

The Impact of Social Media Use on Body Image in Northern Cyprus

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Abstract

The current study investigated if frequency of social media use, self-esteem, thin-body ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison were related to and can predict body image dissatisfaction.

Female participants ($n = 411$) completed an online survey and the findings revealed that heavy social media use, thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison positively correlated with body dissatisfaction. Self-esteem and body dissatisfaction had an inverse relationship. All the predictor variables significantly predicted the criterion variable though self-esteem and appearance-related social comparison had the highest contribution to body dissatisfaction.

Given the prevalence of body dissatisfaction and its negative consequences, especially among young women, more research is essential to better understand the construct and better prepare health care professionals on how to tackle it.

Keywords: *Social media use, Social comparison, body image dissatisfaction, self-esteem, thin-ideal internalization*

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Introduction

Body image is the attitude towards the physical appearance of one's self (Holt & Lyness, 2007). As an attitude, it comprises of the perceptions, beliefs, thought processes, feelings, and behaviors towards one self's outer appearance. According to Grogan (2006), body image represents the individual perceptions and visualizations of outer body size, shape, and comprehensive aesthetics. These perceptions and visualizations can be satisfactory or not in nature and may influence the level of self-confidence, behavioral pattern and general quality-of-life (Martin, 2010). The main component of the outer body perceptions and visualizations are the self- evaluations, feelings and the saliency of physical appearance (Cash, Melnyk & Hrabosky, 2004). Physical appearance is an important aspect of one's identity and it's usually the first thing that comes to view in social situations. Thus impressions could be formed of one's behavioral characteristics based on the perceived outer body appearance (Lennon & Miller, 1984). To create a positive impression on others most people, especially women and young girls, strive to have the societal adored outer body at all costs (Collins, 2003). Several studies have shown that women place far more emphasis on their attractiveness and body image compared to men (Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda & Heinberg, 2004; Martin 2010; Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Wang, 2010; Kim & Aubrey, 2015). Over the years, small size zero and slim-thin body types have been propagated through several media as the standard of beauty, for women, across the globe. Most women have now accepted the slim-thin body type as the desirable body type and associate it with attractiveness and even success (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006). Therefore, they often strive to achieve this society created ideal body type. Martin (2010) stated that this society stipulated ideal body type often mounts pressure on people to conform which may invariably lead to an increase in body image distortions, bad eating habits, and negative body perception. According to Vonderen and Kinnally (2012), the-image distortions are inferred in many ways such as trying physically to alter your appearance or making negative remarks about other people's appearance. According to Martin (2010), there is always an_unwritten rule which is embedded in most western societies that pressurizes people to consciously seek to conform to the beauty standards. Failure to achieve this slim-thin body type usually results in devastating consequences of negative self-image and body image dissatisfaction among young women (Levine & Smolak, 2004).

Body dissatisfaction occurs when discrepancy exists between one's real body and ideal body image. The discrepancies are often derived from a negative cognitive process of comparison, self-evaluation, and self-rejection (Dittmar, 2009). Cooper &

Fairburn (1993), described body image dissatisfaction as the subjective dissatisfaction with body weight, size and body shape. Several psychological and physical problems are linked to body image dissatisfaction (Brechan & Kvaem 2015). Researches have connected body image dissatisfaction to heavy alcohol and tobacco use (Stice & Shaw, 2002), social anxiety (Vannucci & Ohannessian 2018), disordered eating (Stice, 2001), sensitivity to interpersonal communication (Kim & Cha, 2016), obsessive-compulsive behavior (Manaf, Saravanan & Zuhrah, 2016), depression and suicidal ideation (Levine & Smolak, 2004; Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan & Eisenberg, 2006).

Due to the wide array of behavioral and morbid problems that stem from body image dissatisfaction, researchers' attention has been drawn into identifying factors that may influence body image dissatisfaction among women. Several studies suggest that social media (eg. Pinterest, Snapchat Instagram, Facebook, etc.) use positively correlates with body image concerns and dissatisfaction (Kim & Chock ,2015 ; Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscanell & Dill 2013; Vannucci & Ohannessian 2018; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn,1999);Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Levine & Smolak, 2004;Meier & Gray, 2014).

Social media use has generated several pieces of research among social psychologists and communication experts with regards to arrays of human behaviors. Social media is a subset of mass media that has gain vast audience due to the ubiquity and proliferation of the internet. Boyd & Ellison, (2008), defined social media as online technology platforms that focus on the creation of profiles, sharing information with remarkable visibility of relationships among users. Among the most popular social media platforms are Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Social media distinguished itself from other traditional media due to its unique characteristics of reaching vast audiences quickly, interactivity and the freedom for anyone, with access to the internet, to become an active member of the network. Social media has provided a very efficient and accessible platform for users to connect, communicate and share information especially among adolescent girls and young women (Dzurec, Kennison & Albataineh, 2014; Jurgens, 2012; Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscanell & Dill, 2013; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013), a demographic whose body image concerns are very high and can be problematic among (Prieler & Choi, 2014; Bearman, Martinez, Stice & Presnell, 2006).

Most social media platforms operate as image content-based, i.e. photo/image sharing sites, for personal or promotional purposes. These images may have a strong

influence on users especially when celebrities or media influencers are involved as they are more likely to be viewed as models to emulate. According to Bell (2016), celebrity images on social media can be seen as opinion leaders due to the influence they may exert on users to conform to the images they portray, even though the images are usually cropped, digitally altered and transmitted to the audience to elicit a certain behavioral response (Raut & Patil, 2016). Therefore, these opinion leaders can portray both positive and negative messages and often the messages have an impact on issues like body image concerns and dissatisfaction. Researchers have mixed opinions about the exact impact of social media use on users' behaviors. Some scholars believe that the use of social media provides opportunities for social interactions among users, enabling them to avoid feeling of loneliness and offer invaluable assistance in the creation and presentation of desired self-images online (Eke, Omekwu & Odoh, 2014; Raut & Patil, 2016; Heffner, 2016). Others claimed that the use of social media facilitates social alienation and loneliness among users, and creates a platform for unhealthy body comparisons with peers and celebrities (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). But there seems to be a consensus that the amount of time spent on social media can have an impact on the wellbeing and life satisfaction of users. Fardouly & Vartanian, (2015) identified the amount of time spent on social media and exposure to certain aspects (slim-thin body type images/videos) within the sites as risk factors for body image dissatisfaction. They asserted that heavy users that spent more time on appearance-related images are more prone to engage in irrational body comparison that may diminish body image satisfaction.

In general, the time spent on social media platforms has correlated with several negative behavioral outcomes like eating pathologies, poor academic performance, poor body image and poor mental health (Meier & Gray, 2014; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). Sociocultural models of body image suggest that there are generally two pathways through which the use of social media may lead to body image dissatisfaction: internalization of the societal ideals of attractiveness and social comparison of outer body appearance (Thompson et al., 1999; Keery, van den Berg & Thompson, 2004; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; van den Berg, Thompson, Obremski-Brandon & Coovert, 2002).

Internalization refers to the extent one's attitude towards beauty and attractiveness is shaped by societal prescribed standards that are usually slim- thin for women and broad chest muscular physique for men (Stice, 2002). These sociocultural fabricated body ideal messages are usually propagated through, the media, peers, and family, with media being the most effective medium (Stice, 2002). The media use of

celebrities or other opinion leaders to sell the idea that a “good body is a good person” in this case being the ideal thin-slim body for women, mounts immense pressure on women to be thin. These pervasive societal pressures to be thin are linked to eating disorders (Halliwell & Harvey, 2006) and body image disturbances (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). Internalization occurs when people adopt these socially stipulated ideals of attractiveness and are willingly partaking in behaviors to conform to the body type norms which mostly are difficult to attain. It is almost impossible for most women not to be aware of the societal standards of beauty and attractiveness, but the degree of internalization of the standards varies from one person to another. Women who internalize the societal standards more, and are committed to attaining the ideal body, are most likely to experience negative body image and body dissatisfaction compared to those with more flexible attitudes towards the ideal body type (Ridolfi, Myers, Crowther & Ciesla, 2011). Many researchers have endorsed the idea that internalization influences body image dissatisfaction. Several past studies with adolescent girls have suggested that internalization correlates with body image dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Specifically, Dittmar and Howard (2004) found that aspirations to be thin were positively correlated with body image discrepancy between the real and ideal body image. Other studies have demonstrated a strong connection between thin-ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction among women, and that thin body ideal internalization predicts increased body dissatisfaction (Shroff & Thompson, 2006; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004; Stice & Whitenton, 2002).

Social comparison is an evaluative psychosocial process that involves comparing oneself to others to ascertain their standing on varieties of human endeavors (Varga, 2010). The Social Comparison Theory postulated that humans have innate tendencies to compare themselves with one another to discern and claim their social standings with regards to human attributes, which can include physical appearance-related comparison (Festinger, 1954).

Appearance related social comparisons are usually done in two ways – downward or upward comparison. Downward comparison occurs when people compare themselves to others they perceive as worse than them on a given attribute while upward comparisons involve comparing themselves to others that are perceived to be better and strive to be like them. Several studies have suggested that women often make appearance-related social comparisons (Bessenoff, 2006; Prieler & Choi, 2014; Leahey, Crowther, & Mickelson, 2007; Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2010), and most times they engage in upward comparisons, usually with slim-thin celebrities on social media platforms (Leahey, Crowther, & Mickelson, 2007; Bailey &

Ricciardelli, 2010; Myers & Crowther, 2009). The comparisons usually include facial structures, body shapes, weight, etc. and the overall physical attractiveness.

Research has indicated that downward comparisons among women may lead to more positive self-evaluations (Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2010), while women who frequently make upward appearance-related social comparisons are more likely to feel discontent with their bodies due to the perceived gap between the actual and ideal selves/ viewed images (Myers & Crowther, 2009). Rodgers, Paxton, and Chabrol (2009) found that upward appearance-related social comparisons were linked to greater body dissatisfaction among college women.

Similarly, Myers and Crowther, (2009) found that appearance-related comparisons were significant predictors of body image dissatisfaction among college women. Many other studies have stated that appearance-related comparison increases body image dissatisfaction (Rodgers, Paxton, & Chabrol 2009; Trampe, Stapel, & Siero, 2007; Mills, Polivy, Herman, & Tiggemann, 2002; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Engeln-Maddox 2005; Myers & Crowther, 2009). Another factor that several studies have connected to body image is self-esteem. Branden (2001) defined self-esteem as the general attitude towards oneself. Self-esteem constitutes the cognitive, affective and behavioral appraisal of an individual psychological and physical attributes. Self-esteem is the aggregate result of one's positive and negative evaluation or appraisal of self to ascertain worth (Frost & McKelvie, 2005).

Pop (2016) stated that self-esteem is partly a reflection of one's evaluation of outer body appearance. low self-esteem may indicate low self-worth stemming from the disparity between the actual outer body appearance and the ideal body. Studies have shown that self-esteem is related to body image concerns and disturbances (Cash, 1998).

According to Frost and McKelvie (2005), low self-esteem is a risk factor in developing body image dissatisfaction among young women. Green and Pritchard (2003) identified low self-esteem as a significant factor in predicting body image dissatisfaction.

Davidson & McCabe (2006) found that a low self-esteem individual is more vulnerable to body image dissatisfaction. Similarly, Furnham, Badmin and Sneade, (2002) stated that low self-esteem negatively influences body image satisfaction and that raising self-esteem may reduce body image dissatisfaction. In general, low self-esteem is associated with many behavioral and mental problems like depression and anxiety (Bajaj, Robins & Pande, 2016; Burwell & Shirk, 2006), poor academic performance (Aryana, 2010; Bray, 2001), eating disorders (Agliata & Tantleff- Dunn, 2004; Blaase, & Elklit, 2001) and body image dissatisfaction (Triplett, 2007; Frost & McKelvie 2005; Furnham, et al 2002).

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of social media use, self-esteem, thin-ideal internalization and social comparison (appearance-related) on body image dissatisfaction. Analyses were performed to examine if the level of social media use, self-esteem, thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison are significant predictors of body image dissatisfaction among young female students in North Cyprus.

Method

Research design

The current study utilized a cross-sectional quantitative correlational design to determine the impact of social media usage, self-esteem, thin-ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison on body image dissatisfaction among female students from Girne American University (GAU) in North Cyprus. The dependent/ outcome variable of this study is body image dissatisfaction and the predictor variables are frequency of social media usage, self-esteem, thin-ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of Girne American University's female students. 520 students completed the online survey but only 411 participants were selected from the various faculties at Girne American University in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The rest were discarded due to incomplete forms. All the participants were recruited online through an advert, explaining the aim of the study and consent forms were placed on the students' portals.

Questionnaires

Social media Use - The Multidimensional Scale of Facebook Use (MSFU; Frison & Eggermont, 2015) was modified and used to measure social media use. The MSFU is a 10-item self-report questionnaire that assesses three aspects of Facebook use: passive Facebook use (e.g., "How often do you visit a Facebook profile of a Facebook friend?"), active private Facebook use (e.g., "How often do you send a private message to a Facebook friend?") and active public Facebook use (e.g., "How often do you post a message on your own Facebook timeline?"). The original items were paraphrased to reflect not only Facebook, but social media/social network sites use in general. For example, item like "How often do you post a message on your Facebook timeline?" was changed to "How often do you post a message on your social media platform(s)?" The response format ranges from (1) *never* to (7) *multiple times a day*. A total score was computed by calculating the mean of all items. High scores indicated more frequent social media use by the participant. The average of all the items constitutes the total social media use score and higher points indicate

more frequent social media use. The internal consistency of the three subscales and the overall scale in this study ranged between $\alpha = .81$ to $.94$)

Thin ideal internalization- The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4; Schaefer, et al., 2014) was used to measure internalization. This scale is comprised of 22 Likert type questions with a response ranging from “Definitely Disagree (1)” to “Definitely Agree (5)”. It contains items such as “I think a lot about looking athletic” and “family members encourage me to get in better shape”. SATAQ-4 comprises of 5 subscales that measure internalization for thin body ideals, internalization of the muscular ideal, pressure from family, peer pressure and pressure from the media.

Scoring is done by computing the average point for each item in the questionnaire. Higher scores indicate high internalization and high perceived pressure. The Cronbach reliability coefficient of SATAQ-4 in this study was $.88$.

Appearance-related social comparison - appearance-related social comparison was measured by The Physical Appearance Comparison Scale -Revised (PACS-R; Schaefer & Thompson, 2014).

The scale comprises 11-item Likert questions such as “When I meet a new person (same sex), I compare my body size to his/her body size” and “When I’m eating at a restaurant, I compare my body fat to the body fat of others” with a response that ranges from 0 (never) to 4 (always). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in this study was $.83$.

Self-esteem-Self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg’s (1965) Self-esteem Scale. This scale comprises 10 Likert items (e.g., “At times I think I am no good at all”) with the response of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). Half of the items 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were reverse coded. The total score was calculated for all the participants and the range of value is between 0 to 40. Higher scores indicate a high self-esteem level. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) has been applied in several countries and found to have above-average coefficient alpha of $.81$. (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale in this study was $.91$.

Body image dissatisfaction – Body image dissatisfaction was measured using the Body Dissatisfaction Subscale from EDI-III (Garner, 2004) which is comprised of 10 items that assess the individual level of dissatisfaction with various parts of the body. For example, “I think my stomach is too big”. The scale has a 5-point response format with higher scores indicating higher dissatisfaction. The reliability of this subscale in this current study was good ($\alpha = .88$).

Data analysis

The data collected was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS 23.0 for Windows. Multiple regression models were used to assess and identify the influence of social media usage, thin-ideal internalization, appearance-related social comparison and self-esteem on body image dissatisfaction. Pearson correlation was used to examine relationships among the variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviation of the variables. Table 2 presents the correlation between the predictor variables and the outcome variable. While table 3 and 4 show the model summary and the regression summary respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the predictor and criterion variable

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Social comparison (Appearance-related)	2.88	.681
Thin-ideal internalization	3.38	1.10
Social media use	3.92	.764
Self- esteem	2.03	.779
Body image dissatisfaction	2.78	1.07

Table 2. Correlation between the predictors and criterion variable

Variable	Body image dissatisfaction	p-value
Thin-ideal internalization	.164**	.000
Self-esteem	-.462**	.000
Social media use	.302**	.000
Social comparison (Appearance-related)	.513**	.000

** p < .001.

The result of the correlations among the variables showed that appearance-related social comparison, thin-ideal internalization, and social media use had a significant positive relationship with body image dissatisfaction (p< .001), while self-esteem is significantly negatively related to body image dissatisfaction.

Table -3 Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RF	p
.623	.392	.386	65.53	.0000

a. Predictors: (Constant), appearance related social comparison self-esteem, social media use, thin-ideal internalization

Table 3 presents the model summary of the regression. It shows that appearance-related social comparison, self-esteem, social media use, and thin-ideal internalization significantly predict body image dissatisfaction $F(4,406) = 65.53, p < .0001$. All the predictor variables accounted for 39.2% of the variability in body image dissatisfaction.

Table 4 Summary of multiple regression

Construct	B	SE B	β	p	Sr	Sr ²
thin-ideal internalization	.088	.038	.091	.021	.090	.008
Social media use	.145	.059	.104	.014	.096	.009
Social comparison (Appearance-related)	.580	.068	.369	.000	.330	.109
Self-esteem	-.466	.055	-.340	.000	-.326	.106

Table 4 shows the coefficients and the unique contribution of all the predictor variables on the criterion variable. Social media use had a significant positive relationship ($r = .302, p < .001$) with body image dissatisfaction, suggesting that participants with higher social media use are more likely to feel dissatisfied with their outer body than participants who use less or no social media. Social media use had a standardized beta value of .104, which has a statistically significant moderate effect on body image dissatisfaction $p < .001$ and uniquely accounted for .9% of the variation in body image dissatisfaction. Similarly, thin-ideal internalization had a positive relationship ($r = .164, p < .001; \beta = .091, p = .02$) with body image dissatisfaction and uniquely accounted for only .8% of the variation in body image dissatisfaction. Equally there was a strong positive significant relationship ($r = .513, p < .001; \beta = .369, p < .001$) between appearance-related social comparison and body image dissatisfaction. Appearance related social comparison uniquely contributed the highest variance (10.9%) to the model.

There was a negative significant relationship ($r = .462, p < .001; \beta = -.340, p < .001$) between self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction. This would mean that people with low self-esteem tend to experience high body image dissatisfaction. Self-esteem uniquely accounted for 10.6% of variance in body image dissatisfaction.

Discussion

Several psychological problems and maladaptive behaviors among young females have been linked to body image dissatisfaction (Eke, Omekwu & Odoh, 2014). To curtail the threat of body image dissatisfaction and risks of other associated maladies, it is imperative to understand the dispositional and situational factors that may associate with young females' body dissatisfaction. This study investigated the extent to which social media use, thin-ideal internalization, self-esteem, and appearance-related social comparison influence body image dissatisfaction.

The findings from the multiple regression revealed that social media use, frequency and time spent on social media in this present study, positively correlated with body image dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the quantity of social media use significantly predicted body dissatisfaction,—This finding indicates that young women that reported using social media more tend to experience more body dissatisfaction more. This finding is consistent with the results of (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Schaefer, Thibodaux, Krenik, Arnold, & Thompson, 2015; Thompson et al.1999). Their

findings showed that heavy users of social media were more dissatisfied with their outer bodies. Similarly, female samples who were exposed to more time on Facebook, one of the main social media platforms, reported more negative feelings and contempt about their bodies- (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). The previous finding can be explained in light of the fact that social media platforms are often filled with visual images and videos of celebrities and models with slim-thin bodies that are usually the result of intense exercise and dieting that may be difficult for ordinary people to achieve. Therefore, spending more time on social media platforms may lead to self-criticism, and body dissatisfaction.

Additionally, the results of this study showed that thin-ideal internalization significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction with a very low unique contribution to the model. The result also indicated that thin-ideal internalization positively correlates with body image dissatisfaction. This means that women with high internalization of the thin-ideal body are more likely to experience an increase in body dissatisfaction. The reason could be that internalization provides the yardstick for women to assess, evaluate and monitor their relative standing on the slim ideal body. When it is high, this frequent assessment often leads to the realization that discrepancy exists between their current and ideal body shape and this may increase body image dissatisfaction.

The conclusion from this result is consistent with the findings of Dittmar and Howard (2004) and is also supported by the findings of (Shroff & Thompson, 2006) that increased internalization of the thin-ideal body positively correlated with body image discrepancy between the actual and ideal body image.

Social comparison was the strongest predictor of body image dissatisfaction and contributed uniquely the highest variance in body image dissatisfaction.

Appearance related social comparison also had a strong significant positive relationship with body image dissatisfaction. This means that a higher level of appearance-related comparison is associated with higher levels of body image dissatisfaction. Participants who engaged in appearance-related social comparison experienced more body dissatisfaction. This conclusion is similar to the findings of Myers and Crowther (2009) as well as Rodgers, Paxton, and Chabrol (2009). The relationship between appearances related social comparisons and body image dissatisfaction involves evaluation of one's body shape, size, and features in comparison with others, usually peers or social media images, to ascertain our standing in the society. Most often media images and the thin-ideal body type the society adores are very difficult to attain and may put more pressure on women with a high level of appearance-related social comparisons to conform. Therefore, the more women engage in appearances related social comparisons the more likely they

will be overly conscious about their outer body, which may result in negative feelings such as guilt, shame and body dissatisfaction (Bailey & Ricciardelli,2010; Trampe, Stapel, & Siero,2007; Leahey, Crowther, & Mickelson, 2007).

Self- esteem was another variable that significantly predicted body dissatisfaction. The result showed that self- esteem had a highly unique contribution to body dissatisfaction. Self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction had an inverse significant relationship which means that low self - esteem is associated with high body dissatisfaction. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Frost & McKelvie (2005) and Davidson & McCabe (2006). An explanation for the result could be the fact self -esteem provides a buffer against outer body insecurities (Furnham, Badmin & Sneade, 2002), enhances resilience during challenging times (Davidson & McCabe 2006), and promotes self –assurance and confidence (Frost & McKelvie 2005). When self-esteem is low, young females are more likely to be more concerned about body image and less likely to resist the pressure to conform to the societal standard body ideal. Therefore, the low level of self -esteem could make young women more susceptible to negative feelings about oneself which ultimately leads to body dissatisfaction. Contrarily, young women with high and healthy self-esteem will have more balanced, rational, and realistic views about their bodies and may be less prone to pressure from media and societal fabricated body ideal standards (Frost & McKelvie, 2005).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Body dissatisfaction is the attitude towards self- image accompanied by negative thoughts and feelings towards one’s physical appearance (Kim & Aubrey, 2015). It is very vital to explore factors that can influence body dissatisfaction, not only because of its prevalence among young women but also for the health and behavioral risks associated with body dissatisfaction including eating disorders, depression, anxiety, etc. (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer,2014; Ricciardelli & McCabe,2001; Ridolfi et al., 2011).The main purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which social media usage, thin-ideal internalization, self-esteem, and appearance–related social comparison predict body image dissatisfaction among female students from Girne American University-Northern Cyprus. The results of this study provide insight onto the predictors of body dissatisfaction. The results show that heavy use of social media platforms, high thin-ideal internalization and high appearance-related social comparison increase the likelihood of experiencing body dissatisfaction. Results also revealed that low self-esteem increases self-criticism and consequently leads to more body dissatisfaction.

The results indicate that body image dissatisfaction increases with high usage of social media, high levels of thin-ideal internalization, high levels of appearance-related social comparison and low self-esteem. The results have important

implications for counselors and other mental health professionals, particularly in areas of preventive measures towards body dissatisfaction. Exploring the predictors of body dissatisfaction is vital to formulating ways to reduce its negative impact on the general wellbeing.

While the results of this study provided predictive empirical information into understanding the predictors of body dissatisfaction among young female university students, further research is needed to conduct exploratory analyses that include more predictor variables. Future studies may also conduct mediation analyses guided by some theoretical framework, to understand the interrelationships among the variables to better account for the variance on body dissatisfaction.

The participants in this study were young female students from diverse cultures; a future study may choose to conduct a comparative analysis across different cultures to examine how body image is perceived across cultures.

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