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The Relationship and Mechanisms Between Social Media Use and the Self-Objectification of Females

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Abstract: Social media has become a part of our daily life in modern society and exerts a widespread and profound impact on individuals' physical and mental health. Self-objectification, a phenomenon widely observed on young females, generally means that women tend to regard their body as an object by adopting the societal beauty standard prevalent in a specific society, and evaluate their body from a bystander perspective. Although the objectification theory was initially proposed since 1997, the close connection between social media use and the self-objectification of females actually has received continuous attention from researchers due to the prevalence of social media in modern society and the primary role of social media in contributing to the self-objectification of females. On the basis of reviewing the existing research concerning social media use and the self-objectification of females, the present research firstly systematically reviewed the relationship between social media use and females' self-objectification, and also attempted to clarify the mediating mechanisms between them — the internalization of societal beauty standard (cognitive mechanism) and appearance anxiety (affective mechanism). In addition, the research discussed several protective factors that may mitigate the objectification tendency of females, including physical activities, self-compassion, and social media literacy. Finally, the research discussed some potential limitations in the field of social media use and female self-objectification, and possible directions in future research. By systematically reviewing the literature regarding social media use and the self-objectification of females, the present research will deepen our understanding of how social media use will be related to the self-objectification of females and also provide practical implications for how we can promote the mental health of female social media users in daily life.

Keywords: Social Media, Objectification Theory, Media Psychology, Feminism, Mental Health

1. Introduction

"I am double fat again" "Women are the masters of their bodies" "Women need to love their faces more" Nowadays, on various of social media platforms (e g., TikTok, Little Red Book), some topics relevant to female body maintenance, weight loss, and anti-aging seemingly will never go out of fashion. Correspondingly, for such topics relevant to female body image, we always can encounter a large number of women participating in these discussions, which to a large extent indicates that numerous women in modern society struggle with anxiety related to their appearance and body maintenance. Actually, with the progress of society and the

development of economy, it is not surprised that more and more women are willing to pay more attention to their body image than before. However, for females, paying excessive attention to their bodies or physical appearance, or even holding the belief that their appearance plays a key role in determining their self-worth, may exacerbate the self-objectification tendency of females [1].

Over the past decade, researchers have found that various of media platforms, including mass media and social media platforms, tend to intentionally or unintentionally highlight the importance of physical appearance for women, and on the relative level, the role of women's competence or intrinsic trait is neglected, thus creating a circumstance where women are regarded as objects to be evaluated. And when a female

begins to adopt the societal beauty standard prevalent in a specific society to evaluate their body, the self-objectification of females then occurs. An extensive line of research suggests that, the objectification of females will be connected to a series of negative mental and behavioral consequences, such as appearance anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders, excessive social comparison, and sexual dysfunction [2, 3]. Now, social media has been considered to be a primary source of contributing to the self-objectification of females, however, somewhat surprisingly, there is little research exclusively reviewing the relationship between social media use and the self-objectification of females to date. To fill this gap, on the basis of a brief introduction to social media and the objectification theory [4], the current research firstly provided a systematic discussion for the relationship and mechanisms between social media use and female self-objectification, and also discussed several effectively protective factors for alleviate female objectification, including physical activities, self-compassion, and social media literacy. Finally, we discussed some potential limitations in the field of social media use and female self-objectification, and possible directions in future research.

2. Social Media

In modern society, social media has become a part of our daily life [5]. Through social media, people can communicate with others beyond the limitation of time and space, thus effectively facilitating daily interpersonal communication and the collaboration at work. Different from traditional mass media like television, newspapers, and magazines, social media allows users to autonomously create unique contents and share them with others on the platform, which can significantly motivate users to engage in activities on social media platforms. It should be pointed out that, social media actually does not refer to a specific platform but a collective term for a class of cellphone apps and social networking sites based on the web 2.0 technique and user-generated idea. According to the definition by Ellison and Boyd popular social media platforms common possess three key features [6]. Firstly, users can autonomously create their content and share it with others on the platform as they see it. Secondly, social media constructs a visual network for users allowing them to view the shared contents of other users in real time. Lastly, social media allows users to communicate with each other in a continuous way without the limitation of time or space. By adopting this relatively broad definition, social media platforms involved in the current research include any online websites or cellphone apps allowing users to autonomously create contents and share them, such as Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, and so on.

In modern society, social media is popular among all age groups across the world, and the majority of them are young people. A survey from America conducted in 2018 revealed that nearly 80% of young people report that they have used at least one of the three social media — Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat — one or more times during the day [7]. It should be pointed out that, there is a so-called positive representation tendency on social media. That is, individuals are inclined to present the good aspects of their lives on social media, such as an exciting travel experience, a special candlelit dinner, or a long-awaited reunion with old friends. As a consequence, people may experience frequent upward social comparisons when using social media. Social comparison theory, initially proposed by Festinger, contends that people always need to compare themselves with others, especially with those similar others, to determine their value [8]. And according to the direction of social comparison, social comparison can be further divided into upward and downward social comparison. The former means that an individual compares himself with someone better than himself, and the latter means that he compares himself with another individual who is inferior than himself. Past research has shown that when upward social comparison occurs, individuals will perceive lower self-evaluations, and suffer from a series of negative mental consequences [9, 10]. Due to frequently upward social comparisons occurring on social media, although several studies have revealed some positive effects of social media use (e g., receiving social support, promoting group identity), a large body of research have revealed the significant connections between social media use and a range of negative psychological consequences, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and envy.

3. The Objectification Theory

The objectification Theory, initially proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts, contends that individuals in western society tend to emphasize more on women's appearance and body image over their competence and body function, which make female body regarded as an object and evaluated based on their appearance rather than competence [4]. Prior literature has revealed that the objectification tendency exists in both males and females, but in daily life, females often suffer from more objectification experiences than males. So, previous research mainly focuses on the objectification for females, especially for young females [2]. In line with previous research, we will only discuss social media use and the objectification of females, whose age range includes adolescent girls, young females, and older females. Previous research has shown that the objectification experiences of female are widespread in daily life. For example, one survey conducted in Australia revealed that young females in Australia suffered from the objectifying gazes from men approximately every other day, and in one day, they witnessed other females suffering from the objectifying experiences about 1.35 times [11].

In a society where sexual objectification is prevalent, females may be frequently exposed to objectification experiences, as a result, they may chronically internalize the social-cultural beauty standards for females and attempt to achieve the so-called ideal body image, even at the cost of their physical health. This phenomenon has been termed as the self-objectification of females. Researchers have argued that

for those females with the self-objectification tendency, to some extent, their body images are constructed by external society rather than themselves, as they habitually regard their body as an object and evaluate them from a third-party perspective [3]. In this case, females often overemphasize the role of their appearance in elevating self-worth, and pay little attention to their body functions. For females, both suffering from the objectifying gaze from others and viewing the objectification experiences of others will contribute to the self-objectification tendency of females, which has been found to be related to negative mental and behavioral consequences, such as appearance anxiety, body shame, eating disorders, and so on. It should be pointed out, as a social-cultural phenomenon, although the self-objectification is vulnerable to multiple factors, social media has been widely considered to be a primary source of the self-objectification of females [12]. An important reason for this phenomenon may be most popular social media platforms across the world are picture- or video-based, which inevitably will highlight the importance of the ideal body for users.

4. Social Media Use and Female Self-Objectification

Past research consistently demonstrates that there is a significant positive association between social media use and the self-objectification of females. As an example, Murray, Maras, and Goldfield conducted a questionnaire survey to examine the relationship and mediating mechanism between social media use and eating disorders [13]. The results showed that those participants with high social media use intensity tended to report more symptoms of eating disorders and such eating disorders may be because participants were less satisfied with their weight and appearance. That implies that, using social media may motivate females to pay too much attention to their body image, which further contributes to the self-objectification of females. In another research conducted in China-Mainland, with female adolescents as participants, researchers found that, posting selfies on social media, a typical social media activity, was significantly associated with the self-objectification of female adolescents [14]. Due to frequently exposed to various objectifying cues on social media, the self-objectification of females may be automatically activated upon the presence of objectification-relevant cues [15]. Researchers have pointed out that social media provides an ideal platform for users to express and present themselves following their preference, on which users can automatically determine whether and how they present their body for others and also can look and evaluate their own body from a third person perspective. Under this atmosphere, the role of body image or appearance in self-worth will be inevitably exaggerated, which motivate social media users to strive to achieve the so-called perfect body, irrespective of the unreality of the ideal body.

It is worth noting that several studies indicate that specific activities on social media platforms, rather than general social media use intensity, may mainly contribute to the self-objectification of females. For example, in recent research with female adolescents as participants, Yang et al. firstly took a comprehensive measure for adolescents' cell phone use time, social media use, and online interactions on social media, and then examined which factor will be significantly associated with the self-objectification of female adolescents [16]. They found that when controlling for the use time of specific activities on social media, the general use time of social media did not significantly predict the self-objectification of female adolescents. Of several specific activities, browsing the web, listening to music, and watching TV shows were found to contribute to the self-objectification of female adolescents. And additional research reveals that engaging in appearance- or body image-relevant activities on social media can exacerbate the self-objectification of females [12, 17, 18]. For instance, with the popularity of fitness across the world, individuals often share their fitness quotes or performance on social media platforms, which has been found to induce some negative mental consequences (e g., eating disorder, excessive exercise) although such fitness sharing to some extent encourages other user to pursuit healthy life [17]. Considering that the majority of popular social media platforms across the world are picture- or video-based, such platforms tend to encourage users to present an ideal body to "catch" the eyes of other users, regardless of their original intention, which will exacerbate the objectification tendency of both publishers and viewers.

Past research suggests that the self-objectification of females will cause a series of negative downstream consequences, including low self-esteem, anxiety, and eating disorders. By using a questionnaire survey, Greenleaf and McGreer found that for females, regardless of engaging physical activities, if they possessed the self-objectification tendency, they tended to report higher levels of body surveillance and also were vulnerable to body shame and appearance anxiety [19]. To achieve or maintain the so-called ideal body, they were also likely to suffer from eating-disordered behaviors. Similarly, in another study with adolescents as participants whose age ranged from 12 to 16 years, researchers found that adolescents with higher levels of objectification tendencies exhibited higher levels of body surveillance and body shame, and they also reported higher levels of appearance anxiety and eating disorders. Moreover, compared male adolescents, the above patterns were more obvious for female adolescents [20]. Additionally, researchers have pointed out that the majority of popular social media platforms across the world are picture- or video-based, which will heighten the saline of appearance of an individual in determining his/her worth. As it is difficult for most users to reach the unrealistic ideal, it is not surprised that the self-esteem of users is harmed when they attempt to compare themselves to the ideal on social media or work toward their target body. For example, one lab study regarding fitness contents on social media and mental health showed that exposing participants to ideal images on social media led to higher body dissatisfaction compared to participants exposed

to travel images; moreover, although most fitness posts explicitly alleged that they aimed to improve their strength and health, they actually did not significantly increase participants' fitness behaviors in reality [18]. It should be pointed out, the self-objectification of females not only produces a series of negative physical and mental consequences on the individual level, on a broader level, the objectification of females may put women at a competitive disadvantage with men because the objectification for females in nature will weaken the role of their traits and ability in social competition.

5. The Mediating Mechanisms Between Social Media Use and the Self-Objectification of Females

Previous research suggests that there may be two possible mechanisms between social media use and the self-objectification of females — a cognitive mechanism via the internalization of ideal beauty and an emotional mechanism via appearance anxiety. Specifically, the so-called cognitive mechanism means that the internalization of ideal beauty may mediate the relationship between social media use and the self-objectification of females [21]. Based on the tripartite influence model of the objectification theory [22], females may perceive the objectification stress mainly from three sources — parents, peers, and media, of which the media is identified as the primary source of perceived stress. Actually, regardless of traditional media (e. g., magazines, television) or social media (e. g., Facebook, TikTok), to capture the attention from users to a great extent, they both deliberately construct an ideal but homogeneous body image for users (e. g., the plastic face), and such tendencies are more obvious for those photo-based platforms, such as Facebook and TikTok. A series of studies have demonstrated that individuals exposed to body image-related social media contents tend to gradually internalize the aesthetic standards dominant on social media platforms and apply such standards to perceive and evaluate their own body, thus resulting in the self-objectification of them. For example, in a study with female adolescents aged 13-18 years as participants, researchers not only measured the use intensity of general cellphone activity, but also exclusively measured the use intensity of social media activity. Then, researchers assessed participants' the internalization of the ideal beauty and appearance social comparison, and also asked participants to report their weight satisfaction, body satisfaction, and appearance anxiety. The results showed that, after controlling for the effect of the intensity of general cellphone activity, there was still a significant positive correlation between female adolescents' social media use intensity and body image concerns, and the internalization of the ideal beauty served as a mediating role between them [16]. It is important to note that, the mediating role of the internalization of the ideal beauty between social media use and the self-objectification of females not only was observed on female adolescents, but also observed on young adult women.

In addition to the internalization of social-cultural ideal body images, frequent exposure to the so-called perfect bodies on social media also may produce a range of negative emotional experiences relevant to body image. Specifically, according to the social comparison theory, individuals need to make social comparisons to determine their value, and social comparisons can be further divided into upward and downward social comparisons depending on the direction of social comparison. For those individuals who have internalized social beauty standards, they may frequently experience upward social comparisons because they may mistakenly believe they can achieve the ideal body image presented on social media. Ironically, past research reveals that, due to the positive self-representation widely existing on social media, the presented ideal body image on the platform to a large extent is unrealistic and hard to achieved [12, 22, 23]. In this case, it is almost inevitable for social media users to perceive body shame and appearance anxiety upon they make social comparisons between them and the ideal body images. In an experimental study, researchers firstly exposed female college students to fitness images on Instagram (experimental condition) or travel images (control condition). Then, they measured participants' emotion and body satisfaction, and found that participants in the fitness image exposure condition reported more negative emotion and lower body satisfaction compared to participants in the travel image exposure condition, with upward social comparison playing a mediating role between them [12]. For these individuals suffering from appearance anxiety or body shame, they have a higher probability of engaging in physical activities oriented toward promoting physical appearance rather than body function. Nevertheless, past research has found that engaging in physical activities with body image concerns actually cannot relieve their appearance anxiety, in contrast, such activities may further exacerbate females' self-objectification and appearance anxiety [24].

6. Protective Factors for the Self-Objectification of Females

Given the prevalence of the objectification of females in modern society, identifying some protective factors that can mitigate the self-objectification of females has received continuous attention from researchers for a long time. To date, researchers have identified several mainly protective factors for the self-objectification of females, including health-oriented exercise, self-compassion, and media literacy.

6.1. Physical Exercise and Female Self-Objectification

When initially outlining the objectification theory, Fredrickson and Roberts proposed that regularly physical exercise may be an effective way to prevent the self-objectification of females, resulting from that physical exercise is considered to not only promote exercisers' strength and health, but weaken the role of appearance and weight in

determining their self-worth [4, 25]. Similarly, Smolak et al. found that female athletes tended to possess a positive belief that their self-worth was constructed based on what their body "can do" rather than what their body "looks like" [26]. In a short-term longitudinal study conducted in Australia with female adolescents as participants, researchers found that the amount of time female adolescents spent on physical exercise could significantly and negatively predict the level of their self-objectification one year later, thus providing empirical support for the alleviating effect of physical exercise on the self-objectification of female adolescents [27]. It is important to note that, according to the proposed mechanism by Fredrickson and Roberts, the alleviating effect of physical exercise on the self-objectification of females may be because physical exercise empowers females to shift their attention from physical appearance to body function [4]. Unfortunately, this hypothesized mechanism has not received empirical support to date.

In contrast to the findings mentioned above, some other research did not find a significant association between physical exercise and lower self-objectification of females [28, 29]. The mixed findings may be because there are some moderating factors that may moderate the relationship between physical exercise and female self-objectification, such as exercise motivation and specific types of physical exercise. For example, Prichard and Tiggemann revealed when females engaged in exercise with the purpose of improving body image, their self-objectification would not be alleviated; instead, they tended to show more serious appearance anxiety and eating disorders [30]. Of various physical exercise, yoga was found to be associated with lower self-objectification of females. In addition, past research showed that exercise in the gym was more likely to exacerbate the self-objectification of females in comparison to outdoor exercise, which may be because the gym indeed created an ideal atmosphere contributing to engaging in appearance comparison and for self-evaluation toward their own body image. Overall, so far, the answer to whether physical exercise can effectively alleviate the self-objectification of females is no conclusive, and in future research, researchers need to examine the relationship between physical exercise and female self-objectification in a more subtle way (e. g., taking possible moderators into account).

6.2. Self-Compassion and Female Self-Objectification

Self-compassion is considered to originate from the Buddhist mindfulness, which emphasizes an unconditionally positive attitude toward the self [31, 32]. Unlike self-esteem, self-compassion does not require making social comparison with others to value the self. Moreover, to elevate the self-esteem, individuals usually need to ascertain whether they can reach some specific external standards, thus demonstrating their self-worth; by comparison, self-compassion emphasizes that individuals should give an unconditional, non-contingent acceptance and love to themselves [33, 34]. Past empirical research has provided evidence for the role of self-compassion to alleviate the

negative consequence of negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, depression) on mental health, and to enhance individuals' physical health and subjective well-being [35, 36, 37]. In daily life, it is indeed inevitable for individuals to access a large number of objectifying-relevant cues in a direct or indirect way when using social media, thus habitually monitoring their own body image. However, for those individuals with high level of self-compassion, they can readily accept their own body image even in the case that they realize the existence of deficits relevant to body, which will alleviate a series of negative consequences induced by female self-objectification, including body shame, lower self-esteem, and eating disorders. In line with this proposition, Liss and Erchull found that individuals with high self-compassion than those individuals with low self-compassion possessed more positive attitudes toward their body and also displayed more healthier life styles [38]. Similarly, in another study, researchers revealed a significantly positive correlation between self-compassion and positive body image perception [39]. Notably, Modica did not find the moderating role of self-compassion between Facebook use intensity and body self-esteem, which indicates that self-compassion may can alleviate the negative effects of social media use on body image concerns of females, but the observed effects seemingly will vary with specific social media activities in a given context [40]. In future research, researchers need to pay continuous attention to this issue to further clarify the relationship between social media use, self-compassion, and female self-objectification.

6.3. Social Media Literacy and Female Self-Objectification

For most social media users, they actually use social media only for the purpose of social interactions or entertainment, and know little about how social media platforms attract the attention of users and how various of engagement activities on the platform will affect their mental health. For this situation, some researchers have suggested that it may be necessary for social media users to realize some key information about specific social media platforms, such as product features, marketing strategies, and importantly, how social media will produce an effect on their physical and mental health, which is called social media literacy [41]. In simple words, social media literacy aims to alleviate possibly negative consequences of social media on users by explicitly making users realize some key features relevant to social media (e. g., the well-known tendency for positive representation) and the operational mechanism of social media. Social media literacy may be a particularly effective way to weaken the negative mental consequences when using photo- or video-based social media platforms. Specifically, in order to catch attention from users, those photo- or video-based social media platforms commonly encourage image or video publishers to present an ideal body image via digitally editing software or multiple online filters. Upon social media users do not realize this unrealistic ideal body, they may mistakenly believe that "what you see is what you get", which further motivates them to achieve the so-called ideal body at costs of their physical health. For

example, to maintain an ideal body, they may suffer from eating disorders, body shame, appearance anxiety, and lower body-esteem [23, 42]. By contrast, social media users may be less vulnerable to a series of consequences relevant to self-objectification, if they are aware of the unreality and impossibility of the so-called ideal body in cyberspace. Supporting this view, in a group-based study, researchers found that when females possessing social media literacy accessed appearance-relevant contents on Instagram, they tended to unconsciously ask themselves, what the motivation was underlying the published posts, whether the presented photos can be achieved in real life, and whether publishers used some marketing strategies to attract attention from other users [43]. When confronting the ideal body images presented on social media platforms, by asking themselves a series of questions concerning social media literacy and then answering such questions, researchers found that viewing the ideal body image on social media seeming did not raise obvious harms for female users.

7. Limitations and Future Research

As we have discussed, a growing body of research has established the relationship between social media use and female self-objectification, but little attention has been paid to the mechanisms between them. In this section, we outlined several limitations existing in the current research regarding social media use and the objectification of females, and we also discussed possible directions in future research.

Firstly, the relationship between social media use and the self-objectification of females can be further deepened and clarified. Specifically, based on the existing findings, researchers tend to agree that specific activities engaged o social media platforms, rather than general social media use frequency, contribute to the self-objectification of females [16, 40]. For example, past research has shown that individuals engage in appearance-related activities has been found to be a high-risk factor for the self-objectification of females, such as viewing or posting selfies, pursuing the ideal body presented on social media platforms, or spending time on fitness-relevant contents oriented toward achieving a perfect figure [17, 44]. It should be pointed out, although a considerable number of research has demonstrated that exposure to body-related contents on social media contribute to the self-objectification of females, there still is a possibility that there is a bilateral causality between social media use and female self-objectification. That is, females with higher level of self-objectification tend to pay more attention to body image-related contents on social media, which in turn, will further reinforce the existing self-objectification of females. In other words, social media may not contribute to the self-objectification tendency of females in a single direction, in contrast, the relationship between them may be a reciprocal causation with reinforcing each other. In addition, given that female self-objectification is a social-cultural phenomenon in nature, it is may be not enough for researchers to exclusively pay attention to factors relevant to appearance or body image,

and it is also important to explore some social-cultural factors on a broad level that may contribute to female self-objectification, such as social-economic status, cultural value orientation, economic inequality, and gender stereotypes. As an example, recent research found that females from some religions with economic inequality also tended to report higher self-objectification [45]. Overall, the existing research regarding social media use and female self-objectification seemingly pays excessive attention to those factors that can directly trigger the self-objectification of females, such as exposure to appearance-relevant contents, and pays little attention to some social-cultural factors on a broad level that may indirectly contribute to the self-objectification of females, such as social value orientation or economic inequality. Given the above considerations, researchers can attempt to systematically explore risk factors that may contribute to the self-objectification of females on the both individual and social levels.

Secondly, the existing research regarding to social media and female self-objectification mainly focuses on young female adults and female adolescents, with little attention to children and older women. This potential limitation on the age range of subjects will more or less limits the generality of research findings. Moreover, past research has shown that age is a key factor that exerts an obvious influence on female self-objectification. It is generally believed that the self-objectification of females has become more and more obvious since puberty, so in theory, the detrimental effects of social media use on females' body concerns will be magnified to a great extent during this period. Based on the existing research findings, the age of females displaying the tendency of self-objectification can date back to early adolescence, around age 10 [46, 47]. However, considering the prevalence of smartphones among all age groups in modern society, it is necessary to explore whether the self-objectification of females can be observed at a younger age, which will be a research topic carrying important practical implications. In addition to early adolescents, researchers also should pay more attention to the social media use of older women and their self-objectification, because it is a common phenomenon that the elderly enjoy viewing and publishing posts on various of social media platforms as young people do [48, 49]. In this situation, it may be necessary for researchers to investigate whether the contributing effects of social media use on female self-objectification will function with female age. Overall, we strongly advise researchers to examine social media use and female self-objectification by including multiple age groups of females, so that they can obtain a more complete and precise assessment for the impact of social media use on female self-objectification.

Finally, the present research concerning social media and female self-objectification mainly is conducted in a single cultural background, and the cross-cultural research is scare. The objectification theory, initially proposed in Western society, contends that the overemphasis on female appearance and sexuality in Western society has contributed women to internalizing social-cultural aesthetic standards

and habitually monitoring their bodies, which causes a series of negative physical and mental consequences. In the last decade, due to the rapid development of Internet communication technology, the speed of information dissemination and exchange has dramatically increased across the world. In this situation, the self-objectification tendency of females indeed is no longer a social phenomenon exclusively observed in Western society. Instead, the self-objectification phenomenon has been widely observed across the world. For example, in a recent study conducted in China-Mainland, researchers found that young women posting selfies on social media may exacerbate their tendency to objectify themselves, as manifested by a higher frequency of body surveillance, and their self-objectification tendency further led to physical exercise aiming at weight control [14]. The study, conducted in China, a typically Eastern country, showed the same results pattern with those studies conducted in Western society [50]. However, we must realize that there are significant differences for appearance evaluation and sexual expression between Eastern and Western societies, so it is difficult to conclude the extent to which the findings observed in Western society can be extended to Eastern society, and vice versa. In addition, due to the regulation of government in specific countries, the prevalent social media platforms actually are quite different between Western and Eastern societies, which also raises some challenges for the comparison of the findings between two types of societies. To solve this issue, in future research, researchers can attempt to conduct cross-cultural research to assess the extent to which the effect of social media use on female self-objectification will display the cross-cultural generalization and cultural specificity.

8. Conclusions

Nowadays, social media has become an integral part of people's daily life. Young women often share their "beauty photos" on various of social media platforms, and often are exposed themselves to similar contents shared by others. Engaging in appearance-related social media activities can lead women to internalize societal beauty standards, resulting in appearance anxiety which will further motivate them to habitually monitor their body image and self-objectify themselves. Based on the existing research findings, encouraging women to engage in health-focused outdoor exercise, fostering a belief of self-compassion, and improving media literacy for social media users are proved to be effective intervention strategies to mitigate the self-objectification of females. In future, researchers can attempt to explore the potential bilateral causality between social media use and female self-objectification, investigate how social media use contributes to the self-objectification of females among multiple age groups, and conduct completely cross-cultural research to clarify the cross-cultural generalization and cultural specificity between social media use and female self-objectification.

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