

Body Esteem in College Students: The Influence of Psychosocial and Demographic Variables

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ABSTRACT

Level of physical activity, BMI, and various psychosocial factors have been found to influence body esteem. Most body esteem research focuses on Caucasians, necessitating examination of the impact of these variables on body esteem in other ethnicities. **PURPOSE:** To examine the effects of psychosocial and demographic variables (e.g. media usage, peer/family influences, degree of internalization, perfectionism, level of physical activity, and BMI) on body esteem in students at a Hispanic serving institution. **METHODS:** Eighty-four participants, predominantly identifying as Hispanic ($n = 64$), completed measures of demographic and psychosocial variables. Participants also completed body esteem instruments before and after viewing Instagram images of average looking individuals or the "media ideal." **RESULTS:** Linear regression analyses were conducted to model the relationship between psychosocial and demographic variables as IV and the following DVs: body esteem physical condition (BEPC), body esteem sexual attractiveness (BESA) body satisfaction (BSat), body appreciation (BApp), self-compassion (SCom), and desire for muscularity (DMS). Physical activity level, BMI, self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), and thin internalization of appearance ideals were significantly related to multiple measures of body esteem. Of the models that were significant, five contained physical activity as the IV. Interestingly, physically active participants increased from pre-test to post-test, regardless of which set of images they viewed, on several measures of body esteem, while physically inactive participants decreased from pre to post on the same measures. The models for physical activity as IV were statistically significant on the following DVs: BApp, [$r = .268, \sigma_{est} = 4.13, p=.01$], SCom [$r = .255, \sigma_{est}=3.46 p=.02$], DMS [$r = .241, \sigma_{est} = 1.27, p=.03$], BEPC females [$r = .324, \sigma_{est} = .11, p=.02$], and BEPC males [$r = .508, \sigma_{est} = .18, p<.01$]. Additional statistically significant models include: BMI and BESA females [$r = .469, \sigma_{est} = .005, p<.001$], thin internalization with BApp [$r = .241, \sigma_{est} = .33, p=.03$] and BSat [$r = .286, \sigma_{est} = 7.83, p=.01$], and SOP with BE physical condition [$r = .370, \sigma_{est} = .17, p<.05$]. **CONCLUSION:** Physical activity level, BMI, self-oriented perfectionism, and thin internalization of appearance ideals were significantly related to multiple measures of body esteem in a predominantly Hispanic college student population, highlighting the protective benefits of participating in physical activity on body esteem in a historically inactive population. Future studies should continue to explore how these psychosocial and demographic variables effect body esteem in the Hispanic population.