

Social Media Use, Glow-Up Culture, Body Dissatisfaction and Risk of Eating Disorders Among College Students in West Bengal, India: A Gendered Analysis

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KEYWORDS Anorexia Nervosa. Body Image. Emotional Eating. Media Exposure. Social Comparison

ABSTRACT Viral social media trends related to physique have intensified social comparison tendencies among the youth, which have potentially contributed to body dissatisfaction and increased risk of eating disorders. The objective of the study was to assess the impact of social media on body dissatisfaction and risk of eating disorders among college students in West Bengal, India. A cross-sectional study was conducted. Using purposive sampling, an online questionnaire incorporating the Body Shape Questionnaire and Eating Attitudes Test was circulated. Among 301 students, 12.3 percent were at a high risk of developing eating disorders. Body dissatisfaction was associated with photo-editing practices and concern over likes on posts. Women seeking social media validation depicted a higher risk of disordered eating behaviour. Awareness of viral challenges predicted dissatisfaction and risk, with a greater vulnerability in women. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore underlying factors.

INTRODUCTION

The term “glow up” was popularised by social media through hashtags, which mostly refers to a significant physical transformation of an individual (Later n.d.). This trend typically involves influencers and fitness models in the beauty industry sharing before-and-after photos on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, showcasing transformed bodies that conform to conventional beauty standards (Greenwood 2024; Kurghan and Thorpe 2025). Through a “trickle-down effect”, such influencer-driven beauty standards gradually permeate the mainstream social media feeds. Although theoretically, the “glow-up” trend focuses on self-improvement, it often leads to feelings of guilt, shame, and a negative body image among individuals who perceive themselves as unable to fit the promoted aesthetic or beauty ideals. Such trends further escalate social comparison, ultimately leading to body dissatisfaction (Kurghan and Thorpe 2025). Psychological

well-being is severely affected by a negative body image and is one of the major risk factors in developing eating disorders (Siegel et al. 1999; Barakat et al. 2023).

Body image is a multifaceted concept comprising cognitive, perceptual, affective, and behavioural components (Gardner 1996; Grogan 2021). Body dissatisfaction refers to the prevailing negative attitude towards one's body, arising from a perceived discrepancy between the actual physical appearance and the internalised ideal body image (Cash et al. 1991; Williamson et al. 1993; Cash et al. 2004). Eating disorders (EDs) are a group of conditions characterised by abnormal eating patterns and psychological disruptions that can lead to alterations in weight and societal interactions, thereby impacting an individual's overall quality of life (Brandsma 2007). In the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) classification, the three most extensively studied and well-defined EDs are anorexia nervosa (AN), bulimia nervosa (BN), and binge eating disorder (BED). Festinger's social comparison theory states that people are inherently inclined to evaluate themselves and seek out standards for comparison (Festinger 1954). While the social comparison theory is universally applicable, its manifestation on social media differs significantly across genders. Wom-

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en reportedly experience higher levels of body dissatisfaction compared to men (Fallon et al. 2014; Czubaj et al. 2025). While women are exposed to “size zero” body types that promote disordered eating patterns, men experience the “Adonis complex”, characterised by the pursuit of a more muscular physique (Pope et al. 2000; Birkeland et al. 2005; Lal et al. 2015). The repercussions of prolonged social media use extend beyond body dissatisfaction alone. Continued engagement with such social media platforms leads to sleep disruption and increased anxiety, both well-established risk factors for disordered eating behaviours, but often remain grossly under-addressed in this context (Bednarek et al. 2024).

In an era where “likes” have become synonymous with social validation and algorithms promote unattainable body types through trends such as #thinspiration and #fitspiration, it is easy for social media consumers to get trapped in this cycle (Choukas-Bradley et al. 2020; The Learning Network 2024). Cognisant of the growing concern, researchers have developed innovative tools such as “Screenomics”, created by Stanford University, to capture real-time social media behaviour in adolescents and to promote rigorous investigation in this domain (Sun et al. 2026). Although some body-positive movements on these social media platforms encourage self-acceptance, the “glow up” culture predominantly revolves around weight loss programs and over-consumerism, particularly affecting the younger subset of the population (Orleans-Lindsay 2024; Wisner 2025). Given the widespread dissemination of such beauty ideals, the problems of eating disorders are no longer confined to the Western population. The South Asian population, especially in India, is mirroring these patterns. Body dissatisfaction and fat-phobic attitudes in the Indian population are now comparable to those observed in Western society (Gupta et al. 2001). A study reported that body image dissatisfaction (BID) was as high as 83.9 percent among undergraduate students at a medical college in Bengaluru, India (Ranganath et al. 2023). Specifically, the students classified as obese exhibited a fourfold higher likelihood of developing BID compared to their underweight counterparts (Ranganath et al. 2023).

For decades, issues related to disordered eating in the Indian context have been under-addressed. Recent studies have revealed the inter-

nalisation of ideal body images and the prevalence of atypical eating disorders among college students in India (Shroff and Thompson 2004; Raval et al. 2022). A 2023 cross-sectional study in West Bengal found that 11.95 percent of adolescent girls engaged in disordered eating behaviours, while 15.84 percent regularly skipped meals (Saha and Biswas 2023). A comparative study on body image dissatisfaction among adolescent girls in West Bengal showed a marked urban-rural difference, with a prevalence of 57.85 percent in the urban cohort compared with their rural peers (Paria et al. 2023). However, the influence of social media trends on body dissatisfaction and the development of eating disorders, particularly in West Bengal, India, remains relatively underexplored.

Objectives

The study aims to assess the impact of social media on body dissatisfaction and the risk of developing eating disorders among college students in West Bengal, India. The study seeks to raise the physiological and psychological impacts of viral social media trends and to promote informed discussions on digital well-being and self-acceptance among the youth.

METHODOLOGY

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted. A questionnaire was developed to record the demographic profile and social media usage among the college students. As the study aims to identify social media trends and their impact on body image dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviour, it purposively sought to collect data from social media users. Following purposive sampling, a questionnaire was created in Google Forms and circulated among college students in West Bengal via multiple social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. The demographic data captured multiple variables of interest, such as socioeconomic status, internet access means, stressors, and history of substance abuse, all of which have been associated with eating disorders in previous literature. The questionnaire on social media was employed to extract information regarding frequency of use and preference of image-based social media platforms, preference of nature of posts- text-based, image-based

or video-based, use of editing apps or filters, social comparison based on posts, effect of likes and comments, use of food delivery applications, preferred body type, and awareness of social media body image trends. Standard questionnaires for measuring body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviour were used. EAT 26 and BSQ 16B were the tools used. The Eating Attitudes Test-26 was used to assess the risk of developing disordered eating based on attitudes, feelings, and behaviours related to eating, comprising 26 self-report questions. It has three subscales, namely, Dieting, Bulimia and Food Preoccupation, and Oral Control. The reliability of EAT 26 is high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$ for AN). The test-retest reliability of EAT 26 ranged from 0.84 to 0.89. The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ 16B) was used to evaluate body dissatisfaction and concern over body shape. It is a self-reported questionnaire which consists of 16 items and a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 6 = always. It has been established as a valid and reliable measure of body image dissatisfaction, with good test-retest reliability (0.88) and internal consistency (0.95).

Inclusion Criteria

1. Students attending college/university between 18 and 30 years of age in West Bengal, India
2. Participants who are exposed to social media platforms.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Women who are currently pregnant or have been pregnant in the last 1 year.
2. Participants who face a language barrier and do not understand English.

RESULTS

A total of 301 respondents were collected for this study. The study participants were predominantly women (85.40%). Most were undergraduate students (78.70%) and unmarried (94.70%). The most prominent reasons for stress in the participants of this study were education, health and family issues. Most students relied on mobile data packs to access the internet (76.40%). A notable proportion of the participants reported a family

history of obesity (25.90%) and thyroid (39.20%), and a personal history of menstrual disorders (70.40%). A significant proportion reported emotional eating behaviour (68.20%) and poor sleep (62.90%) under stressful conditions. Societal pressure to lose weight was widely reported (69.70%), with a considerable proportion indulging in substance abuse (alcohol: 21.90%; smoking: 18.30%). Table 1 highlights the various psychosocial factors related to appearance and prevalent eating patterns among the study participants.

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristics	n (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Men	14.60
Women	85.40
<i>Education Status</i>	
Bachelor's degree	78.70
Postgraduate or higher degree	21.70
<i>College Type</i>	
Government	64.10
Private	35.90
<i>Marital Status</i>	
Unmarried	94.70
Married	5.30
<i>Means of Internet Access</i>	
Mobile data pack	76.40
Wi-Fi	23.60
<i>Family History</i>	
Obesity	25.90
Thyroid	39.20
<i>In a Stressful Situation</i>	
Feels better after eating food	68.20
Sleep gets affected	62.90
<i>Substance Abuse</i>	
Alcohol consumption	21.90
Cigarette smoking	18.30
<i>Societal Pressure to Lose Weight</i>	69.70
<i>Personal History</i>	
Menstrual disorders	70.40

None of the women participants in the study was currently pregnant or had been pregnant in the past 12 months. The modal daily use of social media was 1-3 hours, with only 6 percent of participants reporting engagement for more than 6 hours per day. YouTube (71.1%) and Instagram (67.4%) were the most popular image/video-based platforms chosen by participants, followed by Facebook (47.5%) and Snapchat (22.6%).

Table 2 shows that time spent on social media may be linked with body dissatisfaction levels. Participants who spent considerable time duration

Table 2: Duration of social media exposure and body dissatisfaction levels

<i>Time spent on social media</i>	<i>No BD</i>	<i>Mild BD</i>	<i>Moderate BD</i>	<i>Marked BD</i>
< 1 hour	12	8	7	15
1-3 hours	58	50	48	15
3-6 hours	26	42	39	67
>6 hours	7	6	6	0

(3-6 hrs) on social media constituted a larger proportion of those with moderate body dissatisfaction and the largest proportion of those with marked body dissatisfaction levels. However, extreme usage (more than 6 hours) showed a smaller distribution. These results should be interpreted cautiously owing to the smaller number of study participants.

Participants preferred to upload image-based posts (86.7%) as compared to video-based (50.2%) and text-based (59.9%). Around 45 percent of the respondents usually reported taking 2 to 5 selfies before they were satisfied, whereas 20 percent opted to take 6 to 10 selfies. 14 percent chose to take up to 15 selfies. Among the viral body challenges trending in the past few years, the thigh gap challenge (24.3%) and the collarbone challenge (16.9%) were the most prevalent among the survey respondents.

Table 3 depicts the social media exposure to content related to body image and eating disorders. A substantial proportion of participants indulged in using photo editing (70.10%) and filters (61.50%). Many reported sensitivity to social media validation, such as being concerned with likes on the post (42.20%) or being affected by comments on them (40.20%). The popular mukbang content was consumed by almost half of the study participants (56.50%). Moderate awareness of viral body trends on social media was observed (40.90%). A notable percentage engaged in social media comparisons either with their peers (50.50%) or with celebrities (26.90%). A significant proportion of participants actively searched for weight-loss content on social media (41.20%). However, relatively few participants reported willingness to undergo any medical procedure to change their appearance (2.70%). Social media had a considerable influence on perception and behaviour, but did not directly translate into extreme measures.

The prevalent levels of body image dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviour can be seen in Table 4. Although the majority of such participants reported mild body dissatisfaction lev-

Table 3: Social media characteristics of the respondents

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
<i>Posts on Social Media</i>	
Edits photos before uploading	70.10
Uses filters while taking a selfie	61.50
Concerned with likes on post	42.20
Affected by the comments on the post	40.20
Aware of viral body trends	40.90
Watches mukbang content	56.50
<i>Comparisons</i>	
Participants who compare themselves to images posted by others online	50.50
Participants who compare themselves to celebrities or models online	26.90
<i>Change in Appearance</i>	
Participants who would consider surgery/ medical procedures to change how they look	2.70
Participants who search for weight loss content on social media	41.20

els (29.90%), or moderate dissatisfaction (15%), it is interesting to note that marked body dissatisfaction was observed in 2 percent of the study participants. Nearly half of the study participants (46.20%) indulged in binge eating behaviour. On the other hand, use of laxatives or weight loss pills was comparatively less frequently reported (14%). These findings highlight a significant burden of subclinical and overt disordered eating behaviours within the study population.

The study found that one in every two respondents was suffering from negative body image.

Table 4: Body dissatisfaction and eating habits of participants

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
<i>Body Dissatisfaction</i>	46.70
Mild level	29.90
Moderate	15
Marked	2
<i>Eating Disorders</i>	
High-risk participants	12.30
Engaged in binge eating in the past 6 months	46.20
Taken diet pills/laxatives to lose weight in the last 6 months	14

Furthermore, one in every eight respondents had a higher propensity to develop disordered eating patterns. Multiple significant associations were observed between social media behaviours, psychosocial factors and body image outcomes as seen in Table 5.

The Chi-square test found a significant association between body dissatisfaction level and concern with eating patterns ($p=0.043$). Those who usually indulged in photo editing practices were found to have an association with being concerned with one's body shape ($p=0.033$), along with people affected by likes on a post ($p=0.001$), as shown in Table 5.

Those participants who took a greater number of selfies showed a significant association with having greater concern for likes received on their social media posts ($p=0.000$). Those preferring to take more selfies revealed a significant association with gender ($p=0.026$), searching for fitness content online ($p=0.001$), preference for the type of posts, that is, whether text-based, image-based or video-based ($p=0.000$) and inclination to edit posts before uploading ($p=0.000$). The habit of editing photos before uploading on social media platforms was found to have a significant association with using filters while clicking selfies ($p=0.000$).

Body dissatisfaction levels demonstrated a significant association with the pressure to look in a better shape ($p=0.000$) and exercising more than 60

minutes a day to lose weight. ($p=0.037$). Body dissatisfaction and eating habit concerns exhibited a significant association among those concerned with likes on posts ($p=0.028$), the tendency to search for weight loss content ($p=0.019$) and those aware of viral body trends or challenges ($p=0.041$). Following a similar pattern, body dissatisfaction and dieting habits revealed a significant association among those concerned with likes ($p=0.037$) and those searching for weight loss content on social media ($p=0.028$). Watching mukbang content on social media showed a significant association with binge eating tendencies ($p=0.033$).

Women were found to have a significant association with body image concern and concern with eating habits ($p=0.036$). The women concerned with likes received on social media posts showed a significant association between body dissatisfaction and eating habits ($p=0.048$). Women who experience societal pressure to change their appearance also showed a significant association between body dissatisfaction and eating disorders ($p=0.09$). No such association could be observed in men. The women affected by the number of likes received on social media posts displayed a significant association between body dissatisfaction and dieting habits ($p=0.029$). A similar association between body dissatisfaction and eating habits was found in women who searched for weight loss content on social media ($p=0.041$). Interestingly, men who

Table 5: Association of social media characteristics with appearance/diet

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Chi square</i>	<i>p value</i>	<i>df</i>
Photo editing and body dissatisfaction level	8.754	0.033	0
Concern with number of likes and body dissatisfaction level	37.734	0.001	15
Food delivery app usage and binge eating tendency	23.018	0.0001	1
Gender of the participant and exercising more than 60 minutes a day to lose weight	9.435	0.002	1
Pressure from social media to look in a better shape and body dissatisfaction among men	31.979	0.0001	3
Body dissatisfaction level and eating habits concerns in mid-level socioeconomic strata	8.137	0.043	3
Body dissatisfaction level and eating habits concerns among those who were stressed in the past month before the study was conducted	11.082	0.011	3
Number of selfies taken and concern with number of likes received on posts on social media platforms	65.296	0.0001	1
Number of selfies taken and gender of the participant	4.952	0.026	1
Number of selfies taken and editing photos before uploading them on social media	69.883	0.0001	1
Body dissatisfaction level and dieting habits among those who were stressed in the past month before the study was conducted	13.149	0.041	6
Selfies taken and preference of posts on social media platforms among those who are satisfied while looking at the mirror	57.919	0.0001	2
Body dissatisfaction level and eating habits concerns among those who did not indulge in binge eating habits in the past six months	13.417	0.004	3

do not search for weight loss content online showed a significant association between body dissatisfaction and dieting habits ($p=0.041$). Women showed a significant association between pressure from social media to change appearance and body dissatisfaction levels when compared to men ($p=0.0001$).

A binary logistic regression analysis was performed to ascertain the risk factors that are associated with disordered eating behaviour across three distinct models. The variables examined included gender, level of body dissatisfaction, nature of participants' posts, frequency of utilising food delivery applications, recent stress levels, photo editing habits, engagement in fitness and weight loss content, socioeconomic status, selfie-taking habits, awareness of viral trends or challenges, societal pressure regarding weight loss, propensity to seek solace in eating during stressful situations, degree of social media presence, and concern for likes received on posts as shown in Table 5.

In the first model encompassing both genders, it was observed that women exhibited 5.087 times higher odds of disordered eating behaviour compared to men. Individuals with high levels of body dissatisfaction exhibited an 11.427-fold increased risk. Additionally, participants who preferred image-centric posts were 4.745 times more likely to experience disordered eating behaviours. Furthermore, frequent users of food delivery applications demonstrated a 14.495-fold greater likelihood of developing disordered eating behaviours. The results of the regression analysis delineating disordered eating behaviour as the dependent variable are depicted in Table 6.

Two individual binary logistic regression models were constructed, one for men and another for

women, aiming to discern potential risk factors associated with disordered eating behaviour. While the analysis did not yield statistically significant findings for men, noteworthy results were obtained for women. Notably, women exhibiting pronounced levels of body dissatisfaction were found to be 27.426 times more inclined to develop eating disorders compared to their counterparts without such dissatisfaction levels. Moreover, women who demonstrated awareness of viral body challenges circulating online exhibited a 5.556 times heightened risk in comparison to those lacking such awareness. Additionally, frequent utilisation of food delivery applications emerged as a significant predictor of disordered eating behaviour among women, with an odds ratio of 49.593. Furthermore, women expressing concern regarding likes received on their social media posts were identified as being 3.053 times more predisposed to disordered eating behaviour than those who did not exhibit such concern.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of social media on body dissatisfaction and the potential risk of developing eating disorders among college students in West Bengal, India. The findings revealed that approximately 12.3 percent of the participants were identified as having a higher risk of developing eating disorders. A recent study in Chennai showed that 13 percent of medical students were at a higher risk of developing an eating disorder (Iyer and Shiraam 2021). Although a questionnaire alone cannot be used to diagnose eating disorders, it serves as an indicator of individuals who may be at risk. Periodic counselling and the

Table 6: Binary logistic regression

Variable	Exp(B)	p-value	C.I.	
			Upper	Lower
Constant	0.003	0.000		
Gender	5.087	0.033	1.140	22.69
Body dissatisfaction	11.427	0.041	1.099	118.831
Preference to upload image-based posts	4.745	0.037	1.1	20.465
Preference to eat food when stressed	0.305	0.174	0.055	1.692
Awareness of viral trends	2.58	0.059	0.964	6.905
Frequency of using food delivery apps	14.495	0.001	3.031	69.326
Pressure from surrounding to lose weight	3.061	0.285	0.393	23.835
Concern with likes received on posts	2.41	0.065	0.946	6.136

introduction of University Wellness Programs may offer college students sustainable solutions to improve psychological and physical well-being and inculcate better coping strategies when dealing with stressful situations (Sathya et al. 2025).

This study shows that body dissatisfaction and eating disorders are significantly associated with one another in the presence of social media. It corroborates findings from prior literature worldwide (Holland and Tiggemann 2016; Jiotsa et al. 2021; Hosokawa et al. 2023). The study found a significant relationship between body dissatisfaction levels and concerns about eating habits among those preoccupied with the number of likes received on social media posts. Women displayed a significant association between body dissatisfaction levels and disordered eating behaviour among those concerned with likes on a post and experiencing pressure from social media to change how they look. This aligns with the results of a previous study conducted in India that examined the influence of traditional media on youth (Singh and Gadiraju 2020).

Existing literature showcases that engagement in appearance-based comparison did not lead to a decline in body satisfaction following the viewing of bare-chested, muscular models among men. Therefore, the impact of comparison on men's body dissatisfaction might not be as pronounced (Tiggemann and Anderberg 2020). In this study, the impact of likes, fitness content search, and social media pressure did not show a significant association between body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in men. Interestingly, the study revealed that body dissatisfaction and dieting habits were significantly more pronounced in women who actively searched for fitness content, rather than in men, a pattern consistent with the gender differences observed in the findings (Tiggemann and Anderberg 2020). The difference could probably be attributed to men being more exposed to fitness content featuring women, which might lead to less body dissatisfaction than among women (Fatt et al. 2019).

The platforms through which beauty ideals are disseminated significantly influence the degree of body dissatisfaction experienced. A meta-analysis of experimental studies observed that body-positive content could improve self-perception, while prolonged exposure to body-ideal content had the opposite effect (Zhang et al. 2025). Video-based platforms like TikTok exerted stronger negative ef-

fects compared to image-based platforms like Instagram (Zhang et al. 2025). Supporting this, another meta-analysis reported that improvements in self-perception through body-positive content were largely limited to the short term, raising questions regarding its sustained efficacy, in the long run, to counter beauty ideals (Jiménez-García et al. 2025). Building on this platform-specific perspective, a recent cross-sectional study suggests that duration of social media exposure may not reliably predict the risk of disordered eating patterns (Alqadheeb et al. 2026). The Stanford Screenomics study further underscored this statement (Sun et al. 2026). The study revealed that the exploratory app analysis yielded more nuanced findings (Sun et al. 2026). Snapchat, X and TikTok were associated with increased weight-related concerns among the study participants, while Instagram was associated with lower levels of dieting practices (Sun et al. 2026). This suggests that aggregated measures of social media use may obscure platform-specific effects.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the algorithms on social media platforms can differ widely across genders and ages. Thinspiration challenges and pro-anorexia content are more prominently featured on TikTok, appealing to younger audiences. During a compilation of TikTok's hashtags, a large proportion of them were found to promote "pro-anorexia" content (Muldowney 2023). A majority of the views on the hashtags related to disordered eating behaviour were found to be generated by people below the age of 24 (Muldowney 2023). On Instagram, the predominance of white men in the more popular posts stands in contrast to the relatively balanced ethnic composition of Instagram's user base, potentially exacerbating body dissatisfaction among ethnic groups, such as Indian men, who may face pressures to conform to Western beauty standards (Gultzow et al. 2020). In this study, men not actively searching for fitness and weight loss content on social media showed a significant association between body dissatisfaction and dieting levels. Studies have shown that men are affected by a condition known as muscular dysmorphia, where they aspire to become more muscular instead of favouring a slender physique, as demonstrated by a study done in Australia (Yee et al. 2020).

The novelty of this study is that it explores, through a gendered lens, the influence of social

media trends on body image dissatisfaction and disordered eating habits in the Indian context, particularly in the state of West Bengal, a topic that has not been examined previously. Understanding how men and women might internalise and interpret societal standards of beauty differently is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of body image issues and potential risk factors for developing body dissatisfaction or related disorders.

The ramifications of internalising beauty ideals now extend beyond disordered eating behaviours alone. With the unprecedented surge in weight loss medications in the market (Reuters 2025), Markey et al. (2025) demonstrated that increased body shaming and anti-fat attitudes, along with poor self-perception, could be witnessed in participants who were willing to adopt GLP-1 medications despite the known side effects. Increased BMI and recent weight loss attempts strongly predicted interest towards medical intervention. Social media beauty standards may be indirectly pushing psychologically vulnerable individuals toward medicalised solutions, even among those who do not clinically require it.

There are a few limitations to this study. Since this was a study on the influence of social media, an online questionnaire was circulated to the students in colleges of West Bengal. Women respondents in this study were much higher than men, simply owing to their greater baseline exposure to social media content. Additionally, as the study employs a cross-sectional design, a causal relationship between social media trends and individuals' perceptions of body shape cannot be established.

CONCLUSION

This study discerned a notable correlation between social media engagement and heightened levels of body dissatisfaction, particularly evident among women. Elevated levels of body dissatisfaction were found to coincide with behaviours that increase the susceptibility to disordered eating patterns. Notably, the influence of social media platforms was implicated in exacerbating negative body image perceptions, particularly within the demographic of young women. Future investigations should prioritise the development and implementation of strategies that are aimed at cultivating positive body image perceptions and foster-

ing healthy eating habits through the strategic design of social media platforms. A comparative analysis between rural-urban women regarding social media influence on body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviour can capture the wide spectrum of perspectives from a socio-geographic perspective. Assessment of muscularity dissatisfaction in men can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how men perceive their bodies in the context of societal beauty standards.

Effective interventions require evidence-based research, including longitudinal studies, to explore the diverse factors influencing these trends. Continued efforts are essential to promote a healthy social media environment free from harmful content like “thinspiration” hashtags. The focus should be on body positivity, self-acceptance, and healthy habits to promote overall well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Targeted health promotion interventions to be developed for young women that directly address the impact of social media on body image, including digital literacy programs that help users critically evaluate appearance-related content and reduce harmful comparison behaviours. Educational institutions and public health programmes should integrate body image awareness and healthy eating guidance into routine curricula, while screening and early support mechanisms for disordered eating behaviours should be strengthened at the community level. Social media platforms should be encouraged to adopt stricter content moderation policies to limit exposure to harmful trends such as “thinspiration” and “fitspiration” and to actively promote diverse and realistic body representations. More collaboration between public health professionals, educators, and technology stakeholders is essential to translate these findings into sustainable, culturally appropriate interventions that support overall mental and physical well-being.

DECLARATIONS

FUNDING

The authors did not receive support from any organisation for the submitted work.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND INFORMED CONSENT

An ethical approval was sought from the institutional ethics committee. The IEC reference number is 0023/IEC/2023. Information regarding the purpose of the study and the benefits and participants' rights was made known to the participants, and written informed consent was obtained from each participant.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to institutional policy restricting data sharing. This policy ensures compliance with ethical guidelines and data protection regulations. However, the researchers are committed to promoting transparency and reproducibility in research. Therefore, upon reasonable request, the corresponding author (P.M.) can provide access to the data, subject to approval by the institution.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualisation: AG, PM
Methodology: AG, PM
Data curation: AG
Formal analysis: AG, PM
Writing Original Draft: AG
Writing Review and Editing: PM, AG
Supervision: PM.
Both authors approved the final manuscript.

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Paper received for publication in March, 2026
 Paper accepted for publication in May, 2026