

Introduction

Body Image (BI): is the picture of our own bodies that we have in our minds, which reflects on what we see when we look in the mirror. It is a multidimensional concept, with behavioral, psychological and cultural components (*Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, 2010*).

There are different definitions of body image perception; **Perceived BI**: which represents the internal image one figures about himself; **The Ideal BI**: what the society considers as an acceptable body image; In addition to **Body image of the opposite sex (BIOS)** which is the perceived body image for males, by females, or vice versa (*Zaccagnil et al., 2014*).

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in body image perception worldwide, due to the serious consequences of distorted body image on physical, psychological and behavioral well-being. Strict dieting, excessive weight control, low self-esteem, and self-worth, may be consequences to a distorted self-body image, that may cause serious life and economic costs (*Smink et al., 2012*). Positive body image perception leads to the feeling of social acceptance, self-confidence, and life satisfaction, and makes it easier to adopt healthier attitudes and practices regarding eating behaviors and physical activity (*National Eating Disorders Association, 2015*).

Many factors were found to affect body image perception, such as culture, media, age, sex and physical activity (*Grogan, 2016*).

A strong association between body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem was found; according to a previous research by (*Ozmen et al., in 2006*), among 2203 Turkish adolescent students, aged 15-18 years old, using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES). This study results found that body image dissatisfaction was related to low self-esteem and depression in adolescents.

Gender was found to have an effect on body image perception. Literature review found that Women were more concerned about their body image than men; A previous study conducted on university students in Assiut; showed that 25.6% of male and 40% of the female students, reported having mild to marked body image concerns (*El-Ansari et al., 2014*).

Exposure to media, affects the body image perception, and consequently body image satisfaction, which may lead to following unhealthy diets, in order to lose weight.

In **2011**, a study was conducted by *El-Ghazale et al.* among female university students, in five Arab countries (Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria and Oman); showed that the association between exposure to media (watching television and reading magazines), and following strict diet to lose

weight, was significant among females in Bahrain ($p<0.044$), Egypt ($p<0.001$) and Jordan ($p<0.001$).

University students' social environment, may also be an affecting factor, as it stimulates an increased awareness of social norms related to appearance and attractiveness, that trigger the risk of following unhealthy body-change approaches, in order to be in the ideal body image (*Bergstrom et al., 2004*).

Physical activity was found to have positive effects on body dissatisfaction (*LePage et al., 2010*). Body image dissatisfaction improved after doing 30 minutes of aerobic exercises, There was also a significant increase in body satisfaction, by doing aerobic exercises for 60 minutes (*Tyson et al., 2010*).

Reviewing literature showed that there are gaps in knowledge regarding body image perception, as most studies concerning body image perception were conducted in western countries (*Rodgers, 2012*), while less studies were done among Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) countries (*Musaiger and Al-Mannai, 2014*). Secondly, most of these EMR studies focused on either eating disorders, self-image or dieting to conclude that further BI research was required, (*Yahia, 2011*) (*Zeeni, 2013*). Thirdly, few studies, evaluated the body image concerns among university students in EMR region (*Musaiger, 2014*). Another gap in knowledge is lack of studies among

university male students regarding body image, as studies examined only female university students, despite that men similarly experience altered perceptions of their bodies (*Rodgers, 2012*). For example, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), (*Schulte and Thomas, 2013*) concluded that “eating disorders prevention strategies should address the needs of females and males and consider potential depressive co-morbidity”. Fourthly, BI has been studied in relation to the role of the media (magazines, television), while less research focused on the association of body image concerns with BMI, and with many lifestyle features and mental well-being variables (*El Ansari et al., 2014*).

This current study, was done to assess the different concepts of body image; with identification of factors affecting body image perception and satisfaction, among female and male university students. The study also measured the effects of distorted body image perception and low body image satisfaction on self-esteem of the students.

Goal of the Study

To improve body image perception; and to decrease the consequences of distorted body image, among university students.

Research Questions:

- 1) How do university students define body image?
- 2) How far are university students satisfied with their body image?
- 3) What are the different factors affecting body image perception and satisfaction among university students?
- 4) What is the effect of distorted body image on self-esteem?

Research Hypothesis:

Distorted body image may affect the self-esteem of university students.

Research Objectives

- 1- To describe body image perception and satisfaction, among university students
- 2- To identify factors; affecting body image perception, and satisfaction; among university students.
- 3- To determine the relation between body image perception, satisfaction, and self-esteem among university students

Body Image Definitions

1.1 Definition:

Body image is defined as “one’s perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her own body” (*Grogan, 2017*).

Interest in the Psychology and Sociology of body image originated in the work of Paul Schilder in the 1950s. In *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1950) Paul Schilder argued that "Body image is not just a cognitive construct, but also is a reflection of attitudes and interactions with others". Since 1950, researchers have taken ‘Body Image’ to mean many different things, including perception of one’s own body attractiveness, body size distortion, perception of body boundaries, and accuracy of perception of bodily sensations (*Pedro et al., 2016*).

Body dissatisfaction is defined as: “A person’s negative thoughts and feelings about his or her body (*Poorani, 2012*).

1.2. Elements of body image definition:

The definition “A person’s perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his or her body” includes all the elements of body image: body size estimation (*perceptions*), evaluation of body attractiveness (*thoughts*), and emotions associated with body shape and size (*feelings*).

Each individual has a mental picture of his or her physical appearance; that he or she uses to measure concepts related to body image. Once an individual's perception of this body image is disturbed, emotional, psychosocial and behavioral reactions may result (*Zaccagni et al., 2014*).

1.3. Different components of body image perception (*Zaccagni et al., 2014*):

- a. **Perceived body image** which represents internal image one figures about himself.
- b. **Ideal BI:** which is seen as what the society considers as acceptable.
- c. **Body image for opposite sex (BIOS)** which is the perceived body image for males by females or vice versa.

The **National eating disorders association**, in 2015, "Body image fact sheet", identified the body image as:

- a. **Perceptual body image:** How a person sees his/her body.

This is not always a correct representation of how he/she actually look.

- b. **The affective body image:** The way a person feels about his body, this relates to the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction he feels about his shape, weight and individual body parts.

- c. Cognitive body image:** The way a person thinks about his body, this can lead to a pre-occupation with body shape and weight.
- d. Behavioral body image:** Behaviors in which a person engages as a result of his body image encompass. When a person is dissatisfied with the way he looks, he may isolate himself because he feels bad about his appearance or employ destructive behaviors as a means to change appearance.

Positive and Negative Body Image

2.1 Definition:

Positive body image refers to a person's acceptance of his own body, and appreciation of its uniqueness and the functions it performs (*Tylka et al., 2015*).

2.2 Characteristics of a positive body image:

- An accurate perception of body size and shape.
- Seeing own body as it really is.
- Appreciating own natural body shape.
- Understanding that a person's physical appearance says very little about their character and value as a person.
- Accepting own body and understanding that all bodies are different.
- Refusing spending an unreasonable amount of time worrying about own appearance, weight, food or calories.
- Feeling comfortable and confident with own body.
- Own appearance doesn't determine one's actions or behaviors.
- Being comfortable around people of all shapes and sizes.

(*Cash, 2008*)

2.3 Positive body image constructs:

2.3.1 Body Appreciation:

The intentional choice to:

- Accept own body regardless of its size or bodily defects/imperfections.
- Respect and take care of own body by attending to its needs through engaging in health-promoting behaviours. Protect one's body by resisting the internalization of unrealistic standards of beauty in the media (*Webb et al., 2015*).

2.3.2 Positive Rational Acceptance:

Accepting the distressing event and engaging in self-care and rational self-talk.

According to *Cash et al. (2005)* positive rational acceptance is one of the three identified body image coping response styles to manage body image-related threats/challenges.

The other two coping mechanisms are:

- 1- Avoidance (attempting to avert or escape body image-related threats).
- 2- Appearance fixing engaging in efforts to alter appearance by covering, camouflaging, or correcting the perceived flaw).

2.3.3 Body Image Flexibility:

Body image flexibility is defined as “a compassionate response to embrace rather than avoid, escape, or otherwise alter the content or form of aversive body-related thoughts and feelings” (*Sandoz et al., 2013*).

It’s the utilization of mindfulness and acceptance skills to engage in life and pursue valued actions to promote human flourishing, and encourages mindful contact with negative emotions that may emerge when body image is threatened, and this mindful contact helps facilitate body acceptance and committed positive behavioural change via self-care (*Ciarrochi et al., 2013*).

2.3.4 Body Functionality:

Recognizing and appreciating the various functions that the body does; is fundamental for enhancing positive body image, particularly for girls and women (*Rubin and Steinberg, 2011; Alleva et al., 2014*).

2.3.5 Attunement:

Attunement is “The ability to appropriately sense and respect the body by regularly engaging in adaptive behaviours to attend to its needs” (*Cook-Cottone, 2015a*).

Attunement can be estimated by measuring two constructs: **Body responsiveness** and **Mindful self-care**.

Body responsiveness is the feeling of being fully attuned to the body's needs and using this information to guide behavior.

Mindful self-care is being aware of basic physiological and emotional needs and structuring one's environment, relationships, and daily routine to meet these needs (*Cook-Cottone, 2015b*).

2.3.6 Body Pride:

Body pride is "A strong, positive, self-conscious emotion towards the body, that results from engaging in valued behaviors or presenting with positive characteristics" (*Castonguay et al., 2013*).

It is important to determine whether body pride is within normal and in context with the definition of positive body image, or it is more than usual "strong pride of the body appearance", in other words, feeling better than others' appearances. This turns body pride from being a motivation to achieve and maintain the desired appearance, to be a more narcissistic preoccupation with appearance, that is inconsistent with positive body image definition (*Tylka et al., 2013*).

2.3.7 Body Sanctification:

Body sanctification represents the perspective that one's body has spiritual significance and meaning so that it needs to be treated with respect.

When an individual sanctifies his own body, he tends to invest time and energy into mindful self-care, trying to protect and preserve his body (*Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010*).

Body sanctification was found to be linked with health-protective behaviors as vigorous exercise and low use of alcohol, and healthy dieting among U.S. college students (*Mahoney et al., 2005*).

2.3.8 Body Acceptance by Others:

It occurs when people perceive that their body shapes and sizes, are accepted by important others (e.g., friends, partners, family) and society. This can be expressed directly (e.g., “I like your shape”) and indirectly (e.g., by not focusing on or commenting about their bodies).

When individuals are not occupied by the need to meet the appearance-related expectations of others, they become freer to divert time and energy spent on what their body looks like to how their body feels and functions (*Avalos et al., 2006*).

In their studies (*Frisén et al., 2010; Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010*) on adolescent girls and boys from Sweden and female college students from the United States (U.S)., They specified that living in a context where individuals find their bodies are accepted by others, facilitate the development and maintenance of a positive body image. Thus, body acceptance

by others may be a contributor to, more than a component of, positive body image.

2.4 Negative body image:

2.4.1 Definition:

Negative body image or a distorted body image, is a brain condition in which the person is unable to see himself or herself accurately in the mirror; but perceives his features and body size as distorted (*Cederholm et al., 2017*). The image the individual perceives may be huge despite an actual state of thinness.

2.4.2 Characteristics of Negative body image:

- A distorted perception of body size and shape.
- Inaccurate perception of body parts.
- Believing that only others are more attractive.
- Believing that own body size or shape is a sign of personal failure.
- Considering weight or shape as a cause of lack of worth.
- Obsessive self-observation in mirrors
- Feeling ashamed, anxious and self-conscious about own body.

- Feeling uncomfortable with your body.
- Spending an unreasonable amount of time worrying about own appearance, weight, food, or calories.
- Avoiding certain activities or places because of the way that one looks.
- Avoiding certain people because of the way that one looks

(*Van der Meer et al., 2012*)

2.4.3 Grades of Negative body image:

▪ Body image disturbance:

It is the wide ranged definition of untrue body image, ranging from a little dislike to a severe body-hatred (*Heider et al., 2015*).

▪ Body image dissatisfaction:

The discrepancy between the perceived self-body image and the ideal body image.

Body dissatisfaction was found to be related to low self-esteem, and depressive mood; and has been identified as a reliable predictor of the increases use of dieting and disordered eating symptoms and clinical eating disorders (*Kessler et al., 2013*).