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Explaining personality functioning through sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, body appreciation and social media usage among female adolescents in Pakistan

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Abstract

Objectives. *The aim of this study was to explore the complex relationship between sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, personality functioning, body appreciation, social media usage, and age among female adolescents.*

Methods and materials. *ESM Social Media Use Questionnaire (E-SMUQ), Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2), Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-4-Revised Female (SATAQ-4R), Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis Structure Questionnaire (OPD-SQS). A cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from 134 female students aged 11 to 20 years ($M = 16,8$; $SD = 2,10$) using a purposive sampling technique. The participants were enrolled in various educational institutions, and the data collection was conducted through a survey.*

Results. *The results indicated that sociocultural attitudes toward appearance significantly influence personality functioning, and this relationship is mediated by body appreciation. Social media usage was found to moderate the relationship between sociocultural attitudes and body appreciation. Additionally, the mediated relationship between body appreciation and personality functioning was moderated by age.*

Conclusion. *The findings suggest the need for interventions that address the negative impact of sociocultural pressure regarding appearance on body appreciation and personality functioning among female adolescents. The role of social media and age-specific strategies in promoting positive personality functioning and self-esteem was emphasized, highlighting the importance of open communication among adolescents.*

Keywords: *sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, body appreciation, social media, personality functioning, adolescents*

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Объяснение функционирования личности через социокультурное отношение к внешнему виду, оценку тела и использование социальных сетей среди девочек-подростков в Пакистане

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Резюме

Цель. Анализ сложной взаимосвязи между социокультурным отношением к внешности, функционированием личности, оценкой тела, использованием социальных сетей и возрастом среди девушек-подростков.

Методы и материалы. Опросник использования социальных сетей ESM (E-SMUQ), Шкала оценки тела-2 (BAS-2), Социокультурный опросник отношения к внешности-4 пересмотренный женский (SATAQ-4R), Опросник структуры операционализированного психодинамического диагноза (OPD-SQS). Участники: 134 школьницы в возрасте от 11 до 20 лет ($M = 16,28$, $SD = 2,10$), обучающиеся в различных учебных заведениях: 50,7% респондентов были учащимися школ, 14,9% — колледжей и 34,3% — университетов.

Результаты. Подростки женского пола, редко пользующиеся социальными сетями, демонстрируют высокую зависимость от социокультурных установок общества в отношении внешности, что приводит к низкой оценке своего тела респондентами. И, напротив, девушки — активные пользователи социальных сетей менее склонны к интернализации социокультурных установок и внешнего давления в отношении внешности, что положительно влияет на оценку своего тела. Возраст модулирует влияние оценки тела на функционирование личности среди девочек-подростков в Пакистане: с увеличением возраста отрицательная связь между оценкой тела и дезадаптивным функционированием личности уменьшается.

Выводы. Ожидания общества в отношении внешности значительно влияют на оценку своего тела подростками, что, в свою очередь, сказывается на их общем психическом здоровье и самооценке. Социальные сети могут смягчать это давление, повышая оценку своего тела девушками-подростками и положительно влияя на их самовосприятие; кроме того, по мере взросления подростков их способность справляться с этим давлением возрастает. Необходимо развивать систему поддержки, направленную на устранение негативного влияния социокультурного давления в отношении внешности на оценку тела и функционирование личности у подростков женского пола с учетом их возрастных особенностей.

Ключевые слова: социокультурное отношение к внешности, оценка тела, социальные медиа, функционирование личности, подростки

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Introduction

In many societies, norms and expectations emphasize physical appearance, particularly for females. Sociocultural attitudes toward appearance influence various aspects of life, including views on gender, race, religion, politics, and social class (Keith, 2019). In Pakistan, sociocultural attitudes regarding appearance often emphasize specific physiological attributes, with females expected to adhere to standards of thinness and fairness (Abbasi, Khan, Khan, 2024). Young women are usually expected to conform to idealized beauty standards from a young age and these expectations are especially pronounced in cultures where early marriage practices are prevalent, preferred, and encouraged (Aguilar, Corral, Hernandez, 2023). These sociocultural pressures compel females to adhere to specific appearance standards to gain social acceptance and conform to these beauty norms to enhance their prospects in marriage and social acceptance (Abbasi, Khan, Khan, 2024).

One of the key ways these beauty standards are perpetuated is through the internalization of appearance ideals, where individuals adopt societal standards of attractiveness as their personal beliefs and values (Keery, Van-den-Berg, Thompson, 2004). These standards are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and religious contexts, with traditional media and increasingly prevalent social media platforms playing significant roles in reinforcing these ideals (Mahmood, Nawaz, Meer, 2020). For instance, Pakistani media often portrays fair-skinned and slender women as the epitome of beauty, contributing to widespread body dissatisfaction among young females (Hamid et al., 2023). Adolescents in Pakistan often face direct and indirect pressures from their

families to maintain a certain body image and internalize societal standards of appearance more deeply, shaping their perceptions and attitudes toward their bodies (Abbasi, Khan, Khan, 2024; Khan et al., 2023). Deeply embedded beauty criteria do not stop at skin tone or body shape but also include attractive eyes, long hair, good height, and a slim physique for social acceptance, marriage, or status (Malik, Hasan, Tariq, 2024). These societal attitudes contribute to the prevalence of body concerns and eating disorders (Shahzad et al., 2018) and influence self-esteem and relationships (Mills, Minister, Samson, 2022; Ahmadpanah et al., 2019).

Schools, while being places of learning, can sometimes become arenas where these beauty ideals are propagated (Akbar et al., 2022). Peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance can drive adolescents to adopt harmful practices to achieve the desired body image. In urban areas of Pakistan, female students frequently adopt harmful dieting behaviors due to the influence of peers' or even teachers' bullying and body shaming and societal pressures related to body image (Akbar et al., 2022). Weight-based victimization in school negatively impacts the emotional well-being of female adolescents, affecting behaviors such as emotional eating (Puhl, Luedicke, 2012). Studies show that girls strive to fit in by being accepted by their friend circles and this negatively influences body esteem in females (Budianto, Hamid, Ridfah, 2023; Shen et al., 2022).

Female adolescents having such social issues spend a considerable amount of time online, using the internet for self-expression. This digital engagement for the time being alters how they see themselves, control their behavior, and interact with oth-

ers. Their online personas integrate with their real selves, offering insights into contemporary personality dynamics (Akbar et al., 2022). Over time, the accumulated effects of these pressures can lead to personality impairment (Puhl, Luedicke, 2012; De-Clercq et al., 2008). Girls use social media more than boys for emotional bonding, acceptance, validation, and social compensation (Manago, Walsh, Barsigian, 2023; Meilani, Hariadi, Haryadi, 2023). These platforms often amplify societal beauty standards, leading female adolescents to compare themselves unfavorably, resulting in body dissatisfaction and impacting their self-perception and emotional well-being (Avalos, Tylka, Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Perry et al., 2023). In Pakistan, platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat contribute significantly to negative body image among female adolescents by promoting unrealistic beauty standards (Keith, 2019). Excessive social media use is linked to body and eating disorders, with 93% of users feeling uncomfortable with their bodies due to time spent online (Rizwan et al., 2022).

Social media plays a crucial role in the lives of adolescents, offering platforms for self-expression and community support. However, it also has negative effects, such as promoting unrealistic body standards and social comparison (Perry et al., 2023). Female adolescents often try to imitate the lifestyles and behaviors they encounter online (Fernandez et al., 2023; Perloff, 2014), which can strain their real-life relationships and lead to feelings of inadequacy and social isolation. Girls who edit their pictures for social media feel increased pressure to maintain societal appearance standards, leading to discomfort with their bodies (Verrastro et al., 2020). Exposure to idealized images fos-

ters feelings of inadequacy, especially among females, who are more affected by these pressures than males (Ferguson et al., 2014; Jambulingam, Selvarajah, Thuraisingam, 2014). Studies show that females often overestimate their body shape and desire thinness (Toselli et al., 2022). Girls report higher levels of body-related guilt, shame, and embarrassment, while boys report higher levels of pride in their bodies (Sabiston et al., 2022). Social media reinforces sociocultural attitudes about beauty, emphasizing thinness and perfect features, and shapes perceptions of reality, influencing self-concept and adherence to societal norms (Blakemore, Mills, 2024; Heath, Petraitis, 2017). This pressure impacts female adolescents' emotions, personality development, and cultural attitudes (Piccerillo, Digennaro, 2024).

Adolescents face unique challenges as they face profound physical, mental, and behavioral changes (Jaworska, MacQueen, 2015). Female adolescents often experience significant body image concerns due to physical changes and identity formation challenges. Studies show that 55-88% of adolescent girls report negative body image and a desire to appear thinner (Davison, McCabe, 2006; Hoyt, Kogan, 2001). In Pakistan, these issues are intensified by cultural norms and the pervasive influence of global beauty standards via social media (Mahmood, Nawaz, Meer, 2020). Research indicates that frequent social media use among Pakistani female adolescents is associated with increased body dissatisfaction and lower body appreciation, as they compare themselves to digitally altered images and influencer lifestyles (Nigar, Naqvi, 2019).

A crucial aspect of personality development, particularly in adolescents, is body image, defined as an individual's perception and

feelings about their body (Fardouly, Pinkus, Vartanian, 2015; Perloff, 2014). The pressures, intensified by media and social networks, often lead to skewed body perception and psychological issues, including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and impaired interpersonal relations (Grogan, 2021; Davison, McCabe, 2006). The pervasive presence of celebrities and influencers on social media further exacerbates these issues by promoting unrealistic beauty standards, resulting in chronic body dissatisfaction and negative social and emotional outcomes (Perloff, 2014; Tiggemann, Slater, 2013). Positive body image fosters a healthy self-concept and emotional resilience, while negative body image can lead to emotional and psychological problems, including eating disorders, which impact personality functioning (Monteath, McCabe, 1997).

Personality functioning, known as structural integration, refers to how an individual's personality traits, behaviors, emotions, and thoughts interact and adjust in various situations (Oravec et al., 2020; Sharp, Wall, 2012). This concept includes the ability to understand and manage emotions related to oneself and others, as well as adapting to the demands of everyday life (Horz-Sagstetter, Ohse, Kampe, 2021). The transitional phase of adolescence is a critical period for body image development and personality functioning as girls move through different stages of adolescence. This period is often marked by heightened self-consciousness and self-criticism of body image. The internalization of societal standards of beauty, which usually emphasize thinness and specific physical attributes, starts to take root during this time (Keery, Van-de-Berg, Thompson, 2004). This phenomenon is more critical for women who do not conform to societal beauty ide-

als and often face social stigmatization and reduced opportunities in various spheres of life, including employment and marriage (Malik, Hassan, Tariq, 2024).

The personality functioning of female adolescents in this stage is closely tied to their body image. Positive body image can foster self-esteem and emotional resilience, whereas negative body image can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth (Fardouly, Pinkus, Vartanian, 2015; Perloff, 2014). The pressure to conform to beauty standards can affect social interactions, leading to social anxiety and withdrawal in some cases (Park, Koo, 2020). The impact of body image on personality functioning becomes more pronounced as girls continue to develop. Girls are more likely to engage in social comparison and are more susceptible to peer pressure regarding appearance, which can result in an increased risk of developing unhealthy behaviors such as extreme dieting or disordered eating (Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2021; Puhl, Brownell, 2001). Girls with a positive body image are more likely to develop a coherent and stable sense of self, while those with body dissatisfaction may struggle with identity formation (Wangqvist et al., 2015). Negative body image can lead to emotional difficulties such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which can impede personality development and social functioning (Lebert et al., 2020). Development of positive body image during adolescence is associated with greater emotional stability and better social relationships in adulthood (Puhl, Luedicke, 2012), while adult females with negative body image perceptions experience ongoing emotional distress and impaired social functioning (Kousari-Rad, McLaren, 2013; Abbasi, Khan, Khan, 2024).

The objectives of the present study are to measure social media usage, body appreciation, sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, and personality functioning among female adolescents. The present study hypothesized that:

1. Body appreciation will mediate the relationship between sociocultural attitudes toward appearance and personality functioning among female adolescents.

2. Social media usage will moderate the relationship between sociocultural attitudes toward appearance and body appreciation among female adolescents.

3. Age will moderate the relationship between body appreciation and personality functioning among female adolescents.

Method

Research Design

The present study used a cross-sectional research design to collect data from students enrolled in various educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities of Islamabad.

Sample

A purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data from 134 females with ages ranging from 11 to 20 years ($M = 16,28$; $SD = 2,10$). 50,7% of the respondents were school students, 14,9% from college, and 34,3% from university. Additionally, 85,82% of the female adolescents were from nuclear families, while the remaining 19% were from joint families. The majority of female adolescents were residing in urban areas ($n = 123$).

Instruments

ESM Social Media Use Questionnaire (E-SMUQ)

E-SMUQ consists of 10 items, used to measure the amount of time spent by adolescents on social media platforms like Instagram¹, Snapchat, and WhatsApp (Valkenburg et al., 2022). The response options range from 0 to 60 minutes. The sum scores of all platforms showed the total time spent using social media. If the sum scores of platforms exceed 60 minutes, then they are recoded to 60 minutes. High scores on E-SMUQ indicate individuals spend more time on social media platforms (Valkenburg et al., 2022). The Cronbach alpha value of E-SMUQ is 0,81.

Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2)

BAS-2 consists of 10 items and is used to measure positive body image among adolescents (Tylka, Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The response format for BAS-2 is a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = Never to 5 = Always) which requires approximately 2-3 minutes to complete. The composite of the BAS-2 is calculated by using a sum of scores on all 10 items. Thus, the total score on the scale ranged from 10 to 50. High scores on BAS -2 indicate that an individual highly appreciates his/her body (Tylka, Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The Cronbach alpha value ranges from 0,80 to 0,90.

Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-4-Revised Female (SATAQ-4R)

SATAQ-4R evaluates the internalization of appearance ideals and pressures to

¹ Instagram is officially banned in the Russian Federation since 21 March 2022.

achieve the social ideal (derived mainly from media, parents, friends, and other significant) (Schaefer et al., 2015). ("Translation, Adaptation and Psychometric Properties of SATAQ-4R for ...") The instrument is composed of 31 statements. The response format for SATAQ-4R is a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate higher internalization of the body ideals and higher external pressure. The Cronbach alpha value of SATAQ-4R is 0,88 (Schaefer et al., 2015).

Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis Structure Questionnaire (OPD-SQS)

OPD-SQS is a self-report inventory consisting of 12 items, used to measure personality functioning (Ehrental et al., 2015). It covers three domains: sense of self, interpersonal contact, and relationship model. The response format on OPD-SQS is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = fully disagree to 4 = fully agree. To calculate the composite, the sum of items yields scores ranged from 0 to 48. High scores on OPD-SQS indicate impaired personality functioning (Ehrental et al., 2015). Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the total scale was 0,88.

Procedure

In the current study, researchers obtained permission from the respective authors to use their questionnaires. Additionally, the researcher sought permission from educational institutions to collect data for research purposes by using an approval letter obtained from the ethical committee of Bahria University Islamabad Campus. For participants, below 18 years of age, the concerned authority acted as guardian within

institutional boundaries. Seeking permission from school authorities to collect data from students in the educational setting is an ethical practice (Bonell et al., 2023). The study focused on female adolescents, recruited from schools, colleges, and universities in Islamabad. Participants were provided with an informed consent form before participating in the study. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, ensured confidentiality through anonymity, and informed participants of their right to withdraw at any point after providing feedback on the questionnaire. Prior to administering the instruments, participants received brief instructions to carefully read each statement and seek guidance from the researcher if they encountered any difficulties with the questionnaire. The forms were designed to collect demographic information first, followed by standardized instruments used to collect data on the study variable. Generic instructions for form filling were to read the statements and participants were instructed to respond according to their personal opinion or experience with the caution that there is no answer is right or wrong for any provided statement of the questionnaire. The sample size was calculated via G power, adhering to guidelines for statistical analyses. Data collection was followed by data analysis including establishing psychometric properties of the standardized instruments, correlation analysis, and conditional model testing by using Model 21 in Process Macro (Hayes, 2017) of IBM SPSS Statistics 25 version.

Results

Table 1 represents psychometric properties for all the standardized instruments. The Cronbach's α value for instruments ranged from 0,73 to 0,90 which is good to

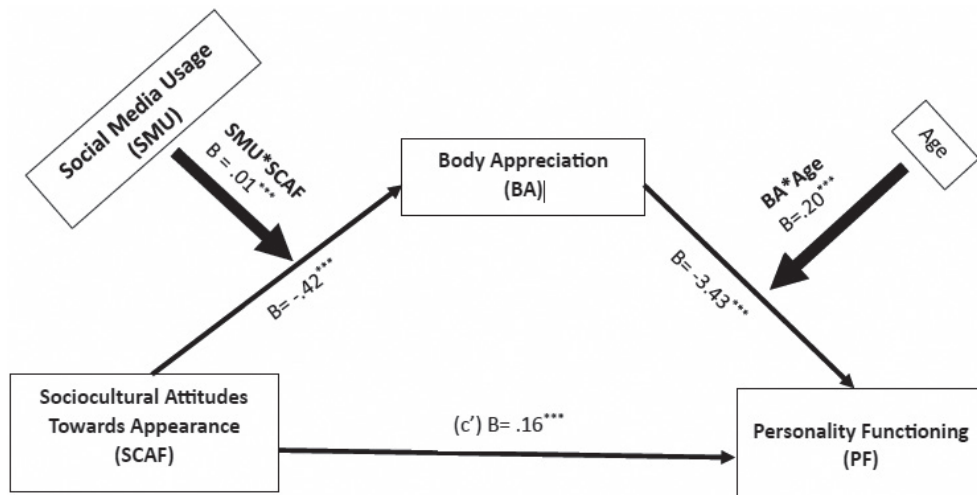


Fig. 1. Moderated Mediation Analysis Explaining Personality Functioning through Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance

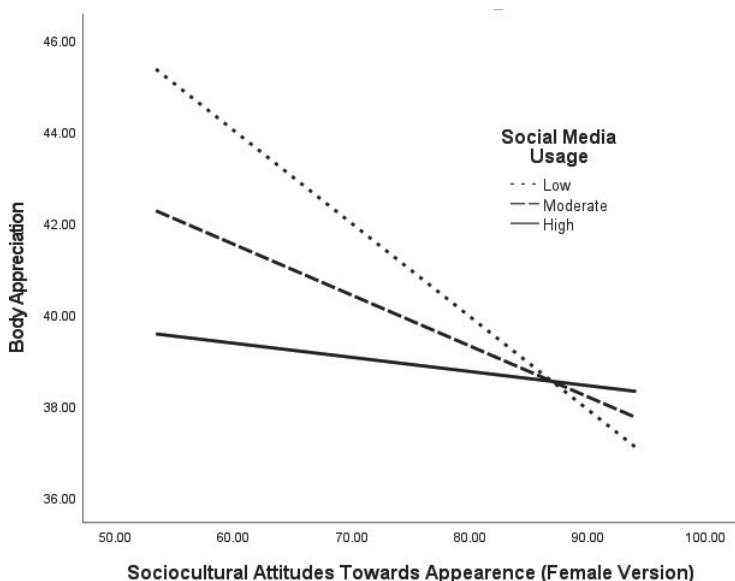


Fig. 2. Buffering Effect of Social Media Usage on Sociocultural Attitudes and Body Appreciation

excellent for research purposes. The relationship between variables was examined

by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

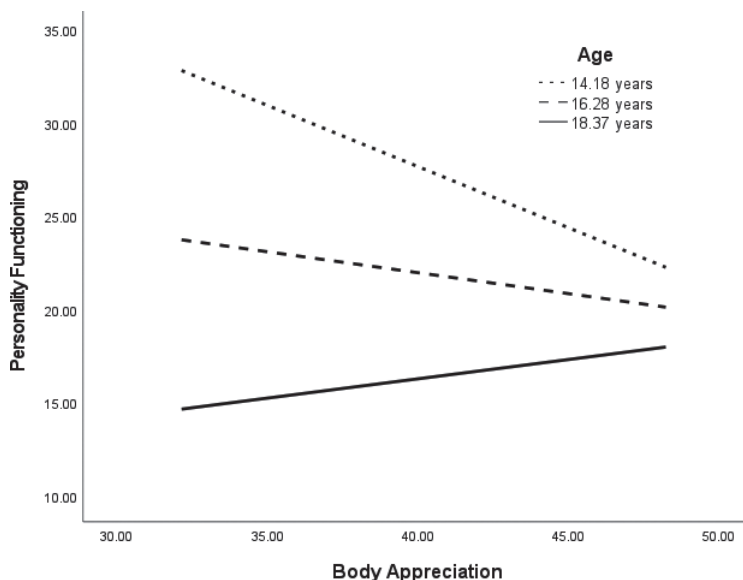


Fig. 3. Moderated Effect of Age on Body Appreciation and Personality Functioning among Female Adolescents

Table 1

Psychometric Properties of Scales for Female Adolescents ($N = 134$)

Sr. No	Scale	k	α	M	SD	Range	
						Actual	Potential
1.	ESMUQ	10	0,73	47,52	14,35	4–60	0–60
2.	Body Appreciation Scale-2	10	0,81	40,20	8,04	19–50	10–50
3.	SATAQ-4 R	31	0,90	73,75	20,32	31–139	31–155
4.	OPDSQS	12	0,90	21,69	12,54	0–48	0–48

Note. k = number of items, α = Cronbach Alpha, ESMUQ = ESM-Social Media Use Questionnaire, SATAQ-4 R = Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 Revised, OPD-SQS = OPD-Structure Questionnaire.

The findings of Table 2 showed a significant positive correlation of sociocultural attitudes toward appearance with impaired personality functioning whereas body appreciation is negatively correlated with sociocultural attitudes toward appearance. Social media usage is negatively associated with body

appreciation. Furthermore, when it comes to age, sociocultural attitudes toward appearance and impaired personality functioning showed a negative correlation with age.

Table 3 shows that sociocultural attitudes toward appearance had a significant indirect effect on personality functioning

Table 2

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Study
Variables for Female (N = 134)**

Sr. No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	ESMUQ		−0,17*	0,11	0,14	−0,12
2	Body Appreciation Scale-2			−0,29**	−0,14	−0,07
3	SATAQ-4R				0,29**	−0,19*
4	OPDSQS					−0,50**
5	Age					

Note. ESMUQ = ESM-Social Media Use Questionnaire, Insta = Instagram, BAS-2 = Body Appreciation Scale, SATAQ-4 R = Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 Revised, OPDSQS = OPD-Structure Questionnaire. * $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$; *** $p < 0,001$.

Table 3

**Explaining Sociocultural Attitude Toward Appearance and Personality
Functioning through Body Appreciation and Social Media Usage among Female
Adolescents (N = 134)**

	Body Appreciation					
	Estimates				95% C	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LL	UL
Constant	74,75	8,81	8,48	0,00	57,31	92,19
SCAF	−0,42	0,12	−3,58	0,00	−0,65	−0,19
SMU	−0,56	0,18	−3,13	0,00	−0,91	−0,21
SCAF × SMU	0,01	0,00	2,77	0,01	0,00	0,01
R ² change of SCAF × SMU	R ² change = 0,05, <i>F</i> (1, 130) = 7,67, <i>p</i> = 0,006					
Conditional indirect effects (SMU)						
Low	−0,20	0,05	−4,30	0,00	−0,30	−0,11
Medium	−0,11	0,03	−3,46	0,00	−0,17	−0,05
High	−0,03	0,04	−0,73	0,47	−0,11	0,05
Personality Functioning						
	Estimates				95% CI	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LL	UL
Constant	191,35	40,20	4,76	0,00	111,81	270,89
SCAF	0,16	0,05	3,17	0,00	0,06	0,26
BA	−3,43	1,03	−3,32	0,00	−5,48	−1,39
Age	−10,60	2,50	−4,24	0,00	−15,54	−5,66

Age × BA	0,20	0,06	3,14	0,00	0,07	0,32
R2 change of Age × BA	R ² change = 0,05, <i>F</i> (1, 129) = 9,86, <i>p</i> = 0,002					
Conditional indirect effects (Age)						
Low	−0,65	0,18	−3,55	0,00	−1,01	−0,29
Medium	−0,23	0,12	−1,96	0,05	−,46	0,00
High	0,19	0,17	1,12	0,27	−0,15	0,53

Note. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

through body appreciation. Internalized and pressurized sociocultural attitudes toward appearance predicted lower body appreciation, which further predicted impaired personality functioning. This mediated relationship between the sociocultural attitudes toward appearance and body appreciation is moderated by social media usage (see Figure 1). Female adolescents with low social media usage scored high on sociocultural attitudes toward appearance reflected in lower appreciation of their body (see Figure 2). Thus, frequent social media usage weakens the predictive relationship between internalized or pressurized sociocultural attitudes toward appearance and body appreciation. Social media usage functions as a buffer, protecting the self-image of female adolescents. The effect of body appreciation on personality functioning was also examined and findings showed that age moderated the impact of body appreciation on personality functioning among female adolescents in Pakistan (see Figure 1 and Figure 3). With increasing age, the negative relation between body appreciation and maladaptive personality functioning diminishes among females (see Figure 3).

Discussion

Adolescence is a time when individuals are particularly sensitive to social and environmental influences (Jaworska, MacQueen,

2015). Personality functioning becomes particularly important as it sets the foundation for future mental health and social relationships (Sawyer et al., 2018). The DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) emphasizes that proper adolescent functioning is crucial to prevent the development of mental health disorders. When adolescents navigate this phase successfully, they are more likely to develop into well-adjusted adults with stable personalities and healthy social lives. This stage of life is marked by an increased desire for independence, identity exploration, and the establishment of personal values (Jaworska, MacQueen, 2015).

The early adolescent years, specifically ages 12 to 14, represent a crucial developmental stage. Educational institutions play a vital role during this period by providing structured environments where young adolescents can explore their identities and develop essential life skills. This phase involves critical transitions that influence personality functioning and mental health (Jaworska, MacQueen, 2015). Schools not only offer academic knowledge but also serve as social arenas where students learn to navigate relationships and build self-esteem. Educators and school counselors are essential in supporting young adolescents as they face challenges related to body image, peer pressure, and self-perception. Negative experiences in school, such as bullying or academic failure,

can exacerbate issues related to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, potentially leading to long-term mental health problems (Jaworska, MacQueen, 2015).

The findings presented in Table 1 show that Cronbach's alpha reliability is adequate for the measurement of the purpose of the study (Taber, 2018). Table 2 shows that social media usage is negatively correlated to body appreciation which means that higher social media use is associated with lower body appreciation among female adolescents (Valkenburg, Peter, 2011; Perloff, 2014; Blakemore, Mills, 2014). Furthermore, body appreciation is negatively correlated with sociocultural attitudes, this indicates that higher sociocultural pressures related to appearance are associated with lower body appreciation (Palmisano, Guarino, 2020; Perloff, 2014). Moreover, the findings also show that sociocultural attitudes are positively correlated with impaired personality functioning which means an increase in societal pressure increases impaired personality functioning (Keith, 2019). The result also shows that a significant negative correlation exists between age and impaired personality functioning, this implies that as age increases, the level of impaired personality functioning decreases among female adolescents (Palmisano, Guarino, 2020; Perloff, 2014).

The findings presented in Table 3 and Figure 1 highlight the complex interplay between sociocultural attitudes, body appreciation, social media usage, and age. The mediation analysis shows that body appreciation serves as a mediator in the relationship between sociocultural attitudes and personality functioning. This means that when girls feel better about their bodies, it buffers the negative effects of societal

pressures on their personality functioning (Andrew, Tiggemann, Clark, 2016). Social media usage moderates the relationship between sociocultural attitudes and body appreciation. The moderation analysis (see Figure 2) further reveals that female adolescents with low social media usage exhibit high sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, which predicts a low appreciation of their bodies (Duan et al., 2022). Conversely, those who use social media more frequently are less likely to internalize sociocultural attitudes and external pressures regarding appearance, which positively influence body esteem. Social media usage functions as a buffer, protecting the self-image of female adolescents (Tylka et al., 2015).

Figure 3 shows that age acts as a moderator between body appreciation and personality functioning. As female adolescents grow older, the impact of body appreciation on their personality functioning diminishes (Fernandez et al., 2023; Zhang, Graham, Mroczek, 2022). Younger adolescents may be more vulnerable to negative influences, as they are still developing their sense of self and are more impressionable. Older adolescents, on the other hand, might develop a better understanding of the unrealistic nature of social media portrayals and thus be less affected by them. Recognizing the role of age can help in tailoring interventions to support adolescents at different stages of their development (Achour et al., 2019).

Adolescent functioning is crucial for the development of a stable personality and healthy social relationships. The interplay between social media usage, body image, and personality functioning highlights the complex dynamics that can influence adolescent mental health (Blakemore et al., 2012). Body appreciation serves as a key

mediator, while social media usage and age act as moderators that shape these relationships. Addressing these factors through early intervention and support can help adolescents navigate this critical stage of life, promoting healthier outcomes and preventing long-term psychological issues. By recognizing and addressing the specific challenges that adolescents encounter, we can foster their growth into well-adjusted and resilient adults (Valkenburg, Peter, 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article highlights the complex relationship between sociocultural pressures, body image, and social media usage in shaping the personality functioning of female adolescents. The findings reveal that societal expectations regarding appearance significantly influence body appreciation, which in turn impacts overall mental health and self-esteem. While social media is often viewed negatively, it can also mitigate these pressures by enhancing body esteem and protecting self-image.

As adolescents age, their ability to cope with and understand these pressures improves, indicating the need for age-specific interventions and support systems. The study shows that higher social media use and sociocultural pressures are linked to lower body appreciation among female adolescents, and societal pressures increase impaired personality functioning. However, impaired personality functioning decreases with age. These findings underscore the impact of social media and societal attitudes

on adolescents' mental health and self-perception. The mediation and moderation analyses provide valuable insights into the pathways through which sociocultural attitudes and social media usage impact body appreciation and personality functioning among female adolescents.

Limitations

Data was collected from adolescents enrolled in formal educational institutions thus, findings cannot be generalized to adolescents not in the education system. Data was collected from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, so it cannot be generalized to other cities of Pakistan.

Instruments were in English language thus, having a proficiency to read English is one of the main pre-requisites in data collection. A questionnaire-based survey method was used to collect data. Thus, making it vulnerable to common method bias. For future studies, extending the age bracket to young adults will help in explaining the prolonged effect of sociocultural attitudes toward appearance on social relations (e.g., marital relations). It is recommended to use multiple data collection methods like interviews, focus group discussions, and projective techniques for personality assessment. The study highlights the usage of social media platforms can help create awareness in schools, colleges, and universities regarding how it affects identity formation and self-concept. The results of the study can help to develop parental guidance strategies for body appreciation, positive self-esteem, and open communication.

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Contribution of the authors

Laiba Khan — Conceptualization of idea, writing and design of the manuscript, data collection.

Saba Tariq — Application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; data collection and analysis.

Nimrah Ishfaq — Supervised the study from conceptualization till article publication.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

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Хан Л. — концептуализация идеи, написание и оформление рукописи, сбор данных.

Тарик С. — применение статистических, математических и других методов для анализа данных; сбор и анализ данных.

Ишфак Н. — курировала исследование от разработки концепции до публикации статьи.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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