



Body Image, Self-Esteem and Self-Concept among Adolescents

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Abstract. Introduction- This paper explores the relationship between body image, self-esteem and self- concept among adolescents. It has been shown that people's perceptions of themselves and their degree of confidence are greatly influenced by their body image, especially when it comes to physical attractiveness. While a negative view of their bodies can lead to low self- concept and low self-esteem, a positive body image can boost confidence and overall wellbeing, improving people's mental health and overall quality of life.

Method- For the study, there were 144 participants, out of which 72 are males and 72 are females. All participants were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Robson's Self-Concept Questionnaire, and Body Image Questionnaire.

Result- The findings indicated favourable relationship between self-concept and body image and a weakly positive relationship between self-esteem and body image. The findings of the t-test showed no discernible gender differences in self-esteem, body image, or self-concept.

Conclusion- Adolescents' body image and self-concept, but not their self-esteem, are strongly correlated, according to this study. There were no discernible gender variations in self-esteem, self-concept, or body image. The findings imply that these interactions may potentially be influenced by elements such as social support and individual experiences.

Keywords: Body Image, Self-Concept, Self-Esteem

1 Introduction

Paul Schilder, who first used the word in 1935, described body image as the mental image of the body that each person creates. Body Image (BI) is a multifaceted concept that encompasses individuals' positive and negative attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding their physical appearance and body (Gardner, 1996). Body image is a complex concept that includes a person's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of their own body as shaped by media representations, social conventions, and personal experiences (MDPI and ACS Style Jiménez- Morcillo et al., 2024). Body image refers to an individual's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards their own body, including its dimensions, form, and look. It is impacted by a number of factors, such as individual characteristics, cultural values, personal experiences, and conventional beauty standards. A person's self-esteem, mood, conduct, and general well-being can all be impacted by their body image, which can be good, negative, or neutral (European Chemical Bulletin, 2023). For youngsters worldwide, body image is an essential component of adolescent development. Many aspects of adolescent health are impacted by negative body image (Hartman-Munick, 2020). To comprehend the worries that adolescents have over their bodies and attractiveness. Body image is defined as one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to one's own body (Gillen & Markey, 2016). While negative body image is associated with discontent and the desire for one's body to be different, positive body image is associated with acceptance and bodily satisfaction. In developed nations, body image issues are common among people and are linked to major health issues like eating disorders, depression, and obesity (Gillen & Markey, 2016). The results of asking adolescents about their sentiments and attitudes around their bodies are frequently disheartening. Adolescents typically report body-related issues and discontent, are eager to point out physical faults, and are unhappy with the way their bodies look (Wertheim, Paxton, & Blaney, 2009). Girls' worries about their bodies and weight seem to get worse as they get older, rather than go away from childhood to early adulthood (Cash & Henry 1995). Fewer studies have examined these concerns among boys and men; most body image research has concentrated on girls and women. Smolak (2004), boys have body dissatisfaction levels that are similar to those of teenage girls because they start to worry about their muscularity and body size during adolescence.

Self-esteem means an individual's good opinion of one's dignity or worth. Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem, which is associated with respect, consideration, and acceptance for oneself, as a crucial component of everyone's existence. One of the most important factors influencing the formation of self-concept and self-esteem is body image (Anamika et al., 2020). Physical attractiveness has been continuously demonstrated to be the most reliable indicator

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of self-esteem at all ages, demonstrating the close connection between self-esteem and views about one's body (Ata et al., 2007). Although a person's internal feelings form the foundation of most of their self-esteem and self-concept, other people's opinions have a significant influence on both body image and self-esteem (Bumberg, 1998). A person's subjective view of themselves, including their sense of value, their position in the world, and their skills, such as their sense of competence and confidence, is known as their self-esteem (Bergagna et al., 2018). People with high trait self-esteem typically believe well of themselves and have superior psychological functioning overall, such as being more stress-resistant. On the other hand, those who express low self-esteem frequently have poor opinions of themselves and are more susceptible to mental health issues like anxiety or depression (Taylor & Armes, 2024). One aspect of self-esteem is body esteem. A person's sentiments and attitudes towards their physical attributes, such as their weight, shape, body image, and opinions about physical attractiveness, are specifically referred to as body esteem (Pop et al., 2022). Teenage body-image is influenced by a number of things, such as gender, media messaging, peer and familial pressure, and self-esteem. In a similar vein, elements like body image, weight, academic achievement, and athletic ability and engagement all affect self-esteem (Opoku, 2024).

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, shaped by a multitude of factors, including interactions with significant others. It encompasses an individual's evaluations of their behaviors, abilities, and distinctive characteristics (Bailey, 2003). Self-concept holds substantial importance as it influences one's motivations, attitudes, and behaviors, and also shapes perceptions of personal competence and worth (Mercer, 2012). A person's self-image, which is informed by their social roles, personality traits, and physical attributes, constitutes a fundamental aspect of the broader self-concept. A critical component within this framework is self-esteem, defined as the extent to which an individual likes, accepts, and values themselves (Chinawa et al., 2024).

The periods of childhood and pre-adolescence are particularly pivotal for the development of self-concept. Conceptualized as a multidimensional psychological construct, self-concept integrates physical, social, and emotional domains (Shpigelman & HaGani, 2019). Among these, the mental representation of one's body—referred to as body image—plays a significant role. Empirical evidence indicates that body image is closely associated with self-concept, with findings suggesting a bidirectional relationship wherein each influences the other (Slade, 1994). Moreover, both self-concept and body image are increasingly understood as social constructs, influenced not solely by psychological or biological determinants but also by environmental and societal factors, particularly those related to physical appearance (Grabe et al., 2008).

Pre-adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, and social changes. During this time, individuals are continually exposed to information and societal messages regarding body image, both their own and that of others (Mendo-Lazaro et al., 2017). Research consistently demonstrates that gender differences exist in body image preferences: boys tend to idealize a muscular physique, whereas girls are more likely to aspire to a slender body image (McArthur et al., 2005).

Adolescence is a formative period marked by profound physical, emotional, and social transformations that play a critical role in shaping an individual's identity. During this developmental stage, adolescents are particularly sensitive to perceptions of their bodies, self-worth, and personal competencies. Consequently, research focusing on body image, self-esteem, and self-concept is of significant importance. Understanding these constructs provides valuable insights into how adolescents perceive themselves and their inherent value, which, in turn, influences their social interactions, academic performance, and overall mental health. Moreover, given the increasing impact of societal standards, peer influence, and media portrayals of idealized body types, examining the interplay among body image, self-esteem, and self-concept is essential for identifying risk factors associated with psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. A comprehensive understanding of these elements can inform interventions aimed at promoting positive self-perception and emotional well-being among adolescents, ultimately supporting healthier developmental trajectories.

2 Methodology

2.1 Objectives:

1. To study the perception of body image among adolescents
2. To examine the level of self-concept and self-esteem among adolescents
3. To examine the relationship between body image, self-concept and self-esteem among adolescents
4. To assess the gender differences in relation to body image, self-concept and self-esteem

2.2 Sample

Data were collected using purposive sampling from adolescent students enrolled in various schools in Lucknow. The sample consisted of 144 participants, equally divided between 72 male (50%) and 72 female (50%) students.

Participants were selected from grades eight to twelve. The research instruments were distributed to all selected students. Prior to data analysis, all completed questionnaires were carefully screened to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the responses.

2.3 Tools Used

Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)

The Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ), developed and standardized by Robson (1989), was utilized to assess participants' self-concept. The SCQ is a self-report instrument comprising 30 items. Responses are rated on an eight-point Likert scale, ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree," according to the respondent's typical feelings. Each response is scored from 0 to 7, resulting in a total score where a higher score indicates stronger self-esteem. The SCQ has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with a clinical validity coefficient of .70 and a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .89.

Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ)

The Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ), developed by Bruchon-Schweitzer and first published in 1987, was used to assess participants' cognitive, affective, and evaluative perceptions of their body image. Rather than focusing on actual physical conditions, the BIQ captures relatively stable psychological perceptions of physical well-being across four dimensions: resilience, vitality, enjoyment, and inner peace. Each dimension comprises four positively phrased items rated on a five-point scale (0 = "does not apply at all" to 5 = "applies totally"). The BIQ exhibits strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging from .80 to .95.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), developed by Rosenberg (1965), was employed to measure self-esteem. The RSES consists of 10 items rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The scale is one of the most widely used instruments for assessing self-esteem and is divided into two components: self-liking and self-competence, each represented by five items. The RSES demonstrates excellent psychometric properties, with a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92 and strong test-retest reliability (correlations of .85 and .88 over a two-week interval).

3 Result and Interpretation

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Body Image, Self-Esteem, and Self-Concept among Male and Female Adolescents (n=144)

Variables	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Body Image	Male	63.19	9.85
	Female	61.40	9.69
Self Esteem	Male	22.98	2.30
	Female	22.86	2.65
Self-Concept	Male	120.73	25.36
	Female	116.04	27.62

The mean and Standard Deviation of Body Image, Self-Esteem, and Self-Concept among adolescents gender wise are shown in Table 1. The findings indicated that Partially supported, as body image is significantly related to self-concept but not to self-esteem. Not supported, as there are no significant gender differences in body image, self-esteem, or self-concept among adolescents. Adolescent psychologists are uniquely qualified to comprehend body image in light of the various social, psychological, and physical experiences that come with adolescence.

Table 2. t-test to examine the differences in male and female adolescents on Body Image, Self- Esteem, and Self-Concept

Variables	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Upper	Lower
Body Image	1.09	142	.273	1.79	1.62	-1.429	5.01
Self Esteem	.302	142	.763	.12500	.41434	-.69406	.94406
Self Concept	1.06	142	.290	4.69	4.41	-4.04	13.43

Using t-test analysis, differences between males and females with regard to body image, self- esteem, and self-concept are shown in Table 2.

According to McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004), males' heightened interest in imitating male body standards during puberty may lead to an increase in body image issues. According to some statistics, 9–81% of preadolescent and adolescent boys feel unhappy with their physique, which supports this idea (Presnell et al., 2004). It is obvious that boys can experience body dissatisfaction, and it can take various forms than it does for girls (e.g., in attempts to gain muscle) According to recent studies, boys' body dissatisfaction rises throughout adolescence and into adulthood, just like it does for girls (Bucchianeri, et al.,2016). Examining the developmental changes in body dissatisfaction and the potential impact of social, psychological, and biological factors on the development of body dissatisfaction in adolescents girls and boys (Presnell et al., 2004). Fewer studies have examined the relationship between boys' body dissatisfaction and internalising the male ideal, despite the fact that studies have shown that a desire for muscularity is associated with low self-esteem and attempts to gain more body mass (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Girls' higher body satisfaction was predicted by parental support, but boys' body satisfaction was unrelated to this outcome (Barker & Galambos, 2003).

According to some body image study, boys' desire to be bigger (i.e., more muscular) and more developed than they think they are throughout the transition to puberty may make puberty a risk factor for their body image (Yuan, 2007). Compared to prepubertal or puberty-affected adolescents, postpubescent boys typically report higher levels of body satisfaction (O'Dea and Abraham1999).To find out how interpersonal factors like social support affect boys' body dissatisfaction, more research on this risk factor is necessary.

Table 3. The co-relation between body image, self-esteem and self-concept.

Variables	Body Image	Self-Esteem	Self-Concept
Body Image	1		
Self-Esteem	.074	1	
Self-Concept	.377**	-.014	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Using Pearson Co-relation analysis, the relationship between adolescents' body image, self- esteem, and self-concept are shown in Table 3.Erikson (1968) described the body as a source of self-concept and identity. He explained how adolescents develop a new and genuine self-concept in his explanation of teenage identity formation. This self-concept is based on the positive acceptance of a more mature body and is a

combination of biological, psychological, and social events from the past and present. According to Erikson, gender variations in body attitudes, self-concept, and their relationship result from heightened sexual dimorphism combined with progressively diverse psychosocial experiences within the framework of this general developmental process (Erikson, 1968). Males tend to see their bodies primarily as a way to efficiently manipulate the outside world, whereas ladies prefer to see them primarily as a way to attract others. Male and female body image and self-concept are predicted to be affected differently by such disparate assumptions (conscious and unconscious) about the body's functionality (Lerner RM et al, 1976).

Cross-sectionally, we discovered that lower body dissatisfaction was linked to better self-esteem; however, for age and gender, there was no sustained correlation between these factors across time (Mellor et al, 2010). Adolescent body image is impacted by a number of factors, such as gender, media messaging, peer and familial pressure or support, and self-esteem. In a similar vein, elements like body image, weight, academic achievement, and athletic ability and engagement all affect self-esteem (O'Dea, J. A., 2012).

The results of this study nonetheless add to the existing literature in a number of ways. Primarily, self-concept and its association with body image among adolescent. This study demonstrated that gender differences does not play a role in relation to body image, self-concept and self-esteem among adolescent.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers some evidence in favour of the theory that adolescents' body image is strongly correlated with their self-concept but not with their self-esteem. The results imply that although body image has a significant role in shaping one's self-concept, self-esteem is not much impacted by it. Contrary to certain previous beliefs on gendered perceptions of the body, there were also no discernible gender differences in self-esteem, body image, or self-concept. The findings advance our knowledge of teenage body image by emphasising the intricate connection between body image, self-concept, and self-esteem. They also raise the possibility that additional elements, like personal experiences and social support, may be crucial in forming these connections.

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