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The Impact of Social Media on Self-Esteem among Young Adults in the UAE

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Abstract:

The use of social media has become part of life, especially among young adults across the world. Various studies have been conducted to examine the effects of social media on social and mental aspects of human society. However, only a few studies have examined the effects of social media on the perceptions of body image and self-esteem among young adults in the UAE. This study therefore explored the effects of social media on body image perceptions and self-esteem among young adults in the UAE. Using a sample of 80 students from Sharjah University, the study used a quantitative survey to examine how social media usage influences the perceptions of young adults in the UAE of their body image. The study found that social media use influences the perception of body image and self-esteem among young adults in the UAE. Also, the study established a connection between social media use and dissatisfaction with lifestyles among young adults in the UAE.

Keywords: Identity, Goffman, Self-representation, Social Media, Body Image, UAE, self-esteem.

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Introduction

Social media has in the recent decade become an essential factor in people's lives. Social media sites have become popular across countries and communities. Popular social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok enable billions of people across the world to interact virtually. With billions of users, social media platforms have triggered long-lasting behaviors among users (Harris and Orth, 2020). Hence, social media is a critical phenomenon shaping people's behaviors and reactions to the world around them. One of the reasons pushing people to get into social media sites is to consume the entertainment content that comes with being on social media sites. According to Harris and Orth (2020), the desire to communicate and share information between an individual and their friends also influences people to join social media sites. Communication through sharing content also enhances entertainment especially when individuals engaging in the behavior share social status and ideals.

Like other societies in the world, young people in the UAE are active social media users. A majority of people in the UAE have incorporated social interactions into social media sites. The high internet penetration in the UAE has triggered an increase in social media usage in the country over the last decade. With high internet penetration, access to social media sites has been easier among the people of the UAE. Radcliffe and Abuhmaid (2020**)** found that as of 2020, 98.98% of the UAE's population were on social media. The finding signifies growth in social media within the UAE compared to the last decade. It also showed that social media is an integral part of the daily lives of the people of the UAE.

However, the dynamics of the usage of social media sites in the UAE have changed over the recent past. Previously, Facebook was the main social media platform that people visited to get news and content about products as well as to interact with friends and family members. Radcliffe and Abuhmaid (2020**)** indicate that the popular social media sites among the youth in the UAE are YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. The growth in social media usage in the UAE also emanated from the growing smartphone penetration in the country. With falling smartphone prices and an increase in internet connectivity, the UAE has seen an increase in social media usage among people of diverse social statuses and age groups.

Using demographic comparisons, young adults in the UAE are more likely to use social media compared to adults and the elderly. According to Gjylbegaj and Jararaa (2018), young adults use social media to access all sorts of information. They use social media to meet virtual groups that share similar interests and concerns. As Gjylbegaj and Jararaa (2018) point out, social media enables young adults in the UAE to expand their networks as they share ideas and communicate with peers. On the other hand, the elderly use social media for communication and access to vital information and rarely use more than two social media sites.

Since social media is a social space that enables people to virtually meet and exchange ideas, it influences the views and perceptions people have of themselves and others (Gjylbegaj and Jararaa, 2018). By influencing how people see themselves, social media affects the self-esteem of users, especially young adults and adolescents. Self-esteem is the barometer of self-evaluation that involves appraisals of self-worth and experiences of an individual (Perloff, 2014 and Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). It entails the way people express feelings of affection toward themselves and

their abilities (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018). Social media provides the platforms through which people gauge their image, abilities, and worth hence shaping the self-esteem of the users.

Previous studies have linked social media with low self-esteem or self-worth issues. Social media users have shown the tendency to compare themselves with their peers in social sites or groups. According to Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017), 88% of social media users have made social comparisons between themselves and their peers on social media platforms. By making social comparisons, social media users, especially young adults and adolescents are likely to experience low self-esteem and lack of self-worth. Social media users in this category are also likely to experience psychological distress as they try to fit into social spaces. With an increase in the usage of social media in the UAE, there is a need to examine the connection between social media usage and the self-esteem of young adults in the country. The study examined the effects of social media on the perceptions of body image, self-representation, self-esteem young and lifestyle satisfaction among young adults in the UAE.

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the effects of social media on the perceptions of young adults in the UAE on their body image, self-esteem and self-presentation. It focuses on identifying changes in personal perceptions on body language, self-esteem and self-presentation as a result of using social media platforms. The study also examines the effects of social media on satisfaction with lifestyles among young adults in the UAE.

Research questions:

1. Is there a connection between social media use and perceptions of body image among young adults in the UAE?

2. Does social media affect the self-presentation perceptions of young adults in the UAE?

3. Does social media affect female young people's satisfaction with the way they perceive their lifestyle?

The study is useful to young adults in the UAE in different ways. For instance, policymakers on young empowerment will need the findings of the study to know how to formulate policies based on the new behaviors of young adults in the UAE. The study will also add to the academic literature on the impacts of social media on the behaviors of young adults. Various studies have examined the role of social media in shaping self-esteem and presentation among female young adults. However, only a few studies have covered this topic in relation to young adults especially female adults in the UAE (add reference). This current study is an effort to bridge this gap by relating previous findings and primary data to the situation in the UAE. The research will be useful in enhancing literature on the usage of social media and its effects on body image perceptions and self-presentation views.

Social Media and Body Image

The usage of social media influences on the perceptions that young female adults have of their body images (Zaid et al, 2021). Different studies have investigated the connection between the use of social media and body image comparison and dissatisfaction among female adults across the world. Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017), investigated the phenomenon of comparisons among social media users. They found that people, especially young adults engage in social comparisons between themselves and other social media users. The authors found that comparisons in social networking sites can either be upward or downward (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017).

Upward comparisons involve an individual comparing himself with those superior to him in social spaces. Perloff (2014) made a similar observation indicating that the presence of images of models in social sites gives other female users the pressure to appear like the models. Perloff (2014) and Franchina and Lo Coco (2018) assert that the body perceptions of female adults change based on the content they consume through social media platforms. Franchina and Lo Coco (2018) further assert that female young adults and other adolescents feel that the appearance and images they see on social media platforms as the ideal appearances that they should emulate. As a result, young adults, especially females develop the urge to appear the way they see their peers on social media (Perloff, 2014). The urge leads to pressure that triggers a change in behaviors and self-esteem among the female adults.

The pressure to look like people above one's social status and appearance triggers feelings of low self-esteem especially among women since they feel inferior when they compare their bodies to those of their idols in social media spaces (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) further argue that upward comparisons influence people to undertake negative evaluations of themselves and end up losing self-esteem. Thus, perceptions of the body image. In trying to appear like those they see as superior to them, users of social media platforms are likely to edit their images as a way of addressing their inferiority (Campell-Phillips and Halder, 2019). The findings show that users of social media may exhibit negative feelings about their body images.

In downward comparison, individuals compare themselves with those below them in social media spaces (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). In this case, users of social media see other users who post their images on the sites

as inferior to them and their appearance (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). Campell-Phillips and Halder (2019) agree with this perspective arguing that in many cases, users of social media use their images as profile pictures. In their study, Campell-Phillips and Halder (2019) established that using self-portraits showed that social media users were satisfied with their body images and appearance. As Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) and Campell-Phillips and Halder (2019) argue, downward comparison in social media platforms happens when users feel satisfied with their body shape, general attractiveness, and weight. Thus, unlike upward comparisons that influence social media users to have low self-esteem, downward comparisons trigger positive feelings about one's body image.

Social media and self-presentation

Since social media influences users, especially young adults to develop different perceptions of their bodies, it has an impact on how young female adults represent their bodies. Perfloff (2014) and Franchina and Lo Coco (2018) indicate that social media users represent their bodies based on what they consider as the ideal appearance. The idea of the ideal body image develops based on the perceptions of body image that female young adults obtain by using social media platforms especially Instagram (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018). Franchina and Lo Coco (2018) further assert that strong peer presence among female young adults influences the way the users represent themselves and their images on social media platforms. For instance, exposure to thin-ideal images may increase the dissatisfaction that women have with their bodies (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018). Perloff (2014) and Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) agree with this perception indicating that dissatisfaction with one's appearance as a result of continuous use of social media influences the way individuals represent

themselves both online and offline. By developing dissatisfaction with one's body image, female young adults may engage in activities to change their skin texture and general body appearance.

In some cases, for instance, female young adults intend to change their skin textures to appear like their peers from different ethnic groups (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). Dissatisfaction with body image and appearance as a result of the use of social media influences female adults and adolescents to apply skin-lightening products to make them appear like their white counterparts (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018). In this case, the users of social media feel that the ideal and attractive female figures should appear thin and whitish (Perloff, 2014). By embracing skin routines that intend to enable them to appear different, female young adults who are users of social media platforms tend to represent themselves differently from the way they have been in the past (Perloff, 2014). Failure to appear or represent themselves in a way that they think is ideal may trigger other antisocial behaviors.

Zaid et al (2021) found that young adults in the UAE present different personalities on social media platforms depending on social situations. Based on Goffman's self-presentation theory, the authors indicate that social media users in the UAE, especially young adults present themselves as people on the stage as they strive to present a desirable image (Zaid et al, 2021). As actors on a stage, users of social media platforms stage a character to give a certain impression of themselves to the other users (Zaid et al, 2021). In this case, the users intend to present a given image that builds a certain impression on others about them (Zaid et al, 2021). The authors further noted that young adult users of social media in the UAE were highly likely to edit their images to appear different from the

way they appeared in real life (Zaid et al 2021). They noted that social media had given young adults the power to present themselves differently from the demands of society. The findings suggest that self-presentation has significantly changed due to the usage of social media in the UAE.

Social media also affects the psychosocial behaviors of the users of social platforms (Umar and Idris, 2018). Umar and Idris (2018) and Abbas et al. (2019) assert that social media affects how individuals behave and develop their relationships with different environments. Since young adults react to the information they consume from social media platforms, their behaviors tend to change depending on the information they consume (Umar and Idris, 2019). Thus, social media affects the interpersonal, physical, and psychosocial factors of the users (Umar and Idris, 2018). Continuous use of social media platforms can also expose young adults to other risks that may lead to mental health problems.

For instance, exposure to cyberbullying and internet addiction can easily affect the mental health of social media users (Umar and Idris, 2018 and Bastick, 2021). Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) held a similar view since they found that upward comparisons and inferiority feelings that emanate from negative comments trigger emotional reactions that may cause depression among social media users. Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) and Abbas et al. (2019) also found that using social media to compare oneself with others triggers loneliness when an individual realizes that other people are better than he is. With such feelings, users may experience depression which is a mental health problem (Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017). Campell-Phillips and Halder (2019) assert that depression, anxiety, and self-loathing trigger individuals to post a lot of pictures and information on social sites to get attention. By seeking validation, users of social media

can easily lose self-esteem.

Social media and satisfaction with lifestyle

Social media affects the views people have concerning their lifestyles (Rajeswari, 2017). Users of social media showcase their lifestyles to other users through images and videos (Rajeswari, 2017). As a result, users are likely to consume information relating to the lifestyles, dressing, and eating habits of the other users (Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). Users of social media form social groups that proclaim certain lifestyles, dressing, entertainment, and eating habits (Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). As Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) point out, upward comparison influence female young adult to embrace the lifestyles they see their peers showing on social media. As a result, there is a likelihood of having lifestyle changes due to social media (Rajeswari, 2017). Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) assert that social media influences young people to embrace norms that fit social spaces they occupy since they are dissatisfied with their lifestyles. For instance, female young adults want to dress like some of the celebrities they interact with on social media platforms Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). The users believe that there are certain conventional lifestyles that people of their age should portray (Rajeswari, 2017). As a result, they try to embrace lifestyles that align with their desires and expectations.

Theoretical framework

Self-presentation theory

The study was based on Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical principles. Specifically, the study was based on the concept of self-presentation. According to Merunková and Slerka (2019), Dramaturgy theory holds that life is a never-ending play in which people are actors. Since life is a play,

socialization involves learning how to play one's roles as assigned by other people. Based on how individuals act on the stage, they build each other's identity as they interact (Merunková and Slerka, 2019). Social interaction, therefore, is seen as how people live their lives like actors on a stage aiming to respond to the audience. In the front stage, people perform their lines to others, and while in the backstage, people retreat and become their real selves.

The presentation that people make on social media suits the dramaturgy theory. In social media spaces, people spend their time on the stage to present personal information, appearance and content to the social media families. While on stage, social media users manipulate each other's impressions about themselves (Merunková and Slerka, 2019). Zaid et al (2021) assert that social media users in the UAE behave as actors on stage. In this case, the users, a majority of whom are young adults build a character based on the impression they intend to create to the other users about themselves. The users convey impressions of themselves through social sites to influence the perceptions of others on them by presenting their images and ideas based on how they want others to perceive them. However, when they finally retreat to their personal spaces, social media users try to think about their interactions with other people in social spaces. After retreating to the personal spaces away from social media, individuals think about their influence on social spaces and the impressions they create on other people. Using this dramaturgy theory, it is easier to examine social settings, appearance, and manner of interactions on social media platforms and their impacts on the users. Dramaturgy theory was used because its claims can fit well into interactions and intentions of people using social media spaces. It captures the idea of acting on a stage and relates it well with how social media is a social setting where interactions that influence

people's self-esteem take place. By using the theory, it was easier to show how young people act on the stage, which is social media shape views of self-image, self-presentation, personal perceptions, and lifestyles.

Self-monitoring theory

Self-monitoring theory deals with the tendency to alter behaviors based on the results of the monitoring of the social situation. Specifically, self-monitoring theory addresses the tendency among individuals to alter their behaviors to impress other individuals whom they share a certain social situation (Westfall, 2020). The theory relates to the metacognitive processes that individuals undergo when they try to control their expressive behaviors. The sensitivity to the behaviors that individuals consider appropriate is what constitutes self-monitoring. Under the self-monitoring theory, individuals exhibit differences in detecting social cues and they engage in self-presentation (Westfall, 2020). Given these differences, such individuals change their behaviors to impress their peers. As a result, such individuals are likely to exhibit personality differences in self-esteem levels. Based on this theory, it will be easier to find the connection between social media use and the urge to impress followers and how such a tendency may lead to low self-esteem. By building a connection between self-monitoring and social media, the theory will assist in examining its role in influencing self-esteem levels among young people in the UAE.

Self-concept theory

Based on Goffman's dramaturgical principles, self-concept involves self-image, the ideal self and self-esteem. The three components shape the idea of self-concept. Baumeister (2011) indicates that self-image relates to the views that people have about themselves while self-esteem relates

to the value that one sees in themselves. The ideal self, on the other hand relates to how an individual wishes to live or be like. An individual's self-concept is the belief about himself such as one's attributes, capabilities and other people's perceptions of the individual (Baumeister, 2011 and McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010). Self-concept occurs as a result of the interface between an individual and the social system (Baumeister, 2011). It emanates from the physical body and involves choosing and acting as a unity and as a point of reference different from other individuals. For one to have a self-concept, they should have a judgment of their worth based on the perceptions they have about themselves and the views of others about themselves.

By using the self-concept theory, it was easier to understand the connections between the assessment of young female adults about themselves and how the perceptions of other social media users influence their self-esteem, self-image and ideal self. The idea of self-concept will help the researcher to develop connections between social media use among the female young adult users of social media and their self-image and presentations. Such connections enabled the researcher to make the necessary conclusions and implications of the study.

Methodology

The study relied on a quantitative research approach in collecting and analyzing data. The quantitative research approach involves collecting numerical data and analyzing it to answer the research questions (Daniel, 2016). This study used survey questionnaires to collect data from the participants. The questionnaires captured issues relating to social media use and its connection to low self-esteem, self-image, self-monitoring

and self-presentation and lifestyles among young adults in the UAE. The questionnaires also captured the opinions, feelings and attitudes of respondents about the link between their use of social media and self-esteem, self-image and presentation. The quantitative approach of survey questionnaires is effective since it enables the researcher to collect a substantial amount of data.

The results were analyzed using SPSS and measures of central tendencies. Also percentages were used to help in analyzing the data. The analysis of the results was pegged on the testing of the hypotheses.

Population and Sampling

The study targeted young female and male adults in the UAE. The main target population for the study was the UAE youth aged between 18-24 years. The idea is that the target group represents young adults who are active users of social media platforms. The study used a random sample from the University of Sharjah. According to Palinkas et al (2015), random sampling is the one in which each potential participant has a chance to participate in the study. A sample of 80 participants (40 female and 40 male students) from the University of Sharjah was selected to participate in the study. The selection was based on the number of social media platforms that the participants had joined. Participants who are active in more than three social media sites were selected.

Results

The results section presents the answers that the participants gave regarding the research questions. The section captures the numerical findings without stating their implications in the study. It is based on different research questions. All the 80 participants selected in the sample

returned the questionnaires showing a 100% response rate.

Out of the 80 respondents, 35% indicated they used social media most of the time, 30% almost all the time and 20% five times a day.

Drivers for joining/using social media sites

Frequency	No.	Percentage %
To get news	12	15%
To view images	16	20%
To interact with friends	32	40%
To end boredom	16	20%
To learn new skill	4	5%

Most of the participants (40%) who returned the questionnaires indicated that they logged into social media to interact with virtual friends while 20% said they used social media to see images and videos. The least chosen option was learning new skills where only 5 % selected it.

Perceptions on appearance

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral
I find pictures of other social media users more attractive than mine	28 35%	24 30%	12 15%	12 15%	4 5%

I would like to appear like the other social media users especially in Instagram	32 40%	20 25%	12 15%	12 15%	4 5%
I can use body products to take image like the ones I see on social platforms	12 15%	12 15%	24 30%	24 30%	8 10%
I wish to follow the physical health routines of some of my friends on Facebook and Instagram	24 30%	28 35%	12 15%	12 15%	4 5%
I have changed diet to look like some of my followers and friends on social media	12 15%	16 20%	24 30%	20 25%	8 10%
I am likely to filter my pictures before I post them on social media platforms	28 35%	24 30%	16 20%	4 5%	8 10%

I select the best picture before posting on social media	28 35%	24 30%	12 15%	8 10%	8 10%
I delete photos and images that do not get above fifty likes on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter	24 30%	24 30%	12 15%	12 15%	8 10%

Many respondents (40%) indicated that they sometimes compared themselves to other social media users. Other respondents noted that they often performed such comparisons. However, others noted they had not performed such comparisons.

	Rarely	Regularly	Sometimes	Always	Not at all
I consider the views of others before posting my image on social media	20 25%	24 30%	12 15%	16 20%	8 10%
I present myself based on the trends especially in Instagram	32 40%	20 25%	12 15%	8 10%	8 10%

I am nervous of my appearance when posting image and views on social media.	16 20%	20 25%	28 35%	12 15%	4 5%
I wish to be unique but still trendy when posting on social media platforms	12 15%	20 25%	16 20%	12 15%	20 25%
I am longing for many likes and comments when posting an image on social media	12 15%	24 30%	8 10%	20 25%	16 20%
I am likely to delete negative comments on my image posts	20 25%	24 30%	16 20%	12 15%	8 10%
I emulate the appearance and trends I see on social media	12 15%	28 35%	12 15%	16 20%	12 15%
I wish I appeared like some of the big names on social media	20 25%	16 20%	24 30%	12 15%	8 10%

Lifestyle perceptions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
My peers on social media live better lives	24 30%	8 10%	16 20%	20 25%	12 15%
I envy my peers on social media especially on Instagram	12 15%	8 10%	28 38%	12 15%	20 25%
I believe my peers present their true life on social media	12 15%	24 30%	16 20%	16 20%	8 10%
I wish I lived like some of my friends on social media platforms	24 30%	20 25%	16 20%	8 10%	12 15%
I have spent money to buy cloths due to influence from social media	20 25%	18 22.5%	17 21.25%	16 20%	9 11.25%

Findings

The study found that Facebook and Instagram were the most popular social media sites among young adults in the UAE. From the sample of 80 participants, 24 (30%) were regular users of Facebook while 28 (35%) were regular users of Instagram. Snapchat accounted for 15% of the participants and Tiktok came last with only 5% of participants indicating they were regular users of the platform.

Young adults in the UAE used social media most of their time as evidenced from the results of the study. The results of the study established that 35% of the 80 participants were on social media most of their time. The study also established that the urge to interact with virtual friends the leading motivating factor for the use of social media among young adults in the UAE. Of the 80 participants, 32 (40%) quoted the need for social interaction on social media as the leading motivator for them to use social sites. Also 20% quoted the need to end boredom as one of the motivators that influence them to log into social media sites.

The study also found that young adults in the UAE developed perceptions of their body image based on the images they saw on the online platforms. Most of the participants (35%) strongly agreed that they found the pictures of the other social media users as more attractive than theirs. Also 40% noted that they wished they appeared like their peers on social media sites especially the ones on Instagram. One of the findings that showed that social media influenced the perceptions of body image among young adults in the UAE was the revelation from some of the participants who indicated that they were willing to follow the physical routines of some of their peers on social media platforms as they strive to acquire a certain body image.

Most of the participants (35%) agreed that they were willing to embrace the physical fitness routines of their peers on social media to enable them to acquire their body image. Other participants noted that they were willing to change their diets to look their peers on social media platforms.

The most crucial finding that showed the possibility of low self-esteem and a negative perception of the body image of social media users among the UAE's young adults related to the manipulations that social media users are likely to perform on the pictures they post on social media sites. A majority of the participants (35%) strongly agreed that they were likely to filter their pictures before posting them on social media sites. A similar percentage of the participants also strongly agreed that they chose the best pictures for posting on social media platforms. Also 30% of the participants strongly agreed that they were tempted to delete their pictures that did not attain a certain number of likes on social media platforms. It was also established that young adults in the UAE compare their body image with those of the peers. Out of the 80 participants, 20 indicated that they often made comparisons of their body image with the image of their peers while 30% noted that they sometimes make such comparisons.

It was also established that social media influenced the self-presentation of young adults in the UAE. A majority of the participants (30%) indicated that they regularly considered the views of their peers on social media before they posted their images on social platforms. Also, 25% of the participants noted that they always presented themselves based on the prevailing trends in social media platforms to avoid appearing outdated. It was further established that the participants were nervous when they presented themselves on social media. The feeling emanated from their doubts on their self-presentation. The finding corroborated concept theory

since it showed that users of social media intend to act as if they are on a stage where they are the point of reference. Also, the study found that young adults in the UAE presented themselves on social media to get as many likes as possible. A majority of the respondents indicated that they regularly deleted the pictures that received negative comments. They also noted that they deleted negative comments on their images since they believed they had presented themselves to the best of their abilities.

Also, the study established that social media influenced perceptions of lifestyles among young adults in the UAE. A majority of the participants (24) noted that they believed that their peers on social media sites lived better lives than them. Of the 80 respondents, 15% strongly agreed that they envied their peers based on what they learned from social media. Some of the participants also agreed that they wished they lived like their peers on social media platforms. The agreement of the respondents was based on their virtual interactions with peers on social media platforms. For instance, some wished they owned cars and other luxury items they had seen with their peers on social platforms. The study further established that some respondents made decisions based on the lifestyle of their peers on social media. Some of the respondents indicated that they made decisions to buy trendy clothes to appear like their friends on social media platforms.

The study also revealed that some of the participants had experienced cyber bullying on social media platforms. Out of the 80 participants, 45% had experienced cyber bullying on their social media interactions. The finding showed that young adults in the UAE were prone to bullying from other social media users. However, the bullying as not as pronounced in the country as it is in other regions given that 55% of the respondents noted that they had not experienced such bullying. The study further revealed that

cyberbullying had a negative effect on the self-esteem of the users of social media. The respondents who had experienced cyberbullying indicated that the experience negatively affected their self-esteem. Based on these findings, it is essential to examine them deeply in a discussion and relate them to the previous findings in other research works.

Discussion

The findings from the study helped in answering the research questions. We cannot generalize the findings given the sampling method, but the findings have a general importance that reflects some tendencies that relate to the effects of social media use among young adults in the UAE. The findings focus on the perceptions of the UAE's young adults on their body images and the influence of social media on such perceptions. The study revealed that young adults in the UAE were becoming ardent users of social media platforms. This discovery was evident from the results of the study since even the new social media sites had become popular among the respondents a majority of whom were university students. For instance, Tiktok was seen to be growing in popularity among young adults in the UAE. The finding that youths in the UAE were ardent users of social media corroborated Radcliffe and Abuhmaid's (2020) finding that 98.98% of the UAE's populations were on different social media platforms. As many social media platforms come up and the internet penetration continues in the country, more UAE users are likely to join.

The finding on the expansion of social media usage among young adults in the UAE further revealed that dynamics for social media use were changing in the country. Although the finding showed that many of the respondents used Facebook frequently, there was a significant growth in

the number that used Instagram as their preferred social media platform. Being the second most used social media platform among the respondents, Instagram showed that it was likely to overtake Facebook and Twitter in terms of popularity among the UAE's young adults. The finding agreed with Radcliffe and Abuhmaid (2020**)** assertion that social media usage dynamics were frequently changing in the UAE.

The study also revealed that there were common interests that motivated young adults in the UAE to use social media platforms. As evident in the findings, young adults in the UAE use social media to get social interaction from their virtual friends. The finding suggested that youth in the UAE were moving away from physical interactions as they embraced social media platforms as avenues for interaction. By indicating that they chose social media to address boredom, the respondents showed that they lacked avenues for interacting physically hence they were finding a virtual space to fill the gap. The finding corroborated Gjylbegaj and Jararaa's (2018) assertion that young adults in the UAE embrace social media to expand their networks and build conversations with peers. Therefore, evidence from this study corroborated the earlier studies on the reasons and motivations for high rate of social media usage among young adults in the UAE.

As evident from the findings of the study, using social media among young adults in the UAE triggered perceptions of the body image of the users in the UAE. The study revealed that using social media made respondents to compare their appearance with that of their peers whom they interacted with on social media. For instance, some of the respondents indicated that they found the images of other users more attractive than their own. Others indicated that they were comparing their body images with those of their peers on social media platforms. Some of the respondents confirmed that

they were willing to engage in activities that could help them change their body image after seeing certain body images of their peers on social media platforms. For instance, the study revealed that some of the respondents intended to change their diet and engage in physical routines to acquire the body images of their peers on social media platforms.

The above finding implied that using social media influenced some of young adults in the UAE to have a negative perception of their body image. By saying that they were willing to change their routines to change their body appearance, respondents revealed that they were dissatisfied with their appearance hence the need to change. The study revealed that upward comparisons in networking sites were common among young adults in the UAE. In this case, the respondents were comparing themselves to individuals who are higher than them in terms of the appearance of the body image. Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad (2017) noted that comparing oneself to superior individuals was common among the female users of social media. This study corroborated Perloff's (2014) assertion that perceptions of body image are based on the content social media user consumes from the networking platforms. As evident in the study, the respondents developed perceptions of their bodies by comparing themselves to their peers on social media platforms. By trying to emulate their peers on social media, young adults develop the urge to look at their peers. The urge leads to pressure that may trigger low self-esteem among the users of social media in the UAE. In this case and as evident in the study, social media users view the image of their peers as the ideal appearance and therefore work towards achieving the body images of their peers.

Also, the study revealed that low self-esteem among young adults as a result of comparing their body images with peers influences the choices of

users to manipulate their pictures when they post them on social sites. For instance, respondents indicated that they are likely to filter their images as they try to influence the perception of other users on their images. Such moves emanate from taking a negative evaluation of oneself and thinking that they cannot fit into social space unless they manipulate their images to appear like those they see as being superior to them (Campell-Phillips and Halder, 2019). The move to edit images before posting may also show low self-esteem. The study revealed that users who were likely to filter images felt that they were not superior enough if they posted the pictures as they appeared without the filters. The study further revealed that when young adults in the UAE felt inferior, they were likely to delete pictures that did not trigger a lot of likes. Actions such as deleting images for not getting likes showed low self-esteem that could lead to mental problems among social media users. By being dissatisfied with one's appearance, social media users are likely to endure negative feelings about their body images hence experiencing challenges such as depression.

The study further revealed that self-presentation of young adults in the UAE depended on their circle of interactions on social media platforms. As evident in the results of the study, young adults in the UAE were conscious of the views of their friends on social networking sites and the consciousness influenced the way they presented themselves on the sites. The study revealed that young adults in the UAE intended to go with the trends on the networking sites and therefore they only presented themselves through images that showed they were keeping with the trends. For instance, the study revealed that some young adults in the UAE were willing to change their diet and skin products to ensure they presented themselves in a way that showed they were attractive to their peers and

able to keep with the trends. The finding corroborated Franchina and Lo Coco's (2018) that trying to represent oneself differently emanates from the upward comparison where an individual feels that they should appear different to catch up with the trends in social media.

Besides, the study revealed that there was a likelihood of dissatisfaction with lifestyles among young adults in the UAE when they became ardent users of social media. The study found that the dressing, eating and entertainment habits of young adults in the UAE changed as a result of consuming social media content. The study revealed that young adults in the UAE envied the lifestyles of their peers that they saw on social media platforms. As a result, some of young adults engaged in actions that showed they were trying to embrace the lifestyles of their peers. The finding agreed with Rajeswari (2017) and Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) that social media influences young adults to embrace lifestyles that show they fit into the trends within social spaces that they occupy. In this case, users of social media embrace norms that make them conform and fit into the virtual social spaces. By believing that there are conventional lifestyles that they should follow, young adults in the UAE tend to embrace actions that help them fit into social spaces.

The study implies that the motivators for logging into social media in the UAE differ depending on social site that an individual chooses to use. The study established that respondents who chose Facebook looked for virtual interactions while the ones that chose Instagram were motivated by the need to kill boredom and see some good pictures. Also, respondents who chose Twitter were looking for news from the social platform. The finding showed that with different motivations, an individual chooses the social platform that serves their motivations. Therefore, the study implies that the

effect of social media on the perceptions of young adults in the UAE may depend on the type of social platform that an individual consumes most of the time.

Based on the findings of the study, they also imply that the feelings of low self-esteem among young adults in the UAE emanate from the upward comparisons. The findings show that the urge among young adults in the UAE to look like their peers brings in envy. With such envy and possible negative perceptions of oneself, there is a likelihood of low self-esteem among young adults in the UAE especially emanating from the upward comparisons. In this case, the need to appear like other peers triggers feelings of low self-esteem.

The study further implies that social media has become one of the determinants of self-presentation among young adults in the UAE. Based on the findings, it is evident that young adults in the UAE choose their dress and body appearance depending on the contents they consume from social media platforms. The study found that youth were choosing their dress code based on the trends they had seen on social media platforms. It also implies that social media influences the decisions of young adults in the UAE. By liking the lifestyle of their peers on social media platforms and trying to be like them, young adults using social media in the UAE showed that they can make decisions out of the pressures they experience in social sites. With these implications, it is evident that decision-makers should target reeducating young adults in the UAE on the dangers of social sites. Efforts targeting deliquescent behaviors should focus on changing how young adults in the UAE consume content from social media platforms.

Conclusion

The study on the effects of social media usage among the UAE's young adults targeted the adults aged between 18 to 24 years. The study mostly targeted university students since they could be easily accessible as respondents in the study. Targeting this population was based on the fact that they are likely to be in different social media sites and can provide information on the motivations behind their use of social media and the impacts of different social networking sites on their perceptions on body image and lifestyles. The study relied on a quantitative approach where numerical data was collected and analyzed to give answers to the research questions. A sample of 80 University of Sharjah students was selected as the sample for the study. Using a qualitative approach, the study made findings that have implications on the policy on mental health and social wellbeing of young adults in the UAE.

The study established that virtual interactions, the need to kill boredom and access news were the leading motivators that attract young adults in the UAE to different social networking sites. It was also established that using social media triggers negative perceptions of the body image of young adults in the UAE. Findings suggested that the youth in the UAE engaged in upward comparison of their body appearance with their peers whom they interacted with on social media platforms. Respondents revealed that they were willing to embrace fitness and diet routines of their peers as they looked for the ideal body image. Although the study did not explicitly find any evidence of low self-esteem among the respondents, the findings showed that negative feelings and perceptions of their bodies could trigger feelings of lacking self-worth hence leading to low self-esteem.

Also, the study found that social media highly influenced the self-presentation tendencies of young adults in the UAE. Results from the questionnaires revealed that young adults in the UAE were keeping up with the trends in fashion and beauty. Since social media determined most of the trends in the fashion industry, then the study revealed a connection between social media usage and self-presentation among young adults in the UAE. The study also concluded that there is a connection between young lifestyles in the UAE and trends on social media platforms. The results showed that youth were more inclined towards lifestyles they saw on social media sites. The revelation that some of them were envying the lifestyles of their peers showed that social media determines perceptions of lifestyles among the young people in the UAE. Thus, the study effectively met its objectives by answering the research questions.

However, the study had the challenge of using a smaller sample where there are fears that the findings of the study may not be as credible as they could have been had the researcher used a bigger sample. Also, relying on only one approach in collecting and analyzing data was a limitation in the study. Future studies on the topic should consider using interviews to supplement the survey questionnaires. Besides, future studies should focus on only one aspect of the impacts of social media like body image perceptions to avoid covering broad areas of investigation.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

1. Demographic factors
    - Tick your gender where appropriate
    - Male
    - B. female
2. Indicate your age
    - 18-20 years
    - 20-22 years
    - 22-24 years

3. Years in social media
    - One year
    - Two years
    - Above 3 years
    - Social media platforms used and frequency
4. Which social media accounts are you most likely to use?
    - Facebook
    - Instagram
    - Twitter
    - Snapchat
    - Tiktok
5. How often do you use social media per day
    - Twice per day
    - Five times a day
    - Most of the time
    - Almost all the time
6. What motivates you to log into social media?
    - To get news
    - To view attractive images and videos

- To interact with virtual friends
- To end boredom
- To learn new skills

Perceptions on body image

7. Respond to the following by ticking where appropriate.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral
I find pictures of other social media users more attractive than mine					
I would like to appear like the other social media users especially in instagram					
I can use body products to take the image like the ones I see on the social platforms					
I wish to follow the physical health routines of some of my friends on Facebook and Instagram					

I have changed diet to look like some of my followers and friends on social media					
I am likely to filter my pictures before I post them on social media platforms					
I select the best picture before posting on social media					
I delete photos and images that do not get above fifty likes on instagram, Facebook and Twitter					

8. How often do you compared your body image with those of friends and followers on social sites? Give reasons for your answer.

- Rarely
- Often
- All the time
- Sometimes
- Never

……..

Perceptions on self-presentation

9. Respond to the following and tick where appropriate

	Rarely	Regularly	Sometimes	Always	Not at all
I consider the views of others before posting my image on social media					
I present myself based on the trends especially in instagram					
I am nervous of my appearance when posting image and views on social media.					
I wish to be unique but still trendy when posting on social media platforms					
I am longing for many likes and comments when posting an image on social media					
I am likely to delete negative comments on my image posts					
I emulate the appearance and trends I see on social media					

I wish I appeared like some of the big names on social media					

10. Have you ever experienced cyberbullying on social media? If yes, what effect did it have on you?

- Yes
- No

Perceptions on lifestyles

11. Respond to the following by ticking where appropriate

	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
My peers on social media live better lives					
I envy my peers on social media especially on instagram					
I believe my peers present their true life on social media					
I wish I lived like some of my friends on social media platforms					
I have spent money to buy cloths due to influence from social media					

تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على الذات لدى الشباب في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

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ملخص البحث:

أصبحت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في الآونة الأخيرة جزءًا أساسيًا من الحياة اليومية خاصة بين الشباب حول العالم. فأُجريت العديد من الدراسات لبحث الآثار الناجمة عن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على الصعيد الاجتماعي والفكري للمجتمع. ومع ذلك، لم يتعرض سوى القليل من هذه الدراسات لبحث آثار وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تصورات الشباب في الإمارات العربية المتحدة عن أجسادهم وتقديرهم لذاتهم. لذا، حاولنا في هذه الدراسة تحري الآثار الناجمة عن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تصورات الشباب في الإمارات العربية المتحدة فيما يتعلق بصورة الجسد وتقدير الذات. وذلك بالاستعانة بشريحة من الشباب تتألف من 40 طالبًا من جامعة الشارقة، ومن ثَمَّ أجرينا دراسة استقصائية لبحث كيفية تأثير استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تصورات الشباب في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة عن صورة أجسادهم. ووجدت الدراسة أن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يؤثر على تصورات الشباب في الإمارات العربية المتحدة عن أجسادهم وتقديرهم لذاتهم تأثيرًا بالغًا. كما أثبتت الدراسة وجود صلة وثيقة بين استخدام الشباب الإماراتي لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والشعور بعدم الرضا حيال نمط حياتهم

الكلمات الدالة: الذات، غوفمان، تجسيد الشخصية، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، صورة المجتمع

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