

Social Anxiety: Predicting Body Dissatisfaction via Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The rise in body dissatisfaction in adolescents and young adults has been connected to the rise in visual social media consumption. A mediator between these two variables is social appearance comparison, though variables affecting the salience of this mediator have not been studied extensively. This study aimed to see whether social anxiety could have an effect on the salience of appearance comparison as a mediator. As motivations for social media use and type of SM content have previously been shown to have effects, the relationship between these variables and social anxiety has been investigated as well. Thirty-three participants were measured on levels of social anxiety and body dissatisfaction and were subsequently exposed to 9 YouTube Short videos of different types of typical social media content. Appearance comparison and regular consumption of specific content were measured after viewing a video. Results showed a negative correlation ($\rho=-0.4066$) between social anxiety and body dissatisfaction, as well as higher levels of appearance comparison in the high social anxiety group for videos featuring the appearance of the creator. Especially high levels of appearance comparison were found for videos relating to fitness and weight loss. This provides evidence that those with higher social anxiety make more unfavorable appearance comparisons via social media and therefore are at higher risk for body dissatisfaction.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, social media (SM) platforms have proliferated with a steady rise in users: In 2010, there were 970 million SM users; by October 2023, there were over 95 billion (Dean, 2024). In particular, visual-based SM platforms – that is, SM platforms centered around shared photos and videos by users – have grown rapidly in number and users. In 2004, 100 million images were posted a day on Flickr, the most popular image-sharing platform at the time. Now, 3.2 billion images and 720,000 hours of video are posted daily (Thomson et al., 2020). The skew towards visual content in traditionally non-visual based SM platforms also reveals this shift. For example, although Facebook allows users to post without photos/videos, 87.8% of all posts had visual content in 2021 (Ahmed, 2021).

Being such a huge facet of our daily lives, social media platforms influence our wellbeing in both positive and negative ways. Body dissatisfaction is one such possible negative consequence of SM use. A survey found that 20% of adults worry about their body image because of images they've seen on SM platforms (Mental Health Foundation). This is a cause for concern as body dissatisfaction leads to a decrease in self-esteem and a drive to change body appearance. In severe cases, this can lead to disordered eating and consequently, eating disorders.

The rise of body dissatisfaction correlated with the rise in visual-based SM use, and this effect is especially pronounced when looking at young adults and adolescents, who comprise the majority of the SM user base (Feger, 2023). In 2007, 65.2% of a studied adolescent sample was dissatisfied with their body; in 2018, that percentage grew to 71.1% (Gonzaga et al., 2023). Additionally, 95% of those with eating disorders are between the ages of 12 and 25 (DoSomething.org).

The relationship between body dissatisfaction and visual-based SM was made even clearer by the COVID-19 pandemic. The largest growth in monthly user base was seen in the visual-based SM platform TikTok, growing 38 percent from 2019 to 2021. The second largest was seen in Pinterest, also a visual-based SM platform (Dixon, 2023).

Around the same time, from 2018 to mid-2022, eating-disorder-related health visits by those seventeen years old and younger increased by a record high of 107.4% (Trilliant Health, 2023). As body dissatisfaction is a common symptom of eating disorders, it is highly likely that body dissatisfaction increases as well.

Among adolescents and young adults, body dissatisfaction has also been linked to social anxiety disorder. Studies have shown for young women with emotional difficulties such as social anxiety, body dissatisfaction is a risk factor for self-harm behavior, such as extreme attempts at weight control like diet pills (Mental Health Foundation). Considering the relationship between SM use and body dissatisfaction, there may be a correlation between SM use and social anxiety as well.

Hypothesis

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of social media consumption and types of social media use and their relation to social anxiety and body dissatisfaction. My hypothesis is that social anxiety will lead to higher levels of appearance compared to SM content showing the appearance of the creator and, therefore, lower levels of body satisfaction and higher consumption of specifically body image-related videos.

Literature Review

Tripartite Influence model and social media

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) states that individuals compare themselves to others to gain an understanding of their self-worth. This theory was incorporated into the Tripartite Influence model (Thompson et al., 1999), which states that sociocultural influences lead to the internalization of idealized body image (eg. the thin ideal) and thereby, body dissatisfaction, with upward appearance comparison as a possible mediator between these influences and internalization. Studies have shown that SM can serve as one such sociocultural influence. Mink and Symanski (2022) found that among female young adults, the use of the visual SM platform TikTok was not directly related to body dissatisfaction; however, it was indirectly related to body dissatisfaction through upward appearance comparison, which fits the tripartite model. However, another study by Van Oosten et al. (2023) found that for adolescents and young adults, higher body dissatisfaction predicted seeking social comparison gratifications via SM. This suggests that body dissatisfaction and social comparison could be bidirectional, which would require a modification of the tripartite model. If trait body dissatisfaction can lead to the search for social comparison, then factors exacerbating body dissatisfaction may affect levels of SM consumption.

Body Image-Related SM content

A limitation of the preceding studies is the indiscretion of SM content consumption by participants. Sanzari et al. (2023) suggested that the type of SM content affects the salience of appearance comparison on body dissatisfaction. Body image-related content, such as those that push the thin ideal, is more likely to lead to body dissatisfaction (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019). However, content such as body positivity, fitness inspiration, and body neutrality have contrasting results in the literature.

Body Positivity

Body positive (BoPo) content refers to SM content that meets the facets of body positivity: body appreciation, body acceptance/love, broadly conceptualizing beauty, adaptive appearance investment, inner positivity, and filtering information in a body-protective manner (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). A study by Rodgers et al. (2022) found that

body positivity can act as a counter to appearance idealization on visual SM. However, BoPo content is largely homogeneous, with 85% of creators having a female figure, of which 67% were White. Additionally, 79% of creators portrayed at least one element of mainstream sociocultural beauty ideals. For those who do not look like BoPo creators (an overwhelming majority), this may result in the internalization of “realistic” body ideals, which are not actually realistic at all. It can also highlight “flaws” unnoticed before, leading to insecurities that have not previously existed.

In a longitudinal study by Fioravanti et al. (2021), young Italian women who actively used Instagram completed surveys on state and trait mood and body satisfaction at regular intervals. Consumption of BoPo content led to a growth in trait body satisfaction, as did other types of content such as fitness inspiration and neutral content (content not featuring the creator). However, both body positivity and fitness inspiration led to state appearance comparison. This contradiction may have arisen because downward social comparison can lead to either low self-evaluation or motivation for self-improvement. The cause of individual tendencies towards each outcome needs to be further studied.

Fitness Inspiration

Fitness inspiration (“fitspiration”) refers to SM content that showcases physical ability and progress. Pryde and Prichard (2022) exposed young females aged 17 to 25 years old to either fitspiration or art (control) TikTok videos and found that participants in the fitspiration group had higher state body dissatisfaction. Appearance comparison was shown to be a mediator and fit ideal internalization was not a moderator. This seems contradictory to the tripartite model; however, given that internalization of body ideals is a mediator rather than a moderator, the pathway from fitspiration consumption to body dissatisfaction needs further research.

Body Neutrality

Body neutrality is the concept of focusing on functionality of the body rather than embracing its appearance. A study by Seekis and Lawrence (2023) found that among college undergraduate women, those who viewed body neutral TikTok content had higher levels of body satisfaction than those who viewed thin-ideal or art (control) content. For this reason, proponents of body neutrality claim that it would lead to less appearance comparison and therefore, higher body satisfaction. However, the literature on the effects of body neutrality is limited and requires further research.

Motivations for SM use: Effect on body satisfaction, factors affecting motivations

A factor affecting SM use salience on body satisfaction is an individual’s motivations for SM use. A study by Jarman et al. (2021) measured motivations for SM use (information sharing, passing time, social interaction, escapism, social capital, and appearance feedback) and body satisfaction. They found that increased motivations for escapism and appearance feedback via SM decreased body satisfaction. Another study by Brailovskaia et al. (2020) investigated correlations between characteristic variables (ie. age, gender, and depression/anxiety symptoms) and motivations for SM use. They identified five categories for motivations: Search for information and inspiration, search for social interaction, beat of boredom and pastimes, escape from negative emotions (escapism), and search for positive emotions. They found that the motivation of escapism correlated with depression/anxiety symptoms, though the other motivations either had no significant correlation or a negative correlation with these variables.

Aligning these findings with the tripartite model, these studies imply that individuals with a depressed or anxious disposition have a tendency to use SM as an effort to escape negative emotions or to receive appearance feedback. Since these motivations also correlate with a decrease in body satisfaction, it can be deduced that those with a depressed or anxious disposition also tend to partake in appearance comparison. However, other motivations do not indicate this negative impact of SM consumption on wellbeing. Thus, it is important to distinguish between different motivations for SM use when looking at the tripartite model.

Affective Dispositional Factors Affecting Appearance Comparison

As aforementioned, the study by Fioravanti et al. (2021) found that consumption of BoPo correlates with appearance comparison, but not body dissatisfaction. However, according to the tripartite model, appearance comparison via SM is a mediator between SM consumption and body dissatisfaction. Thus, there may be another variable influencing the salience of appearance comparison. As indicated by the study by Brailovskaia et al. (2020), affective dispositional factors – specifically, depression and anxiety symptoms – influence motivational use of SM, which influences body satisfaction. Therefore, these factors may also moderate the salience of appearance comparison.

In the study by Van Oosten et al. (2023) on body dissatisfaction and seeking social comparison gratifications, it was found that depression symptoms do not predict seeking social comparison. This may be because depression symptoms may predict the search for other gratifications such as quality of life or social connectedness.

Social Anxiety

One affective disposition that may lead to increased appearance comparison is social anxiety. Social anxiety is the intense fear of social situations in which one may be evaluated by others; therefore, social comparison may be inherent to social anxiety, as it is a method of gauging whether one is superior or inferior in an aspect and influences evaluation apprehension. This is supported by a study by Goodman et al. (2021), who found that among undergraduate students, those with higher trait social anxiety reported less favorable, more unstable social comparisons. Specifically, appearance comparisons have been shown to be less favorable among those with social anxiety. Levinson and Rodebaugh (2014) found that among undergraduate women, social appearance anxiety is highly related to social anxiety. Experimentally inducing social appearance anxiety in participants with a preexisting tendency toward it increased body dissatisfaction. This implies that social anxiety may be a predictor of body dissatisfaction due to its relationship with social appearance anxiety. Considering that many posts on visual SM platforms are centered around appearance, those who have social anxiety may be at a higher risk of body dissatisfaction after SM use.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

Responses were collected from 33 college undergraduate freshman students. 11 (33%) of the participants identified as male and 22 (67%) identified as female. 15 (45%) identified as White, 17 (52%) as Asian, 1 (3%) as Black or African American, and 3 (9%) as Mixed. All participants were aged 18-19 ($M = 18.45$). A cross-sectional self-reported survey consisting of five sections was administered through Google Forms.

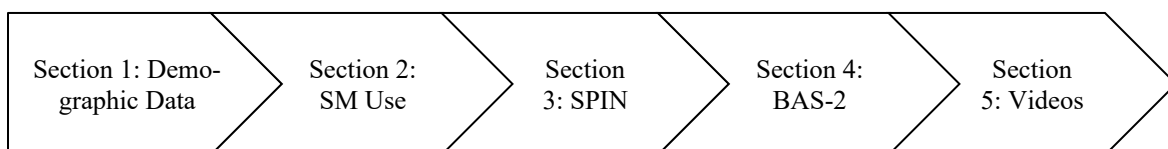


Figure 1. Flow Chart of Survey Progression.

Section 2: Social Media (SM) Use

Participants were asked questions pertaining to time spent on SM, most frequently used SM platforms and motivations for SM use. The question pertaining to the most frequently used SM platforms had an open-ended option. Participants

could select multiple motivations for SM use, as follows: interacting with others, receiving/sharing information, escaping negative emotions, passing time, posting content receiving feedback, and keeping up with trends. These were determined as many studies on SM use distinguished these as the primary motivations.

Participants were also asked two questions asking the extent to which they believed social media impacts their daily life and wellbeing, as well as the extent to which they believed they compared themselves to those on social media. They answered on a scale from 0-4, with 0 indicating Never and 4 indicating Extremely.

Section 3: Social anxiety (SPIN)

The 17-item Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) (Connor et al., 2000) was used to assess social anxiety, as it is widely used to screen for generalized social anxiety disorder (GSAD), or social phobia. Items were scored on a Likert scale of 0-4 points, resulting in a possible score range from 0-68. A higher score indicates higher social anxiety. A score of 19 or higher indicates a possibility of GSAD.

SPIN

1. I have a fear of people in authority.
2. I am bothered by my blushing.
3. I have a fear of parties and social events.
4. I avoid talking to strangers.
5. I have a fear of criticism.
6. I avoid embarrassing myself.
7. I am distressed by my sweating.
8. I avoid parties.
9. I avoid being the center of attention.
10. I have a fear of talking to strangers.
11. I avoid making speeches.
12. I avoid criticism.
13. I am distressed by heart palpitations.
14. I have a fear of others watching me.
15. I have a fear of embarrassment.
16. I avoid talking to authority figures.
17. I am distressed by my trembling or shaking.

Section 4: Body Satisfaction (BAS-2)

The 10-item Body Appreciation Scale (BAS-2) (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a) to assess body satisfaction. Items were scored on a Likert scale of 0-4 points, resulting in a possible score range from 0-40. A higher score indicates higher body satisfaction; a lower score indicates higher body dissatisfaction. In this study, this scale was chosen over scales measuring body dissatisfaction or scales regarding the appearance of the body parts as it might have primed participants to be more aware of their appearance. Additionally, this scale matches the principles of body positivity.

BAS-2

1. I respect my body.
2. I feel good about my body.
3. I feel that my body has at least some good qualities.

4. I take a positive attitude towards my body.
5. I am attentive to my body's needs.
6. I feel love for my body.
7. I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body.
8. My behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body; for example, I walk holding my head high and smiling.
9. I am comfortable in my body.
10. I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors).

Section 5: Videos and appearance comparison (SACS)

The survey included a series of nine short YouTube videos, each representative of a common type of SM content. Videos that did not show the creator's appearance were treated as control videos.

VIDEOS

1. Art (Control)
2. Beauty
3. Comedy (Control)
4. Entertainment (Control)
5. Fitness
6. Influencers/Models
7. News (Control)
8. Self-love
9. Weight loss

Each video was subsequently followed by the 3-item State Appearance Comparison Scale (SACS) (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004) to assess levels of appearance comparison in direct effect to one video at a time. Items were scored on a Likert scale of 0-4 points, resulting in a possible score range from 0-12. A higher score indicates higher levels of appearance comparison. To ensure that participants answered the items in accordance with the corresponding video, the original questions were modified.

SACS (modified)

1. To what extent do you think about your own appearance while consuming similar content?
2. To what extent do you compare your overall appearance to creators of similar content?
3. To what extent do you compare your specific body parts to creators of similar content?

An additional question was asked about the extent of consumption of content similar to the respective video. This assessed levels of seeking out certain types of content. Participants selected a score from 0 to 4, with 0 indicating no consumption of content and 4 indicating very frequent consumption.

CONSUMPTION OF CONTENT

1. How often do you consume social media content similar to this video?

Results

Descriptive Summary of Survey Results

Participants reported their most frequently used SM platforms. Table 1 lists all reported platforms and distinguishes between visual-based and non-visual-based platforms.

Table 1. Visual-based vs. non-visual-based Social Media platforms.

Visual-based SM platforms	Non-visual-based SM platforms
Instagram	Facebook
TikTok	Twitter/X
Snapchat	WhatsApp/WeChat
Pinterest	Tumblr
YouTube	Discord
	Reddit

Figure 2-4 shows the summary of overall usage of social media and motivation for using social media.

Figure 2 lists all social media platforms cited by participants as frequently used. Participants could select more than one platform. Instagram was the most frequently used platform, followed by YouTube and TikTok.

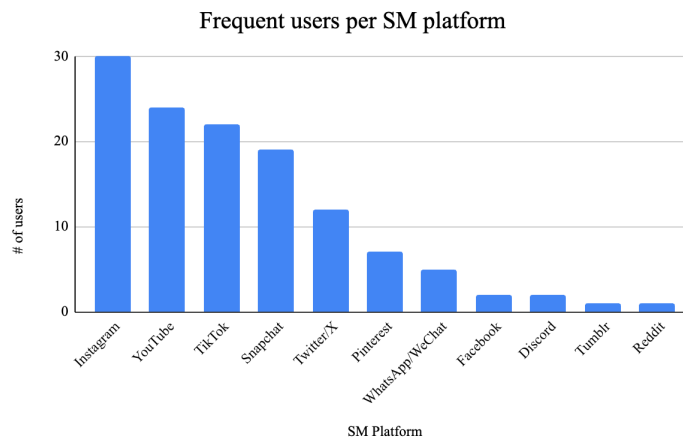


Figure 2. Frequent users per SM platform.

Figure 3 shows motivations for social media use and the number of participants who use social media for each motivation. Participants could select more than one option. Passing time and entertainment was the most common motivation for SM use, while posting and receiving feedback was the least common.

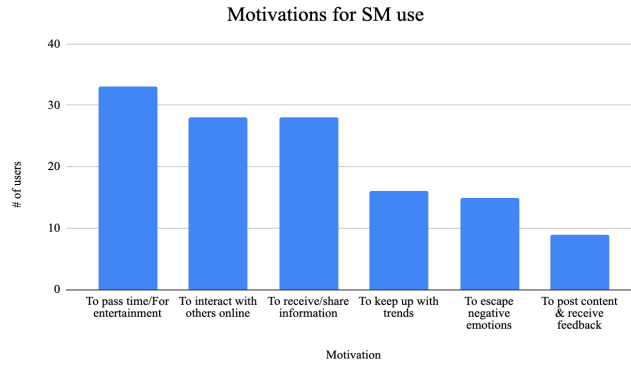


Figure 3. Motivations for Social Media use.

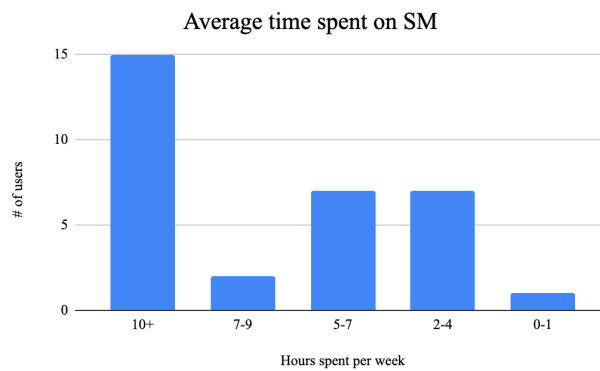


Figure 4. Average time spent on Social Media.

Social Anxiety and Body Satisfaction Analysis

Distributions of SPIN and BAS-2 scores are shown in Figure 5. SPIN scores had a mean of $M = 32.1$ and a standard deviation of $S = 12.7$. Participants were separated into low and high social anxiety groups by creating a median split of SPIN scores. The low social anxiety group has SPIN scores lower than 35 and high social anxiety group has SPIN scores equal to or higher than 35. BAS-2 scores had a mean of $M = 24.9$ and a standard deviation of $S = 8.26$.

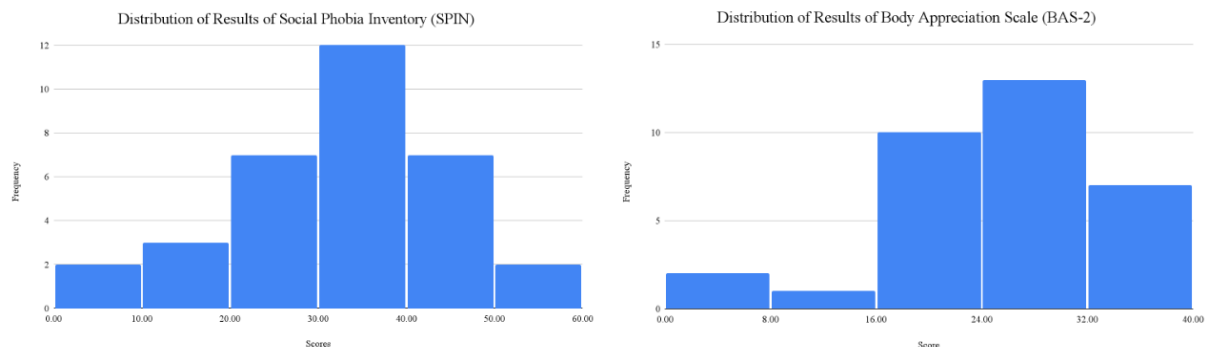


Figure 5. Distribution of results of SPIN (left) and BAS-2 (right).

After calculating the SPIN scores and BAS-2 scores, a correlation test was run to understand the relationship between social phobia and body appreciation. The Pearson correlation test between SPIN and BAS-2 yielded $\rho = -0.4066$, with

a p-value of 0.0001 indicating a negative correlation between SPIN and BAS-2 scores. In addition to the correlation test, a regression analysis was performed using SPIN score as a dependent variable and another analysis with BAS-2 score as a dependent variable. The dependent variables are listed in Table 2 and 3 as long as the outputs. A particularly large positive coefficient is seen in SPIN vs frequent YouTube and Pinterest use. It is also seen in the SPIN vs motivations of receiving/sharing information and posting content/receiving feedback. A large negative coefficient is seen in SPIN vs impact on positive wellbeing. A particularly large positive coefficient is seen in BAS-2 vs the extent to which participants felt addicted to social media. A large negative coefficient is seen in BAS-2 vs frequent use of Pinterest.

Table 2. Regression Output for SPIN Score vs Social Media Usage and Reasons

	Coefficients	Standard Error	R-squared	F-Statistic	Regression Sum of Squares	St.Error for Y-Estimate	Degrees of Freedom	Residual Sum of Squares
Instagram	6.3572	1.8274	0.8316	4.3567	4258.2967	7.5826	15.0000	862.4305
TikTok	-3.8009	1.7526						
FB	-6.3102	2.9576						
Snapchat	-6.0291	4.4399						
Twitter/X	-6.6455	4.6329						
Youtube	27.8719	12.0136						
Pinterest	15.9897	5.0291						
WhatsApp/WeChat	-8.7482	5.9793						
To interact with others online	3.5912	6.7359						
To receive/share information	18.7804	6.3484						
To escape negative emotions	-0.7241	4.3026						
To pass time	-9.7084	5.0663						
To post content & receive feedback	11.1393	5.3263						
To keep up with trends	9.4605	3.7382						
How do you believe social media impacts your daily life and wellbeing?	-22.7265	11.7162						
To what extent do you feel addicted to social media?	-4.0203	4.2999						
To what extent do you compare yourself to those on social media?	6.1603	6.6113						
Y-Intercept	11.5746	13.6086						

Table 3. Regression Output for BAS-2 Score vs Social Media Usage, Reasons and SPIN Score

	Coefficients	Standard Error	R-squared	F-Statistic	Regression Sum of Squares	St.Error for Y-Estimate	Degrees of Freedom	Residual Sum of Squares
Instagram	0.0715	0.3131	0.4578	0.6567	999.5933	9.1960	14.0000	1183.9218
TikTok	-1.7059	2.9790						
FB	2.4056	2.4361						
Snapchat	5.8202	4.0951						
Twitter/X	-1.3444	5.7060						
Youtube	-2.7946	5.9917						
Pinterest	-12.5093	16.9839						
WhatsApp/WeChat	-3.6557	7.8911						
To interact with others online	9.4840	7.7517						
To receive/share information	-8.2558	8.2462						
To escape negative emotions	-8.5971	9.6882						
To pass time	7.5859	5.2230						
To post content & receive feedback	-0.1655	6.8552						
To keep up with trends	-5.6262	7.3412						
How do you believe social media impacts your daily life and wellbeing?	-3.3872	5.4157						
To what extent do you feel addicted to social media?	12.3883	15.8916						
To what extent do you compare yourself to those on social media?	1.7402	5.3646						
SPIN RESULT	-1.6811	8.2468						
Y-Intercept	20.5478	16.8975						

Figures 6-10 comprise of double bar graphs comparing results of the low social anxiety group and the high social anxiety group.

SM platforms were categorized as visual-based and nonvisual-based SM platforms as listed in Table 1. The number of frequent users of each category are shown in Figure 6. Most participants used visual-based SM platforms more frequently than nonvisual SM platforms. The high social anxiety group had a higher average of frequent users of visual-based SM platforms than the low social anxiety group.

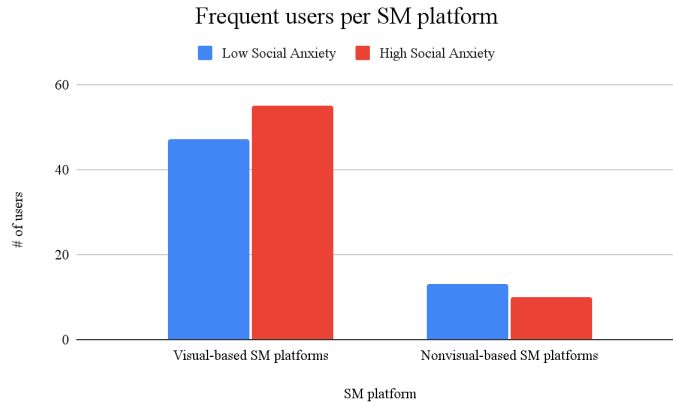


Figure 6. Number of frequent users of visual-based and non visual-based SM platforms.

Figure 7 shows the same data as Figure 3 (Motivations for social media use) but differentiated between low and high social anxiety groups. The high social anxiety group had higher levels of motivation to use SM for all categories except for receiving/sharing information.

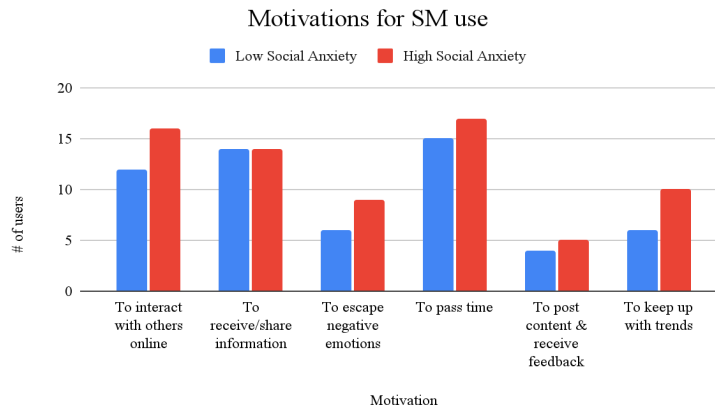


Figure 7. Motivations for Social Media use.

Figure 8 shows the same data as Figure 4 (Average time spent on social media) but differentiated between low and high social anxiety groups. Low and high social anxiety groups have similar numbers of users per time frame.

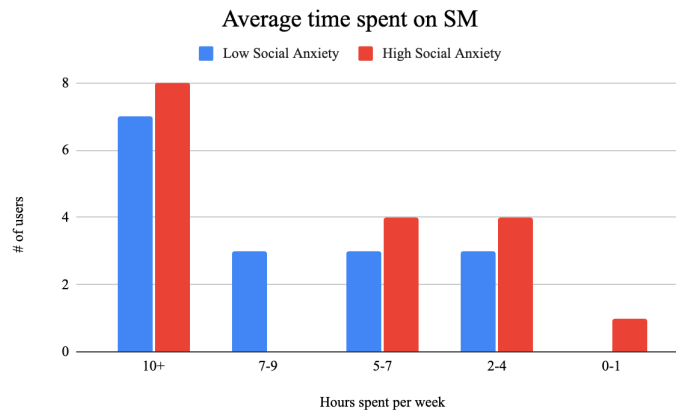


Figure 8. Average time spent on Social Media.

Trait body satisfaction & state appearance comparison

Results of SACS scores are listed in Table 4 with corresponding videos. Videos 1, 3, 4, and 7 serve as controls (representing common types of SM content: art, comedy, entertainment, and news, respectively). Video 2 features a creator’s makeup routine, representing beauty content. Video 5 features a creator’s fitness routine, representing fitness inspiration. Video 6 is a paparazzi video of a model/influencer, representing thin-ideal content. Video 8 features a creator giving advice on self-love, representing body positivity content. Video 9 features a creator’s weight loss journey, representing weight loss content.

Table 4. SACS scores. (*Control)

Video	Low Social Anxiety	High Social Anxiety
1*	4.73	7.75
2	5.47	7.56
3*	3.63	4.29
4*	3.31	4.59
5	8	8.35
6	4.2	6.35
7*	3.5	4.12
8	5.27	7.71
9	6.93	8.76

Data from SACS scores and consumption of content scores are visualized in Figures 9-10.

The SACS scores from Table 4 are visualized in Figure 9. Scores were higher for the high social anxiety group for every video. The highest scores for both groups were generally found in all non-control videos, with the exception of a high score in the high social anxiety group for Video 1.

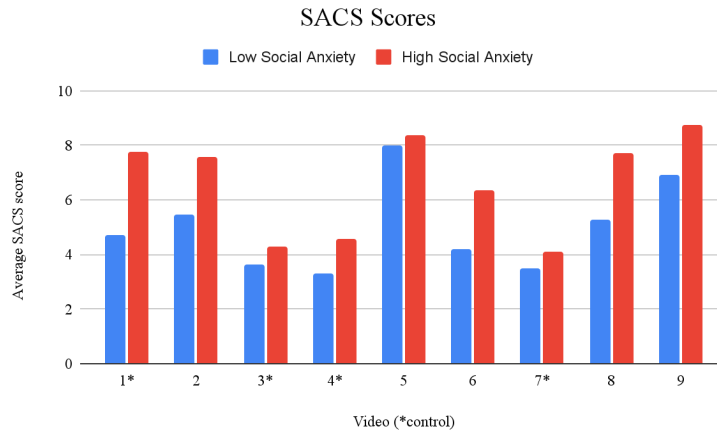


Figure 9. SACS scores.

The consumption of content scores for each video are shown in Figure 10. Similar levels of content were consumed by both groups.

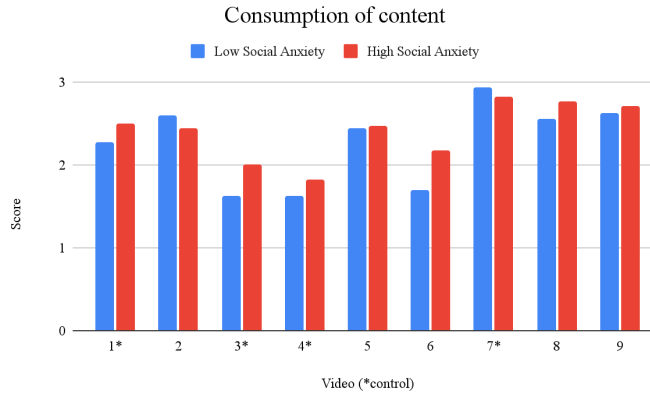


Figure 10. Consumption of content.

For both groups, most people answered TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as their favorite SM platforms. For the low social anxiety group, most people answered Snapchat as their least favorite SM platform. For the high social anxiety group, most people answered Twitter. Reasons in both groups include toxicity, fear of missing out, and insecurity from social comparison.

For the low social anxiety group, most people viewed social media as a positive influence on their wellbeing, citing that it is entertaining, informative, inspirational, relaxing, and helps facilitate socialization. Both groups mentioned addictive tendencies as a negative influence, though the low social anxiety group tended to think the advantages of social media negates this effect. For the low social anxiety group, most people viewed social media as a negative influence, citing that it causes stress, increases pressure for self-presentation, easily causes negative mood when exposed to negative content, fear of missing out, social comparison and low self-esteem. Most participants in both groups generally like visual-based SM content, although the low social anxiety group was more aware of the possible detrimental effects of social media on social comparison whereas the high social anxiety group reported being more socially insecure themselves due to comparison. The self-reported extent of influence social media has on daily life/well-being and on social comparison is shown in Figure 11. The high anxiety group has a more negative score of social media on daily life/wellbeing and a higher score of social comparison than the low anxiety group.

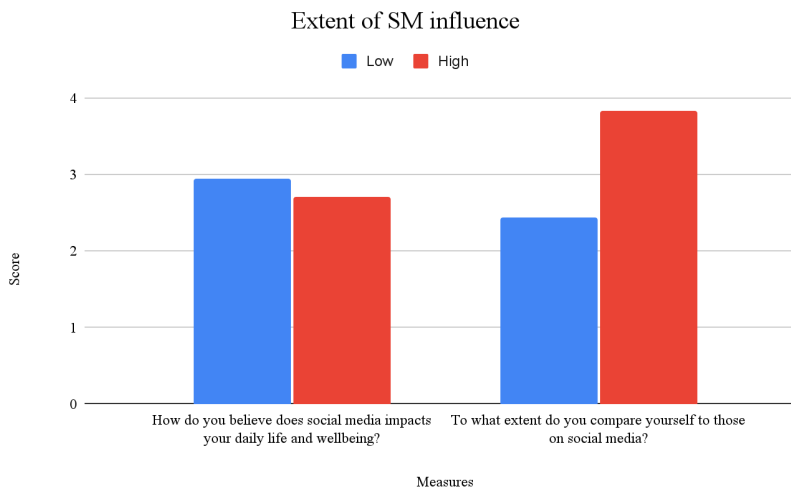


Figure 11. Extent of SM influence.

Conclusion

For every video, the high social anxiety group had higher levels of appearance comparison; given that the control videos did not feature the appearance of the creator, it's uncertain why the high social anxiety group showed higher levels of appearance comparison. However, many of the differences for the control videos were marginal compared to the other videos. The exception is Video 1, but given that it was the first video shown, participants may have been confused as to how to answer the questions pertaining to the video. The levels of appearance comparison for the variable videos (2 (Beauty), 6 (Influencers/Models), 8 (Self-love), and 9 (Weight loss)) were as hypothesized. Even with Video 8, which aligns with the principles of body positivity, there were still high levels of appearance comparison in the high social anxiety group relative to the low anxiety group. This implies that levels of social anxiety affect the way SM users interpret appearance-based content. Furthermore, given that social anxiety negatively correlates with body satisfaction, these results support the hypothesis that social anxiety increases the salience of appearance comparison as a mediator between SM use and body dissatisfaction. Those with higher social anxiety may be more susceptible to unfavorable appearance comparisons via SM, which would also make them prone to body dissatisfaction.

An interesting finding was that although the high social anxiety group showed higher levels of appearance comparison for Videos 5 (Fitness) and 9, both groups showed high levels of appearance comparison relative to other videos, including Video 6. Although the literature implies that content pushing the thin ideal (ie. Video 6) leads to more appearance comparison, these results indicate that content related to fitness and weight control led to more appearance comparison. This can be explained by the same reasons for the pitfalls of body positivity: Appearance-featuring SM content meant to inspire improvements in health and body functionality may actually cause more appearance comparison than thin ideal SM content because it is seen as more "realistic." This would also support the findings by Pryde and Prichard (2022). Additionally, unlike body positivity, fitness and weight loss content do not specifically aim to counteract body dissatisfaction, which may act as a buffer to the salience of appearance comparison as a mediator between SM consumption and body dissatisfaction.

Those in the high social anxiety group used visual-based SM platforms more frequently and non visual-based SM less frequently than those in the low social anxiety group. Additionally, they had higher levels of all motivation for SM use except for receiving/sharing information. Posting content/receiving feedback was the strongest predictor of high SPIN scores, which makes sense since this motivation relies on the output of others. This may be because receiving/sharing information is purposeful and does not involve comparison to others. However, interacting with others, posting content/receiving feedback, and social capital (keeping up with trends) make appearance comparison more likely as it involves social exposure. Meanwhile, escaping negative emotions and passing time may drive further exposure to content that further causes appearance comparison.

Those in the high social anxiety group consumed more content like Videos 1, 3, 4, and 8 and less content like Videos 2 and 7; given that Videos 1, 3, 4, and 7 are control videos and that the differences in consumption between groups were marginal for Videos 2 and 8, there is no significance. The largest difference in consumption is seen in Video 6 (Influencers/models); as Video 6 led to higher levels of appearance comparison for the high social anxiety group, this result supports the hypothesis that those with high social anxiety also consume higher levels of appearance-based content, which leads to more unfavorable appearance comparisons, causing a vicious cycle. However, this needs to be studied further as there is still a lack of evidence for a relationship between appearance comparison and consumption in content, either due to a necessity to create a larger scale measuring consumption or the lack of a relationship between the variables at all.

Social media has more of a detrimental effect on well-being for those with high social anxiety; although there were mentions of other factors such as negative content, the social interactions occurring on SM platforms had a negative impact on many high social anxiety participants' well-being, including social comparison. This is also seen by the more extreme extent to which those in the high social anxiety group self-reported partaking in social comparison. This supports the hypothesis that those with social anxiety are more prone to appearance comparison. Furthermore, the qualitative results suggest that appearance comparison may be moderated by the knowledge of how social

media causes unfavorable social comparison. Those in the low social anxiety group were aware of the effects experienced by those in the high social anxiety group. It is possible that implementing intervention methods such as knowledge of these effects may mitigate appearance comparison via social media and therefore, body dissatisfaction.

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