



Examining the Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Body Image Satisfaction among Female College Students in Chandigarh

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Abstract: This study has explored the connection between self-esteem and body image satisfaction (body appreciation) in female college students in Chandigarh. The study was based on the modern paradigms of self-concept and positive body image and sought to establish the intensity and orientation of relationships between the global self-esteem and multidimensional body appreciation. The study design used was a quantitative, correlational, with a sample size of 153 undergraduate and postgraduate female students. The scales were used in the collection of data: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Body Appreciation Scale (BAS), which has good reliability. The descriptive statistics showed that the self-esteem ($M = 28.32$, $SD = 4.97$) and body appreciation ($M = 48.39$, $SD = 10.65$) were moderate to high. The correlation analysis performed by Pearson showed that there was a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between the variables, $r(151) = 0.664$, $p < 0.001$. Both hypotheses are supported as the results showed that the greater the self-esteem, the greater the body appreciation. The findings reveal the interdependence between global self-worth and body perceptions in female college students. The research highlights the significance of considering body image into mental health interventions and provides region-specific evidence in the Indian context. These findings have implications for developing strength-based, culturally sensitive approaches to promote psychological well-being in

emerging adults.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Body Appreciation, Body Image Satisfaction, Female College Students, Psychological Wellbeing*

1. Introduction

Self-esteem is an organization structure in human psychological functioning, it is a cognitive structuring and an affective controller, which influences perception, motivation and responses to behavioral events in both developmental and sociocultural settings (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023; Tufail et al., 2024). In this architecture, the concept of self-esteem, which has been described as the global, evaluative aspect of self-concept, is not just a trait value but a dynamic and contextsensitive value of perceived competence and worthiness (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023; Tufail et al., 2024). Its theoretical basis cuts across several theories: self-concept theory postulates that self-esteem is the affective valence of self-representations (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023); social comparison theory explains that upward or downward comparisons mediate self-evaluative judgments (Tufail et al., 2024); and sociocultural theory highlights that macro-level norms, media representations, and systems of interpersonal feedbacks all scaffold self-appraisal processes (Mohd Razman et al., 2024). These views agree that self-esteem is not culturally neutral, or psychometrically independent, and that it is recursively formed by, and forms, embodied experience and social positioning (Mohd Razman et al., 2024; Munandar & Nabilla, 2023).

Body image satisfaction, in its turn, cannot be narrowed down to the appearance evaluation only (Vankrothu et al., 2024). Modern theories have focused on the sense of body appreciation as a multidimensional concept that includes functional respect towards the capacity of the body, tolerance to natural variation and defiance to objectifying norms (Neeraj et al., 2024; Vankrothu et al., 2024). This broadened operationalization is a paradigmatic transformation of deficit-based models into the more strengths-oriented models that anticipate embodiment, agency, and the development of cultural resilience (Neeraj et al., 2024) which are especially relevant when it comes to the non-Western environment where collectivist values, family expectations, and the changing media ecologies co-determine bodily meaning (Hasballah & Hussain, 2022). The postulated relationship between self-esteem and body image satisfaction is highly mediated by three mutually reinforcing processes: first, internalization of sociocultural

endorsed beauty ideals, in particular those that support thinness, fairness and youthfulness, is a distal antecedent that mediates self-assessment by externally imposed standards (Neeraj et al., 2024); second, cognitive appraisal processes convert such internalized standards into affect.

These mechanisms have been empirically validated to provide moderate to strong positive relationships between self-esteem and body image satisfaction in various groups of female samples (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023; Tufail et al., 2024). The evidence of meta-analysis indicates that the weighted mean correlations vary between $r = 0.47$ and $r = 0.62$ (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023). Importantly, female college students prove to be a high sensitivity group because of the pressures of identity consolidation and exposure to sociocultural influences (Tufail et al., 2024). Investigations in female undergraduates in Korea, Pakistan and Malaysia have all shown that there are substantial positive relationships between self-esteem and body image satisfaction with coefficients mostly above 0.60 (Mohd Razman et al., 2024). The studies conducted in India also show strong correlations, where one study on young adults in Andhra Pradesh found strong relationships between body image perceptions, self-esteem, and BMI (Vankrothu et al., 2024). A separate study conducted on medical students in North Haryana showed that body image dissatisfaction was high with a connection to low self-esteem (Neeraj et al., 2024). Moreover, research conducted in nursing and general undergraduate groups in India has reported high levels of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem which are related to negative psychological consequences (Diengdoh & Ali, 2022).

Regardless of this accumulating evidence, an important research gap remains in terms of the region-specific studies in the multifaceted sociocultural context of India (Hasballah & Hussain, 2022). Although research has been conducted on such metropolitan centers like Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad, there is a lack of empirical data in Chandigarh, a planned Union Territory with its distinctive bilingual (PunjabiHindi) ecology and educational eminence (Diengdoh & Ali, 2022; Hasballah & Hussain, 2022). Available literature has tended to use convenience samples, use measures that are insensitive of functional body appreciation or focuses on pathology as opposed to normal variation (Diengdoh & Ali, 2022; Neeraj et al., 2024). This is a consequential gap because not having culturally based data constrains the development of context sensitive mental health interventions (Hasballah & Hussain, 2022).

The current research thus seeks to investigate the correlation between the self-esteem and satisfaction of the body image among female undergraduate and postgraduate students pursuing a

degree course in degree-granting institutions in Chandigarh. In particular, it aims to measure the magnitude and direction of the relationship between global self-esteem and multidimensional body image satisfaction on one hand and placing the results in the sociocultural framework of North India on the other hand.

2. Methodology

2.1 Hypothesis

H1: Self-esteem and body image satisfaction of female college students in Chandigarh have a significant relationship.

H 2: Body image satisfaction and self-esteem in female college students are positively related in Chandigarh.

2.2 Participants

The number of female college students involved in the study was 153. The respondents were sampled out of different degree-granting institutions in Chandigarh. It consisted of undergraduate and postgraduate students with various academic backgrounds.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

- Women, college undergraduate/ postgraduate students.
- Age range approximately 18–25 years
- Willingness to participate

Exclusion Criteria

- Male students
- Individuals below 18 years or not enrolled in college
- Part or partial answers.

2.4 Instruments

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): A 10-item self-report scale on global self-worth with Likert scale questions of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale showed a high internal consistency (0.85).

Body Appreciation Scale (BAS): A positive body image measure 13 item measure that measures acceptance, respect and appreciation of body functionality. The scale was very reliable (0.90).

2.5 Procedure

A non-probability (convenience) method of sampling was used to collect the data. The participants were contacted in college environments and informed consent was taken before the participation. A semi-structured data sheet was used to collect the socio-demographic details. The participants were asked to fill in Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Body Appreciation Scale. Anonymity was used to obtain responses to guarantee confidentiality and reduce bias in responses.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

The standard descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated to describe the levels of self-esteem and body appreciation. To test H1 and H2, Pearson product moment correlation test was used to test the relationship between self-esteem and body image satisfaction. The significance level was determined as $p < 0.01$. The correlation was statistically significant ($r = 0.664$) which implies that the variables had a strong relationship.

3. Results

Descriptive Statistics

To analyze the self-esteem and body appreciation of female college students, descriptive statistics were calculated. According to the results, the participants stated that their self-esteem and body appreciation were moderate to high, which implies that, overall, the participants had a positive psychological portrait. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation values for the study variables.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem and Body Appreciation (N = 153)

Variable	M	SD
Self-Esteem (RSES)	28.32	4.97
Body Appreciation (BAS)	48.39	10.65

Distribution of Self-Esteem and Body Appreciation Levels

It was found out that most of the respondents cited moderate self-esteem (64.1%), high self-esteem (30.7%) with a small percentage having low self-esteem (5.2%).

On the same note, the majority of the respondents were high body appreciators (62.1%), then there were moderate body appreciators (30.7%), and very few low body appreciators

(7.2%). These distributions show that the sample mainly shows positive self-evaluation and body image. Table 2 summarizes the distribution.

Table 2. *Distribution of Self-Esteem and Body Appreciation Levels (N = 153)*

Variable	Category	n	%
Self-Esteem	Low	8	5.2
	Moderate	98	64.1
	High	47	30.7
Body Appreciation	Low	11	7.2
	Moderate	47	3.7
	High	95	62.1

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson product-moment correlation test was used to test the relationship between self-esteem and body appreciation. The findings showed that self-esteem and body appreciation have a strong positive relationship, $r(151) = 0.664$, $p < .001$, which means that the higher the self-esteem of individuals, the greater the body appreciation they give. These results support the fact that the relationship exists and is in the right direction. Table 3 presents the correlation results.

Table 3. *Pearson Correlation between Self-Esteem and Body Appreciation (N = 153)*

Variables	1	2
1. Self-Esteem	—	0.664**
2. Body Appreciation	0.664**	—

$p < .001$

The study findings are a good support to the hypotheses put forward to test the relationship between self-esteem and body appreciation.

Table 4

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H ₁	Significant relationship between self-esteem and body appreciation	Supported
H ₂	Positive relationship between self-esteem and body appreciation	Supported

4. Discussion

The current research examined the relationship between global self-esteem and body appreciation among female college students. The results indicated moderate to high levels of self-esteem and high levels of body appreciation, along with a strong positive relationship between the two constructs ($r = 0.664$, $p < .001$). These findings provide empirical support for the proposed hypotheses. Specifically, Hypothesis 1, which stated that there would be a significant relationship between self-esteem and body image satisfaction, was supported, as a statistically significant correlation was observed. Furthermore, Hypothesis 2, which proposed a positive relationship between self-esteem and body appreciation, was also supported, as the direction of the relationship was positive.

The correlation strength is an indication that there is a significant psychological overlap between global self-worth and body attitudes. This is consistent with modern positive body image theories that define body appreciation as a dynamic, adaptive process that entails acceptance, respect, and challenge to social pressure in terms of appearance. Persons with greater self-esteem would most likely have more positive perceptions toward their bodies since their value is not as dependent on external assessment. Body appreciation, on the other hand, can support self-esteem by decreasing self-criticism and enhancing a more stable and loving self-image. In such a way the relationship can be viewed as mutually reinforcing as opposed to unidirectional.

This research is in line with the earlier studies that body appreciation is one of the main correlates of psychological well-being. Previous studies have shown the positive correlation between body appreciation and self-esteem among various groups (Khalaf et al., 2021), and the tendency is also observed in cross-cultural groups (Torres et al., 2022; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Nonetheless, the correlation reported in the current research is somewhat larger than those typically reported, which could be associated with the sample-specific features, like a higher awareness of body positivity, or a common variance because of the self-reported approach.

In principle, the findings contradict the rigidness of the global and domain-specific self-evaluations and indicate that body-related perceptions constitute a core part of the overall self-concept in young women. This reinforces integrative theory of self-esteem where embodiment is a key component of identity and mental operations. It also emphasizes the need to transition

deficit-based models of body image to strength-based strategies based on resilience and acceptance (Munandar & Nabilla, 2023; Tufail et al., 2024).

Practically, the implications of the findings are in the mental health interventions in colleges. The elements of body image, included in programs designed to help people grow their self-esteem, should be supplemented with interventions that would help people appreciate their bodies as the means of raising their self-esteem. Approaches such as media literacy, self-compassion training, and functionality-focused body awareness may be particularly beneficial. In spite of its contribution, the research is limited. A female-only sample is limiting to generalizability, and cross-sectional design does not allow making causal conclusions. Moreover, self-report measures can result in bias in responses. Studies in the future should adopt longitudinal and experimental designs, have more heterogeneous samples, and investigate the underlying mechanisms through mixed-method studies.

To sum up, the research indicates a strong and significant correlation between self-esteem and body appreciation and the interrelation of the two in psychological well-being in female college students.

5. Conclusion

The current study gives empirical support of good and positive association between self-esteem and body image satisfaction in female college students in Chandigarh. The results show that the participants have moderate to high self-esteem and high body appreciation and the correlation between these constructs is statistically significant, which implies that these two variables are tightly linked. This connection implies that body-related perceptions do not represent a peripheral element within the concept of self-evaluation but constitute a focal point of total self-evaluation in early adulthood.

The research adds to the emerging literature in favor of strength-based theories of body image, which is based on acceptance, respect, and usefulness of the body in their originality, instead of concentrating on discontent or pathology. The findings also support the necessity to view embodiment as one of the main aspects of psychological well-being. Applied-wise, the results emphasize the significance of body image intervention in mental health programs in an attempt to boost self-esteem in college students.

The study is, however, constrained by its cross-sectional methodology, the use of self-

reported measures and its sample, which is exclusively female, which can limit the generalizability. Future studies must take the form of longitudinal and experimental and consider broader populations. On the whole, the research highlights the importance of developing self-esteem and body appreciation to enhance holistic psychological health among young women.

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