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The role of social media use in the relationship between self-esteem and body image

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and body image, but also the moderating role of social media use on the relationship between self-esteem and body image. A number of 166 people, aged between 18 and 80, M = 26.39, SD = 11.13, participated in this research, of which 19 were male, 145 were female, and two participants declared that they belonged to another gender. The materials used were: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), The Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015) and The Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007). The results showed that self-esteem is a significant predictor of body image and social media use does not moderate the relationship between self-esteem and body image.

Keywords: *self-esteem, body image, social media*

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has an indispensable role both in general situations of everyday life, as well as the influence it has on the relationship between self-esteem and body image. Additionally, understanding the role that social media use plays in the relationship between self-esteem and body image can provide relevant insights into how individuals navigate and adapt to the online environment and the social pressures related to the body image. Studying the role of social media use in the relationship between self-esteem and body image can bring a number of clinical benefits, such as identifying risk factors for eating disorders and developing personalized interventions to promote healthy body image and positive self-esteem.

There are several studies that have contributed to the knowledge that social media influences self-esteem, body image, body satisfaction and eating habits (Rodgers et al., 2020; Sanzari et al., 2023; Veldhuis et al., 2020), this is possible due to the way social networks can reveal many

problems due to social comparison (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). A study by Steers et al. (2014) states that people can compare several aspects by using social media networks, including physical appearance, and the more time users spend on these social networks, the more comparisons with others occur, which can have a negative impact on self-esteem and body image (Blease, 2015).

The conclusions of the study conducted by Marengo et al. (2018) present many practical implications for the development of interventions aimed at preventing or reducing the negative impact of social media on body image and on the health of individuals. These interventions should aim to promote critical awareness of the idealized images that are presented on social media, as well as the potential impact that exposure to such images can have on their body image and, consequently, on their psychological well-being (Marengo et al., 2018).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem represents a positive or negative attitude towards oneself, which can be considered a key indicator of a person's psychological well-being (Virk & Singh, 2020). According to the study by Frost and McKelvie (2004), self-esteem is defined as the overall level of global respect that people have for themselves. Recent studies show how self-esteem reflects individuals' self-confidence in their own abilities, reflecting self-assessment (Diener, 2000). The findings of the research conducted by Wilson and Ross (2001) demonstrate that people with high self-esteem tend to think they are smart, attractive, or popular, and although these people admit that they have had flaws or made mistakes in the past, they see the present moment in a positive light, thinking they changed for the better even when they didn't.

In the last few decades, the researchers debated the degree to which self-esteem should be conceptualized as a trait-like construct that remains relatively stable over time or as a state-like process that fluctuates continuously in response to environmental factors and situations (Donnellan et al., 2012). Although individuals may experience differences in the particular trajectory that their self-esteem follows, new longitudinal studies suggest that self-esteem tends to be elevated from adolescence to middle adulthood (Orth & Robins, 2014). In addition, there is a growing number of longitudinal studies that have followed the trajectory of self-esteem in critical periods of development, such as adolescence (Birkeland et al., 2012), young adulthood (Chung et al., 2014) and old age (Wagner et al., 2013), and in general, the results of these studies were consistent with the lifespan trajectory described above, that is, they show increases from adolescence to mid-age and then decrease until old age.

The study conducted by Jiang and Ngien (2020) shows that an important factor contributing to lower self-esteem is social comparison. Social comparison leads to the emergence of beliefs that external conditions approved in the social environment are more important than internal and personal traits, so as a person perceives their own characteristics as less important in achieving social recognition, the level of self-esteem will be low (White et al., 2006). The theory of social comparison was first proposed by Festinger (1954) as an attempt to understand how social activities influence an individual's self-evaluation. As a result, two directions of social comparison appeared, one being the upward social comparison, representing comparison with a higher target, and the other being the downward comparison, namely comparison with a lower target (O'Brien et al., 2009). Previous research highlights how the ascending social comparison can negatively influence self-assessment, causing dissatisfaction with life, frustration, depression and discouragement, jealousy, hostility and other negative emotions (Morse & Gergen, 1970). On the other hand, descending social comparison usually improves self-assessment and generates positive feelings (Collins, 1996).

Body image

Body image is usually defined as the psychological representation of an individual's body and refers to feelings, attitudes, and, as well as perceptions and behavior towards one's own body or certain parts of the body (Nagl et al., 2021). Body image is a multidimensional dynamic construct consisting of perceptual, cognitive, affective and behavioral elements (Wertheim et al., 2009). A specific meaning is given to the perception of one's own body, which is closely related to self-confidence, self-esteem, self-image and the identity of a person (Izgiç et al., 2004). Thus, research has shown that people with a positive and realistically defined body image are safer in their interpersonal relationships and are more successful (Palladino Green & Pritchard, 2003), and the attitudes and behaviors of these people are also healthier and realistic (Field et al., 2001).

Due to the multidimensional character of the body image, Grabe et al. (2008) propose an examination of the effects related to the way people look at the body image. One such effect is body satisfaction/dissatisfaction, which is the overall and subjective assessment of a person's body (Grabe et al., 2008). In addition, based on an analysis of published measurements of body image satisfaction and related constructs, van den Berg et al. (2002) define two additional dimensions of body image, namely cognitive dimension and behavioral dimension. The authors argued that the first component, the cognitive dimension of the body image, tries to capture the beliefs, thoughts and attributions of the body image by measuring constructs such as self-atentional focus and internalization of social stereotypes about appearance (van den Berg et al., 2002), and the behavioral component is defined as that which evaluates the

behavior of people related to the body image (van den Berg et al., 2002).

Social comparison, along with the interiorization of ideals, is among the main mechanisms that participate in the distorted perception of body image among people (Jiotsa et al., 2021). Perceiving the body image in a negative manner is dictated by negative perceptions of the physical appearance of a person, which negatively affect or interfere with mental health and well-being (Clay et al., 2005). To see the body image in a positive manner represents the positive perceptions of the person on the physical appearance (Virk & Singh, 2020). The more a person feels dissatisfied with their body, the greater the risk of going through a depressive episode becomes, having low self-esteem (Paxton et al., 2006) and poorer quality of life (Wynne et al., 2016). Recognition of these negative consequences underlines the importance of supporting a positive body image, especially among young adults, in order to optimize their overall health and well-being (Rawana & Morgan, 2014).

The study by Marengo et al. (2018) presents the possibility that due to socio-cultural influences and socialization processes, body image becomes a central feature in the self-concept of adolescents. Thus, body image becomes one of the most important psychological factors affecting adolescent personality and behavior (Tiwari, 2014). Over the past 30 years, the media has overexposed people to beauty ideals, starting at an early age (Blowers et al., 2003), turning these ideals into new benchmarks (Grabe et al., 2008). Additionally, etiological models incorporating environmental factors consider social pressure on physical appearance to be a determining factor in the development of eating disorders, as a result of a distorted body image (Gorwood et al., 2016).

Self-esteem and body image

Of all the personal attributes that influence body image development, Cash (2002) suggested that self-esteem is the most important. In recent decades, studies have shown that negative body image and body discontent lead to low self-esteem (Rodgers et al., 2020). This relationship between self-esteem and body image is supported by several studies (Paxton & Phythian, 1999; Webster & Tiggemann, 2003), being also demonstrated, that certain aspects of the body image correlate positively with self-esteem, for example perceived physical attractiveness (Davison & McCabe, 2005). According to the study by Branden (1969), self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence and self-respect, and when a person does not adopt a positive attitude towards their body, this can lead to feelings of worthlessness.

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) has been increasingly used to understand the process by which self-esteem can influence a person's body image through comparisons (Ameen et al., 2022). Thus, self-esteem and body image have been identified in previous research on the

behavior of individuals as representing important components of this theory (Tylka & Sabik, 2010). According to Stice et al. (2011), because women are very frequently judged by their appearance, they often compare their physical appearance to that of other people. Additionally, previous research has found that even women with high self-esteem may engage in social comparison processes (Gentina et al., 2018).

Cooper and Fairburn (1993) investigated body dissatisfaction, importance of physical appearance, self-esteem and mood in a sample of individuals in the UK who were being treated for bulimia. They found that change in body image dissatisfaction over 10 to 12 weeks of treatment was strongly associated with change in mood, while change in the importance of physical appearance was associated with changes in self-esteem (Cooper & Fairburn, 1993). In the same sense, in the research conducted by Masheb and Grilo (2006), the results showed that the importance of body image was associated with changes in self-esteem, while body dissatisfaction was associated with changes in both self-esteem and and of disposition.

Considering the above, we propose to analyze the relationship between self-esteem and body image, thus formulating the following hypothesis:

H1. *Self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of body image.*

Use of social media

Social media networks refer to online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter that allow users to create and share visual and textual content with other users (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Social media is fast becoming a critical aspect of everyday life for many people, as highlighted by the findings of the study by Orben (2020), in January 2019 there were 3.5 billion active social media users worldwide, and this number continues to grow every year. Due to the ever-increasing popularity of the use of social networks among people of all ages, but especially among young people, many studies have investigated their role as a factor in their psychological adaptation (Marengo et al., 2018).

On social media, people often self-disclose selectively and build their profile based on preferred characteristics, for example, emotions, personality traits or opinions (Vogel et al., 2014). Social media generates comparison-based information and accessible feedback, such as the number of followers, likes, comments, and retweets (Jiang & Ngien, 2020), and such information allows people to quickly form impressions of others (Appel et al., 2016). Important to note is that the most frequently used sites offer a highly visual environment, for example Instagram, and the main activity is image sharing (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). Thus, there are frequent opportunities to make comparisons related to physical appearance and, unlike traditional media, these are

often made in comparison to socially relevant and other known individuals, who tend to present themselves, life and their physical appearance in an exclusively positive light (de Vries & Kühne, 2015).

The research conducted by Lawler and Nixon (2011) highlights the existence of the factor of internalizing the ideals exposed within social media networks, which involves supporting the ideals of appearance promoted by the mass media, as well as adopting these ideals, reflecting the tendency of people to compare appearance with models idealized media. Moreover, social media users may use media content as a source of information on how to improve their physical appearance and may compare themselves to other users promoting an idealized self-image to set a standard to live up to (Rousseau & Eggermont, 2018). As a result, social media users come to consider the proposed ideal standard as the social definition of attractiveness and feel dissatisfied with themselves (de Vries et al., 2016).

The role of social media use on the relationship between self-esteem and body image

As exposure to idealized images on social media increases, there is a growing body of research on the role of social media use on self-esteem and body image (McLean et al., 2015; Tiggemann & Anderberg 2020). The large number of images posted on some social media platforms, such as Instagram, where 10 million new photos are uploaded every hour (Jiang & Ngien, 2020), provides users with opportunities to make social comparisons related to appearance. Such social networks are preferred by users because they allow users with low self-esteem to create an image of themselves according to how they want to be perceived by others (Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013).

Rodgers et al. (2014), state that body image and disordered eating behaviors are strongly correlated with time spent on social media. According to Button et al. (1997), eating disorders are due to either negative body image or low self-esteem, in which cases pathological patterns of eating behavior serve as a coping mechanism for users' exposure to the content they choose to watch on social media networks. To address the growing prevalence of eating disorders, it is necessary to understand the risk factors associated with the development of these behaviors, factors that can be represented by body dissatisfaction, or the negative subjective evaluation of one's own weight or body shape (Stice, 2002).

Although there is some evidence that body comparisons are automatic and unconscious (Gilbert et al., 1995), the experimental study conducted by Want and Saiphoo (2017), presented evidence that making comparisons with social media images is not a automatic process, but requires cognitive effort and is therefore under the full control of the person making the comparison, at least to some extent. Studies have shown that social media exposure impacts body image both positively and negatively (Ahmad et al., 2019). This depends on the type of online interaction; social media likes increase positive body image perception, but seeing other people's selfies, which we may find more attractive, can lead to negative body image perception (Chua & Chang, 2016).

Several correlational studies have examined the relationship between social media use and body image (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016), and the study by Meier and Gray (2014) of preadolescent girls and high school students concludes that social media use, such as Facebook, leads to comparisons of physical appearance. There are relatively few longitudinal studies of social media use, but results from the study by Frison and Eggermont (2017) demonstrated that using Instagram leads to a decrease in self-esteem over time, and the results of the research conducted by Hawes et al. (2020), showed that feelings of social comparison on social media are closely related to social anxiety, low self-esteem, and a distorted body image. All these studies directly or indirectly suggest that exposure to photos of other users on social networks can lead to deterioration of mental health, resulting in low self-esteem and negative body image (Bodroža et al., 2022).

Considering the above, we propose to analyze the moderating role of the use of social media networks on the relationship between self-esteem and body image, so we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2. *Social media use moderates the relationship between self-esteem and body image*.

2. METHODOLOGY

Participants and procedure
A number of 166 people between the ages of 18 and 80 participated in the present study, M = 26.39, SD = 11.13, of which 19 were male (11%), 145 were female (87%), and two participants declared that they belong to another gender (1%). Regarding the area of origin, 124 people belong to the urban area (75%) and 42 people belong to the rural area (42%). In regard to the marital status, 72 people are single (43%), 28 people are married (17%), 63 people are in a relationship (38%), one person is divorced (1%), and two people are widows (1%). In terms of the level of education, 105 people graduated from high school (63%), 36 people graduated from bachelor's studies (22%), 17 people graduated from master's studies (10%), and eight people have graduated from post-secondary education (5%), and in terms of professional status, 109 people are students (66%), 47 people are employed (28%), and 10 people are unemployed (6%).

Inclusion criteria: participants must be Romanian citizens over 18 years of age. The sampling method is one of convenience. Out of a total of 200 people invited to participate in the study, only 166 people agreed to participate until the end by completing the questionnaire (83%). Study participants were contacted through multiple sources, knowledge, internet. They participated voluntarily and were not rewarded for participating in the study.

The research ethics conditions regarding data processing and interpretation, as well as data security monitoring, were met. The data were initially organized in encrypted Excel spreadsheets to which only the author of this study had access. No participants' names or other data that could link the participant's identity to the data provided by them were requested.

Instruments

Sociodemographic variables were collected through a list of questions regarding age, gender, background, marital status, and professional status.

Self-esteem was measured with Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The instrument comprises 10 items and does not measure multiple dimensions. Answers are given on a four-point Likert scale, where 0 – strongly disagree and 3 – strongly agree. Scores are obtained by summing the scores of each item. Examples of items: "I feel that I have a number of good qualities", "I take a positive attitude towards myself".

Body image was measured with The Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The instrument comprises 10 items and does not measure multiple dimensions. Answers are given on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 – never and 5 – always. Scores are obtained by summing the scores of each item. Examples of items: "I respect my body", "I take a positive attitude towards my body".

Social media use was measured with the Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007). The instrument comprises eight items. Answers are given on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree. Scores are obtained by summing the scores of each item. Examples of items: "Facebook has become part of my daily routine", "I would be sorry if Facebook shut down".

3. RESULTS

The present study has a cross-sectional, descriptive and correlational design. For data organization and hypothesis testing, the Jamovi statistical analysis program was used, including the medmod module (The jamovi project, 2024).

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

	M	SD	α	IN	SS	AC
IN	30.42	7.80	.81	1		
SS	18.55	6.61	.89	-.09	1	
AC	36.13	9.58	.96	-.04	.79**	1

Note: **. $p < .01$, *. $p < .05$
IN = Social Media Use, SS = Self-Esteem, AC = Body Image

The scores for the use of social media networks are very high, M = 30.42, SD = 7.80, for self-esteem the scores are relatively high, M = 18.55, SD = 6.61, and in the case of body image the scores are relative high, M = 36.13, SD = 9.58. At the same time, it is observed that there are significant positive correlations between self-esteem and body image, r = .79, p < .01.
Skewness and kurtosis are in the range (-1, 1), which reflects a normal data distribution. There were no missing cases and no cases were removed from any of the statistical analyses.

Descriptive statistics
Mean scores, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations between variables are presented in Table 1.

Hypothese testing
H1. *Self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of body image*.

In order to test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was performed, with self-esteem as the predictor and body image as the dependent variable.

Table 2. *Simple linear regression analysis for self-esteem as a predictor of body image*

						95% CI	
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	β	Lower	Upper
SS	1.14	.07	16.35	< .001	.79	.69	.88

Note: R^2 = .62
SS = Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is responsible for 62% of the variation in body image, the regression equation being statistically significant, $F(1, 164) = 267.37$, $p < .01$. Self-esteem is significantly positively associated with body image, $β = .79$, CI95%(.69, .88), $p < .01$.

Considering this result, we can say that hypothesis H1 is supported by the analyzed data.

H2. *Social media use moderates the relationship between self-esteem and body image*.

In order to test this hypothesis, a moderation analysis was performed with self-esteem as the predictor, social media use as the moderating variable and body image as the dependent variable.

Table 3. *Moderation estimation for social media use in the relationship between self-esteem and body image*

			95% CI			
	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Z	p
SS	1.14	.07	1.00	1.28	16.38	< .001
IN	.04	.06	-.07	.16	.69	.49
SS ✶ IN	-.01	.01	-.03	.01	-.74	.46

Note: SS = Self-Esteem, IN = Social Media Use

Social media use fails to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and body image, $b = -.01$, CI95%(-.03, .01), $Z = -.74$, $p = .46$.

Considering this result, we can say that hypothesis H2 is not supported by the analyzed data.

4. DISCUSSION

Participants in this study scored very high on social media use. Self-esteem scores are relatively high, and body image scores are also relatively high. These results show that the study participants are frequent users of social media and generally have a positive self-confidence and perception of themselves and their body image. This can be influenced by a number of factors, including how users compare themselves to others on social media or how they perceive and react to images and messages related to physical appearance that they encounter in their online interactions (Meier & Gray, 2014).

Significant correlations were observed between certain variables in this study. Thus, self-esteem shows significant positive correlations with body image. As a result of analyzing this correlation, we can conclude by the fact that when self-esteem is generally high, there is likely to be a positive perception on the body image. This finding suggests that the level of confidence and self-esteem can contribute

to the development of a more balanced attitude towards your own body, even when social media users could be exposed to unrealistic social pressures and beauty standards (Frison & Eggermont, 2017). Consequently, in the case of this study it is noted that the use of social media networks fails to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and body image. In other words, the results suggest that the way people perceive themselves and the perception of their own body image are more closely related to the trust and respect they give to themselves, rather than to the frequency of using social networks.

The first hypothesis of the study refers to the relationship between self-esteem and body image. After conducting the analysis, we found that self-esteem had a positive impact on the body image. According to the study conducted by McCarroll et al. (2009), self-esteem is a key factor in explaining individual variations in emotional states during social interactions, including in terms of perception of body image, so a high level of self-esteem can help

overcome negative feelings that may arise from social comparisons, contributing to a more positive perception of your own body image. Also, a research conducted by Zeigler-Hill (2013) shows how people with high self-esteem tend to perceive themselves in a more positive way, which can also influence their perception of their own body image. In addition, according to Mulgrew et al. (2019), higher levels of self-esteem in relation to body image indicate that individuals who have high confidence in their own values and personal qualities also have, a more positive and acceptable perception of their own body image.

The second hypothesis of the study addressed the moderating role of the use of social media networks in the relationship between self-esteem and body image. Regarding the moderating role of social media use on the relationship between self-esteem and body image, we observed that social media use fails to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and body image. Although these social networks can represent platforms for social comparison and exposure to unrealistic standards of beauty, their impact on self-esteem and body image can vary depending on several factors, such as ways of use, content consumed and social interactions from the online environment (Ahmad et al., 2019). Individuals may be exposed to various messages and perspectives regarding beauty standards, and how they react to them may depend on their level of awareness, emotional regulation skills, and self-perception (Peluchette & Karl, 2008). It is possible that some users are less susceptible to the negative impact of beauty standards promoted on social networks or use these platforms in a way that increases their self-confidence and improves their perception of body image (Madge et al., 2009).

According to the study conducted by Meier and Gray (2014), which examined the effects of social media usage on young women, demonstrated that there is no significant link between time spent on social networks and negative effects on users, such as negative body image. Also, in a study conducted by Fardouly et al. (2015), the findings suggested that the use of social media networks does not have a direct effect on users, but certain characteristics of individual differences, such as the high tendency to compare appearance physically, can make them more vulnerable to the influence of social media. Furthermore, according to the results of the study conducted by Sherlock and Wagstaff (2019), no experimental effect of exposure to images posted on Instagram on users' self-esteem was found, requiring a wider range of factors to be considered, such as social interactions and how users perceive and interpret content on social media platforms.

Consequently, the results obtained in the present study are in agreement with the literature, underlining that self-esteem is an essential factor in determining how individuals perceive their own body image, and that the use of social

media networks does not seem to influence substantially the relationship between self-esteem and body image, this aspect reflecting the complexity and diversity of individual experiences in the online environment and the need to investigate more deeply how digital social interactions affect the self-perception of users of various social networks and, implicitly, the way they perceive their own physical appearance.

Practical implications

The present study, regarding the role of social media use on the relationship between self-esteem and body image, may have multiple practical implications. The results of the study could guide the development of educational and intervention programs aimed at promoting healthy use of social networks and improving self-esteem and body image among users of these networks platforms. These programs could include educational components about the impact of online social media on mental health and self-esteem, providing information about the risks associated with excessive or uncontrolled use of social networks.

Intervention programmes could also provide practical strategies and techniques for promoting a positive body image. These strategies may involve promoting self-knowledge and self-acceptance, encouraging a critical and balanced attitude towards online content, and developing stress management skills and social pressures. Moreover, this information could be integrated into guidelines and recommendations for parents, educators, mental health professionals and others involved in the lives of young people, to help them navigate healthy and positive social media online.

Limitations and future directions

This study presents results that have expanded beyond the usual field of observing the relationship between self-esteem and body image, bringing a new perspective on the relatively recent phenomenon of social media usage behavior and their impact on the previously described relationship. Therefore, the present study also had some limitations that should be considered when evaluating its implications and that may provide directions for future research.

First, all constructs assessed in this study were based on self-report measures, which could introduce possible biases due to the influence of social desirability effects and possible lack of awareness. At the same time, in self-report methods, subjects can be influenced by how they relate to the environment and the group they belong to, reporting what they would like to do, would be appreciated if they did, and not what they actually do (Lira et al., 2022). Therefore, in future research it would be preferable to resort to more objective measures in terms of evaluation, by using alternative data collection models, such as directly

accessing the social network profiles of the research participants, this providing a more reliable estimate of the frequency of their online activity. Another limit of the present study refers to the small number of participants. Additionally, in future research, we propose to address this limitation by including a larger number of participants, coming from diverse backgrounds and with varied characteristics, to ensure greater representativeness and to allow the generalization of the results obtained.

Moreover, it should be noted that our study shows a disproportion in terms of gender distribution of participants, with a higher proportion of female respondents compared to the number of males. This could influence the representativeness of the study's findings in terms of gender relations and limit our ability to draw definitive conclusions and generalise results for the entire population. In future studies, it is advisable to pursue a balanced approach in recruiting participants so as to ensure appropriate gender representation. Another limitation of the conducted study is represented by the cross-sectional design, this restricting our ability to establish causal relationships between the variables we investigated. Although most studies measuring a moderating effect have adopted this type of research design, longitudinal studies would allow for a better understanding of the associations between social media use, variable self-esteem, and body image concerns.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides a valuable contribution to the complex understanding of the relationship between social media use, self-esteem, and body image. The obtained results represent an important starting point for future research, which could explore these interactions more deeply and address the identified limitations to obtain a more comprehensive and precise understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, our research can serve as a foundation for the development of strategies and interventions aimed at promoting healthy social media use and supporting the development of positive self-esteem and healthy body image among users.

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In conclusion, by investigating this relationship, we wanted to understand how interactions on social media platforms can influence users' perception of themselves and their bodies. The first research hypothesis was confirmed, so self-esteem is a significant predictor of body image. However, data analysis did not support the second hypothesis, which suggested that social media use might moderate the relationship between self-esteem and body image. Thus, this finding makes a significant contribution to the literature as it addresses existing gaps in understanding the impact that the use of social media platforms can have on users, particularly in terms of mental health and body image.

Given the increased prevalence of social media use, especially platforms that emphasize visual content, the importance of researching the effects of these platforms on mental health is becoming increasingly apparent. The present study highlights the need for continued and deeper investigation in this area to fully understand the consequences of social media use on users and to develop appropriate intervention strategies.

Because of the limitations of the current study, it is suggested that the topic be further investigated in a more robust manner in future research. It is essential to address these limitations in order to gain a more accurate and complete understanding of the relationship between social media use, self-esteem and body image. In this study, we have presented a number of perspectives and suggestions that can serve as a basis for future research on the effect that the use of social media has on self-esteem and body image. Therefore, in future studies it is necessary to identify situations and contexts in which the effects of social media use on self-esteem and body image may be more pronounced. These steps will contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between the use of social media networks and body perception, thus facilitating the development of effective strategies for increasing self-esteem and, implicitly, self-esteem, promoting a healthy body image.

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