

How The Amount of Time Spent on Social Media, The Type of Platform Used, and The Activities Performed Online Influence Body Dissatisfaction among U.S. Young Adults Aged 18–25, and Whether Gender Moderates these Effects.

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Background

Body Dissatisfaction (BD): Unhappy with one's body; starts ages 6–12 → lifelong (Barbar et al., 2025)

Theories & Risks

- Internalized ideals (thinness/muscularity, reinforced by Tripartite Model (Silva & Steins, 2023)
- Objectification → self-monitoring, shame (Bavikatty, 2022).
- Cultivation → repeated exposure → ideals feel normal → harm (Saunders & Eaton, 2018).
- Anxiety, depression, ED, substance use, health issues (Alruwayshid et al., 2021).

Social Media (SM)

- Rapid growth (teens)
- Exposure + content type > time (short use ↑ BD) (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016)

Gender

- Females → higher risk (appearance focus, mental health impacts)
- Males → less but still significant (Gojo Cruz et al., 2023).

Platforms & SM use

- Photo-based → perfection → ↑ BD (Instagram is most harmful) (Saunders & Eaton, 2018).
- Video-based (TikTok) → algorithm + repetition → ↑ BD (Bavikatty, 2022).
- Upward comparison + appearance content → ↑ BD (Babar et al., 2025)
- Passive use → most harmful; active use reinforces ideals (Bavikatty, 2022).
- Non-appearance content = lower risk (Foubister et al., 2023).

Hypotheses

H1: SM & BD

- Social media → ↑ body dissatisfaction across all genders
- Females expected → higher BD

H2: Time & BD

- More time (4+ hrs/day) → ↑ BD
- Affects all genders

H3: Platforms & BD

- Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat → more harmful
- YouTube, Twitter, Facebook → less harmful
- Females → more TikTok/Instagram use; Males → more YouTube/other platforms

H4: Activities & BD

- Passive (scrolling, watching, comparing) → ↑ BD
- Active (posting, selfies, filters/editing) → ↓ BD than passive
- All genders engage, but females → higher engagement + stronger BD link

Methods

Participants

- 115 U.S. young adults (18–25); 139 excluded
- Gender: 52 male, 59 female, 4 intersex

Measures

- Demographics (age, gender, race)
- Social media use: time, platforms, activities
- **BSQ-34** → body dissatisfaction (higher = more concern)
- **TIA (26-item)** → problematic social media use (higher = more addictive)

Procedure

- Online Qualtrics survey (via Cloud Connect; \$3 compensation)
- Steps: consent → demographics → social media use → BSQ-34 → TIA

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Body Image and Media Addiction Scores

Factor	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2
Body Image	115	84.60	39.27	-	
Media Addiction	115	74.88	31.68	.79**	-

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Body Image by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E.
Male	52	69.02	34.00	4.72
Female	59	96.08	38.09	4.96
Intersex	4	117.75	51.25	25.62
Total	115	84.60	39.27	3.66

Table 7

Chi-Square Test Investigating Associations to Gender and Snapchat Use Rank

Gender	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Male	0	22	7	15	5	1	2	52
Female	1	14	12	10	6	13	3	59
Intersex	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	1	40	19	25	11	14	5	115

$p < .05$

Discussion

• Social media → ↑ BD; females most affected

- Idealized content → comparison → internalization (thinness/muscularity) (Cohen et al., 2017).
- Reinforced by the Tripartite Model (Silva & Steins, 2023).

Exposure > Time

- type + repetition of exposure matters most (Alruwayshid et al., 2021).
- Even brief, repeated exposure ↑ BD; Gen Z → constant use/addictive patterns (Kiefner- Burmeister et al., 2023).

Platforms

- TikTok; Facebook; strongest significance (sig)
- Instagram (visual, edited, “perfect” life); stronger sig.
- Snapchat, Pinterest, Twitter (less immersive); weakest sig.
- Gender differences in use; minimal (high use across all) (Bavikatty, 2022).

Why Most Harmful

- Algorithms (e.g., FYP/reels)
- Trends (fitspiration, dieting) + comments/groups (Faraci, 2023)
- Peer comparison → more personally relevant → ↑ BD (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016).

Content & Gender

- Females → appearance content → higher vulnerability
- Males → hobbies/gaming, but still affected (Foubister et al., 2023).

Activities

- Passive (scrolling/videos) → most harmful via constant, automatic comparison
- Active (posting/commenting) → still harmful via validation/ideal reinforcement
- Differences not significant; passive use strongest trend

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Body Image and Daily Time Spent on Social Media Platforms

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	1
Body Image	115	84.60	39.27	-
Instagram use	115	61.68	89.31	.16
TikTok use	115	82.40	100.33	.20*
Snapchat use	115	38.74	93.19	.09
Facebook use	115	27.97	60.79	.24*
YouTube use	115	89.65	105.42	-.07
Twitter/X use	115	47.69	84.44	.13
Pinterest use	115	32.04	91.90	-.001
Other Platform use	115	26.29	90.93	.15