

BODY IMAGE AND SELF ESTEEM AMONG COLLEGE GOING GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to examine the role of body image as a predictor of self esteem among college going girls. For this purpose, the data were collected from 127 girls studying in the government colleges affiliated with University of Jammu. Pearson product moment of correlation and simple linear regression was used for statistical analyses of the data. Significant and positive relationship came out between perception of body image and self esteem. Overall model summary and regression coefficients revealed body shape is a significant predictor of self esteem in college going girls. The model came out to be significant at 0.01 level. The result of the study indicates that perception of body image is one of the important factors related to self esteem among college going girls.

Keywords: *Body image, body shape, college girls, self concept, self esteem,*

I. BODY IMAGE

In the field of psychology body image was initially conceptualized in 1935 and explained as mental image of one's body, generated by feelings and senses which work in a dynamic manner [1]. As a broader construct body image reflects the perception that an individual holds for his own body in relation to an ideal body image, his judgments regarding the attractiveness and affective component relating to shape and size of the body [2,3,4,5]. Body image results from various unique and personal attitudes towards one's body, particularly in terms of physical characteristics [6].

It has been described as an overall respect and love for one's body by accepting and appreciating the uniqueness of their bodies and neglecting the imperfections, feeling confident and comfortable with one's outlook and focusing on everything for the health of their bodies [7]. Body image includes the entire mental picture of one's physical characteristics like body size, body shape and contours and the feelings attached to these attributes [8]. Body image has thus been theorized as a complex construct which is determined by various factors including internal biological and psychological factors and external social and cultural factors [9].

II. SELF ESTEEM

Self esteem has been defined in many ways by different scholars. It is described as an evaluative component of the broader conceptualization of self, which also includes cognitive and behavioral components in addition to affective component [10]. As a personality trait, self esteem remains stable over time in individuals and includes personal characteristics, attributes and beliefs [11]. It is stated that self esteem is "a constant emotional reporting including value, acceptance and self-evaluation" [12].

The capability, significance, success rate and value of an individual also defines one's self esteem [13]. The widely accepted definition of self esteem explains it as the global favorable feeling and belief about oneself, including the assessment of one's worthiness, goodness and self respect where, identity represents the cognitive component of self whereas self esteem represents the affective component of self [14].

As a psychological concept, self esteem has been linked with various other constructs like personality, performance, anxiety, attribution. High self esteem has been associated with positive psychological and physical health of individuals [15] whereas low self esteem has been linked to negative lifestyle leading to health problems like eating disorders [16].

III. BODY IMAGE AND SELF ESTEEM

The exposure of media and societal ideal of thin body shape has negatively impacted the body image of women [17,18]. Previous research highlights the relationship between body image and self esteem. An earlier attempt was made [19] to check for this relationship. A study was conducted on college students and positive correlation was found between body image and self esteem. Research suggests that a strong link exists between how one perceives one's body and appearance and one's self worth among both male and female. This correlation ranges from .65 to .62 in various nations [20]. A significant correlation exists between dissatisfaction with body image, weight and shape with self esteem among women [21].

Lower body image and dissatisfaction with body leads to lower level of self esteem which further can be a factor for development of unhealthy practices like weight loss strategies and eating patterns [22,23,24,25]. Previous research indicates the existence of relationship between weight concerns and self esteem in both males and females, being strongest in middle and late adolescence, respectively [26].

Also, those women who believed that their appearance and body shape were in accordance with the standards set up by the society and thus had positive body image reported high level of self esteem in contrast to those women holding opposite views [27]. In a research study, 51 participants engaged in body image therapy program which was based on cognitive behaviour therapy. In the program the negative evaluations regarding their body image, their physical appearance, body shape and size were challenged and modified which resulted in tremendous increase in their levels of self esteem in the follow up session of the treatment [28]. Among

women, predictors of lower self esteem can be attributed to overestimation of body shape and size and overall dissatisfaction with their bodies [29].

IV. JUSTIFICATION OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Due to the unrealistic image of thinness propagated by the media and prevalent in the society, females tend to be dissatisfied by their overall appearance and are under constant pressure to meet these idealized goals. As a result of this, girls practice unhealthy behaviours and suffer from various eating disorders. This has a grave impact on their daily lives. Previous research suggests positive link between body image and self esteem among college students. Self esteem plays a vital role in the academic achievement, performance and confidence level of students. Hence, it is imperative to further explore the relationship between these two variables. Also, due to dearth of literature specifically in the context of college girls of Jammu city, this study was undertaken.

V. HYPOTHESIS

Perception of body image will be significant predictor of self esteem among girls in colleges.

VI. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Sample

The data were collected using purposive sampling from 127 girls studying in government women colleges affiliated with University of Jammu. Participant age ranged from 17 (minimum) to 22 (maximum). Mean age of the participants was 18.76 year. There were 83 girls from first year (65.4%), 18 were from second year (14.2%) and 26 (20.5 %) girls were from third year of their course in the college.

6.2 Tools

6.2.1. Body shape questionnaire [30]: The questionnaire comprised 34 items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. It measures concern about one's body image. The questionnaire concurrent validity was .035 with eating attitude scale, .66 with body dissatisfaction scale among bulimia nervosa patients. Among occupational therapy students BSQ correlated .61 with eating attitude scale.

6.2.2. Rosenberg's self-esteem scale [14]: The scale measures global self worth of a person with positive and negative about oneself. The scale has total 10 items on 4 point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. Higher score on the scale indicate high self esteem. Internal consistency ranges from 0.85-0.88.

6.3 Procedure

The study was carried out 127 girls studying in government women colleges affiliated with University of Jammu. Purposive sampling was employed for collecting the data. At the outset, the purpose of research was told to the participants. They were told about the relevance of this study. Those interested in participation were given the questionnaires with specific instructions regarding self administration of the scales. Confidentiality of their responses was assured. Only those questionnaires which were completely filled in were taken further for the analysis.

6.4 Statistical analysis

Pearson product moment method of correlation and simple linear regression was employed for statistical analysis of the data. Statistical Package for social sciences (20th version) was used for carrying out the analysis.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For statistical analysis of the data, Pearson product moment method of correlation and simple linear regression analysis was used. Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 shows the results of linear regression.

The results of correlation analysis revealed that there is significant and positive correlation between perception of body image and self esteem ($r = .377, p < 0.01$). The correlation is significant at 0.01 level. The value of correlation reveals that relationship is moderate that is neither too low nor too high. This result indicates that there is moderate level of relationship between college girls' perception of body image and their self esteem.

Table 7.1 Model summary of Body image as predictor of self esteem

Model Summary				ANOVA					
N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
95	.377	.142	.135	Regression	181.685	1	181.685	20.687	.000
				Residual	1097.827	125	8.783		
				Total	1279.512	126			

- Predictor Variable (constant) : Body image
- Outcome Variable: Life Satisfaction

Table 7.1 shows the model summary of body image as predictor of self esteem. On examining the Table 7.1 it was found that the model $F(1, 125) = 20.687, p = .000$ is significant at .01 level. This indicates that over all model of perception of body image is significant predictor of self esteem among college going girls. The value of R square is .142 that shows that 14.2 percent variance in self esteem of college going girls was explained by their perception of body image.

Table 7.2 Body image regressed on self esteem

Coefficients				
Un-Standardized	Coefficients	Standardized coefficients	t	p value
	B	Beta (β)		
(Constant)	18.793		28.499	.000
Body image	.034	.377	4.548	.000

Table 7.2 shows the *unstandardized and standardized* regression coefficients which indicates the slope of regression. The slope shows the rate at which criterion variable that is self esteem changes with per unit change in predictor variable which is perception of body image. The calculated B value indicates the slope of regression analysis for perception of body image.

This B value represents the change in the criterion associated with a unit change in the predictor. The B value of perception of body image ($B = .034, t = 4.548, p = .000$) is significant at .01 level. In addition, perception of body image has positive relationship with self esteem. Hence the hypothesis that perception of body image will be significant predictor of self esteem in college girls is accepted.

The findings of the study reveal that the college girls' perception of their body image significantly impacts their self esteem. Body shape does play a important role in predicting girls self esteem level. College girls with more positive attitude towards ones physical characteristics will experience increase in self respect, confidence, feeling of worthiness and more positive emotions. The results of the study are in accordance with other studies. A study was carried out on 227 students in Canada. Significant and positive association was found between body image and self esteem [31]. Another study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, pubertal timing, and body image on sample of Scottish school girls. Regression analysis revealed body image significantly predicted self esteem. Girls with lower perception of body image showed low self esteem and those with positive perception showed comparatively high levels of self esteem [32].

VII. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that body image is significant predictor of self esteem among college going girls. A concern about one's body image influences the level of self esteem among girls. Findings of the present study as well as other previous studies highlight that positive self assessment of body, accepting the uniqueness of one's body, feeling positive about one's physical characteristics leads to high level of confidence and self respect. High level of self esteem in turn promotes positive behavior such as better academic performance, decrease in suicidal ideation, depression and other mental health problems. Girls with dissatisfaction with their body need to be given special educational training about inculcating healthy lifestyles. Education about problems associated with unhealthy eating habits also needs to be imparted. In colleges, health psychologist needs to pay attention towards cognitive restructuring with regard to negative thinking about of one's body image. Practicing of positive health related activities will lead to increase in positive body image as well as greater level of self esteem.

As the data were collected from government colleges and only from girls, sample size was low and drawn using purposive sampling, all these serve as the limitation of the paper. In future intervention studies should be carried out for enhancing the body image perception and boosting the self esteem. Socio-economic correlates and demographics factors can also be taken into consideration for further assessment.

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