BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Abstract

Background: Body image can be described as the way someone views their own body and make assumptions about how others view them. Family, friends, social pressure and the media are some factors that influence this image. Body image is also closely linked to self-esteem: a person's assessment or viewpoint of himself or herself. People with high self-esteem are aware of their own strengths and qualities, they value themselves, set goals that are achievable, manage better in tough situations, and perceive feedback or criticism as a way to improve themselves and grow; whereas those with low self-esteem are less clear about their own beliefs, do not think well of themselves, react to criticism in a hostile and emotional manner, often set unrealistic goals, and tend to see or expect the worst. Multiple factors such as school, friends, and internal factors can affect self-esteem. Body image and self-esteem have long been known to be linked and are significant issues, especially amongst the youth.

Aim of the Study: This paper aims to study the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem among young adults. To achieve the purpose of the study a quantitative research design has been used.

Sample: Data was collected from 50 individuals within the age range of 22 and 27 years, wherein 25 were males and 25 were females. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling technique.

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Tools Used: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-16A, Cooper et al., 1986) were used to assess the dimensions of body image and self-esteem of each individual.

Results: The data collected was subjected to SPSS and Pearson's correlation was carried out. There was no significant relationship found between the body image issues and self-esteem.

Keywords: Body image, Self-esteem, Perception, Young adults

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, physical appearances plays a huge role in a person's life. People are judged and labelled according to their appearances and it impacts every aspect of life, directly and indirectly. These could lead to the emergence of body image issues, where a person feels like they are not good enough or they do not belong in their bodies. Body image can be described as the way someone views their own body and make assumptions about how others view them. Family, friends, social pressure and the media often influence body image. Body image is also closely linked to self-esteem. A higher self-esteem and higher sense of self-worth are presumed to help young people achieve more satisfaction with their bodies and themselves.

1. **Self-esteem:** In general terms, the concept of self-esteem can be defined as the way a person views or evaluates him or herself. It is the opinion an individual has overall of their own self-worth. This evaluation of oneself can either be positive or negative. A person is said to have high self-esteem if the evaluation of themselves are more approving while a person with low self-esteem define themselves in a more critical way. Global self-esteem stems from the overall feelings of self-worth. Social psychologists perceive self-esteem as the general attitude people hold toward themselves.

   Recently, self-esteem has become a word that most are familiar with. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others are dedicated to boosting self-esteem, as presumably high self-esteem will lead to positive developments.

   People with high self-esteem are aware of their own strengths and qualities, they value themselves, set goals that are realistic and achievable, manage better in tough situations, and perceive feedback or criticism as a way to improve themselves and grow; whereas those with low self-esteem are less clear about their own beliefs, do not think well of themselves, react to criticism in a hostile and emotional manner, often set unrealistic goals, and tend to see or expect the worst.

   Individuals with high self-esteem seem to possess greater attractiveness and amiability, foster healthier relationships, and exert a more positive influence on others compared to those with low self-esteem. However, most of these beliefs are refuted by objective measures. No evidence has yet been found to prove that self-esteem predicts the quality or length of relationships.

   Individuals with high self-esteem are more keen when it comes to group participation and giving feedback about the group's approach. Indirect effects of high self-esteem might be seen on leadership as well. Stronger in-group favouritism tends to be shown towards those with high self-esteem leading to biases.

   Additionally, self-esteem is related to happiness. There are beliefs that high self-esteem leads to greater happiness, though causation has not been established. Depression is likely to occur as a result of low self-esteem under certain conditions. Some studies support the buffer hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that the effects of stress are alleviated by high self-esteem. However, there are other studies indicating that mainly during favorable times, one may experience the negative impacts of low self-esteem. Yet,

others find that regardless of the circumstances, high self-esteem leads to happier outcomes. Overall, there are two categories of benefits reaped by those with high self-esteem: enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings. (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Researchers often differentiate between global and domain specific self-esteem. Global self-esteem is the opinion an individual has of their own self-worth overall, while domain specific self-esteem pertains to the evaluation of one's worth in specific areas or domains, such as interpersonal relationships, intellectual abilities or physical looks.

2. **Measurement of Self-esteem:** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is widely recognized as one of the most used methods of assessing self-esteem. It was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965. It is a measure of global self-esteem and a self-report measure. More specific measures of self-esteem are also available. These measures are used in evaluating self-esteem in particular domains, including academics, interpersonal relationships, physical appearance, and athletics. Such measures use the performance scores in each particular domain to indicate the self-esteem in that given domain.

3. **Body Image:** Body image is considered as a multi-faceted construct. It is composed of the self-perception and beliefs one holds about one's body as well as the attitudes, feelings and behaviour towards one's body (Cash et al., 1990; Grogan, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999). Though it is often considered that body image is a fixed attribute, it is not fixed. Rather, a person's body image is shaped by the dynamic interplay between the individual, their body and the social context. In simpler words, body image can be described as the personal relationship we share with our body and how we feel in our own body. Over the last few decades, multidimensional assessments of body image have developed as a result of identifying its multiple features. These include estimation of body image, body dissatisfaction, investing in appearance, objectification of body, body ideal internalization, body appreciation, body awareness, and desire for thinness and masculinity. (Calogero et al., 2010).

4. **Development of Body Image:** Body image develops in a gradual manner since childhood. Both past as well as current experiences affects the development of body image. Culture, interpersonal experiences and physical changes are the usual factors that shape body image.

5. **Body Image and Self-esteem:** It has long been known that body image and self-esteem are linked. Further, they are significant issues for young people, especially during adolescence and puberty. People are affected by body-image issues throughout their lives, from childhood to old age. For the most part, past research has focused on self-esteem and body image in children and adolescents. However, the older population is quickly becoming the focus of recent researches. Issues with body-image are associated with an overall poor self-concept as well as lower self-esteem in adolescents. These include poor academic as well as social self-concepts. Self-esteem, gender, media or pressure from friends and family are some factors that may influence body image during adolescence. In a similar vein, body image and body weight, performance in academics, athletic abilities, and involvement in social activities are some of the factors that contributes to shaping one's self-esteem (O'Dea, 2012).

Mellor, D. et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine the relationship between body image and self-esteem across time and age for males and females. Higher self-esteem was found to be linked to lower body dissatisfaction, cross-sectionally. But no consistent relationship was found between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction across time for age and gender. It was found that men had lesser dissatisfaction with their bodies than women. However, men placed greater emphasis on their physical appearance than women. Additionally, men reported high levels of body dissatisfaction too.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- **Research Design:** This present research was based on quantitative research design as the numerical data is collected and analysed. 50 participants were selected randomly. The researcher made sure that all participants belonged to the age range of 21-27.
- **Study Setting:** A physical survey was conducted in Manipur University. The participants were selected randomly. It took three days to collect the data.
- **Subjects:** The data was collected from 50 participants, which includes 25 males and 25 females. The participants were students of Manipur University.
- **Sampling:** The sample of the present study was simple random sampling technique where 50 participants were selected randomly.
- **Inclusion Criteria**
  - ➢ Both males and females were taken as participants.
  - ➢ All the participants are of age range between 22-27 years.
  - ➢ Participants were students of Manipur University
 - ➢ The minimum qualification of the participants is graduate

Tools and Scales

1. **Semi Structured Proforma:** Semi structured proforma designed particularly for the present study is used to gather the necessary information of the participants. This includes Age, Gender, Religion, Qualification and Marital status.

2. **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965):** In 1965, Dr. Morris Rosenberg developed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It serves as a tool to assess self-esteem. The RSES consists of ten items answered on a four-point Likert-type scale – 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. It has good predictive validity. It also has internal consistency as well as test–retest reliability. The RSES has a high Cronbach coefficient (M=0.81), thus, supporting the internal coherence of the scale. Over a period of 2 weeks, test-retest reliability was assessed. Excellent stability was indicated with correlations of .85 and .88. The scale also exhibits excellent internal consistency, with a German scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92.

3. **Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-16A) (Cooper et al., 1986):** The BSQ was designed by P.J. Cooper, Taylor, Z. Cooper and C.G. Fairburn in 1986. It is a self-report measure of the body shape preoccupations. The BSQ-16A is a shortened form of the original 34-item BSQ. BSQ-16A consists of a 16-item questionnaire which is to be responded by the participant using a six-point Likert i.e., 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often', 'very often' and 'always'. Each item is scored from 1 to 6 with "Never=1" and "Always=6", yielding a possible minimum score of 16 and maximum score of 96. Pearson's correlations were

used on all of the shortened forms of BSQ to test them for convergent validity against the body dissatisfaction subscale of the EDI and the 34-item BSQ. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to assess internal consistency. Additionally, in a non-clinical sample, a two-factor solution revealed that the two retained factors showed a high correlation for the BSQ-16A scale, $r(1167) = .85$, $p < .001$. Test-retest reliability was assessed using Pearson's correlations. On both the occasions taken three weeks apart, the students' responses to the BSQ were highly correlated ($r \geq .97$, $p < .001$ for each BSQ form). Moreover, each of the French version of the BSQ demonstrated acceptable internal reliability.

III. RESULTS

As part of the study, set of two questionnaires were filled out by the participants to measure body image issues and self-esteem. A total of 25 males and 25 females filled up the questionnaires. The data was then subjected to SPSS. Pearson's correlation was carried out to see the relationship between the self-esteem and body image.
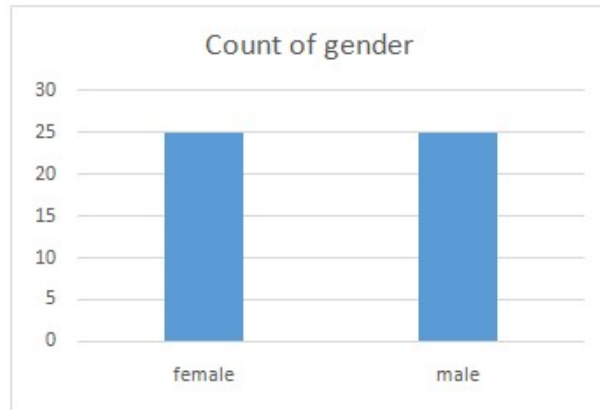
Figure 1: Gender of the sample

Figure 1 shows the gender demographic of the sample of the study. This sample consists of 25 males and 25 females.
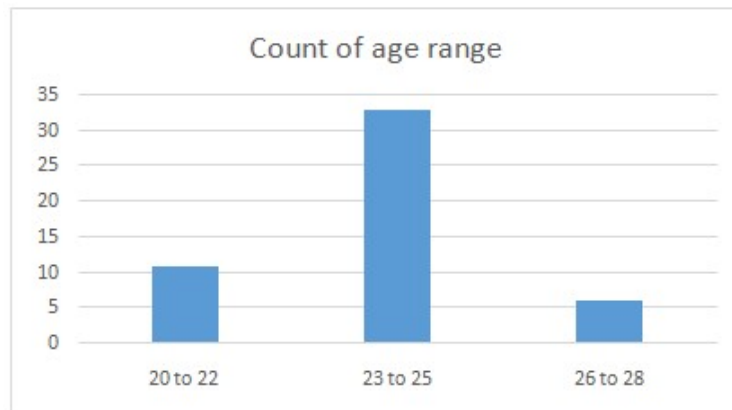
Figure 2: Age range of the sample

Figure 2 shows the age range of the sample of the study. There are 11 participants in the age group of 20 to 22, 33 participants in the age group of 23 to 25 and 6 participants in the age group of 26 to 28.

Table 1: Relationship of Body Image Issues and Self esteem

Variables	Body image issues	Self-esteem
Body image		
Self-esteem	-.238	

The quantitative data was subjected to SPSS package and bivariate correlation was carried. As seen in the above table 1, r(df)=-.238 and p=.096 Thus, there is a weak negative relationship between body image issues and self-esteem but it is statistically insignificant. As there is no statistical significance in the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem, we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study evaluated the relationship between body image issues and self-esteem among young adults. Results suggest an insignificant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem. Though body image is a major factor that has an influence on the development of self-esteem, it is not the sole factor. Peers, family, genetics, personality, experiences, age, health factors, thinking patterns and other internal factors, in addition to social factors such as the culture or environment in which a person was raised, may have an impact on one's self-esteem; thus contributing to the results. Researches on behavioural genetics show that both genetics as well as the environment have an influence on global self-esteem. However, environmental factors contribute to a greater variance than genetic factors. Approximately, 40% of self-esteem variance is attributed to heritability. (Orth et al., 2018).

For Abell, S.C. (1988), researchers should focus on other facets of human activity along with studies on self-esteem. The relationship between body image and self-esteem may be better understood by studying the nature and frequency of an individual's activities. Let us take the case of a teenage girl, who is a high school student, and takes an active part in extracurricular activities. Her feelings of self-worth might stem from her appearance and comments or compliments from her peers. On the other hand, a successful and occupied businessman or woman may engage in many other activities that increases self-esteem and thus, not be as obsessed with her physical appearance. He also added that generally moderate to strong correlations have been found between these two variables, i.e. body-image and self-esteem; yet it is still largely unknown precisely in which way they are correlated. Hence, it can be understood that self-esteem is a complex notion and depends on a lot more than body image.

Nonetheless, a negative correlation does exist between body image and self-esteem. It can thus be stated that people who have less issues with their body image, i.e. a higher satisfaction with their bodies, have a higher self-esteem. On the other hand, people who face more body image issues, i.e. those who have a negative body image have a lower self-esteem.

These findings are consistent with that of Mellor et al. (2010) who conducted a study to find the relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction for both males and females. A moderate, negative correlation was found between the two variables. It was also found that the strength of this relationship remained constant over 2 years and across adulthood.

The results of the present study are also supported by previous studies examining body image and self-esteem that have shown that the more positive an individual's body image is, the higher their self-esteem will be and the more negative the individual's body image, the lower their self-esteem.

There are a few limitations that might affect the findings of the present study. First is the limited size of the population. Second, the population was only from a limited area. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole global population. Moreover, there were some barriers in word meaning in the questionnaires, so in some words, basic translation was made according to the researcher's own way. Lastly, factors such as age, culture and educational qualification might affect body image and self-esteem and need to be taken into consideration.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings from the current study concluded that there is a negative relationship between body image issues and self-esteem. Individuals who have less issues with their body image have a higher self-esteem, while those with more body image issues have a lower self-esteem. But the relationship is not statistically significant.

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