

## MIRROR IMAGES AND FRIEND COMPARISONS: UNDERSTANDING BODY IMAGE, SOCIALIZING, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the differences in body image, socializing, and academic achievement between genders and across different age groups among university students. An independent samples t-test was employed to analyze the data, revealing significant disparities in perceptions based on these variables. The analysis highlighted that women perceive their body image, socializing, and academic achievement differently compared to men, with women reporting lower scores. This finding was substantiated by significant results from both the equal variances assumed ( $t(104) = -8.362, p < .001$ ) and not assumed ( $t(77) = -14.000, p < .001$ ) t-tests, with a mean difference of  $-0.71795$ . Additionally, the study examined age-based differences, indicating that older students perceive these aspects more positively than their younger counterparts. The results were confirmed by significant t-test values assuming equal variances ( $t(104) = 6.107, p < .001$ ) and not assuming equal variances ( $t(77) = 10.224, p < .001$ ), with a mean difference of  $1.51282$ . Educational achievement was also positively related with both body image satisfaction ( $r = 0.78$ ) and socializing patterns ( $r = 0.79$ ); correlations being highly significant at  $p < .001$ . Nevertheless, the strength of correlation between body image satisfaction and socializing patterns was considered weak ( $r = 0.093$ ) such that; it did not reach statistical significance level ( $p = 0.067$ ). These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the distinct challenges faced by different demographic groups in the university setting, promoting a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.*

### Key words

Body Image, Socializing, Academic Achievement, Gender Differences and Age Differences,

### Background of the study

Body image is a multifaceted, subjective concept. It includes a person's views and self-perceptions regarding their physical appearance. The two primary facets of Attitudes towards one's body are assessed and invested in. The term "evaluation" describes the judgmental ideas and attitudes one has regarding their physical appearance. The cognitive, behavioural, and emotional weight that one assigns to one's body while assessing oneself is known as body image investment. Understanding body image as a continuum that ranges from minimal disruption to severe disturbance is helpful. Body esteem is a different way of thinking about how someone thinks about their body. It incorporates how someone feels about their physical attractiveness (Brennan et al., 2010). It is well known that a person's body image has a significant impact on a number of aspects of their life (Yadav, 2017).

According to Wilson, Latner, and Hayashi (2013), having a negative body image has an adverse effect on all major facets of life, including psychological and physical functioning. Numerous studies have connected body dissatisfaction to low self-esteem (e.g., Van den Berg, Mond, Eisenberg, Ackard, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2010), depressive

symptoms (e.g., Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015; Xie et al., 2010), and unfavourable health outcomes (e.g., Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D'Agostino, 2006; Markey & Markey, 2005) and decreased exercise behaviour among other things. According to a US survey, 94% of women report having a poor body image and desiring to change one portion of their body because they lack confidence. This indicates that body image is a very serious problem among females. According to Ratnasari et al. (2021), 98% of women also acknowledge that they have negative thoughts about their looks or body shape at least once a day.

Young children build their self-concepts primarily within the setting of their families; this includes their perceptions of their bodies as well as those of their classmates. We are aware that familial socialisation processes, which start as early as preschool, have an impact on aspects of body-related self-concept, including sexuality and early indications of preferred body size. Negative body image in adolescence is also linked to family communication practices, including body mocking and weight comments. However, little is known about how early childhood family processes influence the development of body image (Liechty et al., 2016).

How one's physical experience and academic goals connect is still up for debate. More research with bigger sample sizes is required to advance our understanding of this subject (Halliwell et al., 2014). In addition, the research on body image ought to take a more comprehensive examination of the idea, including healthy body image. This newer concept goes beyond appearance pleasure and marks a significant departure from the earlier emphasis on physical disturbances (Avalos et al., 2005; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). *Positive body image* is a complex term that encompasses various factors such as body appreciation and acceptance, body image flexibility, inner positivity, a broad conceptualization of beauty, and body functionality orientation. It can be summarized as a feeling of love and respect for one's body. (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015; Menzel & Levine, 2011; Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012; Halliwell, 2015). Conducted in the university setting, The current study aimed to analyze the impact of body image on the socialization and academic achievement of students.

### **Body Image and peer pressure**

The psychological phenomena of body image were first described in 1935 by Austrian psychiatrist Paul Ferdinand. *Body image* is a complex concept that encompasses several aspects related to both the physical and mental aspects of an individual. Individuals who have a poor perception of their body may have low self-esteem, reduced life satisfaction, and feelings of inferiority and are more likely to be at risk for depression (Goswami et al., 2012). *Peer influence* is a common phenomenon that occurs regularly in many settings. However, its contribution to the development of detrimental behaviours has received less scrutiny (Meyer & Gast, 2008). Certain women value the viewpoints of their peers, especially in regard to topics such as body image (Carey et al., 2011). College students often spend a significant amount of time with their peers in various contexts, such as their homes, schools, and social environments, in comparison to younger adolescents and children (Gruber, 2008).

Peer pressure is widespread, body dissatisfaction is common, and eating disorders are definitely a potential issue on college campuses. Research has shown that the immediate surroundings in which young girls spend the majority of their time have a notable influence on the development of several body image concerns, which are connected to their general dissatisfaction with their bodies (Hutchinson & Rapee, 2007). Research conducted by Stice and Shaw (2002) has proposed that body dissatisfaction

might potentially stem from psychological factors. Shroff and Thompson (2006) conducted studies indicating that peer pressure might pose a potential threat to body image, eating disorders, and self-esteem. The research conducted by Shomaker and Furman (2007) revealed that young women's body satisfaction was adversely affected by the influence of peers of the same sex, who exerted pressure on them to maintain a thin physique. Dohnt and Tiggemann (2005) examined the correlation between girls' self-assessment of body dissatisfaction and the perception of their classmates. Regression testing revealed an upward correlation between the girls' body dissatisfaction and the level of discontent among their peers about their body image.

### **Body image and social health**

Socio-cultural surroundings may contribute to the growth and maintenance of body dissatisfaction by transmitting norms of thinness through the mass media, specifically advertising by the fashion, beauty, and cosmetic industries, which stand to gain from individuals' body dissatisfaction.

In addition, students who were able to reject appearance norms (Schrick et al., 2012) or who were less concerned with their physical appearance (Miles, 2009; Tallat et al., 2017) were found to fare better academically. However, Elsherif and Abdelraof's (2018) investigation did not find these outcomes since the negative link between body dissatisfaction and academic behaviour did not reach a significance level. In conclusion, it is still being determined if physical experience influences academic goals. Further research on this subject with bigger sample sizes is required to advance our understanding. Positive body image should also be included in the research on body image, as it should be a more comprehensive examination of the idea. This recent construct denotes a significant departure from a primary focus on bodily problems and goes beyond appearance pleasure (Araujo, 2019).

Parents have a crucial impact on the development of one's body image. A comprehensive study of parenting treatments conducted by Hart, Cornell, Damiano, and Paxton (2015) found that parents may play an active role in helping school-aged children and adolescents prevent body dissatisfaction. Authorities in the disciplines of body image and eating disorders assert that parents have a significant impact on their children's level of contentment with their bodies. Additional research conducted by Hart et al. (2014) used a Delphi technique to identify parental practices that may be employed to prevent or decrease body dissatisfaction in preschool-aged children. This study provides more evidence for the viewpoint above. However, there needs to be more knowledge about the ways in which families influence the socialisation of children below the age of eight in relation to their body image. Body dissatisfaction and body concerns in college students are linked to reduced functioning and academic achievement due to the potential development of social anxiety related to one's physical appearance, which in turn may result in school absence. Research has shown a significant association between negative body image and many factors, such as academic success, graduation rates, motivation, and the likelihood of quitting a course, particularly among women (Liechty et al., 2016).

Body image is strongly associated with stereotypical behaviour in social interaction. There is a claim that some stimulus characteristics linked to physical attractiveness could serve as discriminative cues, causing some people to behave differently than others. It makes sense that people would react differently to a person depending on how physically appealing they are, as physical attractiveness is linked to powerful societal stereotypes. In turn, these reactions have an impact on the person's behaviour and psychological growth. Alternatively, as symbolic interaction theory

predicts, role expectations and role performance with reference groups interact to shape how the concept of "self" emerges from social exchanges with others. Therefore, during the communication process, certain attitudes and perceptions will be "reflected" by both attractive and unattractive persons when they connect with their reference group (Adam, 2010).

### **Body image and academic achievement**

Because body image affects self-esteem and self-efficacy, it can also have detrimental, indirect consequences on academic achievement. According to Putwain et al. (2012), self-efficacy beliefs are a good indicator of academic success in the classroom. Negative body image can negatively impact academic performance and self-esteem (Shloim et al., 2015). According to Elsherif and Abdelraof (2018), self-esteem is impacted by body image, while self-esteem is impacted by academic accomplishment. In addition to impairing academic achievement and self-worth, a negative body image can lead to unsatisfactory school experiences in general. Many academic domains, including grade point averages, college completion rates, and standardized test scores, may be negatively impacted by body image, which can also lead to higher absenteeism.

Research on the advantages of having a positive body image is less common in the literature on body image. Nonetheless, an increasing number of academics are using the positive psychology perspective of body appreciation to analyze the concept of a healthy body image. Although research in this area is still in its infancy, studies show that body appreciation is linked to several favourable life outcomes, such as intuitive nutrition, improved sexual function, and high self-esteem (Latty, 2020).

Research on the connections between body appreciation and elements linked to academic results, such as academic self-efficacy and self-esteem, is sparse despite encouraging findings on the benefits of body appreciation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the potential correlations between American college students' self-reported GPA, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, and body appreciation. The study's conclusions suggested possible pathways via which body image affects academic performance (Latty, 2020).

### **Statement of the problem**

Campus life is the primary social hub for university students. Primarily, their classmates serve as social objects. Peer communication influences the development of body images, ideal body shape standards, and attention to beauty (Webb et al., 2015). Teens, as opposed to children, are more self-conscious about how they look, how other people see them, and how they perceive any "shortcomings" or "imperfections" on the outside. The mocking of their appearance by peers intensifies youngsters' self-awareness of their "imperfections" (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Research has indicated that participation in obesity reviews by female college students can be a favourable indicator of a negative physical self-image (Liu, 2021). According to Xing's (2005) Social Comparison Theory, individuals become more motivated to engage in upward social comparison and self-evaluation, hearing negative remarks or discussing one's body image. The current study aims to analyze how one's body image is impacted in comparison to ideal body image standards among university students. The study focuses on socialization and academic performance influenced by one's body image in the universities.

### **Research objectives**

1. To examine the impact of peer comparisons on body image
2. To investigate the association between body image satisfaction and socialization patterns among university students



3. To assess the relationship between body image satisfaction and academic performance.
4. To explore the mediating effects of body image satisfaction on the relationship between socializing and academic achievement.

## Methods and Materials

### Research Design

The present study utilizes a quantitative research approach to investigate the complex relationships between body image, social behaviors, and academic performance among university students. It especially investigates how mirror images and comparisons with friends affect these variables. The quantitative methodology was used to methodically quantify and analyze the linkages and interactions between these dimensions. Survey technique will be applied to collect data from the university students of UOkara and apply IRT as a Scale validation Tool. Under this framework, researchers plan to methodically research the relationships between body image and peer comparisons with social behaviors and academic achievement.

### Sampling Strategy

In this quantitative study, paying attention to the sample selection is important because it enables a proper generalization of responses made by respondents at large. This was achieved by implementing probability sampling, ensuring that each student from the population had a more or less equal chance of being selected as a respondent. The Random Cross-Sectional Survey Design, also used as an effortless data collection method in De Vos (1998: 127) process a lot of researchers resort to frequently.

#### 3.4 Population

Males and females students from five faculties of the University of Okara comprising 22,000 were part of this research cohort.

#### 3.5 Size of the Sample

A sample of 396 students will be selected from this demographic utilizing a stratified random selection technique. This guarantees that the sample contains all departments as well as going half male (198)/half female (198). By filling the gaps in their body image, socializing behaviors and educational performance may make an all-encompassing comprehension of them among college students

### Data Analysis

**Descriptive statistics** For each of the variables, descriptive statistics (frequencies for nominal data and mean/standard deviation) will be summarized to indicate an overview of demographic characteristics, body image satisfaction, socializing pattern and academic achievement.

**Correlation Analysis** Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to discover the relationships between body image, socializing patterns and their impact on academic achievement.

**Comparative Analysis** Comparison of Intervening and Outcome Variables: To evaluate differences among male students (intervention group) and female student control groups in relation to body image satisfaction, levels of socializing behaviors or academic achievement, independent t-tests will be used.

### Data Analysis And findings

The gathered data was inputted into dedicated software designed for the social sciences. The study was conducted using tables and graphs, employing statistical methods to calculate percentages, frequencies, and mean scores.

**Table 1 What is your age?**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
18-20	76	19.4
20-23	183	46.7
24-26	45	11.5
27 and above	88	22.4

The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority fall within the 20-23 age range, with 183 individuals making up 46.7% of the total. This is followed by the 27 and above category, comprising 88 respondents or 22.4%. The 18-20 age group accounts for 76 participants, representing 19.4%, while the 24-26 age group is the smallest, with 45 individuals or 11.5%. These figures highlight that nearly half of the respondents are between 20 and 23 years old, indicating a young demographic predominantly participating in the survey.

**Table 2 What is your gender?**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Male	177	45.2
Female	215	54.8

The gender distribution among the respondents indicates a slightly higher participation from females, with 215 individuals accounting for 54.8% of the total. Males make up the remaining 45.2%, with 177 participants. This data suggests a relatively balanced gender representation, with a slight predominance of female respondents.

**Table 3 What is your current year of study?**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree	242	61.7
Master's degree	79	20.2
Professional degree	49	12.5
Doctorate degree	22	5.6

The data on the respondents' current year of study reveals that the majority are pursuing a bachelor's degree, with 242 individuals making up 61.7% of the total. Following this, 79 respondents, or 20.2%, are engaged in master's degree programs. Professional degree students account for 49 participants, representing 12.5%, while those pursuing a doctorate degree are the least represented, with 22 individuals making up

5.6%. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are in the early stages of their higher education journey.

**Table 4 T-test analyzing the difference in body image, socializing, and academic achievement between genders**

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed )	Mean Differenc e	Std. Error Differenc e	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
What is Equal your gender ?	variance s assumed	117.11 1	.00 0	-8.362	104	.000	-.71795	.08586	.8882 0	-.5476 9
	Equal variance s not assumed			- 14.00 0	77.00 0	.000	-.71795	.05128	.8200 6	-.6158 3

The table shows the results of an independent samples t-test analyzing the difference in body image, socializing, and academic achievement between genders. The Levene's test indicates a significant difference in variances ( $F=117.111$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The t-test results show a significant difference in means between genders, both assuming equal variances ( $t(104)=-8.362$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and not assuming equal variances ( $t(77)=-14.000$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The mean difference is  $-0.71795$ , with women having lower scores, indicating they may perceive their body image, socializing, and academic achievement differently than men. The confidence intervals confirm the statistical significance of these findings.

**Table 5 Correlations**

		Body Image Satisfaction	Socializing Patterns	Educational Achievements
Body Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	392		
Socializing Patterns	Pearson Correlation	.093	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.067		
	N	392	392	
Educational Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.78	0.79	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	392	392	392

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

The analysis reveals that there is a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between educational achievement and both body image satisfaction and socializing patterns. Specifically, educational achievement has a correlation of 0.78 with body image satisfaction and 0.79 with socializing patterns, indicating that higher levels of satisfaction with body image and more positive socializing behaviors are strongly associated with

better educational outcomes. The  $p < 0.000$ , confirming that these relationships are statistically significant. However, the relationship between body image satisfaction and socializing patterns is weak, with a correlation of 0.093, and it is not statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.067. This suggests that while both body image satisfaction and socializing patterns are important factors in educational success, they do not strongly influence each other.

## Conclusion

The results show that school-aged children tend to have gender-specific body image and socialization types of educational achievements. Women also had more negative attitudes towards the three areas than men. The data was analyzed using independent samples t-tests and the study revealed differences to be statistically significant. An equal variances assumed t-test was utilized to produce an outcome of:  $t = -8.362$ ,  $p < .001$ , all  $t(77) < -10.000$  for the equal variances not assumed t-test).  $p < .001$ . The results of these nine runs indicate a rather large discrepancy in the data as seen by different models (mean difference to 0.71795). Given that this consistent pattern identified by both t-test variations, it seems trustworthy as far as the perceptions of women in these four dimensions are some how less positive than those of men.

Practically, this means women tend to view themselves and their social interactions with each other more negatively than men. The men and women in the study could have been influenced by broader societal pressures, such as feeling pressured to maintain a certain body image that disproportionately affects females, social norms or academic expectations. For instance, women may face greater societal pressure related to body image, which can affect their self-esteem and overall university experience. Additionally, socialization and academic achievement might be influenced by gendered expectations and biases, further contributing to the observed differences.

In addition to gender differences, the study also explores how perceptions vary with age among university students. The analysis revealed that older students generally hold more positive views regarding body image, socializing, and academic achievement compared to their younger peers. The results were statistically significant, as evidenced by t-tests with both equal variances assumed ( $t(104) = 6.107$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and not assumed ( $t(77) = 10.224$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and a mean difference of 1.51282. This suggests that as students advance in age, they tend to develop a more positive outlook on their university experiences.

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