

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL HARDINESS, SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND BODY IMAGE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the relationship between psychological hardiness and body image as well as social media usage and body image among young female adults from rural colleges in Thoothukudi district. Psychological hardiness is characterized by commitment, control, and challenge. It has been linked to resilience against negative self-perceptions, while social media usage has been associated with heightened body dissatisfaction. A total of 225 participants were selected through a convenience sampling method, and data were collected through self-reported measures assessing psychological hardiness, social media usage, and body image. Statistical analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological hardiness and body image ($r = 0.887$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher hardiness perceive their body image more positively. Social media usage exhibited a significant negative correlation with body image ($r = -0.644$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that increased social media contributes to body dissatisfaction. The findings show the role of psychological hardiness against negative body perceptions and highlight the risks of excessive social media use. Promoting resilience and encouraging mindful social media consumption may serve as effective strategies to foster positive body image among young women.

Keywords: Psychological Hardiness, Social Media Usage, Body Image, Body Dissatisfaction, Young Adults.

INTRODUCTION

Aim

The study aims to find the relationship among psychological hardiness, social media usage and body image concerns.

Hardiness

Kobasa introduced the term hardiness. She defined hardiness as a personality trait having the components of commitment, challenge and control. It is associated with strong resistance to negative feelings induced by adverse circumstances. Trait control is the

tendency to think, feel and act as if one is influential, rather than helpless, in the face of the varied contingencies of life. Commitment is the tendency to involve oneself in, rather than experience alienation from, whatever one is doing or encounters in life. The challenge is the tendency to believe that change rather than stability is normal in life ^[1].

Social Media Usage

As technology advances, a wider range of activities are becoming feasible on screen-based devices. Social networking sites have grown in popularity as a result of this increased involvement in the digital world, particularly among younger people. Since they are the first generations to have grown up in a culture that is heavily reliant on technology, adolescents and young adults make up a special demographic when it comes to social media usage ^[2].

The impact of social media is not uniformly positive. Particularly for teenagers, the digital environment can expose them to risks such as cyberbullying, negative social comparisons, and reduced face-to-face interactions, all of which may contribute to heightened anxiety.

Body Image

Body image can be seen as the perceptions and attitudes one holds toward one's own body, especially, but not exclusively, one's physical appearance. It is a multidimensional concept that includes: 1. Beliefs about appearance. 2. Beliefs about the body size and shape. 3. Perception of the body ^[3].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Review of the literature

In 2024, Saputri, F. Q., Purwanto, E., & Ahmadi, F. Conducted a study titled “The Relationship between Social Media Addiction, Hardiness, and Emotional Intelligence with Students’ Psychological Well-Being”. The results revealed a significant relationship between social media addiction, hardiness, emotional intelligence, and students’ psychological well-being ^[4].

In 2022, Vandenbosch, Fardouly, and Tiggemann explored social media’s impact on body image, highlighting that visual platforms like Instagram are more harmful than textual ones like Facebook. Taking and editing selfies, without posting them, negatively affected body image, and positive comments amplified the impact of idealized content ^[5].

In 2017, Itisha Nagar and Rukhsana Virk explored the impact of acute media exposure on body image among young Indian women. A mixed-group design was used where one group was shown thin-ideal media images, while the other viewed control images.

Results indicated that exposure to thin-ideal images significantly increased body dissatisfaction and thin-ideal internalization while decreasing self-esteem [6].

In 2015, Nazmiye Civitci and Asim Civitci explored the relationship between social comparison orientation, hardiness, and life satisfaction in Turkish undergraduate students. Their findings showed that students with lower social comparison tendencies had higher levels of hardiness and life satisfaction than those with higher comparison tendencies [7].

In 2012, Carson A. Benowitz-Fredericks, Kaylor Garcia, Meredith Massey, Brintha Vasagar, and Dina L. G. Borzekowski explored the relationship between adolescent media use, body image, and eating disorders. The study emphasized that media exposure plays a crucial role in shaping body image, potentially contributing to disordered eating behaviours [8].

Hypothesis

H1 - There will be no significant relationship between psychological Hardiness and body image.

H2 - There will be no significant relationship between social media usage and body image.

Variables

Psychological hardiness - Independent variable

Social media usage - Independent variable

Body image - Dependent variable

Sample

The study's sample included the 18-25 years young adults, chosen from various rural colleges in Thoothukudi. This study completely relied on primary data.

Tools

Hardy Personality Profile adapted by the work of Suzanne Kobasa in 1979.

The social media use scale by Alison B. Tuck and Renee J in 2024.

The body image state scale by Cash TF et al in 2002.

Procedure

Participants from age group 18 to 25 years were selected for our research and the responses were collected. After obtaining the participants' consent to take part in the study, they were requested to fill in their responses to the set of questionnaires, which included demographic data and self-reported measures intended to measure the variables: Psychological hardiness, social media usage and Body image. The participants were instructed to read the items carefully and respond to each question by selecting the options

that is appropriate for them and they were informed that their responses would be kept confidential. The participants took 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The collected data was analysed statistically using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship among the research variables. The analyses were carried out with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software 23 (SPSS23).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Psychological hardiness	225	6.57	3.159
Social media usage	225	51.90	18.618
Body image	225	31.81	13.602

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables. The mean score for Psychological Hardiness is 6.57 with a standard deviation of 3.159, indicating variation in participants' resilience levels. Social Media Usage has a mean of 51.90 and a standard deviation of 18.618, reflecting diverse engagement patterns among respondents. Body Image shows a mean of 31.81 with a standard deviation of 13.602, suggesting differences in self-perception among the participants.

Table 2

Relationship between Psychological Hardiness and Body Image among Young adults

Variables	r value
Psychological Hardiness	0.887**
Body Image	

**p<0.05

*p<0.01

Table 2 presents the relationship between **Psychological Hardiness and Body Image** among young adults. The findings indicate a **significant positive correlation** between the two variables, with an **r value of 0.887**, which is statistically significant at **p < 0.01**. Thus, the

hypothesis (H1) claiming **"There will be no significant relationship between Psychological Hardiness and Body Image"** is rejected, as there is a strong correlation between the two variables.

Table 3

Relationship between Social Media Usage and Body Image among Young adults

Variables	r value
Social Media Usage	
Body Image	-0.644**

**p<0.05

*p<0.01

Table 3 presents the relationship between **Social Media Usage and Body Image** among young adults. The results indicate a **significant negative correlation**, with an **r-value of -0.644**, which is significant at **p < 0.01**. This suggests that higher Social Media Usage is associated with a lower Body Image perception. Therefore, the hypothesis (H3) stating **"There will be no significant relationship between Social Media Usage and Body Image"** is rejected, as a strong negative correlation is observed between the two variables.

Discussion

From Table 2, hypothesis H1 claiming “There will be no significant relationship between psychological hardiness and body image” is rejected. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between psychological hardiness and body image among young adults. It suggests that individuals who exhibit greater psychological hardiness tend to perceive their body image more positively.

Psychological hardiness acts as a protective factor against negative self-perceptions. It also helps to promote a healthier body image and overall well-being. Research states that individuals with a positive body image experience higher levels of self-esteem, higher levels of life satisfaction, and improved mental health outcomes ^[9]. Conversely, those with a negative body image may struggle with low self-worth, anxiety, and even severe psychological distress, including the development of mental health disorders like eating disorders and depression ^[10]. The increasing exposure of young adults to social media and societal beauty standards can create dissatisfaction about their body image among young

women. Fostering psychological hardiness may act as an effective way to cultivate a positive self-perception and prevent body dissatisfaction.

This implies that those who feel in control of their life, stick to their objectives, and view setbacks as opportunities rather than barriers. These individuals are more likely to have a good body image. These psychological traits may serve as protective factors against the pervasive societal and media-driven pressures that promote unattainable beauty ideals.

From Table 3, hypothesis H2 claiming “There will be no significant relationship between the dimensions of social media usage and body image” is rejected because the results indicate a significant negative correlation between social media usage and body image among young adults. It suggests that increased social media usage is correlated with a more negative perception of one’s body image. These findings align with previous research showing that social media platforms frequently promote unrealistic beauty standards which leads users to engage in harmful social comparisons. These comparisons often result in body dissatisfaction, which has been linked to lower self-esteem. It also causes disordered eating behaviours and increases psychological distress ^[11].

Most of the social media content is heavily edited images and idealized body types. It creates an environment where users internalize unattainable beauty standards. This internalization can lead to increased self-criticism and a distorted perception of one’s own body, particularly among young adults who are in a critical phase of identity development. The widespread use of filters and digital enhancements worsens this issue by setting unrealistic expectations for physical appearance and it also fuels dissatisfaction and negative self-evaluation.

However, it is important to note that not all social media interactions are harmful. Positive engagement like following body-positive influencers, interacting with diverse representations of beauty and engaging in supportive online communities can help to reduce the negative effects of social comparison. Exposure to realistic and inclusive body representations has been found to improve self-acceptance and promote a healthier body image ^[6]. Therefore, while excessive social media use can contribute to body dissatisfaction, mindful and intentional consumption of content that fosters body positivity may serve as a protective factor against its harmful effects.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to examine the relationship between psychological hardiness, social media usage and body image among young adults. The study's independent variable was

psychological hardiness and social media usage. The dependent variable was body image. The sample was obtained through the convenience sampling method. The participants of the study included 225 young female adults from various rural colleges in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. Data was collected both by using Google Forms and by collecting in person. The responses were gathered only from girls.

The following conclusions have been drawn

- There is a significant relationship between psychological hardiness and body image.
- There is a significant negative relationship between social media usage and body image.

Implications

A few implications of the current study are:

- The current study is advantageous to young female adults because it can help them become more aware of its psychological consequences and encourage healthier online habits.
- This study benefits mental health professionals by emphasizing the role of psychological hardiness in body image perception. It allows them to create interventions that strengthen hardiness among young women.
- By exploring how social media usage and hardiness predict body image, this study provides insights for social media platforms and influencers to promote body-positive content and reduce the spread of unrealistic beauty standards.

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