

How to Cite:

Singh, U., & Manju, M. (2022). Correlates of body image and self esteem among adolescents. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S6), 4147–4154.
<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS6.10579>

Correlates of body image and self esteem among adolescents

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Abstract--Adolescence is a difficult period in a child's life during which he or she undergoes several changes, including physical, social, cognitive, and emotional ones. This is the point in life when true self emerges. So, child must be well-cared for and supported by their parents and peers. Positive body image has been highlighted as a major component of psychological well-being, and it is required to prepare our adolescents, as well as key gatekeepers like parents and teachers, with the ability to cope with societal and cultural pressures to adhere to unrealistic beauty norms. The current research is an endeavor to present a systematic review on the correlates of self esteem and body image among adolescents. Data from previous research papers in psychology, psychiatry and sociology are incorporated to explore the factors associated with body image and self-esteem. Family influence, media, peer influence are identified as correlates of self esteem and body image in adolescents. Some recommendations for parents, educators and schools are also mentioned.

Keywords--self esteem, body image, adolescents.

Introduction

Self esteem refers to “one's positive or negative attitude toward oneself”. It is considered as a vital measure of psychological well-being. There are various influencers of adolescents' self-esteem but some reasons are compelling to believe that body image changes are important to comprehend this tendency. Because adolescents are indoctrinated to believe that in our society and today's world, physical appearance is an important basis for the assessment and appraisal of

self. Indeed, self-worth and appearance are intricately intertwined, with perceived appearance repeatedly emerging as strongest predictor of self-esteem among teenagers. For both girls and boys, self-esteem demonstrates a strong positive relationship with academic performance (Gupta, 2013). Even when compared to adolescents with other psychiatric conditions, adolescents having issues related to negative body image are more likely to have negative psychological symptoms like sadness, anxiety, distress and suicidal thoughts than adolescents with no body image issues (Jeannie, Gregory & Marion; 2007).

Positive perceptions, attitude and ideas towards as body image all are proved to be the contributors of positive self-image. Positive self-image is the extent to which a person appreciates himself and how he or she views his or her own unique character, personality, aptitudes, and achievements. Young persons with low self image may have low confidence in themselves and their appearance. Individuals with high confidence and worth have a positive and favorable attitude toward their body and mind. Adolescents who perceive their own character as positive, they are capable to retain their own confidence and worth (Ajmal, 2019). Having poor body image and low self-esteem are documented as key sources of worry among adolescents in the research. This review paper summarizes how family, media & social factors influence the body image of the adolescents that ultimately have an impact on self esteem of adolescents.

Body Image and Self Esteem

Body Image refers to “a person's thoughts, feelings and perception of the aesthetics or sexual attractiveness of their own body” (Grogan, 2016) whereas *Self-esteem* refers to “an individual's subjective evaluation of their own worth”. “Self-esteem can be described as beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states (Hewitt & John, 2009). People with a poor body image believe that they have not good body appearance and therefore, they are unable to check out themselves. They have complaint of low self-esteem, lack of self-control, and despair with other psychosomatic discomforts. While persons having great body image welcome and acknowledge the distinctiveness and characteristics of the body, which makes them to pay attention more on what their bodies can do instead of how it seems because of which they accept their bodies unconditionally. Individuals' positive approach to view their body leads them to feel satisfied with what they have in their life and move them towards having a high sense of self-esteem (Khalaf, Hashmi & Omari, 2021; Bansal, 2017).

Various factors that were found to be correlated with negative body image were gender, concerning about other's opinions and doing dieting. In terms of gender, adolescent girls are found to have poor body image in comparison to boys. According to recent review of literature, poor body image is significantly linked to poor self-esteem, poor mental health, low self-worth and the likelihood of acquiring psychological issues. In adolescents, having a poor body image and low self-esteem has severe psychosocial consequences and increases the likelihood of psychological discomfort. These issues are important during adolescence not just because of social and cultural ideas and perceptions about self are formed in this period but also because of physical changes during puberty make the girls

perceive poor self image in so called beauty standards set by society for females (Gupta, Bhatia, Shetty, Naphade & Datar; 2016).

Gender Differences

Gatti, Ionio, Traficante & Confalonieri (2014) did a cross-sectional research of 242 teenagers aged between 11 years - 17 years according to which good bodily satisfaction leads to increased self-esteem. Girls are more concerned than boys about the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics and body modifications. Girls and boys have various factors that influence their physique and self-esteem. Weight, attractiveness, and the presence or absence of menarche has more significant impact on the females' self-esteem than pubertal status. In fact, BMI and menarche proved to be two most critical factors in female body esteem. Girls have poor body satisfaction because they have to make effort for accepting and giving mental integration for pubertal changes, which leads to low self-esteem, as for as boys are concerned height, peers' perceptions about looks, anxieties about seeming tall and muscular impact self-esteem (Pop, 2016).

In comparison to teenage girls in their early years of adolescence, adolescent females in late adolescence stage were found to have high degree of self-esteem. Teenage girls are more self-conscious about their body and weight than teenage boys, and adolescent females provide less personal information than adolescent boys (Ajmal, 2019). Virk & Singh (2020) attempted to determine the percentage of students who were unhappy with their body image, and the association between numerous factors of self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction. It was a cross-sectional research with 125 first-year medical students from rural Haryana as participants. 16.8% of the pupils were unhappy with their body image. Dissatisfaction with body image was shown to be substantially related with a low BMI. Self-esteem and body image satisfaction were shown to have a relatively favourable relationship. Underweight or overweight individuals were more prone to have negative affective thoughts regarding their bodies and were more concerned about how others perceive them in social circumstances than their normal weight peers.

Adolescent bodies undergo many physical changes during puberty in short span of time, they are prone to have extremely dynamic body image views. Body image issues might be amplified throughout puberty. For boys, puberty brings with the features that society values: height, speed, broadness and strength. Girls' puberty comes with it traits that are commonly viewed as less desirable, such as becoming rounder and having more body fat. These changes have the potential to exacerbate females' discontent. Adolescents going through puberty changes earlier or later than their peers might impact their body image and mental health. Early development in girls and late development in boys, in general, pose the biggest obstacles to a good body image (Gupta, Bhatia, Shetty, Naphade & Datar, 2016).

Family Influence

Yahaya, Apaak & Hormenu (2021) did study on 561 senior high school students to evaluate the link between health behaviour, self-esteem and body image as well

as factors impacting body image. The biggest predictor of body image was found to be family influence. Adolescents with body image issues tend to have low self-esteem, and family may play a crucial role in assisting students in developing a positive body image. The strongest predictor of body image was found to be family influence, after while role model impact, media, friends/peer, and community/society. Parental nurturing is vital throughout the developing process, but it appears to be more critical in the development of early adolescents, according to the findings.

Hasan et al. (2018) study revealed that eating disorders and concerns related to body image are quite common in University students and families have significant impact on the development of eating disorders among young people. Adolescents from wealthy households are self-conscious about their appearance. The link can be stated in a roundabout way. Because adolescents who have much monetary ways to get in restaurants and pay, they may have more fast food, which in turn can increase the risk of obesity. Obesity has a detrimental influence on sense of a favourable body image, which is an important component for the development of teenage self-esteem. Another intriguing finding in the present study is the relationship between education of mothers and good body image. Teenagers with low-education mothers are unconcerned about their physical appearance. Mothers appear to have an equally important role. Furthermore, mothers having low education may lack the information and resources needed to assist and teach their children about many elements of body image, physical appearance, and bodily functions, thus leading to have body image problems in adulthood (Khalaf, Hashmi & Omari, 2021).

Romani, Brandao, Sudzina, Bo & Mikkelsen (2021) study investigated the impact of socioeconomic status of family on social attachment and body image of students. High income of parents resists poor body image and social attachment whereas overweight or obese students have more possibility of having or perceiving poor body image and social attachment. Barbeau, Carbonneau, & Pelletier (2022) study investigated effects of perceived negative and positive body talk in family and peers on teenage girls' body talk and eating disorder attitudes, as well as function of adolescents' fear of negative assessment and self-compassion in these connections. Perceived negative body talk was linked to more self-related negative talk and lowers self-compassion due to fear of unfavourable assessment and vice-versa. Negative and positive body talks are developed interpersonally by boosting evaluative worries and diminishing self-compassion, according to the findings.

Media Influence

Mass and social media plays significant role in promoting slender body attractiveness that can explain body image and self-esteem relationship. Adolescents having several accounts in social media are less likely to value their physical appearance. Youth with pro-eating disorders that promote their ideals through social media are most likely to be encountered by university students who have many accounts. Social and mass media promote slim body as an ideal one, and the media contributes to the public's pressure by promoting slim body ideals, which can bring unfavourable beliefs and attitudes regarding fat and

overweight. Adolescents should get social media literacy training, which will help them think critically about content of media and messaging and minimise their participation in detrimental activities encouraged by its influencers. To combat the present wave of slim body idealisation in social media, interventional programmes employing social media are also needed (Khalaf, Hashmi & Omari; 2021).

Audrey, Satyadarma & Subroto (2020) study used a sample of 150 female teen Instagram users to look at the association between body image & self-esteem. Its findings also revealed a link between body image & self-esteem. Based on the findings of the study, it was determined that the greater an individual's self-esteem is, the more positive and content they are with their looks. The stronger an individual's self-esteem is, the more satisfied they are with their body. The better was female's self-esteem the more they labels and perceives their body weight as normal. The smaller the individual's fear over being obese, the higher his or her self-esteem. Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar (2005) study revealed that body satisfaction of girl adolescents aged 11–16 years lowers when they get exposed to either ultra-thin or average-size magazine models which resulted to ultimately low self-esteem. The self-esteem of older girls was similarly lower than that of younger ones.

The majority of women are unhappy with their physical appearance. Parents, schools, peers, and even the media may all contribute to unhappiness. This has been going on over the past 30 years, and it's not unexpected given how skinny women have been portrayed in the media. The media has a great impact on how women see their bodies. Thin women are connected with excellent appearance, attractiveness, and successful relationships as healthy persons. The bodies are portrayed as personal billboards that provide initial impressions to others. Eating disorders can affect women who are striving to achieve unrealistic objectives as they strive to satisfy this unreasonable expectation of thinness. Currently, teenage and young adult girls account for almost 90% of severe eating disorder cases. Women who are unhappy with their bodies frequently have poor body image, which leads to poor self-esteem (Rajika & Gayatri, 2019).

Conclusion

Adolescence is a difficult period in a child's life during which he or she undergoes several changes, including physical, social, cognitive, and emotional ones. This is the point in life when true self emerges. So, child must be well-cared for and supported by their parents and peers. Because a teenager body undergoes drastic and rapid changes during puberty, they may develop negative views towards their own body. When they observe other attractive person, whether models, celebrities in the media, or adult females, their own self-image is distorted. This may create distortion in their real and ideal images, resulting in further problems. Lower self-esteem, depression and the development of a range of medical, mental, and social difficulties have all been connected to body image dissatisfaction. Promoting a positive body image is critical for addressing other social and public health challenges that teens face. Positive body image has been highlighted as a major component of psychological well-being and it is required to prepare our adolescents, as well as key gatekeepers like parents and teachers with the ability

to cope with societal and cultural pressures to adhere to unrealistic beauty norms.

Recommendations

- Parents must be educated and made aware about the significance of having positive attitudes toward weight, food and beauty, as well as the influence these views have on their children. Both parents should be conscious of the effects of their views and ideas on their children. Parents may set a good example for their children by modelling healthy eating habits and making meal preparation an enjoyable activity instead of tedious one.
- Preventative techniques can be adopted to encourage pre-adolescents and adolescents to have a good body image and self-esteem. Preventive guidance and counselling programmes can be helpful in making students feel encouraged about their interactions with others as well as and for creating a secure, loving, and effective learning environment in the classroom in which students can learn to cultivate positive body images and learn about relaxation techniques to use when feeling stressed about self-image. Counselors may help both girls and boys from social groups and encourage them to feel good about themselves, develop healthy body image attitudes, and appreciate their body. Counselors can also assist in the facilitation of information sessions about the physiological changes that occur as a result of the start of puberty in both girls and boys.
- Students and parents will be less likely to adopt negative tactics to achieve an "ideal" weight if they are informed about the negative impacts of dieting and missing meals by lectures and newsletters. Local nurses or dietitians might be invited to speak to pupils about body types and how to eat properly by minding all of the food categories. Schools and Institutions can implement "no tolerance" policy for teasing related to body shapes among peers. Physical activities should be organized by schools to encourage students to participate in so as to boost their self-esteem. Nonathletic students might be encouraged to volunteer at day care facilities, food banks, and homes for the elderly to exhibit their abilities and skills and feel good about themselves. Students should be taught how to analyse the messages they get from media sources and how to avoid allowing such messages to abuse their growing attitudes.

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