The Implications of Social Media in Dietary Habits and Body Image;

exploring Gender Differences

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Abstract

Aims: The present study examined the implications of social media engagement in body image and dietary habits, while also exploring the gender differences within these variables. Research has begun to objectively study these issues, producing contradictory findings. Therefore, this research sought to expand upon these findings and strengthen them by investigating the strength of these relationships. **Method:** Participants (N=111) completed a questionnaire through social media, measuring their social media engagement, body image, undereating and overeating negative behaviours; encompassing the body image scale (BISS), Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ), and the Adult Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (AEBQ). **Results:** Results from a Pearson's regression analysis and T-test revealed that higher levels of social media engagement by individuals are associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction and negative image perception. Similarly, more social media engagement predicted both undereating and overeating negative dietary behaviours. No substantial distinction between the genders for body image were found, with men marginally outperforming women. **Conclusion:** These research findings assist in better comprehending how social media use among users negatively affects both individuals relationship with food and how individuals perceive their bodies. Results, which cast doubt on the misconception that men are not as heavily impacted by these problems as women, is crucial, as they indicate that more investigation on gender differences should be undertaken. The results have noteworthy practical ramifications for how individuals use digital platforms.

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Literature Review

Body image is characterized towards an individual's perspectives, ideas, and feelings regarding their own appearance. It refers to the portrayal of someone's physique, particularly their image, embodying societal conceptions, which are influenced by the cultural values and accepted practices of society. A negative body image can manifest as an unfavorable cognitive assessment of one's appearance (Quittkat, et al., 2019). Numerous lives have been influenced by social media sites, such as Tiktok and Instagram, given that some individuals constitute a distinct community in regard to social media consumers as they are among the first population to have developed in a heavily networked society (Shannon, et al., 2022). It is crucial to determine if using social networking sites has an effect on body image, body dissatisfaction and eating habits, since adolescents and young adults are considered to be the main users of these platforms. Research has begun to objectively study these issues, producing contradictory findings.

A huge rise of social media use and preliminary evidence of a relationship between app usage, increased body image concerns and negative eating behaviours has emerged within the previous couple of decades and continues to incline (Jiotsa, et al., 2021). There has been a plethora of studies on the damaging consequences of exposure to romanticized portrayals, such as those seen in advertising or magazines, on body image concerns and dietary choices (Field, et al., 1999; Turner, et al., 1997). The magnitude to which social networking directly or indirectly affects negative body image, however, is challenged and the findings are conflicting. Several studies have indicated associations among social media usage and body image discontent (Fardouly, et al., 2018; Yang, et al., 2020; Fioravanti, et al., 2022), however, a few determined that social media usage is associated with positive body image (Rogers, et al., 2021).

Recently, there has been an increase in academic attention on the possible impact that new media social networking platforms, such as Instagram and Tiktok, may have on the factors of body image and dietary patterns (Fardouly, et al., 2018; Rounsefell, et al., 2020; Yang, et al., 2020). These newly launched sites are almost exclusively utilized for exchanging personal photographs and video clips (Josh Howarth, 2022). Since 2022, both Instagram and Tiktok have already attracted over a billion active consumers, reflecting the social media platforms' rapid growth in mass appeal within the previous several years (Scott Dixon, 2022). Pictures as well as videos are an extremely effortless approach in displaying oneself on the internet (Vogels, et al., 2022). The majority of data analysis studies exploring social media and body image have heavily relied on Facebook; given that it is the largest widely used social media site worldwide (Eckler, et al., 2017). Despite being perhaps the most widely used picture-sharing mobile app, Instagram has been receiving relatively limited research attention compared to other platforms (Hu, et al., 2014; Vogels, et al., 2022). Several of these more recent apps, like Tiktok, are primarily image-based, unlike Facebook, enabling individuals to embody societal expectations for perceived attractiveness, which can contribute to discontentment with one's own image when one cannot adhere to those requirements (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019; Uchôa, et al., 2019). However, this issue has not been adequately explored in the framework of current social media platforms.

Health practitioners are presently finding it difficult to communicate and inform social media consumers regarding healthy dietary habits (Lee Ventola, 2014). Instead of professionals, app users appear to be enticed to celebrities' nutrition recommendations, sharing insights while acquiring occasionally misleading material (Pilgrim, et al., 2019). Numerous social media profiles have sizable following groups that they use to promote diet products, glorify ideal living, and spread messages about body image that are frequently conflicting (De Jans, et al., 2022). According to a study by Rounsefell and colleagues (2020),

healthy young adults who are exposed to social media may experience detrimental consequences, affecting their body image and food decision making as a result of using social networking sites and being exposed to appearance-focus material (Rounsefell, et al., 2020). A related investigation examining Facebook usage revealed comparable discoveries on the impacts of social media on negative body image and unhealthy eating patterns (Smith, et al., 2013), however, there is evidence to support the premise that a limited engagement with social media platforms has little harmful effects on difficulties regarding body image (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). In order to identify what amount of social media engagement is more hazardous to body image difficulties, additional experimental and survey investigations are necessary.

Since adolescent women are more susceptible than other age ranges to have body image problems and problematic eating issues, investigations on social media have mostly been conducted on this population (Tiggemann, et al., 2013; Cohen, et al., 2017; Fardouly, et al., 2018; Yang, et al., 2020). It has previously been hypothesized that both dietary factors and body image ramifications specifically predispose women to participate in self-objectification; representing the degree that a person holds a perception of oneself and develops obsessive tendencies with how their body should look (Richard Perloff, 2014). It has been argued that this may lead to a constant scrutiny of one's physical presentation (Fioravanti, et al., 2022). With a strong contrast from conventional media, members of social media sites frequently share pictures of themselves that are orchestrated, improved through the usage of graphic editing software, generally showing themselves looking ideal and perfect (Cohen, et al., 2017; Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). Users may strive to manage how they appear by removing or restricting photographs that don't compliment them (Lang & Barton, 2015).

The unique findings of a recent study conducted by Tiggemann and colleagues (2018) on the influence of likes on women's body perception, showed how particular and distinctive characteristics of social media may influence how individuals perceive themselves and negative food behaviours. This finding is noteworthy as it shows through posting personal photographs that solicit remarks and commentary from other people, social media platforms may enable members to actively take part in detrimental patterns; presenting themselves as subjects that may be observed and valued solely dependent on looks (Tiggemann, et al., 2018). Interestingly, Ringrose and Barajas (2011) revealed that women modified their images significantly greater and more frequently than males did, using light sources and angles to make themselves seem more ideal (Ringrose & Barajas, 2011). Moreover, Casale and colleagues (2019) conducted an experimental study to examine how access to numerous appearance-focused social media photographs affected females and males' perceptions of their bodies. The findings demonstrated that prolonged engagement to desirable, same-sex profiles increased female's discontentment with their bodies. The degree toward which females identified their identity by their external attractiveness also increased. Male's physical discontent, weight discontent, and body confidence were not found to be affected with interactions to same-sex attractive photos (Casale, et al., 2019). Since greater extensive investigations on a wider variety of populations are necessary, researchers have also started looking at how media representations of individuals from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds affect their body image and eating habits (Prieler, et al., 2021). There are indications that certain ethnicities experience negative body image at levels similar to those of Caucasian populations (Voegeli, et al., 2021), although there are claims that there are minimal cultural variations in the perceptions of idealized or visually appealing individuals (Tiggemann, 2011).

While previous literature has mostly concentrated on body image (Yang, et al., 2020), it is necessary to recognise that this current study's theoretical framework of analysis will be targeting the impacts social media has on body image difficulties and additionally, the dietary impact regarding overeating and undereating practices. The current investigation will look at the combined and cumulative effects of using social media and the specific content consumed on individuals' dietary patterns and overall appearance-related concerns. Particularly in regards to difficulties with body image and negative dieting behaviours, men may exhibit differing tendencies than women (Cohane, et al., 2001). The variations between the genders have not been sufficiently analysed in the published literature and remains controversial (Hargreaves, et al., 2004). Earlier hypothesis indicated that social media has a proportional impact on the variables for both males and females (Saiphoo and Vahedi, 2019). However, more recent studies have identified a relationship between negative dietary practices and body image when comparing male and female social media feeds that each gender is exposed to (Chua & Chang, 2016; Thornborrow, et al., 2020; Mahon & Hevey, 2021). Moreover, a study conducted by Tamplin and colleagues (2018) argued that different kinds of social media activity, such as the posts displayed on an individual's feed that they are exposed to on an ongoing basis, may reveal a varied body image relationship between men and women (Tamplin, et al., 2018). For illustration, a woman's feed may include considerably more postings about diets and body focused images than a male. This is in comparison to earlier literature, which placed more emphasis on the amount of time invested on social media (Jiotsa, et al., 2021).

The discrepancies observed in the existing literature described preclude researchers and healthcare specialists from establishing any definitive conclusions about the influence of social media on body image and dietary habits. In order to provide an explanation that is more definitive, it is important that the current research investigates the impact of social

media exposure in inclusive population groups and newer app contexts. The social media world is quickly evolving, generating difficulty in consistently providing suggestions that are both prompt and useful (Kross, et al., 2021). That being said, limitations within the existing literature, such as the individualized aspects of social media while utilizing suitable controls, could perhaps restrict the interpretation of the results concerning social media's effects on overeating, dietary behaviours, undereating dietary behaviours, and body image (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). Negative eating practices such as compulsive eating or restriction, which have many detrimental long term physical implications, are more likely to be practiced when one has a poor body image (Rounsefell, et al., 2020). Previous research findings on the impact of social media and body image are inconsistent (Smith, et al., 2013; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016), therefore, it is necessary to identify what specific features of social media are more hazardous to body image difficulties, additional survey investigations are necessary. As the data between gender scoring is inconsistent, according to previous investigations (Casale, et al., 2019; Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019), the difference in gender scoring in relation to body image and dietary behaviours will be analyzed. The awareness of these detrimental effects highlights the value of encouraging and fostering a positive view of one's body. The intention of the current study is to establish a framework for future research on the associations between social media use, body image, and eating behaviours among both males and females, and to serve as a basis for further empirical work on the subject.

The Current Study

While previous literature has mostly concentrated on body image (Yang, et al., 2020), it is necessary to recognise that this theoretical framework of analysis will be targeting the influence social media has on body image concerns and additionally, the dietary impact. This investigation will look at the combined and cumulative effects of using social media and the specific content consumed on individuals' dietary patterns and overall appearance-related

concerns. The current study will conduct additional quantitative research concerning the extent that social media has on body image and dietary patterns, as the statistical data evidence is inconsistent in the literature described. Particularly in regard to difficulties with body image and diet behaviours, men may exhibit differing tendencies than women (Cohane, et al., 2001). The variations between the genders have not been sufficiently analysed in the published literature and remains controversial (Hargreaves, et al., 2004). Additionally, studies on how the media potentially affects males have received considerably less attention. For illustration, a woman's feed may include considerably more postings about diets and body focused images than a male. Lastly, the majority of data analysis studies exploring social media and body image have heavily relied on Facebook; given that it is the largest widely used social media site worldwide (Eckler, et al., 2017). However, competing social media sites, notably Instagram and Tiktok, are becoming increasingly more popular, especially among young adults (Vogels, et al., 2022). Several of these networks, like Instagram, are primarily image-based, unlike Facebook, enabling individuals to compare their looks quite frequently. Due to this reason, this investigation will take into account the effects of these appearance based social media apps.

Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine the implications of social media in dietary habits and body image. Due to this research being quantitative in nature, it may not provide a thorough and in-depth understanding of the subject matter; but it is important to conduct more quantitative research concerning the extent that social media has on body image and dietary patterns, as the statistical data evidence is inconsistent. The aim of the current study with additionally investigate the gender differences amongst these variables. These objectives have resulted in the accompanying study questions and hypotheses:

Research question one: Is there a clear relationship between the criterion variable, social media, and the predictor variable, body image? *Hypothesis for research question one:* The hypothesis predicts that in line with previous research, being more engaged with the predictor variable (PV) social media, will be positively associated with the criterion variables (CVs) poorer body image.

Research question two: Does higher social media engagement predict increased negative dietary behaviours? *Hypothesis for research question two:* Higher social media engagement will be predict an increase in negative dietary behaviours.

Research question three: Is there a difference in gender scoring in relation to body image and dietary behaviours? *Hypothesis for research question three:* The third hypothesis predicts, based on the previous literature, that women will score higher than men on the body image scale and both EUE and EOE eating behaviour scale.

Methodology

Participants

The sample for the current study was comprised of 110 individuals (males: $n = 33$; females: $n = 77$). his was computed using the formula provided by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) for determining the sample size for multiple regression analysis, which is shown within: ($n > 50 + 8m$), where participants are denoted by n, and PVs are denoted by m. Therefore, for the findings to be statistically significant, the minimum sample size must exceed n = 74. With an average age of 23 (SD = 2.47), the participants' ages varied from 18 to 76. An average sample size of 156 individuals was additionally calculated from 5 prior research investigation's participant sample sizes (Casale, S., 2021; Yang, H., et al., 2020; Aparicio-Martinez, P., et al., 2019; Fardouly, J., 2018; Mask, L., & Blanchard, C. M., 2011). Lastly, the G*power Statical Power Analyses test was utilized to judge the sample size needed in order to attain a more reliable sample size estimate. It used an effect size of 0.5, a significant level of 0.05 and the power of 0.8. The average approximated sample size calculated was 115 participants and of the participants recruited, a sample size of 111 was utilized.

In accordance with ethical standards, participants gathered were at least over the age of 18 years. Both male and female individuals were included in the research. As a necessary consequence of the participants being recruited through the use of social media platform, the sample was populated by individuals who were actively engaged on social media; increasing the study's validity. Additional demographic data, other than gender and age, was not gathered from participants since it was not necessary for the research; as one of the main concerns was respecting the participants anonymity. Moreover, the participants did not belong to any medical or clinical group.

Measures

An online anonymous self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the primary data, including three different scales which measured the target variables. The online data collection used a questionnaire created on the Google Forms platform. No demographic questions were administered in the study apart from the gender and age of the participants. The quantitative data analysis was converted to Excel and the SPSS software application once enough surveys had been completed for the validity of the research to be significant. The research design was experimental in nature in order to establish causation between the predictor variable (PV), social media, and the two criterion variables (CVs), dietary habits and body image. The study encompassed the body image scale (BISS), Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ) and the Adult Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (AEBQ).

Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ) (Przybylski, et al., 2013). The SMEQ is a five - item instrument that uses response anchoring varying from '0' *for not at all* to '7' *for daily* to assess a participant's level of social media consumption. The responses among all five questions may be added up to determine each scoring rate. Scores that are comparatively high reflect greater time spent on online sites. For instance, the participant answer anchors for the item "how many times have you used social media 15 minutes before going to bed?" must be assessed for the prior week: *not one day = 0, one day = 1, two days = 2, three days = 3, four days = 4, five days = 5, six days = 6, and every day = 7*. Individual scores may be calculated by combining together the answers to each of the five items, and this yields a trustworthy composition of value ($a = .82$ *to* $.89$). The maximum score is 35, while the minimum is 0 (see Appendix B for full details). The scale has a strong level of internal consistency for this particular sample, as indicated by the Cronbach's alpha of ($a = .84$).

Body Image State Scale (BISS) (Cash, et al., 2002). The BISS is used to assess momentary contentment with one's body appearance. It is measured using six bipolar Likert-

type items that ask respondents how they currently feel about different components of their appearance, such as physical attractiveness, body composition and form, and attractiveness. An average score of momentary bodily satisfaction is calculated for each item, which gives a choice of a nine-point response style between contentment to discontent, or vice versa. The scales range from *extreme satisfaction* to *severe dissatisfaction* regarding physical appearance, with three of the questions shifting from positive to negative, reversing the score. The questions with reversed scoring included: question two "*right now I feel... extremely satisfied with my body size and shape..*", question four *" right now I feel... extremely physically attractive",* and question six "*right now I feel that I look... a great deal worse than the average person looks"*. Responses varied from 1 (a great deal) to 9 (a great deal), — in other words, individuals were asked to rate their physical appearance from "Extremely dissatisfied" (9 points), "*Mostly dissatisfied*" (8 points), "*Moderately dissatisfied*" (7 points), "*Slightly dissatisfied*" (6 points), "*Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied*" (5 points), "*Slightly satisfied*" (4 points), "*Moderately satisfied*" (3 points), "*Mostly satisfied*" (2 points), to "*Extremely satisfied*" (1 point). Following assessing the positive to negative questions in reverse order, the average of the six items on the scale was calculated. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was ($a = .83$), which denotes a good degree of internal consistency with the existing dataset.

Adult Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (AEBG) (Hunot-Alexander, et al., 2021). The AEBG is an age transitive modification of a frequently utilized and well validated evaluation of personal variability in dietary approach characteristics (satisfaction of eating and consuming in reaction to adverse influences) and avoidant characteristics (slow eating and undereating reaction to adverse influences). The 35-item scale comprises of a 1–5 Likert scale to evaluate agreeableness or disagreeableness with each of 8 appetitive elements. Each statement must be read by participants, who must then check the box that applies to

them the strongest. For instance, the phrase *'I often feel hungry'* requires a check next to the following choices: *strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5*. Reverse scored items included the enjoyment of food (EF), emotional over-eating (EOE), emotional under-eating (EUE), food fussiness (FF), food responsiveness (FR), slowness in eating (SE), hunger (H), and satiety responsiveness (SR). An shortened adaptation of 39 statements was made to the original scale in order for optimal participant responsiveness.

Design and Analyses

The research design of the current study implemented an experimental cross sectional design using standard multiple regression analysis for illustration and clarification of results; the study being quantitative in nature. The predictor variable (PV) was social media, while body image and dietary habits (mediator) were analysed as criterion variables (CV). The correlational relationships within each gender set of participants (*male/ female*) were investigated for hypothesis three. The male group and the female group was examined through a between-subject design, as well as the variations between groups for each criterion variable using independent sample t-tests. Group correlations, effect sizes, multiple regression analyses, and mediator tests were used in the statistical evaluation using SPSS Statistics Software. All variables were subjected to one-way ANOVAs and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient to analyse correlations within groups when variables met the assumption of normality.

Procedure

Convenience sampling was employed using Tiktok, Twitter, Instagram, and other similar online sites since they provided a variety of channels for communicating and exchanging information while maintaining physical separation and anonymity. The use of social media to distinguish and recruit possible volunteers allowed the study to reach a

greater segment of the demographic than it could have otherwise, while also identifying participants associated with specific factors that could be used to predict their eligibility. The use of social media sites to facilitate questionnaires or collect data from individuals was prohibited. These channels were exclusively utilized to promote the research study and refer possible participants to the survey's dedicated website. This was to guarantee that the content acquired was compliant with NCI's Data Retention Policy and that NCI was the sole data controller. In order for the potential participants' recruitment to comply with guidelines, the project's website was explicitly used to distribute the relevant information in the form of a Privacy Notice. Both in the comments section or through instant messengers, it was not encouraged to contribute or provide any private information. Posters were also displayed around NCI which can been seen in Appendix I.

The questionnaire was held online through the Google Forms software website that individuals were directed to after finding the research questionnaire link on the researcher's social media page. Potential participants could choose to participate in the online questionnaire when they clicked on the researcher's social media account. When opening the link to the current study, each participant was provided with an informative document outlining the study's purpose in non-scientific terms, their eligibility for the research, what will be involved in the questionnaire, and the potential risks and benefits from participating at the commencement of the questionnaire, immediately upon clicking on the link (see appendix E for full details). The possible participants had unlimited time to review and complete the form; taking approximately 3 minutes to read. The consent form was provided at the end of the information page (see appendix F) in which the individuals were required to click a 'yes' button confirming that they had read/ understood the information presented in the document and that they would like to continue. The consent form displayed a statement that they could understand and consent to easily. The individuals lastly had to click an 'agree' button

confirming that they had read the above information, they consent to participate, and confirm that they were over the age of 18. Individuals had the right to withdraw their consent to participate before and during the questionnaire took place without penalty. The questions took an average of 7 minutes to complete for participants (the time for completion obtained from the pilot study individuals). The questions encompassed a mix of multiple-choice questions encompassing the Adult Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (AEBG), the Body Image States Scale (BISS) and the Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ), where individuals were required to click one answer for each separate question. The individuals were permitted to take as many breaks as they required in order to complete the questionnaire; given that the questions had no time limit. The final section of the questionnaire included a debriefing form (see appendix G) that once more described the research purpose and acknowledged gratitude to respondents for their participation. My supervisor and own contact details were provided, as well as mental health and eating disorder support links due to the possibility that an individual could have perhaps experienced psychological discomfort. Participants were encouraged that they may send the link to anyone who met the requirements and appeared intrigued.

Ethical Considerations

All data was obtained in conformity with NCI's ethical standards. The study participants could withdraw their data simply by exiting the questionnaire browser while completing the sections, or at the end of the questionnaire before clicking submit. However, if the participant has already submitted their answers, their individual data will not be able to be withdrawable as the data is completely anonymised. The participants were provided with the opportunity to consult with the researcher or supervisor by the emails provided at the bottom of the debriefing sheet (see appendix G) if they had any questions or issues related to this process after they completed the questionnaire. The following support services were

provided: The Samaritans: (01) 872 7700, Bodywhys: (01) 2107906, and NEDA Helpline: text 'NEDA' to 741741 for 24/7 eating disorder crisis support.

Participants were briefed though the information form (see appendix E), consent form (see appendix F) and the debriefing form (see appendix G) that they will no longer have the ability to withdraw their data once the questionnaire has been submitted and when the research has been published through National College of Ireland. All participants were informed that the questionnaire's data will be used exclusively for my degree and no other research will be conducted using it. Participants were additionally informed that if the project earns a 2.1 or higher, it will be included in the NCI library's publications; which according to NCI standards will be maintained for 5 years; yet beyond that time, all information gathered in this analysis will be erased.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The current data is comprised from the sample of 110 participants (n = 110). The sample was comprised of 33 (30%) males and 76 (69.1%) females. One participant, labelled as 'other' was removed from the data set due to significance of numbers. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables are presented below in Table 1 for both genders.

Table 1

Frequencies for the current sample for each demographic variable (N =110)

Variable		N	Valid Percentage
Gender			
	Male	33	30.0
	Female	76	69.1
Age			
	18-21	83	74.7
	22-26	10	7.38
	27+	16	14.4

Descriptive statistics were performed for both the predictor variable, social media, and the criterion variables, body image, emotional undereating and overeating (EUE and EOE). Preliminary analyses were performed on the data set to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The means (M), standard deviations (SD), minimum and maximum stores, and range (R) were obtained, along with tests of normality. Subsequently, histograms demonstrated that the dataset was approximately

normally distributed. In the case of the undereating variable (EUE), the data set was moderately positively skewed. See Appendix H for the accompanying histogram for all continuous variables. There are four continuous variables: social media, body image, emotional undereating dietary behaviours (EUE) and emotional overeating dietary behaviours (EOE). The descriptive results for all continuous variables are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the current sample for each continuous variable

Variable	*M* [95% CI]	*SD*	Range
Social Media	31.00 [4.00, 35.00]	8.17	31
Body Image	40.00 [8.00, 48.00]	8.00	40
Emotional Undereating	17.00 [5.00, 22.00]	3.72	17
Emotional Overeating	18.00 [5.00, 23.00]	3.89	18

Inferential Statistics

An independent samples t-test was used to compare levels of body image and both overeating and undereating dietary behaviours between males and females. There was not a significant difference in body image scores, with males (M= 29.00, SD= 8.19) scoring slightly higher than females (M= 28.09, SD= 7.90), t (107) = .55, P= .468). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference= .908, 95% C1 [-2.39, 4.21]) was small (Cohens d

= .144). Regarding the undereating dietary behaviours between males (M= 11.15, SD= 3.90) and females (M= 12.87, SD= 3.56); females scored slightly higher than males, t (107) = -2.2, P= .576). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference= -1.72, 95% C1 [-3.23, -.202]) was considered a medium effect size (Cohens d = .469). Lastly, the overeating dietary behaviours between males (M= 12.30, SD= 3.78) and females (M= 14.15, SD= 3.80); females scored higher than males, t (107) = -2.3, P= .768). The magnitude of differences in the means (mean difference= -1.84, 95% C1 [-3.41, -.273]) was considered a medium effect size (Cohens d = .485).

A Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was performed to determine how well negative body image and negative dietary patterns could be explained by the predictor variable social media. There was a significant negative correlation between the two variables social media and body image ($r = -.190$, $n = 110$, $p < .05$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 64% of variance in common. These results suggests that higher levels of social media use are associated with a lower score on the measure of body image. There was a significant strong positive correlation between social media use and undereating behaviours ($r = .324$, $n = 110$, $p < .01$). This result suggests that higher levels of social media use results in more negative undereating dietary behaviours. Lastly, there was similarly a significant strong positive correlation between the variable social media and overeating behaviours ($r = .362$, $n = 110$, $p < .01$). Overeating and undereating dietary behaviours were both highly correlated ($r= .577$, $n = 110$, $p < .01$). This result suggests that higher levels of social media use results in more negative overeating dietary behaviours. Table 3 displays the results below.

Table 3

Correlations between all continuous variables

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Social Media	1			
2. Body Image	-.190*	1		
3. Undereating Behaviours	.324**	-.226*	1	
4. Overeating Behaviours	.362**	-.199*	.577**	1

*Statistical significance: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

A one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to investigate whether there are differences in levels of negative body image between genders. Participants were divided into two groups, males (M 29.00 [26.10,31.90], SD 8.19) and females (M 28.09 [26.29, 29.89], SD 7.88). Results indicate that there was not a statistically significant difference in the level of negative body image between the two gender groups, F 2.98, (6,823) = p = .586. The effect size indicated a small difference in body image scores (eta squared = .021). See table 4 for clarification of results.

Table 4

One way ANOVA between genders for body image variable

Variable	*M* [95% CI]	*SD*
Male	29.00 [26.10,31.90]	8.19
Female	28.09 [26.29, 29.89]	7.88

Discussion

The current study set out to seek greater clarification on the implications that social media consumption has on how individuals perceive their bodies and their dietary patterns. The study examined the combined and cumulative consequences of using social media sites including Tiktok, Instagram, and Facebook; in particular, the quantity of material consumed over the course of a typical week that could potentially impact individuals' food choices and overall appearance-related concerns. In addition, gender variations within both variables were explored, as previous literature depicted that men may have different tendencies than women, particularly when it comes to difficulties with body image and dietary habits (Cohane, et al., 2001). Since women are thought to be more susceptible to have body image problems and problematic eating issues, investigations on social media have mostly been conducted on this population (Tiggemann, et al., 2013; Fardouly, et al., 2018; Yang, et al., 2020). However, as demonstrated in the literature, gender differences have not been adequately examined and it is still uncertain whether or not there is a significant variance (Hargreaves, et al., 2004). While a wide range of possible factors may influence levels of negative body image and negative dietary behaviours, this study specifically attempted to control for social media since prior studies had found that it was closely associated to these issues (Jiotsa, et al., 2021). According to prior studies, using social networking platforms and being subjected to content that emphasizes looks and attractiveness can have negative effects on individuals who are in good health, such as modifying how they perceive their bodies in a negative way and contributing to negative food decisions (Rounsefell, et al., 2020; Smith, et al., 2013). Accordingly, this research investigated how different forms of social media consumption among men and females are attributed to dietary habits and body image. Three hypotheses were developed within this study to accommodate the aims of the current investigation.

In the interest of evaluating the first hypothesis, which asked whether there is a direct correlation between using social media and having a more negative body image, results displayed a significant negative relationship between the two variables. This supported and increased confidence in the hypothesis, indicating that higher levels of social media use by individuals are associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction and negative image perception. This outcome is consistent with prior research. Similarly, the second hypothesis showed that higher social media engagement predicted both undereating and overeating negative dietary behaviours, sharing a significant correlation; in accordance with what was anticipated to transpire from previous studies. The findings of the final hypothesis revealed that there was no substantial distinction between the outcomes for body image, with men marginally outperforming women. Interestingly, this contradicted the hypothesis, which proposed that women would perform higher on the body image scale than males.

As hypothesised, increased engagement in social media by individuals have been associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction and negative image perception. This assertion is in agreement with prior quantitative studies investigating the unfavourable effects of social media on body image (Fardouly, et al., 2018; Yang, et al., 2020; Fioravanti, et al., 2022), alongside recent qualitative focus group studies where participants frequently disclosed feeling dissatisfied with one's appearance when attempting to adhere to social media's body standard (Baker, Ferszt & Breines, 2019; Mahon & Hevey, 2021). A possible explanation for this highly correlated relationship is the increase of digital modification. Due to the new built-in filter features on social media platforms like Snapchat, their utilization looks ordinary and realistic (Kleemans, et al., 2016). Individuals prevalently hold celebrities as well as other influential public figures accountable for using portrait editing and image manipulation methods since they may normalize an unattainable body standard, which

becomes problematic while acting as role models among many people (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). Several participants in research regarding this issue stated that they took a lot of time choosing their own personal pictures to post, looking for the most attractive camera position, then further enhancing it with effects and electronically modifying it with photo-editing apps (Bij de Vaate et al., 2018; Veldhuis, et al., 2020). Following this, Wick and Keel (2020) discovered that women who posted modified photographs on their personal profiles displayed more eating disorder tendencies than those who shared original pictures or were in a control condition. Even though this emerging social networking component is consistent, the issue remains up for discussion due to conflicting considerations. More research on social medias relationship to negative body image is essential as contrary to Cohen and colleagues' findings, an increase in body-positive material in the past few years comprising of large quantities of unfiltered photos may provide a useful platform for enhancing women's body image. According to this study, social media may even be beneficial for body perception. However, their sample size restrained a thorough examination of the general population since their analysis was focused only on young women (Cohen, et al., 2019).

As higher social media engagement predicted negative body image in prior studies and in the current investigation, it was interesting to see that it was similarly strongly linked to an increase in both undereating and overeating negative dietary behaviours. As demonstrated by the results of the current study, negative dietary patterns associated from social media usage were not found to be statistically different among men and women, with women only marginally outperforming men in terms of the eating scale. It is worthwhile to emphasize that men and boys also exhibit negative body image and negative eating behaviors while being frequent users of image intensive apps (Dixon, 2023), when you take into

account the fact that the overwhelming bulk of studies continue to be interested in female participants only (McCabe and Ricciardelli, 2001; Striegel-Moore et al., 2009). This was supported by an exploratory study conducted by Aparico-Martineez and colleagues (2019), evaluating a large collection of studies on social media and problematic eating behaviours. They exclusively examined the gender variations; discovering just one study with a meaningful gender imbalance. The conclusions drawn from this investigation may be explained through the possibility that who were more active on social media are potentially subjected to more pictures and messages that raise the likelihood of them acquiring negative eating behaviours. The research was concerned with visual platforms like Instagram and Tiktok which enable greater access to powerful visual content that might support the thin ideal (Sidani, et al., 2016). According to various research, several prevalent trends, such as *fitspiration* and *thinspiration,* may have a damaging effect as they encourage people to alter their eating behaviors in pursuit of conforming to the perceived norm. The assumption is that people have an natural inclination to engage in social comparison practices automatically and subconsciously (Tiggemann, 2012), striving to show an ideal image of themselves on social media in order to be admired by others and by their societies collectively. Hence, the prevalence of eating problems, including undereating, compulsive eating, and overeating, has been found to be higher in individual's who use social media frequently (Smith et al., 2013).

Finally, while there was no substantial gender difference in the results of the body image scores, it is interesting to highlight that men performed slightly higher than women. Most studies published in the field have sought to explore how idealized pictures on social media affects various aspects of body image negatively in the female population in particular (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). However, recent user statistics display that over half of Instagram users are males (51.8%) (Dixon, 2023). Subsequently, approximately a quarter of

the *fitspo* and "*picture-perfect*" depictions on photo based platforms attribute to romanticized masculine forms (Gültzow, et al., 2020). The research on the impact of the media on men's body image is clearly inconsistent. Previous studies claimed that men wished they had more muscle, potentially as a consequence of the muscular bodies of plastic figurines and other non-media influences (Pope, et al., 1999; Barlett, Harris & Smith, 2005; Baghurst, et al., 2006). The increased representation of strong, slim men in advertisements and films also reflects this (Jaehee Jung, 2011). Such research discovered no association among males' social media engagement and body discontent. Studies conducted during the same timeframe however, demonstrated opposing findings (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). More up to date meta-analyses claim that social media has an equivalent impact on body perception for both men and women, yet other studies argue that due to the shame attributed to male body satisfaction, the influence that social media has on men's body image may be minimized (Griffiths, et al., 2014; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Comparable to how females have been subjected to an unattainable skinny ideal, males have recently become subjected to the influence of online society to attain an idealized athletic physique (Gültzow, et al., 2020). Increasing male body dissatisfaction has also correlated with increased amounts of body composition exhibited on social networking sites (Piatkowski, et al., 2021). The current study builds on this research and in an effort to minimize this stigma, more research on social media and body image should consider both male and female body image perspectives. In attempts to accurately associate negative body image with relevant factors involved, investigations may want to concentrate on the particular media imagery, influencers, trends, and hashtags that each gender commonly follows on online platforms.

The following limitations must be recognised when interpreting these results. This study's recruitment through social media primarily recruited young women, which presents a

constraint that may prevent findings to bee generalizing to the general public. Additionally, although the study provided inside on the broad range of differences displayed through different age groups, the subjects were mostly between the ages of 18 to 21 which limited the results' potential validity in a wider context. As a consequence, these findings should be viewed as exploratory, and the conclusions should be regarded as tentative and not yet final. Whilst the analysis used the required baseline number of individuals using Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) formula and the G*power Statical Power Analyses test, the relatively small sample has not sufficiently accounted for variations in gender, ethnicity, and age discovered in earlier studies on body satisfaction and dietary practices. Consequently, extending data collection is something that upcoming research must think about doing in hopes of recruiting a diverse population of volunteers from which to derive inferences. Meanwhile, it's feasible that the measures employed during the investigation failed to appropriately assess the variables properly. Predominantly, the adult eating behaviour questionnaire used only 10 questions for this research to assess for undereating and overeating behaviours, despite possessing strong dependability (Hunot-Alexander, et al., 2021). This might suggest that the scale wasn't precise or detailed enough to accurately record individuals' dietary habits. The body image states measure also included items that were primarily image-focused and did not take into consideration the unintentional perceptions and normative beliefs. To yield more reliable findings, subsequent investigations may consider the utilization of more detailed scales that assess every component of this complicated conceptual framework. Lastly, future studies should also take into account particular social media usage patterns, such as engaged or passive involvement. This will make it possible to comprehend the specific processes and circumstances influencing the likelihood that social media utilization is connected to disordered eating. While supplementary research is required, this study was strengthened by the examination of more widely used and prominent social media platforms, which provided

more accurate findings concerning this media-dependent population. This investigation was particularly invested in social networking sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Tiktok, rather than earlier quantitative studies that heavily focused on social media platforms like Facebook. The impact of these other social media platforms besides Facebook should be examined and compared in future investigations. It might also be of benefit to use an integration of the self-reporting metrics employed in this study with other more precise techniques for measuring people's social media usage.

Implications

The conclusions that can be drawn from this research have notable theoretical as well as practical ramifications. Despite being a new area of study, the connection between social media, body image, and negative eating patterns has generating a considerable amount of interest. Therefore, the current research sought to quantitatively investigate this relationship. Examining these concerns is essential due to the association found between social media and body image dissatisfaction (Fardouly, et al., 2018; Yang, et al., 2020; Fioravanti, et al., 2022) as well as social media being associated with eating disorder indicators (Cohen, et al., 2001; Mask & Blanchard, 2011; Smith, et al., 2013). One of the most reliable and constant indicators of future problematic eating habits is body dissatisfaction and the unfavourable perceptual assessment of one's own body composition or appearance (Yang, et al., 2022). The implications of this research offer a frame of reference to explore for many clinicians and professionals who may not understand the broad concepts and the extent to which eating disorders and the development of negative body images are threatened by social media. It introduces a way for discussing the various manners in which media can affect eating habits and body image, as well as gender differences in susceptibility to media portrayal. Future studies in this area should make specific recommendations on how to combat harmful media

factors and encourage a positive body image in order to lessen the negative impacts that image dissatisfaction has on disordered food tendencies.

Conclusion

To conclude, the current research has provided a more specific and inclusive approximation of the intensity of the connection between social media use, body image disturbance, and eating behaviours to add to the existing research previously provided. The study indicates that the frequency of social media engagement is strongly related to unfavourable eating practices and poor perceptions of one's body across a variety of indicators. Since no substantial gender difference was found in relation to body image scores, this investigation has built on prior research displaying a need to minimize the stigma that social media effecting body image applies to specifically women. Subsequently, further studies on social media and body image must therefore take both male and female experiences and perceptions into account in order for the development of inclusive interventions. Upcoming investigations must endeavour to place emphasis on the role that social media use continues to play in body concerns, negative overeating, and negative undereating, since these sites have grown increasingly widespread in today's modern way of life. The prolonged negative impacts that social media could potentially have on individuals however are unclear since it remains a relatively new phenomenon.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Evidence of Data and Output

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Difference	Difference	Lower	Upper
TOTALbodyimage	Equal variances assumed	.531	.468	.546	107	.293	.586	.90789	1.66246	-2.38774	4.20353
	Equal variances not assumed			.538	58.888	.296	.593	.90789	1.68757	-2.46907	4.28486
TOTALEUE	Equal variances assumed	.315	.576	-2.247	107	.013	.027	-1.71691	.76397	-3.23138	-.20243
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.168	56.233	.017	.034	-1.71691	.79199	-3.30330	-.13051
TOTALEOE	Equal variances assumed	.087	.768	-2.327	107	.011	.022	-1.84171	.79150	-3.41077	-.27264
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.333	61.295	.011	.023	-1.84171	.78940	-3.42006	-.26335

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

				95% Confidence Interval	
		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	Lower	Upper
TOTALbodyimage	Cohen's d	7.97447	.114	-.295	.522
	Hedges' correction	8.03091	.113	-.293	.519
	Glass's delta	7.88277	.115	-.294	.524
TOTALEUE	Cohen's d	3.66459	-.469	-.881	-.054
	Hedges' correction	3.69053	-.465	-.875	-.054
	Glass's delta	3.56031	-.482	-.896	-.065
TOTALEOE	Cohen's d	3.79668	-.485	-.898	-.070
	Hedges' correction	3.82355	-.482	-.891	-.070
	Glass's delta	3.80422	-.484	-.898	-.067

Oneway

Descriptives

body image

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
male	33	29.0000	8.18535	1.42489	26.0976	31.9024	10.00	44.00
female	76	28.0921	7.88277	.90422	26.2908	29.8934	8.00	48.00
Total	109	28.3670	7.94852	.76133	26.8579	29.8761	8.00	48.00

ANOVA

body image

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.966	1	18.966	.298	.586
Within Groups	6804.355	107	63.592		
Total	6823.321	108			

ANOVA Effect Sizes[a,b]

			95% Confidence Interval	
		Point Estimate	Lower	Upper
body image	Eta-squared	.003	.000	.054
	Epsilon-squared	-.007	-.009	.045
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	-.006	-.009	.044
	Omega-squared Random-effect	-.006	-.009	.044

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Appendix B

Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ) (Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. Computers in Human Behavior, 29, 1814-1848.).

Participant Instructions Response Anchors

Not one day		0
One day		1
Two days		2
Three days		3
Four days		4
Five days		5
Six days		6
Every day		7

Items

1. How often did you use social media in the 15 minutes before you go to sleep?
2. How often did you use social media in the 15 minutes after you wake up?
3. How often did you use social media when eating breakfast?
4. How often did you use social media when eating lunch?
5. How often did you use social media when eating supper?

Calculating Individual Scores

Individual scores can be computed by summing responses to all five items and forms a reliable composite measure (α = .82 to .89).

Appendix C

Body Image States Scale (BISS) (Cash, T. F., Fleming, E. C., Alindogan, J., Steadman, L., & Whitehead, A. (2002). Beyond body image as a trait: The development and validation of the Body Image States Scale. Eating disorders, 10(2), 103-113. doi:10.1080/10640260290081678)

For each of the items below, check the circle beside the one statement that best describes how you feel RIGHT NOW AT THIS VERY MOMENT. Read the items carefully to make sure the statement you choose accurately and honestly describes how you feel right now.

1. Right now I feel . . .

- o Extremely dissatisfied with my physical appearance
- o Mostly dissatisfied with my physical appearance
- o Moderately dissatisfied with my physical appearance
- o Slightly dissatisfied with my physical appearance
- o Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with my physical appearance
- o Slightly satisfied with my physical appearance
- o Moderately satisfied with my physical appearance
- o Mostly satisfied with my physical appearance
- o Extremely satisfied with my physical appearance

2. Right now I feel . . .

- o Extremely satisfied with my body size and shape
- o Mostly satisfied with my body size and shape
- o Moderately satisfied with my body size and shape
- o Slightly satisfied with my body size and shape
- o Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with my body size and shape
- o Slightly dissatisfied with my body size and shape
- o Moderately dissatisfied with my body size and shape
- o Mostly dissatisfied with my body size and shape
- o Extremely dissatisfied with my body size and shape

3. Right now I feel . . .

- o Extremely dissatisfied with my weight
- o Mostly dissatisfied with my weight
- o Moderately dissatisfied with my weight
- o Slightly dissatisfied with my weight
- o Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with my weight
- o Slightly satisfied with my weight
- o Moderately satisfied with my weight
- o Mostly satisfied with my weight
- o Extremely satisfied with my weight

4. Right now I feel . . .

- o Extremely physically attractive
- o Very physically attractive

- Moderately physically attractive
- Slightly physically attractive
- Neither attractive nor unattractive
- Slightly physically unattractive
- Moderately physically unattractive
- Very physically unattractive
- Extremely physically unattractive

5. Right now I feel . . .

- A great deal worse about my looks than I usually feel
- Much worse about my looks than I usually feel
- Somewhat worse about my looks than I usually feel
- Just slightly worse about my looks than I usually feel
- About the same about my looks as usual
- Just slightly better about my looks than I usually feel
- Somewhat better about my looks than I usually feel
- Much better about my looks than I usually feel
- A great deal better about my looks than I usually feel

6. Right now I feel that I look . . .

- A great deal better than the average person looks
- Much better than the average person looks
- Somewhat better than the average person looks
- Just slightly better than the average person looks
- About the same as the average person looks
- Just slightly worse than the average person looks
- Somewhat worse than the average person looks
- Much worse than the average person looks
- A great deal worse than the average person looks

The questions with reversed scoring include:

Question two: "*Right now I feel... extremely satisfied with my body size and shape".*

Question four: *" Right now I feel... extremely physically attractive".*

Question six: "*Right now I feel that I look... a great deal worse than the average person looks".*

Appendix D

Adult eating behaviour questionnaire (AEBG) (Hunot-Alexander, C., Arellano-Gómez, L. P., Smith, A. D., Kaufer-Horwitz, M., Vásquez-Garibay, E. M., Romero-Velarde, E., et al. (2021). Examining the validity and consistency of the adult eating behaviour questionnaire-español (AEBQ-Esp) and its relationship to BMI in a Mexican population. Eating and Weight Disorders-Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity, 27(2), 651-663. doi.org/10.1007/s40519-021-01201-9).

Please read each statement and tick the box most appropriate to you.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I eat less when I'm angry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am interested in tasting new food I haven't tasted before	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I eat less when I'm upset	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I eat more when I'm angry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am always thinking about food	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often get full before my meal is finished	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy a wide variety of foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am often last at finishing a meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I eat more and more slowly during the course of a meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I eat less when I'm annoyed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often feel so hungry that I have to eat something right away	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I eat slowly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I cannot eat a meal if I have had a snack just before	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* Reversed items

Enjoyment of food	=	item mean EF
Emotional over-eating	=	item mean EOE
Emotional under-eating	=	item mean EUE
Food fussiness	=	item mean FF
Food responsiveness	=	item mean FR
Slowness in eating	=	item mean SE
Hunger	=	item mean H
Satiety responsiveness	=	item mean SR

Strongly disagree =1, Disagree = 2,Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Agree =4, Strongly agree =5

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
EF	I love food	□	□	□	□	□
FF	I often decide that I don't like a food, before tasting it	□	□	□	□	□
EF	I enjoy eating	□	□	□	□	□
EF	I look forward to mealtimes	□	□	□	□	□
EOE	I eat more when I'm annoyed	□	□	□	□	□
H	I often notice my stomach rumbling	□	□	□	□	□
FF	I refuse new foods at first	□	□	□	□	□
EOE	I eat more when I'm worried	□	□	□	□	□
H	If I miss a meal I get irritable	□	□	□	□	□
EOE	I eat more when I'm upset	□	□	□	□	□
SR	I often leave food on my plate at the end of a meal	□	□	□	□	□
FF*	I enjoy tasting new foods	□	□	□	□	□
FR	I often feel hungry when I am with someone who is eating	□	□	□	□	□
SE*	I often finish my meals quickly	□	□	□	□	□
EUE	I eat less when I'm worried	□	□	□	□	□
EOE	I eat more when I´m anxious	□	□	□	□	□
FR	Given the choice, I would eat most of the time	□	□	□	□	□
EUE	I eat less when I'm angry	□	□	□	□	□
FF*	I am interested in tasting new food I haven't tasted before	□	□	□	□	□
EUE	I eat less when I'm upset	□	□	□	□	□
EOE	I eat more when I'm angry	□	□	□	□	□
FR	I am always thinking about food	□	□	□	□	□
SR	I often get full before my meal is finished	□	□	□	□	□
FF*	I enjoy a wide variety of foods	□	□	□	□	□
SE	I am often last at finishing a meal	□	□	□	□	□
SE	I eat more and more slowly during the course of a meal	□	□	□	□	□

Appendix E

Participant Information Document

Zoë Hutchison's research study on the implications of social media in dietary habits & body image: exploring gender differences

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether to take part, please take the time to read this document, which explains why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. If you have any questions about the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the end of this sheet.

What is this study about?
I am a final year student in the BA in Psychology programme at National College of Ireland. As part of our degree we must carry out an independent research project. For my project, I aim to investigate if there is a clear relationship between social media, body image and dietary behaviours. It will evaluate if social media directly impacts dietary patterns and/ or unhealthy dietary behaviours, as well as how individuals perceive their bodies. This research will additionally analyse the difference in gender scoring in relation to body image and dietary behaviours. The research study will be continually supervised by Dr. Fearghal O'Brien.

What will taking part in the study involve?

If you wish to partake in this online questionnaire research it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questions will be divided into three sections involving social media usage, body image and dietary behaviours. Please read this form in its entirety before you agree to be in this study. You will be asked to complete a consent form directly after completing the questions.

Who can take part?
You can take part in this study if you are both male and female aged over 18, using at least one of the following forms of social media: Tiktok, Instagram or Facebook.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in this research is voluntary; you do not have to take part, and a decision not to take part will have no consequences for you. If you do decide to take part, you can withdraw from participation at any time by simply existing the link of the questionnaire. You can withdraw your data from the study after the questionnaire has been completed, up to the point that the results have been written up for submission. This questionnaire includes items asking about your body image and dietary habits. There is a small risk that these questions may cause some individuals upset or distress. If you feel that these questions may cause you to experience an undue level of distress, you should not take part in the study.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?
There are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this research. However, the information gathered will contribute to research that helps us to understand how social media can impact individuals body image and dietary habits. There is a small risk that some of the questions contained within this survey may cause minor distress for some participants. If you experience this, you are free to discontinue participation and exit the questionnaire. Contact information for relevant support services are also provided at the end of the questionnaire on the debriefing form.

Will taking part be confidential and what will happen to my data?
The questionnaire is anonymous, it is not possible to identify a participant based on their responses to the questionnaire. All data collected for the study will be treated in the strictest confidence. Only the researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the data collected. Responses to the questionnaire will be fully anonymised and stored securely in a password protected/encrypted file on the researcher's computer. Data will be retained and managed in accordance with the NCI data retention policy. Note that anonymised data may be archived on an online data repository, and may be used for secondary data analysis.

What will happen to the results of the study?
The results of this study will be presented in my final dissertation, which will be submitted to National College of Ireland. The results of the project may be presented at conferences and/or submitted to an academic journal for publication if the project receives a grade 2.1 or above.

Who should you contact for further information?
Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Zoë Hutchison at x20391046@student.ncirl.ie or the research's supervisor, Dr. Fearghal O'Brien, at fearghal.obrien@ncirl.ie if you have any issues or questions concerning the utilization of this data or any inquiries about this questionnaire.

[click to proceed with the questionnaire ☐]

Appendix F

Consent form

Please make sure to click submit at the bottom of this page if you wish for your responses to be included in this study

I agree to my participation in Zoë Hutchison's research study: The implications of social media in dietary habits & body image: exploring gender differences.

The study's intention has been communicated to me in written form.

I am participating voluntarily.

I recognize that I have the right to resign from the research at any point.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage (other than after the data has been submitted).

I consent for my data to be analysed.

I recognise that my information will be used in an anonymous manner.

Required Questions*

By clicking the "Yes" button below you are consenting that you are over 18 years of age

Yes ☐

By clicking the "I agree" button below you are consenting that you have read the above information regarding the nature and purpose of this study and you wish to partake in this study

I agree ☐

[SUBMIT ☐]

Appendix G

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire analysing the implications of social media in individuals dietary habits and body image, exploring gender differences. This research will aim to investigate if there is a clear relationship between social media, body image and dietary behaviours. It will evaluate if social media directly impacts dietary patterns and/ or unhealthy dietary behaviours, as well as how individuals perceive their bodies. This research will additionally analyse the difference in gender scoring in relation to body image and dietary behaviours.

The questionnaire is confidential and anonymous. To withdrawal your data, simply exit the questionnaire browser while completing the sections, or at the end of the questionnaire before clicking submit. However, if you have already submitted answers your individual data will not be able to be withdrawable as the data will be completely anonymised. You can contact the researcher or supervisor by the emails provided at the bottom this debriefing sheet if you have any questions related to this process. This questionnaire's data will be used exclusively for my degree; no other research will be conducted using it. That being said, if my final year project earns a 2.1 or higher, it will be included in the NCI library's publications. According to NCI standards, the data will be maintained for 5 years; yet beyond that time, all information gathered in this analysis will be erased.

I want to express my sincere thanks to you once more for having giving your time to take part in my research. We urge you to contact someone about any mental distress you may have experienced as a result of participating in this survey. To help you get more support if necessary, I've also listed some hotline details below.

Support Services

The Samaritans: (01) 872 7700

Bodywhys: (01) 2107906

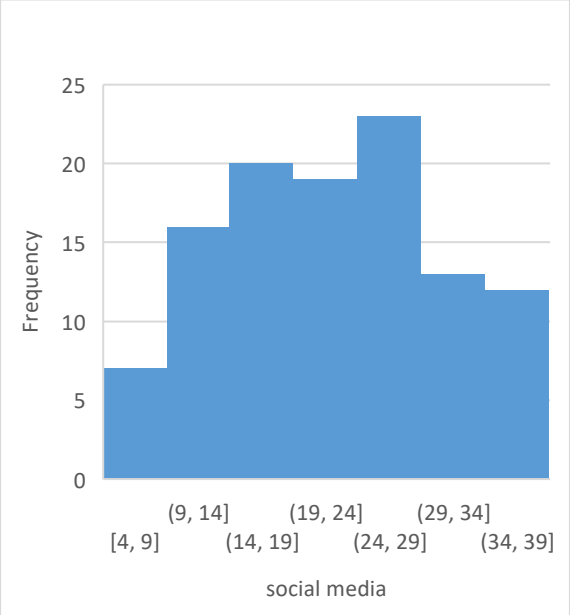
NEDA Helpline: for 24/7 eating disorder crisis support, text 'NEDA' to 741741

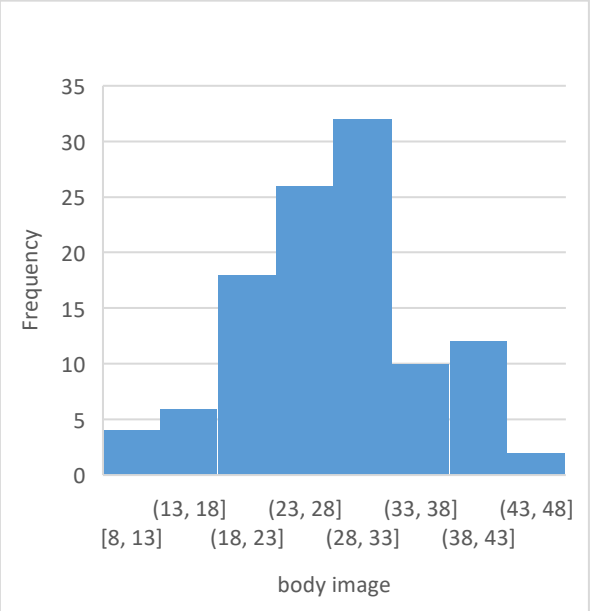
Contact Information

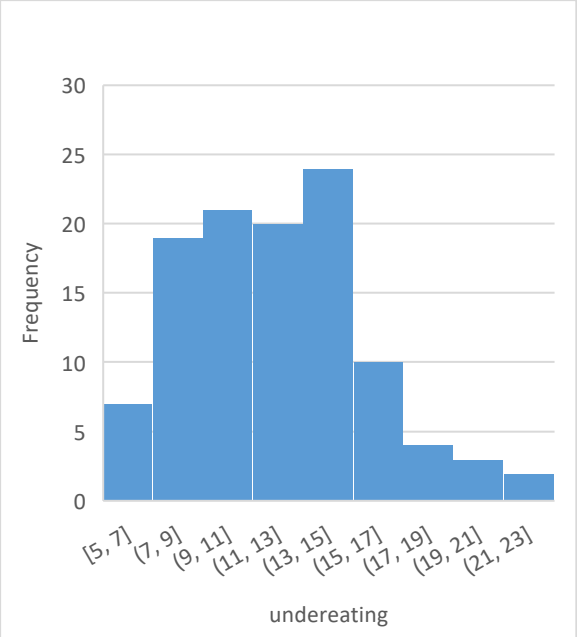
Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Zoë Hutchison at x20391046@student.ncirl.ie or the research's supervisor, Dr. Fearghal O'Brien, at fearghal.obrien@ncirl.ie if you have any issues or questions concerning the utilization of this data or any inquiries about this questionnaire.

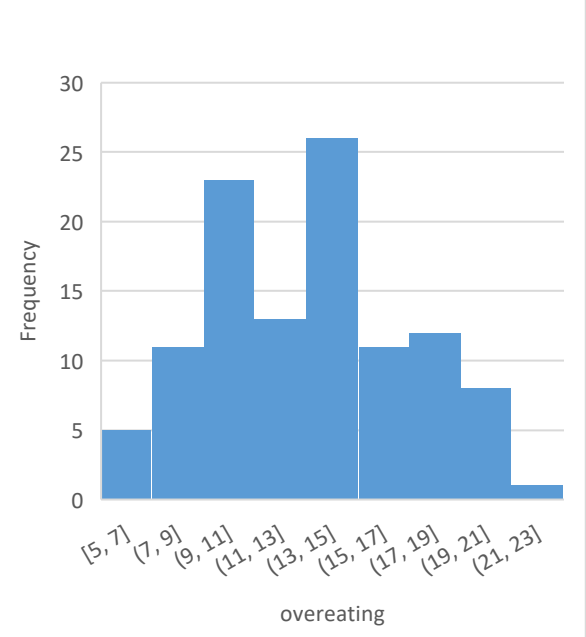
Appendix H

Histograms









Appendix I

Poster for recruiting participants