

Introduction

Negative body image perceptions are highly prevalent in young adult populations, with some studies estimating between **69-84% of women** and **10-30% of men** experience body dissatisfaction on social media (Runfola et al., 2013; Quittkat et al., 2019), causing **increased social comparison** and overuse of social media (Jiosa et al., 2021). Furthermore, exposure to idealized images and influencers on social media promotes **appearance-based social comparison**, where individuals evaluate their own appearance relative to others. Such appearance-based comparisons have been associated with increased dieting behaviors and dietary restraint, especially among women (Jiotsa et al., 2021). Beyond body image, appearance-based social comparison has also been linked to **depressive symptoms** (Lup et al., 2015), suggesting that **social comparison** may be an **important mechanism** through which social media influences psychological well-being. Gender differences have also been identified, revealing a need for further exploration of how social media impacts specific aspects of body image for both women and men.

Present study & Hypotheses:

In this study we will focus on how **appearance comparison on social media** impacts three facets of young adults' **body image** (body surveillance, body shame, and body control). We hypothesize the following:

Appearance comparison on social media will be **negatively associated** with

- (1) body surveillance
- (2) body shame.
- (3) body control.
- (4) **Gender** will significantly **moderate** the association, such that women will have **stronger associations** of all three components of body image than men.

Methods

Participants

Participants included **71 young adults** (ages 18–34) residing in Oklahoma. Recruitment were recruited via social media advertisements from April-December 2024.

Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants completed an **online baseline survey** assessing substance use, social media activity, and affect from the previous day. All surveys were completed via REDCap. Participants earned up to \$200 for completion

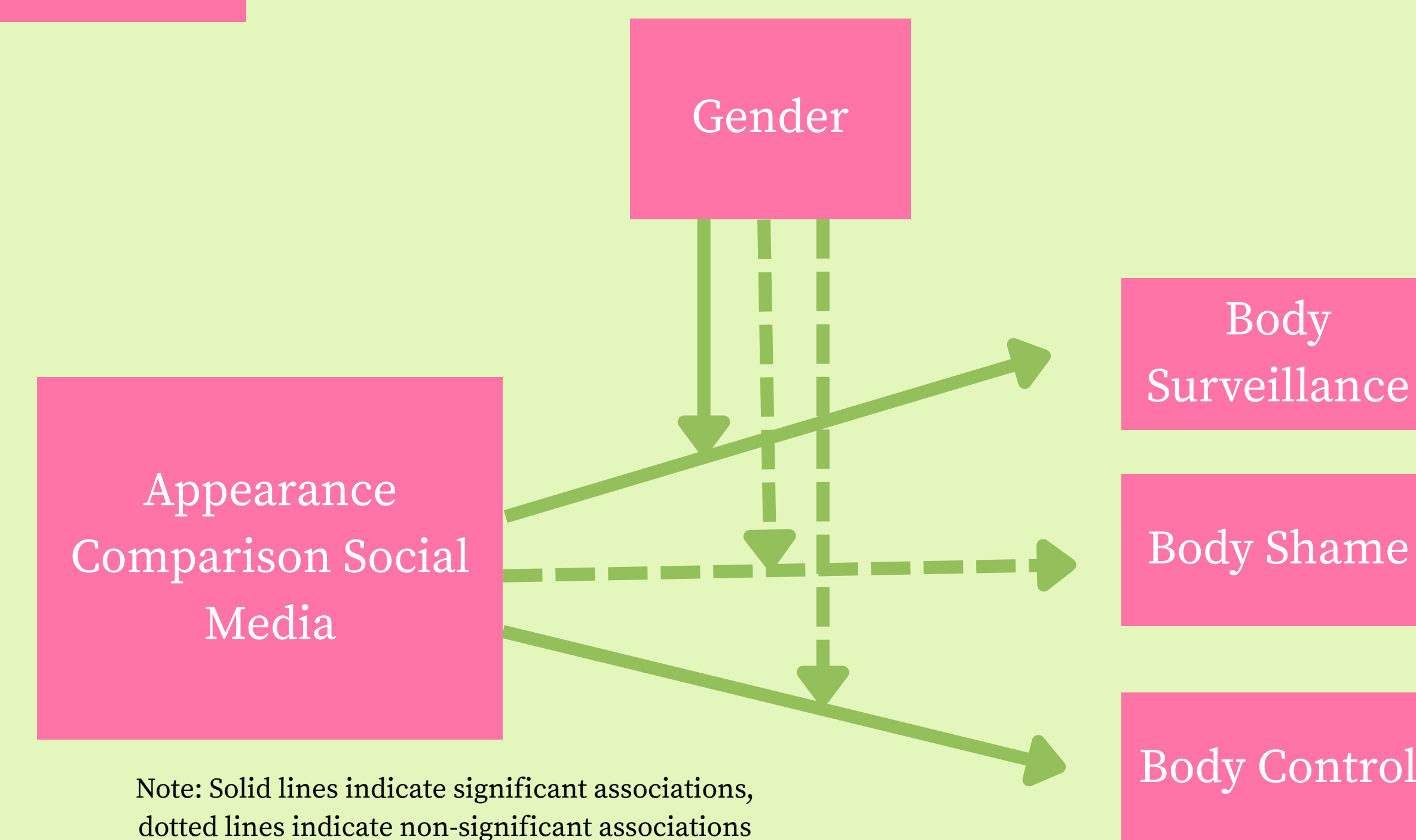
Measures

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale: included three subscales: body surveillance, body control, and body shame measured on 7-point Likert scale (e.g., When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.)

Physical Appearance Comparison Scale-Revised (adapted): assessed how often individuals compare their physical appearance to that of others on social media measured on 5-point Likert scale. (e.g., When I'm on social media, I compare my weight/shape to the weight/shape of others)

Results

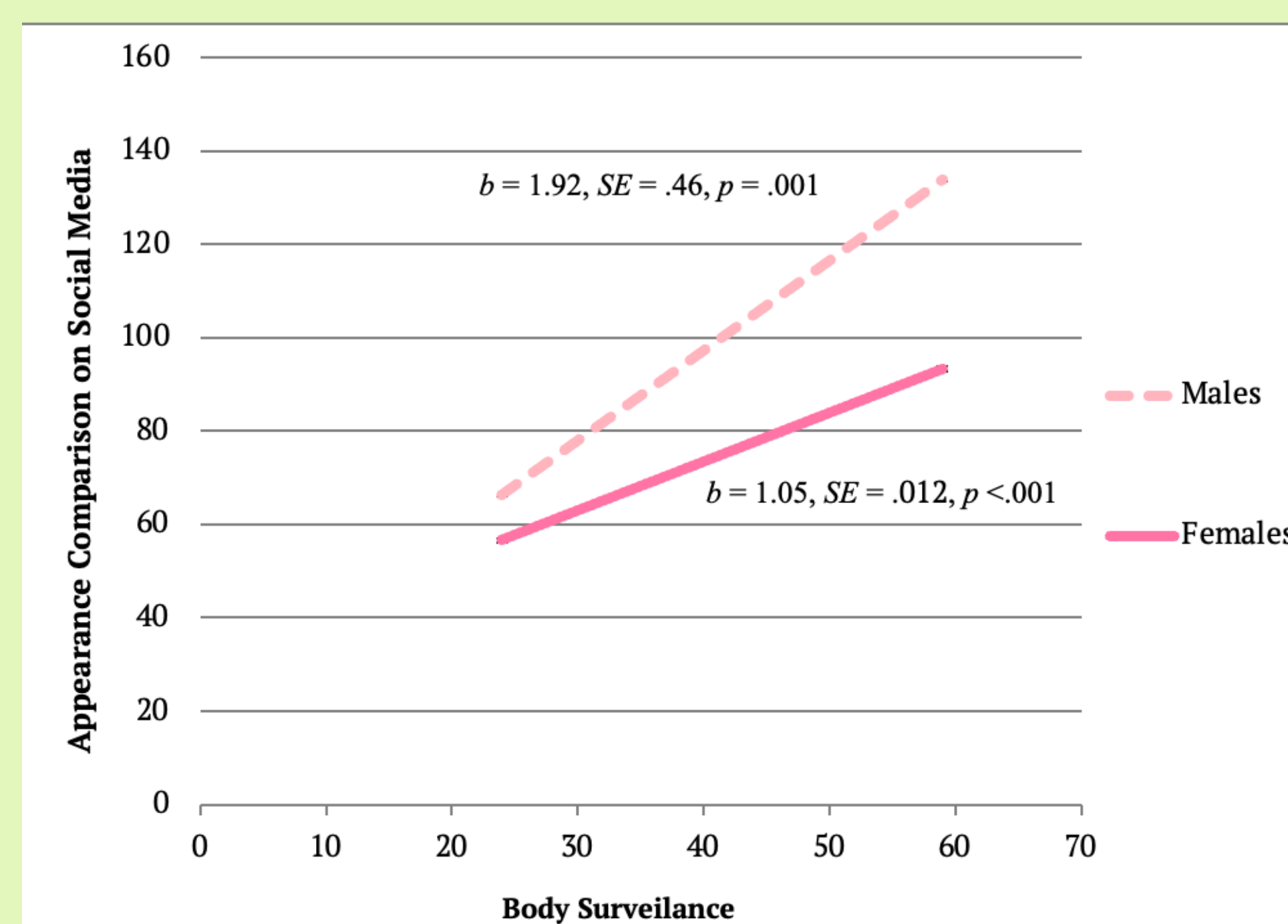
Figure 1 Path diagram for the main effects and interactions



Hypotheses 1-3 were partially supported. Results from regression analysis showed that appearance comparison on social media was associated with more **body surveillance** ($b = .1.93, SE = .38, t(63) = 5.0, p < .001$), **body control** ($b = 2.15, SE = .70, t(63) = 3.1, p = .0029$), but not **body shame** ($b = .33, SE = .41, t(6) = 3.21, p = .4169$)

Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Results from moderation analysis showed that gender significantly moderated the effects of appearance comparison on social media on **body surveillance** ($b = -.87, SE = .43, t(63) = -2.0, p < .001$). Gender did not significantly moderate the association between appearance comparison on social media on **body shame** ($b = -.31, SE = .46, t(63) = 3.42, p = .5012$) or **body control** ($b = -.33, SE = .78, t(61) = 3.42, p = .6655$).

Figure 2 Significant interaction term for gender on appearance comparison and body surveillance



A simple slopes analysis was used to probe the significant interaction (see figure 2). It revealed greater appearance comparison was associated with higher body surveillance for both males and females, but the relationship was **stronger among males than females**.

Discussion

Summary of Key Findings/Interpretation

Greater appearance comparison was associated with **higher body surveillance for both males and females**, though the relationship was stronger among males. Gender did **not significantly** moderate the association between **appearance comparison on social media** and **body shame or body control**. These findings reveal a shifting relationship between body dissatisfaction and behavior across genders as social media use rises, with **males appearing more susceptible** to overall body insecurity, body comparison, and concern for external opinions about their appearance. Females still demonstrated a significant relationship with body surveillance, though weaker than that observed among males.

Comparison to Prior Literature

Most prior research has focused predominantly on **women**, with studies typically including only female participants or a substantially larger proportion of women. Existing work suggests that **the rise of social media** in recent years has **contributed to increased body dissatisfaction**.

Implications

Young adults, particularly males, may benefit from **greater support** and **awareness** regarding social media use and its implications for body image perception and satisfaction.

Limitations

Findings are limited by regional restriction to Oklahoma and sample demographics, including a predominantly female and predominantly White sample, which **constrains analyses among males**. Cultural background and socioeconomic status may also **shape body image exposure and access to mental health resources**.

Future Directions

Future research should employ **larger, more diverse samples** to further examine the relationship between **males and body dissatisfaction**.

References