

The Effect of Social Media on Body Image Among Adolescents

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Abstract

Adolescent development is a critical life-stage that research has seen as highly impressionable. This study focused on the amount of time spent on social media and how the adolescent's body image is being affected. This secondary analysis research gathered data from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey from 2009-2010. The original study conducted a cross-national survey for students 5th through 10th grade and staff and faculty targeting health-related attitudes and behaviors. Social media was broken down into two categories: computer time and gaming time; as well as trichotomous time variables: no time, less than 3 hours, and 3 or more hours. Results of this study showed that more time spent with social media correlated with a lower body image score. Social media, with the right amount, has the potential to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviors and a positive body-image.



Introduction

Significance of Study:

-40% of female adolescents had a negative body image; 23% of male adolescents were dissatisfied with their bodies (Michael et al., 2014).

-Media has shown to be a strong influence on social standards, especially with ideal beauty standards

-92% of teens report daily use, 89% have at least one social media platform, 71% have more than one platform, and 25% have reported being online "almost constantly" (Burnette, Kwitowski, & Mazzeo, 2017; Salomon & Brown, 2019)

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to raise awareness of the risk and protective factors of social media on body image and to investigate the impact of social media.

Research Question:

What are the effects of social media on body image among adolescents?

Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that social media has more negative than positive effects for adolescents about their overall body image. A part of these negative effects is impacted by peer judgment, cyberbullying, and unrealistic standards. Some benefits include peer support, connectivity, and community with social groups and role models, and aid in identity formation.

Literature Review

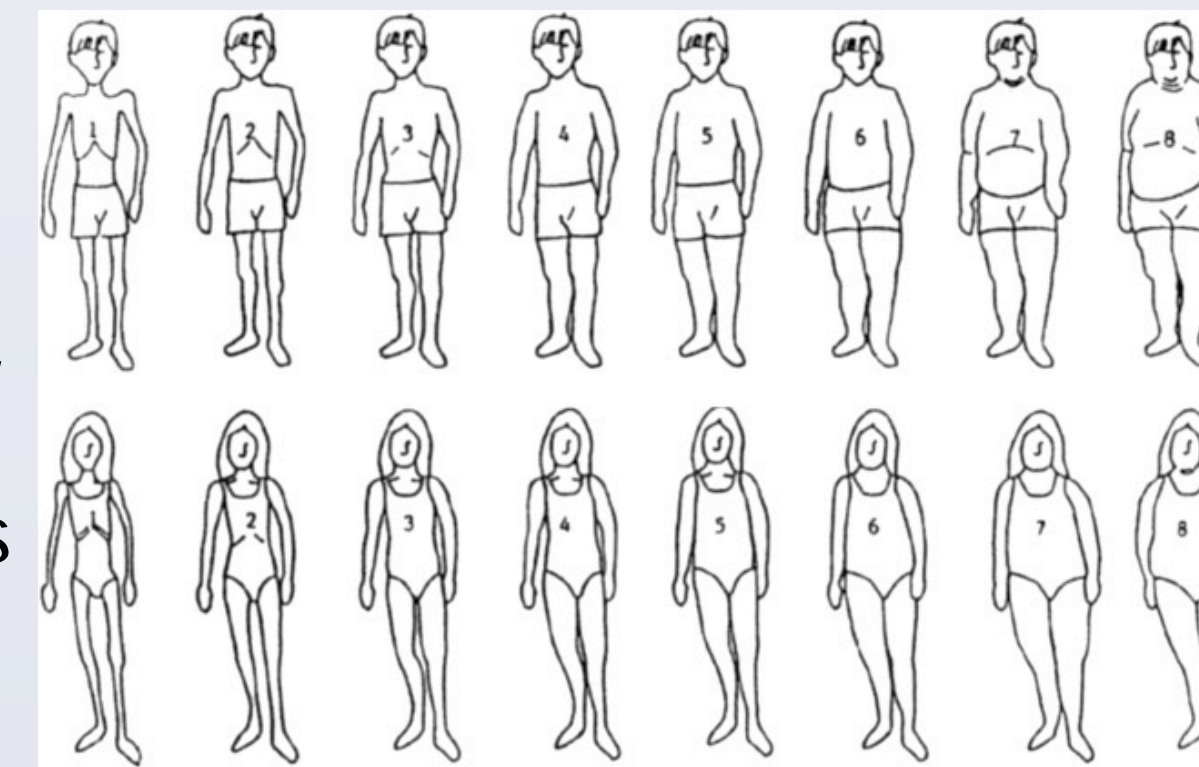
The combination of internalized body standards that are not healthy nor realistic puts adolescents at high risk in developing a negative body image (Salomon & Brown, 2019; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016). When someone develops a negative body image they are more likely to develop symptoms of depression, anxiety, or eating disorders (Paraskeva et al., 2017; Vilhjalmsson et al., 2012).

Social Media, Body Image, and Adolescents

- Social Media enforces a cultural standard and ideal physical body type that is not only unobtainable but a depiction of perfection that is not rational to biological possibilities (Paraskeva et al., 2017; Salomon & Brown, 2019)
- Body image for adolescents has a large factor in comparisons with media and the internalized levels and characteristics of beauty (Paraskeva et al., 2017).
- There is a high emphasis on peer opinion and social media is a source of comparison that can either improve or hurt the individual's body image (Salazar, 2017)
- Thoughts and feelings on a persons' individual view on their body are positively correlated to their self-esteem exposure to social media was correlated with body image concerns (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013).

Body Image and Adolescents

- It is developmentally typical for an adolescent to place an emphasis on their physical appearance.
- Adolescents are placed at a higher risk when they become dissatisfied with their body, negatively affecting their overall well-being (Salomon & Brown, 2019; Vilhjalmsson et al., 2012).
- On top of their developmental susceptibility to a heightened awareness of their peer's evaluation of the self, things worsen when the individual has deviated from society's body standards.



Gaps in Research

- Research has explored social media and other internet-based platforms but has not kept up with the advancing technologies and their societal effects.
- Effects of social media portrayal of body shapes on the male body image and overall mental
- Another gap in research is within prevention and interventions for the negative effects of social media on body image

Results

- Participants who were never on the computer had significantly *higher* body image (M = 17.88, SD = 5.33) than study participants who were on the computer 3 or more hours (M = 16.76, SD = 21 5.50).
- Study participants who were on the computer less than 3 hours (M = 17.81, SD = 5.01) also had significantly *higher* body image than study participants who were on the computer for 3 or more hours.

	No time	Less than 3 hours	3 or more hours
No time	----	.077 (.188)	1.129 (.183)***
Less than 3 hours	-.077 (.188)	----	1.051 (.127)***
3 or more hours	-1.129 (.183)***	-1.051 (.127)***	----

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

- Participants who never played games had significantly *lower* body image (M = 16.59, SD = 5.63) than study participants who played games less than 3 hours (M = 17.55, SD = 5.15).

- Participants who were gaming 3 or more hours also had a significantly *lower* body image (M = 16.99, SD = 5.67) than participants who played games less than 3 hours.

	No time	Less than 3 hours	3 or more hours
No time	----	-.958 (.157)***	-.396 (.218)
Less than 3 hours	.958 (.157)***	----	.562 (.181)**
3 or more hours	.396 (.218)	-.562 (.181)**	----

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Methods

Research Design: This secondary data analysis with a cross-sectional design due to the use of one specific measurement point. This study utilized the same set of data collected from the 314 schools included in the Health Behavior in School Aged Children's design. This study's sample size is 8,069 students of the 14,627 students from the original study.

Sampling Method: This study's sample size was 8,069 students from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children. Inclusion criteria for the sample: full completed responses, body image, and media use questions, and demographic information.

Measures: Students from 5th to 10th grade were included in the survey.

Social Media Use: Media use variables are separated between video game and computer time. They contained continuous measures of quantity (number of hours played in a weekday or weekend).

Body Image: Body image was self-reported from participants on a scale. The 6 questions related to frustration with appearance, satisfied with appearance, hate my body, feel comfortable with body, feel anger towards my body, and like appearance in spite of flaws.

Conclusion

- This research will add to the growing body of literature about the powerful effects of social media.
- The social media through computer time and gaming depict societal and cultural values of physical beauty and expectations (Salomon & Brown, 2019).
- This life stage centers around identification formation.
- In learning how social media affects the adolescent, mental health professionals can provide research based practice.
- Social workers and other mental health professionals can implement social media to help promote healthy lifestyles and positive body image.

Implications for Practice

- Social media has become part of the environmental factors that affect daily functioning and growth.
- Analyzing how social media affects adolescents will help predict interventions for next generations as well as helping that population enter the next stage of life.



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