



**Universidad
Europea MADRID**

TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

**Title: Young adults body image, social media use and the
importance of social support**

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Grado en psicología (modalidad 100% inglés)

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Number of words: 7238

Abstract:

Body image, social media and social support are topics that in the past have been researched to a significant extent. However, to the authors knowledge the combination of these topics remained as not a common combination. The survey was conducted with the questionnaires BAS-2, OSSS-3 and BSMAS to gain a better understanding of the possible correlations between body image, social support, and social media. A total of 107 participants completed the full survey and consented to having their data collected and analyzed for the purposes of this thesis. The results obtained demonstrated that there was a statistically significant, but weak negative correlation between the BSMAS and the BAS-2 questionnaires. This indicated a negative correlation between social media use and body image. Furthermore, the data analysis uncovered a weak, but statistically significant positive correlation between the OSSS-3 and BAS-2 questionnaires. This indicated a correlation between social support and body image.

Key words: *Body image, social media, social support*

Acknowledgments:

I would like to take this opportunity to show my most sincere gratitude to my tutor Juan Carlos for his dedication to my thesis, his patience and for all the knowledge he has provided me with in this process. I am also grateful to my devoted professors at the university, for inspiring me to continue my education further, and for all the valuable knowledge they have installed in me. I would also like to thank my practice tutor Dra. Manuela for encouraging me to believe in my own abilities. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge my parents Kari and Ole for their devotion to me and their everlasting support and belief in me. Moreover, I would like to give my sincerest gratitude to my partner Raul for his belief in me and supportive words when I needed it the most. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to all my supportive friends, with special note to Maria, Sigrid, Isabel, Aleksa, and Kimia that all have been a huge help in the process of writing my bachelor thesis and collecting data from all around the world.

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Body image:

Body image, an essential part of how humans see, evaluate, and consider their own bodies. The interest encompassing the changes in the population's body image is something that has been an important and "hot topic" in scientific communities in recent years (Cash, 2012). This has led to a recent surge in the acknowledgment of the importance of body image, perhaps particularly in the younger parts of the population. Young people between 16-25 years of age, have identified their body image as the third biggest cause of concern for their mental health (Mental Health Foundation, 2019).

Among other factors, body image influences actions, feelings, and behaviors. Based on positive or negative associations to one's own body image, people could alter their self-perception accordingly (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021). The definition of body image as a general concept, has been described as a combination of thoughts and feelings, that one could have regarding one's own body (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021).

These thoughts and feelings could indeed be both positive or negative, but they could also be described as a mix of positive and negative thoughts and feelings regarding the person's own body. Four types of body images have been described (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021). The first one is the perceptual body image. This has been described as the way the person perceives their own body (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021).

This perceptual image is not always an accurate representation of reality. Someone very small could perceive themselves as very large or vice versa. The second type of body image was the affective body image. This had been described as the way one felt about one's own body. It could be positive feelings, such as feeling content, or it could be negative feelings such as feeling disgust for one's own body (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021). The third body image was the cognitive body image. This was described as the way one reflected upon and thought about one's own body (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021). The last body image was the behavioral body image. This body image consisted of behaviors one may engage in due to the thoughts and feelings one could have regarding the body and image (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021).

There are several important aspects that influence the current body image of a person. These influences may be both external and internal. For instance, an internal influence could be the person's personality. An external influence could be social media, such as Facebook or Instagram, and the frequency and usage of these applications (National Eating Disorder Collaboration, 2021).

However, these were not the only factors that influenced body image. A sociocultural theory described as the tripartite model, suggested that the body image was impacted by family, peers, and the use of media (Thompson et al., 1999). The impact by media on body image could be of high significance. Constant images that featured the ideal body appearance, and the exposure to body fixated material was likely to affect the perceptions and emotions (Thompson et al., 1999). This exposure could lead to internalization and comparison with unobtainable bodies. As it could be described as impossible to obtain the look of a strongly photo shopped picture, this could lead to dissatisfaction and a sensation of failure (Thompson et al., 1999).

A further influence on the body image could be gender. Authors found that girls viewed more content featuring body perfection, hence they experienced more negative effects of social media (Bell et al., 2021). On the contrary, some boys using social media experienced to a greater degree motivation and positive emotions related to their body image when viewing social media posts (Bell et al., 2021). Hence, social media could have both a positive and a negative effect on the user's body image (Bell et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a study revealed that 88% of women and 65 % of men compared their bodies to images on social media (Blackford, 2020). An additional study found that adolescent girls were more influenced than adolescent boys by the amount of likes and comments they received on social media (Kenny et al., 2017). Moreover, authors found that comments young girls received on social media platforms primarily were focused on their appearance. These comments received on social media regarding the girl's body and appearance, were found to influence the girl's body image (Gill & Scharff, 2011).

However, it may be considered remarkably important to note that there have been several studies on body image differences in boys and girls, with inconclusive results regarding gender. Several studies have also found boys experiencing high degrees of body dissatisfaction due to muscular ideals on social media (Gültzow et al., 2020).

1.2 Social media:

Young people of this day and age in the western world, have constantly been subjected to the influences of social media. These social platforms have been based on visuals, and in many cases, they have had a superior emphasis on appearance and creating an illusion of the perfect and desired body (Rodgers & Melioli, 2016). Social media has been defined as online applications allowing for interactions with people, maintaining a relationship with others, being part of interest groups and developing the individual's presence on the applications (Kietzman et al., 2011).

Not only could the presence on these social media platforms affect the body image, but the act of editing and applying filters to pictures of oneself, could also negatively affect the body image (Walker et al., 2019). Being presented with the possibility of editing one's picture into the perfect self, could be a contributor to a negative body image. This trend on social media has contributed to a rise in cosmetic surgery among young women (Walker et al., 2019). The age group that was investigated for the purpose of this thesis was between 18-29 years old. Recent research indicated that at least 84 % of this group used social media (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). When investigating this group's social media habits, it became evident that some of the most used social media platforms were Snapchat and Instagram (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

Authors have found Instagram and Snapchat to be the applications that correlated the most with a negative body image, more than other applications, such as Facebook (Vandenbosch et al., 2021). Instagram and Snapchat were indeed among the applications that were used with the highest frequency within the young population (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

1.3 Social support:

Social support has been defined as a psychosocial resource that could be reached by the person within their social network, and their available interpersonal contacts (Kocalevent et al., 2018). One of the main interests the author of this thesis had, was to find out if social support would affect the use of social media and the body image. Perceived social support indicated how the subject perceived the amount of social support received from friends, family, and other sources (Ioannou et al., 2019).

The author of this thesis was interested to see if there was a connection between the use of social media and social support. Furthermore, the author was interested in how social support could impact the body image. Previous authors found a significant difference between subjects with high and low social support, and their perceived body image (Merianos et al., 2012). High levels of social support correlated positively to high levels of body image satisfaction. On the other hand, low levels of social support correlated positively to a negative body image (Merianos et al., 2012). Concerning offline social support specifically, and internet addiction, authors found that having a larger amount of offline support, correlated negatively with internet addiction (Wang & Wang, 2013).

1.4 Objectives

The main objective of this thesis was to find out if there were any correlations between body image, social support, and the use of social media. It was also of interest to see how the social media usage could impact the body image. Moreover, there was an interest in discovering if the amount of social support would impact the body image. Furthermore, it was of significance to discover how social support could relate with the use of social media.

1.5 Hypothesis

Hypothesis nr 1:

Higher levels of social support will correlate with less use of social media.

Hypothesis nr 2:

Less use of social media will correlate with a better body image.

Hypothesis nr 3:

Higher levels of social support will correlate with a better body image.

2. Method:

Design:

Concerning the sample that was utilized in the research of this thesis, it was a convenience sample that was taken from the population of interest. The participants of the sample were found by using different apps and social media. The author reached out through WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and Outlook mail to the participants. The design that was used was a correlational methodological design. The survey was conducted as a cross-sectional study. Dependent variables that were measured for the purpose of this thesis was body image (BAS-2) and social support (OSSS-3). Independent variables that were measured was the social support (OSSS-3) and social media usage (BSMAS).

Participants:

The total number of participants that completed the full survey was 107. The participants had to be between 18-29 years of age to be able to take part in the study. Regarding differences in gender, 59.8 % of the participants were female, 39.3 % of the participants were male, and 0.9 % of the participants preferred not to state their gender. There was a rather large variation between the different nationalities that participated in the study.

The following nationalities participated in the study: Algerian, American, Norwegian, Mexican, Brazilian, British, Canadian, Danish, Finnish, French, German, Honduran, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Peruvian, Portuguese, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss, and Venezuelan nationals. The answers were grouped into group 1 Europeans, group 2 Americans, group 3 Latin Americans, group 4 Asian, and group 5 Others.

Instruments:

BSMAS, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale:

Three questionnaires were used in the gathering of data. Firstly, the questionnaire Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) was used to gather information regarding the social media habits of the participants. The scale was developed by Andreassen and colleagues (Luo et al., 2021). This scale was developed specifically with the aim of exposing possible addiction to social media (Luo et al., 2021). Andreassen first developed the BFAS to measure Facebook addiction (Andreassen et al., 2012). Later the BSMAS was developed to measure a broader social media addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017). McDonald's omega demonstrated good internal consistency for the BSMAS measure (Luo et al., 2021). Furthermore, BSMAS had demonstrated good psychometric values, and this was an important reason for selecting this questionnaire for the survey (Luo et al., 2021).

BSMAS is based on Griffith's six criteria for addiction, and it has been a questionnaire of high regard within the scientific communities (Luo et al., 2021). It is a self-report questionnaire. All together BSMAS consist of six items, and it is a five-point Likert scale. Responses range from "Very rarely" to "Very often". The total possible score ranges from six points being the lowest possible score, to thirty points, with thirty being the highest addiction possible (Luo et al., 2021). Receiving more than 12 points is an indicator of social media addiction (Balamurugan, 2022).

BAS-2, Body Appreciation Scale:

The second questionnaire that was used for the purposes of this thesis, was the Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2). The BAS was first created in 2005 by Avalos and colleagues. The scale consisted of thirteen items, with focus on measuring the degree of acceptance and opinions towards one's own body. BAS has been well accepted by the scientific community and received psychometric support (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). There was proven an invariance between the genders with a confirmatory factor analysis, and the internal consistency was proven to be good, along with the validity of the BAS-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

The body appreciation scale was originally developed to better be able to evaluate the body image and appreciation without emphasizing possible negative implications (Zarate et al., 2021). The authors of this measurement believed that there were not sufficient measurements for the positive aspects of the body image (Avalos & Tylka, 2005). The authors found that the BAS predicted body image, this made BAS highly relevant for the purposes of this thesis (Avalos & Tylka, 2005).

A newer version of the BAS was BAS-2, this was a reviewed version of BAS (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). This was the same scale, but the authors reworded and removed items to make the scale more applicable to both men and women. The BAS-2 had 10 items instead of 13 items. BAS-2 is a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Always” to “Never” (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The higher the score, the higher is the positive body appreciation and body image. The scores range between five and fifty, with five being the lowest body appreciation and negative body image possible, and fifty the highest body appreciation and positive body image possible (Zarate et al., 2021).

[OSSS-3, Oslo Social Support Scale:](#)

The Oslo Social support scale is a scale with good proven construct and predictive validity. The OSSS-3 has been well accepted by the scientific community and has been administered in many studies. The OSSS-3 has a good internal consistency. Furthermore, it is a short and concise scale, with three items. It is a Likert scale, ranging from four to five alternatives. The scale measured what was needed to know about social support for this study, had good validity and therefore was the scale of choice. The scores range from three to fourteen possible points. If the participant had below eight points that indicated poor social support, between nine and eleven indicated moderate social support, and above twelve points indicated strong social support (Kocalevent et al., 2018).

[Ad-Hoc questionnaire:](#)

Additionally, demographic questions were added to the survey. These questions included the variables of the participants gender, age, and nationality. Moreover, consent forms were added to comply with the ethical guidelines. The consent forms were also added to make sure the participants understood the consequences of conducting the survey, and to formalize their consent. Google forms were used to create the survey.

Procedure:

The procedure of conducting this thesis started with reviewing different topics before the author found the one of highest interest. Then, the author worked with the professors to obtain ethical clearance from the University. Once the author received ethical clearance, the process of conducting a literature review started. After this, the author found relevant questionnaires to conduct the research. These questionnaires were uploaded to google forms, to create a survey measuring the areas of interest. Google forms is a free survey administering software, created by Google (<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>).

This software allowed the author to administer the survey and gather appropriate information from the participants. The amount of time needed to complete the survey for the participants was approximately seven minutes, including reading the informed consent. The relatively short amount of time made the survey easy to administer, and convenient for the participants to complete. In the beginning of the survey, the participants were presented with informed consent to apply with the ethical guidelines.

The informed consent assured the participant's that any information given would remain confidential, and that the study was voluntary. Furthermore, the informed consent consisted of information regarding the purpose of the study. The informed consent was mandatory to sign to do the survey.

The participants were also presented with the authors contact information in case they had any further questions or concerns. After the participants agreed and consented, they were presented with questions regarding their demographics. Then the participants were presented with a little message explaining how to do the survey.

Firstly, participants were presented with the OSSS-3, to evaluate social support. Then, the participants were presented with BSMAS, to evaluate the participants use of social media. Finally, the participants were presented with the BAS-2, to evaluate their body image. After the end of the survey, the participants were given a message expressing gratitude for their time and their participation. All together the questionnaires consisted of 19 items. When including the questions about demographics and informed consent, the total amount of items was 23.

Data analysis:

Initially, the data was registered and organized using the program Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The data analysis program JASP (Jeffery's Amazing Statistics Program), a free source for statistical analysis, was used to conduct the statistical analysis of the data collected with the surveys. The descriptive statistics obtained by the data, were demonstrated by the respective means, percentages, and standard deviations.

The descriptive statistics summarized the main characteristics of this analyses data set. The inferential statistics of this thesis were based on the descriptive statistics outcome. Inferential statistics such as Spearman's rho correlation, were conducted on the data material, as the sample was not normally distributed, to test the hypothesis.

3.Results:

The results obtained when conducting the data analysis have been demonstrated below. First one may observe the descriptive statistics and frequency tables for age, gender, and nationality. Spearman's rho was used to analyze the correlations between the different questionnaires.

3.1 Frequency tables and descriptive statistics:

Table 1:

Frequencies for Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	42	39.252	39.252	39.252
2	43	40.187	40.187	79.439
3	22	20.561	20.561	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	107	100.000		

Per table 1, one could observe that the group with the biggest frequency was group 2 (24-26 years of age) with 40.18% of the participants.

The group with the second most participants was group 1 (18-23 years of age) with 39.25% of the participants. The smallest group was group 3 (27-29) with 20.56 % of the participants.

Table 2:

Frequencies for Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	42	39.252	39.252	39.252
2	64	59.813	59.813	99.065
3	1	0.935	0.935	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	107	100.000		

Per table 2, one could observe that the largest group was group 2 (female) with 59.81% of the participants. One could observe group 1 (male) had 39.25% of the participants. One could observe that group 3 was the smallest group with 0.93% (prefer not to say) with only one participant in this group

Table 3:

Frequencies for Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	78	72.897	72.897	72.897
2	6	5.607	5.607	78.505
3	14	13.084	13.084	91.589
4	5	4.673	4.673	96.262
5	4	3.738	3.738	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	107	100.000		

Per table 3, one could observe that group 1 (Europeans) had the largest percentage of the sample with 72.89%. The smallest group of the sample was group 5 (Others) with 3.73% of the sample.

Table 4:

Descriptive Statistics	BSMAS BAS-2 OSSS-3		
	Valid	107	107
Missing	0	0	0
Median	15.000	33.000	9.000
Mean	14.477	32.673	9.187
Std. Deviation	4.519	9.123	2.181
Variance	20.422	83.222	4.757
Shapiro-Wilk	0.984	0.984	0.960
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	0.236	0.224	0.003
Minimum	6.000	11.000	4.000
Maximum	26.000	50.000	13.000

Per table 4 one could observe the mean for BSMAS was 14.47. The lowest score one could receive was 6, and the highest score one could receive was 30. The cut-off score for social media addiction tendencies was 12. The mean of this sample was rather high, as it would demonstrate that the average participant would have addictive social media tendencies. For BAS-2, the mean was 32.67. The lowest possible score was 5, and the highest score possible was 50. The average participant seemed to score along the middle regarding the body image satisfaction. For OSSS-3 the mean was 9.18. The highest possible score was 14. The average participant seemed to fall into the category of moderate social support, that was when the participants received between 9-11 points. Std. Deviation for BSMAS was 4.51, for BAS-2 9.12 and for OSSS-3 it was 2.18. Median for BSMAS was 15, for BAS-2 it was 33 and for OSSS-3 it was 9. The p-value of Shapiro wilk for OSSS-3 was 0.003. This demonstrated that the p-value was significant, and the null hypothesis could be rejected. BSMAS had a Shapiro wilk p-value of 0.23 and BAS-2 had a p-value of 0.22, for these scales we could not reject the null hypothesis.

3.2 Correlations:

Table 5:

Spearman's Correlations				
Variable	BSMAS	BAS-2	OSSS-3	3
1. BSMAS N	—			
Spearman's rho	—			
p-value	—			
2. BAS-2 N	107	—		
Spearman's rho	-0.294	—		
p-value	0.002	—		
3. OSSS-3 N	107	107	—	
Spearman's rho	-0.077	0.247	—	
p-value	0.431	0.010	—	

Table 5 demonstrated that there was a weak negative correlation between BAS-2 and BSMAS, with a Spearman's rho value of -0.29 and a significant p-value of 0.002. This would mean that the participants with higher BAS-2 scores, would have lower BSMAS scores. Furthermore, one could observe a weak positive correlation between OSSS-3 and BAS-2 with a Spearman's rho value of 0.247 and a significant p-value of 0.01. This would mean that the participants with higher scores on BAS-2 also would have higher scores on OSSS-3. One could also observe a Spearman's rho of -0.077 and a non-significant p-value of 0.43 measuring the variables of BSMAS and OSSS-3. This would indicate no correlation or statistical significance between OSSS-3 and BSMAS.

4. Discussion:

When reflecting upon the results of this thesis, there are indeed several important aspects that need to be considered and further discussed. In the initiation of this thesis, the main objectives were to discover if there were any correlations between body image, social support, and social media use. It was also of interest to see how the social media usage could impact the body image. Moreover, there was an interest in discovering if the amount of social support would impact the body image. Furthermore, it was of significance to discover how social support could relate with the use of social media. This was the main interest of the author, and these were also the variables that the author tried to measure when administrating the survey.

Concerning the first hypothesis of this thesis “Higher levels of social support will correlate with less use of social media.” This hypothesis was measured by the questionnaires OSSS-3 and BSMAS.

It became clear when analyzing the data, that there was no correlation or statistical significance to note between the answers obtained in these two questionnaires in the survey. This data can be observed in table 5. With a p-value of 0.43, the data demonstrated no statistical significance. Additionally, the Spearman’s rho value of -0.07 demonstrated no correlation between the variables in the survey. Based on the results from the data analysis, one could reject the first hypothesis, and state that there is no apparent correlation between social media use, and social support according to this data. From the results obtained when measuring the first hypothesis, one can recognize that these results do not have statistical significance or correlations.

However, it is important to note that results without any correlations also demonstrate the views and responses of the participants, even if the responses the author expected and had hypothesized indeed are different from the results obtained. It is also important to mention that the results of not statistically significant data, and no correlations could certainly also be a valuable contributor to the discussion. Additionally, these findings can also provide important insights for scientific research and needs to be reported with the same diligence as significant findings. However, it is very important and beneficial to reflect upon why the first hypothesis had to be rejected, and why it appears to be no statistical significance or correlations.

The author had found some, but not a lot of research focusing purely on social support, that also compared this variable to social media use. However, one study that measured offline social support in connection with internet addiction, found a negative correlation between offline social support, and internet addiction (Wang & Wang, 2013). There are several possible explanations as to why the author of this thesis did not get statistically significant or correlating results with the combination of the OSSS-3 and BSMAS scales.

It could be that there for this sample was no significant correlation between the social support the participants had, and the use of social media. However, after considering previous research, the author of this thesis found it to be a rather large possibility, that the combination of the measures OSSS-3 and BSMAS was not measuring the exact variables the author wanted to measure.

OSSS-3 is a rather short questionnaire, consisting of only three items. This is likely to have impacted the outcome of the results. The items in this questionnaire did likely not provide sufficient items to in depth measuring the social support for the purposes of this thesis.

Previously OSSS-3 has been used more as a tool to measure large normative populations, not to in depth understand the participants social support (Kocalevent et al., 2018). The results obtained from the measures of the first hypothesis may have a methodological weakness due to the combination of questionnaires. Furthermore, the results could be impacted by the items not measuring the variables the author intended.

Additionally, BSMAS consisted of only 6 items, and the low item density combined with the low item density of OSSS-3 could have had an impact on the result. It is possible that it was difficult to find any correlations between two scales with so few items. Another factor that may have influenced the result not having statistical significance or correlation, was the large number of different nationalities in a relatively low sample size.

When considering the second hypothesis of this thesis, it stated that “Less use of social media will correlate with a better body image.” This hypothesis was measured by the questionnaires BSMAS and BAS-2. When reviewing the data in table 5, one can observe that this hypothesis indeed can find some support in the data. The hypothesis can be confirmed.

The data demonstrated that there was a weak negative correlation between social media and body image. This was a weak correlation, but it did have statistical significance. The Spearman’s rho had a value of -0.29, and the p-value was 0.002.

One can understand from the data that participants that had low scores on body image, had high scores on social media usage and vice versa. These scores could indicate that the participants with a higher score on body image had a lower score on social media. This indicates that the participants that used social media less, had a more positive body image.

The weak negative correlation of the variables supports previous findings, that also indicated that the use of social media can affect the body image negatively (Gill & Scharff, 2011). The results that the author of this thesis obtained, could also be seen in comparison to previous research findings describing that using more social media, lead to a higher exposure to filters and pictures advertising the “perfect body” (Walker et al., 2019).

Using these apps contributed to a more negative body image, furthermore Walker (2019) also found that the usage of social media leads to more people getting cosmetic surgery. Looking at the results from previous research, and considering the results obtained in this thesis, there may indeed be an indication that the use of social media can have an adverse effect on the body image of young adults and teenagers.

The results obtained may show a trend towards supporting the inkling that excessive exposure to social media could be damaging for the body image. Being excessively exposed to bodies that are considered the ideal, may lead one to be more critical towards one's own body. The weak, but important correlation obtained in this thesis demonstrates that there is a likelihood of participants body image being affected by their use of social media.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most common worries for young adults today is their bodies and the way they consider them (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). The importance young adults put on their physical appearance, seems to possibly be more excessive when they use greater amounts of social media. It will be interesting to see if there in the future will be additional awareness around the possible damaging abilities of social media, and if the general population will start taking steps to protect their mental health and their body image, by possibly reducing their social media use.

An important aspect to reflect upon, is that the author initially wanted to measure if the time spent on social media would influence the body image. However, the BSMAS did not specifically measure time spent on social media, and this is indeed something the author finds limiting when reviewing the results from the analysis. Being able to measure the amount of time spent on social media specifically, and how this could correlate with the body image, would have been an interesting correlation to observe.

Finally, the third hypothesis stated that "Higher levels of social support will correlate with a better body image." When observing the measure for social support OSSS-3 and the measure for body image BAS-2, one may observe a weak positive correlation with Spearman's rho of 0.247 and a significant p-value of 0.010 in table 5. These results provide support for the hypothesis, and one may confirm the hypothesis. Participants having higher scores in social support, also had higher scores in body image. The results had a weak correlation, but statistical significance.

Another author found a significant difference in participants that had high and low social support, and their body image (Merianos et al., 2012). The author found a positive correlation between high levels of social support and a more positive body image (Merianos et al., 2012). The results obtained in this thesis can support the positive correlation found by Merianos (2012), considering a positive correlation between body image and social support.

Even if the results obtained in this thesis can only be considered to have a weak positive correlation, they could be considered slightly important for future research, as the results obtained also support previous findings. It is of high importance for the author to make clear that all the correlations that were found only had a weak correlation. Over-interpreting these results as revolutionary or extremely significant would not be beneficial for future research or indeed for this thesis. However, they may be useful indications for future research, and these results could also be important in supporting previous findings.

Regarding the means for the different questionnaires, they can be observed in table 4. BSMAS had a mean of 14.47. Having a score above 12 points, the participant was considered to have social media addiction tendencies. Considering this cut-off score, the mean in this sample can be described as medium- high (Balamurugan, 2022). The fact that the average participant had social media addiction tendencies, is worrying and interesting at the same time. These results can be an important consideration when reviewing our own social media tendencies, and how easy it is to become addicted.

The questionnaire BAS-2 had a mean of 32.63. Considering that the lowest score one could receive was 5 and the highest score 50 (Zarate et al., 2021). These results put the average participant along the midline when considering their body image. The higher the score, the more positive the body image and appreciation (Zarate et al., 2021). Considering these results, the average participant seems to not have an extreme body image, in neither positive nor negative direction. The OSSS-3 had a mean of 9.18. This mean indicates that the average participant is not too extreme in either positive or negative direction, regarding their social support. Officially, the average participant would have moderate social support (Kocalevent et al., 2018).

When observing the frequency tables for age in table 1, one may conclude that in this study the largest group of participants was between 24-26 years of age. Arguably, this is an age group that had their teenage years in the beginning of the social media era.

However, it may be discussed that if this thesis had measured a younger part of the population, such as teenagers, the data could have provided the thesis with different results within the correlations. As today's teenagers may have been subjected to social media at a younger age, they may also have had different results. Though, this is something that could be investigated more in the future. Most of the studies the author reviewed about social media and body image, had a younger target population than what was the target population of this thesis.

This is something that needs to be considered when interpreting the data obtained. When observing the frequency table for gender in table 2, one can note that 59.81% of the participants were female. Hence, the results obtained demonstrate with a higher frequency the female perspective on the measured variables. The differences in gender cannot be considered extremely large, as the male participants made up 39.25% of the sample size, however it is possible that the difference in the gender quantity influenced the outcome.

When observing the frequency table for nationality in table 3, one can observe that the largest group was Europeans with 72.87 % of the participants.

This group contained 12 of the 22 different nationalities, and this is more than half of the nationalities in this survey in only one group. Even if everyone in group 1 are Europeans, they are likely to have cultural differences among themselves. This may have made the correlation with the other groups challenging, as it is likely to be several individual differences within the group. Furthermore, it may be considered important to note that the remaining four groups had rather few participants compared to the European group, and this is likely to have impacted the possibility to obtain any significant results based on nationality.

4.1 Limitations:

After conducting the data analysis, reviewing, and evaluating the results, the author of this thesis started the process of gaining an understanding of why some of the correlations hypothesized by the author did not occur, and proved to not exist in this data sample. Furthermore, the author wanted to gain an understanding as to why the correlations that were discovered were weak, and why the author did not find a stronger correlation.

Numerous observations and reflections by the author led to various sightings of aspects in this study that could have been done differently. All the aspects that are to be mentioned, have indeed provided this author with valuable learning experiences, and would provide important guidelines for the author's future research. There were some methodological limitations, such as the sample size of this study. The author concludes that there is a possibility that the sample size of 107 participants made it difficult to generalize the results to the normal population.

It may be that the author could have been able to discover stronger correlations with a larger sample of participants. Furthermore, the fact that the participants were collected with a convenience sample constituted a limitation for this study. The variables such as nationality, age and gender, were likely to have been affected by the fact that the participants were reached with social media and connections that the author had. This is indeed likely to have affected the outcome.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the participants were from all over the world. A small sample size of 107 participants combined with the fact that these participants were from 22 different nationalities, brought its limitations upon this study. Having participants from so many nationalities, led to a big diversity, but at the same time made it very difficult to find any correlations of importance and consistency within the sample, as there were not sufficient participants from all the countries. When analyzing the data from this sample of so many different nationalities, it is considered of importance to execute caution when comparing the results to a more homogenous general population of primarily one nationality.

When observing the nationality data in table 3, one can observe that group 1 had the largest number of participants with 72.8%. Group 1 is the European group. It is evident that even with many nationalities, most of the participants were Europeans. However, within this group of Europeans there were 12 different nationalities. This was many nationalities to combine into one group, and this may indeed have affected the outcome. Even if 72.8% of the participants were Europeans, one may assume that there were cultural differences between the different nationalities, even if this group was considered as one unit.

These cultural differences may indeed have had a big impact, and not considering the way the culture could affect the outcome is indeed an important limitation.

Furthermore, the length of scale OSSS-3 can be mentioned as a possible limitation. At first, the author considered the length of the OSSS-3 with only 3 items to be a positive attribute. This was because the author expected a shorter survey to be easy and quick to administer. However, the survey was likely too short, and with only 3 items it was possible that the items did not measure the social support sufficiently for the outcome of this thesis.

The shortness of the OSSS-3 may have led to the desired variables not being measured correctly or with a sufficient depth. This led to a questionable validity for the purpose of this study, with the possible problematic limitation of the few items of OSSS-3.

A further limitation is that the study was conducted with a cross-sectional and not longitudinal design. The results may have been different had the author had the sufficient time to measure the participants several times over a longer time span.

Furthermore, an important aspect to consider is the participants social desirability. The questionnaires that were used had several possible stigmatizing questions, and the participants may have felt a need to conform to the standards of social desirability. Questions from OSSS-3 regarding how many friends and social contacts one have, could be difficult to answer “none” for the participants, as it could be considered a normal need to want to fit in with the expectations of society. Additionally, questions regarding one’s own body satisfaction and social media use may also have suffered from social desirability bias, as these also could be considered topics that may be challenging to answer completely truthfully for some participants.

Moreover, all the questionnaires were self-reports. This could be considered a limitation, as the author had no way of controlling if the participants read all the questions correctly, and if the participants possibly misunderstood anything.

Other than the email of the author that was provided to the participants, and the instructions, there was no way for the participants to receive help while doing the questionnaire. To summarize, several aspects have been highlighted as possible important limitations and as possible contributing factors to the results not having strong correlations. The consideration of the limitations is exceptionally useful for this author in gaining a better understanding of the processes of conducting a scientific study, and what aspects to alter for possible future research.

4.2 Future research and implications:

Regarding important considerations for future research, the author has several suggestions as to what can be done moving forward within research on the topics reviewed in this thesis. Firstly, for future studies the author will consider adding other measures of participants to the study, not only self-reports. For instance, interviews with the participants and observations of the participants. This could be useful in collecting more detailed information, and one could be able to study more variables in a more precise manner.

Additionally, it can be of interest to further investigate the correlation between body image and social support. However, the author stresses the importance of using a scale with a larger number of items, and items that precisely measure both the offline and online social support, as the author considered it an important suggestion to distinguish between these two types of social support for future research. The author found that the measurement of OSSS-3 was not sufficient for this thesis concerning measuring all the aspects of social support the author wanted to measure.

Even though it was also mentioned as a limitation in this study, the author proposes to do a study with many nationalities when investigating these topics in the future. This recommendation is based on the difficulty of generalizing the results that many profiled studies has had.

This problem of generalization has, among other aspects, been due to lack of diversity in the target population investigated. In fact, one of the limitations that were mentioned by the authors of BAS-2, was that it was mostly tested on white Americans (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The authors stressed the need to be careful to generalize the results obtained to the general population, due to little diversity of the participants in the sample (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). One of the strengths of this thesis is the variability of ethnicities and nationalities that the sample consisted of.

However, it is a strong recommendation for future research to obtain a larger sample size, to be able to investigate the possible differences between the nationalities. Furthermore, the author gives a strong recommendation to not put too many nationalities in one group, if one is interested in seeing the differences between the different ethnicities and nationalities.

The author has a strong interest in discovering if there exist any correlations of importance between the different nationalities, regarding their body image and body appreciation. An aspect that the author also considers important for future research, is to measure more specifically time spent on social media, and how the time spent may correlate with the body image.

Possibly, being able to understand how the large or small amount of time spent by the user on social media affects the body image, can help prevent further development of negative body image in the future. A final recommendation would be to develop a measurement for recognition-seeking patterns on social media. This is something the author initially wanted to study, but the author was not able to find a valid measurement for recognition-seeking patterns, and the effect of recognition received through social media on the body image.

4.3 Final remarks of the thesis:

The results obtained in this thesis demonstrate support to previous research conducted on body image, social media, and social support. The results obtained, although the correlations were weak, can be important in future research, and as support to previous research. The newfound interest the author discovered for further investigating body image and nationalities, is indeed something the author has become inspired to investigate further in the future.

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6. Annexes:

Annex 1: OSSS-3: Oslo Social Support Scale

Oslo 1: How many people are so close to you that you can count on them if you have great personal problems?

- 1 *'none'*
- 2 *'1-2'*
- 3 *'3-5'*
- 4 *'5+'*

Oslo 2: How much interest and concern do people show in what you do?

- 1 *'none'*
- 2 *'little'*
- 3 *'uncertain'*
- 4 *'some'*
- 5 *'a lot'*

Oslo 3: How easy is it to get practical help from neighbors if you should need it?

- 1 *'very difficult'*
- 2 *'difficult'*
- 3 *'possible'*
- 4 *'easy'*
- 5 *'very easy'*

The sum score ranges from 3 to 14, with high values representing strong levels and low values representing poor levels of social support. This continuous score was used to generate the normative data for the OSSS-3 for each scoring point as well as to determine group differences according to age and sex.

Referring to Bøen and colleagues [18], the OSSS-3 sum score can be operationalized into three broad categories of social support.

- 3–8 poor social support*
 - 9–11 moderate social support*
 - 12–14 strong social support*
-

Annex 2: BAS-2: Body appreciation scale-2

Appendix. Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Final Version)

Permission to use this measure is not required. However, we do request that you notify the corresponding author via email if you use the Body Appreciation Scale-2 in your research. Please seek permission if any item is modified.

For each item, the following response scale should be used: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always.

Directions for participants: Please indicate whether the question is true about you never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always.

1. I respect my body.
 2. I feel good about my body.
 3. I feel that my body has at least some good qualities.
 4. I take a positive attitude towards my body.
 5. I am attentive to my body's needs.
 6. I feel love for my body.
 7. I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body.
 8. My behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body; for example, I hold my head high and smile.
 9. I am comfortable in my body.
 10. I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors).
-

The 10-item BAS-2 [41] uses a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*). Higher scores indicate higher BA. To calculate one's final BA score, item responses are summed, resulting in a score between 5 and 50. Table 1 presents a description of the items

Annex 3: BSMAS: Bergen social media addiction scale

Scale

Here are six statements to consider. For each, answer: (1) very rarely, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often, or (5) very often.

1. You spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning how to use it.
 2. You feel an urge to use social media more and more.
 3. You use social media in order to forget about personal problems.
 4. You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success.
 5. You become restless or troubled if you are prohibited from using social media.
 6. You use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies.
-

Scoring and Interpretation of BSMAS:

The **Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale** is straightforward and short, with an accurate social media addiction assessment. The 6 items are measured against a 5 point Likert scale, 1 for "very rarely" to 5 for "very often." Then scores of each item are added to get the overall score of the BSMAS. The total **score of BSMAS ranges from 6-30**.

According to researchers, when you **score more than 3 for 4 items out of 6**, it is definitely an **addiction indicator**.

Annex 4: Informed consent statement

This survey is a part of a study regarding body image, social media use and social support in young adults aged 18-29. If you are not in this age group, please do not complete the survey. By completing this survey, the participant accepts that the information provided can be used in this study exclusively. The study is anonymous and voluntary. If you need more information about the study, feel free to contact the researcher at odagalaaen1@outlook.com.

Informed consent statement:

I declare that I have read and understood the information sheet that has been given to me; the characteristics and the objective of the study have been explained to me, as well as the possible benefits and risks of the same. I have had the time and opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns that I had. All questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, that I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give explanations and without this having an impact on future participations.

I freely give my consent to participate in the Research Project of the Final Year Degree Project entitled "Young adults body image, social media use and the importance of social support", carried out by Oda Kristine Næss Galaaen, a student at the European University of Madrid.

I have also been informed that the confidentiality of my data will be maintained and that these will be protected and included in a file that must be subject to and with the guarantees of the General Data Protection Regulation (RGPD), which came into force on the 25th May 2018, which supposes the repeal of Organic Law 15/1999, of December 13, referring to the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data.

Taking this into consideration, I GIVE my CONSENT to cover the objectives specified in the project.

I have read the informed consent statement and I GIVE MY CONSENT

*

I GIVE MY CONSENT

Annex 5: Demographic data and full survey:

Demographic data:

Age:

18-23

24-26

27-29

Gender:

Woman

Man

Prefer not to say

Nationality:

Social support: Directions for participants: to the best of your ability, please answer the alternative you identify with the most.

How many people are so close to you that you can count on them if you have great personal problems?

None

1-2

3-5

5+

How much interest and concern do people show in what you do?

None

Little

Uncertain

Some

A lot

How easy is it to get practical help from neighbors if you should need it?

Very difficult

Difficult

Possible

Easy

Very easy

Social media: Directions for participants: answers ranges from "Very rarely" to "Very often" answer to the best of your ability.

You spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning how to use it.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

You feel an urge to use social media more and more.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

You use social media in order to forget about personal problems.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

You become restless or troubled if you are prohibited from using social media.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

You use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies.

Very rarely

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very often

Body image: Directions for participants: Please indicate whether the question is true about you never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always.

I respect my body

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I feel good about my body

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I feel that my body has at least some good qualities.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I take a positive attitude towards my body.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I am attentive to my body's needs.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I feel love for my body.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

My behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body; for example, I hold my head high and smile.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I am comfortable in my body.

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors).

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Often

Always

End of survey. Thank you for your time and participation!