

## THE INFLUENCE OF SNAP CHAT FILTERS ON THE PERCEPTION OF BEAUTY STANDARDS AMONG YOUTH: A CASE STUDY FROM LAHORE

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### Abstract

*Second, this research probes into how Snapchat filters impact the views of young beauty while contemporary beauty standards come into play with fast technological innovation in Lahore, Pakistan. A quantitative cross-sectional approach was used to evaluate how filter use can influence beauty standards and self-esteem among 200 18–25-year-olds. Sharing images and confidence in doing so is encouraged by filters, despite a lower satisfaction with a natural look. However, cultural considerations are involved in this association, since Snapchat filters are somewhat consistent with the Pakistani beauty standards. Fewer gender disparities were expected, suggesting that there was a gender-wide influence. Because this suggests that cultural norms are intertwined with the digital beauty technology, mental health practitioners, educators, and social media platforms should develop culturally appropriate treatments to address the entangled relationship between the two.*

**Keywords:** Snapchat filters, beauty standards, self-esteem, youth, augmented reality, cultural influence, Pakistan

### 1. Introduction

The modern media technologies have allowed young people now to see, represent, and evaluate themselves differently. The most readily accessible app for teens for face augmentation is Snapchat, which provides AR filters (Phua et al., 2017). These filters should be studied in Lahore, where conventional beauty standards are strong, but the digital transition is fast (Tanveer, 2023).

Despite fast-changing beauty standards in the world, 'Snapchat dysmorphia' (desire to look like artists' photos) brings psychological issues. As discovered by Rajanala et al. (2018), cosmetic surgery is undertaken to match digitally filtered appearances. Platforms such as these are also used by young users to deploy sophisticated self-promotion and peer assessment tactics (Chua & Chang, 2016).

This study analyses how cultural factors affect the effects that Snapchat filters have on face beauty standards and self-esteem among Lahore youth. The current and important study is due to growing digitisation in Pakistan, specifically in metropolitan areas, where youth in Lahore act equally competent in streaming the historical and cultural continuity.

#### 1.1 Research Objectives

1. To examine the frequency and patterns of Snapchat filter usage among Lahore youth and assess its impact on perceptions of beauty standards and self-esteem levels.
2. To investigate the relationship between filter usage and self-esteem levels.
3. To analyse gender differences in filter preferences and their effects.

## 1.2 Research Questions

1. How does the use and frequency of Snapchat filters influence beauty perceptions and self-esteem levels among Lahore youth?
2. How do cultural factors mediate the impact of AR filters on beauty standards?
3. Are there significant gender differences in filter preferences and their effects?

## 1.3 Hypotheses

1. H1: Increased use of Snapchat filters is positively correlated with unrealistic beauty standards.
2. H2: There is a negative relationship between filter usage frequency and self-esteem levels.
3. H3: Cultural factors significantly moderate the impact of AR filters on beauty perceptions.
4. H4: Female users show higher engagement with beauty-enhancing filters compared to male users.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Digital Transformation of Beauty Standards

Social media platforms offer so much space to self-presentation for youth; hence, they play an important role in youth perception of beauty. According to Fardouly and Vartanian (2016), looking at social media can be bad for people's body image and self-esteem, with heavy users exhibiting greater exposure to body image and self-esteem issues. AR filters simplified the process of transforming appearance in real time. McLean et al. (2015) showed that directly related to the presence of such behaviors with adverse body image consequences for adolescents.

### 2.2 Psychological Impact and Identity Formation

The effects of altering appearance through AR filters have psychological implications of depth and significance beyond appearance itself. As noted by Rajanala et al. (2018), people are increasingly opting for cosmetic treatment to look like the social media filtered images. Kleemans et al. (2018) show that in exposure to manipulated images, body satisfaction in adolescents is negatively affected and that users prefer immediate pleasure from filters and develop dissatisfaction with their natural appearance.

### 2.3 Cultural Context of Digital Beauty Standards

There is also the tension between tradition and innovation, which is a trend running through current scholarship. Kumar and Singh (2021) investigate how local Pakistani beauty ideals negotiate or absorb digital standards, identifying the processes of cultural localization by which youth adapt and re-signify AR filters to represent a new look by local beauty standards, whilst keeping a link to the global aesthetic ideals. As noted by Thompson et al. (2021), the differences in filter choice, usage patterns, and frequency depend highly on the cultural contexts, which should be taken into consideration when conducting social research.

### 2.4 Theoretical Framework

In this research, several theoretical frameworks were used to determine how Snapchat filter use affects beauty standards. Observation and interaction with technological resources can be used to explain how young people learn and what they learn about beauty standards using Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). As Social Comparison Theory explains, youth engage in upward and downward comparisons with filters and picture editing, forming new beauty standards with the pictures that resemble edited images (Tiggemann et al., 2018). Hassan and Ahmed (2020) use Cultural Adaptation Theory in their work to explain the way traditional cultures adapt to new technologies, such as technological augmentation of

traditional cultures and how conservative youth adapt to balance adherence to cultural beauty norms with technological augmentation.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study was conducted to find out a cross-sectional quantitative correlation, using it, to assess the relationship between Lahore youth and Snapchat filter exposure and beauty ideals. This was an appropriate approach to (1) finding associations between variables, and (2) testing hypotheses on the use of filters and related phenomena (Heydari and Lai, 2019).

#### 3.2 Sampling Strategy

Members of the target population were the sample of males and females aged 18-25 living in Lahore. Through University networks, social media, and community organizations in our local area, we sampled 200 individuals using purposive sampling. Sullivan (2020) computed the power analysis of this sample size at a level of 95% confidence interval and 5% error margin.

#### 3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Consequently, our work relied on an online structured questionnaire delivered via Google Forms, including using the established scales and the culturally designed measures to do our work. Data collection was done based on demographics (age, gender, education level, economic status), filter usage frequency and preferences, beauty perception assessment, self-esteem measured using Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and cultural attitudes on beauty norms measurement through a specially designed Pakistani Cultural Attitudes Inventory.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.0. Initial data cleaning addressed missing values and outliers. Descriptive statistics provided sample characteristics and response patterns. Hypothesis testing employed correlation analyses, multiple regression modelling, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Comparison tests examined filter usage frequency and beauty expectations with covariate adjustments for demographic indices, while moderation analyses explored how cultural factors affected these relationships.

#### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The research received approval from an Institutional Review Board before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation. Privacy-preserving techniques included encrypted data storage and anonymization of analysis datasets. Research team members underwent ethics training to ensure participants were treated ethically.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The sample was nearly evenly split by gender (52.5% female, 47.5% male). Age distribution showed concentrations in the 22-23 (32%) and 24-25 (32%) ranges, with 17% aged 20-21 and 18.5% aged 18-19. Snapchat usage frequency varied: 27% used it several times daily, 21.5% once daily, 21% two to three times weekly, 16.5% once weekly, and 22% rarely or never.

#### 4.2 Filter Usage Patterns and Preferences

Mean scores for most items fell between 2.5 and 2.7 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting moderate agreement with statements about filter usage and effects. The highest means (2.74)

were observed for "feeling more confident sharing photos when using Snapchat filters" and "feeling less satisfied with appearance after using beauty filters," highlighting a paradoxical relationship.

#### 4.3 Impact on Beauty Perceptions and Self-Esteem

Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between preference for filtered appearance and decreased satisfaction with appearance after using filters ( $r = -0.179$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), contradicting our hypothesis (H2) that increased filter usage would negatively correlate with self-esteem. Regression analysis showed that feeling less satisfied with appearance after using filters was a significant predictor of preference for filtered appearance ( $\beta = -0.171$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ).

#### 4.4 Gender Differences

While most gender differences were not statistically significant, females reported slightly higher confidence when using filters ( $M = 2.86$ ) compared to males ( $M = 2.61$ ), males showed marginally higher preference for their filtered appearance ( $M = 2.61$ ) than females ( $M = 2.49$ ), and females perceived greater alignment of filters with Pakistani beauty standards ( $M = 2.75$ ) compared to males ( $M = 2.58$ ).

#### 4.5 Cultural Factors and Filter Usage

The mean score for "Snapchat filters align with traditional Pakistani beauty standards" was 2.67, indicating moderate perceived alignment. Similarly, "I feel that beauty filters conflict with cultural values" had a mean score of 2.54, suggesting a nuanced view of beauty filters' relationship with cultural values. The findings back the complex processes of digital beauty norms localization presented by Kumar and Singh (2021).

### 5. Discussion

Lahore youth's relationship with beauty perceptions can be understood as convoluted through Snapchat filters. Our paradoxical finding that filters both promote more sharing confidence and also decrease natural appearance satisfaction can be explained by 'Snapchat dysmorphia' as described by Rajanala et al. (2018). Filters show moderate alignment with Pakistani beauty standards and in this way they support Hassan and Ahmed (2020) argument on how more conservative youth have to choose their ground between cultural beauty criteria and technological augmentation.

However, with no pronounced gender differences, this points to a narrowing gender gap in urban Pakistani youth digital beauty practices, which is in line with Morgan and Lee's (2022) description of Lahore youth's hybrid digital self-presentation. Such findings shed light on the use of AR filters as a digital beauty practice for the production of beauty in different cultural contexts, highlighting the need to embrace the long-term psychological and social effects of AR filters on adolescent identity formation and well-being.

### 6. Conclusion and Implications

Snapchat filters are part of the negotiation that youth of Lahore participate in with notional alterations of beauty. The confounding influence of filter use on confidence and appearance satisfaction illuminates the various ways AR filters draw people in. How youth moderate their alignment to traditional Pakistani beauty standards is also consistent with the way youth make sense and enact the space in between global digital trends and local cultural space.

The implication of these results is very important for mental health professionals, educators, policymakers, and technology developers. Our findings for mental health professionals are that AR filters have very complex psychological effects on youth and require awareness. Culturally sensitive digital literacy programs should be developed by educators who teach

youth how to navigate the digital beauty standards while preserving cultural values. When policymakers are creating guidelines for social media use and digital wellbeing, they should consider the psychological impacts of the AR filters they permit. During the development and implementation of AR features, cultural context should be taken into consideration so that technology developers can produce more inclusive and culturally sensitive digital experiences.

Future research might include longitudinal studies to study how change in beauty perception changes over time, cross-cultural comparison of what cultural aspects influence AR filters to modify beauty ideals across different areas, and intervention studies to develop evidence-based approaches that mitigate AR filters' problems.

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