

Educational and Gender Differences in Body Image and Depression Among Students

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The aim of the present investigation was to study educational and gender differences in body image and depression among students. Sample consisted of 100 subjects. Out of these 50 were school students and 50 were college students. These two groups were further divided according to gender; each group comprised 25 males and 25 females. Thus, a 2x2 factorial design was used. Depression was measured by Beck Depression Inventory and body image was measured by body esteem scale. ANOVA and correlations were used to analyze the results. Results showed significant main effect of gender on body image. Males had significantly more positive body image than females. Negative correlation was found between body image and depression of males and females students. However, in other comparisons, significant differences were not observed.

Body image refers to the similarity between actual and perceived ideal body shape. Everyone has a body image and it has strong emotional overtones based on his experience in life. Body image is a multidimensional self-attitude toward one's body, particularly its size, shape and aesthetics. It refers to persons' evaluations and affective experiences regarding their physical attributes, as well as their investments in appearance as a domain for self-evaluation. Body-image evaluations and emotions derive in part from self-perceived discrepancies from internalized physical ideals. Body image investment includes the extent of attentional self focus on one's appearance, its importance or schematicity vis-à-vis one's sense of self and behaviors for the management or enhancement of appearance. Concerns about weight and shape are conventionally

associated with women. Fallon and Rozin (1985) reported that women wanted to be thinner than they thought they were. Tiggmann and Pennington (1990) also reported body dissatisfaction in women. In contrast man's body satisfaction appears to be high but they also show body dissatisfaction (Cash & Winstead, 1986; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005).

Dissatisfaction with one's body image may result in depression. The term 'depression' covers a variety of negative moods and behavior changes. Some are normal mood fluctuations and other meet the definition of clinical problems. The mood change may be temporary or long lasting. It may range, from a relatively minor feeling of melancholy to a deeply negative view of the world and an inability to function effectively (Sarason & Sarason, 2002). Depression is high in females than in males (Carson, Butcher & Mineka

1998). The increasing incidence of depression may have a possible relation between body image and depression. Hence, an attempt has been made to study educational and gender differences in body image and depression among students.

Method

Sample

The total sample comprised 100 students. Out of these 50 were school students and 50 were college students. These two groups were further divided according to gender, i.e., thus each group consisted of 25 males and 25 females. The age for school students ranged from 13 to 16 years and for college students ranged from 18 to 21 years. Participants were taken from different schools and colleges of Delhi.

Design: 2x2 factorial design was used.

Tools

The body image was measured by Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shield, 1984). The Scale consists of 35 items, each has substantial loading in at least one of the three factors for women and men. It has five response categories ranging from strong negative feelings to strong positive feelings with score from 1 to 5.

Reliability was measured by computing alpha coefficient. For males, this measure of internal consistency in alpha coefficients of .78 for the attractiveness factor, .85 for the upper body strength factor and .86 for the general physical condition factor. For females, alpha coefficients were .78 for attractiveness factor, .87 for the weight concern factor and .82 for the general physical condition factor. The discriminant validity for males and females for various dimensions were calculated. It was reasonably good.

Depression was measured by Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1987). It is one of the most widely used inventories for depression. There are total 21 group of statement

Results

Mean scores of body image and depression of different groups were calculated and F ratio and correlation were used for analyzing the results. Results are given in different tables. When ANOVA was calculated for body image only gender emerged as significant ($F = 5.18, <.05$). In other comparisons, significant difference was not found.

Table 1: Mean scores of four groups of subjects

Gender		School	College	Mean of Means
Male	Body Image	114.24	111.76	112.70
	Depression	13.04	10.28	11.66
Female	Body Image	104.36	106.36	105.36
	Depression	11.00	10.16	10.58
Mean of Means	Body Image	109.3	108.76	
	Depression	12.02	10.22	

Table 2: Correlation coefficient between body image and depression of school and college, male and female students.

Group	School Students	College Students	Male	Female
Correlation	0.051	0.084	-0.356*	-0.413**

* Significant at .05 level; ** Significant at .01 level

Table-2 shows a negative correlation coefficient between body image and depression for male (-0.356) and female students (-0.413) which is significant at .05 and .01 level of confidence respectively. However, coefficients of correlation between other two variables of school and college students were not significant

Discussion

The aim of the study is to examine educational and gender differences in body image and depression among students. Results indicate that main effect for level of education was not significant. It means that school and college students did not differ on body image. Body image being particularly related with the body appearance has more to do with the physiological factors than any other factors. It seems that whatever the image an individual has developed early and the life was purely in the physiological ways and has nothing to do with the later age or education.

Results reveal that F-ratio of gender related to body image was found to be significant at .05 level of significance. It means that male and female students differ significantly on body image. It may be observed from table-1 that male students have obtained 112.70 mean body image score and female students obtained 105.36 mean body image score. Since F-ratio for gender came to be significant, we can say that males have significantly more positive body image than females. It is interesting to note that same results have been obtained in American culture (Cash & Winstead, 1986; Davis & Katzman, 1996). Though it seems that Indian culture

differs from American culture in a number of ways, but perhaps the explanation given by above mentioned researchers in terms of social construction seem to be equally true for the Indian culture also. To them an understanding of the differing social construction of female and male within the U.S. culture seems to be responsible for the gender differences in body image. Moreover, some feminine theorists have also written that "feminine body is constructed as an object to be looked at". It means that body image of a women is more important to be looked at by others than by herself.

The interactional effect of level of education and gender was found to be non-significant. It means that body image has in no way to do with the level of education.

There were non-significant F-ratios for educational level, gender and interaction of the two variables on depression. The sources related to depression are perhaps more related with the family, neighborhood, peer group, rearing style etc., hence the seeds of depression which work as precipitating factor for depression are sown in the personality of the individual to the sources other than the education and gender. So non-significant differences between the depression of male and female, school and college students seem to be obvious. Though study conducted by Diane et al. (2002) shows that boys though present a similar rate of depressive symptoms than girls prior to adolescence, girls become more depressive than boys after adolescent period. But samples of the two studies were different. Perhaps belonging to the same

socio-economic background, cultural background and residential background did not exhibit differences in depression.

Results show non-significant relationship between body image and depression of school and college students which means that there is no significant relationship between body image and depression of school and college students. However, a significant but negative relationship was found between body image and depression of male and female students.

The negative correlation was obtained more for females than males. Many feminist scholars have argued that cultural norms and expectations encourage girls and women to be attentive to and psychologically invested in their physical appearance, which can undermine their well-being and contribute to eating deregulation, depression, and other psychological difficulties (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990).

Allgood (1990) found the significant relationship between body image and depression for both sexes. They found that females reported more depressive symptoms and negative body image than males. Shin and Paik (2003) also obtained significant negative correlation between body image and depression.

This is further confirmed from the non-significant difference between the correlation of body image and depression of school and college students, and significant difference between male and female students.

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