

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY USING MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEDIA INFLUENCE SCALE

Nadia Saleem[–]

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Virtual University of Pakistan, Lahore
nadia.saleem@vu.edu.pk

Fatima Riaz

Department of Mass Communication, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore
fatimakat496@gmail.com

Oneeba Afzaal

Department of Mass Communication, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore
Oneeba.afaal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In a traditional society, gender roles are associated with males and females according to social norms. Masculinity, independence, and dominance are considered necessary characteristics associated with males, whereas, females are mostly considered dependent, delicate, and sensitive. However, women of today are more confident to adopt those gender roles which were once associated with men only. Still, many women prefer to adopt traditional gender roles that may stimulate self-objectification. The present study suggests that social media exposure is one of the stimulating factors that may create self-objectification among males and females. It was survey research in which data was collected from 200 male and female respondents. The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMI) was used for social media and self-objectification value assessment. The result shows that more exposure to social media results in high self-objectification. It was also found that females have high self-objectification as compared to males.

Keywords: Self-objectification, social media, self-surveillance.

INTRODUCTION

Self-objectification is widely explained by different researchers. It is defined as when individuals take a third-person perspective more seriously rather than their own perspective about themselves. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) conclude in their study that sexual objectification in terms of cultural context results in self-objectification, which turns into self-surveillance, causing psychological consequences and mental health risks in victims. It is more common for females how others feel about them or how they look (McKay, 2013). According to this theory, individuals evaluate themselves on the basis of their appearance. Women tend to believe what others and what the society says about them. As per Calogero (2013), “self-objectification occurs when the objectifying gaze is turned inward, such that women view themselves through the perspective of an observer and engage in chronic self-surveillance”. Self-objectification leads to the behaviour of body shaming causing depression, stress, and anxiety among individuals that result in low self-esteem and de-motivation (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Continuous body shaming has an adverse effect on mental health (Feltman, 2018). Self-objectification can have severe negative effects on both males and females such as body shame, eating disorders, appearance anxiety, and despair.

Rationale of the Study

This study will help to understand the emerging problems of the youth which are sometimes unsaid and causes some serious issues. The new generation is so involved in social media that the youth started following the appearances of the people in the media. The youth mostly avoid the family

[–] Corresponding Author

gatherings and if they come to join the family, remain busy with their phones and avoid the friends and family, who are physically available there. They are so involved in technology that they don't want to show their real faces to the world they start showing people what they have and youth shows deceptive and fake pictures of their life to impress and avoid criticism and judgment. Moreover, sticking to social networking sites has developed a strong need for social approval from their friends and social circle.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify the relationship between social media exposure and self-objectification.
- Assess the inclination towards self-objectification among males and females.

Research Question

RQ₁: What is the relationship between social media exposure and self-objectification among youth?

RQ₂: Is there a Difference in the lens of gender with respect to social media exposure and self-objectification among youth?

RQ₃: Does social media exposure predict self-objectification among youth?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Meier & Gray (2014) found in their research that self-objectifying behaviors can include excessive mirror looking, recurrent selfies, criticizing one's appearance in the reflection and photos, and associating oneself with other women and images too. Westernized social orders will quite often externalize individuals as a rule, frequently regarding individuals as though they are things or wares. However, because Westernized social orders are soaked with heterosexuality, by which orientation goes about as an unavoidable coordinator of culture, typification is most frequently clear inside hetero relations. Females are characterized, assessed, and treated more regularly as items as compared to males. Specifically, it is the review of ladies as sex objects, as instruments for the sexual adjusting and delights of men that are maybe the peculiarity generally recognizable to researchers and laypersons the same (Rollero & Piccoli, 2017).

This objectification occurs in two areas: interpersonal or social encounters and media exposure. Calogero, Tantleff, & Thompson (2011) have defined interpersonal or social encounters as "Interpersonal or communal encounters include catcalls, checking out/ staring at, or looking at women's figures, sexual comments, and annoyance." Whereas Aubrey (2006) defines media exposure as "the relationship between the body and sex is unambiguously portrayed in contemporary media, and conforming to a thin body ideal is crucial to sexual attractiveness".

Rollero (2017) discussed media as an effective tool for shaping the real world's feelings and sentiments of individuals. It ended up being persuasive on the principle of a widespread social sense, the media to a great extent built up those qualities and standards which had as of now accomplished a wide consensual establishment.

The research by Fardouly, J, et al. (2015) said that the media portray women as an object which is sexually objectifying, and very high exposure to media objectifying is linked to higher self-objectification among young women. The reason why the use of media may relate to self-objectification is that females compare their self with others in media. The study examined the relationship between the usage of types of different media which include social media platforms such as the internet, television, music videos, and magazine, The appearance and comparison tendencies among women in general and the appearance among specific women on Facebook. Self, peers, family, celebrities, etc have a mediated relationship in Facebook usage and self-objectification. The participants were female (N=150 between the age range of 17-25 years). The usage of Facebook and fashion magazines was positively correlated with self-objectification and this relationship has been mediated with appearance. These findings recommend that appearance comparison can play an essential role in self-objectification among young women.

Research conducted by Slater and Tiggemann, M (2014) analyzed three possible indicators of self-objectification in female youths, specifically media exposure, extracurricular activities, and appearance-related remarks: both positive and negative. In this research data was collected from 1,087 young females between the age of 2 to 16 years, who responded about media exposure like TV, magazines, Internet, and interpersonal interaction; time spent on extracurricular activities, positive and pessimistic appearance-related remarks, self-generalization, self-observation, body disgrace, and

disarranged eating. Application of the estimated way model uncovered that self-revealed openness to magazines and long-range informal communication destinations were related emphatically to self-objectification. Furthermore, positive appearance-related remarks were demonstrated to be related decidedly to self-externalization. Then again, time spent on extracurricular activities was not connected with self-externalization. Specifically, the outcomes recommend that positive appearance-related remarks and praises might be similarly as, or much more, liable to lead to self-externalization as bad appearance-related negative remarks.

Vandenbosch and Eggermont, (2015) explored in their study how open access to sexualized early evening TV programs, music shows, men's magazines, and explicit sites were connected with the self-objectification and body observation of females among young male adults. An indirect relationship between sexualized media, self-objectification, and body exploration through the starring was observed. A strong relationship between self-objectification and sexualized obscene sites. Aubrey, (2006) utilized the self-objectification hypothesis of Fredrickson and Roberts, (1997) to anticipate that the media's disgraceful act of generalizing bodies persuades people to have an artificial viewpoint of the real self and to constantly screen their appearance, i.e., participate in body observation. To test these theories, a 2-year panel study was carried out, which showed that exposure to sexually objectifying television and magazines triggered body observation of females among men only. The study focused on how media content generates body-oriented perceptions.

Earlier studies show that media exposure increases chances of self-objectification as individuals assess themselves according to the standards of media and try to transform their bodies to be attractive and appealing. Social media these days has increased the expectations of individuals, both men and women. They try to follow the trends and change their looks and figures to fit in and be more sexually attractive. The present study is aimed to find out the relationship between media exposure and self-objectification among youth.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is supported by the uses and gratification theory. The theory tries to unearth reasonable explanations to questions like why and how individuals make use of media and what kind of gratifications they derive from it. The theory is based on the premise that media consumption is purposive because of which people make use of both traditional media, such as radio and television, and interactive media such as the Internet and mobile phones and computer-based VoIP phone (Berente, Hansen, Pike, & Bateman, 2011). In this process, individual motivations whether intrinsic or extrinsic play a seminal role in maneuvering their behavioral intentions and their ability to use media. As an offshoot of the functionalist perspective on mass media communication, the Uses, and Gratification theory was first developed because of the feasibility of radio as a medium of communication during the 1940s (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). Ever since, the theory has been used as an analytical tool through its application on other mediums of communication as well including the television, the internet, etc. The central questions posed by the theory are “Why do people use media? And what do they use them for?” (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study was survey research in which data was collected from a sample of 200 respondents through purposive sampling. The relationship between two variables, media exposure as an independent variable and self-objectification as a dependent variable, was studied through a correlation statistical test. The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMI) was used for social media and self-objectification value assessment.

Sampling

The participants for the current study were selected through the Purposive sampling technique. The sample size selected was the college students of Lahore City. The sample size was (N=200) among which the males were (N=94) and the females were (N=115), with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years.

Multi-Dimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS)

The MMIS is a scale with 11 items that are developed to assess the multiple components of social media based on the influences of body image. Therefore, each item is rated on a 3-point Likert scale disagree, not sure, and agree. There are three distinct subscales within the scale, Internalization, Awareness, and Media Pressure, as well as an overall total, (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001).

The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale had numerous things with high normal reactions of consent to the different assertions. The most noteworthy scores were on Item 4 – “I would like my body to resemble the assemblages of individuals in the films” ($x=3.89$), Item 9 – “I get hints concerning how to look alluring by understanding magazines” ($x=3.20$), Item 11 “Observing motion pictures gives me thoughts regarding how to look alluring” ($x=2.90$), and The high scores on these things demonstrate the occurrence of the media in the choices with respect to engaging quality and in adjusting to an “optimal look” among the respondents. Low normal scores, which showed more conflict than arrangement, on the scale. The test reliability coefficient was .83

Procedure

The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and also provided them with the consent form. Demographic forms and two scales were given to the participants. The researchers used MMIS (Multidimensional Media Influence Scale) to measure the relationship between social media exposure and self-objectification. Social media exposure was the independent variable, whereas self-objectification was the dependent variable. The scale used in this research was multi-dimensional.

Statistical Analysis

SPSS software was used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive statistics were calculated to assess the frequency and percentage frequencies of the variables. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to find the relationship between social media exposure and self-objectification.

RESULTS

The results of the current research explored the relationship between social media exposure and self-objectification among young males and females. The data were analysed in two key steps. First, Demographic characteristics were analysed through descriptive statistics. In step 2, correlation analysis was applied to check the relationship between the two variables.

Demographic Characteristics

The section describes the percentages and frequencies of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1:

Frequencies and percentages of demographic variables of Study (N = 200)

Sr. No	Variables	f (%)
1.	Gender	Male 94(45.0)
		Female 115(55.0)
2.	Education	Post-Graduates 74(35.4)
		Graduates 135(64.6)
3.	Marital status	Single 94(45.0)
		Married 89(42.6)
		Living relationship 11(5.3)
		Divorced 14(6.7)
		Widow 1(0.5)

Table 1 shows that the females are higher in number than the males and the participants selected for the research are (N = 200) the female (N = 115) and the males (N = 94).

Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was applied to find out the relationship between the study both variables. The results are shown in Table 2

Table 2

Correlation between all the study variables (N = 200)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Total MMIS	.003				

Note; MMIS = multidimensional media influence scale,

Table 2 shows that the MMIS scale is positively significant with self-objectification.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between media exposure and self-objectification in the age range from 18-30 years. This study considered the existing knowledge of earlier research that suggests that social media promotes more self-objectification and also the individual is much more influenced by social media exposure. The current study was also designed to educate and provide insight into the advantages and disadvantages of media exposure in the Pakistani community background, and also to check how much which gender is mostly affected.

The literature review provided the researchers with evidence to help and support the current study. Furthermore, Slater and Tiggemann (2015) in their study show that the positive self-appearances were related to the social media exposure, and the positive comments were shown as the positive appearances from the self-objectification. The two variables in the study were used as it indicates that social media has affected the individual self where people are influenced by the ideal and heroes from showbiz. Therefore, people have been influenced and follow the things and actions, and fashion shown in the media.

The findings of the current study reveal that the female population is more exposed to the media as compared to the male and more data was collected from the BS and M. Phil students. The data analysis shows that social media users are highly influenced by music videos and fashion on different social media platforms. The results also show that social media exposure affects individuals thinking and they try to improve their selves in real life as influenced by the people in the media. Eggermont, S. (2012) discussed an equation model that shows the relationship between the self-objectification and social media exposure and also the internalizing beauty ideals from showbiz celebrities and also shows the indirect relationship between sexual objectifying media and the self-objectification and body check through the internalizing beauty ideals. Hence, the present study mainly focuses on both gender self-objectification of their bodies not only females or girls are studied but also male gender is studied to check which gender is more affected.

Results also indicate that the female gender has higher self-objectification than the male gender.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that social media users have a high self-objectification. They are deeply inspired by the glamorous world of fashion and style on social media. Due to this impact, they start to associate themselves with the body images of celebrities. This un-attainable desire of looking flawless leads to many negative thoughts including passing comments on others' images and body shaming. The results of the research proved that females are more influenced by social media exposure, thus more self-objectification is shown between the females as compared to the males.

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