

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE EATING
PATTERNS OF YOUNG WOMEN**
A CODESIGNED, EXPLORATORY STUDY
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Hugo R Kazenbroot-Phillips
Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science
Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences
Department of Nutrition & Dietetics University of Auckland

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Abstract

The primary goal of this research is to comprehend how social media affects young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, regarding their body image and connections with food. Social media has transformed communication and the spread of information over the past 20 years. societal standards, cultural values, and media portrayals have shaped people's conceptions about food connections and body image. Social media's introduction has changed people's perceptions of food connections and body image, especially in the perspectives of young women. This perspective guided the semi-structured interview and collaborative intervention design approach. Participants in the study were young women aged 18 to 24 who lived in urban and suburban locations across Aotearoa New Zealand. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants. The analysis reveals that the proliferation of edited, enhanced imagery across social media channels propagates unrealistic and highly scrutinized depictions of beauty that young female users then internalize as norms or expectations of feminine worth. Social media's role in shaping food relationships reveals messaging plays an influential yet complex role in propagating disordered nutrition attitudes and guilt-tied consumption. Using Nvivo qualitative software analysis tools, the remaining transcripts were separated and coded independently. The findings highlight the need to consider how cultural contexts shape social media's impact on young women's body image and food relationships. Prevalent diet culture messaging permeates online spaces. However, failing to examine how cultural ties to food, health, and beauty differ across ethnic groups risks further marginalizing minority young women while potentially intensifying disordered eating patterns. This research suggests potential in utilizing social media's capacity and outreach to increase awareness about the opposite negative effects that it has on young women's body image and food relationships.

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List of Abbreviations

NZ - New Zealand

SCT - Social comparison theory

Statement of Original Authorship

I, Hugo Kazenbroot-Phillips, confirm that this Master's Thesis has been written solely by the undersigned and contains the work of no other person or persons except where explicitly identified to the contrary. I also state that said Master's Thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for the fulfilment of any other qualification. I make this statement in full knowledge of and understanding that, should it be found to be false, I will not receive a grade and may face disciplinary proceedings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The study's background offers a thorough basis for comprehending the significance and context of the findings. By examining the presence of social media, its effects on day-to-day living, historical perspectives on body image and food connections, and the influence of social media on these elements among young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, it establishes the value of the study.

Social media has transformed communication and the spread of information over the past 20 years, infiltrating every aspect of daily life. In addition to changing how individuals connect, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have had a big impact on a lot of different aspects of peoples' personal and social lives (45). Social media has become a major source of information and social interaction due to its widespread use, especially among younger groups. According to Holland et al. (17), the extensive use of this technology has a significant impact on people's perceptions of the world and themselves, affecting factors like self-worth, body image, and lifestyle decisions.

Traditionally, the standards of society, the culture problems, and the appearance in the media have been way of shaping people's perception about food and body image (86). Issues concerning body image kept on changing their appearance over time and have been somewhat reflecting the larger society's and culture's development. One illustration of this is the early 20th century when a larger figure was often preferred, but a leaner figure then came into favour in the

later decades (11). Dietary trends being turned into adaptations to economic conditions and public health concern are just like those of the past.

The entry of social media into the field has caused the change in the people's ideas regarding the food connections and body image, notably among the teenage girls. Social media tends to be visual platforms, so consumers buy into an environment where weight and beauty standards are frequently presented and highlighted (30). These websites with their thriving online communities of idealized body types or lifestyles that are not accessible to everyone might lead the young women to disproportionate comparisons which will affect their eating patterns and how they see their bodies. Research shows the association of using social media in a habit, and negative body image as well as altered eating habits (13).

This togetherness with the distinctive New Zealand culture and social structure is among the international trends that Aotearoa is known for. The population being diverse with indigenous Māori and numerous immigrant cultures, embracing a complicated relationship with food and body self-image. In New Zealand's context, the studies on social media and health & well-being may be done not only with the Western but also the indigenous philosophy to shape the methodology (46).

Social media changes somebody's identity, mass opinion, and even the perception of reality in a more significant way than just communication (87), for example. Peer interactions and meticulously selected materials on these websites have a very short and massive impact on the mental health and self-esteem of young people. The virtual world of social media merges the borders of life and representation, which affect individual's perception of self and other people.

The Aotearoa New Zealand cultural background is an important factor to consider when evaluating social media's influence on the body image and food connections because its influence

is complex (88). To illustrate, the Māori and Pacifica peoples possess different cultural viewpoints on food and body image which most likely gives them conflicting standpoints with the ideology that is portrayed by the West and is extensively propagated via social media. This cultural dilemma can be liabilities for those teens who are trying to fit in as young women and have low self-esteem because of the paradox (44).

The role played by social media in having a positive influence on diet and body image can be vital, but it may also have a negative accessory (70). Platforms are now hubs for health-focused campaigns and body positivity movements that question traditional notions of beauty and encourage better lives. But these encouraging messages' effectiveness frequently clashes with idealized images, which is more prevalent (12).

The complex societal fabric of Aotearoa, New Zealand offers special chances for social media-based health promotion (88). Health promotion initiatives can be more effective and resonate when they are tailored to respect and reflect the cultural values of its diverse community, including the Māori perspective. A more comprehensive understanding of health promotion in the digital era can be achieved by utilizing research and interventions created in this environment, which can provide insights that are applicable both locally and globally (47).

According to my research, social media engagement has increased recently, with TikTok and Instagram seeing a large increase in user activity mainly among young people (23). The abovementioned platforms are widely known for highly viral and interactive content. These days' young women have made them a crucial part of their daily routine as they have potential to bring changes in perception of self and the environment.

Social media has still greater impact due to influencer culture. These content-creators promote a set of standards that appear to be attainable but they are not, with the focus being on how one looks rather than how they feel or what they achieve (89). Such influence can affect the target audience adversely creating a false sense of reality and self-esteem issues that may escalate into more serious mental health disorders. The popular trend on TikTok where the influencers are sharing their daily food intake is not always healthy as it sometimes promotes restrictive eating patterns.

Also, the pandemic has caused a greater amount of people to turn to social media as a source of bonding and leisure activities while they are confined to their homes. Studies show that people are more engaged during lockdowns, which might have made their body image issues worse because they were exposed to more idealized images for a longer time (93). It's important to keep up with new social media trends so that our research remains relevant. Therefore, including recent examples in our study is essential. Therefore, this research will provide a current analysis of the effect of social media platforms on young women in a relevant and timely manner.

In summary, there is a complicated interplay between local cultural circumstances and worldwide trends in the way that social media shapes body image and food connections. This link provides the opportunity for Aotearoa, New Zealand, to use what they have learned and how they have dealt with these problems around the country in a way that is respectful and inclusive of the country's wide spectrum of cultures. The main findings of the research suggest that studying social media, especially among young Kiwi women in New Zealand, is prominent in how it affects a resourceful and socially empowered society. Social media is having an effect that is difficult to understand and, therefore, this intelligence should be used to generate targeted solutions to positive body image attitudes and healthy eating in the social media era.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays social media networks have become core channels for social intercourse and idea dissemination that attracts people through visual content (70). The choice of the platforms that participate with them in displaying excessively retouched or altered pictures, also visual media, profoundly affects how people evaluate their own bodies. People experience the situation of being constantly confronted with the pictures that show the slimness and attractiveness as the main values in their minds. Especially women in the age of youth are affected by these images. It may result in making unhealthy comparisons, having a negative body image as well as being dissatisfied in life (30). Likewise, social media also plays a role in how we interact with food and allows certain diets and lifestyles to flourish which, in turn, influence eating disorders (8).

Recognizing the ubiquity of social media in our time, it could be significant to learn how it affects networks with food and body image concerns. It is the fact that young girls are on social media more than anything that makes them vulnerable to the effects of the digital content they are exposed to. Instantaneous social media interaction's interpersonal nature of being close and private is an immediate and consequential issue that is highly significant in terms of public health and mental health (23).

Though researchers world-wide are exporting more and more work on the effects of social media on having an appetite and self-image, there is still a substantial shortage of studies that focus on Aotearoa, New Zealand in particular. This disruption is extremely relevant when understanding how these international events affect the country that is rooted in its own sets of social and cultural features. The unique cultural realm is presented through the multiculturalism of the residents of

New Zealand, which include a vast indigenous Māori groups alongside Pacific islands. To completely comprehend and address the impact of social media on body image and food interactions among its youth, research in this field must take these cultural nuances into account (47).

The existing literature, albeit comprehensive, has certain limitations that this study intends to fill, specifically considering the distinct social and cultural environment of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Teenagers today are bombarded with culturally driven messaging from TV and social media that defines beauty in western standards, despite New Zealand having its own unique cultural narratives regarding body image and food relationships (70). That oversight is super critical because it doesn't consider the cultural details of the Māori community and the many different immigrants who help make New Zealand what it is.

Furthermore, existing research has not comprehensively examined how diverse social media platforms, with their unique functionalities and content offerings, differently affect young women's body image and eating habits. Instagram can have negative effects on body satisfaction as studied in research (71) but there isn't much study on TikTok which is very popular among young people nowadays. Also, most literature doesn't provide the positive correlation considered to be true on the internet based on actual data together with people's subjective experiences but rather just gives the broad generalization. Unfortunately, mixed-methods research hasn't been used that much in New Zealand. There's a need to study this occurring in NZ culture.

Previous research has identified several gaps, which this study seeks to address. First off, a large portion of the research that has already been done on the effects of social media on interactions with food and body image is focused on people in North America and Europe. A

substantial shortage of targeted studies exists about Aotearoa, New Zealand, particularly considering its peculiar cultural composition. It is important to comprehend how social media affects varied groups, a topic that receives little attention. This study is intended as a more complete source of information on the way in which social media affect young women in New Zealand (the influence and the treatment), in the context of a nation that is specific to Māori culture.

It is the effect of social media on the way young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, seek for food and body image, that this research tries to explore. Given the nature of social media which is characterized by its widespread reach and its capability to not only damage psychological and physical health but also cause a ripple effect of other problems, this topic is now one of the relevant issues to discuss. This research is devoted at addressing the areas where the research lacks by comprehending the effects of digital media on the young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This study aims to look at body image pressures and eating habits that are affected by social media by means of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the purpose of having a wider and more thorough research on such theme. Factors of income, education and health are contextualized within the New Zealand societal setting to obtain a complete picture as these disparities have not been comprehensively investigated. This will also serve to offer insights in shaping policy decisions and interventions around the identified challenges.

1.3 Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to gain information on how social media influences the way young women in New Zealand see themselves in terms of appearance and relationship with

food. The scope of the study is secured as the goals guarantee that all the key aspects of this complex issue are considered and the research proceeds in a targeted way.

1. To Assess the Influence of Social Media on Body Image Perceptions

The primary objective is to determine the extent to which teenage girls form an opinion of their bodies from their participation in various social media platforms. Among the marketing strategies on these sites, there is a variety of content like pictures, advertisements and posts from influencers that shape the attitudes and perceptions of the audience about their bodies. The main reason is to know if younger women are using edited and retouched photographs more often and being more dissatisfied with their own bodies or have a different view of themselves.

2. To Investigate the Impact of Social Media on Food Relationships

Checking the influence of social media on young girls' perceptions of diet and nutrition and their eating habits is another important aspect to be considered. This includes the examination of food trends spread and the way social media has become a tool for the pushing of certain diet styles, which in turn is responsible for the wayward eating behaviour and influences of young women.

3. To Explore Cultural and Contextual Influences in Aotearoa, New Zealand

The study aims at identifying how in Aotearoa New Zealand, these cultural and context specific aspects drive food and body image interaction via social media. This includes examining the manner how international social media trends intersects with cultural aspects, for instance, Māori and Pacific young women's worldview, to form their thoughts and actions.

4. To Inform Interventions and Policy Recommendations

And the research aims to offer the information that can be used in shaping programs and suggested policies. The aim is to offer some important recommendations for developing health promotion, education, and regulatory measures that will not only mitigate but also positively address the negative effects of social media on body image and interactions with food, as the study shows. While there is a great demographic and cultural diversity, which make up the multicultural society of Aotearoa, New Zealand, the proposals will be developed considering the specifics of this region.

Hence, these goals are aligned in a manner that will help researchers to achieve a broad understanding of how social media affects the relationships between eating and body image among young women in New Zealand and for the sake of adding to both the academic and real-world applications in health promotion.

1.4 Research Questions

The study's aims are methodically addressed by these research questions and hypotheses, which offer an organized method for examining the intricate connection between social media, body image, and food interactions among young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

1. How does engagement with social media platforms influence the body image perceptions of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand?
2. In what ways does social media affect young women's relationships with food, including their eating behaviours and attitudes towards diet and nutrition?

3. How do cultural and contextual factors in Aotearoa, New Zealand, shape the impact of social media on body image and food relationships among young women?
4. What interventions and policy recommendations can be developed to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships for young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand?

Hypotheses

1. **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** There is a significant correlation between the level of engagement with social media platforms and the body image perceptions among young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand.
2. **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Exposure to certain types of content on social media, such as diet trends and idealized body images, negatively influences the eating behaviours and attitudes towards food among young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand.
3. **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Cultural and contextual factors unique to Aotearoa, New Zealand, significantly modulate the impact of social media on body image and food relationships among young women.
4. **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Tailored interventions and policies based on the cultural and social context of Aotearoa, New Zealand, can effectively mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships among young women.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has significance in that it provides a detailed exploration of how social media gets young women in New Zealand involved in the processes of their food and body-image

interactions. This study is important in several ways: by applying research to the real world, it moves the academic world, pushes new techniques and practices, and provides valuable information to multiple interested parties.

1.5.1 Contribution to Academic Knowledge

This research provides a timely response to the lack of recent literature that centres on the specific ethnic and cultural surroundings that are otherwise underexplored. Despite there being many studies that have looked at the effect social media has had on what people eat and how they view their bodies in other locations, in Aotearoa there is a unique cultural environment. Through incorporating cross-cultural considerations and advancing our knowledge on the role of social media in building individualities in different socio-cultural settings, this research will contribute to the upgrading of the academic community (23).

1.5.2 Benefits to Stakeholders

The research gives the essential knowledge for the target audiences of public health professionals, youth and policymakers in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It provides young women with a knowledge of the things that they may have been fed with, as far as social media goes, which can give them a clue as to how such influence works. This can go a long way in equipping themselves with media literacy and self-awareness. These studies can help health professionals in the development of strategies and communication techniques that are more productive and are better taken by the target group, in so doing, reducing the negative effects of social media on young women. By presenting empirical findings, this research shows the policy direction of the decision makers of social media policies that have a formative role in education and health sector (17).

Policy interventions

The results of this survey could consequently have a ripple effect on the policies and strategies that currently exist within New Zealand. Research on this topic will reveal more information about how girls differ from their male peers in their body image and eating behaviour. This data can be used in creating dedicated programs for this target group. Probably, these educational programs are among the best candidates to assist us in this process. In view of providing a reliable and safe environment for young people to learn the lure of social media, they should be encouraged to take policies that monitor the posts and ban those that promote fake beauty standards and body criticism. Additionally, agencies may utilize this knowledge to run campaigns aimed at promoting Acceptance of one's body and boosting self-regulation with a special focus on various cultural groups in New Zealand.

1.5.3 Informing Future Research and Interventions

Also, the science may draw insights that can help future research works and treatment. Subsequent research can be directed to these areas; the targeted areas are to be investigated and narrow-focused treatment should be prescribed according to the certain areas of food relationship and body image that are affected by social media. The outcome of this trial will bring about the emergence of effective health promotion campaigns in social media platforms with public health awareness at their core. Research into resilience-building factors and protective measures against the detrimental impacts of social media can be another way for this topic to ignite interest, and thus contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of digital well-being (13).

At last, this research is important in many aspects, because it makes contributions to the general body of knowledge, it provides useful areas of approach for the interested participants, and it offers direction for policy implementations and further research. This marks the gap in the research because it is based on the experience and situation in New Zealand which also act as a model for the future research about diverse cultures.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Given that the subject of the study is the perception of using social media by women aged 18-24 in Aotearoa, New Zealand, correlating with body image and food relationships, therefore, Social Comparison Theory (SCT) is a suitable model for the study. As to SCT, founded by Leon Festinger in 1954, people attach values to their social and personal dimensions by comparing themselves to others (15). While media has been a big negative in the use of humankind communication, The Galatea Effect stands out as a very important theory.

Social comparison theory (SCT) that stresses an individual's inclination to evaluate him/herself through the contrast of his/her attributes or abilities with those of others is the basis of the study (15). Based on whether the target of the comparison is perceived as either higher or lower than oneself, social comparisons may be either upward or downward as published by SCT. Crossing a comparison line can have a negative effect, such as envy, sadness, low self-esteem, but it also may be the path to self-improvement. Notwithstanding the fact that upward comparison can hike up the perceived self-worth, perhaps, it may also rise envy, pride, complacency and arrogance.

First, the upsurge of social media platforms has invariably created an environment where people can constantly engage in social comparison (71). It is common that people are subjected to different in most cases carefully picked and perfectly idealized photos of others, which in turn diminishes how they perceive and value themselves (8). Young girls are generally the most dangerous victims of this. SCT not only covers the inroads into consumption behaviour in general, but more important it investigates the effect on the identity formation of youths, particularly of those issues with appearance and face they see on these media.

The research's application of social comparison theory in the context of body image issues clearly demonstrates the significance of this study. Reportedly, young women (aged 13) may experience body dissatisfaction because of frequent exposure to overly edited or perfected bodies on social media (13). These sadnesses spring from the comparisons of the life with these portrayals and these may lead to a different mental health issues. Moreover, for SCT understanding the connection between social media and the eating behaviours is also significant. Social media platforms such as Instagram that influence the way young women choose their diets and attitude towards food has been proven to contribute a lot (27). This reproduction mode could be a replacement for unhealthy eating behaviour, including improper dieting and overindulging, that results from competing with other people's lifestyles and eating habits.

Social tolerance can, therefore, be employed to learn about how internet behaviours such as online image and eating patterns of young females aged 18- 24 in New Zealand affect their body image. Social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) are usually the most favourable platforms for this age group, and they offer so many of comparison opportunities between one's peer, celebrities, influencers and even strangers. Studies have shown that the effect of seeing those perfect photos of others on social media might be that a girl is constantly comparing herself to those other people and at the end she becomes dissatisfied with her own body image (12). Moreover, the media and social networks most likely contribute to a young woman's eating habits and attitude to food related issues as she can receive recommendations about dieting, eating health or avoiding specific food groups in the messages she sees or may be criticized for her choice of food or body shape (17).

With a co-design approach, the project will aim at studying 18-24 years old Aotearoa women in New Zealand's perception of social media in the context of their body image and food interactions. Co-design is a participatory method that does not only the consumers taking

part in the design process but also involves them as the active collaborators in the product, service, or intervention design (32). Coordinate with co-design to ensure that the intervention addresses issues that are relevant, acceptable and effective, and it also encourages a sense of empowerment and allows active participation and ownership by the users (3). The next phase of the project re-analyses the data of an old co-design initiative that was aimed at young women's (34) health promotion through social media. The study will be focused on the topics and conclusions of the co-design sessions and interviews with participants, who participate in social media, and their viewpoints on body image and food social networks as well as the influence of social media on their attitudes.

SCT is a method where the research may deeply investigate the reasons that social media influences the body image and food attachment in the adolescent women. It may not only be helpful in gaining deeper knowledge of psychological processes underlying some of these events, but also to identify strategies that might work in successful promotion of health. Revealing the fact that social media has the impact on SCT through these patterns should be the main task for the development of the policies that promote positive body image and food relationships which are important for many women today as they are a part of their lives.

The project is a contribution to the increasing pool of knowledge owed to social media and SCT by exposing how young women of Aotearoa, New Zealand can face social comparison in social media and how this is likely to affect their food relations and body image. Codesigning with the young women can be shown through the project as to how it can help them participate in health promotion strategies that they find meaningful and appealing.

2.2 Background of the study

2.2.1 Historical Context of Body Image Perceptions

A complex tale is formed by the historical context of body image beliefs, and it shows society and culture's development over time (72). Eventually, the physical appearance dreamt by individuals was primarily based on the overall lifestyle and the culture which was changing at the same rate. During the early 20th century, the Gibson Girl in the United States and other characters of the same type served as the particular and ideal woman who was sympathetic to the body style that was voluptuous and curvy (34). This concept was normally supposed with wealth and steadiness, which was a good combination of physical and mental health. It was with the beginning of the Roaring Twenties when the boyish build became popular as the look of flappers, which was the synonym for liberation and defiance of social rules, was produced.

The years post the Second World War brought in another transformation. Hollywood stars like Marilyn Monroe succeeded in making women believe the hourglass shape was in demand in the 1950s (73). Through this era there were certain standards associated with the size of a woman in terms of attractiveness and femininity. The size that had to be bigger was celebrated. Yet the very 1960s can be hard to recognize as the platform shoes were replaced with a much lower profile, and Twiggy together with the other models were the new standard (73). The media was enamoured with an increasing level of thinness in the body during this time, which started an ongoing spread.

It is no secret, there has been increasing, and complex, depiction of how bodies are supposed to look over the past couple of years, due to the rapid multiplication and digitalization of mass media (74). Body shapes began to rapidly change in the late 20th / early 21st century due to multiple factors, but mainly because of the emergence of celebrity culture and fashion

industry. However, there has been a tendency for fashioning of slim bodies and corpulence, frequently leading to unrealistic expectations of the average woman (74).

One of the most significant roles of media in the body image belief formation is to provide opinion from the external source. Social media or digital media are not the only culprits nowadays when it comes to the increasing temptation to compare our own lives with that of others, who are usually pictured in glamorous settings. The relationship between people and their bodies has changed as it was impacted by the spread of social media influencers and the application of photo editing software, not to mention the general curation of the image of the lifestyle (19). This trend of the digital growth has led to an exposure to images that might possibly be associated with an increased incidence of dissatisfaction with female bodies as well as mental issues that follow.

Furthermore, the image of oneself and of the appearance is not only formed by the media but also by culture, race, and social conditions. Cultures are different in their concept of beauty, and it is the young age that is very receptive to such ideals (75). Along with racial and socioeconomic qualities, characteristics such as race, which determine the way body image is viewed, are the other aspects that affect body image.

By amending ideals of beauty, the society witnessed more fundamental transformations on past body image perceptions and evolutions. The history of beauty standards shows that it was the voluptuous silhouette that was preferred in the early twentieth century while the thin shapes are the norm nowadays (77). The media's increasing power of especially digital media has greatly increased the portrayal of body image. This too affects girls and women to psychologically distress themselves as they conform to the world's standard of beauty (74). Having a historical sense is important in understanding body image beliefs of the present-day era, and media influence becomes key in the current landscape because of the use of social media.

2.2.2 Evolution of Social Media and Its Impact on Society

One of the most important milestones of the twentieth century in terms of social progress was the proliferation of social media, which has not only changed the ways of communication, but also had a significant effect on the existing elements of society. Social media has started its journey from small beginnings as a place for individual interaction and socializing to a complete media that has had a great impact in the global environment; it has deeply affected politics, culture, and individual psychology.

In terms of online social networks, Friendster and Myspace were the trailblazers in this area, thereby laying the groundwork for what soon would become an era of digital communication revolution. Nevertheless, the growth of both Facebook (founded in 2004) and then Twitter (2006) as well as Instagram (2010) and TikTok (2016) meant that its full influence would now begin to be felt (4). Along with this, these social media platforms not only created the platform for social interaction but also offered the development of content, sharing and consumption which was never seen before.

Humanizing sentence: The impact of this evolution was not only cultural, but also social. Social media has now opened the avenues for content creation to anyone with access to internet little matter their age, gender, class or existing social status. As a result of it, there is the expansion of the diversity in content and participation which weakens the main media's gatekeeping occupation (41). Along with these good sides of social media, the rapid dissemination of disinformation, the formation of echo chambers, and the deepening of political division are among the common disadvantages associated with social media (1).

One of the most vivid influences social media has on the society is on the psychological state of individuals, especially what they think about themselves and how they interact socially. The internet is now the self-esteem terms of reference; the social networks almost always increase self-esteem problems and mental health difficulties (43). Social media content may be

curated, and that it usually shows a lifestyle and body portraying perfection. In fact, this might bring more unreachable expectations to the users, and thus may make them feel inadequate or anxious (13).

Moreover, young people, mostly teenagers and young adults, who are considered as more vulnerable to the influence of the social media, is another issue of consideration. It has been documented that social media has a correlation with mental illnesses such as loss of psychological well-being and depression (40). Every day young people are bombarded with photos and lifestyles that show perfection on social media that puts high expectations and pressure to adopt these standards, which can interfere with young people's body image and self-worth.

It has been the era of social media that has witnessed socially transformative effect on society as it is through social media that people communicate, acquire knowledge and view themselves and others (79). Internet communication has led to numerous advances comprising of more diversified content and media democratization, but at the same time it created problems such as deception, polarization, and unfavourable impact on mental health (80). However, being aware of the magnitude of these effects is very important, particularly with regards to the role of social media in, both young women's values about body image and their behaviours toward food.

2.2.3 Young Women's Demographics and Culture in Aotearoa

The socioeconomic background and cultural identity of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the country that I was born in, create a unique and intricate picture that is vital in deciphering their attitudes towards social media, with its connection especially to body image and food-related matters. The richness of the Aotearoa mix of European, Asian and other Pacific societies culture with Māori culture makes it an appropriate location for the unit.

The recent census data has revealed that there is a sizeable young group of people in New Zealand where one must take into account the necessity to cover the needs of people aged 18-24 (35) as well. This growth stage of life is a crucial stage for both social age identity and personal development. Further, this cohort has a distinctive ethnic composition of the many Asians, Māori, Pacific Islanders and Pakeha New Zealand Europeans), who all crown the culture of the nation (35).

If the Māori culture is considered, the process of forming a national identity of New Zealand cannot be easily accomplished. With the notion of whānau (families) and mana wahine (the authority and the position of women) being important in their lives. These two principles are very much women oriented and focus on their strength, solidarity, and ability to support each other, even against circumstances which are far from supporting them, thus contributing to the formation of a cultural framework that directly affects women's experiences and viewpoints (26).

The same with the other regions around the globe, New Zealand also faced the invasion of Western culture which is basically the result of the development of mass media and globalization (81). There for, this brought together the diverse mix of cultural features and behaviours, especially with the young people. Young women in New Zealand just realize that they are in a situation where they must master themselves and at the same time the main culture which existed in the country as well as impacts from outside in the world.

Education as well as socioeconomic issues is also another factor in the life of New Zealand women living in the age of 18 to 24 (82). She comes from a country with a good literacy rate and an excellent education system as well that has made women more aware and enabled them to take advantage of the opportunities. But this issue is also marked by factors such as economic inequality and urban-rural differences and influences the way young women use these resources (31).

The youth in New Zealand are now both diaspora descendant generation women and recent immigrant women to the country (83). Indigenous values, international influences, educational opportunities, and socioeconomic aspects are the components that present an unparalleled picture in which these women act on social media. Therefore, it is undeniable that exploring this atmosphere is the key for realizing how social media endorse such body image beliefs and food connections, so future culturally sensitive and successful therapies are planned.

2.3 Social Media and Body Image

The role of social media becomes an important object of research when considering how body image is currently influenced among young females. Social media platforms, which have proliferated in our daily living, have the vital function of wasting time-wasting to the point of getting obsessed which results in this way or another making you harbour negative body perceptions and attitudes. The trend is more often spotted in teenage girls who are active in online messaging platforms and considering making body modifications.

Body image is an idiosyncratic dimension which gets affected by different conditions and circumstances including media coverage. The opinion formation of the youth is taking place at an alarming speed due to the information often viewed on media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and TikTok in the era of social media. These outlets don't just mean that women share and view pics, but they also ensure the distribution and the beauty standards (13).

Pictures on social media platforms usually show either an ideal weight or even impossible procedures for users to reach; that is why very often they create the feelings of dissatisfaction or low self-esteem. The multifaceted feature of photo manipulation through tools and filters worsens the scenario which leads to a false perception which hides reality and can result in harmful comparisons. It is also important to be informed of social media mechanics as

it pertains to the effect it can have on a young women's perception of their body image; this is when strategic methods would be developed to counter the negative effects which affect the mental health and wellbeing of young women.

The mass media has portrayed and impacted the ideal body image in a very radical way over time, by integrating and imposing the general cultural standards of beauty. Ultimately, the media has had a tremendous influence on the attitude people have towards the perfect body, a view that varies through the years. At the beginning to mid-centuries, the media have been flaunting voluptuous figures as the summit of the beauty for women, that is as exemplified by Hollywood stars such as Marilyn Monroe. It was a symbol of the growing tendency to depict a piece of ideal, plump figure type (11).

Nevertheless, roughly opposite thing happened during the late 60s and 70s, when media increasingly appreciated leaner body ideal. That period brought such models as Twiggy to the forefront who differed from the previous body type idolized in the media. Following the decades, the trend of weight loss became clearer, and it was mostly due to the media overpowered by fashion industry using magazines and television.

The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed the internet and social media blooming and consequently there has been a significant amplification of their influence on how individuals perceive their bodies. Social media, which is one of the most effective mediums of promotion that included fitness and to be thin, also became evidence to the dissemination and maintenance of the so-called body image standards (30). The world of media has been altered due to digitalization, which has accelerated its impact on people's image about their bodies and has a strong influence on how they see their own bodies and how much they are enjoying them.

2.3.1 Social Media Influence and Body Image Perceptions

Social media is an influential factor in the formation of views about body image, but a more detailed examination reveals it to be a complex and multi-sided issue, especially in the era of digital communication. With its extensive scope and omnipresent nature, social media becomes one of the primary tools where body image standards and ideals are presented and internalized by users especially women in their youth (30).

It's mostly by the photo-sharing sites like TikTok, Facebook and Instagram that users are generally exposed to photos that sometimes represent idealized or the truth is not truly represented by body types. This social interaction might lead to upward social comparisons, this is when people compare themselves to those, they consider contrary to beauty. These pairings are, in most cases, associated with negative body image and low self-confidence (13).

The influence of media personalities on the issue of body image aggravates this dilemma. Influencers hold a great importance in setting the styles and taste since people feel that they are closer to them and as opposed to traditional celebrities who may not be their role models. Such people constantly post pictures which are in line with social beauty patterns, which particularly influences teenagers who regard these people as a role model or the people they should strive to look like (36).

Additionally, a growing trend of people filtering, and photo-editing tools allows them to change their appearance into these idealized standards. Whilst these tools may find a way to create a whole different person imaginatively, they often show just an unrealistic and sometimes unachievable beauty standard. Such an alteration can cause the person to push their body towards unrealistic boundaries and lead to a misleading view of normal body types (17).

Such factors are the cumulative sum of many things. Based on these results social media activity becomes a significant factor for concerns about body shape, body weight and body

image. Of this matter more, it is a top concern considering the huge number of those in the teenage group with internet use especially (38). Moreover, the social media influence on body perception is not a limited case to the mere exposure to idyllic photos but to the interactive character of these media. The quest for comments, shares, and likes may be used as the basis for desirability and the tendency to approve others, consequently, other principles of beauty and admiration may be engraved to young women's self-concept (14).

Social media elicits a massive influence on body image beliefs particularly through trying to concept of the best body types and fashion trends. This effect, which is more likely to be experienced by females who use social media, especially ones with participation and photoediting, may result into negative body image, high body dissatisfaction, and the lot of psychological challenges among young women (84).

2.3.2 Role of Social Media in Shaping Beauty Standards

Social media nowadays is a significant thing in the beauty industry as the beauty standards are one of the main topics among people on social media. Beauty norms, which originate from these platforms, do not only reflect but contribute to the development of the social conceptions and individual self-concepts, which is more visible among the young women (30). People are surrounded by social media posts all the time, and it constantly presents them with some images that promote specific beauty standards. Often it happens that the pictures represent only one concept of beauty that doesn't catch up with the diversity of the overall population. In such regulations, the youth, slimness, and certain facial features which are highly acceptable/appreciated in a market dominated by the West are mostly highlighted (13). The audience especially teenage girls may find these shared values appealing to the extent that they grow to be their actual goals and benchmark.

The social media influencers are the ones who share these beauty standards with the rate of more than any other process. They often have huge numbers of fans and are very

powerful as far as their followers are concerned because their fanbase considers them as their beauty and desirability role model. Influencers contribute to the perpetuation of performance in a conventional beauty as they continuously reveal their pictures which comply with traditional beauty standards. As a result, highly targeted and attractive ads from influencers who are carrying cosmetic products as their branded merchandise normalize certain aesthetic norms as ideal (36).

Psychologically, social media has led to a generation which is more accepting of some popular trends and intensifies the beauty expectations. As social affirmations go likes, comments and shares make the system of beauty "choices" seen as more worthy than others. This feedback loop has thus far the power to start building a cycle where all users subconsciously tend to adhere to media-promoted beauty standards to be socially recognized and accepted (17).

The influence of tech in constructing beauty standards on social media is as well essential. Many people are using the filters and photo editing software widely used to make their appearance match the ideal of beauty. With the occurrence of such change, it is not only the promotion of unrealistic standards but also it blurs the boundary between real image and digitally altered images which makes it difficult to differentiate between the two (13).

Social media has a profound role in shaping the way beauty is defined in the era of modern society. These sources serve a function of concretizing beauty norms by the exporting certain standards, the power of media idols, and social validation practices (19). This psychological influence of mass media such as social networks can have a serious impact on the consumers, especially on young women, because it shames their conception of beauty and self-worth, more often ending up in bad body shape and psychiatric disorders.

2.3.3 Psychological Impacts of Social Media on Young Women

The social media can exert different and vast psychological changes on adolescent females; the main of them are their self-image and self-esteem. Social media has turned into the new media platform that has a great impact on the perceptions of young women, with them striving for the idealized body types and idealized storylines, which has many consequences on their psychological health (30).

Note that body image dissatisfaction is one of the almost full-time psychological impacts. Social media influence used for fake beauty standards can be reprehensible and commonly unreal, which can be a reason for bad body image in the teenage girls. The depression begins from the comparisons with the body and life represented on these platforms of which the major part has been purposely altered or deliberately selected as perfection (13). These comparisons are a source of unhealthy feelings like inadequacy and false impression about one's body.

Seniority of social media among girl youth has also been linked to the augmented usage of social media among youth girls with depression and anxiety disorders. The desire for people to fit into social media norms and rules as well as the fear of missing out on life causes their existence to be controlled by what other people say or feel can result in emotional distress. Social networking sites with interactive features that often rely on feedback in numbers (likes, comments, shares) might exacerbate these issues since they could directly connect self-worth and self-esteem to one's online feedback (17).

The other big influence is the tendency to develop eating disorders, which is another influence. The marketing of different diets and fitness routine campaigns that most commonly appear on social media alongside the depiction of skinny body as an ideal, can shape the eating habits of young women and can change the way they view food. This influence can be

manifested as an unhealthy fixation of body weight and shape which at times takes the form of improper eating behaviour (36).

Besides, social media may assist in inciting a process referred to as 'self-objectification', in which young females come to internalize an observer's perspective of their body. This will be eliciting continuous self and body monitoring which will worsen body dissatisfaction and increase the vulnerability of mental problems (14).

It further brings out the entire psychological effects imposed on younger females in matters touching on body images, mental health, and eating behaviours, to mention just but a few, through the use of social media. The realization of the adverse effects and development of programs to acquire a healthy view of the body and mental health is very paramount among young women living in this digital era.

2.3.4 Social Media in Body Positivity and Negative Trends

Broader reinforcement from the media came with the passing years with the slim trend hugely attributed to the media representation by most mediums on behalf of the fashion industry (16).

Social media, in the late parts of the 20th and early 21st centuries, coupled with the internet, heightened the effects of the activities of media on body perceptions. Exposure to and the reinforcement of standards of body image are spread through a focus on fitness and thinness on social media platforms (30). Progresses in the digital age has only but accelerated media's instant and wide effect on body image. This has a big impact on consumers' opinions of their own bodies and degree of satisfaction with them. Consequently, while social media does present those opportunities for availing body acceptance and fighting against unrealistic beauty standards, it may also encourage precarious trends in body esteem. How social media shapes

one's body image can be positively or negatively associated with all health aspects and the attitude toward one's own body.

2.3.5 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Building

Coping strategies are necessary for a reduction in social media exposure damage with respect to body image. Promoting resilient mental tools and coping strategies could serve to reduce or buffer the effects of social media on young women's body image. Resilience models a pattern of using social media in more positive ways. One potentially important coping strategy is the use of critical media literacy to question and challenge the information buffeted at teenage females on social media. This way of the world, therefore—reducing negative body images by finding and removing artificial standards and acknowledging the curation of material (25).

A more diversified media diet might be this: encouraging young women to follow diversified accounts on social media might just act as a counterbalance to the negative influence and in return accord them a more balanced side to their perception. Such accounts should be those that encourage diversity and body positivity. It is also vital that one should not be left out of activities because they need to boost body appreciation and self-worth, regardless of looks. High involvement in activities that emphasize the skills, the hobbies, and the relationships will turn attention away from looks to achievement and networks (12).

Added to that, the strategies employed in creating self-compassion or mindfulness all foster emotional resilience. Such activities may help young women develop attitudes of acceptance toward their bodies and become kinder to themselves (28). Resisting the vulnerabilities to the negative influences of social media on one's body image will entail encouraging critical media literacy, diversity of media content, practice in activities that build one's self-esteem, practice in mindfulness and self-compassion.

The connection between body image and social media is quite complicated and multivariable, mostly in young women. In this respect, social media may be viewed as instruments of socialization, self-expression, and even dissemination and distribution of representations of the body ideal and standards of beauty. The expectations could turn into maladaptive habits, psychological distress, and body dissatisfaction among young women (30).

Future investigation should develop a deeper understanding about the subtleties of how individual social media may impact an individual's body image. This is important because the exact processes through which these platforms impact the user's needs to be studied, especially the kind of material, engagement, and variance in vulnerability (13).

Lastly, further study on practical interventions and techniques to reduce the harmful effects of social media needs to be conducted. Such examples would be media literacy initiatives, resilience enhancement exercises, and the various other positive types of body image content on social media (25). Social media continues to grow at a steady rate and influence society, whereas research should be in constant update to help guard mental wellbeing. Countless problems that become visible demand sensitivity and resolve on the side of working on them in establishing a healthier, more fluent environment.

2.4 Social Media and Food Relationships

The increased role of social media in daily life has prompted some interest in social media and its potential link to social eating decisions. The advent of the role of social media, which stands as one of the most important spaces of exchange and consumption of food-related information that affects the eating pattern and the dietary preferences, mostly pertaining to young females (6).

Social media combines visual and interactive content, from the recipe ideas to pictures of how the food is placed on the serving plate to make an impression on its users. Access to a

great diversity of food-based information, such as recipes, diet trends, and nutritional recommendations (20), has revolutionized access to and consumption of information on food and eating practices.

It could be twofold effects of social media on food relationships. Some may argue that, in reality, it promotes healthful eating behaviour and even awareness in terms of nutrition. This also adds to the distribution of diets in mass media and to the type of unhealthy eating behaviours often advertised by show business stars, pop singers, television stars, Instagram, and YouTube influencers (39). This is very important, given that social media has noted effects on eating behaviour, ways of carrying out nutrition education, and general health. This section will try to look deeper into these diverse elements and provide some kind of insight on how social media does indeed affect the current habits of eating and the food culture.

2.4.1 Impact of Social Media on Eating Habits and Food Choices

With broad use and influence, the effect of social media on eating habits and choices is gaining a lot of significance. This further avail social media as a very unique environment for the exchange of information about food, thus largely determining the kind of food their users consume (p. 19).

Presently, social media is really coming out as a strong tool regarding influencing eating habits, especially in the youth. There are also some very visually attractive food displays posted on Instagram and Pinterest that truly have the power to skew the perceptions of what actually constitutes the most desirable and health-giving diet. Users get exposed to attractive photos of food, with some showing the current fashion nutrition for eating, hence they can adopt the same in their eating (20). The 'visual diet' phenomena would then posit that the food choices made in

real given time could also be influenced by what one views, possibly leading to a healthful or unhealthy way of eating habits based on the content (6).

The increase in social media has also signalled a spike in fad and high-fat diets being spread through social platforms. Quite often, the influence these diets bear on society is due to popular endorsement by influencers and celebrities, whom many of their fans are bound to emulate. These tend to be simple and flashy diets, with little scientific support or nutritional balance. People may endorse these diets and get into unwholesome eating habits such as following a restricted diet or getting obsessed with eating "clean" and may result in a disordered eating pattern (39).

For example, exotic, rare, or trending foods and cuisines seen in food pictures posted on Instagram or TikTok may trigger an individual to try new types of cuisines or food products. This would augment the variety of food available on the plate and the receptivity to new foods; however, it may also cement food preferences based on the fickleness or aesthetics of food rather than value (20).

According to research, there is a link between social media use and specific dietary habits. High levels of interactivity with food-related material on social media have further been associated with high levels of attention to diet, a higher probability to adopt a specific eating pattern, and in some cases, to risk greater orthorexia nervosa (preoccupation with healthy eating) (39). This demonstrates how social media can not only influence eating habits but also contribute to poor food connections.

Social media does influence the views of food and nutrition of the users to some level, for there are lots of influences from experts guiding or giving ideas regarding the kind of foods and advice in nutrition. They are quite resourceful, therefore. The lack of regulation, together with the overloading of disinformation, must be capable of making all the transmitted information reliable or evidence based. Hence, in some cases, it may lead to the wrong understanding of what it meant by a healthy diet, hence consumption of nutritionally unbalanced eating patterns (6).

Social media surely has huge and diverse impacts in relation to patterns of eating and choices of food. On the one hand, it can insinuate diversity in diets and interest in nutrition; on the other side, it may lead to growth in fad diets, eating disorders, and food/health misinformation (p. 19). In the present scenario, social media has become an inseparable part of living, so understanding the influence of social media on dietary patterns is very essential to inculcating good eating habits and at the same time, reducing their potential negative consequences.

2.4.2 Role of Social Media and Healthy Eating Promotion

Social media gets all the blame as a bad influence on eating habits, but at the same time, it holds importance in promotion regarding proper nutrition. Such an equivocal nature of social media underlines the ability of the latter as a tool for positive dietary changes, especially by the young (85). Social media has therefore become locations for the promotion and distribution of good dietary habits. Influencers, dieticians, and health-based organizations post up content on the dietary regimens, healthy cuisines, and information on nutrition facts (85). As a result, such knowledge of the viewers is likely to develop more positive attitudes and hence make healthier food choices. For example, there are a lot of beautiful photos with healthy food posted on

Instagram or Pinterest. An attachment to the photos always includes recipes and nutritional information so that the users get the chance to adopt these foods into their diets (20).

Most of the time, the use of social media in the field of wellness and nutrition for the creation of awareness is very helpful. Most of these health influencers or professionals normally break down the concepts of nutrition so well that even a layman can understand them and still make them simpler for the public. Such spreading of information would arm customers with knowledge that would help them make informed decisions regarding food and would more propel thinking driven by health.

As such, the development of online communities around healthy eating and living is enabled. Truly, such a structure can provide great support to a person trying to change their manner of eating and live much better; the help could be very significant, full of great motivations, and even a kind of society people with a similar way of life. These are groups whereby members assist and share experience, problems, and achievements with each other (22). Young, committed users of healthy eating messages are best targeted through social media.

This generation uses the content from the social media posts as a source of information, given that the platform is very interactive and participatory. It would, therefore, be concluded that through the engagement of young target audiences via influencers, "they can play a critical role in the formation of attitudes towards food and health, thus promoting a balanced diet" (39). Despite its potential, social media's function in promoting healthy eating is fraught with difficulties.

There are various diet and nutrition messages on social media, some conflicting but varying in accuracy and reliability. Social media users need to view social media in a critical way and strive to pick it from a source they trust (6). The role of social media in instigating the masses for consuming a healthy diet is very important. Social media can play a leading role in

developing healthy eating habits through sharing informative content and by developing a support system to take healthier food decisions. However, their effectiveness largely depends on the authenticity of the provided information and the discernment of users.

2.4.3 Role of Social Media and Unhealthy Eating

Another important area of food relationships that social media has marked is a place of advertising for eating habits that would prove detrimental to healthy living. However, most of the nutritional information and inspiration to eat healthy come from the same social media avenue. They tend to further dangerous eating habits and attitudes. And most of the content being shared over social media glorifies unhealthy eating habits, including junk overeating, extreme eating habits, irregular dietary habits, high-calorie, and low-nutrient meals, et cetera. From time to time, some posts pop up related to high-calorie, low-nutrient meals being glorified, and all such habits look very attractive and fashionable—those being shared by some celebs or influential personalities. Such entertainments, then, have the power to normalize and even applaud bad eating habits, especially among young, impressionable people (19).

Social media has, in fact, been one of the primary focuses for spreading fad diets and possibly unhealthy means of losing weight. All other fad diets are over platforms, promising instant effects but are either scientifically based or not long-term sustainable. What is more, highly restrictive dietary behaviours have attitudes or practices that may be advertised and could result in disordered eating, the latter even more because this study focuses on the already vulnerable category of young women predisposed to eating disorders (39).

Another factor leading to an unhealthy diet due to marketing and advertising on social media is foods; that is, most of the companies, if not all, in the food and beverage industry resort to the use of social media in advertising their products which have high content of sugar,

fat, and calorie. The interactive and individual character of social media ads, by dint of the interactive and individual character, can have a deep influence on customers' food habits and likes, especially the youth (9).

Much worse, the influx of mukbang (eating shows) and food challenges on popular platforms like YouTube and TikTok further escalate the problem, since such videos normally feature someone eating large amounts of food during one meal, thereby giving an impression of and glorifying the tendency of binge eating. The fact that these are comedies should hold no less potential for being very injurious to viewers' perspectives on normal practices regarding food and portion/serving sizes.

The role of social media in promoting unhealthy eating is one that involves a rather complicated and alarming balance. The effects can be ruinously gigantic—from the glamour of oversized meals to even starvation regimes, along with other disordered eating behaviours. That, in effect, promotes critical engagement with the information afforded through social media and increased awareness of the potential influences on eating patterns.

2.4.4 Social Media and Nutrition Education

Social media thus provide a platform from which useful and factual information on the facts of nutrition may be disseminated—a use that would clearly form a very promising tool for nutrition education. Proved to be impactful and effective in the youth generation for the teaching, reaching out, and making accessibility and attraction towards nutrition education.

"Today, not only nutritionists but also health professionals and educators share them to give advice based on evidence about food. Social media help in transferring methodological tools in interpreting instruction that includes advice on how to follow a balanced diet, interpreting product labels, and the myths connected to the topic of nutrition. This could work

to raise public perception on healthy eating and nutrition, especially among the young adult generation who extensively use social media (20).

In that sense, learning nutrition may be made fun with the participatory features enabled by social media: dialogues, question-and-answer sessions, sharing of experiences give the user power to step up the level of customization towards improved learning experiences. Social media education programs are detailed with so much of multimedia—movies, infographics, and interactive sessions—they may be ideal to see to it that the students learn, and the facts stick with them about nutrition (6).

Delivering nutrition education through social media has its sets of potential benefits but also big challenges. The information is so huge, and if it's not very well controlled, then it's bound to lead to misinformation and misunderstanding. There is always a danger that complex dietary concepts will be dumbed down in a way to sex up the content. It, therefore, highly necessitates that the delivery is done with accuracy, evidence-based nature, and effectiveness in providing information (39). Social media presents itself as one of the greatest tools when it comes to educating people on nutrition, since through it, one can easily get in touch with and engage the audience in valuable nutritional information.

However, the effectiveness of such attempts still lies with the appropriateness of the sources and the truthfulness of the information proffered (p. 86). The potential and likelihood of social media being used profitably for medical education are a part burgeoning fast with social media dynamics in life. Many folds have an influence of social media on food connections regarding eating patterns, choices, and education in nutrition.

However, equally massive is the immense potential for instruction in the extent that it fosters both good and bad eating behaviour (p. 86). Future research needs to look at developing an effective plan to use social media to encourage the public, especially the more susceptible young women, to maintain positive practices in eating behaviour. Other possible strategies,

including fighting against the disinformation and intervening with the issues provided by advertisement of unhealthy eating habits, should particularly be studied. Set aims need constant studies and research with the ability to capitalize on the good sides of social media in nutrition and public health.

2.5 Co-Design Approaches in Health Promotion

Co-design in health promotion encompasses multi-stakeholder participation in ensuring that local stakeholders become part of the design and implementation of interventions for health, which include the patients, practitioners, and others that pertain to the community. This is going to bring out the aspect of the fact that the involvement of more most affected people is going to make it possible to develop more effective and sustainable solutions (32).

Thus, co-design collaboration innovation lies in the strength of involving multiple players at the design level, therefore bringing their varied views and experiences to the table. Such collaboration will thus not only enhance the development process of those interventions but also guarantee that health interventions are better suited in the long run to meet the requirements and tastes of the target population (33).

In this regard, it is mentioned that co-design has high value in issues concerning body image and food relationships, among others. The issue may be complex in the sense of requiring multidimensional natures, thus will require finesse toward the tailor-made detail to the issue being addressed (87). The co-design can help create much more complete and sensitive health promotion initiatives since, together with specialized figures in health and nutrition, people will have also taken part in it personally lived this problem. This inclusive approach is critical in developing treatments that engage with and benefit the intended audience.

2.5.1 Principles of co-design in health interventions

Co-design in health intervention borrows from a host of key concepts and principles that make its application effective to produce solutions that are creative and steeped in reality, arising from situations and needs of those whom the intervention, under provision, should serve.

Diversity and Inclusiveness:

The basic ideas of co-design include active inclusion, which means striving for, recognizing, and valuing the active diversity of views, especially those of speakers that are rarely heard and whose role in health forums is usually given a marginal position or overlooked. Similarly, if designed in a co-inclusive way, the diversity of experiences and needs will result in just treatments available to all sectors of the population (32).

Transparency and Open Communication:

Transparency in co-design means open communication. This necessitates honesty and openness in communicating among the stakeholders to build confidence and to enable free dialogue for the airing of ideas and criticism. Such transparency in the design process is necessary for the detection of potential problems and opportunities.

User-Centeredness and Empowerment:

It places the people participating at the core of the creative process, which ensures that solutions are generated in full knowledge of the needs, wants, and situations of users through a user-centred approach. Therefore, the design of these health programs with co-design makes them more relevant and successful within the intended audiences since it allows users to contribute their views and ideas.

Collaboration and Partnership:

It underscores that at the core of co-design is collaboration, bringing the stakeholders—that is, the health professionals, persons requiring healthcare and their caretakers, with members of the public—to work collaboratively. Such a collaborative approach brings about a joint ownership and joint responsibility feeling in the design process by all parties, hence more committed to the success of the intervention (33).

Iterative Process and Adaptability:

The co-design process involves the use of evolving concepts, which are developed iteratively through an ongoing change process based on the input of all people at the project's front end. This flexibility is going to give the possibility to make changes and readjustments every time new knowledge comes up to keep the measure responsive to changing requirements and circumstances (33).

These include key principles of co-design in health interventions: inclusivity, cooperation, empowerment, iterative, and openness. These principles ensure that the designs developed for solutions were not just innovative and workable but, more importantly, true reflections of what the target population needed and would use. As the needs of health diversify and become complex, even larger room exists for the principles of co-design in the development of health interventions. Power can be built and sustained over the long term.

2.5.2 Application of co-design health approaches

Co-design health promotion programs work effectively for health problems with cooperative and inclusive methods. These instances demonstrate the implementation of codesign ideas and their impact on health outcomes:

The Emily Carr University Health Design Lab:

This lab collaborates with nonprofits, industry partners, and healthcare providers worldwide to develop cutting-edge health solutions. A notable project involved co-designing psychological well-being tools with teenagers, resulting in tools that were both appealing and relevant to their age group (29).

The Diabetes 'IDEAS' Project:

Utilizing co-design, "IDEAS" (Innovative Diabetes Education and Self-Management) collaborated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia to develop a culturally sensitive diabetes education curriculum. By involving community members, healthcare practitioners, and diabetes experts from the design stage, the program effectively catered to the specific cultural and educational needs (2).

'Co-Creating Wellbeing' in Mental Health:

In the UK, the 'Co-Creating Wellbeing' program involved service users of behavioural health, informal caregivers, and designers working together to co-create psychological support tools and methods. This participatory approach ensured the development of tools based on actual user experiences and needs, improving mental health therapies (21).

Co-Design for Paediatric Asthma Care:

In the US, parents of children with asthma, healthcare providers, and designers collaborated to create a digital tool for asthma management. Tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of both parents and children, this initiative led to improved asthma treatment and health outcomes (24).

The 'Open Notes' Initiative:

This US program allowed patients and healthcare providers to co-design a system enabling patients to access their medical notes online. By involving patients in the design

process, the system became more accessible and usable, enhancing patient involvement and ownership of their healthcare (10).

These examples showcase that co-design is widely applicable and effective in health initiatives. By actively involving stakeholders in the design process, health treatments are more aligned with user needs, making them more effective and sustainable

2.5.3 Potential of Co-Design in Addressing Body Image and Food Relationship Issues

Both the body image and food relationship difficulties provide a rich area for the utilization of co-design for interventions, as both areas facilitate intervention that is compassionate, inclusive, and sensitive to the unique requirement of the individual (p. 87). The co-design provides a framework to produce solutions that are genuinely meaningful, not just to those who are touched by the concerns but in an efficient way.

Empathy and Understanding in Design:

In this view, co-design is an empathic approach that gives the much-needed sensitivity in dealing with matters as sensitive as body image and food connections. Designing, therefore, ensures that there is better understanding of the psychological and emotional variables through involvement of persons who have firsthand experience of these difficulties. This firsthand knowledge is priceless in developing solutions that are more likely to be adopted and effective (32).

Tailored and Inclusive Solutions:

As the co-design process is inclusive, interventions shall be made to tailor toward the varied needs of the many groups. With reference to body image and food relations, this would

mean coming to responses in view of the great multiplicity of social, cultural, and individual aspects. This allows the making of therapies that are not homogeneous for all but are peculiar to individual difficulties and requirements in different communities through co-design (33).

Building Trust and Engagement:

The stakeholder input is possible at the level of design and ensures the full involvement of stakeholders. It is only this trust that can be paramount in areas such as body image and food connections that usually have issues of stigmatization and miscommunication. Co-design would thus be important in great help toward the reduction of the barriers related to communication and involvement, which are crucial for the success of any intervention (32).

Promoting Long-Term Sustainability:

This relates to the idea that an additional sense of ownership from all the stakeholders brings an increase in the commitment to the designed solutions. They include within them the ownership of the co-designed solutions that will ensure, over time, the durability of programs, particularly those regarding complex problems—body perception and eating behaviour (33).

Co-design has the capacity to treat even the difficulties of body image and the relationship with food because of its capacity to build empathic, personalized, and long-term solutions. Co-creation will support taking innovation one further step, developing solutions more than just innovative by building upon the knowledge flowing from personal experiences by people directly touched.

Co-design in health promotion offers a radical, yet empathic and inclusive way to develop treatments, especially on complex topics such as body image and food relations (p. 87). However, continued development in co-design and its furthering to new issues and, more precisely, to new demographics will finally show its potential in health promotion. This is the potential of digital technology and applications of social media on the frontline in co-designed

health initiatives to broaden its reach and impact. Future research and practice should therefore aim to seek greater understanding from the influence of co-design across diverse groups so that the efforts of the intervention may be sensitive and holistic in nature for the overall betterment of the community.

2.6 Challenges and Ethical Considerations

In health promotion, addressing ethical and practical issues is paramount, especially concerning social media consumption and co-design techniques. The use of social media in health promotion necessitates significant ethical considerations due to its extensive reach and influence, which can lead to misinformation, potential harm to disadvantaged populations, and the aggravation of health inequities [23]. Co-design approaches, while encouraging inclusive and participable health solutions, also present challenges such as reconciling diverse interests, ensuring fairness in involvement, and managing resource limitations (33). Additionally, privacy and data protection concerns associated with social-media-based interventions pose serious issues, necessitating careful consideration of how private health information is managed (42).

Ethical Concerns in Using Social Media for Health Promotion:

- **Misinformation and Content Accuracy:** The spread of misinformation is a major ethical issue with using social media for health education. The open nature of these platforms allows anyone to share content, which may not always be factual, or evidence based. Misinformation on health topics can lead to severe consequences for individuals acting on incorrect advice (42). To counter misinformation, it's vital to ensure that communicated information is accurate, reputable, and backed by scientific evidence.
- **Influence on Vulnerable Populations:** Social media platforms often significantly impact vulnerable populations, characterized by low health literacy or health-related

anxiety. These groups are more susceptible to health misinformation or might misinterpret health messages, leading to increased anxiety or engagement in risky health behaviours (23). Health promoters should aim to communicate in simple, nonexploitative, and accessible ways to these groups.

- **Exacerbating Health Inequalities:** Unintentionally, health promotion via social media may worsen health equality. Digital health efforts might exclude individuals without access to technology, those with low socioeconomic status, or those in areas with poor internet connectivity. This digital divide means those who need health information and interventions the most are often the least likely to access them (23). Ethical health education should strive for inclusivity, considering alternative methods to reach underrepresented audiences on social media.
- **Targeting and Personal Data Use:** Social media raises additional ethical concerns regarding personalized marketing and personal data usage. While targeting specific demographics with health messages can be beneficial, it also involves using personal data, which must be handled with respect for privacy and consent (42). Health promoters must navigate these issues carefully, ensuring compliance with privacy laws and ethical standards.

In summary, while social media holds tremendous potential for health promotion, it also presents numerous ethical dilemmas that must be judiciously addressed. Ensuring information accuracy, assessing the impact on vulnerable individuals, addressing health disparities, and safeguarding privacy and data security are crucial for ethical health promotion practices in the digital realm.

2.6.1 Challenges in Implementing Co-Design Approaches

Along with its inherent benefits, co-design methods in health promotion come with a unique set of challenges. While it offers the promise of user-centred solutions with great potential, it often faces difficulties due to practical and organizational constraints.

Resource Limitations and Time Constraints:

A significant barrier to adopting co-design is its demanding requirements for resources, including time, finances, and personnel. Co-design methods are more time-consuming than traditional approaches due to the need for continuous engagement and collaboration across diverse stakeholders. Finding adequate funding to cover extensive research, meetings, and iterative design processes can be challenging (33).

Stakeholder Engagement and Participation:

Achieving comprehensive and continuous involvement from all stakeholders is a formidable task. The co-design process involves a variety of participants, such as health professionals, consumers, caregivers, and community members. Ensuring effective engagement with these groups throughout the process is difficult, especially given the variability in participants' levels of interest, accessibility, and commitment (32).

Balancing Diverse Perspectives and Interests:

Harmonizing the myriad and varied views and desires of stakeholders is central but challenging in co-design. Participants from different backgrounds may have differing—and sometimes conflicting—views on what constitutes an effective health treatment. Professional facilitation and diplomacy are required to navigate these differences and achieve consensus aligned with the project's goals (33).

Institutional Resistance and Cultural Barriers:

Institutional resistance and organizational cultural barriers present another hurdle. Codesign approaches often necessitate a shift from traditional top-down decision-making processes to more democratic and collaborative methods. Organizations accustomed to hierarchical structures may resist this change. Additionally, cultural differences between stakeholders can impact communication and collaboration, necessitating a need for understanding and flexibility (32).

Maintaining Quality and Rigor:

Ensuring the quality and consistency of the co-design process is essential but challenging. There's a need to maintain a balance between the creative and participative nature of co-design and the production of outputs that are scientifically valid and methodologically rigorous. This balance is crucial to ensure that co-designed interventions are both innovative and evidence-based (33).

In summary, co-design holds significant potential as an approach in health promotion, though intrinsic challenges must be addressed for its successful application. These challenges relate to resource and time availability, stakeholder involvement, balancing perspectives, organizational resistance, and ensuring process quality and rigor.

2.6.2 Privacy and Data Security Issues in Social Media-Based Interventions

In the realm of health interventions via social media, privacy and data security stand as paramount concerns due to the delicate nature of health-related information and the expansive data-handling capabilities of social media platforms.

Risk of Data Breach and Misuse:

Health interventions on social media grapple with the risk of data breaches and the unauthorized use of personal health information. Social media networks, which store vast amounts of user data, can become vulnerable to cyber-attacks without robust defences, risking sensitive health-related data's unauthorized disclosure. This not only breaches patient confidentiality but also erodes trust in the healthcare system.

Personal Information Consent and Control:

Another pressing issue is consent and the degree of control individuals have over their health information on social media. Often, users are left in the dark about how their data is used, stored, and shared. Ethical practice in social media-based treatments hinges on the crucial but challenging requirement of securing informed consent for using personal health data.

Compliance with Legal and Ethical Standards:

Navigating legal and ethical standards related to data privacy poses a significant challenge. Regulations like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in the United States provide strict guidelines on managing health-related data. Interventions utilizing social media must carefully adhere to these complex regulations, a daunting task given the global and interconnected nature of these platforms.

Addressing privacy and data security issues is crucial when implementing health treatments through social media platforms. This involves comprehensive data protection measures, obtaining informed consent for data use, and following legal and ethical guidelines. Failure to address these concerns could compromise health interventions' effectiveness and public trust.

Despite the novel opportunities presented by social media and co-design approaches for health promotion, they come with significant ethical, practical, and security considerations. Future efforts should focus on enhancing data security, ensuring ethical compliance, and

tackling co-design's practical challenges to maximize health interventions' efficacy and credibility.

Future Health Promotion Directions:

Understanding the future directions of health promotion, especially in unique cultural and health contexts like Aotearoa, New Zealand, is crucial. The adoption of emerging phenomena like social media and co-design methodologies introduces complexities and opportunities. These innovations offer new ways to engage communities, personalize health communications, and address diverse health needs. Embracing these changes requires an active stance, recognizing the potential of these tools to revolutionize health promotion practices and research, particularly in areas of popular concern such as body image and dietary behaviours

2.6.3 Future Role of Co-Design in Health Interventions

The future of health treatments is increasingly leaning towards co-design, a movement driven by a shift towards patient-centred and community-driven healthcare approaches. As health issues become more complex, there's a growing demand for solutions that are creative, collaborative, and tailored to individual needs.

Health Solution Personalization:

At the core of co-design is the ability to craft health solutions that are specifically tailored to meet the unique requirements, preferences, and cultural backgrounds of individuals and communities. This approach is particularly beneficial in managing chronic illnesses and mental health conditions, where personalized care is key to effectiveness. Co-design enables healthcare to advance towards more customized treatment programs, acknowledging the diverse needs and experiences of patients (33).

Integration with Digital Technologies:

Co-design is set to merge more seamlessly with digital technology, enhancing the accessibility and user-friendliness of health interventions. By integrating co-design processes with e-health and m-health technologies, there's an opportunity to harness the power of technology while ensuring that digital health solutions are grounded in the real-life experiences and needs of users. This synergy aims to make health interventions more accessible and tailored to user preferences (32).

Community Empowerment and Engagement:

Another crucial aspect of co-design's future in health treatments is its capacity to empower communities and deepen their engagement with health matters. By involving community members directly in the design process, co-design fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards health outcomes. This participatory approach is invaluable, particularly in public health efforts, where community involvement is essential for the success of interventions (33).

In summary, the role of co-design in health interventions is characterized by its potential for customization, integration with digital health technologies, and community involvement. As the healthcare sector continues to evolve, co-design stands out as a promising method for developing new, effective, and user-centred health solutions, ensuring that health care becomes more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the population

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a description of qualitative methods employed in this exploratory design research that comprises co-design of the social media intervention for health promotion. Among the research team measures of relation credibility is that the data sources and analytic procedures used to achieve the qualitative objectives are in place. Constructive research paradigm, researcher positionality, choosing participants, sampling procedures, ethical implications, interview process and the inductive thematic analytic strategy are all talked about by Creswell and Poth and Braun and Clarke (page 50) in this study. These approaches, therefore, provided an understanding of the thoughts that are held by adolescent girls on social media. This, along with health goals, paved the way for creating a prototype intervention.

This exploratory study stipulated that the participants would come up with a social media health promotion intervention through a systematic approach, and the data collection methodologies are given in this chapter. The research is focused on young women's views, experiences, and what is of the most importance for them when it comes to social media and health problems. For achieving this task qualitative research method is the best option. In the case of semi-structured interviews, instead of using quantitative surveys, open-ended probes are preferred. This kind of inquiry is suitable to be used for finding intricate information about the attitudes, beliefs, sensitive subjects, as well as the role of peers (92). Participatory research, which integrates the community targets in the reaching of a solution, applies qualitative methods like focus groups, interviews, and case studies. This leads to the introduction of the subjective views of the inside person, thus making me completely part of the development process. This will, however, not only eliminate the imposition of the external assumptions but

also it will greatly increase the likelihood of success of the project. In order to produce an interesting and customized social media intervention prototype, it is beneficial to analyse different perspectives thematically instead of just looking at the themes. By applying qualitative methodology and constructivist view, researchers would be able to figure out that they will use the process of learning and co-learning so that they could understand how to improve the reach, relevance and impact of health promotion for young women.

3.2 Qualitative Approach and Paradigm

By applying a qualitative research approach, the aim is to offer an in-depth analysis of the points of view and interpretation of healthcare experiences that young ladies provide via the use of social media (51). The sample population made a significant contribution to putting the model for an intervention prototype that solves health related issues, which are very important for their age group. The methodology was participatory, integrating field social research tools in an applied qualitative approach, as described by Kahlke (57). With this being so, we place focus on constructivism, a theory that looks at objective references which emerge through social interactions and is largely driven by individual experiences and sociocultural conditions. The Constructivism paradigm (52) is developed on the background of the subjectivist epistemology, which concerns the collaboration between the individual and the object of knowledge and the relativist ontology, which admits the existence of different independent realities and the naturalistic approach to the scientific process, which implies the use of inductive and deductive methods for the collection and analysis of the data. This philosophical belief guided the interview framework and the utilization of shared approach to interventions design.

The constructivist orientation is well-suited to address this study's problem focused on improving health promotion relevance, engagement and impact among young women. Health interventions often struggle connecting with youth target groups as developers impose assumptions rather than consulting the lived experiences of end-users (93). Constructivism assumes a relativist ontology (multiple valid realities), subjectivist epistemology (co-created findings), and naturalistic methodological procedures involving an inductive approach to data collection and analysis (52). This paradigm guided open-ended inquiry and co-design activities illuminating participants' values, priorities, preferred social media features, and vision for an intervention prototype. Centering and interweaving target population insights is key to developing health promotion initiatives resonating with young women's needs and digital lifestyles.

3.3 Researcher Characteristics and Reflexivity

This analysis's conception, design, and execution are influenced by the background study of the topic by Jessica Malloy, an academic researcher with experience in social mediabased health therapies and public health (53). Both her prior work and this analysis have been overseen by Dr Rajshri Roy. Considering previous involvement in research, the relevant theories are as follows: 1) social media enables the connection with hard-to-reach demographics, such young women; and 2) involving the target audience in the design process may enhance the effectiveness and suitability of health promotion efforts targeting young individuals (64). In the process of analysing the data, the lead researcher made it a point to revisit these presumptions and maintain an open mind to newly developing participant viewpoints that could contradict earlier conclusions. In light of the power dynamics that are inevitably present during contacts with participants, the researcher sought to establish rapport, co-learn, and make sure that participant voices and choices shaped the intervention ideation

approach (61). Nonetheless, the lenses used in study design and evaluation are nonetheless shaped by the personalities and histories of the researchers.

Considering the impact of social media on body image and food relationships among young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, it is important to engage in self-reflection for better understanding of the role as a researcher. The personal attributes could affect interactions with the individuals involved, the view of the findings, and formulation of the queries for the research study. On the basis of using social media both for personal enjoyment and academic research, beliefs and experiences related to these websites could affect the evaluation and findings.

Researchers background in qualitative research allows for proper understanding about research methods and makes awareness of any potential biases that can arise while doing the research. Researchers must keep the relationship with the participants in check while carrying out research activities. This will help to maintain the authenticity of the data.

The impact of social media on society is not uniform across cultures. Therefore, the assumptions made about social media should be reassessed, particularly when it comes to New Zealand. Our research process is built with utmost consideration to objectivity and relevance, and we'll keep on evaluating how our characteristics influence it. The reflexivity of the study must be considered in order to guarantee the findings are reliable, trustworthy, and reflect the experiences of young women from diverse backgrounds in the specified region.

3.4 Context

Participants in the study were young women aged 18 to 24 who lived in urban and suburban locations across Aotearoa New Zealand. Because the sample was made up of university students, the majority of participants had completed undergraduate or graduate degrees. Aside from convenience, the university-affiliated setting provided access to an

expressive participant group capable of engaging in extended talks and brainstorming about complicated health-related themes (64). Geographic and educational similarities also offered comparable viewpoints and experiences on healthcare access, technology/social media savvy, financial position, and young adult independence. Nevertheless, the sample was not representative of the many identities, societies, and living conditions common among New Zealand teenagers in general (66). This setting was not only convenient but also strategic. Universities act as hubs for young, technology-savvy individuals, keen on engaging in deep, complex dialogues. This environment enabled thorough discussions during numerous extended interviews. However, there's a caveat: it could well be that this cohort would not be exposed to the same barriers as their young peers without the access to university, thus hollowing out the findings.

Different members in this group were fairly heterogeneous – they had different geographical locations, were studying different fields, came from a wide variety of cultures, and had different lifestyles. The diversity enabled them to engage in a wide variety of topics regarding health issues and social media usage.

Coming from the same geographic and educational place created opportunities for them to spot different things we had in common, including attitudes toward health care access, digital literacy, making own medical decisions, and handling peer relationships. Being away from parents, therefore, could lead to the greater autonomy that make such individual decisions. This was a specific area that was looked into: what are the digital platforms that need to be designed as private up to now? The university space, additionally, enabled the students to have more casual talks concerning sensitive issues including sexual orientation, mental health and drug use; most of which are stigmatised among students of higher learning, especially when they are under high pressure from academics.

Additionally, it is no coincidence that this phase of life is also the time when social media is at its peak and optimal for identity exploration. Therefore, this demographic provided essential insights into the effective use of platforms that are integral to young adults' lives for health promotion. While the findings might not be universally applicable, they offer valuable information for enhancing student wellness programs and guiding future research that includes a more diverse range of young adults.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants who satisfied the criteria of being self-identifying women between the ages of 18 and 24, living in New Zealand, using social media on a regular basis, possessing smartphones, and showing an interest in codesigning a health promotion intervention (65). Other factors considered were the capacity to explain viewpoints in English and describe personal or peer past health difficulties. Snowball and convenience sampling were used to attract interested participants by using existing university networks (59). Around 30 individuals were screened, with the first 15 meeting eligibility and availability scheduled for consent processes and interviews during the data collection period. The final sample consisted of 15 young women aged 20 to 24 years who completed both interview sessions, as 5 consented participants withdrew from the timeintensive study. Still, the depth of data obtained from extensive case examples provided thematic saturation and answered the research questions, aligning with recommended guidelines for sample sizes specific to qualitative methodology (94).

Based on accepted criteria for in-depth qualitative interviews focusing on meaning and process investigation (56), the intended sample size was up to 20 persons, with saturation projected around 15 participants. The final sample consisted of ten young women who

conducted two full interview sessions, offering rich information about the themes of inquiry while fulfilling the saturation requirements set for the participatory applied study.

While convenient, this approach risks selection biases by overrepresenting educated young adults less likely dealing with compounding marginalization barriers. However, the sample provided rich qualitative insights on perspectives within this influential demographic. Still, findings cannot speak for all NZ youth, requiring cautious transferability.

The criteria for participation aligned with characteristics of the target population for a social media health intervention prototype tailored for young women in New Zealand. Thus, eligibility required individuals who:

1. Self-identified as a woman.
2. Were between 18 to 24 years old.
3. Currently resided in New Zealand.
4. Used at least one social media platform daily.
5. Owned a mobile smartphone.
6. Had personal experience and/or knew peers who faced sensitive health issues in young adulthood; and
7. Expressed interest in co-designing an online intervention resource.

Additional considerations for identifying strong prospective participants included willingness to openly discuss personal stories during interviews along with thoughtfulness in conveying perspectives. The recruitment strategy also deliberately sought diversity across demographic factors like ethnicity, geographic region, and university major to elicit a heterogeneous range of experiences navigating health challenges and social media habits.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Prior to recruitment and data collection, the University Human Ethics Committee granted ethical approval, confirming suitable methods to safeguard participant rights and welfare in compliance with institutional ethical guidelines. The co-design research was approved by the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee (UAHEC) on 09/06/2022 for three years. Reference number: UAHPEC24366. Participants were given full information regarding the research methods, risks/benefits, privacy safeguards, and the voluntary aspect of participation throughout the consent process. The ability to skip questions or resign at any moment without explanation or penalty was stressed in signed informed consent. Interview conversations had an opportunity to go into sensitive health matters, while participants had the option of declining to discuss anything that made them uncomfortable. In addition to permission forms, confidentiality was preserved by de-identifying documentation, securely keeping data with password-protected access, and only releasing aggregate findings (48). These steps reduced risk and reflected standard practices in qualitative research ethically with young adult groups (62). For further security, the university's ethical review board directed continuing research operations.

The research received ethical approval for its procedures of participant rights and welfare protection from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee before any recruitment or data collection took place, thus establishing adherence to guidelines on research ethics. Strict procedures maintained ethical responsibility when working with young adult participants in delicate health discussions (97).

An informed consent sheet was given out during recruitment that outlined clearly what the project is about, what their involvement will entail, risks and benefits as well as the voluntary nature of study participation. This facilitated informed consent procedures as possible participants could evaluate how comfortable they were and what their capacity to undertake

long interviews on views about wellbeing that might unveil emotional burdens. They also highlighted the ability to skip questions, pause-and-resume sessions or even withdraw from them without having to give any explanation or suffer any penalties with formal written consent.

To further reduce risk, building rapport and trust was necessary before initiating any complex health issues. The first interview was a general social media habits and health priorities but more related to young women. Before the second session, participants might measure their openness by discussing personal issues with the interviewer so that co-design ideas related to filling knowledge gaps around potentially stigmatized health topics can be invited. The researcher was still aware of any signs of discomfort and made it clear to the participants that they were allowed to determine how much they wanted to share.

Other ethical priorities involved protecting confidentiality and privacy, including safe data management protocols. Recordings, transcripts, and notes were deidentified; participants' names replaced by their self-selected pseudonyms to be utilized in reporting new themes alone in aggregate. Data was stored securely on password-protected servers with restrictive access controls to prevent exposure. Such measures comply with the codes of ethical qualitative health research, especially in cases where marginalised social groups reveal personal sensitive information (48).

The university ethics committee carried out an initial assessment, balancing the small risks involved in voluntary participation against the significant benefit of including underrepresented voices in research that's meant to assist them. They made sure ethical standards were maintained as the research went on. The strict safeguards in place allowed for the collection of genuine insights, which are crucial for promoting health equity and social justice.

An information sheet was provided to potential participants, giving them a thorough understanding of the study's aims, methods, requirements, risks, and benefits. This helped them make an informed choice about their participation. The key points covered were: 1) the expectation to participate in two interview sessions, each lasting 45-60 minutes, between September and December 2022, focusing on social media and personal health perspectives; 2) the use of audio recording and transcription for analysis purposes; 3) the possibility of emotional discomfort from recalling negative experiences; 4) the unlikely prospect of direct benefits, apart from contributing to research that may benefit others; and 5) the freedom to skip questions, pause, or withdraw at any time without penalty. Interested individuals provided written consent, signing they comprehended the project and their rights. Participants could rescind consent later by emailing the researcher to have their contributions deleted during ongoing data collection between the 20 planned interview sessions.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Protecting identities was essential for participants to feel comfortable opening up across the lengthy sessions. Interview transcripts and notes were deidentified, referring to individuals by self-chosen pseudonyms. Data extracts published used these aliases to prevent indirect recognition. Direct identifiers linking real names to pseudonyms were stored separately from study data available only to the lead researcher. Additional data security entailed storing recordings and documents on password-protected servers accessible to just core team members. Such extensive measures upheld ethics mandates when collecting personal disclosures from young, marginalized women (48).

Psychological Support

Despite not discussing clinically sensitive information, the interviews' length regarding personal wellbeing had the potential to trigger unpleasant memories or emotions. Thus, details for university mental health services were provided, and checking on participant welfare was

embedded throughout the sessions. Distress protocol included pausing dialogues, redirecting conversations to more positive aspects, and recommending follow-up counselling. Fortunately, no concerning psychological responses occurred during data collection.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Each participant was subjected to two rounds of in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews. The first 45 to 60-minute interview covered a wide range of topics, including social media experiences, viewpoints on health and well-being objectives for young women, responses to sample social marketing health promotion initiatives, and ideas for intervention social media platforms, elements, and implementation strategies. The second 45–60-minute interview included interactive co-design activities that included prompts for brainstorming intervention names, prospective content and features, customizing criteria, and simulated prototype instances to elicit further viewpoints. The growing COVID-19 epidemic necessitated remote interviews using Zoom videoconference software, allowing involvement from all parts of New Zealand but posing technological limits for collaborative hands-on design aspects (49). Screensharing and Zoom whiteboard tools, on the other hand, encouraged virtual visualization and debate of intervention ideas. Between September and December 2022, a total of 20 sessions of interviews were conducted. Dialogues were extensively transcribed, and audio recorded to provide textual datasets for research.

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic necessitated remote data collection over Zoom video conference rather than in-person dialogues. While enabling geographic reach across New Zealand, virtual interviews limit intuitive interpersonal cues, collaborative notetaking, and hands-on creative design tasks. Participants potentially held back sharing sensitive experiences without building rapport through face-to-face interactions. Technical glitches also disrupted

interview flow. Still, screensharing and digital whiteboard tools facilitated sufficient visualization and discussions of intervention ideas.

Round 1: Social Media and Health Landscape

The first 45 to 60-minute interview occurred over Zoom between September-October 2022. An open-ended guide prompted discussion on daily social media habits, influences on health priorities, common issues faced among young adult women, reactions to existing health promotion campaigns targeted to demographic groups, and initial ideas on a tailored social media intervention's potential components and delivery approach. Questions aimed to understand young women's broader experiences and landscape needs as context before codesign activities.

Round 2: Co-Design Sessions

A second 45 to 60-minute follow-up interview through Zoom took place in November/December 2022, set within the same month as the first round for temporal continuity. The guide had activities based on whiteboard collaboration and screensharing features for active ideation of an intervention framework. Participants generated suggestions for branding, sample content types of interactive features and personalised messaging that connected with perceived knowledge deficits as well as preferred social media engagement behaviours identified in the round one dialogues. Conversations grounded in concrete examples and the practical elements went beyond theories.

Interview Procedures

Sessions were held in privacy with recordings professionally transcribed. Dialogues intended for open two-way communication where the interviewer used probes and reflections to encourage debate of perspectives without becoming overly directive stances that may skew responses. Inductive analysis approaches could be facilitated through textual datasets that

enabled the identification of emergent themes that remained close to participants' own language and frameworks. 10 participants were interviewed in 20 interview sessions, totalling about 25 hours of audio material.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

Using best practices for qualitative procedures, separate semi-structured interview guides were created for each set of interviews (58). The first guide included six open-ended inquiries with additional probes that investigated social media situations, health issues for young women, particularly sensitive themes, current health promotion efforts, and preliminary suggestions for a bespoke social media-based intervention. The second phase expanded on these talks by asking five questions to obtain specific input on example intervention names, prospective content/features, delivery platform considerations, customization criteria, and overall ideas. Archibald et al. (49) designed questions and exercises to offer structure while enabling unexpected viewpoints to arise via open discourse. Prior to actual data collection, pilot testing with two respondents allowed for adjustments to interview flow, question phrasing, and interactive aspects. The goal of intentional iterative modification was to prioritize rich qualitative insights above standardised quantitative metrics (60).

Instrument Development

The research team drafted initial interview questions and activity prompts targeting key objectives:

1. 1st round – Understanding of social habits to social media, health views/knowledge gap, perspectives on current campaigns & possible answers for hypothetical intervention.
2. 2nd round- specific co-creation input elicitation on branding, features, content, channels and sample materials”

Questions were formulated in such a way as to avoid yes/no, or leading phrasing and utilized open-ended neutral triggers for encouraging narration of subjective experiences, beliefs, and priorities from the perspectives that participants owned. Additional probes and recapitulation summaries to prompt further details when insights petered out.

Pilot Testing

Two test respondents matching the intended demographic were used to test draft instruments. Piloting also facilitated realistic timing of depth sharing required in condensed sessions, clarity in communicating the questions, relevance of prompts while eliciting data that addressed the research aims; logical flow for developing dialogues and importance/sensitivity ratings which informed ethical protocols (98). Rephrasing of complicated questions was driven by feedback, alternative prompts were added to prompt multiple dimensions, and interactive activities were made accessible via video conferencing.

Final Instruments

The developed Round 1 guide was refined to include six questions with optional probes about, social media habits, health or wellbeing role model sources that had a high impact on young women, surveys hard-hitting challenges and the details of issues that affected them along with knowledge needs they required which had an effect on them. 5 Design oriented questions focused on some emerging priorities from initial interviews, and completion of demographic information accompanied by collaborative hands-on components such as branding scheme conceptualization, sample post comment analysis & tailoring criteria input were incorporated into the guide for use in Round 2.

3.9 Units of Study

The final sample included ten young women aged 20 to 24 who identified as university students living in New Zealand. Six people classified as European from New Zealand, two as Asian, one as Middle Eastern, and one as Latin American. The majority of participants admitted to using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat for more than 5 years, accessing them several times per day and spending more than 2 hours per day overall networking and reading information. This degree of ingrained social media activity was supposed to be a goal attribute for co-designing a healthcare program using popular platforms.

Specific demographic features offered variety to make the eligibility criteria rich in experiential tones.

Age Range

The screening survey requested women aged 18 to 24 years, but the final age range was from 20 to 24. The transition to young adulthood between adolescence and full-blown adulthood, includes major life transformations in the areas of relations, education, employment health behaviours, and identity investigation (66). Thus, a slightly tight age band was able to catch the shared phenomena of navigating these milestone changes while hitting this maturing level of discourse inappropriate with teenagers from an ethics point.

Cultural Identities

Ethnically, six were New Zealand European, two were Asian (Chinese and Indian), one was Middle Eastern Iranian and one Latin American from Brazil. This diversity in cultural values, family relationships, and health-technology worldviews was valuable due to this heterogeneity. For instance, dating and discussions on sexual health issues may be surrounded by more taboos in traditional Asian families than their more progressive counterparts from NZ. Collecting variety of perspectives reinforced transferability.

Education Status

With regard to education, six interviewees were studying for undergraduate bachelor's degrees in fields including marketing, engineering, psychology and medicine. The other four were studying postgraduate masters and doctorate. The high education level allowed for articulate insights during long dialogic interviews. However, some instances may not show the health marginalization of young women who are denied to higher level education opportunities.

3.10 Data Processing

Prior to assessment, professionally transcribed conversations were validated against original audio recordings to guarantee correctness and to fix any transcription problems. To maintain anonymity, all potentially identifiable elements were deleted from the transcripts, and participant names were substituted with unique number codes. Deidentified transcripts were then imported into the qualitative data analysis program NVivo 12, along with completed demographic questionnaires from participants. The ability to analyse trends by attributes during coding was aided by linking survey demographic factors to interview extracts. Data validation techniques and the use of a renowned analytic platform increased scientific rigor in obtaining reliable interpretations from textual data (63).

Strict post-verbatim interview transcription data processing procedures improved the integrity of the raw textual dataset for reliable qualitative analysis. Steps key to the process included accuracy checks, deidentification, data cleansing, preliminary jottings and uploading documents with quantitative survey data into QSR NVivo 12 software.

Accuracy Checking

Precision was checked by comparing original audio recordings with professionally transcribed dialogue excerpts to eliminate such inconsistencies as spelling mistakes or changes capturing slang terms. Describing the reality of spoken words, pauses, laughter, interruptions, tone and inflections as accurately as possible helps create descriptive validity of the interview context (99).

Deidentification

Every transcript reference to a participant's real name was changed to a unique code that mapped to a secret master list of identifying information that was only available to the main researcher in case of re-contact. This affirmed moral obligations to safeguard sensitive information and uphold commitments that let people communicate openly without worrying about inadvertent exposure (100).

Data Cleaning

Extensive reading familiarized researchers to themes and formed initial analytical thoughts recorded in memos (63). These jottings also flagged any passages needing sanitation to prevent indirect privacy deduction from highly specific personal details. For example, a participant's small home region mentioned, or niche health condition could enable deduction by others familiar with uniquely identifiable characteristics. Thus, data was carefully anonymized beyond just names removal.

NVivo Uploads

Final accurate, anonymous transcripts were uploaded into the NVivo 12 software alongside participants' quantitative pre-interview survey responses on demographics like age, ethnicity, social media usage levels compiled in Excel. Linking textual and statistical data is useful for illuminating potential experiential patterns across subpopulations during coding stages (101).

In summary, meticulous data processing transformed raw verbal interview recordings into accurate, confidential, unified datasets amendable for rigorous qualitative analysis approaches interrogating themes systematically across the set.

3.11 Data Analysis

Data familiarization, first coding, searching/reviewing concepts, defining/naming concepts, and writing up results were all aspects of inductive thematic evaluation (50). To begin, two team members read three transcripts extensively, individually coded data extracts linked to the study topics, compared results, and agreed on an initial codebook. They coded two more transcripts jointly to better calibrate code application and group pertinent extracts into major subject categories. Using the qualitative software analysis tools, the remaining transcripts were separated and coded independently. During the process, the entire team gathered for analytical sessions to examine emerging trends, assess additional supporting or conflicting information, condense codes into representative themes, explore connections between themes, and create names and definitions for the themes that accurately represented the entire dataset (54). This rigorous inductive technique revealed important participant priorities and recommendations for creating a tailored social media health intervention.

Inductive thematic analysis followed the phases of data familiarisation, initial coding, searching/reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and writing up findings (50). First, two team members (the lead author and a research assistant) thoroughly read the same three interview transcripts, paying attention to content related to perspectives on social media, health/wellness priorities, and potential intervention design ideas. They independently coded intriguing extracts from the transcripts related to the research questions, then came together to compare initial codes applied to the same data extracts. Through extensive discussion, a

consolidated codebook was developed based on common codes along with deliberating discrepancies to calibrate a shared understanding of code definitions and representative versus unfits extracts.

The codebook contained 32 initial codes such as “vulnerability online,” “academic stress,” and “practical healthy living tips.” The two coders then analysed two more transcripts utilizing the codebook, meeting regularly to discuss emerging patterns, review additional supporting/discrepant extracts, and consider relationships and hierarchies between codes. For example, codes like “contraception questions” and “gynaecological issues” were collapsed under a broader theme labelled “sexual health knowledge gaps.”

Once a comprehensive codebook was solidified from the collaborative analysis of 5 transcripts, the remaining 15 transcripts were divided between the two coders to independently finish initial coding. They reconvened after individually coding all transcripts to review themes, cluster related codes, synthesize essence of meaning within themes, evaluate validity in relation to research questions, name themes, and select vivid exemplar quotes. Final key analytic themes included “Navigating Sensitive Topics Online,” “Valuing Relatable Peer Experiences,” and “Co-Designing Responsive Harm Reduction Resources.” This rigorous process enhanced scientific credibility through investigator triangulation and achieving consensus on data interpretation (89).

3.12 Techniques to Enhance Trustworthiness

Establishing rigorous qualitative practices was imperative for producing credible, reliable findings that authentically reflect participants’ perspectives grounded in lived experiences rather than researcher biases. Several strategies enhanced trustworthiness:

Triangulation Multiple data sources, methods, and investigators converged evidence supporting validated interpretations (102). Data triangulation included gathering both social

media/health landscape insights (interview set 1) and tailored intervention co-design priorities (interview set 2) from participants. Investigator triangulation involved initial collaborative coding and theme development between the lead author and trained research assistant on the same transcripts to calibrate understood meanings and mitigate lone researcher predispositions (89). Member-checking occurred during second interviews building on key topics arising from first round analysis for confirmation and expansion.

Audit Trail Comprehensive documentation detailed processes from study inception through reporting findings in a transparent audit trail. Descriptions tracked methodological decisions, sampling rationales, evolving interview questions, analytic steps relating codes to overarching themes, and data excerpts supporting interpretations (103). These detailed records allowed impartial evaluation that rationale logical scientific reasoning constructed credible arguments untainted by systemic biases or “fishing expeditions” for hoped-for results.

Positional Statements that are accompanied by transparent reflexivity and critical reflection on researchers’ personal backgrounds, assumptions, and changing viewpoints documented the way in which interpretive lenses digest the findings as an ongoing thought that is made transparent. Reflexive journals have facilitated the critical examination of the effectiveness of subjective orientations. In addition, it has brought about an alternative explanation of issues and at the same time kept the emic realities as they stand while developing a material for coherent storylines that reconstruct each component argument.

Such evaluative procedures would then be enough to produce evidence that would be used by social media health promotion programs to derive the strategies from that are effective since they use meaning-making frames for the intended beneficiaries, the young women.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter offers a detailed analysis entailing the qualitative approaches that were applied to obtain a deeper understanding of the young women's perspectives as they co-plan the development of a social media-based health promotion campaign. The constructivist method was employed with semi-structured interviews and inductive themes analysis to collect information to discover the views, choices, and interests of the target population. The approaches were based on a strong ethical groundwork and scientific accuracy. Through the application of interactive activities that made people speak, the research team in fact brought the draft findings into life and created significant recommendations, which are directed to the implementation of capturing social media campaigns for the purpose of current health issues tackling among the young generation. These next things come about based on this foundation, which might be tested and changed via iterations of prototype tests.

To recruit the relevant demographic group of technology-savvy young adults coping with health issues, cases were selected strategically with the aid of key criteria. This was to enable access to the real experiences of individuals from the group. I found that the gradual diversification of topics (45-60 minutes in length) to be a trust-building factor that allowed mutual understanding as well as the possibility of disclosing complicated topics in future. Through the iterative process of the interview guides, the framework was adjusted, and a mixed method of participant engagement was used where open-ended questions regarding the wellbeing beliefs were conducted alongside practical activities that were co-designed with participants and that led to the synthesis of the intervention framework. It was set to absolutely high-quality standards of data authenticity, as audio recordings underwent sound editing and had additional verification to ensure accuracy.

The productive coding type pinpointed the general themes that appeared as a result of the research in a systematic way, keeping consistent with the participants' terminology and the

social media sphere relating to social values, preferences, and suggestions for the most urgent knowledge gaps management. The methodological steps performed were investigator triangulation, consensus development, and member reflection to increase the credibility of the interpretation of the derived patterns. Participant safety during the research process involving the self-disclosure of private information was of utmost importance, and the main university human subject protections guaranteed the obtaining of informed consent.

The study finally accomplished its objectives in recognizing the important factors to be considered while promoting health awareness through the trending digital platform for young people in terms of impact, user engagement and relevancy. The description of addressing young women's needs and the recommendations for a prospective intervention enable a formative control that can be applied to the basis of an experiential prototype. Moreover, this approach is not universal, and it may be irrelevant to other settings, however, the methodology provided space for the voices of end-users who often shed to the side but provably aid in outreach. This base serves as a springboard that leads to the further development of more forward-thinking ways to use participatory technology-based health programs that could strengthen power of the marginalized.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This analysis examines how engaging with social media impacts body image and food relationships among young women in New Zealand, addressing four key research questions around these platforms' influence. It explores potential interventions leveraging social media itself to foster healthier attitudes. The chapter analyses results from qualitative interviews highlighting complex links between online messaging consumption, self-perception, disordered eating behaviours, and sociocultural factors. Quotes connect directly to the study's focus on digital spaces twisting ideals, enabling comparisons, and driving unhealthy fixation around appearance and diets. Thematic analysis reveals how diet culture permeates platforms, but conscious content and usage could transform social dynamics from harm to health promotion. Findings inform strategies to uphold young female users' wellbeing within pervasive digital environments.

4.2 Engagement with Social Media Platforms Influence and Body Image

Perceptions

The discussions on social media's influence on body image examined several interrelated subthemes. These included how platforms propagate unrealistic ideals through image manipulation, facilitate negative social comparisons to these inflated standards, and enable scrutiny that intensifies appearance fixation. Despite some pushback, the predominant themes indicate that constant exposure to narrow views of beauty contributes to negative self-perception and body dissatisfaction among young female platform users.

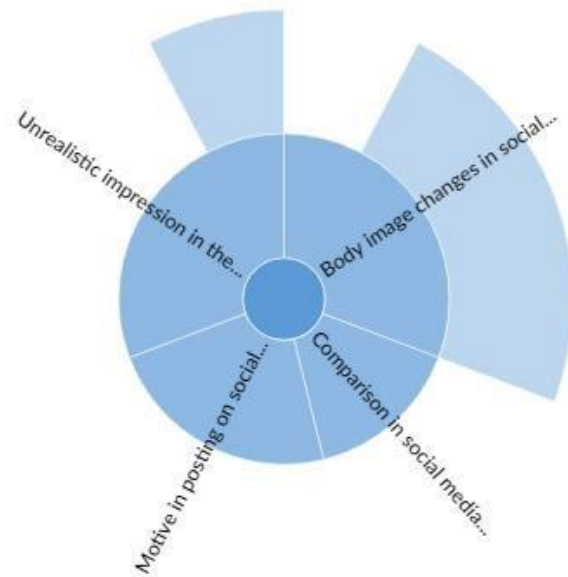


Figure 1 Social Media Platforms Influence and Body Image

4.2.1 Body Image Changes in Social Media Postings

The study revealed that social media platforms like TikTok often promote an unrealistic and distorted representation of beauty using photo editing and filters.

Quoting one respondent:

Exactly, and I think the same thing is yeah, I've seen a lot of those like again, it's TikTok that's like people showing what they look like when they've absolutely photoshopped the crap out of themselves versus what they look like naturally.
(Participant 7)

The issue of body image distortion propagated through social media, indicate that constant exposure to these artificially enhanced images likely contributes to negative

self-perceptions and body dissatisfaction among young female social media users. This demonstrates how various facets of social media engagement can twist body image ideals in unhealthy ways.

4.2.2 Social Media and Body Image

The respondents indicated how social media content centred around diet, fitness, and unattainable beauty standards can negatively impact young women's body image.

Quoting one respondent:

I hate this. It's so dumb. I'm sorry. So, she's talking about the drink, but the drinks not even in half the pictures? It's just pictures of her being like skinny and toned, and it's, I don't know, a drink like that is probably a marketing product anyway, but the odds that it actually does what she claims it does is already unlikely. And she's catering to an audience that is easily influenced as well. It's just overall, not good, and the way she's presented it is just really bad, I think. (Participant 1)

The first respondent criticizes an influencer for using overly edited and misleading images to sell a product, catering to an impressionable audience.

Another respondent cited that:

if you follow, follow along with that account, you'll be increased, you have an increased exposure to like, for example, the infographics like, over time, you'll see more of them. And it will kind of just, like the knowledge, like the information on that post, even if you don't pay attention to as much that, you'll kind of see more of those, because you follow that page. And then like, obviously, with the videos they tend to be more engaging as well. So yeah, I definitely watch a lot of those videos. The next one was

how to increase the relevance of people different with body shapes, sizes, genders, cultures, and I was thinking, like, not relating food to like a type of body or like a type of like gender or size, something like that. But just showing that food is for everyone, like just like sharing, like information about food and recipes, that it's directed for literally everyone, and to share recipes from different cultures just to increase awareness of different types of food combinations that are possible for achieving like a variety in the diet. (Participant 16)

The respondent discussed how following certain accounts leads to increased exposure to content that equates appearance to worth. The propagation of unrealistic ideals and constant bombardment of appearance-focused messaging via social media contributes to poor selfimage and misconceptions around health for young female users. Reducing the linkage of food to stereotypical body types and appearances could help promote more inclusive and positive messaging.

There are aspects of social media that contribute positively to body image.

A respondent cited that:

I have learnt from social media posts on how I can work on my body shape to improve how I see myself, without looking at others and comparing with them. I have therefore adopted a positive attitude and learn from others (Participant 5)

Social media therefore can be useful in learning and positively improve the media users.

4.2.3 Comparison in Social Media Posts

The respondents noted how engaging with social media facilitates negative social comparison and body image issues among young women.

Quoting one respondent:

I guess from like a body image and in sports as well, what I've found out by talking to a runner is that, the comparison part of social media is really, really strong and they compare themselves to what they'd like to look like running, for example, just because that's on the top of my head you know they'll look at like pictures of women who are really thin and who are potentially good runners and they go, "I want to be like that", and then they make assumptions about that person and how they got there, and so I think yeah comparison is probably quite strong for young people. (Participant 2)

The respondent discusses how female athletes often compare themselves to unrealistically thin, enhanced images of women online, feeling pressure to achieve an idealized appearance that may not be healthy or realistic. This ties directly to the research question on how social media impacts body image.

Quoting another respondent:

You could have something like a story highlight and a series of like little notes or memos about body image or, you know, don't take into account, like all those skinny models or something, you know that's on Instagram. Or like here are some resources about body image you can, you know, have a look at. You know those really good pages that um really promote like the feminine aspect. And I don't know if this is like inappropriate to say but I know we are all girls here. But yeah, a lot of people think like their body parts should look like a certain thing, but everyone is unique. And there's those pages that show that you can look like anything, and they show this art, they are just painting and stuff, and like feminism and like body acceptance, and I think that's cool. (Participant 11)

The second respondent notes how social media spreads narrow beauty standards, but also how some accounts promote body acceptance and challenge stereotypical ideals. The culture of comparison propagated through social media engagement encourages young women to measure themselves against inflated, often edited representations, contributing to poor selfimage. While some content pushes back against this, the prominence of appearance-focused messaging still negatively influences female users' perceptions, especially regarding unrealistic body ideals.

4.2.4 Motivation for Posting on Social Media

The respondents speak to different facets of how engaging with social media impacts young women's body image perceptions.

Quoting one respondent:

So, I think shares in this case might actually be quite an interesting metric to take into account as well, and actually might be a little bit more important than, let's say, comments? I don't know it depends on what the content of the posts was, if you're wanting people to comment and if you're wanting that dialogue? So, I guess yeah and maybe then comes down to the objective of the post as well? (Participant 4)

The respondent considers how metrics like shares can indicate if messaging around body positivity and acceptance is resonating.

Quoting another respondent:

Or like here are some resources about body image you can, you know, have a look at. You know those really good pages that um really promote like the feminine aspect. And I don't know if this is like inappropriate to say but I know we are all girls here. But yeah, a lot of people think like their body parts should look like a certain thing,

but everyone is unique. And there's those pages that show that you can look like anything, and they show this art, they are just painting and stuff, and like feminism and like body acceptance, and I think that's cool. (Participant 16)

The respondent discusses accounts that challenge stereotypical beauty standards and promote body acceptance. This indicates that while much social media content propagates unrealistic ideals, some tries to counter that.

However, the third respondent highlights the "fakeness" of social media, including celebrities deceiving followers about cosmetic procedures contributing to distorted beauty notions.

Quoting another respondent:

But I'm mentioning, you said like the fakeness of social media and yeah, that's true. There's a Youtuber called Lorihill, she's American, and she posts like breaks the unveiling of like plastic surgery, like all the celebrities they say 'Oh, no, I never got in my life'. But then Lori holds like a - she worked in that industry, she kind of really knows when someone does it. But she says the purpose of a video is to never hate or shame anyone for doing plastic surgery. In fact, Laurie got plastic surgery herself and showed it on channel, but she's promoting transparency and accepting people whether they do plastic surgery or not. But she was hitting the point home. You should be honest about it, and then she's upset that of course the celebrities say 'No, no, no, I never did it' but then do it. (Participant 19)

Overall, while some posters try to push transparency and self-acceptance, the ubiquity of misleading, edited content contributes to a culture of comparison, negative self-image issues, and pressure to meet inflated beauty ideals for young female users. Even when users

consciously reject narrow standards, constant exposure to filtered imagery glamorizing a "perfect" physique can still negatively impact perceptions of self and what is considered attractive. So social media advances unrealistic body ideals, despite some effort to promote inclusivity.

The respondents speak to different facets of how common motivations for posting certain types of content on social media can negatively impact young female viewers' body image perceptions. Factors such as portraying an idealized version of one's life, chasing validation through likes and followers, and promoting products using enhanced or misleading imagery contribute to the propagation of unrealistic beauty standards across social platforms. This content often promotes restrictively thin, edited, and enhanced depictions of beauty aimed at soliciting engagement and purchases. However, exposure to these inflated representations frequently contributes to negative social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating intentions among young women consuming this content. By revealing some motivations behind the selective curation and enhancement driving posts, the quotes provide insight into how and why platforms facilitate distortion of beauty notions in ways that can directly harm female users' body positivity.

4.2.5 Unrealistic Impression in the Social Media

The respondents speak directly to how social media facilitates distorted and unrealistic beauty ideals.

Quoting one respondent:

Um, but like that, that, doesn't mean that it's going to work for other people and her promoting it, and the reel in the video and showing, like her body and what it looks like, is such a like unrealistic - sets such an unrealistic image to others who think 'Oh,

she did it, this product is working for her; it's like a legit thing, so why don't I give it a go?' And then, obviously, if it doesn't work for you, you get really frustrated and it starts a whole like negative cycle. (Participant 5)

The first respondent criticizes an influencer for promoting a product using images that set an unrealistic and potentially damaging impression.

Quoting another respondent:

Like I know as an example, there's this YouTuber, Stephanie Lange, I think her name is, and she - I find her video is really useful because she goes through, and she shows how Instagram photos are edited in Photoshop. So, she'll show like actual paparazzi photos of different influencers and celebrities. And then she'll show how people go about actually changing their images. Because editing images isn't something that I do, so being able to actually see how people do it has really helped me to, I guess, debunk the fakeness of social media that's been super useful for me. (Participant 17)

The second respondent positively highlights content exposing how social media images are often heavily edited, helping young women recognize the “fakeness” perpetuated online.

Quoting another respondent:

Yeah, I was gonna say as well definitely no, like, body checking, or even just like posting photos of one's body in like tight clothing or anything like that, I think kind of gives the impression that, you know, whoever's running the account, they're making food for people who look like that or who wants to look like that when that's not always the case. (Participant 19)

However, the third respondent notes that even non-edited images centred around appearance can propagate restrictive ideas around women's bodies. While some content constructively exposes the deception, the ubiquity of these inflated images still negatively

impacts female users' perceptions and self-image by advancing stereotypical and unachievable standards. Seeing "real" bodies that don't match the idealized physiques promoted across platforms can exacerbate negative social comparison and body dissatisfaction. So, despite pushback, social media still distorts beauty notions in ways that harm young women's body positivity.

4.3 Social Media Effect on Young Women's Relationships with Food, Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Towards Diet and Nutrition

The study assessed the social media's impact on food relationships, with sub-themes highlighting the proliferation of often unreliable or unrealistic diet and nutrition rhetoric online. This frequently promotes unhealthy attitudes by linking food to appearance, guilt, restriction, and thinness rather than overall wellbeing. While seeking community, young women consume confusing mix-messages that override internal wisdom around eating. Despite potential for knowledge exchange, digital spaces largely enable the spread of disordered advice that damages rapport with food.

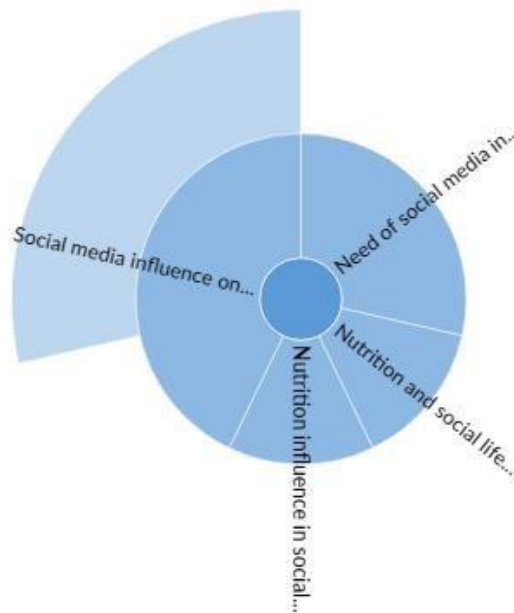


Figure 2 Social Media Effect on Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Towards Diet and Nutrition

4.3.1 Need of Social Media in Dieting

The respondents show how young women frequently turn to social media in attempts to find dieting advice, aligning with the research question on how social media impacts their relationship with food.

Quoting one respondent:

I have been struggling to lose that extra couple of kilograms for the past whenever. I've gone to different websites to find new diets, I have taken new supplements, every now and again I jump on a diet, and it goes well, for the first couple of weeks, and then I get tired, and then it's just back to normal'. (Participant 7)

The first respondent shows a woman struggling to lose weight, repeatedly trying new diets and supplements promoted on websites and social media. However, these prove unsuccessful long-term.

Quoting another respondent:

Yeah, I was gonna say like, I think maybe more infographics or informational content on Instagram and then having like a tik tok or reels to post like videos like communicating maybe recipes or I don't know whatever you would want to use like a video to explain something that you couldn't put directly in a post, but I think maybe (Participant 19)

The second respondent suggests using social media's multimedia formats to communicate recipes and nutrition information. Many young women consume social media content centred around dieting and nutrition in efforts to change eating habits and lose weight. However, this content often promotes unhealthy, restrictive, or unsustainable diets that fail over time, potentially contributing to a negative relationship with food. While social media creates demand for dieting advice, the solutions offered may be ineffective or even harmful regarding attitudes around food and body image.

4.3.2 Nutrition and Social Life Influence

The respondent's quote speaks directly to the complex interplay between food, nutrition, and social/cultural factors.

Quoting one respondent:

It doesn't even have to like talk about nutrition at the start because that just creates the idea that they should be talking about food, but food, nutrition - nutrition is so much more than just food it's about your social life, food can be shared on special

occasions, that sort of thing, and it's all linked with those that emotional or mental link
(Participant 1)

Nutrition encompasses more than just physical sustenance - it has important social and emotional connections. However, the respondent argues social media often focuses too narrowly on nutrition's bodily effects rather than its integral ties to community, relationships, and quality of life. While social media drives interest in diet and nutrition, the messaging frequently disregards key contexts around food that contribute to healthy attitudes. This can propagate reductive notions that negatively impact young women's holistic relationship with food.

4.3.3 Nutrition Influence in Social Media

The respondents demonstrate how social media content focused on diet and fitness often promotes unhealthy behaviours.

Quoting one respondent:

So, my kind of biggest ones are about, you know, comparisons to friends and family and societal expectation as well. Um, I know it's particularly bad on social media with, you know, people posting all the time doing like body checking, or like posting what I eat in a day, and it's not necessarily like a balanced meal. It's very, I guess, restrictive almost, and I know people are trying to put what they deem to be the best version of themselves on social media, but that unrealistic sort of perception of themselves that goes online, it kind of leads to a lot of really unhealthy uh comparisons of other people (Participant 12)

The respondent criticizes posts depicting restrictive diets, noting this sets an unrealistic standard that leads to negative social comparison. While posters may intend to portray their best selves, the proliferation of these distorted, appearance-centric representations contributes to disordered attitudes around food that harm young women's wellbeing.

4.3.4 Social Media Influence on Dieting

The respondents demonstrate how young women frequently look to social media for recipe inspiration and nutritional guidance

Quoting one respondent:

I know or/and I mean, I fit into that age bracket myself, I use social media to stay connected with my friends and Whanau, but also to get new ideas for things. I'm a big foodie. So, I like to go on Instagram or even Tik Tok, actually, recently, and look at what other people are cooking, come up with other ideas on recipes to make. I have noticed that there's heaps of Instagram influencers, some of whom maybe don't have too much nutrition knowledge, or background training, providing nutritional advice on these apps, and I think that a lot of young people use them. (Participant 2)

The respondent notes much of this content is created by influencers without credible expertise, which impressionable young female viewers still actively use and trust. This shows how diet and nutrition advice from non-evidence-based social media sources may encourage unhealthy behaviours or poor attitudes around food. While social media creates demand for this kind of information, the messaging risks promoting distorted ideas about health, diet culture fixations, and dysfunctional eating particularly among young women.

4.3.5 Food Eating Influence in Social Media

The respondents demonstrate how social media shapes young women's eating habits and attitudes, directly relating to the research question.

Quoting one respondent:

So, I had had faith in myself, foods I hate, eating disorder, and um, I think there are some more, but I forgot what they are. I feel like it's really similar to the word comparison, it's like um, I feel like I have my own values when it comes to achieving health and well-being. But then, you know, like I go on social media a lot, and I see the messages and the posts about um eating healthy, or you know, just things like that. And then some of them is just so different, or even when I was talking to my friends, sometimes I tell them like about 'Oh so I ate this for breakfast today', or like 'I just had this, I cooked this', and then sometimes they just throw in like a random, like absolutely random, like very neutral, it's not negative or anything at all, but like it's just like 'oh, but like that's fat, that's greasy'. And then I was like 'No, it's not'. (Participant 5)

The first respondent response shows how even neutral commentary from peers on social media about "healthy eating" can make women question and feel badly about their own diets.

Quoting another respondent:

And then a very popular one, but like um, 'do you fucking mind' with like Alex and Andy, she covers a lot of different topics, but does health and fitness as well in some of them, and her podcast is just like so fun to listen to you, like you literally just feel like you're listening to your best friend. And then, yeah, just yeah, there is a few more others, of course 'the bare performance' podcast, it's um one with Nick Bare, it's a cool one, he talks with a lot of different just like people in the fitness and health and wellness world and just like, yeah covers just a lot of cool guests. (Participant 9)

The second respondent notes how fitness influencers and podcasts are popular sources of health advice. However, the messaging often conflicts with women's intrinsic values around food and wellbeing.

While social media helps drive food choices, the pseudoscience, restriction, and weight stigma frequently promoted in diet discourse can negatively impact young women's relationships with food. Even content aiming to encourage "healthy eating" risks imposing external rules that override internal cues and introduce guilt, negativity, or disordered behavioural patterns around eating. This demonstrates social media's complex role in shaping attitudes and behaviours.

4.4 Cultural and Contextual Factors Unique to Aotearoa

The discussions on sociocultural contexts shaping social media's effects reveal subgroup themes around the marginalization of minority voices regarding body ideals and diet messaging. Results critique the white, Western-centric notion of "health" dominating platforms as reductive and exclusionary. Findings indicate intervening requires embracing diverse perspectives that counter the perpetuation of traditional stereotypes and colonial impositions dictating standards rooted in restriction rather than empowerment.



Figure 3 Cultural and Contextual Factors Unique to Aotearoa

4.4.1 Communities culture on recipes

The respondents demonstrate the need to consider cultural contexts when examining social media's impact on young women's food relationships.

Quoting one respondent:

Well, obviously, you're going to have a representative, representative sample of people in your young people focus group which will be really helpful but also just yeah, probably talking with some people in those communities, Māori , Pacifica, people from Asian countries and all that sort of stuff because if you consume ethnic food on a or you know, food that's specific to your culture or on an everyday basis and you're just seeing content of Westernised recipes that's not going to be relatable or very engaging for that

young audience. So, it's probably about just trying to find a balance of everything there.

(Participant 3)

The first respondent notes how content centred on "Westernised" dieting advice risks being irrelevant or ineffective for those from non-white backgrounds who follow different cultural food traditions.

Quoting another respondent:

I feel like that's kind of an obvious one, though, in our gender misnaming is kind of like a thing these days to be aware of, but culturally, the recipes, I suppose, like the cultures of the people that they are what food like because about healthy intervention rights and like what foods they like, or their dietary requirements of people like me, I have a whole list. (Participant 11)

The second respondent echoes this, stating that healthy eating messaging must consider diverse populations' preferences, values, and restrictions around food.

While diet culture permeates online spaces, overlooking how cultural ties to food, body image, health and wellness differ across groups risks further marginalizing minority young women and intensifying disordered eating patterns. Content failing to resonate with those from ethnic backgrounds indicates that cultural erasure permeates social media. This highlights the need to amplify inclusive, ethical perspectives that embrace the diversity underpinning food and health relationships rather than whitewashing ideals.

4.4.2 Cultural Context Effect on Dieting

The respondents emphasize how cultural upbringings shape attitudes and behaviours around food

Quoting one respondent:

there's the food culture that we've each been brought up in individually. And food is so much more than just say like the type of food we eat. It's the context in which we eat it in, and naturally it's going to be biased towards your worldview. (Participant 9)

The respondent notes that food encapsulates more than physical nutrients or ingredients - it has deep personal, communal, and symbolic meaning conveyed through practices like rituals, meals, and traditions. Failing to embrace food relationships' profoundly cultural nature and instead viewing nutrition reductively when creating social media content risks certain groups feeling disconnected, policed, pressured, or shamed for honouring their heritage's values around health.

4.4.3 Cultural Effect in Food Preference and Presentation

The respondents critique the appropriation of ethnic food by white social media influencers

Quoting one respondent:

This is so very random, so like don't mind me in some ways, but it annoys me that this was food taken from a different culture, and it's a white person cooking it? Like, and this is just something that I think a lot about slides and presentation and when you're trying to like, get the wider audience and stuff. Like, if, like, even the hands and stuff like, it should be reflective of the culture, if you're taking it from a different culture. (Participant 7)

The respondent expresses frustration at seeing cultural dishes co-opted and repackaged without adequately respecting the original community. The results indicate that insensitive or tone-deaf use of traditional cuisine on social platforms can perpetuate erasure and dismissal of

marginalized groups. This highlights the need to amplify diverse voices speaking on their own food heritage rather than have outsiders appropriate these for social gains.

4.4.4 Food Culture Posting on Social Media

The respondent speaks to the power of social media in bringing together communities around shared cultural food interests

Quoting one respondent:

I think another point about I guess eating is that there if you're passionate about a certain type of cultural food or type of like budget meals, all sorts of things, you can create your own channel or brand to support people with that, and create a community where you can feel like you're maybe not, maybe not financially, maybe as like a hobby maybe, but as long as like you're creating your own sort of community, I think that makes people feel like they've got a purpose and being able to impart that knowledge on to others. (Participant 2)

The respondent notes how creating spaces to celebrate one's own heritage, values, or specialized knowledge regarding cooking can foster connection and purpose. Allowing traditionally marginalized voices to own the narrative regarding their cuisine provides a platform to counter the Eurocentric diet culture dominating the digital landscape. Representing diverse food perspectives through inclusive posting can transform social media into a tool for empowerment rather than oppression around eating attitudes.

4.4.5 New Zealand Culture on Body Image and Food Relationships

The respondents addressed how sociocultural contexts in New Zealand shape attitudes around health and wellbeing

Quoting one respondent:

Um, I think a lot of social like community perceptions of health are based around kind of temporal cultural norms. Like in New Zealand, I would say that health is often kind of visualized and defined um to a certain look or particular, I suppose, like person, which oftentimes would be able bodied, white, slim. And I don't necessarily, I don't think that's a good thing. It kind of makes health a very narrowly defined topic by a lot of people, unless they kind of start to really question it themselves, and what it means for them as well (Participant 1)

The respondent critiques the narrow, exclusionary definition of "health" perpetuated in NZ - typically centring abled, thin, white bodies. This homogenizing, othering view detrimentally impacts standards and aspirations. The finding suggests these worrying cultural trends likely intensify social media's negative messaging effects on minority ethnic women's body image and eating behaviours. Dismantling reductive associations between Western attributes and "health" could help foster more inclusive, ethical perspectives on nutrition and wellness across NZ's diverse populations.

4.5 Tailored Interventions and Policies Based on the Cultural and Social

Context of Aotearoa

Aspects on social media interventions emphasize counterbalancing detrimental effects through targeted myth-busting, narratives elevating inclusiveness, strategic facilitation of spaces for exchange, and development processes that continuously integrate user feedback. Results stress that while systemic pressures persist, individual and community agency can be bolstered by equipping young women to analyse, resist, and reshape rhetoric - transforming consumption into empowerment.

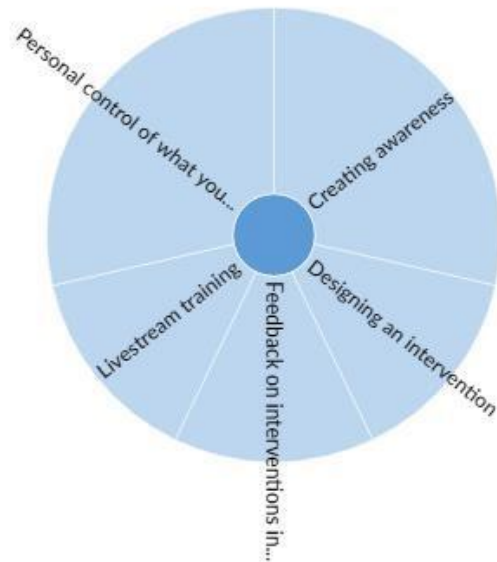


Figure 4 Tailored Interventions and Policies

4.5.1 Creating Awareness

The respondents provide insights into using social media to spread awareness around the platforms' detrimental impacts on young women

Quoting one respondent:

So, we'd be bringing awareness to the connection between social media and body image issues and all of that sort of stuff, and how it can have a massive impact.

We'd have discussions around who would be credible sources of information on the platform versus who might not be - even just having discussions like we did today about how dieticians can't be on the platform as much as say, a nutritionist or an influencer.

(Participant 8)

Quoting another respondent:

Yeah, especially well, especially those like Make Your Own Food posts like, like what I eat in a day, but like recipe videos, I suppose I see a lot of those on Pinterest. Its less of an intervention, I suppose. But it's definitely you know; it would draw people to an Instagram page. And if your goal is to kind of increased awareness, then I suppose that would definitely fulfil that. (Participant 3) The next respondent noted:

And the next one was the type of content that should be posted. And I was thinking, like, just general like videos, so that people watch them. Maybe stories that are, that are from dietitians, or students in the relevant fields to increase relevancy, and definitely the MythBusters idea, to combat all that misinformation on the media. (Participant 13)

Further, Quoting another respondent:

With apps, we thought that Instagram and Tik Tok were the best - kind of more of an emphasis on Instagram, because it is quite versatile with the fact that you can put photo posts and you can put video and reel content. And also, stories. Video versus photo content ratio on Instagram in particular, probably about fifty-fifty, with kind of like reels and a style of like tik tok videos? So, kind of quite short, portrait video with maybe like text or information over the top. Um with Tik Tok, we noted that you could do the kind of like image slide shows and stuff as well, but probably more so video content on Tik Tok than that. Tone of the intervention. (Participant 17)

Recommendations include facilitating discussions analysing sourcing credibility issues in nutrition/body image content and who genuinely constitutes an expert. Other suggestions include leveraging popular formats like recipe videos or Myth Busting misinformation to counteract pseudoscience and dangerous rhetoric.

The respondents emphasize balancing evidence-based perspectives from credentialed authorities with relatable peer voices to resonate across diverse viewers. They stress embracing multimedia formats, interactivity, and concise delivery on visually dominant platforms like Instagram and TikTok to effectively reach and engage young female users. However, the overall tone must remain positive, ethical and solution-focused to constructively shift attitudes and behaviours rather than shame.

While inherently problematic dynamics enable distortion and harm around body/food relationships, the findings indicate social platforms could powerfully counteract this through conscious content that informs, connects, represents and uplifts marginalized communities. Reframing interventions to disseminate counter-narratives elevating inclusivity could mitigate negative effects by educating users on detecting and resisting messaging aligned with diet culture

4.5.2 Designing an Intervention

The respondents provide valuable insights into developing social media campaigns to foster healthy body image and eating behaviours

Quoting one respondent:

it's really important to ask a representative group of people, before designing this intervention, so that it does reflect these different experiences that people have with their families and yeah growing up here or not here so that you at least get those sorts of snippets. (Participant 9)

The first respondent stresses including diverse populations in formative research so resulting interventions effectively reflect varied sociocultural experiences with food and health.

Quoting another respondent:

And then the last aspect of it is this idea of healthy navigation, and having conversations about how treacherous social media can be in terms of the impact it can have on your body image. And uh, how we go about, I guess, curating news feeds and navigating these spaces in a healthier way to protect our sense of self and our body image. (Participant 18)

The second respondent notes interventions should build critical media literacy skills that enable young women to curate their online spaces, identify misinformation/manipulation tactics, and self-regulate usage to mitigate negative effects.

While social media inherently risks distorting body/food attitudes, equipping young women to safely navigate platforms could minimize harm. Findings indicate cooperative development processes and educational tools that honour multiple perspectives can empower users to consciously process content, uphold their own values amidst intense pressures, and derive benefits from connecting online while protecting self-image. This highlights the potential for carefully tailored, evidence-based interventions on dominant platforms to counteract rather than contribute to unhealthy messaging

4.5.3 Feedback on Interventions in Social Media

The respondents provide critical considerations around evaluating and iterating on social media health interventions targeting young women

Quoting one respondent:

So for me, that's also quite important, in that stage, and then, of course, you know when you're implementing interventions and everything like that, like I said with social media that's the whole value of it at that, to two-way dialogue, it is co-creation because you are able to go beyond what we have traditionally done in marketing and

that is just shouting at people, or talking to people, whatever you want to call it, and telling them things without getting that feedback. (Participant 6)

The first respondent emphasizes embracing platforms' interactive nature by continuously incorporating user perspectives when implementing and refining strategies. Rather than one-way content transmission, facilitating open dialogue and co-creative processes with the target audience through likes, comments, shares etc. allows insights into what resonates and drives engagement.

Quoting another respondent:

I think it depends like if the post is kind of asking me to comment, then I will. Or if it's something that I found like interesting or helpful, or maybe sharing personal insight, then I would want to comment on that (Participant 14)

The second respondent notes user feedback depends on feeling invited to participate and seeing personal relevance in the messaging.

While social media enables mass reach, findings indicate targeted polling, focus groups and inclusive participation centred around young women's needs could bolster receptiveness and impact. Fostering two-way exchange through built-in feedback channels allows insights into counterbalancing restrictive messaging with approaches better promoting body acceptance and intuitive eating.

4.5.4 Livestream Training

The respondents provide insights into utilizing livestreams to deliver social media health interventions to young women

Quoting one respondent:

So, with live streams it's kind of like important, again what Young Adult 7 said, when you do it, how you do it, because otherwise, it could be a wasted livestream. The timing is really important, and you would like to put a post 'we're doing it X day and time'. Then people would know. But again, it does require commitment, people will just forget that because people scroll post any time, and It's kind of like you have to come to livestream with the exact day and time kind of thing? But you can make it exciting and engaging and a taster of what will be in there, and people might come and like people can ask questions. (Participant 2) Quoting another respondent:

So, making sure that engagement in livestream - attendance and engagement, are two key aspects to the live stream, I suppose. And the date and time, and when you include that in the intervention, so when you have that build-up of participants like kind of ready to go, so yeah, make sure it's not a wasted opportunity, for sure. Make sure the aspects are planned out and people attend and kind of timing so when people are working and stuff like that, yeah. (Participant 8)

Key considerations include ensuring timing enables attendance amid busy schedules and reinforcing sessions through advance promotion across platforms promising value-add through interactivity. Strategically framing streams to provide knowledge generates curiosity and investment in participation. Optimizing engagement also requires consciously designing presentations and supplementary materials as dynamic, succinct, and digestion-focused by embracing multimedia formats.

Findings indicate this immediacy and sense of exchange could powerfully counteract static posts users easily scroll past. However, successfully competing with other content relies on strategic coordination around participants' availability, catchy teasers signalling tangible benefits from tuning in, and genuinely two-way discussion where young women's voices take

central focus. This highlights livestreams' untapped potential for interventions if purposely used to resonate with and responsively uplift target users.

4.5.5 Personal Control of What You Feed on in Social Media

The respondents noted on the need for Personal control of what one feed on in social media.

Quoting one respondent:

So, if you're going to engage with content that you don't really want to do - violent content, or content that makes you sad - that algorithm is going pick it up that you are showing interest in this, and it's going to send you more and more and more of those ones. So, keep it positive, only engage with things that you want to see, if you see content on the page that you feel like, you know what, this is not good for my mental health or this is something that I don't want to see (Participant 18)

The first respondent provides valuable advice around young women curating their social media feeds to mitigate negative influences. It recommends consciously customizing content through likes, clicks etc. to prompt algorithms to deliver more supportive messaging aligned with mental health goals. This encourages limiting or blocking problematic accounts and reporting content detrimental to self-image or disordered eating.

Quoting another respondent:

I think you could definitely help with things like mixed messages of healthy. I really like your presentation style, so I'm sure via social media, you would probably give really clear messages, and hopefully people subscribe to it. Um, there is probably not a lot of people can do about the wider systemic things like what's put in our food, or how much time and cost of good food, or maybe even time for appointments. But um! Things like avoiding anxiety, a good influence on social media that - I mean, I would

follow you, if you had a platform, I think those would be really good, especially for young girls (Participant 4)

The second respondent notes the power of positive, humorous short-form videos to counteract distressing rhetoric and evoke uplifted emotional states. This indicates that interventions could spread more effectively by embracing such formats and tones.

The next respondent noted:

Because I find that those the short videos, I kind of go to for like, not humorous content, but like most of the time, it you know, it invokes a good emotion. So, I like when like, like health, health influencers or people that I follow who do stuff like selfacceptance and self-love when they post a little bit more seriously on their Instagram but have a bit of a funnier tone on other apps. (Participant 8)

The third respondent emphasizes exposure to current social campaigns and media highlighting diversity and inclusion to inform healthy messaging. Mirroring these approaches in interventions can help continue driving powerful cultural shifts regarding restrictive assumptions.

Further, Quoting another respondent:

I guess keeping up with like, relevant media as well, like in terms of like, like, including everyone, just like I was trying to, like say maybe like watching, like, shows that are out at the moment, or like looking at what like content and what like characters they have. Or just kind of looking at like other like other campaigns that are kind of trying to include everyone just getting ideas of kind of what they're doing. I think the biggest thing when it comes to like health pages, especially for me, is that they put a lot of focus on like size doesn't determine your health. (Participant 15)

The fourth respondent offers encouragement that an evidence-based social media presence providing clear, sound perspectives on nutrition could positively impact young women amid confusing rhetoric. It notes systemic barriers but suggests personalized influence could combat anxiety and poor body image.

While achieving sweeping change is difficult, findings indicate consciously supporting, sharing and signalling preferences for content that embraces body and size acceptance over restrictive diet notions could slowly improve messaging patterns. Allowing young women's voices to lead the dialogue also helps ensure resonance and receptiveness. This highlights that despite passive consumption being the norm, users can play a role in better controlling and reshaping information flows.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of this study's key findings, which examined the impacts of social media engagement on body image and food relationships among young women in New Zealand. Structured around the research questions that anchored the qualitative investigation, it analyses emergent themes from participant interviews regarding influences on self-perception and dietary behaviours.

First, it overviews key insights related to the role of social media interactions in propagating distorted beauty ideals and driving negative body image outcomes. Comparisons to relevant literature and theories around appearance-focus intensified through online spaces are explored to contextualize this phenomenon. Following this, the relationship between digital

environments and disordered eating attitudes is discussed, linking patterns like internalization of diet rhetoric to existing knowledge on media impacts.

Sociocultural dimensions are then spotlighted through a discussion of how cultural marginalization and dominant stereotypes related to narrow definitions of beauty and health shape social media effects on wellbeing. Finally, promising interventions using online community engagement, targeted myth-busting and movement building to advance positive representations and improved critical consumption skills are considered.

Together, these interconnected facets provide a robust investigation into how young women in New Zealand might be better supported to use social media for connectivity, not anxiety, regarding their bodies and food choices. The implications aim to inform more responsible design and dialogue surrounding the digitally immersed.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Engagement with Social Media Platforms Influence and Body Image Perceptions

The analysis reveals that the proliferation of edited, enhanced imagery across social media channels propagates unrealistic and highly scrutinized depictions of beauty that young female users then internalize as norms or expectations of feminine worth. This alignment conforms to feminist media theory and its commercial propagation through pervasive objectifying representations that socialize girls and women to continually self-monitor against patriarchal ideals (36).

Findings show acute awareness of how image manipulation tactics including filters, posing, plastic surgery etc. create unrealistic beauty notions young women compare themselves

against, sparking appearance anxiety and compulsions to meet inflated standards. The expectation to emulate filtered versions of influencers and celebrities was noted. As Fardouly et al (13) state, digital spaces provide comparison habits linked to body dissatisfaction – especially regarding weight, stomachs, thighs and arms.

Internalization occurs through users engaging in the practice of evaluating themselves against airbrushed images and thus ignoring the possibility of questioning their authenticity. A few participants disclosed they felt ashamed and not beautiful while looking at pictures of people who are perceived as more perfect online, thus, indicating that a twisted standard of beauty had almost imperceptibly become a measure of worth and fitting in. This is just another factor that steers towards the increased level of self-objectification and such things as excessive grooming (36). The constant bombardment of the male gaze entrenches it making women to look at themselves and their peers through the lens of narrowed beauty ideas. Mitigation needs strengthening the media literacy that will expose and suppress disinformation (25).

The analysis implies that social media is not only a medium for the direct dissemination of unrealistic/distorted imagery, but also its intensities self-scrutiny and shattered body confidence by offering continual exposure to appearance-focused content and allowing people to give comments/opinions that are not wanted. Participants commented on the downward pressure created by these types of media when women are trained to focus on assumed imperfections through the use of diet, exercise, makeup and plastic surgery images. This is consistent with the findings that masculine social media engagement is focused on weight, diets and cosmetic procedures rather than interests or achievements (25).

Participants mentioned how comment and forum features created means for peer criticism and direct abuse linked with gender duties around women's bodies and food choices. According to Holland and Tiggeman (17), social networks become more critical by internalizing propaganda through these tools which makes propaganda more dangerous.

Participants reported being distressed at being reminded of weight gain or being told to go on a diet by the other side, which indicates that the increased visibility accompanied by surveillance only makes efforts to meet the impossible beauty standards more stressful. Some confessed that they were starving before events on such stage, expecting that pictures will shock the viewers.

Alongside the analysis of twisting through editing, this section also confirms that social media socially standardizes unattainable body ideals for young women while offering plenty of methods and stimuli for anxious comparison, able to hide deviation and meet the externally defined wellness. Integrating the pervasive measures of media at multiple layers demonstrates that contemporary media presents not only individuals with personalized filters but cumbersome ecosystem infrastructure that calls for public health approaches to actively dismantle modernity.

Further study shows that social media engagement leads young women to keep measuring themselves by the unrealistic standards of the famous women, social media influencers, and the best versions of their peers. Multiple respondents said that they absolutely have the habit of upward comparison through the lens of appearance standards that they adopt by self-judging themselves (30). The photo recall of respondents gave rise to reflections on how they used to look-alike social media models with some-like perfect bodies and kitchens. Algorithm-driven profiles which recommend posts to users based on their interests and identity are tailored to create such clashes.

Respondents noted that they have learnt much content is fiction after talking to these micro-celebrities or viewing the everyday flaws by themselves. However, brief encounters have nonetheless rooted some self-consciousness left by a comparison of the virtual ideal surrounding happiness display, friend circle, travel options or body aesthetics adjusted to increase likes and envy. Contrary to common belief that deception can be recognized, as

illustrated by the quantitative social comparison study of Fardouly et al., (13), self-esteem, body, and health perceptions can decline because of curated posts that promote unrealistic goals. Building resilience entails increasing the consumption of what is essential and arranging the spaces for real sharing.

Consumers have been recently aware that social media portrays unrealistic realities, but respondents still reported multiple issues from extended exposure to unrealistic content as resistance to passive consumption feeds is difficult. Analysis is in the style of McGraw and Mandl (88) that effects of familiarity with the techniques of publicity images reduce power of symbolic communication and inner impacts but real absorption of influences over years.

The findings reiterate fan disappointment with celebrities for misleading people about cosmetic surgeries and denying them highlights the reality that viewers' tuning in results in subtle ways of shaping self-image at a costly price even for the savvy audience. In addition, curated lifestyles are often put on display publicly, consequently fitness and motivational accounts that are intended to inspire but may inadvertently glamorize disordered habits are sometimes displayed as extremes under the guise of wellness. These are in agreement with the study of Carrotte, Prichard and Lim (6), in which the same amount of depressed mood was observed from fitspiration and thinspiration images among young women despite the different agendas, showing that perceptions do form the attitude of the people.

In the wake of the ever-increasing access to realities both factual and imagined, results indicate users find it hard to substantiate or reject the dominant visualizations of what encompasses beauty, success and happiness compared to their lives. Public health strategies that seek good opportunities in social media platforms must address not only meanings crafted by individual posts but rather whole ecosystems of distortion that are intensified by daily digital interactions in the most vulnerable audiences.

The women's internalization of the unrealistic images, which are promoted through social platforms, can be considered as an externalization of wider patriarchal cultural dynamics that sexually objectify female bodies and define the attractiveness as youthful, thin, and lighterskinned (18). Prevailing media representations, across all genres, are historically white malecentred, whose approach and gaze seem to filter the notion of the female worth through the physical appeal principles related to food consumption (20).

Relevant sociological theories have mentioned mass communication media such as ads, movies and television as socializing agents of gender norms. While internet media merge with everyday engagement, their capacities for increased presence, manipulation and commenting exceed but in fact are synchronized with those of traditional media documented to have an influence on body consciousness over years. Participants in particular did mention that filtering of regular selfies is now a requisite to be up there with the established celebrity photos, thereby signifying the spread of beauty standards as baseline.

As such, the image-oriented architecture and captivating features of platforms like Instagram and TikTok largely emphasize on appearance and outer lifestyle than inner reality or character (13). The algorithms that recommend visually similar and popular content are developing leading to the emergence of social bubbles where the young people emulate the collaged visions. This is achieved through the curation of such content which in turn gives a greater space to profit-making corporations that monitor activity to increase usage and data extraction and hence contribute to the homogenization of aspirational ideas that young women use to construct their identity.

5.2.2 Social Media Effect on Young Women's Relationships with Food, Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Towards Diet and Nutrition

Analysis of research question 2 which examined social media's role in shaping food relationships reveals messaging plays an influential yet complex role in propagating disordered nutrition attitudes and guilt-tied consumption.

Results match the expected quantitative correlations in the literature on the relationship between self-surveillance and digital engagement eating habits (36). The cognitive dissonance was evident in users flipping between the idea of dieting for gaining communal support and yet getting shaken when the advice differed from or did not work for their unique bodies. As noted by Ventola (42), setting fixed rules of diet outside weakens natural hunger signals, distressing on failure of expectations of deprivation.

Furthermore, a number of respondents noted the rise of public image concern as an antihealth evangelism of the wellness movement that is preoccupied with manipulating ingredients, proportions and weight instead of overall health. Such popularization of pseudo-scientific claims and moralizing of ingredients as acceptable or unacceptable is a factor that leads to vulnerability (13). In addition, projecting embodiment of desirable bodies as the driving forces of dietary compliance may lead to normalization of the thinness-worthiness relationship (20).

What is of paramount importance because of the high levels of mental health problems among the youth nowadays, more than one participant mentioned that the weak body image and depressive thoughts usually appear before the social comparison is done after which, the imitation of the flashy diets and strenuous fitness programs which are touted online. Carrotte, Prichard and Lim (6) have shown the negative effect of unhealthy messaging. Another motive for impression management was observed, as women dieted before occasions expecting the

media and the public to evaluate their body fat levels before the rise of culturally constructed thin ideals.

On the positive side, the findings showed a space that champions food diversity, flexibility and body positivity as strong counters to diet narrowness. Rephrasing the relationship towards food through a lens of intuitive, balanced and pleasure-focused together with feminist and HAES principles highlights social media's benefit if it is consciously created. Psychological and emotional processes, starting with dissonance and ending with validation, prove that for young women looking for community they become the victims of distorted communications which are false and overcome their inner wisdom. These systems of consumption, anxiety and self-hatred must be rationalized by public health approaches through peeling off the layers that cultivate them in social spaces.

Furthermore, as previously suggested, social media engagement was found to be a risk factor for eating disorders. The review shows that young women most often seek dieting inspiration and nutrition guidance from informal sources on social media (37). Participants confessed having practiced fad diets, which were prescribed by some online posts, and which never really worked as far as long-term weight loss is concerned. According to Turner and Lefevre (39), unregulated diet materials are inclined to becoming unsustainable with the negative consequences of binge cycles, metabolic issues, and emotional eating triggers.

Still the call can be enticing as participants admitted to being drawn to advertisements for supplements or programs that use influencer promotions and desired looks to promise a makeover. This is in line with Feltman and Szymanski (14) stance that unregulated digital spaces perform as a source of unqualified advice making feedback loops through sharing functions faster and therefore increasing their diffusion.

Young women appear to be situated in a dual reality, where being part of a supportive community also leads them to risky zones creating additional weight and body image concerns.

Mitigation should platform credible voices who can stand for facts against profit-oriented pseudoscience, support reporting of any false claims and create safe user-friendly environments so that people can make their own informed opinions outside of the shame-rooted value of thinness in food.

Additionally, the examination reveals the stereotyped and harmful language employed by the social media nutrition discussion, which ignores food's wide range of personal and cultural meanings, that go beyond the physical health implications (20). According to Holland and Tiggeman (17) observed qualitatively, online wellness communication conveys stigmatizing language, moralization, and weight-centered messaging that conflicts with the principles of intuitive eating.

Respondents shared view that nutrition goes beyond nutrients or diets, pointing to its strong association with quality of life, social connection, identity and emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, the participants felt the ongoing dialogue compromised their understanding of contexts, contending that all the attention was on ingredients and health outcomes, and not on the overall well-being and social roles. The equivalence between weight and value suffers from ignoring weight stigma and also could trigger disordered pathology. It is revealed that girls expect more supportive and empowering meanings which are job-related, and food takes the central place in celebrations, togetherness, coping, bonding and culture.

Furthermore, this is a similar process to the wider cultural forces that value nonWestern traditions as exotics aesthetics or discoveries while ignoring their role as a feeding, health and community belonging nourishment heritage. As Linda et al (34) argues, digitization intensifies problematic power dynamics enabling cultural appropriation. Reframing social media food talk to make space for inclusive community celebration and intergenerational story sharing around culturally sustaining cuisine could nurture more ethical connection.

The findings indicate that social media often promotes unhealthy behaviours and attitudes related to diet, nutrition, and body image among young women. Specifically, the respondent highlighted how social media content focused on restrictive diets and extreme fitness regimens sets an unrealistic and appearance-centric standard that contributes to negative social comparison and disordered eating patterns.

As the respondent criticizes, social media posts depicting overly restrictive diets promote unhealthy expectations around food and exercise. Even if the intent is to portray one's best self, the proliferation of these distorted representations normalizes harmful attitudes that negatively impact young women's wellbeing. The finding aligns with research showing that social media usage focused on appearance is associated with body dissatisfaction, disordered eating behaviours, and poor mental health outcomes among adolescent girls and young women (17; 36).

Ultimately, the respondent underscores how diet and fitness-centric social media content reinforces unrealistic beauty ideals that foster negative social comparison and contributes to disordered eating attitudes. These findings highlight the need for greater awareness around the potential harms of appearance-focused social media and point to an opportunity for social media literacy interventions aimed at mitigating these risks among young women.

Further findings reveal that young women frequently turn to social media for recipe inspiration and nutrition guidance from non-expert sources, which promotes unhealthy perspectives. As the respondent notes, much of this nutritional content comes from influencers without credentials, yet impressionable young female viewers still actively use and trust their advice. This demonstrates how diet and fitness messaging from unqualified social media personalities encourages risky behaviours and attitudes around food.

Despite lacking expertise, influencers on social media have cultivated trust and authority on topics of health and wellness among their young female followers. As such, their messaging around dieting, recipes, and nutrition shapes attitudes and behaviours, even when the content promotes restriction or excludes critical information. While social media creates demand for diet and fitness advice from relatable figures, it risks normalizing dysfunction around food through messaging aligned with diet culture fixations rather than evidenced-based health perspectives.

Essentially, young women seek out non-expert nutritional and wellness messaging on social media which informs their behaviours and attitudes related to food and body image, often in unhealthy ways (17). These findings underscore the need for qualified experts to have greater influence on social media to promote reliable perspectives on health, diet culture, and dysfunctional eating attitudes targeted towards young women.

Further findings show how social media powerfully shapes young women's eating habits and attitudes around food in both positive and negative ways. As the study demonstrates, social media strongly influences food choices. However, discourse around dieting and nutrition frequently promotes pseudoscience, restriction, and weight stigma, which can detrimentally impact young women's relationships with food. Even when aiming to encourage healthy eating, messaging that imposes external rules around what, when, or how much to eat can override hunger and fullness cues. This risks introducing guilt, negativity, or disordered behavioural patterns, as the findings show.

Despite potential benefits, social media nutrition messaging targeted at young women often emphasizes restrictive rules, demonization of foods, and weight control instead of balanced science-based guidance (17). As content and advice around food choices permeates social media, this dysfunctional attitudinal framework shapes personal eating habits and orientations toward food. Findings demonstrate how young women internalize and apply these

distorted perspectives in detrimental ways that harm their intuitive eating skills and introduces risks including disordered eating patterns.

Ultimately, the study highlights social media's multifaceted and complex role in informing young women's behaviours, relationships with food, and body image. While powerful in shaping attitudes and habits, prevalent perspectives promoted on social media introduce harm as well as help.

5.2.3 Cultural and Contextual Factors Unique to Aotearoa

The findings highlight the need to consider how cultural contexts shape social media's impact on young women's body image and food relationships. As the respondent demonstrates, prevalent diet culture messaging permeates online spaces. However, failing to examine how cultural ties to food, health, and beauty differ across ethnic groups risks further marginalizing minority young women while potentially intensifying disordered eating patterns.

Content on social media largely reflects and reinforces the dominant cultural narrative around thin, white appearance ideals and approaches to wellness (17). As such, ethnic minority young women may find little resonance with this messaging, indicating concerning cultural erasure trends in social media spaces. By overlooking diversity in cultural traditions, values, and practices related to diet, exercise, and body image, homogenized diet culture discourse propagates harm.

These findings underscore the need for inclusive representation of diverse ethnicities and cultural perspectives around food and wellness in social media spaces targeted towards

young women. Rather than whitewashing ideals, ethical content embracing plurality of health relationships across cultural groups provides promise for mitigating risks of marginalization and disordered eating. Ultimately, examining contexts shapes understanding social media's impacts

Further findings highlight the cultural dimensions shaping food relationships and the risks of overlooking this context on social media. As the respondent emphasizes, food holds deep personal, communal, and symbolic meaning, encapsulating more than physical nutrients across cultural groups. Practices like rituals, meals, and traditions convey this profound significance of eating (80). However, content failing to honour the cultural nature of food attitudes and behaviours around health risks marginalizing those whose heritage values diverge from the dominant narrative. Groups may feel disconnected, pressured, policed, or shamed for upholding cultural traditions around food.

Consequently, reductive social media messaging aligned to diet culture rather than embracing the plurality of cultural relationships with food introduces harm (80). By disregarding the individualized, ethnicity-based symbolic and community value ascribed to eating practices, content creators alienate minority young women from resonating with media guidance around health. Findings stress the risks of simplifying, whitewashing or denying the cultural roles of food across diverse ethnic upbringings.

Further findings reveal respondent frustrations regarding inappropriate cultural appropriation of ethnic food by white social media influencers. As expressed, seeing sacred traditional dishes co-opted and repackaged without respect for marginalized communities they originated from perpetuates erasure and dismissal of these groups. This indicates that insensitive, tone-deaf use of cultural cuisine by outsiders on social media introduces harm (20).

Through the use of the food belonging to minority cultures for likes and follows without even a thought about its roots and significance, white influencers on social media risk to exploit

sacred customs and at the same time are failing to address the oppressing systems which disadvantage these communities (33). This type of appropriation allows white public figures to profit from the seductive appeal of ethnic cuisine only as a vehicle for audience engagement, which reflects privilege issues that are hidden. The power imbalance grants the dominant groups the rights to appropriate the minority practices for social gains instead of empowering the oppressed communities to design the cultural food narratives that reflect their own cultures (20). This indicates the importance of elevating many voices that are speaking about food culture with a spirit of cultural respect.

The results show the social media's ability to unite marginal but culturally rich communities as a means of connecting and empowering themselves. As the respondent mentions, specialized groups can share knowledge, values, and interests related to a specific cooking practice that is a heritage of their roots on the online platforms. The digital media is currently dominated by the Eurocentric way of diet that has been traditionally imposed on oppressed communities. This creates counter-narratives that places the ethnic cuisine back under the control of oppressed communities (32).

Rather than further oppression of minorities, social media also provides a platform to project previously unheard opinions, generate familiarity around identity-based food habits and reclaim cultural representations (33). The respondent explains that the empowerment of traditionally powerless voices in shaping the discourse about their traditional dishes and also the modern applications turn the social platforms into the tools for the purpose of positively affecting the attitude towards cooking and diet.

Results show that social media can unite the communities to observe cultural food practices as more empowering counter-narratives against toxic diet culture when applied inclusively (30). More research suggests that the sociocultural landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand affects the development of prejudiced, selective and exclusionary attitudes which

equate health with the non-disabled, thin, white, Western bodies (76). However, according to findings, the homogenizing approach otherizes minority groups, which seems to be a worrying cultural trend, and probably increase the negative impacts of social media's body negativity and eating disorder messaging (84; 17). The Western attributes vs health standards in NZ continue to create reductive binaries, which casts a spell over marginalized ethnic communities and distorts aspirations (84).

Women with minority ethnic backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to unhealthy eating habits and negative body image when the dominant digital space is permeated by diet culture and images privileging particular identities (17). Disintegrating the local beliefs and practices that cause health problems to be considered as solely determined by external physical traits may lead to more inclusive and ethical approaches to nutrition and wellness that are adopted by different populations.

The cultural facets of Aotearoa New Zealand are instrumental in framing the influence of social media on body image and its value for health among young women, especially those who are the part of ethnic minority groups. The above findings point to the complicated interplay between Western beauty standards, Native cultural norms, and non-traditional cultural context of the New Zealand people.

One of the major issues is the domination of the Beauty Westens type ideal focusing on slenderness, whiteness and disability as the apogee of health and life. The media reinforces these notions through social networks, hence creating a strict and excluding model of beauty that involves an extreme discrimination of those who do not appear with these standards. Thus, with young women of different cultural backgrounds the result can be a biological disconnection with their origin culture beauty standards and conventional food observance concerning body acceptance.

In the land of peoples with different cultural makeup the acceptance and influencing of Western beauty standard can be of a higher degree of harm to those who do not meet up with the set-up of beauty. For example, the ancient Maori and Pacific Island cultures had honoured such a more varied body shapes than today, with larger body honoured as it has then symbolized strength, fertility and prosperity. Nevertheless, western culture has had an impact on a youth online social media platform which can be a negative factor in the cultural values transmitted through these communities and it may contribute to negative body image and disordered eating patterns among young women beside these sites.

In addition, the research demonstrates the untrue levelling of the line between diet and health plus the simple naming of instructions on social media that don't account for the complexities of traditional foods and people's cultures in the area. In New Zealand, where the traditional Māori and Pacific Island foods differ from the European foods, the isosceles triangle concept can create a conundrum in which the messages promoted on social media and the realities of food access and preparation within these communities are mixed up.

Moreover, the analysis mentions the cultural values in New Zealand that emphasize on body appearance and ability for health. It does not consider body size and physical limitations. This single-minded imagining ends up reinforcing discriminating attitudes and does not take into account complexities of worldviews towards health and prosperity. While most teenage girls want to feel beautiful and healthy, girls who are from an ethnic minority can feel even worse when they see these images, which can lead them to self-esteem issues and the distorted understanding of what health means.

The study suggests solving this problem through the recognition of more diverse and multicultural approaches to nutrition and wellness which celebrate variety of Aotearoa cultural diversity. Through the act of highlighting opposing storylines capable of restoring the traditional food practices and demolishing the plant of Western beauty standards social media

is meant to be an area where young women from different backgrounds will learn and develop a positive body image and healthy eating relationship.

Summing up the findings, research indicated that equity-oriented interventions should target sociocultural determination of health embodiment standards to reduce the impacts of social media, especially for minority girls of ethnic groups.

5.2.4 Tailored Interventions and Policies Based on the Cultural and Social Context of Aotearoa

This research suggests potential in utilizing social media's capacity and outreach to increase awareness about the opposite negative effects that it has on young women's body image and food relationships (86). As per the suggestion of the respondents, the successful interventions should combine the scientific and evidence-based minds of accredited authorities with the stories of peers that are easy to relate to and appreciated by diverse viewers. Multifaceted formats, interactive features, alongside succinct delivery on visually focused platforms like Instagram and TikTok remains critical for successfully engaging the young female users (85). Nevertheless, the overall tone should be constructive, positive, ethically minded and solution-focused in order to create an attitude and behavioural change, rather than to shame.

Despite the fact that social media communication is intrinsically problematic and helps to misinterpret and harm body/food relationships, conscious content may be a solution for dealing with this problem (9). As studies suggest, the strategic dissemination of counternarratives that can communicate, represent and uplift the marginalized communities can act as a counterbalance to the negative effects by educating young women to identify and resist the messages which are in tandem with the diet culture of restriction (81). Finally, while difficult, the study provides an indication of how to use platforms like Instagram and TikTok

themselves for the distribution of empowering counter-messaging from recognizable sources to young girls that diet culture can be resisted, and intuitive self-care is embraced.

However, these results provide a basis for developing social media-based interventions that aim to promote healthy body image and intelligent eating if designed to empower the users (17). Considering inherent dangers of distorting attitudes by platforms, endowing young women with skills to operate safely in communities is one of the strategies to reduce harm. In addition, co-designed educational tools and campaigns that elicit the involvement of multiple voices can build users' skills in critically understanding the content rather than unthinkingly adopting the messages (85). This approach of capacity building emphasized critical thought, self-efficacy, and preservation of personal values while being subject to the influence of appearance pressures has the potential to elicit benefits of online connections beside protecting self-image (17).

Results suggested that creating conscious social media interventions focused on the big platforms aimed at young women can switch from contributing to unhealthy attitudes concerning food and embodiment to being part of the solution (25). Bridging the gap and empowering users to combat the internalization of toxic messaging, campaigns that are cooperative and which focus on resilience building, have a great potential to defeat diet culture's distortions if founded on solid evidence.

Further outcomes point out the caveats of the evaluation and revision of the social media health programs aimed at women in their twenties (32). Virtual platforms empower broad audience; however, the impact of message is ensured through inviting users' participation and related personal need in development. Using sample-specific polling and focus groups, as well as the inclusion of young women in the co-design process, that would address their needs and views will make the campaign more receptive and impactful (12).

Supporting two-way communication through feedback channels implemented in the program allows for continuous feedback on the message having to do with counteracting diet culture myths with approaches that are more body-positive and intuitive across the groups of priority importance (86). Per research findings, supporting collaborative input allows a process of co-creation and adaptation of content to blend perfectly with the culture and value system of the young female users (17).

Fundamentally, applying participatory process in assessing and revising social media for health promotion interventions should be beneficial for incrementing resonance and avoiding risks of rejection or disengagement of target young women (42). This engagementcentred approach to design, therefore, emphasizes on the formation of collaborative partnerships with the target communities.

Another thing that is worth mentioning is that additional studies help resolve the questions regarding the use of livestreams to accomplish effective social media health interventions for young women (33). Strategic factors are the provision of the timing that allows attendance between hectic schedules and the reinforcement of sessions via multiplatform promotion with the inclusion of a promise of extra values coming from the participation in the event. Streamlining streams to distribute information stimulates interest and commitment to tuning in (32). Achieving the optimal engagement also involves delivering the materials in a dynamic, to-the-point format that incorporates multimedia such as graphics, short video clips, photos and text (85).

This immediacy of exchange and the interactivity that lives stream provides could counteract this less personal nature of posts that users are easily scrolling through (33). Nevertheless, coordination of our efforts is key, as it implies coordination around the participants' availability as well as catchy teasers that point directly to the benefits they will get from the event (12). Conversations should encourage a real meaningful dialogue where young

women's perspectives and experiences are given more attention than the educators' messaging (32). Applying livestreaming in an interactive way and with a view to building resonance may have an underused potential for delivering interventions that are competing for young women's attention. By consciously constructing upon users' perspectives, live content will hence provide more effective delivery of the empowering counter-narratives.

The other insights show that the public needs to have more control over social media content in order to reduce the harms associated with it (17). By what the mentioned respondents recommend, users can consciously personalize feeds through liking, clicking and settings which will lead to the algorithm delivering more positive messages in compliance with mental health targets while limiting or blocking harmful pages and reporting bad content (17).

Moreover, humour and short-form videos having positive messages also can defeat hateful and destructive communication with inspiring emotions (42). This shows that interventions can be delivered across the board by using the same captivating language and tone. While achieving body/size acceptance changes at a platform level is quite a challenge, findings suggest supporters, and sharers, of body/size acceptance content over restrictive diet notions would be a slow yet gradual improvement (32; 17).

This would also mean that there would be a higher rate of compliance and resonance as young women's voices would lead dialogues. While the norms of passive consumption are being obeyed, the findings reveal that users are able to have greater control over information flows by deliberate usage of social accounts and campaigns which are in line with mental health goals (17). Ultimately, empowering young women to make conscious decisions to control their social media diet with counter-messaging campaigns as a long-term solution will curb the negative effects.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This research study offers valuable understandings on the correlation between involvement with social media and the body image and relationship with food among young women. Results of the study show the multi-faceted role platforms have in shaping diet, nutrition and embodiment attitudes, behaviours, and self-perceptions.

In general, the predominant media discourse on social media normalizes the marketing of unrealistic and excluding beauty norms as well as erroneous, unhealthy attitudes towards food. The influencers and brands that capitalize on diet culture as well as young female users who show curated glimpses of their lives to fulfil their need for validation both create and spread this content. Continuous exposure to media involvement leads to problems of negative social comparison, body dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating behaviours as it presents a highly edited imagery as something to aspire to. Research shows the influence on the unhealthy ways to reach the established extremes.

More particularly concerning research question one on social media's role in shaping body image, the constant promotion of altered and unrealistic representations of beauty makes idealized notions of attractiveness, status, and accomplishment the norm and prompts young girls to compare themselves to artificial standards. Although some content counters the dominant practice of projecting stereotypical ideals that can result in the development of negative self-perceptions, the majority still portray this style of photography.

Research question two demonstrated new food relationships, showing that social media often imitates abstinence and even putting food morals, policing of food choices and mixing dieting with discipline and success. Content specifically from the non-degreed influencers offers nutritional advice that is not very credible to the naive viewers. Overly promoting shortcuts, quick fixes, and externally imposed rules about food based on the reach of physical

ideals can easily supplant internal cues and cause harmful dysfunction. Results demonstrate women internalize and emulate these attitudes that make them more connected with their looks, dietary choices, and self-worth.

Looking into cultural contexts shows who else young women experience exclusion apart from being marginalized, compelled to fit the narrow Western standards of beauty, cultural appropriation and the dismissal of traditional practices. Over generalization, simplification of the nutrition and wellness messages ignores the complexities of the local food traditions. In addition, the study criticizes the cultural norms in New Zealand that indicate that thin, white, able-bodied shape is related to health and well-being. Placing beauty and diet ideals as the default ones othered people with non-conforming bodies and platforms may lead to the magnification of risks of distress and disordered eating for minorities.

The last research question provides options for social media campaigns that encourage resilience, by exposing users to tactics adopted by problematic accounts, widening ideas of attractiveness diversity, and shifting attitudes that are rooted in size inclusivity. Findings suggest that the participatory processes where young women dictate the messaging, that is sensitive to the honour of cultural contexts, should be responsive to the self-concept. Continuous evaluation mechanisms are capable of realigning user preferences with input, and of countering diet culture trends. Whereas the basic knowledge of exposure escalates harm, the deliberate actions that employ design elements that reinforce power and community provide an avenue to bettering social media's position in bolstering positive relationships with food and body.

This study unveils the intensively intricate nature of social media among young women nowadays where the constant pressure towards external ideals is risky in that it can make the real image of self-worth, health and embodiment distorted. Contrary to it though, the studies also find a way to take advantage of the design, counter-messaging, and peer solidarity within

these platforms to create more positive associations that look inwards. The path is only clear when the marginalized voices are amplified to redefine the nature of engagement through selfempowerment and self-care.

6.1 Recommendations of the study

This research identifies the ways in which online social networks can be used to combat the pressure resulting from weight concerns, fat fixation, and unhealthy eating behaviours. Results of this study yield an insight that the empowering messaging and peer engagement on these platforms, especially the ones that use the same platforms, should be used as a strategy to promote healthy perspectives from within and resist the imposition of external ideals.

Recommendation is focused on raising the awareness of youth on the negative effects of social media on body image and eating behaviours, as well as improving the skills to recognize the toxic elements and resist them. Campaigns should also promote literacy so that people could read between the lines which are manipulative and guard their self-esteem when exposed to such pressures to conform. The formation of supportive communities with a mutual acceptance as a basis ensures that a comparison culture is substituted. Research affirms the need to amplify minority/subaltern voices in discourses that are essential in the creation of counter-narratives that promote the elevation of marginalized groups who are traditionally othered by dominant ideals in the efforts to minimize the alienation of the individuals as well as the risks of self-judgment.

The intervention plan we propose focuses on the development of empowering, mythbreaking content that aligns with the actual experiences of young girls. It suggests the preference for real-life social media influencers along with referential experts across the formats of choice for digitally immersed generations such as Instagram and TikTok. Strategic

multimedia approaches have the power to negate the effects of positive representations of intuitive eating and self-care. Hashtags like *#antidietsculture*, the ones that bring people together, can be promoted for more discovery. Feedback mechanisms ensure the continuous requirement and alignment with numerous needs.

The other viable tactics are resorting to influencers in the community to start the message, social listening to allow for candid sharing of real lived experiences and creating virtual conversations to bring out constructive advice. This way, we can look at metrics around reach and resonance to help with the evaluation and gathering impact stories for the next iteration. Instead of just putting rules from top-down, the studies suggest start from the context of the participants and co-create meaning with them.

This intervention framework is our compass for social media campaigns that advocate for resilience through the exploitation of the ploys of dangerous accounts and the broadening of what is healthy to include diversity. It is about knowing when to trust and how to spot manipulation. Development of new concepts of beauty and progress that are governed by selfconfidence and self-presence can redefine the ways young women relate to food and their bodies.

In terms of the feasible next steps, the first one is to get funding to start the iterative pilot focusing on inclusivity. By creating referral lines to services, ethical issues are addressed around issues of potential body image distress raised by discussions. Continuous training for controlling communication in turn also ensures security. The translation process can be reinforced by partnerships with community leaders and policymakers so that the intervention is well tailored across high-need groups. In the long run, by spreading of the successful experiences through social network diffusion, the impact is maintained.

At last, research and the suggested answers indicate that the external appearance pressures get more intense with social media engagement but also the awareness of the matter

can be used to exploit the social media platforms to create empowerment from within. Conclusions provide the basis for developing critical skills to achieve maximum potential and mental wellbeing, while also encouraging self-concepts grounded in holistic wellbeing. Using food and body culture-oriented interventions as practice can help develop a healthy connection with food and bodies.

Beyond campaign rollouts, the findings reflect a call for integrating broader policy and education efforts that focus on the social factors that sustain diet culture myths through social media. While the interventions that aim at individual behaviour change can be a basis for resilience, if this is not uncovered the social forces including the performance curriculum standards, and the literary platforms as well as profitable plans that induce comparisons would persist.

Incorporating social media literacy aimed at breakdown of deceptive messages into curriculum standards across age groups will make the younger generations more equipped to navigate the digital world. No different than the physical health curriculum that teach basic nutritional knowledge, learning to critically evaluate and identify sponsorship is a process that supports savvy consumption. Training modules must equip teachers with the necessary skills to discuss problematic influences online and to co-create appropriate responses to the problem. Frameworks such as media literacy 4.0 create models that link individual outcomes to collective outcomes. Government agencies overseeing procedures can engage in collaboration with scientists, teachers, and students to keep the best practices, which are always on the rise, in mind.

There is an ongoing realization that there is a necessity to destabilize the old revenue patterns that are fuelled by anxiety and negative social comparison to stimulate consumption. With the intrusion of digital spaces into identity formation, there is a need for policy discussions on platform accountability, although it seems that the regulation of such a rapidly changing

technology is subject to a number of difficulties. For example, the option of a stamp that indicates claims made and warnings of manipulated imagery can be an avenue to ensure an ethic balance with innovation. Algorithm design can be approached in cooperation with an external partner focusing on wellbeing. Financial disincentives penalising for the explicit content that slanders one's self-esteem may restrain harms. Nevertheless, these spaces are complex and keeping the action going is necessary to change from monitoring and profitcentred design to empowerment.

Eventually, multiple-level recommendations that comprise creative campaigns, improved media literacy and institutional policies seem to be the way that we can counter negative effects of platforms by making purposeful choices about how we develop social technology within our society. Though challenging, collective action shows promise in the use of these tools to reap their benefits, while managing the risks.

6.2 Implications of the study

This study on mitigating the negative effects of social media was conducted exclusively by and for females, hence, the gender-based distinction in the analysis and interpretation of the process and the findings of the study constitute an extended layer of significance. The primary image culture and unrealistic standards mostly targeting women is reinforced by the social media which in result amplifies the risk of eating disorders and body image issues. Therefore, the study perspective focuses on lived experience, which in turn embodies this gendered vulnerability. Yet, other literature claims that not only the lean male ideals but also more unconventional or muscular designs are associated with body dissatisfaction, thus underlining the usefulness of positive masculinity models as a tool for counteracting the toxicity. A study that is focused on males can identify differences in the pressures and methods.

The discourse on diet and nutrition also constructs hyperpalatable convenience food to be in tandem with masculinity and salads with restriction as femininity. Providing intuitive eating from a health angle with the use of a masculine lens that highlights strength and functionality rather than aesthetics will hopefully increase the perceived relevance.

On the other hand, although social listening and participatory design give wholesome insights from the bottom up, the women who facilitate women empowerment can still unintentionally reproduce binaries in the solutions proposed. Likewise, going for emotional self-care as a trait of weakness can lead to rejection of the message without uncovering how gendered expectations are formed. On the contrary, male researchers or participants can emerge with some different requirements.

Including diverse gender identities in reiterative studies is important not only for preventing adverse effects of artificial intelligence on men but also on non-binary individuals and relationships. Nevertheless, the position of the oppressed groups is a key one, since the dominant groups tend to implement standards which are unfavourable to non-conformists. In the end, sustainable inclusion and power-conscious processes that assess intersecting elements of gender and equity integrated into these initiatives can provide a better approach to social media literacy initiatives addressing the risks associated with the digital platforms without dismissing the impact of these lived burdens.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This study, which was exploratory, qualitative, and formative, was carried out to inform the design of future intervention to influence social media and health perspectives among university-enrolled young women in New Zealand. Findings should be interpreted while considering the limitations. The non-probabilistic techniques considering sample cases that are rich in information and using existing networks for recruitment are not generalizable. The

perspectives represented cannot claim to stand in for all New Zealand youth. Self-selection bias due to the theme may result in data being lost, and opinions of the less vociferous groups may not be represented. However, the subject is still discussed in the complex humanized themes that make it more useful for bringing the contemporary young adult's priorities.

The highly educated sample restrain replicability as the marginalized youth who were denied educational access hold divergent undetected challenges. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of the targeted formative goal consisting of explaining subjective experiential phenomena above generalizable probabilistic trends. In general, the rigorous inductive analytic processes uphold dependability claims of themes emerging from interviews conducted, but readers should be measure in applying the findings.

6.4 Future research recommendations

These early findings that were obtained through participatory qualitative research became the beginning of more research on social media intersection with youth health promotion. With specific focus on young women and men derived from a homogenous and small sample, future investigations could be purposely recruited to include more sociocultural diverse men and women using maximum variation cases to further explore similarities and differences in navigating health across identities and transitional stages. This will bring out the common grounds among teenagers and gender minority groups to see the same in young populations that are targeted for online interventions.

Moreover, relying on used qualitative instruments and co-design activities that are established here, we may systematically reproduce the approach with a larger sample or a youth in other global contexts to assess generalizability by evaluating the consistency of themes as knowledge gaps and desired intervention features. Such patterns as reach can be monitored by

using survey instruments. In addition to self-reported data, new studies may examine engagement levels with prototype social media health interventions by analysing usage metrics, commenting or content amplification behaviour. This approach is mixed with both qualitative data capturing the youth voices and then quantitative evaluation of real-life intervention effects which together would give robust evidence for best practices of this emerging digital health promotion arena.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Codebook

Cultural and contextual factors unique to Aotearoa The cultural and contextual factors in Aotearoa, New Zealand, that shape the impact of social media on body image and food relationships among young women

Communities culture on recipes The influence of the community on the recipes and preferences of food types

Cultural context effect on dieting The influence of culture background on the dieting format especially on social media area.

Cultural effect in food preference and presentation	The influence of culture background on food preference and presentation especially on social media area.
Food culture posting on social media	The culture of food posting and acceptability on social media
New Zealand culture on body image and food relationships	The influence of New Zealand culture background on food preference and presentation especially on social media.
Engagement with social media platforms influence and the body image perceptions	The engagement with social media platforms influences the body image perceptions of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand
Body image changes in social media postings	Influence of social media postings on Body image feelings and experience.
Comparison in social media posts	Influence of social media postings on Body image feelings and experience. The element of comparison of an individual and the media posting influence
Motive in posting on social media	Assessing the motives of posting on social media.
Unrealistic impression in the social media Personal control of what you feed on in social media	The challenge of unrealistic impression in posts (away from normality of the situation).
Social media effect on young women's relationships with food, eating behaviours and attitudes towards diet and nutrition	The social media effect on young women's relationships with food, including their eating behaviours and attitudes towards diet and nutrition
Need of social media in dieting	Need of social media in dieting plan and knowledge on diets

Nutrition and social life influence	Nutrition and social life relationship in social media
Nutrition influence in social media	Determine the level of Nutrition influence in social media
Social media influence on dieting	Social media influence on nutrition knowledge and data
Tailored interventions and policies based on the cultural and social context of Aotearoa	The interventions and policy recommendations that can be developed to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships for young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand
Creating awareness	Awareness intervention to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships
Designing an intervention	Developing ideas of healthy practices to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships
Feedback on interventions in social media	Discussing the status and conditions together to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships
Livestream training	Livestream training on intricate connection between social media, body image, and food interactions to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on body image and food relationships
	The intervention of Personal control of what one feeds on in social media

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