

# Original Research Article

## Prevalence and Impacts of Body Shaming on Social Media among University Students in Bangladesh

### ABSTRACT

Body shaming is a social disease that has spread to different segments of society. It has been constantly growing in the hands of the media, especially social media and the commercial world.

**Objective:** The objectives of the study are to examine the prevalence and impacts of social media on body shaming faced by university students in Bangladesh.

**Methodology:** This study followed the quantitative research methodology to conduct the research. It was from 08 June 2024 to 14 June 2024, when the researcher collected the data through an online survey consisting of 35 questions. A total of 477 students participated in the study; the target population was formed with part of the students at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur.

**Results:** The study found that 66.45% of the students were faced with body shaming, and 42.76% of these happened through social media. Female students reported a higher prevalence of body shaming (37.11%) than that of male students (29.14%), with an odds ratio of 1.493, indicating that females were almost 1.5 times more likely to experience body shaming. Most of the students were body shamed for their body shape and weight. Students perceive that bullying tendency, lack of understanding, jealousy, and low self-confidence are the major causes of body shaming. According to the research, the impacts of body shaming are multifaceted in most of the students; with issues such as emotional distress (47.59%), body anxiety or dissatisfaction (40.25%), depression, and inferiority (39.62%) coming up as a high rate of result. Alarmingly, 10.27% of students reported noticing suicidal tendencies in themselves due to body shaming. Female students generally reported higher rates of negative impacts compared to male students across most categories.

**Conclusion:** There is an urgent requirement for awareness campaigns and legal actions to be taken against body shaming on social media. Educational institutions should also implement awareness programs for the younger generation to make them aware of the negative consequences of body shaming.

*Keywords: Body shaming, Social media, Prevalence, Impacts, Students, Bangladesh*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Body shaming is the act of criticizing and degrading someone for their physical characteristics, such as being 'too skinny, too fat,' etc. Starting from the larger society, family members also indulge in body shaming in various ways without being aware of it. According to several studies, over 45 percent of youngsters have experienced body shaming at least once in their life. In 2016, more than 4.2 million people in the United States underwent cosmetic surgery to improve their appearance with the majority of these having been due to body shaming (Ahmed, 2021). The Mental Health Foundation in the United Kingdom found that, in 2019, one in every five adults felt ashamed of their physical appearance. Thirty-one

24 percent of boys and 37 percent of teenage girls are frustrated with their body image. Even  
25 60% of adults feel very ashamed because of such hindrances in their minds(Health and  
26 Social Care Committee, 2022). Alarming children are not spared from such acts as body  
27 shaming as well. Many mothers in Vietnam are providing plastic surgeries as gifts for their  
28 daughter's birthdays (Do et al., 2016). In 2018, police from all over Indonesia handled 966  
29 cases of physical humiliation or body shaming throughout that year in Indonesia  
30 (Puluhulawa& Husain, 2021).

31 The media not only provides information and news but also plays an important role in society  
32 in shaping and managing public opinion. On the other hand, the media also plays a negative  
33 role in society due to biased reporting and discriminatory comments. For example, the media  
34 induces body shaming. This can cause serious physical and psychological problems for  
35 individuals (Gan & Jiang, 2022). In the digital age, body shaming is more common on media  
36 than in real life. In Indonesia, the number of perpetrators of body shaming is increasing as  
37 the number of internet users increases (Astuti & Yenny, 2019).

38 Body shaming is on the rise at the hands of social media and the commercial world. A look  
39 at the commercials shows that the commercial world holds tendencies to mutilate a mind  
40 against one's body in public. There are tips for weight loss, creams for fairness, and  
41 medicines for growing taller, i.e., all the services to change one's appearance are at our  
42 fingertips (Bangalive, 2018). Nowadays, people upload their photographs on social media,  
43 and they often succumb to different types of negative comments from other users. It's  
44 common to see people shame both men and women for their physical types (McFarland &  
45 Petrie, 2012). Instagram photos of ones are mostly about looks-how perfect, refined, and  
46 conventionally good-looking they seem to be to others. On Facebook, there's no end to  
47 trolling. Most people do not feel the need to think of the person sitting on the other side as a  
48 human, when commenting on social media (Tinni, 2018). In fact, talking about people's looks  
49 has become a trend. Women are attacked more than boys on these issues: thick bodies,  
50 less hair, and skin color. Especially how and in which manner women should have a perfect  
51 figure. And if not, you have to listen to the simile of fat, bamboo or elephant. Body shaming is  
52 proof of how unnecessarily critical you are as a human being (Bangalive, 2018).

53 According to the Aachol Foundation, a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh, 43.89  
54 percent of young women are subjected to harassment on the internet and social media  
55 platforms, including ugly comments, image distortion, and body shaming. Most women said  
56 that they suffered from an inferiority complex after reading ugly comments and being  
57 ridiculed about their body structure and their choice of clothes on social media (Mehedy,  
58 2022). Therefore, it is mostly women who seem to be influenced by body shaming on social  
59 media platforms. Another study showed that anxiety, depression, and self-esteem among  
60 15- to 18-year-olds are strongly related to perceived body image dissatisfaction, and there  
61 has been a growing trend of body shaming among adolescents in recent years. Many young  
62 people have felt anxious and even suffered from depression because of their unconventional  
63 or socially so-called not-good-looking body shape (Shandy & Sari, 2023). Although body  
64 shaming can affect individuals of all ages, this study focused on university students.  
65 Because body shaming is a common phenomenon among young adults today as they  
66 become obsessed with diet, exercise, and fashion.

67 A BBC report in 2017, citing a survey of some Asian countries, including Bangladesh, said  
68 that the risk of cyberbullying is increasing at an alarming rate in these countries, and women  
69 and minors are the most likely victims of bullying. The first Information and Communication  
70 Technology Act (ICT Act) was enacted in Bangladesh in 2006, and this law was amended in  
71 2013. The country's only cyber tribunal was established in Dhaka the same year. In this act,  
72 the provision of 10 years imprisonment and a fine of not more than about \$8520 has been

73 made for the crime of taking private pictures or videos without the permission of someone  
74 and publishing them. However, there is still no law in the country against obscene speech or  
75 irrelevant comments in posts. Only 21 percent of victims of cybercrime in Bangladesh report  
76 it to law enforcement. And at least 72 percent of them do not get the expected remedy or  
77 result even after filing the complaint. Such information has emerged in a study report by the  
78 Cyber Crime Awareness (CAA) Foundation (Chowdhury, 2018; Uddin, 2021; Anderson,  
79 2018). However, until now, body shaming is endless and still exists in the hustle and bustle  
80 of social media existence in this era of disruption, and the percentages of body shaming  
81 incidents are increasing at an alarming rate due to the lack of laws and societal awareness.

82 Considering all these factors, it is necessary to discuss the prevalence of body shaming on  
83 social media, what kind of impacts university students are facing, and how the situation can  
84 be mitigated. The current study explores the prevalence and impacts of body shaming on  
85 social media with reference to students at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur,  
86 Bangladesh. This study provides academic insights into the prevalence of body shaming and  
87 its negative consequences that some people may be unaware of. This study may alert  
88 students, parents, educators, legislators, policymakers, and enforcement agencies about the  
89 seriousness of the impact of body shaming.

## 90 **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

91 Gam et al. (2020) examined the prevalence and predictors of body shaming among school-  
92 going adolescents. Using a cross-sectional study, they gathered data from 800 students in 4  
93 schools of Lucknow in India and found that a total of 44.9 percent of participants responded  
94 to having been body shamed at least once in the past year. Okoli et al. (2023) carried out a  
95 study on the prevalence and effects of body-shaming on social media among  
96 undergraduates in Nigeria. They collected 300 surveys to accomplish this study. The study  
97 found that most female undergraduates faced different types of body-shaming compared to  
98 their male counterparts at the university. More than 88.5% of the respondents believed that  
99 body-shaming could be the cause of eating disorders, anxiety, disturbed body image,  
100 sadness, and trauma. The study recommended that the government needs to support  
101 initiatives that raise public awareness of the harmful impacts of body shaming.

102 Mumu and Rashid investigated the prevalence and varieties of body shaming practiced via  
103 memes in Bangladesh on five Facebook pages. Purposive sampling was used to select five  
104 Facebook pages, and data was collected from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022. The  
105 findings have shown that there were more comments on masculinity, size, skin tone, and  
106 height in memes. Body-shaming memes target not only females but also male counterparts  
107 and transgender individuals (Mumu & Rashid, 2023).

108 The Aachol Foundation of Bangladesh published a study titled 'Social context of young  
109 women and its impact on mental health'. This organization surveyed 1,040 young women  
110 between the ages of 18 and 30, and found that young women are increasingly being  
111 sexually abused, harassed, and body shamed in Bangladesh. According to the study,  
112 69.92% of young women experience body shaming, and 65.58% are frequently subjected to  
113 various forms of sexual harassment. It began with the family, but this unpleasant trend has  
114 spread rapidly because of social media. It also revealed that 37.24% of women are verbally  
115 abused by their relatives regarding their body shape, structure, and appearance. Twenty-two  
116 percent of women have been victims of body shaming by friends, 14.25% have heard  
117 heinous shaming words from their own family members and 11.85% of young women had to  
118 hear negative words about their physical appearance from passersby. Because of this, most  
119 young women experience behavioral disorders or other mental health problems, and they  
120 notice suicidal tendencies in themselves (Mehedy, 2022).

121 Sadia, Jibon, and Parvez outlined research on the effects of media advertisement  
122 representation of women's body images on violence against women in Bangladesh. This  
123 study also highlights how the younger generation is influenced by the media. This  
124 quantitative study was conducted where 80 male and female students were randomly  
125 selected from the two reputed universities at Khulna in Bangladesh. It has been found that  
126 some of the advertisements and media content have shown specific body shapes as an  
127 ideal. For that reason, women faced contemptible body shaming and verbal attacks; more  
128 than 80% of women answered that they have faced verbal or physical sexual assault. This  
129 research has also shown that about 70% of women were unhappy with their body shape and  
130 tried to get the ideal shape as shown in the media (Sadia et al., 2022).

131 Siyu Wan analyzed the impact of social media on body shame in China. The researcher  
132 used a literature review approach to examine the information regarding body shame. She  
133 found that the abundance of body-shaming content in the media led young people to focus  
134 on body shame, which could lead to more serious physical and psychological problems  
135 (Wan, 2023). Another study in Indonesia of over 50 undergraduates revealed that body  
136 shaming treatments were also received in the form of insults, mockery and insinuation,  
137 leading to the students being stressed, embarrassed, insecure and downgrading their  
138 confidence level (Trisna, 2019). Mustafa et al. (2022) examined youth awareness of body  
139 shaming issues in Malaysia. Using a mixed-method approach, they gathered data and found  
140 that the youth are well aware of the impact of body shaming. A study conducted by Melizza  
141 et al. (2023) found that there is a significant relationship between body shaming and self-  
142 esteem in students of Indonesia. Because when someone is insulted about their body, it  
143 affects one's self-esteem.

144 Zulkifli et al. (2023) investigated students' awareness of the implications of body shaming  
145 and their perspectives regarding their body image. Using an online questionnaire, the data  
146 was collected from 50 public university students in Malaysia and found that the majority of  
147 students acknowledged the implications of body shaming on victims, with more than half  
148 expressing a negative perception of their bodies. Jiotsa et al. (2021) explored the association  
149 between social media exposure and the presence of body dissatisfaction and body image  
150 disorders. The researcher followed an online questionnaire to investigate the association  
151 between how often one compares their physical appearance to that of the people they follow  
152 on social media and one's body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness.

153 A study was conducted by Puluhalawa and Riski Husain with the title "Body Shaming  
154 through Social Media as a Digital Crime in the Era of Disruption." In this study, data  
155 collection techniques were carried out with a review of libraries aimed at providing clues and  
156 ideas for formulating and solving problems. To evaluate the data, researchers deployed a  
157 descriptive-analytical approach that provides a comprehensive explanation or picture of body  
158 shaming as a digital crime. Researchers suggest that improved rules, as well as the role of  
159 the press and the general public, can affect people's attitudes about body-shaming behavior  
160 (Puluhalawa & Husain, 2021).

161 The available literature contains studies that have explored body-shaming; none have  
162 investigated the prevalence and impacts of body shaming on social media among university  
163 students in Bangladesh's context. The present study seeks to fill this gap.

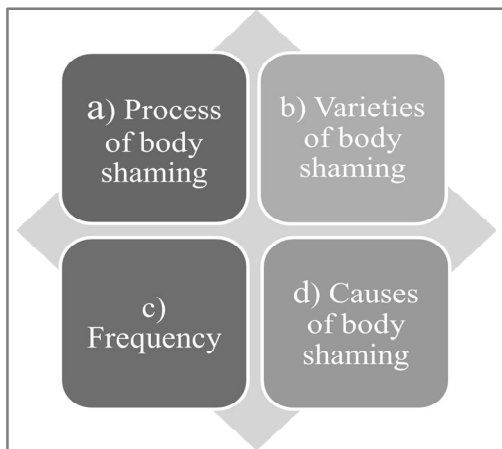
### 164 165 **3. CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW**

166  
167 **3.1 Body shaming:** Body shaming is when someone publicly criticizes or comments on  
168 someone's body size, size, or weight in a way that shames or humiliates them. Body  
169 shaming can take many forms. The most common examples are described when people

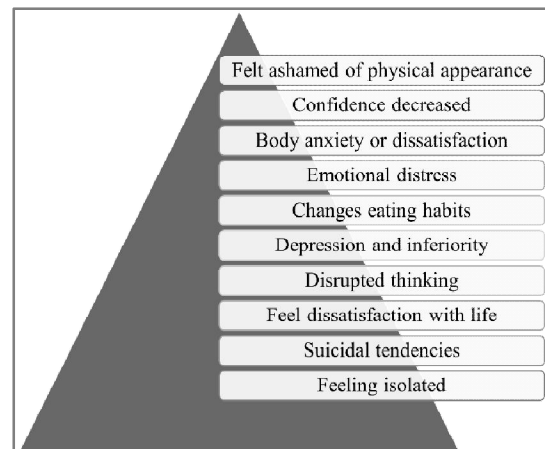
170 refer to someone by their names as fat, thin, pigmy, etc. For instance, statements like “when  
 171 did you become so fat?”, and “it would be nice if your skin color was a little brighter”, like  
 172 this- if you make any comments or make criticism about someone’s body size, volume, or  
 173 weight in such a way that the person feels ashamed or humiliated, then it is body shaming.  
 174 Also, bashing about one’s external beauty, belittling oneself in comparison with someone  
 175 else, and making negative comments about one’s physical shape behind someone’s back  
 176 are also forms of body shaming. There are three types of people who participate in body  
 177 shaming. Firstly, People who is suffering from extreme inferiority and who find peace by  
 178 hurting others (usually victims of body shaming). Secondly, oblivious people who are unable  
 179 or unwilling to understand the consequences of saying something. These types of people do  
 180 not think about the consequences of the words that come out of them. Thirdly, really bad  
 181 people who love to hurt people for no reason. Most of us fall into category number two  
 182 regarding body shaming. After saying a word, there is no headache about its consequences.  
 183 But they don’t care how much the words influence others for their irrelevant and unwise  
 184 reactions (Tinni, 2018).

185  
 186 **3.2 Socialmedia:** social media refers to human-to-human interaction through virtual  
 187 communication and networks. That is, the medium that people use to create, share, or  
 188 exchange anything to communicate and express themselves using information and  
 189 communication technology is called social media or social networking sites. Some such sites  
 190 are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, X, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, etc.  
 191 (Dollarhide, 2024).

192 **Fig 1: Prevalence of body shaming**



**Fig 2 Impacts of body shaming**



193  
 194 **4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

195 Cultivation theory has been used as a theoretical framework for the study. This theory was  
 196 first proposed in the 1960s by George Gerbner, an American professor, to examine the  
 197 influence of television on viewers (Gerbner, 1969). His findings were further expanded and  
 198 developed by American screenwriter Larry Gross (Gerbner and Gross, 1972). Cultivation  
 199 theory was originally conceived on the effects of television but applies in many ways to  
 200 social media. According to cultivation theory in social media, long-term exposure to social  
 201 media platforms shapes the perception of reality among its users, just like the effect of  
 202 watching television over a longer period. Social media sites provide information,  
 203 entertainment, and social interaction nowadays, much like television in the past. If people  
 204 have started spending more time on social media, then they are exposed continuously to

205 perfect content, and often portraying idealistic or distorted reality-like the perfect body image,  
206 luxurious lifestyle, or extreme opinions. According to cultivation theory, the more students  
207 are exposed to such content, the greater the chance that they will begin to accept these  
208 ideals as reality and judge both themselves and others based on these standards. This could  
209 give rise to other negative psychological effects, such as body dissatisfaction, low self-  
210 esteem, depression, that subsequently lead to body shaming or unhealthy comparisons. For  
211 example, if social media continuously portray a certain body type as ideal or perfect, then  
212 eventually, through such portrayals, the users would begin to internalize these ideals.  
213 Logically, cultivation theory posits that social media can cultivate a particular worldview  
214 among its users, just like television did, but maybe with much more influence because of the  
215 interactivity and pervasiveness of this media. The researcher felt this theory may provide an  
216 academic framework to reach any conclusion on this issue.

217

## 218 **5. METHODOLOGY**

219

220 The researcher followed a quantitative methodology to accomplish the research. The online  
221 survey questionnaire is designed for a quantitative study. The researcher collected consent  
222 from the students before collecting the data and information from them. This study was  
223 conducted, representing the opinions of 477 students, including female (252), male (224),  
224 and others (01) from different departments of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur,  
225 Bangladesh.

226 **5.1 Target population:** This research has been conducted on the students at Begum  
227 Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR). According to the BRUR website, there are 22  
228 departments under six faculties, with a total population of approximately 8,000. The Krejcie  
229 and Morgan sampling formula helps in determining the sample size needed to make  
230 accurate inferences about the population. This sampling formula states that if the population  
231 is 8000, sampling 381 respondents will normally give a fairly accurate result.

232 **5.2 Study duration:** Data collection was conducted from June 8, 2024, to June 14, 2024,  
233 for one week.

234 **5.3 Survey tool:** The survey was designed as a closed-ended questionnaire with 35  
235 questions, including demographic inquiries.

236 **5.4 Data collection:**The researcher distributed the questionnaire created through Google  
237 form to her known students and colleagues in each department of BRUR via the WhatsApp  
238 application. Those students and colleagues provide the link to students in their respective  
239 departments. During the survey, a total of 477 responses were collected.  
240

241 **5.5 Data analysis:** This study uses a statistical software package followed by the  
242 Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 29 version). It has been used in  
243 frequency distribution, biplot, odds ratio, correlation, and principal component analysis (PCA)  
244 in order to highlight the graphical and tabular representation of data and information in the  
245 research.

246 **5.6 Ethical Issues:** The study maintained ethical guidelines throughout the whole  
247 research. On the other hand, it was ensured proper channels and consent from the students  
248 throughout the data collection process.

249 **6. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

250 **Table 1: Demographic information of the students**  
 251

Variables	Response	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	252	52.8
	Male	224	47.0
	Others	1	0.2
Education Levels	Honors 1st Year	138	28.9
	Honors 2nd Year	132	27.7
	Honors 3rd Year	85	17.8
	Honors 4th Year	30	6.3
	Masters	92	19.3
Age Group	17-18 Years	11	2.3
	19-20 Years	74	15.5
	21-22 Years	227	47.6
	23-24 Years	153	32.1
	25-26 Years+	12	2.5

252

253 Table 1 presents the demographic details of the 477 students in the survey, which produces  
 254 a differentiated profile of the participants across sexes, age groups, and different educational  
 255 levels. The data reveals a slight female majority, accounting for 52.8% of the total; 252 of  
 256 these were females, while 224 (47%) were males. and 0.2% of the sample represented other  
 257 sexes. In terms of educational background, the largest proportion were relatively new  
 258 university students (28.9% with 138 for Honors 1st Year and 27.7% with 132 for Honors 2nd  
 259 Year). Only 17.8%, with 85, participated in Honors 3rd Year, and 6.3%, with 30, participated  
 260 in Honors 4th Year. It's worth mentioning that 19.3% (92) of the students are masters'  
 261 students, showing a significant number of advanced-level students. The 21–22 years age  
 262 group had the most significant proportion at 47.6% (227), closely followed by the 23–24  
 263 years (153) group at 32.1%. There were only very small numbers of both student groups, at  
 264 2.3% aged 17–18 years and 2.5% aged 25–26+ years.

265

266 **Table 2: Social media usage patterns of the students**

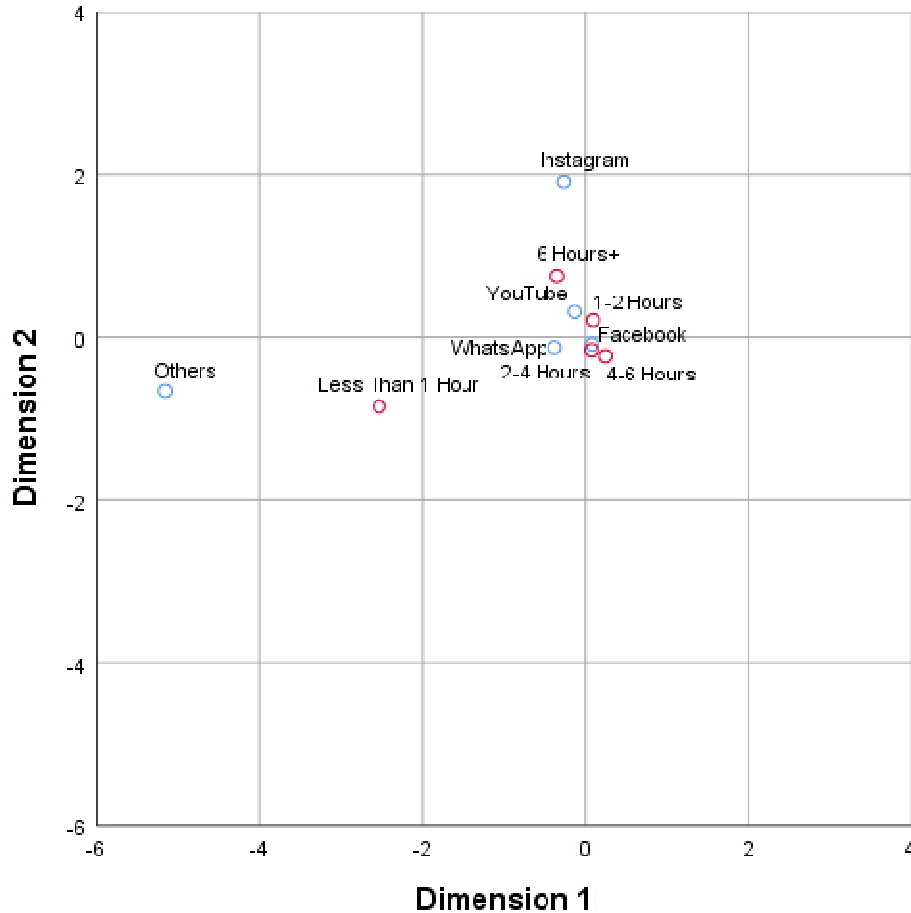
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Variables	Response	F	%
Do you have social media accounts?	Yes	473	99.2
	No	3	0.6
	Not applicable	1	0.2
Which social media are you using more?	Facebook	402	84.3
	YouTube	39	8.2
	WhatsApp	19	4.0
	Instagram	14	2.9
	Others	3	0.6
How much time (approximate) do you spend daily on social media?	Less Than 1 Hour	11	2.3
	1-2 Hours	84	17.6
	2-4 Hours	202	42.3
	4-6 Hours	115	24.1
	6 Hours+	65	13.6

268

269 Table 2 illustrates the details regarding the patterns of use of social media by the students.  
 270 An overwhelming majority, 99.2%, have accounts on social media; only 0.6% do not have  
 271 profiles on such media, while 0.2% marked not applicable. On preferred social media  
 272 platforms, most of the students indicated that they used Facebook 402 (84.3%), followed by  
 273 8.2% on YouTube, 4.0% on WhatsApp, 2.9% using Instagram, and 0.6% who use others.  
 274 Only 2.3% of the students reported a daily usage time of less than 1 hour on social media.  
 275 Those who use it for 1-2 hours make up a total of 17.6% of the students, whereas 42.3% use  
 276 it for 2-4 hours daily. 24.1% use social media for 4-6 hours a day, whereas 13.6% use it for  
 277 more than 6 hours a day. This data indicated that almost all students use social media; out  
 278 of these, Facebook was the most popular platform. Most of the students spent a  
 279 considerable amount of time on it every day, while some even used it for hours, just going on  
 280 to prove that the engagement of students with social media is very high.

281 **Chart 01: Correspondence analysis of social media usage versus time spent by**  
 282 **students**



283

284 The Correspondence Analysis Biplot shows diverse patterns in social media usage based on  
 285 how much time users spend on each platform. Instagram is noticeably segregated,  
 286 demonstrating a distinct usage pattern as compared to other platforms. Facebook is strongly  
 287 associated with longer usage times, particularly among users who spend 1-2 hours, 2-4  
 288 hours, and 4-6 hours or more online, indicating that this site dominates protracted  
 289 involvement. YouTube is closely associated with users who spend 6 hours or more on social

290 media, suggesting that this platform is favored by heavy users. WhatsApp is associated with  
 291 moderate usage, often about 2-4 hours, although the 'Less Than 1 Hour' and 'Others' groups  
 292 are separated from the main cluster, indicating a more infrequent usage pattern. This biplot  
 293 demonstrates the many links between social media platforms and user engagement levels,  
 294 providing insights into platform preferences depending on time spent online.

295 **Table 3: The prevalence of body shaming among students**  
 296

Variables	Response	Through what means have you faced body shaming?				Total (%)
		Social media (%)	Face to face (%)	Others (%)	Not applicable (%)	
Have you faced body shaming?	Yes	204 (42.76)	102 (21.38)	10 (2.09)	1 (0.20)	317 (66.45)
	No	3 (0.62)	8 (1.67)	52 (10.90)	74 (15.51)	137 (28.72)
	Not applicable	3 (0.62)	3 (0.62)	7 (1.46)	10 (2.09)	23 (4.82)
What have you been body shamed for?	Body shape	54 (11.32)	18 (3.77)	3 (0.62)	0 (0)	75 (15.72)
	Skin color	29 (6.07)	15 (3.14)	5 (1.04)	0 (0)	49 (10.27)
	Weight	47 (9.85)	24 (5.03)	5 (1.04)	1 (0.20)	77 (16.14)
	Height	25 (5.24)	14 (2.93)	1 (0.20)	0 (0)	40 (8.38)
	Others	36 (7.54)	16 (3.35)	53 (11.11)	1 (0.20)	106 (22.22)
	Not applicable	19 (3.98)	26 (5.45)	2 (0.41)	83 (17.40)	130 (27.25)
How frequently have you experienced body shaming?	Always	3 (0.62)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0.62)
	Often	11 (2.30)	6 (1.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	17 (3.56)
	Sometimes	68 (14.25)	23 (4.82)	7 (1.46)	1 (0.20)	99 (20.75)
	Rarely	76 (15.93)	44 (9.22)	15 (3.14)	4 (0.83)	139 (29.14)
	Not applicable	52 (10.90)	40 (8.38)	47 (9.85)	80 (16.77)	219 (45.91)

297 Table 3 shows that 66.45% (317) of students have faced body shaming and 28.7% (137) of  
 298 students have never faced body shaming. Among them, most students, 42.76 % (204) faced  
 299 body shaming through social media, 21.38% (102) face to face and 2.09% (10) through  
 300 other means. The survey asked students why they faced body shaming. Most students,  
 301 11.32% (54) reported that they were body shamed for their body shape, 6.07% (29) for skin  
 302 color, 9.85% (47) for weight, 5.24% (25) for height on social media as a high rate of result.  
 303 When asked how frequently you have experienced body shaming; 0.62% (3) of the students  
 304 said they faced body shaming always on social media. Besides that, 2.30% (11) often,  
 305 14.25% (68) sometimes, and 15.93% (76) of students rarely subjected themselves to body  
 306

307 shaming on social media; with 9.22% (44) saying it rarely happens and 4.82% (23) of  
 308 students saying it sometimes happens face to face.

309  
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 311

**Table 4: Who faces body shaming more frequently on social media?**

Variables	Yes %	No %	Not applicable %	Odds (Yes/No)
Female	177 (37.11)	63 (13.21)	12 (2.52)	2.810
Male	139 (29.14)	74 (15.51)	11 (2.31)	1.878
Others	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0.000

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Table 4 shows which students are more likely to face body shaming on social media among females, males, and others. Here, 177 (37.11%) female students answered that they have faced body shaming on social media, while 139 (29.14%) students and 1 (0.21%) students of other gender have faced body shaming. Also, the odds of females saying yes to no  $177/63 = 2.810$ . Males' odds are  $139/74 = 1.878$ . Therefore, the odds ratio (OR) for females saying 'yes' compared to 'no' is 1.493. Females were almost 1.5 times more likely to say yes to body shaming on social media than males were.

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 321

**Table 5: Process of body shaming on social media**

Variables	Response	Yes	No	Not applicable	Odds (Yes/No)
Body shaming through comments	Female	47	166	39	0.283
	Male	64	131	29	0.489
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	111 (23.27)	298 (62.47)	68 (14.26)	0.372
Body shaming through text messages	Female	96	118	38	0.814
	Male	69	122	33	0.566
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	165 (34.59)	241 (50.52)	71 (14.88)	0.685
Body shaming through sending audio/videos	Female	42	172	38	0.244
	Male	43	144	37	0.299
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	85 (17.82)	317 (66.46)	75 (15.72)	0.268
Body shaming through sending photos	Female	51	166	35	0.307
	Male	71	122	31	0.582
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	122 (25.58)	289 (60.59)	66 (13.84)	0.422
Body shaming by	Female	100	120	32	0.833

relatives/friends through social media comments, text, audio, or video messages	Male	71	122	31	0.582
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	171 (35.85)	243 (50.94)	63 (13.21)	0.704
	<hr/>				
Experienced face-to-face body shaming by relatives/friends after seeing your video, photo, or any post on social media	Female	85	134	33	0.634
	Male	75	114	35	0.658
	Others	0	1	0	0.000
	Total (%)	160 (33.54)	249 (52.20)	68 (14.26)	0.643

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Table 5 presents the details of various process through which body shaming takes place and compares the responses of females and males. This research has revealed that 23.27% of students were faced with body shaming through comments, 34.59% through text messages, 17.82% through sending audio/videos, 25.58% through sending photos, 35.85% were faced by relatives/friends through social media comments, text, audio, or video messages, and 33.54% were faced body shaming relatives/friends after seeing your video, photo, or any post on social media. Also, the odds of females saying body shaming through text message yes to no  $96/118 = 0.814$ . Males' odds are  $69/122 = 0.566$ . Therefore, the female odds ratio (female/male) through text message is  $0.814/0.566 = 1.438$ , and relatives/friends' comments, text, audio, or video messages is  $0.833/0.582 = 1.431$ , which indicates that females were faced almost 1.5 times more body shaming through text message and relatives/friends' comments, text, audio, or video messages on social media than males. On the other hand, male odds ratios (male/female) are more likely to notice through comments (OR =  $0.489/0.283 = 1.728$ ), sending audio/videos (OR =  $0.299/0.244 = 1.225$ ), sending only photos (OR =  $0.582/0.307 = 1.896$ ), and experienced face-to-face body shaming by relatives/friends after seeing your video, photo, or any post on social media (OR =  $0.658/0.634 = 1.038$ ). The finding indicates that males faced more than 1.5 times body shaming through comments and sending audio/videos than females.

**Table 6: Impacts of body shaming on social media**

Variables	Response	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not applicable (%)	Odds (Yes/No)
Felt ashamed of your physical appearance because of body shaming (I1)	Female	103 (21.59)	90 (18.87)	59 (12.37)	1.144
	Male	79 (16.56)	94 (19.71)	51 (10.69)	0.840
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	182 (38.16)	185 (38.78)	110 (23.06)	1.985
Confidence decreased because of body shaming (I2)	Female	88 (18.45)	121 (25.37)	43 (9.01)	0.727
	Male	59 (12.37)	123 (25.79)	42 (8.81)	0.480
	Others	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	148 (31.03)	244 (51.15)	85 (17.82)	1.207
Suffered from body anxiety or dissatisfaction because of body shaming (I3)	Female	109 (22.85)	105 (22.01)	38 (7.97)	1.038
	Male	83 (17.40)	103 (21.59)	38 (7.97)	0.806
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	192 (40.25)	209 (43.82)	76 (15.93)	1.844
Suffered from emotional distress because of body shaming (I4)	Female	129 (27.04)	89 (18.66)	34 (7.13)	1.449
	Male	98 (20.55)	87 (18.24)	39 (8.18)	1.126
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000

	Total	227 (47.59)	177 (37.11)	73 (15.30)	2.576
Any changes in your eating habits (15)	Female	77 (16.14)	137 (28.72)	38 (7.97)	0.562
	Male	59 (12.37)	122 (25.58)	43 (9.01)	0.484
	Others	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	137 (28.72)	259 (54.30)	81 (16.98)	1.046
Suffered from depression and inferiority (16)	Female	115 (24.11)	103 (21.59)	34 (7.13)	1.117
	Male	74 (15.51)	112 (23.48)	38 (7.97)	0.661
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	189 (39.62)	216 (45.28)	72 (15.09)	1.777
Suffered from disrupted thinking (17)	Female	110 (23.06)	107 (22.43)	35 (7.34)	1.028
	Male	79 (16.56)	106 (22.22)	39 (8.18)	0.745
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	189 (39.62)	214 (44.86)	74 (15.51)	1.773
Feel dissatisfaction with life (18)	Female	88 (18.45)	129 (27.04)	35 (7.34)	0.682
	Male	59 (12.37)	130 (27.25)	35 (7.34)	0.454
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	147 (30.82)	260 (54.51)	70 (14.68)	1.136
Noticed any suicidal tendencies in yourself (19)	Female	25 (5.24)	190 (39.83)	37 (7.76)	0.132
	Male	24 (5.03)	161 (33.75)	39 (8.18)	0.149
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	49 (10.27)	352 (73.79)	76 (15.93)	0.281
Feeling isolated from relatives/friends (110)	Female	102 (21.38)	115 (24.11)	35 (7.34)	0.887
	Male	76 (15.93)	114 (23.90)	34 (7.13)	0.667
	Others	0 (0.00)	1 (0.21)	0 (0.00)	0.000
	Total	178 (37.32)	230 (48.22)	69 (14.47)	1.554

344

345 Table 6 depicts that there are major negative impacts of body shaming on social media,  
346 while (47.59%) reported experiencing emotional distress as a direct result of body shaming.  
347 Furthermore, significant percentages of students reported feeling ashamed of their physical  
348 appearance (38.16%), decreased confidence (31.03%), body anxiety or dissatisfaction  
349 (40.25%), changing in eating habits (28.72%), depression and inferiority (39.62%), disrupted  
350 thinking (39.62%), feeling dissatisfaction with life (30.82%), noticing suicidal tendencies  
351 (10.27%), and feeling isolated from relatives/friends (37.32%). Also, the odds ratios (OR)  
352 comparing females and males experiencing various impacts of body shaming on social  
353 media. Further, when it is calculated the female to male odds ratio (female/male), it is found  
354 that females are more likely to say yes to a feeling ashamed of their physical appearance  
355 (OR = 1.144/0.840 = 1.362), decreased confidence (OR = 0.727/0.480 = 1.515), body  
356 anxiety or dissatisfaction (OR = 1.038/0.806 = 1.288), emotional distress (OR = 1.449/1.126  
357 = 1.287), changing eating habits (OR = 0.562/0.484 = 1.161), depression and inferiority (OR  
358 = 1.117/0.661 = 1.690), disrupted thinking (OR = 1.028/0.745 = 1.380), feeling  
359 dissatisfaction with life (OR = 0.682/0.454 = 1.502), and feeling isolated from  
360 relatives/friends (OR = 0.887/0.667 = 1.330). On the other hand, male odds ratios  
361 (male/female) are more likely to notice suicidal tendencies (OR = 0.149/0.132 = 1.129)  
362 compared to females. These discrepancies highlight how body shaming impacts females  
363 and males differently, with females being more than 1.5 times more likely to report  
364 confidence decreased, suffering from depression, and feeling dissatisfaction with life, while  
365 males are more likely to report suicidal thoughts.

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**Table 7: Correlation analysis of impacts of body shaming**

Variables	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10
I1	1									
I2	.730**	1								
I3	.730**	.735**	1							
I4	.659**	.690**	.774**	1						
I5	.618**	.604**	.655**	.682**	1					
I6	.667**	.755**	.790**	.830**	.683**	1				
I7	.613**	.678**	.728**	.749**	.625**	.790**	1			
I8	.644**	.727**	.782**	.770**	.639**	.794**	.781**	1		
I9	.510**	.544**	.608**	.630**	.564**	.659**	.637**	.701**	1	
I10	.651**	.656**	.734**	.737**	.592**	.763**	.738**	.776**	.653**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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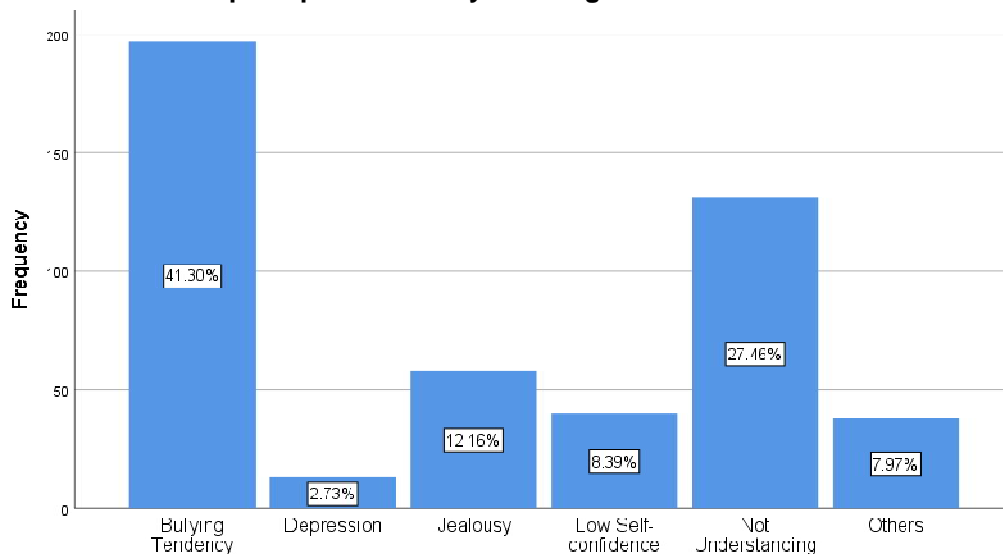
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Table 7 represents the Pearson correlations between different impacts of body shaming between pairs of variables. The finding shows that there is a high positive correlation between decreased confidence and both the shame of physical appearance and body anxiety, as  $r = 0.730$ . On the other hand, emotional distress has high correlations with its remaining impacts, including depression with  $r = 0.830$ , and disrupted thinking with  $r = 0.749$ . The analysis also indicates that eating habits changes are often related with emotional distress ( $r = 0.682$ ) and body anxiety ( $r = 0.655$ ), suggesting that body shaming can lead to unhealthy eating patterns. It further brings out prominent interrelations between the feeling isolated from relatives or friends and other impacts, for instance, life dissatisfaction with  $r = 0.776$ , body anxiety or dissatisfaction with  $r = 0.734$ , and emotional distress with  $r = 0.737$ . This clearly establishes interlinkages for most of the negative body shaming outcomes, which have their pervasive impacts on both psychological and behavioral well-being.

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**Chart 2: Students' perceptions of body shaming for various reasons**



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A 6 items question was asked to understand students' perceptions of why people engage in body shaming. Chart 2 shows that the majority of students, 41.30%, believe that body shaming comes as a result of having a bullying tendency toward others. Another 12.16% of students think it's because of jealousy, 8.39% have low self-confidence, 27.46% believe that

387 many people do body shaming unknowingly, and 2.73% believe that body shaming occurs  
 388 when someone is depressed, while 7.97% found it others way. The findings indicate that  
 389 bullying tendencies, lack of understanding, jealousy, and a lack of self-confidence are the  
 390 primary causes of body shaming.

391

392 **Table 8: Student' perceptions of the prevalence and impact of body shaming on social**  
 393 **media**

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Variables	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Body shaming situation is increasing day by day due to social media (P1)	204	42.77	208	43.61	55	11.53	10	2.10	0	0.00
Body shaming situation is increasing day by day even offline due to social media (P2)	189	39.62	221	46.33	54	11.32	13	2.73	0	0.00
Body shaming affected a person's self-esteem (P3)	244	51.15	194	40.67	34	7.13	4	0.84	1	0.21
Body shaming lead to eating disorders, anxiety, body shape disturbances, depression, and trauma (P4)	234	49.06	195	40.88	42	8.81	6	1.26	0	0.00
Possible to mitigate body shaming situations on social media (P5)	154	32.29	226	47.38	66	13.84	28	5.87	3	0.63
Need laws to regulate body shaming situations through social media (P6)	224	46.96	186	38.99	55	11.53	11	2.31	1	0.21
Need awareness to control body shaming situations on social media (P7)	284	59.54	166	34.80	23	4.82	2	0.42	2	0.42
Necessary to take educational activities at school, college, university level to create awareness about body shaming (P8)	290	60.80	158	33.12	25	5.24	2	0.42	2	0.42

395

396 Table 8 presents a clear and detailed overview of the students' perception regarding the  
 397 prevalence and impact of body shaming on social media, showing a high level of concern  
 398 and a perceived need for intervention. For instance, most of the students (strongly agree  
 399 42.77%, and agree 43.61%) that situations of body shaming are increasing day by day  
 400 because of social media, while the same trend is extended to offline, as strongly agreed by  
 401 39.62% and agreed by 46.33%. Besides, 51.15% of the students strongly agreed and  
 402 40.67% agreed that body shaming has a negative impact on the self-esteem of people. The  
 403 link between body shaming and severe mental health problems is further recognized since  
 404 almost 90% of the students, with 49.06% strongly agree and 40.88% agree, body shaming  
 405 can eventually cause eating disorders, anxiety, body shape disturbances, depression, and  
 406 trauma. The possibility of mitigating body shaming on social media is supported by 32.29%  
 407 who strongly agree and 47.38% agree, while a disproportionate extent of students (46.96%  
 408 strongly agree and 38.99% agree) feel that laws are needed to regulate such situations.  
 409 Moreover, the need for awareness campaigns is shown by 59.54% strongly agree, 34.80%  
 410 agree, and 60.80% strongly agree that educational activities at school, college, and  
 411 university levels are necessary to create awareness about body shaming.

412

413 **Table 9: Varimax rotated principal components analysis of the student' perceptions of**  
 414 **body shaming**

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Variables	Factors
Body shaming situation is increasing day by day due to social media (P1)	0.727
Body shaming situation is increasing day by day even offline due to social media (P2)	0.768
Body shaming affected a person's self-esteem (P3)	0.693
Body shaming lead to eating disorders, anxiety, body shape disturbances, depression and trauma (P4)	0.740
Possible to mitigate body shaming situations on social media (P5)	0.561
Need laws to regulate body shaming situations through social media (P6)	0.738
Need awareness to control body shaming situations on social media (P7)	0.788
Necessary to take educational activities at school, college, university level to create awareness about body shaming (P8)	0.740
Initial Eigenvalues	4.175
% of Variance	52.184
Cumulative %	52.184
Scale: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree	

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Table 9 presents the results of a Varimax rotated principal components analysis (PCA), which was used to examine the correlation between students' perceptions about body shaming on social media. In general, the loading scores are divided into three categories: strong (>0.75), moderate (0.75-0.50), and weak (0.50-0.30). The highest loading factors include the perception that awareness is needed to control body shaming situations on social media (P7 = 0.788, strong) and body shaming situations are increasing day by day even offline due to social media (P2 = 0.768, strong). Other significant factors include the belief that body shaming affects a person's self-esteem (P3 = 0.693, moderate), can lead to serious issues like eating disorders, anxiety, and depression (P4 = 0.740, moderate), the necessity of laws to regulate body shaming through social media (P6 = 0.738, moderate) and the importance of awareness and educational activities to control and mitigate body shaming (P8 = 0.740, moderate) respectively. The PCA explained 52.184% of the total variance, showing that these factors have a moderate influence on students' perceptions of body shaming. The initial eigenvalue of 4.175 indicates that these components together have a moderately significant explanatory power for students' attitudes towards body shaming.

## 7. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

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This study found that body shaming is a widespread problem among university students, with the majority of 66.45% reported having experienced it. The focus of this phenomenon is strongly associated with social media, particularly Facebook, where students are most likely to experience body shaming. The prevalence is aggravated by students' high engagement with social media platforms, with 42.3% spending 2-4 hours online and a significant number (13.6%) spending more than 6 hours per day. According to this study, 42.76% experienced body shaming on social media platforms, while 21.38% experienced it in face to face, which could be caused by heavy exposure to the social media as stated by the cultivation theory that constant media exposure modifies viewers' perceptions of reality and behavior, and the more people are exposed to images of the perfect body, the less conscious they are of their unrealistic character. For university students, who are often active and engaged users of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, this theory posits that their ongoing exposure to content that glorifies certain body types can cultivate a perception. This can be explained by several factors that may be responsible for the growing body-shaming

449 on social media. Firstly, anonymity and detachment of online interactions make it much  
450 easier for people to get involved in body shaming. Secondly, these ideal body images, as  
451 depicted on social media, constantly expose users to negative body comparisons that further  
452 lead to the perpetuation of body shaming and internalization of these harmful standards by  
453 victims. These subjects create an environment where body shaming becomes normalized,  
454 further entrenching it as a societal issue.

455 The findings of this study reveal significant gender differences in the experiences of body  
456 shaming. Specifically, 37.11% of the female students reported experiences related to body  
457 shaming on social media, compared to 29.14% of male students. Female to male students  
458 had an odds ratio of 1.493 regarding the experience of body shaming; in other words, female  
459 were almost 1.5 times more likely to experience body shaming compared to males. The  
460 most frequently reported reasons for body shaming were body shape (11.32%), weight  
461 (9.85%), and height (5.24%), with social media being a particularly prevalent platform for  
462 these forms of shaming. The study also found that females were more likely to face body  
463 shaming through text messages and comments from relatives or friends on social media,  
464 with odds ratios of 1.438 and 1.431, respectively. Conversely, males were more likely to  
465 experience body shaming through comments (OR = 1.728) and sending audio/videos (OR =  
466 1.225). This disparity can be explained by the fact that women are subject to many societal  
467 expectations and pressures of compliance with certain physical standards. Women are  
468 judged more by their appearance, which shows in the higher rates of body shaming they  
469 experience. In patriarchal societies, such attitudes towards women have existed worldwide  
470 since ancient times, creating inferior images of women.

471 In this study, the impacts of body shaming were multifaceted. Nearly half of the students  
472 (47.59%) reported emotional distress, while 40.25% experienced body anxiety or  
473 dissatisfaction, 39.62% suffered from depression and inferiority and dissatisfaction with life  
474 (30.82%). The study found that female students not only face body shaming more frequently  
475 but also suffer more impacts. Females are 1.5 times more likely to suffer from decreased  
476 confidence, depression, and dissatisfaction with life due to body shaming compared to  
477 males. On the other hand, while male students reported body shaming less frequently, the  
478 study highlights a troubling trend where they are more likely to experience suicidal  
479 tendencies as a result of body shaming. This points to a different but equally serious  
480 psychological impact, suggesting that while the nature of body shaming might differ by  
481 gender, the consequences are universally damaging. The study's findings also highlight a  
482 concerning link between body shaming and suicidal tendencies, particularly among male  
483 students. The correlation analysis further supports the application of cultivation theory. There  
484 were strong correlations between decreased confidence and body anxiety or dissatisfaction,  
485 with  $r = 0.730$ , and emotional distress and depression, with  $r = 0.830$ . The correlation  
486 indicates that the extent to which students are increasingly exposed to body shaming  
487 content has the likelihood to cause them to internalize negative beliefs regarding their  
488 bodies, which leads to significant impacts. According to this discussion, cultivation theory  
489 provides a framework for understanding how media consumption can shape social reality  
490 and influence public perceptions over time.

491 Students' perceptions of body shaming revealed that 41.30% believed it stems from a  
492 bullying tendency towards others, while 27.46% believed that many people do body shaming  
493 unknowingly. A majority of the students strongly agreed and agreed, 51.15% and 40.67%,  
494 respectively, that body shaming is a serious issue that affects self-esteem and may further  
495 lead to serious mental health problems like eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. Most  
496 students have expressed their opinions that there ought to be legal provisions to deal with  
497 and limit body shaming on these social media sites. There is a strong consensus among  
498 students for increasing awareness and educational initiatives on the issue to combat body

499 shaming. The strongest factor identified was the need for awareness to control body  
500 shaming situations on social media (P7 = 0.788). Other significant factors included the belief  
501 that body shaming is increasing due to social media, both online and offline (P2 = 0.768),  
502 and the necessity for laws to regulate body shaming (P6 = 0.738). The PCA indicated that  
503 awareness, education, and legal measures are perceived as crucial in addressing body  
504 shaming among students.

## 505 **8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

506 The world and the era that we live in have already turned into an age of information with the  
507 rapid exploration of information and communication technology (ICT). People are observing  
508 the positive and negative side impacts of ICT and different types of social media (Jaijaidin,  
509 2023). The present study highlighted these negative aspects of social media in body  
510 shaming among students. In this study, social media have been identified as a significant  
511 catalyst in the increase in body shaming incidents. This detailed analysis delves into the  
512 prevalence, impacts, gender-differences experiences and students' perceptions of body  
513 shaming among 477 university students. This study found that body shaming is a prevalent  
514 issue among university students, particularly exacerbated by social media. Most female  
515 students who are active on social media often face body shaming more than male students.  
516 This research has shown that body shaming not only affects a large portion of the student  
517 community but also has severe impacts, especially in the case of female students. A majority  
518 of students stated that body shaming is on the rise due to social media, with which 42.77%  
519 have strongly agreed, and 43.61% have agreed. The findings of this study therefore slightly  
520 correlate with the findings in the studies conducted by Gam et al. (2020), Okoli et al. (2023),  
521 Mehedy (2022), Trisna (2019) and Melizza et al. (2023). The study not only identifies the  
522 prevalence and impacts of body shaming but also highlights the urgent need for multifaceted  
523 interventions to address this growing problem.

524 This research emphasizes the requirement for a multi-faceted approach toward this  
525 particular problem. First and foremost, educational institutions need to sensitize students  
526 through workshops and programs that aim to improve their self-esteem, self-identity, and  
527 confidence. The government should encourage public awareness campaigns about the  
528 negative impacts of body shaming in order to create a helpful and conscious community.  
529 Thirdly, laws such as the ICT Act censor content that may lead to body shaming. Integrating  
530 body shaming into some chapters in textbooks may sow the seed of awareness and  
531 sensitization at an early stage. Therefore, we require nothing less than comprehensive  
532 awareness and sensitivity to the context of family, education, and culture. It may be effective  
533 at a personal level to disregard body shaming through self-confidence, positivity, and  
534 ignoring negative comments. To prevent body shaming, we need to address both online and  
535 offline factors, such as media and public campaigns, counseling, support, education sector  
536 reforms, and positive online content. By combining these strategies, we can create a more  
537 sensitive and resilient community that is willing to address body shaming.

## 538 **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

540 Although body shaming can impact people of any age, this study has just focused on  
541 university students at tertiary public institutes in Bangladesh. Aside from that, this study  
542 centered only on Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, where students of this university were  
543 the respondents to this research. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all students  
544 at public and private universities in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, this study provides a  
545 significant finding about the prevalence and impact of body shaming among students.  
546

547

## 548 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

549

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## 553 **DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

554

555 The researcher declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language  
556 Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the  
557 writing or editing of manuscripts.

558

## 559 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

560

561 The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

562

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