

Healthy Social Media Practices in Preventing Body Dysmorphia Disorder

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Abstract

Background: Body Dysmorphic Disorder, also known as dysmorphia, is a psychiatric illness that can occur due to social media. This psychiatric illness causes a person to be very worried about their appearance, and often even think that their appearance is very bad. **Objective:** The purpose of this study is to describe a healthy way of social media to prevent Body Dysmorphic Disorder for its users. **Methods:** The method used is a literature review taken from several sources with a limit of 2019-2024. **Results & Discussion:** To prevent BDD, it is important to use social media in a healthy way. Steps that can be taken include limiting time on social media, following accounts that support body positivity, and engaging in real-world activities to boost self-confidence and distract from the pressures of social media. **Conclusion:** Healthy social media practices have been shown to prevent Body Dysmorphia Disorder in users.

Keywords: Body Dysmorphia Disorder, Dysmorphophobia, Social Media

Introduction

In today's digital era, the development of technology is rapid and tends to change towards a more modern direction. Social media is one of the products of technological development that is continuously developing and has become an integral part of everyday life. There are several examples of social media, namely WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, X, and so on. especially among teenagers, this is due to the benefits of social media that allow users to interact, cooperate, share, and communicate with other users virtually¹. Apart from social benefits, social media is also very useful in work or doing business, one of which is to advertise,

promote, and introduce the products or services offered². Social media is also very useful as a learning medium, where social media makes it easy for students to access learning in various scientific fields, especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic³.

Apart from the positive impacts, social media can also have a negative impact on users who do not use social media wisely, such as addiction that leads to lack of self-confidence, social anxiety, stress, and decreased social interaction⁴. Social media can also be a hotbed of crime. Hoaxes are also one of the negative impacts of social media if users are too easy to believe in every news uploaded on social media⁵. Apart from that, mental and psychiatric illnesses can also attack users if they do not use social media properly such as Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, narcissism, and depression^{6,7}

Body Dysmorphic Syndrome, also known as dysmorphia, is a psychiatric illness that can occur due to social media. This psychiatric illness causes a person to worry a lot about their appearance, often thinking that their appearance is very bad⁸. Research conducted by ateq et al., (2024), shows that social media users can influence the way people judge someone's physique and even encourage someone to do plastic surgery to look better, especially for women⁹.

This review aims to discuss how the psychiatric disease Body Dysmorphia Disorder is caused by social media and how to use healthy social media to prevent the possibility of Body Dysmorphia Syndrome for its users.

Methods

The method used in this article is a literature review where analysis is carried out from various literature sources. Literature searches were conducted through google scholar and mendeley sources with a range of years between 2018-2024. The keywords used in the literature search are Body Dysmorphia Syndrome, Psychiatric Disorders, and Social Media.

Discussion

Body Dysmorphia Disorder (BDD), also known as dysmorphia, is a psychiatric disorder characterized by patients who suffer from obsessive and disturbing images of their ideal body¹⁰. Patients with BDD believe that they look ugly or deformed (e.g. thinking that they have a big, 'disgusting' nose, or very scarred skin), when in reality they look normal. As a result of worrying about their appearance, they may stop socializing, stay at home, and even commit suicide¹¹.

Women are more likely to exhibit BDD behaviors than men¹², This is because women are more sensitive to physical appearance issues than men, for example worrying more about food, weight and physical appearance. A study conducted by Cash & Pruzinsky (2002) showed that girls' dissatisfaction with their bodies increased by about 40-70% after early adolescence¹³. Dissatisfaction usually focuses on areas of the body that contain a lot of fat such as the hips, buttocks, abdomen, and thighs.

Social media is a platform that allows users to present themselves to others, engage in conversations, communicate with other users, and create virtual social environments¹⁴. This allows everyone who uses social media to see and notice how other people look on social media. As a result, social media users often feel pressured to meet the expectations set by others. This can lead to excessive social comparison, where individuals feel that their appearance is not good enough compared to what they see on screen. As a result, many people experience mental health issues such as low self-confidence, anxiety, and even eating disorders. So it can be argued that exposure to social media can cause and even exacerbate body image dissatisfaction, often driving individuals to undergo plastic and cosmetic surgery procedures simply to improve their appearance⁶.

Therefore, social media should be used in a healthy way to prevent Body Dysmorphia Disorder. Firstly, limit your time on social media to avoid getting caught up in the cycle of harmful comparisons. Many users are exposed to idealized images and unrealistic beauty standards, which can trigger dissatisfaction with one's appearance. Therefore, it is important to focus more on our own strengths and uniqueness and appreciate what makes us different. Secondly, we can follow accounts that promote body positivity and body diversity which can help create a healthier perspective towards people's body appearance. And finally, engaging in real-world activities, such as sports, art, or other hobbies, can be an effective way to distract from the pressures of social media and boost self-confidence.

Conclusion

Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that Body Dysmorphia Disorder, also known as dysmorphophobia, is a psychiatric disorder that causes sufferers to feel dissatisfied with their body image. This can occur due to unhealthy exposure to social media. It can be prevented by various things, including limiting the use of social media, following accounts about the diversity of the human body, and being active in real-world activities such as sports, arts, and other hobbies.

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