

A comparative analysis of the body image of obese boys and girls of Udaipur city

SHILPA RATHORE¹ AND BHAWANA JAIN^{2*}

¹Head & Associate Professor and ²Research Scholar,

¹Department of Home Science, B.N. University, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India

²Department of Home Science, M.L. Sukhadiya University, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to determine the prevalence of obesity and its effect on body image of college-going girls and boys of Udaipur (Rajasthan) and ascertain the associated factors. A descriptive study with sample size of 240 students (120 Girls and 120 Boys) was conducted over a period of four months in four Universities of Udaipur. The research concluded that the body image of obese boys and girls was negative to neutral. The results showed that there is no significant difference between obese boys and obese girls regarding body image. However, higher mean of boys showed that they were more vulnerable to develop negative body image as compared to girls.

Key Words : Body image, Obesity

INTRODUCTION

Body image is a person's inner conception of his or her own physical appearance. This conception may or may not correlate with objective reality. The phrase *body image* was first coined by the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Paul Schilder in 1935 in his book *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*. Each person holds an image of the physically perfect person in mind and evaluates his or her appearance against this ideal. A person who is pleased with his or her body shape and appearance is said to have a positive self-image. Teen obesity refers to the problem of very overweight teenagers. Obesity for a teenager occurs when his or her body mass index (BMI) is more than 95 per cent greater as compared to other teenagers of the same gender and age. Obese teens often experience poor body image as a result of being overweight. Poor body image is connected to a number of psychological problems, including depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Teens with poor body image are also at risk of developing an eating disorder. Hence, in the present study was undertaken with the objective to comparative analysis of body image of obese boys and girls.

Review of literature :

Gross (2005) in her study found that, females expressed some body size dissatisfaction more than males. Perceived risk for disease due to weight was related to body mass index, family weight history, body awareness and income, but not body size satisfaction.

Cite this Article: Rathore, Shilpa and Jain, Bhawana (2018). A comparative analysis of the body image of obese boys and girls of Udaipur city. *Internat. J. Appl. Home Sci.*, 5 (10-12) : 1029-1035.

Blond (2008) and Want (2009) in their study found that, individuals who already have low body satisfaction are likely to be negatively affected by images of idealized body shapes whereas individuals who have high body satisfaction are unlikely to be affected by images of idealized body shapes.

Priya and Prasana (2010) in their study conducted in Mangalore on assessment of body mass index, body image perception and attempts to change weight among the female medical students, found that body image was perceived correctly by the female medical students and in-turn they had attempted to modify their body weight status toward normal.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected from the following four Universities *i.e.* Bhopal Nobles University, Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Pacific university and Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture & Technology. 30 obese boys and 30 obese girls were selected randomly from each University. Hence, a total of 120 boys and 120 girls were selected for the study. Five point Body Image scale developed by Dr. V.L Chauhan and Pooja Surana, 2001. Questionnaire consisted of two parts- first included background information like age, sex, education, BMI etc. and the second part consisted of 30 statements related to self-confidence, hesitation, frequent physical changes in body, body weight perception, voice and looks etc. Interview technique was used to collect in-depth information. Scoring was done on the basis of positive and negative statements. The table 1 presented below indicates the scoring pattern:

Table 1 : Scoring pattern with the use of five point body image scale		
Positive statement	Scoring pattern	Negative statement
5	Very satisfied	1
4	Satisfied	2
3	Neutral	3
2	Dissatisfied	4
1	Very dissatisfied	5

Formula used for calculation of scores:

Frequency X Score/ Sample size

Body image categorization :

The resulting scores were used to categorize body image of boys and girls based on following categories :

- 5 – Very Positive
- 4 – Positive
- 3 – Neutral
- 2 – Negative
- 1 – Very Negative

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data indicated that majority *i.e.* 61.25 per cent of the respondents belonged to 18-20 years of age. Equal ratio of male and female respondents was taken for the present investigation. Majority of the respondents were doing their graduation. The data of Body Mass Index depicted that majority

i.e. 74 per cent of boy respondents were overweight whereas rest 26 were in category of obese and 57 girl respondents were overweight and 43 were obese (Garrow, 1985).

Body image of respondents :

Table 2 : Mean Body image scores of obese college going girls and boys (N=240)			
Sr. No.	Statements	Mean scores of Boys	Mean scores of Girls
1.	I feel Hesitant when other people are looking at me	1.89	2.27
2.	If I was able to change any part of my body or face, I would have been more self-confident	1.42	1.5
3.	My body dimension is compatible with my age.	1.63	1.59
4.	If I was attractive I would have been more confident and satisfied	2.93	3.71
5.	My body is energetic enough to perform all types of work	1.54	2.36
6.	I feel that people ridicule me in terms of my body	2.54	2.33
7.	If my mother and father were more attractive, I would have been the same	3.22	3.76
8.	I would have been more popular amongst my friends if I was beautiful active and physically fit	1.23	2.47
9.	My way of sitting and standing is unusual.	2.67	3.36
10.	I imagine a lot about my body	1.69	2.45
11.	I feel secure regarding my body	3.54	3.15
12.	My face is beautiful	3.39	3.28
13.	My face appears ugly while laughing	1.10	2.03
14.	I do not choose some apparel because I feel that I look fatter when I wear them	4.33	4.5
15.	I get disturbed if anybody passes personal comments on me	3.51	4.38
16.	The tone and complexion of my skin is satisfactory.	3.70	3.26
17.	I try to avoid physical labour because it hampers my beauty	1.47	1.95
18.	I like my hair	4.22	3.64
19.	I feel awkward about the rapid changes occurring in my body	3.75	2.86
20.	My body is more fit and capable as compared to my friends	3.03	2.82
21.	I use new beauty products and energy yielding drugs	2.15	3.33
22.	I am satisfied with my weight	1.23	1.46
23.	My body depicts Symptoms of many diseases	3.84	3.38
24.	Persons with attractive personality should only participate in cultural and social events	3.97	3.81
25.	I have a sweet voice	4.60	4.05
26.	My dress up is very impressive compared to others	1.86	2.13
27.	I am satisfied with every part of my body	1.43	1.91
28.	Due to physical handicap I am not satisfied with myself	3.48	2.72
29.	My weight seems to be a medium of self-identity and self-expression	3.23	3.09
30.	I often look in the mirror, before going anywhere	1.65	2.20

5- Very positive, 4 – positive, 3- neutral, 2- negative, 1- very negative

1. The mean score for the statement “I feel Hesitant when other people are looking at me” indicated that the feeling of hesitation was found higher in girls as compared to boys, which indicated that girls felt more uncomfortable when someone looks at them as compared to boys.
2. For the statement “If I was able to change any part of my body or face, I would have been more self-confident” girls and boys were found dissatisfied with their body. The higher mean of girls showed that they are more conscious of their body and face as compared to boys.
3. For the statement “My body dimension is compatible with my age” both girls and boys were found dissatisfied. The result behind that was due to obesity.
4. “If I was attractive I would have been more confident and satisfied”, for this statement the response of the boys was found neutral which indicated that they were confused about their looks. The mean score of girls i.e. 3.71 depicted that they felt their level of confidence would improve if their looks will change. This indicated that girls were more concerned about their looks.
5. For the statement “My body is energetic enough to perform all types of work” the response of both boys and girls was found to be negative. This indicated that they both obese boys and girls opined that due to their extra weight they are not able to work actively as compared to others.
6. The data revealed for the statement “I feel that people ridicule me in terms of my body” that both obese boys and girls had negative response which clearly shows that they don’t know it’s true or not. They were unaware about others opinion or feelings about their body.
7. “If my mother and father were more attractive, I would have been the same” for this statement the response of the obese boys and girls was found positive which indicated that they think that heredity can be a reason of their obesity and their looks is somewhat similar to their parents look.
8. For the statement “I would have been more popular amongst my friends if I was beautiful active and physically fit.” The response of the obese boys was negative which mean they don’t feel that smartness can make them more popular.
9. “My way of sitting and standing is unusual” for this statement the response of the obese boys was negative which indicated that they are comfortable with their posture and don’t consider it negative whereas the response of the obese girls was positive. The obese girls felt that due to their extra weight they feel difficulty in sitting and standing.
10. The obese girls and boys responded negatively for the statement that “I imagine a lot about my body”. This indicated that they don’t think or imagine about their body so much.
11. For the statement “I feel secure regarding my body” both obese boys and girls responded positively. The mean score indicated that both boys and girls felt secured about their body which clearly indicated that obesity did not affect both the genders.
12. For the statement “My face is beautiful” the response of obese girls and boys was positive. They were satisfied with their face.
13. For the statement “my face appears ugly while laughing” the response of the obese boys and girls was found negative which clearly shows that they were satisfied with their smile and don’t think negatively about it. This indicated positive body image.
14. For the statement “I do not choose some apparel because I feel that I look fatter when I

- wear them” the response of the boys and girls was found very positive which clearly shows that they were more concerned about their clothing behaviour.
15. For the statement “I get disturbed if anybody passes personal comments on me” both boys and girls responded positively which indicated that adolescent boys and girls were sensitive to other’s comments about their body shape and looks. This indicated negative body image perceptions hence it can be said that for adolescent boys and girls value the opinion of people around them. Among gender girls were more affected by other people’s comments.
 16. “The tone and complexion of my skin is satisfactory” for this statement both boys and girls reacted similarly. The mean scores indicated that both obese girls and boys were satisfied with colour and texture of their skin.
 17. For the statement “I try to avoid physical labour because it hampers my beauty” the response of obese boys and girls was negative. The boys and girls preferred doing physical labour in the form of exercise as they felt that exercise is a medium for healthy life. It was found during interview that obesity was as major concern for them for which they preferred to do a lot of physical labour.
 18. The ratio of boys responding on the statement “I like my hair” was higher than girls.
 19. “I feel awkward about the rapid changes occurring in my body” for this statement the response of the obese boys was positive. The obese boys were found uncomfortable with the frequent changes in their body whereas the response of the girls was uncertain. They neither responded positively nor negatively. The body changes during this time were major concern for boys as compared to girls in this age group.
 20. For the statement “My body is more fit and capable as compared to my friends” the response of obese boys and girls was neutral. The boys and girls were found uncertain about this statement. This indicated that adolescent accepted their body positively despite of their body image concerns by their peer group. Though they have concerns regarding their body image they appear to accept themselves in a positive way and they didn’t compare their body with their friends.
 21. “I use new beauty products and energy yielding drugs” for this statement the response of obese boys was negative whereas the response of the obese girls was positive. The data clearly indicated that girls were more concerned about their beauty and used different beauty products to look good as compared to boys.
 22. For the statement “I am satisfied with my weight” both obese boys and girls responded negatively which clearly indicated that extra weight was a major concern for them and they were not satisfied with it.
 23. For the statement “My body depicts symptoms of many diseases” the obese boys and girls responded positively. This indicated that obesity was a major concern of both genders and they were aware about the various diseases caused by obesity.
 24. For the statement “Persons with attractive personality should only participate in cultural and social events” the response of boys and girls was found positive which indicated that they were very dissatisfied with their body buildup and had negative body image. They hesitate in social gatherings and feel that due to their obesity their personality was not suitable and should not participate in social and cultural events.
 25. “I have a sweet voice” mean scores indicated that for this statement both the boys and girls responded very positively.

26. "My dress up is very impressive as compared to others" the response of the boys and girls for this statement was negative. This indicated that dressing was a major concern for both boys and girls.
27. "I am satisfied with every part of my body" for this statement the response of obese boys and girls was negative. This study has in general indicated that young men and women were not satisfied with their body, they had some regrets and they would like to change some dimensions of their body if possible.
28. "Due to physical handicap I am not satisfied with myself" for this statement the response of boys was positive which indicated their negative body image. The obesity was a major reason behind this due as due to their weight they were not comfortable and did not participate in various sports and other activities as compared to others. The response of girls was uncertain.
29. "My weight seems to be a medium of self-identity and self-expression" the mean score for this statement was found towards neutral to positive. The data indicated that both boys and girls reacted positively on these aspects and agree that their body is a medium of self-identity and self-expression.
30. "I often look in the mirror, before going anywhere" mean score revealed that boys and girls disagree with this statement and responded negatively for this.

The data presented in Table 3 clearly depicted that there was not much difference found in various aspects of body image of boys and girls. The mean scores of the body image scale revealed that obese boys and girls have similarities in body image. The response of boys and girls towards body image was found neutral. The body image of obese girls was found little positive as compared to boys as their mean score was a bit higher. T-test was applied in order to ascertain the significant relationship between body image of boys and girls. The results presented in table 3 clearly revealed that there was no significant difference between body image of boys and girls [t value = (0.57) > 0.05] at 5% level of significance.

Table 3 : Difference in the body image of college going obese boys and girls

Gender	Body Image	t-value
	Mean± SD	
Boys	2.68±1.09	0.57NS
Girls	2.86±0.84	

Not Significant at 5 per cent level

Finally it can be concluded that there is a strong sense of body image perception among adolescents, and they were concerned about changing unsatisfactory dimension if they can be strongly influenced by the fashionable world and were trying to compete in almost all the aspects irrespective of their gender.

This finding can be supported by a study conducted by Garousi *et al.* (2013). In which approximately two-thirds of the male and female students experienced mild and exacerbated dissatisfaction of their bodies and 40 per cent of the research population used common methods for body change.

Summary and conclusion :

The study can be concluded that college going obese boys and girls are generally facing

problems with body image due to their large body builds. The mean scores calculated with the use of body image scale revealed that response of boys and girls towards body image was found neutral which indicates that they were uncertain about their body image. The body image of obese girls was found little positive as compared to boys. The study found that teens who perceive themselves as overweight are at greater risk of obesity as adults. The finding confirms the belief that an inappropriate body image can lead to a variety of issues during adolescence and adulthood.

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