

BEYOND LIKES AND FILTERS: DIGITAL SELF-IMAGE AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND APPEARANCE CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

The widespread use of image-centered social media has increased concerns about online appearance and self-presentation among young adults. This study examined the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness, with adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image as parallel mediators. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and data were collected from 740 young adults aged 18–25 years using purposive sampling. Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Digital Self-Image Scale, and the Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale. Correlation analyses indicated that self-esteem was positively associated with adaptive digital self-image and negatively associated with maladaptive digital self-image and appearance-related social media consciousness. Parallel mediation analysis revealed that both adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image significantly mediated the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness, with maladaptive digital self-image showing the stronger indirect effect. The findings highlight digital self-image as an important psychological mechanism underlying appearance-related concerns and underscore the need to promote healthier digital self-perceptions among young adults.

I. INTRODUCTION

The widespread adoption of image-centric social networking platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat has fundamentally transformed the way individuals construct, communicate, and evaluate their identities. Unlike traditional face-to-face interactions, these platforms provide users with extensive opportunities to create, edit, and share carefully curated representations of themselves through photographs, filters, and other digital enhancement tools. Consequently, online identity has become increasingly appearance-oriented, with users continuously managing how they are perceived by digital audiences. This environment encourages frequent appearance monitoring, strategic self-presentation, and reliance on social feedback, making physical appearance a central component of digital identity formation (Goffman, 1959; Walther, 2007; Vogel et al., 2014). Research consistently demonstrates that the visual and interactive nature of social media intensifies appearance-related concerns and influences individuals' psychological well-being by increasing exposure to idealized standards and opportunities for social evaluation. Self-esteem has long been recognized as one of the most important psychological factors influencing how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves in social environments. Individuals with higher self-esteem generally possess a more positive sense of self-worth and are less vulnerable to

external evaluations, whereas those with lower self-esteem are more likely to engage in social comparison, seek external validation, and become concerned about how they are perceived by others. Previous research has consistently shown that lower self-esteem is associated with greater body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, and higher concern regarding physical appearance in online environments (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018).

However, the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness is unlikely to be direct. Rather, it may operate through the development of digital self-image, which represents individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perceptions of themselves within digital environments. Digital self-image encompasses how individuals perceive, construct, evaluate, and emotionally respond to their online identities through behaviors such as appearance management, online self-presentation, validation seeking, social comparison, and perceptions of congruence between their offline and digital selves. Individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to develop healthier and more adaptive digital self-perceptions, whereas individuals with lower self-esteem may develop maladaptive digital self-images characterized by greater appearance monitoring, validation seeking, editing dependence, and discrepancies between their digital and real selves. These digital self-perceptions may subsequently influence the extent to which individuals become concerned about how their appearance is evaluated on social media (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Michikyan et al., 2015). Within digital environments, appearance consciousness has emerged as an important psychological construct referring to the degree to which individuals are cognitively and emotionally preoccupied with their physical appearance and how it is evaluated by others. Although concern about appearance has long been recognized as a component of self-perception, social media have substantially amplified this process through photo-editing applications, beauty filters, quantified feedback (e.g., likes and comments), and continuous exposure to idealized images (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018). Individuals who develop maladaptive perceptions of themselves in digital environments are more likely to engage in frequent appearance monitoring, compare themselves with idealized online images, and modify their digital photographs to conform to socially desirable beauty standards. These behaviors have been associated with greater body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, and lower self-esteem. Recent mediation research further demonstrates that digital image-editing behaviors influence self-esteem indirectly through appearance-related psychological processes rather than through direct effects alone.

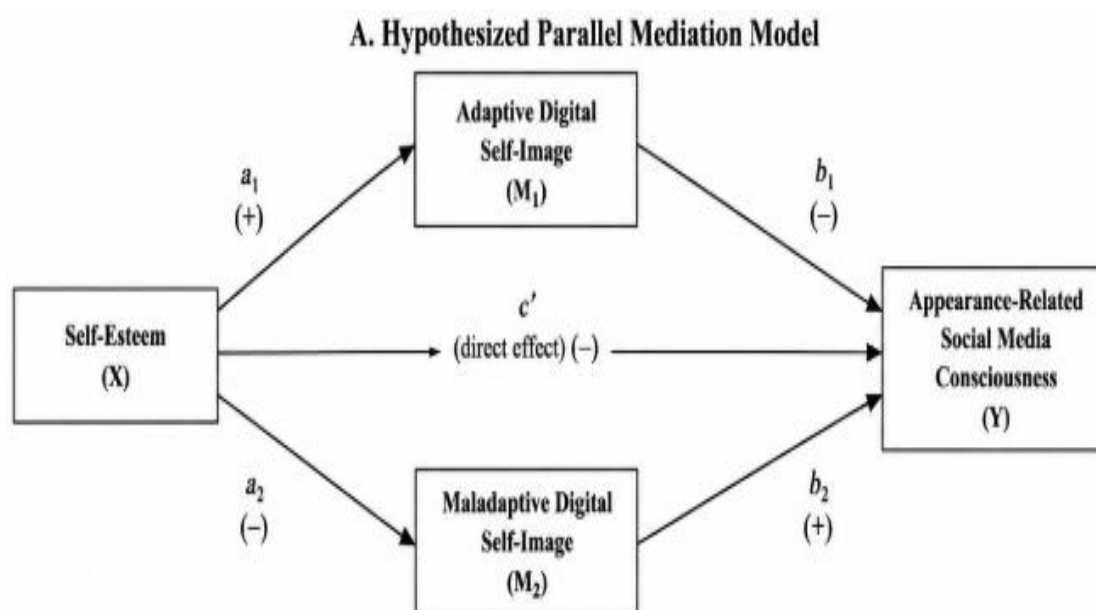
The proposed mediational relationship is supported by several complementary psychological theories. Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) suggests that repeated appearance monitoring encourages individuals to internalize an observer's perspective, resulting in habitual self-surveillance and heightened concern about physical appearance. Self-Presentation Theory (Goffman, 1959) explains how individuals strategically construct favorable online identities to create desired impressions, whereas Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) describes how exposure to idealized online portrayals promotes continual comparisons with others that shape self-evaluation. Furthermore, Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) proposes that discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal digital self generate negative emotions and lower self-worth. Finally, Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) explains that individuals actively engage in digital self-presentation to satisfy psychological needs such as identity expression, belongingness, social approval, and self-esteem. Together, these theories suggest that self-esteem influences how individuals construct and evaluate their digital identities, which subsequently affects appearance-related social media consciousness. Although previous studies have established significant associations between social media use, appearance concerns, body image, and self-esteem (Fardouly et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2014), relatively little research has examined digital self-image as the psychological mechanism linking self-esteem with appearance-related social media consciousness. Existing studies have predominantly focused on isolated constructs such as selfie behavior, body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, or online self-presentation, rather than conceptualizing digital self-image as a multidimensional construct integrating cognitive, emotional, behavioral, motivational, and relational components. Furthermore, despite growing evidence supporting mediation models in digital appearance research, empirical investigations examining whether digital self-image mediates the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness remain scarce.

Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the mediating role of digital self-image in the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness among young adults. By integrating

established psychological theories with contemporary research on digital identity, this study seeks to advance understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which self-esteem influences appearance-related concerns. In addition, the findings will provide empirical evidence supporting the use of the Digital Self-Image Scale (DSIS) as a multidimensional measure of digital self-perception and contribute to the growing literature on identity development and psychological well-being in increasingly digital social environments.

Hypotheses

1. There is likely to be a significant relationship among self-esteem, digital self-image, (i.e., adaptive digital self image and maladaptive digital self-image) and appearance-related social media consciousness.
2. Self-esteem is likely to positively predict adaptive digital self-image and negatively predict maladaptive digital self-image, while adaptive digital self-image is likely to negatively predict appearance-related social media consciousness and maladaptive digital self-image is likely to positively predict appearance-related social media consciousness.
3. Adaptive digital self-image and maladaptive digital self-image are likely to mediate the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness.



II. METHOD

Participants

A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data from participants at one specific time. Cross-sectional studies are commonly used to analyze a population or group at a particular point in time (Setia, 2016). Purposive sampling technique was used in the present study to select specific participants (M_{age} , 20.54, SD = 1.66) who fulfil the criteria for the research. Purposive sampling involves non-probability sampling technique in which specific individuals are purposely selected based on the characteristics that are relevant for the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants who met the following criteria were included in the study: 1) Young Adults 18-25 years of age (WHO, 2024), 2) Active Digital/ Social Media Users, 3) Minimum 2 hours daily social media usage, and 4) At least have 2 social media accounts. The following participants were excluded who, 1) Passive user who never post their own photos/ videos, 2) Had any physical disability/impairment, and 3) Had any diagnosed psychiatric illness

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=740)

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender			Primary Purpose		
Male	138	18.6	For posting stories	82	11.1
Female	602	81.4	Posting stories,	138	18.6
Marital Status			entertainment Posting,	502	67.8
Unmarried	719	97.2	entertainment, education	18	2.5
Married	21	2.8	Daily Use		
Total Social Media Accounts			Yes	740	100
Two	52	7	No	0	0
Three	117	15.8	Physical Disability		
Four	163	22	Yes	0	0
More Than Four	408	55.2	No	740	100
Average Usage Time			Education		
2-3 Hour	18	2.4	Intermediate	64	8.6
4-5 Hours	80	10.8	Under Graduate	633	85.5
6-7 Hours	480	64.8	Post Graduate	43	5.8
More Than 7 Hours	162	21.4	Psychological Disability		
Number of Apps			Yes	0	0
Instagram	118	15.2	No	740	100
Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook	30	4.1			
All Social Media Apps	592	80			

Note. *n* = Frequency, % = Percentage

Measures

[1] The Appearance related Social Media Consciousness (ASMC) Scale was created by Choukas-Bradley., et al. (2020) to gauge adolescents' awareness of how individuals may perceive their physical appearance on social media platforms. The scale consists of 13 items that assesses individual concern about how they are evaluated on social media platforms. Respondents use 7 Likert type scale ranging from "never" to "always". The ASMC Scale demonstrates excellent internal consistency, with reported Cronbach's alpha values typically 30 ranging from 0.92 to 0.97. **[2]** The Digital Self-Image Scale (DSIS; Chaudhary et al., 2026) is a self-developed measure has 25 items consisting of two subscales: 7 for Adaptive Digital Self-Image, and 18 items for Maladaptive Digital Self-Image to assess digital self-image among the general adult population. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". For scoring, the means of each subscale is calculated to determine the total score for that particular subscale. **[3]** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965) was used to assess global self-esteem. The scale consists of 10 items, including five positively worded and five negatively worded statements, rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Negatively worded items are reverse scored, and higher total scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. The RSES is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem and has demonstrated good reliability and validity across diverse populations. **[4]** A demographic information sheet was used to collect participants' background characteristics. It included variables such as age, gender, birth education, social media usage, number of social media accounts, number of hours spend on social media and marital status. Participants were asked whether they had any diagnosed psychological disorder, and if yes, they were required to specify it.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities, and the study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Formal permission was obtained from the authors of all original instruments used in the study. Data were collected using purposive sampling from young adults aged 18 to 25 years enrolled in universities and colleges, as well as individuals from the general population who met the study's inclusion criteria. Eligible participants were approached individually and provided with a brief explanation of the study's purpose and procedures in both written and verbal form. Those who voluntarily agreed to participate were asked to provide written informed

consent before completing the research questionnaires. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. They were encouraged to respond honestly and were assured that there were no right or wrong answers. The researcher remained available throughout the data collection process to clarify any questions regarding the questionnaires without influencing participants' responses. Strict confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. No personally identifying information was recorded on the questionnaires, and all collected data were used exclusively for research purposes. The completed questionnaires were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher and the research supervisor.

III. RESULTS

Table II: Pearson Correlations Among Social Media Use Variables, Self-Esteem, Adaptive Digital Self-Image, Maladaptive Digital Self-Image, and Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness

Scales	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No. of Social Media Account	4.6	2.4	---	.24**	.78***	.45	.34*	.25*	.76**
Average Usage time	5.2	2.8		----	.56**	.24	.40*	.36**	.65*
Social Media Platform	927.77	4664.56			-----	.45	.67	.56**	.45*
Rosenberg Self Esteem	25.29	4.03				-----	.56**	-.89**	-.45*
Adaptive Digital Self Image	25.49	5.22					----	-.29**	-.11**
Maladaptive Digital Self Image	46.50	13.58						-----	.79**
Appearance Related Social Media Consciousness	52.71	17.58							-----

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The table indicates that the number of social media accounts, average usage time, and social media platform use were positively related with adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of digital self-image as well as appearance-related social media consciousness. In contrast, self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) showed a significant positive correlation with Adaptive Digital Self-Image (ADSI) and significant negative correlations with Maladaptive Digital Self-Image (MDSI) and Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness (ASMC), suggesting that individuals with lower self-esteem tend to have vulnerable digital self-perceptions and higher appearance-related concerns on social media and vice versa.

Table III: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness from Self-Esteem, Adaptive Digital Self-Image, and Maladaptive Digital Self-Image

	Appearance Related Social Media Consciousness	
Variables	B	ΔR ²
Model 1		
Number of Social Media Accounts	.18**	.31
Average Usage Time	.21**	
Social Media Platform	.16*	
Model 2		
Number of Social Media Accounts	.14*	.13
Average Usage Time	.17**	
Social Media Platform	.11*	
Self-Esteem	-.42***	
Model 3		
Number of Social Media Accounts	.08	.28
Average Usage Time	.11*	

	Appearance Related Social Media Consciousness
Social Media Platform	.05
Self-Esteem	-.13*
Adaptive Digital Self-Image	-.30***
Maladaptive Digital Self-Image	.57***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The hierarchical regression analysis showed that the control variables entered in Model 1 (number of social media accounts, average usage time, and social media platform) significantly predicted appearance-related social media consciousness, explaining 31% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .31$). In Model 2, the inclusion of self-esteem significantly improved the model, contributing an additional 13% of the explained variance, with self-esteem emerging as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.42$, $p < .001$). In Model 3, after adding adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image, the model explained an additional 28% of the variance in appearance-related social media consciousness. Maladaptive digital self-image was the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .57$, $p < .001$), whereas adaptive digital self-image was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$). The regression coefficient for self-esteem was substantially reduced ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$) after the inclusion of the mediators, suggesting that adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image partially mediate the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness.

Table IV: Parallel Mediation Analysis of Adaptive and Maladaptive Digital Self-Image in the Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness

Models	b	SE	B	z	95% CI Lower	Upper
Total Effect						
Self-Esteem → ASMC	-0.64	0.08	-.47	-8.00***	-0.80	-0.48
Indirect Effects						
Self-Esteem → ADSI → ASMC	-0.09	0.03	-.07	-3.00**	-0.15	-0.04
Self-Esteem → MDSI → ASMC	-0.23	0.04	-.17	-5.75***	-0.32	-0.16
Path Coefficients						
Self-Esteem → ADSI	0.49	0.04	.46	12.25***	0.41	0.57
Self-Esteem → MDSI	-0.61	0.05	-.55	-12.20***	-0.71	-0.51
ADSI → ASMC	-0.18	0.05	-.15	-3.60***	-0.28	-0.08
MDSI → ASMC	0.42	0.05	.42	8.40*	0.32	0.52

Note. ADSI=Adaptive Digital Self Image, MDSI=Maladaptive Digital Self Image, ASMC= Appearance Related Social Media Consciousness

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether Adaptive Digital Self-Image (ADSI) and Maladaptive Digital Self-Image (MDSI) mediated the relationship between Self-Esteem (SE) and Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness (ASMC). The results indicated that self-esteem had a significant negative total effect on appearance-related social media consciousness ($b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.08$, $\beta = -.47$, $z = -8.00$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.80, -0.48]), suggesting that individuals with higher self-esteem reported lower appearance-related social media consciousness. Self-esteem significantly and positively predicted adaptive digital self-image ($b = 0.49$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), which, in turn, significantly predicted lower appearance-related social media consciousness ($b = -0.18$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$), yielding a significant indirect effect ($b = -0.09$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [-0.15, -0.04]). Likewise, self-esteem significantly and negatively predicted maladaptive digital self-image ($b = -0.61$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = -.55$, $p < .001$), and the indirect effect through maladaptive digital self-image was also significant ($b = -0.23$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.32, -0.16]). Overall, the findings indicate that both adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image significantly mediate the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness,

with the stronger indirect effect observed through maladaptive digital self-image, suggesting that it is the more influential pathway linking self-esteem to appearance-related social media consciousness.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, digital self-image, and appearance-related social media consciousness among young adults while examining the mediating role of adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image. The findings supported all proposed hypotheses, demonstrating significant associations among the study variables and confirming that both adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image partially mediated the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness. These findings extend the growing body of literature suggesting that individuals' evaluations of themselves in digital environments play a crucial role in explaining how self-esteem influences appearance-related concerns on social media. The correlational findings revealed that higher self-esteem was positively associated with adaptive digital self-image and negatively associated with maladaptive digital self-image and appearance-related social media consciousness. Individuals with greater self-esteem appeared to maintain healthier perceptions of themselves in digital environments and experienced fewer concerns regarding how their appearance was evaluated on social media. Conversely, lower self-esteem was associated with greater maladaptive digital self-image and heightened appearance consciousness. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that individuals with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to appearance comparisons, body dissatisfaction, and excessive concern about online evaluations (Fardouly et al., 2015; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Vogel et al., 2014). According to Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals continuously evaluate themselves by comparing their appearance with others. In highly visual social media environments, these comparisons become increasingly frequent and often involve unrealistic beauty standards, contributing to negative self-evaluations and greater appearance-related concerns.

The hierarchical regression analysis further demonstrated that social media usage variables significantly predicted appearance-related social media consciousness before psychological variables were entered into the model. Although the number of social media accounts, usage time, and platform use explained a considerable proportion of variance, self-esteem contributed additional explanatory power beyond these behavioral factors. More importantly, after adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image were included, the predictive effect of self-esteem was substantially reduced while maladaptive digital self-image emerged as the strongest predictor of appearance-related social media consciousness. These findings suggest that merely spending more time on social media may not fully explain appearance concerns; rather, the way individuals psychologically construct and interpret their digital identities appears to be more influential. Similar conclusions have been reported by Perloff (2014), who argued that psychological investment in online appearance is more detrimental than simple exposure to social media. One of the most important findings of the present study is the significant mediating role of adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image. The mediation analysis showed that self-esteem positively predicted adaptive digital self-image, which subsequently reduced appearance-related social media consciousness. At the same time, lower self-esteem predicted greater maladaptive digital self-image, which substantially increased appearance-related social media consciousness. Furthermore, the indirect effect through maladaptive digital self-image was stronger than the adaptive pathway, indicating that maladaptive digital identity processes represent a more powerful mechanism through which self-esteem influences appearance-related concerns. These findings highlight that individuals with low self-esteem are not only more likely to experience negative self-perceptions but also develop unhealthy digital identities characterized by excessive appearance monitoring, editing dependence, validation seeking, and discrepancies between online and offline selves. Similar mechanisms have been described in studies examining self-presentation and online identity, where frequent digital self-modification contributes to lower psychological well-being and increased appearance dissatisfaction (Michikyan et al., 2015; Schau & Gilly, 2003; Walther, 2007).

The findings also provide empirical support for the theoretical framework proposed in the present study. Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) explains that repeated attention to physical appearance promotes self-objectification and habitual body surveillance. The stronger indirect effect through maladaptive

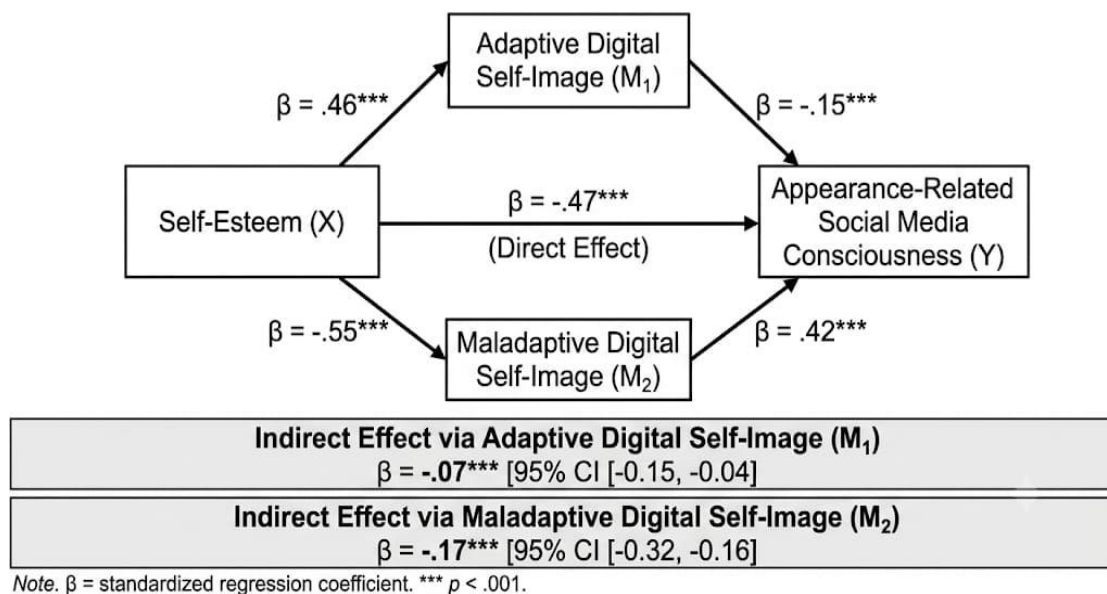
digital self-image suggests that individuals increasingly internalize an observer's perspective while interacting with social media, making appearance central to their self-concept. Likewise, Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) proposes that discrepancies between actual and ideal selves produce emotional discomfort and lower self-worth. The present findings suggest that maladaptive digital self-image may represent this discrepancy, where highly edited or idealized online identities become psychologically distant from the authentic self, thereby increasing appearance-related consciousness. Self-Presentation Theory (Goffman, 1959) further explains why individuals strategically manage their online images to obtain favorable social evaluations, while Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) suggests that these behaviors are motivated by needs for social approval, belongingness, and identity expression. An important contribution of this study is its distinction between adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of digital self-image. Previous research has largely focused on negative aspects of online self-presentation, such as body dissatisfaction or selfie behaviors, without considering that digital identity may also possess adaptive characteristics. The present findings indicate that adaptive digital self-image functions as a protective factor, whereas maladaptive digital self-image increases psychological vulnerability. This multidimensional conceptualization advances existing literature by demonstrating that digital self-image is not inherently harmful but depends on how individuals psychologically engage with digital environments. These findings therefore provide empirical support for the proposed Digital Self-Image Scale as a multidimensional measure capable of capturing both healthy and unhealthy aspects of digital self-perception.

Although the present study contributes important theoretical and practical insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference regarding the direction of relationships among the variables. Future longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to establish temporal relationships and examine changes in digital self-image over time. Additionally, the use of self-report measures may have introduced social desirability and common method biases. The sample primarily consisted of university students and female participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups and populations. Future research should employ more diverse and representative samples while considering cultural differences in digital identity development and appearance-related behaviors. Overall, the present findings emphasize that self-esteem influences appearance-related social media consciousness primarily through individuals' digital self-image. Interventions designed to improve young adults' psychological well-being should therefore focus not only on strengthening global self-esteem but also on promoting healthier digital self-perceptions, reducing maladaptive online appearance management, and encouraging authentic self-presentation within social media environments.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated that self-esteem is significantly associated with digital self-image and appearance-related social media consciousness among young adults. Individuals with higher self-esteem reported healthier adaptive digital self-image, lower maladaptive digital self-image, and reduced appearance-related concerns on social media. More importantly, adaptive and maladaptive digital self-image significantly mediated the relationship between self-esteem and appearance-related social media consciousness, with maladaptive digital self-image emerging as the stronger mediating pathway. These findings suggest that the psychological processes through which individuals construct and evaluate their digital identities explain how self-esteem influences appearance-related experiences in online environments. The study further supports the multidimensional conceptualization of digital self-image and provides empirical evidence for the utility of the Digital Self-Image Scale in understanding digital identity among young adults. From a practical perspective, interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem, reducing maladaptive digital self-image, and promoting authentic online self-presentation may help minimize appearance-related social media consciousness and improve psychological well-being in the digital age.

Final Parallel Mediation Model (Standardized Path Coefficients: β)



Limitations, Suggestions and Implications

Although the present study provides valuable insights into the relationships among self-esteem, digital self-image, and appearance-related social media consciousness, several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations, while reliance on self-report measures may have introduced social desirability and response biases. Additionally, the purposive sampling technique and predominantly female sample restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. The study also focused exclusively on Pakistani young adults aged 18–25 years, limiting the applicability of the findings across different age groups and cultural contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships, utilize more diverse and representative samples, and examine these relationships across different cultures and developmental stages. The findings of the present study have important implications for research and practice by highlighting digital self-image as a key psychological mechanism linking self-esteem with appearance-related social media consciousness. The results suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem and promoting a healthy digital self-image may help reduce appearance-related concerns among young adults. Furthermore, the study supports the use of the Digital Self-Image Scale as a valuable measure for assessing digital self-perception and provides a foundation for developing digital well-being programs, psychoeducational interventions, and mental health initiatives that encourage authentic online self-presentation and healthier social media engagement.

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