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Original Article

Does Fashion-Related Social Media Engagement Shape Young Adults' Body Image Concern, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation, and Emotional Intelligence?

Aditya Oberoi[1], Rubani Kaur Narang[2]

[1]*American School of Paris, France.*
[2]*Pangea Society, Delhi, India.*

[1]*Corresponding Author : aditya26oberoi@gmail.com*

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Abstract - *Social media is increasingly being used by young adults to consume, contribute to, and create fashion-related content. This trend has been associated with higher Body Image Concern (BIC) and Perfectionistic Self-Presentation (PSP). However, the influence of fashion engagement remains underexplored, and the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in this context has received little attention. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between BIC, PSP, and EI and how fashion-related social media engagement shapes these variables. A quantitative survey was conducted. The sample comprised 113 Indian young adults, who were grouped as consumers (n = 38), contributors (n = 48), and creators (n = 27) of fashion-related social media content. Data analysis was conducted through Pearson's correlation and analysis of variance. The results revealed that BIC was significantly positively correlated with the subdimensions of PSP (Perfectionistic Self-Promotion, non-display of imperfection, and Nondisclosure of imperfection). Surprisingly, EI was significantly positively correlated with both BIC and PSP. However, fashion-related social media engagement did not appear to have a significant effect on BIC, PSP, or EI. These findings indicate that EI may not necessarily act as a protective factor for BIC, highlighting the complexity of these relationships across cultures, with EI possibly being unhelpful beyond an optimal level. Nevertheless, body image-based interventions targeting young adults may benefit from integrating components of PSP and EI. Moreover, while fashion-related engagement did not appear to affect young adults, future research should comprehensively explore this construct to obtain insights into the effects of consuming and creating fashion-related content on social media.*

Keywords - *Body Image Concern, Emotional Intelligence, Fashion Engagement, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation, Social Media.*

1. Introduction

Social media has become a constant presence in our lives, becoming integrated into our everyday activities. Apps like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook help connect people, allowing them to express themselves by sharing photos or videos and stay informed. Individuals' daily engagement with social media reflects how accessible these platforms have become and how dependent people have become on them. Such platforms present visual content, which often features heavily edited and filtered images to augment one's personal appearance. These posts, consisting of influencers showcasing products or a workout tutorial, emphasise an ideal physique. As users who scroll constantly every day, these ideal bodies can be perceived as something attainable or the bare minimum. Young adults, whose sense of identity is developing and who spend a large portion of their time on social media, can be severely affected by these videos. They are likely to be deceived into believing what is normal or attractive, which can create unrealistic expectations about one's body. In this context, the current research sought to investigate the relationships between Body Image Concern (BIC), Perfectionistic Self-Presentation (PSP), and Emotional Intelligence (EI), alongside the influence of engagement with fashion-related social media.

Body image has been defined as 'a multidimensional construct involving how one perceives, thinks, and feels about their physical appearance' [1]. Body dissatisfaction can be defined as a negative attitude towards one's physical appearance, assumed to originate from a perceived discrepancy between actual physical appearance and the desired ideal body image. Grogan [2] defined body dissatisfaction as a negative evaluation of one's physical self, typically arising from the perceived gap between actual and ideal body image. Previous studies have examined how comparing one's body to media images influences teens'

perceptions of themselves and how body dissatisfaction or having a distorted body image can lead to irregular eating patterns. Perloff [3] found that exposure to idealised media images strongly influences adolescents' body image concerns and is linked to increased body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviours. Experiencing dissatisfaction with one's body can result in harmful psychological outcomes, including reduced self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and heightened anxiety. Looking at 'ideal' or 'perfect' body images can lead to dissatisfaction, as individuals compare themselves to others and believe that being more muscular or thinner is ideal. Constant comparisons with influencers, celebrities, or other public figures who often appear flawless can lead to feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction with one's body. Silva and Steins [4] found that exposure to idealised body images on Instagram significantly increased body dissatisfaction via upward social comparisons among young adults. Fardouly et al. [5] studied the impact of the Facebook profiles of peers and celebrities on young women's body image and mood and found that the idealised images led to increased body dissatisfaction and a more negative mood. McLean et al. [6] also surveyed 1,000 teenage girls to investigate the relationship between using filters and/or editing apps and body image concerns. They demonstrated that the girls who edited their photos had higher levels of body dissatisfaction, as the filters and editing apps created unrealistic ideals and led to a negative self-perception.

Social media not only promotes comparison but also generates pressure to present oneself as flawless. Some users feel the need to hide their imperfections to produce idealised images and content to gain approval. Trying to appear and be perceived as perfect can increase body dissatisfaction. Perfectionistic self-presentation is defined as the interpersonal expression of perfection—the drive to appear perfect to others by either promoting one's 'perfection' or concealing imperfections. Hewitt et al. [7] found that individuals who aim to be perfect are likely to experience higher levels of stress. McGee et al. [8] found that young women who tried to present themselves as perfect were likely to have eating disorder symptoms. Another study by Hewitt et al. [9] demonstrated that individuals who engaged in PSP showed greater distress after an interview and had elevated heart rate during discussions of past mistakes. Given the emotional toll of PSP, it is important to know which skills can aid in coping with these pressures, one of them being EI.

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to perceive, articulate, interpret, and regulate emotions while understanding and reacting appropriately to the emotions of others [10]. Emotional intelligence has mostly been studied in the workplace setting and predicts better workplace outcomes, such as better collaboration and reduced stress [11]. However, recent research also highlights its importance in other areas of our lives. For example, higher EI has been linked to improved academic success and personal connections. Unlike body dissatisfaction and PSP, EI has positive outcomes for well-being, such as lowering depression and improving coping skills. For instance, MacCann et al. [12] showed that higher EI helped in counteracting the effects associated with body dissatisfaction. Castro-López et al. [13] showed that when body dissatisfaction was high, teenage girls with a lower ability to manage their emotions were more likely to show eating disorder symptoms, with subdimensions of EI acting as moderators between body dissatisfaction and eating disorder symptoms. However, even girls who had high EI skills had more eating disorder symptoms. Individuals with high levels of EI are better equipped to identify, comprehend, and control their emotional responses.

Research has consistently shown that PSP is linked to body dissatisfaction. Individuals who constantly strive to obtain ideal features often make comparisons with unrealistic beauty standards, which can lead to pressures to appear 'perfect' and deteriorate one's self-esteem. Hashmi et al. [14] examined the relationship between PSP, anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction and demonstrated that PSP was significantly correlated with body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depression in females. In males, PSP was correlated with body dissatisfaction and anxiety but not depression.

Based on the literature examining the relationships between these variables, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a: Body image concern is positively correlated with perfectionistic self-promotion.

H1b: Body image concern is positively correlated with the non-display of imperfection.

H1c: Body image concern is positively correlated with the Nondisclosure of imperfection.

H1d: Appearance dissatisfaction is positively correlated with perfectionistic self-promotion.

H1e: Appearance dissatisfaction is positively correlated with the non-display of imperfection.

H1f: Appearance dissatisfaction is positively correlated with the Nondisclosure of imperfection.

H1g: Interference in functioning is positively correlated with perfectionistic self-promotion.

H1h: Interference in functioning is positively correlated with the non-display of imperfection.

H1i: Interference in functioning is positively correlated with the Nondisclosure of imperfection.

Furthermore, EI can moderate against the harmful effects of body dissatisfaction and PSP. People with high EI are better equipped to control feelings of inadequacy, social comparisons with peers and/or celebrities, and unrealistic expectations. Riolo et al. [15] mentioned that individuals with EI are better able to regulate emotional distress coming from social comparisons and feel less overwhelmed by body-related pressures. Cuesta-Zamora et al. [16] found that low EI was strongly linked to high body dissatisfaction and more eating disorder symptoms. Moreover, EI played a critical role in influencing body image regardless of the participants' body mass index. Clearly, EI is not only useful for social skills or in the workplace but also affects how individuals perceive their bodies. Improving EI is pivotal to protecting people from developing a negative body image. Furthermore, in a study by Swami et al. [17], EI was linked to a more positive body image. However, they found that some individuals with high EI experienced body image concerns when exposed to idealised body images.

Across the literature concerning the three variables of PSP, body dissatisfaction, and EI, this study observed that people who try to appear perfect are more likely to be unhappy with their bodies. This could stem from comparing themselves to ideal beauty standards or worrying about being judged. However, EI can help counteract these traits of body dissatisfaction and PSP, as people better at understanding and managing their emotions are less likely to be affected by social comparisons or stress. Accordingly, the researchers proposed the following:

H2a: Perfectionistic self-promotion is negatively correlated with EI.

H2b: The non-display of imperfection is negatively correlated with EI.

H2c: The Nondisclosure of imperfection is negatively correlated with EI.

H3a: Emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with BIC.

H3b: Emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with appearance dissatisfaction.

H3c: Emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with interference in functioning.

Fashion engagement on social media, such as following influencers, browsing style content, or posting photos, can significantly influence body image and self-presentation behaviours. Especially, following influencers and being exposed to fashion content can often lead to negative self-comparisons and body dissatisfaction. Studies have found that comparing one's appearance to people on social media is linked to higher body dissatisfaction and a stronger drive for thinness [18]. Shaw [19] demonstrated that frequent exposure to fashion magazines predicted greater body dissatisfaction and a need to look thinner among college women. This shows how fashion content can contribute to an unrealistic body image and increased pressure to change one's appearance.

On social media, influencers often portray themselves in the best lighting, poses, filters, and outfits to appear ideal. This can create stress and anxiety for users, who may feel that they do not measure up to these standards. Lowe-Calverley and Grieve [20] found that viewing idealised images increases appearance comparisons, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction. Therefore, being able to critically evaluate the unrealistic nature of fashion posts and regulate one's emotional responses is crucial for social media users' well-being. In this context, EI can help prevent users from making their emotions contingent on appearance-based validation through likes, comments, or compliments. Although social media engagement has been widely studied, there is a lack of research that examines explicitly how distinct types of engagement relate to EI, body dissatisfaction, and PSP.

The researchers expected the type of fashion-related social media engagement to have an impact on the variables of interest. Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H4: The type of fashion-related social media engagement has a significant effect on (a) BIC, (b) Appearance Dissatisfaction, (c) Interference in Functioning, (d) Perfectionistic Self-Promotion, (e) Non-display of Imperfection, (f) Nondisclosure of Imperfection, and (g) EI.

While previous research has linked PSP to body dissatisfaction in the context of social media, few studies have examined the role of EI. Moreover, most studies have explored these variables separately, and there is a noticeable gap in research combining all three variables. Additionally, social media use has been widely studied, but fashion-related content has received little attention. This study aimed to fill these gaps by exploring how EI impacts BIC and PSP and how fashion engagement on social media influences BIC, PSP, and EI. Accordingly, this study answered the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1: What is the relationship between body image concern, PSP, and EI?

RQ2: How does fashion-related social media engagement shape body image concern, PSP, and EI?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design

This study used a quantitative design to assess variables such as BIC, PSP, EI, and fashion-related social media engagement. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (Google Forms) from young adults (18–35 years old) living in India.

2.2. Sample

The study used a convenience sampling method targeting young adults aged 18–35 years, including both males and females. Eligible participants were those who either consumed, contributed to, or created fashion-related content on social media or engaged in a combination of these activities. Participants who reported 'no' for all three categories (n = 15) and one participant aged 17 were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 113 participants from an initial total of 129. The amount of time people spent consuming, contributing to, or creating fashion content on social media in a day ranged from less than 30 minutes (n = 67), 30–60 minutes (n = 24), 1–2 hours (n = 10), and more than 2 hours (n = 12). The sex distribution was balanced, with 56 males and 57 females. The age distribution ranged from 18 to 35 years. The participants' educational background varied: 43 participants had graduated from school, 51 had completed their bachelor's degree, and 19 had completed their master's degree. Geographically, the participants were from North India (n = 71), South India (n = 31), East India (n = 5), and West India (n = 6).

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Body Image Concern Inventory

The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) is used to measure concern about and dissatisfaction with one's appearance [21]. This inventory comprises 19 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses can range from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Its subscales include appearance dissatisfaction and interference in functioning. The total score ranges from 19 to 95, with a lower score indicating less dissatisfaction with one's appearance. The BICI has been found to be reliable and valid, observing a Cronbach's alpha value of .93 [21].

2.3.2. Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale

The Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale (PSPS) assesses the tendency to present oneself as perfect or ideal while avoiding imperfections [7]. It includes 27 items divided into three parts: Perfectionistic Self-Promotion (i.e., trying to show others that one is perfect), Non-Display of Imperfection (i.e., avoiding actions that might show flaws), and Nondisclosure of Imperfection (i.e., not admitting mistakes or weaknesses). The responses are provided on a 7-point Likert scale, spanning from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The total score ranges from 27 to 189; higher scores represent a stronger tendency to present oneself as perfect. The PSPS is reliable and valid, with good consistency across its three parts, with a Cronbach's alpha of approximately .9 [7].

2.3.3. Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test

Developed by Schutte et al. [22], the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is used to measure EI in participants. The scale comprises 33 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Three items (5, 28, and 33) are reverse-scored. The SSEIT assesses overall EI, covering aspects such as the ability to recognise, regulate, and express emotions. The total score ranges from 33 to 165, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of EI. Previous research has demonstrated reliable consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of around .85 [22].

2.3.4. Fashion-Related Social Media Engagement

Based on the taxonomy proposed by Schivinski et al. [23], three items were created to categorise the participants into three groups of consumers, contributors, and creators: (1) Do you consume fashion content on social media? (e.g., reading posts; watching videos; following influencers, creators, or brands; or clicking on product links related to fashion); (2) Do you contribute to fashion content on social media? (e.g., liking, commenting on, sharing, reposting, or recommending posts related to fashion); and (3) Do you create fashion content on social media? (e.g., starting discussions; posting pictures, videos, or selfies; or writing posts or reviews related to fashion). The participants responded with 'yes' or 'no' depending on their type of fashion-related social media engagement. The participants who only consumed content were classified as consumers. The participants who either consumed and contributed to content or only contributed to content were classified as contributors. Finally, those who either consumed and created content, contributed to and created content, consumed, contributed to, and created content, or only created content were classified as creators.

2.4. Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using a quantitative questionnaire composed of the BICI, PSPS, and SSEIT, which measured BIC, PSP, and EI, respectively. The questionnaire was circulated via Google Forms. To ensure that the participants were informed about the study, provided information outlining the study's purpose and eligibility criteria (Indian nationals aged 18–35 years and living in India), and assured the participants that all responses would be anonymous and only used for academic purposes.

2.5. Method of Analysis

To analyse the data, SPSS version 27 was used. First, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationships between BIC, PSP, and EI. Second, this study conducted an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with the type of fashion-related social media engagement as the

independent variable and EI and the subdimensions of BIC and PSP as the dependent variables.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. The participants were provided with information explaining the study's aims and inclusion criteria and how their information would be used. Informed consent was received through the questionnaire, and the participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes. Given the potentially sensitive nature of topics such as body dissatisfaction and self-presentation, the participants were reminded that they could skip any question they were uncomfortable answering or withdraw at any stage without penalty.

3. Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation between Body Image Concern, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation, and Emotional Intelligence

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Body Image Concern	47.026	16.326	–						
2. Appearance Dissatisfaction	25.549	10.458	.960**	–					
3. Interference in Functioning	21.478	6.931	.907**	.753**	–				
4. Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	44.204	12.110	.467**	.401**	.495**	–			
5. Non-Display of Imperfection	43.248	12.360	.471**	.373**	.547**	.727**	–		
6. Nondisclosure of Imperfection	29.496	7.561	.280**	.208**	.346**	.661**	.507**	–	
7. Emotional Intelligence	115.549	23.126	.208*	.163	.244*	.444**	.401**	.341**	–

First, BIC (M = 47.026, SD = 16.326) was significantly positively correlated with its subdimensions of appearance dissatisfaction (M = 25.549, SD = 10.458, r = .960, p < .01) and interference in functioning (M = 21.478, SD = 6.931, r = .907, p < .01). Second, Perfectionistic Self-Promotion (M = 44.204, SD = 12.110) was significantly positively correlated with the other subdimensions of PSP: non-display of imperfection (M = 43.248, SD = 12.360, r = .727, p < .01) and nondisclosure of imperfection (M = 29.496, SD = 7.561, r = .661, p < .01). Third, perfectionistic self-promotion was significantly positively and moderately correlated with BIC (r = .467, p < .01), appearance dissatisfaction (r = .401, p < .01), and interference in functioning (r = .495, p < .01). Fourth, non-display of imperfection showed a significant positive and moderate correlation with BIC (r = .471, p < .01), appearance dissatisfaction (r = .373, p < .01), moderately positively correlated with EI (r = .401, p < .01), and interference in functioning (r = .547, p < .01). Fifth, Nondisclosure of imperfection was significantly positively but weakly correlated with BIC (r = .280, p < .01), appearance dissatisfaction (r = .208, p < .01), and interference in functioning (r = .346, p < .01).

Finally, EI (M = 115.549, SD = 23.126) was significantly positively but weakly correlated with BIC (r = .208, p < .05) and interference in functioning (r = .244, p < .05); however, its correlation with appearance dissatisfaction was not significant (r = .163, p > .05). Furthermore, EI showed significant positive and moderate correlations with Perfectionistic Self-Promotion (r = .444, p < .01), Non-display of Imperfection (r = .401, p < .01), and Nondisclosure of Imperfection (r = .341, p < .01). This finding was surprising, as EI was expected to protect individuals from body dissatisfaction and PSP.

The ANOVA results (Table 2) revealed no significant effect of the type of fashion-related social media engagement on the variables of interest, indicating that the scores for BIC, PSP, and EI did not differ across consumers, contributors, and creators of fashion content on social media.

Nevertheless, some differences were observed in the mean scores, which require further exploration to be substantiated. These scores indicated that contributors (M = 49.583, SD = 16.161) had higher BIC than consumers (M = 44.553, SD = 14.401) and creators (M = 45.963, SD =18.940). A similar trend was seen in appearance dissatisfaction, with contributors (M = 26.896, SD = 10.533) reporting higher dissatisfaction compared with consumers (M = 24.342, SD = 8.888) and creators (M = 24.852, SD = 12.337). For interference in functioning, contributors had higher scores (M = 22.688, SD = 6.852) relative to consumers (M = 20.210, SD = 6.498) and creators (M =

21.111, *SD* = 7.536). In terms of PSP, creators had the highest mean for Perfectionistic Self-Promotion (*M* = 45.296, *SD* = 13.922), followed by consumers (*M* = 44.447, *SD* = 10.623) and contributors (*M* = 43.396, *SD* = 12.330). Furthermore, non-display of imperfection appeared to be the highest in consumers (M = 45.395, SD = 11.833), followed by contributors (M = 42.562, SD = 11.836) and creators (M = 41.444, SD = 13.949). For Nondisclosure of imperfection, creators scored the highest (*M* = 31.370, *SD* = 9.278), followed by consumers (*M* = 29.210, *SD* = 6.235) and contributors (*M* = 28.667, *SD* = 7.430). Simultaneously, contributors had the highest EI mean score (*M* = 119.083, *SD* = 21.051), followed by consumers (*M* = 115.421, *SD* = 20.662), with creators showing the lowest EI mean score (*M* = 109.444, *SD* = 28.870). However, these differences appeared to be minimal, as indicated by the nonsignificant ANOVA results.

Fig.1 illustrates a comparison of the means of consumers, contributors, and creators across the examined variables.

Table 2. Analysis of variance by fashion-related social media engagement

	Consumers (*n* = 38)		Contributors (*n* = 48)		Creators (*n* = 27)		*F*	Sig.
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***		
Body Image Concern	44.553	14.401	49.583	16.161	45.963	18.940	1.084	.342
Appearance Dissatisfaction	24.342	8.888	26.896	10.533	24.852	12.337	.707	.495
Interference in Functioning	20.210	6.498	22.688	6.852	21.111	7.536	1.415	.247
Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	44.447	10.623	43.396	12.330	45.296	13.922	.221	.802
Non-Display of Imperfection	45.395	11.833	42.562	11.836	41.444	13.949	.933	.396
Nondisclosure of Imperfection	29.210	6.235	28.667	7.430	31.370	9.278	1.149	.321
Emotional Intelligence	115.421	20.662	119.083	21.051	109.444	28.870	1.516	.224

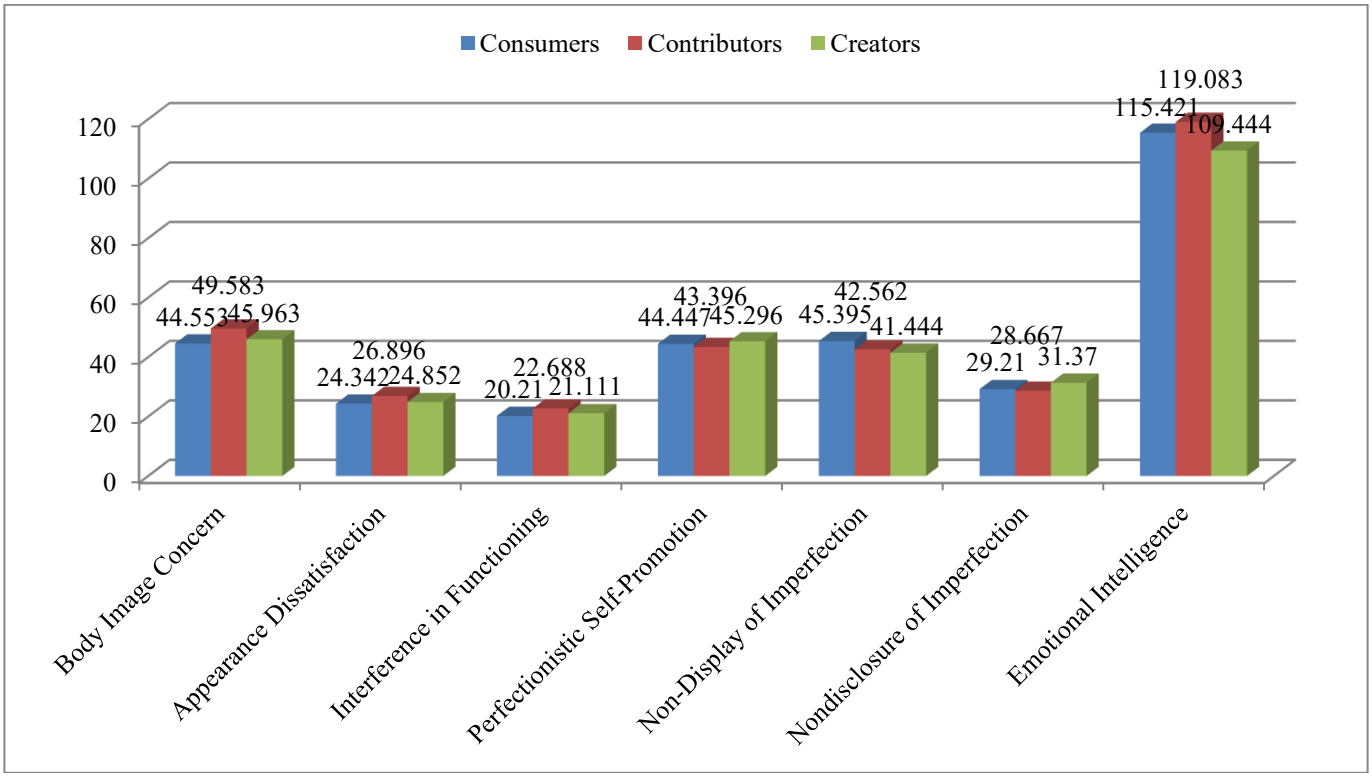

Fig. 1 Comparison of the mean scores of consumers, contributors, and creators of fashion content

4. Discussion

The present research examined the relationship between BIC, PSP, and EI and the effect of fashion-related social media engagement on these variables. The data were collected through an online questionnaire using the existing valid scales of BICI, PSPS, and SSEIT. Via convenience sampling, 113 young adults aged 18–35 years from different regions of India. The data were analysed using Pearson's correlation analysis and an ANOVA.

Found that BIC had a significant positive correlation with PSP; thus, H1a was accepted. This finding aligns with previous research. For example, Hewitt et al. [7] argued that individuals with high PSP are motivated to present a flawless appearance, especially when they are dissatisfied with their appearance. This moderate and significant correlation highlights that concerns about body image play a meaningful role in driving perfectionistic behaviours. Individuals who are more dissatisfied with their body image are more likely to present themselves in a perfectionistic manner.

In addition, the findings revealed a significant positive correlation between BIC and non-display of imperfection; thus, H1b was accepted. Hewitt et al. [7] emphasised that the Non-display of Imperfection reflects efforts to prevent others from seeing one's personal shortcomings. The current study's results are consistent with this study, as people who are concerned with their appearance may carefully manage what others can see in order to avoid negative judgment. In the context of fashion-related social media engagement, hiding one's imperfections may be amplified due to trends.

Furthermore, the results showed a significant positive correlation between BIC and Nondisclosure of imperfection; thus, H1c was accepted. This finding is consistent with research by Lundqvist et al. [24], which found that Nondisclosure of imperfection predicted body satisfaction levels among athletes. This suggests that hiding imperfections from others can contribute to a greater focus on body image concerns. The present findings expand on this by showing that Nondisclosure is linked with body image concerns among young adults beyond athletic contexts.

This study found a significant positive correlation between appearance dissatisfaction and perfectionistic self-promotion, leading us to accept H1d. This aligns with previous research, such as Shaw et al. [18], who showed that body dissatisfaction is linked to maladaptive forms of perfectionism. The moderate and significant correlation highlighted dissatisfaction as a key driver of perfectionistic presentation. The tendency to promote a perfect image appears to increase when dissatisfaction with one's appearance grows.

In addition, this study found a significant positive correlation between appearance dissatisfaction and non-display of imperfection; therefore, H1e was accepted. This result is consistent with Sherry et al. [25], who showed that people who avoid showing flaws are more likely to struggle with body image disturbance. This correlation indicated that dissatisfaction can predict concealment behaviours because when people are unhappy with their appearance, they may make consistent attempts to hide what they consider "imperfect" about themselves. This behaviour may reduce short-term embarrassment but gradually increase the tendency to fixate on their flaws. In the context of fashion-related social media engagement, appearance pressures are especially heightened.

Additionally, a significant positive correlation was found between appearance dissatisfaction and Nondisclosure of Imperfection; thus, H1f was accepted. This finding is supported by Lundqvist et al. [24], who also showed that Nondisclosure was connected to body dissatisfaction. By showing a weak but significant correlation in a general young adult sample, not only athletes, the current study broadens the understanding of Nondisclosure as a strategy to negotiate body image management in everyday life, particularly online.

For interference in functioning, a significant positive correlation was found with perfectionistic self-promotion; thus, H1g was accepted. This suggests that individuals who engage in Perfectionistic Self-Promotion may experience greater interference in their daily functioning due to their appearance. Although weak, this significant correlation underlines how perfectionistic behaviours can impact day-to-day life. The need to maintain a flawless image can lead to stress and distraction, thereby impacting overall well-being. Lundqvist et al. [24] found that PSP is negatively related to body satisfaction, consequently affecting daily functioning. The present study extends this by demonstrating that Perfectionistic Self-Promotion is associated with functional interference in a general young adult sample.

Similarly, interference in functioning was significantly positively correlated with non-display of imperfection; thus, H1h was accepted. Individuals who avoid displaying imperfections may experience increased interference in their daily functioning. The significant correlation suggests that even moderate concealment behaviours have measurable effects on functioning. The effort to conceal flaws can cause stress and affect overall well-being. While Lundqvist et al. [24] examined the relationship between Nondisclosure of imperfection and body satisfaction, the present study extends this by demonstrating that the non-display of imperfection is also associated with functional interference due to body image issues among young adults. Moreover, a significant positive correlation was found between interference in functioning and Nondisclosure of imperfection; thus, this study accepted H1i. Individuals who choose not to disclose

imperfections may experience greater interference in their daily functioning.

Contrary to the hypothesis, PSP was significantly positively correlated with EI; thus, H2a was rejected. Similarly, non-display and Nondisclosure of imperfection were also significantly positively correlated with EI, leading to the rejection of H2b and H2c. Previous research has often positioned EI as a protective factor against perfectionism, suggesting that individuals with higher EI should be less likely to present themselves as perfect. Lopez-Zafra and Gartzia [26] investigated the association between EI and self-presentation, finding that individuals with higher EI are more adept at managing their emotional expression in social interactions. However, Schutte et al. [22] found that EI supports social adaptability by helping people regulate their emotions. This means EI may not lower perfectionism directly, but allow individuals to manage how they appear to others in more strategic ways. Previous studies have observed that emotionally intelligent individuals may use their skills to present a more perfectionistic image [27,28]. Davis and Nichols [29] found that EI can increase one's focus on social evaluation, which may increase pressures for self-presentation. Sariraei et al. [30] observed that high EI can contribute to social media overuse and appearance-related pressures by intensifying emotional awareness and comparison tendencies. Finally, Vicent [31] reported that EI can be associated with greater body dissatisfaction, particularly in settings that encourage perfectionism. Similarly, the present study revealed that EI may coexist with perfectionistic behaviours instead of reducing them. This contributes a novel finding to the discipline by highlighting that high EI may not necessarily coexist with low PSP. In fact, it may actually strengthen concealment behaviours.

Unlike the existing studies examining PSP and EI, this study used the SSEIT, which examines the awareness of other people's feelings. Therefore, being emotionally intelligent in this sense may allow people to "read the room" and learn how to hide their flaws. Individuals with higher EI might be better at hiding their imperfections, possibly due to their heightened emotional awareness and social sensitivity. Perhaps, being highly emotionally intelligent can help individuals manage and present a more perfect image of themselves, especially on social media.

Similarly, EI was significantly positively correlated with BIC and interference in functioning, leading to the rejection of H3a and H3b. Contrary to the researchers' expectations and the literature, individuals with higher EI reported more concern about their body image. However, this relationship was weak. This finding suggests that, instead of protecting against body image concerns, EI may be associated with heightened sensitivity to appearance-related issues. This study demonstrated that higher EI, as measured by the SSEIT, may also coexist with increased BIC in a young adult sample.

The positive correlation between EI and appearance dissatisfaction was nonsignificant; therefore, H3b was rejected. This suggests that EI may interfere with one's functioning related to their body image, but it may not necessarily impact their dissatisfaction with their appearance. The lack of significance indicates that EI may not be sufficient by itself to counter appearance dissatisfaction. Barberis et al. [32] studied trait EI in a Lebanese university sample and found that, although higher EI was linked to more positive appearance perception, it did not always reduce appearance dissatisfaction.

The ANOVA results showed no difference in any of the variables based on the type of fashion-related social media engagement; thus, H4 was rejected. This could be due to various reasons. First, the sample size for each group might have been insufficient, and the variations across groups could have contributed to the nonsignificant results (consumers: n = 38, contributors: n = 48, creators: n = 27). Second, it is possible that exposure to fashion content online has a similar impact on young adults, irrespective of how they engage with it. Young adults frequently use social media to scroll, post, or create content. This constant focus on appearance may create the same kinds of pressures across social media users. Previous studies on social media engagement have mostly examined general use and time spent online rather than comparing the types of engagement. While our findings were not significant, future studies with larger samples could clarify whether the type of fashion-related social media engagement plays a role in influencing these variables.

This study provides crucial insights but has some limitations. First, the findings are based on a sample of 113 young adults across India, but cannot be generalized to all young adults because of the limited sample size. Second, using self-report measures can lead to some biases in reporting, such as social desirability or errors in how the participants see themselves. Third, a cross-sectional design does not allow us to determine a cause-and-effect relationship. Fourth, the categorisation of participants' social media engagement may not be comprehensive enough to truly capture the diversity of such engagement. Moreover, it is difficult to determine if social media users are completely aware of the type of media they consume, as the algorithms often feed users content they may not actively seek out or enjoy. Fifth, the scale used to measure EI included questions about controlling and/or regulating one's emotions, which may explain the unexpected positive relationship with BIC and PSP. Future studies should use larger and more representative samples, track participants over time using longitudinal designs, and explore several facets of social media use and engagement, as well as EI components. This can help enhance the understanding of how young adults'

body image and perfectionism are linked. The resulting insights could guide future interventions, such as teaching social media skills, to reduce young adults' body dissatisfaction and PSP tendencies.

5. Conclusion

The study sought to assess the interrelations between BIC, PSP, and EI and the influence of fashion-related social media engagement on these constructs. The results indicated positive correlations among all three variables; however, no significant group differences were detected. These results suggest that EI may not always act as a protective factor, highlighting its complex interactions with BIC and PSP among young adults in India. Moreover, despite the nonsignificant findings, the investigation of fashion-related social media engagement offers a foundation for future studies to comprehensively examine this variable. These findings emphasise the need for interventions that target both emotional skills and healthy body image in young adults as they navigate social media. This study has important theoretical implications as it indicates that EI can be related to body dissatisfaction and self-presentation, suggesting a more complex relationship than previously thought. Practically, the findings can pave the way for programs in schools and universities to help young adults manage their body image and PSP by learning skills to better manage their emotions instead of simply controlling them. The results also support the need for awareness campaigns on the impact of fashion-related social media content as well as the role of EI in contributing to well-being among the Indian youth. Moreover, while the findings for the effect of fashion-related social media engagement were insignificant, it is still crucial to promote healthy online behaviour and realistic self-expectations, regardless of whether one consumes, contributes to, or creates social media content. Despite this, the observed associations between BIC, PSP, and EI contribute valuable new perspectives and form a foundation for subsequent studies.

Author Contributions

AO: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft

RKN: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Visualization, Writing – Review & Editing

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