

Exploring the Role of Social Media in Promoting Self Image (Physical) Perspectives among Young Girls



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled: **“Exploring the Role of Social Media in Promoting Self Image (Physical) Perspectives among Young Girls.”** submitted by Jaweria Nisar is accepted in its present form by the PIDE School Policy, Development and Governance, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad as satisfying the requirements for partial fulfillment of the degree in Master of Philosophy in Development Studies.

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FORMAL DECLARATION

I, Jaweria Nisar, hereby solemnly declare that the work described in my thesis “Exploring the role of social media in promoting self-image (physical) perspectives among young girls” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Anjeela Khurram. I have not used any further means for the completion of this work except those I have explicitly mentioned in this thesis. All concepts adopted and copied from other written sources have been properly referred with the source. This work has not been published or submitted to any other examination board in the same or a similar form. I am solely responsible for the content of this thesis and I own the sole copyrights of it.



Jaweria Nisar

DEDICATION

To Beloved Parents
MR & MRS NISAR AHMED

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I am extremely thankful to ALLAH ALMIGHTY for his unwavering support, giving me faith in myself, and ability to remain positive in a situation of difficult circumstances. His blessings made it possible for me to complete this project.

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has greatly altered the social and psychological lifestyles of adolescents, especially when it comes to body image and self-esteem. This study examines how social media affects the perspective of self-image among teenage girls aged between 15 and 18 years in the Pakistani sociocultural background. The study narrows down to the age variations between younger adolescents (15-16 years, classes 9-10) and older adolescents (17-18 years, HSSC first and second year), and the influences of social media exposure, family life, peer relationships, and cultural orientations on body image concerns. The research design adopted was a qualitative in nature; a focus group discussion and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 adolescent girls were adopted. Thematic analysis was used to find out significant patterns and meanings in the experiences lived by the participants. The data gave rise to five significant themes: social media use, appearance concern, social comparison, self-comparison on social media, and cultural factors influencing negative body image. The results indicate that Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube social media sites are a key part of the everyday life of adolescents and a major cause of unrealistic beauty ideals. Even though younger adolescents were more restricted by their parents, they also had equal effects of online content. There was a higher exposure, independence, and susceptibility to appearance-related anxiety and dissatisfaction in older adolescents. Social comparison was observed to work both online and offline, which was supported by peer interactions, family remarks, and culturally predetermined ideals of beauty. Strong cultural preferences towards fair skin and thin body shapes further deteriorated negative body image and emotional distress. This thesis comes up with the conclusion that interactions between social media in combination with cultural norms and social environments affect the body image and psychological state of adolescent girls significantly. The study suggests parental guidance (age-based), media literacy education, positive school climate, culturally-reflective interventions, and policy-based approaches as effective to enhance positive body image and mental health among adolescent girls.

Keywords: Body image, social media use, young girls

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction:

Social media is now an essential component of everyday life. Billions of individuals use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Snapchat to communicate, exchange information, and entertain themselves. Although the use of social media provides multiple advantages, which include being connected with family and friends, it has also been linked to numerous negative consequences, such as its impact on body image. (Huang, Peng, & Ahn, 2021). Notably, social media influences teenagers' body image with both positive and negative consequences. Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat frequently post filtered and edited images that promote unrealistic expectations of beauty. This can result in dissatisfaction with physical appearance, negative self-perception, and unhealthy eating habits.

Adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, are vulnerable due to developmental phases that involve adulthood, acceptance from peers, and creation of identities, all of which contribute to the pressure of a negative body image. Making comparisons through online platforms increases thoughts of inferiority, particularly when interacting with content such as photographs that highlight appearance (Nghaimesh & Eidan, 2023). Unrealistic beauty standards are often portrayed in media, including movies and advertisements, by highlighting attractive celebrities and models. Adolescent girls get anxious about the lavish lifestyle of celebrities, and they try to adopt unsafe and unhealthy techniques to achieve a thin body shape. (Mooney, Farley, & Strugnell, 2009).

The social comparison also has a significant role in young girls' life. Adolescents who spend more time on social media are more likely to compare themselves with others, and young girls who use specific types of media like Instagram, Snapchat, etc., posting selfies, and following social media accounts that contain filtered and edited photos are more likely to be unhappy and unsatisfied with their physical appearances. (Boursier, Gioia, & Griffiths, 2020).

According to the Digital 2024 report, at the start of 2024, Pakistan had 55.50 million Facebook users, 71.70 million YouTube users, 17.30 million Instagram users, 54.38 million TikTok users, 30.21 million Snapchat users, 12.00 million members on LinkedIn, and only 4.50 million on X(Twitter), which is the most important app in political terms. These findings indicate that there is a deeper connection between body dissatisfaction and social media use in young people.

Whereas social media may provide numerous advantages but parents, teachers, and caregivers must be aware of the possible adverse impacts of social media and encourage adolescents to develop healthy habits through social media use (Fioravanti, Benucci, Ceragioli, & Casale, 2022).

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

Social media is an essential part of our daily lives. Despite the many benefits of social media platforms, there is a serious concern about the use of digital media on adolescent body image. Adolescents are a vulnerable group, and dissatisfaction with their bodies can result in a variety of adverse outcomes, such as eating disorders, sadness, and low self-esteem. There is sufficient data to indicate that social media use is linked with body image among adolescents, but the exact cause of this association is unclear (Franchina & Coco, 2018).

It is critical to get an in-depth knowledge of the factors that lead to this relationship, which includes the types of digital platform use that are most closely linked with negative body image, the role of societal comparison, gender, age, along other demographic factors (Mahon & Hevey, 2021). The impact of social media on body image in youngsters can be serious and broad in scope. There are a few serious consequences, such as Eating Disorders, Low self-esteem, poor body image practices, comparisons in society, and online harassment. (Klier, Rommerskirchen, & Brixius, 2022).

In Pakistani society, where physical appearance holds significant value, the widespread use of social media raises pressure on the youth, leading to negative self-perceptions and lower self-esteem. (Rizwan, Zaki, & Javaid, 2022). According to digital reports of 2022, 2023, and 2024, there were 82.90 million internet users in Pakistan in January 2022 and 87.35 million users in early January 2023. While in early 2024, the number of users was 111.0 million. This report shows that the number of users is increasing with every passing year (Digital Pakistan).

In this current era, society is responsible for controlling individuals and the way they should look and shape their bodies. Similarly, social media platforms such as Instagram are also demonstrating how the female body should be presentable. However, there is a lack of information, specifically the female-related content presented on Instagram and its impact on young girls' body image perspective. Young girls are also facing societal pressure from parents, peers, and other family

members. However, there is are lack of evidence and concerns about female body image within society.

In this study, the researcher reviewed body image-related content of influencers on Instagram. The study also aims to fill the gap in the existing literature by investigating the association between social media use and body image among teenage girls and determining the main variables that contribute to this relationship. This study also examined the time spent on social media, the content most watched on social media, and the platform that is frequently used by teenage girls, which can contribute to self-esteem and body image. This also look at how age groups, grades, comparison with influencers or celebrities, and monthly income can influence social media usage and body image. Based on the narrative of SOP as stated in the preceding text, I am narrowing my research problem into “Exploring the Role of Social Media in Promoting Self Image (Physical) Perspectives among Young Girls” and have operationalized my topic into the following research questions and objectives.

1.2 Objectives:

1. To examine the differences in the body image perspective among female students about social media usage with respect to age group, educational stage, and income level.
2. To investigate whether device type (Mobile Phone, iPad etc.), social media content, platform preference, comparison with influencers, and time spent on social media can predict the perspective of body image.

1.3 Research Question:

1. How do social media usage and body image perspectives of adolescent girls differ concerning their age, grade, and income level?
2. What are the factors that help to predict the intensity of social media that can influence body image?

1.4 Explanation of Key Terms:

1.4.1 Social Media Use:

Theoretical Definition:

Social media use is the act of interacting with social media platforms and taking part in all of the services they provide. It includes activities such as composing and distributing content, providing feedback on posts, liking or responding to content, following or subscribing to user accounts, and participating in online conversations or interactions (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2022).

Operational Definition:

Social media refers to an online platform, where people connect and communicate with others. People create and share their content to get feedback from others. The excessive use of social media (Instagram) has, widely impact in actions, habits, and routine of youngsters' lives. It includes time spent on social media, engagement on social media (likes, comments, shares), and content preferences. These factors will be analyzed through semi-structured interviews.

1.4.2 Body Image:

Theoretical Definition:

Body image describes an individual's beliefs, opinions, and feelings toward their physical appearance, which includes their body weight, size, physique, and various other physical features. (Cameron & Ward, 2019).

Operational Definition:

Body image refers to an individual's insight, attitudes, and feelings about their physical appearance, including their body size, shape, and overall aesthetics. It will focus on aspects such as body satisfaction, comparison to influencers or peers, self-esteem related to appearance, and the influence of societal or cultural standards. For the current research, these aspects will be explored through interviews and focus group discussions

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Social Media:

Social media has evolved dramatically since its inception. In the 1970s, internet forums and chat rooms allowed users to communicate in the present time. Since (1997) websites for blogging such as Live Journal and Xanga enabled people to express their ideas and feelings online. The modern idea of social media developed in the late 2000s, with platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Dumas & Desroches, 2019).

Facebook was launched in (2004) by Mark Zuckerberg and his classmates at Harvard University. It was initially designed to connect students, but with time it has become the most popular social media platform. YouTube was launched in (2005) by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. In the beginning, it was used as a video uploading and sharing platform, but with time, it grew into the largest platform for finding various video content, such as music, movies, and education. Twitter was established in (2006) by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams. It facilitates users to compose and receive brief messages, which are called "tweets," with up to 280 words in length. Twitter is nowadays an important tool where people can express their opinions and ideas. Instagram was launched in (2010) by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and it is the parent company of Facebook. It is also the biggest platform for photo and video sharing (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019).

Social media became more accessible on mobile phones with the release of the iPhone in (2007). Instagram started in (2010) as a photo-sharing platform. The widespread use of front-facing smartphone cameras and the rise of "selfie culture" became famous in (2013). Live broadcasting of videos became popular in (2016) with the platforms Facebook Live. Social media became more popular during the COVID-19 time in (2020). People used social media platforms to stay connected while physically distancing themselves during the pandemic time (Aichner, Grünfelder, & Maurer, 2021).

The most recent advances in the world of the Internet, particularly the rise of social networks and the growing consumer demand for them has called on businesses and other organizations to use

social networking sites for promoting their goods and services, and we now see a flood of marketing materials that are posted on these sites. These businesses are looking for fresh approaches, to move away from the traditional ways in the field of advertising in terms of its nature, diversity of its means, and the amount of money they spend on it, to grab people's interest towards their goods, and one of the most effective strategies is the use of celebrities who have a significant following and are frequently viewed on online platforms (Hilkens, 2021).

Social media is now an essential component of today's life. It is used to promote the company's marketing, businesses, entertainment, social networking, and educational opportunities. Businesses use it to connect with more people via marketing and engagement, whereas viewers enjoy a variety of content, such as videos, images, and memes, as well. It promotes community by connecting people who share similar interests, and it improves education by allowing for teamwork and the exchange of resources. Social media allows us to interact, acquire knowledge, and communicate with the world in beneficial ways (Bakeer, 2018).

A study by Bennis (2023), investigates how people's identities and memories are shaped in online environments by digital technologies and social media. It explains that individuals use social media to establish and recreate many profiles on the internet, frequently presenting themselves in ways that differ from who they are in real life. Additionally, the study contends that because people share, alter, and delete digital content on a regular basis, memories saved online are growing and constantly evolving. Overall, the study highlights how internet has changed the way individuals interact, express themselves, and build memories, which makes cyber anthropology a crucial area of study for interpreting modern digital culture (Bennis, 2023).

2.2 Social Media and Young Girls:

Adolescence or young age is the period between childhood and adulthood. It is characterized by physical development, psychological changes, and evolved societal responsibilities. It starts with puberty, which typically occurs between the ages of 10 and 12 and lasts until the biological maturity level is achieved, which occurs at or after the age of 20. Studies conducted by neuroscience indicate that major brain growth occurs during the late teenage years, particularly between the ages of 18 and 20 (APA, 2018).

Social media has a significant impact on adolescents' lives. The young generation is not familiar with life in the pre-Internet era. Unlike traditional media (Newspapers, TV), the modern digital world provides possibilities to interact with people of similar interests, build their identities, and express their narratives in a safe environment. It serves as a forum for making friends, encouraging innovation, and defending others against harassment. Although continuous use may result in low self-esteem and negative body image, emphasizes its multifaceted effects on young adolescents. Young girls may develop body image issues due to influences from media, friends, and family members. On the other hand, online platforms are currently promoting inappropriate material about teenage girls' body image (Dar & Nagrath, 2022).

Adolescents and young adults have the majority of accounts on globally famous platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. An excessive number of accounts are involved in inappropriate social media activities, which include posting frequently, making repetitive posts, criticizing others, seeking praise, acting artificially, and sharing selfies. Adolescent girls can use social media filters and Adobe Photoshop to create customized versions of reality just like these accounts, but frequent use of social media and spending more time causes depression and doubt about their physical appearance. Hence excessive use of social media leads to eating disorders, low self-confidence, and psychological problems. Many girls face community remarks about their appearance, remarks like "I look fat" or "I look thin" to cope with community criticism and avoid harsh assessments of others (Burnette, Kwitowski, & Mazzeo, 2017). Kaplan and Mazurek (2018) indicated that there are also potential negative effects of social media on adolescents. These can include Cyberbullying, Lack of privacy, Comparison, Social isolation, and sleep disturbance.

2.3 Celebrities and their Impact on Adolescents:

Celebrities are people who have achieved limelight and popularity, usually by using their skills, professions, or significant achievements. They can be entertainers, musicians, players, political leaders, and others. Social media celebrities have established an immense following who are eager to watch all of their videos or read what they write across multiple platforms. Their activities on social media influence a wide range of people (Mahon & Hevey, 2021).

Celebrities can have major effects on the lives of adolescents, particularly their looks and perception of their bodies. Adolescents frequently look to celebrities as mentors, and they can

attempt to copy their physical traits and aesthetics. This can create pressure to meet unrealistic as well as harmful beauty standards. For example, a lot of celebrities are admired for their very thin or muscular bodies and that can result in adolescents feeling pressure to lose weight or build muscle to achieve a comparable appearance (Harris & Griffiths, 2023).

Furthermore, the media frequently depicts celebrities who have ideal physiques and perfect looks, which can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem in adolescents. Adolescents who compare their bodies to these unattainable beauty goals may feel insecure and develop negative emotions and thoughts about their bodies. This can lead to eating disorders, body shaming, and various other harmful behaviors (Gupta, 2022).

The expansion of social media websites and increased public interest have led businesses to use these platforms to promote the products and services they offer. Nowadays social media is flooded with advertisements as businesses seek innovative approaches that differ from traditional marketing to grab the attention of consumers successfully. A popular strategy is to use celebrities who have massive followings and these celebrities add artistic and innovative value to advertisements because of their camera presence and popularity. Industries link up to work with well-known and influential figures like musicians, actors, and sports stars, whose career successes boost their public profile. This tactic helps businesses to grow and they also recognize the vital role these prominent personalities and advertisements play in increasing the brand's and product's success (Valkenburg, 2022).

Adolescents need to know that the photographs they see of celebrities in the media are frequently heavily edited and do not represent the truth. They should concentrate on their own physical and mental well-being instead of attempting to meet societal beauty requirements. Teachers, caregivers, parents, and other adults should also encourage adolescents to appreciate their uniqueness and encourage them to build a positive opinion of themselves (Bakeer, 2018).

2.4 Body Image:

Psychologists have done extensive studies on the concept of body image. Body image refers to how people think, behave, and feel about their bodies. The history of the term “body image” is unclear but its origins may be traced back to Paul Schilder's in (1935) in his book “The Image and Appearance of the Human Body”. In this book, he investigated the psychological importance of the body. He describes that social communications, real-life events, and interactions with others

all influence body image, which has an important impact on confidence, self-image, and emotional well-being. A positive body image illustrates confidence and satisfaction in the person's natural shape whereas an unhealthy body image is caused by anxiety and frustration with appearance (Grunewald, Calzo, & Brown, 2021).

Positive body image requires loving and valuing one's own body, no matter its shape or size, and it is essential for adolescents' mental and physical health. Strategies for fostering positive body image are to promote positive self-talk that focuses on abilities, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices such as frequent physical activity, a healthy diet, enough sleep, resisting beauty standards set by society, and avoiding unrealistic depictions from the media. For positive body image, adolescents must also concentrate on their inner abilities such as kindness and intelligence. They must select a supportive environment where they feel accepted. If they are battling with body image or self-esteem, talking to a healthcare professional can help. Such initiatives can help adolescents gain confidence and develop an appealing connection with their bodies (Choukas-Bradley, Roberts, Maheux, & Nesi, 2022).

Adolescents frequently struggle with negative body image, especially during puberty when their bodies are rapidly changing. Negative body image is an individual's perception of their own body and appearance, which is frequently influenced by societal beauty norms and principles. Negative body image can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and well-being in youngsters. Several factors can influence the body image view of adolescents, such as (i) peer and family member remarks (ii) social media and other platforms of media (iii) physical changes like weight gain or puberty and (iv) bullying or trauma of any personal experience (Tylka, 2018).

Social networks and chat are widely used types of electronic media. Social media frequently includes content created by users, in which people post highly idealized versions of themselves. Psychological models have identified links between traditional media, issues related to body image, and eating disorders. Having fitness-related visuals on platforms such as Instagram has been linked to rising body image concerns, internalization of beauty standards, and a desire to compare appearances. One of the most prominent sites in China is “The Little Red Book”. In that site, ninety-four percent of users are female, and social media sites have labeled women’s bodies as “thin” (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2018).

It is essential to understand that the association between digital media use and body image is complicated and can be influenced by several factors such as variations in personalities, the

particular platforms and type of content that teenagers receive exposure to, and the overall atmosphere in which social media is used. Social media could lead to negative body image by promoting an unattainable beauty standard. Observing others' highly edited and constantly filtered photos can cause individuals to judge their bodies by others and think unworthy. Cyberbullying and other types of online harassment are common on social media, causing serious consequences on the well-being and mental health of individuals. Anderson and Jiang conducted a study in (2018) where they concluded that 95% of the teens have access to a smartphone and 45% say they are online almost constantly. The most popular platforms among teens are YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

2.5 Appearance Concern and Peer Interaction:

Early adolescence (10-14 years old) is an important time for having concerns about appearance, as it coincides with major mental, physical, and social changes, such as entering adulthood and an intense need for peer approval. Mental developments, such as imagination and self-consciousness boost physical awareness and appearance concerns. Social and cultural factors impact, especially peer, media, and parental pressures. These factors contribute to issues like encouraging unrealistic beauty, thin and curvy bodies for women, and strong and muscular bodies for men, which lead to social comparison, and body dissatisfaction. According to sociocultural theory, dissatisfaction is caused by the feeling of pressure to adapt to appearance standards, whereas objectification theory describes how societal norms concentrate on being physically attractive. It can lead to self-objectivity, body surveillance, and body-shaming. Girls experience greater effects than boys, with higher rates of adopting unrealistic beauty standards, peer comparison, objectification, or dissatisfaction with their bodies. These theories work together to provide an in-depth knowledge of adolescent appearance concerns (Dakanalis, Fida , Riva, & Zanetti , 2015).

Peers have an immense effect on adolescent development, particularly about physical appearance concerns. Interactions with peers tend to concentrate on appearance, especially among girls, and may involve frank remarks both positive, such as appreciation, and negative, such as taunting or bullying as well as judgmental remarks (e.g., "You're not fat, I am"). Such conversations may boost societal beauty standards, creating self-objectivity, and dissatisfaction (Clark & Tiggemann, 2006).

Appearance-related interactions encourage a "peer appearance culture," in which social expectations regarding physical appearance are discussed and added strength. Although these interactions can give support and enhance peer bonds. By using different social media platforms, adolescents post selfies for the sole purpose of receiving remarks from peers. Girls mostly received comments on fatness. Weight-related conversations, such as "fat talk," or beauty-related products conversations have become common among girls, while boys' interactions usually concentrate on muscle-related topics. Boys also use humor and mocking and mostly avoid speaking about body dissatisfaction as compared to girls (Whitaker, Gough, Fawkner, & Smith, 2021).

Several studies have been carried out to determine the impacts of social media use on teens' body image. Many of these studies discovered that social media use has been related to negative body image and low self-esteem, especially among teenage adolescents who compare themselves to others online or are exposed to thin or idealized images of beauty. Other research studies have found that social media use has no direct connection to body image. However, it could be an element that contributes to negative body image as it leads to raised comparison with other people or in case it is used to promote unrealistic standards of beauty (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) are used to examine the role of social media in promoting body image among young girls.

2.6.1 Social Comparison Theory:

Social comparison theory was put forward by Festinger in (1954). According to social comparison theory, people compare and evaluate themselves to gain insight into their personal development. Comparisons usually concern a specific attribute. This theory includes two types of comparisons: upward and downward social comparison. Upward comparisons mean comparing yourself to someone more successful, while downward comparisons mean comparing yourself to someone less worthy. Adolescent girls use social media to improve their appearance by making upward comparisons. However, the comparisons negatively affect them when adolescent girls fail

to meet the idealistic appearance requirements and it can result in feelings of body dissatisfaction (Vartanian & Dey, 2013).

Social media users frequently post appealing images that are edited and overrated. As images become more readily available, they may become internalized, leading to unrealistic comparisons and body dissatisfaction (Vonderer & Kinnally, 2012).

Upward perceptions of appearance on social media may increase concerns about body image among young women. Women who compare their physical appearance to society's unrealistic thin beauty standard may experience body shame and can get involved in unhealthy eating habits to lose weight. In 2019, Hough and Mills made a hypothesis in which they suggested that young women are actively involved in image-based social media among attractive peers. They are likely to target upward social comparison and have more negative body image. On the other hand, those women are engaged in image-based social media with their families, are unlikely to target social comparison. Interacting with families had no impact on their body image perspective but appearance-based social media had an impact on them (Hogue & Mills, 2019).

A recent study by Ahmed, Hassan and Ghazali (2024), on social comparison theory proposed a model which explains how active versus passive use of Instagram effect the mental wellbeing of individual's health. This study highlights that social comparison on Instagram can have a significant effect on mental wellness. Individuals who use Instagram regularly by posting, liking, and commenting usually deal with fear of missing out (FOMO), which makes them compare themselves to other users. Individuals can feel less successful or incompetent as a result of such comparisons, especially among people who have similar ideal and flawless lifestyles, which can increase symptoms of sadness. In addition, the study demonstrated that even passive Instagram engagement such as browsing through content on Instagram without actively participating, can have an adverse effect on psychological well-being. This is due to the fact that when scrolling, people may unconsciously compare themselves to others, which can possibly promote anxiety and sadness. In general, social comparison on Instagram, whether active or passive, can be dangerous to psychological health (Ahmad, Hassan, & Ghazali, 2024).

2.6.2 Social Cognitive Theory:

The social cognitive theory was first proposed by Albert Bandura in the 1980s. This theory points out how observational learning influences attitudes and behaviors. The author proposed that people learn by monitoring the behavior of other people and that that sort of learning may come from different types of media, including movies, TV, and, most recently, social media (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

According to this theory, people learn by noticing other people and then practicing their behavior, which can be called modeling. This modeling process has three primary elements: attention, retention, and motor reproduction. Attention indicates how much people are paying attention to focus on other behavior, retention refers to how well an individual remembers the behavior of others, and motor reproduction refers to the individual's ability to physically adopt or practice the behavior of other people (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

In the context of social media, social cognitive theory demonstrates that interacting with images of thin and fantasized bodies on social media may lead adolescents to adopt these beauty standards and behaviors such as dieting and disordered eating in trying to develop the same type of physique. This process is known as social learning. Furthermore, SCT suggests that the more an adolescent has access to visuals of flawless bodies on social media, the more they will develop a negative body image and low self-esteem (Baker et al., 2019).

2.6.3 Objectification Theory:

Objectification refers to seeing a person's own physique, parts, or organs through the lens of other people. This kind of conduct is related to excessive use of social media. Individuals who have adopted media norms commonly judge their physical appearance to make sure that fits with the ideal levels (Dittmar & Bell, 2011).

Self-objectifying people typically appreciate and characterize themselves depending on how other individuals see them, instead of their personal emotions or abilities. Basically, Young women tend to absorb beauty norms influenced by media images. The media's constant attention to body parts aligns audiences with a subconscious sexually explicit focus. Young women facing being sexually objectified have to learn how to handle and cope with its effect on their personal lives. Studies demonstrate that women are frequently assessed purely by their looks. It is logical to believe that

constant consumption of sexually discriminatory media might have an adverse effect on women's opinions about their bodies. Moreover, the mainstream media's focus on female physiques and specific body parts establish unattainable standards of beauty (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Regular exposure to female models demonstrates beauty perfection and may lead to society's benchmark of beauty. Comparing yourself to unrealistic expectations or adopting media-promoted beliefs may result in adverse impacts. A higher interaction with influential figures could cause to affection and strive to become like them (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

2.7 Conceptual Framework:

This conceptual framework demonstrates; how social media influences the body image perspective of young girls.



Source: The Author

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

The conceptual framework for this study demonstrated, how social media usage influences body Image perspective. I have applied different theories (social comparison, objectification and social cognitive theory), to explain the link between social media use and body image. Social media platforms act as the primary source of exposure to visual content that influences body image perspective. The time spent, duration, and nature of interactions on these platforms are pivotal in shaping attitudes toward body image.

Content type, peer interaction, societal or family pressure, role of influencers and celebrities set beauty standards and present ideal body image on social media. To achieve these beauty standards, young girls follow the content and posts about fitness, fashion, dieting, and beauty products. The role of likes, comments, and sharing from peers and family contribute to social comparison (upward comparison). Upward comparison means to compare yourself to someone more successful or more worthy.

The excessive use of social media and the interaction with images of thin and fantasized bodies on social media may lead to behavioral changes, such as dieting, poor sleep, or cosmetic surgeries in trying to develop the same type of physique. Social cognitive and objectification theory explains behaviors and suggests that the more an adolescent has access to visuals of flawless bodies on social media, the more they developed a negative body image and self-esteem. Body image is the outcome of exposure to social media. It led to positive or negative impacts. Negative impacts manifest as poor self-esteem, body dysmorphic, or unhealthy behaviors such as excessive dieting.

2.8 Positionality:

Positionality is related to the researcher's recognition and expression of their particular position, viewpoints, and impact on the research process. For this thesis, I have taken phenomenological approach, to understand the lived experiences of the participant of body image by interaction with social media. It explores how social media influence and make sense of body image.

2.8.1 Ontology:

This researcher adopts a constructivist ontological approach, which describes that body image is not objective reality but is constructed socially and culturally. This study believes that body image

perspective is not fixed. Every individual is influenced by social media according to their social, cultural, and personal context.

2.8.2 Epistemology:

This study aims to explore the role of Pakistani social media in promoting body image perspective among young girls. Therefore, the epistemological position for this research is interpretivist.

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Strategy:

To explore how social media impact on teenage girls in building their body image perspective. This study adopted a qualitative research design. The researcher emphasizes a particular topic and obtains findings with no assumptions, providing support for future research. This creates an ideal atmosphere for analysis and provides an organized framework for the researcher to analyze (Greening, 2019). Hence, a qualitative research strategy is appropriate, to focus on respondent's feelings, thoughts, and experiences with body image by using social media and also this research strategy helps to examine the visual data from social media platforms i.e. Instagram.

3.2 Research Design:

Research design is the plan, structure, strategy, and investigation that is concaved to obtain search questions and control variance (Thakur, 2021). There are three main research designs. These are descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory research designs. A qualitative research strategy is set for this research and data was more focused on words instead of numbers. Since this study intends to examine the body image opinion in teenage girls through Pakistani social media, the explanatory research design is appropriate. This study is based on phenomenological studies, which examines lived experiences provided by the people.

3.3 Data Collection:

The unit of data collection is the main source to provide the exact information about the research matter for the analysis. For the current study, firsthand information was collected through face-to-face interviews with young girls. Girls were selected based on their age i.e. 15-18 from Punjab group of college (Talagang). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews combine structured and unstructured questions to give a more extensive interview guide (Harley, 2019). In this current study primary data was collected by face-to-face interviews of young girls, the participants were able to share their experience, thoughts, and

behavior related to social media, as everyone has their own experience and perspective about body image. Primary sources provide up-to-date and firsthand information, such as feedback from participants and opinions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The researcher also used an audio recorder with the permission of the respondent, to capture all data and get more focus on the interviewee.

The study further examines the preferences of females on Instagram about women's body image. The researcher conducted a focus group discussion in the same institute. A focus group consisted of young girls who were in the same year (15-18) and class. Information about the topic was given to the girls before selection. The researcher selected girls from different age groups and considered each other as part of the same friend group. This was done to ensure that the girls would be able to talk openly, as they talk normally about these topics with friends. The focus group started with some general questions about participants' hobbies and media use. In a focus group, the researcher used images of famous models, influencers, and artists from Instagram. Through these images, the researcher got the responses of girls, thoughts, and positive or negative reactions to body image.

The researcher used hashtags (#) and popular tags (@), to determine the accounts which are mainly focusing on body image-related posts. For this purpose, secondary data which was already published on Instagram from January 2023 till September 2025 used. Secondary data include previous and already published information for the study (Collis & Hussey,2014). For the data collection accounts like @celebspakistan, @showbizpakistan, @ushnashah, @nehataseer @ayeshaomar @hrrakhann @mahirakhan @aimankhan @sajalaly @kinzashmi @aaminasheikh and hashtags like #selflove #body #girlsbeauty #bodyfit #diet #makeup #FasionDivas, #GlamorousLooks #BeautyInspiration #PakistaniCelebrities, were used to explore the specific Pakistani accounts; those are promoting body image on Instagram.

3.4 Locale:

For the current study, primary data was collected through semi structured interviews about social media usage and a focus group discussion. For focus group discussion, images were collected through social media platforms i.e. Instagram. The researcher mainly focuses on Instagram accounts that are actively sharing female body image-related content. Only Pakistan-based accounts and the images that have the most likes, shares, or comments were included.

The sample of young girls selected from Punjab group of college located at Talagang in Punjab. It is situated in Potohar plateau of Punjab and primarily a rural area. The culture is the mixture of

rural, simple lifestyle and modern urban lifestyle blended in the city. The main purpose of selecting this locale was that many studies are mostly conducted in urban cities, while rural areas are often ignored. Since this research focuses on social media, so the researcher wanted to explore whether social media also influencing children living in rural or small cities.

3.5 Sampling and Sample Size:

To explore the role of social media in promoting body image perspectives among young girls. For the collection of primary data, the researcher used a sample of young girls from Punjab group of college (Talagang) between the ages of 15-18 and a purposive non-probability sampling technique was used, which is most appropriate for qualitative research. In this current study primary data was collected by face-to-face interviews of 20 young girls who are regularly using social media, sharing posts, pictures, and videos and actively engage with peers, family, and strangers on social media were included. Sample size was not too large because initial interviews were unique but with more interviewing common themes started to come. For focus group discussion, 8 girls were selected and the images were collected from online social media (Instagram) posts of influencers, models, artists, and body image-related pages. These accounts have been chosen based on how actively they post on their Instagram accounts regarding body image. Images from these accounts were selected based on likes, shares, and comments (e.g., 1000+ likes 1000+ comments, or 1000+ sharing). Moreover, the criteria for the selection of these accounts based on time frame, starting from January 2023 to September 2025 and their geographical location based in Pakistan included. The following accounts and hashtags were used at the initial stage. e.g., @nehataseer, @aaminasheikh, @celebspakistan, @showbizpakistan, @ushnashah, @ayashaomar, @hirrakhan @mahirakhan @aimankhan @sajalaly @kinzashmi and filtering was done by using the following hashtags e.g., #FasionDivas, #GlamorousLooks #BeautyInspiration #PakistaniCelebrities, #selflove #body #girlsbeauty #bodyfit #diet #makeup. The study sample selected according to the following criteria:

3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria:

1. Female students with the age range 15-18.
2. Female students who are regularly using social media platforms
3. Instagram accounts that are actively engaged to present female body image-related content.

3.5.2 Exclusion Criteria:

1. Female students who have limited access or not actively using social media.
2. Instagram accounts have limited or no body image-related content.

3.5.3 Table 1: Participants Information:

Participant information about their age and grades are given below:

Participants	Grade	Age
P1	9	15
P2	10	16
P3	9	16
P4	11	17
P5	11	17
P6	9	15
P7	9	15
P8	10	16
P9	12	18
P10	12	18
P11	10	16
P12	11	17
P13	11	17
P14	10	16
P15	9	15
P16	11	17
P17	12	17
P18	10	16
P19	12	18

P20	12	18
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Source: The Author

3.6 Data Analysis:

To obtain authentic results and outcomes for the research, it is important to choose a suitable data analysis plan. In qualitative research, data can be analyzed through content analysis, thematic or ethnographic content analysis. In this study, the data were collected through interviews and focus group discussion. For focus group discussion and interviews data was transcribed, translated, and reviewed the positive and negative responses of participants about social media body image concerns. Codes were generated through selective coding method. Instagram was used for focus group discussion and data was analyzed through content analysis. For interviews, general questions related to social media were asked to explore participants' experiences, perceptions and views. By identifying the main opinions and repeated thoughts of participants, the data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 4

4. Analysis and Discussion:

This chapter deals with analysis of the data and discussion about the findings. The data is analyzed through Braun and Clark five step approach. Further, respondent's responses about social media use are discussed and then different themes are formulated from these responses. To obtain authentic results and outcomes for the research, it is important to choose a suitable data analysis plan. In this study, the data was collected through interviews and focus group discussion.

Thematic analysis technique has been used in the present study to evaluate the gathered data from the field. In this thesis Braun and Clark five steps systematic thematic analysis approach was used. These steps work as a road map to improve the quality of research process, findings and carefully handling of the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the purpose of analysis, interviews were written in verbatim and then transcribed. Then all the transcriptions were compiled in order to start the coding procedure. When all the transcription containing response from different respondents was compiled, the next step was to organize all the data by questions. While organizing data by question all the responses and data regarding one question was compiled and the procedure was repeated for all questions. Then for the responses for each question, codes were generated. After the initial coding on the basis of organized question, in next phase the similar codes were compiled after further reduction. When similar codes were compiled, they formulated the themes. The themes are discussed in the discussion part.

4.1 Data Analysis Steps:

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data. It includes identifying revealing trends in the data set, which is then evaluated for their fundamental meaning. These trends or patterns can be analyzed by understanding the meaning of keywords used by participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For this thesis, Braun and Clark five steps systematic thematic analysis approach was used. These steps work as a road map to improve the quality of research process, findings and carefully handling of the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps are:

Step1: Transcription, familiarization with the data and selection of quotations.

Step2: Selection of keywords or sub codes

Step3: Coding of the data

Step4: Development of themes

Step5: Conceptualization through interpretation of sub codes, codes and themes.

At first step, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions’ recordings were written in verbatim and then transcribed. The researcher was deeply familiar with data, repeated patterns and meaningful statements related to research topic. In second step data was first organized and then initial keywords or sub codes were generated through organized responses. In third step codes were generated. Keywords or sub codes played an important role to get insightful and meaningful codes. In next step, after detailed analysis of codes, the researcher gets broader themes. These themes are actual results of this research and are discussed in discussion part. At next step, conceptualization was done through interpretation of sub codes and themes. The sub codes, codes, themes and conceptualization of this research are given below in the table.

Table 2: Overview of Thematic Analysis Findings

The table summarizes the key themes and conceptual categories derived from participants' narratives. It demonstrates how social media engagement, appearance-related concerns, self-comparison, and cultural expectations contribute to body image perceptions among adolescent girls

Verbatim	Sub Codes	Codes	Themes	Conceptualization
“I really love to use Instagram and my feed is full of actresses and fashion pages.” “I mostly watch TikTok reels of celebrities and beauty videos.” “I watch YouTube for vlogs, makeup tutorials, and fitness videos.”	Instagram TikTok YouTube Snapchat	Social Media Platform	Social Media Use	Digital Influence

<p>“I use Snapchat filters to make my pictures look better.”</p> <p>“I use social media daily; if I don’t use it, it feels like something is missing.”</p> <p>“My parents don’t allow me to have my own phone, so I use my mother’s mobile.”</p> <p>“My mother follows me on Instagram to see what I post.”</p> <p>“Before posting photos, I check them again and again.”</p>	<p>Use Time</p> <p>Parents Restrictions</p> <p>Photos Sharing</p>	<p>Screen Time</p> <p>Parental Influence and Control</p> <p>visual Exposure</p>		
<p>“I feel stressed about my weight after seeing slim girls on Instagram.”</p> <p>“My parents say my skin is getting dark, which makes me worried.”</p> <p>“I feel anxious when I think I don’t look good like others.”</p> <p>“Social media has made me very conscious about my looks.”</p>	<p>Weight</p> <p>Fair Skin</p> <p>Dissatisfaction</p> <p>Consciousness</p> <p>Anxiety</p>	<p>Idealized Appearance</p>	<p>Appearance Concern</p>	<p>Body Dissatisfaction</p>

<p>“I am not satisfied with my appearance after using social media.”</p> <p>“My friends talk about dieting and beauty all the time.”</p>	Peer Pressure	Appearance Pressure		
<p>“I keep comparing my face and body with models on Instagram.”</p> <p>“Influencers make me feel like I should look perfect.”</p> <p>“I want to look like the actresses I see on social media.”</p> <p>“I use filters because I don’t feel confident without them.”</p> <p>“I edit my pictures before posting them.”</p> <p>“I know social media beauty is fake, but it still affects me.”</p> <p>“Comparing myself with others has reduced my confidence.”</p>	<p>Comparison</p> <p>Influencers</p> <p>Celebrities</p> <p>Editing Tools</p> <p>Filters</p> <p>Unrealistic</p> <p>Lack of Confidence</p>	<p>Appearance Anxiety</p> <p>Altered Self Image</p>	<p>Self-Comparison on Social Media</p>	<p>Self-Consciousness</p>

<p>“In our culture, fair skin is considered beautiful.”</p> <p>“People say girls should be fair to look good.”</p> <p>“Girls are expected to look perfect all the time.”</p> <p>“Models have perfect features, and we are compared to them.”</p> <p>“These pages on Instagram and TikTok always show reels about fashion, beauty tips and dances.”</p> <p>“These beauty standards and trends are not for normal girls because we can’t afford them but still I want to be part of discussion with my friends.”</p> <p>“I know that all girls on social media wearing makeup but still I want to copy them”</p>	<p>Beauty Standards</p> <p>Fair Skin</p> <p>Look Perfect</p> <p>Perfect Features</p> <p>Beauty Pages</p> <p>Beauty Trends</p> <p>Makeup</p>	<p>Societal Standards</p> <p>Influencers Trends</p>	<p>Cultural Factors Influencing Negative Body Image</p>	<p>Unrealistic Beauty Ideals</p>
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Source: The Author

4.2 Discussion of the Study Results

4.2.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of Participants:

The sociodemographic data of the participants were explored through in depth interviews and focus group discussion. For focus group discussion, 8 students were included in a group and 20

students were included for in depth interviews. The participants for this study consisted of young girls aged (15-18), educational level (SSC & HSSC), diverse family structure and access to digital media. The study showed that girls at SSC level had less exposure as compared to HSSC. But no one denied about the use of social media.

In terms of device type, almost every one reported that they are using smart phones. There were many reasons as laptop, iPad are expensive and mobile phones are an increasingly common choice for students who do not have the money to buy expensive devices. Also mobile phones are extremely versatile and can be used for plenty of activities, such as social media use, internet scrolling, and conversation with others. Therefore, the study revealed that mobile phones are an excellent choice for students who wants to stay in contact with their peers and stay up to date with current events and trends.

Some students from both SSC and HSSC level reported that they have personal mobile phones but almost 11 girls said that they have common mobile phone and all siblings and mother are using same smart phone. There were many reasons, the girls those reported about personal mobile phones, there father are residing abroad, or have high standard of living and family environment were not restricting. The girls those reported that they have common mobile phone, their parents are strict and few girls said they can't afford separate mobile phones for all. But all the girls had exposure to social networking platforms.

In regards with most common platform and content, the study showed that the most common content was entertainment, fashion and celebrities. Only 3 girls reported that they have interest in watching travelling guides, baking and reading. YouTube were most common platform among all girls for watching drama, Vlogs and education related videos. TikTok and Instagram were famous for reels, beauty trends and celebrities.

Relating to time spent most of the students expressed that they are using 3 to 5 hours a day. Because all the day they are at school or college and in evening they also have study workload. All the girls reported that if they are busy or no, they spend time on different platforms by watching and following others (e.g., peers, celebrities and models).

4.2.2 Discussion of Social Media Use and Body Image Perspective Among Young Girls:

The current study showed that, TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms of social media all contribute to create consciousness about body image through promoting unrealistic beauty goals and constant comparisons. These findings align with social comparison theory. According to social comparison theory, people compare and evaluate themselves to gain insight into their personal development. Most of the girls revealed that slim and thin body is the ideal figure. They love to have flawless and fair skin like young celebrities. To attain ideal figure and skin they were using different treatment and remedies. As one of the girl in 12 grade revealed that she is taking skin laser sessions and few girls reported that they are going to parlor for different skin treatments. Girls in the age group of 15-16 years made comparisons in a relatively subtle manner, with most making comparisons on hair styles, make up and clothes.

Almost all the girls showed the concern about body image. This strengthens the concept of social cognitive and objectification theory. In social cognitive theory author proposed that people learn by monitoring the behavior of other people and that sort of learning may come from different types of media, including movies, TV, and, most recently, social media (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Girls between 17-18 years old practiced more upward social comparison and more often. These participants contrasted their bodies, skin color, and facial appearances with those of the influencers and celebrities. Most of the girls accepted that pictures posted on social media were processed, filtered, or improved using cosmetic surgery but they still love to adopt these beauty standards. For this they were using different filters to gain more attention among peers and social media.

Objectification theory refers to seeing a person's own physique, parts, or organs through the lens of other people. This kind of conduct is related to excessive use of social media. Individuals who have adopted media norms commonly judge their physical appearance to make sure that fits with the ideal levels (Dittmar & Bell, 2011). According to young girls those are more active on Instagram and tiktok were involved in comparing their body and daily routine with influencers and bloggers. Most of the girls were impressed, the way celebrities are celebrating 'Eid, birthdays and other activities. As the world revolves around social media platforms, people makes a concept of beauty standards and living standards in their minds of what they see online.

The study further finds that social media contributes to negative body image but it is not the only factor. Social gatherings and community settings were the places where cultural comparison was mostly manifested. The participants shared that the girls who fit the mainstream beauty standards

were applauded, admired, and talked about positively, whereas those who failed to conform were neglected or even laughed at.

The family settings were also influential in strengthening social comparison. According to the participants, relatives used to comment on appearance during family meetings and tended to compare the girls with their siblings or cousins. Social comparison takes place continuously both online and offline. The age factor is also a significant determinant of vulnerability; as older adolescents are more vulnerable. This study results emphasize the positive use of social media, value of the positive peer conditions and the sensitivity of the cultural and family to minimize the adverse comparison patterns.

4.2.3 Analysis on Social Media (Instagram) through focus group discussion: -

A focus group discussion was conducted to get students' views on female celebrities and their perceptions of beauty that are promoted on Instagram. Participants were shown specific images of female celebrities from Instagram during the entire discussion. These pictures were shown in order to assess their reactions, thoughts, and views about the celebrities as they appeared on social media. A focus group took place in a class room, where facilitator and participants were seated around a table. Before beginning participants were asked some demographic questions regarding age, class and social media use.

At the start general questions were asked regarding social media use, likes and dislikes. To boost or to enhance the discussion, the researcher distributed one by one different pictures of celebrities taken from Instagram. They were asked to take few moments to look at them and then asked different questions e.g. (How do you feel when you see these photos?), (Do you think there are different beauty standards adopted by these celebrities?), (Is it hard to meet these beauty standards?), (Do you feel editing apps impact body image?) etc.

Teenagers browse social media platforms that are primarily visual, like Instagram, where participants share images or videos. According to young girls, Instagram mostly emphasis on beauty, fashion and celebrities related content. People occasionally post photos that have been altered or carefully edited to make them appears more appealing. One participant shared "*People are more obsessed with how they look.*" On appearance related question one girl shared "*Girls are*

more conscious about their looks because they all want to look like famous celebrities and want certain hair color and certain body weight.”

Girls also shared that comments on posts or images typically emphasize on physical appearance, and comments about style or beauty are frequently made. Teenagers also think that getting compliments about their appearance is linked to being judged by their peers and socially acceptable. Girls also discussed that it’s a social media norm that we have to comment positively on our friend’s posts. As they shared *“You can’t really comment on their posts, if someone shared a selfie you are not going to comment like haha you are so funny.”*

The facilitator asked the group if social media exert pressure to look a certain way and one participant replied *“I feel like I don’t compare myself with others but I feel like there is pressure on me to look a certain way...it’s weird.”* Another respondent, *“I would say like social media affects how they feel about their body but I don’t think it affects anybody here.”*

Comparison to celebrities were both endorsed and denied in group discussion. The question of celebrity was initially met with hesitation and quiet. One participant responded, *“I don’t know...depends on who.”* The facilitator then asked what kind of thoughts these celebrities evoked but the group was reluctant to share anything. One participant took initiative *“If I am following female celebrity...they do all these, photo shoots, makeup and they look really pretty.”* Another respondent said, *“Obviously, they are famous...they have makeup artists, Photoshop, a lot of work done on them.”*

Furthermore, young girls considered that on social media, external beauty is often admired over internal qualities such as skills, kindheartedness, or confidence. There is a pressure on girls to keep up an appealing look in pictures and daily life. This perspective is not restricted to social media; it also depicts an overall social and cultural environment in which people tend to put a priority on external appearance. As a result, young people might start to believe that creating inner characteristics are less important than being looked good, which can impact their self-esteem along with how they judge people and themselves.

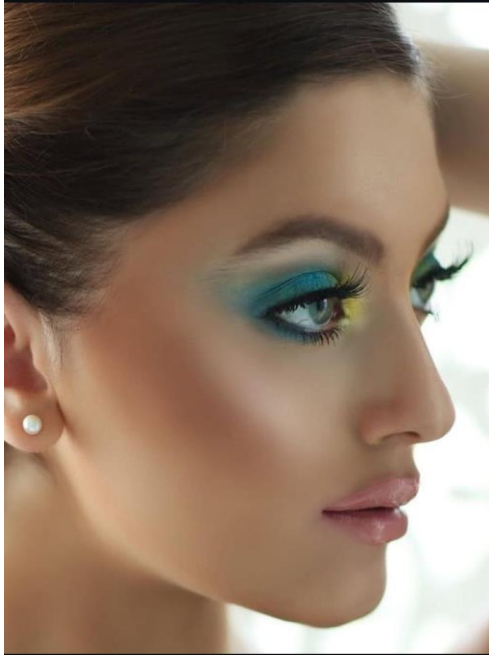
4.2.4 How Body Image Presentation on Instagram Influences Young Girls: -

Analysis of images of celebrities on Instagram reveals that women’s body image is represented in a way of highlighting beauty and attractiveness. The pictures depicted perfect body image and visuals include the comments like “Gorgeous” and “Beautiful.” These comments are accountable for given the rise to societal trends. Moreover, the review of selected pictures tends to attract attention and perception. In this existing study, different celebrity pictures were shown to a group of students. As like these comes from Instagram account @pakistani_celebrities

Title: Style and presentation on Instagram



https://www.instagram.com/pakistani__celebrities?igsh=aGZhNWw5YnR6dXZj



<https://www.instagram.com/nehastaseer?igsh=cTVpdnpieGNsaTI4>

After looking at the pictures all the respondent recognizes the celebrity. They all were familiar with her work and family life. It showed their interest and likeness about the celebrity. When the facilitator asked how these pictures affect you? Few respondents shared, “She looks beautiful...no harm to admire her.” Another respondent said, *“I am confident in myself...I mean, she looks really pretty...but I am happy and I don’t want to be anybody else.”* Another respondent said, *“I don’t get jealous...I appreciate her, I want same hairs and eye color.”* One respondent said, “I know these pictures are highly edited...but I also use these edited apps.” Another respondent shared, *“I know these pictures are highly edited and photo shopped...I mean...It is good to look perfect.”* It has been found that Instagram images are not authentic and the celebrity images are photo shopped and different editing tools are being used to look perfect. Almost all the respondent recognized this but still they want to copy them. The appreciating comments on pictures can influence self-esteem and perception to adopt these beauty standards.

Title: Fitness related Images



<https://www.instagram.com/yumnazaidiofficial?igsh=NTkyZWtueDkwNzJ3>



<https://www.instagram.com/showbizpak?igsh=Nmdqdjh1ejBrMDV1>



https://www.instagram.com/pakistani__celebrities?igsh=aGZhNWw5YnR6dXZj

Some images show celebrities are lifting heavy weight and also adopt clean eating habits. When asked from students, they don't want to adopt because they found it difficult to do regular exercise and do clean eating. But no one denied to have the slim body like them. One respondent shared, *"A lot of my clothes don't fit me now...I am really upset about it, my mother always encourages me to adopt clean eating habits...but I love to eat fast food."* Another respondent shared, "She is slim and pretty...like to adopt her routine...but failure to do so."

Fitness inspirational accounts, and images usually inspire others to adopt healthier lifestyles. People may get the benefit from these accounts. However, these accounts and models are responsible for encouraging and give right directions to visitors. On the other hand, these images build unrealistic expectations among followers. Women engage in poor eating and exercising habits as a result of these situations. It can be harmful specially for the young girls. Instagram photos are effective for building women's perceptions about their bodies.

Considering responses to celebrities' images on Instagram, it can be stated that body satisfaction is very important specially for the young girls. The pictures of celebrities show body transformation such as fitness pictures can sometime motivate girls to adopt healthier and improve lifestyle. However, highly edited and filtered pictures can reduce body satisfaction. When young girls continuously see highly edited pictures on Instagram, they feel unhappy with their own body. On the other hand, accepting and valuing one's own body is important to eliminate negative

thoughts and constant comparison. Comments on celebrities post such as “Gorgeous”, “Beautiful”, “You inspired me” etc. reflects how strongly body images on Instagram influence people’s perspective.

4.3 Thematic Analysis:

This chapter discusses the analyses of the data and findings with reference to conceptual framework applied for the research. It is aimed to understand the concept and discuss the findings. The discussion is done thematically.

Theme 1: Social Media Use

The utilization of social media became one of the key elements of the daily life of adolescent girls aged between 15 and 18 years, but the results show clearly that the usage may differ by age, educational attainment, and family status. The respondents who were girls aged 15 to 16 years and were primarily in classes 9 and 10 reported relatively limited access to mobile phones. Most of them lacked access to their own smartphones and were dependent on the ones belonging to their parents or older siblings. One participant shared that *“I use social media daily but my parents don’t allow me to have my own phone, so I use my mother’s mobile.”* Monitoring by the parents was prevalent among this age of teenagers, where time schedules were set to limit the amount of time teenagers could use their phones as late as after school or before sleep. These limitations notwithstanding, younger respondents said that they were highly emotionally attached to social media, and this was because looking at updates after school had become a normal routine, and they were curious about trends and celebrities. One participant from grade 10 said *“I mean like, my mother follows me and she sees my story but I really don’t care because there is nothing to hide.”* Some participant expressed discomfort with this monitoring like participant from grade 11 expressed that *“It gives me anxiety whenever my parents are like, I am just going to check something but actually check my mobile history, its freak me out even though I have done nothing wrong.”* However, younger participants aged 17-18 years who were enrolled in the first and second year of HSSC perceived themselves as being more independent in their digital practices. Most of these girls had personal smartphones and were always connected to the internet. Multiple participants reported that their parents restrict them what they post on social media. Even some parents placed restrictions on posting selfies. Participant from grade 12 shared, *“When I first got Instagram I couldn’t post selfies, when it was just me on Instagram.”*

Economic stability was also a factor to consider because people with relatively well-off families or with parents working in foreign countries were less constrained. These teenagers were claimed to spend more time on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, and in most cases, these platforms were visited many times a day by these older teenagers. To them, the use of social media was not just a leisure activity but also rooted in the establishment of their identity and social affiliation. Participant from grade 12 shared *“I use social media daily; if I don’t use it, it feels like something is missing.”* Another respondent from grade 10 shared *“If I don’t use social media and only interact with my friends, I feel that I am excluded and miss out on many things.”* In both the old and the young, Instagram was found to be the strongest platform, especially where the visual content is concerned. The application of TikTok was mainly based on viewing short reel videos, aesthetic changes, and celebrity videos, whereas YouTube was more popular with its choice of longer videos, including daily vlogs, workouts, and parchment tutorials. Girls of a younger age were more content consumers who either passively watched the video or scrolled feeds. However, older girls had mixed remarks. Few girls stated that they actively followed influencers, saved their posts, and tried to repeat the trends they saw on the Internet. One respondent said *“I like to see what people I follow have posted.”* Another said *“Influencers can make me to do things, what I don’t want to, but you have to do it because it is an important person.”*

Patterns of use were also predetermined by socioeconomic differences. The girls of the poor families tended to share one mobile phone with their siblings, and this restricted screen time but did not stop exposure. Others took out the social media account of their parents or even borrowed phones to stay connected. One respondent from grade 9 shared *“My parents don’t allow me to have my own phone, so I use my mother’s mobile.”* Another respondent from grade 10 shared *“we are 6 siblings and it’s not possible to afford separate mobile phone, so we have common for all.”* Despite a lack of access, these girls were aware of the latest trends and celebrities, indicating the dominance of social media among social classes. The difference in perception of these limitations was also seen based on age, with the younger girls being able to accommodate restrictions with much ease and older adolescents being rebellious due to restricted access. When it comes to usage time, respondents felt that excessive use of social media affects them. They usually scroll Instagram or TikTok and find it hard to put down the phone to sleep instead. Respondent from grade 11 said *“it is like that you have been sitting for ten minutes but then one hour has passed.”* Other respondents shared, they need to updated about what the other people are posting and they

have a bad habit of scrolling social media. *“Sometime I stay away from social media but then usually I fall back again with the same pattern, it is not that I am addicted but I feel that I have to follow my routine of checking social media.”*

This theme indicate that social media usage is almost universal among teen females, but the age factor is very important in determining independence, frequency, and involvement. Younger adolescents have higher parental control and equal fascination, and older adolescents have more exposure, which makes them more engaged and vulnerable. These developmental differences form a crucial basis in the way social media affects body image perceptions in different developmental stages.

Theme 2: Appearance Concern

The issues surrounding appearance were deeply present among the participants of all ages; the manner of thinking and terms of expression of the issues varied greatly between the younger adolescents and the older adolescents. Adolescent girls in the age group of 15-16 years had mixed thoughts, they talked about discomfort caused by physical changes, which included weight gain, acne, and body shape changes, among others. Such worries were normally aired in emotive and insecure language as opposed to outright discontent. One respondent from grade 9 shared *“if I have acne, I like to cover up with makeup or mask and it makes me feel more comfortable and secure.”* Most of the younger respondents mentioned that they experienced discomfort comparing themselves to the photographs they saw on social media, especially when they spotted the differences in the texture of skin, body size, or facial structures. *“sometimes when someone is looking very pretty then obviously I make comparison with myself.”*

Adolescents at the mature stage of 17-18 years expressed more concern and aggressive appearance issues. These respondents were not afraid to talk about how they were unhappy with certain parts of their bodies, such as weight, skin tone, facial features, and looks. The escalated self-perception and anxiety outcomes were caused by being more exposed to the content of influencers and discussions with peers. One respondent shared *“Social media has made me very conscious about my looks.”* The respondents within this age bracket related that they felt the pressure to look presentable in a social place like college, family gatherings, and social occasions. Respondent from grade 11 shared *“My parents say my skin is getting dark, they usually call me kaalo (black) which*

makes me worried.” Social media was seen to establish standards that were hard to attain, which led to continuous feelings of being inadequate.

Anxiety of parents became one of the aspects of appearance concern interrelated with others. Respondents shared that *“there is comparison among peer and family because everyone is using social media so they know the trends and the one who adopt these trends, people are appreciating and praising them.”* Mothers and parents in general were also reported to be concerned with uncontrolled screen time, loss of self-confidence, and physical complications like weight gain and skin complications. The younger respondents talked about having tight parental control, checking social media profiles, and restricting cell phone use. Parents usually defended these restrictions by saying that they were put in place to protect against emotional damage and study diversion. Conversely, parents of older adolescents were more inclined to make use of verbal instructions instead of actual limitations. Though parents were concerned with anxiety, peer influence, and emotional functioning, they tended to have no organized knowledge as to how social media affected body image. This meant that parental intervention was limited to mere advice and not the actual intervention. The participants also added that parental remarks were accidentally somewhat supportive of appearance issues, especially when comments were made regarding weight or skin tone.

The theme is that appearance issues are not singular experiences of a person, but they are rooted in the family interaction. Age is one of the factors that influence parental reactions, as younger girls are given protective limits and older girls are subjected to psychological stress with fewer restrictions. The results highlight the significance of age-related parental sensitivity in order to deal with appearance-related fears.

Theme 3: Self-Comparison on Social Media

Self-comparison proved to be one of the key processes in which social media impacted body image amongst adolescent girls. All age groups admitted to working in comparison with celebrities, influencers, and peers they meet online. But the degree and the extent of self-comparison rose significantly with age. Girls in the age group of 15-16 years made comparisons in a relatively subtle manner, with most making comparisons on hair styles, make up and clothes rather than body shapes. One respondent from grade 10 said *“Oh, I wish I had that hair.”* These younger

respondents showed their respect for online individuals, as they perceive them as the inspirations and not the strict guidelines against which they can measure themselves.

Although this was at the onset of the admiration, a gradual experience of repeated exposure influenced the perception of beauty by young girls. With time, they will become more aware of the perceived imperfections, especially after watching filtered videos and edited images. They were unable to express dissatisfaction directly all the time, but their stories showed the increased level of self-consciousness and awareness of appearance. This indicates that prolonged exposure is the basis of subsequent dissatisfaction.

Adolescents between 17-18 years old practiced more upward social comparison and more often. These participants contrasted their bodies, skin color, and facial appearances with those of the influencers and celebrities. Most people accepted that pictures posted on social media were processed, filtered, or improved using cosmetic surgery. However, the knowledge of manipulation did not lessen its emotional effect. One said *“I know these are edited pictures but when I look at the pictures I feel like; I don’t love myself.”* Respondents have stated that they experienced pressure to appear like their peer and continuous comparison. Grade 12 student shared *“social media led to comparisons between their clothing and height to that of their peers.”*

The older adolescents were especially prone to using beauty filters and editing applications. The participants reported that they had to edit their photographs before publishing to get likes and positive comments that gave a short-term boost in confidence. Respondents shared their thoughts that *“By using social media, automatically start comparing our bodies with others and if there is any imperfection, usually use filters to show perfection.”* But this practice made people discontented in their real life since they felt that they could not be up to the version of themselves that they were edited. Social events also added pressure to self-comparison because appearance-congratulations were frequently given by those who fit the beauty standards promoted on the internet.

Some of the participants added that social media only shows positive moments, which renders actual life seems less thrilling or successful by comparison. As a result, certain individuals got sad, annoyed, and under pressure to change in order to be acknowledged. Respondent from grade 11 said *“Influencers usually shared their daily routine life and we automatically relate with our daily routine.”* However, a few participants agreed that social media can be beneficial when

comparisons are perceived constructively, such as by inspiring improving oneself. The majority of respondents agreed that unnecessary self-criticism on social media can be harmful to mental health, emphasizing the importance of mindful use, self-awareness, and prioritizing personal growth over online acknowledgement.

This theme shows how a social media platform results in ongoing upward comparison, which internalizes unrealistic beauty ideals over time. The age differences point out that due to the early exposure and active involvement, younger girls are more at the initial stage of this process, whereas older adolescents are more deeply affected psychologically because they are exposed to it longer.

Theme 4: Social Comparison

The social comparison was not only on the digital level, but it went deep into real-life interactions in the school, peer group, and family setting, where the adolescent girls were developing their perception of their bodies and social worth. The respondents of all ages had said that judgments on appearance were common and acceptable in society. Nevertheless, the perceptions of these comparisons and their emotional evaluation had distinct age differences. Those girls between fifteen and sixteen years of age tended to take such comparisons in silence, and those between the seventeen and eighteen years of age showed more awareness of the psychological effects of such comparisons.

Physical appearance was an overt form of social status within the school environment. According to the younger participants, they admired and were interested in the classmates who were considered to be attractive or fashionable, and they disregarded or mocked those who were unlikely to be that. One respondent said *“I usually don’t like to play with my friends because they are making fun of my weight and slow running.”* When sharing photos of themselves, participants emphasized getting comments from others over their own. They had Concerns about how others would react. Some respondents said *“they are affected by this some time and it has led them to edit some photos in ordered to achieve the desired image.”* Another said that *“I believe cyberbullying decreases if you edit photos.”* Another girl from grade 11 said *“actually we need validation from peer and family like whenever we go somewhere, we constantly asking how I look.”*

Girls who were in classes nine and ten seldom questioned such dynamics and instead accepted remarks about weight, complexion, or clothing as normal aspects of school life. These experiences

were usually not talked about, even in cases where they were painful. Older adolescents who were enrolled in the first and second year of HSSC reported more emotional responses, such as feeling embarrassed, anxious, and fearful of social rejection in the case of similar judgments.

Social comparison was enhanced by peer get-togethers. Respondents between seventeen and eighteen years revealed that beauty would frequently be the topic of discussion in groups. Girls who matched the standards of beauty were applauded whereas those who failed to meet the standards were targeted by jokes or laughed upon or even mildly mocked. One respondent from grade 12 said *“one of our class fellow had short hair and was overweight, we mostly teased her and eventually she left the school.”* These types of interactions enhanced the notion that social acceptance and popularity were based on physical attractiveness. These interactions were witnessed by younger people and slowly, they learnt to appreciate certain traits even in cases when they did not realize their emotional implications.

The family settings were also influential in strengthening social comparison. According to the participants, relatives used to comment on appearance during family meetings and tended to compare the girls with their siblings or cousins. One respondent from grade 10 shared *“her aunt always forces me to hang or exercise with stairs to increase my height and she always pointing me out in family gatherings.”* Younger adolescents were more likely to understand these comments as a mode of concern or advice. Conversely, the participants who were older identified them as causes of stress and emotional inequalities. It was culturally acceptable to comment on the complexion, weight, or height, and girls were not able to confront it directly and outline their discomfort.

The use of coping was especially evident in differences in age. Teenagers (between the ages of fifteen to sixteen years old) were more apt to repress their feelings and learn to take comparison as a given situation. They did not necessarily have the confidence or words to describe emotional damage. Adolescents that are older indicated that they were more self-conscious and anxious, particularly at times when they made comparisons repeatedly in varied social contexts. Other participants claimed to stay away from social events completely as a way to avoid being judged, which is a cumulative psychological burden of continued comparison.

In general, this theme shows that social comparison is a process that takes place continuously both online and offline. The age factor is also a significant determinant of vulnerability, as older

adolescents are more vulnerable because of their more profound emotional impact their social exposure and awareness. These results emphasize the value of the positive peer conditions and the sensitivity of the family to minimize the adverse comparison patterns.

Theme 5: Cultural Factors Influencing Negative Body Image

It turned out that cultural considerations were a strong force that created negative body image among the adolescent girls between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years old. The participants always explained that beauty and social value in society were associated with fair skin and slender physique, and certain facial features. These ideals were thoroughly inculcated in cultural traditions and in ordinary language; thus, they seemed natural and indubitable. The younger adolescents, between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years, tended to receive these standards unquestioningly, whilst the older adolescents, between the ages of seventeen to eighteen years, were partially aware of their socially constructed character but still internalized them.

Respondents stated that appearance expectations about culture were exchanged at a tender age via the family, peer discussions, and exposure to the media. Respondent from grade 10 shared that *“it makes me uncomfortable when someone comments oh why your skin gets darker, it feels like I am ugly and it loses my self-confidence.”* Girls who had darker skin or did not have a typical body shape were often subject to negative comments, often leading to the development of feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Younger participants explained that these kinds of remarks were typical and inevitable, as they tend to think that they need to alter their looks to obtain approval. These experiences influenced the initial views on self-value and enhanced the notion that physical beauty was the measure of societal acceptance.

Cultural pressure was more strongly experienced emotionally by older adolescents. Although most of them admitted that beauty standards were unrealistic and practiced through media images, they experienced the necessity to adhere. One said *“I know there is unrealistic content on social media but expectations creates anxiety.”* The respondents spoke of how they were caught between being aware and expecting, how they knew that it was damaging, but still worked to attain these standards. Social media fueled this conflict by marketing fairness products, cosmetic improvements, and modified photos that were in accordance with prevailing cultural values.

Social gatherings and community settings were the places where cultural comparison was mostly manifested. The participants shared that the girls who fit the mainstream beauty standards were

applauded, admired, and talked about positively, whereas those who failed to conform were neglected or even laughed at. Respondents shared their thoughts that *“family and school both appreciate the girls those are good in looks and actively participate in functions and gatherings.”* Such reactions strengthened the attractiveness of particular bodily features and led to anxiety, lack of self-esteem, and withdrawal. The younger girls absorbed these reactions over time, but old adolescents experienced emotional fatigue as a result of constant exposure.

Body shaming became an institutionalized phenomenon in the family, peer, and online spaces. The participants also explained how comments regarding weight, complexion or features of the face were usually explained as concern or advice. One girl shared *“my mother side of the family has fair skin whenever I go there they don’t forget to comment on my skin tone which bother me a lot.”* Adolescents who were younger tended to perceive body shaming as motivation to change. Contrastingly, older adolescents also linked such remarks with the stress and anxiety as well as the depressive mood. Although more aware, there was a lack of emotional support, which could not easily help participants refute these narratives.

The issue of age also became critical in terms of the way cultural norms were processed. Girls aged fifteen to sixteen years do not have sufficient critical ability to challenge the standards of beauty, but rather are oriented towards conformity. The mature level of adolescents was also more cognitive, but psychologically affected by the long-term exposure and greater social expectations. The process of cultural pressure through such developmental movement pinpoints the accumulation of cultural pressure over time.

In general, this theme shows that cultural factors do not act separately, but they interact with social media and daily interactions to induce the negative body image. The results underline the necessity of age-appropriate interventions that are culturally sensitive. To make adolescent girls feel accepted, confident, and psychologically healthy, educational institutions, parents, and policymakers need to work together to combat the entrenched beauty standards.

CHAPTER 5

5. Connection Between Results and Objectives:

This chapter deals with the link between the results and objectives of this study. The findings of this study explained in the previous chapter which shows the direct link between research objectives and questions. The analysis of the diverse sets of information reveals the strong interconnection among social media and body image perspective in Pakistan, especially in young girls. Here is the narrative that builds the connection:

5.1 Social Media Use:

Use of social media varies across the different demographic age groups. It is also fact that exposure to social media is common in all age groups, irrespective of socioeconomic background. Regardless of the variation in access to personal mobile phones, especially among younger adolescents who are between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years and older adolescents who are between the ages of seventeen to eighteen years, the use of social media platforms is similar. Few younger respondents tended to use the common or parental gadgets, and the older adolescents were more autonomous and could access them without interruption.

5.2 Appearance Concern:

The results also indicate that social media is a major contributor to unrealistic beauty ideals. All age brackets are related to one another, and celebrities, influencers, and peers are depicted over the internet. Although adolescent girls knew that these images were filtered or edited, they still internalized these standards. The comparison and admiration of younger adolescents were observed at the early stages, but the consequences of it were greater in older adolescents because of the extended exposure and the social consciousness.

5.3 Social Comparison:

The normalized appearance-based judgment is perpetuated in daily interactions as it strengthens the hierarchies of beauty and social exclusion. The majority of participants were constantly worry about how they look in person, specifically their body shape, complexion, facial features, and apparel style. Sometime it leads frustration with comparisons to other girls and pressure to meet

specific requirements for beauty. These offline experiences add to lack of confidence in oneself and an anxiety of harsh criticism from others.

5.4 Self Comparison on Social Media:

Social media frequently depicts celebrities who have ideal physiques and perfect looks, which can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem in young girls. This study results indicates that appearance concerns among young girls are growing due to use of social media. Young girls contrasted their bodies, skin color, and facial appearances with the influencers and celebrities. Many girls accepted that pictures posted on social media were processed, filtered, or edited but still they want to adopt it.

5.5 Cultural or Societal factors:

The study result shows that strong biases towards fair skin, thin bodies, and certain facial features are very deeply rooted in the social expectations. These ideals are increased with the help of social media and put pressure on adolescent girls. The discussions revealed that remarks from family, friends, and fellow students influence societal appearance concerns and long-term emotional effect. School atmospheres and social occasions have made them mindful of their appearance, which leads to nervousness and anxious behavior.

Table 3: Alignment of Research objectives, Questions and Thematic Findings:

The table below presents the relationship between research objectives, questions and themes that emerged from thematic analysis. These findings illustrate how young girls’ social media experiences and interactions contribute to the development of their body image perspectives.

Research Objective	Research Question	Results
To examine the differences in the body image perspective among female students about social media usage with respect to age group, educational stage, and income level.	How do social media usage and body image perspectives of adolescent girls differ concerning their age, grade, and income level?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Media Usage 2. Appearance Concern

To investigate whether device type(Mobile phone, iPad etc.), social media content, platform preference, comparison with influencers, and time spent on social media can predict the perspective of body image.	What are the factors that help to predict the intensity of social media that can influence body image?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-Comparison on Social Media 2. Social Comparison 3. Cultural Factors Influencing Negative Body Image
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Source: The Author

5.6 Revised conceptual Framework:

Based on the above findings, the discussion and analysis of the data have stated a slightly different conceptual framework from the initial one, as shown in the figure below. According to new conceptual framework, **social media use** is very common in all the age group. Most of the young girls claimed to spend more time on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, and in most cases, these platforms were visited many times a day. Social media was not just a leisure activity to them but also rooted in the establishment of their identity and social affiliation. **Self-comparison** proved to be one of the key processes in which social media impacted body image amongst young girls. All age groups admitted to working in comparison with celebrities, influencers, and peers they meet online. Peer comparison is common offline and online both. Young girls love to adopt beauty and fashion sense of celebrities. The **social comparison** was not only on the digital level, but it went deep into real-life interactions in the school, peer group, and family setting, where the adolescent girls were developing their perception of their bodies and social worth. The respondents of all ages had said that judgments on appearance were common and acceptable in society. The negative body image is determined by **cultural factors**. Strong biases towards fair skin, thin bodies, and certain facial features are very deeply rooted in the social expectations. These ideals are increased with the help of social media and pressure on adolescent girls to conform. The negative body image is also determined by cultural factors. Strong biases towards fair skin, thin bodies, and certain facial features are very deeply rooted in the social expectations. Body shaming and different remarks from friends, family and fellow students are normal in our society. These all the factors lead to **low self-esteem** and **negative body image**. Regular comparison with friends, family and excessive use of social media platforms encourages dissatisfaction. Constantly worry about how they look in person, specifically their body shape, complexion, facial features, and apparel style is alarming

at this young age. Many girls complained about frustration with comparisons to other girls and public images, pointing to an impression of pressure to meet specific requirements for beauty. To normalized appearance-based judgment, raised lack of confidence in oneself and an anxiety of harsh criticism from others.

5.6.1 New Conceptual Frame Work:

The revised conceptual frame work is given below:



Source: The Author

Figure 2: New Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 6

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

6.1 Conclusion:

This thesis has discussed how social media affects the body image perception of adolescent girls in the age group of fifteen to eighteen years in the Pakistani sociocultural setting. Concentrating on the age gap, the availability of digital media, the family structure, relationships with peers, and cultural beliefs, the study gives a wide perspective on how social media influences the perceptions of beauty, self-worth, and social acceptance among adolescents. The results indicate that social media is strongly intertwined in the lives of teenage girls and that it is a very important aspect of impacting their psychological health.

Among the main conclusions of the study, one can identify the fact that exposure to social media is common in all age groups, irrespective of socioeconomic background. Regardless of the variation in access to personal mobile phones, especially among younger adolescents who are between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years and older adolescents who are between the ages of seventeen to eighteen years, the use of social media platforms is similar. The younger respondents tended to use the common or parental gadgets, and the older adolescents were more autonomous and could access them without interruption. This heightened exposure of older adolescents was linked to an augmented susceptibility to look-related dissatisfaction and emotional affliction.

The research also finds that social media is a major contributor to unrealistic beauty ideals. All age brackets are related to one another, and celebrities, influencers, and peers are depicted over the internet. Although adolescent girls knew that these images were filtered or edited, they still internalized these standards. The comparison and admiration of younger adolescents were observed at the early stages, and the psychological consequences of it were greater in older adolescents because of the extended exposure and the social consciousness. This evolution brings into the limelight the manner in which body image dissatisfaction is built up over a period of time.

Parental concern was also found to be a significant but underdeveloped protective factor. Although parents were anxious about the excessive screen time, weight changes, and loss of confidence, they were often not able to respond much. Younger adolescents were followed more closely, and those who were older were guided verbally as opposed to being emotionally. The results indicate that

parents are usually not adequately aware of the psychological effects of social media, which leads to inconsistent intervention approaches, and some approaches prove ineffective.

The study further indicates that social comparison does not stop at the virtual sphere but goes further to school, peer groups, and family set-ups. The normalized appearance-based judgment is perpetuated in daily interactions as it strengthens the hierarchies of beauty and social exclusion. Younger girls will take such experiences in silently, whereas older adolescents complain of heightened anxiety and self-consciousness. These offline experiences add to the adverse impact of online comparison, which leads to cumulative emotional strain.

The majority of participants stated that they constantly worry about how they look in person, specifically their body shape, complexion, facial features, and apparel style. Many girls complained about frustration with comparisons to other girls and public images, pointing to an impression of pressure to meet specific requirements for beauty. Such worries were frequently raised in terms of a lack of confidence in oneself and an anxiety of harsh criticism from others.

Moreover, the discussions revealed that remarks from family, friends, and fellow students influence societal appearance concerns. A few participants reported that even slight remarks about their weight or appearance had a long-term emotional effect. These respondents added that school atmospheres and social occasions have made them mindful of their appearance, which leads to nervousness and anxious behavior. Meanwhile, the conversation also revealed that girls who were given emotional support and encouraging words were more secure and less exposed to societal pressures. In general, the results indicate that appearance concerns among young girls are growing and caused by a variety of factors, which highlights the importance of nurturing environments and educational programs that promote a positive and favorable self-image.

The negative body image is determined by cultural factors. Strong biases towards fair skin, thin bodies, and certain facial features are very deeply rooted in the social expectations. These ideals are increased with the help of social media and pressure on adolescent girls to conform. The young adolescents embrace these norms without doubt, but older adolescents realize that they are constructed but can hardly resist internalization. The discourse of body shaming is accepted by culture, which complicates the development of psychological distress.

In general, the thesis ends with a conclusion that, in combination with cultural norms and social contexts, social media has a great effect on the body image perceptions of adolescent girls. Collective responsibility and collective efforts both family, institutional, and policy levels are needed to address these challenges.

6.2 Significance of the Study:

This study contributes to understanding the impact of social media on body image as it is the most critical issue in today's digital world. This study mainly focuses on young girls and addressing both societal and academic gaps. By analyzing remarks, and thoughts of young girls, and social media platforms such as Instagram, the research provides insight into how hashtags, trends, posts, and influencers contribute to body image. This study mainly focus on young girls and social media is the main part of their lives. Girls are vulnerable and are more concerned about physical appearance. Existing literature shows the relationship between social media and body image but there is a lack of exploration on body image among Pakistani adolescent girls. According to a digital Pakistan report, internet users in Pakistan increased by 24 million between January 2023 to January 2024. In one of the surveys shared on Express Tribune in November 2024, approximately 40 percent of adult Pakistanis under the age of 30, actively use social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. In Pakistan, we easily adopt whatever is imposed by the West, without realizing its impact on individuals, families, or at the national level. As a result, social media use has spread to all levels of society. Children are using it at a young age. Some are social media stars and are gaining popularity by making reels. But there are no effective rules and regulations for social media use in Pakistan, if there are any regulations exist there are no checks and balances.

The current study mainly focuses on young girls and social media platforms such as Instagram. Instagram is the most popular photo-sharing platform and demonstrates body image. Many influencers and Instagram pages are promoting products that can enhance beauty, like makeup products, diet plans, exercise tools, cosmetic surgeries, etc. The researcher critically evaluated young girls' perspectives on social media and its impact. Examining social media and its impact might help parents, peers, and teenage girls to accept their physical appearance and increase self-

esteem and confidence. Educational institutes and teachers can help to promote positive body image among young girls.

6.3 Recommendations:

Following the results of this study, there are a number of practical and policy oriented recommendations that are presented to tackle the ill effect of social media on body image among adolescent girls. These suggestions focus on the joint action of parents, learning institutions, policy makers, media houses, and the society in general.

To begin with, parents are supposed to be active and knowledgeable in their roles in influencing the adolescents to use social media in a healthy way. Instead of using restrictions as a sole tool, parents ought to find a way of talking freely and in the appropriate age about beauty standards, online manipulation, and self-acceptance. The needs of adolescents at a young age are cohesive supervision and boundaries, whereas the older adolescents need emotional support, related communication, and critical discussion. Awareness programs concerning parents should be established at the community level to inform parents on the psychological impact of exposure to social networks.

Second, learning institutions are supposed to incorporate media literacy and body image education as a part of the learning curriculum. Students should be taught in schools and colleges to be more critical of the content on social media, recognize how unattainable standards of beauty are promoted, and how filters and editing technologies created by social media affect the true female body. The counseling services are supposed to be reinforced to help those students who are faced with anxiety, low self-esteem, or dissatisfaction with their bodies. Educators must be taught how to notice the emotional distress at its initial stages and react empathetically and sensitively.

Third, peer environments are to be transformed into supportive and inclusive ones. Schools and colleges ought to implement strict anti-bullying measures which clearly address body shaming and appearance-based teasing. Normalization of various body types and minimization of harmful comparison may be achieved through peer support programs, student-led awareness programs, and group discussions. Positive peer interactions should be encouraged in order to minimize social pressure and encourage emotional well-being.

Fourth, policymakers ought to think about control over the access of digital technology among adolescents. There should be age guidelines on the use of mobile phones in learning institutions. Based on the international example, the regulated use of mobile phones during school hours can help decrease the excessive exposure. It should also work with social media in order to encourage responsible posts and restrict the damaging information about beauty in relation to teenagers.

Fifth, there should be culturally sensitive public awareness campaigns, which will question traditional beauty stereotypes. The media companies are advised to advance multi-dimensional and real images of beauty, such as varying skin colors, shapes, and facial characteristics. The government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and civil society should combine their efforts to address the cultural norms that are entrenched and are leading to body dissatisfaction.

Last, there should be an increase and accessibility of mental health services among adolescents. Safe spaces with which adolescents can share issues about body image and self-esteem can be offered by school-based counseling, helplines, and community support centers. The intervention has to be done early to avoid the psychological consequences that will be faced in the long term, like anxiety and depression.

To sum up, negative body image in adolescent girls is a multi-level and holistic issue that needs to be resolved. By working together, in the context of families, schools, policymakers, and media, one can advocate positive body image and emotional strength, as well as psychological well-being, to adolescents in Pakistan.

6.4 Future Directions:

Future research should focus on larger samples and various socioeconomic groups in order to fully understand the effect of social media on negative body image. Qualitative research provides insight into people's lived experiences, including those who look for assistance from professionals with body image issues. Understanding how several social media platforms impacts various age groups can help prescribe specific responses. Collaborative development with users leads to innovative solutions. Long-term research may observe shifts in opinions, which promotes the formation of flexible strategies. Healthcare practitioners must be prepared to address body image issues, and policy ought to concentrate on support and reduction in stigma of

mental health services. Social assistance and schooling play critical roles in promoting self-confidence.

7. References

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8. Interview Guide:

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE GIRLS WHO ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA

TOPIC: Exploring the Role of Social Media in Promoting Self Image (Physical) Perspectives among Young Girls

Social media is a main part of life for people of all ages. It has positive or negative consequences for all people, but especially teenage girls. This study mainly focuses on young girls aged between 15-18. The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with each participant and will analyze the data through thematic analysis. So, for the current study, young girls are the main UDC; only those who use social media regularly are included in the interview. These interviews can last from 20 to 40 minutes, as per participant response. At the initial stage, the researcher has selected a private institute in Talagang City. If the researcher does not get the desired audience, then they will go to explore other institutes. The researcher has obtained permission from the principal of the institute and will inform the aims or purpose of the current study. Before starting to gather the data from the samples, the researcher will give a verbal brief explanation and background of the research. The researcher will ask permission from the audience for the audio or video recording. If they are not willing, then I will write all their responses. The researcher will maintain an interview guide under the following themes:

Theme 1: Sociodemographic Data:

- Q1. What is your name, age, and grade?
- Q2. Monthly income of your parents / Occupation?
- Q3. In which grade are you studying?

Theme 2: Social Media Use:

- Q1. Most used device (laptop, Mobile phone, iPad, etc.)
- Q2. Most used platforms (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)
- Q3. How much time do you spend on social media?
- Q4. Which type of content do you like, follow, or watch the most?
(Entertainment, Celebrity Lives, Cooking, Sports, Beauty, etc.)

Q5. Are you using social media, whenever you have time, Daily habits, before Sleep or relaxation time?

Theme 3: Social Media and Body Image:

Q1. Are you posting your pictures or videos on social media?

Q2. What are your feelings after socializing on social media? (satisfaction from Other comments, comparisons from others, etc.)

Q3. Are you satisfied with your appearance?

Q4. What do you want to change in yourself? (Hairstyle, weight, lips, Eyebrow shape, skin texture, nose, etc.)

Q5. Which celebrity, model, or influencer do you follow the most?

Q6. What do you like to watch about their lifestyle, appearance, way of speaking, etc.?

Q7. Do you wish to look like that celebrity?

Q8. Which type of treatment do you want to adopt to look like your favorite person? (cosmetic surgery, laser, Botox, fillers, etc.)

Q9. What are your eating habits?

Q10. For weight loss, which method do you usually adopt (exercise at home, walk, gym, yoga, etc)

Theme 4: Appearance Focus and Peer Interaction:

Q1. Do you and your friends follow the same pages or celebrities?

Q2. Do you think it is important to associate with an influencer on social media?

Q3. How often do you post images of yourself?

Q4. Do you use editing apps while posting images on social media?

Q5. Are you using these filters to get more likes or comments?

Q6. Does it make you feel good about your appearance?

Q7. Do you think editing apps impact on body image?

Q8. How do you feel if you don't get any likes or comments?

Q9. How do you react to this situation? (sad or delete photo)

Q10. Any incident or experience you want to share about social media

The above questions will be used to start an interview. The researcher can change the question or may ask a few questions, depending on the response of the audience.

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM (INSTAGRAM)

Instagram is another UDC for the current research. From this platform, the researcher will collect the images of influencers, celebrities, or Instagram accounts that portray the female body and get excessive likes, comments, and shares. These influencers or accounts are displaying flawless female bodies. The researcher aims to collect images from Instagram to conduct a focus group discussion among young girls. The data will be analyzed through thematic analysis. At the initial stage, the researcher will use the following hashtags (#) and tags (@) to get access to the required data, but as the researcher explores more, these tags will be increased. Through Instagram accounts like celebspakistan, showbizpakistan, nehataseer, etc., The researcher will take screenshots of images and will conduct a focus group discussion, including 6 to 8 girls in a group. The researcher will distribute different screenshots of Instagram images among girls and will ask for their reactions, thoughts, and negative and positive feedback about the images.

Focus Group Discussion Guide:

Instagram Use:

- Q1. How do you use Instagram?
- Q2. What are the reasons for using Instagram?
- Q3. Which type of content do you prefer on Instagram?
- Q4. How often do you open Instagram to see your favorite Instagram?

Celebrities:

- Q1. Which celebrity do you like the most?
- Q2. Do you like to see your favorite celebrity's images or videos?
- Q3. Look at these photos (the researcher will distribute celebrities' photos)
- Q4. How do you feel when you see these photos?
- Q5. Do these photos affect how you feel about your body?
- Q6. Do you think there are different beauty standards adopted by these celebrities?
- Q7. Do you or your friends meet these beauty standards?
- Q8. Do you think these images are edited or realistic?

Q9. Is it hard to meet these beauty standards?

Q10. Do you feel pressure to adopt these beauty standards?

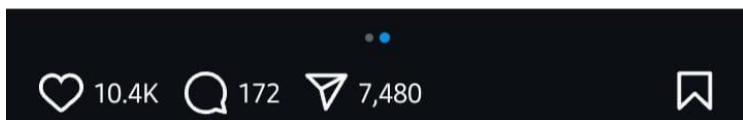
Q11. Do these images impact body image?

Q12. Do you feel editing apps impact body image?

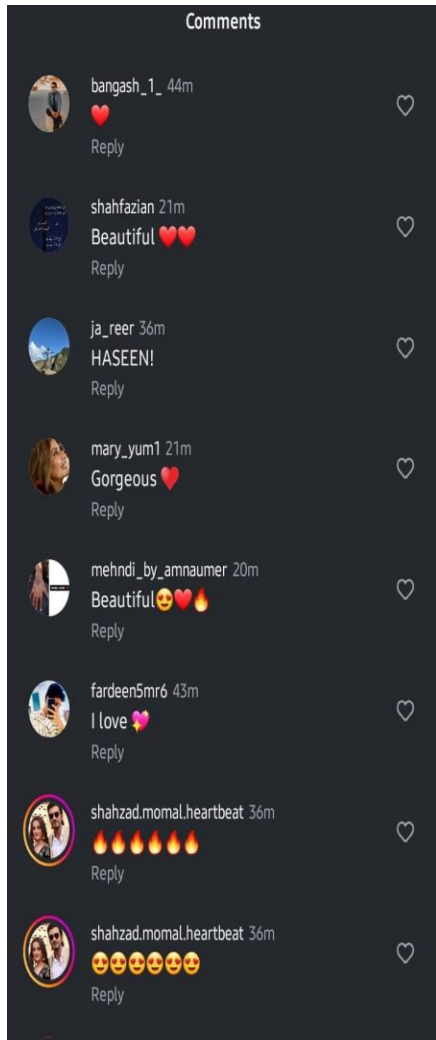
Q13. How are these apps helpful or harmful?

Q14. Anything else you want to share about Instagram use or celebrities?

Here are the screenshots of the images from Instagram at an initial stage.



This picture has been taken from @celebspakistan, which demonstrates that the model gets teeth aligners and whitening treatment.



This screenshot has been taken from @showbiz Pakistan, which shows one of the model's eye pictures, and within a few minutes, this picture got 691 likes and got different comments, mostly from the female audience.



This picture also presents body shape and age factors.

