Social media usage and body image: The role of personality and stress

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Research has shown that, the more time a person spends on social media, the more likely they are to have higher levels of body dissatisfaction (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016).

Although many researchers have speculated poor body image to be more common amongst young women (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016), it has also been reported that men suffer through similar issues (Fox & Rooney, 2015).

Along with social media and poor body image having a strong correlation (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016), it has also been reported that personality is a significant moderator in that relationship (Swami et al., 2013).

In a study looking at the big five personality traits, they examined how neuroticism was also positively linked to ideal and actual weight discrepancies (Swami et al., 2013). This is also where the stress moderator may come in, since most people who are high on the neuroticism scale, are also high on the stress scale (Murray et al., 2016).

Researchers found stress to be most potent amongst individual who are also having body dissatisfaction issues (Murray et al., 2016).

In the present study we examined the relationship between social media usage and poor body image and the potential moderating effects of stress and personality.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that as social media usage increases, body dissatisfaction will decrease. Moreover, that the relationship between social media usage and body image will be stronger in individuals with high levels of neuroticism, low levels of conscientiousness, and high levels of perceived stress.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through social media websites (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat) as well as Rowan University students who were currently enrolled in the Essentials of Psychology course.