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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY APPRECIATION, SELF-ESTEEM, AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students. Grounded in the positive body image framework, which suggests that acceptance and appreciation of one's body contribute to psychological well-being and self-worth, the study aimed to explore how body appreciation is associated with self-esteem and overall quality of life. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from 50 university students through purposive sampling. The sample consisted of an equal number of male and female participants, with the majority belonging to the adult age group. Standardized instruments were administered, including the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS-13), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and an 8-item Quality of Life Scale. Data were analyzed using Pearson product–moment correlation, independent samples t-test, and simple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that body appreciation was positively associated with both self-esteem and quality of life. In addition, body appreciation emerged as a significant positive predictor of self-esteem among the participants. However, the relationship between self-esteem and quality of life appeared relatively weak, and no significant gender differences were observed in body appreciation levels. Overall, the results highlight the importance of fostering positive body image as a factor associated with self-esteem and well-being among university students.

Keywords: *body appreciation, self-esteem, quality of life, positive body image, university students*

Introduction

Body image is a multidimensional construct that reflects an individual's perceptions, attitudes, and feelings toward their own body (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Among its components, body appreciation represents a positive aspect of body image, emphasizing acceptance, respect, and favorable opinions of one's body (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Research suggests that individuals who possess higher body appreciation demonstrate greater psychological well-being and self-worth (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005). Positive body image not only reduces the risk of body dissatisfaction but also contributes to adaptive functioning and life satisfaction (Swami et al., 2013).

Self-esteem, defined as the global evaluation of one's worth, is strongly linked with body appreciation. Individuals with higher levels of body appreciation tend to report higher self-

esteem, indicating that valuing one's body plays a critical role in shaping overall self-concept (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015; Avalos et al., 2005). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that body appreciation predicts self-esteem and serves as a protective factor against negative psychological outcomes, such as depression and anxiety (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004).

Quality of life (QoL) reflects an individual's overall satisfaction with various life domains, including psychological, social, and physical well-being (World Health Organization, 1995). Emerging evidence suggests that positive body image is associated with higher quality of life, as individuals who appreciate their bodies tend to experience greater life satisfaction and well-being (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016). Furthermore, self-esteem has also been shown to contribute to quality of life by promoting resilience and adaptive coping strategies (Diener & Diener, 1995; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Despite the established relationships among these variables, research exploring the interconnections between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life in university students remains limited. Understanding these associations is important, as this population often experiences body image concerns alongside academic and social pressures. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the relationships between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students. Specifically, the study explored whether body appreciation predicts self-esteem, investigated correlations among the three variables, and assessed potential gender differences in body appreciation.

Background

Body image, self-esteem, and quality of life are important psychological constructs that significantly influence young adults' overall well-being. Positive body appreciation, which reflects acceptance and respect for one's body, has been shown to be strongly associated with self-esteem and life satisfaction (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Swami et al., 2013). Research indicates that individuals who appreciate their bodies tend to experience higher psychological well-being and engage more positively in social and academic activities (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015; Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016). Despite the growing evidence on the benefits of body appreciation, limited studies have specifically examined its relationship with self-esteem and quality of life among university students, a population that often faces body image pressures and fluctuating self-worth due to academic, social, and cultural influences. Understanding these associations can inform interventions aimed at promoting mental health, self-confidence, and life satisfaction in young adults.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the positive body image framework (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), which emphasizes that valuing, appreciating, and accepting one's body contributes to psychological well-being and self-worth. According to this framework, individuals who maintain a positive perception of their bodies are more likely to develop higher self-esteem, experience better emotional regulation, and report improved quality of life. The theory also suggests that body appreciation serves as a protective factor against negative psychosocial outcomes and enhances life satisfaction. By applying this framework, the present study examines how body appreciation may predict self-esteem and its relationship with quality of life among university students, providing an empirical basis to understand the psychological benefits of positive body image in a young adult population.

Rationale

Positive body image has been consistently associated with enhanced psychological well-being and self-esteem (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005; Swami et al., 2013; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). However, research focusing specifically on university students remains limited, despite their increased exposure to social, academic, and cultural pressures that can influence perceptions of the body and overall life satisfaction. Investigating how body appreciation relates to self-esteem and quality of life in this population can provide insights into factors that support mental

health and adaptive functioning. Furthermore, examining the predictive role of body appreciation may inform interventions aimed at enhancing self-worth and well-being among young adults.

Literature Review

Positive body image, reflected in body appreciation, is increasingly recognized as a key factor in psychological well-being. Avalos, Tylka, and Wood-Barcalow (2005) demonstrated that individuals with higher body appreciation report greater self-esteem, highlighting the role of self-acceptance in mental health. Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) further emphasized that body appreciation supports adaptive coping strategies and enhances overall self-worth. Beyond self-esteem, body appreciation has been linked to improved quality of life, including emotional and social functioning, in diverse populations (Swami et al., 2013; Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016). Self-esteem itself has a well-established association with life satisfaction and well-being, with longitudinal research showing that higher self-esteem predicts better psychological outcomes over time (Diener & Diener, 1995; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). Although some studies have explored gender differences in body image, findings are mixed, with several reporting minimal variation in body appreciation between male and female university students (Swami et al., 2015; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Collectively, these studies suggest that body appreciation and self-esteem are closely intertwined and contribute meaningfully to an individual's quality of life, making them important constructs to examine in young adult populations.

Methodology

Study Aims and Objectives

The present study aimed to examine the relationships among body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Investigate the relationship between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life using Pearson correlation.
- Examine differences in body appreciation between male and female university students using an independent samples t-test.
- Determine whether body appreciation predicts self-esteem using linear regression analysis.

Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed to explore associations among the study variables at a single point in time.

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students?
- Is there a difference in body appreciation between male and female university students?
- Does body appreciation predict self-esteem among university students?

Hypotheses

Pearson Correlation Hypotheses

- H_0: There is no relationship between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students.
- H_1: There is a relationship between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life among university students.

Independent Samples t-test Hypotheses

- H_0: There is no difference in body appreciation between male and female university students.
- H_1: There is a difference in body appreciation between male and female university students.

Linear Regression Hypotheses

- H_0: Body appreciation does not predict self-esteem among university students.
- H_1: Body appreciation predicts self-esteem among university students.

Operational Definitions of Variables

- **Body Appreciation:** Body appreciation refers to the degree to which individuals accept,

respect, and hold a positive attitude toward their bodies, including valuing functionality over appearance and rejecting unrealistic body ideals. Higher body appreciation indicates a more positive body image (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005).

- **Self-Esteem:** Self-esteem is defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their self-worth and self-acceptance, reflecting the degree to which a person values themselves and feels confident in their abilities (Rosenberg, 1965). Higher self-esteem indicates greater self-worth and positive self-regard.
- **Quality of Life:** Quality of life is the individual's perceived satisfaction and well-being across multiple life domains, including physical, psychological, and social aspects. Higher quality of life reflects greater overall well-being and life satisfaction (WHOQOL Group, 1995).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion:** University students aged 18–25 years, willing to participate, and able to complete self-report questionnaires.
- **Exclusion:** Students with known psychiatric disorders or unwilling to participate.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants meeting the inclusion criteria, ensuring relevance to the research objectives.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized participants' characteristics. Pearson correlation examined relationships among body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life. Independent samples t-test assessed gender differences in body appreciation. Simple linear regression tested whether body appreciation predicts self-esteem.

Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The study followed ethical guidelines for psychological research.

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Results

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants (N=50)

Characteristics		n	%
Gender			
	Male	25	50
	Female	25	50
Age			
	Teenager	3	6
	Adult	47	94

The table shows the demographic characteristics of study participants. The results show females (n= 25) are equal as compared to males (n= 25). Regarding the age distribution, adults made up the bulk of participants (n = 47, 94%), while teenagers made up a smaller percentage (n = 3, 6%). Adults made up the majority of age group in the sample, which was generally equally divided by gender.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and reliabilities of sample for study variables (N=50)

Scales	N	Mean	Mod	S.D	α	Min	Max	Skew	Kur	W

BAS	50	50.06	42	8.360	.882	33	65	-.022	-.692	.977
RSES	50	17.80	15	3.833	.623	11	29	.689	.691	.958
QOL	50	30.32	28	5.512	.866	19	40	-.333	-.362	.965

Table 3

Correlation Analysis Between Body Appreciation, Self-Esteem and Quality of Life (N=50)

Variables	1	2	3
Body Appreciation	-	.458**	.571**
Self-Esteem		-	.226
Quality Of Life			-

Note. **p< .001

This table shows correlation analysis between self-esteem, body appreciation, and quality of life. The result shows that there is a positive, moderate and significant correlation between body appreciation and self-esteem (r=.458**, p< .001). The result shows that there is a positive, moderate and significant correlation between body appreciation and quality of life (r=.571**, p< .001). The result shows that there is a positive, weak and insignificant correlation between quality of life and self-esteem (r=.226, p< .001).

Table 4

Independent Sample T-Test Analysis of Comparison of Body Appreciation Between Male and Female (N=50)

Variables	Male		Female				Confidence Intervals		
	M	SD	M	SD	P	t(df)	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Cohen's D
Body Appreciation	50.08	8.24	50.04	8.64	.987	.017 (48)	-4.764	4.844	.005

Note. p>0.01

Male and female participants' scores on body appreciation were compared using an independent-samples t-test. Males (M = 50.08, SD = 8.24) and females (M = 50.04, SD = 8.64) did not significantly differ in their enjoyment of their bodies, according to the results (t (48) = 0.02, p =.987). The impact size was small (Cohen's d = 0.005), indicating that there was no discernible difference between male and female participants' practical perceptions of their bodies. Overall, the results show that in this sample (N = 50), gender had no discernible impact on body appreciation levels.

Table 5

Linear Regression Analysis Between Body Appreciation and Self-Esteem (N=50)

Variables	R	R^2	P	B	SE	Confidence Intervals	
						Lower	Upper
Constant			.018	7.296	2.986	1.293	13.300
Body Appreciation	.458[a]	.209	.001	.210	.059	.092	.328

Note. p< .001***

This table shows linear regression analysis between body appreciation and self-esteem. The result shows that overall model was statistically significant (r = .458[a], r^2=.209, p< .001). Overall, the findings also suggest that body appreciation is a significant positive predictor of self-esteem among the participants.

Discussion

The current study investigated the relationships among body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life, examined gender differences in body appreciation, and explored whether body appreciation predicts self-esteem among young adults. The findings were interpreted within the frameworks of sociocultural theory (Thompson et al., 1999) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which highlight the role of positive self-perception and internalization of body ideals in psychological well-being.

Correlation analysis revealed a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between body appreciation and self-esteem (r = .458, p < .001) and between body appreciation and quality of life (r = .571, p < .001), while the correlation between quality of life and self-esteem was weak and insignificant (r = .226, p > .01). Consequently, the null hypotheses regarding the relationships between body appreciation, self-esteem, and quality of life were partially rejected. These results are consistent with recent research demonstrating that individuals with higher body appreciation report better self-esteem and life satisfaction (Swami et al., 2021; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2021). According to self-determination theory, internalized positive body perceptions fulfill basic psychological needs for competence and relatedness, promoting higher self-esteem and life satisfaction, which aligns with the current findings.

The independent-samples t-test showed no significant difference in body appreciation between males (M = 50.08, SD = 8.24) and females (M = 50.04, SD = 8.64), t (48) = 0.02, p = .987, with a negligible effect size (Cohen's d = 0.005). This confirmed the null hypothesis that gender does not significantly affect body appreciation. Contemporary studies similarly report minimal gender differences in body appreciation among nonclinical adult populations (Homan et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2022). Sociocultural theory suggests that although media and societal pressures affect both genders, individual cognitive appraisal of body image can moderate these effects, possibly explaining the lack of gender difference observed in this sample.

Linear regression analysis indicated that body appreciation significantly predicted self-esteem (R = .458, R^2 = .209, p < .001; B = .210), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This supports the idea that appreciating one's body enhances psychological well-being and self-worth. These findings align with recent literature emphasizing body appreciation as a protective factor against low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (Tylka et al., 2021; Pila et al., 2020). From a theoretical perspective, positive body appreciation fosters intrinsic motivation and self-acceptance, consistent with self-determination theory, which may explain its predictive role in self-esteem.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of fostering body appreciation to enhance self-esteem and overall quality of life. Interventions targeting body positivity, mindful engagement with social media, and reduction of self-objectification may be effective strategies for improving psychological well-being. Future research could explore potential mediators and moderators, such as cultural influences or social comparison tendencies, to better understand individual differences in body image outcomes.

Implications and Limitations

The present study highlights the significant role of body appreciation in promoting self-esteem and overall quality of life, suggesting practical implications for psychological interventions, educational programs, and public health campaigns aimed at enhancing body positivity. Encouraging individuals to develop a positive and accepting attitude toward their bodies may reduce self-esteem deficits and improve life satisfaction. Clinicians and counselors can integrate body appreciation strategies, such as mindfulness, media literacy, and self-compassion exercises, into therapeutic programs to foster psychological well-being. However, the study has certain limitations

that should be considered. The relatively small and homogeneous sample (N = 50) limits the generalizability of the findings, while the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences. Additionally, reliance on self-report measures may introduce social desirability bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of participants' responses. Future research should utilize larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and mixed method approaches to validate and expand upon these findings.

Conflict of Interest

We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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