

Body Image Satisfaction Enhances Self-Esteem

G. K. Tiwari *

The present research aims to through light on the impacts of body image satisfaction on the self-esteem of the participants. Four hundred male ($M = 19.63$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 19.31$, $SD = 1.08$) and female ($M = 19.49$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 16.36$, $SD = 1.12$) having rural and urban domicile served as the participants in the study whose body image satisfaction and self-esteem were assessed with the help of Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ)-Modified Version (Cooper, Taylor, Cooper & Fairburn, 1987) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The results indicated that female participants demonstrated mean higher body dissatisfaction as compared to their male counterparts and the urban participants showed greater degree of body dissatisfaction as compared to the rural participants. Likewise, the male participants showed higher mean scores on self-esteem as compared to females and the mean self-esteem score was higher for rural in comparison to urban participants. There were significant gender and domicile differences among the mean scores of body image satisfaction and self-esteem of the participants. The body image satisfaction accounted for 74.50% variance in the scores of self-esteem of the participants. The results have significant implications for the understanding of body image satisfaction and self-esteem in shaping self- concept of the individuals.

Key terms: Body Image Satisfaction, Self-esteem, Self-Worth

Introduction : An individual's perception of body image impacts his psychological functioning and well-being. It is a multidimensional construct representing cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to an individual's own physical attributes (Muth & Cash, 1997). Muth and Cash revealed two components of body image satisfaction: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's physical attributes and experience of discrete emotions. Body image is central to adolescents' development of self-concept as it serves as an important base for self-evaluation and evaluation by others (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). The nature and extent of the individuals' body image has important bearing on their functioning in almost all aspects of life especially in growing periods. A variety of consequences have been found to be associated with one's level of body satisfaction. School absenteeism (Yanover & Thompson, 2008), sense of muscularity, self-confidence and mental health (Furnham & Calnan, 1998), achievements in life (McCabe, Ricciardelli, & Finemore, 2002), eating behavior and addictions (Drewnowski & Yee, 1987) have been reported to be correlated with one's body satisfaction.

Perceptions of physical appearance and self-worth are closely linked and the former is the strongest single predictor of self-esteem among both male and female children and adolescents (Harter, 1999). Physical appearance serves different functions in male and females with equally significance for both for popularity and self-confidence (Cohane & Pope, 2000; Coyl, 2009). The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) concluded that obesity negatively affects psychological and social well-being of children. Contrarily, negative body image is associated with negative or low self esteem (Lawrence & Thelen, 1995; Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005). Self-esteem refers to a positive or negative attitude toward self that makes the person feel that he is a person of worth (Rosenberg, 1965). Feeling of belonging or being needed, sense of being accepted

* Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Dr. H. S. Gour Central University, Sagar, M. P.

and a feeling of being a competent person are important aspects of self-esteem. A person with a low self-esteem demonstrates self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, and self-contempt, lacks self-respect, and paints a disagreeable self-picture (Glasser, 1969).

The perceptions of body appearance and self-worth have strong connections. The issues of self-worth become prominent in adolescence during which the establishment of identity and coherent sense of self are major developmental task to be accomplished (Seligman, 2006). The Contingencies of Self-Worth Theory proposes that satisfaction with body has important impacts on global self-esteem (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). Poor self-esteem may cause eating disorders and finally lead to body image dissatisfaction (Lawrence & Thelen, 1995). The individuals who report higher degree of body dissatisfaction and dieting also showed inferior self-esteem (Lawrence & Thelen, 1995; Tiggemann, 2005).

The changes in the availability and use of various means of communication technology, mass media especially electronic and internet, new societal changes and increased competition coupled with pressure to excel in academic performance and other areas of life have reshaped the body image perceptions of the individuals having a noteworthy contributions in restructuring the nature and dynamics of self-esteem of youths worldwide. Taking this perspective into consideration, the present study has been designed to evaluate the role of body image satisfaction in accruing the nature and extent of self-esteem of male and female students having rural and urban domiciles.

Methods

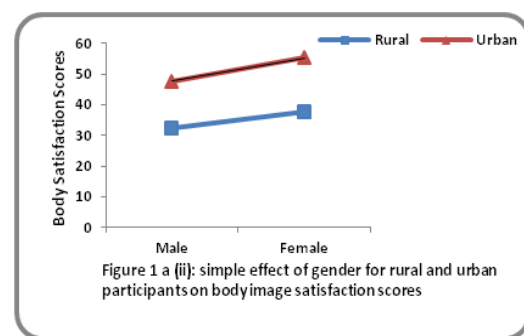
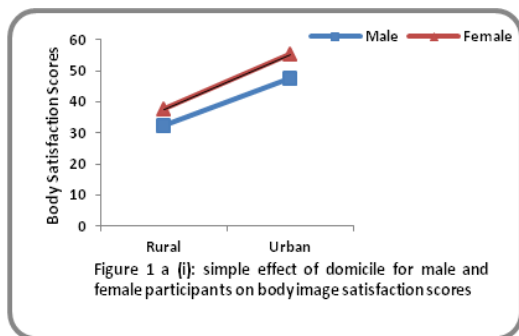
Participants: Four hundred participants with equal number of males ($M = 19.63$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 19.31$, $SD = 1.08$) and females ($M = 19.49$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 16.36$, $SD = 1.12$) aged 18 to 21 and newly admitted in Dr. H. S. Gour Central University, Sagar, M. P. with rural and urban domiciles served as the participants in the present study. They all belonged to lower middle socio-economic status and had affiliation with joint family.

Tools: Two questionnaires were used in the study. A modified short version of the Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper et al., 1987) was applied to assess the concerns pertaining to the participants' body shape comprising 14 items with a six-point Likert scale ranging from never (1 point) to always (6 points). It has widely been used to assess body dissatisfaction and treatment of eating disorders. The internal consistency of the original questionnaire as measured by Cronbach Alpha ranged from 0.96 - 0.97 and 0.93 short version (Dowson & Henderson, 2001). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale standardized by Rosenberg (1965) consisting 10 items with four points from strongly agree (3 points) to strongly disagree (0 point) was used to assess self-esteem of the participants. Its test-retest reliability has been found to range from .82 to .88 and Cronbach Alpha from .77 to .88.

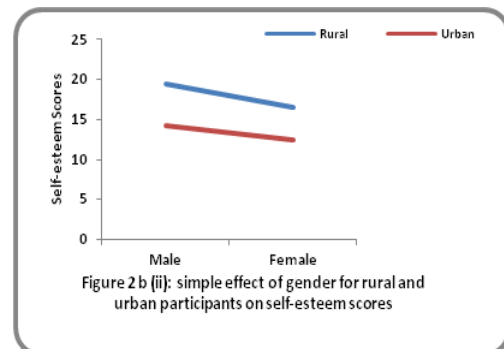
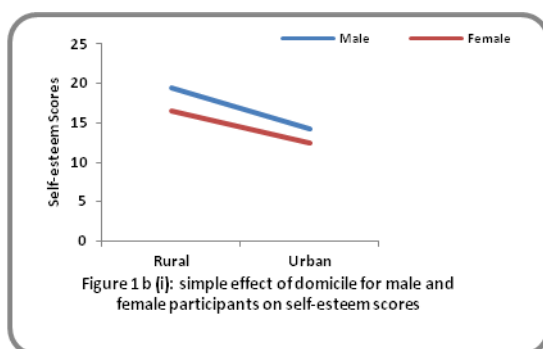
Procedure : After having been planned and selected the sample of the study, the whole sample was divided into twenty groups comprising twenty participants each for the convenience of administering the tools. Before conducting the actual study, an integrated strategy was developed and a thorough study of the questionnaires and other details including the precautions and instructions were read and understood. As per the formulated plan of the study, the scales were administered and the scoring was carried out as per the guidelines described in their manuals. The raw score so obtained were statistically analyzed.

Results: The mean body image satisfaction scores of rural ($M = 32.36$, $SD = 1.76$) and urban ($M = 47.65$, $SD = 1.61$) males were significantly higher as compared to their rural ($M = 37.73$, $SD = 1.62$) and urban female counterparts ($M = 55.44$, $SD = 3.28$) which was approved by statistically significant values of t ($t = 21.47$, $p = .001$; $t = 20.49$, $p = .001$). It indicated that both rural and urban male participants were more satisfied with their body image in comparison to their female

counterparts as the higher scores on body image satisfaction indicated lower satisfaction and vice versa. In addition, rural participants demonstrated higher body image satisfaction ($M = 35.05$, $SD = 3.18$) as compared to the urban ($M = 51.55$, $SD = 4.68$) participants, and the males ($M = 40.01$, $SD = 7.85$) showed greater satisfaction with their body image as compared to the female participants ($M = 46.59$, $SD = 9.24$). The same were attested by the statistically significant values of t ($t = 72.49$, $p = .001$; $t = 27.12$, $p = .001$). The Figures 1 a (i) and 1 a (ii) of simple effect interaction demonstrate that the body image satisfaction scores of the participants were constituted as a results of interaction effect of their domicile and gender.



The mean self-esteem scores of rural ($M = 19.44$, $SD = 1.14$) and urban ($M = 14.26$, $SD = 1.40$) males were higher as compared to their rural ($M = 16.56$, $SD = 1.13$) and urban female counterparts ($M = 12.50$, $SD = 1.14$). The t values of the two pairs of mean scores ($t = 18.25$, $p = .001$; $t = 10.35$, $p = .001$) demonstrated these differences to be statistically reliable. It indicated that both rural and urban male participants evinced higher self-esteem in comparison to their female counterparts. Further, rural participants demonstrated higher ($M = 18.00$, $SD = 1.84$) mean self-esteem score as compared to the urban ($M = 13.38$, $SD = 1.55$) participants, and the males ($M = 16.85$, $SD = 2.89$) demonstrated greater self-esteem as to those of the female participants ($M = 14.53$, $SD = 2.33$). These differences were statistically reliable ($t = 35.32$, $p = .001$; $t = 18.97$, $p = .001$). The Figures 1 b (i) and 1 b (ii) of simple effect interaction evinced the role of the domicile and gender of the participants in shaping the self-esteem of the participants.



The scores of body image satisfaction and self-esteem were pooled for computing Pearson Product moment coefficient of correlation which demonstrated that there was a statistically significant negative correlations among the scores of body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem of the male ($r = .886$, $p = .001$) and the female participants ($r = .825$, $p = .001$). Statistically

significant coefficients of correlation among the scores of body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem of the rural ($r = .652$, $p = .001$) and the urban participants ($r = .473$, $p = .001$) were also observed. The regression analysis showed that body image satisfaction of the participants accounted for 74.50% variance in their scores of self-esteem.

Discussion : The results of the present study made it evident that the level of body image satisfaction of the male and female participants having rural and urban affiliation has strong impacts on their levels of their self-esteem. The male participants of both rural and urban domiciles have shown higher body image satisfaction as compared to their female counterparts. This gender difference may be indicative of the fact that the competition for socially valued and socially determined goals such as employment and romantic partners, might be increasing dissatisfaction with aspects of the self, such as physical appearance which in turn limiting their success in obtaining maximum outcomes. The second reason for higher body image dissatisfaction of the female participants as compared to the male participants may be due to the social expectations and media influences which emphasize that attractive facade is greater for women. It has been reported in previous study that physical attractiveness is a stronger determinant of popularity with the opposite sex for women than it is for men (Feingold, 1990).

The results of the study have also indicated that both male and female participants of rural domicile have shown greater body image satisfaction in comparison to their urban counterparts. This might be due to the fact that urban participants have a greater opportunity to be affected by the messages of modern ideals of beauty through electronic and print media which in turn might have increased their sensitivity towards their body image. Previous studies have also concluded that self-esteem was the most important predictor of body dissatisfaction, with females having low self-esteem experience more body dissatisfaction than those with high self-esteem" (Griffiths & McCabe, 2000). The conclusions of the present study indicate that the body image satisfaction with biographic attributes such as gender and domicile have significant impacts on the functioning of the self-esteem the participants.

The presence of body image dissatisfaction among adolescents and pre-adults is high. Modern society portrays a very perverted image of beauty for men and women worldwide. Owing to these constructions, the individuals get ragged between their actual body image and their perceived body image which is damaging. Illogical expectations from family, media, peers, and society compel the individual to believe that they should pass any hurdles to make themselves look as per the expectations of these forces not as they really are (Feingold & Mazzella 1998). The present study suggests for future researchers to evaluate the impacts of various forces which act upon the individuals to determine the nature and extent of their body image satisfaction and dissatisfaction and finally important of constructing self and uncovering the nature of psychopathologies.

Reference :

- Clay, D., Vignoles, V. L., & Dittmar, H. (2005). Body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls: Testing the influence of socio-cultural factors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15 (4), 451-477.
- Cohane, G. H. & Pope, H. G. (2000). Body image in boys: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 29, 373-379.
- Cooper, P. J., Taylor, M. J., Cooper, Z., & Fairburn, C. G. (1987). The development and validation of the body shape questionnaire. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 6(4) 485-494.
- Coyle, D. D. (2009). Kids really are different these days. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 405-407.

- Crocker, J., Luhtanen, R. K., Cooper, M. L., & Bouvrette, A. (2003). Contingencies of self-worth in college students: Theory and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 894–908.
- Dowson J., & Henderson L. (2001). The validity of a short version of the Body Shape Questionnaire. *Psychiatry Research*. 102 (3), 263-271.
- Drewnowski, A. & Yee, D. K. (1987). Men and body image: Are males satisfied with their body weight? *Psychology Med*, 40, 626-634.
- Feingold, A. (1990). Gender differences in effects of physical attractiveness on romantic attraction: A comparison across five research paradigms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 981–993.
- Feingold, A. & Mazzella, R. (1998). Gender differences in body image are increasing. *Psychological Science*, 9 (3), 190-195.
- Furnham, A., & Calnan, A. (1998). Eating disturbance, self-esteem, reasons for exercising and body weight dissatisfaction in adolescent males. *European Eating Disorders Review*, 6, 58-72.
- Glasser, W. (1969). *Schools without failure*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Griffiths, J. A., & McCabe, M. P. (2000). The influence of significant others on disordered eating and body dissatisfaction among early adolescent girls. *European Eating Disorders Review*, 8, 301-314.
- Harter, S. (1999). *The construction of the self: A developmental perspective*. New York: Guilford.
- Lawrence, C. M. & Thelen, M. H. (1995). Body-image, dieting, and self-concept: Their relation in African-American and Caucasian children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 24(1), 41-48.
- McCabe, M. P., Ricciardelli, L. A., & Finemore, J. (2002). The role of puberty, media and popularity with peers on strategies to increase weight, decrease weight and increase muscle tone among adolescent boys and girls. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 52, 145-154.
- Muth, J. L. & Cash, T. F. (1997). Body-image attitudes: What difference does gender make? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 27, 1438-1452.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Seligman, L. (2006). *Theories of counseling and psychotherapy: Systems, strategies, and skills*. Upper Saddle River: NJ: Pearson Education Inc.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). Fact Sheet: Childhood overweight and obesity prevention initiative - Healthy youth for a healthy future. *Office of the Surgeon General Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesity/prevention/factsheet>
- Thompson, J. K., Heinberg, L. J., Altabe, M., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment and treatment of body image disturbance*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tiggemann, M. (2005). Body dissatisfaction and adolescent self-esteem: Prospective findings. *Body Image*, 2, 129–135.
- Yanover, T., & Thompson, J. K. (2008). Eating problems, body image disturbances, and academic achievement: Preliminary evaluation of the eating and body image disturbances academic interference scale. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 41(2), 184–187.
