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2022-12-07

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Body Image Dissatisfaction in Correlation with Self-Efficacy and Depression

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Abstract

This literature review focuses on the topic of body image dissatisfaction (BID) and self efficacy/esteem. I aimed to review the association between the two. Multiple databases were included, primarily utilizing terms such as “self-esteem” “Body image dissatisfaction” “depression” and “Self-efficacy”. Results review the various factors of body image dissatisfaction. These factors included aspects of appearance in various regions of the body, but primarily through weight and body shape. I reviewed the association and comparison of depression with body image dissatisfaction. The goal was in identifying the cause effect relationship between the two leading to the next part of the study. The last part of the review is on the association between body image dissatisfaction and self efficacy. This was measured primarily in performance at universities and through association with depressive symptoms. It is discussed that future research should attempt to measure the effect of BID within the workplace.

Introduction

Physical appearance is often being used as a basis for societal judgement of positive quality traits, which is likely the reason BID is common (Pop, 2016). BID affects 66.1% of adults in the United States (Silva et al., 2011). The various forms of BID, are considered multidimensional constructs with a variety of factors that determine severity and perception of self (Weinberger et al., 2016). The same study describes factors including personality, feelings, thoughts and behaviors that compose one's BID. Many compare their physique to unattainable standards (Schmidt, 2014). Such comparisons have increased in recent years (Schmidt, 2014). Social media among other influences have led to the increase (Ryding & Kuss, 2020).

BID leads to discomfort and discontent. Both men and women experience forms of body image dissatisfaction. They do however have different sources of dissatisfaction and desired

physiques (Silva et al., 2011). As stated before, social media plays a role in the increased BID, which may explain social aspects of these conditions. Previous studies have been conducted to analyze the social influence of discrimination on BID as well as other weight and appearance related illnesses. Social discrimination is what ultimately leads to BID (Cohrdes et al., 2021). Depression is one of many symptoms of BID. Research into the correlation and severity of mental illness such as depression have taken place (Weinberger et al., 2016). BID as mentioned, is extremely common. The study performed by Weinberger showed that severity was often proportional to factors such as weight; however, many considered part of a normative weight also felt their own degree of dissatisfaction.

In the presence of such dissatisfactions, we may consider how this affects the ability of the public to accomplish goals and function in society. Self-efficacy by definition is an individual's belief in their capacity to act in the ways necessary to reach specific goals (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Poor body image is correlated with lower productivity. This is seen in its correlation with poor academic outcomes (Latty, 2020).

In this review, I will cover methods used in my research; said research will seek to identify the correlation between body image dissatisfaction, self-efficacy, and the prevalence of depressive factors and states in relation to BID. Research is being focused on the statistics of BID throughout the population, risks and symptoms of BID, and its correlation with self-efficacy and motivation. It is found that there is little correlation between BID and Self-Efficacy.

Methods

I conducted research into the various demographics that experience body image dissatisfaction. Included in my search were specific sources of dissatisfaction whether it be weight or physical features. Further research was done to assess risks associated with such

feelings. During my search I realized that the vast majority of information available was conducted with a focus on female populations as they are statistically more vulnerable. Many articles were found using the phrase “male” AND “female”. “Body image” and “self-esteem” and “self-image” and “body dissatisfaction” were included. Databases include EBSCO, PUBMED, and Gale Psychology Collection. In total my search yielded 561 results. This review analyzes 17 of those sources.

Results

Body Image Dissatisfaction and Contributors

Body image dissatisfaction is a spectrum of factors that can adversely affect a variety of aspects of one’s life. Such factors can include height, weight, and various features of the body (Marsella et al., 1981). This section aims to study the factors and types of BID (body image dissatisfaction) found across the spectrum of age and gender.

Body image differs as we age. Most studies conducted focus on specific age groups. The first age group studied are adolescents. A study from Tehran, Iran, was conducted with 903 adolescents. Because some adolescents were experiencing body image dissatisfaction due to weight gain caused by lifestyle changes for mental illness, or from the use of medication in treating similar illness, those adolescents (43) were excluded from the study. In their findings, both weight and sex had the greatest impacts on body image dissatisfaction in the adolescents (Farahani, 2022). Across the board, girls had greater dissatisfaction with their bodies than the boys. It was also made apparent that those in the overweight and obese categories had greater dissatisfaction than those within a normal weight range. Other stats in the study showed that girls were dissatisfied with a BMI that was average or above average while boys were dissatisfied if their BMI was below or above average. This trend is likely due to the various social standards in

society. Girls want a thinner body shape and smaller size while men want a muscular body shape with a larger size.

Next, I researched the stats of body image dissatisfaction in adults. I figured that much of the trends would continue through adolescents into adulthood. A study was conducted that analyzed the various effects that contribute to BID (Green and Pritchard, 2003). One hundred and thirty-nine adults were surveyed. The study does not say from where specifically but states that they were found in the area of the businesses and universities. It can be assumed to be in Ohio and Indiana, around the locations of the authors. Green and Pritchard (2003) conducted their study focusing primarily on the factors of body image dissatisfaction which included media influence, gender influence, family influence, and self-esteem. Firstly, before conducting their study, they acknowledged research that had been done to indicate women have more negative body image evaluations (Muth & Cash, 1997). They also however cited research that shows no difference in levels of body image dissatisfaction between men and women (Wilcox, 1997). This equalization of comparable BID between men and women, is reinforced by studies showing that men have had increased body image dissatisfaction over the years (Vartanian et al, 2001). Other studies showed a similar trend in the type of dissatisfaction exhibited by the two in comparison with the study of adolescents. They described men as seeking to be more muscular as well as wanting to be thinner while women generally wanted to be thinner (Muth & Cash, 1997). The sample conducted by Green and Pritchard (2003) showed similar trends in the goals and desired physiques of men and women. They also found that women did in fact have a greater degree of dissatisfaction compared to men. This may be reinforced by the role of media in body image dissatisfaction. They found that media played a strong role in BID with the women in their sample. In comparison, they found that it had little effect on the BID of men. The finding with

regards to the lack of influence it has on men, is contrary to previous studies done (Vartanian et al., 2001). This could be a difference in sample populations (Green & Pritchard, 2003). It was noted that the studies performed by Vartanian et al. (2001), were done with undergraduates. This suggests that with age, social influences become less of an influence on the BID of men. In the study of family influence conducted by Green & Pritchard (2003), they found when a family member encouraged a subject to diet, they were likely to have an increase in BID. Relating back to the BID of adolescents, the influence of parents and dieting can influence the children. In a study performed by Abramovits and Birch (2000), it was stated that children's dieting habits were predicted by the dieting habits of their parents. Self esteem in their study, was analysed as a cause for BID. In my review I will be examining self-esteem and self-efficacy as attributes being affected by BID. With that being said, it was shown that lower self-esteem contributed to higher levels of BID in men and women (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Across the board, BID seems consistent in the way in which it manifests itself. Adolescent boys, undergraduate men (young adults), and adults all showed a desire for more muscular and larger body shapes. With the increase of age, men began to include the desire for thinner body shapes (Muth & Cash, 1997). There was a greater consistency of BID with adolescent girls, undergraduate women, and adult women. They remained consistent in a desire for thinner and smaller body shapes. Various influences lead to an increase of body image dissatisfaction. What should be taken away from this analysis is that body image dissatisfaction tends to be associated with weight and body shape. With body image dissatisfaction as a common struggle for youth, young adults, and adults, it is clear that if such a perception leads to a saddened state and hinders the quality of life or productivity of an individual, it should be a

greater focus in our society in order to greatly improve the human condition. Whether or not BID has an effect on such aspects of life, is the focus of my next section.

Body Image Dissatisfaction and Depression

A major portion of my study is focused on the effect that a perceived BID has on an individual's quality of life by measurement of mental health (i.e depression/anxiety). In studying the association between depression and BID, I found that gender plays a significant role in severity. A previous study showed that the greater depression exhibited in women is a result of the more common body image dissatisfactions (Hankin & Abramson, 1999). Other studies showed that once factors shared between men and women were removed, factors such as social support and stressful life events, dietary restraint and body dissatisfaction predicted depression in women where it did not in men (Bearman & Stice, 2008). In my research I found the previous data and the following through a study titled, "Body image predictors of depressive symptoms in adolescence", conducted by Kristen Murray, Elizabeth Rieger, and Don Byrne. This study was conducted in Canberra, Australia with 298 adolescents. They were each measured for age, height and weight. This studied was conducted over the course of a year with the implementation of weight lost strategy and muscular growth strategies. In the initial data collection, the children were given a survey to assess levels of self esteem as well as poll the level of BID. After a year of intervention, the same information was gathered again. To the surprise of the researchers, after a year of intervention and increased body awareness, depressive symptoms increased. It was assumed that these increased symptoms were the result of placing increase focus and awareness on body image. This is especially likely in the case of the adolescent girls who already have a great deal of societal pressure on their body shape (Murray et al., 2018).

Another study conducted on the association between depression and body image dissatisfaction was conducted among adults. This study also aimed to be a cross cultural analysis. It was performed with a group of Caucasian Americans, Chinese Americans, and Japanese Americans. The study was conducted in 1981, however I have chosen to include it given that the objective comparisons made were focused on weight, height, and physical features. Since no other factor was included in measurement, such as the influence of media, or family influence, all of which would yield different results due to a generational gap, the study likely represents a similar finding to what would be found with any given sample of adults under the same measurements. The study was conducted at the University of Hawaii with undergraduate students. Marsella et al. (1982), describe symptoms of depression. Such symptoms include, fatigue, appetite impairment, low libido levels, and a variety of somatic disturbances (Marsella et al. 1982). It was hypothesized that such symptoms would be increased by BID. The study analyzed a variety of factors in body image dissatisfaction. Where previous studies primarily focused on weight, this study aimed to measure satisfaction with certain features of complexion as well. There were 256 respondents in the study. Among the features measured, were height, hips, body hair, hair, shoulders, nose, ears, neck, posture, face, complexion, and eyes. Within the different ethnocultural groupings, trends in the focus of dissatisfaction were shown, however consistently across the board, there was a positive correlation between depression and body image dissatisfaction. Whether or not one preceded the other is unknown. Their discussion took the stance that depression preceded the dissatisfaction and enhanced its score on the assessments.

Throughout these studies there is a trend between the level of BID and an individual's depressive symptoms. This can be associated with a decrease in self-efficacy, and achievement as I will review in the next section.

Body Image Dissatisfaction and Self-Efficacy

I examined a study done to measure body appreciation, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy (Latty, 2020). An important definition laid out by Latty, is the definition created by Bandura (1977). Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. The belief is that self-efficacy is an indicator of academic outcomes (Latty, 2020). The study was conducted on the relation of body appreciation, academic self-efficacy, and GPA among college students in the U.S. Latty begins by referencing studies that show a correlation between BID and increased depression (Gillen, 2015), and anxiety (Junne et al., 2016). She goes on to cite other research that proposes aspects of her study. They show data to support the idea that body image dissatisfaction is associated with reduced academic outcomes such as lower standardized test scores, grade point average, and college completion rates (Murphy, 2012; Paolini, 2016; Tallat, Fatima, and Adiya, 2017). As for the definition of body image in this study, it was mentioned that body image is a subjective perception and while external appearance plays a role in the degree of appreciation or dissatisfaction, the subjective perception of the individual plays a great role in its severity. This is different from many aspects of previous studies where other factors were considered, but most of the measurement was done on the basis that dissatisfaction was the result of purely objective factors such as BMI. Latty studied 68 undergraduate students. Each student was surveyed on self esteem, academic self-efficacy, and GPA. It was found that there was not a significant correlation between body appreciation and self-reported GPA (Latty, 2020). There was however emphasized an importance in positive perception of self-image. This is not to be confused with body appreciation (Latty, 2020).

Another study was conducted with subjects taking antipsychotic medication. The study aimed to test the effect of weight loss intervention in improving self-efficacy. They found that losing weight had a significant impact on overall self-efficacy (Yarborough, 2016).

BID manifests itself in a variety of aspects of appearance. Most commonly it manifests itself in weight. BID has been associated with depression, anxiety, and poor self efficacy. Although evidence exists in opposition to these claims, the recognition of its relevance to certain samples, should be an indicator of its importance and should merit greater focus in developing programs aimed at improving body image perception through weight loss or in the case of research performed by Latty (2020), positive psychology.

Discussion

These studies examined a variety of demographics. Various ages were examined as well as the differences found between male and female participants. Different ethnicities were also studied with regards to body image dissatisfaction. Variance in the areas of dissatisfaction was noted however in preference of height, or in size between ethnicities. This difference was, however, negligible. Between genders, female participants across the age demographics felt greater degrees of body image dissatisfaction as well as a greater prevalence and severity of depression. The limitation of this review is found in the assessment of body image dissatisfaction and it's relation to self-efficacy, or self-esteem. The results of the studies did not differentiate between the gender of participants in a meaningful enough capacity to conclude differences in their respective correlation between body image dissatisfaction and self-efficacy and self-esteem. Future research could seek to study the difference in performance outcomes based on BID between male and female participants.

With regards to the cause effect relationship of body image dissatisfaction when compared with self-efficacy, there was not a significant correlation between the factor and result. When compared with other studies in the review, they show a positive correlation between body image dissatisfaction and depression or anxiety. Such factors can lead to poor self-efficacy, however that is a stretch for rationalizing a positive correlation with the current study. The limitation of studies on body image dissatisfaction with self-efficacy, is found in the limited trials and tests performed on populations other than students. Future research should be conducted to measure the effect of body image dissatisfaction on self-efficacy within a variety of workplaces.

I hope that future research can specifically seek to identify negative effects of body image dissatisfaction within the workplace, school, or other areas of achievement. I have a belief in the importance of a body image satisfaction and I would hope that results of future studies could lead to more programs and funding for the assistance and education of people in body appreciation, fitness, etc., in order to improve the human condition as a whole.

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Summary of Changes Made From Peer Review

I received a great deal of assistance from peer review. Comments were made in relation to my use of “I” throughout the paper. Changes were made where they seemed appropriate in order to increase the professionalism of the paper. Another critique was found in the location of certain phrases that were ordered in a way that caused a little confusion and did not flow properly. Changes were made in ordering sentences to provide proper context before information, as opposed to providing the context after, allowing the reader to read the information already understanding the necessary background. Certain sentences were removed as they were the remains of former sections that had been removed already. The assistance provided by my classmates was ultimately invaluable to me.

Summary of Changes Made From Visiting the Writing Lab

The largest contribution to my paper that I received from the writing lab, was in constructing a proper conclusion to my abstract that summarized my methods of research, the buckets I was focusing on, and the conclusions/discussion of the results. Another way in which I was assisted was in formatting my in text citations. I was able to correct instances where I would address researchers by name without including the year of the study in parentheses immediately after. Another correction made was in the transitions of my buckets. Efforts were made to more cohesively transition between topics. I am glad I went to the lab and will definitely be returning.