

Social Media's Negative Association with Adolescents' Body Image Self-Perception

Nayun Kim
nayunkim.email@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media has filled adolescents' everyday life. Exposure to social media content may be related to unhealthy appearance comparisons and negative body image perception. With this literature review, I aimed to synthesize research on how social media may be associated with body image self-perception among teenagers. A total of 14 research articles reporting 15 empirical studies were identified in PsycInfo and reviewed. I identified seven themes across the empirical studies: (1) the issue's prevalence across the globe, (2) the large variety of research approaches used, (3) commonly preferred body-image qualities, (4) unrealistic and ever-changing beauty standards on social media, (5) social media's negative associations with teenagers' body image perception, (6) gender differences in social media's relations with teens' body image perception and related mental health outcomes, (7) differences in outcomes by types of social media platform and engagement. Overall, this review provides valuable evidence into how social media plays an important role in youth's body image perception. Implications for future research and practice were discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Social media use has arguably taken over adolescents' social life in the past two decades. However, there have been many issues that stemmed from excessive social media use, one of them being the negative association with teens' body image. When social media was first developed in the early 2000s, it allowed for people to connect and display their own images on the Internet. As years progressed, more technological advances were made as editing, filters, and artificial intelligence tools were created for instant enhancements of photos and videos, which were widely available on social media platforms. Constant exposure to social media content can promote unhealthy appearance comparisons and teenagers' negative body image self-perception. Body image perception refers to how individuals look at themselves on physical aspects, such as weight, facial features, and figure. It is particularly important to teenagers because it is a defining part of their developing identity and may correlate with their psychological well-being.

Teenagers may internalize social media ideals and increase unhealthy comparisons regarding appearance

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to peers or to these so-called ideals. Social comparison theory explains how individuals evaluate themselves based on looks, abilities, opinions, and status in comparison to others. This can be exhibited in two distinct ways: downward comparison and upward comparison (Festinger, 1957). Downwards social comparison involves people comparing themselves to those who they consider less well-off. In the context of social media, social comparison occurs when individuals judge the physical appearance of those that exhibit certain characteristics that are considered undesirable to them, and thereby provide temporary feelings of increased self-esteem and an elevated sense of worth for the individual. Upward social comparison, on the other hand, involves people comparing themselves to those who they consider better. In the context of social media, social comparison frequently occurs for individuals who compare their own body image with those appear on social media platforms (e.g., photos and videos from peers, celebrities, etc.), and can result in feelings of dissatisfaction of their own body and a sense of inferiority or a strong striving for self-improvement. As such, upward social comparison may help explain some of the negative psychological and behavioral outcomes for teenagers who make body image and appearance comparisons with others when they engage in social media use.

Prior research suggests that self-image perception issues in adolescents are strongly associated with the excessive usage of social media platforms. The prevalence of social media use has been found to be linked to an increased level of mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2026). Although many studies have explored the relationship of social media and body image perception (Conte et al., 2025), less is known about the certain qualities and standards teenagers are looking to achieve. While some studies included both boys and girls within their sample (e.g., Boursier et al., 2020; Rodgers et al., 2020), others prioritized females (e.g., Fastoso et al., 2021; Janak et al., 2023).

The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize research of how social media content may be related to body image self-perception among teenagers, honing in on major themes across the findings to communicate how future safety nets can be implemented so that adolescents have more support while dealing with the negative effects of social media.

Literature Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified in the database PsycInfo, using keywords including “teen*” “body image perception” “social media”. I used the following search conditions: peer-reviewed, journal articles, empirical study, publication dates set to 2015-2026. I also harvested five relevant articles from the references of a systematic review article (Conte et al., 2025) that focused on teenagers’ social media use and body image perception.

I included articles for this review if (1) social media and body image perception are both the variables of interest in the study, (2) the study explicitly examined associations between body image perception and social media use, and (3) the target population was adolescents.

I excluded articles from this review if (1) the study was about body training, weight loss programs, rather than body image self-perception, (2) the study was about mass media (e.g., TV, advertisements, general published content) rather than social media, (3) the study was about intervening or studying the behaviors of patients with eating disorders rather than general teenagers, (4) the research focused on social media content examination rather than its associations with individuals' body image perception or psychological well-being, (5) the study focused on individuals' online behaviors when engaging in social media content rather than how the online content may be related to their perception of body image, (6) the study examined body image perception's association with real-life, offline social interactions (e.g., with friends, peers), or (7) the research focused on intentional online body shaming, cyberbullying, etc., rather than general social media content and interactions and how they may be linked to individuals' body image perception.

Article screening was first done by reading the title and abstract using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the identified articles were then examined by a mentor separately to check relevance of the articles to the topic.

THEMES IDENTIFIED

I reviewed a total of 14 empirical research articles on the topic and identified seven themes: (1) the issue's prevalence across the globe, (2) the large variety of research approaches used, (3) commonly preferred body-image qualities (i.e., skinny, pretty, sexy), (4) unrealistic and ever-changing beauty standards on social media, (5) social media's negative associations with teenagers' body image perception, (6) gender differences in the association between social media use and teenagers' body image perception as well as psychological wellbeing, and (7) differences in outcomes by types of social media platform and engagement.

Prevalence of the Issue Across Cultures

The issue of how social media contributes to negative body image perceptions and related mental health outcomes exists well beyond the Western culture, and even spans across countries in Asia and Africa (Table 1). There were several different continents that conducted studies to explore this topic more in depth, such as Africa (e.g., South Africa), Europe (e.g., Sweden), Australia, Asia (e.g., Singapore), and The Americas (e.g., Uruguay and the Midwest). Researchers around the globe share the same concerns of social media's detriments towards individual self presentations.

Studies were conducted in a large variety of countries and regions – including Italy (Boursier et al., 2020), Austria (Naderer et al., 2022), America (Kiefner-Burmeister et al., 2023; Roberts et al., 2022), Sweden (Wiklund et al., 2019), Uruguay (Fastoso et al., 2021), Australia (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2026; Carrotte et al., 2015; Rodgers et al., 2020), South Africa (Janak et al., 2023), Singapore (Chua & Chang., 2016),

and Ireland (Mahon & Hevey., 2021; Cotter et al., 2026; Kenny et al., 2017). Teenagers across the world may have different social media experiences, but their struggles surrounding social media related self-perceptions appear to be a common issue regardless of culture and region.

Researchers share the same concerns around social media's detriments towards individual self presentations. Social media may be an adverse source for adolescents' idealizations and self-perceptions of beauty. In South Africa, teenagers participated in semi-structured interviews and researchers found that social media promoted Westernized representations of media culture (Janak et al., 2023), reinforcing internalizations of beauty that are seemingly perfect. Apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat made South African teenage girls change their own qualities to fit into the "flawless" versions of beauty they saw through their phone screen.

Various Research Approaches to Understand the Issues

The reviewed studies vary largely in research design (Table 1). About 50% of the studies reviewed used quantitative observational designs (40% cross-sectional and 7% longitudinal). Most of these studies reported associations between social media use or social media content and body dissatisfaction or body-image related mental health issues (Fastoso et al., 2021; Boursier et al., 2020; Kiefner-Burmeister et al., 2023). Additionally, about 13% of reviewed studies used either an experimental design or a pretest-posttest intervention design and showed stronger evidence that social media was associated with teens' body image perception. For example, social media content was found to be harmful for teens' body satisfaction (Naderer et al., 2022), and the harm could be reduced with a decrease in social media use (Roberts et al., 2022). The other 40% of the studies reviewed approached the topics with a qualitative interviewing design (e.g., Mahon & Hevey., 2021; Wiklund et al., 2019), which provided participants' personal accounts on how they perceived and experienced social media use and the content on social media.

Most of the reviewed quantitative studies were in a cross-sectional design. A team of researchers in Uruguay (Fastoso et al., 2021) used a cross-sectional design to explore the factors that may contribute to mental health of female teenagers by assessing cybervictimization, social media addiction, and body image comparisons. They found that only peer comparisons related to selfie editing, and that photo retouching has an inverse relationship with self-esteem. Similarly, Cotter et al. (2026) administered a population-based survey of predominantly students in Ireland investigating four categories of mental health issues, life time self-harm, and social media/ screen time. Using a cross-sectional study design, they observed that constant engagement with image-centered platforms creates social comparison and body dissatisfaction.

A small number of quantitative studies were in a longitudinal design. Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2026), for example, investigated social media use and depressive and social anxiety symptoms in Australian adolescents and young adults in a longitudinal design. They recontacted participants from a previous study, along with a separate group of university students to create two distinct subgroups. After the

study's participants completed the surveys that measured their social media use and depressive and social anxiety symptoms, they received two additional follow-ups in 2019 and in 2022. They found that appearance preoccupation and social media use had significant positive associations with each other.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal study designs are prominent in the reviewed studies to assess social media use and body image perception using survey items but the fact that the participants self-reported their scores on a predetermined scale could make it difficult to rely on the numeric responses, which may have overly simplified the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Additionally, social desirability bias can encourage participants to alter the scoring on these different measurements to make them abide by societal standards rather than answering with full honesty.

Studies that used an in-depth qualitative approach provided details that quantitative observational studies missed. Chua and Chang et al. (2016) implemented a qualitative interview design in their study, exploring social media's effects on teenage female students who were active Instagram users. Through one-to-one interviews averaging 45-60 minutes, participants shared their observations of selfie posting by themselves and their peers. By allowing participants to further explain their perspectives, researchers found that media content was greatly associated with perceptions of beauty among youth, leading teens to constantly chase peer approval and attention on online platforms. Although all participants recognized the harmful nature of online comparison, they also described feeling the urge to alter their photos to appear perfect in their peers' eyes. Similarly rich in detail is Janak et al. (2023). They used a sample of South African teenage girls between the ages of 17-18 and conducted interviews that lasted 30- 45 minutes. Researchers asked specific questions about body ideals, shape, and size to better understand the intra-actions of these female adolescents. Using audio-recording devices during interviews to ensure accuracy, researchers found that South African teenagers had a strong desire to fit into westernized representations, as portrayed in media cultures.

Commonly Preferred Body-Image Qualities

Studies found a few body-image qualities that were commonly perceived by the youth to be appealing or attractive, including "skinny" "pretty" and "sexy." Mahon and Hevey (2021), in their qualitative interviews with mixed-gender Irish schools, found that while there has been an increased amount of body representation showcased in social media content and campaigns, users noticed that the skinnier individuals received more positive feedback than plus-size individuals did. Even content created to realistically represent diverse body types was viewed suspiciously by the participants, who felt that the captions' wholesomeness created a substantial gap with the intensely body-focused nature of the posted picture or video itself. Because of these disparities, participants felt that body positivity content failed to demonstrate true effectiveness and that their insecurities persisted despite this online positivity. As one teenage girl specifically noted, "skinnier ones [sic: individuals]" was observed to "get more positivity back than the plus size ones [individuals] would" (p. 6).

In Chua and Chang's (2016) interviews with Singaporean female students who posted selfies and used Instagram, they found that these young users were extremely self-conscious of their external appearance and even felt inferior to those who they considered to be "prettier" or more "attractive" than themselves. The number of likes on a social media post was often used as a measurement of how pretty someone was. The instantaneous nature of this quantitative feedback was considered more important than the comments on a post. All participants admitted to using filters in photo-enhancing applications to blur imperfections and brighten the skin in an effort to improve their self-presentation. One-third of the participants had used editing applications to remove perceived flaws and modify the size of their facial features. Posting social media pictures was usually to present a positive self-image to their peers, and as one participant detailed, "I want people to see me as a beautiful girl. Because people always say I'm ugly, but then some people will say I'm beautiful. That's why I always, that's why I start posting all my pictures to let people see I'm pretty" (p.193).

Sexiness was also found to be a commonly recognized appearance quality by teenagers. In the interviews to understand teenage girls' experiences with social media and their self-perception, Janak et al. (2023) found that teenage girls felt pressured to be more "sexy". Participants described the importance of receiving attention from the opposite gender and wearing clothes that accentuated their figure. One participant, for example, when detailing the qualities that she thought were sexy, explained that "When I'm all dressed up, I see myself as a sexy diva. I wear clothes that make my waist look small and my breast look big to get a lovely body shape. I get people's attention easily than in real life" (p. 957).

Unrealistic and Ever-Changing Beauty Standards on Social Media

A great number of the studies reviewed found that social media content (e.g. photos, videos, comments, postings, etc.) explicitly set, implied, or promoted unrealistic and ever-changing beauty standards for youth. Wiklund et al. (2019), for example, recruited ten participants from a large public high school in Sweden and conducted semi-structured interviews about life satisfaction through the damaging standards of physical fitness. They found that the 'unhealthy fitness hype' among teenagers was set through using social media on a regular basis, and promoted a paradox of being both very strong and extremely skinny. Many of the ever-changing standards that youth feel pressured by are shaped largely through information spread on social media. One participant noted, "Since there's such an incredible contrast now (compared) to a few years ago, it's like night and day" (p. 445). Where there was extensive content related to exercise and nutrition on social media platforms, knowledge and true scientific understanding often lacked, creating further problems for online users.

Mahon and Hevey (2021) conducted interviews with 29 Irish adolescents about their social media usage and the relation with their body image perceptions. They found that adolescents, girls in particular, explicitly reported that social media had a negative association with their body image perception. Being heavy users of social media, girls have a strong preference towards platforms that are heavily focused on external appearance and seek female body "ideals". When exposed to content that promotes

self-acceptance, female participants found it difficult to receive when the influencer was a skinny woman or an individual with a seemingly flawless body and they had trouble accepting their own bodies.

Social Media's Correlations with Mental Health Related to Body Image

Most of the reviewed studies found a significant negative association between social media use and body image perception and its related mental health outcomes. Social media use was linked to unattainable beauty standards and increased disliking and dissatisfaction with youth's own body images. Wiklund et al. (2019), for example, conducted a semi-structured qualitative study involving 10 high school students. They found that adolescents internalized body images on social media as fitness standards to pursue and actively sought to meet these unattainable standards. The constant pressure to exercise to achieve a societally acceptable body type made adolescents extremely self-conscious about their own physicality. Chua and Chang (2016) interviewed 24 secondary school girls about their observations of social media posting and found that excessive photo editing was largely attributable to heavily unrealistic standards and unhealthy beauty perceptions. The obsessive self-criticism surrounding body image created dissatisfaction in youth, particularly among female students. Janak et al. (2023) discovered that the standards many of the South African teenage girls idealized were highly racialized, and favored white girls with fair skin and slim bodies. Although some beauty qualities were truly unattainable for the participants, it created greater dissatisfaction in South African adolescents.

Negative Implications on Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem was found to co-occur with excessive social media use. Conte et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review that included 17,336 subjects from 10 countries. Among the 20 articles they reviewed, they found that both male and female TikTok users had self-esteem related issues, and experienced negative emotions surrounding their body image after excessive screen time. Rodgers et al. (2020) recruited a sample of 770 adolescents as part of a larger intervention study and implemented a biopsychosocial framework. The resulting models showed that both social media use and self-esteem related issues may lead to internalizing social media ideals, which then leads to upwards appearance comparison, followed by body dissatisfaction. Fastoso et al. (2021) gathered data from a nationally representative sample of female teenagers in Uruguay within their cross-sectional survey design. The researchers found that as self esteem decreases, teens are more likely to engage in selfie editing and appearance enhancing tools.

Links to Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety were strongly associated with external appearance comparisons within social media content. Kiefner-Busmeister et al. (2023) conducted a study including 150 Midwestern American children, ages ranging from 9 to 11. Participants were then separated into three distinct categories, including screen time use by age, screen time use by gender, and appearance pressure by gender. The results showed that a negative self perception on social media can contribute to poorer mental health and

psychological well-being. Furthermore, viewing excessively edited selfies and airbrushed portraits on social media can be associated with greater anxiety towards one's own body image perception. Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2026) conducted a longitudinal study of social media use, which included adolescents and young adults living in Australia. They found that body dysmorphic symptoms coexisted alongside social anxiety and depression in young people. Comparisons on social media related to online appearance fixations is linked with greater anxiety and depression among young users.

Potential Relations to Self Harm

A small number of studies found that youth who heavily used social media and held the body-image “standards” derived from social media were more likely to resort to harmful practices to themselves. Cotter et al. (2026) conducted population-based surveys in secondary schools in Ireland that predominantly involved adolescent students. Body dissatisfaction, particularly among the female population, was strongly associated with poor mental well-being and risks of self-harm. Additionally, teenagers who sent sexually explicit images or experienced sharing of non-consensual images had a higher likelihood of engaging in self-harm.

Acknowledging that most studies reviewed found negative association between social media use and teens' body image perception, one study found that social media use was not related to teens' body image perception (Naderer et al., 2022), and some studies were still able to find some aspects of social media content that might offer positive associations on teens' body image perception. Mahon and Hevey (2021) found that in recent years, TikTok creators and users encouraged the diversification of body image standards. There was an increased amount of positive content for users specifically centered around self-confidence and body appreciation. However, the positive elements were mostly from the media content representing diversity very well, as opposed to the frequency of social media use. In addition, the study also found that regarding comments on different body types, skinnier images had greater positive feedback and plus sized images more negative ones, in which regard, the finding still suggested potential negative implications on users' body image perception as it promoted only the skinnier body types.

Gender Differences in Social Media's Associations with Body Image Perception

An interesting theme among the reviewed studies was gender differences. The correlation of social media use on body image perception was found to differ by gender identity (Table 1). For example, Kiefner-Burmeister et al. (2023), for instance, conducted a study with Midwestern American children who were 52% female and 48% male to examine appearance pressure from social media as differed by gender. They found that adolescent females reported feeling more pressured by appearance ideals from social media compared to their male peers. Rodgers et al. (2020) used a mixed-gender sample of adolescents to explore how depression, social media use, and self-esteem are interconnected with body image dissatisfaction and related behavioral outcomes for Australian teenagers. They found that for girls, internalization of social media ideals was directly associated with body satisfaction, whereas it was not a significant contributor to boys' body dissatisfaction. Cotter et al. (2026) conducted a cross-sectional study

with a representative sample of predominantly Irish secondary school students to understand the relations between screen time and mental health outcomes as differed by gender. They found that high social media and passive screen time use increased odds of emotional problems and peer problems in girls, but not boys.

Researchers found that girls who were unhappy with their body had higher mental health issues; more specifically, emotion, peer, conduct, inattention/hyperactivity-related problems. Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2026) specifically found that young women were three times higher than young men in online appearance preoccupation, social anxiety, depression and social media use, although gender difference in depressive symptoms was small. As can be seen on the line graph provided by the study, emerging women reported more online appearance preoccupation throughout every time point and both genders experienced a significant increase in their appearance preoccupation over time. Young women that scored high in social anxiety symptoms displayed the most elevated levels of online appearance preoccupation. Young men low in symptoms had the smallest online appearance anxiety, while young men high in symptoms and young women low in symptoms fell in between.

Some of the studies also discussed why certain adolescents, such as teenage girls with a high level of body image concerns and those who have higher social media use (e.g., > 4 hours / day; Cotter et al., 2026) may be more vulnerable to negative effects than others. Boursier et al. (2020), for instance, pointed out the pivotal roles of social approval in adolescents' experiences, the one-to-many style of communication that is typical in social media, as well as their own body image disclosure on the online platforms.

Differences by Social Media Platforms and Types of Engagement

Some studies found differences in teens' body image and related mental health by active versus passive engagement in social media platforms. For example, Mahon and Hevey (2021) reported that boys believed that they had stronger control over their social media use and the outcomes that came along by actively screening and choosing the content that presented their positive body image, whereas girls did not feel the same levels of control, and thereby appeared to be more passive recipients of whatever social media provided and led them to believe. Similarly, Cotter and colleagues (2026) found that more passive screen-time use increased odds of body-image-related message internalization for females but not for males, resulting in body dissatisfaction twice as high for females as males. However, the association between passive versus active style of social media engagement and body image issues was to a large extent confounded by gender, making it unclear whether styles of engagement contributed to teens' body image perception uniquely, which calls for future research on this topic.

The reviewed studies also differed in the social media platforms to focus on. Several studies examined social media use in general rather than focusing on image-focused platforms such as Instagram or TikTok, and these studies were able to show the mere exposure and the extent of social media use may be linked to a number of outcomes such as body dissatisfaction for groups of adolescents. For example, Wiklund et

al. (2019) concluded that fitness standards and trends that social media exposes teenagers to increased the pressure for them to be physically fit. They reported that participants felt the need to improve their physical appearance in order to receive social acceptance, which meant following the fitness hype on social media platforms. Similarly, even though Boursier et al. (2020) did not focus on specific social media platforms, they assessed participants' selfie-expectancies and found that it was related to teens' social appearance anxiety and problematic social media use. On the other hand, some studies were explicit in their focus on either image-focused social media or a particular social media platform in order to hone in on the image-focused nature of these platforms and how it may be associated with teens' social media engagement. Kenny et al. (2017) found that peers' social media content, such as peers' selfies and comments on others' photo posts may have huge influences on teens' body image perception. Researchers found that girls valued verbal compliments and numerical feedback on Facebook when specifically exploring the image-focused platforms participants used and the responses to their questions regarding body image. Carrotte et al. (2015) found that body-image related mental health issues were found to be associated with social media content centered on fitness and health. Participants in this study were specifically asked about types of pages they engage with on image-focused platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, this literature review investigated research on social media usage among teenagers from multiple cultures and countries, and its relations with adolescents' body image self-perceptions. Across the studies reviewed, several key patterns emerged, including (1) the issue's prevalence across the globe, (2) the large variety of the research approaches used, (3) commonly preferred body-image qualities (i.e. skinny, pretty, sexy), (4) unrealistic and ever-changing beauty standards on social media, (5) social media's negative correlations with teenagers' body image perception, (6) gender differences in social media's associations with teens' body image perception and related mental health outcomes, (7) differences in outcomes by types of social media platform and engagement. Meanwhile, prior research also suggested that these effects are not always consistent among all adolescents and depend primarily on specific ways young users interact on these platforms (Naderer et al., 2022).

There were a few limitations with the present review of literature on social media and teens' body image perception, including reliance on self-reported data, disparities between online platforms, variation in definitions of problematic social media use, prevalence of observational research designs, and lack of additional background variables accounted for in the study aside from age, gender, and culture (e.g., Roberts et al., 2022; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2026).

Overall, these findings suggest that educators can implement more health interventions related to nutrition and exercise, since school is when adolescents are constantly surrounded by people also going through the same developmental period as they are. Moreover, having friends and sports teammates to bond with over body image struggles can help teens and build their social support system. These findings matter because teenagers and young people are the new generation and will soon be the future of the world. Future

research should continue to explore these effects on a diverse group of participants (ethnic origins, gender, socio-economic classes) and examine the effectiveness of prevention/awareness programs and peer support networks.

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Table 1

Reviewed Study Demographics

#	Article	Country/ Region	Continent	Research Design	Sample Size	Genders
1	Mahon & Hevey (2021)	Ireland	Europe	(qualitative) Focus groups Interview	29	79.3% female, 20.7% male
2	Boursier et al. (2020)	Italy	Europe	(quantitative) cross-sectional self-report study	578	62.5% female, 37.5% male
3	Naderer et al. (2022)	Austria	Europe	Study 1 Qualitative (workshop co-creation); Study 2 Quantitative survey experimental design	Study 1: 47 Study 2: 186	Study 1: 51.1% female, 48.9% male Study 2: 53.8% female, 46.2% male
4	Kiefner-Burmeister et al. (2023)	Midwestern America	North America	(quantitative) cross-sectional study	150	52% female, 48% male
5	Wiklund et al. (2019)	Sweden	Europe	(qualitative) interview study	10	50% female, 50% male
6	Fastoso et al. (2021)	Uruguay	South America	(quantitative) cross-sectional survey design	233	100% female

#	Article	Country/ Region	Continent	Research Design	Sample Size	Genders
7	Roberts et al. (2022)	United States	North America	(quantitative) pre-test/post-test design	65	100% female
8	Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2026)	Australia	Australia	(quantitative) longitudinal study with 3 repeated measures	565	60% female, 40% male
9	Cotter et al. (2026)	Ireland	Europe	(quantitative) cross sectional study	4404	46.4% female, 53.6% male
10	Carrotte et al. (2015)	Australia	Australia	(quantitative) cross sectional study	1001	72.2% female, 27.8% male
11	Chua and Chang et al. (2016)	Singapore	Asia	(qualitative) interview study	24	100% female,
12	Janak et al. (2023)	South Africa	Africa	(qualitative) Interview study	30	100% female
13	Kenny et al. (2017)	Ireland	Europe	(qualitative) focus groups	111	53.15% female, 46.85% male
14	Rodgers et al. (2020)	Australia	Australia	(quantitative) Cross-sectional survey	681	49% female, 51% male

Table 2

Social Media Platforms and Body Image Outcomes Focused

#	Article	Platform Type	Social Media Platform(s)	Assessment of Body Image Perception and Other Outcomes	Sample Question / Tool
1	Mahon & Hevey (2021)	Image-focused	Instagram, VSCO.	Body image perception was assessed with 3 interview questions.	“(1) What social media activities/behaviors do you think help/harm body image perceptions? (2) What characteristics of social media platforms promote positive body image / negatively impact body image? and (3) How do you manage challenging appearance-focused content on social media?” (p. 4)
2	Boursier et al. (2020)	Any social media platform	None specified	Selfie-Expectancies Scale (SES): assessed expectancies concerning selfie-behavior. Social Appearance Anxiety Scale assessed anxiety about being negatively evaluated by others because of overall appearance and body shape.	“How much selfie-taking might damage your reputation?” (p. 3) “I get nervous talking to people because of the way I look,” and “I worry that others talk about flaws in my appearance when I’m not around” (p. 4).

3	Nadere et al. (2022)	Any of the following	Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, & Snapchat.	Body satisfaction was measured using a digital visual analogue scale (VAS).	(Sample questions of VAS were not provided in the article.)
4	Kiefner-Burmester et al. (2023)	Any social media platform	None specified	Sociocultural Attitude Toward Appearance (SATAQ-4): was used to measure pressures on appearance. Three subscales within the SATAQ-4 scale: Thin/low Body Fat Internalization, Peer Pressure, Media Pressure.	“An example from the thin ideal Internalization subscale is, ‘I think a lot about having very little body fat.’ An example from the Peer Pressure subscale is, ‘I feel pressure from my peers to improve my appearance.’ An example from the Media Pressure subscale is, ‘I feel pressure from the media to improve my appearance’” (p.1413).

5	Wiklund et al. (2019)	Any social media platform	None specified	(2) Social Media Sets the Standards Social and mass media were viewed by adolescents as powerful arenas that promote new and unrealistic fitness standards. (3) The Paradox of Strong and Skinny as the New Standard The young people used the term 'strong is the new skinny' to describe the new fitness standard, which has gone from merely 'thin' to 'fit and strong' with a lot of muscles.	"The interview guide contained open-ended questions and probes related to seven areas: social media, norms and ideals regarding body, appearance and exercise, gender, being an athlete or non-athlete, social context, and their knowledge of orthorexia" (p. 444).
6	Fastoso et al. (2021)	Any of the following	Instagram, Facebook, Tuenti, and Twitter	Teenagers' Body Comparison was measured by an adopted 4-item scale to investigate teenagers' body comparisons with (a) models/celebrities and (b) peers and selfie editing using an already developed 3-item scale.	"How often do you compare the shape of your body to that of models and celebrities?" (p. 369).
7	Roberts et al. (2022)	Any of the following	Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter	Self-objectification: The eight-item Body Surveillance and eight-item Body Shame subscales of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale. Items were rated on a seven-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).	"I often worry about whether the clothes I'm wearing make me look good" (p. 127). "I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could" (p. 127).

8	Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2026)	Image-focused	TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram	Online Appearance Preoccupation honed in on social comparison and concerns regarding online appearance preoccupation.	"How I feel about my body and appearance is influenced by other people's social media pictures" (p. 14).
9	Cotter et al. (2026)	Image-focused	Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok	Body Dissatisfaction was measured by one statement.	"Participants were asked how well the statement 'I am happy with my body' applied to them. Responses included [applies] 'very well', 'well', 'poorly' and 'not at all'" (p. 3).
10	Carrotte et al. (2015)	Image-focused	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Health and Fitness-Related Social Media Content was measured with several options.	1. Weight loss/fitness profiles 2. Cleanses or detoxes 3. Diet plans or weight loss (e.g., I Quit Sugar, Michelle Bridges 12WBT, Kayla Itsines Bikini Body Challenge) 4. Other health-related pages" (pp. 3-4).
11	Chua & Chang (2016)	Image-focused	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr	Selfie Comparisons was further explored in interview sessions that lasted about 45-60 minutes.	"During the one-to-one interviews, participants were asked to share observations about their and their peers' posting of selfies on Instagram, thoughts on beauty, and comparison behaviors. Space was given for descriptive accounts to develop and for further probing to allow for more subtle nuances to emerge. All interviews were

					audio-recorded and later transcribed” (p. 192).
12	Janak et al. (2023)	Image-focused	Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok	Body Ideals, Shape and Size was explored through specific questions around sexiness	“Questions included: What does ‘sexiness’ on social media mean to you? How do you attract boys on social media? What things/objects do you use to express yourself as sexy? What do boys like? What happens if you are not seen as sexy on social media?” (p. 955).
13	Kenny et al. (2017)	Image-focused	Facebook	Body Image was examined through two main questions.	“This article focuses on two questions: ‘How do you think peers influence body image?’ and ‘Do you think this influence is positive and/or negative?’ All questions were supplemented by clarifying and probing questions to elicit further discussion” (p. 773).
14	Rodgers et al. (2020)	Any of the following	Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest	Body Dissatisfaction was measured, specifically body image concerns over the course of the last 28 days.	‘An example item is, “How dissatisfied have you felt about your shape?”’ (p. 403).

