Body Image and Self-Esteem among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Body image can be described as the way someone perceives their body and assumes that others perceive them. This image is often affected by family, friends, social pressure, and the media. It is also closely linked to self-esteem: a person's evaluation of, or attitude toward, him- or herself. People with high self-esteem are aware of their personal qualities, think well of themselves, set realistic goals, cope successfully with difficult situations, and perceive feedback in a self-enhancing manner. People with low self-esteem have less clear self-conceptions, think poorly of themselves, have more adverse emotional and behavioral reactions to criticism, often select unrealistic goals, and tend to be pessimistic about the future. Self-esteem can be affected by many factors, such as school, friends, and internal factors. Body image and self-esteem have long been known to be linked and are salient issues, especially among 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 a simple random sampling technique.

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: It was found that there was no significant relationship between body image issues and self-esteem.

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, physical appearance plays a huge role in a person's life. People are judged and labeled according to their appearances and it impacts every aspect of life, directly and indirectly. A result of these is the emergence of body image issues, where one feels like one is not good enough or they are not supposed to look like who they are. Body issues or body image is the way someone perceives their body and assumes that others perceive them. This issue or image is often affected by family, friends, social pressure, and the media. Body image is also closely linked to self-esteem. A positive self-image and a strong sense of self-worth are likely to help young people become more content with their bodies.

Self-esteem

The concept of self-esteem generally refers to a person's evaluation of, or attitude toward, him- or herself. It can be said that self-esteem refers to a positive or negative evaluation of oneself. Self-esteem also involves a person's overall emotional evaluation of his worth. High self-esteem is a highly favorable global evaluation of self, whereas an unfavorable definition of the self represents low self-esteem. Hence, it is evident that self-esteem is a multi-dimensional construct. Global self-esteem comes from the overall feelings of self-worth. It includes an individual's talents, capabilities, accomplishments, and personality as well as academic, social, and physical self-esteem. For the most part, self-esteem has been conceptualized by social psychologists as the overall attitude people hold toward themselves.

Self-esteem has become a household word. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others have focused efforts on boosting self-esteem, on the assumption that high self-esteem will cause many positive outcomes and benefits.

People high in self-esteem claim to be more likable and attractive, to have better relationships, and to make better impressions on others than people with low self-esteem, but objective measures disconfirm most of these beliefs. Self-esteem has not been shown to predict the quality or duration of relationships.

High self-esteem makes people more willing to speak up in groups and criticize the group's approach. Leadership does not stem directly from self-esteem, but self-esteem may have indirect effects. Relative to people with low self-esteem, those with high self-esteem show stronger in-group favoritism, which may increase prejudice and discrimination.

Self-esteem has a strong relation to happiness. Although the research has not established causation, we are persuaded that high self-esteem does lead to greater happiness. Low self-

esteem is more likely than high to lead to depression under some circumstances. Some studies support the buffering hypothesis, which is that high self-esteem mitigates the effects of stress, but other studies come to the opposite conclusion, indicating that the negative effects of low self-esteem are mainly felt in good times. Still others find that high self-esteem leads to happier outcomes regardless of stress or other circumstances. Overall, the benefits of high self-esteem fall into two categories: enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings. (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Researchers often distinguish between global and domain-specific self-esteem. Whereas global self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of his or her worth, domain-specific self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of his or her worth in specific domains such as peer relationships, intellectual ability, and physical appearance.

Measurement of self-esteem

The most common method of measuring personal self-esteem as an overall trait-like self-evaluation is with the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) scale. On this measure, people are asked to provide their explicit attitude toward themselves. There are also more specific measures of self-esteem that are used to assess self-esteem in particular domains, such as academics, personal relationships, appearance, and athletics, with scores on these more specific types of self-esteem being predicted by performance indicators in those domains.

Body image

Body image is a multi-faceted construct that consists of self-perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behavior related to one's body(Cash et al., 1990; Grogan, 1999; Thompson et al., 1999). Body image is often viewed as a fixed property that is rooted in the minds of individual persons, but it is not fixed. Instead, a person's body image constitutes a dynamic relationship between the individual, the body, and the social environment. In simple terms, it can be defined as the personal relationship we have with our body. It also includes how we feel in our bodies. Recognition of the multiple facets of body image has led to the development of multidimensional assessments over the last several decades, some of which include body size estimation, body dissatisfaction, appearance investment, body objectification, body ideal internalization, body image quality of life, body appreciation, body responsiveness, drive for thinness, and drive for masculinity (Calogero et al.,2010).

Development of body image

Body image forms gradually, and begins to develop in childhood. It is affected by both past and current experiences. Some of the most common determinants of body image include cultural factors, interpersonal experiences, and physical changes.

Body image and self-esteem

Body image and self-esteem have long been known to be linked and are salient issues for young people, particularly during adolescence and puberty. These issues affect people throughout the life span, from childhood to old age. Past research has focused predominantly on body image and self-esteem in children and adolescents. More recently, research in this area has begun to focus on older people. Body image concerns are associated with overall poor self-concept in early adolescence, including poor physical, social, and academic self-concepts as well as low overall self-esteem. Body image during adolescence is influenced by factors including self-esteem, gender, media messages, and pressure or support from peers and family. Similarly, self-esteem is influenced by factors such as body image, body weight, academic performance, and sporting ability and participation (O'Dea, 2012).

Mellor, D. et al. (2010) examined the relationship between body image and self-esteem across time and age for men and women. Cross-sectionally, it was found that higher self-esteem was associated with lower body dissatisfaction, but there was no consistent relationship between these variables across time for age and gender. Women were more dissatisfied with their bodies than men; yet, men placed greater importance on their appearance than women and also reported high levels of body dissatisfaction.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: This present research was based on a quantitative research design as the numerical data is collected and analyzed. 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 at Manipur University. The participants were selected randomly. It took three days to collect the data.

Subjects: The data was collected from 50 participants, which included 25 males and 25 females. The participants were students of Manipur University.

Sampling: The sample of the present study was a 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 a 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)

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965. It measures self-esteem using ten items answered on a four-point Likert-type scale – 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.The scale has good predictive validity, as well as internal consistency and test–retest reliability (Schmitt &Allik, 2005; Torrey, Mueser, McHugo, & Drake, 2000). Cronbach coefficient is high (M = 0.81) supporting the internal coherence of the scale. Sinclair et al. (2010) suggest that self-esteem scores are highly dependent on temporal effect, and therefore the scale may not capture trait-based self-esteem adequately. Despite this, test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. The RSES demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

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 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 to 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 a maximum score of 96. All of the shortened BSQ forms were tested for convergent validity against the body dissatisfaction subscale of the EDI and the 34-item BSQ using Pearson's correlations. Internal consistency was estimated using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The parallel method (Horn, 1965) supported a one-factor solution for three shortened BSQs in the non-clinical sample (the BSQ-8A, BSQ-8B, BSQ-8D versions) and for the seven shortened BSQs in the clinical sample (but not the BSQ-34). Overall, the one-factor solution was rejected six times in favor of a two-factor solution. The two factors retained were highly correlated in the non-clinical sample for the BSQ-16A scale, $r(1167) = .85$, $p < .001$, for the BSQ-14 scale, $r(1167) = .71$, $p < .001$, for the BSQ-34 scale, $r(1167) = .70$, $p < .001$, and moderately correlated for the BSQ-16B scale, $r(1167) = .42$, $p < .001$. To assess test-retest reliability (three weeks apart), Pearson's correlations were used. The internal reliability was quite acceptable for each French version of the BSQ. Regarding test-retest reliability, the students' responses to the BSQ scales on both occasions (three weeks apart) were highly correlated ($r \geq .97$, $p < .001$ for each BSQ form).

Statistical analysis: For achieving the objectives of the present study, the collected data was subjected to Pearson's correlation to examine the relationship between variables using SPSS version 22.

III. RESULTS

As part of the study, a 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 self-esteem and body image.
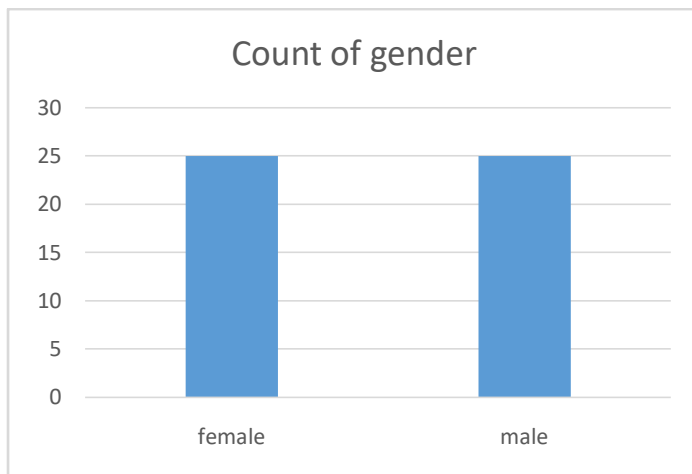
Figure 1: Gender of the sample

Count of gender

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

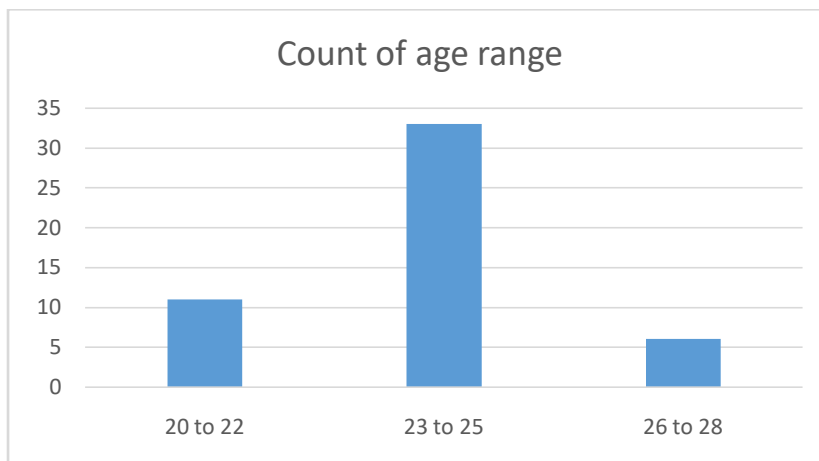Figure 2: Age range of the sample

Count of age range

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 between body image issues and self-esteem

Variables	Body image issues	Self-esteem
Body image		

Self-esteem	-.238	

The quantitative data was subjected to an SPSS package and bivariate correlation was carried out. As seen in above table 1, $r = -.238$ 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 key factor influencing the development of self-esteem, self-esteem can be affected by many other factors, such as school, friends, and internal factors; thus contributing to the results. Other factors that influence self-esteem include genetics, personality, life experiences, age, health, thoughts, social circumstances, etc. Behavioral genetic research suggests that both genetic and environmental factors influence global self-esteem, but that environmental factors account for more variance than genetic factors, with the heritability of self-esteem estimated to be about 40% (Orth et al., 2018).

According to Abell, S.C. (1988), it might be helpful for researchers to look at a few other aspects of human activity in conjunction with self-esteem studies. Looking at the nature and frequency of a person's activities may help to sort out the relationship between body image and self-esteem. For example, a teenage girl, who participates in a few extracurricular or social activities, may be very dependent on her appearance for feelings of self-worth. A successful and busy corporate executive, on the other hand, may engage in many self-esteem-enhancing activities, and thus not be preoccupied with his or her physical appearance. He also added that while moderate to strong correlations generally have been found between these two variables, the precise way in which they are correlated is largely still unknown. 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 fewer 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 lower self-esteem. These findings are consistent with that of Mellor et al. (2010) whose studies showed that self-esteem had a moderate, negative correlation with body dissatisfaction for both men and women, the strength of this relationship remained constant over 2 years and across adulthood. They are also supported by previous studies examining body image and self-esteem that have demonstrated that the more positive the individual's body image, the higher the self-esteem, and the more negative the individual's body image, the lower the self-esteem.

A few limitations 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 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 fewer issues with their body image have higher self-esteem, while those with more body image issues have lower self-esteem. However, the relationship is not statistically significant.

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