

# "INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE IN THE PRACTICE OF FAD DIETS "



PROJECT SUBMITTED

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of the degree of

B.Sc NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

BY

LIYA LAWRENCE

SB20ND011

DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL

NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

WOMEN'S STUDY CENTRE

ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

ERNAKULAM

APRIL 2023

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APRIL 2023

CERTIFIED AS BONAFIDE RESEARCH WORK

Signature of Internal Examiner

Signature of External Examiner

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled “**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE IN THE PRACTICE OF FAD DIETS**” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelor's Programme in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics is a record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Ms. Rose Mathew**, Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, Women’s Study Centre, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam and has not been submitted in part or full of any other degree/diploma/fellowship or the similar titles to any candidate of any other university.

Place: Ernakulam

Liya Lawrence

Date: 18/04/2023

## **CERTIFICATE**

I here certify that the project entitled “**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE IN THE PRACTICE OF FAD DIETS**” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Bachelor's Programme in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics is a record of original work done by Ms. Liya Lawrence during the period of the study under my guidance and supervision.

**Signature of the HOD**

**Signature of the Research Guide with designation**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I bow my head before God Almighty for the blessings, love and care. Next, I would like to express my deep sense of attitude and heartfelt thanks to my parents and family for their co-operation, encouragement and moral support.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Our perspectives about everything are changing constantly with the emerging advancements in technology. Social media has been a great influence in the transition of the way we converse, work together, and produce content. (Aral S. et al., 2013) With this accessible social media it has also grown to become one way of communicating and promoting about health and its other disciplines. This promotion has both authentic and authoritative sources like WHO and also the social media ‘influencers’ who might provide information from their own experience and also for promotional activities. This information may not have screening as done by public organization. The field of nutrition is no exception to this for promotion of information. (Lynn T et al., 2020)

With celebrities, athletes and fitness models being among the most followed individuals on social media. Their well fit and toned bodies want the common public to have similar bodies. This can lead to thoughts about one’s own body image. According to National Eating Disorders Collaboration, body image is a combination of the thoughts and feelings that you have about your body. Body image may range between positive and negative experiences. Body image is influenced by internal (e.g. personality) and external (e.g. social environment) factors.

With the ongoing obesity endemic with India having a 40.3% obesity prevalence rate. South had the most zonal variance at 46.51%, and east had the lowest variation at 32.96%. Obesity rates were greater in urban than rural areas (44.17% vs. 36.08%), among women than men (41.88% vs. 38.67%), and among people over 40 than those under 40 (45.81% vs. 34.58%). (Venkatrao M et al., 2021) Being overweight or obese has had negative impact on the physical, social as well as psychological well-being of the individuals. Thus, leading to body dissatisfaction.

Body dissatisfaction has been linked to many psychological consequences. It is known to contribute to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. Of particular interest is its role in the development of eating disorders. Dieting is sometimes looked upon to play a mediating role between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem, where body dissatisfaction leads to dieting, which then leads to low self-esteem (Paxton et al., 2006).

In every aspect of someone’s life, such as going for shopping, watching television, reading fashion magazines and following favourite celebrities, the very thin figure is linked with a happy and

successful life. Therefore, thousands of teenagers are exposed to the ‘ideal’, unrealistic image of models, who according to medical standards, try to maintain a 15% below normal weight and meet the criteria for anorexia (Mirror Mirror Eating Disorders [MMED], 2014). Television, movies and social media are full of diet advertisements about food supplements, diet programs and in general chemically based ways to lose weight. Every month new novel diets promise to cause dramatic changes to the appearance of overweight people probably due to the fact that all previous diets did not work and are rather unhealthy (MMED, 2014).

A fad diet is usually described as a weight loss plan that guarantees quick weight loss and dramatic results with not much effort. (Bastin, 2004). These dieting methods alter the intake of macronutrients to specific proportions or instruct people to intake or avoid particular foods. (Spadine M & Patterson MS , 2022) They limit the range of food types included in the meal plan and do not reassure a balanced and healthy diet. They usually propose ‘miracle’ foods that need to be consumed in abnormal quantities and help fat burning with a minimal effort. Some focus on consuming large quantities of one food type that could result in intestinal disturbance, bloating, bad breath and nutritional imbalances (Bastin, 2004). Fad diets that have been trending for a while include watermelon diet, paleodiet, ketogenic diet, blood type diet and alkaline diet.

Although these diets help in weight reduction at a fast rate they seem to have adverse long-term effects. Weight loss happens too quickly, with the majority of the decreased weight being of muscle rather than fat. Rapid weight loss can also result in a number of health problems, including constipation, inadequate vitamin and energy intake, and fatigue, all of which are brought on by eating less calories (HRF, 2014).

Increase in obesity endemic and models, wrong perceptions of what is ideally healthy, unauthorized data circulating through our finger tips we are pushed to following fad diets. This study would enable to understand the how social media effects one’s perception of self-image and body image and how this forces one to follow fad or unrealistic diet plans. It enables to understand the correlation between social media, body image and the practice of fad diets, the various strategies or regimes followed by the people for weight loss as well as to stay slim. Thus the study is very relevant for the current society.

**AIM:**

To understand the influence of social media and body image on the practice of fad diets.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- To understand one's perception of body image and body shape.
- To understand the various dietary factors utilized for weight loss.
- To understand the various practices followed for weight loss.
- To understand the correlation between social media and practice of fad diets.

**REVIEW OF  
LITERATURE**

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature pertaining to the study on '**Influence of Social Media and Self Image in the Practice of Fad Diets**' is discussed under the following headings:

### **2.1.Diet Pattern**

### **2.2. Fad diets**

### **2.3. Self-Image and Reasoning Behind Dietary Pattern**

### **2.4.Social Media and Diet**

#### **2.1 Dieting Pattern**

According to Markey, C & Markey, P (2005), connections were studied between healthy and bad dietary patterns and men's and women's body image. The Contour Drawing Rating Scale was used to evaluate the body satisfaction and perceptions of 218 participants, 104 men and 104 women. The Weight Management Behavior Scale was used to gauge participants' dietary habits, and body mass index was used to gauge their weight status (BMI). Despite the fact that the majority of the sample's men tended to be overweight or obese, they were more likely than the women to be happy with their physical appearance. The majority of males did express some level of unhappiness with their physical appearance. In addition, although more men than women admitted to dieting, 79% of men said they engaged in at least one healthy dieting habit, while over 36% said they engaged in at least one bad one. These findings show that both men and women engage in diet-related actions quite frequently.

Another study by Canpolat, B (2005), examined the roles of body image, ideal body weight, self-perception, and body mass index (BMI) on the dieting behavior of Turkish adolescents. The 531 participants in the study, who were aged 15 to 17, were chosen from five specialised high schools in Ankara. They completed the Dieting Status Measure, the Body Image Satisfaction Questionnaire, and the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA). Height and weight of the participants were also determined. The findings suggest that rather than being truly overweight, a slimmer body ideal, low self-worth, and a low physical self-concept had more substantial influence on body dissatisfaction and

dieting. Therefore, having a thinner body ideal and, thus, dieting in females, may not necessarily be prohibited by good physical self-concept scores and body satisfaction.

Brownell, K (1991) did a study on Dieting and the search for the perfect body: Where physiology and culture collide. Modern society breeds a search for the perfect body. Today's aesthetic ideal is extremely thin, and now, is the need to be physically fit. People seek the ideal, not only because of expected health benefits, but because of what the ideal symbolizes in our culture (self-control, success, acceptance). Two assumptions are widespread with regard to body weight and shape. One is that the body is infinitely malleable, and that with the right combination of diet and exercise, every person can reach the ideal. The second is that vast rewards await the person who attains the ideal. Research has shown that biological variables, particularly genetics, are influential in the regulation of body weight and shape. Hence, there are limits to how much a person can change. In addition, the rewards of being attractive are less than most would expect. There are serious consequences of seeking the ideal and falling short, some psychological and others physiological (e.g., increased health risk for weight cycling). Clinical and research efforts are necessary to help individuals establish reasonable weight and shape goals, and to educate the public accordingly.

Keifer, C (2005) did a study on Eating and Dietary Differences in Men and Women. There are some considerable gender-specific differences in many areas of nutrition. Several of them already emerge in childhood or adolescence. Women have a higher awareness and better knowledge of nutrition than men. They also seek nutrition counselling more frequently than men do. Women eat more fruits, vegetables, cereals, milk, dairy products and whole grain products, whereas the consumption of red meat, particularly pork, sausages, eggs, alcohol, high sucrose foods is higher in men. Gender-specific differences are also obvious as far as nutrient intake and recommendations for the dietary allowances are concerned. Men's approach towards nutrition is uncomplicated and pleasure orientated whereas women rather have an ambivalent attitude. They are less satisfied with their weight. Restrained eating, dieting and eating disorders are much more common in women. Men, however, control their weight with exercising and implement diets only for health reasons. The reasons for the different eating behaviours and the different attitudes towards nutrition can be found in psychological and socio-cultural factors. Prevalence of obesity is similar between the sexes; men are however more frequently overweight. Typically their body fat is distributed viscerally, which is associated with a

higher risk of associated diseases. On the other hand visceral body fat can be reduced more easily and the potential benefits of weight loss are higher in people with visceral fat distribution.

## **2.2 Fad Diets**

A fad diet is any weight loss plan that promises quick results and is usually a temporary nutritional change. ( Khawandanah J & Tewfik I , 2016) These diets have changes in patterns of intake various macronutrients and micronutrients. Hence making the body deficit in these and thus leading to faster loss of weight.

According to a study conducted in 2021 by Vidianingar M et al. 52 female models between the ages of 18 and 25 were chosen by simple random sampling. Fad diet information was gathered by a questionnaire, nutritional status was determined using the subject's most recent measurements of height and weight, and nutritional adequacy was assessed using a two-day meal recall. Chi-square analysis was done on the data. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents 69% practice fad diets, 62% have a poor perception of their bodies, 22% have nutritional statuses that are excessively thin, 44% are moderately thin, or 33% are normal and are 77% are nutritionally inadequate. It was concluded that the female models who followed fad diets by consuming drinks that are thought to burn fat (slimming products like shakers, slimming teas, and fibrous drinks), consuming only one type of food (carbohydrates only, protein only, or fruit and vegetables only), results in inadequate nutritional intake in the body and nutritional status below normal due to improper food selection and psychological factors.

In a study conducted by Tahreem A et al. on Fad diets: Facts and Fiction in 2022, the global prevalence of obesity is alarmingly high and is impacting both developed and underdeveloped countries, beyond the borders of ethnicity, sex, and age. On the other hand, the global interest in dieting has increased, and people are obsessed with certain fad diets, assuming them as a quick fix for their long-term problems. A fad diet is a popular dietary pattern known to be a quick fix for obesity. These diets are quite appealing due to the proposed claims, but the lack of scientific evidence is a big problem. Such diets are often marketed with specific claims that defy the basic principles of biochemistry and nutritional adequacy. These diets may have protective effects against obesity and certain chronic



diseases like cardiovascular diseases, metabolic syndrome, and certain cancers. Limited evidence exists to support the proposed claims; rather certain studies suggest the negative health consequences of long-term adherence to such dietary patterns. Many fad diets have emerged in the previous few decades.

Spadine M & Patterson MS did a study on social influence on fad diets use. 13 people were selected for this study in 2022. A fad diet is a general word for dieting strategies that advise changing the intake of macronutrients to certain proportions or advise people to consume or avoid specific foods, frequently with the aim of achieving rapid weight loss. Prior research reviews have noted how social influence affects eating habits generally, but they haven't yet looked specifically at fad diets. The methods used were Medline, PsycInfo, Embase, CINAHL, and CENTRAL databases were searched using PRISMA standards to find articles examining the effect of social on the usage of fad diets. The results showed that 62% of reviewed studies examined interpersonal influence and 92% reported social influence impacting a variety of fad diet behaviours. Social influence is associated with the adoption, adherence, and termination of fad diets.

According to a study conducted in 2021 by Schutz Y et al. on Low-carbohydrate ketogenic diets in body weight control: A recurrent plaguing issue of fad diets. The most appropriate type of diets to maintain or lose body weight over the medium to long term has been a matter of controversy and debates for more than half a century. Both voluntarily and forcible food restriction, resulting in negative energy and macronutrient balance and hence weight loss, have not been designed to be maintained for the long term. By contrast, when a classical and traditional type of alimentation is consumed in special conditions like the Mediterranean diet, it generally provides an appropriate nutritional density of essential macronutrients and micronutrients; it is hence appropriate for long-term use, and it provides several benefits for health if the compliance of the individuals is maintained over time.

### **2.3 Self-Image and Reasoning Behind Dietary Pattern**

Kapoor A et al. did a study on relationship of eating behavior and self-esteem with body image perception and other factors among female college students of University of Delhi in 2022. This cross-

sectional study was conducted among 180 female undergraduate students of University of Delhi. Sociodemographic characteristics and anthropometric measurements were recorded. Eating Attitude Test-26, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Contour Drawing Rating Scale and Body Shape Questionnaire 34 were used to assess eating behavior, self-esteem, body image dissatisfaction and body shape concerns, respectively. In this study, 27.8% of the study participants were overweight or obese, 30.6% had body shape concerns and 76.7% had body image dissatisfaction. Significant proportion (13.9%) of the participants was identified as high risk for the development of Eating Disorders and having low self-esteem (12.8%). The study concluded that factors such as nutritional status, family influences, type of college and body shape concerns lead to high risk eating behavior and low self-esteem.

Ribeiro-Silva & Fiaccone, R did a study on Body image dissatisfaction and dietary patterns according to nutritional status in adolescents in 2017. A cross-sectional study of 1496 adolescents was conducted. The participants completed the Body Shape Questionnaire. Demographic, anthropometric, and socioeconomic data were collected, as well as information regarding the pubertal development and dietary intake. Body image dissatisfaction was identified in 19.5% of the adolescents. Three dietary patterns were identified: (1) the Western pattern was composed of sweets and sugars, soft drinks, typical dishes, pastries, fast food, beef, milk, and dairy products; (2) the Traditional pattern was composed of oils, chicken, fish, eggs, processed meat products, cereals (rice, cassava flour, pasta, etc.), baked beans, and bread; and (3) the Restrictive pattern was composed of granola, roots, vegetables, and fruit. Amongst overweight/obese adolescents, those with slight and moderate body image dissatisfaction were less likely to follow a Western-like dietary pattern when compared with those satisfied with their body image. Additionally, in this group, adolescents with high body image dissatisfaction was more likely to follow a restrictive pattern.

Romieu I et al did a study to investigate the relationship between dietary patterns and self-perceived body shape silhouette and BMI in a sample of Mexican women. A cross-sectional analysis of dietary habits from baseline data of a large cohort study (EsMaestra) conducted in 2006-2008 in Veracruz, Mexico. 20330 Mexican teachers provided information on body shape silhouette at baseline, changes in body shape silhouette and BMI, as well as information on sociodemographic variables and lifestyle. High intakes of carbohydrates, sweet drinks and refined foods are related to larger silhouettes.

Public health intervention improving access to healthy dietary guidelines, healthy food choice in the work place, promotion of physical activity and regulation of beverages with a high sugar content and of refined foods should be considered.

According to Satia, J et al did a study on Motivations for healthful dietary change in 2007 to describe scales that measure motivations for changing dietary behaviour, and to examine associations of these scales with current diet and dietary. Participants were 1205 adults selected at random from enrollees of a large Health Maintenance Organization. At baseline, data were collected on motives for changing diet, fruit and vegetable intake, fat-related dietary habits, and demographic characteristics. Participants were then randomised to receive the intervention or to receive no materials. A follow-up survey was administered at 12 months. In this study, majority of participants reported that it was very important to make dietary changes to feel better (72%) and to control an existing medical problem (57%), but very few (4%) were motivated by pressure from others. Factor analysis of the diet motivation items yielded two intrinsic ('self-image' and 'personal health') and one extrinsic ('social pressure') scales with fair internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.59$  to  $0.68$ ). Motivation scales were statistically significantly associated with demographic characteristics and baseline diet. For example, desire for a better self-image was a stronger motivator for changing diet among females, while personal health was more important to older persons and men ( $P < 0.001$ ). Social pressure to change diet was statistically significantly associated with higher fat intake ( $r = 0.11$ ) and self-image was associated with lower fat intake ( $r = -0.14$ , both  $P < 0.001$ ). Motivation by social pressure and self-image were both significantly associated with greater fat reduction at 12 months post-intervention ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## **2.4 Social Media and Diet**

Jeong, H & Shin, K (2022) conducted a study on How Does Adolescents' Usage of Social Media Affect Their Dietary Satisfaction. In order to improve the health status of adolescents, studies are needed to illuminate the essence of their general and dietary lifestyle. Thus, we conducted this study to verify meaningful relationships between adolescent usage of social media (USM), which plays an important role in their life, their food consumption behavior (FCB), and their dietary satisfaction. This study used two analysis methods: t-tests and structural equation modeling (SEM). This study

verified whether there was a significant difference in adolescent FCB depending on their USM using t-tests. This study proposes that the following FCBs showed significant differences between users and non-users of social media in adolescents: a tendency to try new types of food ( $t = 2.134, p < 0.05$ ), a tendency to avoid foods with harmful risks such as suspected spoilage ( $t = 3.513, p < 0.001$ ), a tendency to eat bread or fruit for a simple breakfast ( $t = -3.893, p < 0.001$ ), and a tendency to often use home meal replacements (HMR), eat out or have food delivered ( $t = -3.245, p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, this study used SEM to verify the causal relationship between adolescent USM and their dietary satisfaction. According to the results of SEM, adolescents' USM mediated by the FCB of preferring convenience fully mediates the negative relationship between adolescent USM and their dietary satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$ ). It is necessary to reverse the situation in which adolescent dietary satisfaction decreases as their FCB of preferring convenience increases. Government regulations for food companies and autonomous efforts for quality improvements on their part are needed

Lynn, T (2020) did a study on Sorting the Healthy Diet Signal from the Social Media Expert Noise: Preliminary Evidence from the Healthy Diet Discourse on Twitter. Over 2.8 million people die each year from being overweight or obese, a largely preventable disease. Social media has fundamentally changed the way we communicate, collaborate, consume, and create content. The ease with which content can be shared has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of individuals or organisations that seek to influence opinion and the volume of content that they generate. Unfortunately, from a public health perspective, many of these 'influencers' may be poorly qualified in order to provide nutritional or dietary guidance, and advice given may be without accepted scientific evidence and contrary to public health policy. In this preliminary study, we analyse the 'healthy diet' discourse on Twitter. While using a multi-component analytical approach, we analyse more than 1.2 million English language tweets over a 16-month period in order to identify and characterise the influential actors and discover topics of interest in the discourse. Our analysis suggests that the discourse is dominated by non-health professionals. Public health policy makers and professional nutritionists need to consider what interventions can be taken in order to counteract the influence of non-professional and bad actors on social media.

Another study by Williams, G (2014), conducted a systematic review of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) examining the use of social media to promote healthy diet and exercise in the general

population. 22 studies were included. Participants were typically, middle-aged Caucasian women of mid-to-high socioeconomic status. There were a variety of interventions, comparison groups and outcomes. All studies showed a decrease in programme usage throughout the intervention period. There was a significant difference in favour of the social media intervention; however, in the other case, a greater difference was observed in the comparison groups. Social media may provide certain advantages for public health interventions because it is popular, it can reach a large and diverse audience and may be relatively less expensive to administer and maintain. However, studies of social media interventions to date relating to healthy diet and exercise tend to show low levels of participation and adherence, and do not show significant differences between groups in key outcomes. Despite its growing popularity, there is little evidence that social media interventions demonstrate a significant benefit for improving healthy diet and exercise

# **METHODOLGY**

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology pertaining to the study on ‘**Influence of Social Media and Self Image in the Practice of Fad Diets**’ is given under the following heads:

#### **3.1 Selection of Subjects**

#### **3.2 Selection of Method**

#### **3.3 Selection of Tool**

#### **3.4 Collection of Data**

#### **3.5 Analysis of the Data**

##### **3.1 Selection of Subjects**

Sampling means to select a smaller population from a large population so as to derive information about the larger population which has been selected. (Adwok J, 2015).

For the present study random sampling was used. Through this method samples are chosen randomly from a population, usually to make it easier to generalise from the sample to the population.

The study mainly focused on people residing in different regions of Ernakulam. While sampling 50 men and 50 women were selected between age group of 18-50 years. Thus, the sample of the study consisted of a total of 100 participants.

##### **3.2 Selection of Method**

The method selected for the present study was a survey method using a questionnaire. It is the process of gathering data from a sample of people using their responses to questions in order to learn more and get perspective on a range of topics relevant to the current study. (Ponto, J 2015).

##### **3.3 Selection of Tool**

The tool selected for the present study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a set of printed or written questions with a choice of answers, devised for the purposes of a survey or statistical study.

The questionnaire was prepared as an adaptation of the questionnaire used by Neha M Tamhane for her study “The Role of Body Image, Dieting, Self-Esteem and Binge Eating in Health Behaviors”

(2017) and by Lisa La Chapelle Berry (1999) “Media and Peer influence on fad diets tried by adolescent”.

The questionnaire consisted of the various aspects related to the background information of the subjects' demographic profile, body image, diet patterns for weight loss and social media status.

### **3.4 Collection of Data**

The questionnaire was prepared with the help of Google forms. These were circulated among the selected sample through WhatsApp and Emails. The participants filled in the form and their response was recorded. The questionnaire used is added in Appendix.

### **3.5 Analysis of the Data**

The collected participant responses of the questionnaire was consolidated into tables, graphs and various charts and analyzed by using the percentile method to form conclusive data for the study.



# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The result and discussion of the topic “**Influence of Social Media and Self-Image in the Practice of Fad Diets**” can be discussed under the following heading:

### **4.1 Demographic Data of the samples.**

#### **4.1.1 Age**

#### **4.1.2 Educational Qualification**

#### **4.1.3 Occupation**

### **4.2 Body Image and Body shape**

### **4.3 Dieting for weight loss**

#### **4.3.1 Weight Loss Diet Patters**

#### **4.3.2 Pattern of Skipping Meal**

#### **4.3.3 Vomiting to Lose Weight**

### **4.4 Social media and its effects on diets**

#### **4.4.1 Time spent on influencer accounts**

#### **4.4.2 Practice of regimes from these accounts**

#### **4.4.3 Appeal for Pseudo – Dieticians**

### **4.1 Demographic Data of the samples.**

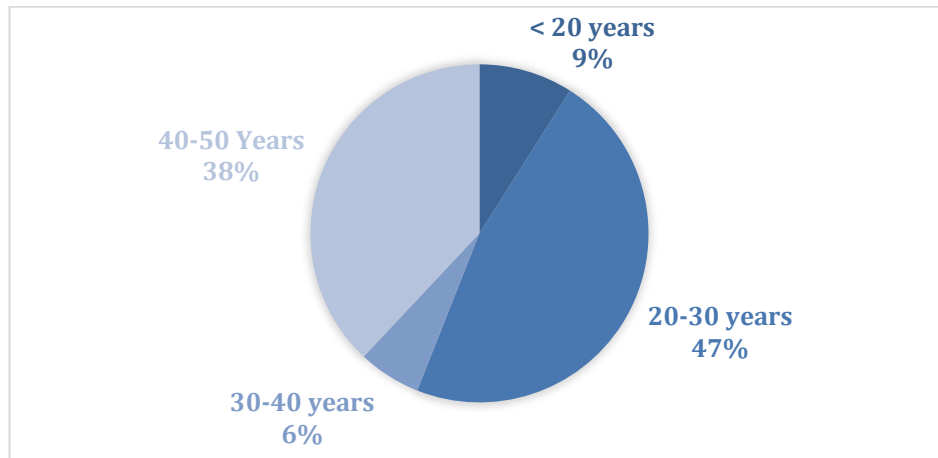
Through the questionnaire various demographic factors of the participants like age, gender, educational qualification and area of living was studied. A total of 100 responses were collected with the help of google forms. Among these eighty-four percent lived in the urban area whereas sixteen percent lived in the rural area.

#### **4.1.1 Age**

The survey participants were a mixed group in terms of age with participants from age groups ranging from below 20 years to 50 years as given in the table below:

**Table 1: Age -Wise Distribution of Participants**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
< 20 years	9
<b>20-30 years</b>	<b>47</b>
30-40 years	6
40-50 Years	38



**Figure 1: Age -Wise Distribution of Participants**

From the above figure it can be understood that maximum (47%) survey takers were in the age group of 20-30 years of age, 38% were between 40-50 years of age, 9% were below 20 years of age and 6% of participants were between 30-40 years of age.

#### **4.1.2 Educational Qualification**

With the help of the questionnaire, the education qualification of the participants was noted. The samples had mixed group with 12<sup>th</sup> standard students as well postgraduates. Table 2 shows the education wise distribution of the participants.

**Table 2: Distribution of Participants based on Educational Qualification**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
12th standard Students	12
Undergraduates	39
<b>Post-Graduates</b>	<b>49</b>

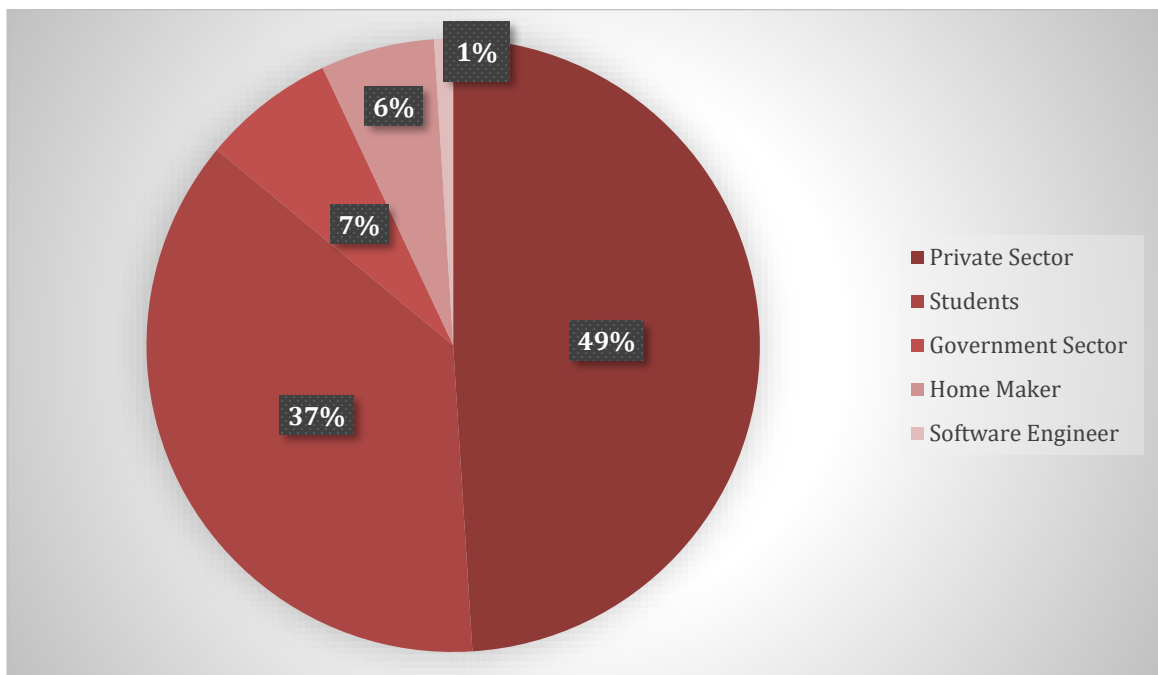
From Table 2 it is depicted that almost half (49%) of the participants were postgraduates whereas the remaining fifty-one percent were undergraduates or 12<sup>th</sup> graders with thirty nine percent and twelve percent respectively.

### 4.1.3 Occupation

The occupational data was asked to understand the kind of people the participant is involved with, work pattern etc. Table 3 contains the occupation data of the samples.

**Table 3: Occupational Information of Participants**

Occupation	Percentage of Participants (%)
<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>49</b>
Students	37
Government Sector	7
Home Maker	6
Software Engineer	1

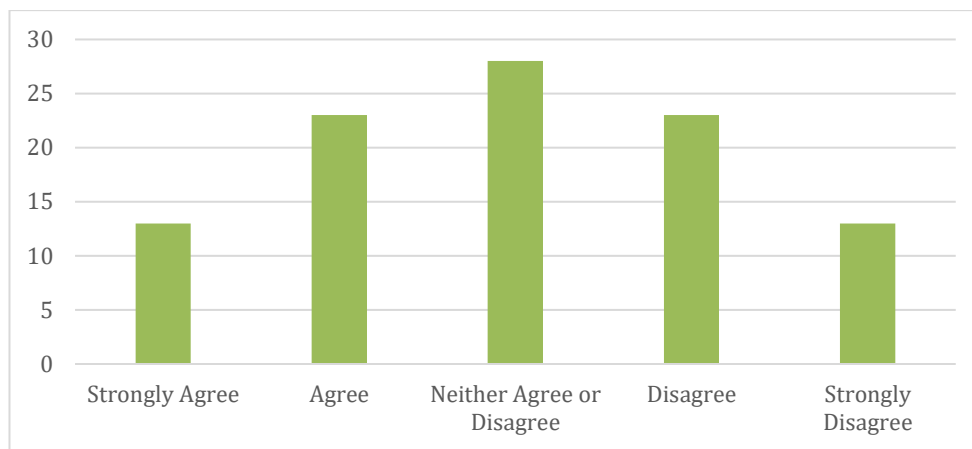


**Figure 2: Occupational Information of Participants**

From the occupational information asked it was found that 49% of the participants were working in the private sector, 37% of the total participants were students, 7% of the participants were working in the government sector, 6% of the participants were homemakers and the remaining 1% of the total participants worked as software engineer.

#### 4.2 Body Image and Body shape

The next session of the questionnaire was dedicated to understand people’s perspective on body image and shape. Participants were asked to give their opinions of agreement to the statement, “People who are thin are better looking than those who are overweight”.



**Figure 3: Participants Perspective Thinness Better Than Being Overweight**

Figure 3 explains that 28% of the participants neither agreed or disagreed. Whereas as 36% of the people agreed that its better to be thin than being overweight. At the same time 36% of the samples also disagreed to this statement.

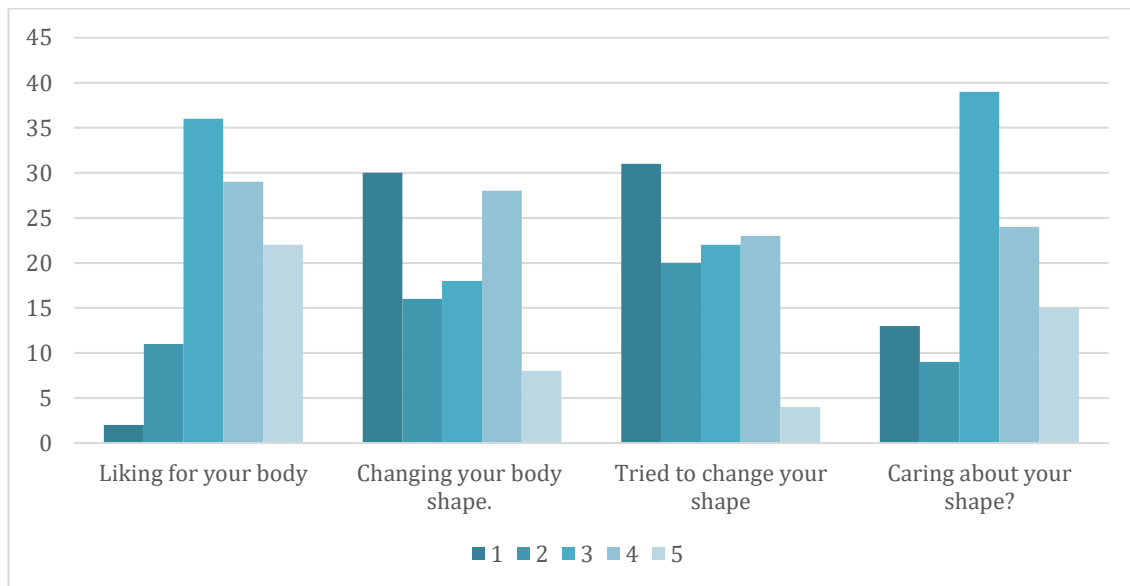
These results are contradicting to the previous study conducted among adolescents alone wherein majority believed it was better to be thin as overweight was sign of being ill, less motivated and socially withdrawn. (C. Greenleaf et al., 2006)

The questionnaire also had a self-analytical session to understand the samples perspective about themselves and their own body image and shape. This was done through rating scale wherein was

attributed to be '1- Not at All and 5- Very much'. These question and views are elaborated in the table below (Table 4)

**Table 4: Participants Self Analysis on Body shape and Image**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Liking for your body</b>	2	11	<b>36</b>	29	22
<b>Care about shape.</b>	13	9	<b>39</b>	24	15
<b>Changing your body shape.</b>	<b>30</b>	16	18	28	8
<b>Tried to change your shape</b>	<b>31</b>	20	22	23	4



**Figure 4: Participants Self Analysis on Body shape and Image**

From the above figure and table, it is seen that 51% like their body, 13% dislike their body and the remaining 36% neither like nor dislike their body. It is found that the majority of the participants like their own body. Among the samples, thirty nine percent care very much about their shape and how they look, 22% don't care about their shape and the remaining 39% neither cares nor don't care about their shape. Though there were only 13% who dislike their body, 36% of the participants would like to change their shape, 46% doesn't want to change their shape and the remaining 18% neither wants

nor doesn't want to change their shape. Therefore, majority of the participants are conscious of their body, they would want to maintain as they are.

Among the survey takers more than half of the participants (51%) have not tried to change their shape, 27% have tried to change their shape.

The results showed similarity to previous studies conducted among men and women wherein at an average they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their body and were either willing or non-willing to invest time into changing their body shape. ( H.L Quittkat et al., 2019)

### 4.3 Dieting for Weight Loss

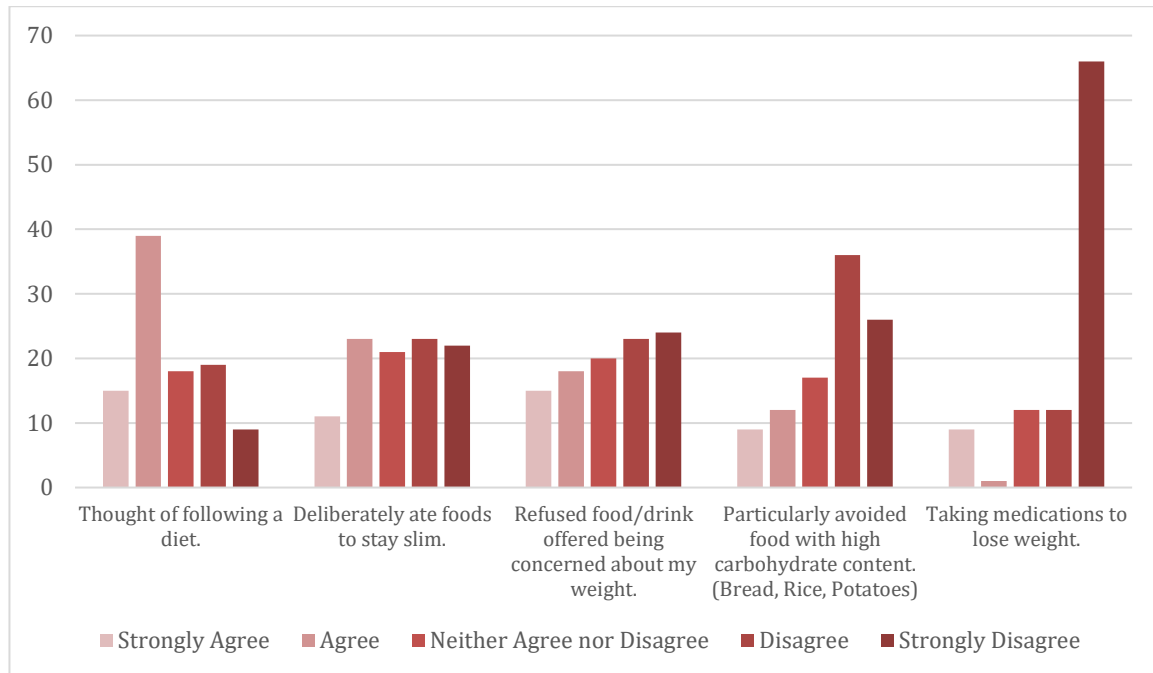
People pick various habits like vomiting, skipping meals, avoiding certain foods and drinks and included certain drinks and beverages to increase weight loss or to stay slim. The next session of the questionnaire was dedicated to understanding these habits followed by the participants.

#### 4.3.1 Weight Loss Diet Patters

The table below explains the various regimes followed by the participants to reduce weight or to maintain current weight.

**Table 5: Perspectives on Weight Loss Regimes**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Thought of following a diet.</b>	15	39	18	19	9
<b>Deliberately ate foods to stay slim.</b>	11	23	21	23	22
<b>Refused food/drink offered being concerned about my weight.</b>	15	18	20	23	24
<b>Particularly avoided food with high carbohydrate content. (Bread, Rice, Potatoes)</b>	9	12	17	36	26
<b>Taking medications to lose weight.</b>	9	1	12	12	66



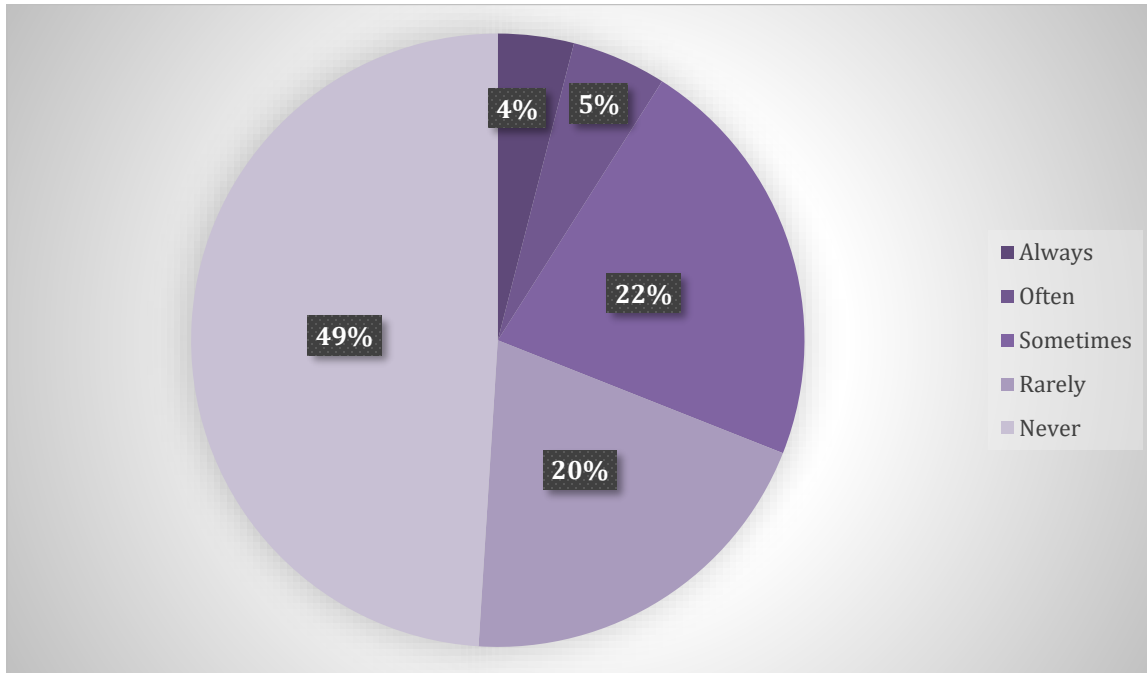
**Figure 5: Perspectives on Weight Loss Regimes**

According to the present study, 15% of participants agree to thinking of following a diet whereas 9% of participants have strongly disagreed. It was observed that 23% of participants agreed to deliberately eating foods to stay slim. 10% of participants strongly agreed to deliberately eating foods to stay slim. In our present study, 24% of participants strongly disagreed to refusing food/drink being concerned about their weight at the same time 15% of participants strongly agreed to refusing food/drink being concerned about their weight. 36% of participants disagreed to avoiding foods with high carbohydrate content. 9% of participants strongly agreed to avoiding foods with high carbohydrate content. From the table and figure it's evident that 9% of the participants strongly agree on taking medications to lose weight whereas majority (66%) believe in not taking any medications.

### 4.3.2 Skipping meals

The practice of skipping meals is becoming increasingly common adults. These have adverse effects on the including becoming more prone to various lifestyle diseases like diabetes and CVDs. (A. S Carew et al., 2021). The meal skipping practice among the participants is explained through figure 6.



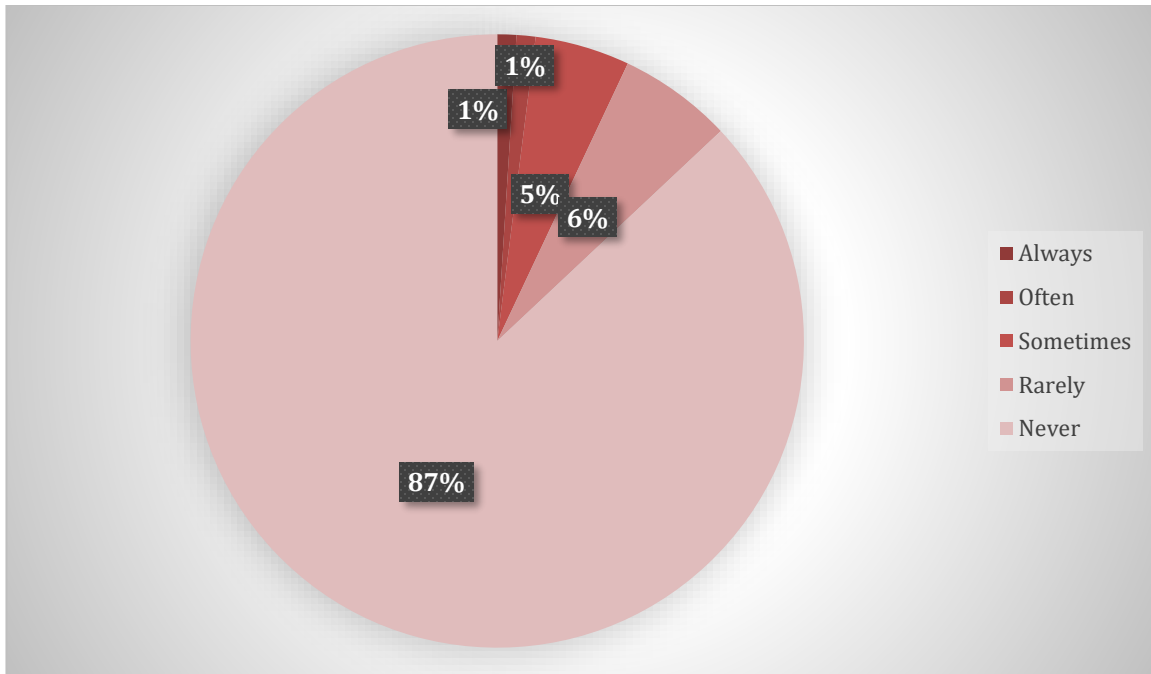


**Figure 6: Practice of Skipping Meals**

According to the study, people were asked on whether they skipped meals to lose weight and it was found that, 4% of the participants always did skip their meals, 5% often skips meals, 22% of the participants skips meals sometimes, 20% skips meals rarely and the remaining 49% never skips meals to lose weight. The participants who skipped meals were those who were more conscious about their body weight and image and skipped meals in order to lose weight accordingly.

### **4.3.3 Vomiting to lose weight**

Though vomiting as a weight loss strategy is mostly seen among adolescences, adults were also seen to practice the same for weight loss.



**Figure 7: Practice of Vomiting**

As from the study it can be seen that though 87% have never done it there were closely 7% of the participant who sometimes, often or even always do it. This is contradicting from previous study conducted by Yiing Mei Liou et al. ( 2012) among adolescents wherein 13% of the participants had the habit of vomiting to lose weight.

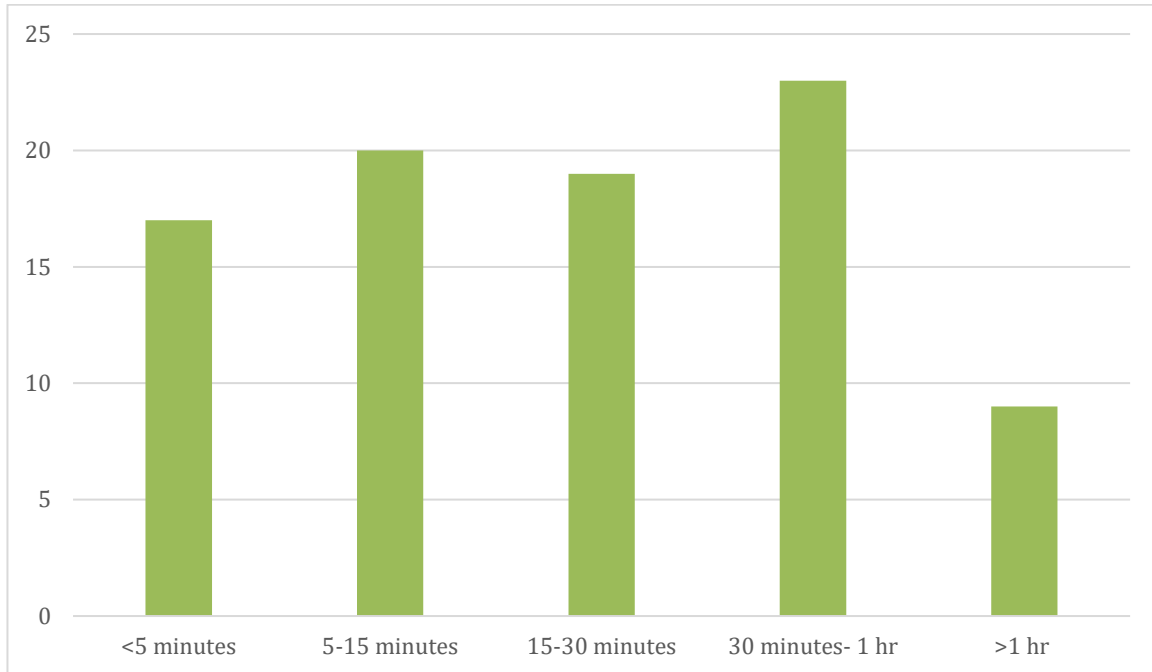
#### **4.4 Social media and its Effects on Diets**

Social media opens us to a world wherein we are exposed to hundreds of photographs of famous people and fitness or fashion models, causing an internal battle to reach unattainable standards in terms of beauty as well body shape.

Among the participants majority have been using social media through various apps like whatsapp, Instagram, facebook, youtube etc. Among these only forty – five percent participants follow fitness influencers or models.

##### **4.4.1 Time spent on Influencer Accounts**

According to the study, it was observed that 23% of participants look through social media accounts of fitness influencers for 30 minues-1 hour, 20% of participants look through social media accounts for 5-15 minutes, 9% of participants look through social media accounts for greater than an hour. 17% of participants look through social media accounts for less than 5 minutes. (Figure 8)



**Figure 8: Time spent watching Influencer Accounts**

#### 4.4.2 Practice of regimes from these accounts

People looking out for a speedy weight loss often follow the regimes followed by these influencers. Among the participants following is the data on the percentage of people following the influencers fitness regime. (Table 6)

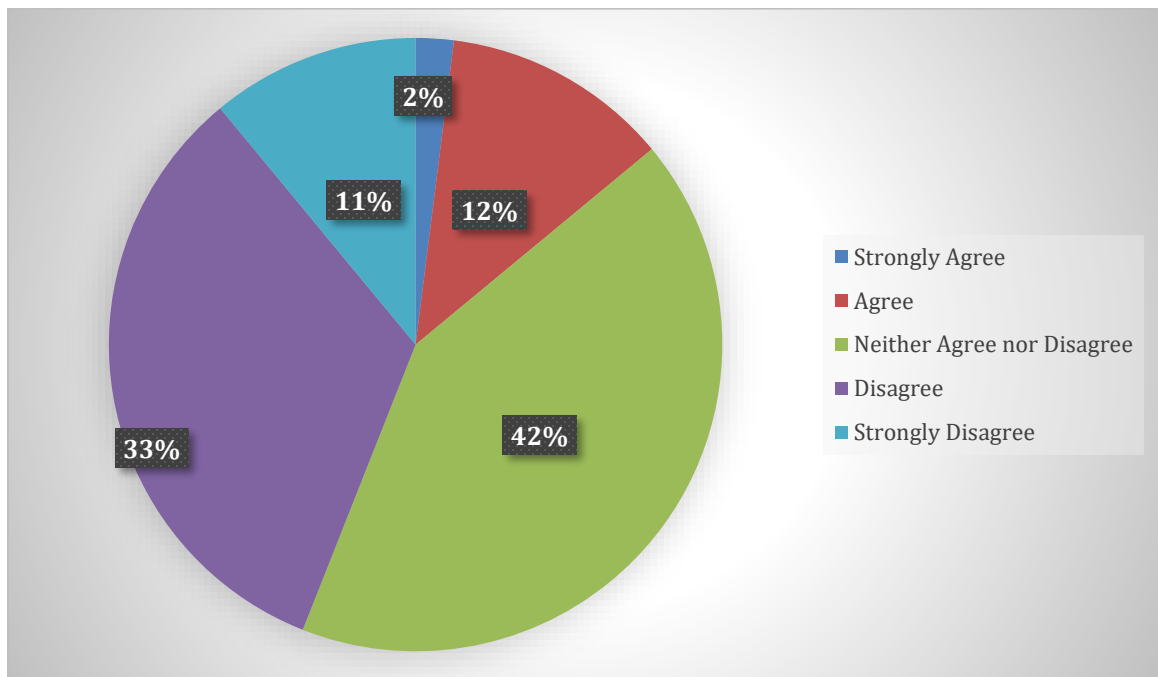
**Table 6 : Percentage of Participants Following Influencers Regime**

	Percentage of Participants (%)
<b>Never</b>	<b>37</b>
Rarely	31
Sometimes	23
Often	8
Always	1

The above table very well depicts that 37% of participants have never followed regimes from the accounts of fitness influencers, 31% of participants rarely followed regimes from these accounts. Whereas 9% of participants often or even always follow regimes from these accounts.

#### 4.4.3 Appeal for Pseudo- dietician

With growing technology it's a trend to start following regime from pseudo – dieticians and to follow their advice and regimes that consulting an actual qualified dietician. To have a better understanding, the participants were asked about their opinion on visiting an actual dietician and listening to pseudo dieticians.



**Figure 9: Appeal for Pseudo- dietician**

From the figure it is evident that 42% of participants neither agree nor disagree to finding these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician. 33% of participants disagree to finding these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician. However, 12% of participants agree to find these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician

# **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

With the prevalence of overweight and obesity growing higher and reaching endemic stages people are keen on reducing their weight. Emerging social media and its trends of healthy and fit body have negative impact on the body image of the people and lead to body dissatisfaction, forcing people looking for fast weight loss to follow unrealistic diet patterns like fad diets. A fad diet is usually described as a weight loss plan that guarantees quick weight loss and dramatic results with not much effort.

The objectives of the present study titled **“Influence of Social Media and Self-Image in the Practice of Fad Diets”** are:

- To understand one’s perception of body image and body shape.
- To understand the various dietary factors utilized for weight loss.
- To understand the various practices followed for weight loss.
- To understand the correlation between social media and practice of fad diets

The present study done to understand the influence of social media and body image on the practice of fad diets followed a survey method using a questionnaire. A total of 100 samples were collected by random sampling method focusing on people residing in different regions of Ernakulam. While sampling 50 men and 50 women were selected between age group of 18-50 years. The questionnaire consisted of the various aspects related to the background information of the subjects’ demographic profile, body image, diet patterns for weight loss and social media status. The questionnaire was prepared with the help of Google forms. These were circulated among the selected sample through WhatsApp and Emails. The information collected through the questionnaire was consolidated into tables, graphs and various charts and analysed to form conclusive data for the study.

The major findings of the study include:

- To understand the participants perception of body image they were asked about their agreement to the statement “People who are thin are better looking than those who are overweight”. It was found that 28% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed to be thin than being overweight. Whereas as 36% of the people agreed that it’s better to

be thin than being overweight. At the same time 36% of the samples also disagreed to this statement.

- Though there were only 13% who disliked their body, 36% of the participants would like to change their shape, 46% doesn't want to change their shape and the remaining 18% neither wants nor doesn't want to change their shape. Therefore, majority of the participants are conscious of their body, they would want to maintain as they are.
- According to the present study, 15% of participants agree to thinking of following a diet whereas 9% of participants have strongly disagreed.
- It was observed that 23% of participants agreed to deliberately eating foods to stay slim. 10% of participants strongly agreed to deliberately eating foods to stay slim. Twenty four percent of participants strongly disagreed to refusing food/drink being concerned about their weight at the same time 15% of participants strongly agreed to refusing food/drink being concerned about their weight.
- Thirty six percent of participants disagreed to avoiding foods with high carbohydrate content whereas 9% of participants strongly agreed to avoiding foods with high carbohydrate content.
- While 66% have refused taking medications, nine percent of the participant have been taking medications for weight loss.
- The participants who skipped meals and were involved in vomiting were those who were more conscious about their body weight and image and followed such practices to lose weight accordingly.
- According to the study, it was observed that 23% of participants look through social media accounts of fitness influencers for 30 minues-1 hour, 20% of participants look through social media accounts for 5-15 minutes, 9% of participants look through social media accounts for greater than an hour. 17% of participants look through social media accounts for less than 5 minutes.
- Forty two percent of participants neither agree nor disagree to finding these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician. Thirty three percent of participants disagree to finding these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician. However, 12% of participants agree to find these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician.

From the study it can be concluded that majority of the individuals like their body and do not care about their shape. Moreover, majority of the participants did not agree to avoiding foods with high carbohydrate contents to lose weight. A large percentage of participants never follow regimes from accounts of social media influencers and neither agree nor disagree to finding these social media accounts more beneficial than consulting a dietician. Further research can be done in the areas of correlating self-image based on social media influence and providing evidenced data correlating the BMI of an individual with the practice of fad diets.



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# **APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**SESSION 1 - Demographic Profile**

1. Name:
2. Age: a.<20yrs b.20-30yrs. c.30-40yrs. d.40-50yrs
3. Sex: 1. Male. 2. Female
4. Education: 1. Not educated 2. SSLC. 3. +2 4. Graduate 5. Postgraduate
5. Occupation: 1. Homemaker. 2. Government Sector. 3. Private sector 4. Other
6. Place of Residence: 1. Urban. 2. Rural

**SESSION 2- Body Image**

7. People who are thin are better looking than people who are overweight.

a. Agree b. Disagree. c. Strongly Agree. d. Strongly Disagree

8. On a scale of 1-5, how well do like your body?

a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. 5

9. On a scale of 1-5, do you like to change your body?

a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. 5

10. On a scale of 1-5, have you tried to change your shape?

a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. 5

11. On a scale of 1-5, how much do you care about your shape?

a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. 5

### SESSION 3 - Dieting for Weight Loss

12. How often do you skip meals to lose weight?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree

13. Have you thought of following a diet?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree.

14. Do you deliberately eat foods to stay slim?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree.

15. Do you refuse food or drink offered because you are concerned about your weight?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree

16. Do you particularly avoid food with a high carbohydrate content? (Bread, Rice, Potatoes)

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree

17. Are you consuming any medications to lose weight?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree

18. Have you discussed the following diets with your friends?

- Ketogenic diets
- Intermittent fasting
- Paleo diet
- Zone diet
- Perricone diet

a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. Strongly Agree    d. Strongly Disagree

19. How often do you vomit to lose weight?

a. Agree    b. Disagree.    c. Strongly Agree.    d. Strongly Disagree

#### SESSION 4- Social Media

The design of Instagram and the subsequent effects of fitness accounts on body image and mental health.

20 . Do you have an Social media? a. Yes b. No

21. If yes, what all social medias do you have?

a. Instagram

b. Whatsapp

c. Facebook

d. Youtube

e. Other

22. Do you follow any fitness models/influencers?

a. Yes b. No

23. How long do you spend looking at fitness models/accounts (in minutes)? Make a guess.

a. <5 minutes    b. 5-15 minute    c. 15-30 minutes    d. 30-60 minutes    e. >1 hr

24. How often do you follow the regimes from these accounts?

a. Always    b. Often    c. Sometimes    d. Rarely    e. Never

25. Have you found it more beneficial than consulting a diet consultant?

a. Strongly Agree    b. Agree    c. Neither agree nor disagree    d. Disagree    e. Strongly disagree