

IMPACT OF SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE ON SPORTS PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

With reference to Pakistan, it has been observed that young female students are reluctant to take part in sports because of social pressures that affect their health in the long run. This research was conducted to examine the effect of self-esteem and body image on sports participation of female athletes mainly with two objectives i.e. to quantify the relationship between self-esteem and body image of sports participation of females and to quantify the impact of self-esteem and body image as motivators for sports participation of females. The purpose of selecting this topic was that both self-esteem and body image can play a major role to motivate females participate in sports. By applying the simple random sampling, a total of 200 female students were selected from four different universities to participate in the study. These female students belonged to the physical education department of different universities of Lahore, Pakistan. Adapted questionnaires of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1965) and Offer Scale of Body-image (1972) were used to get the opinion of the participants. Results indicated a positively significant relationship between self-esteem and sports participation of female students as the values of the correlation were 0.317. In case of body image, positive significant relationship was observed between body image and sports participation as the value of correlation was 0.442. The research concluded that female students having high level of self-esteem and perfect body image, were more enthusiastic to participate in sports. The findings will help the physical trainers, instructors and teachers to find out the causes from the females who have low self-esteem.

Keywords: Sports, Females, Student Athletes, Self Esteem, Body Image

1. Introduction

The term self-esteem refers to, "how we value ourselves; it is how we perceive our value to the world and how valuable we think" we are to others. Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of self-worth. It means that how much someone matters for himself/herself and to the other

people. (Gillen, 2015) It means that up to what extent a person gives value to own abilities and praises him/her. It is reported in different researchers that those individuals who have high self-esteem, they are happier in their lives as compared to the less confident people. Moreover, positive self-esteem gives us

strength to handle difficult situations.

On the other hand, the term 'Body Image' defines as, "The perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception. These feelings can be positive, negative or both and are influenced by individual and environmental factors. (Zhang, 2015).

Body image refers to a person's image, which is the objective perception and the subjective assessment of the features of his body. It covers appearance, body shape, physical strength, health and other aspects, and the degree of self-awareness. These aspects affect a person's emotions and health behavior, such as weight control, personal and adaptation, psychological stress, self-development and interpersonal relationships (Wang et al., 2016). Besides self-esteem, a perfect body image is also very important especially for females. While discussing the body image, it is necessary to mention 'body type' here because by identifying the body type of an individual, it gets easier for the train-

ers to train the person for sports and games. Body type is broadly divided into three categories; ectomorph, endomorph and mesomorph. Lean and long body with difficult building muscles refers to ectomorph. Big fat body, commonly pear-shaped having greater tendency of storing body fat is known as endomorph and well-built muscular body with high metabolism rate known as mesomorph. Ectomorphs are great at handling starches into vitality and your quick digestion system implies that you smolder off fat effectively. (SNAPE, 2016) The drawback is that individual have to fight for the battle to build up on the grounds that your quick jerk strands are immature. Endomorphs are adroit at putting away fuel, with muscle and fat packed in the lower body. The endomorph is the hardest body sort to have as far as dealing with your weight and general wellness, yet to get a more adjusted body; you ought to concentrate on building up your shoulders and stripping without end overabundance fat from your lower body. On contrary, mesomorph have better body shape as compared to other two and they just have to maintain their natural

athletic structure with proper eating habits and training. (SNAPE, 2016).

Imperfect body image, eating problems and hormonal disorders lead to depression in females that affect their further life (Jack, 2011). Previous studies have indicated that young girls between 11 to 15 years of age, show serious self-esteem issues related to their body image. (Basich, 2006). During this time of age, different changes occur in their bodies and if they do not take care of their health by doing proper exercise, it spoils their body image. So, it can be said that self-esteem and body image are directly linked with each other and sports participation brings positive changes in both. Causes of low self-esteem are linked with the body image of young females. In order to increase self-esteem and improve body image of young females, it is necessary to appreciate their participation in sports and physical activities. (Wang, 2016), adolescence is the period of changes and transition. Due to these transitions, youth has to struggle in dealing with their physical and social changes. Sometimes these

changes even lead to stress and low self-esteem. Among different areas of self-esteem, physical self-esteem affects young females the most. (Bowker, 2006) It includes the physical attractiveness and competence. Researchers show that those adults who take part in sports and physical activities are more confident about their physical self-esteem and body image. Such adults are more satisfied with their physical appearance. Physical self-esteem or body image are inter-changeable concepts of one concept as per the literature. The relationship of self-esteem and body image in case of young females is not difficult to understand. (Bowker, 2006).

American Association of Women published a research in 1992 in which they mentioned that girls who have low self-esteem at the age of 11 or 12, face critical time in in the later years of life as well. (Basich, 2006). It happens because it is the age of transition. A survey showed that 60% girls of 5th grade told that they feel good about themselves but in case of 6th grade, only 37% girls gave the similar statement. (Basich, 2006). Body image does

not only relate to body weight of a person but it also linked with the feelings of a person about his/her appearance.

Girls are usually more concerned about their body image because of the friends. It has been observed as well that overweight girls have low self-esteem and they are less confident towards their body image, which can be improved by participating in sports and physical activities. (Basich, 2006) For this purpose, it is important to provide various opportunities to young girls. In Pakistan, due to the socio-culture factors, young girls often feel hesitation while participating in sports. Pakistani society is a patriarchal society which is embedded in the values, traditions and culture. Here, the status of girls and women is not homogenous due to which they are excluded from different activities like sports (Ahmed & Akram Ansari, 2011).

After examining different research, it can be assumed that previous researches mainly focused on adolescent girls and level of self-esteem and body image. This research is measuring the

impacts of self-esteem and body image on females' sports participation of university students who are mostly from 18 to 25 years old. Secondly, in Pakistan, no such study has been conducted yet that discussed these two variables with reference to sports participation. Foreign authors worked on the related topics but no study as such has been observed in Pakistan on this topic. Moreover, this research is analyzing the variables in opposite manner. However, previous studies stress on the impacts of sports participation on self-esteem and body image of females. By the help of this study, researcher enables to highlight the importance of sports participation for girls at all level. In Pakistan, females usually leave sports in their young age and it later leads to health problems, low self-esteem and improper body image. Therefore, this study will highlight the impacts of the body image on physical activities of young girls. With reference to Pakistan, it has been observed that most of the young girls are reluctant to take part in sports because of social pressures that affect their health in the long run. This research examined the relationship of self-

esteem and body image with sports participation of young females. The purpose of selecting this topic is that both self-esteem and body image can play a major role to motivate young girls to participate in sports and games.

2. Literature Review

In a study by Calfas and Taylor (1994), the effects of physical activities on different psychological variables in adolescents were discussed. Researchers' indicates that both body and mind play a vital role to be in a perfect state of wellness and good health. Along with physical health, mental and psychological health is also important to be maintained. So, it is important to focus on the psychological effects of physical activities. The selected psychological variables for this study were depression, stress, self-esteem, anger, anxiety and intellectual functioning. For this purpose, articles of the last 10 years were selected. It was found out in the study that physical activity positively affects the youth in terms of psychological variables. Therefore, it is necessary to engage adolescents in such kind of activities at least for 30 minutes a day.

In another research, Jennifer and Abraham (2000) discussed the eating attitudes and improving body image with reference to the new educational approach which focused on self-esteem. Researchers explained that school-based programs helped prevent students from eating disorders and also improve the body image of female students. In this study, researchers introduced a new approach and they call it self-esteem-based approach. The purpose of this new strategy was to improve the body image and eating habits among school girls and boys by improving self-esteem. For this purpose, 470 secondary school students were selected. An educational program was conducted by the regular teachers in the school in which they guided the students about improved body image. Results of the study demonstrated that the offered program highly improved the body image of the students and it changed the level of self-esteem as well.

Tiggemann (2001) studied the impact of leisure activities on the body image, eating disorder and self-esteem of adolescent

girls. Questionnaires were distributed among 306 girls that contained the questions related to eating disorder, self-esteem, leisure activities and body image. It was found out that girls were more concerned about their academic success. Yet a strong relationship was observed between body image and self-esteem as motivators to participate in sports.

Tracy and Erkut (2002) described in their research that athletics is one of the most prominent activities in United States. It is a fact that healthy bodies produce healthy minds. So, students are encouraged to participate in the sports and other physical activities. School-based sports programs are helpful in increasing self-esteem of students and provide various benefits to them in terms of their health. In this study, data was collected from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. In all groups, it was observed that physical well-being was an influential mediator.

Harrison and Narayan (2003) explored that whether participating in school sports activi-

ties as a team is associated with high psychological functioning as compared to participate in such activities alone. A sample of 50168 students was selected and students were classified into different groups based upon their sports activities. It was observed that students who participate alone and in group, both had higher odds as compared to those who take good food. However, the students who are involved both in sports and healthy self-image are better than those who consume alcohol.

Bowker, Gadbois and Cornock (2003) discussed two variables in their study; sports participation and self-esteem. These variables were examined as gender role orientations. The basic aim of this study was to analyze the gender roles, gender orientation and sports participation to examine self-esteem. For this purpose, researchers took a sample of 100 students. There was no gender differences observed in case of self-worth. Participants who took part in sports activities showed higher level of self-esteem. Harrison and Narayan (2003) explored that whether participating in school sports activi-

ties as a team is associated with high psychological functioning as compared to participate in such activities alone. A sample of 50168 students was selected and students were classified into different groups based upon their sports activities. It was observed that students who participate alone and in group, both had higher odds as compared to those who take good food. However, the students who are involved both in sports and healthy self-image are better than those who consume alcohol.

Dishman et al. (2006) studied the mediating role of self-concept and self-esteem in cross-sectional relations of sports with reference to depression. For this research, 1250 girls were selected. A strong and positive relationship was observed between physical self-concept and self-esteem. Physical activities were reported to be helpful in reducing the risk of depression.

Grogan (2006) discussed the contemporary perspectives of body image and health in her research. It was examined by the researcher that over the past two decades, there was a significant

increase in the research of body image among men and women. Topics like body image, body satisfaction and health have been discussed in a great deal. Special articles are published on effects of body image, health and socio-cultural influence.

Daniels and Leaper (2006) investigated the relationship between sports participation, peer acceptance and self-esteem in both boys and girls. In this study, peer acceptance played a mediating role among self-esteem and sports participation. The sample of both boys and girls was selected for this study. Results of the study revealed that peer acceptance mediates the relationship between self-esteem and sports participation in case of both boys and girls. Findings of the study explained that peers play an important role in changing the social attitude about the participation of girls in sports.

Burgess, (2006) did their research on the effects of aerobics on the body image of the adolescent girls. It was examined that body image dissatisfaction, physical perception and physical activities are inter-linked with each

other. In this research, researchers conducted a six week aerobic dance program. In this program, 50 school girls participated. These girls were divided into two different groups. In one group, girls were taught physical activities and in the second groups, girls were taught aerobic dance. After 12 weeks, significant changes were observed in those girls who took part in the aerobic dance. They reported to be more satisfied about the body image and physical perception.

Lindsay, Babiss and James (2009) examined sports participation as a protective factor to release depression. Researcher also examined self-esteem as a mediating factor in case of social support. The purpose of this study was to examine the sports participation as a protective factor in order to reduce depression. In this research, multivariate regression analysis was used on the data to explore to link between depression and increased participation in sports. It was concluded that adolescents must be offered with different opportunities to participate in sports. In this way, they can reduce depression and increase self-esteem.

Hardin and Jennifer (2009) discussed the influence of media and gender role on the opinion of gender-appropriate sports. In this research, researchers collected a data of 340 students and examined that how sports is examined in US under the light of gender norms. To support the study, researchers examined the variables by applying social learning theory. Researchers suggested that until mediated images of women will be more added in sports, up till then, the increasing rate of females' participation in sports will be less affected.

Tommy, Yngvar and Stephen (2011) discussed the relationship between self-esteem and physical activity in adolescents. They investigated that if physical fitness mediates then what will be relationship between physical activity and physical self-perception. Results of this study explained that upper body strength and cardiovascular strength is the unique mediator among this relationship in case of both genders. On the basis of above mentioned literature, it can be concluded that sports participation of females help them to grow as it increases their confidence and improve their body image as

well. To support the literature review, this research is going to include two theories as well; self-discrepancy theory and self-esteem theory by Rosenberg.

2.1. Self-Discrepancy Theory

This theory, developed by Edward Tory Higgins in 1987. In self-discrepancy theory (SDT), the term 'self' is defined as difficult and multifaceted. However, there are different domains which use to define 'self' and there are different states of 'self' described by researchers. Higgins explains that different consequences arise when people compare one state of self with the other. SDT focuses on three domains of self; actual, ought and ideal. The actual self describes as the perception of an individual of his own characteristics. The ideal self refers to the characteristics that a person wants to possess or aspire to have. 'Ought self' refers to those attributes that a person takes as an obligation to possess. (Vartanian, 2012) SDT suggests that individuals are motivated to lessen the gap and to remove differences in self-guides. Following is a model by which clear understanding of SDT can be developed.

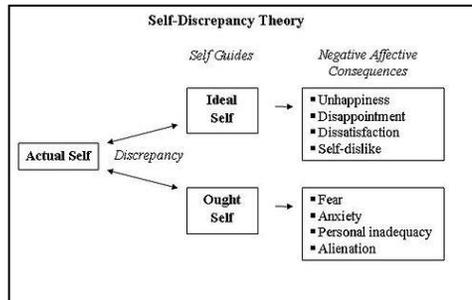


Figure 1. Self-Discrepancy model illustrating the outcome of actual vs ideal and actual vs ought discrepancies.

2.2 Self-Esteem Theory

The other theory that can support the present research is known as 'Self-esteem theory.' Since the past few decades, 'self-esteem' is being observed as an important part of research in the construction of psychological theories. Self-esteem is basically an aesthetic phenomenon and it can be understood through instrumental and intrinsic values. To understand the concept of self-esteem, it is also necessary to study the related terms such as self-competence and self-liking. Self-competence refers to evaluative experience of an individual as a causal agent that can bring the desired outcomes. It is basically a positive or negative positioning as a source of effective-

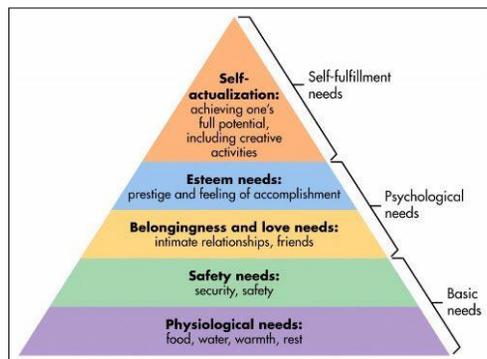
ness. On the other hand, self-liking is defined as the characteristics and actions of a person that reflects the intrinsic value. Both elements are equally important in formulating self-esteem. (Tafarodi & Swann, 2000). One can understand the concept of self-esteem by studying the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is briefly explained below.

2.3 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was presented by Abraham Maslow in 1943. Maslow proposed this theory in his paper named as A theory of Human Motivation. According to him, human beings possess different motivation systems. He says that people are basically motivated to achieve various needs. When a person fulfils his one need, he moves to the second need. Furthermore, Maslow included five motivational needs in his research that is usually described by the help of a pyramid. (McLeod, 2007) A 5-stage model was proposed by him that divided into basic and psychological and growth needs. It can be shown in the figure below that Maslow divided this hierarchal model into five different stages. (McLeod, 2007) The

first stage deals with physiological needs that include basic necessities which are important for living. These needs include food, water, shelter, drink and sleep. After physiological needs, there are safety needs which include security, protection, order and freedom. Third stage includes belongingness needs. It includes friendship needs, relationship needs and love. At the fourth level, there are *esteem needs* which include achievement, self-respect, status, dominance and self-esteem. Finally the fifth stage deal with self-actualization needs, which includes the needs of personal growth and self-realization. With respect to this research, esteem needs are the most relevant. Esteem needs are basically the psychological needs. This research is discussing the impact of self-esteem and body image on females' sports participation. It is a fact that self-esteem and perfect body image helps women to take part in sports with full enthusiasm. When a person accomplishes esteem needs then he can reach to next level that is actually the stage of self-actualization. (McLeod, 2007) It refers to the needs for the personal growth and self-discovery.

It helps people to move in different directions for their betterment.



3. METHODOLOGY

This study carried out using cross sectional research design with the following objectives:

- To quantify the relationship between self-esteem and body image on sports participation of female athletes.

The researcher formulated the following hypotheses:

- There will be a significant relationship between self-esteem, body image and sports participation.

3.1. Sampling

In this research, population of the study was all those female students who were studying Health and Physical Education at BS level in Lahore, Pakistan. Female students were selected

from four universities. A total number of 200 female students who fulfill the criteria (Female students who are studying physical education in their curriculum) were selected using simple random sampling technique.

3.2 Data Collection

Three different scales were used for data collection. These scales included 1) Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1965) consisting of 10 statements five worded negatively and five positively was used to measure participants' self-esteem; 2) Offer Scale of Body-image (Davies & Furnham, 1972) this scale consists of 20 items which measured the participants' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's body-image; and 3) to measure the sports participation of females, (youth in ice land, 2010) scale was used. For an assessment of sports or physical activity the statements "do you participate in sports activity" was used because it requires the participant to give an exact number of weekly sports activities.

4. Findings

Correlation Analysis was performed to see the relationship

between self-esteem and body image and sports participation of female students.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Beta	Sig.
Self Esteem	4.2690	.45682	.123	.058
Body Image	3.0600	.61831	.496	.005

***Dependent Variable: Sports Participation**

Based on regression analysis, it can be concluded that a positive and significant relationship was observed between self-esteem and sports participation of female athletes ($p=0.058$). In case of body image also, a significantly positive relationship was observed between body image and sports participation ($p=0.005$).

5. Discussion

The results indicate that self-esteem is related with sports participation of female students. Females with high level of self-esteem have a greater interest to participate in sports activities. Likewise, body image also indicated a significantly positive relationship between sports participation of female students. With reference to self-esteem, participants were agreed with most of the statements. For example, "I keep a positive attitude toward

myself." Results also demonstrated that the dominant category in this research was "strongly agreed" as 40.5% participants fall into this category. There were 9.5% who gave neutral response, 29.5% were agree, 16% were strongly disagree and 4.5% were disagreed with the statement. With reference to this question, most of the participants were strongly agreed. It shows that most of the female participants are positive towards themselves. Results also indicated that participants showed positive response towards statement, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Results of the survey demonstrated that the dominant category in this research was "agreed" as 54.5% participants fall into this category. There were 25% who gave neutral response, 6% were strongly agree, 6% were strongly disagree and 8.% were disagreed with the statement. In another question, table no. 4.2.4 describes the response of the participants towards statement, "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others." Results of the survey demonstrated that the dominant category in this research was "agreed" as 53.5% partici-

pants fall into this category. There were 21% who gave neutral response, 10.5% were strongly agree, 10.5% were strongly disagree and 4.5% were disagreed with the statement. All these questions show the attitude of females towards themselves. It can be observed in these questions that women are highly satisfied with them and they have strong level of self-esteem.

To sum up the entire discussion, it can be said that sports play a vital role in the lives of female university students and self-esteem and body image leave a significant impact on the participation of female students. Pre-adulthood is difficult for the youngsters and particularly for the females. They turn into the casualty of various infections prior when compared with men. So, it is important to inspire young girls towards sports and diversions. According to the certainties distributed by World Health Organization (WHO), bosom malignancy is the main illnesses and reason for death among ladies in the world. Females become the victim of different diseases as early as males. In addition, cardiovas-

cular illnesses are additionally basic in ladies. In young ladies, osteoporosis, stoutness, mental disarranges, dejection, substance utilize, pregnancy and maternal wellbeing are the other significant explanations behind serious ailment or even demise. To reduce the ratio of diseases in females, it is highly necessary to motive them towards sports. But unfortunately, it has been observed that in the entire world, sports participation of females is quite less than males. Most of the girls quit sports because of the social pressures, safety issues and lack of opportunities. This drop-out of females from sports is quite alarming and it is necessary to motivate them towards sports. For this purpose, this research focused on the impact of self-esteem and body image on sports participation of females. For this purpose, researcher first of all examined different researches in the section of literature review. Moreover self-discrepancy theory, self-esteem theory and Maslow theory of hierarchal needs were used as a supporting material. These theories worked as a base for this research.

6. Conclusion

Self-esteem and body image had a significant effect on sports participation of female athletes. At the same time, self-esteem and body image - the mediating effect of self-esteem was established on physical appearance and sports participation was a key factor.

7. Limitations

There were some limitations that were inevitable in this study:

- Data was collected from only one university;
- Athletic teams as a whole were contacted;
- Athletes with physical dissatisfaction were less likely to participate; and
- Only volunteers took part in the study, who may not represent the entire female athlete population.

8. Recommendations

- The study must be replicated with a large sample size at a larger scale.
- The sample was limited to the female athletes. Future studies must involve male athletes to make gender comparisons.

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