Investigating Self-esteem and Body Image Concern among Students of Islamic Azad University of Abhar Using Demographic Variables, 2015

Asgari M [1], Amini K [2*]

[1]MSc. Dept. of Nursing, School of Nursing, Abhar Islamic Azad University , Zanjan, Iran
[*2]PhD. Dept. of Nursing, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Zanjan, Iran

Corresponding Author: Dept. of Nursing, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Zanjan, Iran

Email: korosh@zums.ac.ir

Abstract

Background: Two main factors of success and failure of individuals in all different stages of life are considered to be self-esteem and body image.

Objectives: The present study aimed at examining self-esteem and body image concern among students of Islamic Azad University of Abhar based on demographic variables.

Methods: This study was a cross-sectional study conducted in 2015, and participants consisted of 154 male and female students at Islamic Azad University of Abhar-Iran. Stratified random sampling method was used, and samples were chosen from different fields of study. Data were collected using two standard questionnaires, that is, Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES). Data analysis was carried out through SPSS software version 16, descriptive statistics, Chi-square, independent t-test, and ANOVA.

Results: Regarding body image concern, 27.3% of the participants were found to be asymptomatic, and 45.5% of them were found to have symptoms. In addition, 27.3% of the participants were recognized to have a severe disorder. The participants' scores regarding body image concern were found to be significantly different according to age, marital status, field of study, and education level (P<0.05). With respect to self-esteem, 35.1% of the participants were found to have low self-esteem, 32.4% had moderate self-esteem, and 32.5% enjoyed high self-esteem. Furthermore, the participant' self-esteem scores significantly varied in terms of age, marital status, field of study, and education level (P<0.05).

Conclusion: The participant students' Body image concern was found to be high, and their self-esteem was low. It is recommended that university officials and decision-makers in mental health area enhance students' self-esteem and body image as two important factors and make plans considering demographic factors.

Key words: Abhar, body image, Islamic Azad University, self-esteem, student

Introduction

Body image is of great significance in during adolescence, because physical, cognitive, and social changes occur in this evolutionary period [1]. Gorgan (2008) defines body image as" an image of one's perceptions, feelings and thoughts about the body and as an integrity of the body size estimation, emotional evaluation of the shape and size of the body is embodied" [2]. It is believed that dissatisfaction with body is a major concern affecting eating disorders, sexual disorders, [3] and illnesses associated with deformity [4]. Lack of satisfaction with body also leads to other mental disorders such as mood disorder, drug

abuse, social anxiety disorder [5], sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors [6].

Momeni et al. (2012) reported that 27.8% of Iranian students had mild to severe mental dissatisfaction with their body [7]. Lack of content with body in the cases of Najafabad and Afshari students were found to be 34.4% [8] and 51% [9], respectively, Dehghani et al.'s (2012) findings showed that the high average image satisfaction in individuals involving in physical appearance indicates that they tend to spend more time, effort, and mental energy on their look and are looking for attraction reflecting the low satisfaction of physical image in people involving in this area [9]. Based on Wood's studies, body image dissatisfaction has a negative impact on social interactions [10]. Demographic factors such as sex, age, and celibacy have been reported to influence body image [11]. The findings if a number of studies specifically emphasize that the prevalence of body image concern is higher in student groups and teenagers compared to other social groups [7,12]. Research findings demonstrate that self-esteem is closely related to dissatisfaction and, it is an important predictor of perceived dissatisfaction [13]. Self-esteem refers to individuals' degree of confirmation, acceptance, and sense of value [14]. Self-esteem is deemed to have a very close relationship with individual adaptation methods, and it determines mental health and mental development of individuals [13]. Research findings revealed that people with high self-esteem as opposed to those with low self-esteem had more resistance to problems increasing their survival and success [15]. In addition, social and work disabilities such as absence of work, reduced productivity, low quality of life, social isolation, unemployment, marital problems, depression, and suicide are negative impacts of lack of self-esteem [16].

In a study on the relationship between self-esteem and mental health of adolescents, the need for self-esteem has been found to be the main psychological need in 87.4% of participants [17]. According to statistics, there has been an 18% increase in self-esteem in New Zealand. Chinawa et al. reported that 3.6 % of adolescents in Nigeria suffer from low self-esteem [18]. In Akolechy's

(2011) review on high school adolescents in Sabzevar, 14% of them were determined to have a satisfactory level of self-esteem [19]. According to Hosseini et al.'s (2007) study on students of Tehran University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, 55% of students were reported to have high self-esteem, and 45% of them were found to have low self-esteem (916). Pik et al. (2012) concluded that many factors including biological, psychological, interpersonal experiences, environmental, and cultural factors affect self-esteem [20]. Social factors might be considered the underlying reason behind various degree of self-esteem in the aforementioned statistical findings. It seems that investigating underlying variables influencing self-esteem and body image concern and having statistical information can help in strategic health planning process. This article is part of a research project approved by Islamic Azad University of Abhar, and the data relevant to the comparison of the prevalence of anxiety disorders resulting from body image and self-esteem in boys and girls is published in the Journal of Behavioral Sciences No. 28 in 2016 in Persian [21]. In this article, body image concern and self-esteem degrees of students of Islamic Azad University of Abhar are presented based on age, marital status, field of study, and educational level.

Methods
A cross-sectional study was carried out in 2015, and 451 students at Islamic Azad University of Abhar participated. The minimum sample size was estimated to be 146 participants based on the average formula and the results of a pilot study conducted on 35 students. Considering the probability of incomplete questionnaires, 165 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 14 questionnaires were incomplete and unanalyzable. Stratified random sampling was based on different academic disciplines.
In order to collect data, ethics code was received from the Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University of Abhar (51204392112224). Obtaining a written permission from authorities, one of the researchers had access to the list of students from each college and determined the share of participants according to number of

students in each college. in particular college a Students' desired number was randomly selected using a random number table. The participants were invited to take part in this study and were provided with the necessary information about the purpose of this study and how to completing questionnaires properly. In the data collection,, we attempted to provide a quiet environment for each student while filling out questionnaires. Data collection tool in this study was an anonymous questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire asked about participants' demographic information including age, gender, marital status, the field of study, and educational level. The second part concerned the BICI, and the third part was the Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire. Body image concern questionnaire is a standard questionnaire containing 19 items that investigates an individual's concern and discontent with his/her appearance. This tool consists of two factors. The first factor refers to dissatisfaction and shame from one's appearance, examination, and concealment of perceived defects. The second factor reveals the degree of concern over body image and its impact on individual and social performances Participants need to answer questions based a 5-point Likert scale ranging from one (never) to five (always). On this scale, the score of one indicates, "I have never had or did not feel this", and the score of five means "I always have this feeling or do it" The total score of the questionnaire varies from 19 to 95. A score below 35 is indicative of an asymptomatic symptom, and the scores from 35 to 42 indicate body-symptomatic concerns. Finally, a score over 42 shows severe symptoms. The credibility and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed in Littleton et al.'s (2008) study on student samples [22]. In Iran, this tool is also psychometric, and the validity and reliability of the tool for society of Iran have been verified [23,24].

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was designed by Rosenberg in 1965 [31], which is a scale with 10 questions investigating the total self-esteem based on self-reporting method. In this scale, multiple-choice questions are used, and the answers include "I am quite agree, agree, disagree, and quite disagree". The score for each question varies from one to four depending on the subject of question. The higher the score in this scale, of the higher self-esteem is. Rosenberg [25] has verified the validity and reliability of this scale. In Iran, the validity and reliability of this scale have also been confirmed [26].

In order to analyze the data, SPSS software version 18 was used, and descriptive statistics were employed to describe the characteristics of research units and their status in the two main variables. In order to compare the units of the research based on the underlying variables, normal distribution was obtained by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and parametric tests such as t-test and unilateral analysis of variance were run.

Results

Out of 151 participants, 51.3% were male, and 77.9% were single. The maximum age range of subjects was between 19 and 28 years old. Most of the participants (79.9%) were studying at university at the time of data collection. Based on the participants' field of study, nursing students (24%) and students majoring in agriculture (5.2%) constituted the highest and the lowest rates of participants, respectively (Table 1). Data analysis revealed that 27.3% of students were asymptomatic, and 45.5% were symptomatic. Additionally, in terms of body image concern, 27.3% of students were found to be highly concerned with their appearance. The findings of self-esteem review demonstrated that 35.1% of the research units had low self-esteem, and 32.4% of them had moderate self-esteem. Finally, 32.5% of participants were found to have high self-esteem (Table 2).

Table 1: absolute and relative frequency of body image disorder and students self-esteem in Abhar Azad University

Variables		Abundance	%
Body image disorder	Asymptomatic	42	27.3
	symptomatic	70	45.5
	severe	42	27.3
Self-esteem	low	54	35.1
	moderate	50	32.4
	high	50	32.5

Table2: Demographic profile table of research units based on some underlying variables

Demographic variables		Self-esteem			Body image disorder		
		-+Average Standard deviation	The statistics	P value	-+Average Standard deviation	The statistics	P value
Sex	**Male**	24.19±4.904	-.330	.042	36.91±8.495	2.743	0.007
	Female	23.95±4.178			40.77±8.977		
Age	**17-19**	26.14±6.085	2.220	.005	40.24±8.549	.755	0.027
	19-21	2.022±3.851			41.19±9.708		
	21-23	24.24±3.691			36.79±8.792		
	>23	24.25±5.123			39.42±7.744		
Field of Study	**Medical (nursing)**	3.309±23.68	2.779	.000	41.24±6.804	1.201	0.034
	Technical Engineering (Industries, Electronics, Mechanics)	4.517±24.04			36.74±9.891		
	Humanities (Business Administration, Accounting)	4.268±19.25			36.38±5.999		
	Agriculture (horticulture)	5.040±25.41			40.46±8.689		
Marital status	**Single**	23.86±4.175	1.166	.026	39.44±8.864	-0.920	0.032
	Married	24.82±5.697			36.50±8.853		
Grade of educational	**Associate degree**	25.44±7.418	1.637	.056	37.56±10.248	1.709	0.040
	Bachelor	4.326±21.24			39.10±9.146		
	Masters	4.228±22.55			37.56±7.116		

Findings of independent t-test and analysis of variance showed a significant difference (p<0.05) between participants' average self-esteem score based on age, marital status, field of study, and educational level. In the scale of body image concern, the average score of subjects was found to be statistically different based on age, marital status, field of study, and academic level (Table 2).

Discussion
In this study, 151 male and female students of Islamic Azad University of Abhar were investigated in terms of body image concern and

self-esteem based on demographic factors. The results indicated that regarding body image concern, 27.3% of student were asymptomatic, and 45.5% of them were symptomatic. In addition, 27.3% of students were found to have severe concerns. Thus, a significant proportion of students at Islamic Azad University of Abhar had concerns about their body image.

Various students' concerns about their appearance has been investigated in a number of studies. For example, in a study conducted by Fortes et al. (2014), adolescents' dissatisfaction was found to be low (16.1%), moderate (8.9%), and severe (5.6%) [27]. In Momeni et al.'s (2016) study, the prevalence of this condition among students of Qazvin's medical sciences was reported to be be 17.8% (mild), 8.5% (moderate), and 1.5% (severe) [7]. Afshri (2016) found that 3.4% of participants had a low dissatisfaction with their body image, and 7% of them were reported to be moderately concerned with their appearance [3]. Moghimian reported the prevalence of this concern among students of Najafabad Azad University to be 34.4% [8]. Examining students in Pakistan, Taghi et al. demonstrated that 78.8% of students were dissatisfied with physical aspects of their appearance [28]. Discrepancy in results of studies on body image concerns can be attributed to difference in instruments and the questionnaire used for screening, socio-cultural context, and investigated populations.

With respect to self-esteem, the results showed that 35.1% of the students had low self-esteem. The adverse effects of low self-esteem include depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders, invasive behaviors, and drug abuse [29]. It is noteworthy that in the literature review, the prevalence of low self-esteem was found to be 3.6%, among Nigerian adolescents, and it was reported to be 18% in New Zealand [18]. In Forthes's (2014) study, 56% of adolescents had low self-esteem [27]. Hosseini (2007) reported 45% [16] of students of Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences in Tehran suffered from low self-esteem. In Aclej's (2011) study on high school students in Sabzevar, 14% of students were reported to have satisfactory self-esteem [19].

In the present study, it was found that single people are more concerned with their appearance than married ones. This result is consistent with Khanjani and Ghazizadeh Hashemi's findings [30,31]. However, Keivan Ara indicated that single people have a better body image than the married [32]. Moreover, the results of this study indicated that body image concern was more common in the 19-21 age range. This finding is confirmed by those of Asnah Ashri and Bajorenson's studies [33,34]. High concern over body shape in adolescents was expected as young people seek to gain identity and make an effort to establish an independent and stable self-identity, thereby looking for a variety of criteria in the outside world and comparing themselves with standards dictated by society [35].

The results were found to be inconsistent with those of Keivan-Ara's studies [32]. Examining the relationship between body image concerns and students' educational level, the findings demonstrated that concern over appearance was more common in undergraduate students, and they were found to have lower self-esteem. Nursing students' constituted 24% of sample and the ubiquity of body image concern was higher in nursing students compared to students with other majors. Other extensive studies need to conduct investigating undergraduate students in order to confirm the findings of this study. Unfortunately, no study has investigated body image concern in the case of undergraduate students to compare and discuss the results of this study regarding this issue.

According to the results of this study, single individuals and students in the 19-21 age range had lower self-esteem. These results are consistent with Forest's findings [36]. People with low self-confidence seem to invest more in their body image as a source of value. When these people get a lot of negative feedback, their self-esteem and self-worth are threatened, thereby trying to maintain the sense of self-esteem by focusing on their appearance [37].

Since the results pertinent to the relationship of one's gender and body image concern and self-esteem are reported in the article published in number 28 in the Journal of Behavioral Sciences, they are not presented in this paper [21]. One of the limitations of this study refers to the possibility of participants' concealing their

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concern over body shape, as data collection method was cognitive. However, attempts were made to minimize the impact of this limitation by observing ethics and ensuring participants that their identity by no means will be revealed.

Students' body image concern was found to be high, while their self-esteem was low. In the light of the findings of this study, university authorities and decision-makers in the areas of students' mental health are recommended that take into account self-esteem and body image concerns and the intervening in demographic variables.

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