

Perceived Physical Attractiveness and Sexual Esteem Among Male and Female Adult Student

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The current study was designed to investigate the relationship of perceived physical attractiveness and sexual esteem among Pakistani women and men. Role of gender and marital status on the study variables was also explored. The sample consisted of 320 adults (130 men and 190 women) with age range of 18 to 35 years. Sample was taken from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The Multidimensional Body Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scale MBSRQ-AS (Cash, 2000) was used to measure perceived physical attractiveness. Sexual esteem was measured by the subscale of Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (Snell, 1998). The findings indicated that Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, and Body Area Satisfaction were positively correlated to sexual esteem, whereas overweight preoccupation was negatively correlated with sexual esteem. Gender differences on the variables indicated that appearance evaluation was higher among men as compared to females. The moderation analysis showed that the significant negative relationship between overweight preoccupation and sexual esteem in men only, whereas sexual esteem of women was not unaffected through all levels of overweight preoccupation. The study findings provided a better insight into the role played by perceived physical attractiveness and need of sexual esteem among both genders. Findings were discussed in cultural context. Further, implications of the study were considered and discussed.

Keywords. Perceived Physical attractiveness, sexual esteem, gender differences

Physical attraction is an important component of our sexuality. The degree to which we consider our sexual life worthy and satisfying is greatly influenced by our satisfaction related to our physique and

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body and the way we form an image of an ideal body in our mind. Men and women conceptualize their perceived physical attractiveness in different ways. Generally, women have more compartmentalized and fragmented perception about their physical attractiveness (e.g., I don't like the size of my thighs), whereas men have a holistic and functional perception (e.g., look how much weight I can lift) about their physique (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010).

Traditionally, there has been a greater focus on perceived physical attractiveness and sexual experiences of women. A greater part of population that is men have been neglected in empirical studies. While, there is meaningful link between perceived physical attractiveness and sexual experiences in both men and women (Bernhard, 2002). Sexuality has always been a controversial topic, even in developed countries. Similarly, in a country like Pakistan, where discussions are strongly influenced by religion, traditional practices and beliefs, research and discussion focusing on sexuality are extremely considered a taboo. It invites a great deal of outrage and criticism from the public. This research outlines one of such areas of sexuality that are highly neglected and underreported in Pakistan, especially, in reference to sexual-esteem.

Perceived Physical Attractiveness

Perceived physical attractiveness is defined as the way a person's physical appearance is considered as having radiance or elegant qualities. This appraisal can be centered on self-judgment, others' explanation or a combination of both. Physical attraction includes both face and body of an individual and it is related to the satisfying opinion about a person's physique, body shape, form and facial features (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). Hence, we can say that perceived physical attractiveness is synonymous to perceived body image.

Eastwick and Finkel (2008) revealed evidences for the expected gender differences. Particularly, women were more likely to consider attractiveness of their partner when choosing partners for short-term relationship, while, men considered physical attractiveness when choosing partner for a serious long-term relationship. Hence, for having long-term relationships, women are expected to be more physically attractive. In Pakistani society, women are judged on their physical appearance and attractiveness as compared to men which makes them more conscious and concerned about their physical appearance (Taqui et al. 2008)

A study showed that physically attractive women are healthy and more resistant to sickness (Hume & Montgomerie, 2001) and, therefore, are at less risk of being stressed out that may affect their marital satisfaction negatively (Neff & Karney, 2004, 2007). At the same time, husbands of physically attractive wives are more contented at the start and stay more contented in the long run, they may treat their attractive wives in a better way and thus those attractive wives may be satisfied during the relationship (McNulty, Neff, & Karney, 2008). In a study reported in Pakistan, body image was positively related to psychological wellbeing for both men and women (Abbasi & Zubair, 2015). Such evidences illustrate that perceived physical attractiveness (also referred as body image) can influence social as well as psychological wellbeing.

Sexual Esteem

Sexual esteem or sexual self-esteem has been defined as “the value that one places on oneself as a sexual being, including sexual identity and perceptions of sexual acceptability” (Mayers, Heller, & Heller, 2003, p. 207). It is the positive appraisal for and confidence in the capability to experience an individual’s own sexuality in an enjoyable and satisfying way (Snell & Papini, 2010). Sexual esteem depends upon one’s view of the self as a sexual being, considering oneself as sexually appealing or sexually competent, and how one perceives oneself during a sexual encounter. It is a fundamental part of one’s physical and sexual health capabilities (Maas & Lefkowitz, 2015).

Men and women differ in their perception of sexual esteem. Women are believed to be more conscious about their perceived physical attractiveness and thus evaluate their sexual esteem with respect to it. Whereas, men’s sexual esteem revolves around their self-concept of how much capable they are in having successful sex with their partners. Those who have successful sexual relationship have higher sexual esteem (Maas & Lefkowitz, 2015). Literature suggests that the negative thoughts of women about their physical appearance hinder their contacts with partners leading to low sexual esteem and thus less sexual satisfaction (Pujols, Meston, & Seal, 2010). During a sexual relationship, men who view themselves being more able to evoke and satisfy the sexual urges of their partner usually have higher sexual esteem. For women, sexual esteem varies depending on how much sensual and tempting they appear to their partner. When compared on romanticism, the young women, who view themselves more fascinating, have higher sexual esteem than the young men (Cavendish, 2010).

Sexual Esteem and Perceived Physical Attractiveness

Studies highlight the direct relationship of physical attraction with sexual esteem. Khan et al. (2017) reported that body dissatisfaction is associated with body image perception. Particularly during the adolescence phase, where girls develop awareness about their physical appearance and body size that eventually affects their attitude towards body satisfaction. Amos and McCabe (2017) reported that positive self-perceptions of sexual attractiveness lead to higher sexual esteem, increased sexual satisfaction, and a greater frequency of sexual activity with others among both men and women who identified as heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual. Past literature also shows that perceived physical attractiveness is a major contributing factor in one's sexual esteem. Those who view their different body parts as attractive are found to be satisfied with their sexual life. Those who are not satisfied with their physical appearance are usually distracted by the negative appearance related thoughts during sexual activity. Thus they avoid sex and have low esteem (Pujols et al., 2010).

Research evidence shows that sexual esteem is highly predictable from one's subjective view about physical attractiveness (Wiederman & Hurst, 2010). Sexual esteem fluctuates with the person's real and perceived physical attractiveness (Wiederman & Hurst, 1998). Previous literature shows that for women, in addition to perceived self-attractiveness, sexual esteem also depends on how others view their attractiveness. Those women who are considered physically attractive by others usually have higher sexual esteem (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994). Also women need validation of their feelings and thus emphasize more on intimacy (Lobato, 2014). Sex is considered as the core feature of marital satisfaction for both the partners (Meltzer & McNulty, 2010), but if they have lower sexual esteem due to poor perception of physical attractiveness, it reduces their sexual contacts and becomes a leading factor towards sexual depression (Snell & Papini, 2010).

Literature highlights the gender differences on how perceived physical attractiveness affects the sexual esteem of the individuals. For both genders, sexual satisfaction is an important aspect of marital life and it is moderated by number of factors including sexual esteem (Pujol et al, 2010). A study showed that the self-esteem of women is based more on their perceived physical attractiveness, while, men's self-esteem is based mainly upon resources flow and relative status. Sexual attraction for women is related to their figure and sex drive. Women focus more on their bodies because an unattractive body is a greater problem than an unattractive face (Wade, 2000). Studies also

show that men in general report less body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, internalization of socio-cultural standards of beauty, and disordered eating; but they have a greater drive for masculinity in contrast to women (Yean et al., 2013). Pakistani men live in a culture that places comparatively less importance to physical attractiveness (Jalees & de Run, 2014), but Pakistani men who migrate to other industrialized countries have lower body satisfaction (Saghir & Hyland, 2017). The major objectives of the present study are to explore the relationship between physical attraction and sexual esteem among adults. It is also intended to explore moderating role of gender between perceived physical attractiveness and sexual esteem. The cultural aspect of any topic is difficult to be ignored. Physical attraction is viewed differently across cultures (Cash & Smolak, 2011) with respect to forming new relations especially the intimate sexual relationships. In Pakistani culture, the concepts related to sexuality are considered a taboo to be discussed, so the problems related to these concepts are not reported. Their significance cannot be ignored in the sexual relationships as it is related to life satisfaction. So these constructs need to be discussed and researched in the present culture. Thus, the present research is designed to focus gender keeping in view their body image and sexual esteem.

Hypotheses

Based on literature it is assumed that:

1. Perceived physical attraction (including appearance orientation, appearance evaluation, body area satisfaction, overweight preoccupation, and self-classified weight) is positively related to sexual esteem.
2. Women are more concerned about their physical attraction as compared to men.
3. Gender moderates the relationship between perceived physical attractiveness (appearance orientation, appearance evaluation, body area satisfaction, overweight preoccupation, and self-classified weight) and sexual esteem.

Method

Sample

The sample comprised of adults ($N = 320$) from the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Sample included both married and

unmarried individuals of both genders. The age range of the sample was 18 to 35 years. The inclusion criteria for sample selection were adults from Rawalpindi and Islamabad who had at least graduation level of education. Convenience sampling was used for sample selection.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages along Demographic Variables (N = 320)

Demographics	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	130	40.62
Female	190	59.37
Marital Status		
Single	184	57.5
Married	136	42.5

Instruments

Multidimensional Body Self Relations Questionnaire-Appearance Scale (MBSRQ-AS). Physical Appearance was measured using the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire-Appearance Scale (MBSRQ-AS). It was developed by Cash (2000) to assess self-attitudinal aspects of the body image construct of adults and adolescents (15 years or older). The scale consisted of 34 statements subdivided in 5 subscales that yielded separate scores on the 5 sub-scales including Appearance Evaluation (7 items), Appearance Orientation (12 items), Body Area Satisfaction scale (9 items), Over-weight Preoccupation (4 items), and Self-classified Weight (2 items).

Appearance Evaluation refers to the feelings of perceived physical attractiveness or unattractiveness, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's looks. High score on appearance evaluation subscale shows feeling mostly positive and satisfied with their appearance and vice versa. Appearance Orientation is the extent of investment in one's appearance. High scorers place more focus on how they appear, pay attention to their looks, and engage in extensive grooming behaviors. Body Areas Satisfaction refers to satisfaction of discrete aspects of one's body. High composite scorers are generally contented with most areas of their body and vice versa. The Self-Classified Weight refers to the perception of one's body weight. It has two items ranging from very underweight to very overweight. Overweight Preoccupation reflects weight vigilance, fat anxiety, and

dieting. High score on this subscale indicates high overweight preoccupation (Cash, 2000).

MBSRQ-AS is a five point Likert scale. From item 1 to 22 statements are scored on a rating scale ranging from *definitely disagree* (1) to *definitely agree* (5). Item 23 is scored on a rating scale ranging from *Never* to *Very often*. Item 24 and 25 are scored on a rating scale ranging from *Very Underweight* to *Very Overweight*. The items from 26 to 34 are scored on a rating scale ranging from *strongly unsatisfied* to *strongly satisfied*. The alpha reliability of the scale is .85 (Cash, 2000), which shows that it is a reliable measure to be used in the study. In the current sample, the reliabilities of the subscales are for Appearance Evaluation .60, for Appearance Orientation .50, Body Area Satisfaction .78, Over Weight Preoccupation .50, and Self-Classified Weight .74.

Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (MSSCQ). It is an objective self-report instrument designed to measure the 20 different psychological aspects of human sexuality (Snell, 1998). Sexual esteem is measured through one of the subscale of MSSCQ which has 5 items with alpha reliability of .87. Cronbach alpha for current sample is .86. It is a five point Likert scale with each item being scored from 0 to 4: *Not at all characteristic of me* (0), *Slightly characteristic of me* (1), *Somewhat characteristic of me* (2), *Moderately characteristic of me* (3), and *Very characteristic of me* (4). Earlier the subscale of sexual esteem from MSSCQ was used by Schick, Calabrese, Rima, and Zucker (2010).

Procedure

Initially, official permission was obtained from the institutes from which the data were collected. The sample was approached in their respective institutes (school teachers and university students) and homes. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study. All participants were assured that their data would be kept confidential and would be exclusively utilized for the research purpose only. Informed consent was taken before administration of the questionnaires. Brief instructions as well as the verbal description were given so as to strengthen the authentic filling of the questionnaires. In the end, respondents were thanked for their cooperation and participation in the research. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed among participants, out of which only 320 were returned. The data collection procedure and informed consent was revised several times keeping in view the sensitivity of the topic.

Results

The present study was carried out to examine the relationship between physical appearance and sexual esteem and study the role of gender and marital status in study variables. Correlation analysis was applied to study the relationship between physical appearance and sexual esteem. To study the differences among male and female individuals and married and unmarried on physical appearance and sexual esteem, independent sample *t*-test was applied. Moderation analysis was run through multiple regression analysis.

Table 2

Overall Correlation of Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, Body Area Satisfaction, Overweight Preoccupation, Self-Classified Weight, and Sexual Esteem (N = 320)

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Appearance Evaluation	-					
2 Appearance Orientation	.52**	-				
3 Body Area Satisfaction	.23**	.22**	-			
4 Overweight Preoccupation	.27**	.34**	.02	-		
5 Self-classified Weight	-.03	-.02	-.06	-.26**	-	
6 Sexual Esteem	.33**	.22**	.19**	-.13*	.05	-

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Table 2 shows that sexual esteem is significantly positively correlated with appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, and body area satisfaction, whereas sexual esteem is significantly negatively correlated with overweight preoccupation.

Table 3

Correlation of Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, Body Area Satisfaction, Overweight Preoccupation, Self-Classified Weight, and Sexual Esteem Across Gender (N = 320)

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Appearance Evaluation	-	.52**	.20**	-.24**	-.10	.30**
2 Appearance Orientation	.56**	-	.10	-.32**	-.07	.09
3 Body Area Satisfaction	.31**	.33**	-	.20	-.14	.26**
4 Overweight Preoccupation	-.33**	-.40**	-.17*	-	-.33**	-.01
5 Self-classified Weight	.07	.04	.03	-.14**	-	.03
6 Sexual Esteem	.41**	.34**	.13	-.31*	.09	-

Note. Upper diagonal shows correlation coefficients among women. Lower diagonal shows correlation coefficients among me.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Table 3 shows in lower diagonal related to male participants indicates that sexual esteem is significantly positively correlated with appearance evaluation and appearance orientation, whereas, sexual esteem is significantly negatively correlated to overweight preoccupation among men. The upper diagonal indicates scores of female participants showing positive correlation of sexual esteem with appearance evaluation and body area satisfaction. Findings show that men have better sexual esteem with good appearance evaluation and positive appearance orientation, and less overweight preoccupation also increases sexual esteem. Correlation coefficients are stronger in men than women. In women, non significant relationship of sexual esteem and overweight preoccupation is observed, but significant positive relationship appears with body area satisfaction. Appearance evaluation is having positive significant relationship with sexual esteem among both genders, which depicts overall significance of perceived physical attractiveness in sexual esteem.

Table 4

Gender Differences on Variables of the Study (N = 320)

Variables	Men (n = 130)		Women (n = 190)		t	p	95% CI Cohn's		
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	d
Appearance Evaluation	22.4	3.17	21.19	3.46	3.22	.001	.48	2.00	.36
Appearance Orientation	38.04	7.11	37.65	5.24	5.59	.57	-.98	1.76	-
Body Area Satisfaction	33.81	5.78	34.14	4.58	.56	.57	-1.47	.81	-
Overweight Preoccupation	14.86	2.68	14.86	3.01	.002	.99	-.64	.64	-
Self-classified Weight	6.50	1.22	6.35	1.49	.89	.37	-.17	.45	-
Sexual Esteem	12.19	4.35	11.93	3.86	.55	.58	-.65	1.16	-

Table 4 illustrates the results of independent sample *t*-test for measuring differences among male and female participants on all the study variables. The mean scores on all the variables show non significant differences except for appearance evaluation. The mean score of women is higher with a small effect size on appearance evaluation as compared to men which means that there is a very small yet significant difference between men and women on appearance evaluation.

Table 5 shows the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between overweight preoccupation and sexual esteem. Moderation analyses were also run between relationship of other domains of perceived physical attraction and self-esteem, but these were showed non significant interaction effect. Hence, only significant moderation is reported.

Table 5

Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Overweight Preoccupation and Sexual Esteem (N = 320)

Predictor	Sexual Esteem		
	95% CI		
	<i>B</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Constant	27.09***	18.77	35.41
Overweight Preoccupation	-7.46**	-12.31	-2.61
Gender	-.98***	-1.53	-.43
Overweight Preoccupation x Gender	.48**	.16	.80
R^2	.04		
F	4.95		
ΔR^2	.02		
ΔF	3.90		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5 shows the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between overweight preoccupation and sexual esteem. The interaction term of overweight preoccupation and gender is significant. Main effect of gender and overweight preoccupation is also significant in predicting sexual esteem. This moderating effect is further illustrated by a mod graph in Figure 1.

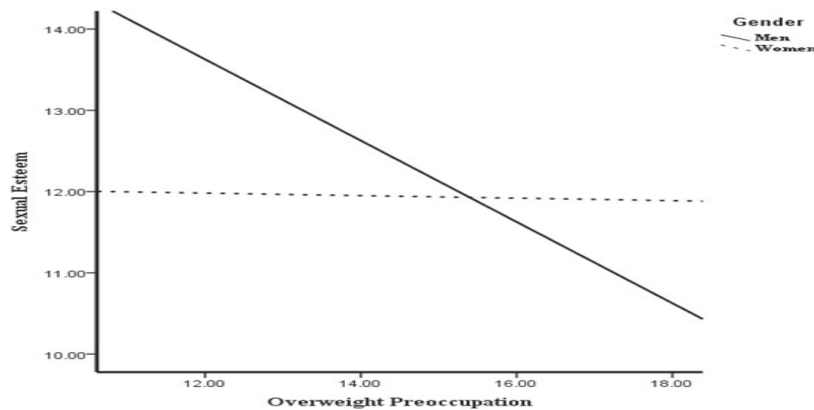


Figure 1. Moderating role of gender in the relationship between overweight preoccupation and sexual esteem.

In Figure 1, male gender is represented by a plain straight line and the female gender is shown by a dotted line. It can be seen that sexual esteem of male gender significantly declines with increase in overweight preoccupation, while for female gender this predictive relationship is non significant.

Mean Differences between married and unmarried participants on variables of the study ($N = 320$) were also tested using independent

sample *t*-test. The results showed non significant results for all variables except for self-classified weight with $t(318) = 4.39$ at $p = .00$. Married participants scored higher ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 1.30$) as compared to unmarried ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 1.38$) participants on self-classified weight with 95% *CI* [0.37, 0.97] and a medium effect size of 0.51. This finding suggests that married participants have an increased perception of being overweight as compared to unmarried participants.

Discussion

The present study was attempted to examine relationship between perceived physical attractiveness and sexual esteem among adults. Role of gender and marital status in study variables were also explored. Findings indicated that appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, and body area satisfaction are positively correlated to sexual esteem in overall sample. However, overweight preoccupation was negatively correlated to sexual esteem. The findings substantiates the results of earlier literature, as the studies show that sexual esteem of the individual can be easily predicted from a person's perceived physical attractiveness (Wiederman & Hurst, 2010). Research evidences show that those individuals who view themselves as less attractive are usually reluctant to engage in sexual relations because self-perception of less attractiveness lowers their sexual esteem and, thus, it leads to sexual depression (Snell & Papini, 2010). Furthermore studies have also reported the direct relationship of perceived physical attractiveness with sexual esteem, as they found that having high perceived physical attractiveness leads to increased sexual satisfaction, greater number of sexual partners, and a greater frequency of sexual activity (Amos & McCabe, 2017). The overweight individuals or those having any issues with body weight usually view themselves negatively with respect to perceived physical attractiveness and feel less sexually attractive (Wiederman & Hurst, 2010). So, a person's own positive views about appearance becomes a key factor in boosting sexual esteem, thus lead to more intimacy in romantic relations (Koch, Mansfield, Thureau, & Carey, 2005).

Appearance evaluation and appearance orientation were positively related to sexual esteem among men, while, for women only appearance evaluation was positively related to sexual esteem. On the other hand, overweight preoccupation was negatively related to men sexual esteem and body area satisfaction was positively related to sexual esteem among women (see Table 3). Sexual esteem fluctuates with the person's overall appearance evaluation and orientation. Those

who are considered physically attractive by others usually have high sexual esteem (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994). Researches show that men and women view their physical attractiveness differently (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2003). As a matter of fact, men tend to perceive their physical attractiveness as a whole and in functional aspects, like how much they are capable of doing anything being in a relationship. In contrast, women perceive their physical attractiveness by focusing on distinct and different parts. Such different conceptualizations of men and women lead them to focus on different parts and aspects of their physical attractiveness (Fredrickson & Roberts, as cited in Chrisler & Mc Creary, 2010). Furthermore, literature also shows that low sexual esteem becomes a declining factor for the marital life satisfaction, as it is a hurdle for intimacy (Mehdi, Seyed, & Rahele, 2013).

On perceived physical attractiveness, there were non significant differences along gender except for appearance evaluation. Men are found to be more positive about their appearance evaluation (see Table 4). Overall, the hypothesis that women are more concerned about their perceived physical attractiveness is rejected. The effect size for the mean difference was small, which means that there is a very little difference between both genders on appearance evaluation and on other domains and sexual esteem. Hence, reflects that for both genders, sexual esteem is equally important factor for the sexual life satisfaction (Pujols et al., 2010). van den Brink, Vollmann, Smeets, Hessen, and Woertman (2018) also found similar results indicating no gender differences on body image and sexual satisfaction. Besides this, men and women have different criteria and perception regarding their perceived physical attractiveness, which ultimately affects their sexual esteem in different ways (Schwalbe & Staples, 1991). For both genders, physical attraction is a desirable trait that they aspire for their partner (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008). Literature shows that lower sexual esteem of the individual, irrespective of the gender, leads to sexual depression in the individual (Snell & Papini, 2010), because lower sexual esteem causes reluctance to engage in sexual activity which is considered as a sign of neglect, thus, affect the intimate relations badly (Pujols et al., 2010). The findings suggest that physical attractiveness and sexual esteem are equally important for individuals in our culture regardless of their gender.

No significant moderating role of gender was found between all subscales of MBSRQ and sexual esteem, except for overweight preoccupation. The moderation analysis showed that the negative relationship between overweight preoccupation and sexual esteem is only significant for men, whereas sexual esteem of women stays

unaffected through all levels of overweight preoccupation. This in essence means that men are more concerned about their weight in relation to their sexuality as compared to women. One of the reason for such findings may be the under-reporting at the part of female participants. Secondly, it is observed that in some cultures a bit curvy body among women is linked to greater physical attractiveness (Freedman, Carter, Sbrocco, & Gray, 2004). Such findings greatly depend upon the cultural influences in shaping our minds for the ideal physical attractiveness. Cross-cultural studies in Pakistan also reveal differences in perceptions of physical attractiveness. Saghir and Hyland (2017) studied body image of Pakistani men indicating that Pakistani men who live in Arab countries have poor perception of their body as compared to those living in Pakistan. It also reveals that living in an industrialized society increases the likelihood of dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance. In another study on Pakistani medical students, men were more worried about being overweight as compared to underweight (Taqui, et al., 2008). Mahmud and Crittenden (2007) compared Pakistani and Australian women for body image. Australian women displayed higher body dissatisfaction than Pakistani women. In Pakistan too, the women of English-medium institutes displayed higher concern for being overweight than Urdu-medium institutes women. This suggests that the cultural aspect of physical attractiveness and its influences have a great role in shaping our ideal physique and effecting sexual esteem more in men than women.

In the current study, the mean differences on marital status revealed that married individuals are more concerned with self-classified weight as compared to unmarried participants. After marriage, women are usually concerned about their weight, especially, waist-to-hip ratio because it creates problems related to conception and pregnancy (Waas, Waldenstrom, Rossner, & Hellberg, 1997). In Pakistani culture weight or body mass index is considered a significant predictor of marital satisfaction (Shaheen, Kumar, Ali, & Makhija, 2016). After marriage and child birth hormonal changes because of change in reproductive health create impact on weight, hence, married individuals perceive them being over-weight as compared to married. Within relationship too, spouses comment on each other's physique and body that also influence self-perception related weight.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the current study, it could be assumed that perceived physical attractiveness in terms of appearance

evaluation and body weight concerns is a significantly related to sexual esteem of both men and women. Men's perception of their increased body weight lowers down their sexual esteem but not for women. Married individuals are more concerned about self-classified weight as compared to unmarried individuals.

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study has certain possible limitations. Firstly, the participants were conveniently chosen from the Rawalpindi and Islamabad only, which limits the generalizability of the findings. To enhance the generalizability, sample could be acquired from the different age cohorts and areas of the population. Data from different age groups may help to see how the transitional phases of life affect physical attractiveness and its role in sexual esteem. Secondly, using only self-report quantitative techniques may create the problem of social desirability. For future studies, it would be more suitable to include qualitative methods to get an insight into the phenomenon. Thirdly, it would be more appropriate to explore sexual esteem and perceived physical attractiveness in relation to other variables such as marital satisfaction, self-esteem, sex drive, and overall life satisfaction. This would enhance broader and comprehensive understanding about the phenomenon.

Implications

The current study will open new pathways for future researchers to explore various body image related variables that may affect an individual's sexual and emotional life. Furthermore, this study will enhance the importance of studying sexual life related constructs in a country like Pakistan where talking about sexuality is considered a social taboo. Moreover, this exploration will lay the foundations for the propensity of researchers towards the efforts to understand and explore such kind of personal and subjective issues and experiences of individuals for helping them to live their lives with contentment.

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