Original Article

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BODY COMPARISON TENDENCY, BODY–ESTEEM AND SLEEP QUALITY AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN SHAH ALAM / MALAYSIA

MOHAMMED A. ABDALQADER*, SABRINA ALFRED JOSEPH

International Medical School, Management and Science University, Malaysia

Corresponding author: mohd_abdalqader@msu.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Based on many studies probing the spectrums of social media, it has become evident that social media has changed a variety of human interactive activities such as communication, shopping, source of influence on perception, and even search for knowledge. The study aims to find the relationship between social media usage with the body comparison tendency, body esteem levels, and sleep quality. **Methodology:** a cross-sectional study design using quantitative data conducted among female students of a private university with a sample size of 267 and using a self-administered questionnaire for data collection. A convenience sampling was used from different faculties of the university. **Results:** It was found that excessive use of social media significantly predicted that participants engage in body comparison behaviours P< 0.001. It was also found that social media use influenced body esteem levels significantly. Higher social media use influences sleep quality significantly, as well. **Conclusion:** The results showed that social media use for more than 3 hours had a significant impact on body comparison tendencies among those female university students. It was also concluded that body esteem levels among those that fell into this category who used social media for more than 3 hours were lower compared to those who used social media for lesser than 3 hours in general. In evaluating the impact of social media on sleep quality, it was found that nearly half is at high risk of suffering from insomnia or sleep-related disorders.

Keywords: Social media, body comparison tendency, body esteem, and sleep quality

Introduction:

The world as it is today has been subjected to tremendous changes over the last two decades, primarily due to the advancements of technology. These changes have had a significant impact on the social structure of societies everywhere on the planet as indicated by numerous researchers such as (Bank & Tat, 2014; Amedie, 2015; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016)

Currently, social media is utilized by billions of people around the globe commonly referred to as 'netizens', a netizen is defined as 'a frequent user of the internet', and according to (Walton, 2017) the impact that social media has on individuals from a health perspective (mental & physical) is largely negative.

Social media has transformed itself into a platform that provides a multitude of opportunities for the current 'digital generation' to access information and the knowledge that is easily shared by each other via text, videos, and images. The motivation for sharing such information publicly varies in a form that ranges from social support, social status, personal experiences, and personal achievements (Oh & Syn, 2015). This sharing of personal information has led to a trend among netizens globally who have gradually increased their use of social media not just to communicate and merely share information and knowledge, but also to compare themselves with others from various perspectives as indicated by (Panger et al., 2014; Vogel et al., 2015).

With their personal physical appearances compared to multiple other users and often spend substantial amounts of time on social media to enhance their virtual presence on these platforms.

There has been a wide array of research that has contributed to the knowledge that social media increases the tendency for body comparison and body-esteem, especially among women. Apart from these two elements that often cause stress (low esteem and confidence), social media has also been identified as a major sleep disruptor impacting sleep quality that eventually leads to various other ailments, both mentally and physically. The proliferation of social media has gained momentum, and how this phenomenon is affecting the global population is an evolutionary question that needs to be addressed more frequently and thoroughly that it is now. It is not precise or clear about the position of social media harm with regards to if it is doing more harm than good. Understanding the relationship between social media and social comparisons and its subsequent impact on sleep is a critical topic that needs to be pursued as frequently as possible based on the fact that the last known study on the subject was conducted in 2015 by Vogel et.al and there has been a significant number of changes in applications and technological devices since 2015, requiring the subject to be examined closer to home which is the purpose of this study that focuses on body comparison tendency, body esteem levels and sleep quality due to social media.

The objective is to study the impact of social media on body comparison tendency, body esteem, and sleep quality among female students in a private university.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study design was conducted using convenience sampling of the students from different faculties in that private university. The data were obtained via a self-administered survey questionnaire which is used before and validated containing five sections with five items on the first part that was targeted at extracting demographic data. The second part of the survey questionnaire was aimed at gathering information on the use of social media containing two items. The 3rd part of the questionnaire contained six items that were aimed at obtaining information on body comparison tendencies among women that use social media. In contrast, the 4th part was a section containing 14 items that were intended to assess the level of body esteem among women that use social media. The final section of the questionnaire contained ten items that was focused on evaluating the impact of social media on sleep quality. Sections 3, 4, and 5 were attached to a Likert scale selection structure that presented students with five options with each option representing a numeric value starting from 1 to 5.

The sample size was 267 participants, and inclusion criteria were for those aged between 21 and 35 years old from various faculties. Those who refused to participate and males are excluded from this study. Ethical approval was granted from the university ethics committee before conducting the data collection. The analysis of the data was done via the SPSS statistical software version 24 (IBM SPSS Statistics), which provided an assessment of various statistical figures in a quantitative format. The analysis was focused on demographic variables followed by the analysis of the impact that social media had on each of the three variables (body comparison tendency, body esteem, and sleep quality). Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using one-way ANOVA, t-test, and correlation analysis was used for the statistical test analysis of the study objectives and hypothesis testing.

Results:

The response rate was 95%, which was covered by the 20% of the non-response rate, which was added to the original calculated sample size. The total number of respondents was 267 from different faculties of that private university, with a minimum age 18, maximum age of 28, and mean age of 21 years old. The majority are Malay 58.4%, followed by Indians 36.7%, then Chinese 3% and others 1.5%. The majority of the respondents are among the international medical school, 28.8%. It was found that 65.2% have more comparison tendencies, followed by 17% with medium and 17.8% with less body comparison tendencies. The younger the age group, the higher the duration of social media use. Based on the data-set output, it was revealed that about half the sample population is likely to have sleep disorders 49.4%.

Table1: The association between time spent on social media/hour with body comparison

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T test	P value
Body comparison/more comparison	160	8.2	1.65	3.57	< 0.001
Body comparison/less comparison	107	5.7	2.86		

Table2: The association between time spent on social media/hour with self-esteem

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T test	P value
self-esteem/high	152	4.9	1.23	-2.8	< 0.001
self-esteem/low	115	7.8	2.07		

Also, it was found that excessive use of social media significantly predicted that participants engage in body comparison behaviours with p< 0.001. It was also found that body esteem has a significant p < 0.05. It was revealed that social media use influenced body esteem levels and the conclusion there is a positive relationship between social media usage and body-esteem levels, body esteem levels were lower among those who spent an average of 3 hours or more each day on social media. The results also revealed that body comparison tendencies were significantly higher among Indians and Malays. Higher social media use influences sleep quality, it was demonstrated that p < 0.001 which indicates there is a direct relationship between social media use durations and sleep quality with the conclusion that social media use impacts sleep quality.

Discussion:

In the study, it was found that excessive use of social media significantly predicted that participants engage in body comparison behaviours with p< 0.001 and that is supported by (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015) in which they found in their study there is a positive relationship between social media platforms such as Facebook and body dissatisfaction and body comparison.

It was also found that body esteem has a significant p < 0.05. It was revealed that social media use influenced body esteem levels and the conclusion there is a positive relationship between social media usage and body-esteem levels, and that was consistent with the findings of another study in which they concluded the social media using related to a sharp drop in body esteem levels for females between the ages of 16 to 25. However, the studies also revealed that this trend reverses as women draw nearer to the age of 30 (Anderson & Jiang,

2018) & (Amedie, 2015). In general, most females 'accept' the way they are only around the age of 24 (Nelson et al., 2018). Nevertheless, elements of their experiences with body esteem are eventually carried on and reflected in the level of their confidence and character in the long run.

In the current study, higher social media use influences sleep quality, in which it was noticed a direct relationship between social media use durations and sleep quality and that is parallel to another study which declared that the social media had been found to be among the major causes behind sleep deficiency among young adults which has a negative impact on cognitive functioning, immune system, cardiovascular risk, metabolism, weight, and as well as temperament as indicated by (Mullington et al., 2009).

This study findings of adolescents who used social media more were more experienced poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of anxiety and depression are consistent with a study done by (Woods et al., 2016).

The study limitation was doing a random sampling for better generalization of the findings; the short time frame was another limitation. The implications of findings for future research to aware those teenagers and young adults about the effect of the extra use of social media on health, sleep and mental health competency to balance their lifestyle, benefits and harms of social media use.

CONCLUSION

It is showed that social media use for more than 3 hours had a significant impact on body comparison tendencies among women, especially those between the ages of 18 to 27. The results also indicated that body esteem levels among those that fell into this category who used social media for more than 3 hours were lower compared to those who used social media for lesser than 3 hours in general. In evaluating the impact of social media on sleep quality, it was found that nearly half the sample population is at high risk of suffering from insomnia or sleep-related disorders. We recommend future research to include different groups of adolescents and young adults and not only from universities to compare social media use among those from different backgrounds.

Conflicts of Interest:

The author declare no conflicts of interest.

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