

Body Image and Eating Attitudes

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Abstract—Adolescence is a critical developmental stage during which concerns related to body image become increasingly significant, particularly among teenage girls. Sociocultural pressures, including exposure to appearance-focused media and peer comparison, contribute to the development of body image dissatisfaction, which may influence eating attitudes. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. A quantitative, descriptive correlational research design was employed. The sample consisted of 200 adolescent girls aged 13–19 years selected using stratified random sampling from urban educational institutions in Mysore, including JSS Pre-University College, Kendriya Vidyalaya Mysore, St. Joseph's Central School, and Mahajana Pre-University College. Data were collected using standardized tools, namely the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ 34) and the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26). The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation. The results revealed a strong positive relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes, indicating that higher levels of dissatisfaction are associated with more unhealthy eating attitudes among teenage girls. The findings support the hypothesis and highlight the importance of addressing body image concerns in adolescence. The study emphasizes the need for early intervention and awareness programs in schools to promote healthy body image and positive eating attitudes among adolescents.

Index Terms—Body Image Dissatisfaction, Eating Attitudes, Adolescents, Teenage Girls, Body Image

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and psychological changes. During this period, individuals become increasingly aware of their appearance, and body image plays an important role in shaping self-concept and identity. Among teenage girls, body image concerns are particularly significant due to

heightened sensitivity to societal expectations and appearance standards. Body image dissatisfaction refers to negative perceptions and feelings about one's body shape, weight, or overall appearance. Persistent dissatisfaction can lead to unhealthy eating attitudes such as excessive dieting, food restriction, and fear of weight gain. These eating attitudes, if not addressed, may affect both physical and psychological well-being. In recent years, the influence of appearance-focused media, especially social media platforms such as Instagram and television content, has increased significantly. These platforms often promote unrealistic beauty standards, leading to comparison and dissatisfaction among adolescents. Additionally, negative peer influence, including comparison, teasing, and pressure related to body image, further contributes to body dissatisfaction. Psychological factors such as low self-esteem, referring to a reduced sense of self-worth, also play a role in shaping how individuals perceive their bodies and eating behaviors. Although these factors are important, the present study primarily focuses on examining the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. Body image dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating attitudes have become a growing concern among adolescents, particularly among teenage girls. Increased exposure to appearance-oriented media and peer comparison has intensified concerns related to body image in urban settings.

While several studies have explored eating disorders, there is a need to focus on eating attitudes in non-clinical populations, especially among school-going adolescents. In the Indian context, particularly in urban areas like Mysore, limited research has examined the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes in a focused and simplified manner.

Therefore, this study is needed to better understand this relationship among teenage girls and to provide insights for early identification and preventive strategies in educational settings.

1. Conceptual Definitions

- i. **Body Image Dissatisfaction:** A negative subjective evaluation of one's body shape, weight, or appearance.
- ii. **Eating Attitudes:** Patterns of thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors related to food, dieting, and weight control.
- iii. **Media Exposure:** Exposure to appearance-focused content on social media (e.g., Instagram, YouTube) and television.
- iv. **Peer Influence:** Negative peer influence such as comparison, teasing, and pressure related to body image.
- v. **Self-Esteem:** Global self-esteem, referring to overall self-worth, with emphasis on low self-esteem.

2. Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on teenage girls aged 13–19 years studying in urban educational institutions in Mysore, including JSS Pre-University College, Kendriya Vidyalaya Mysore, St. Joseph's Central School, and Mahajana Pre-University College.

The study examines the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes using a quantitative approach. While media exposure, peer influence, and self-esteem are acknowledged, the primary focus remains on the association between the two main variables.

3. Justification for Selecting Only Female Participants

The study focuses exclusively on female participants because adolescent girls are more vulnerable to body image dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating attitudes due to greater sociocultural pressure related to appearance and thinness ideals. Previous research indicates that the prevalence and intensity of body image concerns are higher among girls compared to boys. Therefore, focusing on girls allows for a more specific and in-depth understanding of the issue within a high-risk group.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Introduction

Body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes have been widely studied among adolescents, particularly among teenage girls. This stage is associated with increased awareness of physical appearance and social comparison. Various studies have examined the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes, along with influencing factors.

2. **Body Image Dissatisfaction and Eating Attitudes**
Stice (2002) found that body dissatisfaction is a strong predictor of unhealthy eating behaviors such as dieting and binge eating. Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2006) reported that adolescents with body dissatisfaction are more likely to engage in unhealthy eating patterns. Prasad et al. (2013) found a significant positive relationship between body dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among adolescent girls. Banerjee and Chakraborty (2015) reported that urban adolescent girls show higher body dissatisfaction influencing eating behavior.

3. Media Exposure and Body Image

Tiggemann and Slater (2013) found that social media exposure is associated with increased body dissatisfaction. Fardouly et al. (2015) reported that appearance-based comparisons on social media negatively affect body image. Sharma et al. (2019) found that media exposure influences body image and eating habits among Indian adolescents. Kaur et al. (2018) reported that media promotes unrealistic beauty standards.

4. Peer Influence and Eating Attitudes

Paxton et al. (1999) found that peer pressure and teasing are linked to body dissatisfaction and dieting behaviors. Jones et al. (2004) reported that peer influence shapes body image among adolescents. Bansal and Mehra (2016) found that peer comparison contributes to body dissatisfaction. Verma and Srivastava (2020) reported that peer influence affects eating attitudes.

5. Self-Esteem and Eating Attitudes

Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as overall self-worth. Fairburn et al. (2003) found that low self-esteem is associated with eating-related problems.

Singh and Singh (2014) found a negative relationship between self-esteem and eating attitudes. Das et al. (2017) reported that low self-esteem is linked to body dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating behaviors.

6. Research Gap

Limited studies focus on eating attitudes in non-clinical adolescent populations. Few studies have been conducted among urban teenage girls in Mysore. Limited research examines the direct relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes in a focused manner.

7. Summary

The literature indicates that body image dissatisfaction is strongly associated with unhealthy eating attitudes. Media, peer influence, and self-esteem also play important roles. However, gaps remain in terms of population and focus, which the present study addresses.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative, descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls.

2. Variables

- i. Independent Variable: Body Image Dissatisfaction
- ii. Dependent Variable: Eating Attitudes

3. Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls.

4. Hypothesis

H1: "There is a significant relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls."

5. Sample

The sample consists of 200 teenage girls aged between 13–19 years studying in urban educational institutions in Mysore.

6. Sampling Technique

The study uses stratified random sampling, where participants were selected from different types of institutions (government, private, and pre-university colleges) to ensure representation.

7. Institutions where research was carried out

The data was collected from selected urban institutions in Mysore, namely JSS PreUniversity College, Kendriya Vidyalaya Mysore, St. Joseph's Central School, and Mahajana Pre-University College. These institutions represent a mix of government, private, and central board schools and colleges.

8. Inclusion Criteria

- i. Adolescent girls aged 13–19 years.
- ii. Students studying in the above-mentioned urban institutions in Mysore.
- iii. Participants who were willing to participate.
- iv. Participants who could understand and respond to the questionnaire.

9. Exclusion Criteria

- i. Male students.
- ii. Students outside the age range of 13–19 years.
- iii. Participants who were unwilling to participate.

10. Tools Used

- i. Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-34): Used to assess body image dissatisfaction.
- ii. Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26): Used to assess eating attitudes.

Both tools are standardized and widely used, with established reliability and validity.

11. Procedure

- i. Permission was obtained from the selected institutions prior to data collection.
- ii. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained.
- iii. The questionnaires were administered in classroom settings, and participants were instructed to respond honestly.
- iv. The collected data was scored and prepared for analysis.

12. Ethical Considerations

- i. Participation was voluntary.
- ii. Informed consent was obtained.

- iii. Confidentiality of responses was maintained.
- iv. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study.

13. Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using Pearson’s correlation to determine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study conducted to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. The data was analyzed using Pearson’s correlation.

Table 1 Correlation Between Body Image Dissatisfaction and Eating Attitudes (N = 200)

Variables	1	2
Body Image Dissatisfaction	1	
Eating Attitudes	.60**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (p < .01)

Interpretation: The results indicate a strong positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes (r = .60, p < .01). This suggests that higher levels of body image dissatisfaction is associated with more unhealthy eating attitudes among teenage girls.

2. Summary of Findings

- i. There is a significant positive relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes.
- ii. As body image dissatisfaction increases, unhealthy eating attitudes also increase.

V. DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

The present chapter discusses the findings of the study conducted to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. The results obtained from the statistical

analysis are interpreted in light of the research objective and hypothesis. This chapter also relates the findings to existing literature and provides psychological explanations for the observed relationship between the variables.

2. Interpretation of Results

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes. This indicates that as body image dissatisfaction increases; unhealthy eating attitudes also increase among adolescent girls. This finding suggests that negative perceptions about one’s body significantly influence eating-related thoughts and behaviors. Adolescents who are dissatisfied with their body shape and appearance are more likely to engage in dieting, food restriction, and other unhealthy eating patterns.

3. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of the present study are consistent with earlier research in this area. Stice (2002) reported that body dissatisfaction is a strong predictor of unhealthy eating behaviors. Similarly, Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2006) found that adolescents with higher body dissatisfaction is more likely to develop unhealthy eating patterns. Studies conducted in the Indian context also support these findings. Prasad et al. (2013) found a significant positive relationship between body dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among adolescent girls. Banerjee and Chakraborty (2015) also reported that urban adolescent girls experience higher body dissatisfaction, which influences their eating behaviors. Thus, the present study aligns with existing literature, confirming that body image dissatisfaction plays an important role in shaping eating attitudes among teenage girls.

4. Psychological Explanation of Findings

The relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes can be explained through psychological and sociocultural perspectives. During adolescence, individuals are highly sensitive to appearance-related feedback and societal standards of beauty. Exposure to idealized body images in media and comparison with peers may lead to internalization of unrealistic standards. When adolescents perceive a

gap between their actual body and the ideal body image, it results in dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction can negatively affect self-perception and lead to unhealthy coping strategies, such as restrictive dieting or disordered eating attitudes. Furthermore, low self-esteem may intensify these concerns, making individuals more vulnerable to negative body image and unhealthy eating behaviors. Thus, body image dissatisfaction acts as a key psychological factor influencing eating attitudes.

5. Conclusion of Discussion

The findings of the study clearly indicate that body image dissatisfaction is significantly associated with unhealthy eating attitudes among teenage girls. The results highlight the importance of addressing body image concerns to promote healthy eating behaviors and overall psychological well-being.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls. This chapter provides a brief summary of the entire study, including objectives, methodology, and major findings.

2. Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was: To examine the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls.

3. Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes among teenage girls.

4. Methodology

- i. The study adopted a quantitative, descriptive correlational research design.
- ii. The sample consisted of 200 teenage girls aged 13–19 years from urban educational institutions in Mysore, including JSS Pre-University College, Kendriya Vidyalaya Mysore, St. Joseph's Central School, and Mahajana Pre-University College.
- iii. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling.
- iv. The tools used for data collection were:

- Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-34)
- Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26)
- v. Data was analyzed using Pearson's correlation.

5. Major Findings

- i. The study found a strong positive relationship between body image dissatisfaction and eating attitudes.
- ii. Higher levels of body image dissatisfaction were associated with more unhealthy eating attitudes among teenage girls.
- iii. The findings support the hypothesis that body image dissatisfaction significantly influences eating attitudes.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that body image dissatisfaction plays a significant role in shaping eating attitudes among adolescent girls. Addressing body image concerns is essential to promote healthy eating behaviors and psychological well-being.

7. Implications

- i. Theoretical Implications:
 - The study contributes to existing literature on body image and eating attitudes.
 - It highlights the importance of psychological factors in adolescent development.
- ii. Practical Implications:
 - Schools can implement awareness programs on body image and healthy eating.
 - Counseling interventions can help improve self-perception among adolescents.

8. Limitations

- i. The study was limited to teenage girls in urban Mysore.
- ii. The sample size was limited to 200 participants.
- iii. Self-report measures may involve response bias.

9. Suggestions for Future Research

- i. Future studies can include both boys and girls for comparison.
- ii. Larger and more diverse samples can be used.
- iii. Additional psychological variables can be explored.

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