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A study of body image in university students: With reference to participation in sports and gender

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Abstract

Effect of participation in sports and gender was observed on body image of university students. In order to fulfil the objectives, 25 interuniversity male players (Ave. age 23.11 years) and 25 interuniversity female players (Ave age 22.32 years) were selected as sample. These players took part in various competitions for team and individual events. Another set of 25 male university students (Ave. age 24.12 years) and 25 female university students (Average age 25.16 years) were also selected as sample. To assess body image of the selected subjects, Modified Version of Self Assessment Questionnaire for Body Image, prepared by Agashe and Karkare (2008) was used. 2x2 Factorial ANOVA analysis revealed significant main effect of participation in sports and gender on body image of university study. The two factor interaction effect of participation in sports and gender on body image of university students was not found to be statistically significant. It was concluded that participation in sports and gender alone and not in interaction with each other unable to influence body image of university students.

Keywords: Body image, level of participation, gender, university students

Introduction

Developing a positive body image and a healthy mental attitude is crucial to a woman's happiness and wellness. One of the definitions of body image says that it is the mental representation we create of what we think we look like; it may or may not bear a close relation to how others actually see us. That is why it is subject to all kinds of distortion from internal elements like our emotions, moods, early experiences, attitudes of our parents, and much more. Nevertheless, it strongly influences behaviour. According to Schilder (1935) [7] body image is the picture an individual's body which he/she forms in mind. As the study of body image has progressed there are suggestions that the "normal" individual's feeling or attitude towards her body may be an important reflection of her identity which is developed within a framework, both cultural and environmental. The structure of the ego system which is concerned with the three components of body ego - body (ego), body boundary, and body image - form allied concepts. Rose (1966) [6] defined the body ego as the psychic representation of the bodily self in the ego system. The bodily self includes and extends beyond the body boundary and body image to include one's clothing, objects and product's. Freud felt that the body ego was the first stage of ego development. While it is often said to constitute the central core of the ego as a whole, the body ego is an intermediate level between the raw data arising from body experience and personality. This relationship enables the body ego experiences arising from various levels of bodily experience to be integrated and organised with the ego. It is a very well established fact that participation in sports is core of psychological as well as physical well-being. It has also been documented in the past that sports are beneficial for positive body image and enhanced psychological characteristics (Jaffee and Mahle Lutter, 1995, Hausenblas and Symons Downs, 2001) [3, 2]. As far as body image of males and females is concerned Serdula *et al.* (1993) [8] and Thompson (1996) [9] reported that gender plays a significant role in body image. To further analyse body image this study was focussed on university students with participation and gender as independent factors.

Objective

The objective of the present study is to assess main and interaction effect of participation in sports and gender on body image of university students.

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Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that participation in sports and gender alone and interaction with each other will significantly influence body image of university students.

Methodology

Sample

In order to fulfil the objectives, 25 interuniversity male players (Ave. age 23.11 years) and 25 interuniversity female players (Ave age 22.32 years) were selected as sample. These players took part in various competitions for team and individual events. Another set of 25 male university students (Ave. age 24.12 years) and 25 female university students (Average age 25.16 years) were also selected as sample. Purposive sampling method was used for data collection.

Tools

To assess body image of the university students, Modified Version of Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Body Image,

prepared by Agashe and Karkare (2008) was used. It consist of 25 multiple choice questions which assess the body image of a person. This test is highly valid and reliable. The scoring pattern of this questionnaire is “Higher the score on BIQ, lower is the body image of a person.

Procedure

100 university students were selected on the basis of participation in sports and gender. Body image questionnaire was administered in a peaceful environment. As per the design of the study a fourfold ANOVA table was required and accordingly data was placed in cell. In this 2x2 factorial ANOVA participation in sports has two levels (players-non players) and gender also has two levels (male-female). The analysis and F statistics are presented in table 1 and 2 respectively.

Results

Table 1: Effect of Participation in Sports (A) x Gender (B) on Body Image of University Students

		Gender (B)		Marginal Mean
		Male (b ₁)	Female (b ₂)	
Sports Participation (A)	Player (a ₁)	N=25 M=12.72 S.D. = 5.98	N=25 M=16.36 S.D.=9.63	14.54
	Non player (a ₂)	N=25 M=20.24 S.D.=8.17	N=25 M=23.72 S.D.=7.59	21.98
Marginal Mean		16.48	20.04	

Table 2: ANOVA Summary

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
A				1383.8401
	1383.840			316.8401
B				5.007*
	21.87**			.1601
	316.840			.160
AB				6074.40096
	.003 (NS)			
Within treatment				
	63.275			
(Error)				

** Significant at .01 level; * Significant at .05 level; NS Not Significant

Table 1 reveals the following facts

- The main effect of participation in sports on body image of university students found to be statistically significant at .01 level (F=21.87, *p*<.01). It reveals that body image of university sportspersons (M=14.54) was found to be significantly higher as compared to university non sportsperson (M=21.98). The results are analysed as per manual i.e. higher the score lower the body image.
- The main effect of gender on body image of university students was found to be statistically significant at .05 level. (F=5.007, *p*<.05) It shows that perception of own body was significantly higher in university male students (M=16.48) as compared to university female students (M=20.04).
- The F of 0.71, an indicator of interaction effect of participation in sports and gender on body image of university students was not found to be statistically significant.

Discussion

The result clearly states that body image of university sportsperson was better as compared to university non-sportsperson. In a similar study Prakasa and Overman (1986)^[5] reported that body image in sportspersons is high as compared to non-sportsperson. Hence the present study once again highlight the role of sports in enhancement of body image.

Another main effect in the form of gender was also found to be significantly affecting body image of university students with female students have lower body image as compared to male students. This may be due to social pressure on females to be thin and also modern day females are so much beauty conscious.

The two factors interaction effect of participation in sports and gender on body image was not found to be statistically significant. This is expected because two main effects are highly significant.

Conclusion

1. Body image in university sportsperson was significantly better as compared to university non-sportsperson.
2. University female students were more likely to suffer from disorganized body image as compared to male university students.
3. Participation in sports and gender in interaction with other failed to create variance on body image of university students.

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