



A Study on Attitudes towards Body Image on Personality & Self-Esteem on Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era of 21st century, physical appearance is one of the main concerns among young adults. How one perceives himself/herself in context to his/her physical appearance, i.e., body image, has a strong impact on one's self-esteem (value judgement about oneself) and personality (relatively enduring characteristics that makes him/her different from others). A total of 50 young adults in the age of 18-25 participated in the study. Body image, personality and self-esteem were measured through standardized scales. The results showed that self-esteem is significantly positively correlated with appearance evaluation, neuroticism and body areas satisfaction. Major role of media should also be catered in future studies as it will reap the root causes of body image and its satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Additionally, comparative studies on body image, personality and self-esteem would unfold many levels of bodily concerns among males and females.

Keywords: Body image, Personality, Self-esteem, Young adults

Introduction

"The important thing is to realize that no matter what people's opinions may be, they're only just that—people's opinions. You have to believe in your heart what you know to be true about yourself, and let that be that." - Mary J. Blige

As adults, we feel tremendous pressure in our everyday life to look good, always be in perfect shape or to simply have a perfect body. This is the age, when our social circle broadens. Also, we are expected to look for a partner to get married. Thus, the pressure to look a certain way increases a lot in this stage. Media too, plays a vital role here.

Body image is a person's perception of their physical appearance and their level of attractiveness. It is a type of mental image we create of ourselves, although it may or may not be related to how we actually look. The unique thinking, mood, and behaviour pattern defines a person's personality. In other words, personality is the unique way that every person thinks, behaves, and feels throughout their lifetime. The Latin term "persona," which refers to a mask used by an actor, is where the word "personality" originates.

Self-esteem is the value, respect, and worth that a person accords to himself or herself. High self-esteem individuals aren't shy about expressing their curiosity or talking about their chances, experiences, and thought.

In a study by Harter (2000) on self-esteem and appearance, it was found that self-perceptions of appearance are indistinguishably linked to one's level of self-esteem. Only popular people as per cultural and media messages were reported high on self-esteem. In particular, girls are likely to suffer from low self-esteem if they are unable to meet the standards and ideals of beauty being set today.

A study by Robins et.al. (2001) on personality correlates of self-esteem, showed that the big five accounted for 34% of variance in self-esteem. Individuals who were high on self-esteem showed emotional stability, extraversion and conscientious. Also, they were somewhat agreeable and open to experience. The relationships between self-esteem and the Big Five essentially transcend age, sex, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and nation despite a thorough search for putative mediators and moderators of this general pattern. Self-esteem and the Big Five were inversely correlated, with high self-esteem persons having a propensity to attribute socially desirable attributes to themselves.

Another study by Soohinda et al. (2019) was done on the body dissatisfaction and its relation to big five personality factors and self-esteem in young adults' college women in India. It included 555 female college students of North India. The results of the study witnessed that a significant percentage of young women had a negative body image associated with higher BMI, lower self-esteem, high neuroticism and high conscientiousness.

Body Image

According to Cash & Pruzinsky (2004) "Body image can be seen as the perceptions and attitudes one holds toward one's own body, especially, but not exclusively, one's physical appearance." Body image has been defined as "the self-perception of the physical self and the feelings and thoughts that result from that perception" (Cash & Gorgan, 2006).

A study done by Mintem et al. (2015) on change in body weight and body image in young adults found that prevalence of dissatisfaction was higher in women because they perceived themselves as fatter than the ideal of the three categories of z-score change ($\geq +0.5$ sd; -0.49 to $+0.49$ sd and ≤ -0.5 sd). The results adjusted for confounding factors revealed that women with increased BMI z-scores were less prone to feel thinner than ideal. Additionally, the increased risk of dissatisfaction due to perceiving oneself as fatter than ideal was similar between men and women.

Another study was done by Streeter et al. (2012) on young adults regarding their body image, included a sample of 75 male and 87 female young adults. Results of the study showed that BMI was inversely associated with body image, particularly weight esteem.

A study was done by Green & Pritchard (2003) on young adults regarding the predictors of body image. The sample included in the study was of 139 adults. It was found that age, familial pressure, and low self-esteem predicted body dissatisfaction in both men and women. Media influence predicted body dissatisfaction in women.

Personality

As per Allport (1937), "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual, of those psycho-physical systems that characterize his/ her characteristic adjustment to the environment". Cattell (1965) defined it as "the traits that predict a person's behaviour." It is the more or less stable and enduring organization of a person's character, temperament, intellect and physique that determine his unique adjustment to his environment (Eysenck, 1952).

A study on Personality and body image revealed that negative body image is associated with higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of extraversion. Although, agreeableness was not related to body image and findings regarding conscientiousness and openness were intermediate. Negative body image was associated to lower levels of conscientiousness once the study's quality was taken into consideration. Negative body image was associated to neuroticism in both men and women. Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness all showed unclear sex moderating effects (Allen & Walter, 2016).

Similar results were shown in a study done by Allen & Celestino (2018) on body image and personality. The research stated that Neuroticism was associated with all components of body image and mental and physical health. Extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness were linked to some aspects of body image and mental health. Numerous mediator models found that the relationship between personality (neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness) and mental health was mediated by body image discrepancy and appearance rating.

Another study done by Swami et al., (2012) measured the associations between the big five personality factors and body image including two constructs, namely, Actual- ideal weight discrepancy and body appreciation. It was done in two studies, one on 950 women and another on 339 women. Both the studies showed that Neuroticism was significantly associated with actual- ideal weight discrepancy (positively) and body appreciation (negatively) once the effects of body mass index and social status had been accounted for.

The study stated that only emotional reaction to any kind of negative comments about appearance significantly speculated both appearance evaluation and orientation, although frequency of negative comments do not. Being Extrovert indicated a more favourable or positive appearance evaluation and a greater focus on appearance than being introverted. Negative appearance evaluation and high appearance orientation were associated to neuroticism scores (Kvalem et al. 2006).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to a person's overall sense of his or her value or worth. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person "values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself" (Adler & Stewart, 2004). According to self-esteem expert Morris Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is quite simply one's attitude toward oneself. He described it as a "favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self". As per Coopersmith (1967) "Self-esteem is the judgment or opinion we hold about ourselves. It's the extent to which we perceive ourselves to be worthwhile and capable human beings".

A study was done by Mellor et al. (2010) to examine the relationship between body image and self-esteem across time and age for men and women. The results of this study showed that higher self-esteem was associated with lower scores on body dissatisfaction, but there was no consistent relationship between these variables across time for age and gender.

A study on relationship between body image and self-esteem was done by Szabo (2015). In the study, it was found that there is a close correlation between the body image and self-esteem. Lower levels of self-esteem were indicated by significant differences between the perceived and ideal body images. Furthermore, negative body image was also formed by distortions of visual perception.

Another study done by Grilo et al. (1994) showed that self-esteem was covaried significantly with body image measures.

A study done by Hee (2006) showed that women's self-esteem was influenced by appearance attractiveness, internalization, and care for appearance. Higher degree of self was witnessed among the women who accepted their body as it is regardless of their actual BMI and when they evaluate their body positively.

Purpose

The purpose of the study attitudes towards body image on personality and self-esteem among young adults

Hypotheses

There is a positive correlation between appearance evaluation and self-esteem.

There is a positive correlation between high self-esteem with neuroticism.

There is a positive correlation between Body areas satisfaction and self-esteem.

There is a positive correlation between positive appearance evaluation with extraversion.

There is a positive correlation between negative appearance evaluation and neuroticism.

There is a positive correlation between high appearance orientation and neuroticism.

Method

Sample

The study included a sample of 50 participants from throughout Delhi-NCR. The subjects ranged in age from 18 to 25.

Measures

Rosenberg self-esteem scale: This scale was given by Rosenberg (1965). It includes 10 items which aims to measure global self-worth. It measures both positive and negative feelings regarding self. It is rated as 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10): This scale is adapted from Rammstedt & John (2007). It is a 10-item short version of Big five inventory. It has 5 subscales: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience.

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire– Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS): It was given by Cash (2015). MBSRQ-AS is a short version of MBSRQ. It is a self-report inventory that assesses peoples' attitudes toward to different aspects of body image. It is intended to use for adults and adolescents (15 years or older). It has five subscales: Appearance evaluation (AS), Appearance orientation (AO), Body areas satisfaction (BASS), Overweight preoccupation (OP) and Self-classified weight (SCW).

Procedure

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and Google forms were used to collect the data through questionnaires. It was acknowledged that each individual had cooperated. Standardized psychological scales were administered to the participants.

ANALYSIS OF DATA:

Results

Table 1: Table showing N, Mean and SD

	Self-esteem	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience	Appearance evaluation	Appearance orientation	Body areas satisfaction	Overweight preoccupation	Self classified weight
N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	27.8	5.46	7.36	6.12	5.44	6.58	23.4	40.4	29.3	9.42	6.44
Standard deviation	4.46	1.82	1.37	1.42	1.95	1.75	5.28	7.13	7.08	3.74	1.79

Table 2: Table showing correlation of all variables

	Self-esteem	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience	Appearance evaluation	Body areas satisfaction	Overweight preoccupation	Self-classified weight
Self-esteem	-									
Extraversion	0.216	-								
Agreeableness	0.028	-0.076	-							
Conscientiousness	0.248	0.002	0.019	—						
Neuroticism	0.295*	0.396*	0.161	0.069	—					
Openness to experience	0.071	-0.009	0.064	0.135	-0.034	—				
Appearance evaluation	0.414*	-0.135	0.267	0.02	0.053	0.156	—			
Appearance orientation	-0.093	-0.091	0.023	-0.182	-0.054	0.218	0.436**	—		
Body areas satisfaction	0.336*	-0.043	0.17	0.041	0.091	0.084	0.589***	0.415**	—	
Overweight preoccupation	-0.041	0.214	-0.066	-0.163	0.221	0.221	-0.103	0.347*	-0.152	—
Self-classified weight	0.013	0.319*	-0.066	-0.085	0.248	0.067	-0.373**	-0.343*	-0.349*	0.339*

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Discussion of Results

The results of the study found out that there is a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and self-esteem ($r = 0.295$, $p < .05$). There is a significant positive correlation between appearance evaluation and self-esteem ($r = 0.414$, $p < .01$). Further, it was found out that there is a significant positive correlation between body areas satisfaction and self-esteem ($r = 0.336$, $p < .05$). Moreover, it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between self-classified weight and extraversion ($r = 0.319$, $p < .01$).

In body image scale, subscales are found to be significantly correlated with each other. Lastly, neuroticism is found to significantly positively correlated with extraversion ($r = 0.396$, $p < .01$).

Our first hypothesis states that there is a positive correlation between appearance evaluation and self-esteem. This hypothesis is proved in our study. Identical results were found out in a study by Paxton & Phytian (2007) on body image, self-esteem and health status in adulthood. The results of the study shown that there is a positive correlation between appearance evaluation and self-esteem.

Our second hypothesis states that there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and Neuroticism. This hypothesis is proved in our study. This result was also found in a study done by Lönnqvist et al., (2009) on High Neuroticism, mental disorders and low self-esteem. It was found that neuroticism leads to low self-esteem.

Our third hypothesis states that there is a positive correlation between body areas satisfaction and self-esteem. Another study done by Frost & McKelvie (2004) also showed the same results. It was found out that body satisfaction is positively correlated with self-esteem. Hence, our third hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION

In the modern era of 21st century, physical appearance was one of the main concerns among young adults. How one perceives himself/herself in context to his/her physical appearance, i.e., body image, had a strong impact on one's self esteem (value judgement about oneself) and personality (relatively enduring characteristics that made him/her different from others). A total of 50 young adults in the age of 18-25 participated in the studied. Body image, personality and self-esteem was measured through standardized scales. The results showed that self-esteem was significantly positively correlated with appearance evaluation, neuroticism and body areas satisfaction.

Media also plays an important role in our perception of ideal body. Influence of media on body image satisfaction would be an interesting topic to study. Also, comparative study would unfold many aspects of insecurities and disorders to be related with media and its influence on body image among males and females.

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