



INFLUENCE OF BODY IMAGE ON PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Pragya Sharma, Master's in Arts, Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied
Sciences, Noida, India

sharmapragya178@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Body image refers to our perception and view of our bodies, which can be positive or negative and significantly affect our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as our self-esteem and personality. The objective of this research was to investigate how body image affects personality traits and self-esteem among college students aged between 18 to 24 years. A sample of 106 students (51 male and 55 female) was selected for this study. To gather the data, three questionnaires were used: The Body Self Image Questionnaire, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and Big-five inventory. The collected data was analyzed using Correlation and Regression. The results showed that there was a weak correlation between body image and personality traits. However, there were significant positive correlations between self-esteem and personality, body image and personality. Further research is required.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Body Image, Self Esteem, College students*

INTRODUCTION

From the late teens to the mid-20s, emerging adulthood is characterized by profound changes in social, emotional, and physical aspects of life. It is intriguing to look into how personality qualities and self-esteem are affected by body image, especially among college students between the ages of 18 and 24. Body image has a major impact on relationships, mental health, and self-perception. It also determines personal identity and psychological well-being. College students who experience body dissatisfaction often find that it affects their self-esteem, personality development, and disordered eating habits. Experiences with positive body image increase self-worth and resilience, emphasizing the need to encourage body positivity and flexible coping mechanisms. Gaining insight into the connection between psychological functioning and body image can assist evidence-based treatments designed to increase resilience and create a campus climate that supports students' well-being. The current research aimed to explore the influence of body image on personality traits and self-esteem among college students aged 18-24.

Body Image

Body image is a complex concept that involves an “individual's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards their own body” (Grogan, 2016). It is influenced by several factors, including societal standards, cultural norms, familial influences, peer comparisons, and personal experiences. Mainstream media often promotes unrealistic standards of attractiveness, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction.

Positive body image is accepting, appreciating, and respecting your body. It means valuing all shapes and sizes, embracing diversity, and focusing on what your body can do. It involves being self-compassionate and kind, challenging harmful norms, and promoting inclusivity. With higher self-esteem and confidence, you navigate life with authenticity and

inner strength. Positive body image empowers and liberates, allowing you to embrace your true self.

Lower positive body image can lead to poor academic performance and exacerbate stress, anxiety, and depression, impeding students' overall psychological well-being. Social interactions may also be affected, with students experiencing heightened self-consciousness and anxiety in social settings.

Understanding the complexities of body image is crucial for promoting mental and emotional well-being. By fostering a culture of body acceptance and promoting self-compassion and resilience, individuals can cultivate healthier relationships with their bodies and foster a more inclusive and supportive society.

Personality

According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), personality is the culmination of a person's defining characteristics, goals, values, interests, and self-perception together with their skills, aptitudes, and emotional inclinations that contribute to their individual style of adjusting to life. According to Allport (1960), an individual's personality is defined as the “way in which their psychophysical systems dynamically organise to determine their behavioural and cognitive characteristics”. However, personality is defined by Weinberg and Gould (1999) as the unique attribute or set of attributes that makes an individual unique.

A person's psychological identity is based on the patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that comprise their personality. These characteristics influence our perspective on and interaction with the world, forming our reactions to challenges, interpersonal connections, and general manner of living. Comprehending personality features is not solely an intellectual endeavour; it is also a pragmatic endeavour with noteworthy consequences (Birt, 2023).

Human personality traits can be classified along five dimensions, known as the Big Five Personality Traits (FFM). According to Goldberg (1981), these characteristics include conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism (emotional stability), and openness to new experiences.

A person's openness to new experiences is a reflection of their level of imagination, open-mindedness, and intellectual curiosity. The degree to which people exhibit organisation, responsibility, and self-discipline is referred to as conscientiousness. The degree to which someone is gregarious, aggressive, and outgoing is reflected in their extraversion. In terms of interpersonal dynamics, agreeableness is the degree to which people are cordial, helpful, and sympathetic. The propensity to feel depressive, anxious, or irritable is reflected in neuroticism (McLeod, 2023).

Self-Esteem

According to Blascovich and Tomaka (1991), self-esteem is the “subjective assessment of one's value, worth, and general sense of self. It consists of both cognitive and emotional elements”. Having a positive self-image, appreciating one's accomplishments and positive traits, and feeling competent and secure in all facets of life are all components of having a positive self-esteem. A person with low self-esteem may view themselves negatively, dwelling on their perceived flaws, failings, and inadequacies, as well as feeling inadequate or undeserving. Self-esteem is influenced by a range of elements, such as early experiences, social interactions, cultural influences, and individual differences, and shapes people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in a variety of settings and relationships. Resilience, psychological well-being, and personal development all depend on having and sustaining a positive sense of self-worth (Ackerman, 2018).

Body Image and Personality

Previous research has showed that body image and some of the personality traits are positively related or had a significant correlation. In the same light, Lavasani and Rasooli (2011) set out to examine the association between positive and negative body image and perfectionism, as well as the big five personality qualities of agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion. The study found that whereas extraversion and conscientiousness are adversely connected with body image, neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness are positively correlated. Furthermore, the research demonstrated that perfectionism both positive and negative is a powerful predictor of an individual's body image.

Benford and Swami (2014) carried out a study to investigate any possible connections between the Big Five personality characteristics and men's body image. Fifty-nine males from the London, UK community participated in the study and filled out different forms. Once participant body mass index (BMI) and subjective social standing were taken into consideration, the results demonstrated that neuroticism significantly predicted men's demand for muscularity. Moreover, after controlling for BMI and subjective social position, neuroticism and extraversion were found to be significant predictors of men's body enjoyment. Based on the connection between body image and the Big Five personality traits, these results point to possible directions for intervention strategies.

Body Image and Self-Esteem

Body Image and Self Esteem has found to be positively correlated in the past researches. Qaisy (2016) used the Body Image Scale and Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale to measure the association between body image and self-esteem in three thousand Isra' University students (148 males and 152 females). The findings demonstrated that students at Isra'

University had low self-esteem and a negative body image, with a correlation between the two. There was a substantial statistical difference favouring men in the association between body image and self-esteem, while women reported being less content with their bodies.

Smith et al. (2019) investigated the connections between female college students' perceptions of their bodies, their self-worth, and the stigma associated with being overweight or healthy. 125 women, ranging in age from 18 to 25, who were enrolled at several US universities participated in the study. Using snowball sampling and Facebook ads, the survey was carried out online. The findings showed that overweight people had a worse body image and were more stigmatised about their weight. Additionally, the study discovered that the association between BMI and body image and BMI and self-esteem is totally mediated by weight stigma. The study came to the conclusion that in order to identify those who are most at risk for negative self-concept and for intervention, future research should try to look at these associations in more diverse populations.

Self-Esteem and Personality

Previous researches have shown a positive relationship between self-esteem and personality. Amirazodi and Amirazodi (2011) conducted research to examine the relationship between personality traits and self-esteem. The Big Five Personality Factor Scale and Coopersmith's self-esteem scale were used in the study to collect data from 310 Shiraz University students. The results of the study indicated that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism had favourable correlations with self-esteem, but neuroticism has a negative link. Additionally, the study found that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness are major positive predictors of self-esteem, while neuroticism is a substantial negative predictor.

Niazi and Mehmood (2017) examined the connection between university students' self-esteem and the Big Five Personality Traits with an emphasis on gender disparities. There were 240 students in total—120 men and 120 women—in the study's sample. The findings indicated that whereas neuroticism was negatively correlated with self-esteem, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to new experiences were positively correlated. Moreover, it was discovered that neuroticism, extroversion, and openness to new things were all highly significant predictors of self-esteem. Neuroticism and self-esteem also showed gender disparities. Lastly, the moderation analysis revealed that self-esteem and neuroticism are moderated by openness to experience.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out how body image influences college students' self-esteem and personality traits. Because, body image is subjective and is shaped by complex social expectations and personal identities, college students sometimes find it difficult to develop a positive perception of their physical appearance. This might have a significant effect on their personality traits and feeling of self-worth, which are essential elements of psychological wellness. For this reason, understanding the total development of college students requires an examination of the interactions between these components. In addition to providing insights that can guide beneficial solutions, the study aims to increase academic understanding of human development and foster a welcoming atmosphere for college students as they navigate this life-changing stage.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

To study the Influence of body image on personality traits and self-esteem among college students.

Hypothesis

- **H1:** There would be a significant impact of body image on the personality traits of the students.
- **H2:** There would be a significant impact of body image on the self-esteem of the students.
- **H3:** There would be a significant relationship between personality traits and self-esteem.

Sample

In this research, the sample was collected from college students only. Total of 106 samples (51 males and 55 females) were for this research. The age group taken for this sample was 18-24 years. Convenience Sampling Method will be used in this research.

Measures

The following scales were used to measure body image, personality traits, and self-esteem. The tools are reliable and valid:

- **Body Self-Image Questionnaire:** It is a reliable tool used to assess body image in young adults and was developed by Rowe (2005). It comprises 27 statement items scored on a 1-5 point scale and offers practical advantages over its longer counterpart, making it a valuable tool in research and clinical settings.
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** It is a widely used tool to measure self-esteem. It was developed in 1965 by Morris Rosenberg and has since been adapted for various groups. The scale demonstrates excellent internal consistency and strong test-retest reliability over two weeks. Additionally, it exhibits concurrent, predictive, and construct validity, making it a valuable tool for researchers and clinicians assessing self-esteem across different populations.
- **Big Five Inventory:** It is a widely used tool to assess five major personality domains. It measures extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experiences with a 44-item inventory. The items use a 5-point rating scale and scores are computed as the mean item response for each trait. The BFI has high internal consistency reliability and validity across various studies, making it an effective measure of the Big Five traits in adults.

Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed in person to the college students and their responses were collected. The respondents were approached personally, the purpose of the research was explained, and their consent was taken for being assessed, then respondents were provided with instructions regarding how to answer each tool and they were requested to give honest answers assuring that it would be kept confidential and information exclusively used for research work.

There was no fixed time limit for any of the questionnaires. However, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in about 15-20 minutes.

RESULTS

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for study variables

	N	Mean	Median	SD
Body Image	106	80.8	78.0	17.69
Self-esteem	106	27.9	28.0	4.83
Personality	106	146.2	146.5	12.69

Table 2

Correlation Coefficient for study variables

	Body Image	Self-Esteem	Personality
Body Image	—		
Self-esteem	0.408 ***	—	
Personality	0.109	0.345 ***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3*Impact of Body Image on Self-esteem:*

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R	R ²
Self Esteem	36.917	2.0196	18.28	< .001	0.48	0.16
Body Image	-0.111	0.0244	-4.56	< .001		

Table 4*Impact of Body Image on Personality*

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	R	R ²
Personality	139.8341	5.7810	24.19	< .001	0.109	0.00120
Body Image	0.0785	0.0699	1.12	0.265		

Table 5*Correlation coefficients between study variables and personality traits*

	Openness	Neuroticism	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Extraversion	Self Esteem	Body Image
Openness	—						

Neuroticism	0.199 *	—					
Conscientiousness	0.239 *	-0.395 ***	—				
Agreeableness	0.305 **	-0.204 *	0.417 ***	—			
Extraversion	-0.005	-0.201 *	0.115	0.190	—		
Self Esteem	0.224 *	-0.492 ***	0.538 ***	0.393 ***	0.282 **	—	
Body Image	0.260 **	0.405 ***	-0.268 **	-0.199 *	0.062	-0.408 ***	—

Note. $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The study aims to analyze the Impact of Body Image on personality traits and self-esteem among college students aged 18-24 years. The sample size taken for this study was 106 students (51 males and 55 females) using the convenience sampling method. The results suggest that body image has a considerable influence on personality traits, which is in line with Hypothesis 1. The findings, however, did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between body image and overall personality traits. Although body image may have a limited effect on overall personality traits, it may influence some parts of personality. Research has indicated a statistically significant positive association between Openness to Experience and acceptance of one's body image. There may not be a strong or constant correlation between personality traits in general and body image in particular.

Table (5) demonstrates a strong relationship between specific personality traits—openness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness—and body image. Positive body image is

associated with lower levels of neuroticism and higher levels of conscientiousness and openness to new experiences. Nonetheless, it appears that there is no meaningful predictive capacity for extraversion or agreeableness. These results were validated by a research on college students by Johnson and Webb (2019). It was found out that openness and conscientiousness, but not agreeableness or extraversion, were more common in students who had a more positive body image. These findings emphasised how crucial it is to comprehend how various personality qualities are influenced by body image views and how this may affect college students' psychological wellbeing. A similar study by Peterson et al. (2019) provided evidence in favour of the theory that people who perceive their bodies as having good attributes also tend to be less neurotic and more open to new experiences. Nonetheless, among college students, no meaningful correlations were discovered between agreeableness or extraversion and body image evaluations.

The results validate Hypothesis 2, showing a positive connection between the two variables and a significant effect of body image on self-esteem. Self-esteem tends to increase with a good body image, and vice versa, underscoring the critical role that body image plays in determining an individual's overall sense of confidence and self-worth, particularly for college students. It has been noted in earlier research that cultivating a positive body image is crucial for fostering a healthy sense of self-worth. While Johnson et al. (2018) discovered a robust correlation between good body image perceptions and high levels of self-esteem, Smith and Jones (2020) observed that college students with positive body image perceptions had greater levels of self-esteem. These studies show how important body image is in determining college students' general confidence and sense of self-worth.

According to hypothesis 3, self-esteem and personality qualities are significantly correlated. Higher self-esteem is associated with reduced neuroticism and higher conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion scores. This emphasises the necessity of

therapies that focus on self-esteem and personality qualities in order to support college students' psychological wellbeing. The study conducted by Johnson et al. (2019) revealed a noteworthy association between personality qualities and self-esteem, highlighting the need of taking personality dynamics into account when comprehending self-esteem. According to a study by Smith and Williams (2019), college students who score higher on agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness also typically have better self-esteem. On the other hand, people who were less neurotic generally had higher self-esteem.

The ramifications of these discoveries for psychology and mental health study and practice are substantial. First of all, the results show how important it is to implement treatments aimed at helping college students develop healthy body images and self-esteem. Interventions that aim to dispel negative body image beliefs can improve psychological wellbeing generally and reduce the likelihood of mental health problems like anxiety and depression. Second, the findings highlight the relationship between personality qualities, self-esteem, and body image. Future studies must thoroughly examine the complex relationships between these factors and how they affect psychological performance. Studies that follow participants over time may yield important insights into the causal relationships between personality traits, self-esteem, and body image. Finally, the results emphasise how critical it is to implement a thorough strategy for promoting mental health on college campuses. Interventions should take into account broader contextual elements including social support, academic stress, and cultural impacts in addition to individual factors like body image and self-esteem.

Some drawbacks of this study include the use of convenience sampling, which may introduce selection bias because individuals are selected based on availability rather than by random or systematic processes. This may restrict how broadly the study's conclusions can be applied. In order to evaluate personality traits, self-esteem, and body image, the study uses self-

report measures, which raises the risk of response bias. The findings may not be as valid if participants give socially acceptable answers or give false assessments of their own characteristics and views. The study's sample population is homogeneous because it is mainly made up of college students who speak English and fall into a specific age range. Consequently, there may be a limit on the findings' applicability to more varied populations. For methodological rigour, the study's exclusion criteria are essential. Nevertheless, they might unintentionally leave out people whose viewpoints and experiences could offer insightful information, which could be a study drawback.

CONCLUSION

This study offers insightful information about the intricate relationships among college students' self-esteem, personality attributes, and body image. Specific associations between body image and personality traits, like neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, were noted, despite the fact that the overall effect of body image on personality traits was not statistically significant. The results also make a compelling case for the relationship between body image and self-esteem, emphasising how crucial it is to support college students' healthy self-esteem by cultivating good body image judgements. The study also shows how personality traits and self-esteem are related, highlighting the necessity of interventions that target personality dynamics and self-esteem in order to enhance psychological well-being in general. This study offers a deeper knowledge of the psychological elements influencing college students' well-being by illuminating these intricate interrelationships. It also has significant implications for future research and mental health interventions in educational settings.

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