



BODY DISSATISFACTION AS A PREDICTOR OF SELF ESTEEM AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG GENERATION Z

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ABSTRACT

The body dissatisfaction has become a widespread psychological challenge in the digital age associated with negative consequences related to the development of low self-esteem and poor life satisfaction. Despite growing research, limited attention has been given to young adults in non-Western contexts, where cultural values and social media pressures intersect. This cross-sectional study examined body dissatisfaction as a predictor of self-esteem and life satisfaction in a sample of Generation z (ages 18–27; N = 200) recruited from colleges and universities in Islamabad. Participants completed the Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Descriptive analyses indicated elevated levels of body dissatisfaction in the sample ($M = 60.93$, $SD = 11.71$). Pearson correlations showed body dissatisfaction was negatively associated with life satisfaction ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) and with self-esteem ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$). Regression analyses revealed that body dissatisfaction significantly predicted self-esteem and life satisfaction. An independent-samples t-test indicated females reported higher body dissatisfaction than males (females: $M = 65.0$, $SD = 12.0$; males: $M = 56.0$, $SD = 10.5$). These findings underscore the critical need to address body image concerns in non-Western populations through therapeutic practice, educational programs, and thoughtful digital policy. Interventions focused on promoting self-compassion, media literacy, and healthier online environments could help mitigate the negative impact of body dissatisfaction on the mental well-being of Generation Z.

Keywords: *Body Dissatisfaction, Generation z, Life satisfaction, Self-esteem.*

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (born 1997–2010) represents the first cohort of true "digital natives," with 40% of the global population and disproportionate influence as consumers (Dimock, 2019;



Chamberlain, 2018). Immersed in social media and emerging technologies like augmented reality (Ameen et al., 2021), Gen Z's self-perception is uniquely shaped by constant online exposure to idealized appearances. This perpetual connectivity fosters unprecedented body image pressures: while only 15–20 years define a generational cohort (Almog & Almog, 2013), Gen Z's psychological profile marked by visual self-presentation and comparison (Grigoreva et al., 2021) demands urgent examination in contexts like Pakistan, where Western and traditional beauty standards collide.

According to Neves et al (2017), body image involves the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions of a certain body. Poor self-esteem and life non-satisfaction tend to be more pronounced in such individuals. There has been a tendency to link Generation Z with lack of confidence coupled with low self-esteem (Writer, 2017). In particular, low self-esteem has been characterized as a problem of the young women's population: it increases their vulnerability to depression, anxiety, self-harming behavior, and several other mental issues (Kramer, 2021). An increasing concern is the psychological and emotional impact, which focuses on the core aspects of body image, understanding the relationship between body dissatisfaction and these outcomes. It is apparent that people from Gen z have great concern towards their physical appearance. During the puberty stage there may be a rise in concentration on weight and body shape image due to the immense body changes that take place during this stage (Ata et al., 2007).

A person's self-esteem according to Rosenberg consists of all the evaluations they have of themselves including the good and the bad. High self-esteem is associated with good outcomes in life such as better exam grades and lower levels of anxiety and depression. Low self-esteem on the contrary could lead to a superior feeling of absolute worthlessness and be a causal factor to various errant behavior (Rosenberg, 1965). One's self esteem for both genders were related to body dissatisfaction during adolescence stage of development (Murray et al., 2015; Seidah et al., 2004; Van der Berg et al., 2010; Wichstrøm & von Soest, 2016). Generation z is one of the key developmental stages in the acquisition of self-esteem (Harter, 1999), which people grew up understanding to be the confidence in their own worth or abilities (Rosenberg, 1979).

Life satisfaction is a general assessment of emotions and affairs in a person's life, related to the fulfillment or happiness one feels with their life circumstances. Research shows a close correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction, with higher self-esteem usually ranging alongside higher life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2009). People with greater self-esteem report more body satisfaction, for both men and women (Frederick et al., 2014; Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Swami et al., 2016). In addition, adults who are able to follow a healthier diet, along with reporting a greater body satisfaction, related to a greater reporting of life satisfaction (McCreary & Sadava, 2001). Instead, research shows that negative emotions about the body have a substantial negative impact on people's overall quality of life (Cash & Fleming, 2002, Peplau et al., 2009).

SATA Model makes recommendations for appearance management practices for teenagers (Yoo & Kim, 2012). This represents SATA, or society appearance trait as defined by Heinberg, Thompson, and Stormer (1995) as a person's knowledge and acceptance of society's standards for appearance. According to this model, external societal, social media, muscularity, and thinness ideal influences lead to poor body image impression, which causes lower self-esteem and general life satisfaction. The model has been modified to take into consideration the impact of digital media, which makes it especially applicable in the setting of the widespread online interactions of



today. The current research study will examine the intricate linkages that exist between body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Yoo & Kim, 2012).

The body dissatisfaction (BD) is the negative cognition, affect and evaluation of the physical appearance of a specific individual (Grogan S. 2006); following which the study sought to know that how health of the individuals would be greatly influenced with the actions towards own body at any phase of their life, as every phase holds certain developmental value in the body image status of the individuals (Rohde et al., 2015). They show that in the last forty years body dissatisfaction has been emerging into attention in scientific publications (Fitzsimmons Craft EE, et al.2009). Body dissatisfaction is reportedly highest amongst generation Z, early adulthood especially women (Heron KE, et al 2013). Concerning body image dissatisfaction, the youngsters in this generation are a significant concern to the public health since the conditions lead to other more health risks and impacts including; Negative impact on the psychological health, poor self-esteem, depression and eating disorders (Bornioli A, et al 2021). Moreover, mental status is among the ten leading common factors affecting health risks among the generation z (Mathers CD, et al. 2000). In actuality, psychological issues, low self-esteem, and depressed moods have all been correctly associated with body dissatisfaction among Generation Z. The former have connected dissatisfaction with the body with anxiety (Cruz-Saez et al., 2015; Dooley et al., 2015), depression (Cruz-Saez et al., 2015; Dooley et al., 2015., et al.), and low self-esteem (Delfabbro et al., 2015). In a similar manner, adolescent studies conducted on both sexes revealed that dissatisfaction with bodies was a forecast of low self-esteem and even great prevalent of depression amongst adolescents (Johnson & Wardle, 2005., et al.). Among generation Z however, negative self-esteem has been associated with anxiety and sadness (De Jong et al., 2012; Lee & Hankin, 2009). Self-esteem has been found by a couple of studies to be connected to body dissatisfaction (Fortes LdS, et al. 2014). Self-esteem is the result of positive judgment on self; it is mainly formed in adolescent life as stated by Voelker DK in 2015. The last decade has seen self-esteem as the subject of attention since it could be the type of buffering factor that leads to the BD. As an example, self-esteem does not only alter the depression, anxiety, and stress (Murray K, Rieger E, Byrne D 2013). Some studies have been carried out on the adolescents and adults regarding body dissatisfaction (Sukariyah MB, Sidani RA 2014). In our research, this direction of the investigation and test numerous psychological variables in the Generation Z group of individuals, who are most vulnerable to psychological statuses shifts due to the rise of social pressure related to body image. It becomes audible in young women and most of them do not consult professionals since they are not even aware that they need them. Therefore, the proposed study aims to discuss correlates of BD in Generation Z as well as the self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Self- esteem refers to the complete judgment that a person had about himself. Research however indicates that low self-esteem is more susceptible to pressures perceived in the society such as the media images, languishing on the unrealistic thin ideal hence likely to increases the sense of inadequacies experienced (Harter, 1999). Results of the study are always consistent according to which people with high body dissatisfaction scores have lower global self-esteem and satisfaction with their lives (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). This correlation has been widely discussed as the objectification theory, according to which representatives of culturally oriented on superficiality sexuality would internalize an outside view of both the own body and sex organs,



which impairs with its chronic body inspection and discontent (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2002).

Life satisfaction refers to satisfaction with the life of a person. Studies indicate that individuals in dissatisfaction with the appearance of their bodies are lesser satisfied in life (Diener et al., 2009). As an illustration, young members of Gen Z may refuse to attend social or job interviews or start relationships because they are not confident about their appearance (Bornioli et al., 2021). The worrying rate of body dissatisfaction is on the rise in terms of worldwide frequency (Mondal et al., 2021; Hyun et al., 2014) as well as locally (Radwan et al., 2019). In a most recent study of 308 Emirati students aged 18-25 in Emirati universities, it was shown that 81 percent of participants had body dissatisfaction (Radwan et al., 2019). Likewise, a survey on Lebanese high school students evidenced that 60 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls were dissatisfied with their body and also demonstrated differences between real body weight and ideal body weight with 44 percent of boys wanting to be heavier and 59.5 percent of girls desiring to be thinner (Sukariyah & Sidani, 2014). Body dissatisfaction can be created by a range of factors such as those physical, cultural, socio-economic, psychological, and social (Choi & Choi, 2016), as well as family and peer pressure (Webb & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2012), parental attitudes (Van Vonderen & Kinnally, 2012), and media portrayals focused on appearance (Meier & Gray, 2014). These factors shape the body image of individuals aged 12 to 27 (Reel, et al., 2015). The global spread of unrealistic body ideals has led adolescents to experience body image distortion and dissatisfaction (Croll, 2005).

This study employs Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) Objectification Theory to analyze the psychological and sociocultural dimensions of body dissatisfaction among Generation Z in Pakistan. This theory suggests that the sociocultural spaces educate people, especially women, to look at their individuals and bodies through the eyes of a viewer. This is expressed in the online world by the continuous surveillance of the body through selfies, the desire to be seen through the use of social media, and using likes to support that sense of appearance and acceptance (Tiggemann & Slater, 2020). In Pakistani Gen Z, this is further exacerbated by competing notions of beauty - modesty traditions across the cultures and the Westernized aesthetic ideals on digital media. According to the theory, the phenomenon of self-objectification experienced as a habit is expected to cause shame, stress, a decrease in self-esteem that eventually impairs life satisfaction. The model is the only one explaining the process of technology-mediated self-surveillance within collectivistic cultures.

Literature Gap

Body dissatisfaction is a common aspect of psychological research of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Within a larger context of the personal identity and subjective wellbeing, however, much of this existing literature addresses these outcomes as separate constructs and they may fail to realize that these constructs are interdependent. In addition, most of the earlier literature has either concentrated on adolescents or western samples, creating a major gap in the comprehension of how body dissatisfaction functions among generation z (those aged between 18 and 27) in Pakistan. The present study attempts to fill that gap by examining the mechanism by which body dissatisfaction serves as a predictor of self-esteem as well as life satisfaction among Generation z. Although there is an increasingly pattern of their studies regarding the body image issues, there is little understanding of how body image issues may influence various aspects of psychological wellbeing at the same time, particularly in cultures where there is an overlap of the importance of

appearance, social comparison, and collectivist values. Body dissatisfaction in the current study will not only be examined as a singular issue, but also be explored in the form of a psychological predictor with practical interpretation to the experiences of Generation Z in terms of life gratification and self-esteem in a more image and web-based society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the level of body dissatisfaction among young individuals of Generation Z.
2. To examine the relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem in Generation Z.
3. To examine the effects of body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction in Generation Z.

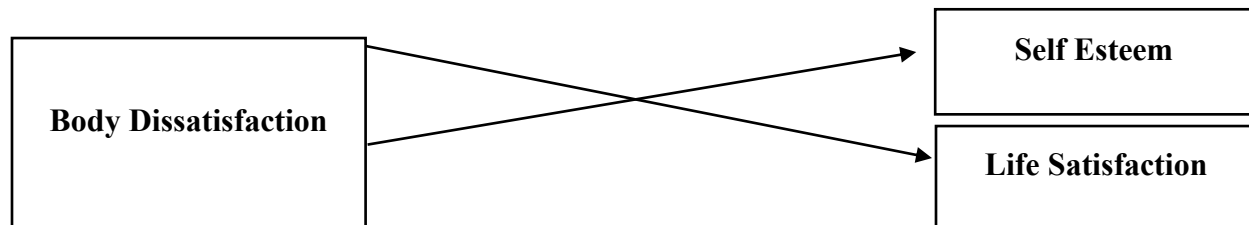
Research Question

1. What are the effects of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem among Generation Z?
2. How body dissatisfaction impact life satisfaction in Generation Z?
3. What is the gender differences in the level of body dissatisfaction among Generation Z?

Hypotheses

1. H1: There is a significant negative relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem among young individuals of Generation Z.
2. H2: There is a significant negative relationship between body dissatisfaction and life satisfaction among young individuals of Generation Z.
3. H3. Female Generation Z have high level of body dissatisfaction as compared to Male Generation z

Conceptual Framework



This cross-sectional study examined the pathways linking body dissatisfaction to well-being among Generation Z. Data were collected from undergraduate and graduate students (ages 18–26) across colleges and universities in Islamabad, using purposive sampling to target individuals.

Sample

The sample for the main study of this research is comprised of Generation Z (18-27 years), (N = 200) using convenience sampling technique from Islamabad.

Table 1

Gender wise sample detail (N=200)

Male	Female
100	100



Instruments

Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) (Littleton 2005)

The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI), developed by Littleton in 2005, is a 19-item self-report measure designed to assess concerns related to body dissatisfaction, particularly focusing on dysmorphic concern. Participants are asked to rate how often they experience the feelings or behaviors described in each item on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The BICI captures various dimensions of body dissatisfaction, including body image discrepancy, body image shame, and appearance-related anxiety. The scale has shown strong internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of .93, indicating high reliability. The BICI is a valuable tool for understanding the impact of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem and life satisfaction, making it an appropriate instrument for this study focused on Generation Z.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965, is one of the most widely used self-report instruments for assessing global self-esteem. It consists of 10 items that measure an individual's overall self-worth or self-acceptance. Respondents rate themselves on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The scale does not have formal subscales and is treated as a one-dimensional measure of self-esteem. However, it includes both positively and/ negatively worded statements to ensure comprehensive coverage of self-esteem. There are 5 reverse-coded items in the RSES to control for response bias. These items are: 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10. In terms of psychometric properties, the RSES demonstrates high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha typically ranging between 0.77 and 0.88.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. 1985, is a short, 5-item scale designed to measure an individual's overall cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. Unlike other scales that measure specific aspects of well-being, the SWLS focuses on a person's subjective evaluation of their life as a whole. Respondents rate the items using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), providing a wide range of responses. The SWLS does not include any reverse-coded items, as all 5 items are positively worded. Regarding psychometric properties, the SWLS demonstrates excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging between 0.80 and 0.90.

Procedure

Sample for the current study is consisted of Generation Z of ages 18-27 years, selected from the area of Islamabad. A purposive sampling. technique was followed to recruit participant based on their availability and willingness. Permission was granted by colleges in Islamabad to collect the data from the student. The college administration was nice and cooperative. All participant has to sign the consent form and were briefed on the study's purpose, ensuring the confidentiality and providing the instruction for completing the questionnaire. Structured questionnaires were self-administered and the paper-and-pencil technique was employed to administer the same with each questionnaire taking only 10-15 minutes to complete in average. Participant were asked whether they want refreshment, which were provided as a appreciation. We thank the administrator for the cooperation. The data was processed for statistical analysis (Descriptive statistic, Regression, t- test and correlation).

RESULTS

The analysis of data from Generation Z regarding body dissatisfaction together with self-esteem and life satisfaction relationships used SPSS version 26. The analysis of body dissatisfaction versus overall life satisfaction relationships includes descriptive statistics with correlation analyses and regression analysis. This result provides dedicated attention to how body dissatisfaction work as a predictor between self Esteem and Life satisfaction

4.1 Internal Consistency and Descriptive Statistics of Data

Table 2 has revealed alpha coefficients of all instruments, mean, standard deviation, the actual and potential range of scores and skewness and kurtosis of data distribution

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Coefficients Scale (N= 200)

Sr.	Scale	No. of Items	A	M	SD	Range		S	K
						Actual	Potential		
1	BD	19	.77	60.93	11.71	22 – 90	19 – 95	-0.06	1.08
2	LS	5	.55	18.99	6.00	5 – 35	5 – 35	-0.16	0.74
3	SE	10	.68	21.54	7.72	12 – 37	10 – 40	0.10	-1.26

Note: BD= Body Dissatisfaction, LS= Life Satisfaction, SE= Self Esteem, a= Alpha reliability, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, S = Skewness, K = Kurtosis

Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients for Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics for every study variable. With a mean score of 60.93 (SD = 11.71), the Body Dissatisfaction scale ($\alpha = .77$) has high internal consistency. With a mean score of 18.99 (SD = 6.00), the Life Satisfaction scale ($\alpha = .55$) exhibits comparatively low internal consistency, indicating caution when interpreting conclusions based on this measure. With a mean score of 21.54 (SD = 7.62), the Self-Esteem measure ($\alpha = .68$) shows satisfactory reliability and indicates that individuals have moderate levels of self-esteem. The majority of variables' skewness and kurtosis values fall within permissible bounds, indicating roughly normalcy. The descriptive statistics show that participants reported a high level of body dissatisfaction, with a mean score of 60.93 (SD = 11.71). which indicating that young Generation Z individuals in the sample experience notable concerns related to body image.

Table 3

Socio demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 200)

Demographics	Description	F	%
Age	Early Adults (18-22)	61	30.5
	Late Adults (23-27)	139	69.5
Gender	Male	100	50
	Female	100	50



Education	High School	73	36.5
	Bachelor's	90	45.0
	Master's or Higher	37	18.5

Table 3 presents the sample's socio demographic details (N = 200). The majority of participants (69.5%) are late adults (ages 23–27), with 30.5% of the sample being early adults (ages 18–22). The sample's gender distribution is equal, with 50% of participants being men and 50% being women. Those with a bachelor's degree (45.0%) are the most educated group, followed by high school graduates (36.5%) and those with a master's degree or above (18.5%).

To explore the associations between body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Pearson Correlation among body dissatisfaction and life Satisfaction (N=200)

Variable	1	2	3
Body Dissatisfaction	-	-.26**	-.15*
Life Satisfaction	-	-	-.15*
Self-Esteem	-	-	-

Note: ***p<.00, **p<.01, *p<.05

Table 4 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients that look at the connections between self-esteem, life satisfaction, and body dissatisfaction. Life happiness and body dissatisfaction were shown to be significantly correlated negatively ($r = -0.26, p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1, which states that life satisfaction decreases as body dissatisfaction increases. Additionally, there was a small but significant negative correlation between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem ($r = -.15, p < .05$), as well as between self-esteem and life satisfaction ($r = -.15, p < .05$). These findings suggest that individuals with higher body dissatisfaction tend to report lower self-esteem and life satisfaction. Which is supporting the hypothesis 2.

To examine mean differences in body dissatisfaction across groups, independent samples t-tests were conducted. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Gender Difference on Study Variables (N = 200)

Variables	Male (n=100)		Female (n=100)		T	P	95% CI		Cohen' d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
BD	56.0	10.5	65.0	12.0	-6.02	.001	-11.8	-6.2	0.85

Note: BD= Body Dissatisfaction,

The independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant gender difference in body dissatisfaction (BD), with females (M = 65.0, SD = 12.0) reporting significantly higher levels than males (M = 56.0, SD = 10.5), $t = -6.02$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.85$. The 95% confidence interval [-11.8, -6.2] indicates that the true population mean difference falls within this range, confirming that female participants experienced substantially greater body dissatisfaction than their male counterparts which support the hypothesis 3.

To examine the predictive effect of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem and life satisfaction, linear regression analyses were conducted. The results are presented in Table 6

Table 6

Regression Showing the Effect of Body Dissatisfaction on Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction

Variable	B	SE	95% CI		B	P	R ²	F	p-Model
			LL	UL					
SE Model									
Constant	4.12	0.33	3.47	4.77	-	.001	.13	34.53	.001
BD	-0.38	0.06	-0.50	-0.26	-0.36	.001			
LS Model									
Constant	5.24	0.33	4.59	5.89	-	.001	.09	23.94	.001
BD	-0.28	0.06	-0.40	-0.16	-0.30	.001			

Note. BD: Body Dissatisfaction, SE: Self Esteem, LS: Life Satisfaction

The regression results indicate that body dissatisfaction significantly predicts both self-esteem and life satisfaction, with stronger effects observed for self-esteem. For the self-esteem model, body dissatisfaction showed a significant negative association ($B = -0.38$, $\beta = -0.36$, $p < .001$), explaining 13% of the variance ($R^2 = .13$, $F(1,198) = 34.53$, $p < .001$). Similarly, for life satisfaction, body dissatisfaction was negatively associated ($B = -0.28$, $\beta = -0.30$, $p < .001$), accounting for 9% of the variance ($R^2 = .09$, $F = 23.94$, $p < .001$). The findings suggest that while body dissatisfaction adversely impacts both outcomes, its effect is more pronounced for self-esteem than life satisfaction. The robust, statistically significant results (with confidence intervals not including zero) highlight body dissatisfaction as an important psychological factor that interventions should target to improve well-being. However, the modest R^2 values indicate other unmeasured variables likely contribute substantially to both self-esteem and life satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The present paper is the basis of a research designed to examine how body dissatisfaction affects life satisfaction and self-esteem in the context of generation z between the ages of 18-27. Based on a sample of 200 Pakistani participants, the study provides interesting information regarding the predictive effect of negative perceptions of body image on the overall well-being. The findings will be discussed in the light of the existing literature with the focus on similarities and differences with previous studies. Also, it discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, gives limitations to the study as well as recommendations that can be conducted in the future in the research of body image and mental health on Generation Z.

As the findings of this study showed that body dissatisfaction has a negative relationship with self-esteem among Generation Z ($r = -.15$ $p < .05$) is congruent with previous studies finding



that an increased body dissatisfaction is related to deficit in self-esteem among Generation Z. Prospective longitudinal studies have demonstrated that negative body-image predicts subsequent low self-esteem (Paxton et al., 2006), whereas experimental and cross-sectional projects have also linked the media direct exposure and appearance comparison as the processes that raise both side effects (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). In addition, there is meta-analysis-based evidence of clinical and nonclinical samples that shows reliability of a negative correlation between appearance-related psychopathology and self-esteem (Kuck et al., 2021).

This study consistently argues that body dissatisfaction is negatively correlated with life satisfaction, as much was the case in a recent study ($r = -0.26$, $p < .01$). The current results, which showed that life satisfaction was significantly and negatively correlated with body satisfaction ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) are in sympathy with previous studies which found that more body dissatisfaction is associated with low life satisfaction. A study of adults and adolescents in Greece reported that more body dissatisfaction was associated with lower life satisfaction significantly, taking into consideration age and existential concerns (Georgiou & Kleftras, 2022). In a broader sense, it is also found in quality-of-life research that body dissatisfaction is associated with poorer mental and psychosocial functioning, particularly on women in community samples (Vallance et al., 2013). The observed results imply that the effect size of the study at hand is moderate, century-long negative correlation between body dissatisfaction and life satisfaction is powerful and significant. It reinforces the fact that body acceptance and introduction of positive body image as means to potentially raising overall life satisfaction should be addressed through multiple interventions.

The independent-samples t-test indicated that female participants declared significantly greater body dissatisfaction than male ones (females: $M = 65.0$, $SD = 12.0$; males: $M = 56.0$, $SD = 10.5$), $t = -6.02$, $p = .001$, Cohen $d = 0.85$, with the 95 percent of the mean difference interval of [11.8, 11.8]. The existence of the said gender gap is consistent with the huge body of empirical work that has shown that girls and women would tend to exhibit greater negative body image and body dissatisfaction as opposed to boys and men (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Knauss, Paxton, & Alsaker, 2008). Social cultural factors, i.e., stronger internalization of thin-ideal and appearance pressures, stronger sexual objectification, and more appearance-based social comparisons, can explain these disparities and have been observed in adolescent and college samples as well as in diverse cultural backgrounds and settings (Papageorgiou, Fisher, & Cross, 2022; Quittkat et al., 2019). The objectification theory also explains the outcomes of chronic sexual objectification among women by assuming that they develop the observer perspective on their bodies that causes self-objectification, body shame, and high levels of body dissatisfaction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The effect size was large ($d = 0.85$) in this case, which points to the fact that there is a significant gender difference in this sample and represents strong evidence.

The results of the present study can significantly contribute to theoretical knowledge of psychology, first, and foremost, in terms of Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The findings are consistent with those of the Objectification Theory, that virtual objectification of the female body (and, increasingly the male body) causes people to self-surveil and adopt shameful attitudes toward themselves, which, in turn, lowers self-esteem and life satisfaction. Stretching these frameworks, the study shows that they are applicable even to generation Z, that has been particularly inculcated into a digital culture, where the boundaries between what is real and what is modified are further becoming unclear. Moreover, these results indicate that the current theories



of body image might have to be revised to incorporate the presence of the content generated by algorithms and reinforcing the narrow standards of beauty by directly applying personalized and repetitive amounts of exposure. The study, therefore, does not only confirm the existing theories in a more modern setting but also stresses the necessity of the theoretical extending that would include the influence of the digital environment as one of the factors controlling the interaction between body image and psychological well-being.

Limitations and suggestion

Even though the present study offers meaningful knowledge about the connection between body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in Generations Z, there are several limitations that should be stated. To begin with, cross-sectional design prevents making any causal conclusion; that body dissatisfaction is the direct cause of drop in self-esteem and life satisfaction with time requires longitudinal or experimental studies. Secondly, self-report measurements might carry the bias of the social desirability or recall fallibility, and further studies can consider the utilization of implicit measures (e.g., the Implicit Association Test as the body image measure) or operationalization of behavioral manifestations (e.g., social media pattern of engagement) as the supplement to self-reported findings. Third, the sample was mainly comprised of Generation z between the age of 18 and 27 years, which might disregard the essential developmental separations in adolescents and cultural diversity since the research did not comprise diverse socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds. It would be ideal that future research considers a more representative sampling in future research to allow non-binary individuals and cross-cultural comparison as a way of improving generalizability. Moreover, investigating protective (such as self-compassion, social support) or moderator (such as gender, the frequency of social media use) may explain why some people can be resilient in the context of their high body dissatisfaction. Lastly, causal arguments may be reinforced by experimental evidence and used to determine possible applications with experimental designs, e.g., regulated exposure to idealized and diverse body types in social media accounts. These limitations would help improve theoretical models in addition to informing more distilled efforts aimed at countering the psychological impact of body dissatisfaction in the digital age.

Implication

According to the findings, it can be implicated that the most immediate, viable solutions involve clinicians screening regularly and integrating modules that draw on CBT principles to help address maladaptive body beliefs during low self-esteem and poor life-satisfaction treatment, educators and parents teaching media-literacy lessons (such as lessons on photo-editing and the effects of algorithms), policymakers considering actions such as mandatory disclosure of retouched images and other policies that hinder deceptive appearance norms, and social-media designers adjusting algorithms and giving users more controls so that they may advance body image. These efforts combined might significantly minimize the impacts on mental health that come along with body dissatisfaction among Generation Z.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that body dissatisfaction remains a serious predictor of low self-esteem and a weaker level of life satisfaction among Generation z due to the factors of persistent exposure to idealized images via social media. It demands concerted efforts: at the personal level, to foster self-compassion and media literacy education, at the organizational level, to incorporate



body image work into school curricula and mental-health initiatives and at the cultural level, to demand more responsible media representation and media platforms policies which favor the representation of body diversity. Protective factors, cultural variations, and long-term effects are deemed to be the subject of future studies. Scaling these results into clinical practice, education, and digital design would potentially increase the psychological wellbeing of Generation Z

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