

Role of self-esteem and resilience on body esteem in college students

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the role of self-esteem and resilience on body esteem in college students with a total sample size of 150 students, including both males and females from 18-25 years. The tools used are Body Esteem Scale-Revised (Frost, Franzoi, Oswald, & Shields, 2018), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) and Youth Resilience Scale (Bhat & Khan, n.d.). Statistical tool used is that of correlation. Results revealed significant correlation between body esteem, self-esteem and resilience among males and females.

Keywords: *Body Esteem, Body Image, Socio-Cultural Influences, Self-Esteem, Resilience*

First coined by the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst, Schilder (1935), body image refers to a person's perception of the aesthetic or sexual attractiveness of their own body. It refers to how an individual views, thinks and feels about their body and appearance. This view can be either positive or negative and is significantly affected by the influences of the environment and sociodemographic aspects.

Body esteem is a crucial aspect of self-worth and mental health across the life span. Body image consciousness has been seen among people, resulting in an inclination towards an "ideal body shape". Just as in early stages of development (childhood and teenage), increased body image issues in adulthood have been associated to increased probability of symptoms of depression (Jackson et.al, 2014), psychological distress and various eating disorders (Goldschmidt et.al, 2016). On the other hand, positive body image in adulthood has been associated with enhanced overall wellbeing and quality of life (Swami et.al, 2018). For a long time, body esteem issues were recognized as western phenomenon particularly among females, but such issues are also found in males and in different cultures (Garrusi, Garousi & Baneshi, 2013; Johnson, Balasubramanya & Britto, 2015).

It has long been established that self-esteem and body esteem are related and are prominent problems for young people (Szabó, 2015). Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall subjective and emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgement of oneself as well as an attitude towards the self (William James, 1892). Body image issues are linked

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Received: January 19, 2021; Revision Received: February 19, 2021; Accepted: March 10, 2021

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with poor self-concept in general, which includes poor physical, social, and academic self-concepts as well as overall low self-esteem. Individuals who have a negative body image of themselves are considered to be more vulnerable to poor dieting routines, and to eating disorders (Naeimi et.al, 2016; Singh Mannat, Parsekar & Bhumika, 2016). Body esteem is affected by factors that include gender, self-esteem, media and peers and family pressure or support (Musetti, Schimmenti & Corsano, 2020; You & Shin, 2019; Amaya-Hernández et.al, 2019). Specifically, in particular, research has shown that heavier body weight increases the chances of lower self-esteem in females, and can contribute to depressive symptoms (Merlo et.al, 2018). Self-esteem plays a key role in young people's mental well-being. It is possible that good self-image and a clear sense of self-worth can enable young people to become more comfortable with their bodies. It is additionally a protective factor for better mental wellbeing and social behaviour. Individuals with low self-esteem, irrespective of age or gender, are more likely to report discontent with their body size or shape (Cruz-Sáez et.al, 2020; Kim, 2018).

Throughout the life cycle, body esteem issues impact both men and women. Some individual factors such as resilience may act as positive factors for high body esteem (Izydorczyk et.al, 2018). Identifying these factors can result in better prevention and intervention planning.

Richardson and his colleagues (1990) contended that resiliency is “the process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or challenging life events in a way that provides the individual with additional protective and coping skills than prior to the disruption that results from the event”.

Resilience may be comprehended as a protective factor, a person's consistent mental resource, which is usually triggered in situations that are perceived as difficult, stressful, or threatening to an individual. Resilience is often defined as a tool for dealing with stress, a means of successfully managing stressful life circumstances. The issue of mental resources is often characterized as resilience signifying a collection of skills needed to cope effectively with high stress levels, involving adaptable, creative ways of coping with difficulties. The key role is played by an individual's ability of “bouncing back” from the adverse experience and the capacity to elicit positive emotions.

Research indicates that high resilience can act as a protective factor, encouraging a sufficient degree of acceptance of one's own body (Snapp, Hensley-Choate & Ryu, 2012). In 2005, Choate suggested a resilience model to combat body image dissatisfaction among young adolescent women that concentrated on influence of media and family and peer relationships.

Psychological protective factors like resilience and self-esteem, may be a significant source of inspiration for attitudes toward health or anti-health. These attitudes lead to habits that are health-seeking or anti-healthy, such as those including an unhealthy attitude toward food and physical activity. Anti-health habits (limiting food or performing frequent physical exercises, causing vomiting, and using laxatives and other medications not according to medical indications) frequently indicate a negative attitude towards one's own body, manifesting a skewed view of the body and dissatisfaction with it (Izydorczyk, Rąba & Sitnik-Warchulska, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to find out whether a relationship exists between body esteem, self-esteem and resilience.

Hypothesis

Various hypotheses can be stated about the relationship between various dimensions of body esteem, self-esteem and resilience. In this study, four research hypotheses were tested:

1. H₀: There exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and self-esteem among female college students.
2. H₀: There exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and self-esteem among male college students.
3. H₀: There exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and resilience among female college students.
4. H₀: There exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and resilience among male college students.

Sample

A total sample of 150 was selected falling in the age group 18 to 25 years using convenience sampling technique. The participants involved in this study were students enrolled in an undergraduate course and post-graduate course at Amity University, Rajasthan. The total sample (N = 150) consisted of traditional college-aged students. There were 75 female participants (50%) and 75 male participants (50%). Demographic data collected from the sample include age, gender, family type and education.

Research design

The present investigation studies whether body esteem is affected by self-esteem and resilience. A correlational design was employed for the study. Correlational research is a type of non-experimental research where the statistical relationship between two variables is evaluated, with little or no effort to control extraneous variables.

Tools used:

Body Esteem Scale-Revised: The BES-R (Frost, Franzoi, Oswald, & Shields, 2018) is a revision of the original Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984). The test consists of 28 body parts and functions rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. Alpha coefficients for women's subscales are .72 (sexual attractiveness), .89 (weight concern) and .81 (physical condition) and for men's subscales are .80 (sexual attractiveness), .88 (upper body strength) and .90 (physical condition). The scale also shows good convergent and discriminant validity.

Self-esteem Scale: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The score range is 10 to 40. High scores indicate higher self-esteem. Internal consistency for the RSE range from 0.77 to 0.88. Test-retest reliability for the RSE range from 0.82 to 0.85. Criterion validity = 0.55. Construct validity = correlated with anxiety (- 0.64), depression (- 0.54), and anomie (- 0.43).

Psychological Resilience Scale for Youth: Psychological Resilience Scale for Youth by R.H. Bhat & S.M. Khan is used to measure psychological resilience. The scale consists of 21 items rated on 5-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5. It consists of 5 dimensions: self-perception, single-mindedness, task orientation, organized and self-restraint. The scale has an internal consistency of Cronbach’s alpha 0.881 and composite reliability of 0.63 to 0.74. The scale also has 53.15% of factorial validity, 53.15% overall construct validity and good convergent validity.

RESULT

Table 1 Correlation among various dimensions of body esteem, self-esteem and resilience in females (N=75)

Pearson correlation

Dimensions of Body Esteem	Self-esteem	Resilience
Sexual Attractiveness	.598**	.605**
Weight Concern	.651**	.598**
Physical Condition	.666**	.589**

Table 2 Correlation among various dimensions of body esteem, self-esteem and resilience in males (N=75)

Pearson correlation

Dimensions of Body Esteem	Self-esteem	Resilience
Sexual Attractiveness	.470**	.278*
Upper Body Strength	.328**	.240*
Physical Condition	.472**	.372**

DISCUSSION

Body esteem contributes to our perception of self in the society. How we look to ourselves and, most importantly, to others is of great importance to us. Body image has an impact on our emotions, thoughts and self-worth throughout our lives.

The first hypothesis stated that there exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and self-esteem among female college students. The results indicate that the hypothesis is false and there is a significant relationship between the two variables. All dimensions of body esteem are positively correlated with self-esteem, i.e. sexual attractiveness (.598), weight concern (.651) and physical condition (.666). It means that high self-esteem will result in high body esteem and vice-versa. Women with lower self-esteem showed more dissatisfaction with their bodies than women with high self-esteem. Research has also shown similar results. Boyd (2019); Skorek, Song & Dunham (2014) state that body esteem and self- esteem have a positive correlation; the way one perceives and feels about one’s body are connected with self-esteem as well as self-concept. Greater clarity of self-concept can result in high body esteem (You & Shin, 2019). Women who show better body esteem and high self- esteem are more successful in fighting the internalization and social pressures related to one’s body esteem. Johry (2016) stated that sociocultural influence on body esteem with relation to self-esteem, eating disorder tendencies were found in women with low self-esteem. Social support and self-esteem in women could be significant targets for body image interventions. Low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction can also result in development of unhealthy eating habits or restrained eating (Kim, 2018).

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The second hypothesis states that there exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and self-esteem among male college students. The findings reveal that the hypothesis is false and significant correlation has been found between body esteem and self-esteem among college going men. All dimensions of body esteem are positively correlated with self-esteem, i.e. sexual attractiveness (.470), upper body strength (.328) and physical condition (.472). It means that high self-esteem will result in high body esteem and vice-versa. This finding can be supported by researches with similar result. It seems that men and boys are also reporting body dissatisfaction more and more. Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman & Keshet (2018); Murray, Rieger & Byrne (2013) have found out that self-esteem can play a very important role in increasing one's body esteem. Focusing on these variables can also increase one's well-being. Gillen (2015) reported that men with higher positive body image showed high self-esteem, fewer unhealthy eating behaviours, fewer depressive symptoms and lower drive for masculinity. Connections between positive body image and health-related indicators were similar for men just like women; Low self-esteem and body-esteem can also result in stress among men. A healthy body image has important implications for health and overall well-being.

The third hypothesis states that there exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and resilience among female college students. The results demonstrate that the hypothesis is false and significant correlation has been found between resilience and self-esteem among college going women. All dimensions of body esteem are positively correlated with resilience, i.e. sexual attractiveness (.605), weight concern (.598) and physical condition (.589). It means that high resilience will result in high body esteem and vice-versa. Research has shown a similar result; Lonergna et.al (2019); Snapp Hensley-Choate & Ryu (2012); Liss & Erchull (2015) suggest that resilience can act as a protective factor against low body esteem. Media promotes unachievable body image ideals that lead people to adopt harmful means (unhealthy eating habits, use of pills or surgery) to achieve the ideal body shape (Flannery, Harris, Kenny, 2020; Rodgers et.al, 2017). Women often desire to have a thin body. High resilience can help women in accepting their bodies despite the pressures from the society. Focusing on resilience can help women in developing high body esteem. Burnette et.al (2019) suggested that social support, resilience, and self-esteem in women could be significant targets for body image interventions.

The fourth hypothesis states that there exists no significant relation between various dimensions of body esteem and resilience among male college students. The findings indicate that the hypothesis is false and significant correlation has been found between resilience and self-esteem among college going women. All dimensions of body esteem are positively correlated with resilience, i.e. sexual attractiveness (.278), upper body strength (.240) and physical condition (.372). It means that high resilience will result in high body esteem and vice-versa. Although research is lacking for these variables in regard to men but Lonergna et.al (2019) point towards a similar result; Resilience can act as an important factor when it comes to prevention of low body esteem. Unlike women, men desire to have a heavier (masculine) body rather than a thin body. McNeill & Firman (2014) suggest that younger males desire for a muscular and lean body and older males are more focused on health and lifespan concerns.

Early diagnosis of negative body image and its formation could help in much more detailed evaluation of individual's resources like resilience and self-esteem, and their role in the formation positive/negative body image.

CONCLUSION

Body esteem is a crucial aspect of our lives as it affects our overall well-being. Low body esteem can cause individuals to adopt unhealthy eating behaviours which can seriously harm their health. The study aimed to examine the role of self-esteem and resilience on body esteem in college students. Self-esteem and resilience were found to be significantly correlated with all dimensions of body esteem in both males and females. Focusing on factors like self-esteem and resilience can help people to fight against this societal pressure and grow acceptance towards their bodies. Proper intervention programmes can be formulated with use of such findings and focusing on protective factors.

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Acknowledgement

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Acharya C. & Gulwani K. (2021). Role of self-esteem and resilience on body esteem in college students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 9*(1), 490-497. DIP:18.01.049/20210901, DOI:10.25215/0901.049