

Body Image and Diet Plans: An Exploratory Study of Obese People

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Abstract

Body image and dieting plans have vital roles in a healthy life. The current study is designed to investigate the behaviour of individuals toward body image and to identify the connection between diet plans and bodily image. The study also identifies weight loss interventions for a short period of time. To fulfil this purpose, quantitative research is designed. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection from 385 respondents. This sample size was determined by applying the Fitz-Gibbon table. A stratified random sampling method was utilized to collect data from regular members of selected gyms and diet clinics. SPSS did data analysis. The current study identified that females face more physical and psychological problems as compared to males in terms of their body image. The study also found that negative body image leads an individual towards dieting plans. Based on these findings, the study concluded that a daily exercise schedule causes satisfaction in terms of bodily image. Lastly, it was established that body image and dieting plans greatly impacted an individual's Quality of life.

Keywords: Body image, Diet plans, obesity, Physical and Psychological problems, Quality of Life.

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1 Introduction

Body image is considered a multifactorial phenomenon that comprises behavioural perceptual and emotional domains (Alhashemi, et al., [2022](#)) while dissatisfaction with one body image causes negative thoughts about his / her physical appearance. It affects a person's psychological well-being and overall Quality of life (QOL) (Mohammadbeigi et al., [2018](#)).

Negative bodily image is related to psychological and physical problems like depression, low self-esteem, Anorexia, hypertension, etc., while physical problems include obesity/inappropriate body image, cardiovascular disease, etc. (Nawaz et al., [2020](#)).

Western culture and society adore thin bodies, and numerous youngsters are worried about their physical appearances. Moreover, in this way, they are involved in different strategies to get or preserve a thin body (Mackenbach et al., [2019](#)). As a result, young females get involved in dieting to preserve an ultra-thin body (Al-Jawaldeh & Abbass, [2022](#)).

In today's world, many people, particularly the younger ones, prefer to eat junk food. Junk food consumption among youngsters has diverse reasons. One of them is changing lifestyles in the modern world. Moreover, several people work long hours a day, remain busy and do not have sufficient time to cook and eat healthy food, so they eat junk food (Yang et al., [2018](#)). Another reason for eating junk food is the influence of mass media, as media advertise such types of food for their promotion attractively and more appealingly. It captures the attention of people, particularly the attention of youngsters. Moreover, they will spend more money on food items (Fox et al., [2019](#)).

Little is known about the effect of bodily image and dieting on diet choices and eating practices. There is a shortage of evidence in existing literature about the effects of diet and exercise on body image satisfaction.

Past research on bodily image has paid attention mostly to females, and largely ignored bodily image among males. In fact, a greater number of females and about one-fourth of males that has factually normal weight observe themselves as overweight. Very few studies gathered data that were based on gender comparisons of bodily image. Current study will seek to fulfil these gaps. Present study would disseminate awareness among the overweight people to attain their bodily weight and dieting plans by fitness centers and media as public take novel ideas and suggestion from media to maintain body image. The study also has the potential to produce data which will support in the expansion of novel fitness promotion plans, concentrating on healthy intake of food and bodily image aiming obese people.

1.1 Objectives

Following are the objectives of the study:

- i. To find out the association between negative bodily image and positive dieting strategies
- ii. To examine the association between negative bodily image and physical issues
- iii. To identify association between negative bodily image and Psychological issues
- iv. To explore association between positive attitude towards dieting plans and positive outcome of gym and exercises.

2 Theoretical Framework

To build theoretical foundation for the current study, Researcher employed Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to the present study. SCT described that human actions are the outcome of dynamic communications between behavioral, personal and ecological elements (Hendy et al., [2001](#)).

- Individual's thinking patterns and emotions are the main constituents of personal factors.

- Behavioral factors include fitness-related programs
- External factor comprises bodily and social environments (environmental factors).

SCT delivers an inclusive framework to understand the factors of obesity and its possible mediators and processes to maintain body image. A vital construct of the theory is diet and proper exercise, measured as a basic prerequisite for suitable body image (Abuzaid et al., [2022](#)).

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The current study was based on the following Conceptual framework;

- Background variable

Gender, age, level of education, Socio-economic status and occupation

- Independent Variable (IV)

Diet plan, weight, smoking, exercise, physical health, Psychological problems, mental health

- Dependent Variable (DV)

Body Image

3 Materials and Methods

The present study utilized a quantitative approach to fulfill the objective of the study. As the current study collected information from both males and females, so, a quantitative research approach was appropriate for the study. Information was achieved after obtaining consent of respondents regarding their willing to participate and confidentiality. This study was initiated in Multan willingness. All the gyms and diet clinics present in Multan constitute universe of the study. However, regular members of gyms and diet clinics were chosen as target population. People who have dieting issues and face body image problems visit these places so researchers choose this as the universe. From the list of registered gyms in Multan researcher selected ten gyms as target population. By applying a simple random sampling technique researcher selected (n=385) respondents (both male and female). To determine sample size researcher, use Fitz-Gibbon Table.

In order to measure hypothesis of the study, as cited above, researcher employed self-administer questionnaire. Questionnaire was constructed by researcher by the help of existing Literature. And it consists of two main sections. The first section was based on questions regarding demographic profile of respondents and second portion based on questions regarding dietary practices and body image. Pre-testing of the tool was done in order to ensure validity and reliability of tool. Some modifications were made in the tool after pre-test and then post testing was done.

The descriptive as well as inferential analysis was done to fulfil the objectives of current study. And this analysis was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 (SPSS). Correlation analysis was done to test the relationship between the main variables of the study. And t-test was applied to test the gender differentials with reference to main variables of the study.

4 Results

Analysis and detail description of data were done in order to generalize. Table (1) represents a descriptive analysis of demographic data while Table (2) represents correlation analysis and Table (3) depicts hypothesis testing by the application of a t-test.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the demographic profile of respondents (n=385)

Variables	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Masculine	237 (62)
Feminine	148 (38.4)
Age	
18-23	148 (38.4)
24-29	175 (45.5)
30-35	39 (10.1)
36-41	18 (4.7)
Above 41	5 (1.3)
Qualification	
Secondary	43 (11.2)
Higher-secondary	80 (21)
BS	131 (34)
Graduation	95 (25)
Post-Graduation	36 (9.4)
Marital status	
unmarried	286 (74.3)
Married	98 (26)
Widow	1 (.3)
Height	
4.3-4.7	6 (1.6)
4.8-5.3	110 (28.6)
5.4-5.11	228 (59.2)
Above 5.11	41 (10.6)
Weight (Kg)	
40-55	54 (14.0)
56-70	140 (36.4)
71-85	132 (34.3)
86-100	48 (12.5)
Above 100	11 (2.9)
Exercise hours	
4 hours	4 (1)
3 hours	13 (3.4)
150 mint	8 (2.1)
135 mints	1 (0.3)
120 mint	103 (27)
105 mint	1 (0.3)
90 mint	58 (15.1)
75 mint	7 (2)
60 mint	131 (34)
45 mint	35 (9.1)
30 mint	21 (5.5)
20 mint	3 (0.8)
Level of income	
10000-20000	54 (14.0)
21000-30000	72 (18.7)
31000-40000	37 (9.6)
41000-50000	78 (20.3)
Above 50000	144 (37.4)

Table (1) explains that over half of the participants (61.6 %) were male. And almost half of the participants (45.5 %) belong to the age bracket (24-29 years). A great number of respondents (34 %) earned a Bachelor's degree. Single respondents had constituted an overwhelming response rate (74.3 %). Present Data ensured that most participants (59.2 %) belong to a height ranging from (5.4 to 5.11). The majority of the participants (36.4 %) had a weight from (56-70 kg). It was evident that most of the participants (34 %) spent one hour daily in exercise. The income level of most respondents (37.4 %) was above 50000.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Study Variables (n=385)

Study Variables	Correlation (Person) values	Sig.
Negative bodily image & * positive attitude toward dieting plans	.194**	.000
Negative bodily image & * physical issues	.363**	.000
Negative Bodily image & *psychological issues	.497**	.000
Positive attitude towards dieting plans and * positive consequences of gyms and exercise	.630**	.000

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

Above mentioned table (Table 2) describe the correlation analysis of DV (Body image) with various IV e.g. diet plan, physical problems, Psychological problem and gym and exercise. It was evident that all the study variables have significant associations. As negative body image leads toward diet plans. Likewise, negative body image also has a significant relation with physical as well as Psychological problems.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of study variables

Gender differentials according to			T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Positive attitude towards diet plan	Equal Variance assumed		-6.229	383	.000	-7.87809	1.26475
Positive effect of gym and exercise	Equal Variance assumed		-4.118	383	.000	-2.29975	.55851
Physical problems	Equal Variance assumed		-3.750	383	.000	-3.20230	.85403
Psychological problems	Equal Variance assumed		-2.592	383	.010	-2.03008	.78310

Male (n=237), Female (n=148)

Table (3) cited above, confirmed the hypothesis that males depict diverse positive attitude towards dieting plans as compare to females. This hypothesis also shown a significant variance ($t=-6.23$, $p=.000$) regarding positive behavior of dieting plans by males ($M=59.7$; $S. D=10.9$) and ($M=67.5$; $S. D=13.7$). Gender play a vital role in dieting plans. Analysis of above table also verified that males have different positive impacts of exercise and gym than females. A significant alteration of positive impacts of exercise and gym ($t=-4.118$; $p=.000$) was found between gents respondents ($M=20.9$, $SD=5.30$) and women respondents ($M=23.2$, $SD=5.38$). Researcher also found that gents preferred to join gyms while females prefer to do exercise at their homes. Due to some social

barriers females hesitate to involve in some outdoor activities, and they prefer to stay at home.

The above table also depicted that males and females have different bodily issues. Moreover, there was a significant difference in bodily issues ($t=-3.75$; $p=.000$) in males ($M=37.5$, $SD=7.63$) in contrast to women ($M=40.7$; $SD=8.92$). Both genders have different types of tasks to perform in regular life. Females, being taker, perform all the house chores. They did not have time for themselves, so they ignored their diet plans. Researchers examined that there is also a noteworthy variance between gents ($M=33.6$; $SD=7.37$) and females ($M=35.6$, $SD=7.64$) in terms of Psychological issues. Regarding body image, females have more psychological issues as compared to men. The thirst to fit into socially constructed criteria of the perfect body made females psychologically disturbed.

5 Discussion

Globally, junk food has become an emerging industry. It is gaining popularity not only in rural areas but also in urban areas (Abbas et al., [2022](#)). Increasing rates of obesity among children have become a crucial health and public policy problem all around the world. However, it received greater attention in Western countries, particularly the United States. However, the problem of obesity is also considered an emerging problem in Asia (McLean & Paxton, [2019](#)). Being overweight is negatively connected to both sexes, either male or female (Frederick et al., [2022](#)).

Social and cultural indicators of the bodily image, e.g. (a slim ideal, perception about a slim ideal, and apparent burdens to be thin) all had a vital connection with the bodily image (Koch et al., [2019](#)), which was also proved by the current study. Bodily image is connected with self-worth, self-assurance, exercise, eating patterns and emotional stability. Moreover, disorders in these variables are termed body image. A destructive physical image could higher the possibility of the existence of an eating disorder to be thin like dropping meals for long hours and eating unhealthy or junk food. According to research, body image concerns have been recognized as a global problem that is likely to be harmful for nations, and it affects about three lack masses globally (Zuair & Sopory, [2022](#); López-Gil et al., [2023](#)). In Pakistan, 22 % of men and 37 % of females in city areas have been facing issues of higher mass. It was also evident that young girls in Pakistan have been confronting more problems regarding obesity as compared to boys. Moreover, it affects not only their physical well-being but also their intellectual health. Moreover, obesity cause various diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes etc. (Khan at al., [2011](#)).

Researchers identified the association between negative bodily image and positive approach toward dieting plans. The same results were identified (Tylka et al., [2015](#)) by another researcher. According to the authors, the relationship between these two variables is vital as dieting plans ensure a healthy lifestyle. Another study has shown findings similar to those of the current study. As the author stated, an individual's dieting plans help him obtain more satisfaction with exercise, which increases his self-satisfaction regarding bodily image (Yin et al., [2022](#)).

The current study examines an association between negative bodily image and physical and Psychological problems. Physical problems alter the shape of the individual body, which initiate a negative body image. Diet plans increase satisfaction in terms of body image. Similar findings were reported by another researcher (Mills et al., [2018](#)).

The current study proves that Satisfaction with body image is higher in men than in females. Similar results were reported by another research (Quittkat at al., [2019](#)).

6 Conclusion

This research established that there is an association between negative bodily image and positive attitude regarding dieting plans. A negative image regarding a person's body encourages a person to have a positive dieting plan. Moreover, the present study also concluded that negative bodily

image also is a source of physiological and psychological issues. It was examined that negative bodily image enhances physical issue while dieting plans and exercise will have a positive outcome on bodily image. And in this way, both exercise and diet plans solve most of the psychological and physiological problems. This research also confirmed that males are more intended to join gyms while females choose to stay at home while following their dieting plans. It was also evident that in our society where having a ultra-thin body is a symbol of beauty and perfection, females are more conscious regarding their looks and body image in comparison of males. And present study verified this claim as it was examined that male and females have different have diverse psychological problems in terms of body image.

6.1 Recommendations

Following recommendations were made for future researchers to conduct study on following areas:

- Regarding dieting plans of obese people
- Psychological issues faced by obese people (male and female)
- About stereotypes of female obesity

6.2 Implications of The Study

Following were the implications of the study:

- The occurrence of poor body image demands for interventions and current study has practical implications for the construction of suitable body image interventions for the people who are obese.
- Current study will provide awareness concerning grounds of obesity and its conceivable risk factors.
- Identification of factors helps in promoting positive body image.
- SCT provides an inclusive framework for considerate the factors of obesity and it defines potential mediators and measures to uphold body image.
- It will provide mindfulness about the body image and shapes the confidence to take explicit exercise and diet to overcome the indicators of obesity.

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