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## Effect of participation in sports on body image of female college students

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### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to compare body image of female collegiate students on the basis of their participation in sports. The sample consist of 50 female students (Average age 19.12 years) with participation in intercollegiate sports tournament and 50 female collegiate students (Average age 20.01 years) with no active involvement in sports. 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. A significant effect of participation in sports on body image of female collegiate students was obser. Female collegiate students with participation in sports had significantly superior body image as compared to female collegiate non-sportsperson. It was concluded that female collegiate sportspersons possesses more magnitude of body image as compared to female collegiate non-sportspersons.

**Keywords:** Body image, collegiate student, participation in sports

### Introduction

Developing a positive body image and a healthy mental attitude is crucial to a woman's happiness and wellness. Body image refers to a person's feelings of the aesthetics and sexual attractiveness of their own body. The phrase body image was first coined by the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Paul Schilder in his book *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1935) [9]. Human society has at all times placed great value on beauty of the human body, but a person's perception of their own body may not correspond to society's standards. According to Cash and Pruzinsky (2003), "Body image is a complex construct constituting the following configuration: emotional experience related to body and its functions, as well as mental concept (perception and thoughts) regarding physical appearance." Body image represents a multifaceted, complex construct that is influenced by the processes of time, experience, and maturation. The development of body image is not confined to childhood where a child is constantly exploring and assessing her environment, but continues throughout life. Body image also been defined as the cognitions and affect regarding body, body importance, dieting behavior, and perceptual body image (Bainfield & McCabe, 2002) [2]. These definitions indicates that body image is a combination of how an individual pictures or perceives their physical self and how they feel about their body. It has been demonstrated that human beings use their bodies as a framework for their awareness and psycho-physical orientation of themselves. Awareness of body image relates man to his environment by allowing him to experience the stimuli outside but, at the same time, separates man from space. It has also been suggested that one's body image is not static; instead it is dynamic, with a variety of images affected by changes in body weight, fitness and the ability to learn and perform new physical skills. Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self, but more importantly the thoughts and feelings the person experiences as a result of that perception. It is important to understand that these feelings can be positive, negative or a combination of both and are influenced by individual and environmental factors. According to Schilder (1935) [9] 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. Females have been found to experience dissatisfaction with physical appearance at a much higher rate than males (Striegel-

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Moore & Franko, 2002)<sup>[11]</sup>, and women of all ages and sizes display body image disturbance. Numerous studies have verified that one's subjective evaluation of their own appearance can have a powerful impact on a person's development and psychosocial experiences. Researchers have found that body dissatisfaction is correlated with other forms of psychological impairment. Not surprisingly, disturbed body image is one of the main precursors for disordered eating and dieting in adolescent and young adult girls (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989)<sup>[1]</sup>. It has been advocated that physical activity and sports enhance body image. Number of studies have documented that sports participation is beneficial for development of body image. Jaffee & Mahle Lutter (1995)<sup>[6]</sup> also reported that low body image in females was largely due to lack of physical activity and sports participation. Miller and Levy (1996)<sup>[8]</sup> reported higher body image in female athletes as compared to female non-athletes. A study conducted by Koivula (1999)<sup>[7]</sup> revealed that participation in sports brings more positive body image. The outcome of the study conducted by Hausenblas & Symons Downs (2001)<sup>[5]</sup> revealed that athletes possess more magnitude of body image as compared to non-athletes. In contrary some studies shows that females are prone to develop poor body image due to participation in sports (Slater and Tiggeman, 2011)<sup>[10]</sup>. Similarly Davis and Cowles (1998)<sup>[4]</sup> reported that females who take part in sports such as gymnastic or long distance running are more prone to dissatisfied body image. Hence in the light of contradictory findings the researcher decided to assess body image of female college students on the basis of participation in sports.

### Aims & objective

The objective of the present study was to compare body image of female college students on the basis of participation in sports.

### Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that female college students with active participation in sports will show more magnitude of body image as compared to female college students with no active participation in sports.

### Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

### Sample

The sample consist of 50 female students (Average age 19.12 years) with participation in intercollegiate sports tournament and 50 female collegiate students (Average age 20.01 years) with no active involvement in sports. The sample comprise of female students from various colleges of Nagpur.

### Tools

To assess body image of the female college 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 female college students were selected from various colleges following the inclusion criteria of participation in

sports / non participation in sports. Body image questionnaire was administered to each subject keeping the convenience of the subjects. The response on each statement was scored as per directions of author's manual. To compare body image of female college students on the basis of participation in sports, independent sample 't' test was used.

## Result and Discussion

**Table 1:** Comparison of body image between female collegiate sportsperson and female collegiate non sportsperson

Groups	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	't'
Female College Sportsperson	15.06	7.88	4.24	2.48*
Female College Non-sportsperson	19.30	9.16		

\* Significant at .05 level

A perusal of table 1 indicate that mean score on body image in a group of female collegiate sportsperson was 15.06 while for group consisting of female collegiate non-sportsperson it was 19.30. The mean difference between two groups was 4.24 and calculated  $t=2.48$  was significant at .05 level. The scoring pattern of body image questionnaire is such that higher scores is indicative of poor body image. On the basis of this scoring pattern it can be said that female collegiate sportspersons possesses significantly more magnitude of body image as compared to female collegiate non-sportsperson at .05 level significance criteria.

Results indicate the benefits of sports participation in terms of perceived physical appearance and psychological wellbeing and reiterate the previous findings regarding the association between participation in sports and positive body image.

### Conclusion

On the basis of results, it was concluded that female college students with active

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