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The impact of body shape on self-esteem: Exploring the relationship between physical appearance and psychological well being

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the relationship between body shape and self-esteem among students. The study used BMI to assess body shape and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure self-esteem among 80 participants. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, and correlation were utilized to determine the relationship between the two variables. The results showed that body shape did not significantly impact self-esteem, challenging societal norms that emphasize the importance of achieving a certain body shape to improve self-esteem. The study suggests that interventions aimed at improving self-esteem should consider individual factors such as social support and personality traits. This article provides valuable insights that may inform interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem in individuals and represents a significant contribution to the field of psychology.

Keywords: Body shape, self-esteem, BMI, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, student, DAV University, correlation analysis, social support, personality traits, subjective measures, objective measures, societal norms, psychological well-being, mental health, holistic approach

Introduction

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth and value. It is the sense of self-respect, self-acceptance, and self-love that individuals have for themselves. Having healthy self-esteem is important because it can affect an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. When individuals have healthy self-esteem, they tend to have a positive self-image, be confident in their abilities, and have a sense of control over their lives. However, when individuals have low self-esteem, they tend to have negative self-perceptions, self-doubt, and a lack of self-confidence.

Self-esteem is influenced by various factors such as upbringing, experiences, culture, and social interactions. It is a dynamic construct that can change over time and can be improved through various interventions, including therapy, self-reflection, and self-care. Developing and maintaining healthy self-esteem is crucial for overall well-being and achieving personal goals. Body image is a complex construct that encompasses an individual's thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes toward their physical appearance. It has been shown to play a crucial role in the formation of an individual's self-esteem, which refers to their overall evaluation of their worth as a person. While body image is influenced by a range of factors, including genetics, cultural norms, and media representation, the relationship between body shape and self-esteem has received significant attention in recent years.

Body shape refers to an individual's physical form, such as their height, weight, and body proportions. Research has suggested that individuals with certain body shapes, such as those who are overweight or obese, may be at a higher risk of experiencing low self-esteem due to societal stigma and negative attitudes toward their body size. On the other hand, individuals who conform to the societal ideal of a "perfect" body shape, such as being thin or muscular, may also experience body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem due to the pressure to maintain an unrealistic standard.

Given the importance of self-esteem in an individual's psychological well-being, it is essential to understand the relationship between body shape and self-esteem.

This research aims to investigate the effect of body shape on self-esteem in individuals, taking into account various factors that may contribute to this relationship. Through this study, we hope to shed light on the complex interplay between body shape and self-esteem and provide insights that may inform interventions aimed at improving body image and self-esteem in individuals.

Body shape and physical appearance have been the focus of extensive research in the field of psychology, particularly in the areas of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Body shape is defined as the overall structure and size of an individual's body, while physical appearance refers to the individual's perception of their body and how others view them.

Several studies have shown that body shape and physical appearance can have a significant impact on an individual's self-esteem and psychological well-being, both positively and negatively. The concept of self-esteem has been defined as an individual's evaluation of their worth and value. According to Rosenberg (1965) [2], self-esteem refers to "a favourable or Unfavourable attitude toward the self." Individuals with high self-esteem tend to have a positive self-image, are confident, and have a positive outlook on life. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem have a negative self-image, are insecure, and often have a negative outlook on life.

The relationship between body shape and self-esteem has been explored in several studies. Some studies have suggested that individuals with a more desirable body shape (i.e., thinner body shape) tend to have higher self-esteem (Cash, 2002; Stice, 2002) [1, 3]. In contrast, individuals with a less desirable body shape (i.e., heavier body shape) tend to have lower self-esteem (Cash, 2002; Stice, 2002) [1, 3].

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of body shape on the self-esteem of an individual, specifically how body shape affects the self-esteem of an individual and also how it affects individuals of different genders.

Participants were selected randomly from DAV University, and the sample consisted of 80 adults aged 18-25 years, drawn from various departments to ensure generalizability. The study used a homogeneous sample to ensure that the characteristics of the sample were representative of the population.

The participants completed a survey consisting of two sections. The first section, the Body Shape Evaluation Scale, asked participants to evaluate their body shape using the BMI index. The second section, the Self-Esteem Scale, used Rosenberg's self-esteem test to measure participants' overall evaluation of themselves.

Data were collected using a questionnaire, and participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire in a calm and comfortable environment. The data collection process was conducted under the supervision of the researcher, who counselled and oriented the students about the aims and objectives of the research. The questionnaire was designed to be clear and easy to understand.

The study used two measuring scales: The Body Mass Index (BMI) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The BMI was used to assess participants' weight and height, and their BMI was calculated accordingly. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consisted of questions that were answered as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, with answers representing 4, 3, 2, and 1 scores. Questions number 2, 5, 6, 8,

and 9 were in reverse order. The total score was calculated, and individuals were categorized into groups, namely low self-esteem, medium self-esteem, and high self-esteem.

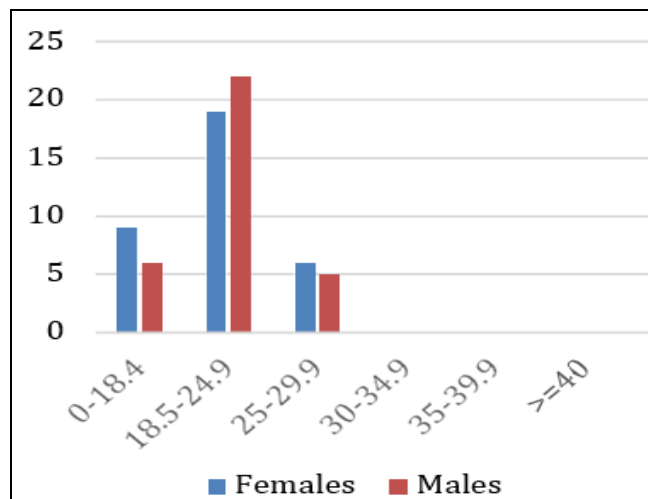


Fig 1: Distribution of sample on the basis of BMI

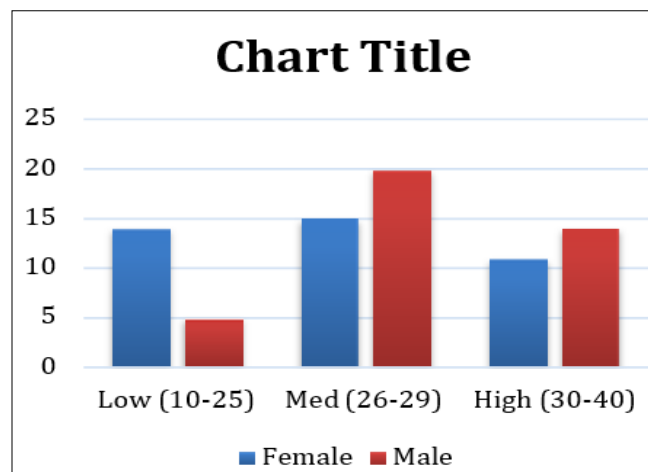


Fig 2: Distribution of sample on the basis of RSES scores

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and body shape among male and female students. Hypothesis 1 predicted that male students would have higher self-esteem than female students. Hypothesis 2 predicted that individuals with positive body shapes would have higher self-esteem. The study used statistical tests to examine these hypotheses and also compared the findings with previous studies.

The results of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the self-esteem levels of male and female students. The mean scores for self-esteem were 28.55 for male students and 27.175 for female students. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have also reported no significant gender differences in self-esteem. Illustrated in Table 1.

The study also found that there was a small positive correlation between body shape and self-esteem. However, this correlation was not significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, that there is no correlation between body shape and self-esteem, was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. Illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1: Statistical data of z-test (two-tailed) between RSES scores of male and female students

S. No.	Component	Gender	N	Mean	SD	P	Significant or not significant
	Self-esteem	Male	40	28.55	3.320102		
1	Scale	Female	40	27.175	3.00331	0.052	No significant

Table 2: Correlation between BMI and self-esteem, comparing BMI scores and RSES scores

Correlation coefficient	BMI	RSES
BMI	1	0.20
RSES	0.20	1

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that have also reported little to no significant relationship between body mass index (BMI) and self-esteem. Several studies have reported small and inconsistent relationships between BMI and self-esteem, while others have found no significant relationship at all.

In conclusion, this study found that there was no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students and that there was little to no significant relationship between body shape and self-esteem. These findings are consistent with previous studies and suggest that gender and body shape may not be significant factors in self-esteem levels.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between body shape and self-esteem among male and female students. Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem levels between male and female students, with male students having higher self-esteem than female students. However, the statistical analysis showed no significant difference in self-esteem levels between male and female students, contradicting the hypothesis.

These results are consistent with previous research that found no significant gender differences in self-esteem levels. The authors of the meta-analysis conducted by Kling, Hyde, Showers, and Buswell (1999) ^[11] concluded that there were no significant differences between males and females in terms of self-esteem levels. Similarly, Twenge and Crocker (2002) ^[12] found no significant differences in self-esteem between males and females in their sample. Robins *et al.* (2002) ^[13] also found that gender differences in self-esteem disappeared by early adulthood.

The present study's Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be a significant correlation between body shape and self-esteem, with individuals with positive body shapes having higher self-esteem. However, the statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between body shape and self-esteem, contradicting the hypothesis. These results are consistent with previous research that found no significant relationship between BMI and self-esteem. The studies reviewed in the present study found small and inconsistent relationships between BMI and self-esteem, with no significant relationship in many cases.

The results of the present study have implications for interventions aimed at improving self-esteem. Gender-specific interventions may not be necessary, as there are no significant gender differences in self-esteem levels. Instead, interventions aimed at improving self-esteem can be targeted at all students, regardless of gender. Additionally, interventions aimed at improving body shape may not be effective in improving self-esteem, as there is no significant relationship between body shape and self-esteem.

In conclusion, the present study found no significant differences in self-esteem levels between male and female

students and no significant relationship between body shape and self-esteem. These results are consistent with previous research and have implications for interventions aimed at improving self-esteem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study aimed to explore the relationship between body shape, BMI, and self-esteem in male and female students. Our results indicate that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students. Furthermore, we found a positive but weak relationship between body shape and self-esteem. However, there was no significant correlation between BMI and self-esteem.

These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests that gender differences in self-esteem are not significant and that while there may be some small relationships between body shape and self-esteem, these relationships are often inconsistent and weak. This highlights the need for more research to explore the complex factors that contribute to the development of self-esteem and body image in individuals.

Our study has some limitations. Firstly, our sample was restricted to university students, so the results may not be generalizable to other populations. Secondly, we only measured self-esteem using a self-report questionnaire and did not take into account other factors such as social support and cultural influences. Finally, our study was cross-sectional, meaning that we cannot infer causality from the findings.

In light of these limitations, future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples, and longitudinal designs to explore the development of self-esteem and body image over time. Additionally, qualitative research could provide a more in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of individuals regarding their self-esteem and body image.

In conclusion, our study provides valuable insights into the relationship between body shape, BMI, and self-esteem in male and female students. While our findings suggest that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between males and females and a weak relationship between body shape and self-esteem, more research is needed to further explore these relationships and their underlying factors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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