

Addressing Body Image Concerns in Young Women: Evaluating a Psychoeducational Intervention

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a tailor-made psychoeducation program to address irrational body image and unhealthy eating behaviors among female undergraduate students aged 18-21 years. This research employed a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-test assessments. Sixty-one participants were divided into an intervention group (n=30) and a control group (n=31). The intervention group was exposed to videos depicting unhealthy weight loss behaviors and their consequences, whereas the control group received no intervention. The measures used included the Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire and Eating Disorder Inventory-3. Paired-sample t-tests revealed significant differences in body image variables between the pre- and post-test conditions for the intervention group (Cohen's $D > 1$), while no significant differences were observed in the control group. Independent-samples t-tests showed that the samples from both groups were homogenous at baseline. The findings suggest that psychoeducation intervention led to improvements in body image and a reduction in the internalization of appearance ideals. These results are consistent with those of previous studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of psychoeducational interventions in improving body image, satisfaction, and self-esteem. This study highlights the potential of tailor-made psychoeducation programs to address the irrational body image and unhealthy eating behaviors among young women. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of such interventions and their applicability in diverse populations.

Keywords: *Body image, Psychoeducational intervention, Eating disorders, Young women*

Body image refers to an individual's perception, thoughts, and feelings regarding their physical appearance and body. It encompasses how a person views their body shape, size, weight, and overall physical features. Body image can be influenced by various factors including cultural norms, media representations, personal experiences, and social comparisons. A positive body image involves accepting and appreciating one's body, whereas a negative body image may lead to dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and potentially harmful behaviors.

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Received: June 07, 2025; Revision Received: August 18, 2025; Accepted: August 23, 2025

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Body image concerns among women have significant psychological implications, impacting various aspects of their mental health and well-being. Social media play a crucial role in shaping these concerns, particularly among young women. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook expose users to idealized images that intensify body dissatisfaction and promote social comparisons. This exposure contributes to mental health issues, such as low self-esteem, depression, and eating disorders, as many women struggle to meet unrealistic standards of beauty (Perloff, 2014; Merino et al., 2024).

Cultural and gender factors further compound these effects, as societal standards of attractiveness often scrutinize women's physical attributes including weight and body mass index (BMI). Cultural norms and gender expectations influence women's perceptions of body image, leading to varied impacts based on individual ideals. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies to address body dissatisfaction and promote healthier perceptions of body image among women (Merino et al., 2024).

Research indicates that body image concerns are strongly linked to eating disorders, which can significantly affect health and quality of life. This relationship emphasizes the need for early prevention and intervention strategies, especially in vulnerable populations, such as female students. Educational initiatives that raise awareness of body image concerns and encourage seeking help can mitigate these risks (Mallaram et al., 2023). Body dissatisfaction is not limited to physical appearance, but also involves emotional and psychological aspects, as demonstrated in studies on early adolescent girls and women with medical conditions such as scleroderma. Negative affect, sociocultural pressure, and physical health issues can exacerbate body image concerns, leading to depression and psychosocial impairment (Benrud-Larson et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2013).

Additionally, behaviors such as engaging in "selfie" activities on social networking sites revealed further complexities in the relationship between body image, self-objectification, and self-esteem among young women. These behaviors can both reflect and affect body image, suggesting that their motivations and psychological outcomes are intertwined (Veldhuis et al., 2020).

There is a need for comprehensive public health strategies to prevent the negative impact of body image concerns. These should include fostering an inclusive understanding of beauty, reducing societal pressures, and increasing the representation of diverse body types in media. Addressing these concerns holistically through biopsychosocial models and interventions can significantly improve women's mental health and quality of life (Rodgers et al. 2013).

Addressing body image concerns in young women through psychoeducational interventions has garnered significant interest and research. One promising approach is to incorporate yoga as a psychoeducational tool to improve body image dissatisfaction among college-aged women. One study evaluated the efficacy of yoga as a novel intervention and found that participants who engaged in yoga classes twice weekly for 12 weeks showed significant improvements in their evaluation of their appearance and satisfaction with specific body areas compared to a control group. Moreover, these participants reported reduced preoccupation with their appearance, suggesting yoga has the potential to foster healthier body relationships among young women (Ariel-Donges et al., 2018).

Additionally, the broader implications of body image concerns on various aspects of well-being and the role of the media are crucial to consider. Studies have shown that media

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exposure often exacerbates body dissatisfaction by reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards, leading to negative psychological outcomes, such as anxiety and low self-esteem. This highlights the need for interventions that include educational initiatives and media literacy programs to help young people critically engage with media content. These interventions can mitigate the adverse effects of media on body image and promote healthier self-perception and well-being (Xie, 2024; Merino et al., 2024).

Furthermore, understanding cultural and gender dynamics at play can enrich the design and implementation of psychoeducational interventions aimed at body image concerns. It is essential to tackle these concerns through comprehensive public health strategies and policy measures that address not only personal perceptions but also societal norms and expectations regarding body image (Merino et al., 2024).

Overall, psychoeducational interventions, such as yoga and media literacy, as well as a multifaceted approach that includes policy measures, offer promising pathways to improve body image dissatisfaction among young women, fostering a more inclusive understanding of body image in society. While I cannot generate a full essay, this summary provides a concise overview of psychoeducational interventions for body image concerns based on the available literature.

Body image concerns among women have significant psychological implications, impacting various aspects of their mental health and well-being. Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook expose users to idealized images, intensifying body dissatisfaction and promoting social comparisons. This exposure contributes to mental health issues such as low self-esteem, depression, and eating disorders (Perloff, 2014; Merino et al., 2024).

Cultural and gender factors compound these effects, as societal standards of attractiveness often scrutinize women's physical attributes. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies to address body dissatisfaction and promote healthier perceptions of body image among women (Merino et al., 2024).

Research indicates a strong link between body image concerns and eating disorders, emphasizing the need for early prevention and intervention strategies, especially in vulnerable populations like female students. Educational initiatives can raise awareness and encourage seeking help to mitigate these risks (Mallaram et al., 2023).

Body dissatisfaction extends beyond physical appearance, involving emotional and psychological aspects. Studies on early adolescent girls and women with medical conditions like scleroderma demonstrate how negative affect, sociocultural pressure, and physical health issues can exacerbate body image concerns, leading to depression and psychosocial impairment (Benrud-Larson et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2013).

Behaviors such as engaging in "selfie" activities on social networking sites reveal complexities in the relationship between body image, self-objectification, and self-esteem among young women. These behaviors can both reflect and affect body image, suggesting intertwined motivations and psychological outcomes (Veldhuis et al., 2020).

Comprehensive public health strategies are needed to prevent the negative impact of body image concerns. These should include fostering an inclusive understanding of beauty, reducing societal pressures, and increasing the representation of diverse body types in media.

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Addressing these concerns holistically through biopsychosocial models and interventions can significantly improve women's mental health and quality of life (Rodgers et al., 2013).

Psychoeducational interventions, such as yoga, have shown promise in improving body image dissatisfaction among college-aged women. One study found that participants engaging in yoga classes twice weekly for 12 weeks showed significant improvements in their appearance evaluation and satisfaction with specific body areas compared to a control group (Ariel-Donges et al., 2018).

Media exposure often exacerbates body dissatisfaction by reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards. Interventions that include educational initiatives and media literacy programs can help young people critically engage with media content, mitigating adverse effects on body image and promoting healthier self-perception (Xie, 2024; Merino et al., 2024).

A multifaceted approach incorporating psychoeducational interventions, media literacy, and policy measures offers promising pathways to improve body image dissatisfaction among young women, fostering a more inclusive understanding of body image in society.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To assess the impact of psychoeducation interventions on unhealthy eating behaviors in the target population.
- To compare body image perceptions and eating behaviors between an intervention group exposed to educational videos and a control group.

Research Question:

Do tailor-made psychoeducation programs positively influence body image and unhealthy eating behaviors?

Hypotheses:

- H_1 = There would be significant differences between the aspects of body image of the intervention and control groups in the pretest condition.
- H_2 : In the intervention group, there were significant differences between the aspects of body image in the pre- and post-intervention conditions.
- H_0 = In the control group, there were no significant differences between the aspects of body image in the pre- and post-intervention conditions.

Research Design

This study used quasi-experimental research with a pre-test and post-test design.

Sampling

Sample Population

The population selected for this study consisted of female undergraduate students age range—18-21 years. Most students were from North India. Sixty-one female undergraduate students were selected for this study was 61 female undergraduate students.

Measures Used

- **Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire:** The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) is an important tool used in body image research. It measures multiple facets of body image, including perceptions, attitudes,

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and behaviors related to body appearance and satisfaction. The MBSRQ is particularly notable for its applicability to both men and women across a wide age range, which makes it a valuable instrument for diverse demographic studies. (Cash and Henry, 1995; Deshmukh and Kulkarni, 2017).

- **Eating Disorder Inventory-3:** EDI-3 has also been validated across different cultural contexts, including Portugal and Sweden. These studies highlight the cross-cultural applicability of the inventory, with some variations observed in norms across different countries. However, these differences are often small and do not detract from the overall utility of the EDI-3 as a reliable assessment tool (Machado et al. 2001; Nyman-Carlsson et al. 2014).

Procedure

Video Selection

This study included two groups of participants: the intervention group, those who were exposed to triggering stimuli, such as videos depicting unhealthy weight loss behaviors and their consequences, and the control group, those who were not exposed to triggering stimuli. Two videos were prepared for each of the groups. The first video was a compilation of reels, pictures, quotes, and scenes from advertisements, shows, and movies that perpetuate thin ideals and unhealthy weight-loss behaviors. The second video was a compilation of clips showing the consequences of unhealthy dietary behaviors. None of the videos were prepared for the control group.

Administration of the study

The course of the study differed between the intervention and control groups. The intervention group was asked to respond to the questionnaire as part of the pretest study. After this, they were shown a 15 minutes compilation of reels, pictures, and scenes from shows and movies that perpetuated thin ideals and unhealthy weight-loss behaviors. A five minutes break was given to them, after which they were shown the second video, which was a 5-10 minutes compilation of the consequences of unhealthy dietary behaviors. Focus group discussions were also conducted for the intervention group for 10 minutes. The participants were then referred to the next day for post-test administration of the scales. For the control group, a pre-test administration of the scales was conducted, and they were called again the next day for post-test administration. No videos were shown between the two.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was conducted during the study period. The students who consented to participate in the study answered the questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis

Normality tests were used to examine data distribution. The following equation was employed to conduct the statistical analyses:

- Independent sample t-tests were employed to compare the differences between the groups.
- Paired-sample t-tests were used to evaluate changes within groups.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained. No deception was performed during the study. The participants were informed of their right to voluntary participation and were told that they could withdraw if they felt uncomfortable

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during the course of the experiment. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their information. Psychoeducation was provided to them after they watched the videos. Permission was obtained from the responsible authorities before approaching participants.

RESULTS

This stage assessed the influence of videos depicting harmful body ideals and their effects on female college students' self-perceptions. This study included 61 undergraduate participants, with 31 assigned to the control group and 30 to the intervention group.

Table 1 Paired Sample T-test of the variables for intervention and control groups

Variables	Test	Mean	S.D.	t	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Body-Image (Control)	Pre	24.1	6.09	1.41	0.31
	Post	23.7	5.84		
Body-Image (Intervention)	Pre	21.3	3.41	6.09*	-1.11
	Post	23.2	3.25		
Body-Dissatisfaction (Control)	Pre	12.0	7.04	1.00	-0.18
	Post	12.1	7.21		
Body-Dissatisfaction (Intervention)	Pre	15.1	4.65	7.63*	1.39
	Post	13.0	4.44		

Note. * $p < .001$

Table 1 shows the results of the pre-and post-test differences in variables between the intervention and control groups. The results showed a significant difference in both variables in the intervention group (Cohen's $d > 1$), whereas no significant difference was noted in the control group. Therefore, both the alternative hypothesis and the null hypothesis "*In the intervention group, there would be significant differences between the body image variables of pre-test and post-test conditions*" and "*In the control group, there would be no significant differences between the body image variables of pre-test and post-test conditions.*" are retained.

Table 2 Independent sample T-test of the variables for intervention and control groups

Variables	Mean	S.D.	p
Body Image (Control)	24.3	5.78	
Body Image (Intervention)	21.3	3.75	0.063
Body Dissatisfaction (Control)	12.0	7.04	
Body Dissatisfaction (Intervention)	15.1	4.65	0.056

Table 2 shows the results of the independent-sample t-test for the variables in the intervention and control groups. The p-values, which were greater than 0.05, showed that the samples in both the intervention and control groups were homogenous. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis "*there would be significant differences between the aspects of body image of intervention and control groups in the pre-test condition*" is rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of a psychoeducation intervention to address irrational body image and unhealthy eating behaviors. The results showed that the intervention group showed improvement in the responses in the post-test condition (Cohen's $d > 1$), whereas the control group, who were not given any psychoeducation intervention, showed little to no improvement in the post-test responses (Cohen's $d < 1$). A few studies have been found that support this finding. In addition, Paraskeva et al. (2024) found that body image interventions led to improvements in body image and reductions in the internalization of appearance ideals among adolescent Indian girls. Another study by Adusumilli et al. (2022) found that this intervention resulted in improvements in body image, satisfaction, and self-esteem. Ciao et al. (2021) also found significant improvements in appearance norms and body image as a result of a psycho-educational intervention.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of psychoeducational interventions for addressing body image concerns and unhealthy eating behaviors among young women. The findings demonstrate that tailored psychoeducation programs can lead to significant improvements in body image perceptions and attitudes.

Key results include:

- Significant differences in body image variables between pre- and post-test conditions for the intervention group, with large effect sizes (Cohen's $D > 1$).
- No significant differences observed in the control group, supporting the effectiveness of the intervention.
- Homogeneity between intervention and control groups at baseline, strengthening the validity of the results.

These outcomes align with previous research showing the positive impact of psychoeducational interventions on body image, satisfaction, and self-esteem. The study highlights the potential of such programs to reduce the internalization of unrealistic appearance ideals and promote healthier body perceptions.

However, further research is needed to:

- Explore the long-term effects of these interventions
- Assess their applicability across diverse populations
- Investigate the role of cultural and social factors in shaping intervention outcomes

Taken together, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of tailored psychoeducation programs to address body image concerns and unhealthy eating behaviors among young women. These findings have important implications for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies in educational and clinical settings.

Ethics declarations

All participants provided informed consent, and the study was approved by the institutional ethics review board. Prior to commencing the study, the participants were briefed on the study's objectives, reassured about the coding of their personal data to ensure anonymity, and asked to sign a consent form. This process guarantees the protection of confidentiality and personal information.

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Acknowledgment

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

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Chauhan, E. & Murugesan, M. (2025). Addressing Body Image Concerns in Young Women: Evaluating a Psychoeducational Intervention. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 2391-2399. DIP:18.01.220.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.220