

Family Environment and Body Image Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Background: The present study aimed to assess the relationship between Family Environment and Body Image among Young Adults.

Methodology: A non- experimental correlation design with quantitative approach was used in the study. The sample consisted of 135 young adults of 18-25 years, selected using convenient sampling method. The tools used for this study were Family Environment Scale and Body Image Action and Acceptance Questionnaire. Correlation and regression analysis were both employed to evaluate the relationship and influence of Family environment on Body image.

Results: The findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between body image and certain dimensions of family environment namely expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and independence. Regression analysis showed that there is 32.9 percentage of dependency of family environment on Body Image among young adults. The findings also indicated that there are no significant differences in Body Image between young adults living in Nuclear and Joint families.

Conclusion: Further studies in diverse populations are needed to ascertain and validate the findings of this study.

Keywords: Family environment, Body image, young adults, nuclear, joint families.

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INTRODUCTION

Family environment

The family was the most important system in practically all countries a century ago in terms of life and human existence. The only institution that offers safety and support without expecting anything in return is family. Family functioning has a significant impact on how well children's personalities and social skills are developed [1]. The fundamental unit of society is the family, and interactions between family members are referred to as transactions. these transactions can be positive or negative. Positive family interactions result from a healthy family environment, whereas negative interactions result from a negative one. The situations and social climatic conditions that exist within families make up the family environment. The socioeconomic status and parenting styles are just two examples of how the home surroundings might vary [2]. The families in general and parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child. The strongest factor in moulding a child's personality is his relationship with his parents [3].

Body Image

The society has a significant impact on how ideal beauty is currently portrayed in the media, especially for women. It's now extremely obvious how heavily our culture values looks, as seen by ads, social media, fashion publications, beauty products, cosmetics, fitness, and more. Such a worldview is prevalent in modern post-industrial countries, and there is a continual rise in the concern with physical appearance that appears

to be stronger than ever [4]. A person's body image is a product of their personal experiences, personality and various social and cultural forces. A person's perception of their appearance can be different from how others actually perceive them. Appearance-related critical comments negatively influenced one's body-image. One of the many ways that a family's stress on thinness contributes to eating disorders and other problems is through body image dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction with one's body image is characterised by a personal, unfavourable self-evaluation [5].

Family environment influence on body image

The home and family environment have been demonstrated to have a significant impact on young people's body image; both overt comments about weight and covert parental modelling may be harmful to teenagers [6]. Children and adolescents tend to be more secure, well-adjusted, healthier, and safer than peers raised in other environments when parents are emotionally warm, affectionate, and available and balance these qualities with high expectations and a firm but fair disciplinary style, according to research [7]. Parental nurturing is crucial for children's overall development and seems to have a particularly essential role in the healthy development of early adolescents [8].

Parents who are nurturing have a long-lasting impact on their kids' body image. Researchers found in a recent study that children with supportive parents have more stable body image satisfaction over time [9]. Few research papers have studied these links for body image discrepancy, but those that have found a link between them, and body image discrepancy were related with lower levels of social and emotional support from parents [10]. Increased eating and a lower body image are concurrently and longitudinally predicted by more tense, cold, and unsupportive relationships with parents [11].

However, emotional support from family, especially in the form of praise and encouragement, may act as a buffer against some of the more harmful sociocultural effects and aid teenagers in long-term development of a healthy body image [12-13].

A study was conducted in Hisar city and two villages of Hisar district. These adolescents were selected from randomly selected four Government Senior Secondary Schools. Total sample constituted of 240 adolescents, 120 from rural area and 120 from urban area. These 240 adolescents included 120 boys and 120 girls. Family environment was assessed with the help of Family Environment Scale (FES). Adolescents were personally interviewed about their perception of family environment. The findings of the paper were Adolescent boys perceived family environment as more expressive, more accepting and caring, more independent, while, adolescents' girls perceived family environment as more organized and controlling. Adolescent boys perceived family environment significantly much better than adolescent girls [14].

A study conducted on the role of the perception of family environment in relation to body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and difficulties in close relationships. In this study, 362 non-clinical participants with ages ranging from 17 to 25 years. The findings of the study were that Difficulties in close relationships, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating were significantly higher in invalidating families than in validating families. Perceived experiences of invalidation in childhood may be associated with eating disorder symptomatology. In addition, difficulties in close relationships during adulthood possibly contribute to the emergence of eating disorder symptoms [15].

A study conducted on body attitudes among children and their parents, and predictors of body attitudes in both groups. This study was conducted on 37 children (aged between 3 and 7) and 37 parents. Results revealed that 28 children (75.68%) chose the thin and average silhouettes as the ideal body shapes. The most undesirable silhouette was that indicating obesity (62.16%). There was a relationship between body dissatisfaction and thin ideal internalization. Muscular ideal internalization, family pressure, media pressure and peer pressure made parents wish to change their children's body shape. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression revealed that media pressure amongst children and body dissatisfaction amongst parents were predictors of ideal silhouette in children. In addition, mediation analysis showed that media pressure had mediated the relationship between parent's body dissatisfaction and children ideal silhouette. Children and parents both preferred slim silhouettes. Body dissatisfaction was related to internalization of a society acceptable silhouette and to pressure to change body shape by parents. There is a risk that parents can create negative attitudes in their children towards their body [16].

A study conducted was undertaken to study mental health and psychological well-being among adolescent of joint and nuclear family. 30 adolescent from joint family and 30 adolescent from nuclear family were randomly selected Naroda area of Ahmadabad city. Mental health inventory by Jagdish and A.K. Shrivastava and Psychological well-being scale were used for data collection. Results reveals that significant difference was existed between adolescent of joint and nuclear family on mental health dimension such positive self-evaluation, perception of reality, integration of personality, autonomy, group oriented attitudes and environmental mastery. Significant difference was also found on overall mental health. Significant difference was found on psychological well-being also [17]. The objectives of the current study were to examine the relationship between family environment and body image among young adults, to examine the influence of family environment on body image among young adults, to assess if there is a difference in family environment among young adults from joint and nuclear families and to assess if there is a difference in body image among young adults from joint and nuclear families.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Non-experimental correlational research which refers to as a design that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions, with quantitative approach was adopted to check if there is a relationship between Family Environment and Body Image among Young Adults. The type of design was used to determine the strength and direction of relations among two variables.

Procedure

Young adults were invited to participate in the study and were selected through random sampling. Participants included young adults who were 18–25 years of age, and were living or have lived in the past with their families for 15 or more years. Data was collected through the google form with the informed consent of the participants. Confidentiality- was assured. 135 young adults participated in the study, and all met the inclusion criteria.

The study focused on young adults living in joint and nuclear families. The present study focused on analyses of the following measures: (1) The Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chadha [18] to gather information about young adult current perceptions of their family environment, and (2) The Body Image Action and Acceptance Questionnaire [19]. This sample consists of young adults from different parts of the country, different backgrounds and age groups.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis refers to the tentative statements which are put forward in order to test them during the research and thus, fulfil the objectives of the study. The following hypothesis were set by the researcher:

Ho1: There will be no significant relationship in family environment and body image

Ho2: There will be no significant influence of family environment on body of young adults.

Ho3: There will be no significant difference in family environment between young adults from joint and nuclear families.

Ho4: There will be no significant difference in body image among young adults from joint and nuclear families.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical techniques used to analyses the data were Mann Whitney u-test and Spearman's Correlation and Linear regression. The data was analysed by using IBM SPSS Software. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and the data.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for Family environment subscales and Body image. In the area of cohesion, the mean value is 46.58 and the SD is 11.93 which indicates that there is average level of cohesion in family. In the area of expressiveness, the mean value is 28.65 and SD value is 7.68 indicating average level of expressiveness within the family members. In the area of conflict, the mean is

38.45 and SD is 12.66 which indicates an average level of conflict in the family. In the area of acceptance and caring, the mean is 40.07 and SD is 10.54 indicating a low level of acceptance in the family. In the area of independence, the mean value is 29.6 and the SD is 7.35 which indicates that the level of independence in the family is low. In the area of active-recreational orientation, the mean is 28.37 and SD is 6.53 indicating an average level of participation in active recreational and social activities of the family. In the area of organization, the mean is 7.91 and SD is 1.65 indicating an average level of organization the family. In the area of control, the mean value is 14.34 and SD is 2.79 which indicates that there is an average level of control in the family. In Body image, the mean score is 133.6 and SD is 34.64 which indicates that there is high level of acceptance for body image among young adults.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Family environment and Body image

Scales	M	SD
Family Environment Scale		
Cohesion	46.585	11.935
Expressiveness	28.659	7.682
Conflict	38.459	12.663
Acceptance	40.074	10.544
Independence	29.600	7.350
Active-Recreational	28.378	6.531
Organization	7.919	1.653
Control	14.348	2.795
Body Image	133.600	34.641

Table 2: Correlation between family environment and Body image

Variable	n	r
Body image	135	-
Cohesion	135	0.161
Expressiveness	135	0.225**
Conflict	135	0.235**
Acceptance	135	0.202*
Independence	135	0.25**
Active-recreational	135	0.153
Organization	135	0.087
Control	135	0.059
** Significant at p< 0.01 level		
* Significant at p< 0.05 level		

These findings indicates that, on the expressiveness, conflict and independence dimension significant relationship was found at p<0.01 level and in the acceptance dimension significant relationship was found at p <0.05 level. It can be interpreted from these findings that body image has a significant relationship with expressiveness, conflict and independence in the family. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which stated that, there is no significant relationship between body image and family environment of a young adult. There is a significant positive correlation between body image and family environment.

The results of this study shows that some of the sub-scales of family environment scale is correlated to the body image of a young adult. These findings are supported by a previous study which found that women admitted that there was pressure on them to lose weight from the media, but this pressure did not have as big of an impact on how they felt about their own bodies as they felt from their families. According to the study, among the other factors, felt family pressure had the strongest correlation with body dissatisfaction. [20].

Table 3: Influence of family environment on Body image

Independent Variable	R ²	B	SE B	b	t
	0.329				
(Constant)		96.547	19.76		4.886
Cohesion		-0.241	0.699	-0.083	-0.344
Expressiveness		0.173	0.824	0.038	0.209
Conflict		0.528	0.364	0.193	1.452
Acceptance		-0.006	0.866	-0.002	-0.007
Independence		1.285	0.733	0.273	1.755
Active-recreational		-0.446	0.974	-0.084	-0.458
Organization		0.057	1.987	0.003	0.029
Control		-0.182	1.184	-0.015	-0.153

A simple linear regression was calculated to see the influence of family environment on the body image of a young adult. The value of R² is 0.329. This showed that the percentage of the contribution of independent variable, family environment to the dependent variable body image is 32.9%. The result indicates that family environment has an influence on body image and can affect the way young adults perceive themselves.

There have been researches done previously to understand the influence of family environment and body image. One of the research findings state that parental nurturing is crucial for adolescent's overall development and seems to have a particularly essential role in the healthy development of young adolescents and adults [21].

Young adults who are content with their bodies have positive linkages with warm, nurturing parents, while those who are discontent with their bodies have associations with parents who are harsher and less affectionate [22]. For both males and girls, these conclusions appear to be true.

The findings of the current research align with the results of the above-mentioned research. Thus, there is an influence of family environment on body image of a young adult.

Table 4: Comparison of Body image based on family types

Variable	Family Types	Mean Ranks	Z	Sig 2 tailed
Body image	Joint Family	65.20	-0.492	0.623
	Nuclear Family	68.20		

Table 4 represents the comparison of body image on the basis of family types. The result indicated that there is no significant difference in body image on the basis of family environment. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which states that, there is no significant difference in the body image of young adults in terms of family types. There was no significant difference in the scores for Joint family (M= 65.20) and nuclear family (M= 68.20) types; z= -0.492 and sig 2 tailed = 0.623. The current research shows that there is not much difference between the joint and nuclear family scores in relation to body image. However, the data of the current research is unequal and does not depict equal population of nuclear and joint family types. There is a huge gap between the population of both the family types.

Table 5: Comparison of family environment based on family types

Variable	Family types	Mean rank	Z	Sig 2 tailed
Cohesion	Joint Family	66.93	-0.188	0.851
	Nuclear family	68.38		
Expressiveness	Joint Family	65.21	-0.490	0.624
	Nuclear family	68.98		
Conflict	Joint Family	68.93	-0.163	0.870
	Nuclear family	67.68		

Acceptance	Joint Family	66.87	-0.199	0.843
	Nuclear family	68.40		
Independence	Joint Family	69.76	-0.309	0.757
	Nuclear family	67.39		
Active-recreational	Joint Family	66.86	-0.201	0.841
	Nuclear family	68.40		
Organization	Joint Family	72.83	-0.868	0.386
	Nuclear family	66.31		
Control	Joint Family	56.94	-1.959	0.050
	Nuclear family	71.87		

Table 5 represents the comparison of family environment influenced by joint family and nuclear family types. A Mann Whitney test was conducted to see the difference in family environment scores for joint family and nuclear family types. There was a significant difference in the scores for Joint and nuclear families. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. There have not been many studies conducted, that investigates the comparison of family environment influenced by joint and nuclear families that studies the influence of family environment on body image of young adults. The current study indicates that there is not much difference in the scores of joint and nuclear families in comparison to family environment. There is no significant difference of family environment influenced by joint family and nuclear family types.

Due to time and resources constraints, the sample size was limited with respect to the geographical specifications. Due to these limitations, the results may not be generalizable. Furthermore, as the scales were very lengthy the data could not be collected in a proper manner. Also, since the data collection was performed through an online survey, it may be difficult to know how the participants were doing emotionally at that moment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the hypotheses testing and dimensions correlation and regression between variables, the conclusions of this study revealed that there was a notable difference in the influence of family environment on the body image of young adults. The study also reported that young adults belonging to the age group of 22-25 years are more influenced by family environment in terms of their body image and how they see or perceive their body. The study also reported that females are more influenced by this than males. However, significant difference was not found in the family environment and body image of young adults in terms of family types. In addition to this, family environment and body image were found to be moderately positively correlated and the influence family environment on body image was found to be 32.9%.

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