

Impact of social media engagement or image related exposure on body image and eating behavior in healthy young adults: A systematic review

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BACKGROUND

- Young adults are developing independence yet remain impressionable¹
- It is an important time for nutrition intervention, with high intakes of sugar sweetened beverages and low fruit and vegetable consumption^{2,3}
- Social media provides opportunity to engage young adults
- There is concern social media exposure negatively effects body image and increases risk of engaging disordered eating behaviors⁴

AIM

To systematically review current evidence to understand how social media exposure to image-based media affect body image and eating behaviors in healthy young adults.

METHODS

- P** Healthy young adults (18-25 yrs), any Body Mass Index (BMI kg/m²), no pre-existing health conditions
- I** Social media engagement (commenting, liking, sharing), or exposure to image-related content (viewing, posting, engaging)
- C** No comparator
- O** Body image (satisfaction or dissatisfaction). Diet-related behavior (healthy eating, dieting/restricting, overeating/ bingeing)

RESULTS

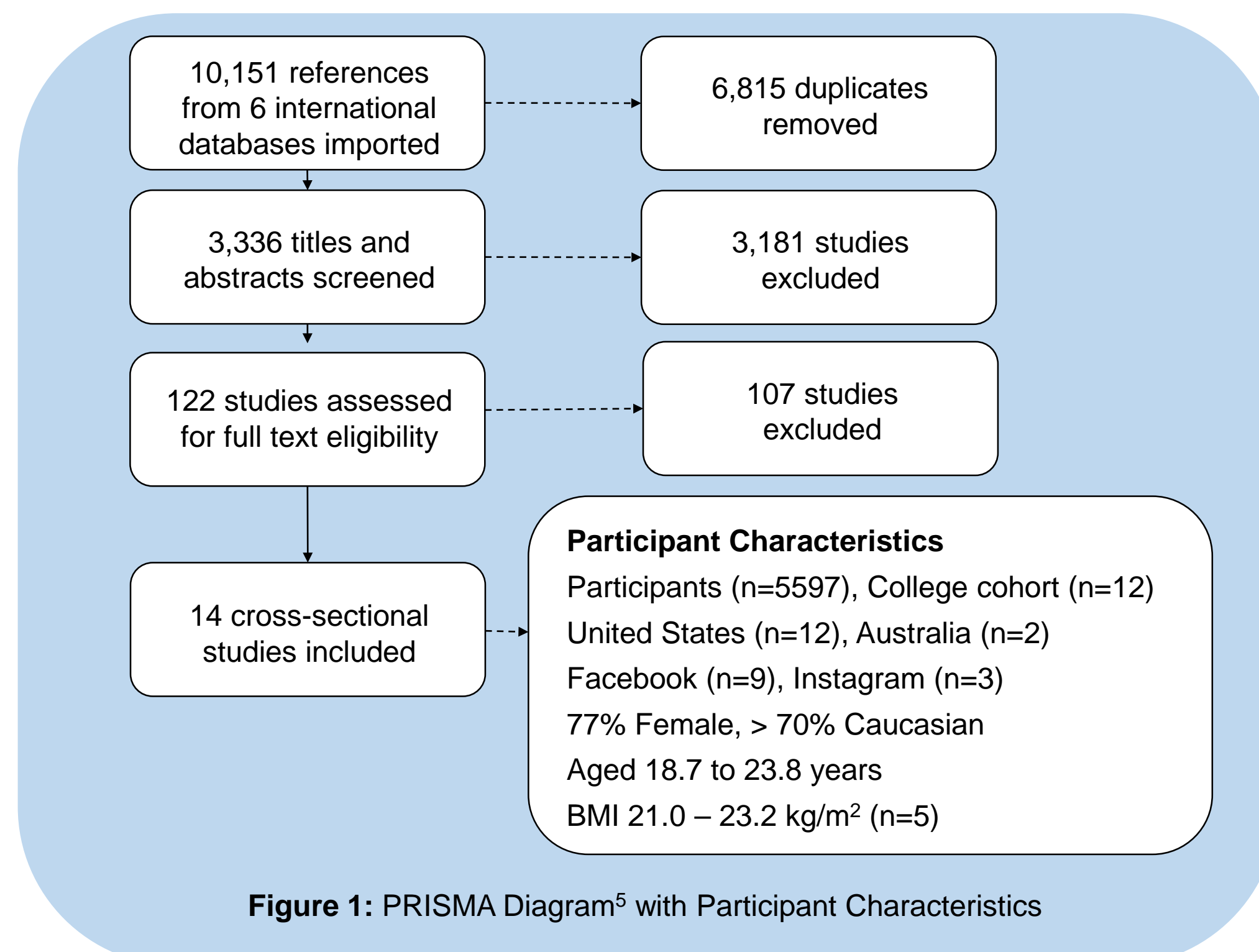


Figure 1: PRISMA Diagram⁵ with Participant Characteristics

Table 1: Overview of results from included studies (n=14)^a, examining the impact of social media engagement or exposure to image-based content on body image and eating behaviour outcomes.

Body Image and Eating Behavior Associated Outcomes ^a		Time/Frequency of Exposure (n=5)	Engagement (e.g. liking, posting) (n=5)	Negative Engagement (e.g. "I'm too fat") (n=3)	General Photos (n=2)	Idyllic Photos (e.g. celebrities) (n=3)	Appearance Comparisons ^(m) (n=6)
BODY IMAGE	Body Dissatisfaction (n=13)	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
	Drive for Thinness (n=5)	↑	↑			↑	↑
EATING BEHAVIOR	Disordered Eating (n=3)	↑		↑			↑
	Dietary Restraint (n=2)			↑			↑
	Overeating (n=1)			↑			
	Healthy Eating (n=1)					↑	

(m) Mediates the relationship between exposure and outcome.
^a Studies reported multiple exposures and outcomes. Arrows are indicative of direction

DEFINITIONS

Appearance Comparison: The tendency for a person to compare their appearance to others as a means of evaluating their opinion of themselves⁶.

Body Dissatisfaction: Negative feelings about body weight or shape. Also known as body shame, appearance concern/self-worth and low body satisfaction⁷.

Disordered Eating: A range of abnormal eating behaviours including dietary restraint, binge eating, skipping meals and dieting⁸.

Drive for Thinness: Excessive concern with dieting, weight and pursuit of thinness⁷.

Idyllic Images: Images of celebrities, friends and peers portraying perfect lifestyles.

Negative Engagement: Negative social media activities including body fat talk (e.g. "I'm too fat"), and negative feedback/reassurance seeking.

CONCLUSIONS

- Social media engagement and exposure to image-related content appear to negatively influence body image and some eating behaviors in healthy young adults
- Tendency to engage in appearance comparisons mediated many relationships
- Designers of health related social media campaigns should be cognizant of the reciprocal relationship with negative body image and eating behavior
- Future work will include gaining an understanding of how health professionals use social media to communicate health, and young adult perspectives on how social media influences views of their own body image

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