

Relationship of Gymming with Mental Health, Body Image Satisfaction, Aggression and Happiness

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Abstract— The whole purpose behind this research was to study individuals who engage themselves in regular recreation body building exercises, to improve their current body images and its impact on their mental health, happiness and aggression. Lately all around us if we look at news articles, clippings of magazines, and social media all are influencing us to work towards “perfect bodies”. It is essential for us to realize and focus on this issue and see how it can be fruitful for our knowledge base. Studies on this over time have shown that gym going individuals have advantage for their mental health. Looking at our research findings we can see that

gym goers had slightly better body image satisfaction (33.61) as compared to non gym goers (33.00); for aggression also gym goers had scored significantly lower (70.08) as compared to non gym goers (78.81) and there was significant difference between them on this dimension ($t= 2.06$; $p= 0.05$); for mental health also gym goers had scored lower (9.75) as compared to non gym goers (11.15); and while looking for relationship between gymming to body image satisfaction, mental health, happiness and aggression findings indicate that for relationship between gymming with mental health it was seen to be negative (-.158), with body image satisfaction there was positive relationship (.242); with happiness also there was seen to be a significant positive correlation (.258). With the help of this paper and after reviewing vast literature on this it can be concluded that mental health professionals should take this issue seriously and create awareness regarding body image dissatisfaction and its impact on their mental wellbeing and also how its impacting our other aspects of life.

Index Terms— Aggression, Body image satisfaction, Gym, Happiness and Mental health.

I. INTRODUCTION

These days we see that the current generation is always looking at the latest trends, influenced by the silver screen images of models and actors; dressing up like them, working hard to look like them; “zero figure” has become such a trend amongst the females and six pack abs amongst the males. People these days go to extremes to look perfect; gymming, going for various cosmetic surgeries, going on extreme hunger diets, bingeing, taking laxatives to look thin, to fit into the skinniest attires possible. Maintaining perfect figures has become an object of fascination. Everyone is running to the gyms, aerobic classes, hiring yoga tutors just to look as perfect as they can, it seems as if the battle is not with themselves but the celebrities we see on our televisions.

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In contrast to the present scenario, if we look at the past, we can remember how being thin and skinny was frowned upon, in many cultures it was considered a sign of poverty or ill health; but these days we see a completely different picture. It feels as if the youth is under some pressure to look like other “perfect beauty ideals”. Interestingly the pressure is not felt only in females; males also feel this pressure and are hitting the gyms more regularly than females.

The sole purpose of this paper is to see does gymming have any relation with body image satisfaction, general mental health, happiness and aggression.

A. Body image:

The term body image was first coined by Schilder (1950), according to him it is not solely created through one’s own perceptions but also through one’s social experiences and interactions with others. It has a huge impact in formation of one’s own identity, in raising one’s personal worth and has an effect on the well being of an individual across the lifetime (Grogan, 2008). It has been observed by researchers that focus on body image is mostly done by females; despite of vast literature on body image and females researches show that it is the males who are seeking psychological intervention for body image-related difficulties which highlights the increasing incidence of this issue among this gender (Olivardia, Pope & Hudson, 2000). It has been noticed over the past few decades, the body image dissatisfaction has increased in men and their numbers have increased in the gyms to attain “muscle tone” (Cash, 2002).

Interestingly research studies comparing body image satisfaction in men and women have found that the dissatisfaction experienced by men in terms of their bodies does not push them over the edge towards poor mental health but impacts more on their self esteem, aggression levels; while for females it strongly has an impact on their mental health (O’Dea & Yager, 2006).

Research by Striegel-Moore & Smolak, (2000) found that overweight girls and women experience significant societal pressures, such as teasing about weight, discrimination, and disapproval, which creates a pressure on their minds which impacts them psychologically and to reduce this burden, they start complying with the societal demands and work hard to “fit in”.

B. Gym and mental health:

Researchers have shown that individuals engaging in regular exercises such as gymming, swimming etc., have improved

and better self esteem, better body image satisfaction (Depcik & Williams, 2004; Lepage & Crowther, 2010). And also improvements in emotional wellbeing of non depressed individuals (Pope et al., 2002).

Studies have also found positive results for mental health professionals suggesting that gymming is also found to enhance mood, improve cognitive functioning (Cassilhas et al., 2007) , self esteem and quality of life of depressed patients (Kimura et al., 2010).

II. METHODS

A. Aim:

The aim of the present research was to see the relationship of gymming with mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

B. Hypotheses:

H1: There will be no significant difference between gym goers and non gym goers on mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

H2: There will be no significant difference between gym going females and gym going males on mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

H3: Gymming will not have any significant impact on general mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

C. Research design and variables:

Two groups between subjects research design was used for the study. The independent variable of the study was gymming. The dependent variables of the study were mental health, body image satisfaction, happiness and aggression.

D. Sample and sampling:

Purposive sample consisted of 120 participants (30 gym going males; 30 gym going females; 30 control group males and 30 control group females) who filled the informed consent form to participate in the study. Their age range was 18-40 years. The participants had no history of any psychiatric and medical illness. Participants who were not fluent in English or Hindi were excluded from the study. The data was collected from parts of Rajasthan, Delhi and Mumbai, India.

E. Tools used in the study:

Personal data sheet: To record relevant personal information of the participants.

Informed consent: To get willingness to participate in the study.

General health questionnaire: (GHQ by Goldberg & Williams, 1988). The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) is a self-administered screening questionnaire, designed for use in consulting settings aimed at detecting individuals with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). It consists of 12 items, each one assessing the severity of a mental problem over the past few weeks using a 4-point

Likert-type scale (from 0 to 3). The score is used to generate a total score ranging from 0 to 36. The positive items are corrected from 0 (*always*) to 3 (*never*) and the negative ones from 3 (*always*) to 0 (*never*). High scores indicate worse health.

Body image satisfaction scale: it was assessed using body areas satisfaction scale (BASS by Cash, 2000; Brown, Cash & Mikulka, 1990); it is a 9 item scale which assesses satisfaction or dissatisfaction with specific areas of the body on a 5-point scale (Complete Satisfaction to Complete Dissatisfaction).

Happiness scale: It was assessed using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002); it has been derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI). The OHQ includes similar items to those of the OHI, each presented as a single statement which can be approved on a uniform six-point Likert scale; reliability of this scale is ($\alpha=.91$).

Aggression scale: It was assessed using the aggression questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) the 34-item AQ measures a respondent's self-perceived levels of aggression and anger, it is a revised version of the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (BDHI; Buss & Durkee, 1957).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

As the hypotheses were guiding force for analysis of the data, results are displayed and discussed according to them.

H1: Difference between gym goers and non- gym goers on General mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

Table 1: Difference (t- Test) between gym goers and non- gym goers on General mental health, body image

	GROUPS	MEAN	S.D.	t-TEST
GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH	NON-GYM	11.15	4.40	1.478
	GYM-GOING	9.75	5.86	
BODY IMAGE SATISFACTION	NON-GYM	33.00	6.45	.535
	GYM-GOING	33.61	6.17	
AGGRESSION	NON-GYM	78.81	26.04	2.06*
	GYM-GOING	70.08	19.97	
HAPPINESS	NON-GYM	4.05	.64	.814
	GYM-GOING	3.95	.72	

satisfaction, aggression and happiness (N= 120).

Analysis revealed that gym goers had scored slightly better on body image satisfaction (33.61) as compared to non gym goers (33.00); for aggression also gym goers had scored significantly lower (70.08) as compared to non gym goers (78.81) and there was significant difference between them for this dimension ($t= 2.06$; $p= 0.05$); for mental health also gym goers had scored lower (9.75) as compared to non gym goers

(11.15); though the findings were not significant. While on the other hand only for happiness gym goers had scored lower (3.95) than non gym goers (4.05), though there was a difference the results were not significant as can be seen from table 1. The findings are in sync with the literature on this topic clearly indicating positive health benefits of gymming for mental wellbeing and body image satisfaction, which is enhanced after people, become aware of their physical strengths and caliber (McDonald & Thompson, 1992).

H2: Difference between gym going females and gym going males on general mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness.

Table 2: Difference (t- Test) between gym going females and gym going males on General mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness (N= 60).

	GROUPS	MEAN	S.D.	t-TEST
GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH	GYM GOING FEMALES	10.66	6.51	1.215
	GYM-GOING MALES	8.83	5.07	
BODY IMAGE SATISFACTION	GYM-GOING FEMALES	32.13	6.06	1.903
	GYM-GOING MALES	35.10	6.01	
AGGRESSION	GYM-GOING FEMALES	66.76	19.41	1.293
	GYM-GOING MALES	73.40	20.30	
HAPPINESS	GYM-GOING FEMALES	3.72	.78	2.030*
	GYM-GOING MALES	4.14	.62	

As can be seen from the results gym going females (10.66) had scored higher than gym going males (8.83) on general mental health; for body image satisfaction males had reported better body image satisfaction (35.10) than females (32.13); which clearly justifies the findings of other studies also which state that lower body image satisfaction leads to poorer mental health; for happiness also males had scored better (4.14) than females (3.72) and the findings were significant (t=2.03; p= 0.05), which is an obvious explanation, if their body image satisfaction is higher and mental health is better, they are ultimately going to be a happy group; and lastly for aggression also males had scored higher than females (73.40 and 66.76) respectively, this could be due to their general instinctual pattern, which states that males are usually more aggressive than females.

H3: Relationship of general mental health, body image satisfaction, aggression and happiness for Males and Females.

Table 3: Correlation of Gymming with General mental health, Body image satisfaction, Aggression and happiness for Males and Females

GYMMING	GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH	BODY IMAGE SATISFACTION	AGGRESSION	HAPPINESS
	-.158	.242	.167	.258*
NON GYMMING	-.004	.260*	-.287*	.019

As can be seen from table 3 relationship between gymming and mental health is negative (-.158), with body image satisfaction there is positive relationship (.242); with happiness also there is a significant positive correlation (.258). and relationship between non gymming and mental health is also negative though it isn't as strong as found in gym goers (-.004); interestingly the relationship in the sample was found strong for non gym goers to body image satisfaction (.260) than gym goers; for non gym goers we can clearly see from the results negative correlation between aggression (-.287) and the findings were found to be significant, the reasons for these findings for the non gym goers could be, that this group might be consisting of those individuals who already have the so called "perfect bodies" that their body image satisfaction is higher, which in turn creates no aggression in them, leading to a negative correlation with aggression and mental health and positive relation with happiness.

IV. CONCLUSION

Looking at the vast literature and our research findings we can clearly conclude that body image, gymming etc., are not confined to some specific gender, males and females both experience disturbances related to their bodies, the only difference that lies amongst them is that of the way these insecurities are manifested, for females its is more likely through poor mental well being and for males through aggressive behaviors. These findings have implications for mental health professionals working towards the well being of individuals, it is essential that we as clinicians should not neglect this important domain of body image satisfaction and dissatisfaction which is pushing people towards various psychiatric disorders such as body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorders, depression, low self esteem, and very sadly in worst cases suicides. We should create awareness amongst people, of this grave condition and collaboratively look for solution to this. We should also keep the impact created by gymming on our mental health in mind and should use it as an option for better mental and physical healths. Though the research was conducted on a small sample, we cannot generalize completely from these findings; but surely can learn something from it.

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