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A comparison of body image profile between male and female athletes and non-athletes

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to assess body image of intercollegiate male and female athletes and non-athletes. To conduct the study 50 intercollegiate male athletes (Ave. age 18.24 years) and 50 intercollegiate female athletes (Ave. age 19.11 years) were selected as samples. The selection of these male and female athletes was done from intercollegiate competition held in Chhattisgarh. Another set of 50 male collegiate non-athletes (Ave. age 18.21 years) and 50 female collegiate non-athletes (Ave. age 19.11 years) was also selected. To assess body image of the collegiate athletes, Modified Version of Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Body Image, prepared by Agashe and Karkare (2008) was used. 2x2 factorial ANOVA was used for data analysis. The factors analysis revealed that athletes showed more magnitude of positive body image as compared to non-athletes but surprisingly body image dissatisfaction was significantly higher in male students as compared to female students. The two factor interaction of participation in sports and gender was not observed on body image of collegiate students. It was concluded that participation in sports and gender are two two strong variables that affect body image of collegiate students individually.

Keywords: Body image, male-female athletes, non-athletes

Introduction

The concept of body image has gained immense importance in recent years. The term is either used positively or negatively. The most basic assumption about body image can be obtained by perceiving ourselves in the mirror. When we look at the mirror it gives us an idea about how we feel about our body. When we see our body in the mirror it gives us perceptual body image while the feeling towards our body is affective which is dependent upon body shape and weight. Thinking about our body is termed as cognitive body image. Behaviour also plays part in body image and it determines how we feel about our appearance. Body image is perception towards the body and how one mentally frames its perception towards own body. It is very important in the entire lifecycle because it affects our mood and social behaviour. There are number of negative consequences of dissatisfied body image. The poor body image may decrease academic performance, social relationship and quality of life also. Paul Schilder was credited with the concept of body image which he introduced in his book in 1935. There is no denying that every society puts great emphasis on body and shape. When these beauty ideals or body shape do not meet the required standard, distortion in body image occurs. According to Schilder (1935) [8] the formation of a perception towards one's own body shape in mind is called body image. The framework of body image also includes cultural and environmental factors. Cash and Pruzinsky (2003) [3] clearly defined body image as an intricate construct that consists of emotional experience of our body and its functioning; perception of our body in terms of its physical appearance. Body percept and concept makes our body image in which body concept is developed from multiple perceptions while the body percept is a psychological process and can be felt through sensation. The formation of positive or negative body image can be understood by social comparison theory. According to Milkie (1999) we compare our physical appearance with other people and then judge our appearance in a positive or negative way. So many factors have been identified by the researchers that may have a potential effect on positive/negative body image. Paxton (2003) [7] reported that diligence, decreased self-esteem, depressive symptoms are some of the psychological characteristics that affect body image. Koran *et al.* (2013) reported that health perception, exercise and proper nutrition are essential for positive body image.

Wasylikiw *et al.* (2012) [11] reported a relationship between self-compassion and women's body image. Goswami, Sachdeva, and Sachdeva (2012) [4] in their study found that overweight and obese female collegiate students are more to suffer from dissatisfied body image. Ganesan *et al.* (2018) [3] reported that a body image problem is common in Indian adolescents and it cannot be said that body image problems exist only in Western culture. Soohinda *et al.* (2020) [10] reported that high neurotic Indian men are more likely to have dissatisfied body image. Another factor that has come into limelight regarding body image is sports participation. Study conducted by Hausenblas and Symons Downs (2001) [5] reported a meaningful association between sports participation and positive body image. As far as gender is concerned, Serdula *et al.* (1993) [9] reported its strong association with body image. But the combined effect of sports participation and gender was not observed on body image of collegiate students. Hence this study was planned.

Hypothesis

Simple and interaction effect of sports participation and gender will be observed on body image of female collegiate students.

Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

Sample

To conduct the study 50 intercollegiate male athletes (Ave.

age 18.24 years) and 50 intercollegiate female athletes (Ave. age 19.11 years) were selected as samples. The selection of these male and female athletes was done from intercollegiate competition held in Chhattisgarh. Another set of 50 male collegiate non-athletes (Ave. age 18.21 years) and 50 female collegiate non-athletes (Ave. age 19.11 years) was also selected from colleges operational in Raipur Chhattisgarh.

Tools

Body Image Questionnaire

To assess body image of the collegiate athletes, Modified Version of Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Body Image, prepared by Agashe and Karkare (2008) was used. It consists of 25 multiple choice questions. This questionnaire is properly validated and is reliable. The scoring pattern of this questionnaire is "Higher the score on BIQ, lower is the body image of a person.

Procedure

100 female students enrolled in various undergraduate and post graduate courses offered by colleges operational in the state of Chhattisgarh were selected. The selection of female collegiate students was based on criterion set in the objectives of this study. Due to two levels in each independent variables namely participation in sports (athletes - nonathletes) and gender (male-female), a 2x2 factorial ANOVA was set up for data analysis.

The results are given in table 1 and 2 respectively.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Effect of Sports Participation (A) x Gender (B) on Body Image of College Students

		Gender (B)		Marginal Mean
		Male Collegiate Students (b ₁)	Female Collegiate Students (b ₂)	
Sports Participation (A)	Athletes (a ₁)	N=50 M=17.04 S.D. = 6.62	N=50 M=15.24 S.D.=7.69	16.14
	Nonathletes (a ₂)	N=50 M=23.08 S.D.=3.91	N=50 M=18.44 S.D.=7.70	20.76
Marginal Mean		20.06	16.84	

ANOVA Summary

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
A	533.610	1	533.610	12.00**
B	259.210	1	259.210	5.83**
AB	50.410	1	50.410	1.13(NS)
Within treatment (Error)	4265.520	96	44.433	1.13(NS)

** Significant at .01 level; NS Not Significant

Table 1 reveals the following facts–

1. The simple main effect of sports participation reveal that athletes possess significantly better body image (M=16.14) as compare to non-athletes (M=20.76) with higher scores on body image questionnaire denotes inferior body image. [F=12.00, $p<.01$] When observed more minutely, male athletes had better perception about their bodies as compared to male non-athletes; the result is same for female athletes and non-athletes.
2. The simple main effect of gender reveal that female collegiate students possess significantly better body image (M=16.84) as compare to male collegiate students (M=20.06) with higher scores on body image questionnaire denotes inferior body image. [F=5.83, $p<.01$]

3. The two-factor interaction calculation gives value of 1.13 for F-ratio which indicate non-significant variance. It means that sports participation and gender together unable to influence body image of collegiate students.

The results reveal that college students participating in competitive sports have superior body image as compared to non-athlete's college students. Boyd and Hrycaiko (1997) [1] also reported that some kind of rigorous physical activity improves physical self-esteem that is good for possessing superior body image. Hausenblas and Symons Downs (2001) [5] also reported findings similar to the present study.

Another outcome in the present study reveals that body image in female collegiate students was significantly better as compared to male collegiate students. It shows that males suffer from issues of muscularity and also want an ideal body type namely muscular mesomorphic shape while females want to be thin and slender. This fact is highlighted in the present study. Soohinda *et al.* (2020) [10] also reported that body image dissatisfaction is on the rise in male population.

In the present study the simple main effect of sports participation and gender was observed on the body image of collegiate students. So it was natural that these two strong

independent variables did not associate with each other to influence the body image of collegiate students.

Conclusion

On the basis of results, following conclusions are drawn -

1. Collegiate student-athletes possess more magnitude of body image as compared non-athlete's college students.
2. Female collegiate students possess more magnitude of body image as compared male collegiate students.
3. Sports participation did not influence body image of collegiate student when interacting with gender.

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