The Impact of Social Media Use on Body Image and Self-Esteem among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective(s): The current study aims to determine the extent of social media use, the degree of body image and self-esteem among college students, the influence of social media use on these concepts, and the variations in these constructs with respect to sociodemographic variables.

Methods: At the University of Kerbala in Iraq, a descriptive study was conducted in order to meet the previously mentioned goals. From the first of February, 2024, to the first of August, 2024. 98 students were included in the convenience non-probability sample, and the adopted questionnaire (in the Arabic version) was used to collect data. Structured interviewing is the method used to gather data for each student.

Results: According to the study's findings, 65.1% of students use social media at a moderate level. Of the students, 78.6% have low self-esteem, while only 41.8% have positive body images.

Conclusion: The present research found that students' use of social media has a positive impact on their body image and a negative impact on their self-esteem, and that the degree of these effects varies with the age of the student.

Recommendation: The study suggested concentrating on setting up meetings that highlight individual strength and acceptance as a means of fostering self-esteem.

Keywords: Social Media, Self-Esteem, Body Image

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an essential component of l0ife for everyone in today's communication-driven world, including students. Its usage is growing at a notably faster rate than it did in the past. [1]. Currently, there are 3.5 billion active social media users worldwide. Due to its publicity, the Internet has completely changed how people engage, communicate, and get information [2]. Social media, according to the Oxford Dictionary, are websites and applications that let users engage in social networking or create and share content[3]. However, the growing prevalence of social networking sites (SNSs) throughout the world has led to a wealth of studies examining the effects of SNS use on users' self-perceptions and general well-being. While many studies have indicated that social media use has beneficial effects, there is also a substantial body of research indicating that social media use has detrimental effects on people's self-esteem and other aspects of their overall well-being [4]. Social media is a major force in contemporary culture, impacting how people obtain information, pass the time, and create their identities. One such tendency is the selective presentation of excessively optimistic self-images on social media. This is especially noticeable on platforms where one can use photos to project a supposedly real image of oneself. Social comparisons have previously been connected to negative psychological impacts of using social media, such as decreased life satisfaction, heightened loneliness, and problems with body image [5]. Body image is the viewpoint, ideas, and emotions that an individual has about their own body. It depicts a person's physical attributes, including how they appear in the mirror, and it stands for social conceptions that are derived from local customs and culture. This idea is founded on widely accepted body ideals that are propagated by family, friends, and the media. [6]. Therefore, a person's physical appearance plays a significant role in their personal identity, and this relationship to how they view themselves starts early in life. The propagation of messages centered on the "ideal body" in periodicals, newspapers, and television shows strongly influences cultural perceptions of body image[7]. When the media sets the standard too high for the majority of young people to meet, those who attempt may feel like a personal failure, which can exacerbate poor body image [8]. Self-esteem is one of the paradigms in juvenile studies that is most often examined. A person's negative or positive feeling of their own value, pride, positive self-evaluation, or self-respect is commonly used to characterize their self-esteem. It can also refer to our feelings toward ourselves, whether positive (high self-esteem) or negative (low self-esteem). We feel good about ourselves when we believe we're great and valuable and that other people agree with us [9]. Furthermore, self-esteem is one element that may be responsible for the detrimental impacts of social media addiction. The Hyper personal Model states that people who utilize social media are frequently exposed to the carefully chosen and exalted online personas of others, which may cause viewers to feel less confident in themselves even as they see

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or update their own online personas. self-worth [10]. Thus, the goals of the current study were to determine how much social media was used, how college students felt about their bodies and their self-worth, how social media use affected these feelings, and how much the socio_ demographic data related to these feelings differed from one another.

METHODS

By using the assessment method to determine the impact of social media use on body image and self-esteem among college students for the period of February 1, 2024, to August 1, 2024, a descriptive study design was implemented to meet the study's objectives. College students at the University of Kerbala were the subjects of the current investigation. Using a convenience non-probability sample of 98 students, the sample was chosen, and data was gathered using the Adopted questionnaire (in its Arabic version), with a structured interview technique applied to each student as a means of gathering information. The following sections make up the research questionnaire:Part I: Student demographic information (age, gender, educational attainment, and income status). Section II: Social Media Dependency Measure There are fifteen items in this section. Strongly agree (1), agree (2), uncertain (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5) were the ratings assigned to these items. According to the social media addiction scale, low refers to 1-1.66, moderate to 1.67-2.33, and severe to 2.34-3.3. Section III: Scale of body image There are 26 items in this section. The ratings for the items were: (1) agree; (2) uncertain; and (3) disagree. The student's body image was rated as follows: low = 1–1.66, moderate = 1.67–2.33, severe = 2.34–3. Part IV of the self-esteem scale has ten items with ratings of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (1), and strongly disagree (0). The students' self-esteem scores were as follows: low = 1–1.66, moderate = 1.67–2.33, severe = 2.34–3. A committee of six experts determined the validity of the questionnaire content, and the reliability of the instrument was assessed using the Cronbach alpha test for each section. The data in this study are analyzed using version 24 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics (Chi-Square test) are used in conjunction with inferential statistics (frequencies, percentages, Mean of Score, and standard deviations). The results showed that the predictor of the significant differences was None significant if P > 0.05, High significance when P ≤0.01), and Significant difference when P ≤0.05[11-17].

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of Participants according to socio-demographic data

Variable		F	%
Age	21-19	12	12.24
	24-22	56	57.14
	More then 24	30	30.61
M±SD= 2.327± 4.513		Total= 98	
Gender	Male	40	40.82
	Female	58	59.18
Total= 98			
Stage of level education	First stage	9	9.18
	Second stage	42	42.86
	Third stage	8	8.16
	Fourth stage	39	39.80
Total= 98			
Income status	Sufficient	56	57.14
	Semi-Sufficient	38	38.78
	Insufficient	4	4.08
Total= 98			

Table (1) reveals that the highest percentage of students aged 22-24 years old (57.14%), were female students (59.18%), were in the second stage (42.86%) and)57.14% (of students have Sufficient income status.

Table 2. Overall Assessment of the social media use among students

Knowledge	f	%	M	SD	Assessment
Low	13	13.3			
Moderate	55	56.1	2.1735	0.64257	Moderate
Severe	30	30.6			
Total	98	100.0			

Table (2) reveals that the highest percentage of student have a moderate level of social media use (56.1%) (M±SD= 2.1735± 0.64257).

Table 3. Overall Assessment of the body image among students

Knowledge	f	%	M	SD	Assessment
Poor	18	18.4			
Fair	39	39.8	2.2347	0.74337	Good
Good	41	41.8			
Total	98	100.0			

Table (3) reveals that most of the students who participated in the study have good body image (41.8%).

Table 4. Overall Assessment of the self-esteem among students

Knowledge	f	%	M	SD	Assessment
Poor	77	78.6			
Fair	19	19.4	1.2347	0.47191	Poor
Good	2	2.0			
Total	98	100.0			

Table (4) reveals that the majority (78.6%) of students have a poor level of self-esteem.

Table 5. Relationships between body image and age, gender, and income among groups

Variable		body image			
		Poor	Fair	Good	Relationship
Age	21-19	5	5	2	X^2 = 38.603
	24-22	13	30	13	P-value= .000
	More than 24	0	4	26	Sig= S
Gender	Male	7	16	17	X^2 = .035
	Female	11	23	24	P-value= .982 Sig= N.S
Income status	Sufficient	11	20	25	X^2 = 1.681
	Semi-Sufficient	6	18	14	P-value= .794 Sig= N.S
	Insufficient	1	1	2	

The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between body image and age among groups and there is non-significant relationship with gender and income at (p-value =0. 00)

Table 6. Relationships between self-esteem and age, gender, and income among groups

Variable		self-esteem			
		Poor	Fair	Good	Relationship
Age	21-19	8	4	0	X^2 = 6.884
	24-22	41	13	2	P-value= .034
	More than 24	28	2	0	Sig=S
Gender	Male	29	11	0	X^2 = 3.990
	Female	48	8	2	P-value= .136 Sig= N.S
Income status	Sufficient	42	12	2	X^2 = 5.152
	Semi-Sufficient	33	5	0	P-value= .272
	Insufficient	2	2	0	Sig= N.S

Table (6) results show that age and self-esteem have a significant relationship among groups, while gender and income have a non-significant relationship at (p-value = 0.034).

Table 7. Social media use's impact on students' perceptions of their bodies

	Social media use			t	p-value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Body image	.599	.101	.518	5.937	.000	S

This table demonstrates that students' body image is positively impacted by social media use at p-value (0.000).

Table 8. Impact of Students' Use of Social Media on Self-Esteem

	Social media use			t	p-value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Self-esteem	-.175	.073	-.238	-2.397	.018	S.

This table demonstrates that students' self-esteem is negatively impacted by social media use at a p-value of (0.018).

DISCUSSION

According to the study's findings, the largest proportion of students are between the ages of 22 and 24 (57.14%), while the lowest percentage is between the ages of 19 and 21 (12.24%). This finding conflicts with that of a prior study [18] which discovered that 43.4% of the students were in the 18–22 age range. The majority of the students, or 58 percent, were female (59.18%). This outcome is consistent with study result [19] which showed that female undergraduate participants made up the majority of the sample (54.3%). The highest percentage of students was in the second stage (42.86%) followed by the fourth stage (39.80%) and the lowest percentage was in the third stage (8.16). This result is consistent with study [20]. The study result reveals that most of the college students who participated in the study were in the second stage (34.5). The majority of the students have sufficient economic status (57.14%) and only (4.08%) have insufficient economic status (Table 1). A similar result with study (2) where most of the study participants had a medium socioeconomic state (60.2%) while only (6.2%) had a low socioeconomic state. In terms of students' use of social media, the results indicate that roughly half of them (56.1%) have a moderate level, followed by those who use it severely (30.6%), and only 13.3% have a low level (table 2). This result corresponds with study [21] where the study shows that most of the students have one to three hours of social media use (63.3%) while only (27.1%) reported spending 4 hours or more. The study result reveals that most of the students who participated in the study have a good level of body image (41.8%) followed by fair (41.8%) and a low percentage (18.4%) of the students have a poor level of body image (table 3). Study [3] supports this finding by showing that while 28.9% of college students have high body disassociation, the majority (71.1%) have low levels of body dissatisfaction. 78.6% of students have low levels of self-esteem, 19.4% have fair levels, and the lowest percentage of students have high levels, according to the majority of sample results (table 4). This result contrasts with research [22] that indicated the majority of students (76.6%) had moderate levels of self-esteem, while 15.3% had low levels, and only 8.1% had high levels. Regarding the relationship between body image and demographic data, the study's findings show that there is a significant correlation between body image and age (table 5), but not between body image and gender or economic status. This outcome deviates from the study [23]. The studies show that there is no meaningful correlation among student's age and gender and how they feel about their bodies. In terms of self-esteem, the study's findings indicate that there is a correlation between the two sets of demographic data: age and body image have a significant relationship, but there is no significant correlation between gender or economic status and self-esteem (table 6). This result contradicts study [9] since the latter's findings indicate that there is no meaningful correlation between age and self-esteem. The study does concur that there is no meaningful correlation between gender and economic status and self-esteem. Concerning the effect of social media use on body image, the result of the study shows that social media use has a positive effect on Body image among students (table 7). This outcome is consistent with a study [24] conducted in Lebanon. The results show a strong link between negative body image and excessive social media use. The results of the study show that social media use has a negative impact on students' self-esteem (table 8). This result is in line with study [25,26] since it demonstrates that social media use and self-esteem are negatively correlated. Nevertheless, the findings of another earlier study, such as study [27] indicate that there is a positive correlation between low self-esteem and the frequency of social media use.

CONCLUSIONS

The latest research came to the conclusion that students used social media at a moderate overall level, had a positive body image, and low self-esteem. Students' age has an impact on their self-esteem and body image. Additionally, the current study discovered that students' use of social media has a negative impact on their self-esteem and a positive impact on their body image.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the student's poor level of self-esteem, the study advised to focus on organizing sessions that focus on building self-esteem through activities that emphasize personal strength and self-acceptance.

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