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Author(s): **Qurat-ul-Ain Javaid
Amna Ajmal**

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The Impact of Body Image on Self-Esteem in Adolescents

Qurat-ul-Ain Javaid¹

Amna Ajmal^{2*}

Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to explore the impact of body image on self-esteem in adolescent males and females. A sample of 290 adolescents (144= male, 146= females) was taken from different schools and colleges of Multan. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Body Image Scale were used to measure the impact. Findings indicated a positive relationship between the level of confidence in the body image of adolescent males and their self-esteem. Moreover, it was found that adolescent females in their later years of adolescence had a high level of self-esteem as compared to adolescent females in their early years of adolescence. Independent t-test scores found that adolescent females report feeling more conscious about their body image and weight as compared to adolescent males. Results also showed that adolescent females disclose less information about themselves as compared to adolescent males.

Keywords: adolescents, body image, self-esteem

Introduction

Most teenagers have similar questions and concerns about their bodies. They think a lot about their appearance which seems in a constant state of change during adolescence. Everyone has an "image" of their body and appearance and how well it fits in what they consider normal, acceptable, or attractive. For adolescents, body image is a big part of their total self-image. They are very much sensitive and responsive regarding criticism about their body image which they find irritating and they perceive negatively things like comments and taunts. Many of them begin to lose self-esteem or confidence if they get unfavorable or bad comments about their appearance, physical abilities, social looks, ethnic features and changes in their body that are linked with puberty. To focus equally on all aspects of their lives, they need to give equal importance to other major factors such as mental aptitude, their personalities and inner strengths, artistic and musical talents etc. that also contribute significantly in the making of the overall self-image. Adolescence is a specific time period, generally considered between 10 – 19 years of age, during which certain

^{1,2}Department of Applied Psychology, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

*Corresponding author amnaajmal25@hotmail.com



changes occur in human beings including social, morphological and psychological changes. Evidence shows that responsibility increases along with demands and changes in friendship occur during this stage of life (Polce, Myers, Kilmartin, Forssmann & Kliewer, [1998](#)).

The level of confidence also known as self-esteem is determined by how much a person believes in his/her own worth and also by his/her perception of the degree of respect shown to him/her by others. Self-esteem is essential since liking oneself can influence one's emotional wellness and how one may act in a particular situation. An exploratory research was directed by [J. A. O'Dea](#) in the University of Sydney, NSW, Australia on 26 March, 2012. The research focused primarily on body image and self-esteem in children and adolescents. It indicated that body image and self-esteem encourage adolescents to develop a positive self-image and promote overall psychological health, healthy eating habits, and regular physical activity. The findings of this exploratory research strongly support the hypothesis of the current research.

Research shows that the percentage of body fats also increases among females during adolescence. These changes and certain other changes may affect how a person looks. Self-perception is a person's impression of the style or sexually engaging quality of his/her own body. Image dissatisfaction relays the dissatisfaction regarding one's physical shape, appearance and weight.

An exploratory research was directed by Defora in Brazil amid 2012-2013 on self-perception and the level of confidence among young people. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was utilized to assess the relationship between body image and self-esteem. 387 youths finished all estimations. The outcome demonstrated that 30.6% of adolescents showed body disappointment. 56% youths had low self-esteem because of dissatisfaction with their body image. Findings demonstrate that there is a critical effect of self-perception on self-esteem. Another study conducted by Clay, Vignoles and Dittmar ([2005](#)) led an examination on "Body Image and Self-esteem among immature young adolescent girls aged 11-16 years". Results bolster calls for timely instructive mediations to help young ladies to deconstruct the media pictures.

1.1. Rationale

The aim of this research is to check or assess the impact of body image

on self-esteem in adolescents because there has been little work on it in our region. This study will not only fill the existing gap in research but it will also help adolescents to come to know more about the importance of self-esteem in their lives and how their body image can help them look better and feel more confident. Hence, the purpose of this research is to measure the relationship between body image and self-esteem, gauge the effects of gender differences on this relationship and find the level of self-perception and self-respect in adolescents.

1.2. Hypotheses

- There is a significant impact of body image on self-esteem.
- Adolescent females have a low level of confidence about their body image as compared to adolescent males.
- Older adolescent males have a high level of confidence in their body image as compared to younger adolescent males.
- Older adolescent females have a high level of self-esteem as compared to younger adolescent females.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

A simple survey research design and convenient sampling technique was used in this study.

2.2. Participants and Sample

A sample of 290 adolescent boys and girls (144 boys, 146 girls) was taken from different schools and colleges of Multan. The sample included both younger adolescent boys and girls who were between 12-15 years of age and relatively older adolescent boys and girls aged between 15-19 years. For this research, convenient sampling technique was used to collect data. Along with the instrument, demographic variables' (name, age, gender, qualification) sheet was attached.

2.3. Procedure

The co-relational research method was used. Demographic sheet was administered on a sample of 290 adolescents. The data was taken from different schools and colleges of Multan. Permission was taken for data collection from the principles of schools and colleges. General instructions

were given to the respondents regarding the purpose and time of task. They were requested to fill the statistical data sheet according to the directions given before each scale. Data was analyzed through SPSS (version 21).

2.4. Instruments

Two instruments were used in this research. The first was Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (SES) developed by Rosenberg (1965). It consists of 10 items and the response scale provides three options namely strongly agree, agree and disagree. The other scale used in this research was Body Shape Questionnaire developed by Cooper et al. (1986). It consists of 16 items and the responses are scored as Never=1 and Always=6. The general score is the aggregate over all the 16 items.

3. Results

To study the significance of the relationship between body image and self-esteem on the basis of different types of responses for male and female recipients one way ANOVA was performed using SPSS (Statistical package for Social Sciences).

Table 1

Regression Analysis Showing the Impact of Body Image on Self-esteem (N=290)

Predictors	B	Std. E	b	t	p
Body image	-.347	.177	.138	1.961	.002*

$R^2 = 0.6$, Adjusted $R^2 = .002$, $F = 1.645$, $p < 0.05$ *

Regression analysis in the table shows that there is a significant impact of body image on self-esteem in adolescents. The given value in table is $p > 0.05 < 0.05$ which shows an impact.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix Scores of Body Image and Self-esteem (N=290)

Scales	Items	Body Image	Self-esteem
BSS	16	1	0.240**
SEE	10		1

Note: Inter subscale correlation of adolescents' (N=290). BIS = Body image Scale; SES = Self-Esteem Scale.

Table 2 illustrates a meaningful connection between self-perception and self-esteem among young adolescents. If responses towards body image are negative then it affects the self-esteem. This finding is emphatically connected to this theory.

Table 3
Mean, Standard Deviation, t and p Values on the Scale of Body Image and Self-esteem in Male and Female Adolescents (N= 290)

Scale	Gender	N	M	SD	T	P	Cohens'd
Body image	Male	144	34.56	9.894	1.50	0.15	0.1474
	Female	146	32.89	12.60			
Self-esteem	Male	144	24.75	2.291	-.401	0.25	0.462
	Female	146	25.86	2.50			

N= 290. f= 288, p>0.05

The above results demonstrate that there is a compelling contrast among male and female adolescents with regard to their self-perception. There is no valid difference among male and female adolescents with regard to the level of their self-esteem.

Table 4
Level of Confidence in Body Image among Younger and Older Adolescent Males (M=144)

Group	N	Mean	S.D	T	P
Younger Adolescent	32	32.89	.251	2.893	.029
Older Adolescent	38	34.56	.273		

This table shows that older adolescent males have a higher level of confidence in their body image ($P>0.05$).

Table 5
Level of Self-Esteem among Younger and Older Adolescent Females

Group	N	Mean	S.D	T	P
Younger Adolescents	36	33.33	.251		
				2.587	.034
Older Adolescents	34	36.45	.273		

Table 5 shows that older adolescent females have a higher level of self-esteem ($P>0.05$).

4. Discussion

Body image and self-esteem are two major factors of an individual's personality that are linked together. Positive thoughts, perceptions and attitude towards body image contribute in making a positive personality. Self-perception depends on one's musings about their personality, their mentality and sentiments, and the way their body looks. On the contrary, confidence is based on how much one likes oneself, and how one perceives or values his/her individual character, qualities, aptitudes, and achievements. Youngsters who have low confidence may not generally feel certain about themselves or what they look like. Individuals with great confidence regularly have a constructive and certain disposition about their body and mind, can perceive their qualities and also maintain their individual esteem and worth (Abell & Richards, [1996](#)).

The results show that the first hypothesis is supported and there is an impact of body image on self-esteem among adolescents. Self-esteem grows up in adolescents through positive body image. If self-body image is negative and unfavorable then it prompts distress and dissatisfaction with oneself which leads to a low level of self-esteem.

The second hypothesis of the study states that female adolescents have a low level of confidence in their body image as compared to male adolescents. This hypothesis is bolstered on the grounds that male adolescents have more familiarity with their body image. This study supports this research hypothesis. Schacter ([2009](#)) led an exploratory

research on the "Relationship between Body Image and Self-esteem of Ninth and Twelfth Graders". The research was conducted on a sample of 36 ninth graders and 38 twelfth graders who volunteered for the study. The outcomes demonstrate that adolescent females have a lower level of confidence in their body image and low self-esteem as compared to their male counterparts.

The third hypothesis posited that male adolescents have a higher level of self-esteem as compared to female adolescents. The third hypothesis has not been supported on the grounds that if male adolescents have low confidence in their body image then they should not turn out to have high self-esteem. Since males are strong and have the capacity to confront their negative and positive self-perception (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004). Studies have illustrated that boys are almost equally divided between wanting to lose weight and increasing weight, but there are few studies that have illustrated a desire for increased muscle size. In adulthood, men show a stronger desire to lose weight as they grow older.

The fourth hypothesis expressed that younger adolescents have a higher state of confidence in their body image as compared to older adolescents. The speculation is bolstered by the study of Simmons, Blyth, Van Cleave & Bush (1979). As per findings of the research, the seventh grade girls faced more problems in the new environment as compared to boys and girls who remained in the same school. Moreover, girls with multiple problems including change of school and reaching puberty suffered with the lowest self-esteem.

The fifth hypothesis is accepted that older adolescent females have a higher self-esteem as compared to younger adolescent females. The girls who study magazines focused at grown women are more dissatisfied with their outlook as stated in the study Body Image Concerns in Young Girls: The Role of Peers and Media in 2006 by Tiggemann and Dohnt. Thus, the current research highlights that girls between 11-18 years of age are living in an age in which both media and their peers influence body image and provide them awareness of dieting. There is a remarkable contrast between male and female youngsters about their self-respect.

5. Conclusion

The results are analyzed on the basis of the assumptions in previous studies that females report being more conscious about their weight as compared to

males but the findings state that a significant impact of body image on self-esteem has been supported by the current study. Results show that confidence in body image is higher in adolescent males as compared to adolescent females. Older adolescent females have a higher level of self-esteem. Educated adolescent males have a high level of confidence in their body image. So, there is an impact of body image on self-esteem in adolescents.

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