



A Study on Body Image and Self-Esteem among Young Women

Smitee Bahri, Masters in Arts, Psychology, MCM DAV College, Chandigarh, India

bahrismitee@gmail.com

Abstract

The way young women feel about their bodies and their sense of self are very important to their mental health. Body image perception develops as a result of societal expectations that frequently place an emphasis on physical grace. Following these standards can make one feel inadequate and always strive for an unreachable body image. Additionally, women are more likely to experience body shaming because of these reasons. As a result, individuals experience low self-esteem and under confidence, which has an impact on their mental health. Self-esteem and body image was measured using standardized scales. The purpose of the research was to study relationship between body image and self-esteem among young women. The results found that there is a positive correlation between Self-Esteem & Overall appearance evaluation and there is a significant negative correlation between Self-Esteem & Social Dependence. For young women to have high self-esteem, they should surround themselves with people who truly appreciate them, wear clothes which makes them feel good about themselves and rather than criticizing their own selves.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Body Image, Young Women

Introduction

One's own thoughts, feelings, and perception of the body form body image. Both external and internal factors can have an impact on a person's perception of their physical appearance, which can be either positive or negative. Young women's self-esteem and body image in India are greatly influenced by the complex interactions of media, societal expectations, and cultural standards. Traditional ideals of beauty, often promoted by media and reinforced by cultural norms that can create challenges for many individuals.

All of us start to form body image at a young age as we become conscious of how we look and seek social acceptance from our peers, family members, and the larger society around us. The way we perceive our body is influenced by our culture, society, and personal beliefs.

Self-esteem is one's total self-perception, including your limitations and views about your abilities. Your beliefs, relationships, and life events, including those related to culture, religion, and social standing, all influence our sense of self-worth. Many of our current perceptions are a reflection of the comments we have heard from people over time.

Body image is closely related to one's self-esteem. An individual's self-esteem is often impacted by their body image, which can be positive or negative. The individual may feel self-conscious about their body if they have a bad body image. They strive to change their physical appearance in an effort to fit in with social expectations and suffer from low self-esteem. Though many people are experiencing this, young women are primarily impacted. Because of their particular physique types, they receive praise or criticism. By presenting a picture of a "perfect body," the media has only worsened the situation. Women's mental health is being negatively impacted because of their low self-esteem, which might result in eating disorders or despair.

A study was conducted on 555 female college students in North India to investigate the prevalence of body image dissatisfaction and its association with self-esteem and personality traits among young Indian women. 27% of the participants experienced moderate-to-severe body image issues. Body shape dissatisfaction is significantly related to lower self-esteem and a higher body mass index. Body shape dissatisfaction was only predicted by two personality traits: neuroticism and conscientiousness. Understanding body image issues can aid in the selection of more effective interventions for the management of negative body image (Soohinda et al., 2019).

Grilo et al. (1994) conducted a study to investigate the relationship of physical-appearance-related teasing history to body image and self-esteem in obese female. Growing up with weight and size-related teasing was linked negatively to one's assessment of one's looks and favorably to body dissatisfaction as an adult. Compared to individuals with adult-onset obesity, those with early-onset obesity expressed higher levels of body dissatisfaction. The result exhibited that body image and self-esteem are related and that growing up with bullying regarding one's size or weight may be a risk factor for the formation of a negative body image.

Self- Esteem

According to Adler and Stewart (2004), self-esteem refers to a “person’s overall sense of his or her value or worth. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself.”

According to Frost and McKelvie (2005) self- esteem refers to “an evaluative element of how a person values, supports, approves or disapproves him or herself.”

Self-esteem can be defined as “the overall affective evaluation of one’s worth, value or importance” (Blaskovich & Tomaka, 1991).

According to Strelan et al. (2003), a study was conducted on 104 female participants in the age of 16-25 to investigate the interrelationships between self-objectification, reasons for exercise, body satisfaction, body esteem, and self-esteem. The study found that self-objection and appearance related reasons for exercise negatively impact body satisfaction, esteem, and self-esteem, while functional reasons for exercise positively influence these outcomes. The study suggests that motivations for exercise contribute to reduced body satisfaction and self-esteem among women with high self-objectification.

According to Srivastava and Agarwal (2013), a study was conducted on 120 young adults to investigate the self-esteem among young adults. Out of which 60 were males and 60 females. The result found out that males have higher self-esteem than women and there was no significant difference between gender and self-esteem, suggesting that it is not dependent upon gender.

Body Image

“Body image relates to a person’s perceptions, feelings and thoughts about his or her body, and is usually conceptualized as incorporating body size estimation, evaluation of body attractiveness and emotions associated with body shape and size” (Grogan, 1999; Muth & Cash, 1997).

According to Cash (2004), “body image is a multi-faceted psychological experience incorporating perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to one’s body.”

According to Fardouly et al. (2014), a study on the effect of Facebook usage on women's mood and body image was conducted on 112 females. It was found that spending time on Facebook led to more negative and more appearance discrepancies. Women with a high appearance comparison tendency reported more facial, hair, and skin-related discrepancies after Facebook exposure than on a control website.

Khalaf et al. (2015), a study was conducted to investigate perceived and ideal body image and associated factors among 663 female university students. 23% of participants agreed on the ideal body image. Behavioural, social, and economic factors positively correlated with the desire to be thinner, while socioeconomic associations positively correlated with the desire to be heavier. The result suggested that the public health sector should prioritize interventions focusing on improving adolescents' physical self-image, considering the whole family, and addressing appearance concerns and body image discrepancies.

Purpose

The purpose is to study the relationship of body image and self-esteem among young women.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant relationship of body image and self-esteem among young women.

Method

Sampling

A total of 30 young women participated from Chandigarh and Panchkula. The age of the subject ranged from 18 to 25 years.

Measures

- **Body Self Image Questionnaire- Short Form, (BSIQ-SF)** developed by Rowe et al. (1999), consists of 27 items, each on a 5-point Likert scale: ranging from 1 or a – Not at all true of myself; 2 or b – Slightly true of myself; 3 or c – About halfway true of myself; 4 or d – Mostly true of myself; 5 or e – Completely true of myself.
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, RSES** developed by Rosenberg (1965), consists of 10 items. It has 4-point Likert scale: ranging from “strongly agree to strongly disagree.”

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and questionnaires were filled through google forms, each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized Psychological Test were administrated to the participants.

Analysis of Results

Results

Table 1 *N, Mean, Standard Deviation*

	Self esteem	Overall Appearance Evaluation	Health Fitness Influence	Investme nt in Ideals	Health- Fitness Evaluation	Attention to Grooming	Height Dissatisfaction	Fatness Evaluation	Negative Affect	Social Dependence
N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	18.7	10.8	10.8	9.40	8.80	9.20	7.03	6.70	6.07	7.90
Median	17.5	11.5	11.0	10.0	9.00	9.00	6.00	6.00	4.50	8.00
Standard Deviation	5.08	2.80	2.71	3.04	2.71	2.28	4.29	3.54	3.47	2.92

TABLE 2

SHOWS CORRELATION BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE

	Self esteem	Overall Appearanc e Evaluation	Health Fitness Influenc e	Investme nt in Ideals	Health- Fitness Evaluati on	Attentio n to Groomin g	Height Dissati sfactio n	Fatness Evaluation	Negative Affect	Social Depende nce
SELF ESTEEM	—									
OVERALL APPEARANCE EVALUATION	0.5 48 *	—								
HEALTH FITNESS INFLUENCE	0.1 45	0.13 6	—							
INVESTMENT IN IDEALS	- 0.2 06	- 0.17 3	0. 52 2	** —						
HEALTH- FITNESS EVALUATION	0.3 13	0.60 4	*** 0. 14	0. 0 0	— . 0					
ATTENTION TO GROOMING	0.0 24	0.23 9	0. 37	* 0 5 5 6 6	** 0 . 1 8 0	0 . 1 8 0	—			
HEIGHT DISSATISFAC TION	- 0.1 36	- 0.18 6	0. 07 8	0 4	* . .	- 0 . 2	0 . .	—		

				4	0	1				
				7	3	1				
					8					
FATNESS	-	- **	0.	0 *	- *	0	0	—		
EVALUATION	0.0	0.51	14	.	0	.	.			
	33	1	8	4	.	2	1			
				1	4	6	8			
				5	6	4	9			
					3					
NEGATIVE	-	- ***	-	0 *	- **	0	0	0 ***	—	
AFFECT	0.3	0.71	0.	.	0	.	.	.		
	56	6	09	4	.	2	3	7		
			4	3	5	2	3	6		
				2	1	0	3	6		
					5					
SOCIAL	- *	- *	0.	0 ***	-	0 **	0 **	0 **	0 ***	—
DEPENDENCE	0.3	0.41	29	.	0	
	75	3	9	6	.	5	4	4	6	
				4	1	0	6	6	3	
				7	5	6	6	4	7	
					1					

NOTE. * P < .05, ** P < .01, *** P < .001

Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is a significant positive correlation between Self-Esteem & Overall appearance evaluation ($r= 0.548, p< .01$) and there is a significant negative correlation between Self-Esteem & Social Dependence ($r= -0.375, p< .05$). Further, we found that there is significant positive correlation between Overall Appearance Evaluation & Health-Fitness Evaluation ($r= 0.604, p< .001$) as well as a significant negative correlation with Fatness

Evaluation ($r = -0.511$, $p < .01$), Negative Affect ($r = -0.716$, $p < .001$), Social Dependence ($r = -0.413$, $p < .05$). Health fitness influence shows a significant positive correlation with Investment in Ideals ($r = 0.522$, $p < .01$) and a significant positive correlation with Attention to Grooming ($r = 0.375$, $p < .01$).

Further, the results found that there is a significant positive correlation between Investment in Ideals & Attention to Grooming ($r = 0.566$, $p < .01$), Height Dissatisfaction ($r = 0.447$, $p < .05$), Fatness Evaluation ($r = 0.415$, $p < .05$), Negative Affect ($r = 0.432$, $p < .05$), Social Dependence ($r = 0.647$, $p < .001$). The results found out that there is a significant negative correlation between Health-Fitness Evaluation & Fatness Evaluation ($r = -0.463$, $p < .05$), Negative Affect ($r = -0.515$, $p < .01$). Attention to Grooming has a significant positive correlation with Social Dependence ($r = 0.506$, $p < .01$). Additionally, the results found that there is a significant positive correlation between Height Dissatisfaction & Social Dependence ($r = 0.466$, $p < .01$). The results were found that there is a significant positive correlation between Fatness Evaluation & Negative Affect ($r = 0.766$, $p > .001$), Social Dependence ($r = 0.464$, $p < .01$). There is a significant positive correlation between Negative Affect & Social Dependence ($r = 0.637$, $p < .001$).

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between body image and self-esteem. The results found that there was a positive correlation between Self-Esteem & Overall appearance evaluation and there was a significant negative correlation between Self-Esteem & Social Dependence. Therefore, there was an impact of self-esteem and body image. For young women to have high self-esteem, she should surround themselves with people who truly appreciate them, wear clothes which makes them feel good about themselves and rather than criticizing oneself, she should try to remain positive and take professional help.

References

- Ackerman, C. E., MA. (2023, April 26). *What is Self-Esteem? A Psychologist Explains*. PositivePsychology.com.<https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem/#:~:text=Self%20Esteem%20refers%20to%20a,Adler%20%26%20Stewart%2C%202004>).
- Audrey, M., Satyadarma, M., & Subroto, U. (2020). The Correlation between Self-Esteem and Body Image: A study on female adolescent Instagram users. *Proceedings of the 2nd Tarumanagara International Conference on the Applications of Social Sciences and Humanities (TICASH 2020)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201209.094>
- Burychka, D., Miragall, M., & Baños, R. M. (2021). Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Body Image: Integrating Positive Body Image, Embodiment and Self-Compassion. *Psychologica Belgica*, 61(1), 248–261. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb.1057>
- Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood. *Body image*, 13, 38-45.
- Grogan, S., & Grogan, S. (2007). Body image. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203004340>
- Grilo, C. M., Wilfley, D. E., Brownell, K. D., & Rodin, J. (1994). Teasing, body image, and self-esteem in a clinical sample of obese women. *Addictive Behaviors*, 19(4), 443-450.

- Khalaf, A., Westergren, A., Berggren, V., Ekblom, Ö., & Al-Hazzaa, H. M. (2015). Perceived and ideal body image in young women in South Western Saudi Arabia. *Journal of obesity, 2015*.
- Soohinda, G., Mishra, D., Sampath, H., & Dutta, S. (2019). Body dissatisfaction and its relation to Big Five personality factors and self-esteem in young adult college women in India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 61*(4), 400.
- Srivastava, N., & Agarwal, S. (2013). Self-esteem among young adults: A comparative study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 2*(3), 59-61.
- Strean, P., Mehaffey, S. J., & Tiggemann, M. (2003). Self Objectification and Esteem in Young Women: The Mediating Role of Exercise. *Sex Roles, 48*, 33-42.
- Yahaya, R., Apaak, D., & Hormenu, T (2021). Body image, self-esteem and health behaviour among senior high school students in Offinso Municipality of Ashanti Region, Ghana. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport Management, 12*(1), 11-18.