RESEARCH ARTICLE

Body Image Satisfaction and Its Psychological Correlates: A Correlational Analysis of Self-Esteem Among University Snapchat Users in a Digital Social Media Environment

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of visually oriented social media platforms has intensified scholarly interest in their psychological consequences, particularly concerning body image and self-esteem among young adults. Snapchat, distinguished by its ephemeral content, image-based communication, and extensive use of augmented reality filters, presents a unique digital environment that may shape users' self-perceptions in distinct ways. The present study investigates the relationship between body image satisfaction and self-esteem among university students who actively use Snapchat, while also examining potential differences across gender and age groups. Employing a descriptive correlational research design, data were collected from a sample of 102 university Snapchat users using standardized self-report measures of body image satisfaction and global self-esteem. Statistical analyses included Pearson correlation coefficients and comparative tests to explore associations and demographic variations. The results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between body image satisfaction and self-esteem, indicating that individuals who reported more positive perceptions of their bodies also demonstrated higher levels of self-worth. Gender-based analyses showed that female participants experienced significantly lower body image satisfaction compared to male participants, although self-esteem differences were less pronounced. No statistically significant differences were observed across age groups. These findings underscore the influential role of visually driven social media platforms in shaping psychological well-being among young adults. The study highlights Snapchat as a meaningful context for understanding contemporary body image formation and its implications for self-esteem. From an applied perspective, the results emphasize the importance of developing preventive and psychoeducational interventions aimed at promoting healthy self-perceptions, critical media literacy, and psychological resilience

in digital environments. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media psychology by offering empirical evidence specific to Snapchat users within a university population.

Introduction:

In recent years, social media platforms have become central to the daily lives of millions, significantly shaping individuals' self-perceptions and social interactions. Among these platforms, Snapchat is renowned for its ephemeral content and innovative filters, which uniquely influence users' body image and self-esteem (Vaterlaus et al., 2015).

Given that body image dissatisfaction can lead to adverse psychological outcomes such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders, understanding its dynamics in the digital age is crucial (Fardouly et al., 2015; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

Body image is defined as a person's perceptions, attitudes, and feelings about their physical appearance (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

Self-esteem, closely linked to body image, reflects an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value (Rosenberg, 1965). Prior research has established a strong link between body image and self-esteem, especially among young adults who are highly engaged with social media (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008).

However, little research has specifically targeted Snapchat users, whose experiences may differ from users of other social networks due to the platform's unique communication style and visual features.

The present study aims to fill this gap by examining the correlational relationship between body image and self-esteem among Snapchat users in a university setting. Additionally, it seeks to explore how demographic variables such as gender and age may impact these psychological constructs, in line with findings from previous studies indicating gender differences in body dissatisfaction and self-esteem levels (Furnham, Badmin, & Sneade, 2002).

Understanding these relationships is vital for mental health professionals and educators aiming to develop interventions promoting healthy body image and high self-esteem, particularly in populations vulnerable to the negative effects of social media (Perloff, 2014). The study tests three hypotheses: (1) a positive correlation exists between body image satisfaction and self-esteem; (2) there are significant gender differences in body image and self-esteem; and (3) age groups differ in these psychological variables.

The psychological and social dimensions of body image formation: The duality of mind and body is one of the theoretical issues that has preoccupied philosophical and scientific thought throughout history, as it has remained a subject of ongoing debate among philosophers and scientists about the nature of the relationship between the physical and psychological dimensions of human beings. In the context of this debate, modern scientific

approaches have sought to move beyond rigid dualistic conceptions by developing intermediate concepts that integrate the body as a tangible physical entity and the mind as a system of subjective representations and meanings. The concept of body image in psychology is one of the most prominent of these concepts, given its explanatory power in understanding how individuals represent their bodies on a psychological level. Body image refers to the mental construct that an individual forms of their body, which reflects not so much the physical reality of the body as their subjective perception and emotional and cognitive representations of it. It is therefore an abstract psychological concept centred on the body as an object of subjective experience, not merely a biological entity. This concept began to take shape in the late 19th century at the hands of the French physician Bonnier, where it was initially proposed within a neurological framework, focusing on the role of nerve centres in representing the shape of the body and its position in space. With the development of psychological research, the concept of body image underwent a qualitative expansion during the 1930s, when psychoanalyst Paul Schilder introduced it into the field of clinical psychology, emphasising its dynamic nature and its overlap with the emotional and social dimensions of the individual. Since then, body image has been viewed as the product of a complex interaction between multiple factors, including genetic and neurological determinants, as well as psychological, social and cultural factors.

The formation of body image begins at a very early stage of life. Some analytical approaches, such as Dolto's, point to the profound impact of pregnancy and birth experiences in shaping this initial perception of the body. The formation of body image does not stop at a certain stage, but continues throughout life, influenced by critical developmental stages, such as adolescence, as well as exposure to various internal and external factors, such as physical injuries, illnesses, psychological trauma, and negative treatment patterns in early childhood. Depending on the nature of these experiences, body image can take on different forms, ranging from a healthy body image characterised by integrity, harmony and self-satisfaction, which contributes to enhancing self-esteem and transforming the body into a source of psychological strength for the individual, to a disturbed body image manifested in various patterns of body image disorders. A review of the psychological literature in this field indicates that a large part of the research has focused specifically on the study of body dysmorphic disorder, as defined and classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), as one of the most common and representative forms of body image disorders. (Mohamed Kamal Zidi, 2025, p. 420)

Throughout life, the body is subjected to a series of practices and interventions aimed at altering its image and improving its appearance, whether for personal reasons or in response to social and cultural pressures. These practices include a wide range of behaviours such as weight control, the use of cosmetics, changing hairstyles and hair colour, clothing style, and attention to hygiene and physical care. Together, these elements are considered fundamental determinants that contribute to shaping an individual's body image. Engaging in such practices leads to the reconstruction of the mental image of the body, For example, the use of cosmetics, in addition to improving one's appearance, enables the individual to identify with prevailing social norms and adopt common aesthetic symbols, which is reflected in their perception of their physical self compared to what it was before. Strategies for modifying body image vary in complexity, ranging from simple practices such as changing one's style of dress or hairstyle to more complex and costly ones such as extreme diets or medical and cosmetic surgical interventions that require considerable financial and psychological effort. Body image plays a pivotal role in mental health, as it represents the meeting point between biological and physiological dimensions on the one hand and psychological

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and emotional structures on the other. It contributes to guiding the ego and regulating its relationship with the body, It also influences how individuals respond to their physical impulses and emotions. Physical appearance and the mental image associated with it are two fundamental elements in building a sense of psychological security and determining the level of self-satisfaction. Self-esteem is closely linked to body image and mental health in general, as studies indicate that body image directly affects an individual's psychological state and cultural factors.

The body plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's personal experience, as it is a fundamental means of interacting with oneself and others. This role is shaped by early life experiences, where physical and emotional experiences leave a deep impact on the formation of a person's body image. Experiences related to basic needs, such as hygiene, movement, and exposure to different types of treatment, all contribute to the construction of a mental model of the body that mimics self-awareness and influences an individual's personal and social relationships later in life. These early experiences overlap with psychological, social and cultural factors, influencing a person's perception of their body and how they interact with it, including their level of self-satisfaction and ability to adapt to surrounding social norms. On this basis, individuals seek to use various physical and cognitive tools and techniques to form a complete and balanced body image, thereby boosting self-confidence and reducing anxiety about their appearance. In addition, individuals' responses to these experiences may vary depending on the nature of the factors surrounding them, including family, school and social interactions, and even the medical and psychological guidance available. Positive experiences that enhance self-esteem and mental health contribute to the development of a coherent and positive body image, while negative or traumatic experiences lead to distortions in body perception, which are reflected in the individual's overall psychological balance and ability to cope with life's challenges. (Zainab Bouchelaghem, 2025, p. 145).

Methods:

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the association between body image and self-esteem among Snapchat users. The descriptive correlational design is appropriate for exploring natural relationships among variables without experimental manipulation (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017).

Participants:

The sample consisted of 102 Snapchat users recruited from two universities. The participants were 57 females (55.9%) and 45 males (44.1%), predominantly aged between 18 and 32 years (95.09%). Participants were selected using convenience sampling.

Measures:

Two validated scales were used for data collection:

Body Image Scale: Comprising 25 items assessing participants' perceptions and satisfaction with their physical appearance. The scale demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.70.

Self-Esteem Scale: Adapted from Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, consisting of 10 items measuring global self-worth. This scale showed acceptable reliability with an alpha above 0.62.

Procedures:

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Participants completed an online questionnaire including demographic items, the body image scale, and the self-esteem scale. Data collection was anonymous and voluntary, conducted over a two-week period.

Data Analysis:

-Initial data screening involved testing for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Both indicated non-normal distributions, steering the analysis towards non-parametric methods.

-Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 21, including:

-Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages).

-Spearman's rank-order correlation to assess the degree of association between body image and self-esteem.

-Mann-Whitney U tests to investigate potential gender and age group differences in the variables.

.Significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

Results:

Data Screening and Normality Assessment

Prior to conducting inferential statistical analyses, the dataset underwent rigorous screening for data quality and distributional characteristics. Tests of normality using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov methods showed significant departures from normality for both the body image and self-esteem variables ($p < 0.05$ for all). Given these results, subsequent analyses were conducted using non-parametric statistical tests appropriate for non-normally distributed data.

Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

The sample included 102 Snapchat users, with a slight female majority (55.9%). Age distribution indicated a predominantly young adult population, with 95.09% aged between 18 and 32 years. Descriptive analysis revealed a moderate average score for body image satisfaction (Mean = X.XX, SD = X.XX) and an average self-esteem level (Mean = X.XX, SD = X.XX) across participants. These descriptive statistics provide a baseline understanding of the psychological constructs within this specific population.

Correlational Findings:

Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed to examine the association between body image satisfaction and self-esteem. The analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($rs = 0.569$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that greater satisfaction with body image is associated with higher self-esteem among Snapchat users. This finding aligns with established psychological theories positing a strong link between physical self-perception and overall self-worth.

Gender Differences:

Investigating gender-based differences using the Mann-Whitney U test uncovered statistically significant differences in body image perceptions ($U = 946$, $p = 0.014$). Specifically, female participants reported lower levels of body image satisfaction compared to their male counterparts. This result concurs with previous literature suggesting greater body image concerns among females, possibly exacerbated by social and cultural pressures

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amplified through social media (Perloff, 2014). However, the test did not detect significant gender differences in self-esteem scores (U = 1183, p = 0.12), suggesting that self-esteem may be influenced by a broader array of factors beyond body image alone.

Age Group Comparisons:

Non-parametric comparisons across two age categories (18-24 and 25-32) revealed no significant differences in body image satisfaction (U = 1563, p = 0.38) or self-esteem (U = 1498, p = 0.45). These results imply relative stability of these psychological outcomes across early adulthood in this sample. It is plausible that the uniformity in social media usage patterns and developmental stage among university students contributes to this lack of significant variation.

Summary of Results:

In sum, the findings underscore the meaningful link between body image and self-esteem in Snapchat users and highlight gender-specific vulnerabilities related to body dissatisfaction. These insights reinforce the need to consider psychosocial factors in digital well-being initiatives and mental health interventions targeting young adults.

Discussion:

The present study aimed to explore the correlational relationship between body image satisfaction and self-esteem among Snapchat users, while considering potential gender and age differences. The findings reveal a significant positive association between body image and self-esteem, indicating that individuals who perceive their bodies more positively tend to exhibit higher levels of self-worth. This result is consistent with extensive research linking physical self-perceptions and overall psychological well-being (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Grabe et al., 2008).

The gender differences identified in body image satisfaction align with prior literature suggesting that females generally experience greater body dissatisfaction than males, likely due to sociocultural pressures and idealized beauty standards amplified by social media (Perloff, 2014; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). However, the lack of significant gender differences in self-esteem suggests that self-worth may be influenced by multifaceted factors beyond body image alone, warranting more nuanced investigation.

Age comparisons showing no significant differences in body image and self-esteem echo findings from previous studies that indicate relative stability of these constructs during early adulthood (Huang & Dong, 2019). This may be explained by homogeneous developmental and social media exposure in the sampled university population.

The use of Snapchat's unique features, such as temporary content and appearance-altering filters, may also contribute to body image perceptions in complex ways. While some users might benefit from creative expression, others may experience heightened self-scrutiny or comparison, potentially exacerbating body dissatisfaction (Vaterlaus et al., 2015). These contextual factors highlight the importance of considering platform-specific impacts when evaluating psychological outcomes related to social media.

Limitations of this study include the convenience sampling approach and the relatively small, geographically

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confined sample, which may limit generalizability. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences. Future research should expand on these findings with larger and more diverse samples and consider longitudinal designs to examine changes over time.

These results have practical implications for mental health professionals and educators aiming to foster resilience and positive self-concept among young adults in digital environments. Interventions focusing on media literacy, self-compassion, and critical engagement with social media content could mitigate the negative psychological impacts associated with body image dissatisfaction.

Educational sociological analysis of Snapchat's impact on body image:

- Snapchat contributes to the formation of new aesthetic values and standards among learners, which may be unrealistic, affecting their perceptions of what is socially 'acceptable'.
- Digital socialization.

Learning by observation and modelling :

- By following influencers and peers, users—especially students—learn behaviours and attitudes towards the body and may imitate idealised models modified by filters .
- Enhancing or weakening self-esteem.
- Relying on interaction (views, responses, screenshots) as an indicator of self-worth may link learners' self-esteem to their physical appearance.
- Filters as an educational tool with dual effects.
- Negative effect: Reinforcing an unrealistic physical image.
- Potential positive effect: Creative expression and fun if used critically.

Second: Why is Snapchat considered an educational influencer?

Snapchat differs from other platforms because it:

Relies on instant images rather than text.

Uses filters that alter facial and body features.

- It encourages constant self-presentation in front of others
- **From an educational perspective, this means that learners:**
- Learn about themselves through the eyes of others.
- Associate social acceptance with appearance.
- Acquire aesthetic standards from outside the educational context.

Fourth: Educational effects on learners

Potential negative effects:

- Body dissatisfaction.
- Low self-esteem.
- Bullying related to appearance.

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Fourth: Educational effects on learners

Potential negative effects:

- Body dissatisfaction .
- Low self-esteem .
- Body image-related bullying .
- Unhealthy behaviours (extreme diets, hiding appearance).
- Conditional positive effects:
- Self-expression.
- Creativity and fun.
- Boosted confidence if the content is realistic and guided.

Fifth: The role of educational institutions

- The role of schools
- Integrating media education into curricula.
- Implementing activities on body acceptance.
- Training teachers to understand the psychological effects of social media.
- Activating the role of the counsellor.
- The role of the teache.
- Promoting the value of the student beyond their appearance
- Preventing ridicule and bullyin.
- Opening classroom discussions about reality and digital assumptions.
- The role of the family.
- Continuous dialogue rather than prohibition.
- Guiding children to choose healthy content.
- Providing psychological support to children when they express dissatisfaction with their bodies.
- Continuous dialogue, not prohibition.

Sixth: Practical educational strategies

- Teach students that filters are not reality.
- Encourage learners to share authentic content.
- Reduce usage time.

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- Promote confidence-building activities (sports, art, teamwork).
- Suggested educational approaches
- Encourage conscious and responsible use of Snapchat .
- Train teachers on digital mental health issues .
- Implement school programmes to promote self-esteem and positive body image.

Conclusion:

This study provides valuable insights into the positive correlation between body image satisfaction and self-esteem among Snapchat users in a university context. The significant association highlights the intertwined nature of physical self-perception and overall psychological well-being in young adults engaged with social media.

Gender differences in body image satisfaction reinforce prior findings on the heightened vulnerability of females to body dissatisfaction linked to cultural and social pressures prevalent on digital platforms. The absence of gender differences in self-esteem underscores the complexity of self-worth as a construct influenced by multiple factors.

The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and educational programs that promote healthy body image and critical media literacy, particularly tailored to young adults immersed in social media environments. Mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers should collaborate to develop strategies mitigating the negative psychological impacts of social media use.

Future research should endeavor to employ longitudinal designs and more diverse, representative samples to deepen understanding of these psychological dynamics over time. Additionally, exploration of platform-specific features and their role in shaping body image and self-esteem can further inform clinical and preventive practices.

In conclusion, fostering a positive body image and robust self-esteem remains a crucial element in supporting the mental health of young social media users, warranting continued scholarly and practical attention.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with internationally recognized ethical standards for psychological and social science research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the study's purpose prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. No identifying personal data were collected, and participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. The research procedures complied with ethical guidelines applicable to academic research involving human participants.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed substantially to the conception and design of the study.

- **Dr. Siouani Lotfi** was responsible for the theoretical framework, research design, and data analysis.

- **Dr. Hamouche Samira** contributed to data collection, literature review, and interpretation of results.

- **Dr. Hammada Saliha** participated in drafting, revising, and critically reviewing the manuscript for intellectual content.

All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for its content.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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