

Comprehending Gender Differences in Body Esteem and Self Concept

Yogita Sharma¹, Thiyam Kiran Singh², Payal Kanwar Chandel³

¹Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur. Email: yyogitasharma09@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Mizoram University (A central University), Tanhril, Aizawl, Mizoram. Email: thiyamkiransingh@gmail.com

³Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh (Corresponding author). Email: paayalchandel@gmail.com

Abstract

The present endeavour was undertaken to compare the Body-Esteem and Self-concept among young boys and girls. A sample of 200 youth aged between (15-24) years of Jaipur city was taken for the study. The sample comprised of an equal number of boys (n = 100) and girls (n = 100) respondents. The sample was selected by the means of the Convenience Sampling method. The data for the present study were obtained with the help of Body Esteem scale (Frost et al., 2018) and Self-Concept Scale (Deo, 2011). To achieve the objective of the study, a Between-group design was created. Moreover, the analysis of the obtained data was done with the help of an independent-sample test. The results of the study showed significantly higher Mean scores on Weight concern and Physical condition among girls when compared with boys. Moreover, on the self-concept scale, Boys obtained significantly higher Mean scores on emotions, Character, and Aesthetic dimensions when compared with girls. The findings have future implications.

Keywords: *Body-Esteem, Self-Concept, youth, gender*

Introduction

India plays a vital role in the global education sector, with one of the world's largest systems of higher education institutions. Students aged 18 to 23, who make up a big population of 37.4 million people, account for the majority of students enrolled in higher education (Nanda, 2019).

In the premise of the present endeavour, a small attempt was made to figure out the role of gender on one's way of perceiving and evaluating oneself. The development of perceiving a child is affected by various factors. During school years, a student's academic achievement significantly affects one's evaluation (Crocker et al., 2002), and the tendency to recognise and appreciate the comparison between oneself with the members of the peer groups. In a similar vein, using social comparison children also learn to assess their performance according to the standards of the peer groups which in turn leads to constructive or destructive

Comprehending Gender Differences in Body Esteem and Self Concept

perceptions regarding oneself (Butler, 1998; Pomerantz et al., 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). In the early years of a child's life, parents (Lamborn et al., 1991) and teachers (O'Dea and Abraham, 2000) have a significant influence on self-esteem, which in turn leads to a constructive and destructive outcome (Raboteg-Saric and Sakic, 2014). When a child approaches puberty, peer influence has a profound impact on one's overall sense of self-perception. Based on their bonding with close friends, the young adults evaluate themselves (Orth and Robbins, 2014; Thorne and Michaelieu, 1996). Moreover, the perception about oneself, in terms of bodily appearance cannot be underestimated among youth. In an investigation, Mendelson et al. (1996) found body-esteem indicators were linked to global self-worth and were inversely related to relative weight. During late childhood and early adolescence, an inverse relationship was also noted between body image and media influence among girls when compared with boys (Dishman et al. 2006). In a correlational study, a noteworthy relationship was noted between self-esteem, body confidence, and body build in males and females studying in primary, high school, and university Frost and McKelvie (2004).

Polce-Lynch et al. (2001) found self-esteem to have a central determinant in role in mental health. The findings of the study showed lower self-esteem among girls when compared to boys during early adolescence. However, boys during late adolescence reported lower self-esteem during late adolescence. Moreover, a significant difference has been also reported in emotional expression, in which boys showed sternness across adolescence. A noteworthy influence of the nutrition status was also seen in the difference between the ideal and actual self-concept, it is also seen as one of the significant developmental changes during adolescence (Zsakai et al. 2017). In a study, Koff et al. (1990) found body image a major concern in females whereas valuing body was seen as more significant in males. Moreover, a significant relationship was seen between the valuation of body image and self-concept among females when compared to their male counterparts. Presnell et al. (2004) posit that body image dissatisfaction is evident in both genders during childhood as well as adolescence. However, girl respondents showed more dissatisfaction with their bodies when compared with the boys (Makinen et al. 2012.) Moreover, during adolescence, they wish to be in good shape is reported to be equal in both genders which in turn may lead to various psychological issues such as emotional outbursts, depression and even eating disorders (Bearman et al., 2006). However, the desire to become thinner is seen more prominent among girls and is moulded by social pressure and media Kostanski (2004). Based on the findings of the health-based interventional study, girls reported less physical appearance, lower body dissatisfaction, and higher was seen among girls (Franko et al., 2013). A noteworthy association was noted in children and adolescents between the ideal self and the dreaded self, Power, and Khmelkov (1998). According to a few studies, men tend to focus on coordinate spatial relation processing over categorical processing, while women prefer the opposite (Okubo 2004). Male respondents believe they are more attractive than female respondents (Feingold and Mazzella, 1998). Talking to the children, and letting them speak politely, giving them enough attention and affection, and remembering their successes, mistakes, and shortcomings are all childhood experiences that lead to healthy self-esteem. There are shreds of literature for gender comparison in self-concept among children.

However, some promising pieces of evidence found gender comparison among adults for self-concept. In a cultural investigation, male respondents tend to be more independent whereas more dependency was observed among female respondents (Cross & Madson, 1997).

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find out the difference in various dimensions of Body Esteem among young boys and girls.
- 2) To assess the difference in various dimensions of Self-Concept among young boys and girls.

HYPOTHESES

H01 There will be no significant difference in various dimensions of Body Esteem among young boys and girls.

H02 There will be no significant difference in various dimensions of Self-Concept among young boys and girls.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The total sample of the study comprised of 200 young respondents aged between (15-24) years was taken for the study. The sample was equally distributed into boys (n = 100) and girls (n = 100) respondents respectively. The sample was collected by the means of the Convenience Sampling technique.

TOOLS

Body Esteem (Frost et al.2018)

For measuring the Body Esteem of the students, a standardized scale of 15 items by Frost et al., (2018) was used. The Body esteem scale comprises of 28 items. On the scale, 15 items are the same for everyone. However, there are separate 13 items for both males and females respectively. The scale comprises of three dimensions, each dimension has different items for female and male respondents respectively; Sexual Attractiveness: Males (Body scent, sex drive, skin condition, head hair, sex organs) and Females: Buttocks, chest or breasts, body scent, sex drive, the appearance of eyes, sex drive. Upper Body Strength/ Weight Concern: Males (muscular strength, arms, chest, body build, chest, biceps, or breasts) and Females (Body build, legs, weight, hips, Thighs, waist, the appearance of the stomach, and figure or physique). Physical condition: Males (Energy level, agility, physical stamina, reflexes, agility, and physical coordination) and Females (Energy level, Muscular strength, health, physical coordination, physical stamina, and physical condition). It is a self-administered test aimed at determining overall body esteem. The scoring was done by adding the separate score on each item on 5- point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Have strong negative feelings) to 5 (Have strong positive feelings). The reliability of the scale ranges from .81 to .87 whereas the validity of the scale was reported to be from .86 to .90.

Self-Concept (Deo, 2011)

To ascertain the self-concept of the respondents, a standardized scale by Deo (2011) was selected for the purpose. It is a checklist of 90 adjectives, comprising 53 positive, 31 negative, and 6 neutral words. The scale comprises five dimensions i.e; Intelligence, Emotional, Social, Character, and Aesthetic. The scale was meant to administer from the age group 13-26 years. The scoring was done on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Very

Comprehending Gender Differences in Body Esteem and Self Concept

much like this) to 0 (not at all like this) whereas the neutral items were given no weightage in scoring. The test-retest reliability of the inventory reported 0.62 to 0.86 whereas the convergent and discriminant validity was found to be ranging from 0.06 to 0.89. With the help of a stencil, the scoring for the scale was performed. The final score for the scale is obtained by subtracting the score for negative words from the score for positive words.

Statistical Analysis

The obtained data was analyzed with the help of an independent sample t-test.

Result

Table 1

Mean differences in various dimensions of Body Esteem among boys and girls

Variables	Gender (N=200)		t (df=198)	p
	Boys (n=100) M (SD)	Girls(n=100) M (SD)		
Sexual Attractiveness	107.37 (17.91)	110.14 (18.63)	1.07	.28(n.s)
Upper Body				
Strength/Weight	29.74 (6.07)	31.89 (5.57)	2.60	.01**
Concern				
Physical Condition	20.14 (6.38)	24.55 (7.18)	.17	.00***

Note: M = Mean and SD = Standard deviation

** $p < .01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s (not significant)

The result table demonstrates more or less similar Mean scores on Sexual Attractiveness among young girls and boys ($M = 107.37$; $SD = 17.91$) vs ($M = 110.14$; $SD = 18.63$), $p > .05$. However, girls scored higher Mean scores on Weight Concern ($M = 31.89$; $SD = 5.57$) when compared with young boys ($M = 29.74$; $SD = 6.07$), $p < .01$. Similarly, higher Mean scores were reported by young girl on Physical condition ($M = 24.55$; $SD = 7.18$) when compared with young boys ($M = 20.14$; $SD = 6.38$), $p < .001$.

Table 2

Mean differences in various dimensions of Self-Concept among boys and girls

Variables	Institution Type (N=200)		t (df=198)	p
	Boys (n=100) M (SD)	Girls (n=100) M (SD)		
Intelligence	82.74(17.61)	85.74 (15.37)	.53	.20(n.s)
Emotion	22.56 (6.10)	20.36 (5.80)	.63	.01**
Social	8.13 (6.79)	9.27 (5.41)	.02	.19(n.s)
Character	19.72 (4.60)	17.52 (6.78)	.10	.00***
Aesthetic	47.74 (14.99)	42.06 (15.19)	.60	.00***

Note: M = Mean and SD = Standard deviation

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, n.s (not significant)

The result table illustrates more or less similar Mean scores on Intelligence among young boys and girls ($M = 82.74$; $SD = 17.61$) vs ($M = 85.74$; $SD = 15.37$), $p > .05$. However, the boys scored higher Mean scores on Emotions ($M = 22.56$; $SD = 6.10$) when compared with

the girls ($M = 20.36$; $SD = 5.80$), $p < .01$. However, the Mean scores obtained on Social is seen more or less similar among young boys and girls ($M = 8.13$; $SD = 6.76$) vs ($M = 9.27$; $SD = 5.41$), $p > .05$. The finding of the study further depicts higher Mean scores on Character among young boys ($M = 19.72$; $SD = 4.60$) when compared with young girls ($M = 17.52$; $SD = 6.78$), $p < .001$. Furthermore, young boys obtained higher Mean scores on Aesthetic ($M = 47.74$; $SD = 14.99$) when associated with young girls ($M = 42.06$; $SD = 15.19$), $p < .001$.

Discussion

The present study was undertaken to compare the significant difference in various dimensions of Body Esteem and Self-Concept among young boys and girls of Jaipur city (Rajasthan) aged between 15-24 years. The comparison was done by analyzing the data with the help of the independent sample t-test. The study showed varied results in the various dimensions of Body Esteem and Self-Concept among youth boys and girls.

The results of the study can be summarized as follows, to examine the below hypotheses:

H01 There will be no significant difference in various dimensions of Body Esteem among youth boys and girls.

Based on the findings of the study, young girls reported significantly higher Mean scores on Weight concern and Physical condition when compared with young boys. This illustrates that the girls are more concerned about the physical or other qualities or traits in themselves, or to such qualities in the context where they appear. The girls are more concerned with the size of their figure or physique, hips, thighs, waist, legs, the appearance of stomach, and weight. During adolescence, the desire to alter shape or weight is reported to be equal in both genders which in turn may lead to various psychological issues such as emotional outbursts, depression and even eating disorders (Bearman et al., 2006). Likewise, Presnell et al. (2004) posit that body image dissatisfaction is evident in both genders during childhood as well as adolescence. In a study, girl respondents showed more dissatisfaction with their bodies when compared with the boys (Makinen et al. 2012.).

Furthermore, a higher mean score was observed on Physical condition among young girls when compared with young boys. This illustrates that girl students have more concern with their figure or physique, weight, reflexes, physical stamina, reflexes, energy level, physical coordination, liveliness, the appearance of stomach, physical health, and physical condition. Based on the findings of the health-based interventional study, girls reported less physical appearance, lower body dissatisfaction, and higher was seen among girls (Franko et al., 2013). The desire to become thinner is seen more prominent among girls and is moulded by the social pressure, media Kostanski (2004).

Thus, based on the findings of the study, the first hypothesis is rejected.

H02 There will be no significant difference in various dimensions of Self-Concept among young boys and girls.

As far as the second hypothesis is concerned, varied results were seen on the various dimensions of self-concept viz., Emotion, Character, and Aesthetic among young boys and girls. The findings of the study further revealed a statistically significant difference in Emotion, Character, and Aesthetic among young boys when compared with young girls. There is no sufficient review of literature in the support of these findings, and the

findings are also unexpected when the analysis was performed it was reported that boys need social-emotional support from others and feel empathetic with others. As far as Character is concerned, a higher mean score was reported by young boys when associated with young girls. This shows that boys give more value to the moral dimension of self. Boys' self-development includes a self-evaluation mechanism in which they equate their descriptions of themselves as they want to be and as they fear being. A note worthy association was noted in children and adolescents between the ideal self and the dreaded self, Power and Khmelkov (1998).

Furthermore, young boys scored higher mean scores in Aesthetic when associated when compared with young girls. This depicts that the boys are focused, enthusiastic, patient, disciplined, and diligent. Men tend to use coordinate spatial relation processing over categorical processing, according to a few studies, while women prefer the opposite (Okubo 2004). Male respondents consider themselves to be more attractive than females (Feingold and Mazzella, 1998).

Thus, based on the findings of the study, the second hypothesis is also rejected.

Conclusion

It may be concluded from the findings of the study that gender has a significant effect on one's self-perception. In the light of previous studies, it can be said that people gather information about themselves, and the concept of one's self tends to grow as a result of information regarding oneself extends through awareness. Self-perception is a dynamic process that is seen to get influenced by both the individual and society. Furthermore, a person's self-perception develops swiftly during childhood and tends to take shape, as a person learns more about themselves. This perception of oneself has an immense effect of culture that one belongs to, the society and its gender expectations frame one's self concept to a great extent. Societal expectations dictate our terms of being and what we are and how we should look, is influenced by our surroundings to a great extent. These societal pressures determine our satisfaction or dissatisfaction from our own selves. The results of present research suggest that females are more concerned about their appearance as compared to males, as they have been associated more with aesthetic values and not as an individual, leading females to bear the pressure of being in certain shape. It was observed that males have a higher self concept than females, which reconfirms that males in Indian society are always considered as the more important gender and they enjoy that higher status just by the virtue of being born as a male.

References

1. Bearman, S. K., Presnell, K., Martinez, E., & Stice, E. (2006). The skinny on body dissatisfaction: A longitudinal study of adolescent girls and boys. *Journal of youth and adolescence, 35*(2), 217-229.
2. Butler, R. (1998). Age trends in the use of social and temporal comparison for self-evaluation: Examination of a novel developmental hypothesis. *Child development, 69*(4), 1054-1073.
3. Crocker, J., Sommers, S. R., & Luhtanen, R. K. (2002). Hopes dashed and dreams fulfilled: Contingencies of self-worth and graduate school admissions. *Personality and social psychology bulletin, 28*(9), 1275-1286.
4. Cross, S. E., & Madson, L. (1997). Models of the self: self-construals and gender. *Psychological Bulletin, 122*(1), 5.
5. Deo (2011). Manual for SELF-CONCEPT RATING SCALE. National Psychological Corporation. Agra. India.
6. Dishman, R. K., Hales, D. P., Pfeiffer, K. A., Felton, G. A., Saunders, R., Ward, D. S., ... & Pate, R. R. (2006). Physical self-concept and self-esteem mediate cross-sectional relations of physical activity and sport participation with depression symptoms among adolescent girls. *Health Psychology, 25*(3), 396.
7. Feingold, A., & Mazzella, R. (1998). Gender differences in body image are increasing. *Psychological science, 9*(3), 190-195.
8. Franko, D. L., Cousineau, T. M., Rodgers, R. F., & Roehrig, J. P. (2013). BodiMojo: Effective Internet-based promotion of positive body image in adolescent girls. *Body image, 10*(4), 481-488.
9. Frost, J., & McKelvie, S. (2004). Self-esteem and body satisfaction in male and female elementary school, high school, and university students. *Sex roles, 51*(1), 45-54.
10. Frost, K. A., Franzoi, S. L., Oswald, D. L., & Shields, S. A. (2018). Revising the Body Esteem Scale with a US college student sample: Evaluation, validation, and uses for the BES-R. *Sex Roles, 78*(1), 1-17.
11. Koff, E., Rierdan, J., & Stubbs, M. L. (1990). Gender, body image, and self-concept in early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 10*(1), 56-68.
12. Kostanski, M., Fisher, A., & Gullone, E. (2004). Current conceptualisation of body image dissatisfaction: have we got it wrong?. *Journal of child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(7), 1317-1325.
13. Lamborn, S. D., Mounts, N. S., Steinberg, L., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Patterns of competence and adjustment among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful families. *Child development, 62*(5), 1049-1065.
14. Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 32, pp. 1-62). Academic Press.
15. Mäkinen, M., Puukko-Viertomies, L. R., Lindberg, N., Siimes, M. A., & Aalberg, V. (2012). Body dissatisfaction and body mass in girls and boys transitioning from early to mid-adolescence: additional role of self-esteem and eating habits. *BMC psychiatry, 12*(1), 1-8.

Comprehending Gender Differences in Body Esteem and Self Concept

16. Mendelson, B. K., White, D. R., & Mendelson, M. J. (1996). Self-esteem and body esteem: Effects of gender, age, and weight. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 17*(3), 321-346.
17. Nanda, P. K. (2019). India's higher education student population grows by 8 lakh: HRD ministry.
18. O'Dea, J. A., & Abraham, S. (2000). Improving the body image, eating attitudes, and behaviors of young male and female adolescents: A new educational approach that focuses on self- esteem. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 28*(1), 43-57.
19. Okubo, M., &Michimata, C. (2004). The role of high spatial frequencies in hemispheric processing of categorical and coordinate spatial relations. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, 16*(9), 1576-1582.
20. Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 32, pp. 1-62). Academic Press.
21. Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 32, pp. 1-62). Academic Press.
22. Pomerantz, E. M., Ruble, D. N., Frey, K. S., &Greulich, F. (1995). Meeting goals and confronting conflict: Children's changing perceptions of social comparison. *Child Development, 66*(3), 723-738.
23. Power, F. C., &Khmelkov, V. T. (1998). Character development and self-esteem: Psychological foundations and educational implications. *International Journal of Educational Research, 27*(7), 539-551.
24. Presnell, K., Bearman, S. K., &Stice, E. (2004). Risk factors for body dissatisfaction in adolescent boys and girls: A prospective study. *International Journal of eating disorders, 36*(4), 389-401.
25. Raboteg-Saric, Z., &Sakic, M. (2014). Relations of parenting styles and friendship quality to self-esteem, life satisfaction and happiness in adolescents. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 9*(3), 749-765.
26. Thorne, A., &Michaelieu, Q. (1996). Situating adolescent gender and self- esteem with personal memories. *Child Development, 67*(4), 1374-1390.
27. Zsakai, A., Karkus, Z., Utczas, K., &Bodzsar, E. B. (2017). Body structure and physical self-concept in early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 37*(3), 316-338.