A Look Into the Confidence Levels of Screenagers

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Abstract

The present study investigates how social media and screen time usage negatively affect High School students' body image and overall perception of confidence. It was found that screen time is a neutral factor when considering how deeply it affects one's confidence. Almost no matter what, students seem to end up worse, whether that be psychologically or physically, etc., after being exposed to content on social media. This research uses a mixed-method survey to provide a variety of responses using both quantitative and qualitative data. In all, there were twelve participants and all genders were incorporated. Overall, this research explores how indecent social media content and exposure lead to negative choices in daily life and decision-making. Even though social media content can promote healthy lifestyle trends, in the long run, it is bad and the exposure from social media is toxic.

Keywords: Media, beauty standards, feminine values, trends, exposure, decision-making, body image, confidence, beliefs, variety

Introduction

Beauty standards on social media seem to be affecting high school students in different ways. With more media becoming easy to access, it is allowing for excessive amounts of social media consumption. Consuming tons of media can lead to negative effects, specifically on one's body image. In a study done by the New York Times, they found that "Many students" find that "social media has been 'detrimental' to the way they feel about their looks" even though they know the media can be edited and not real (2022). So, my research question aimed to answer how social media usage impacts students' body image and confidence levels. What do students do after viewing content? What measures do they go to, to conform? I wanted to see if there was a correlation between the extent students go to to comply with social or beauty standards, and

how much media they consume. A study done by the National Library of Medicine says that two or more hours of screen time per day is considered too much and can lead to negative effects such as depression, obesity, anxiety, and more (Nakshine et al., 2022). With that, the gap of the study focused on how much screen time one consumes and the rate or extremities one goes through to comply. Extremities are negative (or positive) lifestyle choices that come out of excessive media consumption.

Literature Review

Recently, social media has been influencing beauty and social standards. Since technology is so widespread, it has become easy for people to compare themselves to others online. After sifting through sources, the question became; How do beauty and social standards on social media impact high schoolers? Most of the sources found were about how teens conform to these standards on social media, whether that be through losing weight or putting on makeup, etc. However, the thought behind these actions is more important than actually doing them. Teenagers should not have to go to extreme measures to conform to whatever social media is telling them to look like. Understanding why social media is evil and has such a big impact on people, and how it translates into the real world, is the real problem.

Beauty/Social Standards

Beauty standards have always been extreme. In old-time England, women would cover ¨the entire face with egg white for preservation.¨ (Goering, 2005). In today's time, people can use apps such as Facetune to distort their faces to their liking (Tait, 2018). There has been a problem with people chasing the perfect idea of what they consider beautiful. But why does society strive for it? Well, society tends to be materialistic and wants things to be new and better than the last (Mitcham, 2005). So, when it comes to beauty, something that everyone strives for, the more

standards placed, the more severe and intense the standards are going to become in the future because society is always elevating their ideas of beauty due to their materialistic desires.

Feminism

The modern feminist movement has played a huge role in unrealistic media content. The feminist movement has been controversial recently and some people think it's not contributing as much for women as it should. Society can not ever be contemptuous of the idea of feminism, there will always be some kind of problem. Some people think that the feminist movement has gone too far and is somewhat exploiting women instead of helping them (Grayson, 2005). Take the site OnlyFans for example, some people see this as liberating as women are free to do whatever they want on the app while some say, women are exploiting themselves. However, the feminist movement has conditioned women into thinking that this is freedom for them when in reality, women are just exploiting themselves for men (Grace et al., 2023). Overall, the sexualization of women has become very generalized. As the feminist movement gets more extreme and off-focus, so will beauty and social standards for women and all people. If people are congratulating women on apps like OnlyFans, other women will see this exploitation as the new norm and will want to conform to these standards, because the feminist movement has established it as somewhat liberating. This is just a small extreme example though. Most people are not actually doing OnlyFans. But, relating this back to media usage, the two have a correlation. It would not be unordinary for women to think about heading in an OnlyFans way of life. However, relating more specifically to media consumption for the average teen, there could be a correlation between the intensity and to how someone might feel from viewing specific content. The openness of things like OnlyFans can create more openness to what teens do after viewing certain media as well.

Social Media's Impact

Understanding why social media has an impact on beauty standards is important. Social media has made it possible to easily share ideas and communicate with one another. It is found that ¨many people report that social media is an important part of how they interact with others¨ (Nakaya, 2017). So, when it comes to beauty standards, they can spread quickly on social media platforms, and people will want to follow whatever other people on social media are doing. If a beauty trend is established on social media, people will want to follow that trend. Even though it is not a real interaction, social media still affects one's real life. Media in general spreads quickly (Cubitt, 2005). So, the unrealistic beauty standards on the platforms will too. From simple fixes for one's beauty, like makeup, to more extreme fixes, such as plastic surgery, they can all be seen on social media. As stated earlier, beauty standards are becoming more extreme and it is becoming normalized. So, if the average person sees people getting plastic surgery to become prettier, chances are they would consider the idea, even though it is extreme.

Teens and Technology

How do these standards impact young minds? Teenagers who are growing up in this age of technology might be confused with all these beauty standards and not know what is considered to be too extreme. They might just follow whatever the media is telling them is right. It's found that teens on social media have failed in their moral reasoning online¨ and because of this ¨it led to negative consequences.¨ (Law et al., 2021). So, teens might not know that some beauty standards are extreme and very out there, and they might try to follow them even if they are unethical. Many teens do follow these extreme trends. Some will develop eating disorders over time, or start to exercise too much. The more time they spend on social media, the more they want to conform to these standards (2022). As mentioned earlier, the media has made it possible for these standards to spread very quickly. So, teens will want to follow these standards since they are consuming a lot of media. Their minds are also still developing, making it

confusing for them to establish that some standards are intense. If they see other people following these standards, they will want to too, because, once again, humans strive for perfection.

Overview

Overall, because of controversy in the feminist movement, mass media consumption, and social media in general, beauty standards have been impacting people's lives more and more every day. The standards have gotten out of control, but people still seem to be following them since they are normalized, and chances are, they will keep getting more and more extreme since our world is so materialistic and wants newer and better things. Examining how teens comply with these standards is important. Most have been around social media for their whole life and are used to whatever the media spreads to them. Are teens going to combat these beauty standards? or will they just keep entertaining them since it's what they know and are used to seeing every day on social media.

<center>**Method**</center>

The method I chose for my research was a survey. I chose a survey as it was easy to distribute to my peers and results were gotten back quickly from it. The survey was also confidential so my peers wouldn't have to worry about distributing their information. The survey was a mixed method and I received both qualitative and quantitative data from it. The inquiry process consisted of searching for Senior participants and then handing out consent forms, then I sent the survey after the consent forms were completed. This was all done at Wando High School. My participants consisted of all genders to create a neutral environment in the responses that I received. My research question was whether or not high school students felt impacted by beauty standards on social media and whether or not it affected their confidence.

Mixed Method Survey

The survey consisted of eleven questions. Any gender could answer but the group was specific to high school seniors from Wando High School. At first, I sent out a mass email to multiple students asking if they would like to participate, however, no one responded. Since it did not work, the next thing I did was print out paper consent forms and go around my high school asking students if they wanted to participate. I had better results doing this and more people volunteered to fill out the paper consent forms and then get an email for the electronic survey. I had some difficulty when it came to finding enough people to participate. I was supposed to have thirty participants but only ended up getting twelve people. This let me down because it was not the right amount of information that I wanted. However, I still received valid information to analyze. Other questions asked were more personal. I also made sure to get qualitative answers. For example, some students said they have used specific apps to edit pictures to appear more attractive. Once I received enough responses to the survey I sent a thank you note in an email to those who responded.

Ethics

The ethicality of the survey is mostly up to the correct standards. As stated before, the gender questions allowed all genders to participate so there would not be a bias. I also made sure that only Wando seniors could participate so that there would not be a mix of different ages. I tried to make the survey confidential for the most part but unfortunately received some students' emails in the process by mistake. However, these emails would never be distributed anywhere and are confidential. Overall, the survey and procedure were organized and everything remained confidential and the environment for the responses was neutral. The IRB committee, which confirmed the research, also agreed the research was ethical and honest.

Results

   After the survey was completed I received both qualitative and quantitative data. Some of the questions on my survey aimed for more specific results such as a 1-5 scale, which many questions had. On the other hand, the qualitative data gathered was typed by students and they were given a few portions of the survey to write about how they felt about beauty standards. To analyze the data I created a spreadsheet that showed all the survey results from everyone that answered. From here, I used quantitative questions (such as the scales) and qualitative personal response questions to see a correlation between how students felt about the standards and what they have done to comply.

Charts and Graphs

Figure 1

Survey Questions

| Questions Asked	Why They Were Asked
1) What is your gender? 2) How much time do you spend on social media per day? Be specific, use minutes or hours. 3) Do you ever feel insecure after viewing some content on social media? An example could be seeing someone more fit than you and then feeling insecure about yourself? 4) Do you think social media places beauty standards on people in real life through its content? 5) On a scale of 1-5, how much does technology affect your everyday life? 1 being it doesn't at all. 5 being you check your phone every 10 minutes. 6) If you feel like you are impacted by social media's beauty standards, how severe have you gone to keep up with the standard on a scale from 1-5? 1 being you might put on some makeup	Question 1 was asked to add more variety in the answer I received. Different genders could have different viewpoints on beauty standards. Question 2 was the most important on the survey. It's the main factor when comparing all the other data from the remaining questions. Questions 3 - 11 were asked to help compare the amount of screen time a high schooler has to their opinions on social media and beauty standards. So these questions correlate with Question 2. Most of the data was found from these comparisons.

or buy a certain product. 5 being you would consider plastic surgery. 7) Do you ever feel overwhelmed by social media and how much you are consuming? Ex, endless scrolling on TikTok. If so, why? 8) Do you think beauty standards have impacted your body image and mental health? 9) Have you ever used an app like Facetune to edit pictures? 10) Living in CHS, do you think the people here are more on top of their status and how they look than in other places? 11) If you have complied with beauty standards on social media, what are some activities you might have done to conform? Such as buying makeup, working out excessively, etc.	

The figure above shows the questions that were asked in the survey and why they were asked. The left side contains the questions and the right side clarifies why each question was asked to the students.

Figure 2

Graph Comparing Student's Screen Time To The Level They Comply With Beauty Standards

Students Screen Time and The Level They Comply With Beauty Standards On Social Media
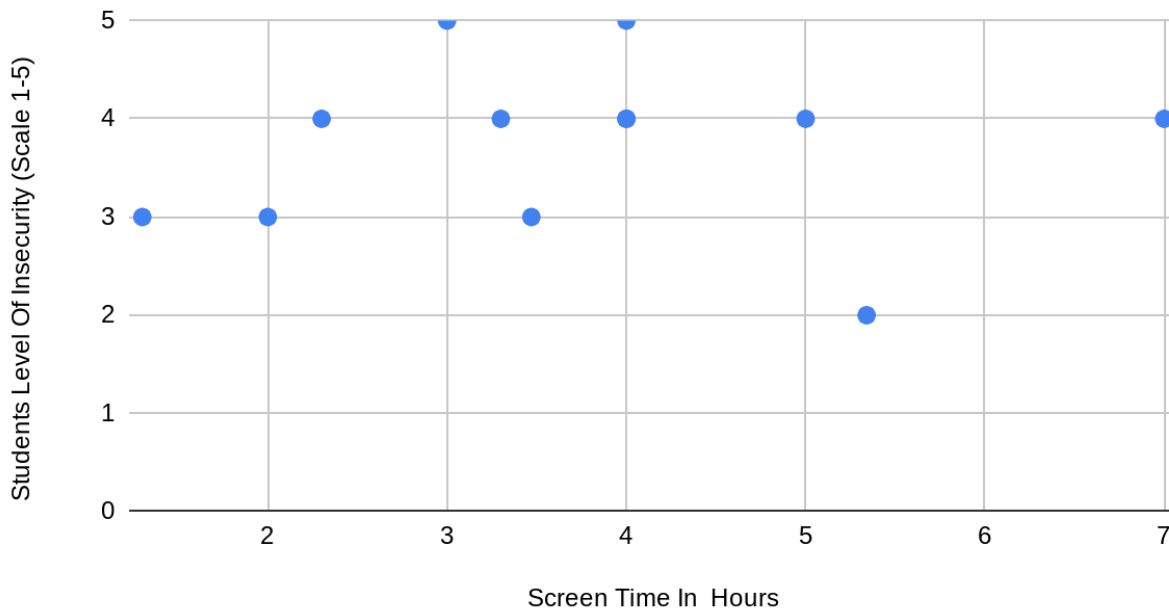
This graph demonstrates the amount of screen time a student has to the level that they have tried complying with beauty standards on social media. I gave them a scale of 1-5 to determine how badly they felt affected by these standards. One being they don't care too much, five being a student would go to extreme lengths and get plastic surgery or another severe procedure or activity done. Or even just changing smaller lifestyle choices by making them more rigid.

Figure 3

Correlation Between Severity Scale and Real-Life Activities Chart

How Severe A Student Complies With Standards (Scale 1-5)	What Things They Have Done To Comply In Real Life
2	"Just went to the gym and i got a better diet."
3	"The only time I can remember conforming to beauty standards was in 4th and 5th grade

	when I bought aftco shorts because they were popular, even though I didn't care for them. Other than that I try to look how I want to look regardless of others."
3	"I have started to wear makeup a lot more because of the trend of it, and have also started struggling with body image which makes me feel like I have to work out in order to look like other girls instead of working out to better my own health and fitness. I also feel like the gym culture on social media has impacted a lot of people, especially me, because it feels as though if you do not go to the gym every day and workout for over an hour with a strict plan for exercise then you aren't really exercising at all, which causes insecurity for people like me who choose to exercise in more engaging ways such as swimming, going on hikes, bike riding, or dancing."
3	"i don't really follow with many trends and things like that because i don't really care for them and im too lazy for it."
4	"I've bought make up and hair stuff, followed workout routine, tried new like healthy foods"
4	"I've bought new makeup, new clothes, gotten more hair ideas, and wanted to work out more"
4	"Working out and buying certain clothes to fit in"
4	"Wearing some makeup at times"
4	"Working out, buying makeup, getting my nails done, doing facials, getting my eyebrows done, tanning"
4	"I have bought almost all the trendy makeup and clothes items to fit in. For example- rare beauty and gold hinge. I also try to workout when I can especially after seeing a video on it."

5	"I don't think I've taken stuff directly from social media trends to follow, but I do cook a good bit of recipes I find online or from my parents that are healthier or have unique/different ingredients said to have beneficial effects."
5	"Working out a good amount and trying to eat healthy."

This chart demonstrates a correlation between how intense a student might feel about beauty standards/trends on social media and how little/far they have gone to comply with them. On the left side of the chart, each student's answers are placed in order from the 1-5 scale (the question on how badly students felt impacted by standards). On the right side, I put each student's answers with what real-life activities they have done to see if there was any comparison in how they felt and what was being put in place.

Discussion

The graph and the chart above build off one another to help further identify a gap and any possible correlation. The Graph Comparing Student's Screen Time To The Level They Comply With Beauty Standards focuses on how students feel about beauty/social standards on social media. It shows that the majority of students feel decently insecure about social media (8/11 students answered a three or four on a 1-5 scale). The screen time section gives a little connection to whether or not more screen time affects students negatively. The Correlation Between Severity Scale and Real-Life Activities Chart above examines how severely a student feels social media trends affect them and what activities they have done in real life to comply with them. I ranked each answer in order and put what each student specifically did on the right. There is a connection between how a student feels and what they have done to comply. It seems that students who put a 3 or higher have bought some kind of item or tried a beauty trend. Two

students who put a "4" on the severity scale say they have "bought almost all the trendy makeup"; the other student said that they get facials and go tanning. These personal answers are important to note because it examines how the more severe a student feels the more they have done in real life to comply. Tanning, trendy makeup, and even facials are unnecessary beauty remedies. However, a student who put a "2" on the severity scale said they "just went to the gym" and started to eat healthier. This suggests that there could be somewhat of a correlation between social media and screen time presence and the extent to which one follows trends. Most students who put a 3-5 on the scale share some personal dispenses that appear to get more rigid as the rank on the chart goes up. However, there is not a certain range or specific activities that demonstrate the severity of social media's presence. It is simply that these students completed these activities because of media consumption. There is not an exact equation for any kind of correlation with this data. Also, even though the data can seem like it does have a pattern, it does not. Yes, there is a seen pattern between media and activities completed by students but, once again, the activities students completed while selecting a ¨5¨ can be just as rigid/unnecessary as student's activities completed when they chose a ¨1¨ or ¨2¨ for the severity scale on the Figure 3 chart. However, there is a clear example that media consumption can definitely kickstart people to go down a worse path. Almost all students can agree to that. It is true that all students put that social media presence one hundred percent affects them while answering the survey. So, adding the Figure 3 chart data on top of that statistic examines the intensity that the Figure 3 data actually represents. Even if a student put a ¨1¨ on the scale and/or said they ¨went on a walk¨ of another healthier activity, they still put that social media definitely affects them. Even so, social media should not affect people that greatly to begin with. Overall, relating to the literature review, it is found that teens on social media have ¨failed in their moral reasoning online¨ and

because of this ¨it led to negative consequences¨ (Law et al., 2021). Also, relating to the literature review, media consumption can cause people to interact differently in everyday life. So, these answers go to show how social media impacts one's belief system. No matter what the students answered, they were impacted in some way by social media in the back of their minds.

New Understanding/Gap

This research examines how media consumption can kickstart one to follow an unhealthy cycle. For the most part, it was found that beauty trends/media consumption leads to unnecessary lifestyle choices. After viewing content on social media, one should not feel implied that they need to follow whatever the newest trend is or even feel bad about how they look because they see better-looking people on social media. Overall, social media spreads quickly and so does whatever beliefs/viewpoints are on it. It is unnecessary to begin with and hurts more than it helps.

Implications

Two major implications were discovered from the data collected. The first one is that the amount of screen time doesn't affect one's belief system, it's the thought behind viewing the content. For instance, someone could be scrolling for hours on TikTok and their belief system might not change at all. They wouldn't decide to go on a walk or do something because they did not feel impacted by beauty trends in the media. However, another person could view one minute of media on TikTok and decide to go on a run because their belief system was impacted greatly by the one minute. So, there is no correlation between the amount of screen time one spends and what activities/lifestyle choices one might follow. Another implication is that media harms one for the worse. It creates unnecessary situations and only causes more problems. Nothing good comes out of constantly being bombarded with beauty trends and unhealthy media.

Conclusion

Overall, this study investigated the correlation between screen time usage and lifestyle choices, specifically lifestyle activities resulting in beauty/body image. Before this study, there was not much research on specific activities people go through to comply with beauty standards. This research helps show how increased screen time and media consumption can lead to changes in one's lifestyle. As stated previously, the National Library of Medicine states that two or more hours of screen time per day can lead to negative physical and mental health effects. The main point found in this study was the unnecessary behaviors people show when they consume media. The extremities and the unnecessary behavior exhibited in people because social media negatively affects their confidence.

Limitations

More data could have been collected to help better prepare my argument. I did not receive as much specific information on activities as I would have wanted. This made it difficult to find a median between screen time and activities students completed. Yes, the activities and screen time did show a correlation with one another but there is no exact equation to determine a number or coefficient. This means that the evidence was surface level. The students' opinions were seen clearly and well-established, however, there was no way to dive deeper and analyze what factors might have given them those opinions. The Google Form provided all the answers but the determining factors for the student's answers were never talked about or seen in the form. In other words, no answers for an equation to determine a numerical coefficient for a correlation. It was just comparing and contrasting answers.

Delimitations

A few delimitations were set in this research. There were only twelve questions in the survey. This created a boundary in what students could answer. Allowing more questions on the

survey could have created a less neutral environment for the answers received. This means that more questions could have broadened the results/data, which could have made it more difficult to analyze. Only twelve questions were asked to keep a limit on what really could be answered. Another delimitation is the age and social status of those who could participate in the survey. Only Seniors could answer. This was good because it was people directly from my school and it also created multiple layers of data to analyze. Age, gender, and economic status are all important parts to consider while analyzing data, and that is why I chose seniors from Wando, it was specific to my research and allowed for more information to come out of the study.

Future Directions

Going forward, people need to be more aware of the media they are watching and consuming. Whether people like to admit it or not, the media we consume today is unhealthy. When people spend multiple hours or even just minutes, it can translate into harmful day-to-day thoughts/beliefs/activities. Going off social media and recalculating the content one views is a good way to stop unhealthy thoughts from developing. Also, for future researchers, I would recommend looking into how these behaviors from screenagers affect people outside of their lives. Such as a parent´s concern with technology and the certain activities their child completes because of the damaging media.

Summary

This study helped demonstrate how harmful media can be. With everything going on in the media, it causes tons of confusion. Because this study focused on teens specifically, the research shows how damaging and intense viewing media in today's time can be. Younger minds might be unaware of the damage media consumption can cause. Once again, decreasing screen time is a good way to limit the content one consumes. It can lead to a healthier lifestyle.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study
Wando High School

Title of Study: Beauty/Social Standards on Social Media and Their Impact on Teens

Researcher: Alexis Chapman

 Course: AP Research Student

Introduction
- You are being asked to be in a research study about social media and how it affects perceptions of beauty.
- You are asked to be a participant because you fit into the three categories looked at (males, females, others).
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before participating in this study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a relationship between social media and beauty standards.
- Ultimately, this research may be published but your name and information will remain confidential.

Description of the Study Procedure
- Turn in the completed consent form.
- Complete survey honestly and submit.
- I will receive the survey and use it for data.

Promises and Benefits Within the Study
- Your information and anything that you report throughout the study will be kept confidential.
- Participation in this study will be extremely beneficial to the researcher, a student at Wando High School, in completing her academic research paper.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- You have the right to ask any questions about the study and results.

Consent

Your electronic signature below indicates that you have decided to participate as a research subject for this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be emailed a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigator.

Participant Information:

Participant Name: _____

Participant Email: _____

                Date: _____

Participant Next Steps:
- Complete the information above and submit the form back to the researcher
- You will be emailed the link to the survey to complete.

Researchers Information:
Name: Alexis Kate Chapman
Method of Contact: chaale2265@ccsdschools.com

Research Advisor Information:
Name: DiAnna Sox, AP Research Teacher
Phone Number: (843) 881-8200
Email: dianna_sox@charleston.k12.sc.us

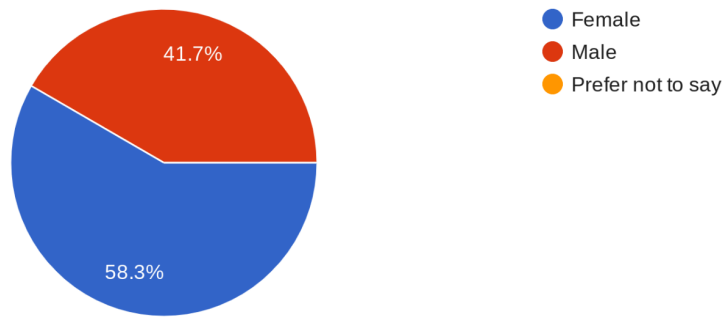**+++ If you are under 18 please get your parents to sign under this.**

Parent Name:

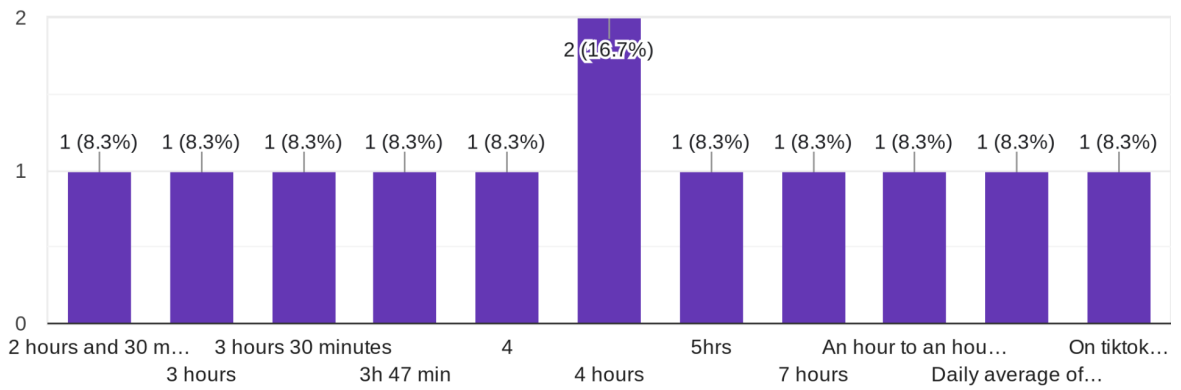Parent Email:

Appendix B

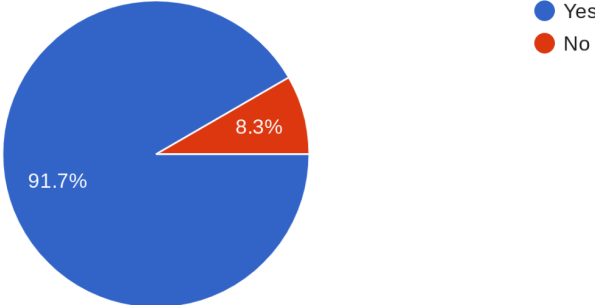Rough Data

What is your gender?
12 responses

How much time do you spend on social media per day? Be specific, use minutes or hours.
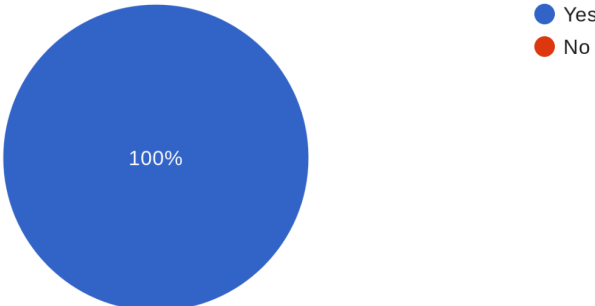12 responses

Do you ever feel insecure after viewing some content on social media? An example could be seeing someone more fit than you and then feeling insecure about yourself?
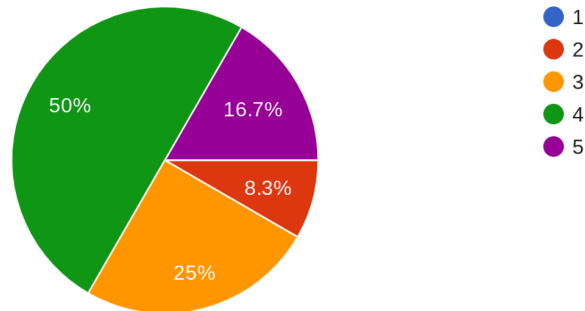
12 responses

● Yes
● No

91.7%

8.3%

Do you think social media places beauty standards on people in real life through its content?

12 responses

● Yes
● No

100%

On a scale of 1-5, be honest, how much does technology affect your everyday life? 1 being it doesn´t at all. 5 being you check your phone every 10 minutes.
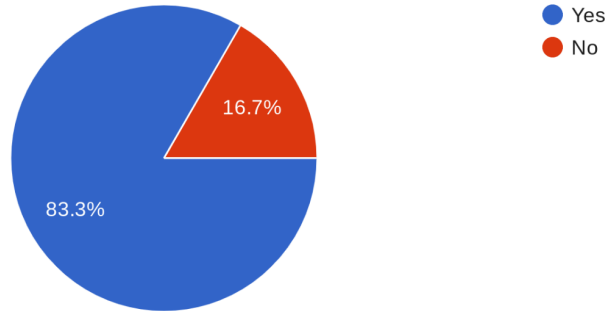
12 responses

Legend:
- 1 (blue)
- 2 (red)
- 3 (orange)
- 4 (green)
- 5 (purple)

Pie chart values: 50%, 16.7%, 8.3%, 25%

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by social media and how much you are consuming? Ex, endless scolling on tik tok. If so, why? 12 responses

Yes there's a lot to take in

Yes I feel overwhelmed because there are so many different tings

Not really overwhelmed but social media does end up making me procrastinate more.

Yes totally, endless scrolling on tiktok is something I fall into the pit of all the time, but can't seem to quit since I feel like I'll find something cooler and better if I keep going.

Yes, I found myself on Instagram reels when I shouldn't be on it.

Yes, scrolling on YouTube

At times from Instagram stories. I feel like I have to view every story that is rainbow and I have to click through it until it has no color around it.

yes, i find it a habit to constantly open tiktok and instagram and then closing out of the app and then immediately open the apps again.

Yes I do feel overwhelmed a lot. There is always so much content and it is all so different. One tiktok could be about a serious issue and then the next is someone lip-syncing.

No

Yes, tik tok feels addictive a lot and I will be sitting on my phone thinking I have only been scrolling for a few minutes and then suddenly it has been an hour. The fact that tik tok now offers longer videos such as 60 seconds and even 3 minute long videos does not help either.

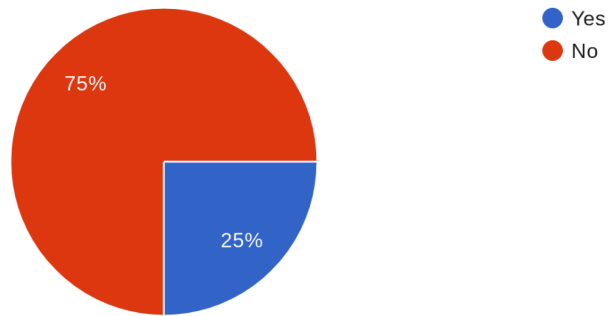sometimes i feel overwhelmed because i spend so much time on it, and i get bored of it sometimes

Do you think beauty standards have impacted your body image and mental health?
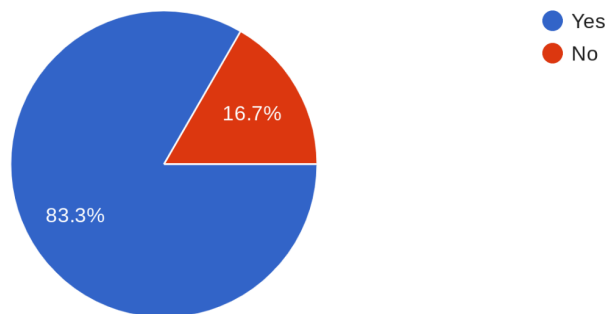12 responses

- Yes
- No

16.7%

83.3%

Have you ever used an app like Facetune to edit pictures?
12 responses

- Yes
- No

75%

25%

Living in CHS, do you think the people here are more on top of their status and how they look then other places?
12 responses

- Yes
- No

16.7%

83.3%

if you have complied with beauty standards on social media, what are some activities you might have done to conform? Such as buying makeup, working out excessively, etc. 12 responses

I've bought make up and hair stuff, followed workout routine, tried new like healthy foods

I've bought new makeup, new clothes, gotten more hair ideas, and wanted to work out more

Just went to the gym and i got a better diet.

I don't think I've taken stuff directly from social media trends to follow, but I do cook a good bit of recipes I find online or from my parents that are healthier or have unique/different ingredients said to have beneficial effects.

Working out a good amount and trying to eat healthy.

Working out and buying certain clothes to fit in

Wearing some makeup at times

Working out, buying makeup, getting my nails done, doing facials, getting my eyebrows done, tanning

I have bought almost all the trendy makeup and clothes items to fit in. For example- rare beauty and gold hinge. I also try to workout when I can especially after seeing a video on it.

The only time I can remember conforming to beauty standards was in 4th and 5th grade when I bought aftco shorts because they were popular, even though I didn't care for them. Other than that I try to look how I want to look regardless of others.

I have started to wear makeup a lot more because of the trend of it, and have also started struggling with body image which makes me feel like I have to work out in order to look like other girls instead of working out to better my own health and fitness. I also feel like the gym culture on social media has impacted a lot of people, especially me, because it feels as though if you do not go to the gym every day and workout for over an hour with a strict plan for exercise then you aren't really exercising at all, which causes insecurity for people like me who choose to exercise in more engaging ways such as swimming, going on hikes, bike riding, or dancing.

i don't really follow with many trends and things like that because i don't really care for them and im too lazy for it.