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Association between Body Image and Psychological Well-being among College students

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Abstract: ***The purpose of this research was to examine the association of body image in relation to Psychological Well-being among college students using the valid questionnaires i.e. Body Image Scale by Cooper, Taylor, et.al (1987), Psychological Well-being Scale by Sisodia and Choudhary (2012). The sample consisted of college students from the age 18 to 25 years from states all over India. The research assessed 80 participants, consisting of 25 males and 55 females. The data was collected offline and online data through stratified random sampling technique. The analysis of the scores was done by Pearson correlation and the results showed that there is a significant relationship between the variables i.e. Body Image and Psychological Well Being showing that there is a negative correlation between the variables. There was no gender difference found in the results. One possible reason for such results could be the societal pressure to conform to unrealistic body standards. This pressure can lead to body dissatisfaction, which has been linked to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety.***
Keywords: Body Image, Psychological Well-being, Body satisfaction, self-esteem, mental health

I. INTRODUCTION

Body Image is, "the mental picture one forms of one's body as a whole, including its physical characteristics and one's attitudes toward these characteristics also known as body concept". (APA) It is the mental representation an individual creates of themselves that may or may not differ from actual bodily appearance. An individual can develop both positive or negative image of their body based on several experiences and environmental factors. Body images is both internal (personal)and external (society). This includes how a person perceives his body or their physical appearance or how a person thinks and talks to themselves about their bodies and how other people view their bodies. Importance of Positive body image is that people with positive body image tend to have higher levels of self-esteem, better psychological health. They have self-acceptance towards their body despite all the unrealistic body image shown in the media. This prevents individuals from trying unhealthy bodily practices to maintain the body that they want. This can also bring healthy outlook and behaviours in people. Psychological wellbeing is a positive state of mind which includes factors such as happiness or life satisfaction. According to APA (n.d.), it refers to a state of happiness and contentment with low level of stress, overall good mental and physical health and outlook, or good quality of life. According to Diener and Smith (1999), Psychological well-being as a broad construct, encompassing four specific and distinct components including a) pleasant or positive well-being, b) unpleasant affect or psychological distress, c) life satisfaction and d) domain or situation satisfaction.

The term psychological wellbeing connotes a wide range of meanings usually associated with wellness. The psychological wellbeing includes meaning of life, absence of somatic symptoms, self-esteem, positive affect, daily activities, satisfaction, absence of suicidal ideas, personal control, social support, absence of tension and general efficiency. (Bhogle and Prakash, 1995)

The Indian perspective of psychological wellbeing identifies four aspects that are the five elements, the person (Jeeva), the life (Ayu) and the health (Arogya). Well-being refers to Maitri, Karuna, Mudita and Upeksha meaning relatedness, compassion, Pleasant disposition and avoidance of conflict. It also refers to uniting self by negating the ego. This in turn indicates that well-being is a combination of survival, wellbeing freedom and identity.

A. Dimensions of well-being

1) *Life Satisfaction:* The act of satisfying, or the state of being satisfied; gratification of desire: contentment in possession and enjoyment; repose of mind resulting from compliance with its desires or demands.
2) *Efficiency:* The comparison of what is actually produced or performed with what can be achieved with the same consumption of resources (money, time, labor, etc.). The quality of being efficient or producing an effect or effects; efficient power: effectual agency.

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3) *Sociability:* The relative tendency or disposition to be sociable or associate with one's fellows. The quality or state of being sociable; also: the act or an instance of being sociable.
4) *Mental Health:* Mental health is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. A person's overall psychological and emotional condition. Good mental health is a state of well-being in which a person is able to cope with everyday events, think clearly, be responsible, meet challenges, and have good relationships with others.
5) *Interpersonal Relations:* An interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring. This association may be based on love and liking, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For literature survey various research papers have been used. (1) *Gillen (2015)* conducted research on Associations between positive body image and indicators of men's and women's mental and physical health. The study consisted of 284 undergraduate students. The results revealed that individuals with positive body image reported less depression and higher self-esteem and no unhealthy dieting behaviour. No significant gender differences were found. (2) Abbasi & Zubair (2015) conducted a study on Body Image, Self-Compassion, and Psychological Well-Being among University Students. The sample of this research consisted of 177 female and 123 male university students. The data was collected using Self-Compassion Scale by Neff and Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire-Appearance Scale by Cash. The study showed that self-compassion was significantly positively related with psychological well-being and body-image. Body-image was positively related with psychological well-being. Self-compassion and body-image significantly predicted the psychological well-being among these students. Self-compassion mediated the relationship between body image and psychological wellbeing. Results also revealed significant gender differences on body image. (3) Delfabbro, Winefield, Hammarström, et.al (2011) conducted research on Body image and psychological well-being in adolescents: the relationship between gender and school type. The study was done on 1281 adolescents from school. The results showed that there is a strong relation between body-image and psychological well being. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to be dissatisfied with their weight and physical appearance, and these factors explained significantly more variation in self-esteem than in life satisfaction or other measures of psychological well-being.

III.METHODOLOGY

A. Problem

This study aims to find out the relationship between Body Image and Psychological Well-being among College Students.

B. Objectives

1) To study the relationship between Body Image and psychological well-being among college students.
2) To study the gender difference in Body Image and psychological well-being among college students.

C. Hypothesis

1) H0- There will be no relationship between Body Image and Psychological well-being among college students.
2) H1- There will be a significant relationship between Body Image and Psychological well-being among college students.
3) H2- There will be no gender difference between Body Image and Psychological well-being among college students.

D. Variables-

The study would have 2 variables

1) Body Image
2) Psychological well-being

E. Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1) *Body Image:* The body image was assessed by using the BSQ-34 (Body shape questionnaire) questionnaire. It is a 6 point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 34 items. It is a self-report questionnaire that was developed by Cooper, Taylor, Cooper, and Fairbum (1987) to measure concerns about body shape and image. The scale has high internal consistency reliability, which is 0.966 A higher score indicates more dissatisfaction and discomfort with the body experience.

2) *Psychological Wellbeing:* It was assessed using the Psychological Wellbeing Scale which was developed by Sisodia and Choudhary in 2012. This is a 50-item scale used to measure psychological wellbeing like efficiency and satisfaction. There are 5 dimensions of this scale i.e. satisfaction, efficiency, sociability, mental health and interpersonal relations. This a 5-point Likert Scale having options of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The test-retest reliability is 0.87 and the validity is 0.94. This scale can be administered by all age groups. The interpretation of the scale ranges from very low to very high.

F. Sample

The sample comprised of 80 college students. Out of which 55 were female and 25 were male college students. The study consists of participants all over from India. The participants were selected from graduate and post Graduate courses who belonged to the age group 18-25 years.

G. Procedure

The questionnaire was through google forms consisting of informed consent from the participants. The google form contained basic demographic details of the participants. The google forms was circulated to various online platforms and offline as well to collect data from the desired age group of students. After the collection of data, it was analysed and interpreted.

H. Technique

Sample was selected through stratified random sampling technique.

I. Inclusive Criteria

The study was only limited to college students of the 18 to 25 years. All the participant in this study was literate.

J. Exclusive Criteria

Individuals not matching the age group criteria were excluded. School students were not involved in the study.

K. Research Design

The present research will follow a correlational approach consisting of two variables. The gender difference will also be explored. The hypothesis formed will be tested empirically.

L. Statistical Analysis

For analysis of the data, correlation and independent t-test and regression were performed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 1 Correlations between Body Image and Psychological Well Being

	Body Image	Psychological Well Being
Body Image	1	-0.679**
Psychological Well Being	-0.679**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation- There is a negative significant correlation between Body image and wellbeing at the 0.01 level of significance, suggesting that there is an inversely proportional relationship between body image and wellbeing.

Table No.2 Independent Sample Test showing Gender difference

Variables	f	t value	Sig**	df
Body Image	0.71	.008 .007	.791	78 40.630
Psychological Wellbeing	157.709	-3.393 -5.011	.000	78 56.132

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

V. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the scores was done by Pearson correlation and the results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between body image and wellbeing, such that as one variable increases, the other variable tends to decrease suggesting that there is an inversely proportional relationship between body image and psychological wellbeing highlights an important relationship between how we perceive our bodies and our overall sense of wellbeing. Specifically, the correlation coefficient between the two variables is negative and significant at a level of 0.01.

This means that the probability of the correlation occurring by chance is less than 1%, and therefore, the correlation is considered very strong. The hypothesis made has been accepted. The null hypothesis has been rejected and the first and second hypothesis has been accepted. There was no significant difference found between genders. The first hypothesis stated that there is a significant relationship between body image and psychological wellbeing which has been accepted as the results state that there is a negative correlation between Body Image and Psychological wellbeing.

Similar results have been found in a research study by Yazdani, Amini, Sobhani, *et.al* (2018) on the Relationship between body image and psychological well-being in Patients with morbid obesity. The result in the study concluded that body image defects caused by obesity could lie in negative psychological well-being in all aspects.

Another study by Parent et al. (2018) found that adolescent girls who reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction also had higher levels of symptoms of depression and anxiety. This is consistent with previous research that has shown that body dissatisfaction is a risk factor for the development of depression and anxiety, particularly in adolescents.

There could be several possible reasons why there is a negative correlation between body image and psychological well-being. One possible reason is the societal pressure to conform to unrealistic body standards. This pressure can lead to body dissatisfaction, which has been linked to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. Individuals who are dissatisfied with their bodies may experience negative emotions that can negatively impact their overall psychological well-being. Another possible reason is the psychological impact of experiencing discrimination or bias based on one's appearance. Research has shown that experiencing weight stigma can lead to negative psychological outcomes, such as increased stress and anxiety. These negative outcomes may be particularly pronounced for individuals who are already vulnerable to negative body image or low self-esteem. Moreover, individuals with a positive body image are less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as disordered eating, substance abuse, or excessive exercise, which can have negative impacts on physical health and overall wellbeing.

VI. CONCLUSION

1) There is a negative significant correlation between Body image and Psychological wellbeing.
2) There is no significant gender difference between Body image and Psychological wellbeing.

Poor body image can be associated with mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, which can further impact wellbeing. Individuals with poor body image may experience feelings of low self-esteem, self-worth, and increased social anxiety. Additionally, body dissatisfaction can lead to unhealthy behaviors such as disordered eating or substance abuse, which can negatively affect overall physical health and wellbeing. Whereas, having a positive body image is associated with higher levels of overall wellbeing, both mentally and physically. It is important to recognize and celebrate diverse body types and promote positive body image for all individuals, regardless of their shape or size, to promote optimal health and wellbeing.

A. Limitations

The current study has some limitations focused on while considering the research. Some of the limitations that can be helpful for future researches are:

1) The sample size was less which might have led to sampling error.
2) The research was conducted on an online platform so there was no control on extraneous variables, which might have impacted the results of the study.
3) As it was an online research, respondents might not have filled the form truthfully.

B. Recommendations for Future Research

There is not much research study done on this topic variables, especially the researches were found to be done only on teenagers. The same research topic can be done on young adults and even older people. The various aspects of psychological capital should be studied in order to find out what contributes to the Body Image. The study available is not comprehensive as it should be, so its need to be generalized.

Some further suggestions for researches are: -

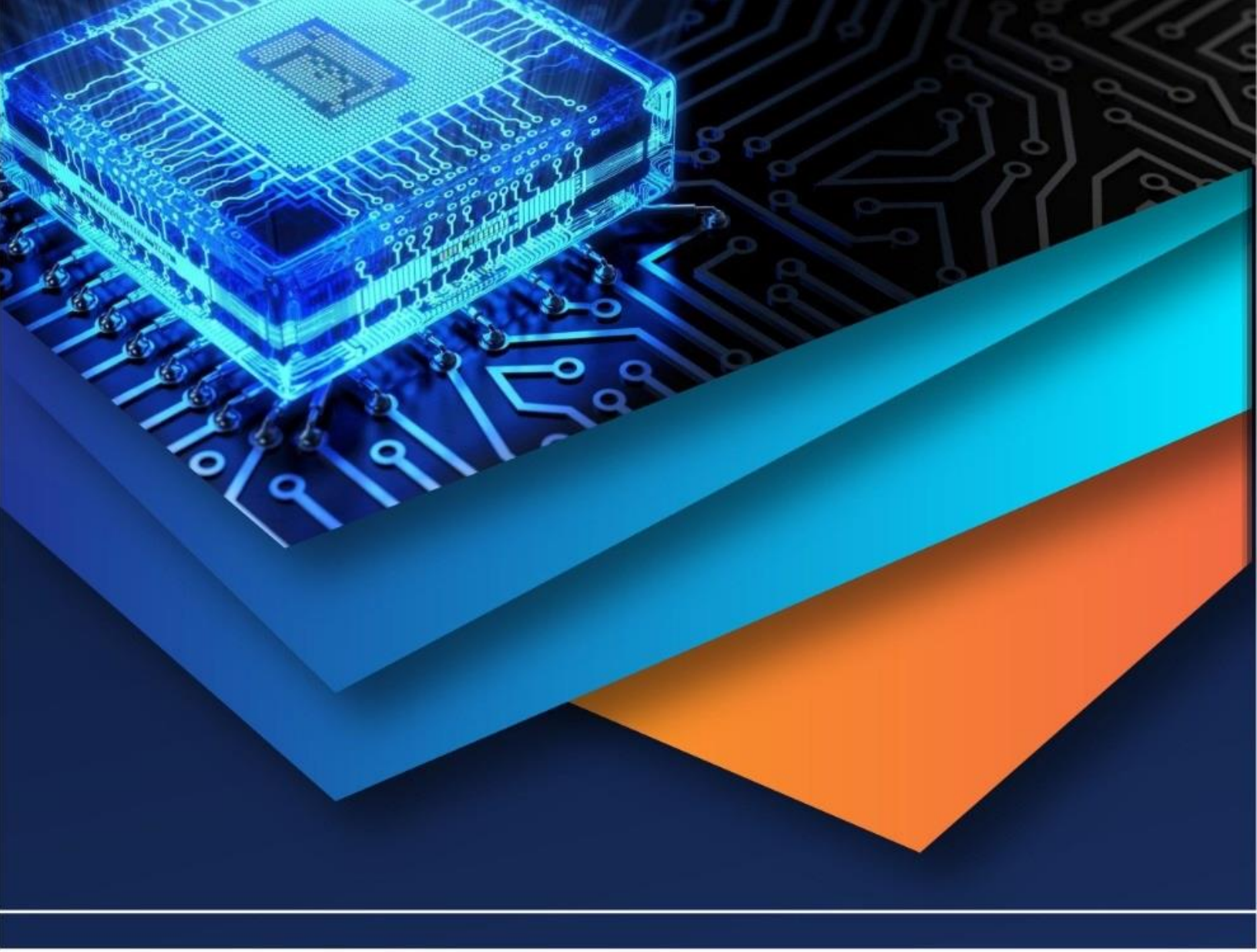
1) Some other variables like quality of life, psychological hardiness and resilience can be included.
2) There was less Indian research done on this topic, so the Indian population should be focused.
3) The similar study can be done on large samples with better sample design.

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Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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