

Body Image and Weight Concern among Pakistani Adolescent Females

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ABSTRACT

Body image is usually measured in terms of weight status of an individual revealing its association with body satisfaction status. It has been observed in numerous cultural communities that a direct relationship between weight status and body dissatisfaction begins to develop in children entering puberty. This study was conducted among the female adolescents of Islamia Girls College Quetta. The participants included in this study were selected randomly keeping the sample size 100. Study was conducted with the help of a self-developed validated questionnaire and measured BMI category to find association between weight status and body dissatisfaction. Obtained results revealed that a high percentage of female adolescents were obese (62%) and (27%) were under the category of underweight because of their mal adaptive eating patterns leading to increased level of body dissatisfaction and also because of high levels of internalization and social comparison.

KEYWORDS

BMI; Weight; Adolescent; Pakistani.

INTRODUCTION

Schilder defined body appearance as a psychosocial aspect in which an individual forms a picture of his or her body in the mind [1]. Body image influence many features of human behaviour such as feelings emotions, mindset, relationships etc. Therefore, effects of body image on an individual's personality is prominent and extensive [2]. Body image is usually measured in terms of weight status of an individual revealing its association with body satisfaction status. It has been observed in numerous cultural communities that a direct link between weight status and body dissatisfaction begins to develop in children entering puberty [3-14]. Body image is perceived on the basis of individuals weight whether he or she is underweight, over or obese and usually a fat body has been discouraged or criticized among adolescent [15-17]. A number of studies confirmed that overweight or obese adolescence indicates high levels of body dissatisfaction in both sexes [8, 11, 18-21]. There may be a number of sociocultural and physical factors such as malnourished diet, decreased exercise and unhealthy weight control responsible for weight gain in ado-

lescents leading to body dissatisfaction [22-25]. Due to lack of reliability in measurement scales, we face a number of limitations in terms of socio-cultural background of the studied participants in investigating body image and body dissatisfaction relationship. Presently in Pakistan there is insufficient understanding and scarce literature available about how and when exactly weight concern is established in female adolescents. Therefore in this study we aimed to describe body image size perception among Pakistani adolescent females and its affiliation with weight status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adolescent female students of Islamia Girls College Quetta was included in this study. Informed consent was obtained from these students selected at random keeping the sample size 100. Study was conducted with the help of a self-developed validated questionnaire designed to find information about eating patterns of individual participants and their perception regarding their body image. BMIs of the individuals

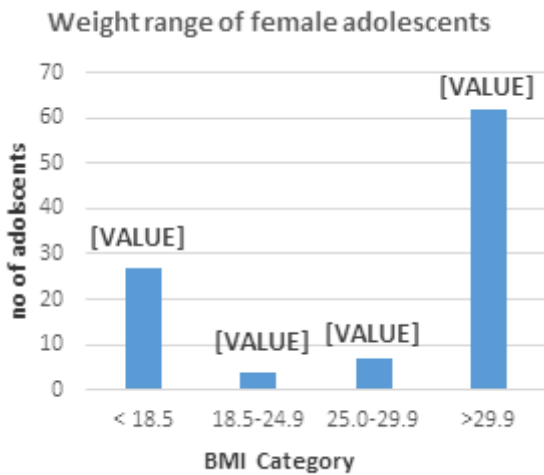
were calculated. Adolescents were also categorized as normal, under/overweight and obese. Statistical analysis of the data was done by means of Microsoft excel.

RESULTS

Out of 100 adolescent’s females, 62% was obese while 27% was underweight out of the total n= 100 as shown in (Table 1) and (Graph 1).

Table 1: Weight Range of Female Adolescents.

S.no	BMI category	Weight range	No of adolescents (n=100)
1	< 18.5	Under weight	27
2	18.5-24.9	Normal	4
3	25.0-29.9	Over weight	7
4	>29.9	Obese	62



Graph 1: Weight range of female adolescents based on their BMI category. 92% of teenagers were not satisfied with their body image while a very low percentage (8%) of females were satisfied with their body as indicated in (Table 2) and (Graph 2).

Table 2: Body Image Satisfaction of Adolescents.

S.no	Body image satisfaction status	No of adolescent (%) (n=100)
1	Satisfied	8
2	Dissatisfied	92

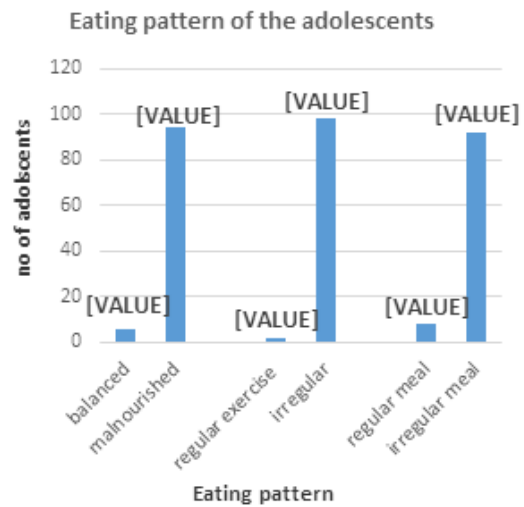


Graph 2: Body image satisfaction status of adolescents.

Eating patterns of 100 adolescents were given in (Table 3) and (Graph 3).

Table 3: Eating Pattern of the Adolescents.

S.no	Eating pattern	No of adolescent (n=100)
1	Diet plan	
	Balanced	6
	Malnourished	94
2	Exercise	
	Regular	2
	Irregular/none	98
3	Meal times	
	Regular three times a day	8
	Irregular i.e. skipping meals	92

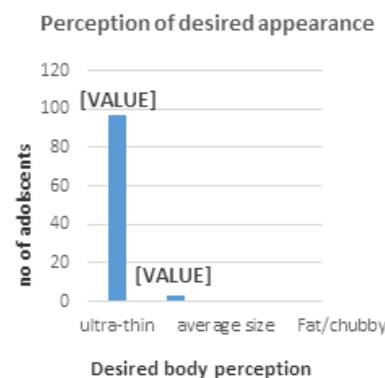


Graph 3: Eating Pattern of the Adolescents.

Perception of desired appearance among the 100 adolescents is given in (Table 4) and (Graph 4).

Table 4: Perception of Desired Appearance among Adolescents.

S.no	Perception of desired appearance	No of adolescent (n=100)
1	Ultra-thin	97
2	Average sized	3
3	Fat /chubby	0



Graph 4: Perception of desired appearance.

DISCUSSION

Unsurprisingly, we found a high percentage of female adolescents to be obese (62%) and (27%) to be underweight. A very small proportion of adolescents were found to be under the category of normal and overweight as indicated in (Table 1). The reason for this increased weight status is associated with their relative eating patterns as (Table 3) clearly depicted that a large percentage of these females were on a diet and were found to be malnourished and does not fulfil their daily nutritional requirements as a result either these Pakistani adolescents were underweight or obese. No exercise followed by irregular meal times also contribute towards their rapid weight gain and loss. Factors such as cultural norms, media influences, and religious practices may also be held accountable for their weight status. Currently very little have been discovered regarding increasing weight associated body dissatisfaction among Pakistani adolescents in the past. Our findings indicates that high rate of body dissatisfaction (92%) is associated with body image perception. Particularly during this phase of growth, adolescents develops self-awareness about their body size or physical appearance which ultimately effects their attitude towards their body size. As it is apparent that underweight and obese adolescent females appear to suffer from body dissatisfaction. Besides, societal norms executed through media, magazines, TV, films, advertisements etc. underlines that female self-esteem is merely based on their physical appearance and reflects a prevailing image of female beauty [28, 29]. For example according to a study it was reported that almost 76% of female characters in television sitcoms were below normal weight [30] that is often more than 20% underweight [31]. Unrealistic media images created through, digital alteration, concealing and surgery were adopted as standards for women self-evaluation [32]. Therefore in such circumstances it is important to establish early interventions to aid adolescent females to recognize and distinguish between a realistic and unrealistic body images [33]. 97% of the adolescents desired to have ultra-thin body size as shown in (Table 4). Thus, it comes as no great surprise that adolescent girls believed that magazine pictures influenced their idea of ideal body shape, and wished to lose weight as a result [34]. Public assessment may be an important mechanism for adverse effects of the media on women's body image. As studies reported that as soon as attractive media models are presented it triggers comparison automatically for women [35, 36]. However there were number of limitations in this study such as participants were mostly middle-class, and all were attending a single-sex college etc. but still the obtained results could be fruitful on giving adolescents tools to deconstruct the so called "ideal body" mentality.

CONCLUSION

Data from this study revealed that adolescent girls' perceptions of their attractiveness may be attributable to increasing social comparison with media models. Awareness of body image size and increasing body dissatisfaction with higher weight status is established among adolescent females in this population. Therefore requires interventions to reduce concerns regarding weight status to achieve an ideal body which does not exists.

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