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SOCIAL MEDIA: ITS IMPACT ON BODY IMAGE OF YOUNG GIRLS A REVIEW

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Abstract

Social media is an amazing place to hangout, but at the same time this amazing space can be a reason for mental issues and body image issues for young girls, as much as these platforms were designed to share ideas, information and your creativity, it has turned into a battle field of who looks more attractive and lean, the obsession to look slim has made females Anorexia. Extremely photoshopped pictures of models, influencers, celebrities have put young girls into dilemma of thinking that they are overweight and not beautiful. This madness needs to be stopped we need to teach our young generation about self love and inclusivity. It is important that there be fair representation of women of colour, different sizes and ethnicity on social media platform as well as in modelling world. Young women should not feel a need to alter their bodies by unnecessary fasting and use of cosmetic procedure, I am not against any plastic surgery I am against the impression that women are not beautiful if they don't have certain features or look a certain way. This review paper discusses the dark side of Social media sites which leads to body image issues in young girls.

Introduction:-

As world started becoming a global village, modern methods to communicate had to be designed, after the rise of internet, email, chat rooms a need was felt for a place where we could

1)communicate with people we love and know

2)co-create and collaborate

3)share the information these all need gave rise to social networking sites, these sites are capable of sharing audio, video, text and images thus making them a multi media platform. These SNS became a boom nearly 2000's with first site being launched in 1997* (<https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html>), SNS provide an escape to its users from ongoing hard hitting realities. Once user log in to their profile they are in a different world, in this virtual world person can have a completely different persona and this is the other side of the social media, which at times is dark and gloomy .

With billions of users world wide it is not possible to keep a check on everything that goes on these platforms, for instance New Zealand live shooting on Facebook. There are loopholes in system. As social media is a global thing there are no global laws governing them. Each country has slightly different

rules and regulations on cyber crime and some time it becomes hard to give justice to victims due to it being an international affair,

All social platforms have slightly different norms for their users, the age restriction is different on different platforms which also exposes young teens to social media, this exposure can some times be misused by the people older than them,

The objective of this review paper is to determine whether use of social media sites like FB/ Instagram are linked to body image issues in females.

2)the prolonged use of social media results in constant comparison which further degrades the way females see their body.

3)Dose social media results in lower confidence and self esteem of females when they compare themselves to their peers or people they follow on social media sites?

Social media is a great tool for communication, it helps in staying connected with our loved ones, it was developed as a communication tool but slowly have developed as place where we do business as well and selling body image is also a business. Buying and selling things, advertising about latest products and services has become more personal and we can target specific set of customers, as social media sites monitor the behaviour of its user and using AI, can show specific ads to specific users.

As much as it is benefiting companies and corporations, it has also given freedom to individuals creators, artist and influencers. People people can showcase their unique talents on social media. The advantage about social media is that it is easy to use and at same time is multimedia platform.

As much as social media was designed for positive experience but in recent times it has been linked to a lot of issues:- issues such as cyber bullying, sexual harassment, identity theft, on a much deeper level depression, anxiety, eating disorders, insomnia and body images issues. When we open Instagram or Facebook our feed is filled with these extraordinary looking females, who are perfect in every aspect. Male body with exceptionally well ascetics, lavish lifestyle, perfect travel pictures and so on. We can not deny the fact that looking at all these perfect pictures put the user into constant comparison, their is nothing wrong to strive for better life style, but when we start living in a split personality, where online persona of the a user is totally different than its real life version then its a problem.

Young users are bombarded with images which are perfect or extremely perfect, these young girls have started believing that this is normal. To look like these females young girls have started doing crash diets, as a result of which their normal biology changes.

While clicking a picture, a user clicks more than 100 pictures for that one instagramable picture. Numbers of like and followers have started giving people a false sense of happiness and superiority complex. Social media has become a place to compete, compete for flawless images which are hard to believe on.

Discussion :-

There are more than 1 billion Monthly active Instagram (["https://www.facebook.com/business/marketing/instagram#"](https://www.facebook.com/business/marketing/instagram#)) users which is approximately the population of India (1.33 billion) (<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/india-population/>). More than 500 million daily active users (<https://www.facebook.com/business/marketing/instagram#>), out of 1 billion

users 56.3% of Instagram users are female and 43.7 % are male (<https://www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/>)

). In India there are 155 430 000 Instagram users out of which 87.2% are men and only 12.8% are women, and the difference for such a huge gap in user can also be a reason that women don't feel safe or secure on Instagram (a possibility) (<https://napoleoncat.com/stats/instagram-users-in-india/2019/01>)

This huge difference is also due to the gender gap in India, the majority of Instagram men users can also be a reason that 1) women don't feel safe using Instagram or 2) This huge Difference is also due to the gender gap in India, the majority of Instagram men users are also between 25 to 34 years, in this age group the sex ratio in 2013-2015 is 900:1000 (women :men)(Niti Ayoge) and in year 1991 it was 927women:1000 men

Social media or SNS site just like any other medium has some dark Side to it, when we are talking about the dark side of social media it is actually the dark side of the people using it, the platform are themselves bad or demeaning. The reason for their creation was for social good and it was clear and pure. It is the people who are using social media and their mental level which needs to be improved for a better and healthy social media experience.

Constant comparison :-

Studies from Canadian Association of mental health (<https://ontario.cmha.ca/document-category/social-media-and-mental-health/>)

has revealed that a major portion of young women feel insecure about their bodies. The constant comparison we do is better explained in social comparison theory* (site the source), which also inform us how we are constantly looking for comparison with people we follow. It is human behaviour that we are also striving for more. There is nothing wrong in it, but having the notion that one will be happy when they have something is just an illusion coz when we attain those standards there is still something new which we want, human race is greedy and never satisfied with what they have.

The social media sites are filled with perfectly curated photos which are photoshopped, have many people behind the scene prefacing each shot images of models and girls, when an average human sees those they are looking at standards which are in human or unrealistic to approach. These model bodies are manipulated too extreme which is not possible to achieve . This constant comparison leads to a lot of issues such as- eating disorder, body image issues. Low confidence, not feeling loved or worthy, depression and suicidal thought.

Derogatory comments:-

When a young female post a picture on social media specially Instagram her comment section is filled with people commenting derogatory words, these words like you look fat, you should probably diet puts a negative impact on the user. Out of many comments if 2 or 3 are commenting on the body of the user then she defiantly starts feeling insecure, now this problem increases if that girl is going through a phase where she has just started accepting her body, it is very demeaning and disturbing for the user than. When a young girl open her profile and all she see is celebrities advertising gimmicky products like tea and pills to reduce weight than user would feel the need to alter her body, we are bombarded with such paid promotions on Instagram, special targeting weight issues.

Research done in Canada (<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323725#Studying-social-media-use-and-body-image>)has shown that this constant comparison and feeling bad about once body does not happen when we are looking at pictures of our family members and relatives, but the moment we switch to peers, friends, celebrities,

models, we start comparing our body to their, even when we know these picture might be altered we still feel bad about our body (source)

The cycle of likes :-

Human brain works on reward system when we post a picture on social media and start receiving positive reinforcement in form of likes and comments our brains reward system starts working, this work same as in case of substance user, the problem arises when we don't get the desired likes and comments, people like to be validated by others and this validation in cyber world/ modern world comes from likes and comments on persons picture.

We as users of social media have our online persona, and want to stick to it, users can have two completely different identities and to maintain that persona, people have started going to extreme levels, photo alteration, plastic surgery, butt implants, cosmetic procedure, going on expensive vacation just to satisfy that online persona. There is nothing wrong in living your dream life, but the problem arises when we are not happy inside and are doing all this for social media attention, when these lavish altered fake photos start floating the Social media platforms and young women who can not afford all these things, they start comparing themselves to these photos, it puts a negative impression on their self esteem and at times to look like the other women, these young girls start dieting which can potentially lead to eating disorders down the line, their are studies being conducted for the same.

The Transformation game :-

Another trend that is popping up in social media world is male transforming into females and looking amazing, , the issue is when a female watch these videos, they go into dilemma of thinking that they are less attractive, more and more people are posting as transgender women not because they are or they really feel this way, rather this all is for more followers and likes on social media, more the followers, more money they can make online.

The slim thick ideology :-

Today a new trend has emerged on Instagram where a female has tiny waste but is full on other places, this kind of body is not natural females have to alter themselves to look like that, some use photoshop and other are wearing waist trainers or corsets and some are even going to the extreme of removing their ribs to look tiny, when young women see these altered images or unnatural bodies they feel a need to lookalike them, and if they don't look like them they feel low and demotivated. It is important to understand that there are people who are photoshopping pictures and female models are getting cosmetic procedures to look a certain way. These images are unhealthy for young girls consumption.

What Needs to be done :-

First and foremost the most important thing is that we are talking about this problem, the good news is we are having a dialogue about this, more and more females are coming up and talking about this problem, we are also recognising that the pictures to which we are comparing ourselves with are altered

On Personal Front :-

Limit the consumption of social media, it is important to track down how much time are we spending on social media, if you feel it is more, then take a break from social media, if that is not possible than monitor who you are following, don't follow those accounts which are promoting superficial image of women. Start appreciating the moments in life, don't just attend an event to click pictures and post online, take your time, focus on current moment, start paying

attention to little details in life and start being grateful for all the amazing things you have.

Remember beauty comes in all forms shapes and sizes so own it and be confident in your own skin. Work on self love and self care, be true to yourself and accept who you are, find the things you are passionate about and follow those accounts which make you feel good.

For Parents and guardians:-

From a young age teach your kids to love themselves, stop pointing out there flaws, no one is perfect and beauty is in all those little infeqfection which makes you unique. Don't compare your kids to other kids, tell them to live a healthy lifestyle. Always tell them how beautiful they are and never pinpoint their flaws in public that would lower their confidence.

Monitor who and what your kids are following on social media, tell them that a healthy body comes in all shapes, size and colours.

For modeling world:-

There needs to be more representation of women of colour, female with different body types of all races and ethnicity so that young girls feel accepted in society.

Conclusion:-

Social media can be an amazing platform to share your creativity but at the same time all the perfect pictures we see on Instagram makes us question our own identity and body image, young females feel insecure about their body image by constantly comparing themselves to their peers and people they follow on Instagram which thus result in mental depression and body image issues, thinking that only on type of body is beautiful is disturbing for so many reasons, many a times these pictures are photoshopped or altered on computer or clicked in certain angle to look the female look more smaller then they are, when these pictures are seen by young teens they feel the need to alter their bodies, resulting in lower self esteem and bad body image. We need to teach our kids that beauty comes in all forms and sizes and every one is beautiful no matter what.

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