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

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Introduction

- 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.

Methods

Figure 1: Pie chart showing gender breakdown

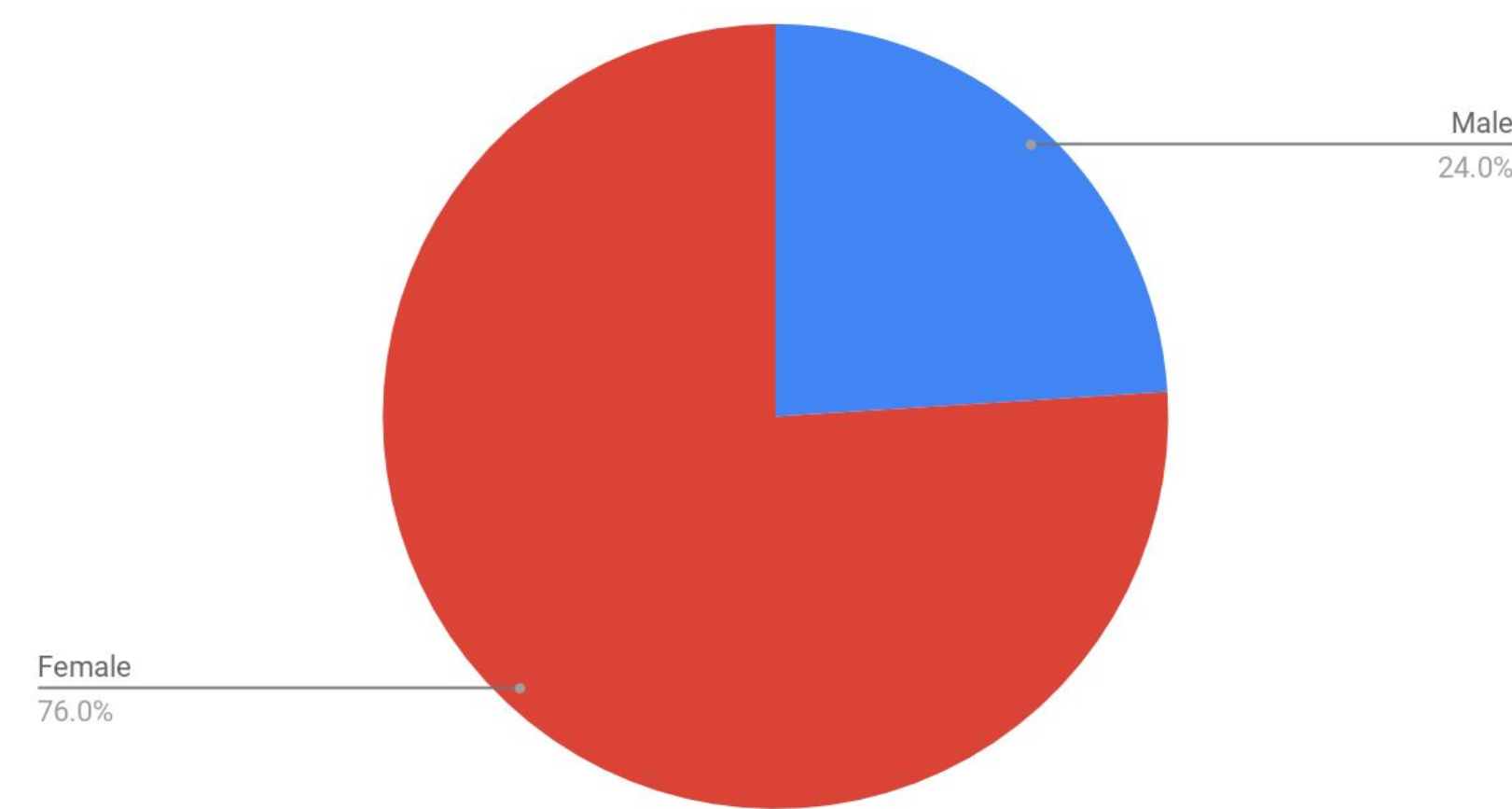
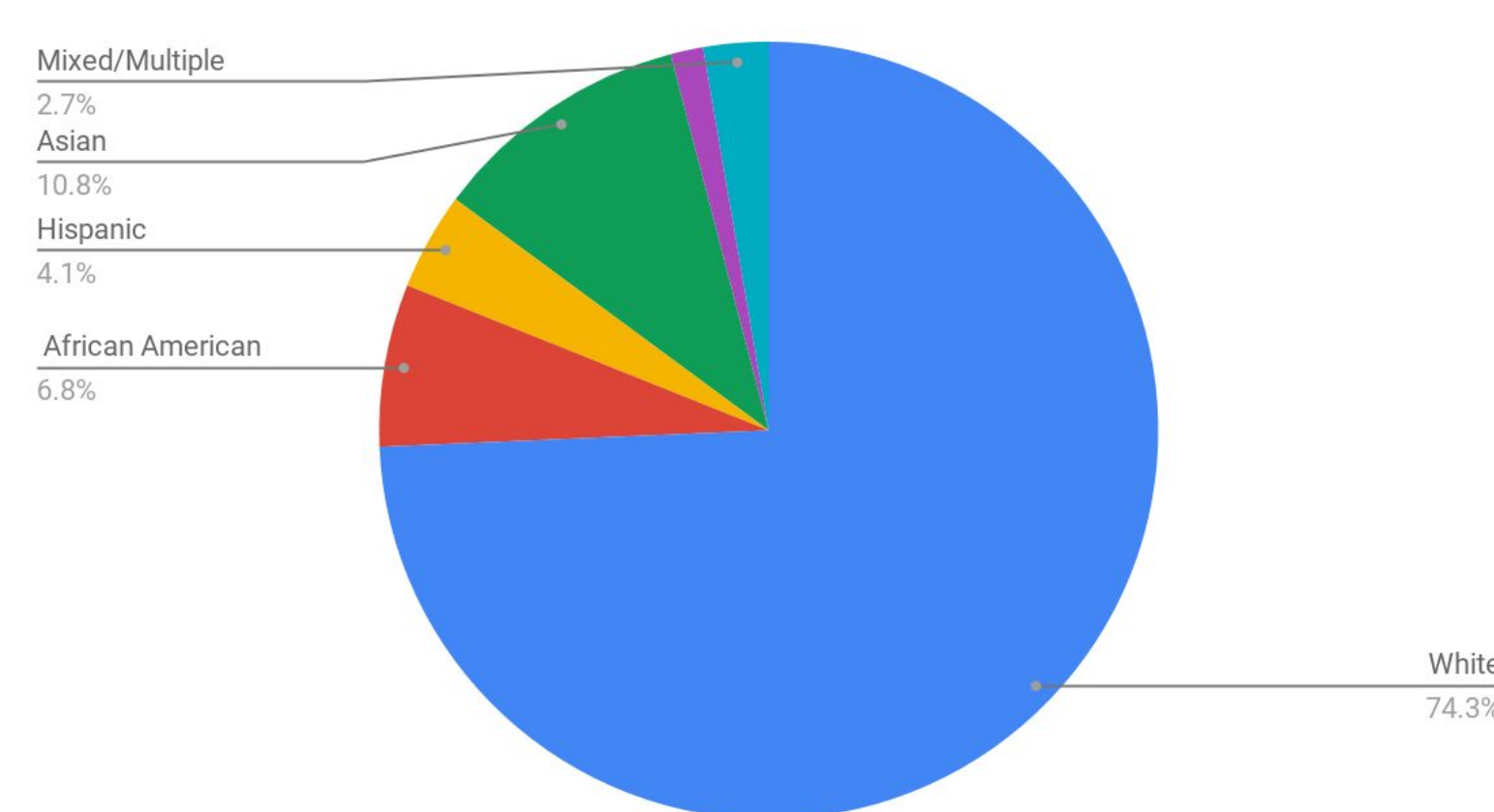


Figure 2: Pie chart showing ethnicity breakdown



Measures

- Dresden Body Image Questionnaire (DBIQ)
 - Measure of body image
- Social Media Use Inventory (SMUI)
 - Measure of how much time our participants spend on social media
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
 - Measure of how much stress our participants may be experiencing
- Ten-item Personality Inventory (TIPI)
 - Used this measure in order to access how strong certain personality traits were present in our participants

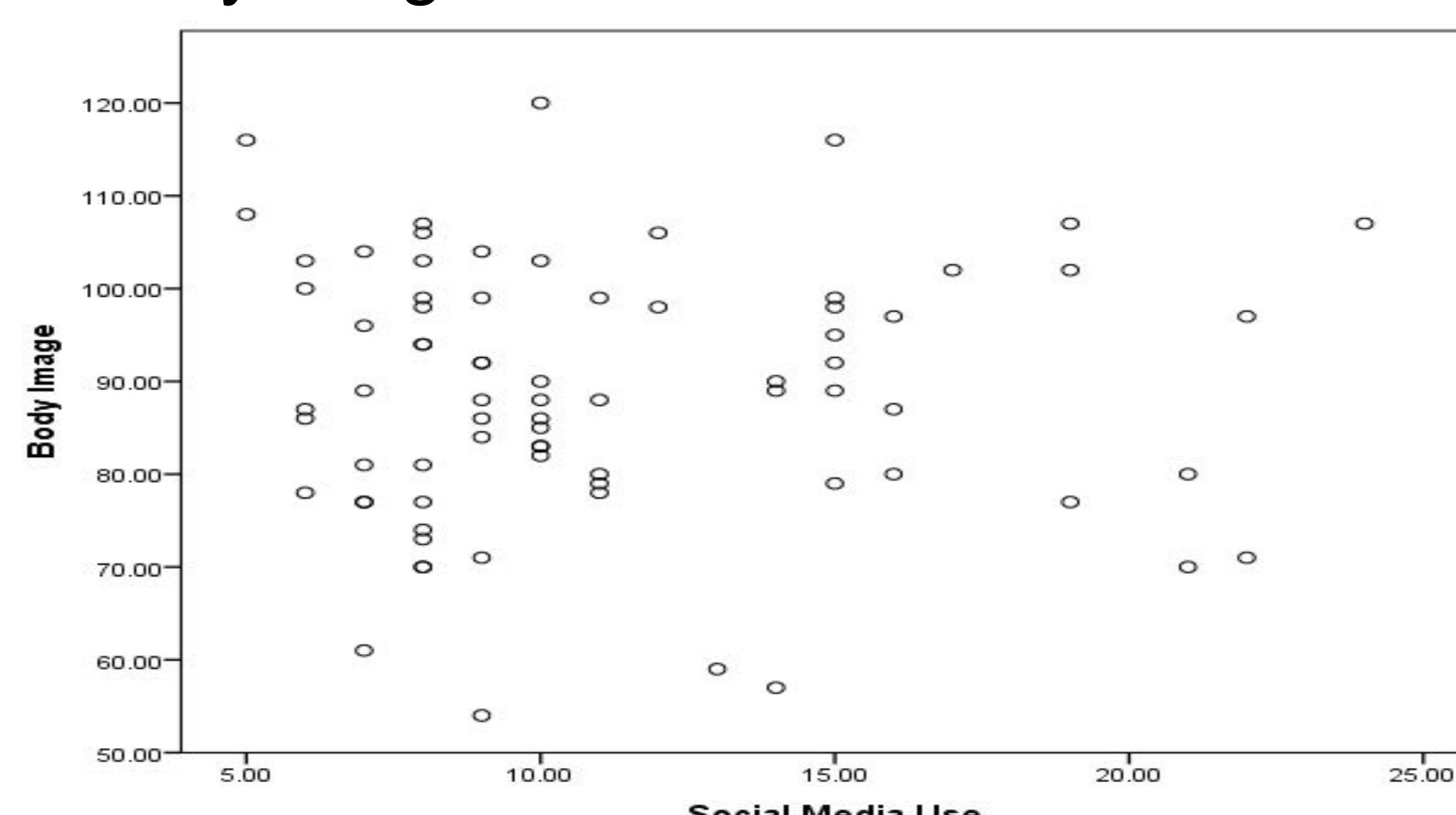
Results

Table 2: Correlations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Neuroticism	—				
2. Conscientiousness	-.20	—			
3. Social Media Use	.19	.02	—		
4. Body Image	-.25*	.13	.004	—	
5. Perceived Stress	.59**	-.37**	.16	-.20	—

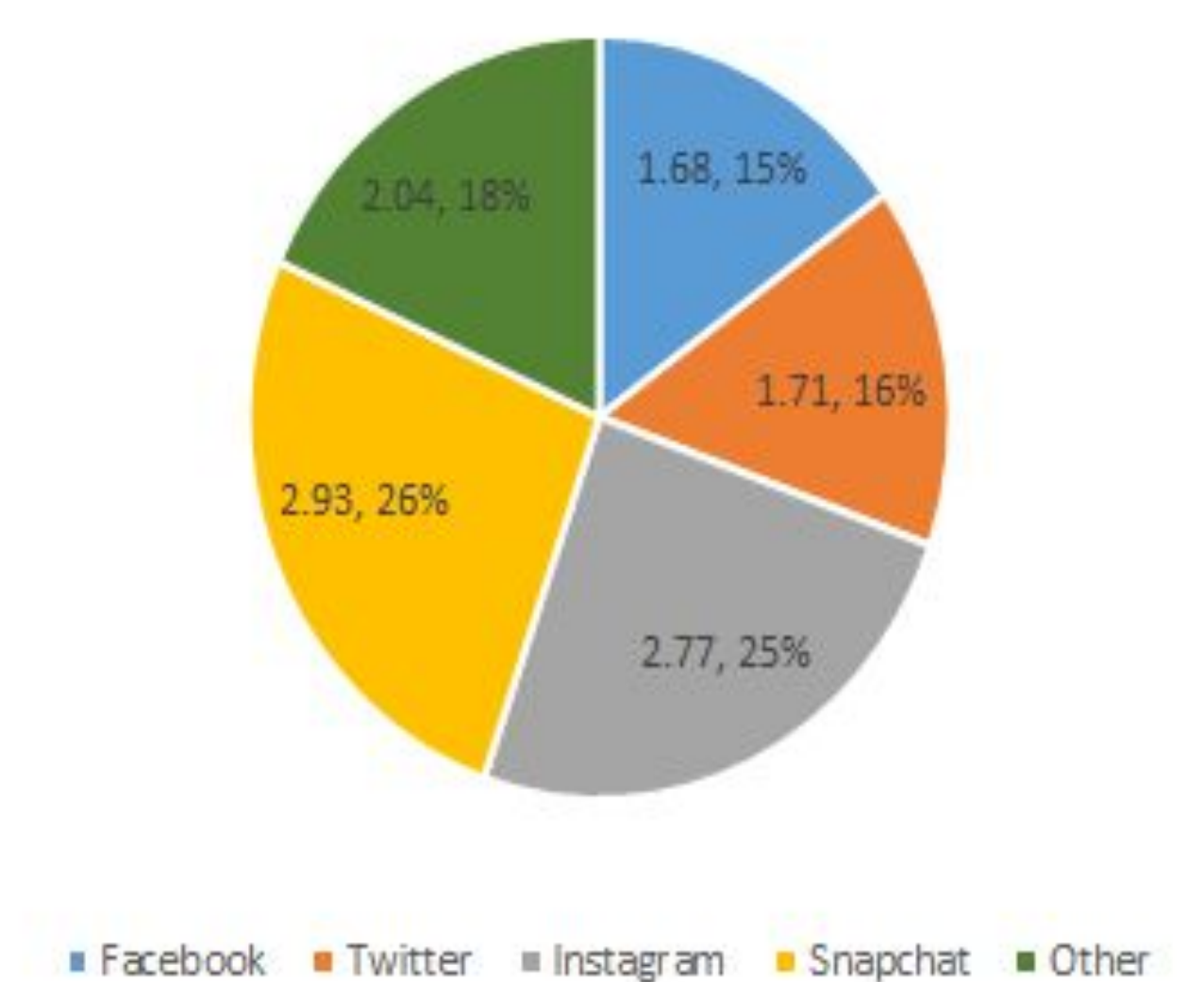
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 1: Scatterplot for social media use and body image



None of the regression models we ran were found to be significant (see Figure 1)

Figure 3: Pie chart showing social media platforms used in our study



Participants in our study reported using social media for an average of 11.13 hours a day. No participants reported never using social media.

Discussion

Our study appears to suggest an association between personality traits, such as neuroticism and conscientiousness, and the levels of someone’s perceived stress.

Our results also suggest an association between neuroticism and a person’s body image.

Our study did not find a relationship between social media use and body image or between stress and body image, contradicting prior research (Fardouly & Vartanian (2016); Murray et al., (2016)

Our results suggest that college students frequently use multiple forms of social media for at least an hour a day (on average).

Limitations and Future Research

One limitations was a relatively small sample size (n=75) which was not particularly diverse.

With the vast majority of participants reporting high levels of social media use, there was limited variability, potentially making it more difficult to find relationships.

Future research should use more extensive measures of personality to further examine potential links to body image and stress.

Future research may wish to use different measures and/or analyses when examining social media usage in college students to account for high levels of use.

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