

# Understanding Relationship between Body Image and Psychological well-being

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Body image is a significant psychological construct that refers to an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their physical appearance and bodily functioning. It is a subjective experience shaped not only by one's actual physical characteristics but also by psychological processes, social interactions, and cultural expectations. In the psychological context, body image influences self-esteem, self-concept, and emotional regulation, playing an important role in how individuals evaluate their overall worth. In the social context, body image is strongly affected by peer comparison, feedback from others, and societal standards of attractiveness, while in the cultural context, ideals related to beauty, body size, skin tone, and gender norms shape how individuals perceive and value their bodies. Research has shown that negative body image is associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction, shame, and appearance-related anxiety, whereas positive body image is linked to self-acceptance and body appreciation (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Grogan, 2016). A study by Tiggemann (2011) found that sociocultural pressures and internalization of appearance ideals significantly predict body dissatisfaction across diverse populations.

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's overall level of positive psychological functioning and mental health. It encompasses more than the absence of psychological distress and includes dimensions such as self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others. In the emotional context, psychological well-being reflects feelings of happiness, contentment, and emotional balance. In the cognitive context, it involves positive self-evaluation and a sense of meaning and direction in life. In the social context, psychological well-being is reflected in the ability to form and maintain healthy interpersonal

relationships. Individuals with high psychological well-being tend to cope effectively with stress, demonstrate resilience, and experience greater life satisfaction. Ryff (1989) emphasized that psychological well-being represents optimal human functioning, while Keyes (2002) highlighted that flourishing individuals show higher levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Empirical studies have consistently shown that higher psychological well-being is associated with better mental health outcomes and quality of life.

The relationship between body image and psychological well-being has become an important area of psychological research due to its strong implications for mental health. In the psychological context, body image directly influences self-esteem and emotional stability, which are core components of psychological well-being. Individuals who hold a positive perception of their bodies are more likely to experience higher levels of self-acceptance, confidence, and emotional well-being. In contrast, persistent body dissatisfaction can lead to negative self-evaluation, emotional distress, and reduced well-being. In the social context, negative body image may contribute to social withdrawal, interpersonal difficulties, and reduced relationship satisfaction, thereby lowering psychological well-being. In the cultural context, unrealistic beauty standards promoted through media often intensify body dissatisfaction, which in turn negatively affects mental health. Research by Cash and Fleming (2002) demonstrated that positive body image significantly enhances quality of life and psychological well-being. Similarly, Wardle and Cooke (2005) found that higher body dissatisfaction and BMI were associated with poorer emotional well-being and increased psychological distress. Tiggemann and Slater (2014) also reported that appearance-based social comparison

negatively affects both body image and psychological well-being, particularly among young.

## II. FACTORS AFFECTING BODY IMAGE

### 1. Sociocultural Factors

Media exposure, social networking sites, peer comparison, and societal beauty standards strongly influence body image. Tiggemann (2011) found that frequent exposure to idealized body images leads to higher body dissatisfaction.

### 2. Psychological Factors

Self-esteem, perfectionism, and tendency toward social comparison affect how individuals perceive their bodies. Individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to negative body image (Cash & Fleming, 2002).

### 3. Biological Factors

Gender, age, physical development, health status, and body mass index (BMI) influence body image experiences. Wardle and Cooke (2005) reported that higher BMI is associated with greater body dissatisfaction.

### 4. Familial Factors

Parental attitudes, comments about appearance, and family emphasis on attractiveness affect body image development. Kluck (2010) found that critical family remarks contribute to body dissatisfaction.

### 5. Cultural Factors

Cultural beauty ideals and norms regarding body shape, skin tone, and weight shape body image perceptions. Swami et al. (2010) highlighted cultural differences in body dissatisfaction across countries.

## III. FACTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING (RYFF'S MODEL)

1. Self-Acceptance: Having a positive attitude toward oneself, including acceptance of strengths and weaknesses.

2. Positive Relations with Others: Ability to form warm, trusting, and satisfying interpersonal relationships.

3. Autonomy: Independence in thought and action, and resistance to social pressures.

4. Environmental Mastery: Ability to manage life situations effectively and create supportive environments.

5. Purpose in Life: Having goals, meaning, and direction in life.

6. Personal Growth: Continuous development, openness to new experiences, and realization of personal potential.

Several studies have examined the impact of body image on psychological well-being. Cash and Fleming (2002) found that individuals with positive body image reported higher life satisfaction and emotional well-being. Tiggemann and Slater (2014) demonstrated that body dissatisfaction resulting from social media use was associated with increased depression and anxiety among young adults. Wardle and Cooke (2005) reported that body dissatisfaction related to higher BMI negatively affected emotional well-being and self-esteem. In the Indian context, Mishra and Mukhopadhyay (2018) found a significant negative relationship between body dissatisfaction and psychological well-being among young adults. These studies collectively suggest that negative body image undermines psychological well-being, while positive body image acts as a protective factor for mental health.

## IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous research has extensively examined the relationship between body image and psychological well-being among adults, highlighting body image as a significant determinant of mental health. Cash and Fleming (2002) conducted a study on adult men and women and found that individuals with positive body image reported higher levels of psychological well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Their findings indicated that body image significantly influenced quality of life and emotional functioning, suggesting that acceptance of one's body plays a protective role in adult mental health.

Grogan (2016), in a comprehensive review of adult body image research, reported that body dissatisfaction among adults is strongly associated with psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and low self-worth. The study emphasized that body image concerns do not diminish with age and

continue to affect adults due to ongoing social comparison, health-related body changes, and cultural beauty expectations. Adults with higher body dissatisfaction were found to experience lower levels of psychological well-being and reduced emotional stability.

A study by Tiggemann and McCourt (2013) examined adult women and found that appearance-related social comparison mediated the relationship between body image and psychological well-being. The results showed that women who frequently compared their appearance with others experienced greater body dissatisfaction, which in turn negatively affected their emotional well-being and self-acceptance. This study highlighted the role of cognitive and social factors in linking body image to psychological well-being in adulthood.

Wardle and Cooke (2005) investigated the impact of body mass index (BMI) on psychological well-being among adults and found that higher BMI was associated with increased body dissatisfaction and poorer psychological well-being. Adults with negative perceptions of their body reported higher levels of emotional distress, lower self-esteem, and reduced life satisfaction. The findings suggested that subjective body image, rather than objective weight alone, plays a crucial role in determining psychological well-being. Research conducted in the Indian context also supports the relationship between body image and psychological well-being in adults. Mishra and Mukhopadhyay (2018) studied young and middle-aged adults and found a significant negative relationship between body dissatisfaction and psychological well-being. Adults with low body satisfaction reported higher anxiety, depressive symptoms, and lower levels of self-acceptance. The study emphasized the influence of cultural beauty ideals and societal expectations on adult body image and mental health.

Similarly, Sharma and Thakur (2017) examined adult men and women and reported that individuals with positive body image demonstrated better psychological adjustment, higher emotional well-being, and greater life satisfaction. Their findings indicated that body image acts as an important psychological factor influencing well-being across adulthood, regardless of gender.

Overall, the reviewed studies consistently indicate that body image is closely linked to psychological well-

being among adults. Positive body image contributes to emotional stability, self-acceptance, and life satisfaction, whereas negative body image is associated with psychological distress and reduced well-being. These findings underline the importance of addressing body image concerns in adult populations to promote positive mental health and overall psychological well-being.

#### Aim

To assess the relationship between body image and psychological well-being among young adults.

Objective: the study was conducted to investigate the following objectives.

1. To assess the domains of body image satisfaction among young Adult participants.
2. To assess the level of psychological well-being of participants.
3. To analyze the relationship between body image and psychological well-being.

Hypothesis: the following hypotheses were formulated for the study :

H: there will be significant relationship between body image and psychological well-being among young adults.

Design: a correlational design was used.

Sample: a sample of 72 participants of age 18-25 years was used. Participants were selected using a convenient sampling technique, based on there accessibility and willingness to participate in study. All participants were currently students and voluntarily consented to take part in the research.

Tools Used: the following tooles were used in present study:

MBSRQ-AS (Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales): Developed by Cash & Pruzinsky. Measures individuals' attitudes and satisfaction with their physical appearance.

Focus: Body image, appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, and related self-perceptions.

2. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB): Developed by Carol Ryff. Assesses overall psychological well-being across multiple dimensions.

Focus: Six key areas:

1. Autonomy – independence and self-determination
2. Environmental Mastery – ability to manage life situations
3. Personal Growth – continuous development and realizing potential
4. Positive Relations with Others – quality of interpersonal relationships
5. Purpose in Life – having meaningful goals
6. Self-Acceptance – positive attitude toward self.

Structure: Self-report scale; versions vary in length (e.g., 18, 42, 84 items).

Procedure:

The study employed a convenience sampling method to recruit 72 adult participants (36 males and 36 females), who were readily available and willing to participate. Prior to data collection, participants were briefed about the study's purpose and provided informed consent. They then completed the MBSRQ-AS to assess various aspects of body image, including appearance evaluation and appearance orientation, and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale to evaluate six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Both questionnaires were self-administered in a calm environment, and participants were instructed to answer honestly. The responses were scored according to standard procedures, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between body image and psychological well-being, to determine whether greater body satisfaction was associated with higher psychological well-being.

## V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between body image and psychological well-being among young adults aged 18-25 years. The study analyzed Five core dimensions of body image using MBSRQ-AS and overall psychological well-being by using Ryff's 18-item scale. The findings revealed significant correlation between specific dimensions of body image and psychological well-being, highlighting the influence of body related perception on mental health outcomes.

Descriptive statistics showed that participants varied in their evaluations and concerns about their body

image. the mean score reflected moderate level of appearance evaluation (M=22.92), appearance orientation (M= 39.97), and body area satisfaction (M= 28.44). Lower scores on overweight preoccupation (M= 11.28) and self classified weight (M=7.01). Suggest some concern around body weight but not extreme dissatisfaction. These findings indicate that body image among young adults is multifaceted and shaped by both satisfaction and concern, consistent with past studies emphasizing the complexity of self-perception (cash & Smolak, 2011; Grogan,2016). The mean psychological well-being score (M= 77.11, SD= 9.07) indicates a moderately high level of well-being among participants. This aligns with the developmental stage of young adulthood, where individuals often experience growth in autonomy, self-acceptance and purpose (Ryff & keyes,1995). However, individual variations suggests that some psychological domains still be influenced by personal and body-related perceptions.

correlation between different dimensions is given below:

1. Appearance Evaluation (AE) & Psychological Well-Being (PSY):  $r = 0.319$ ,  $p < 0.01$  → positive, significant correlation. Higher satisfaction with appearance is associated with higher psychological well-being.
2. Appearance Orientation (AO) & Psychological Well-Being:  $r = 0.436$ ,  $p < 0.01$  → positive, significant. Greater attention to appearance is moderately related to higher well-being.
3. Body Areas Satisfaction (BAS) & Psychological Well-Being:  $r = 0.017$  → no significant correlation. Satisfaction with specific body parts does not seem to directly relate to overall well-being.
4. Overweight Preoccupation (OWP) & Psychological Well-Being:  $r = -0.532$ ,  $p < 0.01$  → strong negative correlation. Higher preoccupation with weight is associated with lower psychological well-being.
5. Self-Classified Weight (SCW) & Psychological Well-Being:  $r = 0.067$  → not significant.

The results indicate that overall appearance satisfaction (AE) and appearance orientation (AO) are positively correlated with psychological well-being. This aligns with prior research suggesting that people who feel confident and attentive about their appearance tend to report higher self-esteem, life satisfaction, and well-being.

No significant correlation was found between BAS and psychological well-being. This could indicate that satisfaction with specific body parts may not strongly impact overall mental well-being; rather, general body image perception is more influential.

Overweight preoccupation (OWP) showed a significant negative correlation with well-being. Individuals who are overly concerned about their weight may experience stress, anxiety, or lower self-acceptance, which negatively affects their psychological well-being.

Self-classified weight (SCW) did not show a significant relationship, suggesting that actual perception of weight category alone may not influence well-being as much as preoccupation or dissatisfaction does.

Promoting positive body image and reducing unhealthy weight preoccupation could be beneficial strategies for enhancing psychological well-being among young adults.

Interventions like body positivity programs, cognitive-behavioral techniques, or awareness campaigns could be implemented in educational or community settings. Findings are consistent with studies showing positive body image is linked to better mental health, while excessive focus on weight or appearance can be detrimental.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study explored how different dimensions of body image relate to overall psychological well-being. The results demonstrated positive Correlation between appearance evaluation and appearance orientation with psychological well-being, indicating that individual who view themselves as more favorably and or who invest in their appearance report good psychological health. Conversely, overweight Preoccupation showed a negative correlation with psychological well-being, suggesting that frequent concerns about body weight are linked to lower Psychological wellness.

Interestingly, body areas Satisfaction and self classified Weight did not show significant relationships, pointing to the complexity and multidimensionality of body image.

These findings support the hypothesis that body image significantly influence psychological well-being in young adults. The study highlights the need for

targeted mental health interventions that promote body positivity, reduce weight-related anxieties and cultivate self acceptance. Such efforts are vital during this developmental stage when individual is particularly vulnerable to social and cultural pressure regarding appearance.

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