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SELF-OBJECTIFICATION, HABITUAL BODY-MONITORING AND BODY-DISSATISFACTION AMONG ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated age related difference in self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction among adolescent and young adulthood women. In addition, it was aimed at identifying the relationships between self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, it was designed to assess body perception and identifying whether girls/women were dissatisfied/feel anxious about their appearance or not. The study involved 300 randomly selected female students (150 from two high school and 150 from university) from Addis Ababa town. Questionnaire that was designed to measure tendency of self-objectification, habitual body monitoring, body dissatisfaction and body figure perception were used to gather information from the participants. The gathered data was recorded and analyzed by using appropriate statistical packages. The finding revealed that women perceive their appearance fatter than they think they deserve and rate slim or thin body figure as appropriate for social approval, to attract opposite sex and to appear physically attractive. In addition, the finding showed that girls/women feel anxious about their appearance. Moreover, the finding disclosed that there was strong positive relationship between self-

objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction. Finally, it was observed that, while there was age related change in body dissatisfaction among adolescent and young adults, the tendency of self-objectification and habitual body monitoring remain the same for the two age groups.

KEYWORDS: self-Objectification, habitual body monitoring, body dissatisfaction.

1.INTRODUCTION

Self-objectification is one of the causes of adjustment problem among adolescent and young adulthood women (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Self-objectification encourages young women to relate to their bodies as objects which exist for the use of aesthetic pleasure of others and to work on its improvement. This will lead women/girls to critically consider and judge their body for its attractiveness or unattractiveness (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris 2004).



Self-objectification among girls is a cultural phenomenon which girls are told to focus on their appearance. Girls are nurtured from a very early age to pay attention to their appearance. Thus a young woman works hard on themselves to achieve culturally defined image (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2004). In addition, it has been argued that women are expected to always submit themselves to the male gaze and present their bodies with aim of pleasing men (Dorland, 2006). To meet the stated standard of appearance they becomes 'the object of their project' (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2004).

With the advancement of technology, there has been a tendency with in fashion, beauty and entertainment industries toward the idealization of a female body with no fat on it at all. Therefore, achieving this "fashionable slimness" has become a routine part of many women's lives (Fea & Brannon, 2006). As a result dieting, watching what you eat, feeling guilty about food, and exercising affecting many women to a greater extent (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006).

The reasons behind this self-disgust may be the conflicts surrounding the cultural valuation of the sexual mature image. It seems as though women have to punish themselves for growing up and for becoming adults (Frost, 2004). This excessive concern on appearance leads women to self-monitoring and surveillance. Self-monitoring generally involves controlling food intake, intentional efforts to increase physical activity and other similar methods that can help them to decrease level of body fat (Brannon, 2008).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) pointed out theories that explain why objectification occurs. Evolutionary theorists contend that women's physical attractiveness indirectly signals reproductive value, and so evaluating women physical attributes has become an important criteria in men's mate selection (Buss & Singh as cited in Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Others argue that the cultural practice of objectifying female bodies originated to create, maintain and express patriarchy (Connell, Kuhm, & Stoltenberg, as cited in Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted with the aim of addressing the following objectives

1. To identify the perception of adolescent and young adulthood women about their appearance.
2. To examine whether girls/women are anxious/dissatisfied with their appearance or not.
3. To investigate the relationship between self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction.
4. To determine age difference in self-objectification, habitual body-monitoring and body-dissatisfaction among adolescents and young adulthood women.

3. METHODS OF THE STUDY

3.1. Participants of the Study

To investigate the issues and meet the intended objectives, correlation design was employed. The data sources were adolescent and young adulthood women. For this, Addis Ababa university undergraduate graduating class female students (early adulthood women) and two secondary schools grade 9 and 10 (adolescence stage) students were considered during participant selection for the study. Multi stage random sampling technique was employed to select the participants. Based on these two secondary schools (Frehiwot and Future Generation Hope) among schools in Addis Ababa town and Addis Ababa University main campus were selected. Thus, female adolescents of grade 9 and 10 at Future Generation Hope and Frehiwot-2 secondary school students (N=1020) and female undergraduate graduating classes Addis Ababa University main campus female students (N= 667) were the target population of the study. Finally, a total of 300 participants were selected by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) guidelines: equal number of adolescent (N=150) and young adulthood (N=150) female students.

3.2. Tools of data collection

The instrument that were employed for the study were originally developed by Noll and Fredrickson (1998) (self-objectification questionnaire (SOQ)), McKinley and Hyde (1996) (self-monitoring scales), Dion, Dion

& Keelan (1990) (body dissatisfaction scale) and Stunkard, (1983) (figural stimuli/body figure perception). Their reliability was 0.89, 0.79, 0.89 and 0.79 respectively. After adopting the instruments to integrate items which were culture relevant, it was validated by using experts' judgments (for validity) and pilot test (for reliability evidence). In addition, for language convenience the instrument were translated to Amharic.

3.3. Procedures

The instruments were administered for the selected participants with the help of two assistants. Assistants were given appropriate orientation on how to administer the instrument and collect data. As the same time, the participants were given relevant instruction on how to fill the questionnaire. The instruments were designed in ranking order (self-objectification questionnaire), five point likert scales (habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction questionnaires) and figural stimuli instrument (selecting different sized figure).

Table 1: Body Mass Index (BMI)

Figure number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
BMI:	18.3	19.3	20.9	23.1	26.2	29.9	34.3	38.6	45.4

BMI = Kg/M²

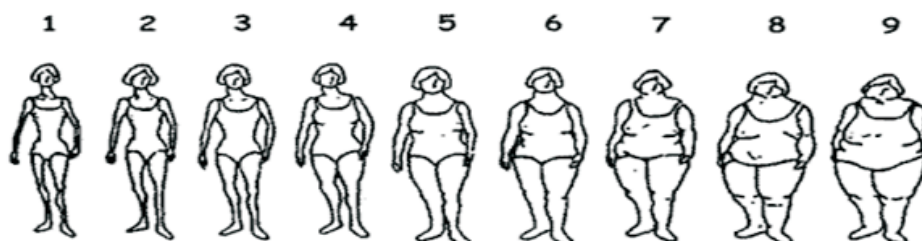


Fig 1: Body Perception Measurement Figures

According to the standard, figure 6 or 29.9kg/m² and above is considered obese/ fat, where as figure 4 or 23.1kg/m² and below is considered thin/slim.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

As already indicated above, the general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction among girls/women and explore age difference in self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction. To achieve the stated objectives, descriptive statistics, t-test analysis, and correlation analysis were computed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Table 2: Level of Education and Grade/Year of Study Participants

Level of Education	Grade/Year	N
Secondary School	9 th	75
	10 th	75
University	4 th	105
	5 th	45

Among 300 female research participants 150 were from Secondary school and the rest from university. From the two secondary schools equal number (N=75) of participants were selected from grade 9 and 10. All the

150 participants from University were graduating class students: 45 from law departments and the rest from other four departments (psychology, theatrical arts, business education and English).

Table 3: Age of Study Participants

Level	N	%	\bar{X}	SD
Secondary school students	150	50.0%	15.73	0.97
University Students	150	50.0%	22.95	1.19
Total	300	100.0%	19.34	3.78

The mean age of participants from secondary school was 15.73 with the standard deviation of 0.97 and the mean age and standard deviation of participants from University were 22.95 and 1.19 respectively.

4.2 Perception of Adolescents and Young Adulthood Women about their Body Figure

In the questionnaire, participants were given 9 different sized figures (fig. 1) which were ranged from extremely thin to extremely fat. Based on the presented figures participants were asked to identify their perceived current figure, socially appropriate figure, desirable figure to attract opposite sex and most attractive figure. Up on their response, the analysis was computed separately for adolescent and young adulthood stage participants as presented below.

4.2.1 Perceptions of Adolescent Girls about their Current Figure, Socially Desirable Figure, Attractive Figure to Opposite Sex and most Attractive Figure

Having identified participants’ selections from the given figures, the figure types were transformed to scores based on body mass index (BMI) (Table 1). According to the standardized instrument body mass index 29.9kg/m² (figure 6) and above were considered as very fat/obese where as below 23.1 kg/m² (figure 4) as thin or slim.

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation of different perceived figures for adolescent participants

Figure Type	N	\bar{X}	SD	t- value
perceived current figure	150	26.43	5.28	
perceived socially acceptable figure	150	24.15	3.96	5.25***
perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex	150	23.49	3.33	6.32***
perceived most attractive figure	150	23.10	2.91	7.28***

****P<0.001

From the computed body mass index of 150 adolescent participants the perceived current body figure mean was 26.43 with the standard deviation of 5.28. The mean and the standard deviation for perceived socially acceptable figure were 24.15 and 3.96 respectively. Similarly 23.49 and 3.33 were values of mean and standard deviation respectively for perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex. Finally, as can be observed from table 4 the perceived most attractive figure was found to have a mean value of 23.10 with the standard deviation of 2.91.

The value, as presented above, showed that the mean of the perceived current figure for adolescent participants was much larger than the index that regarded as slim/thin. On the other hand, the mean for perceived socially acceptable figure, perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex and perceived most attractive figure were approaching to the range thin or slim. Moreover further t test analysis indicated that there was statistically significant difference between perceived current figure and perceived socially acceptable figure (t=5.25, P<0.001), perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex (t=6.32, P<0.001) and perceived most attractive

figure (t=7.28, p<0.001).

4.2.2 Perceptions of Adulthood stage women about their Current Figure, Socially Desirable Figure, Attractive Figure to Opposite Sex and most Attractive Figure

To know the case for young adulthood participants’ similar procedures as that of adolescent participants were followed.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of different perceived figures for young adult participants

Figure Type	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value
perceived current figure	150	26.26	5.24	
perceived socially acceptable figure	150	24.16	3.89	4.91***
perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex	150	23.58	3.54	6.06***
perceived most attractive figure	150	23.49	3.44	6.70***

***P<0.001

For N = 150 young adulthood stage participants descriptive statistics was computed. As presented in the above table 6, the mean and the standard deviation for perceived current figure were 26.26 and 5.24 respectively. Similarly 24.16 and 3.89 were the respective mean and the standard deviation of young adults’ perceived socially acceptable figure. In addition, perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex found to have a mean value of 23.58 with the standard deviation of 3.54. Finally, the perceived most attractive figure body index result showed that the mean was 23.49 with the standard deviation of 3.44.

As that of adolescent participants, the mean of perceived current figure of young adults, according to body mass index interpretation, was approaching to label ‘fat or obese’. In contrast, the mean for perceived socially desirable figure, perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex and perceived most attractive figure are closer to thin or slim value range. It simply means that young adulthood women perceive their figure as fat while they consider thin/slim figure as ideal in relation to social acceptance, heterosexual relationship and beauty.

More over further t test analysis indicated that there was statistically significant difference between perceived current figure and perceived socially acceptable figure (t=4.91, p<0.001), perceived ideal figure to attract opposite sex (t=6.06, p<0.001) and perceived most attractive figure (t=6.70, p<0.001).

From the above perception analysis of adolescent girls and young adulthood women body figure, it is possible to state that ,as a developmental task, some of the most important issue at the stages of adolescence and early adulthood are: getting acceptance by others (Ruutel, 2004), establishing romantic heterosexual relationships and appearing good looking or attractive (Ilaria, 2006). These all are so much to do with perception of own figure.

It was found out that slim figure is ideal to adolescents and young adulthood women in many respects. This is may be because slim body figure among girls is associated with so many positive qualities. As Podjaskey (1997) stated, slim women/girls like themselves, have high self esteem and self love. Moreover, as Hall (2009) identified slim figure is perceived to be important criteria for social approval and crucial sign of beauty among girls/women. Consistently to the mentioned findings majority of the participants associated thin/slim figures with social acceptance, good criteria in heterosexual relationship (to be liked by opposite sex partner) and to physical attractiveness. Shepeliak (2006) come up with exactly similar finding in his study on 144 college students (103 were females) to investigate the gender and cultural variation in the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem.

In the present study the majority of research participants labeled themselves as having body size approaching to the index of fat. This finding is consistent to Shumet (2006) and Ruutel (2009). They found out that girls perceive themselves to be heavier and wish to weigh less and to be thinner.

4.3. Dissatisfaction with Appearance

To know whether participants were anxious or feel dissatisfied with their appearance or not they were provided with scale that measures how much they were dissatisfied with their appearance.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for body dissatisfaction of adolescents and young adults

Level	N	Max.	Min.	Range	Median	\bar{X}	SD
Secondary school	150	119	37	82.00	71.00	71.25	16.83
University	150	118	34	84.00	68.00	66.57	15.88

Table 6 above showed that the maximum values for adolescent and young adulthood participants in body dissatisfaction scale were 119 and 118 respectively. On the other hand, the minimum scores indicated a value of 37 and 34 respectively. Therefore the range is 82 and 84 for young adolescent and adulthood study participants on body dissatisfaction scale.

As computed in table 6 above, the mean for adolescent participants was 71.25 with the standard deviation of 16.83. Similarly the mean of body dissatisfaction score for young adults was 66.57 with standard deviation of 15.88. The median score tell as that 50% of adolescents and young adulthood participants score above 71 and 68 respectively on body dissatisfaction scale.

The data showed that both mean and median scores for both adolescent and young adulthood stage participants were far larger than the expected minimum score. It means that there was a tendency of body dissatisfaction among majority of adolescent and young adulthood stage women.

Consistently, Sarah, Suzanne, & Elizabeth (2002) found out that approximately 40-70% of adolescent girls were dissatisfied with their body.

Tendency of being valued and judged girls/women by physical appearance may create feeling of being anxious with oneself which in turn may lead to having punitive and self hating relationship with their bodies (Grewal & Kapal, 2006). Similarly according to Frederickson and Roberts (1997) girls may develop serious beauty image problems or even body hatred if they fail to achieve "appropriate" body appearance.

According to Ruutel (2004) girls/women are less satisfied with their body parts and body weight. This finding could confirm the idea that adolescent and young adulthood stage female relations with their body part are surrounded by different conflicts and reservations (Lipschuetz, 2002).

4.4 The relationship between Age, Self-objectification, Habitual Body Monitoring and Body Dissatisfaction

Table 7: Inter-correlation matrix: age, self objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction

Variables	Inter-correlation			
	1	2	3	4
Age (1)	-			
Self-objectification (2)	0.08	-		
Habitual body monitoring (3)	0.13(*)	0.55(**)	-	
Body-dissatisfaction (4)	-0.10	0.38(**)	0.26(**)	-

* P < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** P < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As presented in table 7 above, there was statistically insignificant positive relationship between age and self-objectification ($r = 0.08$, $p > 0.05$). However, age found to have statistically significant positive relationship with habitual body monitoring ($r = 0.13$, $P < 0.05$). The case was different for the relationship between age and body dissatisfaction. Even though it was statistically insignificant, age had a negative relation with body

dissatisfaction ($r = -0.10, P > 0.05$).

In addition, Based on the analysis it was found out that there was statistically significant positive relationship between self-objectification and habitual body monitoring ($r = 0.55, P < 0.01$). The value for self-objectification and body dissatisfaction, similarly, showed positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.38, P < 0.01$). Moreover, as indicated in table 7, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction as well ($r = 0.26, P < 0.01$).

There was strong positive relationship between self-objectification and habitual body monitoring; self objectification and body dissatisfaction; and habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction. Study by Grippo and Hill (2007) on 138 European American heterosexual women come up with consistent finding. Their study revealed that self-objectification and habitual body monitoring were positively correlated with body dissatisfaction. Similarly Dorland (2006) reached at similar conclusion that self-objectification has significant positive relationship with habitual body monitoring.

Age found to have negative relationship with body dissatisfaction though it is statistically insignificant. It means that as age increases body dissatisfaction decreases. This may attributed to the fact that the importance of body appearance seems to decrease with increasing age (Tiggemann & Prichard, 2005). On the other hand according to Lipschuetz (2002) the transition into adolescence is typically more stressful for girls because girls meet many normative development challenges at once, including weight gain, dating, and emerging sexuality. Therefore, by his study he found out that, body satisfaction declines for girls from age 12 to 15, then levels off and sometimes increases slightly in middle and late adolescence. Similarly as Tilaye (2007) indicated with the onset of pubertal changes during adolescence things change their feature. Those who consider themselves attractive before start to change their idea with the onset of menstruation. Consistently, Ilaria (2006) found out that self objectification to be best predictor of appearance anxiety and body dissatisfaction.

4.5 Age Difference in Self-objectification, Habitual Body Monitoring and Body Dissatisfaction for Adolescent and Young adulthood women

Table 8: Mean difference in self-objectification, habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction among adolescents and young adulthood women

Variables	Level	N	\bar{X}	SD	t
Self-objectification	Secondary-School	150	1.77	17.30	-0.80
	University	150	3.35	16.75	
Habitual body monitoring	secondary-School	150	2.37	0.46	-1.59
	University	150	2.46	0.53	
Body-dissatisfaction	Secondary-School	150	71.25	16.83	2.48*
	University	150	66.57	15.88	

* $P < 0.05$

The result presented above in table 8, revealed that there was no statistically significant age related differences between adolescence and young adulthood female participants in traits of self-objectification ($t = -0.80, df = 298, P > 0.05$). It means that both adolescent and young adulthood stage female participants have similar tendency of self objectification and the seemingly existing age difference was not statistically significant.

Moreover, as presented in table 8 above, there was no statistically significant age difference in habitual body monitoring for adolescent and young adulthood study participants ($t = -1.59, df = 298; P > 0.05$).

However, based on the independent t-test analysis for age related difference in body dissatisfaction score among adolescents' and young adulthood participants', the value indicated statistically significant. ($t = 2.47, df = 298; P < 0.05$).

Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) came up with the inconsistent finding that body dissatisfaction remained

stable across the age range. They also suggested that self-objectification and habitual body monitoring were significantly decreased with age. Similar finding is reported by Grippo and Hill (2007). The inconsistency of the finding of the present study with the mentioned studies may attribute the fact that the researchers were not included adolescents as a participant of study. They conducted their study on different cohorts of adulthood stage participants.

5. FINDINGS

Generally the study was revealed the following major findings

- The perception of adolescents and young adults about their current appearance was marginally fat. However, they considered slim/thin figures as more appropriate to social acceptance, establishing heterosexual relationship and to appear physically attractive.
- Most adolescents and young adults were dissatisfied about a certain body parts and appearance.
- Age does not have statistically significant relationship with self-objectification and body dissatisfaction.
- Age have statistically significant positive relationship with habitual body monitoring. It means that as age increases the tendency of body monitoring increases.
- There was statistically significant positive relationship between self-objectification habitual body monitoring and body dissatisfaction.
- There was no age related difference in tendency of self-objectification and habitual body monitoring among adolescent and young adulthood women.
- There was age difference in body dissatisfaction among adolescent and young adulthood women. Girls at adolescence years found more dissatisfied with their body than young adulthood women.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From all the study process and findings the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations about practical implications and further investigations

1. It is important to note that self-objectification shifts girls' attention to body monitoring and other related activities. As a result they become less competent in their academic and social skills. Therefore extensive training and awareness creation program is important to mitigate the effect.
2. Beauty contest, modeling, fashion etc. conducted at school settings has so many things to do with self objectification. These practices should be changed by academic competition, debate on different issues and other related activities that can enrich students' academic and social knowledge.
3. Girls club at universities and schools should be equipped with skilled man power on the area so that they can create awareness among the school community.
4. Researcher should make further investigation on the issue. Areas like effect of self objectification, gender difference in self-objectification and so on can be interesting issues of further research.

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