Relationship between Body Image Perception, Use of Social Networking Site and Well-Being of Adolescent Girls in Prayagraj, India

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ABSTRACT: The present study explores the relationship between body image perception and social networking sites on the wellbeing of educated adolescent girls in Prayagraj District of Uttar Pradesh, India. The use of social networking sites is very common among the present adolescents and youth. The presentation of self in the form of posting pictures on various social networking platforms has a very close association with a person's perception of his or her body. There is a lack of qualitative inquiry focussing on the relation between body image perception and wellbeing with the moderating role of the use of social media in India. The present study is both quantitative and qualitative conducted on 41 adolescent girls. The mean score on the adolescent wellbeing scale does not indicate signs of depression (mean= 11.53), and they have mild concern for their body shape (mean= 50.48). However, the qualitative results on the relationship between body image perception and social networking sites (SNS) posit a conflicting ideology. The results indicate that although social networking is an excellent way to connect, its excessive use affects relationships with family and friends negatively. Regarding the dimensions of projecting self on social networking sites, respondents expressed that posting and observing pictures of self and others on social networking sites makes them both feel happy and sad both. Inferiority feelings are also developed. Results are discussed in the light of previous researches done.

Keywords: Body image perception, adolescent wellbeing, social networking, qualitative technique

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines *adolescence* as the period of life between 10-19 years of age. It is a critical phase of human development and a period of physical, psychological, and social instability. Adolescence is a period of life that has recently gained much recognition as a distinct phase of life with its own unique needs.

For girls, adolescence is a period of comparatively more stress and strain as compared to boys. Menarche and Menstruation are compulsory events in women's lives, and the social and psychological responses to these events have different impacts on girls across class, culture, and caste. The socialization of the girl child happens in Indian families in such ways that the communication with parents on issues related to sexuality and

reproductive health is restricted to mothers. Mother bridges the gap between the father and daughter. The communication gap between girls and parents leads to many unanswered questions, resulting in unwanted peer suggestions. Socio-psychological consequences on young girls are severe as they indulge in behavior that is not acceptable in society. The plethora of research indicates that most adolescent girls get information about sexuality and peer relationships from immature classmates, mobile phones, media, or books. Parents hardly allow comfortable opportunities for discussing issues related to sexuality with their adolescent girls. Moreover, the typical adolescent lives in a media-rich environment leading to a serious impact on their lives. (Jejeebhoy et al.,2014).

Globally, social networking websites have become an important way of spending leisure time with adolescents. The statistics have indicated that globally there is a tremendous increase in the Internet and social network sites by people (Statista, 2020). India is on the top among the famous social networking website; for, e.g., India has 280 million Facebook users. Social media usage is one of the most popular online activities. In 2020, an estimated 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025. Statistics have also indicated a substantial involvement of adolescents as frequent users of social media in India and internationally. With the advancement of technology and the cheap cost of smartphones, Social Media is now easily accessible via Smartphone applications. Smartphones made Social Media more private and personalized. Constant Mobile notifications engage users more as compared to Computers (Bhati and Bansal, 2019). According to CNET, Mobile users spent an average of 7 hours engaging in Mobile Applications on Facebook. After cheaper mobile data plans, Social Media sites gained an outrageous amount of Indian users. "India will cross 370 million social media users by 2022" (Statista), which is nearly one-third of the Indian population, and Indian teenagers use the majority of Social Media. Teenage is considered a crucial stage from the developmental point of view and needs guidance, care, parental support, and empathy Dilci and Eranils, (2018). At this Age, Social Media does play an important role in shaping the teenager's behavior towards life Zaky, (2017).

Use of Social Networking Websites, Body Image Perception & Well-being

Research has emphasized the adverse effects of online social networking on children and adolescents. Over the last few decades, technological advances have probably had a much bigger impact on people's lives than anyone can imagine or were indeed prepared for. Social networking sites (SNS) have become an intricate part of modern life. These are the perfect examples of technological and social platforms converging to provide a new communication medium. Several social networking sites set up their online profiles to establish and maintain social contact. Srivastava and Bharadwaj (2014). Children and adolescents visit these sites quite effortlessly. *Such engagement* is a virtual social world that provides novel and innovative opportunities to teenagers and gives rise to additional risks such as potential abuse, exposure to inappropriate content, and online bullying. All such incidences result in serious psychological implications.

In Indian teenagers, the SNS has a primary purpose of promoting communication and interaction amongst users. Such sites like Facebook and Twitter have become popular and a vital part of social life in India, especially among teenagers. However, available literature indicates a lack of in-depth study to evaluate how and why Indian teenagers engage with social networking Vijaylakshmi et al. (2014). Similarly, another research by Sharma et al. (2014) indicates that individuals' excessive undisciplined use of the Internet has led to the emergence of internet addiction. The internal addiction test scoring revealed that 57.3% as normal users, 35.0% as mild, 7.4% as moderate, and 0.3% as severely addicted to the Internet. It was concluded that internet addiction is a growing problem among students, so it is necessary to develop strategies for preventing internet addiction and therapeutic intervention, which is vital for promoting health and safe use of the Internet.

Moreover, Kaveri Subrahmanyam and Gloria Lin (2013) reported that the growing popularity of internet communication applications among adolescents had made the Internet an important social context for their development. Adolescent often engages in what has been referred to as "imaginative audience behavior." They tend to overestimate the extent to which others are watching & evaluating. As a result, adolescents are extremely preoccupied with how they appear in the eyes of others. Such public evaluations are particularly likely to affect the development of adolescent social self-esteem, which is defined as adolescent evaluations of their self-worth or satisfaction with three dimensions of their selves- Physical appearance, romantic attractiveness, and close relationship (Ahn, 2011). There is a close association between adolescents' self-esteem and their sense of wellbeing. In the present scenario, self-esteem is highly influenced by the individual's presentation of self on digital social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. The self-presentation on the various "filter apps" destroys an individual's self-evaluation and drives a person apart from the "real self." Some people presenting themselves on social networking sites, and getting positive comments is a pleasurable experience as it results in higher social acceptance and self-esteem. However, for some, it can be highly disturbing because of discrepancies developed between "real," "social," and "ideal" selves. Such experiences have devastating effects on the overall well-being of a person.

Well-being is defined as the frequency and intensity of emotional experiences such as happiness, joy, stress, and worry that make a person's life pleasant or unpleasant(Kahneman & Deaton,2010). Many different terms are used in psychology literature to describe wellbeing Edward et al. (2002). *Mental health* is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual relies on his/her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively & fruitfully, can contribute to his/her community. The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in the definition of health. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental& social wellbeing is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." (World health organization 2014).

An adolescent is a period in which body image perception focuses on important dimensions/ aspects of social self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. Adolescents generally get comments and opinions from significant members of their lives, which has an overall impact on their body image's positive or negative perception. It is hypothesized that social self-esteem is an important aspect of wellbeing, and it may act as a mediator between social networking sites and wellbeing. The words "Body" and "Image" actually conflict. The body is definite and more objective, "The physical structure of an organism," and most body responses are predictable, such as reactions to cold, pain, pleasure, hunger. "Image," conversely, is subjective, comprising mental representation, idea, or conception. Images are derived from the perception that is influenced by personal and cultural factors. (Angela, 2013). Merging the meaning of these terms leads to "Body image" as the "Internal representation of one's outer appearance," which reflects physical and perceptual dimensions Dina and Bayer (2005). It would not be wrong to say that body image is a multidimensional construct influenced by biological, physiological, and social factors.

Body image is related highly to an individual's self-esteem and self-concept and other key aspects of human development, including sexuality, familial relationship, and identity. Body image also has been established as a key aspect of self-worth and mental health across the life span. Poor body image and lower self-esteem result in dissatisfaction with oneself. If these body-related concerns are intense enough, they may catalyze behaviors to change one's physique to reduce discontent. In its extremes, this discontent manifests as disordered eating patterns or pathways that lead to depression. Laura Weidman et al. (2017) have emphasized the role of body comparison on social media. In order to engage in body comparison on social media, a user must encounter images of others' bodies to use as a reference. Although all current social media channels allow for multimedia content, such as photos and videos, some platforms feature more of these visual types of content than others. Due to the potential differences between visual and text-based platforms, it is necessary to examine the relationships between the time spent on particular social media platforms and the effects on body satisfaction. Assessing whether the time users spend on particular platforms displays different associations with body esteem will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the process that influences body esteem and body image beliefs and behaviors. Understanding the effects of social media platforms on the health of heavy users, such as young women, will be essential for developing future initiatives and interventions to protect and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of this at-risk population.

Multiple factors impact the construction of body image. The strong association between body image and self-esteem has unique importance for adolescents. Adolescence represents a critical transition period during which adolescents face physical, cognitive, and social changes as they enter and progress through puberty and reach adulthood. Changes in these diverse realms do not occur independently but in constant interaction with many individuals, social and cultural factors. Physiological changes include accelerated physical growth, the maturation of primary sex characteristics, and the development of secondary sex characteristics. Adolescent's construction of their closely linked body image& self-concept can be particularly challenging because of the diverse, rapid, and significant changes that are maximum during this period. One of the important sources of body image formation in the present context is using "filter apps" on social media. Young boys and girls often use filter applications on various social websites and put themselves in highly judgemental situations.

Overwhelming dissatisfaction with body shape and weight that adolescents experience is not a cognitive perception or observation but often is linked to one of two weight-related disorders: obesity and disordered eating. Obesity is more prevalent than eating disorders, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa; however, all of these disorders lead to significant negative effects on the individual's physical &psychological health and often impact their socio-economic opportunities during childhood & and adolescence into adulthood Chapel hill, (2017).

The concept of health, subjective wellbeing or happiness, life satisfaction is very closely linked to poor body image. According to WHO, wellbeing is an essential component of health, defined as the most important value in life. The proper functioning of psychic and somatic activity requires a balanced mind, body & soul. Health should be seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. A negative body image can severely affect teenage health (Lucy Morrish & Peta Taylor, 2019). There is also an association between the person's body image perception on the overall wellbeing of adolescent girls. Choi (2010) explored the influence of social media on youth and posited that social media had caused aggression, egoism, excessive self-assurance& skewed perception among the youth. Jensen (2011) evaluated the role of social media in the

empowerment of adolescent girls. The study revealed that social media were not used for human development across the world actively. The scholar suggested that adolescent-specific social media should be developed in order to educate & enlist the active participation of adolescents in academic, social & economic development activities.

Ever since internet use became common as a leisure activity, researchers have been interested in investigating its consequences for wellbeing and self-esteem. Some studies reported negative relationships with various types of Internet use; other studies found positive relationships, yet other studies found no significant relationship. Two reasons may account for the inconsistent finding on the relationships between internet use, self-esteem, and wellbeing. First, many studies have treated the independent variable "internet use" as a one-dimensional construct. Some studies did investigate the differential effects of type of Internet use. However, the selection of these types usually did not follow from theoretical anticipation of their consequences for self-esteem & wellbeing. In our view, at least a distinction between social and non-social internet use is required to investigate internet effects on self-esteem & wellbeing adequately. A second shortcoming in earlier studies is that many authors did not specify how internet use could be related to self-esteem & wellbeing. *Most researchers have focused on the main effects of internet use on either self-esteem or wellbeing. None of these studies have considered models in which the influence of internet use on self-esteem & wellbeing is considered simultaneously. By modeling the relationship of internet use with both self-esteem & wellbeing, a more comprehensive set of hypotheses can be evaluated, which may clarify some of the contradictory findings in previous studies. Some researchers disagree with this and claim that it is generally just the Internet that affects individuals' self-esteem, not the social networking sites.* Youngsters with low self-esteem find Facebook more beneficial as compared to the ones with high self-esteem. Due to the use of Facebook, people with low self-esteem possess more social capital than the ones with high self-esteem. (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013)

The literature on self-esteem suggests a strong link between self-esteem, collective self-esteem & subjective wellbeing (Crocker et al. 2013). This linkage, however, varies with the type of self-esteem examined. For example, a large literature has demonstrated the positive role of personal self-esteem (PSE) in promoting subjective wellbeing. In addition, culture has been found to shape the strength of the association between PSE & subjective wellbeing. PSE was found to be correlated more strongly with life satisfaction in individualistic than in collective societies. Individuals from individualistic cultures may put greater emphasis on their unique traits & personal attributes, which make PSE more salient. In contrast, individuals in collectivist cultures may emphasize the relational & collective aspects of the self. It is essential to clarify which type of self-esteem is beneficial for subjective wellbeing in collectivist cultures.

Based on Zhan & Lindley (2014), using social media as a performance method can be the identity of people and can increase their relationships among others. That was because social activities such as social need are needed for an individual on human being & improve their satisfaction (Zhan, 2016). An individual who has many friends in social media and has many social groups have higher well-being in their lives. Using social media such as Facebook, people can remove or deny unwanted information that they do not need, such as tagged the photo or names. At the same time, SNS allows users to show their memories on past self-expressions such as "like" or "shared" in the case of Facebook. If it is on Twitter, it can be "followers" or "re-tweets." As information, Facebook is one of the ideal tools for self-promotion for the user. They can post status updates, comments, or photos of themselves and frequent positive feedback. (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013)

Using social networking in this era can have a lot of positive and negative impacts on social life. There have been two kinds of people in social media: low self-esteem and high self-esteem. People who are low in self-esteem may be shy or difficult to show themselves on social media. Meanwhile, people who are high in self-esteem usually will show themselves on social media to get attention because of their good qualities. Based on the articles, people who are high in self-esteem can communicate with other people on social media that can give valuables comments for them, and it is the opposite of people with low self-esteem. They are difficult to communicate with other people on social media because they are not active &do not have many friends(Forest, 2014). According to him, although people who are high in self-esteem have many friends on social media, when they meet face-to-face interactions, people who are disclosing their feelings on social media are different than in social media.

According to Zhan (2016), he stated that online networking could improve an individual's life fulfillment through the advantages of expanded social capital, apparent social support, or expanded self-confidence. Additionally, social support can also dismiss an individual's apparent anxiety & initiate a constructive effect to prompt an upgraded life satisfaction.

Some of the researchers have identified the major benefits and advantages of SNS. For example, Facebook gives individuals a sense of freedom &identity, boosts the confidence level of individuals, and cheers them up during hard times (Nayagah, Stephen, and Muema, 2015). Adolescents were exposed to various media, which gender differences varied with the type. There has been a huge increase in internet access among adolescents with five or more years of education, especially boys. While just five percent of boys and four percent of girls

had accessed the Internet in 2007, percentages had increased to 37 and 11, respectively, in 2012. Notably, in 2012, about one-fifth of boys (19%) and one in 20 girls (6%) reported frequent internet use. Rural-urban differences were also apparent. In addition, in 2012,63 percent and 26 percent of urban boys and girls, respectively, had accessed the Internet compared to 28 percent and three percent of their rural counterparts; likewise, 35 percent of boys and 13 percent of girls in urban areas had accessed the Internet frequently compared to far fewer rural adolescents (13% of boys and 1% of girls).

The Rationale of the Study

In the present technologically advanced social scenario, the problems of adolescents are of diversified nature. It has been well mentioned in the research that adolescent girls are very much aware of their body images. Their overall well-being is affected by their perceptions about their body images. Technological advances have made young girls exposed to the virtual social world very easily. The indulgence in social network sites has become a routine for the majority of adolescents and youth. There is a very close association between the use of social networking sites and their body image perception. The perception of the body's shape is an important aspect of the body's overall image. It is quite evident from the research that a person's self-perception is very much affected by the judgments given by his/her society and especially peer group in an adolescent group. Moreover, with the use of social networking, these judgments have become even more prominent. People are becoming more anxious about their virtual social world. Moreover, culture also impacts how adolescents perceive their body image and well-being, using social network sites as a moderator variable. Many quantitative studies address the understanding of the role of body image perception on the wellbeing of adolescents. However, there is a scarcity of qualitative research associated with adolescent well-being while using social networking sites for projecting their body image perception. In an attempt to understand the relationships between the various aspects of the usage of social networking sites in a deeper way, the present study has been designed on the following research question-

1. How does the well-being of adolescent girls gets affected by the use of social networking websites?
2. How is adolescent girls' well-being affected by their self-presentation and body image perception on the various social networking websites?
3. Does any relationship between usage of Social networking websites, body Image perception, and wellbeing of Adolescent girls exist?

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 41 adolescent girls aged 13 to 18 years studying in the 8th to 12th standard classes (mean age- 16.7 years). All the participants were studying in the English medium schools of Prayagraj City. The sampling was purposive.

Measures

The data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. An in-depth qualitative interview schedule was prepared to understand the nature of the usage of social networking sites and their linkages with body image perception. Interviews were conducted face to face, and quantitative data were collected using the following questionnaires, and the well-being was assessed using Birleson (1980) adolescent wellbeing scale. The scale has 18 questions relating to different aspects of adolescent life and how they feel about them. They are asked to indicate whether the statement applies most of the time, sometimes or never. The responses to each question are scored 0, 1, or 2. 0 means that the response indicates no concern, one possible concern, and two that the young person is indicating unhappiness or low self-esteem about that item. A score of 13 or more has been found to indicate the likelihood of a depressive disorder.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the relationship between body image perception and the use of Social Networking Websites on the wellbeing of adolescents. The study specifically tried to look at the moderating role of the use of Social Networking websites and their impact on wellbeing. The data obtained on the wellbeing scale was quantitative. The moderating role of social networking websites and the projection of self on various was done based on a qualitative inquiry using an in-depth qualitative interview schedule. The mean score on the

Adolescent wellbeing scale is 11.53, which means that the adolescent girls are not showing any signs of depression according to the scale's norms. However, the interview schedule's qualitative results indicate a conflicting opinion on many aspects of the usage of social networking sites.

The dimensions of the interview schedule focussed on the *role of the use of social media on body image perception of adolescent girls, the impact of self -presentation on social media and body image perception on well- being of adolescent girls, and understanding the relationship between usage of Social networking websites, body Image perception, and wellbeing of Adolescent girls.* The scores on the adolescent wellbeing score were also available for the participants. Therefore their responses were also taken into account for the interpretation of results.

Role of social media on overall wellbeing

On this dimension, the questions assessed the role of social media in communication, the relevance of social media news in life, comfort in learning new things on social media, and the impact of social media on mental peace. The responses indicate that social networking is considered a very comfortable means of communication where connecting with people as far as communication is concerned. Information exchange is very easy, especially on platforms like WhatsApp, etc. 36.6% had three accounts on other social networking sites (SNS), 29.3 % of participants had 4 to 5 accounts on various websites. There is also an opinion that participants feel disconnected and lost if they are not attending their conversation on various social networking sites. One of the participants (participant X, whose score on well -being scale indicated a likelihood of depression) reported that we could express many of our feelings on social media, which we cannot express when we are in a face-to-face situation. So, there is a freedom of expression that is experienced while conversing on social networking. Respondents also reported that social networking reduces loneliness, and there is a continuous involvement in social life. However, it has also been reported that sometimes it becomes irritating and cannot resist checking the social sites again and again. 24.4% of Adolescent girls check their SNS accounts more than ten times a day, and 39% check 2 to 5 times a day. Although the mean score on well -being scale was below the critical value of 13, the responses on open-ended questions indicate some conflicting opinions. There is a need to explore the impact of social media websites on adolescent well-being using qualitative strategy.

The role of social media is relevant in personal life as the young girls get new ideas, information on dressing sense, physical appearance, socially approved behavior, and much other information on social media. They like taking information on cooking, fashion, motivational lectures, and social life trend. A systematic review and meta-ethnography of ten qualitative studies on different nations were done by Nasarre et al.,2021. The results of the study done in India indicates that concerns about appearance, the role of the family, role of peers, media pressure, coping and distress, and desired supports were identified as major themes that influence the concept of body image in Indian adolescents (Dhillon and Dhawan, 2011). The main findings of the study support the results obtained. Messages from parents, peers, and the media create pressure to lose weight and believe that reducing weight would lead to better life opportunities, and greater acceptance from others was considered major factors. Family and friends' support was considered as important. Therefore the present study focussed on the body image perception and moderating role of social media on the adolescent's well -being and it was found that adolescents are very much concerned with body image. It does have an impact on their behavior on social networking sites and overall well-being.

Impact of Self Presentation and Body Image Perception on Well Being

The results indicated that 77.5% of respondents reported that they post once a month, and 15% reported that they post once a week. 8% reported that they feel ok if their friends do not comment on their picture, but 26.8% reported that it bothers them. During the Adolescent period, girls and boys are usually very conscious about their appearances and often compare themselves with the peer group. Due to hormonal changes and fast bodily changes, they are always conscious of their looks and, at times, evaluate their features and other body characteristics while comparing them with their peers. Social networking websites play a moderating role because children engage themselves in posting pictures on virtual social interactions. In a way, they put themselves in a judgmental state where all their friend's comment, appreciate, and evaluate in some form or other. The results also indicated that 48.8% of respondents use SNS to remain in touch with friends and relatives, 19.5% reported getting news, and 7.3% reported meeting new people.

The major aspects of the inquiry were how they feel while posting their pictures on social networking sites and how they are affected by their body image perception while posting pictures on social networking sites. The majority of the respondents indicated that they feel very excited and good about posting their pictures on social networking sites. Getting positive comments on their pictures is a kind of rewarding experience. They also feel confident in posting pictures after getting positive comments. One of the important aspects of self-presentation on social networking sites is an individual's perception of body image. Data indicated that adolescents are very

much conscious about their body shapes and are affected by the opinion of members in their virtual social world. Some of the respondents also reported that even though they are happy with their overweight body shapes, it becomes difficult to control the emotional disturbances when they face a social comparison. One of the respondents commented that since childhood, she hated her body due to its shape. However, after watching some motivational lectures and other videos on social networking sites, she managed her body weight and feels satisfied. Therefore the moderating role of social networking websites in body image perception was found to be conflicting and neutral.

CONCLUSION

The present research is exploratory and was designed to look at the relationship between the body shape perception of adolescent girls, use of social network websites, and wellbeing of adolescent girls in Prayagraj. Based on the results obtained and previous researches done in the area, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the young girls' usage of social networking websites and their wellbeing, and their perception of body shape is very much affected by their constant self-presentation on the social network. It has been concluded from the results that young girls are very much affected by the responses of their near and dear ones in the virtual social world.

Limitations and Future Implications

The results obtained in the study are indicative due to a small sample and hence need further exploration. Social networking has become an inseparable part of our lives, and young adolescent girls are entering this virtual world at a very young age. There is a strong need to understand the various dimensions of the impact of social networking on the lives of young boys and girls. The study can be further enriched by collecting more data and developing a body shape questionnaire on Indian Samples. Projection of self in the virtual social world can enhance or decrease self-esteem.

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