

Body Image Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction among Women

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between body image constructs and marital satisfaction among women within the post-pregnancy period of five years, besides comparing the variables according to employment status. Participants were 102 working and non-working women within the post-pregnancy period of 5 years. Data was collected through online forms of multidimensional body self-relations questionnaire (MBSRQ) and index of marital satisfaction (IMS). Data analysis was conducted through Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Spearman rank correlation, and Mann-Whitney test. The results showed a significant relationship between body image constructs and marital satisfaction. Body image constructs such as appearance orientation, fitness orientation, health orientation, illness orientation and body area satisfaction are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Working and non-working women showed no significant differences in body image constructs and marital satisfaction. This study revealed that managing all these body image constructs can help to have body image satisfaction which will also improve the level of marital satisfaction.

Keywords: *Body Image Satisfaction, Body Image Constructs, Marital Satisfaction*

We live in a society where women are judged by their physical beauty and a thin body is considered largely attractive (Rodin, Silberstein & Striegel-Moore, 1984). Postpartum women often retain body changes from childbirth that do not fit cultural ideals (Gruis, 1977) and so there is risk suffering from body image disturbance. Body image disturbance is linked to many psychological problems, including depression (Pruzinsky, 1990).

Body Image Satisfaction

A person's perception of their own sexual attractiveness or aesthetics is known as their body image. The phrase body image was first coined by the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Paul Scindler in his book 'The Image and Appearance of the human body' (1935). It is a combination of positive thoughts and feelings that one has about their body.

Body Image Construct

The four main constructs of body image are:

1. The way you see yourself (Perceptual)
2. How you feel about yourself and how you look (Affective)

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3. Your body's mental and emotional state (Cognitive)
4. The things you do in relation to the way you look (behavior)

Marital satisfaction

It can be defined as the attitude a behavior individual has toward his or her own marital relationship or a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person (<https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/socialpsychology/n323.xml>). Most of exploration on the progress to life as a parent has found that as couples become guardians, there is an emotional reduction in certain marital relationship, a sensational expansion in marital conflict, and a precipitous decline in marital satisfaction Bel sky & Kelly (1994); Belsky & Pensky, (1988); Belsky & Spanier et.al (1983). These discoveries were especially articulated for spouses and at times were viewed as just for the wives. These findings were particularly pronounced for wives and in some cases were found only for the wives; however, the wife's declining marital satisfaction fulfillment is the lead sign of the husband's later declining marital satisfaction. (Belsky et al., 1983; Waldron & Routh, 1981). There are several studies done over numerous times that confirm the decline in marital quality and/ or satisfaction. The sharpest decline is during the initial ten years. There are of course the "highs" of the "honeymoon" times, also the sharp drop in the middle times, and also formerly more an increase in the post-parental times. This is known as the U curve of marital satisfaction explained by Dr. Tienie Maritz (<https://www.tieniemaritz.co.za/the-u-curve-of-marital-satisfaction/>)

A person's body image can be influenced by different factors which include personal experiences, personality, and various social and cultural forces. A psychological construct with cognitive, behavioral, and perceptual dimensions, the body image includes attitudes about one's own body. Body image has been one of the topics which have been widely studied by various researchers, and through that lot of studies have shown significant differences in body image satisfaction among men and women. However, Some of these show body image satisfaction in men is higher than in women (EA fallon et.al 2014) Women showed greater body dissatisfaction than men, even when on a scale that focused on the body, genders were matched. There was a greater disparity between women's actual and ideal body images among women in all three body shape focus categories than did the men (Lokken.K., Ferrero.R., Krichner Tara & Bowling.M., 2010). Women who were employed were more concerned with body weight gain than those who were unemployed, but employed women defined current weight better than unemployed women. (Bibiloni et al. BMC Public Health (2017).

One of the indicators of a good marriage is marital satisfaction, which is a real sense of happiness, contentment, and pleasure that a husband and wife feel when they think all aspects of their marriage. One of the earliest results in the literature on marital satisfaction is that partners' satisfaction typically peaks around the time of the wedding and then declines significantly after that. (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; see Gottman & Notarius, 2002 and Karney & Bradbury, 1995 It is well-known that half of all divorces occur within the first 7 years of marriage (Cherlin, 1981), with one-third of all divorces occurring within the first 5 years of marriage (National Center for Health Statistics, 1991). The first fall in the wife's marital satisfaction following the birth of the first child often marks the beginning of the divorce process for many couples (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; C. P. Cowan & Cowan, 1992; HL Raush et.al1974). According to a meta-analysis, parents report lower marital satisfaction than nonparents. Mothers of infants experience the greatest disparity in marital satisfaction (38

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percent of mothers of infants report high marital satisfaction compared to 62 percent of women who have no children). (Jean M. Twenge et.al, 2004) (Mitnick, D. M. et.al 2009).

Attractiveness, which in turn is linked to the development of relationships and contentment, is influenced by one's body image of oneself and others. It is well known that physical attractiveness plays a role in starting and keeping a relationship (Colleen E. Paap, Rick M. Gardner 2011). According to Swami and Furnham (2008), physical attractiveness plays a significant role in the development and upkeep of romantic relationships for both sexes. (CN Markey et.al; 2001) found that body shape and size tend to be the priority of males when initiating a relationship and this creates weight concerns for the female. Partner perceptions of one's body also seem likely to be linked to body image disturbance as well as relationship satisfaction (Pole, Crowther, and Schell 2004). (Azra Shaheen et.al; 2016) have found a correlation between Body Image satisfaction and Marital satisfaction among married adults. But there are studies that contradict this relation (Carolyn Elizabeth Lee 2016) the result of this study indicates that body satisfaction did not predict relationship satisfaction. To this date, the majority of research has been conducted with men, women, adolescents, and married couples rather than women in post pregnancy period of five years.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aims to find the relationship between body image satisfaction and marital satisfaction among women.

Sample

The sample consists of 102 working (N=52) and non-working (N=50) women within the post-pregnancy period of five years from Kerala and Karnataka. The sample was collected through online mode.

Objective

- To find the difference in body Image constructs among working and non-working women.
- To find the difference in marital satisfaction among working and non-working women.
- To find the relationship between body image constructs and marital satisfaction among working and non-working women.

Hypothesis

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in body image constructs among working and non-working women
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in marital satisfaction among working and non-working women
- Ho3: There is no significant relationship between Body image construct and marital satisfaction among working and non-working women.

Tools used

Multidimensional body self-relations questionnaire (Cash.et.al 1990)

It measures the aspects of the body image construct. The 69-item version consists of 10 subscales; appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, fitness evaluation, fitness

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orientation, health evaluation, health orientation, illness orientation, overweight preoccupation, self-classified weight and body areas satisfaction.

Reliability: The first seven factors of the Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) have very good internal consistency, with alphas that range from .75 to .90. Test-retest correlations range from .49 to .91, indicating that all subscales exhibit good to excellent stability.

Validity: The Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire has demonstrated its validity in numerous studies in which subscales have been correlated with a number of other health and body image instruments.

Index of marital satisfaction (Hudson and Glisson 1976) –

A 25-item scale intended to quantify the degree, seriousness, or size of an issue one companion or accomplice has in a marital relationship.

Reliability: With a mean alpha of .96 and a standard error of measurement of 4.00, the Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) has excellent internal consistency. The IMS likewise has magnificent transient solidness with a two-hour test retest relationship of .96. **Validity:** The Index of marital satisfaction has excellent concurrent validity, correlating significantly with the Locke Wallance Marital Adjustment Test. Additionally, the IMS has excellent known group validity, distinguishing between couples with and without marital issues. The IMS also has good construct validity.

Procedure

For the current study, the data was obtained from online mode, with the help of Google Forms. A total of 102 women within the post-pregnancy period of 5 years took part in the study. Subjects were informed about the purpose of collecting data, and consent was taken.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table: 1 Results of Spearman's rank correlation among Body Image constructs and marital satisfaction among women

Body image constructs	Marital satisfaction	
	<i>r value</i>	<i>p value</i>
Appearance Evaluation	-0.124	0.214
Appearance Orientation	-0.209*	0.035
Fitness Evaluation	-0.090	0.369
Fitness Orientation	-0.228*	0.021
Health Evaluation	-0.68	0.494
Health Orientation	-0.265**	0.007
Illness Orientation	-0.343**	0.001
Body Area Satisfaction	-0.220*	0.027
Overweight Preoccupation	-0.83	0.406
Self-classified Weight	-0.130	0.193

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results reveal that the null hypothesis can be rejected as five of the body image constructs are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.

It is observed that appearance which is one of the body image construct is negatively correlated to marital satisfaction, appearance is one of the constructs which is related to both

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the cognitive and affective components of body image. The role of physical attractiveness has been well studied by Swami and Furnham (2008) as they found that physical attractiveness has an influential role for both genders in both formation and maintenance of the relationship. Anders and Tucker (1997) have added to the evidence that in romantic relations more value is given to physical appearance, especially males more than their female counterparts, which might be one of the possibilities why they invest time in their appearance to achieve their ideal appearance, as people who are satisfied with their appearance won't invest extensively on their grooming behaviors or pay more importance on how they look.

Fitness orientation is negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Individuals are dissatisfied with their body commonly get involved in exercises to modify their body. Being active doesn't help always as studies have shown how it can exacerbate body image concerns (panao and carraca 2020), presence of an increasingly uncontrollable exercise related behavior regardless of the effective time spent exercising, involves physical as well as psychological harm. A negative body image increases the risk of engaging in behavior such as dieting or restrictive eating or weight control behaviors. All these concerns which they think is healthy and prevent them from being ill can lead to unhealthy preoccupations. The role that social discourse plays in encouraging the pursuit of the thin ideal has been brought to light by sociocultural models of body image and eating issues.

Health orientation and illness orientation are also negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. A healthy diet should a have a positive impact on health and at the same time, not affect relationships with other people or the quality of life, in the studies of (Anna brytek-matera 2012) they described the term "orthorexia" nervosa, and not only means that people are obsessed with eating "healthily" but also that they have a specific attitude to food.

Lastly body area satisfaction is also negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. All these body image constructs are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, managing all these body image constructs can help to have body image satisfaction which will also improve the level of marital satisfaction as it is found by Friedman Michael et.al 1999; that greater body dissatisfaction in one's self was associated with less marital satisfaction.

Table 2: Mann Whitney U test for Body image constructs among women in different working statuses.

Body image Constructs	Non-working or Working (mean)	Mann Whitney	(Sig2- tailed)
Appearance Evaluation	50.58	1250.000	0.744
	52.49		
Appearance Orientation	49.99	1218.500	0.591
	53.13		
Fitness Evaluation	48.11	1119.000	0.225
	55.16		
Fitness Orientation	50.95	1269.500	0.846
	52.09		
Health Evaluation	54.58	1135.000	0.270
	48.16		
Health Orientation	54.57	1157.000	0.341
	48.61		

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Illness Orientation	54.57 48.18	1290.000	0.957
Body Area Satisfaction	51.65 51.34	1136.000	0.276
Overweight Preoccupation	59.59 42.74	869.500	0.004
Self-classified Weight	57.61 44.89	974.500	0.018

* $p > 0.05$, $U =$ Mann Whitney U

According to table 2, a total sample of 102 was collected in which 53 non-working and 49 working women participated in the study, it is found that only two constructs show significant differences based on working status i.e. overweight preoccupation and self-classified weight with significant values of 0.004 and 0.018 respectively. All other constructs do not differ significantly based on the working status of women. Emily K Healy (2014) working class in the study reported viewing thin ideal images they encountered in media as unhealthy thin as in the study it was highlighted how they valued health over appearance, this was indicated as a resistance tactic that is being utilized by working women in response to the societal values regarding standards for beauty. Maria Del Mar Bibiloni et.al (2017) found that women were more dissatisfied with being overweight, employed women defined better current weight than unemployed and were more worried about weight gain. The null hypothesis, that there is no significant difference in body image constructs among working and non-working women is accepted.

Table 3: Mann Whitney U test for marital satisfaction among women in different working statuses.

Marital satisfaction	N	Mean	Mann Whitney	Sig 2 tailed
Working	49	48.10	1132.00	0.265
Non-working	53	54.64		

* $p > 0.05$, $U =$ Mann Whitney U

According to Table 3, marital satisfaction received a score of 1132.000($p=0.265$) for the Mann-Whitney U test. As a result, there is no statistically significant differences in marital satisfaction among women in different working statuses i.e., working and non-working. A prior study of Rani R (2013) results indicates that working wives face greater marital adjustment problems, as we can say one of the reasons as the added responsibilities of occupation might experience the ill effects of additional serious aims of maladjustment at home or in the office. According to Sahu and Singh (2014), there were no significant differences in marital adjustment between working women and non-working women due to mutual trust, improved comprehension, and sharing. Both working and non-working women had a successful marital adjustment; In conclusion, the null hypothesis, that there is no significant difference in marital satisfaction among working and non-working women are accepted.

CONCLUSION

The major purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between body image satisfaction and marital satisfaction among women within the post-pregnancy period of 5 years and also the difference according to the working status of women. The following conclusions were based on the findings of the study:

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- There is no significant difference in body image constructs among working and non-working women.
- There is no significant difference in marital satisfaction among working and non-working women.
- There is a significant relationship between five body image constructs that are, appearance orientation, fitness orientation, health orientation, illness orientation, body area satisfaction and marital satisfaction.

Implications

During pregnancy and post-pregnancy period, women undergo significant changes in their bodies, some may adapt to the changes and for some physical and psychological changes during pregnancy can lead to negative body image and perception. Poor body image is related to numerous negative mental and physical outcomes, researches show women with poor body image are more likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997) and depression (Thompson et.al 1999) (Meltzer Andrea and McNulty James 2011). Studies also highlight other negative interpersonal outcomes and how it is associated with poor body image (Murray. Et al 2006) Shows the necessity of positive self-evaluation for emotionally risky behaviors that can maintain and strengthen relationships; women with poor body image may be less likely to engage in relationship promoting behavior which can lead to a significant change in marital satisfaction, the finding from the study is an add on evidence to the statement which shows that there is a significant relation between body image constructs and marital satisfaction that throws a new light that we can take preventive measures before it reaches the level of marital dissatisfaction, by planning intervention towards body image satisfaction. Body image has also been linked to depression and also an important role in clinical eating disorders, so early intervention can help to prevent such psychological problems in this population.

Limitations

The study is not without any limitations. The data was collected only from Kerala and Karnataka; hence it limits the extent to which the results can be generalized. Participants had to fill out the questionnaire online. This also could have affected the concentration of the participants resulting in inaccurate responses.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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