

# ASSUMPTION OF BODY IMAGE AWARENESS IN ADOLESCENTS GIRLS

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**ABSTRACT:** *The human body gets constantly change from birth to death. The changes in appearances and physical competencies are intensive particularly in puberty. The rapid physical changes that occurs in puberty have important effects on the body image. Most Adolescent girls are highly aware of their appearances and invest significant cognitive and emotional resources in their relation with the physical body. Body image is a frequent and widespread concern that impacts female adolescents. The article aims to investigate characteristics of body image awareness in adolescent girls as the adolescent girls are becoming highly conscious about the newly developed change in their bodies which might affect their sense of well-being in their life. Dieting and dissatisfaction with body size significantly increased over time and more so for older than younger girls. Region significantly moderated the effect of grade level regarding dissatisfaction with body size but not dieting. Adolescent female's perceptions of their appearance were unchanged over time, region and grade level.*

## INTRODUCTION

Beauty is the promise of happiness (Edmund Burke 1727–1797). Beauty has always been highly valued human attributes, assumed to be connected with happiness, intelligence, and success. Most of today's postindustrial societies share this mindset, and the ongoing obsession with physical appearance might be more intense than ever. The "Appearance Culture" the ceaseless flow of messages regarding how we should and should not look, exerts constant pressure. The body is "Malleable" and is something that ought to be controlled and gets constantly improve, by making changes like the way we look through exercise, dieting, beauty treatments, liposuction, muscle-building supplements, anabolic androgenic steroids, plastic surgery, etc. The overall message is toxic, though clear: If you aren't good-looking, you just haven't tried hard enough. In this context, it is no wonder that having a negative body image (i.e. having negative thoughts and feelings about one's body and appearance also feeling uncomfortable and awkward about their body) is so common that it has been referred to as Normative.

Body image is, how and what one thinks and feel about her /his body. It includes the picture of the body in his/her mind, which might or might not match his/her body's actual shape, size and weight. Therefore, body image plays key role for adolescent students in their physical look and psychological wellbeing. Body image is defined as a self-attitude towards one's body, be it with size, shape or aesthetics (Cash, T. and Prunzinsky, T, 2004). Some of the aspects that the broader term body image attempts to cover are: weight satisfaction, size perception accuracy, body satisfaction, appearance satisfaction, appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, body esteem, body concern, body image disturbance, and body image disorder etc. to name a few.

Body weight is associated with body image and health status of students. Body weight is one of the parameters which indicate youthfulness. Perfect shape of body is prime importance for the adolescent students. Body-image may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that represents how individuals think, feel, and behave with regard to their own physical attributes (Muth & Cash, 1997). Muth and Cash talk about two facts of body image attitude and they are Evaluation (satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's physical attributes) and Affect (experience of discrete emotions).

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood. It is usually associated with the teenage years but it's physical, psychological or cultural expressions may begin earlier and end later. The word "adolescence" comes from the Latin *adolescere*, which means "to grow up". A thorough understanding of adolescence in society depends on information from various perspectives, including psychology, biology, history, sociology, education and anthropology. Within all of these perspectives, adolescence is viewed as transitional period between childhood and adulthood whose cultural purpose is the preparation of children for adult roles. (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004) The concept of adolescence and the term "teenagers" seem to have originated within Western culture. American people expect adolescents to achieve autonomy, identity, and independence due to their individualistic culture. This context facilitates a focus of attention on the physical body which is analyzed, compared and evaluated against the appearance of peers and the social norms. Body image, as "a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about own body", becomes one of the central focus of adolescents (Grogan, 2008). The perceptive dimension refers to the mental representation of the physical body. Thoughts and feelings contribute to the attitude dimension. Regarding the attitude towards body, researchers distinguish between appraisal of appearance (satisfaction / dissatisfaction) and the importance placed on appearance (Cash & Prunzinski, 2002).

Adolescents stage is the stage in the life in which physical body, mind, and social life gets change. They are particularly vulnerable to the messages conveyed by appearance culture. Body weight plays key role for adolescent students for their physical look and psychological wellbeing. Body image is perception of individual's thinking. Perception of body image is change from time to time due to change in physical appearance and mood of individual. Body image is also affected by change in environment and social cultures. Positive body image is directly associated with good mood of individual. A clear, true perception of one's, shape, feeling proud and accepting their unique body and refusing to spend their valuable time in getting worried about food, weight and calories.

In India, girls are conscious about their body a lot. Previous research has shown that girls are not satisfied with their body image. Indian adolescent girls are skipping their meal rather than doing physical exercise (Shah & Hasmukh 2012).

Adolescence is an important period for forming views about oneself and social-cultural thoughts. (Harter 1999) refers to this process as the "Construction of the self" as individuals are discovering who they are and how they fit into the world during this stage. Studies show that, in adolescence, Body Image Awareness is more relevant to compare the adulthood.

Beauty and physical attraction have always been highly valued human attributes, the body is the first thing perceived in social interaction. The body looks is always in the limelight and opens to others evaluations. Body image is how and what one thinks and feel about her /his body. It includes the picture of the body in his/her mind, which might or might not match his/her body's actual shape, size and weight. Body-image may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that represents how individuals think, feel and behave with regard to their own physical attributes (Muth & Cash, 1997). Muth and Cash mentioned about two facts of body image attitude. They are EVALUATION (satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's physical attributes) and Affect (experience/result of discrete emotions). Undue concern about one's body image is one of the psychological problems. This body dissatisfaction is associated with marked emotional distress, appearance rumination, and unnecessary cosmetic surgery (Ohring, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999). A large portion of adolescent's girls reports significantly body dissatisfaction about their body (Thomas, heinberg Altabe & Tantleff – Dunn, 1999). According to (Drewnowski & Calnan et. al., 1987) research has indicated that about 50% of both adolescents and pre-adolescents are torn between their own actual body image and their perceptions. A recent study that was conducted on 400 adolescents (200 boys and 200 girls) in Udaipur city, Rajasthan, indicated that body image has a significant effect on adolescent's psychological well-being. Boys scored higher on psychological well-being than girls. When it came to self-confidence, gender had no significant effects. However, it was found that adolescents who had a better body image also had better self-confidence rates (Chawra, Dubey and Sharma, 2014).

The nurturing of a healthy body image is a challenge during adolescence (Holmqvist K, Frisen A 2012), particularly for girls (Wojtowicz AE, von Ranson KM 2012). For instance, an Australian survey of 14,461 young people aged 15–19 years found that 42.1 % of adolescent females were concerned about body image and body image was the third major issue of personal concern (behind coping with stress and school/study problems) Mission Australia: Youth Survey(2013). Among adolescent females, body dissatisfaction is associated with impaired emotional well-being, low self-esteem, elevated depressive symptoms, low physical activity and disordered eating (Coker E, Abraham S 2014)

Research on the body image of adolescent females has predominantly focused on the early to middle adolescent period and has produced conflicting findings. For example, a study of Australian girls in Grades 8 and 10, where data were collected at two time points over 12 months, found a significant decrease in body satisfaction (Abbott BD, Barber BL, Dziurawiec S.2012) An earlier 5- year longitudinal study (Rosenblum GD, Lewis M,1999). found that body satisfaction decreased for girls between the ages of 13 and 15 years and stabilised between the ages of 15 and 18 years. Another study reported that body satisfaction was stable in a group of 10–15-year-old girls followed over a 3-year period (Cattarin JA, Thompson JK,1994) In one study that has examined transitions into young adulthood, a 10-year study in the US found that body dissatisfaction increased between middle school and high school and increased further during the transition to young adulthood, (Bucchianeri MM, Arikian AJ, Hannan PJ, Eisenberg ME, Neumark-Sztainer D.2013)

There has also been little examination of body image perceptions among the various subgroups within the adolescent female population. In particular, examination of regional differences in body image perceptions among adolescent females is scarce (Austin SB, Haines J, Veugelers PJ 2009) Compared with adolescents living in urban areas, those living in rural areas have higher rates of overweight and obesity (Bruner MW, Lawson J, Pickett W, Boyce W, Janssen I.2008)

The relevance of appearance magazines to body image is evident in a recent survey of adolescent girls: 69% reported that magazine pictures influence their idea of the perfect body shape, and 47% claimed that the pictures influenced them to want to diet to lose weight (Field et al., 1999). Body dissatisfaction has been more common among females (Feingold & Mazzella, 1998) and has been frequently indicated by concerns to lose weight (J. K. Thompson et al., 1999).

Due to over consciousness, students go into depression and anxiety also. Usually it is observed that female Indian adolescents are more conscious to control their weight by restricting diet rather than doing physical exercises. Adolescents are aware about harmful consequences of overweight and obesity. As concluded from the review of research study, "Adolescents girls are conscious about their body even in India perspective content".

Because of the media, girls are under gigantic pressure to be thin and sexy, especially when we are young, still impressionable, and susceptible to believing everything we see. The promotion of the thin, sexy ideal in our culture has created a situation where most girls and women don't like their bodies. Ultimately, no one is immune to the power and persuasion of advertiser's messages. Research continues to support the facts that media tremendously impacts the ideals of American society. For the impressionable adolescent girl, this can be detrimental to both mental and physical wellness. Body dissatisfaction caused by the media can lead to unhealthy behaviors, including eating disorders, low self-esteem, and continuous feelings of insecurity and inferiority.

Adolescent females experience early and increasing body size dissatisfaction and dieting as they age, but stable perceptions of physical appearance. Differences across time, region and grade level were found among adolescent females on body size and dieting behaviour, but not physical appearance. Age and geographic region are important considerations for the timing and targeting of interventions to address body image concerns. Adolescent girls face considerable risk for the development of clinical eating disorders due to intense body dissatisfaction and pressure from peers to "look" a particular way; however, disordered eating and dieting behaviors that do not meet full clinical criteria for eating disorder diagnoses are much more common. (Croll J, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M, Ireland M, J Adolesc.2002).

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