

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

PERCEIVED BODY IMAGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH BODY MASS INDEX, SELF-ESTEEM, BODY CHANGE STRATEGY, AND SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE AMONG RURAL ADOLESCENTS IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Body image is a complex and multifaceted construct with multiple associated factors determining its perception among adolescents. This study aimed to determine the perceived body image and its relationship with body mass index, self-esteem, body change strategy, and social network usage among rural adolescents. This study was a cross-sectional study design using a multistage random sampling technique to select adolescents aged 10 to 19 years. A total of 318 adolescents' data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 22.0 with a p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant. The mean (SD) age of adolescents was 14.6 (2.7) years with a male and female ratio of 1.09:1. The mean score (SD) of perceived body image was 3.63 (0.87). Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that gender, body mass index, and strategy to increase weight could predict perceived body image among adolescents. However, self-esteem did not correlate with perceived body image. Although, the body image dissatisfaction level was low among rural adolescents compared to other studies in Malaysia. However, it can still pose a threat to adolescents' health if not addressed accordingly.

Keywords: Body image, Body change strategy, Self-esteem, Social network usage, Sarawak, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Body image is a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her body¹. It is a complex and multifaceted construct², which can be examined through various elements, such as appearance satisfaction and appearance orientation³. Body image is closely related to adolescents' growth and development⁴. During the adolescence phase, adolescents are subjected to physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and social developments. These developments can result in either body image satisfaction or body image dissatisfaction⁵.

Male and female adolescents generally have different body image preferences. Males typically prefer muscular body size and shape, while females usually sought for body thinness⁶⁻¹⁰. Body image preferences among adolescents can be caused by various factors such as peer pressure, media influences, and celebrities influence¹¹. These factors, especially media influences, usually portray females having thin body figures and males with muscular body shape. As such, adolescents who do not have the portrayed body image may become dissatisfied with their body image.

In Malaysia, previous studies had been done to assess perceived body image among secondary school students¹²⁻¹⁷. The prevalence of adolescents who were dissatisfied with their body image was between 33% and 78%. These studies also found that a higher percentage of female

adolescents were dissatisfied with their body as compared to male adolescents. The highest percentage of body image dissatisfaction was reported previously¹³, whereby up to 82% of its female respondents were found to have body image dissatisfaction. Similar findings were reported among Japanese and 77.2% of Finnish adolescents¹⁸.

Body image dissatisfaction is sometimes dangerous. It is associated with disordered eating behaviours, unhealthy weight control behaviours, low physical activity, exercise, lower self-esteem, and suicidal ideation¹⁹⁻²⁶. By identifying the factors associated with perceived body image, relevant authorities would address this issue among adolescents accordingly. Apart from peers, celebrities, and media influence body image¹¹, there are other factors associated with perceived body image. These factors include body mass index, self-esteem, and social network usage²⁶⁻²⁸.

Body mass index (BMI) measures a person's nutritional status and overall body size and shape²⁹. Male adolescents with normal BMI were found to be more satisfied with their body image as compared to underweight or overweight counterpart³⁰. On the other hand, female adolescents who were underweight are more satisfied with their body image than normal-weight and overweight female adolescents. Abdul Latif et al.³¹ found that almost 80% of the overweight adolescents were dissatisfied with their body image while less than 60% of normal-weight and underweight adolescents had body