

Body Image Avoidance ,Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction among Young Adults Fathima Hanna* and Nisha K.**

Abstract

This research aims to discern the relationships between body image avoidance, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, aiming to uncover crucial factors contributing to body image avoidance and its adverse impacts, while also investigating the interconnectedness of self-esteem and life satisfaction. The study's participants encompassed 141 young adults aged 18 to 25 years. Data collection employed established instruments: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (Rosen et al., 1991). The gathered data underwent a comprehensive statistical analysis, utilizing PSPP software, inclusive of frequency analysis, t-tests, and correlation assessments. The findings of the analysis unveiled significant relationships between life satisfaction and self-esteem, illustrating the profound impact of self-perception on overall life contentment. Moreover, the study identified a substantial association between body image avoidance and life satisfaction, shedding light on the intricate interplay between body image perceptions and overall life contentment. This research contributes valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of young adults, offering implications for interventions and support programs aimed at promoting positive body image and enhancing overall well-being in this demographic.

Keywords: Body image avoidance, Self-esteem, Life satisfaction and Youth

Young adulthood is a crucial period for personal growth and development, defined by constructive thinking, a penchant for debate, and a burgeoning sense of identity. This is also a phase where young adults grapple with questions about the meaning of life, contemplate their future, and set goals. As individuals transition from adolescence to young adulthood, they face numerous transformative experiences that shape their self-image, influenced by societal norms, peer comparisons, and media portrayals. In addition to that, in the present day society, young adults are increasingly confronted with idealized body standards, navigating a complex interplay of perceptions, self-worth, and overall life satisfaction.

Body image, a subjective and dynamic construct encompassing one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours about their physical self, becomes central to this self-perception. Body image avoidance—where individuals consciously or unconsciously avoid situations that might trigger negative evaluations of their appearance. The complex concept of body image avoidance is marked by behaviours that reveal an excessive focus on one's appearance. This includes actions such as avoiding social situations and using concealing practices, like wearing loose clothing, to hide dissatisfaction with certain aspects of one's body (APA Dictionary of Psychology).

While, Body image encompasses both the mental perceptions one holds of their own body and the reflection seen in the mirror. Self-esteem, on the other hand, represents the value and respect an individual attributes to themselves across emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. It is a complex and dynamic aspect that profoundly influences one's personal well-being. Ura & Preston (2015) highlighted that poor body image and low self-esteem were linked to avoiding specific clothing and restricting social

activities, highlighting the complex interplay of these factors. Concurrently, life satisfaction, a holistic measure of contentment and fulfilment, becomes intertwined with body image and self-esteem as young adults strive to define their identities. Davis et al (2020) found that fostering body appreciation positively influenced life satisfaction and flourishing in both men and women.

Empirical evidence highlights the importance of addressing body image concerns and promoting positive body image as part of enhancing life satisfaction and self-esteem. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the impact of gender on self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction among young adults and explore the relationship between body image avoidance, self-esteem and life satisfaction among young adults. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform targeted interventions and support mechanisms, fostering a more resilient and content young adulthood by addressing the complex interplay of body image, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. By exploring these relationships, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into strategies for improving mental health and overall quality of life for young adults navigating this critical developmental stage.

Method

A quantitative, correlational research design with questionnaire-based approach was used for the study. The questionnaire was shared with participants through a Google Form. The participants included in the study was young adults from the age of 18-25 years with a sample size of 141 college students who were selected using convenient sampling. The data were collected with the help of three tools which are as follows:

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Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale: It was developed by Rosenberg in 1956. This scale operates on a 4-point Likert scale and demonstrates internal consistency with a coefficient of 0.77 and a minimum coefficient of reproducibility of 0.90.

Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ): Body image avoidance was assessed, created by Rosen, Srebnick, Saltzberg, and Wendt. This tool utilizes a 6-point item scale, showing a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 and a test-retest coefficient of 0.87.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS): It was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin. This scale employs a 5-point item scale and has an alpha coefficient of 0.87 and a test-retest correlation of 0.82.

Statistical Analysis:

A comprehensive statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software, which involved assessing frequencies for demographic variables like age, gender, weight, and height. A t-test was used to determine the significance of gender differences in self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction. Subsequently, correlational analysis was employed to explore the relationships among self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction.

Ethical Consideration:

The study began by obtaining informed consent from participants. Confidentiality and privacy of the study participants were also be maintained.

Results

The largest group of participants, 22.7%, is 20 years old, followed by 21.3% who are 19 years old, and 17.0% who are 18 years old. Participants aged 21 make up 15.6%, while 10.6% are 22 years old. The remaining respondents are distributed across the ages of 23, 24, and 25, accounting for 6.4%, 4.3%, and 2.1%, respectively. The majority of participants are female, comprising 80.9%, with males at 19.1%. Of the 141 participants, most weigh 50 kg, with the minimum weight recorded at 36 kg. In terms of height, most participants fall between 155 and 160 cm.

Table 1: t test analysis results of the variables, self-esteem, body image avoidance and life satisfaction.

Variables	Test for Equality of Variance Significance	t-test for equality of means Significance
Self Esteem Total	.309	.299
Body Image Avoidance Total	.366	.319
Life Satisfaction Total	.434	.689

The above the table indicates that there is no significant gender difference in self-esteem, body image avoidance and life satisfaction. This is understood from the values .309>0.05, .299>0.05, .366>0.05, .319>0.05, .434>0.05, .689>0.05.

Table 2: Correlation between self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction

		SETOT	BIATOT	LSTOT
SETOT	Pearson	1.00	-1.37	.568*
	Correlation (Sig)		.106	.000
BIATOT	Pearson	-1.37	1.00	-.226*
	Correlation (Sig)	.106		.007
LSTOT	Pearson	.568*	-.226*	1.00
	Correlation (Sig)	.000	.007	

Note: SETOT = Self-esteem Total, BIATOT = Body image Avoidance Total, LSTOT = Life satisfaction Total, Sig = Significance, * indicates significance.

The analysis of the above table reveals that self-esteem and body image avoidance are negatively correlated but not significant, i.e., significant at .05 <.106. The result also reveals that there exists a positive correlation between life satisfaction and self-esteem. The result clearly depicts a negative correlation between body image and life satisfaction.

Discussion

The aim of the study to investigate the impact of gender on self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction among young adults. Furthermore, to explore the relationship between body image avoidance, self-esteem and life satisfaction among young adults

The study utilized t-tests to evaluate the effect of gender on self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction among young adults. Contrary to expectations, no significant gender differences were found in these areas. These results are consistent with findings from Myers & Rossen (1999), which also reported no notable gender differences in self-esteem among obese individuals, and Ura & Preston (2015), who suggested that gender differences in body image and self-esteem might not be as pronounced as anticipated. The study's outcomes reinforce the idea that, in the context of young adults, gender may not significantly influence self-esteem, body image avoidance, or life satisfaction. This perspective aligns with Rumsey & Harcourt (2004), who proposed that body image and self-esteem issues are complex and not strictly determined by gender.

The correlation coefficients were examined to unravel the intricate relationships between self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction among young adults. Contrary to initial expectations, the correlation between self-esteem and body image avoidance yielded a non-significant coefficient of -.137. This aligns with the findings of Ura & Preston (2015) noted the complex relationship between internalized thin ideals and body image concerns. However, Aguirre ,Castillo & Zanetti (2010) highlighted the protective role of self-esteem in enhancing overall well-being, consistent with the observed positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Rumsey & Harcourt (2004) also

found that body image issues significantly impact life satisfaction. The non-significant negative correlation between self-esteem and body image avoidance reflects the nuanced dynamics (Myers & Rossen, (1999); Ura & Preston, (2015)).

In conclusion, the results highlight the complex relationships between self-esteem, body image avoidance, and life satisfaction among young adults, highlighting the importance of a thorough understanding of these dynamics. The findings are consistent with and extend existing literature, offering new insights into the intricate nature of these psychological factors in the context of young adulthood.

The findings of the study need to be examined in the light of the fact that primary focus was on young adults within the age range of 18 to 25. Consequently, the outcomes may not be readily generalizable to adolescents or other age groups. Furthermore, the study heavily relies on self-report questionnaires, introducing the possibility of response bias. Participants might provide responses influenced by social desirability or other subjective factors, potentially impacting the accuracy of the findings.

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the complex interplay between life satisfaction, body image avoidance, and self-esteem among young adults. By elucidating these relationships, the study deepens our understanding of the factors that influence body image avoidance in this age group. The study's insights pave the way for developing targeted interventions designed to address and improve negative body perceptions. These programs can be tailored to reduce body image avoidance, enhance life satisfaction, and boost self-esteem. Such initiatives could profoundly impact young adults' well-being and psychological growth, fostering healthier body relationships and leading to a more fulfilling and satisfying life.

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