

The purpose of the project was to conduct a study in order to find relationships between social media exposure and levels of body dissatisfaction. Studies concerning mass media, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders are numerous; however those concerning social media and body dissatisfaction are limited. The study sought to add to the research pool and spark more interest about the influence of social media. Data was collected through a self report survey created through SurveyMonkey. Before participants were recruited, the study had to be approved by the University of Rhode Island's Institutional Review Board. Once this was achieved, the survey was distributed to various introductory psychology courses with extra credit as an incentive and through informal means, for example through posts on Facebook, with entrance into a gift card raffle as the incentive. In total, 403 responses were collected and analyzed. A poster was created and presented at the URI Honors Program Conference. A research paper will also be completed for possible publication.

The survey consisted of demographic questions, questions from the Eating Disorder Inventory, the Body Image Assessment, and revised questions from the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire in order to support or not support the four hypotheses:

1. More time spent on social media is related to more body dissatisfaction
2. Participants who spend more time on social media are more likely to choose a smaller body frame on the Body Image Assessment scale
3. Age is a reliable predictor of body dissatisfaction where the older the person, the more likely they are dissatisfied with their body
4. Different forms of social media assert different influences on the user

After analyses, three of the four hypotheses were supported. The study did not prove a causal effect; however it does show that there are significant relationships between social media use and body dissatisfaction. One of the main findings was that, across all forms of social media studied in the current study (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube), time spent on social media was significantly different between participants who were satisfied with their appearance

and those who were not, where those who were not satisfied were more likely to spend more time on social media.

Overall, the study supports the idea that more research in this field should be conducted. The current study displayed a significant relationship between body dissatisfaction and social media use. Since body dissatisfaction is one of the major risk factors of eating disorders, research would add important and meaningful information to the community.