



# FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**Social Media and Body Image: A qualitative study of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in university female students**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study aims to investigate the effect of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors among female university students. With the rise of social media and its far and wide use, platforms like Instagram have become compelling in forming a view of beauty and body ideals. The current literature gives an outline of Instagram as a social media platform, its usage patterns, and the motivations behind its use. It also discusses how Instagram negatively affects young adults' body image and self-objectification, particularly among females. This study's theoretical framework is social constructionism, which recognizes that individuals' perceptions of themselves and others are shaped by social experiences and influences. The study acknowledges that social media platforms like Instagram reinforce beauty standards and expectations that are socially constructed. Participants' experiences and interpretations of body image and Instagram use will be investigated in depth through the use of a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews. By leading semi-organized interviews with 11 participants from Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) in Lahore, Pakistan, a comprehensive understanding of the topic will be achieved. This study will aim to contribute to the existing literature of research on how body image and associated behaviors are affected by social media, specifically in Pakistani culture and society. This study will aim to inform policies and guidelines that address body image concerns among young adults in the university setting and promote healthy social media use by providing evidence-based findings.

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## Introduction

According to DataReportal, n.d., in January 2023, there were 4.76 billion social media users worldwide, or 59.5 percent of the global population. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are among the most widely used social media platforms among young adults. YouTube tops the 2022 teen online landscape as it is utilized by 95% of youngsters. 67 percent of teens use TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat which are used by approximately six in ten teens. Facebook comes in second with 32%, followed by Twitter, Twitch, WhatsApp, Reddit, and Tumblr by a smaller percentage (Anderson & Jiang, 2022). In the report titled "Digital 2022: Worldwide Outline Report-Global Overview Report- The Essential Guide to World Connected Behavior, over 58% of the total populace (4, 62 billion) are online entertainment clients. The value increased by more than ten percent in comparison to the previous year.

At the beginning of 2023, there were 53.20 million people in Pakistan who were over the age of 18 and used social media. This represented 39.1% of the total population who were over the age of 18 at the time. Women made up 28.0% of Pakistan's social media users. According to statistics that were made public in Meta's advertising tools, Instagram had 12.95 million users in Pakistan at the beginning of 2023. According to DataReportal, 34.3 percent of Instagram's Pakistani advertising audience at the beginning of 2023 was female. Instagram will have 1.318 billion users in January 2023, making it the fourth most "active" social media platform in the world. The most recent figures demonstrate that generally, 16.5% of the relative multitude of individuals on Earth use Instagram today (DataReportal, 2023).

Carr and Hayes (2015) state that the term "social media" refers to online communication platforms that are long-lasting and self-sustaining, allowing users to interact with one another and produce content that is valuable to them. This content is made by the actual clients and gives

these stages their value. The number of people using social media for leisure activities has increased at an exponential rate over the past few years. Users of social media can connect with people from all over the world and create their profiles in a shared space. Users can engage in a variety of social and entertainment activities through a variety of posts and blogs because they can access their accounts from any device, including smartphones, laptops, and desktop computers (Sharma, John, & Sahu, 2020).

Meta owns Instagram and it was launched in October 2010, around 75 million everyday users have shared 16 billion photographs to date on Instagram (Digital Marketing Ramblings, 2014). Users are made predominantly out of an urban, young demographic group, with more than 90% of the 150 million individuals on Instagram younger than the age of 35. Also, women comprise 68% of users (Business Insider, 2013). Over two-thirds of users access it one time per day and 35% use it at different times each day. With an average of 257 minutes of the month spent utilizing this form of virtual entertainment, Instagram offers an interactive and engaging method to involve the public (Digital Marketing Ramblings, 2014). Instagram is a quirky and fun way to post pictures of your life to your friends. Choose a filter after taking a picture with your phone to make the image into a lasting memory. Instagram is utilized for uploading and sharing pictures. What's more, videos could be tagged with a caption on which followers might comment if they like. On Instagram, user roles are separated into followers and posters. Followers subscribe to a poster's account and get pictures and account updates of the poster's account and a poster is the owner of an Instagram account who can share pictures or videos on their accounts. (Russmann & Svensson, 2016). Negative body image and disordered eating behaviors are linked to social media exposure. Additionally, the thin ideal and unrealistic beauty standards promoted by social media can contribute to body dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating habits. (Perloff,

2014). Exposure to images of "perfect" bodies has been shown to have negative effects on women's body image. These images often portray an unrealistic standard of beauty that is unattainable for most women, leading to feelings of shame, dissatisfaction with their bodies, and low mood and these images typically feature women with flawless skin, thin waists, long and slender legs, and well-defined breasts, promoting an ideal that is often impossible to achieve. (McComb & Mills, 2021).

Social media platforms may increase a person's risk of developing eating disorders and body dissatisfaction in addition to excessive use. Both male and female adolescents' psychopathological outcomes and body image dissatisfaction were found to be positively correlated with Instagram addiction (Lee, 2022). Traditional media can have negative effects on body image and associated behaviors among young people, especially females which lead to decreased body satisfaction and the development of eating disorder symptoms. However, the influence of newer forms of media, such as social media platforms like Instagram, on body image remains inadequately understood (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019).

“Body image” refers to an individual's evaluation of their physical appearance, encompassing a range of attitudes and perceptions about their body, particularly its appearance which is based on Leon Festinger's theory of social comparison. It highlights that people tend to evaluate themselves by comparing their attributes, beliefs, and attitudes to those of others around them. In other words, people assess themselves by engaging in a comparison process with others, referred to as social comparison theory (Aziz, 2017). It is important to conduct further research to fully grasp the potential impact of social media on both body image and associated behaviors, particularly among those who may be more susceptible to negative effects.



Instagram has emerged as a highly popular social media platform among younger audiences, with 41% of its user base comprising individuals aged 13-24 and research suggests that this age group, which encompasses middle to late adolescence and early adulthood, is particularly vulnerable to developing symptoms of eating disorders due to increased self-awareness and self-evaluation during this developmental stage (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019).

Using Instagram is a significant factor in experiencing dissatisfaction with one's body image. This is because Instagram use is associated with internalizing beauty standards, self-objectification, and comparing one's appearance to others on the platform. Instagram encourages users to share their images and receive feedback from others through "liking" and "commenting," it also exposes them to societal beauty standards that are similar to those found in mainstream media. As users seek feedback on their posts, they may engage in self-objectification, meaning that they evaluate themselves based on their physical appearance and strive to conform to idealized beauty standards (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019).

In particular, engaging in photo-based activities on Instagram is a strong predictor of body dissatisfaction. In other words, frequent use of Instagram and the focus on sharing and viewing photos on the platform can lead to negative effects on one's body image perception (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019). Social media entertainment led to another prototype of models known as Instagram Models. Instagram Models are not partnered with a particular office but rather are typically paid to advance specific items on their accounts and female Instagram models are known to stick to similar ideals propagated by the fashion business industry (Aziz, 2017).

There was a significant negative correlation between body esteem and Instagram addiction among young women. Social media addicts tend to compare themselves to other

people on social media and place a greater emphasis on their physical appearance, which can make them less satisfied with their bodies and make them want to be like social media models and influencers. It's important to remember that addicted social media users are different from regular users because they have more severe symptoms and may be more likely to have issues with their body image (Lee, 2022). Lonergan et al. claim that (2020), research has uncovered that there is a connection between the utilization of photograph-based virtual entertainment stages like Instagram and ominous self-perception. Particularly, the act of posting selfies on these platforms can make women feel bad about their bodies, which can make them feel less attractive, fatter, and less satisfied with their size. The link between using social media and having a negative body image is a cause of concern because body image is associated with behaviors such as how women change their eating patterns, struggle to change their skin color; or change their overall appearance according to idealized beauty standards of social platforms.

The concept of social grooming among young adult females on social media platforms is a common practice in today's digital age and it is a way for individuals to maintain social bonds and create a sense of belonging. Checking friends' profiles, leaving messages, and commenting on them are examples of social engagement behaviors that are associated with social grooming in social media environments. These social engagement behaviors may give users more opportunities to view the enhanced images that their friends post on their profiles, which could increase their propensity to judge others' appearance, based on how they look (Kim & Chock, 2015). Social grooming can be a positive way to connect with others; it can also perpetuate harmful beauty standards and contribute to a culture of comparison and perfectionism. For instance: a young woman may receive direct messages from friends suggesting that she try a new beauty product or adopt a particular beauty routine. This can be a way for friends to demonstrate

support and encouragement, but it can also create pressure to conform to certain beauty standards and can contribute to feelings of insecurity.

Self-esteem is a concept that refers to an individual's evaluation of their value or significance. Although self-esteem has long been a frequently studied construct in social psychology, current research indicates that people may draw self-esteem from various aspects of their lives. As a result, a comprehensive assessment of self-esteem necessitates a multidimensional approach to accurately capture the diverse domains from which individuals derive self-esteem (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). From a young age, females are socialized to believe that their physical appearance plays a critical role in how they are perceived by others and in shaping their self-perception. Thus, their self-definition often centers on their body image. There is a strong connection between how females perceive their appearance and their self-esteem, with perceived appearance consistently ranking as the most significant predictor of self-esteem in adult females (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005).

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the patterns of Instagram use among female university students.
2. To examine the motivations for Instagram use among female students.
3. To explore the influence of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors among female university students.
4. To examine the strategies used by female students to manage body image on Instagram.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are the patterns of Instagram use among female university students?
2. What are the motives for using Instagram among female students?
3. What is the influence of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors among female university students?
4. What are the strategies used by female students to manage their body image on Instagram?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant due to its deep link with the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in young university students, particularly among female students. By highlighting the potential negative consequences of excessive Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors, this study can raise awareness about the need to promote positive body image and healthy behaviors among young adults. Self-objectification, internalization of beauty standards, and appearance comparisons are all linked to Instagram use, which is a positive predictor of body dissatisfaction or body image-related issues (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019). This study provides new insights into addressing gaps in the existing literature on the impact of social media use on body image and associated behaviors, particularly in the context of Pakistani culture and society. The goal of this study is to develop evidence-based policies and guidelines aimed at promoting healthy social media use and addressing body image concerns among young adults in the university setting.

### **Theoretical framework**

The current research on social media and body image utilizes a social constructionist approach to understand the relationship between Instagram usage, body image, and associated behaviors among young female university students. This framework recognizes that social influences and experiences are socially constructed and shape individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. Therefore, social media platforms such as Instagram, as part of contemporary culture, play a significant role in shaping and reinforcing beauty standards and expectations. From a constructionist perspective, beauty is subjective and perceived differently by individuals. It is a universal concept present in all societies and has historical and gendered associations, primarily related to women (Abid, Liaquat, & Malik, 2021).

Instagram is a highly visual medium that facilitates social comparison as it allows users to showcase themselves to the public and receive feedback. According to Perloff's (2014) study, the prevalence of appearance-based social comparisons on Instagram can lead to the internalization of beauty standards and self-objectification, which ultimately contributes to negative body image and associated behaviors. While previous studies have investigated how Instagram usage affects body image and related behaviors, most of them have been conducted in Western cultural contexts, and there is limited research on this topic in Pakistani culture and society. The purpose of this study is to investigate how female Pakistani university students' body image and associated behaviors are affected by Instagram use. The present study aims to examine appearance comparisons and self-objectification as essential factors in the relationship between social media use and body image dissatisfaction, as noted by Fardouly et al. (2015).

Furthermore, the research seeks to explore the potential association between female university students' Instagram usage and the development of disordered eating behaviors, including dieting, binge eating, and excessive exercise. This investigation is of great significance as (Wilksch et al., 2020) have demonstrated a correlation between social media use and eating disorders. Thus, understanding the role of social media in promoting negative body image and disordered eating behaviors can help in developing strategies to mitigate these issues among young women. The study will use a qualitative research design to investigate the lived experiences of the participants and how they develop their self-perception and self-personality through Instagram. The analysis of the data will be guided by the social constructionist perspective, which emphasizes the significance of examining the participants' cultural meanings, and experiences, and how they shape their understanding of body image.

Girls and women are socialized to view themselves as objects and learn to prioritize their external appearance over their inner qualities (Perloff, 2014). Society places a significant emphasis on physical appearance, leading women to internalize these beauty standards and assign more importance to their looks than men do and women are also more attuned to managing their appearance to conform to stereotypical physical attractiveness ideals. This process of self-objectification and the prioritization of appearance can have negative effects on women's self-esteem and body image (Perloff, 2014).

In conclusion, the social constructionist perspective is used in the theoretical framework of this study to investigate the connection between body image, Instagram use, and the behaviors that go along with it among Pakistani young female university students. By examining the impact of social media use on body image and the behaviors that go along with it in the context of Pakistani culture and society, the study aims to fill in the gaps in the existing body of research.

The findings of the study will contribute to the creation of evidence-based policies and guidelines for addressing body image issues and encouraging healthy social media use among young adults in university settings.

### **Literature review**

Launched in October 2010, Instagram is a blend of the words "Instant" and "Telegram". Instagram is a social media app that uses images as a means of communication, people use Instagram to relax and kill time (Huang & Su, 2018). It has numerous built-in photo filters that can produce high-quality visual effects. More than 70% of people between the ages of 12 and 24 use Instagram, making it the most widely used social media app among young people worldwide (Huang & Su, 2018). The activities that Instagram users engaged in, such as commenting on posts by friends, liking posts by friends, uploading photos and videos, tagging friends in posts, using #hashtags to search for things, and viewing online shopping pages, were all included in the definition of Instagram usage. On Instagram, every post has a Like and Comment button under it (Cheung, 2014). Using Instagram has been linked to body dissatisfaction and self-objectification among young adults, particularly females (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019). Users frequently spend a significant amount of time viewing, following, and posting their images, as well as those of models and celebrities (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019). Even though many females are aware that the editing and filtering of the images they see and share may make them look unreal, they still feel pressure to meet these beauty standards. Dissatisfaction with their appearance, body size, and shape may result from this but users still frequently engage in appearance-related comparisons and tend to place a strong emphasis on their image to gain approval and validation from others. If their photos don't get enough likes, they may edit them before posting or even delete them (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019).

According to Chua and Chang (Citation 2016,) female Instagram users edit their photos to fix flaws in their bodies and faces, so they can meet their peers' beauty standards. Most people use Instagram to look at posts, especially for the sake of social interaction and distraction.



Instagram gets a lot of attention and time from most people; users of social media tend to feel good about themselves and are very sensitive to criticism, so they first take a lot of pictures before uploading the most important one to get likes and praise (Huang & Su, 2018). According to Huang & Su (2018), Instagram capitalizes on the widespread desire for social validation to provide users with a distinct sense of contentment. People's actions are influenced by their general orientation, or motives, to satisfy their wants and needs (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

According to Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung (2015), Instagram users are motivated to establish and maintain social relationships with others through social interaction. The motives for utilizing social media sites could be characterized as data chasing, entertainment, social interfacing, time passing, and self-expression (Cheung, 2014). According to Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung (2015), Instagram users use this platform to record their daily events and traces (such as trips) and create their cyber documentaries through a variety of fancy photos. Additionally, users use pictures of a variety of things to showcase their personalities, lifestyles, and preferences. When it comes to self-expression and impression management, photographs far outperform texts. According to the findings of Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung (2015), Instagram has evolved into a new and empowering medium for self-presentation, particularly among young females. Users of Instagram use this platform to disconnect from their real lives and communicate with friends, family, and strangers. They can, for instance, develop parasocial relationships with celebrities or famous influencers.

As per Baker, Ferszt, and Breines (2019), Instagram users report more self-perception concerns than Facebook users, particularly while following appearance-based accounts (e.g., celebrities, beauty influencers, and models) instead of nonappearance accounts (e.g., travel). Self-objectification, internalization of beauty standards, and appearance comparisons are all linked to Instagram use, which is a positive predictor of body dissatisfaction. Social media use

has been linked to body issues like obsessing over one's weight or hiding one's body image. Concerns about one's body shape are very common among adults because puberty tends to make people feel worse about their bodies (Franchina & Coco, 2018).

According to Baker, Ferszt, & Breines (2019), young women reported spending a significant amount of time on Instagram, viewing and following others (such as peers, celebrities, and models), resulting in continuous exposure to images that were edited and unrealistic and a struggle to conform to beauty standards. Beauty standards include wearing a lot of makeup or using high-quality makeup, being stick-thin or skinny, having an hourglass figure, and being in good physical shape (curvy, toned, and muscular). In addition, females use photos of other people as tools of motivation to exercise, edit their photographs to produce the "perfect" image, and pose in particular ways to conform to beauty standards (Baker, Ferszt, & Breines, 2019). Individuals' pursuit of the ideals depicted and their tendency toward appearance comparisons with idealized media models reflect media internalization, which entails the endorsement of media-promoted appearance ideals and the adoption of these ideals as a personal goal and standard (Franchina & Coco, 2018). The photos of companions and models on social media profiles are likely unreasonable and idealized.

According to this perspective, the more girls connect through social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, the more this exposure may harm their body esteem. This is because viewing edited and unrealistic images of peers may cause body dissatisfaction. It is fascinating to note that, as per McLean, Paxton, Wertheim, & Masters (2015), young ladies who regularly post "selfies" and who are more invested in and bound to control (alter) their self-images revealed having poor self-perception. Women were more likely to experience greater levels of dissatisfaction with their body size and shape when they engaged in appearance-related

comparisons with a thin model in an advertisement with idealized bodies and skin. This can likewise prompt harmful behavior like disordered eating and severe counting of calories. More prominent exposure to pictures of other females of the same ages on social media was viewed as associated with a more prominent drive for skinniness, and this relationship was conciliated by appearance comparisons (Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton, and Ridgway, 2017).

Each original photo is edited to produce idealized and flawless pictures. To accomplish this, Instagram effects and filters are utilized. Instagram gives users numerous ways to enhance their photos (Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2018). Enhancing the brightness and color intensity as well as adding a strong shadow are all possibilities. The majority of models alter the bodies and faces depicted in the photographs by removing eye bags, wrinkles, and other impurities, as well as by reshaping their legs to make them slimmer and their waists shorter (Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2018).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The data from respondents was gathered through semi-structured interviews and a descriptive qualitative research design in this study. Semi-structured interviews were utilized as a technique for information assortment because the study is exploratory. Through the respondent's own words and narratives, qualitative exploratory research enables the researcher to investigate the respondent's experiences and interpretations. As a result, participants are more involved in the research process (Bryne, 2004).

The primary method of data collection was a descriptive and exploratory qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews to gain a deep and meaningful understanding of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors among university female students. This method identified recurring themes across the interviews and helped comprehend the experiences and interpretations of female university students regarding their body image and associated behaviors as influenced by Instagram use. The interpretive and phenomenological perspective is the foundation of this qualitative research method, which "seeks to understand the world from the participant's point of view" (Gray, 2014, p.165). In addition, this study's social constructionist theoretical framework is deeply linked to its ontological position. According to Bryman (2012), the study lends itself to the hypothesis that social interaction produces social properties and meaning. As a qualitative data collection method, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to comprehend the intricate connection between body image and social media use, particularly in the context of young female university students. The resulting data provided valuable insights into these females' experiences and interpretations, which were used

to guide future interventions or strategies aimed at fostering healthy body image and behaviors in this population.

### **Conceptualization:**

#### ***Instagram use***

Instagram is an online, mobile photograph-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that allows its users to take pictures and videos, and afterward share them on different social platforms (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), using Instagram permits its users to introduce themselves in an ideal way that addresses their idea self with an emphasis on their ideal characteristics (Rosenberg and Egbert, 2011).

#### ***Body image***

Webster (Webster's Dictionary Online 2014) defines body image as, 'a subjective picture of one's physical appearance laid out both by self-perception and by noticing the responses of others.'

### **Access and Sampling**

The population for this small study was undergraduate or postgraduate students at Forman Christian College (Chartered University). Each participant must meet the following requirements to be eligible to participate in the study:

1. The participant is presently enrolled in a program leading to an undergraduate/postgraduate degree.
2. Female FCCU students make up the participants.

I have utilized "purposive sampling" (Bryman, 2012, p. 416) to interview as many members of the aforementioned population as possible within the summer semester or until theoretical saturation is reached. In terms of accessibility, as an undergraduate student at Forman Christian College (FCCU/FCC), a university in Lahore, I have reached the relevant population through personal connections, recommendations, FCCU social media groups, flyers on the university campus, and the Whatsapp group for sociology majors and minors. I have planned to conduct interviews with a sample of 11 female participants who use Instagram and each interview is expected to last 15-20 minutes. For them to make an informed decision, participants received an information sheet outlining the research's objective (see Appendix A).

**Limitations:**

As it was a small qualitative study, the results cannot be applied to all female university students. The study has focused solely on university female students, which might introduce bias and limit the comprehension of the more extensive effect of Instagram use on body image. This study does not take into account the experiences and perspectives of male students or individuals from various age groups, cultural backgrounds, or educational settings.

This study focuses on how body image and associated behaviors are affected by Instagram use at a specific time. The findings might not adequately reflect the current landscape or any future shifts in social media usage patterns due to the rapid evolution of social media platforms and trends. The study hasn't quantified body image or associated behaviors using standardized tools or measurements because it took a qualitative approach. This absence of evaluation restricts the capacity to contrast findings with other studies or establish statistical significance.

Even though the study has low external validity, it hopes to increase internal validity by sharing a summary of the analysis with participants before writing the final report to ensure data accuracy and "faithfulness of interpretation" (Gray, 2014, p. 182).

## **Tools**

A 14-item survey was led to record the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants (see Appendix B) to assist with seeing any multifaceted connection between socio-demographics, Instagram's effect on self-perception, and methodologies of keeping up with the ideal body image of the participants. The only purpose of this survey was to provide a descriptive context for the semi-structured interview's findings.

The fundamental themes Instagram uses, the definition of body image, the reasons for using Instagram, ways to manage body image, and how Instagram affects body image and associated behaviors have been covered in the semi-structured interview. The list of tentative questions that have been used for the interviews can be found in the interview guide (see Appendix C).

## **Ethical Issues**

The British Sociological Association (2002) states that researchers must anticipate any negative outcomes for respondents and protect them as best they can. As a result, the sample only included FCCU students who are currently enrolled.

I approached the participants with empathy because the subject matter was sensitive, keeping in mind their comfort and emotional state. To reduce the chances of distress, I employed sensitive language and provided prompt check-ins and breaks to assess the respondent's well-

being and willingness to proceed (Egan, 2007). The participants were informed that they could stop participating in the research or the interview at any time.

Gray (2014) points out that researching in one's institution can compromise the authenticity of the study as the researcher's fondness for the respondents might make them not answer honestly. However, to counter this, I informed the participants verbally and in writing of the confidentiality policy. To safeguard the respondents' identities, the interviews were transcribed using aliases. In addition, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time on a consent form (see Appendix A), which is written in clear and concise language. Before conducting interviews, I gave potential respondents a comprehensive information sheet outlining the purpose of the study and how the data would be used (Appendix A).

My objective was to provide transparent research that places the respondents at the center of the investigation, despite the possibility of ethical issues. I planned to offset the damages, if any, by giving a top-to-bottom record of the experiences and views of female university students employing the effect of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors while at the same time revealing the sensitive and troublesome experiences of keeping up with the ideal body image on Instagram. I have consulted my thesis supervisor for guidance on how to manage my response to the incoming data in the event of any ethical concerns or gray areas during the study (Bryman, 2012; Gray, 2014).



## Data Analysis

I have used Clarke & Braun's (2013) reflexive thematic analysis which is a six-step process:

1. Familiarization
2. Coding
3. Generating themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Writing up

According to the literature review, the transcript was coded in terms of reasons for using Instagram, strategies for maintaining an ideal body image on Instagram, self-objectification, internalization of beauty standards, and appearance comparisons on Instagram. Besides, I have proposed a follow-up discussion with the participants to survey the translated information and my comprehension of it to guarantee a precise depiction of their encounters.

Respondent validation or member validation was used to ensure the validity of this study's findings. It is a cycle where the researcher gives the members a record of their findings (Bryman, 2012). The researcher's findings and the participant's experiences ensured a healthy correspondence in this approach. All through the interview, I utilized paraphrasing and summarizing, reliably affirming how I interpreted the responses and offering respondents the

chance to correct me as and when required. In addition to my observations of each participant, I have provided them with an account of what they said during the interview (Bryman, 2012).

## **Findings**

The findings of this research are based on responses collected from university female students concerning their Instagram use and its effects on their body image and associated behaviors. The study respondents included 11 female undergraduate students from Forman Christian College. The responses were gathered through a semi-structured interview format, taking into consideration a nuanced comprehension of the participant's point of view. The sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 1. For face sheet information against each respondent, please see Appendix D. The analysis of the responses has led to three major findings:

1. Instagram use among university students
2. Impact of social media use on body image
3. Strategies

Table 1

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

<b>Sociodemographic Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Age		
21-23	10	90.9
24	1	9.09
Gender		
Female	11	100
Year of Study		
Junior	1	9.09
Senior	10	90.9
Household Income		
100k-200k	2	18.18
>200k	3	27.27
Prefer not to say	6	54.54
Regional belonging		
Urban	10	90.9
Suburban	1	9.09
Provincial belonging		
Punjab	10	90.9
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1	9.09
Living Arrangement		
Nuclear Family	7	63.63
Joint Family	3	27.27
Single-person household	1	9.09
Relationship Status		
Single	10	90.9
Prefer not to say	1	9.09
Religion		
Islam	9	81.81
Not mentioned	1	9.09
Christianity	1	9.09
Use of Instagram in a day		
30 minutes-1 hour	1	9.09
1-2 hours	3	27.27
More than 2 hours	3	27.27
Compared your body with the bodies of other people		
Frequently	4	36.36
Occasionally	4	36.36
Rarely	1	9.09

Never	2	18.18
Used any filters or editing apps to modify your appearance on Instagram		
Yes	9	81.81
No	2	18.18
Ever taken actions that are related to your body image (e.g. excessive physical activity, cosmetic procedures, dieting, etc.)		
Yes	4	36.36
No	6	54.54
Cannot say	1	9.09
Instagram has impacted your perception of beauty or attractiveness		
Yes	9	81.81
No	1	9.09
Cannot say	1	9.09

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### **Pervasive Instagram usage**

Female university students exhibited a significant daily interest in Instagram usage, with different levels of interest. While some use casually for 1-2 hours others spend extensive periods. 5 out of 11 participants reported spending 3-5 hours daily on Instagram, indicating the pervasive trend of excessive use among university students. The platform serves as a dominant source of entertainment and connection, spending frequent time scrolling, watching reels, exploring fashion trends, and engaging with friends.

“My use of Instagram is excessive in my daily routine especially when I am not doing anything. I just like to scroll Instagram.” (Ishah, Female)

”I use Instagram almost daily to watch funny videos, to get information about celebrities, and stuff like that but I don’t use it for posting my pictures or routine stuff. I do like to keep up with my friend’s pictures and stuff.” (Zainab, Female)

Participants approached Instagram use in different ways, utilizing the platform for entertainment, social connections, and daily updates about what's happening in the world. For some, this platform was a source of entertainment and a way to remain informed about worldwide occasions, filling the void with traditional news sources. Others used Instagram for social bonding, connecting with friends, watching reels, and sharing content. However, a few participants expressed concern about the impending effect of mindless scrolling and its impact on mental well-being.

“I think it's a good thing that this app's use provides me with new ideas like you are always updated on information and everything but at the same time this mindless scrolling thing is very toxic for me.” (Samia, Female)

“I approach Instagram to connect with friends and to follow information about what's going on around the globe.” (Medium, Female)

Instagram exerted a critical impact on participants' self-worth and body image perceptions, both positively and adversely. Positive angles included inspiration from fitness and wellness content, empowering personal development. However, pervasive exposure to edited pictures and unrealistic beauty standards led to self-questioning and insecurities. Body dissatisfaction and low self-worth emerged as prevalent concerns, frequently set off by comparisons with models and influencers displaying flawless beauty. The impact was nuanced, going from inspiration and desire to elevated hesitance and questioning of self-worth.

“I think it has influenced my sense of self-worth and body image in a negative way or maybe in a positive way too. It motivates me when I see certain pictures of models and their transformation videos. It does influence me that I can do that too but at the same it

makes me feel like maybe I am not beautiful if I am not a certain size but mostly it gives me motivation of getting a better version of myself.” (Emaan, Female)

### **Motives for Instagram use**

Participants’ motivations for Instagram usage were different; some use it as a means of entertainment and a way for time to pass. Others specified peer pressure and cultural patterns as influencing factors. Boredom and exhaustion emerged as normal triggers, driving users to look for comfort and distraction within the platform. The use of Instagram stories and reels assumed a critical role in sustaining user’s interest. The people who followed on Instagram were to a great extent impacted by the user's inclinations, going from entertainers, motivational speakers, and food vloggers to close family and friends. The need for social approval and conformity sometimes leads users to follow trends and celebrities. Although most participants asserted their autonomy regarding posting choices, subtle societal pressures and desire for social approval occasionally influenced their decision.

“Boredom, being tired and wanting you to work, and then I just started to use it for a while because I just don’t have the energy. I started using it because I thought it would make me feel fresh but it takes away my energy.” (Samia, Female)

“Yes my friends always pressure me to post pictures or stuff even if I don’t like that picture.” (Muskan, Female)

The effect of Instagram on body image was obvious, with people looking for motivation from influencers and celebrities for cosmetics procedures and fitness schedules. These impacts frequently prompted both positive changes and, at times, unhealthy attempts to conform to societal beauty standards.

“Yes. I do like to follow and use a lot of DIY home remedies for my skin that I saw on Instagram. I also get small videos about makeup like what to put on first and how to prep your skin.” (Fatima, Female)

“Yes, I use Instagram to get ideas for improving your appearance or body image and to know about new easy styles to maintain my body image like intermittent fasting.”

(Ride, Female)

### **Influence of Instagram on body image and associated behaviors**

Respondents had different perceptions of how Instagram affects body image. 6 out of 11 respondents shared that they felt affected negatively, perceiving unrealistic beauty standards and feeling pressure to conform.

“Negatively, women with fit and tan bodies get more likes and attention, and others like me just try to follow them to look like them, and we try to get the same appreciation.”

(Ride, Female)

4 of the respondents found inspiration in fitness-related content, empowering them to embrace healthier habits.

“It doesn’t influence my body image in a bad way. It allows me to be more motivated about things like fitness and maintaining my exercise and gym routine.” (Seerat,

Female)

Social approval and the pursuit of likes were identified as elements contributing to distorted body image perception, reflecting the platform's effect on users' confidence and self-esteem. Instagram's impact on exercise, grooming, and diet was also multifaceted. A few



participants referred to adverse consequences, portraying undesirable attempts to achieve body ideals and drastic dieting influenced by content on the platform. Alternately, positive effects included better workout schedules and attention to wellness and diet planning, driven by informative and inspirational content.

“It has influenced my exercise and diet because I do watch and save workout videos, and they are very informative videos about your diet planning. It is raising my awareness and helping me a lot.” (Emaan, Female)

“Previously, Instagram has influenced my diet and grooming habits negatively and now positively. In the past years, I used to watch some videos on Instagram, and they made me do strict diets which are not very helpful but more harmful.” (Samia, Female)

The impact of Instagram on body modifications and behavioral changes varied. While certain respondents admitted to trying trends such as piercings and hairdos, others engaged in self-acknowledged practices, figuring out how to embrace imperfections and realness. Having a significant impact on mindsets from judgmental to accepting and promoting self-love emerged as a positive social shift impacted by Instagram use.

“I have done ear-piercing after getting influenced by Aiman Khan (Pakistan celeb). I try to maintain a fit body and I usually take haircuts according to Instagram trends and what’s new and trending in Pakistan fashions.” (Iqra, Female)

“Everyone has some insecurity about their body or features, but I am very comfortable with whatever I am.” (Muskan, Female)

The received responses from participants highlight the diverse effects of Instagram on body image perceptions and behaviors, going from negative pressures and unrealistic standards to positive inspirations for fitness and personal growth. Furthermore, the platform's role in encouraging self-acknowledgment and advancing positive behavioral changes highlights its rising potential to help users develop a better self-perception and mindset.

“I used to judge people after using Instagram that they should look the certain way that I have seen on Instagram but now it's not the same. I have changed my mindset that everyone is different and beautiful in their ways.” (Samia, Female)

“I have changed my behavior for body image due to Instagram use because I realized how harmful it is to always think that you're not perfect. So, Instagram helped me to love myself and motivated me to embrace myself as I am.” (Emaan, Female)

### **Future strategies to manage body image and positive usage of Instagram**

The strategies utilized by users to manage their body image on Instagram give important insights into the adaptive mechanisms and coping strategies within the digital realm. Respondents exhibited a range of ways to deal with managing their body image on Instagram. Some underlined authenticity, declining to adjust their appearance through editing or filters.

“I always post the real self the way I look.” (Medium, Female)

Authenticity and self-acknowledgment arose as key themes, emphasizing the significance of depicting one's genuine self on the platform. A few participants recognized utilizing minimal editing tools, such as basic color adjustments and filters, to improve picture quality.

“I just edit the color of pictures to make it look neater and then yeah to make my skin look clearer. I don’t photoshop my pictures way too much, just the basic editing.”

(Ishah, Female)

Others opted for natural presentations, relying on exercise and healthy lifestyle choices to promote a positive self-perception. These strategies reflect a balance between modest enhancements and embracing natural beauty, showing a conscious effort to stay away from unrealistic depictions. Participants expressed their aims to focus on self-love and well-being in their future interactions with Instagram and have plans to use Instagram in healthy ways, both physically and mentally.

“Due to extreme dieting, I just disturbed my cycle and then there was a video of a woman on Instagram who shared the same story about her journey and what she has faced and then how she tackled it. I sent her a message on Instagram and shared my problem and fortunately, she replied and helped me with the whole thing I struggled with it for two years but now everything is good so Instagram has supported me a lot at that time.” (Samia, Female)

Staying away from comparison, appreciating individual uniqueness, and embracing self-care also emerged as future strategies, underlining self-improvement and self-compassion. Future strategies included continued engagement with strong communities to encourage confidence and body acknowledgment. Respondents navigate the platform with authenticity, embracing their natural selves while pursuing conscious choices to promote positivity and self-acknowledgment.

“It depends on what kind of content you are seeing and following so you will get the same recommendations and content on your Instagram explore page as well. I intentionally started following positive content that encourages real and natural beauty. There are now a lot of influencers who post before and after pictures showing the reality that they are normal people like us, and they also face the same issue of maintaining health, skin, and diet in healthy ways.” (Fatima, Female)

The curation of content assumed an essential part in shaping participants' self-perception experiences. A few participants consciously organized their Instagram feeds, unfollowing accounts that set off pessimistic self-comparisons and showing unrealistic beauty. By deciding to follow influencers and creators promoting body positivity and confidence, Participants effectively developed a strong online environment, shielding themselves from detrimental comparisons. Encounters with relatable stories and empowering advice inspired participants, reinforcing their self-love journey. Active engagement in these positive spaces was viewed as a forward-looking strategy, demonstrating a conscious decision to encircle oneself with affirming narratives.

“For future strategy, I am just going to follow people that look like me and make me feel positive about me, not going to follow anyone who posts after lots of fake editing.” (Zainab, Female)

“In the future, I plan to continue following accounts that promote body positivity. Also, I will focus on engaging with supportive communities and practicing self-care and acceptance.” (Rida, Female)

From the development of authenticity and specific content utilization to future-oriented practices centered on well-being and positive commitment, participants explore the digital landscape with resilience and mindfulness. These methodologies address coping strategies as well as proactive steps toward fostering a better relationship with body image in the age of social media.

## Discussion

The findings of this research shed light on the complex connection between Instagram use, body image perceptions, and associated behaviors among female university students, giving important insights into social media's effect on self-image and well-being. The study's qualitative method took into consideration a nuanced exploration of participants' experiences, revealing both positive and negative effects of Instagram use. The findings uncover the pervasive idea of Instagram use among university students, demonstrating a huge everyday interest in the platform. Participants varied in their usage patterns, from casual scrolling to spending extensive hours on Instagram. While the platform served as a source of connection and entertainment, a few respondents revealed concern about doom scrolling and its negative impacts on mental health. This reflects the habit-forming nature of social media platforms, lining up with existing literature on excessive social media use (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

People who invested more time utilizing screen media were lower in mental well-being than low users. High users of screens were remarkably more likely to show poor emotion regulation (not keeping mentally collected, arguing excessively, and being challenging to get along with), an inability to complete responsibilities, lower interest, and tougher in making companions. The huge association between screen time and well-being might have significant clinical implications for the psychological and physical strength of individuals and for creating rules for explicit screen time limits for older youth and teenagers (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Indeed, youngsters are seen using Instagram practically constantly, be it during meals, studying in the classroom, or any other event. Different things are the justifications for why web-based entertainment is so alluring to youngsters, some reasons are getting attention, requesting opinions, growing a picture, hobby, and adding friends (Kartikawati, n.d.). Different thought

processes in utilizing Instagram can incorporate thought processes (as the need might arise, arriving at the ideational level, accomplishing the satisfaction of emotional need) or effective which incorporates creating, getting responses, connecting, and meeting the requirement for acknowledgment with self-realization.

Social media today isn't simply a medium to impart for young girls but also to construct a picture of their social circle, both to help the teen and their friends' bunch. On Instagram, these young girls have numerous chances to compose thoughts, feelings, and different things to assemble their mental self-view and for their self-presentation (Kartikawati, n.d.). Instagram had a significant impact on respondents' body image perceptions. While some found motivation in wellness and fitness content, others faced serious insecurities and self-uncertainty because of exposure to edited pictures and unrealistic beauty standards. Considering the social constructionist viewpoint, the sociocultural environment may contribute to the development and maintenance of body dissatisfaction through the transmission of standards of thinness through social media communications, specifically promoted by the fashion, beauty, and cosmetic industries which stand to acquire from women's body dissatisfaction (Paquette & Raine, 2004). The effect of Instagram on body image perceptions was nuanced, with respondents experiencing both positive and negative effects. Positive aspects included motivation from wellness and fitness content, fostering self-improvement, and inspiration for personal growth. Nonetheless, the pervasive exposure to edited pictures and unrealistic beauty standards prompted self-questioning and insecurities, contributing to body dissatisfaction and decreased self-esteem. Body image has a great deal to do with appearance which can be seen distinctively by various individuals. These perceptions in this era are affected by media since it is the broadly utilized method of communication and interaction (Hu, 2018). On Instagram, people can become an active

producer. In certain, the platform is supposed to be turning into an undeniably famous site using which individuals set body image goals and targets.

On Instagram, the sharing insights uncovered that 60 million photos are being shared each day. In certain, it is viewed as becoming more famous (Hu, 2018). Social media usage is demonstrated to adversely affect young ladies' self-objectification. This objectification can lead to the improvement of self-perception concerns that are connected with increased dissatisfaction and issues for women (Wise, 2018). Society is capable of controlling people about how they ought to appear and shape their bodies. The media goes about as a platform for showing the way that the female body image presentation can impact the perception of women's bodies (Hu, 2018). Taking everything into account, the media portrays that ladies and women ought to endlessly practice with a definitive target of becoming fit. These fitspiration thoughts should not prompt women to end up thin because they can cause outrageous well-being concerns and issues. The fitspiration pictures on Instagram are expected to develop a misleading self-image that can influence their overall general capacities and well-being (Hu, 2018). The research identifies coping strategies used by participants to manage their body image on Instagram. Realness and self-acknowledgment emerged as key themes, highlighting the meaning of embracing one's natural self in the digital space. Respondents purposely coordinated their Instagram feeds by specifically following the accounts that promote body positivity, self-love, and confidence, in this manner establishing a strong online environment. These strategies line up with the social constructionist perspective, pointing out the role of social interactions and cultural standards in molding individuals' perceptions and behaviors (Andrews, 2012). Moreover, respondents' future strategies included focusing on taking care of themselves and their wellbeing in their future



interactions with Instagram showing a proactive method for managing a better relationship with online entertainment platforms.

Mental well-being is a fundamental part of the phenomenon of taking care of oneself via online entertainment platforms. Self-care content promoted through online entertainment might assist numerous ladies with lightening their pressure and finding healthy coping mechanisms. The apparent meaning of social help among Instagram users could make sense of the shared characteristic of tagging different accounts and the high engagement of posts with the tag #selfcare (Mullis, Nguyen, and Pappas, 2021). Users who promote self-care strategies could resonate with different users with the same posts in that they engage with the posts by liking, sharing, commenting, or retagging different accounts. The promotion of physical well-being by tagging a picture of an individual's body with the tag #selfcare exhibits the likely implications of Instagram on self-perception. Although the initial posters might foster increased confidence by vulnerably posting an individual photograph, different users might experience low confidence from social comparisons (Wong et al., 2019). Increased Instagram use among ladies has corresponded with increased concern about physical appearance and body image disturbances and increased depression mediated by social comparisons (Engeln et al., 2020). The frequency of beauty-themed content with the tag #selfcare might be made sense of by the overwhelmingly female audience and female posters. Even though users could see content promoting self-care through beauty or hygiene strategies as positive, ulterior motives processes in product endorsements and consumer marketing may encourage the popularity of beauty self-care on Instagram (Mullis, Nguyen, and Pappas, 2021). Specific patterns of self-care beauty methods might elevate adjusting one's appearance to approve attractiveness. Clashing interests happen when specialists or other medical care suppliers self-promote their cosmetic procedures for

economic benefit by empowering people to focus on themselves by changing their appearance.

This cosmetic methodology and photo-enhancement patterns on Instagram could extend unrealistic beauty standards and create body image insecurities (Wong et al., 2019).

To conclude, this research gives significant experiences into the complex interplay of Instagram use, body image perceptions, and self-presentation strategies among female university students. The findings highlight the need for fostering digital literacy and enabling people to critically engage with online media content. From a social constructionist point of view, people's encounters, motivations, and strategies are socially constructed phenomena created by social, cultural, and psychological factors. By perceiving the socially constructed nature of these phenomena, interventions and support components can be made to address the difficulties faced by young adults in the digital age. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The sample size, essentially containing female members from a particular university, may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Also, the research's qualitative nature, while giving rich bits of knowledge, may miss the mark on quantitative accuracy presented by standardized tools. Future researchers could benefit from a more diverse participant pool, including people from different social, cultural, and religious groups, to investigate the intersectionality of body image perceptions and Instagram use further. Utilizing mixed-method approaches could give a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon, incorporating both qualitative depth and quantitative breadth.

### **Recommendation**

In light of the comprehensive research findings clarified above, a few basic themes have emerged, shedding light on the connection between Instagram use and female university students' body image and associated behaviors. This research, conducted among 11 female undergraduate students from Forman Christian School, analyzed the nuances of Instagram engagement, its effect on body image, and the coping strategies utilized by these young females to explore the digital realm. As well as being upheld by literature, this concern can be handled by introducing digital literacy and media proficiency programs. Incorporate digital literacy and media proficiency programs in the university curriculum plan. These projects ought to focus on improving students' critical thinking abilities, empowering them to assess the authenticity and credibility of data encountered on social media entertainment platforms (Livingstone, 2013).

Instagram serves as a predominant source of entertainment and association, with respondents spending extensive periods, going from casual scrolling to connecting profoundly with diverse content. While certain students approach Instagram for social connections and staying informed, there is a developing concern concerning doom scrolling and its likely effect on mental health. This finding requires further investigation into the sociological aspects of excessive social media use, diving into its implications on attention spans, emotional well-being, and generally speaking psychological well-being. Next to time investment on social media, how users invest their energy can likewise have an effect. One explicit center is selfie behavior. For instance, the study has shown that users who take more selfies (before posting) and strategically present themselves on Instagram, for instance by editing or manipulating selfies, report higher levels of body surveillance, body disappointment, and lower body esteem (Chang et al., 2019). This is additionally affirmed by the experimental study of Tiggeman and colleagues (2020b) who

viewed that taking and editing selfies prompted higher facial disappointment. Individuals who connect more in active Instagram use, for example, selfie-taking and selfie-editing, report negative body outcomes, although the connection between selfie-posting and body outcomes is as yet uncertain and needs further examination (Faelens et al., 2021).

It would be helpful to educate young girls about the prevalence of photo editing on social platforms and the risks that come from taking part in comparison with ideal body types through media proficiency programs and, ideally, before girls become regular social media photo editors themselves. Media literacy programs have been reliably demonstrated to be powerful in safeguarding and protecting self-perception among young girls and females. Giving information about the particular ways by which a picture can be digitally changed and the distinction that photo editing makes might be helpful to integrate into media education programs targeted toward young females who are at risk of body image dissatisfaction and who regularly edit their photographs (McComb, Gobin, and Plants, 2021).

Social media platforms, including Instagram, ought to effectively promote content that encourages body positivity, self-love, and diversity. The expression "body positivity" will be defined as any message, visual or composed, that challenges prevailing approaches of viewing the physical body as per beauty ideals and empowers the reclaiming of embodiment and command over one's self-image. Body positivity encompasses any individual or movement activities that plan to criticize the societal influences and development of body standards, and instead promote self-love and acknowledgment of bodies of any shape, size, or appearance; including rolls, dimples, skin inflammation, hairy bodies, bleeding bodies, fat bodies, thin bodies, and (dis) abled bodies (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

The most famous component that is utilized to associate the movement on Instagram is the utilization of hashtags. Large numbers of the accounts connected with the body positive development integrate different hashtags into their captions to recognize the various issues their pictures are attempting to address. The hashtag #effyourbeautystandards keeps on being the most generally utilized hashtag by the body positivity movements. A quick search of the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag on the platform raises 1,557,522 posts that have been labeled. Women in the Instagram body positive movement address the standards of beauty that desire thin bodies and urge ladies to count calories to look like these standards as intently as could be expected. Large numbers of these individuals share their experiences living and recovering from eating disorders that are impacted by social media messages letting them know that being thin is beautiful. These pictures are identified through the hashtags #riotsnotdiets (30,494 posts) and #losehateandweight (32,835 posts) (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

This study enlightens the intricate elements between Instagram use and female university students' body image perception and associated behaviors. The findings highlight the urgency of promoting media literacy, improving self-esteem, and empowering positive online interactions among young females. Mental health experts ought to consider incorporating online literacy training programs into their interventions, enabling people to explore digital spaces without hesitation and with positivity. The strategies utilized by participants to deal with their body image on Instagram offer significant bits of knowledge for people, mental health experts, and online platforms. Emphasizing authenticity, self-affirmation, and self-care, these strategies reflect a conscious effort to balance modest enhancements with embracing natural beauty. The proactive steps taken by respondents, for example, organizing their feeds and engaging with positive content, serve as models for promoting positive digital experiences. By tending to the

multifaceted difficulties presented by social media platforms, society can pave the way for a more inclusive, body-positive digital environment, where people are engaged to embrace their uniqueness and encourage a strong identity even with online beauty standard pressures.

### **Conclusion**

The study comprehensively explores the effect of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors among university female students, this study digs into the complex interaction between social media and self-perception. Using a social constructionist perspective, this research aimed to unravel the diverse elements forming body image perception in the digital age. The findings of this study enlighten the different ways by which Instagram impacts how female students see themselves, going from positive motivation to adverse self-comparisons. Despite the limitations in the sample size and scope, this study serves as a stepping stone for understanding the complexities of social media's impact on body image perception among university female students. By tending to the challenges and experiences presented in this review, educational institutions can execute targeted interventions, educational projects, and emotionally supportive seminars. These initiatives can enable students to explore social media carefully, fostering a generation that is versatile, confident, and critical customers of digital content.

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## **Appendix A: Information Sheet and Consent Form**

### **Information Sheet**

Title of Research: Social Media and Body Image: A qualitative study of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in university female students in Lahore.

Researcher: Rubab Liaqat

Institution: Forman Christian College (A Chartered University)

Researcher Contact: 241560534@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk

Supervisor: Shermeen Bano

Supervisor Contact: shermeenbano@fccollege.edu.pk

### ***Invitation***

You are welcome to take part in a research project. Before you choose to take part in the study, it is critical to comprehend the motivation behind this research and what is generally anticipated of you. Kindly get some margin to read this data sheet cautiously and examine it with the researcher or others assuming you wish for additional clarity. Please feel free to inquire if anything isn't clear or if you would like more data about the purpose of this research. You can decide whether or not to participate at any time.

### ***What is the project's purpose?***

The purpose of this qualitative study will be to investigate how Instagram use affects the body image and behaviors of female university students. The specific objective of the study will be to investigate how Instagram use influences female university students' perceptions of their bodies

as well as their thoughts and actions regarding food, exercise, and appearance. The study will also aim to find out how female college students use Instagram to keep up with how they see themselves. The results of this study may help to make better interventions that can help young female students in having healthy body image and behaving in a healthy way.

***Why have I been chosen?***

You would be selected because you meet the participant requirements.

***Do I have to take part?***

It would be entirely up to you. The information sheet and a signed copy of your consent form will be provided to you even if you decide not to participate. You will also be able to withdraw from the study whenever with no excuse.

***What will happen if I take part?***

There will only be one interview, which will last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour and a half. A recording of this interview will be made. You will be asked a series of questions about how you think using Instagram affects related behaviors, body image, and how to manage Instagram's beauty standards.

***What are the possible benefits of taking part?***

It will be hoped that this work will aid in the development of interventions and strategies that promote healthy body image and behavior while also raising awareness of the potential negative effects of social media on body image.

***Will my information be kept confidential?***



The information will be kept completely private. There will be no reports or publications in which you can be identified.

***Who is organizing the research?***

The research is organized by the Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College.

***Who has ethically reviewed the project?***

This research project will be ethically reviewed by the Internal Review Board (IRB), Forman Christian College.

**Consent Form**

1. I certify that I have read and comprehend the research's information sheet explaining the purpose of the research.
2. I have been given the chance to inquire about the research project.
3. I am aware that participating in the study is entirely at my own discretion, and I am free to withdraw at any time without providing a justification. I can decline or not answer questions that I don't want to answer.
4. I comprehend that my reactions will be kept stringently private, and my name won't be utilized in the examination materials. I won't be recognizable in that frame of mind in the exploration report.
5. I grant the researcher permission to access my anonymized responses.
6. I agree that the information gathered from me might be utilized in later examinations after recognizable data has been taken out.

7. I agree to participate in the aforementioned study.
8. I am aware that the researcher will keep a copy of all signed documents, including the consent form and the information sheet, in the final project record.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: Sociodemographic Survey Instrument****Social Media and Body Image: A qualitative study of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in university female students**

1)	<b>Age (in years):</b>	7)	<b>Current living arrangement:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Joint family, <input type="checkbox"/> Nuclear family, <input type="checkbox"/> Single-person household, <input type="checkbox"/> Hostel, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
2)	<b>Gender:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female, <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	8)	<b>Relationship status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Single, <input type="checkbox"/> Committed, <input type="checkbox"/> Married, <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
3)	<b>Year of study:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman, <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore, <input type="checkbox"/> Junior, <input type="checkbox"/> Senior, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	9)	<b>Religion:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Islam, <input type="checkbox"/> Christianity, <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say, <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
4)	<b>Household income (per month):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Below 50,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Between 50,000 and 100,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Between 100,000 and 200,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Above 200,000, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	10)	<b>How often do you use Instagram in a day?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 30 minutes, <input type="checkbox"/> 30 minutes-1 hour, <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 hour, <input type="checkbox"/> More than 2 hours
5)	<b>Regional belonging:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Urban, <input type="checkbox"/> Rural, <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	11)	<b>How frequently do you compare your body with the bodies of other people on Instagram?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Frequently, <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally, <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely, <input type="checkbox"/> Never

6)	<b>Provincial belonging:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Punjab, <input type="checkbox"/> Sindh, <input type="checkbox"/> Balochistan, <input type="checkbox"/> Azad Kashmir, <input type="checkbox"/> Gilgit-Baltistan, <input type="checkbox"/> Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, <input type="checkbox"/> Islamabad Capital Territory	12)	<b>Have you ever used any filters or editing apps to modify your appearance on Instagram?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, <input type="checkbox"/> No, <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
13)	<b>As a result of using Instagram, have you ever taken actions that are related to your body image? (Examples: excessive physical activity, cosmetic procedures, dieting, etc.) ?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, <input type="checkbox"/> No, <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot say  If you answer “yes” please mention the used action (This question is optional)  _____		
14)	<b>Do you feel that Instagram has impacted your perception of beauty or attractiveness?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, <input type="checkbox"/> No, <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot say  If your answer “yes” please mention in what ways (This question is optional)  _____		

## **Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

### **Social Media and Body Image: A qualitative study of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in university female students**

#### **Section 1: Pattern of Instagram use among female university students**

1. Can you please demonstrate your daily use of Instagram?
2. How do you approach Instagram use?
3. How do you think Instagram influences your sense of self-worth and body image?

#### **Section 2: Motives for Instagram use**

1. What motivates you to use Instagram?
2. Who do you follow on Instagram and why?
3. Have you ever been pressured to post a particular image of yourself on Instagram?
4. Do you use Instagram to get ideas for improving your appearance or body image? Do you follow any particular celebrities or influencers?

#### **Section 3: Influence of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors**

1. How would you think using Instagram influences your body image?
2. How do you think Instagram has influenced your exercise, diet, or grooming habits?
3. Have you at any point modified your body or appearance because of Instagram trends or pictures?

4. Have you ever changed your behavior related to body image due to Instagram use?

**Section 4: Strategies used to manage body image**

1. Can you talk about any strategies you use to manage your body image on Instagram?
2. Have you used Instagram's specific tools or features to manage your body image? If yes, can you please explain how you use them?
3. Have you ever found helpful body image-related support or advice on Instagram?
4. What strategies do you have in mind for managing your body image on Instagram in the future?

**Appendix D: Facesheet Information**

Alias	Age	Gender	Year of study	Monthly Income	Regional Belonging	Provincial belonging	Living Arrangement	Relationship Status	Religion
Ishah	21	Female	Senior	-	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam
Muskan	22	Female	Senior	-	Urban	Punjab	Joint	Single	Islam
Samia	23	Female	Junior	-	Urban	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Joint	Single	Islam
Seerat	21	Female	Senior	100k-200k	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam
Zainab	21	Female	Senior	-	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	-	-
Iqra	23	Female	Senior	-	Urban	Punjab	Joint	Single	Islam
Emaan	22	Female	Senior	>200k	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam
Fatima	21	Female	Senior	>200k	Suburban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam
Meriume	24	Female	Senior	100k-200k	Urban	Punjab	Single person household	Single	Christianity
Bakhtawar	21	Female	Senior	>200k	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam
Rida	22	Female	Senior	-	Urban	Punjab	Nuclear	Single	Islam

**Appendix E: Thematic Analysis (Themes, Sub-Themes, and Codes)**

	Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes
Objective 1: Instagram use among university students	Patterns of Instagram Use	Frequency of Use	Excessive daily use
			1-2 hours daily
			2-3 hours daily
			3-4 hours daily
			4-5 hours daily
		Purpose of use	Entertainment and time pass
			Staying connected with friends
			Keeping updated on information
			Mindless scrolling
			Online shopping
			Watching reels and fashion trends
Instagram as a Source of Ideas for Appearance and Body Image	Influencers as a source of inspiration	Following fitness influencers	
		Makeup and fashion ideas	
		DIY home remedies	
Objective 2: Impact of social media use on body image	Negative Impact of Instagram on Body Image & Behavior	Unrealistic beauty standards	Comparison with edited images leads to feelings of inadequacy
			Pressure to conform to ideal body types portrayed on Instagram
		Harmful influence on habits	Unrealistic fitness and diet trends promote unhealthy habits
			Extreme body and grooming standards lead to unhealthy practices
	Positive Influence and Empowerment on Body Image and Behavior	Body positivity and self-acceptance	Instagram promotes body positivity and embracing imperfections
			Positive body image influencers encourage self-acceptance
		Empowering habits and choices	Informative posts inspire healthy exercise routine and diet



			Motivational content fosters positive exercise habits
	Influence on Self-Worth and Body Image	Negative Influence	Comparison with idealized images
			Feeling of being defaulted
			Unrealistic beauty standards
			Questioning self-worth
		Positive Influence	Inspiration from transformation stories
			Motivation for self-improvement
	Motives and Type of Content Followed on Instagram	Lack of Motivation	Trend-following
			Boredom relief
			No specific motivation
		Motivation for Entertainment	Watching reels and entertainment
Objective 3: Strategies	Coping Strategies for Positive Body Image on Instagram	Self-love and authenticity	Embrace real self, avoiding excessive editing and filters
			Focus on self-acceptance and avoid comparisons
		Healthy living and positive engagement	Following positive influencers and seeking body-positive content
			Prioritizing physical and mental well-being and healthy habits
	Future Strategies and Mindful Usage of Instagram	Conscious social media use	Stopping the use of app if negative feelings are arising, focusing on personal well-being
			Being aware of content utilization, filtering out negative influences
		Future strategies and self-expression	Showcasing real self without filters and promoting real self-perception
			Planning future strategies based on confidence, acceptance and well-being

## Appendix F: IRB Approval Certificate



**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD** **APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

IRB Ref: IRB-502/6-2023

Date: 22-06-2023

**Project Title:** Social Media and Body Image: A qualitative study of the impact of Instagram use on body image and associated behaviors in university female students.

**Principal Investigator:** Rubab Liaquat

**Supervisor:** Ms. Shermeen Bano

The Institutional review board has examined your project in IRB meeting held on 22-06-2023 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharon Hanook  
Convener - IRB  
Chairperson, Department of Statistics  
Forman Christian College  
(A Chartered University)  
Lahore

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