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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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BODY IMAGE SATISFACTION AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONING AMONG ADULT GYM INDIVIDUALS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Satisfaction with one's body can have a large impact on our overall health and well-being, both psychologically and socially, especially where one's appearance is emphasized (such as in a gym). The objective of this research project was to examine the relationship between satisfaction with one's body to one's social functioning (as measured through the Body Image Questionnaire [BIQ] and the Social Functioning Questionnaire [SFQ]) among adult gym members in Chennai, India. Participants for the study (N =200-250) were selected using purposeful sampling and were 18 years of age or older. The research sought to establish a level of body image satisfaction, levels of social functioning, and assess gender differences and predictive relationships between body image and social functioning of individuals within a gym environment. Given the increasing prevalence of the gym culture in India and higher appearance-based demands on individuals, it will be of particular importance to have a greater understanding of the relationship between body image and social functioning for both clinical psychology and mental health interventions, as well as fitness and wellness programming initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

The body image is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses an individual's self-perception, cognition, emotional experience and behaviour in relation to their physical appearance and has significant implications for one's self-concept, interpersonal relationships, and psychological health. The impact of body image on an adult's life is particularly important in places where physical appearance is prominent (e.g., fitness centres), as individuals are likely to engage in social comparison and identity development therein. In addition, fitness centres have developed into places where individuals can interact socially with one another, thereby reinforcing body image ideals and promoting self-evaluation. While social interactions at the gym can lead to increases in confidence and sense of community, they can also lead to greater pressure for members to present themselves in certain ways and greater social anxiety. Further, body image dissatisfaction has been associated with withdrawal, reduced confidence and poor functioning in personal relationships, except positive body image associates with better social adjustment and communication. While functioning within society is about an individual being able to interact within society in a meaningful way, to establish and maintain profitable relationships, and to fulfil their roles within society, body image satisfaction plays a critical role in

influencing social confidence, social participation and social communication. Individuals who are satisfied with their body often engage in a more confident manner than those who are dissatisfied obtain confidence; thus, individuals who are dissatisfied with their body often experience avoidance and social anxiety. To date, much of the research has focused on body image; however, little research has focused on the population of individuals who frequent fitness centres in India. Due to India's rapid urbanization and evolving beauty standards, understanding the relationship between body image satisfaction and social functioning for individuals who engage in fitness is paramount for developing mental health resources and creating fitness-based wellness program.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The aim of a study conducted by Zheng et al. (2021) was to explore the relationship between muscle dysmorphia (MD) and social physique anxiety (SPA), as well as body-checking behaviours, among a sample of 492 male college students who engage in regular weight training at fitness clubs. Using validated scales, Zheng and colleagues found that men who were at elevated risk for developing MD also exhibited significantly elevated levels of SPA, engaged in muscle-based body checking behaviours more often, and engaged in more

prolonged/intense workouts than men who were not at risk for MD. The analysis found that SPA was a mediator between MD and body-checking behaviours; as such, SPA is the main contributor to a person's drive to compulsively monitor their appearance. Collectively, the interrelated nature of these behaviours was found to hinder social functioning, as the men participating often engaged in unfavourable social comparison, were overly aware of how others viewed them, and withdrew from social interactions in gyms. Walker et al. (2019) evaluated 45 gym users through qualitative interviews to investigate the relationship between fitness culture, identity and social well-being. They found that participants described contemporary fitness culture as a source for identity struggle via the desire to achieve an idealized body. As a result, participants discussed how focusing on aesthetic goals resulted in their inability to maintain emotionally meaningful relationships and increased their awareness of how others evaluated them.

METHODOLOGY

Research statement: The body image satisfaction and social functioning relationship was studied utilizing a quantitative correlational research design.

Description of Samples: A purposive sampling method was utilized in selecting 220 individuals who belonged to adult gyms throughout Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Variable Description

Independent variable: Body image satisfaction

Dependent variable: Social functioning

Description of Measurement Tools: Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ) is a 5-point Likert scale with an $\alpha = .80$ to $.88$.

Social Functioning Questionnaire (SFQ) consists of 8 items with an $\alpha = .80$ to $.86$ equity score.

STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY

Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation, with statistical analyses done through SPSS software, were set to be significant at $p < .05$.

Samples: Purposive sampling of 220 adult gym members from gyms in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Using 220 gym members' data, this study evaluated the relationship between Body Image Satisfaction vs Social Functioning. Descriptive Statistics showed Body image questionnaire (BIQ) mean=55.15 SD=17.73, and Social Functioning Questionnaire (SFQ) mean=10.89 SD=6.62. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the association between BIQ and SFQ. There was a moderate negative correlation between BIQ and SFQ, $r=-0.531$; $p<0.001$. As Body image satisfaction increased among gym members, there was a decrease in Social functioning. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between Body Image Satisfaction and Social Functioning among gym members and The null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation of body image satisfaction and social functioning among gym members

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Body image satisfaction	55.15	17.73	220
Social functioning	10.89	6.62	220

The descriptive table presents the mean and standard deviation for the study variables. The Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ) included a

sample size of 220 participants, with a mean score of 55.15 and a standard deviation of 17.73. The Social Functioning Questionnaire (SFQ) also had a sample size of 220 participants, yielding a mean score of 10.89 and a standard deviation of 6.62.

Table 2. Correlational analysis showing the relationship between body image satisfaction and social functioning among gym members

Variables	Pearson's correlation	r value
body image satisfaction	1	-
Social functioning	Negative correlation	-.531***

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The table 2 shows the values of Pearson's correlation between the two variables. There appears to be a negative correlation between the body image satisfaction and the social functioning ($r = -0.531$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that while the body image satisfaction increases, the social functioning decreases among gym members. As a significant relationship is observed between the two variables, there is relationship between the body image satisfaction and the social functioning among gym members. Thus, the null hypothesis states there is no significant relationship between body image satisfaction and social functioning among gym members is rejected. This study examined the association between the Body image satisfaction and the Social functioning among gym members.

CONCLUSION

The research looks at the relationship between the satisfaction with one's body and how you relate with others in the world, known as social functioning, in a sample of 220 people who were members of the gym. The average score on the Body Image Scale was 55.15 with a standard deviation of 17.73. The average score on the Social Functioning Scale was 10.89 with a standard deviation of 6.62. Using a Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = -0.531$), the researcher found that they were moderately inverse related to each other (that is, when one goes up by increasing body satisfaction the other goes down by lowering social functioning). This finding indicates that those with a higher level of body image satisfaction are less likely to engage in social activities with others or may see a change in how they relate to people socially. A significant relationship was established by this research that there is a positive relationship present between the given variables. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was able to be rejected. The study has provided valuable information to help understand the relationship between body image perception and social relationships for those who belong to a gym.

Recommendation and Limitations

The research presented considerable issues as they must derive from people who accessed and participated at a gym within Chennai, thereby limiting the generalisation of findings to individuals living/obtaining fitness results outside of Chennai. The validity of self-reported response data may pose a substantial problem, due to the fact that individuals may provide responses to survey questions in order to create a socially acceptable response, not their real behaviours. Other factors not included during analysis were individual demographic factors and individual characteristics (such as personality and length/time of gym attendance) both factors could have contributed to any variance in the results. Future research/analysis should include these types of variables alongside conducting longitudinal studies in order to assess how relationship-related to social functioning have changed over time with respect to body image satisfaction.

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