

Comparative Study

Body Image and Quality of Life among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study explores the relationship between body image and quality of life among adolescents and young adults. Body image, defined as an individual's perception of their physical appearance, plays a crucial role in mental health and overall well-being, particularly in the vulnerable population of adolescents and young adults. By investigating potential differences in body image perceptions and quality of life between these two groups, this study aims to identify age-specific factors that may contribute to body image issues and impact quality of life differently. The findings from this research can provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and support programs to promote positive self-esteem and mental health in adolescents and young adults facing challenges related to body image and well-being.

Keywords: *Body Image, Quality of Life, Adolescents, Young Adults, Comparative Study, Mental Health, Self-Esteem, Intervention, Well-Being*

Body Image:

Body image is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their own body. It is influenced by a variety of factors, including societal standards of beauty, cultural norms, media representations, and personal experiences. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of body image and its impact on mental and physical well-being.

One of the key aspects of body image is body dissatisfaction, which refers to negative feelings and attitudes towards one's own body. Research has shown that body dissatisfaction is prevalent in both men and women, with individuals often expressing a desire to change or improve their physical appearance. This dissatisfaction can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including low self-esteem, depression, and disordered eating behaviors.

Societal standards of beauty play a significant role in shaping body image perceptions. The media, in particular, has a powerful influence on how individuals perceive their bodies. Images of thin, toned, and flawless bodies are often portrayed as the ideal, leading many

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people to compare themselves unfavorably to these unrealistic standards. This can create feelings of inadequacy and pressure to conform to societal norms of beauty.

Cultural norms also play a role in shaping body image. Different cultures have varying ideals of beauty, with some valuing thinness while others prefer larger body sizes. These cultural norms can influence how individuals perceive their own bodies and may contribute to feelings of body dissatisfaction.

Personal experiences, such as past traumas, bullying, or negative comments from others, can also impact body image. Individuals who have experienced body shaming or discrimination based on their appearance may develop negative beliefs about their bodies and struggle with self-acceptance.

Over recent years, there have been a growing movement towards body positivity and acceptance. This movement seeks to challenge traditional beauty standards and promote self-love and acceptance of all body types. Social media platforms have played a key role in this movement, with influencers and activists using their platforms to promote body diversity and inclusivity.

Despite these positive developments, body image issues continue to be a significant concern for many individuals. It is important for society to continue to challenge unrealistic beauty standards, promote body acceptance, and provide support for those struggling with body image issues.

1. Body Image: A Multi-Facet Concept

- **A Psychological Construct:**

- Body image is not a simple, objective measurement. It's constructed within our minds, influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors. This means that even if two people have the same physical measurements, their body images can be vastly different.
- This mental representation is fluid and adaptable. It changes throughout our lives, influenced by experiences, relationships, and even our mood. For instance, a person might feel more positive about their body after a workout or more negative after seeing a heavily edited image in a magazine.

- **The Four Dimensions:**

- **Perceptual Body Image:**

- This dimension involves how accurately we judge our body's size, shape, and weight. Distortions can arise from various factors, including psychological distress, past experiences, and societal pressures.
- For example, individuals with anorexia nervosa often significantly overestimate their body size, even when they are severely underweight.

- **Affective Body Image:**

- This involves the emotional responses we have toward our bodies. These feelings can range from contentment and pride to shame, disgust, and anxiety.

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- The emotional component is crucial because it drives many of our behaviors related to our bodies. If we feel ashamed of our bodies, we might avoid social situations or engage in unhealthy dieting practices.
- **Cognitive Body Image:**
 - This dimension encompasses our thoughts, beliefs, and evaluations of our bodies. It includes our internal dialogue, comparisons to others, and adherence to societal beauty standards.
 - Negative cognitive body image often involves self-critical thoughts, such as "My thighs are too big" or "I'm not attractive enough." These thoughts can reinforce negative feelings and behaviors.
- **Behavioral Body Image:**
 - This dimension involves the actions we take based on our body image perceptions. These behaviors can be positive, such as engaging in healthy exercise, or negative, such as engaging in disordered eating or excessive cosmetic procedures.
 - Avoidance behaviors are also included in this category, such as avoiding swimming pools, or changing in front of others.
- **Subjectivity and Variability:**
 - The subjective nature of body image highlights the importance of individual experiences and perspectives. What one person considers a flaw; another might see as a unique and beautiful feature.
 - Factors such as personality traits, self-esteem, and past experiences contribute to this variability. For example, individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to have a positive body image, even if they don't conform to societal beauty standards.

2. The Influential Forces:

- **Sociocultural Pressures:**
 - **Media Saturation:**
 - The pervasive nature of media, especially social media, creates a constant barrage of idealized images. These images are often heavily edited and filtered, creating unrealistic expectations.
 - The constant exposure to these images can lead to social comparison, where individuals compare themselves to others and feel inadequate.
 - **Cultural Norms:**
 - Beauty standards vary across cultures and time periods. What is considered attractive in one culture might be considered unattractive in another.
 - These norms can exert significant pressure, particularly on vulnerable individuals who are trying to fit in.
 - **Peer Influences:**
 - Comments and comparisons from friends, family, and peers can have a profound impact on body image, especially during adolescence.

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- Negative comments, such as "You've gained weight" or "You're too skinny," can lead to feelings of shame and insecurity.
- **Psychological Factors:**
 - **Self-Esteem:**
 - Individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to experience negative body image because they are more vulnerable to external pressures and internal self-criticism.
 - **Personality Traits:**
 - Certain personality traits, such as perfectionism and neuroticism, can increase vulnerability to body image concerns. Perfectionists may have unrealistic expectations for their bodies, while neurotic individuals may be more prone to anxiety and self-doubt.
 - **Emotional Regulation:**
 - Difficulties in managing emotions can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as disordered eating, which are often linked to negative body image.
 - Food can become a way to manage difficult emotions.
 - **Past Traumas:**
 - Experiences of abuse, bullying, or other traumatic events can significantly impact body image. These experiences can lead to feelings of shame, self-blame, and a distorted perception of one's body.
- **Developmental Stages:**
 - **Adolescence:**
 - This period is particularly critical for body image development due to rapid physical changes, hormonal fluctuations, and increased social pressures.
 - Adolescents are also more susceptible to peer influence and media messages.
 - **Aging:**
 - Body image concerns can persist throughout adulthood, with new challenges arising related to aging and physical changes.
 - Society often places less value on aging bodies, which can lead to feelings of invisibility and dissatisfaction.

3. The Consequences of Negative Body Image:

- **Mental Health Implications:**
 - Body dissatisfaction is a significant risk factor for anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
 - It can also contribute to the development of serious mental health conditions, such as eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder.
- **Physical Health Consequences:**
 - Extreme dieting and excessive exercise can have detrimental effects on physical health, including nutritional deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, and cardiovascular problems.

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- Avoidance of medical professionals can also have negative health consequences, as preventative care is avoided.
- **Social and Interpersonal Impacts:**
 - Negative body image can lead to social withdrawal, avoidance of social situations, and difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships.
 - It can also affect intimacy and sexual relationships.

4. Promoting Positive Body Image:

- **Challenging Societal Ideals:**
 - **Critical Media Literacy:**
 - Developing the ability to critically analyze media messages and recognize unrealistic beauty standards is essential for promoting positive body image.
 - **Promoting Body Diversity:**
 - Celebrating the wide range of body shapes and sizes can help individuals feel more accepted and comfortable with their own bodies.
- **Cultivating Self-Acceptance:**
 - **Focusing on Body Functionality:**
 - Appreciating what our bodies can do, rather than solely focusing on appearance, can help shift the focus from aesthetics to functionality.
 - **Practicing Self-Compassion:**
 - Treating ourselves with kindness and understanding, especially during times of body image distress, can help build resilience.
 - **Body Neutrality:**
 - This emerging concept focuses on accepting your body as it is, without assigning positive or negative values to it. It prioritizes functionality and health over aesthetics.
- **Seeking Professional Help:**
 - **Therapy:**
 - Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and other therapeutic approaches can help individuals challenge negative thoughts and develop healthier coping mechanisms.
 - **Support Groups:**
 - Connecting with others who share similar experiences can provide valuable support and validation.

In conclusion, body image is a complex and multifaceted concept that is influenced by a variety of factors. It is important for individuals to cultivate a positive body image and practice self-acceptance. By challenging societal norms of beauty and promoting body positivity, we can create a more inclusive and accepting society for all body types.

Quality of Life:

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of an individual's well-being and overall satisfaction with life. It is a subjective measure that takes

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into account physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, personal fulfillment, and environmental factors. The quality of life of an individual is influenced by a wide range of factors, including socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, education, employment opportunities, social support, and personal values.

Physical health is a key component of quality of life, as it directly impacts an individual's ability to function and engage in daily activities. Good physical health is associated with higher levels of energy, vitality, and overall well-being. Chronic illnesses, disabilities, and physical limitations can significantly impact an individual's quality of life by limiting their ability to participate in activities they enjoy and affecting their overall sense of well-being.

Mental well-being is another important aspect of quality of life. Mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, can have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life by affecting their mood, cognition, and behavior. Positive mental health, on the other hand, is associated with higher levels of happiness, satisfaction, and overall life fulfillment.

Social relationships play a crucial role in determining quality of life. Strong social connections and support systems are associated with higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction. Loneliness, social isolation, and lack of social support can negatively impact an individual's quality of life by leading to feelings of loneliness, depression, and emotional distress.

Personal fulfillment and self-actualization are also important components of quality of life. Individuals who are able to pursue their passions, interests, and goals are more likely to experience a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life. Personal values, beliefs, and goals play a significant role in shaping an individual's quality of life by influencing their priorities, decisions, and overall life satisfaction.

Environmental factors, such as access to clean air and water, safe housing, and green spaces, can also impact quality of life. A healthy and sustainable environment is essential for promoting overall well-being and quality of life for individuals and communities.

In conclusion, quality of life is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of an individual's well-being and overall satisfaction with life. It is influenced by a wide range of factors, including physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, personal fulfillment, and environmental factors. By addressing these factors and promoting positive lifestyle choices, individuals can improve their quality of life and enhance their overall well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Kamila Czepczor-Bernat et al. (2022) examines the connection between negative emotions and body image and how it impacts life quality. People who confront social standards and discover that their bodies don't belong, and they feel depressed and helpless. Avoidance behavior will follow depression brought on by this. The author of this essay thought that fat people should get treatment to help them manage their negative emotions and body dissatisfaction while also improving their quality of life.
2. Manjunatha, M., et al. (2020) discusses the media's significance to society. In contemporary advertising, the model's attributes and physical attributes are given more attention than the product itself. Men's and women's ideal physique types were thus produced. It has been connected to eating disorders and encourages racism. The study is based on this fact in order to understand the extent and context of the influence of these advertisements.

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3. Milla Evelianti et al. (2020) is based on teenage experiences with body shaming. The findings indicated that a moderate level of body shaming was experienced by the majority of the adolescents. Numerous research has indicated that victims of body shaming may suffer negative consequences. While some teenagers who experienced modest body shaming had good body ideals, others who experienced significant levels of it had the opposite, according to survey respondents from high schools in the Depok district.
4. Qingqing Sun et al. (2018) was to look into the relationships between consumerism and body dissatisfaction. The route analysis' findings indicated that increased materialism was an indirect predictor of greater body dissatisfaction through heightened surveillance and body shame. By establishing a link between materialism and body dissatisfaction, this study adds to the body image literature. Our findings suggest that growing body monitoring and body shame are significant factors that contribute to the explanation of the relationships between materialism and the body.
5. Kushi Mukherjee et al. (2022) discusses how body shaming is prevalent among youth and how it leads to stress, which in turn increases the suicide rate. It was discovered that the total proportion of Compared to the worldwide reports, each concern is more serious. Suicide rates will continue to rise if the issues are not addressed immediately.
6. Fauzia et al. (2019), body shaming can be divided into four categories: skin tone, hair, thin, and fat shaming. Making derogatory comments about obese or plus-sized people is the most prevalent type of body shaming. Thin shaming, as opposed to fat shaming, targets young girls or women with abnormally thin body types. One may become the object of body shaming if they have a lot of body hair, particularly if it is directed at girls. Skin that is too dark and dull can also be subjected to skin shaming.
7. WCNC Charlotte (2017), 94% of teenage girls and 64% of teenage guys have experienced body shame. Considering how easily available everyone is these days, young or old, this is definitely a shocking truth. People who are exposed to the internet are continuously reminded of moral values, proper behavior expectations, and admirable moral beliefs.
8. Markey et al. (2020) showed a positive link between pain acceptance and numerous aspects of body image, including functioning appreciation, in patients with several chronic pain syndromes.
9. Alleva et al. (2018), an intervention comprising three writing tasks centered around functionality appreciation enhanced various facets of body image, including body appreciation, body satisfaction, and body-self alienation, and decreased depressive symptomatology in women with rheumatoid arthritis.
10. Levenig et al. (2019) examined two aspects of body image: physical efficacy and attitudes toward health, which fall under the conceptual umbrella of functionality appreciation. They discovered that CLBP patients had lower levels of these aspects than those with subacute LBP and controls. In conclusion, these results suggest that experiencing pain may be related to appreciating one's body and, in particular, one's functionality.

Rationale

The insight of the study on the topic of body image and quality of life among adolescents and young adults is to investigate the potential relationship between these two factors and how they may impact each other. Body image, which refers to an individual's perception of

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their own physical appearance, has been shown to have a significant influence on mental health and overall well-being.

Adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to issues related to body image due to societal pressures, media influence, and developmental changes. Understanding how body image perceptions affect their quality of life can provide valuable insights for interventions and support programs aimed at promoting positive self-esteem and mental health in this population.

By conducting a comparative study, we can explore potential differences in body image perceptions and quality of life between adolescents and young adults, as well as identify any common patterns or trends. This comparative approach can help in identifying age-specific factors that may contribute to body image issues and impact quality of life differently in these two groups.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on body image and quality of life, providing valuable information for healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers to develop targeted interventions and support systems for adolescents and young adults facing challenges related to body image and well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comparative study on body image and quality of life among adolescents and young adults provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between these two factors. The findings highlight the importance of addressing body image issues early on to promote positive mental health and well-being in this population.

Moving forward, it is essential for healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers to develop targeted interventions and support programs that address body image concerns in adolescents and young adults. By promoting a healthy body image and self-esteem, we can help improve the overall quality of life and well-being of individuals in these age groups.

Further research is needed to explore additional factors influencing body image and quality of life in adolescents and young adults, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting positive body image perceptions. By continuing to study and address these issues, we can work towards creating a healthier and more supportive environment for individuals facing challenges related to body image and well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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