SOCIAL MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE DISSATISFACTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF URBAN MALE UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE DISSATISFACTION

AMONG URBAN MALE UNDERGRADUATES

RUBIN KHOO BU BOEN

Research on body image has largely focused on the female experience although it has been established that men are afflicted by body image dissatisfaction too. This has resulted in a limited understanding of the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and men, particularly when looking at it from a Malaysian context. In recent years, social media has also emerged as an influential medium, particularly among adolescents. The objective of this study is to examine the role of social media in the development of body image dissatisfaction among male adolescents. The study was conducted using male undergraduates from three institutions of higher learning in the Klang Valley using semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The results exhibit that the male experience of body image is a complex one, further accentuated by the way men interact with social media. Participants acknowledged that they engaged in social comparison which often left them feeling insecure. However, they also responded by saying that they see this as a form of motivation for self-improvement. The study has implications in the way body image and men is studied.

APPROVAL SHEET

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It is hereby certified that _____*Rubin Khoo Bu-Boen*___ (ID No: __*MJMA 1401148*___) has completed this final year project/ dissertation/ thesis* entitled "Social media and body image from perspective of urban male undergraduates" under the supervision of _A/P Dr. Sathidran__Sinnappan__ (Supervisor) from the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Creative Industries, and Mr. Thinavan Periyayya (Co-Supervisor)* from the Department of Media, Faculty of Creative Industries.

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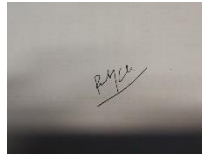
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(*Rubin Khoo*)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UTAR or other institutions.

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1.1 Background of the study

Much of the research on body image dissatisfaction in the past has focused on what is now referred to as 'traditional' media' – TV, magazines, print advertisements and billboards. However, the advent of technology which has led to the digitisation of media content has resulted in a new form of media, termed social media, which of late has emerged as an influential medium.

Not constrained by time and space, new media has achieved explosive growth, allowing consumers to access media content anywhere and anytime, resulting in an increased exposure to media. In the context of body image, this growth in media exposure has resulted in a corresponding increase in the frequency with which people view 'ideal' bodies. This requires a reorientation in the focus of the research that looks at the relationship between media and body image dissatisfaction (Lesutan, 2016).

Social media is referred to as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content," (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, pg. 61). This encompasses platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube, which are dominating the way young adults communicate, especially since most of these social media platforms are free to use.

The influence of these media platforms is significant given that today's youth use these various forms of media on a daily basis. In the U.S, statistics show that youth spend more than seven hours a day accessing some form of media (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010). The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in its 2011 report, state that in Australia, 87% of internet users aged between 15-24 engage in social networking (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Similar statistics were found in other parts of the world. In the United Kingdom, it is 90% for those aged 16-24 (Office for National Statistics, 2011) and in the United States it is also 90% for those aged between 18-29. (Pew Research, 2013a).

In Malaysia, the statistics too are as significant. As of 2017, the number of Facebook users stood at 11.9 million (Statista, n.d.)

In 2016, there were 4.9 million Instagram users in Malaysia with 3.96 million of them active (Milo, 2016).

Research points to this new form of media as being more far-reaching than traditional media as the way social media is consumed differs from traditional media. The process is more interactive with audiences using the platform to seek out information and engage in a variety of activities. (Kim and Chock, 2015).

The study further states that with social media there is a kind of social grooming where young adults use social media as a platform to seek out information about their role in society (Tufekci, 2008). In the process, adolescents receive a significant proportion of information that present an ideal - both for males and females. The impact of social grooming, however, goes beyond just setting the benchmark for appearance but it also serves as a means to reaffirm one's status by attracting likes and comments (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

Technology has also perpetuated this with the advent of the smartphone, which allows for easy access to social media applications. The 2014 article, '*Does Social Media Impact on Body Image*?' published on www.bbc.com, states that social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat as well as messaging

apps, such as WhatsApp, have become the main means through which teenagers communicate with one another.

Increasingly, research points to a relationship between social media and the development of body image concerns and that the more time one spends on networking sites like Facebook, the greater the likelihood that self-objectifying will arise (Diedrichs, 2014).

This is because social media, thanks to the smartphone, is easily accessible compared to TV and magazines which can be 'ignored.' One can choose to not look at 'traditional' media but social media is the main form of communication among young people, requiring participation in order to 'fit in.'

The problem is that what is presented on social media is often not based on reality as smart phones come equipped with built-in filters and effects that can enhance one's appearance, leading to many young people seeing the world through a 'filter.'

Recent research supports this argument. Numerous studies have linked the amount of time spent on Facebook with the emergence of appearance-related anxieties. For example, Fardouly et al (2015) found that time spent of Facebook was likely to result in a

greater likelihood to compare appearances, have body dissatisfaction and a desire to be thin.

According to Tiggemann and Slater (2013) the amount of time spent on Facebook is positively correlated with the development of body image concerns, involving the internalisation of the thin ideal and greater body surveillance.

According to Chae (2017) it is the visual nature of social media that creates greater self-awareness in terms of appearance. For example, taking a selfie is likely to result in one zooming in into a photo to inspect one's appearance.

The literature on body image is vast but much of it has focused on the occurrence of body image among women despite the fact that studies have shown that it is a growing phenomenon among men as well. As stated by MacNeill et al (2017), body image does not discriminate. The consequences are relevant to both men and women. Yet, the focus of body image research has largely focused on women. As a result, less attention has been paid to gender differences with regards to body image dissatisfaction.

Previous studies have established that women are more likely to engage in weight control as a means of coping with body image

dissatisfaction. These include dieting and purging behaviours. Men, however, were more likely to engage in exercise as a means to control their weight (Anderson and Bulik, 2004). However, as the media shifts its attention to men, there has been a corresponding shift in the way male bodies are perceived. What has emerged is a 'muscular ideal' that has placed greater pressure on men to meet societal expectations. Perhaps, this has led to a narrowing of the gap when it comes to gender differences with regards to body image dissatisfaction. This is among the questions that this study hopes to explore.

The other area in which body image research is lacking is in terms of ethnicity. Much of the research is confined to Western societies, with the bulk of the studies of the relationship between media influence and body image dissatisfaction confined to the UK, US and Australia (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). This despite there being a growing concern in developing countries.

In Malaysia, studies on body image remain limited, more so when it comes to looking at its emergence among young men and the impact of the growing influence of social media (Khor et al., 2009). The call for more research in body image and men was also made in a study by Rathakrishan and Loh (2011), which added that more research is especially important in a Malaysian context, given the

nation's multi-ethnic make-up. There is also a lack of body image studies among rural Malaysians. When studying body image perspectives among rural adolescents, Danis et al (2014) state there are few qualitative studies on the subject, signifying the need for more studies to be done in this area in Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysia like other countries in Asia, has experienced rapid modernisation. This requires more data to assess the impact of rapid social change.

The topic of body image is a complicated one, evident by the way in which the phenomenon is defined. It is also a reflection of the way in which the research in this area has evolved. It is symbolic of the fact that the subject is growing in importance and that the scope of the definition has become more subjective and dynamic (Neagu, 2015).

In one of the most comprehensive studies on body image, Garner (1997) established the importance of body image, describing it as a "*mental representation of ourselves; it's what allows us to contemplate ourselves. It actively influences much of our behaviour, self-esteem and psychopathology. Our body perceptions, feelings and beliefs govern our life plan – who we meet, who we marry, the nature of our interactions, our day-to-day comfort level. Indeed, our body*

image is our personal billboard, providing others with first – and sometimes – only impressions (pg.30)."

The definition broadened the scope of body image to go beyond just looking at the physical to include more subjective characteristics such as appearance, attractiveness and beauty, which are a result of self-evaluation.

The concept of body image is now viewed as being multidimensional encompassing evaluative, cognitive and behavioural components towards one's physical self (Ahadzadeh et al., 2017). It refers to how an individual perceives, thinks and feels about his or her body (Grogan, 2008). It involves the way we see our bodies; how we feel about our bodies; the thoughts and beliefs we have about our bodies and what we do as a result of that dissatisfaction (Ricciardelli & Yager, 2016).

An interesting element of body image is that it is not always based on an objective reality (Weinshnker, 2002). Furthermore, each person has an image of an ideal physique which is then used as a basis for comparison.

A positive body image is associated with a positive self-esteem and an ability to withstand the pressures from media and peers

to conform (Tylka, 2011). A negative view, however, can result in a range of consequences, from mild discomfort to the extreme. (Grogan, 2008). Such concerns often result in behaviours like weight control measures, the development of eating disorders as well as other behaviours associated with body image dissatisfaction.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem:

It is important to investigate the factors that pressure adolescents into losing or gaining weight and muscle while also considering how it affects adolescent behaviour. As our society becomes increasingly affluent and technology advances to the point that access to media becomes literally within the palm of our hands, we become more vulnerable to the influence of mass media. The question has to be asked as to what impact this has on our society, particularly on young people whose primary means of communication is via social media platforms.

As at September 2015, statistics indicate that Malaysia ranks among the highest in the region in terms of active smartphone users. The number stands at 19 million, with a social media penetration of 64 percent (www.techinasia.com).

A Nielsen report looking at the Malaysian media landscape in 2017, found that smartphone penetration in the country was at a whopping 98 percent. This, a sharp increase from a 2016 report on Malaysia's digital landscape prepared by the Malaysian Digital Association. It reported that in 2016, Malaysia had an internet penetration of 68.9 percent, a social network penetration of 67.7 percent and a mobile penetration of 144.8 percent, meaning that it is quite common in Malaysia for a person to have two phones. It also found that, on average, Malaysians spent 5.1 hours a day surfing the internet and 2.8 hours using social networks.

A 2017 report by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) pointed to the internet as having changed the way we obtain information, becoming an integral medium in social engagement. These developments could have a significant impact on today's youth.

Adolescence is often viewed as a difficult period in one's life, referred to as a transitional period, one that involves physiological, psychological and social changes (Pon, L.W et al., 2004). It is during this period that individuals struggle to find out who they are and strive to achieve a balance between their need for independence with the continued dependence of family and other adults. It is during this

stage too that success with peers becomes of critical importance in shaping one's self-concept (Jones. D, 2004).

While an adolescent is often thought of as being in their teens, sociological definitions refer to adolescence as being the period between childhood and adulthood. Thus with regards to this study, while the focus is on undergraduates, it is assumed that they fall within this sociological definition as those within this group are still going through a transitionary phase on their journey to adulthood.

University can be stressful time for students as they have to cope with academic tasks while meeting social demands in a competitive environment (Duete et al., 2015). According to Abbasi and Zubair (2015) body image becomes more prevalent for college students as there is a greater focus on body weight, eating behaviours and other related behaviours. The reason the study focuses on undergraduates, is because as students leave their school environment and venture into a more adult environment, they search for cues on what is considered to be appropriate or inappropriate. They are also in the process of establishing their identity. As an agent of socialisation, mass media is one of the sources through which young people learn about the world.

This is true when it comes to establishing what is considered to be attractive or not. It has been shown that the media continuously presents images of ideal bodies that set the basis for comparison (Rodgers, 2016). As a result, there has been a steady stream of research that has linked media exposure with body image dissatisfaction (Kim and Chok, 2015). Past research has shown that the media sets a benchmark when it comes to presenting idealised images. For example, analyses of magazines reveal a constant stream of images that highlight the importance of appearance (Pierce, 1990), and in the process also establish that being thin is the norm for women while for men it is being muscular (Thompson, 1999).

Media has also been seen as being instrumental in creating body image concerns at a younger age. Children as young as nine have been reported to exhibit weight concerns after being exposed to media (Tiggemann, 2003).

It was also found that those who tried to look like media personalities – regardless of gender – were more likely to develop concerns over their weight, compared to their peers. For girls, trying to look like someone they see on media, could result in the onset of weight-loss activities while for boys it could be the start of wanting bigger muscles (Field et al., 2001).

However, with the growing dominance of the digital world among youth, these explanations are now seen as lacking as they don't take into account the interactive nature of the Internet and how this influences the way an adolescent views his or herself (Rodgers, 2016)

With the advent of digital media, media has become even more accessible (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016) making it a significant factor in the way we make decisions. Thanks to technology, media is now a democratic medium, meaning everyone has access to media. It is no longer just the domain of the elite, which means our peers also have the power to influence us. Furthermore, social media is anonymous, which allows users to keep track of developments not just of celebrities but also of their peers. In the context of body image, this means that comparison takes place not just with celebrities but with our peers as well.

The growing influence of social media thus adds another dimension to the problem of body image. In 2014, The *International Journal of Eating Disorders* published a study by the Florida State University that not only found associations between time spent of Facebook with higher levels of disordered eating but also emphasised the importance of things like 'comments' and 'likes.'

The study found those who wanted these sorts of affirmations were also more likely to untag photos of themselves and compare their own photos to those posted by their friends. They also reported higher levels of disordered eating.

It also found that spending just 20 minutes on Facebook increases anxiety and reinforces concerns about weight. Prior to the emergence of social media, the impact of peer/social influences and media were studied separately but now both influences merge and an individual is exposed not just to idealised images presented by the media but also to 'perfect' pictures posted by friends too. The coming together of these two increases the risks of body image dissatisfaction.

As social media is a new phenomenon, the impact it has on body image dissatisfaction isn't clear, requiring more research particularly among men, which is what this study is about.

To summarise:

Various studies have pointed to a number of issues pertaining to body image dissatisfaction among men:

i)   That it is a growing phenomenon.

ii)   That social media has added another dimension to the study of body image dissatisfaction with men and women reacting differently to social media.

iii)   That while body image dissatisfaction has been studied extensively, much of the research has focused on women and not men.

iv)   That men and women cope with body image dissatisfaction in different ways. Research shows that women focus on thinness whereas men become preoccupied with becoming more muscular.

v)   Finally, that research about body image dissatisfaction and Malaysian men are minimal.

Hence this study aims to explore the relationship between social media and body image dissatisfaction by examining the experience of body image dissatisfaction and social media among urban Malaysian male undergraduates.

1.3 Objective of the Study:

In a study that looked at body image dissatisfaction among secondary school girls, Teoh (2000) called for more research to be done in this area in Malaysia. At the time, the study estimated girls were nine times more likely to develop an eating disorder compared

to males. But the study also stated that a similar estimate couldn't be projected for boys because of the lack of research in this area when it came to boys. This could be due to the perception that Malaysian men aren't afflicted by body image dissatisfaction, which is typically seen as something that affects mainly women.

Interestingly, as women have been the focus of body image dissatisfaction studies, it has resulted in the development of intervention strategies that have proven to be effective in tackling body image dissatisfaction among young women. Due to the lack of research on men, no similar progress has been seen when it comes to men although body image dissatisfaction appears to becoming more prevalent among young men. (Whitaker, et al, 2019)

Also, as traditional views of masculinity evolve and qualities like being tough, strong, competitive and engaging in risky behaviour, - often seen to be the benchmark of 'manliness' - (Levant & Pollack, 2003) start to lose their significance as the standards of masculine behaviour change, society's understanding of gender roles start to evolve as well and as a result, men too could start becoming anxious about their appearance.

As a result of such socio-cultural changes, young people start establishing their own points of view about gender that differ from

older traditional perspectives (Khalaf et al., 2013). In Malaysia, these changes have influenced the younger generation to start establishing their own norms when it comes to gender (Low, 2009). This has resulted in the emergence of a 'new man', one who wants to be seen as slim and groomed, who takes care of himself and is conscious of his appearance (Ismail, 2010).

However, the literature on how the perception of masculinity is changing in Malaysia, particularly from the point of view of young Malaysian men, remains limited (Khalaf et al.,2013). This is also true when it comes to looking at body image dissatisfaction among Malaysian men. A study focusing on self-esteem and body satisfaction among undergraduate students in northern Malaysia (Lee and Yee, 2013) suggested that more studies on body image have to be conducted in order to have a greater understanding of body image perception in Malaysia, particularly in terms of gender. Rathakrishnan and Loh (2011) stated while there was evidence of increased body dissatisfaction among men, research on Malaysian men is limited, particularly among those in the college age group.

The lack of research exists despite the fact that researchers have pointed continuously pointed to an increasing pressure among adolescent males to achieve the 'ideal,' which for men has been

shown to be a lean and muscular shape (Khor et al., 2009), a perception cultivated by the mass media and popular culture icons. Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural make-up, are also factors influencing the way men perceive their body shape (Lee and Yee, 2013). In this study, body image is defined as "feelings, perceptions, beliefs and associated behaviours pertaining to one's own body," (Gillen & Markey, 2016, pg. 1).

This study hopes to add to the understanding of body image among urban Malaysian male undergraduates as well as the influence of social media among this segment. The objective of this study is to assess the role of social media in influencing body image dissatisfaction among urban male undergraduates in Malaysia. In doing so, the study aims to ask the following questions:

1) To what extent are urban Malaysian male undergraduates dissatisfied with their bodies?
2) The role of social media in the development of body image dissatisfaction among urban Malaysian male adolescents?
3) To what extent urban Malaysian male undergraduates use social media as a source of information
4) How does body image dissatisfaction affect urban Malaysian male undergraduates?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Gender differences and body image dissatisfaction

One of the earliest studies to highlight body image dissatisfaction among males was Garner (1997). The study revealed that young boys were exhibiting the same insecurities as girls with regards to physical appearance. In the study, 41% of boys, aged 13-19, reported that they were dissatisfied with the way they look, a finding that was not seen in previous studies conducted by the publication in 1972 and 1985. This increase was attributed to a growing popularity by the mass media to feature male celebrities and muscular models.

The study also showed that while body image dissatisfaction was something that afflicted both genders, boys and girls appeared to have different methods of coping with this. Rather than changing their eating habits, boys tended to focus on increasing muscle mass or becoming more toned, a condition known as muscle dysmorphia. This differed from girls who engaged in weight control behaviours

such as dieting. Subsequent studies reinforced this new trend, also pointing to the "onslaught of images in the media glamourising the muscular fit body," (Weinshenker, 2002, pg.3) as being instrumental in influencing the rise of body image dissatisfaction.

Past research also indicated that like girls, the dissatisfaction also started at younger ages and that boys as young as 13, were trying to gain muscle in a bid to achieve the typical ideal body perpetuated by popular culture – muscular, complete with a six-pack (O' Dea, 2003). This was an image formulated and propagated by the media (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003).

The body of research surrounding body image dissatisfaction among men has grown over the years, establishing it as a pervasive problem for men (Galioto and Crowther, 2013). Yet, despite the findings and a growing number of studies looking at body image amongst men, the bulk of body image research has continued to focus on young women (MacNeill et al., 2017). This reinforces the perception that body image dissatisfaction is something that predominantly affects young women although it has been established young men are afflicted too.

The focus on women continues although some studies argue that the emotional strain could be more severe for young men, a result

of societal expectations. Men are not encouraged to talk about appearance nor express their insecurities with regards to the way they look. Furthermore, society does not approve of men dieting in their quest for the perfect body (Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2013). Instead, it is expected that men can achieve muscularity through fitness and nutrition.

An unintended consequence of this is that there appears to little in terms of intervention for tackling body image dissatisfaction among men (Whitaker at al., 2019), whereas efforts in terms of intervention and health strategies for women seems to have resulted in a reduction in body image dissatisfaction among women (Karazsia et al., 2017). This despite the fact that the incidence is growing among young men (Murray and Griffith, 2015). This suggests that it has yet to be recognised as a problem for men although research shows that the prevalence has reached a level that it is considered to normative (Jankoswski et al., 2018). In Whitaker et al., (2019) there is a suggestion that the issue of body image has been feminised, thereby hindering insight into the experience of men and boys.

2.2 Body Image Dissatisfaction and Societal Expectations

In Garner's (1997) study, it was found that subjects were most anxious about the 'visible' parts of their body. There appeared to be

little pressure to change parts that cannot be seen. This was attributed to social pressures arising from the belief that being overweight was a character flaw, a result of poor discipline and that there is a perception that the visible parts can be controlled with sufficient self-discipline.

Research has also pointed to a 'bias' existing against overweight individuals (e,g. Monteath & McCabe, 1997; Hoyt & Kogan, 2001). Western societies, in particular, have been shown to have negative stereotypes for those labelled as being overweight, some even pointing out that prejudice against body size is sometimes even seen as an 'acceptable' (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999 in Botta, 2000). This is because being overweight is perceived to be a result of poor discipline. One's appearance thus becomes a key component for self-evaluation and consequently, one's self-worth becomes linked with meeting society's standards. For men the impact could be severe as being overweight could be seen as a character flaw.

Adolescents too would be particularly vulnerable to this. There is evidence that indicates that discontent is particularly prominent during adolescence (Nelson at el., 2018). The period is acknowledged as being a difficult one and those going through adolescence are particularly prone to feelings of insecurity. It is a time when they subject themselves to scrutiny at a time when there

are physical changes brought about by puberty and the onset of sexual maturity. For boys, these changes are often accompanied by concerns over the chest, shoulders and arms. It is also during this period that they start to become concerned with how others see them (Khor et. al., 2009).

It is during this time that they evaluate themselves from the external and it is also now when they feel awkward and self-conscious about their bodies (Weinshenker, 2002). The implications are far-reaching for young people. For university students, body image becomes important as physical appearance is seen as a determinant of popularity (Kamaria et al., 2016). Developing a desirable and culturally acceptable body is thus seen as being a necessity for being accepted in society.

As it is a time of physical change, those in this age group are also more likely to be dissatisfied with their appearance (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989; Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990; Harter, 1990a in Kenny & Dacey, 1997). The interesting thing is that the judgement is based on their own beliefs about the way they look, rather than having any basis on reality. These studies also indicate that adolescents are particularly vulnerable as they focus on appearance as a predictor of self-worth, ignoring other abilities in the process.

If appearance concerns are starting at younger ages as suggested by Garner (1997), they are developing at a time when youth lack the psychological buffers to protect them. Adolescence is a period when teenagers are discovering themselves and hence, many have not developed coping mechanisms at that stage. As a result, influences often come from outside of themselves in this process of self-discovery. When they look to the external for validation, they often find themselves lacking in many aspects.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives:

A look at the research will show that body image is indeed a complex concept. Perhaps this is because it has been looked at from so many different perspectives. Early research concentrated on physiological explanations, suggesting a body schema that focused on a neural mechanism that controlled body posture and movement (Fisher, 1990). Later research went on to include psychological and sociocultural elements as well (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

While there are various perspectives from which body image can be looked at, this study focuses on the role of media in creating body image dissatisfaction, which is the view put forward by proponents of the sociocultural perspective (Tiggemann, 2011).

The sociocultural perspective has emerged as one of the key frameworks from which body image is studied. Researchers who look at body image from this perspective focus on how cultural values influence the beliefs and behaviour of individuals. According to sociocultural theorists, social agents including that of family, media and peers, exert a strong pressure on the individual to conform to unrealistic body ideals, while stressing the importance of appearance (Rodgers, 2016).

The combined influence of the three social agents – media, parents and peers – has been referred to as the tripartite influence model and as being among the sociocultural factors that play a part in development of body image dissatisfaction by establishing a thin ideal for comparison. The tripartite model suggests that these sociocultural influences convey messages about maintaining appearance-related concerns (Thornborrow et al., 2020). The model has also been used to predict the emergence of body image dissatisfaction as well as the drive for muscularity among men (Stratton et al., 2015; Girard et al., 2017). However, (Thornborrow et al., 2020) also states it is typically used in Western, industrialised countries where media is pervasive. The importance of media, in comparison to other social influences in an Asian context thus requires further investigation.

Sociocultural theories state that body image dissatisfaction can emerge when there is repeated comparison between oneself and the appearance of others (Vartanian & Dey, 2013). According to Neagu (2015), sociocultural theories are of the view that specific social ideals of appearance are established within each culture. These are then passed on through cultural agents and then internalised by individuals.

Whether or not body image dissatisfaction emerges will depend on how the individual responds to these internalised images. Strasburger and Wilson (2002) breaks the process down to three components:

1) That thinness has become associated with social, personal and professional success.

2) That being thin has become the norm especially for teen girls.

3) That many acquire the idea that thinness can be achieved through dieting and exercising.

At the core of the sociocultural perspective is the argument that people are prone to behave more favourably towards those deemed attractive rather than unattractive. This more favourable treatment would then cultivate more favourable self-concepts among attractive people. (Jackson, 2002).

According to the sociocultural perspective, cultural values influence our perceptions of others which in turn affects our behaviour towards others. This, in turn, will influence the way they see themselves. This means that the way others see and behave towards us influences the way we see ourselves. This argument is somewhat similar to the self-fulfilling prophecy in that an individual acquires a self-concept that is in line with the expectations of the perceiver.

According to this perspective, it is assumed that within a culture, there is an understanding as to what constitutes attractiveness and what does not. This is followed by common expectations about attractive and unattractive others, which will in turn, affect the way people are treated. These behavioural differences will then result in the acquisition of different self-concepts. But the question is who or what defines the notion of attractiveness in a society? The sociocultural theories state that it is defined by particular societies (Neagu, 2015), with mass media being one of the social institutions that contributes to this definition by setting the standard for what constitutes beauty.

According to the sociocultural argument, body image dissatisfaction is likely to develop when there is a constant

comparison between one's own appearance with that of others (Fardouly et al., 2015).

2.4 Social Comparison Theory

This argument is based on Festinger's social comparison theory (Lesutan, 2016). The theory states that individuals feel the need to evaluate themselves but when there is no objective standard for comparison, they tend to compare themselves with others as a means of knowing where they stand. The theory is often used to examine the role of social media in relation to body image (Hogue & Mills, 2019).

Social comparison theory is based on a few assumptions (Galioto & Crowther, 2013). First is that there is a tendency for people to compare themselves to others, sometimes peers, to assess their standing. Interestingly, studies have found that the understanding of 'peer' tends to vary in different circumstances. For example, Strahan et al., (2006) discovered that in cases where cultural norms about appearance were obvious, professional models were seen to be 'peers,' and used for social comparison.

When applied to body image among youth, it is argued that media defines what is beautiful in a society. Adolescents then use this

as a basis for comparison on how they should look and then motivate themselves to alter their appearance in order to match the images presented by the media. This then results in adolescents becoming dissatisfied with their bodies. The social comparison link between media exposure and body image dissatisfaction has been established by several studies (e.g. Botta, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Martin & Kennedy, 1993 as cited in Botta, 2003).

With an overemphasis on physical appearance (Romo et al., 2015) in Western societies, there is a significance placed on external appearances, which will in turn impact everyday behaviours and interactions (Swami & Tovee, 2009). The external body then becomes a symbol of a society, representing its norms and practices (Lee, 2005). For example, there seems to be considerable agreement across cultures with regards to facial attractiveness , (Jackson, 2002)..

If all cultures seem to have the same standards of attractiveness, it must stem from a single source that is able to penetrate across all cultures. Perhaps, there is only one institution that has the ability to do that - the mass media. It has been established that media is central in communicating and reinforcing the social desirability of idealised body images (Kim and Chock, 2015). Furthermore, 'attractiveness' is an attribute that is frequently linked with other desirable attributes, resulting in attractive individuals

being treated more favourably compared to their less attractive counterparts, regardless of age, gender, culture or level of acquaintance (Jackson, 2002)

For example, in modern societies, a negative stereotype continues to persist against those who are overweight as a result of the perception that being overweight is a result of a lack of self-discipline and self-control (Neagu, 2015). For men, this may add to the pressure to lose weight as men who are overweight are typically seen as being weak-willed (McCabe and McGreevy, 2011).

The sociocultural perspective is thus important as it attempts to explain how cultural messages about physical attractiveness affect one's evaluation of his or her level of attractiveness. The further this self-evaluation from the cultural ideal, the greater the likelihood that there will be dissatisfaction with appearance. This will then have a corresponding effect on self-esteem and men could be more vulnerable, where this is concerned.

In a study conducted by Heinberg and Thompson (1992), 297 male and female college students were surveyed about how often they compared themselves to others in terms of appearance and non-appearance. The study revealed that men had a greater tendency to compare themselves to celebrities with regards to appearance and

that they rated those comparisons as being more significant compared to women.

Levine & Smolak (2002) suggest that adolescents who see media as providing information about the perfect body are more likely to be dissatisfied with their body. This upward social comparison makes them feel worse about their own weight and shape, especially if they already have a negative body image. Unrealistic media images are also prevalent, making it seem that those who meet the standards are more the norm than the exception.

2.5 Uses and Gratifications Theory

In the 1970s, the uses-and-gratifications approach emerged, explaining the way that media is consumed. The theory explained why individuals choose to use one form of media rather than another. According to Whiting and Williams (2013), the origins of the theory within communication literature make it relevant when studying social media.

As a communication platform, social media is borderless, allowing users to communicate with others all over the world (Williams et al, 2012). Uses and gratification theory states that individuals use media that meet their needs and which provide them

gratification (Lariscy et al., 2011). The perspective differs from sociocultural theories in that it sees users as active individuals who choose their media according to their needs. As such, individuals are selective when it comes to cultural messages regarding appearance standards. As a result exposure to such standards may have different effects (Fitzsimmons-Craft, 2011).

Previous studies have shown that exposure to appearance-related content has resulted in different effects. Looking at this from the perspective of gratifications theory would suggest that individuals interact with media differently, resulting in them being impacted differently (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006).

Where social media is concerned, uses and gratifications theory has been said to be particularly relevant because it takes into consideration the user and how s/he uses social media and for what purpose. Thus it looks at an individual's characteristics such as body image, self-esteem, the need to belong as well as media literacy and how these combine with the social aspects and content available on social media.

It is this premise that makes uses and gratification relevant to studying the influence of social media (Whiting and Williams, 2013), particularly since gratification is seen as being a good predictor of

how much media is used as well as of future use (Kaye and Johnson, 2002).

According to Rubin (1981), individual media consumption can be classified according to these categories; passing time; companionship; escape; enjoyment; social interaction; relaxation; information and excitement.

The category of 'information' makes uses and gratification theory relevant in the context of this study as media is a source from which users obtain information about body image. For example, youth often take to social media to look for information about achieving the perfect body (Borzekowski et al., 2010) while young women actively look for information on weight loss (Perloff, 2014)

2.6 The media's role in the development of body image dissatisfaction

Many studies have pointed to the mass media as having an increasingly pervasive influence on the psyche of the individual, establishing a link between media and psychology in the area of body image research. This view has been supported by numerous studies (Ahadzadeh et al, 2017) that have established the influence mass media has on the development of a negative body image.

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Media, in particular, is said to be responsible for presenting unrealistic images (Perloff, 2014). Constant exposure to media thus should be of concern because it can lead to an internalisation of such images, which in turn can lead to one developing a negative view of one's own body.

This is further accentuated with the emergence of social media. Online surveys conducted in 2019, by the Mental Health Foundation and YouGov in Britain on 1118 teenagers found that 40% pointed to social media as being a factor in causing them to worry about their body image.

Media is also seen as promoting objectification, where one comes to view oneself as an object - to be admired and used - the impact is not just on body dissatisfaction but also low self-esteem and self-objectification. These feelings then serve as the catalyst for the behavioural responses to these developments, which are dieting and excessive exercise regimes (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013).

The mass media represents one of the most important agents of socialisation. Its influence is wide and it is said to permeate the everyday lives of people living in Western societies. For example, previous research has studied the impact of adolescents consumption

of television (Tiggeman, 2002), stating that the media's portrayal of being thin as the ideal is a major factor in the development of body image dissatisfaction. For men, it is the muscular ideal which emerged as the cultural norm during the 1990s.

This can affect individuals in a number of ways. If there is repeated exposure to such images or information, the individual is likely to internalise the 'ideal' figure, thereby creating a benchmark for comparison. Music videos, for example, were found to be related to appearance and weight concerns (Borzekowski et al., 2000).

But the impact of this goes beyond just presenting an ideal. Instead, these images are presented "as complex cultural scripts that link thinness and attractiveness to happiness, desirability and status (Tiggeman, 2002, pg.92)." One's self-worth thus becomes inevitably linked with one's perception of his or her level of attractiveness.

When looking at traditional media, magazines, in particular, were shown to have played a significant part in cultivating body image concerns (e.g. Levine, Smolak & Hayden, 1994; Paxton et al., 1991) by offering explicit instructions on how to attain the beauty ideal. In women's magazines, articles on dieting and exercise are frequently found while men's magazines often publish articles on how to improve body shapes.

In women's magazines, the focus is on targeting specific body parts such as the stomach, hips and thighs. In men's magazines, it is often about increasing the chest size and growing muscles. But regardless of the focus, the underlying message of this is that "one's bodily imperfections can be remedied through simple exercise." (Hoyt, W.D., 2001 pg. 205). This is significant because they promote the belief that people can and should control their body shape and weight.

Experimental studies have shown that even minor exposure to images of thin models in fashion magazines can have negative effects, creating concerns about weight and prompting the development of body image dissatisfaction. The exposure, though brief, can also bring about self-consciousness, negative mood and decreased perception of self-attractiveness (Tiggeman, 2002).

There is a large body of research that point to the unrealistic standard of physical beauty set by the media as being responsible for women becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their bodies. These studies support the view that media images play a part in determining how women feel about their bodies (Hoyt & Kogan, 2001).

Boys too are not exempt from the influence of these messages. The article entitled *'The Idealised Male Body: The Effect of Media Images on Men and Boys,"* prepared by the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (2013) highlights that young men are starting to feel all kinds of pressures when confronted with messages from the media about attaining the ideal male body and perfect appearance. This comes as the media, in recent decades, has shifted its focus to men, presenting a muscular ideal and in doing so, increasing the pressure on men to meet this standard (MacNeill et al., 2017). Initially this resulted in the emergence of an 'Adonis Complex' with men feeling the need to achieve a 'V' shape body.

This provided support for the argument that the same link between magazine reading and body image issues, already established for women, can also be applied to men as sports magazines, for example, use muscular models and advise on how to obtain the perfect body.

Past research has pointed to this as a significant difference between men and women in the way they cope with body image dissatisfaction. For example, when asked to select an ideal image, women veered towards smaller images whereas men opted for bigger (MacNeill et al., 2017). However, as media has in recent years

started to focus on being lean rather being overtly muscular, it is important to also understand whether the ideal body has changed for men and if so, what are the coping strategies adopted by men to achieve this. This is something that has not been fully explored as the activities adopted by men to maintain or control their weight has not been captured or discussed in men's assessments (Jones & Morgan, 2010; Ricciardelli, 2017).

In studying the relationship between exposure to media and the development of idealised body, the focus has largely been on traditional forms of media (Myers & Crowther, 2009). But as social media usage becomes increasingly popular among young adults, it is also becoming increasingly important to study the links between social media use and body image (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

Recent research instead suggests that these forms of media are fast being surpassed by more interactive media which are more popular among adolescents (Bell & Dittmar, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). For example, in Australia, a 2013 student census found that female high school students used the internet most for social networking, on sites such as Facebook (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Similar results were also seen in the UK and the US. In the UK, 90% of those aged between 16-24 used social networking

sites (Office for National Statistics, 2013) while in the US, the figure stood at 90% for those aged between 18-29 (Pew Research, 2013a).

2.7 The Impact of Social Media

Calling for the need for a greater understanding of the effects of social media on body image concerns, Perloff (2014) stated that it was essential to look at the ways in which social media can influence perceptions of body image and the emergence of body image dissatisfaction, arguing that despite there being substantial literature in this area, there is little theory that has considered the process and effects of social media.

The focus in the past has been on conventional or what is now termed traditional media - magazines, television ads, TV programmes and music videos. But given the decline in magazine readership and television viewing, it can be said that these are no longer as influential as they once were. Research has since established a link between negative body image and active social media engagement, particularly with engagement that is photo-based (Cohen, Newton-John & Slater, 2017; Holland & Tiggemann,2016).

Social media is interactive in nature and content-driven. That has resulted in a strong peer presence and a steady exchange of

visuals which make the medium particularly potent in influencing body image concerns through negative social comparisons and peer normative processes (Perloff, 2014). Thus, looking at social comparison with a social media context has to consider online peers and not just celebrities and models (Kim and Chock, 2015).

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Tumblr, which are image-centric are growing in influence, both in terms of users and importance (Tiidenberg & Cruz, 2015). In 2014, Facebook reported having 1.3 billion regular users. Facebook, through the introduction of its 'stories' function, is also enabling greater communication through images. The images posted on social media are said to be as influential as those found in traditional media (Boute et al., 2011).

With 10 million new photographs being uploaded to Facebook every hour, the influence of the medium cannot be underestimated as it enables frequent engaging of social comparisons, that could create more body image concerns (Mayer-Schonberger & Cukier, 2013). This influence is supported by other studies like Junco (2012) which state that college students use Facebook at an average of 100 min/day.

Tiindenberg & Cruz (2015), state that 'image' plays an important role in how the world is experienced and with the greater degree of online interaction, how we interact with the world and that the result is often negative. Unfortunately, this contemporary "visual economy remains profoundly ageist, (dis) ablist and heteronormative (Gill, 2009.pg. 139)."

According to Mabe, Forney and Keel (2014), Facebook has a pervasive influence as it uniquely merges two influences - media and peers - thereby strongly reinforcing the thin ideal. This often leads to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction (Tolman, 2012). There is a difference between the way that social media is consumed, compared to traditional formats.

As there is greater interactivity in social media, users are able to actively search for content and also engage in certain activities. Social media thus enables young people to form social ties and also seek information about others (Tufekci, 2008).

As engagement increases, so does the opportunity to view images posted by their friends, which are often enhanced (Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan, 2008), leading to a greater likelihood for social comparison (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

While Perloff's (2014) paper focused on how social media impacted young women, it is necessary also to look at the impact on young men, given the growing popularity of social media platforms as well as the growth of body image concerns among men.

2.8 How appearance concerns affect youth

In industrialised countries, body image is an integral part of an adolescent's self-esteem. Studies have shown that a negative body brings with it low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, a fear of negative evaluation and obsessive compulsive tendencies (Jones, 2004).

As was stated earlier, society is partial to the good-looking, a result of what is referred to as the physical attractiveness stereotype. What kind of effects do these perceptions have on youth and how does it affect them at educational institutions where much of their social interactions take place? While teenagers may not express their anxieties about appearance issues, it does seem to be taking its toll on adolescents' performance at school. A study conducted at the University of West England (Lovegrove, 2003 in www.bbc.co.uk) found that one in five teenagers skip school because of their appearance.

The study also revealed that 75 percent of the 1,000 students questioned were upset because they were teased about the way they look and that they suffer in silence. Of the students questioned, 31 percent said their lack of confidence about the way they looked prevented them from taking part in classroom discussions.

Approximately 40-70% of adolescent girls expressed dissatisfaction with two or more aspects of their body while between 50 and 80% of adolescents said they wanted to be thinner. And it appears that it is not just the girls who felt this way. Research also indicates that boys wish to avoid being fat, flabby and out of shape (Levine, M.P and Smolak, L, 2002). This is because overweight adolescent individuals tend to be teased more with obesity frequently being seen as the result of personal failure.

During adolescence, peer acceptance is of particular importance and this applies to appearance as well, with standards of appearance often being acquired through peer-interaction.

According to Jones (2004), just as their attitudes towards things like academic performance, smoking and drug use are determined by norms and expectations established by their friends, adolescents also engage in what is described as appearance-training,

through which an appearance culture with shared norms and expectations is created.

And as peer acceptance is particularly important in adolescence, there is a perceived social benefit to be derived from conforming to these appearance ideals (Oliver & Thelan, 1996; Paxton et al. 1991 as cited in Jones, 2004). At the same time, non-conformity often results in peer criticism and teasing about appearance and physical characteristics.

That can only have adverse effects on the individual. Lovegrove (2003 in www.bbc.co.uk) stated that teasing and bullying about appearance affects global self-esteem and as a result, academic performance will be affected as well.

It is within these frameworks that this study seeks to explore body image dissatisfaction among undergraduate males. Firstly, comparing sociocultural perspectives and media theories in the development of body image dissatisfaction. Secondly, looking at gender differences. Finally, to look at the male response which is currently not fully understood.

Theoretical Framework	
Social Theories	Media Theories

Theories	
Social Comparison	Uses and Gratification

Gender	
Female	Male
Media: Presents a thin-ideal	Media: Muscular ideal
Heaviliy Reseatched	Low Research

Media-ideal internalisation

Body Dissatisfaction

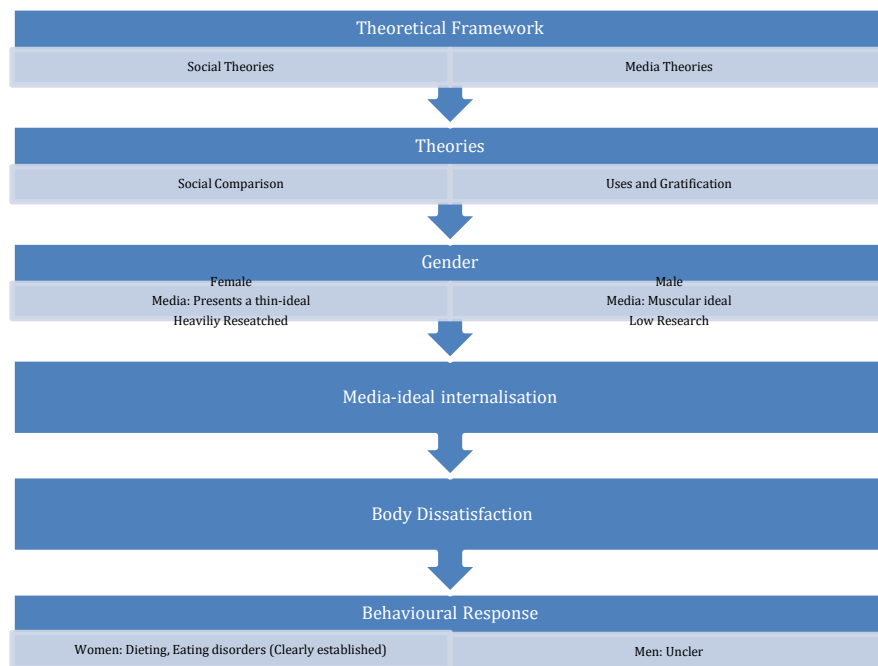| Behavioural Response	
Women: Dieting, Eating disorders (Clearly established)	Men: Uncler

Table 1: Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Research

This study utilises the interpretive perspective, which focuses on the search for meaning, by means of an analysis of subjective experiences through texts. The root of this perspective lies in the concept of phenomenology. Alfred Shutz (1970) argues that phenomenology is associated with how individuals have their own experiences and perceptions of the world. Phenomenology has also been described as the study of lived experience (Jardine, 1990; Van Mane, 1990). It leads us away from quantitative, scientific descriptions and gives an insight into life itself (Jardine, 1990).

In phenomenological studies, the focus lies on how individuals derive common meanings from their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Researchers of this approach look at the common experiences that emerge when interacting with a phenomenon. In this study, the experiences derived through social media, is reflected in the common meanings that emerge from interacting with the medium in regards to body image.

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Bryman (2008) states that a key difference between a positivist approach and an interpretive perspective is that researchers of the latter believe that the study of social phenomena requires a logic that reflects the "distinctiveness of humans against the natural order" (Bryman, 2008; pg. 15).

According to those who work within this perspective, studying these texts will reveal insights into a person's inner feeling and motives. Interpretive researchers are not driven by data, focusing instead on impressionistic methods that look at a subject's own interpretation of experiences. These could take the form of texts or transcripts of conversations (Gunner, 2000), rather than on responses that can be numerically scored.

Researchers of the interpretive tradition focus on the study of subjective meaning attached to social behaviour rather than just external or observable behaviour of people. Thus, studies that employ this tradition adopt the use of qualitative research methodologies that allow participants to respond using their own language and terms. (Bhattacherjee, 2012) states that qualitative research is about discovering meaning and understanding experiences. The objective is about interpreting the reasons for observable behaviour, thus establishing an understanding of actions.

This study looks at how the growing influence of social media affects the development of body image dissatisfaction among male undergraduates. Social media is interactive and in this study, the aim is to understand how this interaction influences perceptions of 'male beauty' and how this then affects behaviour.

As the goal is to understand the thought process and perceptions of participants, this study will employ the use of qualitative methods, focusing on the use of non-numerical data. In qualitative research, the emphasis is on the collection and analysis of extensive narrative data for the purpose of gaining insights into a situation, not achievable by using other types of research.

Qualitative analysis, says Wienclaw (2015), sees the production of meaning as a process. The use of qualitative methodology will also allow for an insight into the subjective experiences of the research participants.

Qualitative research emphasises the 'why' and in doing so looks at the interpretation behind observable behaviour (Khalaf et al., 2013). This allows for a greater understanding of actions that are dynamic and social. It also makes for a greater diversity in responses

allowing researchers to gather and document data in a more consistent manner.

Qualitative research is often used to study issues among young people, particularly with regards to gender and sexuality. By using a phenomenological approach this study aims to concentrate on the responses by participants focusing on their words, which will allow for a better understanding of the influence of social media, with regards to body image.

3.2 Conceptual Framework:

This study focuses on the role of social media in creating body image dissatisfaction. The aim of the study is to investigate the role that social media plays in creating pressures to achieve the body image ideal. It also looks at the impact of what happens when this ideal cannot be achieved.

The study looks at body image from two perspectives – the sociocultural perspective and uses and gratification theory.
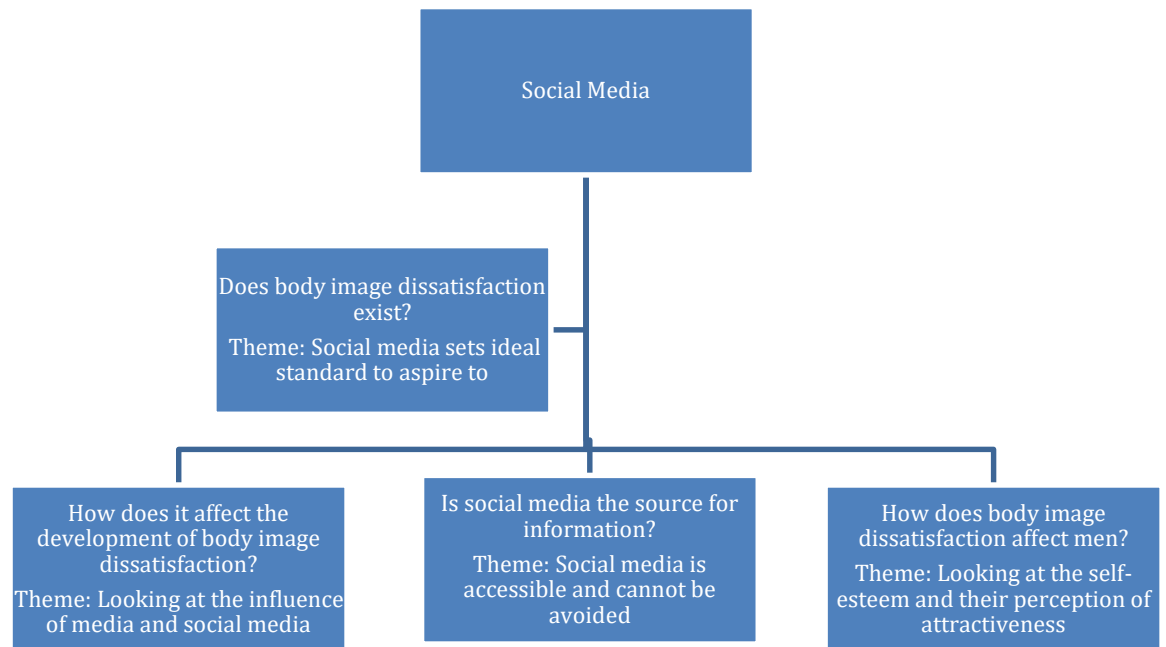
```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Social Media   │
                    └─────────────────┘

        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │ Does body image dissatisfaction │
        │            exist?              │
        │ Theme: Social media sets ideal │
        │       standard to aspire to    │
        └──────────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐
│ How does it affect the │ Is social media the source for │ How does body image │
│ development of body image │ information? │ dissatisfaction affect men? │
│ dissatisfaction? │ Theme: Social media is │ Theme: Looking at the self- │
│ Theme: Looking at the influence │ accessible and cannot be │ esteem and their perception of │
│ of media and social media │ avoided │ attractiveness │
└────────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘
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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.3 Methodology:

The study makes use of two methods. The first is semi-structured interviews that will cover the following themes: perception of body image ideal, body satisfaction, social media influence and self-esteem. The study will employ the participation of male undergraduate students from three local private universities.

Participants viewpoints will be explored through the following questions:

i)   Are you concerned about the way you look?

ii)   Are your friends concerned about the way they look?

iii)   Are you generally satisfied with the way that you look or do you feel that you could look better?

iv)   What about your friends, do they often talk about improving appearances?

vi)   What is your perception of the ideal male body?

vii)   Why do you feel that is the ideal?

viii)   Do you think guys often compare their looks with personalities/celebrities who are frequently featured in the media?

ix)   How do you feel when you come across images of male celebrities/personalities?

x)   What do you think about how the media portrays male celebrities?

xi)   Do you come across these images often?

xii)   How do you feel when you see these images?

xiii)   How many types of social media are you on?

xiv)   How much time do you spend on social media?

xv)   Do you follow many celebrities/personalities on social media?

xvi)   Do you find that these images inspire you to 'improve' your appearance?

xvii)   Do you often treat social media as a source of information?

xviii) What are the strategies to grow followers on social media – do you believe that people who are better-looking have a greater presence on social media?

xix)   How do you feel when your posts do not get likes or reactions?

xx)   What satisfaction do you get from social media?

xxi)   Do you believe that male body image is a problem and should be studied?

The themes and questions were developed and modified from three studies. The first was from Khor et al., (2009). The study looked at the source of concerns, role models as well as the sources of advice. This study also looked at the qualitative study conducted by Morgan and Arcelus (2009) which looked at these categories – body image ideal, external influences and perception of body image. The third was Burnette et al (2017) which looked at general social media use, peers/celebrities and emotions/perceptions.

In quantitative analysis, interviews are more structured, whereas in qualitative interviews, greater flexibility is allowed, which is believed to be of greater value for this study. The list of questions provided above were adhered to but were not presented in a linear fashion to participants of the study. Additional questions were also asked based on the responses and subjects which were at times prompted for further elaboration if they responded in monosyllabic terms.

This is in line with phenomenology where participants are encouraged to provide insight into the life experiences based on their interaction with the phenomena being studied.

The responses were analysed through a textual analysis where the interviews with the participants were studied according to themes and clusters, looking at significant phrases and sentences that emerge from the interviews.

Apart from semi-structured interviews, this study also conducted focus groups to further explore the influence of social media on male university students. Focus groups are particularly useful when it comes to exploratory research (Burnette et al., 2017). For this study, the use of focus groups can also add another level of understanding as it will also investigate whether guys are open to discussing appearance concerns openly with their peers. The rationale for using two methods was to establish validity through triangulation i.e., using more than one method. The third was through the literature review.

3.4 Research setting and data collection.

The study was conducted across two private universities in the Klang Valley and one college. In order to check on validity, the

study used mixed methods using different methods of data collection to study the research questions. The first was through semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 undergraduate students using convenience sampling. The number 15 was decided based on the study by Morgan & Arcelus (2009). Convenience sampling refers to one of the main types of non-probability sampling methods as it is made up of people who are easily reachable (Wienclaw, 2015) and whose participation in the study is based simply on their willingness to participate. It is often used in studies there is no inclusion criteria. In this case, the requirement was they be urban males, pursuing their undergraduate degrees. For this study, the intention is to ascertain a trend and provided an insight into how young men interact with social media and this affects the way they see themselves.

The subjects were from multi-ethnic backgrounds, all living in the Klang Valley. The Chinese students formed the largest number in the study, perhaps reflective of the private university demographic. This study, however, makes the assumption that ethnicity is not significant as the urban population communicates mainly in English and hence, their media influences are largely expected to be western.

In line with qualitative studies, the sample size was intentionally small in order to obtain a greater understanding of one's thoughts, feeling and experiences. At the outset of the interviews, the

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participants were assured of confidentiality and that their answers would be kept anonymous. All interviews were recorded after approval was obtained from participants.

In addition to the interviews, a focus group was also conducted, each comprising of three groups of five from three different institutions of higher learning located in the Klang Valley. The students were also aged between 19-22 and made up of undergraduates.

Participants (Focus Group) Ethnicity and age group	Academic Background
Group One: Three Chinese and Two Indians, 20-22	Students at a local private college. Majoring in Mass Communication
Three Chinese, one Malay and one Indian, 19-22	Part of the American programme in a local private university. Majors were in Business, Engineering, Music, Psychology
Three Chinese and Two Malays. 20-22	Students at a local private university. Majoring in Management

Table 2: Background of focus-group participants

Participants (Semi-structured interviews)	Academic Background/Interests (Students at a local private university)
1. Chinese, 21	Studying Broadcasting; avid film buff
2. Chinese, 22	Studying Marketing; interested in sports; plays football
3. Chinese, 21	Studying Event Management; aspiring entrepreneur
4. Chinese, 22	Studying Broadcasting
5, Indian, 22	Studying Broadcasting; has visible tattoos
6. Chinese, 21	Studying Broadcasting; has explored modeling
7. Chinese, 21	Studying Broadcasting; aspiring actor and model
8. Malay, 21	Studying Broadcasting
9. Indian, 22	Studying Broadcasting; aspiring fitness model
10. Indian, 20	Studying Event Management
11. Indian, 20	Studying Advertising
12. Malay, 20	Studying Marketing
13. Chinese, 19	Studying Advertising
14. Chinese, 20	Studying Marketing
15. Malay, 20	Studying Marketing

Table 3: Background of participants in the semi-structured interviews

In both cases, students were recruited voluntarily via postings on student groups on Facebook and conducted in an informal setting to allow students to freely express their opinions. During the sessions, participants were given an introduction into the topic and promised anonymity.

The interviews and focus group discussion were recorded using a mobile phone. The participants were then asked a series of pre-prepared questions but additional points of discussion were explored depending on the responses. The study adopted an inductive approach to allow for responses to guide the discussion. This was the procedure used by Burnette et al (2018).

Each answer was transcribed, allowing for easy identification of research ideas and concepts. There were then labelled and coded to identify any recurring themes from the interviews and the focus groups. The study adopts an open coding method which seeks to break down data into discrete parts. These parts are then examined according to similarities and differences to answer the research questions.

Through this comparison, researchers can then 'see' patterns. These patterns are then given a 'theme.' These themes were derived based on the responses of the respondents. The third method

employed was the literature review to evaluate whether the findings correspond to the findings of previous studies.

3.5 Research questions

Research Question 1:

To what extent are urban Malaysian male undergraduates dissatisfied with their bodies?
Themes:
- Aspiring for the ideal

Research Question 2:

The role of social media in the development of body image dissatisfaction among urban Malaysian male undergraduates?
Themes:
- Media influence
- Social media influence

Research Question 3:

To what extent do urban Malaysian male undergraduates use social media as a source of information?

Themes:

- Pervasive nature of social media

- International appeal

Research Question 4:

How does body image dissatisfaction affect urban Malaysian

male undergraduates?

Themes:

- Self esteem

- What is beautiful is good

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

4.1 Data Findings

The findings of the study reflect the participants engagement with social media and how this affects them. It also explores how these participants interpret these media messages which will in turn determine their response. The interviews revolved around the participants' use of social media, the influence of social media, participants' views regarding standards of attractiveness in society and the role that media and social media plays in establishing this standard. The interviews also delved into the subject of self-esteem of participants with regard to appearance, in comparison to the standard as defined by society. During the in-depth interview, the responses hit saturation point after the 12th participant and with the focus groups, after the second group. The answers were repetitive and did not differ from the themes expressed by earlier participants.

Of all the participants, only three from the focus groups said that while they had social media accounts, they were not active and had little to contribute, saying that they were not bothered about

developments on their social media. They also said they were not appearance driven and were not affected by what people said about them. An interesting aspect of the focus groups was that participants were not uncomfortable about talking about appearance concerns, which was at odds with the stereotype that guys see appearance as a 'feminine' topic.

4.2 Research Question 1: To what extent are Malaysian male undergraduates dissatisfied with their bodies?

Aspiring for the ideal

All participants felt that they were lacking in terms of their physical appearance, with room for improvement. Most of the participants used the term 'average' to describe themselves. Participant three said he was "not quite ugly" but that he was also not "really that good-looking," just "normal." Participant one, said he was just "alright."

Participant two described himself and his guy friends as being "not good enough," and "compared to what I think a good-looking guy is, I think I am pretty average." Participant five said that there was "no wow factor" about him. He said he doesn't see himself as having a "chiseled face, body that looks right, perfect posture."

Although participant seven works as a part-time model, he still says he is "average" because "there is always someone taller than me, someone more good-looking than me."

The participants acknowledged that they and their friends had concerns about their looks. These concerns lie in, "being compared to someone who physically looks better." Though saying that it is not an obsession, participant one added that when going through social media, he does compare himself with celebrities, thinking, "wah, it would be nice to look like that."

Participant eight said he did not have the "physique" of people he considered good-looking. Participant nine said, 'since young I have always wanted to be fair. I have always wanted to have a good body, to be aesthetically muscular."

Participant five attributed it to being part of the "millennial era," where "they are very conscious about themselves," "picking on things that are miniscule but to them it is a big deal."

He admitted that there is "talk" about improving appearances and that these usually focus on three areas -"diet, gym-ing and lifestyle."

Participant seven who models made a distinction between his friends at university with his friends from the industry. Surprisingly, he said "at uni they are more concerned than the industry because they follow a lot of fashionista on social media, look at them as a trend and follow their style." He said they often talk about it in conversation, "comparing styles" and "trying to lose weight."

Participant nine said his "gym friends are always a little more concerned about their bodies rather than their face." But talking about "college mates" it is about being, "clean shaven, what does my hair look like?"

During the focus group discussions, participants felt it was important to define the concept of appearance.

"To me, appearance is more physical but for him (pointing to another participant), it is more about appearance." - (participant one; focus group one)

Agreeing with this statement, "You cannot change yourself physically but you can always improve, so I dress a lot better. You see me in a different outfit every day to satisfy my expectations. I generally want to be better than I was yesterday." - (participant two: focus group one)

Height emerged as a common source of dissatisfaction. "For guys, height comes up a lot, especially for me because I am considered short compared to my friends," says participant two, describing "185-187cm" or 6ft" as the ideal height. .

"In these days, being tall - because I am not tall enough - is an advantage. People tend to take you more seriously and listen to you," says participant three, an aspiring entrepreneur.

"Height matters. If you are small, people (girls) won't approach you and that's sad" - (participant one: focus group one)

"Tall, good posture, good shoulders," says another participant.

"Broad shoulders, tall, about 175-185cm, lean, athletic." - (participant three: focus group one)

Chest, emerged as the second concern, "once your chest is built, you already look very fit," one participant says.

The majority of participants expressed the ideal look to be one that is fit but not too big. "Tall, muscular but not too huge," was one of the responses.

In focus group two, the words used to describe 'the ideal' were "lean," "athletic body" with "nine percent body fat." The rationale was that "these guys always get the girls."

All participants pointed to the importance of presentation. "Neat look, hair combed, dresses well," said participant five.

Participant eight said people often compare themselves to celebrities and personalities, "that's why someone cuts their hair a particular way, dresses a particular way. They all want to look like their idols."

Participant nine who takes part in bodybuilding competitions said, "I just wish I can have a more aesthetic pleasing body. If I feel I am getting smaller, I feel very insecure, so I try to pump up a bit more." He added, "I have always grown up liking that aesthetic body. I watch movies and TV shows, see guys with that body and I want that too."

Participant nine also said "when you have that aesthetic, you have a certain confidence. You put on a shirt, can just push your chest out and know that you look nice." "A lot of uni friends work out. The ones who keep fit are the ones who are very conscious about what people think of them."

Participant nine also believed that he can achieve his ideal, "If it is the body that I am aesthetically driven to, I believe I can, regardless of genetic type."

"It is not realistic but it inspires me. Before I gym, I look at images so it inspires me." - (participant two : focus group four)

The "ideal" came in the form "actors, musicians and sports personalities" because "guys follow these things." When it comes to fashion, there is a "weird mentality that it is a woman's thing."

4.3 Research Question 2: The role of social media in the development of body image dissatisfaction among urban Malaysian male undergraduates?

Social media influence

All participants acknowledged that social media was used as a primary source of information. One subject said "the era that we are in, most of the information comes from social media." The participants describe social media as being the medium through which they socialise and that it is a means to "keep up with trends of society."

Participants looked at social media in two ways, some saying that seeing pictures of good-looking celebrities and their fitness routines prove to be quite motivational.

"When there is a new movie, there will be a lot videos showing the actors working out." - (participant two: focus group one) "It definitely inspires me to take care of myself better," said participant six. He added, "It is motivation if you want to look like them, have their shape," though admitting that it was quite superficial

saying "it is very surface because we don't know what their like, as their attitude and personality is hard to see."

"Online" is the source of information when it comes to working out tips. But it also serves as a motivating platform for those who are keen to transform. Participant three from focus group one who documented his weight-loss journey on Instagram saw a jump in interaction during the process. That pushed him to continue his "transformation."

"It motivates me to work out." - (participant three: focus group one) "It allows me to set goals" - (participant two: focus group one). But seeing his journey also appeared to have motivated his peers. "The fact that someone has done it means that someone else can do it too. If he can do it, you can too." – (participant one: focus group one)

Several participants also acknowledged that apart from just establishing a standard of 'beauty' for men, the media also suggests that the 'ideal' is achievable by highlighting weight loss success stories. Although they admit to feeling insecure when confronted with 'ideal' images, some perceive it as a form of inspiration.

"There are many people in the world who were at one time a certain size or a certain look and they actually work at their look. For example, there is an actor, Jonah Hill, he was a certain size and he worked to decrease his size, so if you have motivation and the patience to do it, it is very possible," was the response of participant 12 from focus group three, adding, "it is easy to access these success stories through the internet and use them as an inspiration to motivate yourself." He pointed to singers Sam Smith and Ed Sheeran who began in the industry "bigger" but lost a significant amount of weight after achieving success, showing that it is a "trend."

Students who had aspirations to enter the fashion/entertainment industry as models, actors or social media personalities were more strategic in the way they used social media to learn how to break into the industry. Participant six who models part-time says that he uses social media as a "platform" to gain information, seeing "how celebrities dress."

Another participant said that he and his friends, "go through online videos, go through YouTube videos from fitness gurus." The objective is to "take inspiration from actors, as a stepping-stone for what they do."

Participant five said he uses Instagram as an opportunity to "follow more celebrities." "I go through posts of these people and go 'Wow!' I want to be like them, in terms of looks."

But he also said that social media can create feelings of insecurity, particularly since they come across images of celebrities, without looking for it which happens on social media on a daily basis.

"Especially girls, they start posting pictures of these guys and they are like 'hashtag relationship goals' and these are exactly the way media portrays them, social media especially," says participant five.

Participant three in focus group two described himself as "satisfied" and that he thinks he looks good. The gauge – "I can take good pictures," presumably this would be for social media postings.

Participant seven said he was influenced to enter the industry by social media personalities. "I like how they work, what they do, what they wear and where they go."

Participant eight said that "with sites like Tumblr, Instagram and Facebook, things sometimes get out of hand in the way we idolise celebrities."

Participants did admit that to comparing themselves with personalities on social media and that often it makes them feel like they are lacking in some way despite the fact that they acknowledge that a lot of the photos have been edited.

"There is something that stands out among them." (Participant five).

An interesting point by participant eight is that while he engages in comparison on social media, he cites it as the reason he follows "beautiful people."

Participant six draws a distinction between social media personalities and celebrities. The former he described as "more of trendy looks, specialty and uniqueness." Whereas celebrities are "more on healthier images." This could be taken as a suggestion that celebrities represent the ideal whereas peers do not.

It appears that men too are subject to the 'brains or beauty' stereotype that has been applied to women. Both participant five and 12 on the onset described themselves as not conforming to the ideal image perpetuated by social media. They thus adopt a different strategy to create a persona on social media. For participant five, it is

to focus on his "personality" and for participant 12, it is his "humour." But they also acknowledge that have learnt from social media that "appearance is important."

Participant one from focus group two described Instagram as a "portfolio" to market himself, adding a strong social media presence gives you "the flex," slang for the fact it shows that people care. He interestingly admits that it is a "bit sad" but "the fact is that people like good-looking guys."

Media Influence

Participants agreed that the media sets high standards, promoting an idea of the ideal body image.

"Men are presented as sex symbols. These days, physical appearance seems to matter more than anything else. Looks are an important aspect of becoming famous. It matters more. People keep saying looks don't matter but the truth is, it does," said one participant.

Another used the terms - "sharp jawline, muscular, tall and handsome" - to describe the way that the media depicts male celebrities.

"When you look at the media, people like Eddie Peng, you think how nice if I look like that."

"I do think that how the media portrays males has a prolonged impact on our and (female's) perception on what a man should look like."

"I do think that the media is biased towards men who are tall in comparison to men who are short."

"This generation has so much exposure to the media, friends talk about stars and the trends coming in, talk about Lee Min Ho kind of guys."

"Media portrays good-looking male celebrities to be tall, fit, muscular. It could be good or bad, good as a motivation for people to get fit. On the other hand, it might cause people to lack confidence due to their look or body shape."

"It is always about the look," says participant five. "It has always been like that, in my opinion." Participant six described media as "changing the game," that it has "blurred the line between male and female."

Participant seven likens the way media portrays men as "how media portrays a beautiful lady. They have to be healthy, beautiful, have to have smooth skin, good body size, good height."

Participant nine said, "the media portray men to be very metrosexual. Now they talk about your face and how you dress." Participant eight said the media propagates, "manliness - the macho thing is the dominant ideology." He, however, distinguishes between media and celebrity, describing celebrities as being more about "class," pointing to David Beckham and Colin Firth as reflecting this.

But the participants of focus group one had a different perspective about the influence of the media. While they pointed to the media as perpetuating the idea, they also felt that it was not necessarily a negative.

"Yes, media does create this idea but it is not wrong. It is healthy to be in this body state. You can't change the way that you

look but you can change your health. Some people are chubbier or skinnier but the media shows you the ideal body, so it is not technically wrong" - (participant three; focus group one)

"I wouldn't say that it is wrong. I would say it is your choice if you want to follow the body type" - (participant two: focus group one)

Participant six says he feels motivated when he sees such images and after a long pause, says he can achieve those looks. He also points to media as "changing the game" when it comes to the way that male celebrities are portrayed. In particular, he points to a blurring of the "line between male and female."

4.4 Research Question 3: To what extent do urban Malaysian male undergraduates use social media as a source of information?

Pervasive nature of social media:

All participants acknowledged the dominance of social media. All the participants were on at least three forms of social media - Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Other platforms include

Tumblr and YouTube. The participants also admitted that they were more drawn to forms of social media that were more visual in nature. All those who participated in the semi-structured interviews admitted to spending a significant amount of time on social media.

The lowest reported was an average of an hour a day by one participant while the maximum was that of 12 hours a day. However, in focus group one there were two participants who said that they had social media accounts but did not spend a lot of time on them. In focus group two, there was one participant who said he wasn't bothered with social media.

The majority of subjects who were active on social media said they took at least a couple of pictures, one said about 10, before uploading the image onto a social media platform. Only one subject said he took only one picture but said that he "decides a long time on the filters." Again, only one subject said he did not care about "angles" whilst the others all said they were aware of what was most the flattering, referring to "lighting" and "high or low" angles.

Participant eight said, "I am aware of my flaws. I am aware of these things when I take pictures, playing with different angles and

lighting." "Everything has to look just right -look good - people are going to make fun of me if not and I don't like that." (participant five)

The participants also said that they frequently came across images of male celebrities being shared on Facebook and Instagram without necessarily looking for them. "It is just the way media works," said participant five. "You can't help it. It appears in front of you," referring to his constant exposure to images of celebrities.

On social media, participant five said "there are hundreds and thousands of images, there's always a theme you can follow to your liking."

Participant eight said that there are "more than I could wish for," referring to images of celebrities. "I find them on Facebook. 10-15 images are nice but after a while, you are like, why is that there."

International appeal:

Though the influence of the Korean celebrities is often discussed in the context of social media influence here in Asia, the participants in this study also acknowledged it but none admitted to

following them on social media, saying instead it was more common for those who are "Chinese speaking" or from "out of town."

These participants seemed to look more to "international" celebrities. The only Asian celebrities that was mentioned was Taiwanese actor Eddie Peng and Chinese actor Lee Min Ho. The name that came up most frequently was David Beckham as representing the ideal male physique, "not very buff, sporty, thin and healthy, not too skinny." (participant six) Other names that came up were Chris Hemsworth and Dwayne Johnson.

"He stands out. If you were to see him in a crowd of people, he would be the one to stand out. Even if he wasn't famous, you would go 'wow,' this guy is tall, strong, he looks good - he has the wow factor," participant five said of Chris Hemsworth.

Participant five said that to his knowledge, "there are not many Malaysian/Singaporean fitness gurus on YouTube and that it was mainly people from "America, UK, that we take inspiration from."

Participant eight said "locals are beautiful in their own way, but they are like the average joe of Malaysians." International celebrities give a "different vibe, different culture."

Participant six said that he "follows" local Instagrammers, attributing it to his interest in entering the local fashion/entertainment industry.

Although participant seven, who is also attempting to break into the industry, follows local personalities on social media, he tends to "follow more foreign, because you can see more improvement, more activities, like today this my healthy meal, today I am going to do this shoot. These celebrities are good-looking and have a standard."

4.5 Research Question 4: How does body image dissatisfaction affect urban Malaysian male undergraduates?

Self-esteem:

The participants responded in different ways to the question of how images make them feel. One participant reported feeling, "envious"

Participant two admitted to comparing himself with male celebrities but confessed that it had negative consequence, "we will feel bad about ourselves," adding "but we will still do it anyway."

The same participant also went on to say that he "admires their looks."

"I feel insecure," said participant five. "Because there is this constant feeling of I want to be like that but I don't know how to be like that. I don't have the motivation to be like that. I can only aspire to want to be like that."

The same subject also said he feels "very insecure," when he sees images of celebrities being shared on social media, especially when it is by a girl he "likes." He says, "you will be like.. Ha ha… I am never going to achieve that, so obviously you feel very insecure about it."

"Being good-looking has become the minimum standard, then you have to develop a personality."- (participant one, focus group two), referring to participation on social media.

"I think there is a problem. Generally, people only think that girls are expected to be a certain way and people only focus on that but at the same time, guys are also expected to be like Liam Hemsworth or Captain America. This is a problem but guys don't complain, they work towards it." - (participant three: focus group one)

Participant seven said he feels "insecure" but that it is also "motivation." Participant eight said he feels "motivated to look as good as they do (celebrities), to pick up points from their style

The participants described social media as exerting social pressure. Participant six said it fulfilled the "human need for belonging, providing a sense of security" and a "sense of belonging." Participant seven said social media gives you "a sense of attention, a sense of recognition."

Of all the participants in the interviews, only two subjects - participant six and participant 12 - said that they were indifferent to getting no likes or comments on their social media posts. The majority responded used words like "disappointed," "irritated," stressed out" and that it does not feel good."

"You put in the effort to try to look good, put yourself out there and when people don't care, it is a bit of a downer," said participant five.

Participant eight said social media gives him, "a personal satisfaction when people like what I do," and that if he did not have

a "personal attachment" to the pictures, he "would delete it" if it did not get any reaction.

Participant nine said, "to be honest, it feels annoying. You put effort in the picture, it is annoying. I wouldn't take a similar photo." He further adds getting likes gives him a sense of "satisfaction." "The whole feeling that people are looking at you. It's gratification."

"It is quite sad when the likes are not as you expected" - (participant one: focus group one). "If there are no likes, I will remove it." - (participant two: focus group one). "Validation is important." - (participant four: focus group one).

Participant 10 says few likes of on posts leave him feeling "sad and lonely."

What is beautiful is good:

All participants acknowledged that appearance is an important factor when it comes to popularity on social media, responding without hesitation. "Definitely - people who are better looking have a greater social media following." "People who are better looking gets a better reaction" - (participant three: focus group two).

The perception is that people who are physically attractive create better impressions. One participant said that the ideal male body is to be "lean and fit, that way you can wear anything and still look good."

"Without a doubt," said participant five. "My reason for this is that it takes eight seconds to make an assumption of someone. There is this veterinarian on Instagram who looks good and women are following him non-stop. He is just a vet, but he looks good and people flock to him."

"You have to be either influential, rich or good-looking," said participant four. Another added that this perception carried through into the "real" world.

"Even in business, when you talk to clients, they like to talk to handsome guys," said participant three. "When you have a good appearance, you are already half-way in," said participant five.

Participant seven simply said "human beings are interested in seeing good-looking people."

Participant one said that in order to grow his followers on Instagram, "I used to post OOTD at one point in time, every single day, then fashion blogs started to follow me but the only way I knew how to use OOTD was because I followed the fashion blogs in the first place."

Participant two from focus group two attributed his appearance concerns to wanting to make a "good impression" for his girlfriend. "Of course, they want to exhibit you in front of others. Maybe, I should keep fit to leave a good impression in front of others for her. "

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

The objective of this study is to understand the impact of social media on the development of body image among young men. The results demonstrate that the relationship between social media and men is not a straightforward one. Studies have found gender to be a factor in the way social media is used. Generally, women have been found to be greater users of social media (Kimbrough, Guaadagno, Muscanell & Dill, 2013; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). Ricke & Markey (2009) found that women are more open when it comes to social media. They are also more outgoing, self-disclosing and less anxious about showing emotion. Men, on the other hand, tend to use social media for news, expressing themselves with less emotion.

Previous literature which looked at the influence of media on men have suggested that men are somehow simultaneously affected by media but at the same time are also immune to it (Baker, Allen & Qiao, 2015). This conclusion is based on the fact that some studies

have found significant links between media and body image (Galioto & Crowther, 2013), while others have found this link only for women (Vandenberg et al., 2007).

The results of this study seem to support these contrasting views, leading to the conclusion that the male experience with social media is quite different from that of women. The fact that men are influenced by media but can also withstand its pressures has been suggested by Baker, Allen & Qiao (2015) while others have attributed this to individual differences (Michaels et al., 2013; Nikkelen et al., 2012).

This study found a similar result. Much of whether the individual's body image was influenced by social media was dependent on numerous factors. These include the individual's interests, who he chooses to 'follow,' sociocultural influences as well as what social media was being used for.

The study found that subjects used social media as a tool through which they acquired information of what it means to be a man in today's world. That includes knowledge about what it means to look good in society today. It also found that stereotypical

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perceptions of masculinity appeared to dominate when it comes to social media choices. The majority cited celebrities David

Beckham, Christiano Ronaldo, Chris Hemsworth and Dwayne Johnson as the ones they follow as these figures represent the ideal modern man as they are successful, good-looking, athletic and appear to have it all.

The majority of the subjects said they did not follow local celebrities because they could not relate to them, neither were they fans of K-Pop citing them as being too feminine. The suggestion was those who were "Chinese-speaking" were more likely to be fans. Khor et al (2009) found a similar trend where a quarter of the boys surveyed cited sportsmen as role models. While the study attributed body shape as being the main reason for this since sportsmen are perceived to be healthy and muscular, it was also clear that conventional beliefs about masculinity continue to prevail among these participants. According to this sample, following another guy on social media would be "weird." Hence there had to be justification. The guy would either be a friend or a role-model.

Though the majority of the respondents admitted to comparing themselves to celebrities, they stated that their decisions were based on the belief that they could 'learn' from them, whether

in fitness, style or nutrition. The fact that men are motivated to find information is particularly relevant today as studies point to the fact

that in can be confusing being a young man in today's world (Lottes & Alkula, 2011). As such the concept of masculinity is in itself has become quite subjective. A study conducted by John Hopkins University (2010) found that being masculine was associated with traits like having confidence, commanding respect, assuming responsibility and also personifying prowess.

This finding is consistent with uses and gratifications theory. The theory explains the rationale behind why people seek out the media that they do and what they use it for. It differs from other theories in that it looks at individuals as active rather than passive consumers on media.

Based on this study, two 'uses' of social media emerged which in turn influence the development of body image issues among young men. This first is that men appear to use social media for social interaction, to communicate and interact with others. In the study, the majority of participants admitted that posts that garner little reaction have a negative impact on self-esteem. They are thus motivated to post flattering pictures of themselves which are likely to generate the most 'likes'.

The other is to use social media to seek information or self-educate (Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). This was also a theme that came up in this study. The majority of the participants said that a lot of their social media choices were driven by a need to "learn something."

By applying uses and gratification theory it can said that men use social media to gain information on what it means to be a man in today's world. In the study there were three respondents who despite having social media accounts said they rarely visit their accounts and only use it as a means of passing time, relaxation or entertainment. They reported as being not affected by what they see on social media. The study also found that what the subjects use social media for will influence the choices of who they 'follow' and therefore what kind of information they seek to obtain.

As stated earlier, athletes emerged as the leading 'influencers.' The researcher was quite surprised to find the actor Dwayne Johnson's name come up quite often. When asked, the subjects reported that they find his posts inspiring and that they learn about "discipline," "fitness" and "nutrition" by following him on social media.

Although the majority of the respondents reported that they did not follow local celebrities and influencers, there were two who admitted to doing so and both subjects had aspirations to enter the

entertainment and fashion industry. They explained that they follow the social media accounts as a means to learn about the industry.

While studies have shown that women frequently report feelings of insecurity when confronted with images of 'better-looking' individuals, this study found that the reaction is different for some men. They reported that while there were feelings of insecurity, they were also inspired and motivated to achieve the same results. This was especially when looking at a peer as it creates a "if he can do it, why can't I" point of view.

Such varying accounts support the use of uses and gratification in studying the link between body image dissatisfaction and social media as much of the impact will depend on the way social media is used.

Studies have also pointed to the fact body image is often seen as feminine or gay (Hargreaves and Tiggerman, 2006). As such men are perhaps unlikely to talk about it body issues openly. Social media,

given its anonymity, would allow one to seek out information without having to declare their insecurities about their bodies.

Sociocultural changes in Malaysia too have affected the way that men see themselves. In Malaysian men, qualities like holding a

good job rank highly in terms of male achievements (Ng, Tan & Low, 2008). But it has also been found that the 'new man' has also emerged among Malaysia's younger men, a man who is concerned about his appearance.

Previous studies have found that messages about body image come from three sources - family, friends and the media (Neagu, 2015). In this study, subjects acknowledged that appearance-related topics such as styles of dress and body shape are no longer topics that are taboo for young men to discuss because social media by integrating two of these three influences – friends and the media - has normalised these topics. The 'masculine' influence is still evident however as these things are discussed in the context of self-improvement as opposed to an expression of insecurity. In one focus group, participants on more than one occasion kept saying that they work out to attract girls but when questioned as to whether girls cared about physical attributes, they said no. This can also be seen as a form of justification for having appearance concerns.

Social media presents images not just of celebrities but also friends. It also publicly validates 'popular' individuals through likes, engagement and followers. Participants in this study acknowledge that this has exerted greater pressure on them to gain social approval, particularly with the pervasive nature of social media. All participants expressed, without hesitation, the belief that good looking individuals are more likely to be more popular on social media and have a greater presence.

This finding is consistent with other studies which reveal that those on social media often compare themselves with others, believing that they have happier and better lives (Chou & Edge, 2012).

In a study that looked at the relationship between body image and sexuality, it was found that all young men appeared to be suffering from low levels of body dissatisfaction regardless of their sexual orientation (Morgan & Arcelus, 2009). All participants in this study also admitted to having insecurities regarding their appearances. There were participants who admitted that they believed they were good-looking but they also said that there was always room for improvement.

The role that media plays in creating this dissatisfaction has been vastly debated upon in previous research. Some studies point to the fact that the media has transformed men's bodies into objects (Gill, Henwood & McLean, 2005), following a greater focus on men's appearances. Others (e.g., Jones, Vigfusdottir & Lee, 2004; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2003) suggest that the pressure comes from peers as well as sporting personalities. Through social media, both these influences converge in a single source.

Overall, this study found that body image dissatisfaction is an issue for men. All participants admitted that they were insecure about parts of the body, namely height and chest. Previous studies have also reported that men are reluctant to talk about issues to do with body image but in this study, the subjects appeared to have no issues admitting their insecurities, both during the semi-structured interviews as well as in the focus groups, indicating perhaps that there seems to be a belief that everyone has the same insecurities.

The majority of subjects also admitted that they frequently talk about topics like fitness and style which also differs from other studies which deem such topics as being feminine.

The study also found that social media does play a role in the emergence of body image dissatisfaction. All respondents attributed the platform as setting the standard for attractiveness. All with the exception of three referred to social media as being impossible to avoid and being confronted with images of good looking all the time. The subjects also associated aspects like popularity on social media with being attractive. While all subjects point to social media as being the cause for body image issues, they also said it was impossible to avoid as it is the primary mode of socialisation.

This links to research question three which explores whether social media is used as a source of information. The study found this to be true. Subjects reported that social media provides them information about fitness, nutrition and style. It also establishes the rules of what it takes to be popular and attractive.

What the study also found is that the way men cope with body image dissatisfaction differs from women. While issues of self-esteem do emerge, men deal with it differently. Some are motivated to work out while others may focus on depicting themselves differently on social media positioning themselves as funny or intellectual.

This should result in different intervention strategies when tackling the issue of body image dissatisfaction among men, which are among the implications of the study. There seems to be little in terms of intervention strategies (Whittaker et al, 2019) resulting in there being very little progress in tackling body image dissatisfaction among men.

While previous studies on male body image dissatisfaction focused on muscle dysmorphia, this study also found participants opting for lean, athletic looks without wanting to be too big. The implication of this is that men too, like women, could be engaging in weight control behaviours such as dieting as opposed to excessive exercising which was what previous studies had shown.

5.2 Limitations:

The study has a number of limitations. First is that it focused on an urban population and on those who come from more privileged backgrounds, as they were all studying at private higher education institutions. While there were subjects who came from various ethnic backgrounds, their main medium of communication is English. Less is known about those who study at local public universities and

whose primary mode of communication is in Bahasa Malaysia or in other local dialects.

However, in studying body image and the influence of social media, it is also important to extend beyond students from the city to also look at those in other parts of Malaysia, particularly since Malay celebrities have a huge social media presence. It is important to study the impact of this. Also, the majority of the students majored in media studies and thus are quite social media savvy. Thus, future studies should have a more diverse set of students.

The study could however serve as a starting point to begin the discourse on numerous subjects with regards to male behaviours – masculinity, social media influence and body image. As the study has established, the relationship between social media and body image is a complex one. Hence, more studies have to conducted to allow for generalisation to the general public.

5.3 Future Possibilities:

While this study focused on the role that social media plays in the development of body image dissatisfactions, the results can serve as the catalyst for other studies in other disciplines, in particular in the area of marketing. Social media has been an integral part of

marketing. Studies indicate that in the US, 88 percent of marketers use social media with over $60 billion spent annually on social media advertising (Smith, 2011). In Malaysia, the figures are less concrete. In 2017, it was reported that digital spending had doubled, of which social media is one recipient. (www.marketingmagazine.com).

However, as the results of this study indicate the link between social media influence and men is not a straightforward one and that there are various factors involved in the way that men use social media. As marketeers start to focus more on social media, it is important to understand the effectiveness of the medium for the male demographic and this can only be achieved with sufficient research.

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