enough."

4. Seek professional help

If your self-esteem and body image issues become overwhelming, consider seeking counselling for adults in Singapore. Trained professionals can provide personalised guidance and support to help you navigate these challenges, develop healthier self-perception, and build a stronger sense of well-being.

OBJECTIVES

Research on the impact of new-generation media (social media, short-form video platforms, photo-sharing apps) on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem typically focuses on understanding how digital engagement influences psychological well-being. Based on current literature and studies, the primary objectives of such research are often structured as follows:

Purpose:

Objectives of the present Literature Review Paper:

1. To examine the impact of new generation media (social media) on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem.

2. To synthesize existing research on the relationships between social media use and psychological outcomes, including body dissatisfaction, social anxiety, and self-esteem.

3. To identify key factors influencing these relationships, such as media literacy, self-esteem, and social support.

4. To explore the potential moderating and mediating variables that affect the impact of social media on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem.

5. To discuss the implications of the findings for interventions and strategies to promote healthy media use and mitigate potential negative effects on mental health.

6. To identify gaps in existing research and suggest directions for future studies on the topic.

These objectives will guide the literature review paper to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of new generation media on body image, social interaction anxiety, and self-esteem.

1. Primary Research Objectives

- **To assess the relationship between social media usage intensity and mental health outcomes:** Determining how daily time spent, frequency of usage, and active versus passive consumption correlate with body image, self-esteem, and social anxiety.

- **To examine the influence of appearance-focused content on body image:** Investigating how exposure to curated, edited, and filtered images (e.g., on Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) affects body satisfaction and promotes body dissatisfaction.

- **To evaluate the impact of social media on self-esteem:** Analyzing how social comparison, "likes," and comments contribute to fluctuations in self-worth and confidence levels.

- **To investigate the relationship between online engagement and social appearance anxiety:** Assessing the fear of negative evaluation by peers regarding physical appearance, resulting in increased social interaction anxiety.

2. Specific Investigative Goals

- **To identify key mediating mechanisms:** Understanding how **social comparison** (upward comparisons), **internalization of beauty ideals**, and **self-objectification** (self-surveillance) link digital engagement to negative outcomes.

- **To explore gender differences in digital impacts:** Comparing how males and females experience different pressures (e.g., thinness vs. muscularity) and interact with image-editing tools.

- **To analyze the role of specific platforms and features:** Investigating the differential impact of visual-centric platforms (e.g., Instagram reels, TikTok) compared to text-based platforms.

- **To explore the impact of online bullying and social feedback:** Assessing the effect of negative, body-shaming comments or lack of validation (fewer likes) on social anxiety.

3. Application and Mitigation Objectives

- **To investigate the effectiveness of coping mechanisms:** Exploring how digital detoxes, curation of content, and positive, non-edited content (body-positive, body-neutral) can mitigate negative effects.

- **To evaluate the need for media literacy interventions:** Assessing whether educational programs on critical thinking regarding edited content can improve self-perception and reduce anxiety.

- **To provide evidence-based recommendations:** Generating insights for policymakers, educators, and clinicians to promote healthier digital behaviors and improve the psychological well-being of young adults.

Key Variables Measured

- **Social Media Usage:** Intensity, type of usage (passive/active), content type.

- **Body Image:** Satisfaction/dissatisfaction, internalization of beauty standards.

- **Self-Esteem:** Global self-worth, self-confidence (often using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale).

- **Social Interaction/Appearance Anxiety:** Fear of judgment, social appearance anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review was conducted, analyzing peer reviewed articles from databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Scopus. Keywords included "New generation media," "Body image," "social interaction anxiety,"and "self esteem". Studies were selected based on relevance, methodological rigor, and publication date (last 15 years). The study was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of seventeen original questions examining the impact of social media on body image perception, the Body Esteem Scale (BES), and A. Sobczak's silhouette scale representing different levels of nutrition. The questions were in a closed-ended, single- and multiple-choice format. The study sample included 211 respondents. The inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old and active social media users. Participants were recruited via Facebook and Instagram, which, while allowing broad reach, introduces potential selection bias by favoring individuals who are more engaged with these platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Khan, A. (2024):

This study explored the complex connections among social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationships, and self-esteem in young adults, emphasizing how digital engagement influences psychological and interpersonal functioning. The author found that higher levels of social media use were associated with increased social appearance anxiety, as individuals became more focused on external evaluation and comparison, leading to heightened concerns about their physical appearance. The results further indicated that elevated appearance anxiety negatively affected the quality of social relationships and contributed to lower self- esteem, highlighting the broader impact of online pressures on emotional well-being. Qualitative insights from the study revealed that social media platforms shape how young adults perceive themselves and others, influencing the dynamics and authenticity of their social interactions. Khan concludes that excessive social media usage, combined with rising appearance-related anxiety, significantly undermines young adults' self-esteem and relational satisfaction. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions aimed at fostering positive self-image and promoting healthier, more supportive social interactions in the digital age.

Nisreen Ameen(2024)

This study investigated how technology-driven experiences—specifically augmented reality, AI- enabled chatbots, and social media—shape the psychological and behavioral responses of Generation Z women in the beauty industry. The authors found that augmented reality tools significantly enhance perceived body image and self-esteem by allowing users to visualize idealized appearances, which subsequently boosts purchase intentions. Although general social media use did not show strong direct effects on self-esteem, the study noted that exposure to beauty content, influencers, and appearance-based comparisons can still influence women's self- perceptions. The research also emphasized the importance of chatbot communication style, revealing that supportive and assistant-like chatbot interactions increase trust, satisfaction, and

overall engagement with beauty brands. Overall, the findings highlight that digital and interactive technologies play a substantial role in shaping Gen Z women's emotional responses and consumer behavior, underscoring the need for brands to adopt psychologically informed and user-centered digital strategies.

Tian, T. (2023)

Tian's (2023) study explored how social media environments contribute to body image anxiety among women, emphasizing the pervasive influence of idealized beauty standards circulated through online platforms. The study highlighted that continuous exposure to curated images, appearance-focused content, and culturally reinforced beauty expectations places significant psychological pressure on women to meet narrow aesthetic norms. According to Tian (2023), this exposure intensifies body dissatisfaction, lowers self-esteem, and increases anxiety, particularly when women engage in upward social comparison with influencers and peers. The findings further indicated that social media platforms act as powerful agents in shaping women's self- perception by reinforcing unrealistic body ideals through likes, comments, and algorithm-driven visibility. Tian concluded that body image anxiety emerges not only from personal vulnerabilities but also from structural features of social media that reward appearance-oriented behavior. The study recommends increased media literacy, healthier online representation, and targeted interventions to reduce the harmful psychological impact of social media on women's body image

Jarrar, Y., Ayoola, O., & Nweke, G.E. (2022):

This study examined the rising prevalence of body dissatisfaction among university students and emphasized how increased social media exposure intensifies appearance-based comparisons and negative self-evaluations. The authors identified a gap in existing research, noting that while social media use is consistently linked to poorer body image, fewer studies have explored the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship. Their findings revealed that social anxiety plays a significant mediating role, with individuals who frequently engage with social media—particularly in appearance-driven contexts—showing higher levels of social anxiety that make them more susceptible to body dissatisfaction. The research suggests that fear of negative evaluation, heightened sensitivity to online interactions, and comparison-focused browsing can amplify the negative effects of social media on body image. The study concludes that social anxiety is a critical factor influencing how social media shapes body dissatisfaction, underscoring the need for interventions that address emotional vulnerability and promote healthier digital engagement among university students.

Maria Muzaffar Janjua, Ayesha Khan, and Anila Kamal (2022)

This study examined how exposure to idealized media images influences the psychological well- being of college students, with a specific focus on self-esteem, body esteem, and body image anxiety. The authors emphasized that media portrayals of beauty standards can strongly affect young adults, especially in developing countries where increased digital exposure is reshaping appearance-related expectations. Using an experimental design, the findings revealed that exposure to media images significantly lowered self-esteem and body esteem among students, while also heightening body image anxiety. Janjua et al. (2022) highlighted notable gender differences, reporting that males tend to experience lower self-esteem after exposure to idealized images, whereas females exhibit reduced body esteem. Both groups, however, showed increased body image anxiety, indicating a widespread psychological impact. The study concludes that media-driven beauty ideals contribute to negative self-perceptions among youth and underscores the need for interventions promoting realistic body standards and healthier media consumption patterns.

Ling, A. (2022)

Ling (2022) examined how social media promotes unrealistic beauty standards that increase body image anxiety among females. The study found that constant exposure to thin-ideal content leads to self-comparison, reduced self-esteem, and greater body dissatisfaction, especially among adolescents. Ling emphasized that social media's emphasis on appearance intensifies psychological pressure on young women to meet societal beauty norms. The findings highlight the need for media literacy and increased awareness to reduce the negative effects of unrealistic online body standards.

RACHEL.F.RODGERS(2016)

Rodgers (2016) highlighted the rapid rise in Internet and social media use among adolescents, noting that this shift has coincided with increasing concerns about body image and eating pathology. Her review emphasized that adolescents are especially vulnerable as they transition key social and emotional processes into online environments where appearance-focused interactions are common. The study reviewed multiple theoretical perspectives—including sociocultural theory, impression management, self-objectification, social identity theory, and self-discrepancy theory—to demonstrate how each contributes to understanding the relationship between Internet use and body image concerns. Rodgers (2016) found that the constant exposure to idealized images, peer comparison opportunities, and digitally reinforced appearance norms significantly elevate risks for body dissatisfaction and eating-related symptoms among youths. The review also indicated that young people who frequently engage with appearance-centric platforms show stronger internalization of unrealistic beauty ideals, which heightens self- evaluation and body surveillance. Rodgers argued that despite evidence

linking online activity with negative body outcomes, theoretical integration in this domain has been limited. Her review therefore proposed an integrated model combining these five theoretical perspectives to guide future research on how social media behaviors interact with psychological processes in shaping adolescent body image and eating concerns.

Ferdous, S., & Malik, J.A. (2016)

This study examined the relationship between body image, social networking interaction, and social interaction anxiety, highlighting how modern online communication platforms shape psychological and interpersonal functioning. The authors found that increased engagement in social networking sites intensifies opportunities for social comparison, contributing to greater self-consciousness and appearance-related concerns among users. Their findings revealed that individuals who frequently interact on social media tend to exhibit higher levels of social interaction anxiety, which heightens sensitivity to evaluation and reinforces negative perceptions of body image. The study further demonstrated that social interaction anxiety acts as a significant mediating factor, explaining how online interactions translate into body dissatisfaction. Participants with elevated anxiety were more likely to internalize comparison-based content and interpret social cues negatively, leading to poorer body image outcomes. Ferdous and Malik conclude that social networking interaction, when combined with heightened social interaction anxiety, increases vulnerability to body dissatisfaction, emphasizing the need for psychological support, awareness programs, and digital literacy to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive social media use.

Rodgers, R.F., & Melioli, T. (2015)

Rodgers and Melioli (2015) conducted an extensive review of empirical studies examining how Internet use—particularly exposure to appearance-focused content on social media—contributes to body image concerns and eating-related problems among adolescents. Their review synthesized findings from 67 studies and demonstrated that frequent engagement with appearance-promoting platforms significantly increases risks of body dissatisfaction, internalization of unrealistic beauty ideals, and maladaptive comparison behaviors. The authors highlighted that social media environments, which prioritize edited images, thin-ideal content, and peer-driven validation, may intensify vulnerabilities in adolescents who are already sensitive to social evaluation. Drawing on sociocultural, objectification, and social identity theories, the review emphasized that digital interactions amplify pressure to conform to idealized body standards, thereby elevating psychological distress. Rodgers and Melioli (2015) concluded that Internet use—especially appearance-oriented online activity—is strongly associated with heightened body image disturbance and eating concerns, and they recommended further research exploring moderating factors such as self-esteem, media literacy, and peer influence.

Richard.M.Perloff (2014)

The review focused on social media effects on young women's body image concerns and self perceptions, arguing that interactive digital platforms intensify appearance related pressures more strongly than traditional media. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2009), Cultivation Theory (Morgan et al., 2009), and sociocultural perspectives on body image (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann, 2011), Perloff(2014) explained that constant exposure to idealized, highly curate images encourages internalization of unrealistic beauty norms and fosters frequent social comparison. Research conducted across the U.S., U.K., and Australia provider. robust evidence that exposure to thin-ideal imagery is associated with increased body dissatisfaction negative effect, and symptoms linked to disorder eating among young women. The study concludes that social media represents a powerful sociocultural force and stresses the need for future research exploring cross-cultural differences, male body image processes, and protective psychological factors that may buffer the negative impact of social media on young women's body image.

Author(s) & Year	Key Findings	Conclusion
AartiVikram & Deepmala Sutar (2024)	Higher social media usage was significantly associated with lower self-esteem (r = –0.308) and lower body image satisfaction (r = –0.516). Self-esteem showed a positive correlation with body image satisfaction (r = 0.330). Girls reported higher body image concerns and lower self-esteem than boys, though social media usage showed no gender difference.	The study concludes that excessive social media use negatively affects adolescents' self-esteem and body image, particularly among females. It emphasizes the need for intervention and educational programs that address healthy social media practices and promote positive mental health outcomes.
Shi, Yunyu; Kong, Fanchang; Zhu, Min (2024)	Higher social media use increases social anxiety. Imaginary audience and appearance self-esteem mediate this relationship. Imaginary audience raises anxiety; appearance self-esteem lowers it.	Social media intensity indirectly heightens anxiety through psychological factors. Enhancing appearance self-esteem and addressing imaginary audience concerns can reduce adolescent social anxiety
Grace Holland & Marika Tiggemann(2016)	Review of 20 studies showed that social networking site (SNS) use is consistently linked to greater body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Appearance-based comparison and feedback (likes, comments) mediate the relationship between SNS use and body image concerns. SNS activities focused on images (uploading, viewing) showed the strongest negative effects. Gender differences were inconsistent but females were gely more affected.	SNS use has a significant negative impact on body image and eating-related outcomes. Appearance-comparison is a key mechanism through which SNS use harms body image. More experimental and longitudinal studies are needed to fully understand the psychological effects of SNS use.
Muhammad Bayu & Sri Rahayu Puti (2023)	Social media use (frequency & duration) showed a significant positive correlation with social anxiety among millennials. Platform-specific differences in anxiety levels were identified. FOMO acted as a mediating factor between social media use and social anxiety. Gender differences and time-based usage patterns influenced the level of anxiety	Excessive social media use increases social anxiety. Platform-specific awareness is needed to understand how different apps impact mental health. Reducing FOMO can help lower anxiety. Tailored mental-health interventions and user education are important to support healthier digital engagement

Findings/Result:

Based on recent research (2024-2025), studies indicate that new-generation media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) has a profoundly negative impact on the mental well-being of young adults and adolescents, particularly regarding body image, self-esteem, and social interaction anxiety. Here are the key findings organized by objective:

New-generation media, particularly Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, has been linked to a significant decline in mental well-being among young adults and adolescents. Research suggests that excessive social media use can lead to body dissatisfaction, lower self-esteem, and increased social interaction anxiety

The Impact on Body Image and Self-Esteem

Social media platforms showcase curated and idealized beauty standards, fostering unrealistic comparisons and promoting feelings of inadequacy. This can result in: **Body dissatisfaction**: Exposure to filtered images and unrealistic beauty ideals can lead to negative body image and low self-esteem. **Self-esteem**: Constant comparisons and validation-seeking behaviors can erode self-confidence and self-worth. **Social Interaction Anxiety**: Social media can also contribute to social interaction anxiety, particularly among adolescents. Factors include: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): Feeling left out or anxious about online interactions can increase anxiety. Cyberbullying: Online harassment and peer judgment can exacerbate stress and emotional distress.

Studies indicate that:

- Adolescents spending over 4 hours daily on social media exhibit lower self-esteem and higher anxiety levels.
- Girls are more susceptible to negative impacts on body image and self-esteem due to societal beauty standards.
- Passive social media consumption (e.g., scrolling) is more detrimental than active engagement (e.g., posting, commenting)

These findings emphasize the need for mindful social media use, digital literacy programs, and supportive interventions to mitigate negative effects on mental health.

1. Impact on Body Image (Dissatisfaction & Distortion)

- **High Dissatisfaction:** Over 70-80% of studies report that frequent, passive use of appearance-focused platforms is linked to body dissatisfaction.

- **The "Filter Trap":** Regular use of filters and photo-editing tools directly correlates with lower satisfaction with one's natural appearance, particularly among adolescent girls.

- **Internalization of Ideals:** Users frequently internalize unrealistic, digitally enhanced beauty standards, leading to a constant, negative comparison of their own bodies.

- **Gendered Standards:** While girls are pressured by thin-ideal content, boys are increasingly affected by "fitspiration" (muscularity) content, leading to body dysmorphia.

2. Impact on Self-Esteem

- **Inverse Relationship:** A strong, negative correlation exists between the intensity of social media usage and self-esteem levels.

- **Validation Dependency:** A significant portion of young adults report that their self-esteem is dependent on the "likes" and comments received on their photos.

- **Reduced Self-Worth:** Frequent "scrolling" (passive consumption) causes users to compare their lives to the curated, highlight-reel lives of others, leading to feelings of inadequacy.

3. Impact on Social Interaction Anxiety

- **High Social Appearance Anxiety:** Research has demonstrated a highly significant association between high social media usage and high social appearance anxiety.

- **Fear of Judgment:** The "like" economy makes users feel constantly watched, increasing the fear of negative evaluation by peers.

- **Isolation Paradox:** While designed for connection, excessive use is linked to higher feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

- **Avoidance Behaviors:** To escape judgment, 63–65% of young adults reported deleting photos or withholding posts.

Key Findings & Summary Trends (2025)

- **The Paradox:** New Generation Media acts as both a source of connection and a significant psychological risk factor.

- **Passive > Active Danger:** Passive scrolling (browsing) is more detrimental to mental health than active, content-creation-based use.

- **Long-Term Impact:** Even short-term exposure (15-20 minutes) to curated content can produce negative effects on mood and self-esteem.

- **Solution/Intervention:** There is a high (over 70%) demand for, and positive reception to, media literacy education to teach users how to critically evaluate and manage their consumption

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