

## IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM USAGE ON BODY IMAGE APPRECIATION AMONG YOUNG FEMALES: MEDIATING EFFECT OF SELFIE POSTING BEHAVIOUR

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### **Introduction**

Selfie posting is one of most common behaviour among university students as well teenagers. There are several ways by which we can define selfie, But the one that is most common and extensively used is the definition of selfie given by oxford university in 2013, according to which selfie is any photograph captured by oneself either with the help of smartphone, webcam and then sharing it on social media. (e.g. Kim and Chock, 2017; Stefanone et al., 2019; Warfield, 2015). All over the world there are several ways by which university students engage in selfie posting which include sharing their selfie on facebook, snapchat and instagram. Previous studies have explored selfie posting behaviour in term of personality traits, motivation, financial gain and potential consequences associated with this behaviour (e.g. Kim and Chock, 2017; Sung et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016). (Wang et al., 2021)

Most common phenomenon observed in selfie posting is editing of photograph before posting it on social media, using different beauty filters, removal of undesirable effects, objectification and turning it into a more attractive one. Everyone wants to be beautiful, attractive and need appraisal in their lives. So, people post selfie to look beautiful to show others that they are attractive, they do these behaviour for the sake of attention, appraisal, and to gain popularity. Previous literature showed that although selfie posting behaviour has good impact on the lives of individual they also have some adverse consequences that may sometime lead to psychological illnesses. Body image and facial appearance are of great importance when conducting research on selfie posting behaviour (Wang et al., 2021), (*Selfie Posting Article*, n.d.).

According to the tripartite influence model family, peer pressure and media plays important role in one's body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. Because of the excessive use of filters before posting a selfie on social media people are promoting undesirable and unachievable standards of beauty which are somehow impossible to attain in reality. Over the years visual content has gained strong popularity on social media and it has strong influence on perceiving body image in most desirable form (Kim, 2020). Selfie posting behaviour is one of the top behaviour among young adults on social media specially instagram. Previous researchers have explored association between selfie posting behaviour and body image concern but still there is limited data available on relationship between selfie posting behaviour and body image dissatisfaction (Wang et al., 2021).

Before posting selfie when people engage in editing they become aware of their flaws and they also perceive themselves as less attractive than other celebrities or influencers on social media so, they try to correct their flaws and want to look more desirable than

ultimately leads to body image dissatisfaction and eventually its leads to psychological illnesses like eating disorder, body dysmorphic disorder and social anxiety (Caddel, 2021).

Previous researches showed that selfie-editing was associated to body dissatisfaction among both young male and females (Lonergan et al., 2019; McLean et al., 2015). Cohen et al. (2018). They also revealed that self-editing was linked to thin body idealization among young females (Jiotsa et al., 2021).

An experimental study also stated the negative impact of selfie-posting on young women's body image (Mills et al., 2018). In addition to that selfie posting and editing could have also positive impact on body image of individuals when people give positive response in comments and praise them on social media, this may leads to increase in confidence and boost their appearance satisfaction. (Cohen et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018a);(Caddel, 2021).

Social media has gained popularity among young people and they are spending most of the part of their day on social media scrolling, posting and sharing streaks. Among all social media apps instagram is the second most downloaded app in the world, it is the 10<sup>th</sup> most Google search app. Almost 1.393 billion people use instagram every month and 500 million people post daily on instagram. Now a days almost 0.5 billion people interact and post stories on instagram daily (Kim, 2020).

According to recent statistics in Pakistan in January 2022 there were estimated **71.70 million** social media users which were equal to **31.5 percent** of the total population. Statistics published in Meta's advertising tools showed that there were almost 13.75 million instagram users in Pakistan in early 2022. This data suggests that instagram users are almost 6.0% of total Pakistan's population. In early 2022, **34.8%** of Instagram's ad audience in Pakistan was **female**, while **65.2%** was **male**. Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) explained that over 10 million new images are uploaded to the Facebook website every 60 minutes, and Lister (2017) noted that there are over 90 million image or video files shared on Instagram each day, with a total of over 40 billion uploads submitted by users since the Instagram app was launched in 2010. This data suggest that instagram has got significance in the lives of people specially young adults and adolescent and it has great impact on lives of individuals and their body image.

For the past few years body appreciation and body dissatisfaction are positively related to social media posting which includes promotion of unrealistic and unachievable body image standards. However now a days people are promoting body appreciation on social media by posting content related to body positivity through Instagram (Cwynar-Horta, 2016), with over 11M posts with #bodypositive, 04M for #bodypositivity. A recent analysis of 640 Instagram posts sampled from popular body positive accounts, researchers found that these posts includes images of various body sizes and appearances that are somehow underrepresented in majority accounts (Cohen, Irwin, Newton-John, & Slater, 2019b); (Jiotsa et al., 2021)

Perception of body image is unique to every individual. Body image can be defined by interpersonal, socio-cultural and environmental factors of an individual. Perception of body image varies with the passage of time and changes with the change in environment.

Positive body image has been hypothesised in theory as an overarching love and respect for the body (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Literature review revealed that body image appreciation is related to increased, psychological, emotional and social wellbeing (Swami, Weis, Barron, & Furnham, 2018), and other health promoting behaviours like innate eating and physical activity (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016a, 2016b), and plays protective role against thin-ideal media exposure (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2015; Halliwell, 2013); (Jiotsa et al., 2021)

Cohen et al. (2019b) revealed that the content promoted on top Instagram accounts is largely consistent with key theoretical principles of positive body image (Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, 2015), and therefore the authors concluded that engaging with body positive content on Instagram may be associated with similar psychological and protective benefits for women as well as men (Wang et al., 2021).

According to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), living in a society, which sexually objectifies the female body encourages women and girls to 'self-objectify'. Self-objectification can be defined as seeing oneself as an object to be valued by others based on one's appearance. Objectification theory highlights a number of negative psychological consequences of self-objectification experienced by women like body shame, sexual dysfunction and appearance (Yang et al., n.d.).

The social cognitive theory given by Bandura, 1986 and the social comparison theory given by Suls & Wheeler, 2012 were used as fundamental frameworks to study the roles that social media imagery plays on body image distortions. The social cognitive theory hypothesised that individuals learn through modelling and observations of his surrounding environment which leads to change in behaviours and attitudes (Cervone & Pervin, 2017). According to Bandura social learning theory individuals learn through modelling and while using Instagram people learn positivity as well as negativity by observing the behaviours celebrities, influencers, and others on Instagram. Recently Instagram influencers have started a body positivity campaign on social media aim to reduce body image dissatisfaction, and acceptance of one's body regardless of his weight height, and other body features. Their main focus was on inner beauty rather than physical appearance if individual (Sastre, 2014); (Flannery et al., 2021).

## **Rationale**

Literature review revealed that previous researches have examined the relationship between selfie-related behaviours and self-objectification and findings of these studies suggest that a mutual relationship exists. Previous studies have explored this relationship by using cross sectional as well as experimental designs. In Pakistani cultural context very little emphasis has been given to body image appreciation and its relationship with selfie posting behaviour. So, that would be a pioneer research in Pakistan that will explore the relationship between selfie posting behaviour and body image appreciation with mediating role of Instagram usage.

## **Objectives**

Aims of the present study is

1. To explore relationship between Instagram usage and body image appreciation among young females.
2. To explore mediating role of Selfie posting behaviour on body image appreciation among young females.

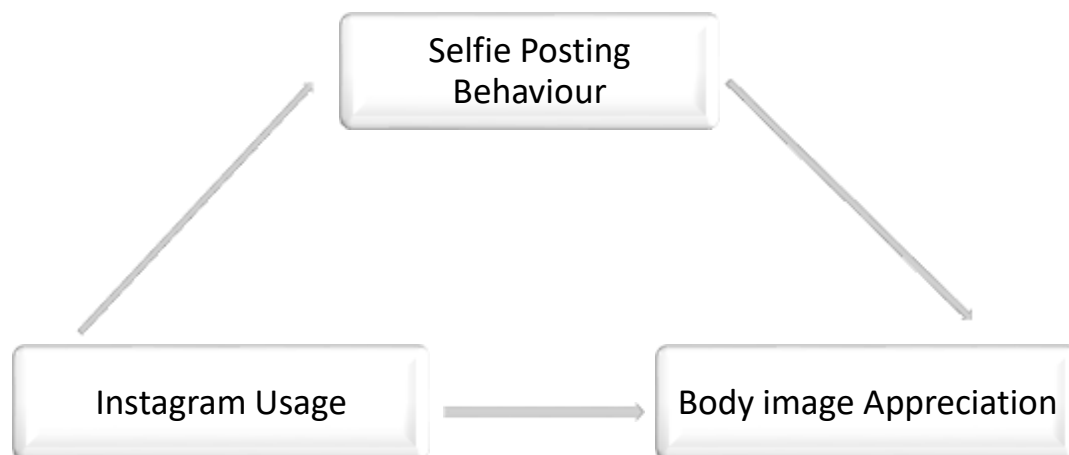
### Hypothesis:

1. There is a negative relationship between Instagram usage and body image appreciation.
2. There is a positive relationship between selfie posting behaviour and body image appreciation.
3. There is a mediating role of selfie posting behaviour that connects Instagram usage and body image appreciation of young females.

### Method

#### Research Design

To rule out the relationship between selfie posting behaviour and body image appreciation correlational study design was used.



**Figure 01:** *Mediating role of selfie posting on instagram usage and body image appreciation.*

#### Sample

Sample of the present study were students(N=150) from different universities of Rawalpindi Islamabad Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was used throughout the study.

**Inclusion Criteria:** Female students of university having access to internet and instagram age range from 18yrs to 30yrs make the sample of study.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Students having no access to internet connections and not active on instagram.

## **Study Setting**

The study was carried out at different universities of Rawalpindi Islamabad.

## **Procedure**

Study was conducted after getting approval from Ethical committee of corresponding universities. Before conducting research ethical issues pertaining to study like informed consent, confidentiality and right to withdraw from study were discussed in detail with participants. Only those participants were selected for study who gave us permission to conduct the study. Participants were asked to fill questionnaire consisting of information related to demographics, body image appreciation and instagram usage. Written instructions and verbal explanations were provided to the respondents. All queries raised by the participants were addressed immediately or later depending on when the questions were posed. All participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation in the study.

## **Instruments**

### **Selfitis Behavior Scale (SBS)**

Selfie posting behavior was measured by Selfitis Behavior Scale developed by Balakrishnan and Griffiths (2018). The scale comprised of A 20-item scale with a 5-point Likert scoring.

### **Instagram Addiction Scale (IAS)**

Instagram addiction was measured by IAS. IAS was initially developed by Young, 1998. The scale was modified by simply substituting the construct "Internet" with "Instagram." (Kircaburun& Griffiths, 2018)

### **Body Appreciation Scale (BAS)**

BAS measures body appreciation females through 13-items, where participants respond to a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with a higher average score indicating a higher level of body appreciation

## **Results**

As a preliminary analysis, bivariate correlations between all variables were calculated. Then, the proposed hypotheses were tested using PROCESS macro (Version 3) for SPSS. Analyses for mediation were conducted with the PROCESS models. The control variables mentioned were entered into all analyses.

**Table 1***Psychometric properties for scales (N=200)*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
The Instagram Usage Scale (TIS)	32.99	8.63	12-50	.84
Selfie posting behaviour (SPB)	73.12	17.88	36-118	.89
Body Image Appreciation Scale (BIA)	52.47	9.51	31-65	.89

Table 1 shows the psychometric properties of the scales used in the present study. The Cronbach's value for Selfie posting behaviour (SPB) Scale was .89(>.7) which indicated good internal consistency. The Cronbach's value for The Instagram Usage Scale (TIS) was .84 (>.7) which also showed good internal consistency. Body Image Appreciation Scale (BIA) was also showing high internal consistency .89 (>.7).

**Table 2***Descriptive statistics and Correlation of The Instagram Usage ,Selfie posting behaviour, Body Image Appreciation Scale (N=200)*

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
The Instagram Usage Scale (TIS)	200	32.75	8.60	–	–	–
Selfie posting behaviour	200	73.06	17.88	.51***	–	–
Body Image Appreciation Scale (BIA)	200	53.94	9.39	-.23**	.12*	–

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 2 revealed that The Instagram Usage is positively related to Selfie posting behaviour with ( $r = .51, p < .001$ ), and negatively related to Body Image Appreciation Scale ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ). Correlation revealed that Selfie posting behaviour had a positive and significant relationship with Body Image Appreciation at ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ).

**Table 3***Regression Analysis for mediation of Selfie posting behaviour between Instagram usage and Body image appreciation (N=200)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	95%CI	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1					.16	.16***
Constant	61.79	[55.09, 67.26]	2.69			
Instagram Usage	-.26	[-.402, .101]	.076	-.22***		
Step 2					.17	.01***
Constant	61.18	[55.09, 67.26]	3.09			
Instagram Usage	-.27	[-.442, .094]	.09	-.24**		
Selfie Posting behaviour	.02	[-.069, .100]	.05	.12**		

Note CI = Confidence Interval

\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3 shows the impact of Instagram usage on Body image appreciation with mediating effect of Selfie posting behaviour. In Step 1, the  $R^2$  value of .16 revealed that the Instagram Usage explained 16% variance in the Body Image Appreciation with  $F(1, 198) = 20.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings revealed that Instagram usage predicted Body image appreciation ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In Step 2, the  $R^2$  value of .17 revealed that the Selfie posting behaviour explained .17% variance in the Body image appreciation  $F(2, 197) = 13.494$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings revealed that Instagram usage ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ) negatively predicted Body image appreciation ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Selfie posting positively predicted Body image appreciation. The  $\Delta R^2$  value of .01 revealed 1% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with  $\Delta F(1, 197) = 11.13$ ,  $p < .001$ . The regression weights for Instagram usage increased from Model 1 to Model 2 (.22 to .24) but remained significant which confirmed the partial mediation. More specifically, Instagram usage has direct as well indirect effect on body image appreciation.

## Discussion

Present study aimed to examine relationship between Instagram usage and body image appreciation as well as mediating role of selfie posting behaviour on body image appreciation. According to our first hypothesis based on the tripartite influence model present study examined negative relationship between Instagram usage and body image appreciation as well as positive relationship between selfie posting behaviour and body image appreciation. We also examined the impact of Instagram usage on Body image appreciation with mediating effect of selfie posting behaviour. Findings of the current study revealed that The Instagram Usage is positively related to selfie posting behaviour and negatively related to Body Image Appreciation, whereas correlation revealed that selfie posting behaviour had a positive and significant relationship with Body Image Appreciation.

These findings are similar to previous studies, suggesting that social media use, particularly selfie posting on different social media platforms is related to facial appearance concerns and also it is consistent with the findings of previous research on the relationship between social



media use and body image concerns (Jiotsa et al., 2021). According to tripartite influence model disused in previous studies, appearance comparisons is a perilous mediating factor behind the link from sociocultural influence and body dissatisfaction. Extending this model, our study examined the mediating role of selfie posting behaviour in the relationship between instagram usage and body image appreciation (Int. J. Environ., 2020).

As hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between instagram usage and body image appreciation, our findings revealed that negative relationship exists between Instagram usage and body image appreciation. Previous studies have revealed that instagram usage leads to body image dissatisfaction rather than appreciation in term of selfie posting. Several studies have also found that exposure to Instagram selfies negatively influences young women's body image (Chang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019; J. Yang et al., 2020). Instagram users are not only viewing others' selfies but also post their own selfies. The findings of this study show that unlike just viewing of others' selfies, selfie-posting activity may have a positive impact on young women's body image. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationships between different types of Instagram selfie activities (e.g., viewing and posting) and young women's body image concerns.

Current study has examined explanatory mechanisms underlying the relationship between selfie-posting behavior and body image concerns. Extending previous studies that explored whether selfie-posting is associated with body image concerns (Butkowski et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2018; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016), this study shows that selfie posting mediates the relationship between instagram usage and body image appreciation (Çelik & Güngör, 2020).

### **Limitations**

As current study has various contributions it has some limitations as well. First, current study has only studied female students of universities in Rawalpindi Islamabad. Future studies should focus on studying males as well as female students of universities in different regions of Pakistan. Second, current study has only focused on university students. Further studies should study instagram usage and selfie posting behaviour relationship with body image among preadolescents and adolescents of school age. As selfie posting behaviour and instagram usage is much common among school age adolescents. Third, the present study focused specifically on instagram usage and did not mention other social media platforms. As different platforms have different relationships with body image appreciation.

Another limitation concerns the definition and measures of selfie used in the present study. The present study focused on the broad concept of selfies without distinguishing different types of selfie, such as lone selfies and group selfies (Kim and Chock, 2017) as well as good-looking selfies and ugly selfies (Bennett, 2014), or the different functions of selfies (i.e. the reasons why the selfies were posted; Sung et al., 2016). Future studies should focus on these issues as well.

### **Conclusion**

Current study examined that there is a negative relationship between instagram usage and body image appreciation as well as positive relationship between selfie posting behaviour



and body image appreciation, whereas selfie posting behaviour mediates the relationship between instagram usage and body image appreciation. Young females will appreciate their body image as they will post their selfies and view desirable comments related to their body image, while only instagram usage negatively predicts body image appreciation.

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