Original Research

DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA APPEARANCE CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Adolescents' active use of social media raises curiosity about how they appear on social media platforms. This situation may cause changes in their personality. This study was conducted to determine the relationship between social media appearance consciousness and self-esteem in adolescents.

Method: This cross-sectional study was conducted between January and March 2023. The study involved 1103 students from three different high schools located in a province in eastern Turkey. As part of the study process, data were collected using the "Questionnaire", "Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale" and "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale". To analyze the data, percentages, averages, independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were performed. The significance level in all tests was set at 0.05. Shao's method was employed to assess the conformity of the data to normal distribution. As a result, the Skewness value was 0.409, the Kurtosis value was -0.370, and it was determined that the data showed a normal distribution between -3 and +3.

Results: The mean age of the students in the study was 26.8% 15 years old, 62.2% were male, and 27% were 9th-grade students. The mean total score of the students was 41.11±17.74 for the Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale and 29.36±6.35 for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It was determined that there was a positive correlation between the scores of the Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($p<0.05$).

Conclusions: In conclusion, it was observed that increasing social media appearance consciousness scores was associated with higher self-esteem levels.

Keyword: adolescent; self-esteem; social media; appearance consciousness

1. INTRODUCTION

Myspace became the first social media platform to reach one million monthly users in 2004, and this is considered the beginning of social media. It is the integration of social media into our lives, its rapid and comprehensive adoption, features such as finding friends, accessing information from news sources, organizing in a very short period, and 24/7 accessibility, that make social media an appealing tool. The availability of these features directly impacts the number of social media users (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). In terms of social media users, adolescents represent a significant share(Boursier et al., 2020). As far as the daily use of social media is concerned, it ranges from 10% to 86% for adolescents between 12 and 14 years of age, and from 21% to 93% for adolescents between 15 and 16 years of age(Smahel et al., 2020) . According to a study conducted in Turkey, adolescents spend approximately four hours on social media platforms every day(Caner et al., 2022). Social media is well known to children and adolescents, and YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat are among the most popular social media platforms among them(Boursier et al., 2020; Steinsbekk et al., 2021).

In adolescence, there is a great deal of physiological, social, and psychological change; in particular, identity discovery, self-expression, friendship, and peer recognition gain a great deal of importance (Dahl et al., 2018) . Because adolescents are particularly eager to establish relationships with their peers, social media provides adolescents with the opportunity to communicate with their peers from anywhere at any time (Caner et al., 2022). The use of virtual communities on these platforms allows adolescents to participate in a wide range of activities, such as creating public or private profiles, interacting, and creating and sharing photos, videos, and stories (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017; Bányai et al., 2017; Boursier et al., 2018; Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018).

An individual's perception of their physical appearance on social media is referred to as social media appearance consciousness (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020) In their social media posts, adolescents focus on positive feedback and the desire to be liked (Steinsbekk et al., 2021) . This affects adolescents' consciousness of appearance. Their social media profiles include the best versions of themselves, the most interesting photographs, and those that they have edited and improved. An individual's physical appearance is believed to be the single factor that contributes most to a person's self-esteem as an adolescent. It is for this reason that adolescents increasingly rely on social media photos and videos as the primary means of presenting themselves to others (Chua & Chang, 2016; Mascheroni et al., 2015). According to previous research, adolescents consider social media videos and photos important in the construction of their self-esteem (Chua & Chang, 2016; Mascheroni et al., 2015).

Approval of the individual's self leads to the formation of self-esteem(Karadağ et al., 2008). Whether the individual evaluates and approves or appreciates his or her self and to what extent is very important for the development of self-esteem(Karadağ et al., 2008). In other words, self-esteem is the individual's evaluation of his or her existence(Yavuz, 2007). Low or high self-esteem is also very important for the spiritual development of the individual. Self-esteem is necessary for the individual's existence and active participation in social life (Muslu, 2001). Individuals with low self-esteem cause the development of conditions that harm personality development, such as anxiety, depression, shyness, and decreased self-confidence(Kaner, 2000). High self-esteem contributes to the development of positive emotions and positive identity development in the individual(Kaner, 2000).

In the literature, there are two studies investigating the relationship between appearance consciousness and self-esteem among adolescents (Ozimek et al., 2023; Özbey & Gültekin, 2021; Steinsbekk et al., 2021). A study by Steinsbekk et al. assessed adolescents' social media usage through interviews and measured appearance consciousness using the Self-Identification Questionnaire (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). Ozimek et al. utilized measurement instruments such as the Photo Editing Scale, Instagram Activity Questionnaire, Self-Objectification Behaviors Scale, Physical Appearance Comparison Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Using the Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale, this study evaluated adolescents' social media appearance consciousness(Ozimek et al., 2023). According to our review of the studies in the literature, no valid and reliable measurement tool has been used to interpret this parameter.

Two ways are available for adolescents to increase their self-esteem through social media appearance consciousness. Firstly, when adolescents share content about themselves, it is rare that they receive negative feedback, and the vast majority receive positive feedback. The second reason is that the content they present online is inextricably linked to how they envision themselves in their ideals of being the best version of themselves (Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Steinsbekk et al., 2021). As a result, this study sought to determine the impact of social media appearance consciousness on adolescents' self-esteem.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Design

A descriptive and correlational study model was used in this study.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of 5374 students enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade at 20 high schools in Erzincan city center. A simple random sampling method was used to select the sample group. In Erzincan city center, three high schools were selected using the draw method from a total of 20 high schools, which included three types of high schools: There were 1328 students enrolled in these schools in total. Totally 1103 students studying in these three types of high schools who met the research criteria and accepted the study without the use of a sampling method were included in the study.

2.3 Data collection tools

The data were collected using a 'Question Form', an 'Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale (ASMC)', and a 'Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale'. Eight questions were included in this section regarding the students' age, gender, grade level, family type, income status, school achievement, ownership of a phone, and amount of time spent on the phone per day.

The one-dimensional, seven-point Likert-type scale consisting of 13 items was developed to measure adolescents' awareness of their appearance on social media (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020).The

scale score ranged from 7 to 91 points. In the scale, there were no reverse-scored items. A high score on the scale indicated a high perception of social media appearance. In the original form of the scale, Choukas-Bradley et al.(Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020) found that Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was 0.95, and in the Turkish adaptation it was found to be 0.92 (Kurtuluş Yıldırım et al., 2022). Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated to be 0.90 in this study.

The scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg (Rosenberg, 1965) for assessing self-esteem and adapted into Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (Çuhadaroğlu, 1986). In the scale, there are 63 items and 12 subcategories rated on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly agree=4, Strongly disagree=1). There was also a 10-item short form of the scale. In this study, the short form was used. A reverse score was assigned to the 3rd, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 10th items of the scale. In terms of self-esteem, 10-20 indicated a low level, 20-30 indicated a moderate level, and 30-40 indicated a high level. According to Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient, the original form of the scale had an alpha coefficient of 0.85. The coefficient of alpha internal consistency in the present study was 0.88.

2.4 Ethical Principles of the Study

A permission dated 30/12/2022 and numbered E-88012460-050.01.04-232277 was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct this study. In addition, institutional permission was obtained from Erzincan Provincial Directorate of National Education dated 01.02.2023 and numbered E-45468433-605.01-69703639. Following the disclosure of the study to the students participating, it was explained that they had the choice to participate in it or not, that their personal information would not be disclosed to others, that it would not be used in any other manner, and that they were free to leave the study at any time. The "Informed Consent Principle" was met by obtaining written and verbal consent from the parents and students.

2.5 Data Collection

The researchers created the questionnaire form, which included the Question Form, Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale after obtaining ethical and legal approvals. To obtain the written and verbal consent of the student's parents, the "Informed Voluntary Consent Form" was sent through the students to the parents in a sealed envelope before the data collection began. The consent form was signed by one of the parents and delivered by the students to the researcher. An appropriate work schedule was developed, and the school administrator implemented the data collection forms. Following the schedule, questionnaire forms were collected in a classroom environment face-to-face.

The questionnaire forms were completed in an average of 15 minutes.

2.6 Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS 25.0. To analyze the data, percentages, averages, independent simple t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were performed. The significance level in all tests was set at 0.05. Shao's method was employed to assess the conformity of the data to normal distribution. As a result, the Skewness value was 0.409, the Kurtosis value was -0.370, and it was determined that the data showed a normal distribution between -3 and +3.

3. RESULTS

The distribution of the descriptive characteristics of the students is presented in Table 1. It was found that 26.8% of the students were 15 years old, 62.2% were male, 27% were in the 9th grade, 82.5% had a nuclear family, 53.5% had an income equal to their expenditures, 42.8% perceived their school achievement as moderate, 93.4% had a telephone and 46.2% spent 1-3 hours a day on the phone. Several descriptive characteristics, including gender, phone ownership, and daily phone use, were found to have a significant impact on the ASMC score, whereas family type, income status, school achievement, and daily telephone use were found to have an impact on the RSES score.

The mean ASMC and RSES total scores of the students are presented in Table 2. It was found that the mean ASMC Total Score was 41.11±17.74 and the mean RSES Total Score was 1.47±1.06 and 74.6% of the students had a high level of self-esteem. The mean ASMC and RSES total scores of the students are presented in Table 2. It was found that the mean ASMC Total Score was 41.11±17.74 and the mean RSES Total Score was 1.47±1.06 and 74.6% of the students had a high level of self-esteem.

The results of Pearson Correlation analysis for the relationship between ASMC and RSES mean scores of the students were presented in Table 3. It was determined that there was a positive and very weak relationship (r=0.151; p<0.05) between ASMC and RSES.

The model established to examine the effect of social media appearance consciousness on self-esteem was found statistically significant (F=25.649: p=0.000). In the model, 2.2% of the change in self-esteem level was explained by social media appearance consciousness. A one-unit change in the level of social media appearance consciousness caused a 0.009-unit change in the level of aggression (Beta=0.009) (Table 4).

4. DISCUSSION

There was a higher level of social media appearance consciousness among female students in the study. According to previous studies, females' body

Table 1. Distribution of ASMC and RSES Scores According to Students' Descriptive Characteristics (n=1103)

		n	%	ASMC		RSES	
				X ± SD	p	X ± SD	p
Age (Year)	15	296	26.8	39.06±17.47	F:1.883 p:0.131	1.49±1.08	F:0.401 p:0.752
	16	248	22.5	41.42±17.42		1.42±1.05	
	17	275	24.9	41.98±17.31		1.51±1.09	
	18	284	25.7	42.12±18.59		1.44±1.02	
Gender	Girl	417	37.8	45.60±17.25	**t:0.514 p:0.000**	1.55±1.12	t:1.954 p:0.051
	Boy	686	62.2	38.38 ±17.48		1.42±1.02	
Grade	9th Grade	298	27.0	39.03±17.42	F:1.960 p:0.118	1.48±1.08	F:0.284 p:0.837
	10th Grade	245	22.2	41.46±17.51		1.43±1.05	
	11th Grade	274	24.8	41.84±17.25		1.50±1.09	
	12th Grade	286	25.9	42.27±18.61		1.44±1.02	
Family Type	Nuclear Family[a]	910	82.5	41.51±17.72	F:2.077 p:0.126	1.46±1.06	**F:4.875 p:0.008 c>a. c>b**
	Extended Family[b]	158	14.3	39.93±17.84		1.39±1.04	
	Broken Family[c]	35	3.2	35.94±17.18		2.00±1.09	
Perception of Income Status	Income less than expenditure [a]	137	12.4	44.35±19.64	F:2.637 p:0.072	1.60±1.14	**F:3.323 p:0.036 a>c**
	Income equal to expenditure [b]	590	53.5	40.55±17.12		1.50±1.03	
	Income more than expenditure [c]	376	34.1	40.80±17.89		1.36±1.07	
Perception of School Achievement	Very bad[a]	33	3.0	37.15±0.32	F:0.951 p:0.434	2.80±1.65	**F:27.703 p:0.000 a>d, a>b>d, a>c>d**
	Bad[b]	70	6.3	42.61±18.13		1.88±1.12	
	Moderate[c]	472	42.8	41.86±18.20		1.56±1.07	
	Good[d]	419	38.0	40.64±16.75		1.24±0.90	
Phone Ownership Status	Yes	1030	93.4	41.48±17.92	**t:3.243 p:0.002**	1.47±1.05	t:0.366 p:0.715
	No	73	6.6	35.87±13.98		1.42±1.19	
Time Spent on The Phone Per Day	1-3 hours[a]	510	46.2	38.31±16.76	**F:11.588 p:0.000 Bonferroni a<b<c, a<d**	1.41±0.99	**F:4.704 P:0.003**
	4-5 hours[b]	430	39.0	42.13±17.48		1.43±1.08	
	6-8 hours[c]	113	10.2	47.86±17.04		1.64±1.03	
	9 and more hours[d]	50	4.5	45.66±24.58		1.92±1.48	

Table 2. Mean ASMC and RSES scores of the students (n=1103)

Scale	Min-Max	X ± SD
ASMC	13-91	41.11±17.74
RSES	0-5.34	1.47±1.06

Table 3. Correlation Analysis of ASMC and RSES Scores of the Students (n=1103)

		RSES
ASMC	Pearson Correlation	0.151*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.000**
	N	1103

Table 4. Regression Analysis on the Effect of Social Media Appearance Consciousness on Self-Esteem (n=1103)

Model 2

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β	S.H.	Standardized β	T	P
Constant	*RSES*	1.098	0.080		13.695	**0.000**
ASMC		0.009	0.002	0.151	5.065	**0.000**

F-statistics=25.649; p-value=0.000; R^2=0.023; Adjusted R^2=0.022; Durbin Watson: 1.970

perception was positively or negatively influenced by social media more than males, and they had a greater interest in body-related content (Boursier et al., 2020; Chua & Chang, 2016; Dakanalis et al., 2016; Hagger et al., 2010). Males prioritized body functionality over aesthetic appearance while females prioritized body aesthetics. As a result, females were more likely than males to engage in self-presentation behaviors, and they were more likely to be affected by the likes and comments on these posts (Kenny et al., 2018).

According to the study, students who owned cell phones and spent a large amount of time on them were highly conscious of their social media appearance. An analysis of body images was

conducted by Tiggemann and Slater in relation to media exposure on the internet, and the study revealed a significant relationship between time spent online and body image (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). A significant positive relationship was found between the amount of time adolescents spent on social media and their anxiety regarding social appearance (Caner et al., 2022) . Smartphones, due to their constant availability and portability, allowed users to check notifications on a regular basis. Therefore, those who used their cell phones for extended periods of time were more likely to use social media. This increased the consciousness of images shared on social media(Rozgonjuk et al., 2018).

Among the participants, it was found that the self-esteem of males was higher than that of females. A study by Özbey and Gültekin (Özbey & Gültekin, 2021) revealed that self-esteem did not differ significantly by gender among adolescents. A study conducted on Norwegian adolescents revealed that male adolescents had higher mean scores than female adolescents (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). According to different studies conducted on adolescents in Turkey, self-esteem was higher among males than among females(Çiftçi, 2018; Tektaş Soy & Kocataş, 2019). Adolescence is a time of emergence of self-esteem, a dynamic and variable structure that is affected by internal and external factors. The physical changes during adolescence begin earlier in females, and females are subjected to greater cultural pressure on physical appearance during adolescence. The result is a lower sense of self-esteem among females(Gao et al., 2022).

It was observed in the study that students with broken families had lower self-esteem. In different studies conducted in Turkey, students' self-esteem did not differ according to family type (Gökçe, 2017; Özbey & Gültekin, 2021; Tatoğlu & Kuzlu Ayyıldız 2022). The results of another study indicated that adolescents from broken families had lower self-esteem(Tektaş Soy & Kocataş, 2019).Two-parent and single-parent families could experience different effects of social support, family resilience, internal control, and parent-child interaction on self-esteem(Akdemir et al., 2016).

In the study, it was found that students who had higher incomes than expenditures had higher self-esteem. In Sarıkaya's study on adolescents, self-esteem scores differed according to economic status (Sarıkaya, 2015). Several studies have reported similar results (Özbey & Gültekin, 2021; Özcan et al., 2013). In another study conducted in China, it was found that adolescents with high socioeconomic status had high self-esteem(Chen et al., 2016).These findings supported the study.

During the study, it was determined that students who achieved high levels of academic achievement possessed high levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem among adolescents did not differ based on academic achievement, according to Tatoğlu et al.'s study (Tatoğlu & Kuzlu Ayyıldız 2022). A meta-analysis of 46 studies with a sample size of 27419 people found that self-esteem positively impacted adolescents' school performance (Körük, 2017). The results of another study conducted on adolescents indicated a significant correlation between school achievement and self-esteem (Şen Celasin & Sevinç Akın, 2022). The study found that individuals with high self-esteem were more motivated to succeed academically because they were able to tailor their goals and expectations for the future according to their strengths and interests(Körük, 2017).

According to the study, students' self-esteem levels increased as their awareness of social media appearance increased. Other studies support this study. (Steinsbekk et al., 2021 ;Ozimek et al., 2023). Social media appearance consciousness increased self-esteem in adolescents who used social media in two ways. First, it was rare for adolescents to receive negative feedback when they shared content about themselves, while the majority received positive feedback. Second, it was integrated with the way they viewed themselves, based on their ideals, that the content they presented online was the best version of themselves (Burrow & Rainone, 2017; Steinsbekk et al., 2021).

There are some limitations to the study. Firstly, the study sample consists of students living in a province in the eastern part of Turkey. Taking into account the living conditions and sociocultural structure of the region, the study's findings cannot be generalized to all students. Second, the scales used to collect the study data are based on self-report. As a result, it is necessary to consider the possibility that students may have concealed their true feelings. Thirdly, the results of the analyses are based on cross-sectional data; longitudinal studies may be necessary to obtain more conclusive results. The last limitation is that this is the first study to assess the relationship between social media appearance consciousness and self-esteem to the best of our knowledge. In light of this, previous studies utilizing different measurement tools are close to ours, but do not exactly overlap. Consequently, it is not possible to make a precise comparison of the study's results.

5. CONCLUSION

For adolescents, the level of self-esteem decreased as the level of social media appearance consciousness increased. Adolescents were found to have a moderate level of social media appearance consciousness and self-esteem. In addition, it was determined that some variables were effective on the level of social media appearance perception and self-esteem in adolescents.

In today's world, adolescents are exposed to a growing amount of internet-based media content. As the dynamic structure of today's society continues to change and develop,

adolescents are spending an increasing amount of time on such platforms and using them to their full potential. Each piece of content that adolescents encounter influences their lives positively or negatively. During adolescence, which involves significant changes and developments, it is imperative to raise adolescents' awareness of such content. Families, teachers, friends, and other immediate family members of the adolescent should be informed. The study of appearance consciousness on social media about different parameters will make a significant contribution to the literature.

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