

## **A CORRELATIONAL STUDY BETWEEN SELF ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE**

Gaurangi Oberoi

Student, Lotus Valley International School, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i03.014 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i03.014>

Received: 3 March 2022 / Accepted: 15 March 2022 / Published: 30 March 2022

### **INTRODUCTION**

Self-esteem is one of the notable developments of human psychology and has been characterized in more ways than one. It includes sensations of worth and acknowledgment which are created because of the familiarity with our skills and the input from our general surroundings. Body-image, on the other hand, may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that represents how individuals "think, feel, and behave with regard to their own physical attributes" (Muth & Cash, 1997).

In modern society, body-image and self-image have shared a unique relationship. Through this chapter, the reader would explore the basic concepts of both self-esteem and body-image. To further elucidate, one's perception of his/her body relates to one's evaluation of self.

### **Body Image**

Body-image refers to how an individual sees his/her own body and how attractive they feel they are. Many people have concerns about their body-image. These concerns often focus on weight, skin, hair, or the shape or size of a certain body part. From the dawn of the age of consumerism till the present, only the outside beauty of an individual is considered important. Since the introduction of the information age, social media has slowly emerged as a factor that influences the confidence of an individual. It is generally seen that individuals are in a constant pursuit to change their appearances to acquire a better chance of acceptance by society. With the ultimate trends of fashion emerging around the world, many people often try and change themselves according to it. In today's day and age, many individuals are seen to be influenced by societal acceptance and judgement which in turn can make them conscious about their bodies.

### **Definitions of Body Image**

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According to Paul Schluder's book, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (2013), "The image of the human body means the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves."

According to NEDC, Body-image refers to the perception that a person has of their physical self, but more importantly the thoughts and feelings the person experiences as a result of that perception.

### **Attributions of Body Image**

**Positive Body-image:** Having a positive body-image relates to accepting oneself despite all the individual's external flaws. In this scenario, self-worth and external appearances have an inverse relationship. This merely suggests that an individual's self-worth is not determined by his/her appearance.

Having a positive body-image includes:

- accepting and appreciating the whole of one's body, including how it looks and what it can do
- having a broad concept of beauty
- having a body-image that is stable
- having inner positivity

Positive body-image aims to help people overcome the pressures of society and the social media content that tries to impose negative body-image. It gives one the boost of confidence to accept oneself. According to The Body Positive organization, "Beauty is not a single image, but the active embodiment and celebration of the self."

**Negative Body-image:** This concept refers to a direct relationship between external appearances and self-esteem. People having a negative body-image may feel dissatisfied with their body and may have trouble accepting themselves. They may often have a lot of insecurities and are afraid of getting judged. Negative body-image can also be referred to as Body Dissatisfaction. The person may:

- compare themselves to others and feel inadequate when doing so
- feel ashamed or embarrassed

- lack confidence
- feel uncomfortable or awkward in their body
- see parts of their body, such as their nose, in a distorted way

Having a negative body-image often leads to a predisposition to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety etc. In its broadest form, a negative body-image can lead to the exhibition of negative or neurotic behaviours such as stress, anxiety, depression and so on. People with a negative body-image may exhibit behaviours such as modifying their external appearances by undergoing plastic surgeries, starting weight loss diets or using hormonal pills for muscle growth. There is a strong link between eating disorders and negative body-image, according to the NEDA. "Any individual who wants to get accepted by society tries and changes themselves into something better."

A person with a negative body-image has insecurities and they often get the best of them. Many teens these days suffer from body-image and often indulge in activities to get accepted by society.

### **History of Body Image**

We are living in a generation that is increasingly preoccupied with body-image, size and shape. It is impressive how a standard of beauty has evolved over the past generations.

Certain phases of beauty that were adored in the past are now considered shameful or unacceptable by society. According to society, the idea of an "ideal" woman is the one without any imperfection or in other words photoshopped. Looking back through the centuries, it is easy to identify how the trends of beauty have changed and evolved. History always repeats as the trends recycle through the past. As years pass by, different individuals set different standards of beauty.

As indicated by a report produced by CNN, the idea of body image traces back to the Pre 1900 era. In one of the archaeological disclosures, Venus Figurines were found which were little sculptures from 23,000-25,000 years prior in Europe. The dolls including the "Venus of Willendorf," found in 1908 at Willendorf, Austria - depict round, pear-formed ladies' bodies. In Ancient Greece, Aphrodite, the goddess of adoration and excellence, was frequently depicted with bends.

As the years progressed, Artists have kept on depicting curves in female figures on canvases through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the 1890s, American craftsman Charles

Dana Gibson drew pictures of tall, thin-waisted yet curvy ladies in delineations for standard magazines, and these portrayals of the new ladylike ideal were alluded to as the "Gibson Girl."

Going into the mid-twentieth century, the depiction of ladies' bodies in craftsmanship was continually developing, as found in French craftsman Henri Matisse's oil compositions showing flexible and streaming bodies.

As slim ladies' bodies began to show up in magazines during the 1920s, a pandemic of dietary issues appeared among young ladies, as per a few examinations. "The most noteworthy revealed predominance of scattered eating happened during the 1920s and 1980s, the two-time frames during which the 'ideal lady' was most slender in US history," scientists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison wrote in a paper in the *Journal of Communication* in 1997.

The bust-to-abdomen proportions among ladies highlighted in the magazines, *Vogue* and *Ladies Home Journal* dwindled by about 60% somewhere in the range of 1901 and 1925, as per an examination in a review distributed in the diary, *Sex Roles* in 1986.

By the last part of the 1940s, that proportion moved back, expanding by around 33% in the two magazines, the review found. Around that time, the more full-body sorts of centerfold girl models and entertainers like Marilyn Monroe filled in notoriety. The authentic shift from an adjusted to a more slender body inclination prompted the ascent of British design model Lesley Lawson, known as Twiggy, and other thin models. They appeared to represent a shift away from the girdles and hot chick young ladies of years past. At the same time, the "second wave" of the ladies' privileges development started.

Even though ladies were done getting themselves into bodices during the 1960s and 70s, the media informing and cultural tensions to cling to an "ideal" body proceeded. That "ideal" was rather an exceptionally youthful and slender body type.

The rate of serious anorexia nervosa requiring medical clinical affirmation rose during the 1960s and '70s, as indicated by a review in the *Current Psychiatry Reports* in 2012.

However, pictures of meagre ladies kept on being standard well into the 1980s, there turned out to be a greater amount of an accentuation on solid, athletic and conditioned body types.

The pervasiveness of heftiness strongly expanded during the '90s. An expected 200 million grown-ups overall were fat, and that number rose to more than 300 million by 2000, as indicated by the WHO.

Along these lines, it appears the mental effects from that remembered impact on self-perception.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a shift toward celebrating different body types in the media and design. That pattern seems to relate to the utilization of web-based media, where different sorts are addressed by ordinary clients on the web.

### **Self Esteem**

Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes himself or herself (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

Self-esteem is also defined as a global barometer of self-evaluation involving cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experiences of the self that are linked to these global appraisals. (Murphy, Stosny and Morrel, 2005). By the same token, Wang and Ollendick (2001) stated that self-esteem involves an evaluation of oneself followed by an emotional reaction towards oneself.

Brown, Dutton and Cook (2001) distinguished three ways in which the term "self-esteem" is used: (a) global or trait self-esteem to refer to the way people characteristically feel about themselves, i.e., feeling of affection for oneself; (b) self-evaluation to refer to the way people evaluate their various abilities and attributes, and (c) feelings of self-esteem to refer to momentary emotional states.

In its generic term, self-esteem is a person's evaluation of their self-worth. It essentially implies the action with which an individual endorses his or her qualities. Morris Rosenberg depicted it as an individual's good or horrible demeanor towards themselves.

Various variables add to impact our confidence, for example, genetics, characters, beneficial encounters, considerations, age, wellbeing, contrasting self with others, social conditions and the response of others.

### **Types of Self Esteem:**

#### **Low Self Esteem**

Individuals who have low self-esteem, consider themselves less than ideal. They don't have faith in themselves, they don't confide in their capacities and they don't respect themselves. Low

confidence can influence a ton of things in one's day-to-day existence. A few of the impacts of low confidence are helpless connections, addiction, discouragement and uneasiness.

### **Consequences of Low Self Esteem**

**Poor Relationships:** Low esteem causes helpless connections due to self-question and the conviction that one isn't sufficient for anything of significant worth and going to mind-blowing lengths to satisfy some unacceptable individuals.

**Addiction:** People who have low esteem will in general utilize hard medications and substances to facilitate the negative inclination they have about themselves. They see the utilization of hard medications or liquor as a break from reality and present themselves to inconvenient impacts of these addictions.

**Wretchedness and nervousness:** Low esteem additionally causes melancholy and uneasiness which is the sensation of trouble, stress or dread. Low confidence brings an absence of certainty that prompts nervousness and extraordinary pity.

### **High Self Esteem**

Individuals who have high self-esteem will in general adore and acknowledge themselves. They have faith in themselves and their capacities. They have the certainty that whatever difficulties may come, they will be able to outperform them. A few of the advantages of high self-confidence include having the option to act naturally without the dread of being judged, preparation to acknowledge new demands, not continually looking for an endorsement from others, availability to learn new things as you acknowledge that you don't know it all and take restorative analysis. Individuals who have high confidence have upgraded drives and wonderful sentiments and they are more charming to be near.

### **Relationship Between Self Esteem and Body Image**

Most youngsters have comparable inquiries and worries about their bodies. They contemplate their appearance which appears to be in a consistent condition of progress during youthfulness. Everybody has a "picture" of their body and appearance and how well it fits in what they think is typical, adequate, or alluring. For teenagers, self-perception is a major piece of their absolute mental self-view. A considerable lot of them start to lose confidence or certainty on the off chance that they get ominous or terrible remarks about their appearance, actual capacities, social looks, ethnic components and changes in their body that are connected with pubescence. To zero in on all parts of their lives, they need to give equivalent significance to other main

considerations like mental fitness, their characters and inward qualities, creative and melodic gifts and so forth, that additionally contribute to the creation of the general mental self-view. Adolescence is a specific period, generally considered between 10 – 19 years of age, during which certain changes occur in human beings including social, morphological and psychological changes. Evidence shows that responsibility increases along with demands and changes in friendship occur during this stage of life (Polce, Myers, Kilmartin, Forssmann & Kliewer, 1998).

The degree of esteem, otherwise called confidence, is controlled by how much an individual puts in his/her own value and by his/her impression of the level of regard displayed to him/her by others. Confidence is fundamental since preferring oneself can impact one's enthusiastic wellbeing and how one might act in a specific circumstance. Exploratory research was directed by J. A. O'Dea at the University of Sydney, NSW, Australia on 26 March 2012. The research focused primarily on body-image and self-esteem in children and adolescents. It indicated that positive body-image and self-esteem encourage adolescents to develop a positive self-image and promote overall psychological health, healthy eating habits, and regular physical activity.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

- **A Correlational Study on Body Image and Self Esteem Among Employees of Multinational Corporations**

Numerous meticulous studies have been conducted on body-image perception and self-esteem. This is due to the fact that we give a great deal of importance to how we appear to ourselves and more importantly to others, what they think and say about us. The relation between body-image and self-esteem was based on continuous research but the employee milieu was not much discussed. The present study aims to find the relation between body-image and self-esteem and to find the gender difference in the perception of body-image and self-esteem among the employees working at Multinational corporations. The participants of the study were the employees working at various MNCs in Thiruvananthapuram. The data was collected using Perceived Body Image Scale Part-I and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and it was analysed using correlation test and t-test. The results show that there exists a correlation between body-image and self-esteem, also there is a significant difference in the perception of body-image among male and female employees. The study notably showed a relation between body-image and self-esteem.

- **Body Image, Confidence, and Media Influence: A Study of Middle School Adults**

For years, we have all been aware of the media's portrayal of the ideal female as unreasonably thin. In recent years, portrayals of males as both thin and muscular have also appeared. A few studies have examined what these images do to younger consumers, both female and male. This study examines these issues and looks at the differences in influence by race. The results show that Hispanic females are the most likely to be influenced, followed by White females. Black females reported no influence. With respect to adolescent boys, only a few reported any influence at all.

- **Body Image Disturbances, the Media and the Adolescent Girl**

Body-Image Disturbances may appear when an adolescent girl's self-evaluation of her appearance interferes with her physical and mental health. Media exposure profoundly affects the stereotyping of the perfect body, resulting in a multitude of body-image disturbances. For the impressionable adolescent girl, this is particularly true. This paper investigates the impact of media on the adolescent female body-image. The relationship between body-image and the Adlerian concepts of striving for significance, feelings and mistaken beliefs, goals of misbehavior, and inferiority will be discussed. Practical strategies for school counselors will also be provided.

- **Individual Body Satisfaction and Perception: The Effect of the Media's Ideal Body Image on Female College Students**

Throughout history, societies have focused on beauty and body shape. Researchers have studied the social and cultural factors that contribute to the formation of an ideal body-image. Many researchers agree that western society has created a thin ideal body-image. This image is communicated in the mass media. The thin ideal body-image is found in beauty and fashion magazines, television programming and on Internet sites. This research sought to determine the correlation between media consumption and body dissatisfaction, as well as the motivation to change one's body. A survey was conducted on college-age women to gather information. In general, this research found moderate correlations between these factors.

## **AIMS, HYPOTHESES AND OBJECTIVE**

### **Aim**

This study aims to identify the relationship between body-image and self-esteem among individuals.

### **Hypotheses:**



Research Hypothesis: The research hypothesis states, "Body Image and Self Esteem share a positive correlation.

Null Hypothesis: The null hypothesis states, "Body Image and Self Esteem share a negative correlation.

**Objective:**

The central objective of this study is to assess the correlation between body-image and self-esteem. As both the variables in the study can have both positive and negative attributes, the study will be able to highlight the relationship each variable shares with the other.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is an objective study to assess the correlation between body-image and self-esteem. To carry out this study, the non-probability sampling method, Snowball Sampling, is used which attempts to collect data upon convenience.

The age parameters used in the data collection are:\*

- 12-14 years
- 15-17 years
- 18 years and above

The gender parameters used in the data collection are:\*

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Gender Neutral
- d) Prefer Not to Answer
- e) Demi-Boy
- f) Non-Binary

\* The age and the gender parameters are used as nominal scales which don't differentiate in order of preference.

The scale used in the research is derived solely by the author of the research. The scale has been developed using the Likert Scale. The scale employs a five option system which has the following alternatives to statements in the questionnaire:

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree.

The rationale behind adopting this scale was due to its objectivity and robustness. As the questionnaire assesses the attitudes related to self-esteem and body-image, adopting the Likert Scale seemed an appropriate choice.

In addition, the scale assesses two components. The first component of the scale is Self- Esteem and the second component is Body-Image Perception. The scale comprises 10 items and for the analysis, the bifurcation will be adopted to interpret the results. Further, item-wise analysis of responses will also be adopted to acquire further clarity on the results.

## **INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS**

The central aim of the study was to assess the relationship between self-esteem and body- image among the Indian population. To carefully analyze this relationship, the snowball sampling method of non-probability sampling was adopted.

According to the collected data, it was shown that a total of 118 participants had contributed to this research. In its clear demarcation, the gender identity was 83 females, 30 males, 2 Gender Neutral, 1 Non-Binary, 1 Demi Boy and 1 Prefer Not to Answer Category. Among the age parameters, 29 participants were from the 12-14 age group, 50 participants were from the 15-17 age group and 39 participants were from the Above 17 years age category.

### **The interpretations of the responses of participants are as follows:**

1. The first statement showed an agreement response from most of the participants. The question stated "I value inside beauty more than outside beauty". For this, 108 participants agreed with the statement and 2 participants disagreed. The remaining 8 participants

seemed undecided.

2. The statement “My appearance dictates my self-worth” witnessed 35 agreements with the statement and 58 disagreements. However, 25 participants were undecided.
3. The statement “I rarely leave the house unless I look presentable” saw 65 agreements, 44 disagreements and 9 undecided responses.
4. The statement “The satisfaction of my appearance dictates my mood” had 62 agreement responses, 38 disagreements and 18 undecided responses.
5. The statement “I often ask others about the way I look” led to 35 agreements, 78 disagreements and 5 undecided responses.
6. The statement “ I often follow movie stars and celebrities for adopting their fashion trends” had 82 disagreements, 26 agreements and 10 undecided responses.
7. The statement, “I tend to change my personal style in order to fit in among my peers” has 86 disagreements, 23 agreements and 9 undecided responses.
8. The statement, “I spend a lot of time worrying about what others think about my appearance” had 71 disagreements, 35 agreements and 10 undecided responses.
9. The statement, “I spend a lot of time and money attempting to “fix” my appearance”
10. had 90 disagreements, 17 agreements and 11 undecided responses.
11. The statement, “My appearance often gets in the way of accepting myself” had 63 disagreements, 40 agreements and 15 undecided responses.

**Table 5.1**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	St. Deviation	N
SE Total	14.3644	3.8133	118
BI Total	13.8983	3.27485	118

**Table 5.2**

Correlations			
		SE	
		Total	BI Total
SE Total		1	
	Sig. (2-tailed) .000		
	N	118	118
BI Total		.652	
	Sig. (2-tailed) .000		
	N	118	118

<b>** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</b>			
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**Interpretation**

From Table 5.2, it is observed that Pearson’s correlation is significant. ( $r=.652$ ,  $N=118$ ; two tailed  $p=0.01$ ). This indicates that on the variables of Body-Image and Self-Esteem, a positive correlation exists.

## **DISCUSSION**

Through this research paper, we explored the different opinions and choices that adolescents hold regarding their body. In today's day and age, it is seen that a sense of insecurity and negativity exists amongst them. The thoughts of an individual may vary on how they look or the opinions they hold about themselves. This may be due to the certain psychological needs that stem from peer conformity or social desirability. Many observations have concluded that an individual may develop body-image issues when he/she is subjected to mockery or not accepted by society. Some behaviourists have attached the cause of body image issues to observational learning as witnessing the behaviours of others through imitation is quite natural for adolescents.

Through this study that examined the correlation between body image and self esteem, the quantitative data revealed that a positive correlation exists between both the variables. The nature of this positive correlation suggests that both the variables will follow a single direction. An individual with a high self-esteem would be able to exude a positive body image and an individual with a low degree of self-esteem would demonstrate a negative body image.

According to a recent study conducted by Rajika, Kurup and Gayatri, R (2019), it was interpreted that a positive correlation between body image and self esteem exists. The research concluded that one of the causes to this relationship is due to the great deal of importance given on how one appears to himself/herself and to others. This study identified that self esteem and body image is influenced by the opinions of others.

In today's day and age, media is considered to be one of the most significant determinants of body image perceptions. As the scope of media has engulfed nearly all aspects of our lives, its influence on one's body image can have a significant impact on an individual's self esteem. According to the research conducted by Persson (2012), the positive and negative aspects of media were highlighted as a key influence on body image across races.

As sighted by the item analysis of the questionnaire presented to the participants, a sense of appearance orientation was represented through the responses. The item "I rarely leave the house unless I look presentable" saw 65 favourable responses out of 118 respondents.

Further, the item "The satisfaction of my appearance dictates my mood", saw 62 favourable responses out of 118 respondents.

In the researcher's opinion, self esteem and body image are influenced significantly by peers, media and observational learning. Through childhood, media had played a significant role in most

of our lives. Media's portrayal of the ideal male and the ideal female and the social norms of desirable bodies have led to internalisations in most individuals. As the historical background of this concept indicates, body image and self-esteem are subject to these influences. Further, the opinions, friends and family hold about an individual can have lasting effects on someone's self esteem. Through observational learning, children, adolescents, teens and sometimes young adults may tend to show a differentiation in behaviour. This is primarily due to the discrepancy between the ideal self and real self.

## CONCLUSION

This present study aimed to identify the relationship between body-image and self-esteem among individuals. To determine the relationship between the two variables, Pearson's Correlation was adopted. Through the statistical analysis, it was found that Pearson's correlation is significant. ( $r=.652$ ,  $N=118$ ; two tailed  $p=0.01$ ). This indicates that on the variables of Body-Image and Self-Esteem, a positive correlation exists. Thus, in conclusion, the research hypothesis- "Body Image and Self Esteem share a positive correlation." was accepted.

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