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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON FEMALE BODY IMAGE: CASE STUDY IN BRAZIL

Thalia Catarina A. de Oliveira, Patrícia Maria de Azevedo Pacheco, Silvana Ambrosoli and Luís Antônio Monteiro Campos

Psychology Course, Unilasalle, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

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ABSTRACT

This article refers to the influence of social media on female body image and seeks to investigate the impacts of Instagram as a dictator of a standard of body image and beauty. The established method was an experimental study of a single subject in which two levels were outlined to measure body satisfaction, with and without the use of Instagram. The study showed a good level of significance in their experiment. We recommend that the study be replicate in a larger sample of participants for a better result.

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of social media in the perspective of body image today, especially to the female public, employs a dictatorial role of rules in standards of beauty and lifestyle. The media, constantly, occupies this space to influence the public with new standards, to sell what is being offered as the solution and synonymous with health and happiness. The use of social media recurring in the daily lives of countless individuals because it is a popular tool of easy access inflames the need to be and have what is being visualized. Body image, according to Frois *et al.* (2011), is built and rebuilt throughout life, instilling meanings of the experiences and references that are presented. In this way, the requirements offered by the media expose a demanding lifestyle as a response to achieving the perfect body ideal. The media, therefore, encourages this fantasy in which any woman can conquer the idealized body image, if desired, since the beauty industry can associate body changes with emotional events and experiences. (Copetti and Quiroga, 2018). The performance of the media with the capitalist interests of companies, participate in an appreciation of the female body to the lean and young image to be considered beautiful, in which more and more products and procedures are to achieve this ideal. It is notorious the increase in aesthetic procedures since the beginning of the use of social networks, however, when one cannot afford the expenses to perform it, the tendency is to use applications

to correct imperfections that are believed to have, to publish a photograph of himself to receive praise, comments, likes, and followers. Thinness is seen as a reference of status, competence, and sexual attractiveness, causing in women– of all ages, a pressure to achieve the desired weight and validation in the face of weight loss linked to well-being. In this sense, eating habits are constructed based on sociocultural influences for the ideal of thinness, increasing rates of eating disorders, as pointed out by Uzunian and Vitalle (2015). The use of Instagram to follow digital influencers, even indirectly, can interfere with self-esteem and the strong tendency to believe that it is necessary to frame social standards to be admired. According to Goldenberg (2011), in Brazilian culture, the body is seen as a source of capital, an object to be molded and manipulated to acquire the ideal stipulated by society and thus achieve total satisfaction. Therefore, it is noted the impact of these influences on the female public based on the excess of contents promoting strict diets, exacerbated physical exercises, fasts, surgical and aesthetic interventions. This distortion of the body image itself entails a constant need to do more and more procedures, and yet, it is not performed. Therefore, the main objective of this research was to measure the influence of the Social Network Instagram on female body image, how much may be related to the woman's self-esteem and her satisfaction with her own body. It is understood that although the media has modified their advertisements and discourses of the ideal body by placing women of all body forms to show the singular beauty of each one, the internet and social

networks continue to be eviler about it. The study becomes necessary in contemporary society, by questioning the domain of the social network – Instagram, for issues of the female body and how this image can be reflected in perceptions of one another. The importance of studies on the subject is made precisely by the excess of reports and complaints of women about their body, based on comparisons with others. Digital influencers assume a relevant and at the same time close role, different from a foreign celebrity, for example, being easy to contact and visualize the routine for the body pattern considered as healthy, beautiful, and coveted. It is punctuated *by* Silva et al. (2019) as the followers of digital influencers idolize a fantasy conventionalized by narcissistic culture, so the individual is enchanted by a spectacle of appearances and masks. Therefore, it is perceived as the aesthetic standards displayed on social media are consistent with reality outside networks, being validated, imposed as ideals, resulting in negative consequences for those who do not meet the expectation of body image. It is verified the importance of the care of professionals to help this female audience to be able to perceive themselves in its entirety, visualizing their beauty in front of the mirror and photographs.

METHODS

In this study, the method used was that of experimental research with a single female subject of 24 years of age. The Likert scale was used as a measurement tool to check the participant's body satisfaction, on two levels, with and without the interference of the Instagram application. In addition to measuring the frequency of use of the application, to verify its influence on the participant's body satisfaction. It is, then, to verify the influence of the independent variable, Instagram, with the dependent variable, the body image of the subject. Being aware that there is the presence of an intervening variable, body weight measurement, for this, will need to be controlled in order not to affect the experimental process. The bibliographic study on the subject is also used to support the development of the study. Scientific articles were searched in Google Scholar and Scielo, as well as books for greater understanding.

Data Analysis

The analysis was made through the data obtained in the baseline, in which body satisfaction was measured by the Likert Scale from 1 to 5, being 1- very dissatisfied and 5- very satisfied, starting on September 27, 2021, until Oct. 26. 2021. The research continued to be carried out through a form created on Google, in which the participant committed to responding throughout the study period. The form was divided into three parts, with part 1 having the data from Set 27. to Oct. 6, on part 2 of Oct. 7. 16 Oct. and finally, part 3 of Oct. 17 through Oct. 26. In the first ten days, body satisfaction was measured without the use of the Instagram app and the variable weight measurement intervener, due to the participant's habit of checking weight every morning; to have no risk of weighing affecting her body satisfaction, it was decided to continue with all the research without the interference of the scale. Access to Instagram was made in the second week of research. The participant was able to use it in a personal way, following digital influencers and their content. It was noted that the Instagram algorithm perceives the frequency of use of this type of content and even without searching was constantly suggested more similar posts. The last ten days have been without the use of social media to verify the relationship of the body image of the participant after being submitted to Instagram access. During these ten days, he continued to record his levels of body satisfaction. The A-B-A design was used in this research and included the three phases: baseline, intervention, and withdrawal, i.e., the return to the initial condition of the study. According to Richards et al., the purpose of the design is to verify whether the behavior changes in the direction expected during the intervention and if there is a return of this when it is removed, having levels close to those measured at the beginning of the baseline, in the case of the research present in the article, at the

first ten days. It is, therefore, to analyze whether the independent variable, in this case, Instagram influenced change in the dependent variable, the satisfaction of body image. The data were exported from Google Forms and allocated in a spreadsheet created in the Jamovi program, version 1.6.16, for Windows, so statistical analyses were performed through the Student statistical test (T-Test) of two samples in pair for means, and the significance level of $p < 0.05$ and Spearman's correlation were adopted.

FINDINGS

The student's statistical test – T-test was used to confirm the hypotheses of the research, in which the relationship between body satisfaction levels from September 27 to October 16 was measured, with and without access to Instagram. These results were obtained:

Table 1. Test T: Two paired samples

Paired Samples T-Test

			statistic	df	p
Sem Instagram	Com Instagram	Student's t	2.45	9.00	0.037

A confidence level of 0.05 is $<$ to be statistically accepted as significant. Thus, research on the influence of Instagram on female body image could count on a good level of significance. It is important to highlight that both variables – dependent and independent– are qualitative ordinal. Thus, Spearman's correlation is the most indicated to be made in this case. Below, we will see the results to better interpret them:

Table 2. Spearman correlation

Correlation Matrix

		Sem Instagram	Com Instagram
Sem Instagram	Spearman's rho	—	
	p-value	—	
Com Instagram	Spearman's rho	0.109	—
	p-value	0.765	—

Without the use of Instagram (27 Sep. to 6 de c.) and with Instagram (Oct. 7 to Oct. 16)

The correlation coefficient is understood as the value that goes from -1 to 1, the closer to the extremes, the stronger the correlation and the closer the 0 is considered weak. In this study, the measurements of coefficients of values of Baba et al. (2014), thus, the correlated value between the days mentioned above, can be statistically understood as very weak, since it is 0.109. In table 3 below, there is the data inserted from the A-B-A design, so that satisfaction was measured again without the use of the application.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation- A-B-A Design Without using Instagram (Oct. 17 to Oct. 26)

Correlation Matrix

		Sem Instagram	Com Instagram	Sem Instagram (2)
Sem Instagram	Spearman's rho	—		
	p-value	—		
Com Instagram	Spearman's rho	0.109	—	
	p-value	0.765	—	
Sem Instagram (2)	Spearman's rho	-0.063	0.296	—
	p-value	0.862	0.407	—

It is noted that the correlated value between the use of Instagram and the last ten days of the study (read in table 3 - Instagram (2)), holds the value of 0.296, thus considered weak. However, if the number of

days of the study at each level measured – with and without the use of social media, had been in greater numbers, it can be conjectured that the trend would increase the positivity.

DISCUSSION

Through the study, it is possible to see how the influence of social media on the female perception of your own body affects your lifestyle and self-esteem. The use of Instagram to follow digital influencers, even indirectly, can interfere with self-esteem and the strong tendency to believe that it is necessary to frame social standards to be admired. According to Goldenberg (2011), in Brazilian culture, the body is seen as a source of capital, an object to be molded and manipulated to acquire the ideal stipulated by society and thus achieve total satisfaction. The participant reports that the time used in the application influenced her body perspective, so the days she spent more hours in the social network, her body satisfaction was shorter. It is reiterated that to affirm this relationship, more research should be done to confirm or not the hypothesis raised. The use of the Likert scale, in the study methodology, was of paramount importance to be able to measure satisfaction and to perceive how it translated to the subject's day. Concerning the influence of the media on the body image of the woman, it can be affirmed with reservations the induction of eating behaviors and habits. These caveats are made due to the increase in Internet personalities, present on Instagram, to warn about the damage that certain actions can cause and how important the discourses of self-love in society are.

However, even with the female influences of empowerment of the body "miss happens" and overweight, these discourses cannot have as much scope, nor are they seen with the same validation of health and well-being. Gonçalves and Martinez (2014) point out how society is culturally obsessed with body image and its display, consequently, there is a tension to have a slim and thin body, which will ensure social and professional success. In Brazil, there are several scientific articles with approaches from various areas concerned with the impact of social media on social, psychological, and physical aspects. Promoting these readings and research help to take a careful look at and in ways of intervention to the ideal of female thinness. During the study, even in 30 days, it is noted how the media is present dictating what should be consumed, the types of content, the innovative diets, the best routine. A question to reflect on the impacts of having two lives, one virtual and one real – so to speak, causes in women. The woman needs to perform various functions and meet expectations to be the best version of herself, in all the environments she inhabits. Besides needing to be beautiful, thin, and constantly young to be admired. The distance between the real body and body image includes the structure of the subject, because according to Frois et al. (2011), always the inscriptions that occurred in their first relations with the world are confronted with the new images that are presented to the individual. Aware that throughout history there have been models of beauty to be desired and followed, with the advent of technology and social networks, the process is much faster, as innovations and trends occur at higher levels.

Final Considerations

The study sought to demonstrate the influence of social media, in this case, Instagram as a contributor to the perception of women about their own body, as well as, to point out how there is a need to be inserted in new beauty trends to feel beautiful. The level of comparison ends up relating to the frequency of use of Instagram since the more inserted one is in social media the infinite amount of content is being viewed by the user. Thus, it is perceived how the level of female self-esteem is impacted by such social comparisons, especially when it is exposed by posting images, videos to have a positive return of its followers with likes, comments, and interactions. This reaction expected by followers, accentuates the desire to belong, as well as social approval, through the tools of the application to like

and comment. Therefore, it is perceived how the impact of female body image is caused by a post, both of others and of itself, because it will self-evaluate and compare with what it has seen in other profiles, affecting their perception of themselves. It is emphasized that the idea of body and ideal beauty patterns bring a form of power of society over women, although it is inserted in a social environment with more discourses of self-esteem, self-acceptance, freedom to be what you desire, yet the molds of bodies understood as perfect are admired and exalted as synonymous with a healthy life, result in long hours of gym and sometimes food restriction. However, even those women who manage to approach the requirements and social standards of beauty, continue with the feeling of not being enough by not enjoying perfection in its entirety. Faced with so many possible procedures, to modify the body, the overwhelming trade of products for beauty, clothing, and accessories, is growing as this space conquers the female public for its rapid way of achieving the standards of beauty required socially. Thus, a tireless search to remain young is configured, through the removal of expression marks and wrinkles, lip augmentation, rhinoplasty, and so many other procedures to be what Instagram filters (digital makeup effects, among others) propose as beautiful and admirable. According to the proposed objectives, the article brought interesting scores, even though the experiment was measured in a short period, there were already significant data proven by the student statistical test (T-test). The importance of this experiment is highlighted to be replicated in larger samples to confirm the hypotheses raised from the s in the article. After all, in the contemporary and largely virtual world, it is necessary these discussions and experimental studies on female body image.

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