A model of social media and body image concerns

* Review of recent research
  + More content analytic and effects research has focused on pro-ana sites
  + Websites devoted to promoting anorexic ideals
    - Contain positive depictions of anorexic life:
    - Perfection: cultural norms linking thinness to perfection
    - Transformation: E disorders transform you from ugly and fat to thin and beautiful
    - Success: strength and ability to keep weight off
  + Impact of pro-ana websites
    - Short term negative influences: low self-esteem and decreased perceived attractiveness
  + Young women who frequent these websites have higher levels of eating disorders and body image concerns

The portrayals of cultural norms have represented an unfair definition of the ideal body image. One aspect of this deleterious portrayals are the websites that exist to only promote anorexic and bulimic behaviors. These websites promote the negative actions of eating disorders as positive impacts on others’ lives. The websites do this as stated by the author by three simple projections. These projections consist of perfection, transformation and success. Perfection refers to when “cultural norms are linked to thinness as the ideal image (cite). The sites also promote that these behaviors will lead you from “ugly and fat to thin and beautiful” (cite). This is the projection of transformation. Further ability and strength to keep off the weight is projected as success. These sites provide this convoluted sense of normalcy that only damages people’s self-perception and their views of what is normal. These sites then cause people to have lower self-esteem and lower perceived attractiveness. Other online content that result in this amount of damage is social media.

* A model of social media influences
  + Simple exposure to media doesn’t lead to body dissatisfaction
  + Media thinness portrayals though can cause harmful influences with psychological implications
  + Media effects involve Reciprocal transactions between nature and context of the medium and the psychology of the perceiver
  + Psychology of the perceiver
    - Low self-esteem, depression, perfectionism, internalization of the thinness ideal, centrality of appearance to self-worth
    - Low self-esteem should mainly influence body image perceptions when women are high in thin ideal internalization or appearance is a major aspect of self- worth
  + Psychological processes, such as social comparisons, should determine the impact of social media uses on body image concerns
  + Psychologically harmful tendencies lead women to focus on appearance-focused social media content 🡪 seek gratification: reassurance and validation 🡪 more time on social media 🡪 social comparisons
  + Upward and downward comparisons compared to others on social media sites. Feel bad about their physical attractiveness.
* Gratification seeking from social media
  + Individuals who are vulnerable to body image disturbances will seek different gratifications
    - Also low in self-esteem and high in thin ideal internalization
  + Women’s reading of beauty and fashion magazines motivated by their drive to improve themselves
  + Satisfy reassurance needs by continuously checking facebook profile pictures and Instagram pics to validate their self-concepts
* Mediating role played by social media comparison Processes
  + People find it diagnostic and functional to compare themselves to others. Particularly those who are similar in attributes that are central to their definition of self

The author presents the case that “simple exposure to media in itself will not cause any harm to people” (cite). However, it is the psychology of the individual that visits these profiles that inflicts damage. “Media thinness portrayals” are a factor that influence the psychological well-being of the people visiting sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Furthermore, it entirely depends on the content of the media and how the receiver perceives it. Through longer exposure to these thin norms, the receiver develops lower self-esteem, depression, perfectionism, and the internalization of the thinness ideal(cite). These long exposures tend to lead to more time spent on social media. This time spent leads to social comparisons, which harm the receiver psychologically as they compare themselves to other pictures. These analytic approaches of surfing through Facebook profile pictures and Instagram posts leads to harmful tendencies as eating disorders. Eventually these visits’ primary purpose ends up being gratification seeking. This is when people tend to seek reassurance and validation through upwards and downward comparisons in social media only to seldom receive that validation. The more they are exposed, young women will take part in more harmful social comparisons.

* Social Media effects on eating disorders
  + mediating roles played by transportation
  + Identification
  + Perceived norms

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The article clearly states the effects of social media on body image. It emphasizes the importance of the psychology of the receiver of the content rather than just examining the nature of the harmful content online. The complexity of the individual being affected by these norms was thoroughly examined and explained. Many examples were given to further create firm understanding of the internal effects these ideals cause. Such examples include websites that promote ideals of anorexia and bulimia, along with the edited photos on social media sites. Throughout the article, the author mentions the psychological state of the person who is victim of these social norms portrayed online. The author mentions how their depression and low self-esteem strongly affects the influence of the content in social media.

The extensive explanation of the psychology of young women has clearly explained the effects of social media on self-perception. The reciprocal transaction between the user and the social media proved to have harmful effects on the user as they began centralizing on appearance focused content(cite). An ample amount of analysis was provided to explain the effects of these prolonged searches of Facebook profile pictures and Instagram posts. Explanations of upward and downward comparisons further clarified the tendency for users to seek gratification online. The thorough explanations of the psychology of young women as they interact with this content has lead me to understand more about the negative effects of social media. The article was unbiased as it considered a rich demographic spanning across other countries, ages, and even other genders. The article approached the problem by analyzing studies from the UK, Australia, and Netherlands. The various references allow the article to contain a diverse sample of data that provide it an unbiased argument. Towards the end of the article, the author mentions the effects social media has on men. Furthermore, the article is unbiased to effects on different genders as well.

The article’s many citations of various studies gave it a credible stance on the issue. Every issue was addressed by an earlier study that has proven a hypotheses or idea. This strongly affects the ethos of the article. It brings forward the credibility of the article as it approaches the situation from these numerous unique studies. Throughout the article there were many mentions of studies done in the UK or other foreign nations. This involvement of a diverse sample allows for more information on the studies. Using the results of these studies is a strong logos appeal throughout the article. The strong facts and results of the studies strengthens the argument the author is presenting. The author also provides their contact information at the bottom of the page. This further improves the credibility of the author as they were open to questions and comments from their readers.

Pathos is a definite appeal apparent through the whole article. The article appeals to emotion through the familiarity of the issues that are presented to the audience. Realizing that this problem is common and ultimately preventable gives hope to those that are facing the struggles. The explanation of the problems of social norms through the articles establishes the norms as an issue that needs to be resolved. Approaching this issue in this way appeals to a major audience. This article tells women they don’t need to conform to these false ideals and contradicting movements. It appeals to women emotionally as it expresses and suppresses the issues of the thin-ideal that is presented by society. The article gives hope. It gives reason to fight against these norms.

References

Perloff, R. M. (2014, May 29). Social Media Effects on Young Women’s Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research. Sex Roles, 363-377. Doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6

* Overall purpose: social media’s effects on young women’s body concerns
  + The psychology of the receiver
  + Negative emotions from social comparisons
  + Unrealistic ideals
* Whether or not it enhanced your understanding of the material presented
  + Explained all about psychology and self-perception
  + Clear and expressive statements explained the gratification seeking in social media
  + Upward and downward social comparisons resulted to more time spent there
  + Ample amount of text explaining the psychology of the perceiver
    - Transportation. perfection, transformation, success
* Unbiased
  + Mentions studies done in other countries
    - UK, Austrailia…
* Intended Audience
  + Young women who frequent social media websites

The contents of this article were very interesting. The article was extremely credible as it approached the issue of anorexia and bulimia from multiple different angles. This consisted of social media sites, pro-anorexia sites, television advertisements, and even magazines. The variability for the causes of disordered eating as suggested by the article are complex and abundant. Women comparing themselves to others to seek gratification for themselves seems to be a harmful behavior that leads to negative attitudes towards their own self-concept. This was an idea that was spread throughout the whole article.

I found the media campaigns against anorexia near the end of the article to be particularly interesting. They mentioned that people pick up these damaging habits because they believe they are the norm. However, making people realize that this isn’t the norm and that only a minimal part of the population takes part in seeking gratification through social media can change other people’s perspective on the issue. I believe that the advertisements promoting acceptance is another influential way to help women be more confident. These media campaigns can help in establishing more positive values in public.