

Social Media Use via Mobile Phones and Its Impact on Self-Esteem and Body Image: A Review

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Abstract

Introduction

Mobile phone-based social media usage has become a pervasive aspect of modern life, with significant consequences for mental health, particularly self-esteem and body image. Through a comprehensive review of current research, this study investigates the complex interplay between social media use, social comparison, idealized image exposure, and feedback, highlighting demographic differences in vulnerability. By identifying effective interventions, this review seeks to promote healthy social media engagement and foster resilience against negative mental health outcomes. The impact of technology on children's development is a pressing concern. This editorial explores the dual effects of smartphones and screen time on children, balancing benefits against risks. To promote healthy development, parents are urged to monitor and limit screen time, fostering responsible smartphone use.¹

Keywords: Social Media; Use; Mobile phone; Impact; Body Image

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Introduction

The integration of social media into everyday life has transformed how individuals perceive themselves and others. With mobile phones providing constant access to platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, users are exposed to a continuous stream of images and content that may shape their self-esteem and body image. This review examines existing literature to understand the effects of social media use via mobile phones on these psychological aspects.

Social Media and Self-Esteem

• Mechanisms of Influence

- **Social Comparison:** Social media platforms facilitate upward social comparison, where users compare themselves to others who appear to be more attractive, successful, or happier. Research shows that frequent social comparison is linked to lower self-esteem².

- Feedback and Validation: The "likes" and comments on social media posts act as a form of social validation. The anticipation of positive feedback can boost self-esteem, whereas lack of interaction can have the opposite effect³.
- **Empirical Findings**
- A meta-analysis by Liu and Baumeister⁴ found a moderate correlation between frequent social media use and lower self-esteem, particularly among adolescents and young adults.
- Experimental studies demonstrate that individuals exposed to idealized images on social media report lower self-esteem than those exposed to neutral images⁴.

Social Media and Body Image

- **Mechanisms of Influence**
 - **Exposure to Idealized Body Standards:** Social media is dominated by images that often promote unrealistic body standards. This exposure increases body dissatisfaction and the internalization of thinness or muscularity ideals.
 - **Editing and Filters:** The ability to edit photos and use filters can create distorted perceptions of beauty. Users may feel pressure to alter their own images to conform to social media standards, reinforcing body dissatisfaction⁶.
- **Empirical Findings**
 - Tiggemann and Slater found that social media use significantly predicts body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls. Frequent viewing of idealized images was associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in disordered eating behaviors.⁷
 - In a longitudinal study, Smith et al. observed that adolescent boys who frequently consumed social media content featuring muscularity-focused images reported increased body dissatisfaction over time.
 - The pervasive presence of social media in daily life has sparked intense research interest. Platforms like WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have become indispensable, but their influence on mental health raises concerns. Despite social media's benefits, such as social connection and information sharing, excessive usage can lead to mental health issues, including stress, loneliness, and decreased well-being.⁹
 - Although mobile phones are ubiquitous, their impact on auditory function remains understudied. This systematic review aims to critically evaluate the existing literature to determine whether mobile phone exposure is associated with adverse effects on auditory function. Notably, mobile phones emit low-level electromagnetic fields, which have been hypothesized to influence neural function; however, empirical evidence supporting this notion is limited and inconclusive.¹⁰

Demographic Differences

- **Age**
 - Adolescents are more vulnerable to the negative effects of social media on self-esteem and body image due to developmental factors such as identity formation¹¹.
 - Young adults also experience negative impacts, although they may be better equipped to critically evaluate social media content¹².
- **Gender**
 - Females are more likely to experience negative impacts on body image due to the prominence of thinness ideals on social media¹³.
 - Males, while less frequently studied, also face pressure related to muscularity and leanness ideals. This is particularly evident in communities focused on fitness or bodybuilding¹⁴.

Interventions and Recommendations

- **Media Literacy Programs**
- Programs that teach users to critically analyze social media content can reduce the negative effects of exposure to idealized images¹⁵.
- **Digital Detox and Social Media Breaks**
- Taking regular breaks from social media has been shown to improve self-esteem and body image.
- **Promoting Diverse Body Representations**
- Encouraging the use of unfiltered images and diverse body types in social media content can help reduce the internalization of unrealistic beauty standards.

Conclusions

Social media use via mobile phones can significantly impact self-esteem and body image, particularly among vulnerable populations such as adolescents and young women. The mechanisms of social comparison, exposure to idealized body images, and feedback loops contribute to these effects. Interventions that promote media literacy, diverse representations, and mindful social media use may help mitigate negative outcomes.

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