

Factors Influencing Perceptions of Undergraduate Students about Idealized Body Image: A Cross-Sectional Study in Peshawar

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To compare the perceived factors influencing the idealized body image among medical and non-medical students in Peshawar

Study Design: Cross sectional study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at the two Universities and a Medical College in Peshawar August 2018 to October 2018.

Materials and Methods: Using Convenient sampling techniques, a total of 422 of medical and non-medical students were approached to be part of the study. The students during their break time were requested to take part in the study. Data Collection was based on indigenous questionnaire, coded and entered into SPSS version 20 and analyzed for descriptive statistics.

Results: Result of the study indicated that out of 422 students 50.7% were non-medical and 49.3% were medical. Most of them were very conscious about their body image. Regarding body weight, 133(63.9%) of medical students perceived that they have normal body weight as compare to 120 (56.1%) non-medical students. However 43(20.1%) of non-medical student considered themselves as underweight as compared to 17(8.2%) of medical students which shows a significant difference ($p=0.002$). Student, regardless of their field of study often compared themselves with one or another perceived idealized person for body image. However, most (82.2% medical and 87.4% non-medical) of them were satisfied with their body image. There was no significant ($p=0.05$) difference regarding factors influencing the perceptions of medical and non-medical students about body image. Nearly 26% of the students were of the view that representation of females in media is a healthy trend which needs to be followed. In relationship to body weight and self-esteem, 30(14.4%) and 42(19.6%) of medical and non-medical students respectively were of the views that body weight has negatively affected their self-esteem indicating that students have similar impression regardless of their field of study ($p=0.29$).

Conclusion: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of medical and non-medical students regarding idealized body image and its associated influencing factors, however, in comparison to medical students, a greater proportion of non-medical students of students considered themselves as underweight.

Key Words: Idealized body image, body weight, Perception, self-esteem, Depression

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INTRODUCTION

Body image is an important aspect of self-representation and self-evaluation throughout the life. The imagination about own body is one of multidimensional assembling of satisfaction levels

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regarding general appearance, shape and size.¹ It become more important when youngster perceive defect in their appearance as it also affect the behavior of the individual.² The satisfaction level of the individual is more linked with subjective meaning of their appearance as compared to objective reality.³ On other hand self-perceptions about body weight acts as indicator for nutrition status, thus one can plan to maintain the ideal body weight accordingly.⁴ The students are more conscious about their body image therefore their satisfaction level also varies. The medical students especially female have different perception about ideal body image.⁵ A study conducted among female students in Mangalore, India where, 25(17%) were undernourished and 11(7.5%) were overweight respectively. Regarding the satisfaction 98(66.7%) of them were satisfied with their image and 30 (20.4 %) were not satisfied and wanted to reduce weight. Although they had normal BMI, but still

42(28.6%) of students were skipping their meal.⁶ Another study conducted in Saudi Arabia where 60.1% of students had shown dissatisfaction with their body image. In same area study on medical students shown that only 26.4% medical students are satisfied with their body image. Among medical students 18.6% perceived that they are too much lean.⁷ In India more than 50% of the female students are dissatisfied with their body image. Most of dissatisfied female students belongs to urban area as compared to those belonged to rural area ($p < 0.001$).⁸ There was no positive association between BMI and satisfaction with body image. Media has vital influential role to change the perception of the individual regarding body image. A study from Pakistan revealed that media has an overall negative effect on individuals' body image.⁹ It is highlighted that person's perceived appearance, feelings related to their physical features and contribution to the relationships with others were the main aspects which influences a person's body image. Having negative perception about own body image among medical profession, could have negative impact on health services to the patients. This could influence the overall performance of individual especially among students and working individuals. It is also proven that cultural differences play a significant role in deciding the 'ideal' body appearance. Perception of young adolescence is mostly based on personal interpretation and it varies from person to person and this perception is influenced by variety of factors. This study aimed to know Factors influencing perceptions of undergraduate students about idealized body image.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional study conducted among medical and non-medical students. Using convenient sampling the students from Sarhad University, Peshawar University and Khyber Medical College were requested to take part in the study. Using the W.H.O software for sample size calculation, the sample size came to be 422 assuming the confidence level (95%) anticipated population proportion⁸ of ($p = 0.52$), study power ($d = 95\%$) and 10% loss of follow-up. Data were collected on a self-administered questionnaire. After coding the variables data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20 and presented in terms of mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS

A total of 422 students (mean age 21.42 ± 1.68 years) out of whom 214(50.7%) were non-medical student and 208(49.3%) were medical students. Among medical students, 52(25.0%) shown extreme consciousness about your physical appearance as compare to 74 (34.6%) of non-medical students ($p = 0.07$).

Regarding body weight, 133(63.9%) of medical students perceived that they have normal body weight

as compare to 120 (56.1%) non-medical students, however 43(20.1%) of non-medical student considered themselves as underweight as compared to 17(8.2%) of medical students which has shown a significant difference ($p = 0.002$). Among Medical students 58(27.9%) perceived that they were overweight as compare to 51(23.8%) of non-medical students. Nearly 2/5th of the students from both groups compared themselves with perceived idealized person for body image whereas 42(20.2%) and 58(27.1%) of medical and non-medical students respectively compared themselves with others. However most (82.2% medical and 87.4% non-medical) of the students were happy with their body image

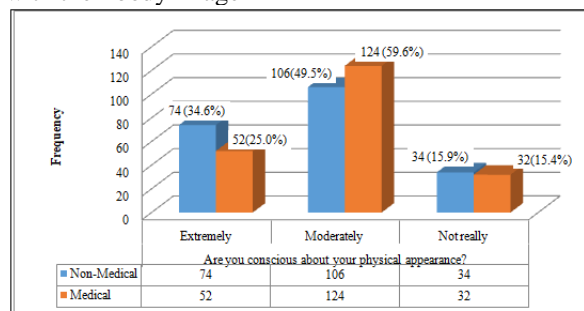


Figure No.1: Comparing the medical and non medical student's concerns about their physical appearance ($p = 0.07$)

Table No.1: Student's intentions about their body image

Variables	Medical Students	Non-Medical Students	P-Value
Students perception about their body weight			0.002
Normal	133(63.9%)	120 (56.1%)	
Underweight	17(8.2%)	43 (20.1%)	
Overweight	58(27.9%)	51(23.8%)	
Comparing themselves with perceived idealized person for body image			0.40
Yes	85(40.9%)	84 (39.3%)	
No	123(59.1%)	130 (60.7%)	
Comparing themselves with others and "come up short"?			
Yes	42(20.2%)	58(27.1%)	0.90
No	166(79.8%)	156(72.9%)	
Status of happiness with their body looks			
Yes	171(82.2%)	187 (87.4%)	0.08
No	37(17.8%)	27(12.6%)	

Regarding the factors influencing perception about body image, 82(38.3%) of non-medical students reported that they feel insecure around the people as compared to 93(44.7%) medical students, whereas an equal number 45(21.0%) of both groups of the student reported that their perception about body image is influenced by Peer pressure. Feeling embarrassed was

the least influencing factors while other factors accounted for 65(30.4%) and 44(21.2%) among non-medical and medical respectively. When they were asked whether, they compared their body weight with others, 25(11.7%); 21(10.1%) of both non-medical and medical students did compare with frequency of 65(30.4%) and 68(32.7%) said some time they compared their body image. (See figure 3)

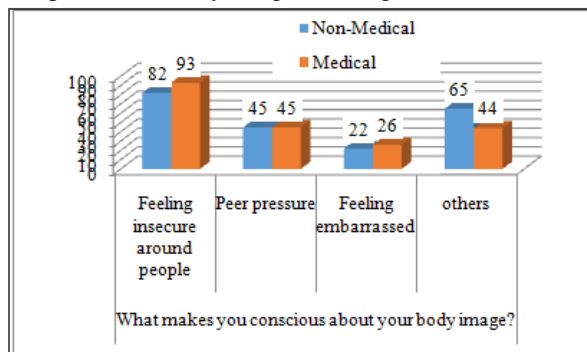


Figure No.2: Factors influencing the perceptions about body image

Table No.2: Status of Student's satisfaction to their body image and role of media in changing the perception

Variables	Responses			P-Value
	Yes	No	I don't know/ Not concerned	
Do you think media's representation of females is a healthy image to follow				
Non-Medical students	56 (26.2%)	106 (49.5%)	52 (24.3%)	0.58
Medical students	55 (26.4%)	94 (45.2%)	59(28.4%)	
Have you ever felt depressed or upset in any way about your body?				
Non-Medical students	81 (37.9%)	114(53.3%)	19 (8.9%)	0.15
Medical students	71(34.1%)	106(51.0%)	31 (14.9%)	
Do you think that reduction in body weight would boost your self-confidence?				
Non-Medical students	76(35.5%)	84 (39.3%)	54 (25.2%)	0.90
Medical students	95(45.7%)	54 (26.0%)	59 (28.4%)	

Only 26% of each groups of the students agreed that "media's representation of females is a healthy image to be follow" however 106(49.5%) of non-medical and 94(45.2%) of medical students did not agree with this statement. Similarly 71(34.1%) and 81(37.9%) of

medical and non-medical students felt depressed or upset in any way about their body indicating that they were not satisfied with their body image. Furthermore 76 (35.5%) and 95(45.7%) of both group of the student were of the view that reduction in body weight would boost their self-confidence. There was no significant difference among the study groups ($p=0.90$)

Relationship of body weight and self-esteem was asked from the students. The result revealed that an equal proportion 42(19.6%) of nonmedical and 30(14.4%) on Medical students were of the views that body weight has negatively affected their self-esteem, but most of them were uncertain about the effect. The perceptions of students in this regards did not vary significantly ($p=0.29$)

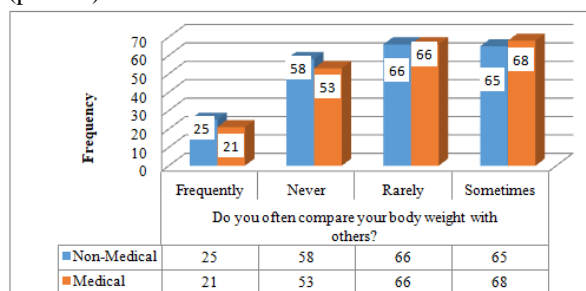


Figure No. 3: Intension of students to compare their body weight with others

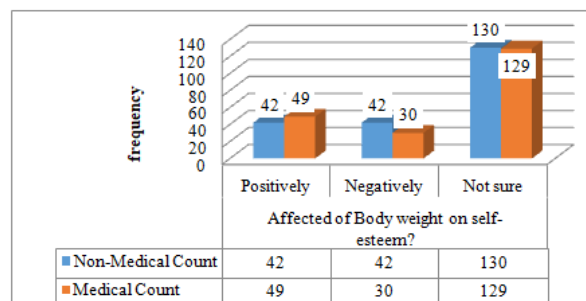


Figure No.4: Perceptions of students regarding affect of body weight on self-esteem

DISCUSSION

Students being adolescent represent a pivotal stage in the development of positive or negative body image.^{2 10-12} It becomes more vital in case of medical students especially for female students, because they interact with patients of various personalities where their own self-esteem may play a vital role in communication and treatment of the patients.¹³ The consequences of having negative perceptions about body image can lead to physical and psychological implications.^{2 14} The present study aimed to determine the perception of undergraduate students regarding idealized body image and factors influencing the idealized body image. Results of the study indicate that out of 422 students (50.7% non-medical and 49.3% medical) a major proportions of student were very conscious about their

body image. Regarding body weight, 133(63.9%) of medical students perceived that they have normal body weight as compared to 120 (56.1%) non-medical students. However 43(20.1%) of non-medical student considered themselves as underweight as compared to 17(8.2%) of medical students which shows a significant difference ($p=0.002$). However, most (82.2% medical and 87.4% non-medical) of them were satisfied with their body image. The study results were in consistence with other results. A study in India shows that 51.04% of medical students were satisfied with their body image.⁵ Similar study from Iran indicates that only 26.4% of medical students were satisfied with their body image, 55% of them perceived self as overweight/obese and 18.6% perceived themselves as too thin.⁷ Apart from adolescent students, study on nine-grade students indicates 74.7% satisfaction rate¹⁵, reveals that the perception about body image changes over time and individual develops more specification and determinants for idolized body image and as result their satisfaction rate declines. Females are more concerns about their body image as compare to male.¹⁶ Result of present study indicates that students, regardless of their field compared themselves with perceived idealized person or others for body image. This finding is well explained by Yoonhyeung Choi. He reported that an individual's perception about body image is influenced by imaginary or comparison with idealized third person and this tendency is greater among female.¹⁷ The comparison tendencies among male and female reveals that female are self-critical and male are self-hopeful.¹⁸ There was no significant ($p=0.05$) difference regarding factors influencing the perceptions of medical and non-medical students about body image. Nearly 26% of the students were of the view that media's representation of females is a healthy image to be followed. A positive relationship of body image is also reported by other researchers. It is also reported that media exposure play an important role in personality development, peer pressure and development of sense of identity to make the transition into an idealized body image.¹⁹ Results regarding relationship of body weight and self-esteem indicates that 30(14.4%) and 42(19.6%) of medical and non-medical students were of the views that body weight has negatively affected their self-esteem indicating that students have similar impression regardless of their field ($p=0.29$). It is apparent that there is an association of bodyweight, physical image and psychological status of every individual. Overweight and obesity are indeed inversely related to self-esteem but underweight is also connected with low self-esteem.²⁰

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the perceptions about idealized body weight among medical and non-medical student were significantly varied but they had more or less

similar impression regarding factors influencing the perception of idealized body weight.

Author's Contribution:

Concept & Design of Study:	Saminullah Khan
Drafting:	Sher Bahadur
Data Analysis:	Atta ullah Jan, Rizwan Anwar
Revisiting Critically:	Saminullah Khan
Final Approval of version:	Saminullah Khan

Conflict of Interest: The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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