

The Association between Body Image and Adjustment in Adolescents

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Article information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Received: 27 Aug 2011 Accepted: 19 Oct 2011 Available online: 16 Oct 2012</p> <p>Keywords: Body image Adjustment Body image dissatisfaction Self - esteem</p> <p>*Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, University of Kashan, Kashan, Iran. E-mail: a_mansourinik@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Background: Over the past decades a large amount of research has been done on body image of adolescents. The motivation for this new surge is based on its effect on their functions and behaviors. The aim of this study was to investigate relationship between body image and adjustment in both sexes.</p> <p>Materials and Methods: The subjects of the study included 400 male and female students of high school selected by cluster sampling. Information was gathered using Physical Self-Description Questionnaire and Bell Adjustment Inventory. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise regression analysis.</p> <p>Results: Results indicated that there was significant relationship between body image and adjustment in both sexes.</p> <p>Conclusion: In general, findings demonstrate that positive body image lead to high self worth and adjustive behaviors in both sexes.</p>

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Introduction

Body image is a multidimensional, dynamic, unstable, and fundamentally social construct, formed from a complex combination of attitudes, feelings, and values, rooted through the representations and stereotypes that social groups value and convey throughout time [1]. Body image in adolescents is a powerful construct affecting their behavior [2]. In current society, body beauty and importance of body are factors that lead adolescents to be dissatisfied with their own appearance, psychological maladjustment, and several disorders such as eating disorders [1].

The physical changes of puberty especially overweight are mentioned risky factor of adolescents' body image disturbances and psychological adjustments. Peer experiences represent the importance of social context for the development of body image among adolescents. The reason of emerging body image disturbances in development period is that adolescents are exposed to peer influences and social comparison processes. Although other socio cultural factors such as the family and media clearly influence the development of body image, adolescents create an appearance culture with their peers that is reinforced by norms and expectations and modeled within the peer society. These experiences reflect and shape individual behaviors and attitudes about body image of self and others [3].

According to some studies adolescents who feel discrepancies between their actual and ideal body image internalize these discrepancies. This dissatisfaction causes depression, anxiety and low self-esteem and consequently impairs person's mental health [4].

Moore and his colleagues found that a body image change is correlated with behavioral adjustment. Adolescents who internalize problems such as

disfigurement are may be at risk for some behavioral adjustment problems [5]. Besides, if adolescents perceive their physical development similar to or different from their peers, it affects their social and psychological adjustment, because understanding this difference may cause to be offended from their classmates by rude comments and limit their social activities and life [1].

Ackard and Peterson believe that overweight related to puberty leads to dissatisfaction of body image and related behavior. Interceptive awareness, drive for thinness, impulse control, asceticism, perfectionism, and eating disorders are behaviors that initiate from body image dissatisfaction [6]. Teasing is considered as a significant factor that determines negative body image among overweight people. Grilo and his colleagues found that the range of body image dissatisfaction during adulthood positively correlated with the frequency of being teased about weight/size during childhood. It is cause to development of negative body image and decrease self-esteem [7].

Body image is a phenomenon that is strongly connected to gender and the nature of any developmental process is different for each sex [8]. To be more accurate girls concern about overweight and boys are mostly concerned with low weight and lack of enough growth. Considering sex differences at the puberty period, boys with late - physical development are exposed interpersonal maladjustment. While premature girls experience more interpersonal maladjustment [9].

According to the above mentioned points, this study intends to demonstrate the relationship between body image and adjustment in boys and girls and to what extend components of body image predict adjustment in both sexes.

Table 1. Correlation between body image and its components with adjustment in boys and girls

Variable	Gender	Health	coordination	Physical activity	Body fat	Sport competence	Physical self-concept	Appearance	Strength	Flexibility	endurance/fitness,	Self-esteem	Total body image
Adjustment	Boy	-0.239**	-0.290**	-0.083	-0.120	-0.148*	-0.376**	-0.398**	-0.224**	-0.273**	-0.156*	-0.535**	-0.410**
	Girl	-0.217**	-0.255**	-0.119	-0.237**	-0.208**	-0.391**	-0.281**	-0.178*	-0.131	-0.180*	-0.526**	-0.379**
	Total	-0.237**	-0.276**	-0.125*	-0.168**	-0.193**	-0.383**	-0.339**	-0.214**	-0.206**	-0.183**	-0.521**	-0.401**

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis predicting adjustment based on components of body image in boys and girls

Gender	Steps	Predictors	B	β	t	R	R2	Adjusted R2	R2 change	Significant
Boys	1	Self – Esteem	-1.80	-0.53	-8.90	0.53	0.28	0.28	0.286	0.000
		Constant	120.34		15.92					
	2	Self – Esteem	-1.54	-0.45	-7.19	0.56	0.32	0.31	0.034	0.000
		Physical self - concept	-0.63	-0.20	-3.14					0.002
		Constant	128.25		16.42					
	3	Self – Esteem	-1.47	-0.43	-6.88	0.58	0.34	0.32	0.020	0.000
	Physical self - concept	-0.60	-0.19	-3.04					0.003	
	Health	-0.40	-0.14	-2.40					0.017	
	Constant	138.58		15.69						
Girls	1	Self – Esteem	-1.47	-0.52	-8.70	0.52	0.27	0.27	0.277	0.000
		Constant	112.61		17.53					
	2	Self – Esteem	-1.39	-0.49	-8.09	0.54	0.29	0.28	0.015	0.000
		Body fat	-0.34	-0.12	-2.03					0.04
		Constant	120.26		16.25					

Materials and Methods

This study is a descriptive- correlative. The population of study include all high school students (boys and girls) studying at Kashan high school in 2009-2010. 400 male and female students of high school are selected by cluster sampling. Information was gathered using Physical Self-Description Questionnaire and Bell Adjustment Inventory.

Physical Self-Description Questionnaire is a 70 – item scale designed to measure 10 facets of physical self-concept along with general self – esteem by Marsh et al. More specifically this instrument is composed of 11 subscales, 9 of which are designed to perception of self related to areas of physical fitness and competence (strength, body fat, physical activity, endurance/fitness, sports competence, coordination, health, appearance and flexibility), 1 that measures self – perceptions of global physical competence, and 1 that measures global self esteem. Each of the 70 PSDQ items is a simple declarative statement that requires an answer on a 6-point Likert-type scale with answers (false, mostly false, more false than true, more true than false, mostly true, and true). Lau and his colleagues reported that validity coefficient of this questionnaire varies from 67% to 92% [10]. In this study validity of the questionnaire is estimated through Cronbach's alpha 94%.

Bell Adjustment Inventory was devised by Bell at 1961. This 160- item inventory includes 5 domains of adjustment such as: home adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment and occupational/ academic adjustment. High scores manifest low adjustment and low scores indicate appropriate

adjustment. Bell reported validity coefficient of home adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment and occupational /academic adjustment subscales and total adjustment as 91%, 81%, 88%, 91%, 85%, 94% respectively [11]. In this study validity of the inventory is estimated through Cronbach's alpha 92%. The data is analyzed by SPSS-16 with pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis.

Results

There is significant correlation between body image and adjustment ($r=-0.401$, $p=0.001$). Also, there is significant correlation between all components of body image and adjustment. In boys, there is significant correlation between all components of body image and adjustment except physical activity and body fat. In girls, there is significant correlation between all components of body image and adjustment except physical activity and flexibility (Table1). Using regression analysis was explained adjustment by components of body image.

In boys, self – esteem, physical self – concept and health predict adjustment. In girls, self – esteem and body fat predicts adjustment. Results indicate that self – esteem plays the most important role in predicting adjustment in both sexes and explain 0.28 and 0.27 of variance of adjustment in boys and girls respectively (Table2).

Discussion

The results indicated significant correlation between body image and adjustment. The similar studies indicate

relationship between body dissatisfaction (negative body image) and poor adjustment [12, 13]. Markus believes that the content of the appearance self - concept is not only determine adjustment, but also the organization of appearance related information. Drawing from the social-cognitive conception of the self-schema which guides information processing about the self, including appearance have demonstrated relative importance of appearance information relate to adjustment [14]. Among women, overweight that is labeled obesity activates emotional schema about their body which is related to psychological-social adjustment [15].

According to Moss, behavior of people that evaluate appearance as negative may be resulted of negative attitude and introjections of attitudes can cause poor adjustment [12]. The interaction of cognitive schema and social content create interpretations influencing adjustment [5]. In drawing social-cognitive schema, people consider appearance as an important dimension in self - evaluation and consider role of other as well [16]. According to theory of social comparison, people tend to using others as a source of self-evaluation. Such people have high contingent self-esteem. Contingent self-esteem is a type of self-worth that is based on matching some evaluating standards such as physical appearance. Therefore, appearance-related social comparisons distress people who base their self-worth on contingencies and have lower perceived attractiveness [17].

Studies have indicated positive correlation between self-esteem and social, emotional and psychological adjustment [18, 19]. This is consistent with the finding of this research that more role of self - esteem in explanation of adjustment in both sexes. As a result it may possible to consider self esteem as mediator of the relationship between body image and adjustment. As if people with positive body image have more self-worth and adjective behaviors. So positive attitude towards physical changes can help adolescent understand objective physical differences deeply and accommodate with his/her physical status instead of negative behavioral outcomes and using unnecessary solves to manage body in order to achieve unrealistic body ideals.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors had equal role in design, work, statistical analysis and manuscript writing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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