

## Original Research Article

# Prevalence of body image dissatisfaction among males and females of Nishtar medical university, Multan

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Body image dissatisfaction is a widespread public health issue that is personified by a negative self-perception of one's physical appearance, frequently resulting from a disparity between one's ideal and perceived body composition. Research shows that young individuals in the South Asian region, including Pakistan, have a high prevalence of BID, especially in academic settings.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted on 316 students of Nishtar Medical University, Multan, to assess knowledge and perception about body image dissatisfaction. The questionnaire developed includes maximum parameters/variables to assess students' perceptions about body image dissatisfaction.

**Results:** The results of the examination of body image dissatisfaction (BID) among the 316 participants revealed that distinct body attributes were associated with varying degrees of satisfaction within the participants. This study identified 26 distinct elements that contribute to body image dissatisfaction. Particular issues included satisfaction with things like not looking slender (0.91) due to their mean score being below 0.96. According to the findings of the study, certain BID characteristics, such as having a distaste for the texture of the hair (1.30), and so on, have mean values that are greater than 0.96; it implies that they produce results for which they show dissatisfaction.

**Conclusions:** BID refers to having unfavorable sentiments about one's own body. Body image dissatisfaction can be caused by a variety of circumstances. Mostly due to the fact that they are satisfied with their physical look and attributes.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Body image dissatisfaction, Depression, Eating disorders, medical students, Mental confusion

## INTRODUCTION

Body image is how you see, think, and feel about your own body and its appearance. It's about your personal thoughts, beliefs, and feelings towards your body. The term "body image dissatisfaction" (BID) describes the negative emotions and thoughts brought on by the discrepancy between one's ideal and actual bodies. The assessment of one's body image includes feelings and thoughts linked to one's looks, as well as whether one is satisfied or not. Adolescents are aware of their body size

and often feel dissatisfaction with higher weight, evident from a young age.<sup>1</sup> Among college students, body image dissatisfaction is prevalent and can have detrimental effects.

Anxiety, sadness, and body image dissatisfaction are consistently linked in the Chinese setting.<sup>2</sup> Body image affects behavior and mental and emotional states, increasing the risk of eating disorders. University students exposed to media often become concerned about their appearance, leading to weight dissatisfaction.<sup>3</sup> Body

image dissatisfaction impacts dietary habits and physical activity, influencing adolescents' nutritional status.<sup>4</sup> Negative body image views are referred to as body image dissatisfaction. 36.7% of students are unhappy with their body image, according to research. Men experience higher BID than women.<sup>5</sup> Body shape dissatisfaction is linked to higher BMI.

Negative body image was associated with greater BMI, lower self-esteem, high conscientiousness, and high neuroticism in young women.<sup>6</sup> In Oman, 80% of medical students were unhappy with their bodies, and 73.5% of them wished they were thinner. This emphasizes how important it is to encourage positive body image perceptions.<sup>7</sup> College students frequently suffer from body image dissatisfaction (BID) and social anxiety disorders (SAD).

Prevalence rates, 36.3% for SAD, 34.7% for BID, and 8.8% for depressive symptoms. It's important to screen for these issues among medical students.<sup>8</sup> Body image dissatisfaction was found in 82.2% of participants, with higher rates in females (87.6%) than males (76.9%) and higher in teenagers (89.3%) than post-teenagers (78.5%). This is a significant concern among medical students at King Edward Medical University in Lahore.<sup>9</sup> University students are at high risk for body image dissatisfaction (BID).<sup>10</sup> Body image concerns and eating disorders are a significant burden among health professionals.<sup>11</sup>

Many young female university students experience body dissatisfaction and have lower metacognitive awareness.<sup>12</sup> In China, female medical students' body shape concerns are linked to distorted eating attitudes, while male students' eating habits are influenced by social anxiety and muscle concerns.<sup>13</sup>

Overweight and obesity in Brazil affect body image and self-perception. Female health science students prefer thinner bodies, while males prefer larger bodies.<sup>14</sup> Among adolescents dissatisfied with their weight, 66.54% are girls, and 32.85% are overweight. Dissatisfaction due to being overweight is linked to depressive symptoms, but not dissatisfaction due to thinness.<sup>15</sup>

To see the prevalence and severity of body image dissatisfaction among medical students of the public medical university in South Punjab.

## METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted from March 2024 to November 2024 at a medical university in Multan. In this study, undergraduate students were included.

Students were questioned regarding their level of pleasure with various body parts using the targeted sampling technique. Permission from the Ethics Review Committee was acquired prior to data collection (Ref. No. 7085 /NMU, Dated: June 03, 2024).

## Inclusion criteria

Students that belong to any class of MBBS in Nishtar Medical University, Multan

## Exclusion criteria

Students that are enrolled in programs other than MBBS in Nishtar Medical University and all the students from other medical colleges.

## Statistical analysis

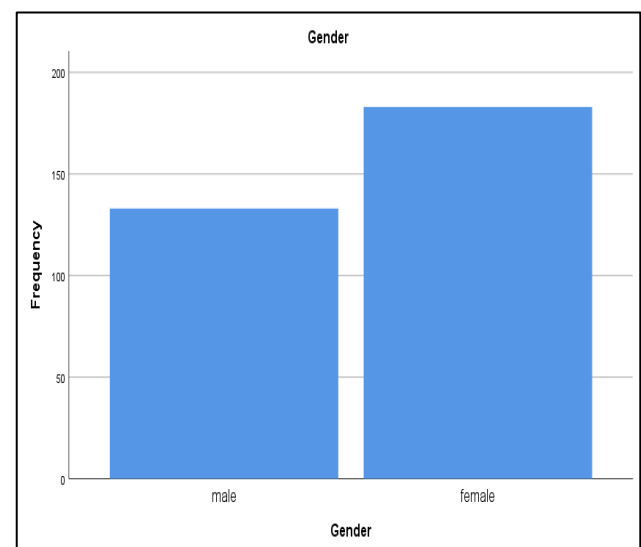
The required data was collected from 316 MBBS students throughout the course of all study years using a self-report questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the data using SPSS version 26. The frequency of the data is determined using the Likert's test.

## RESULTS

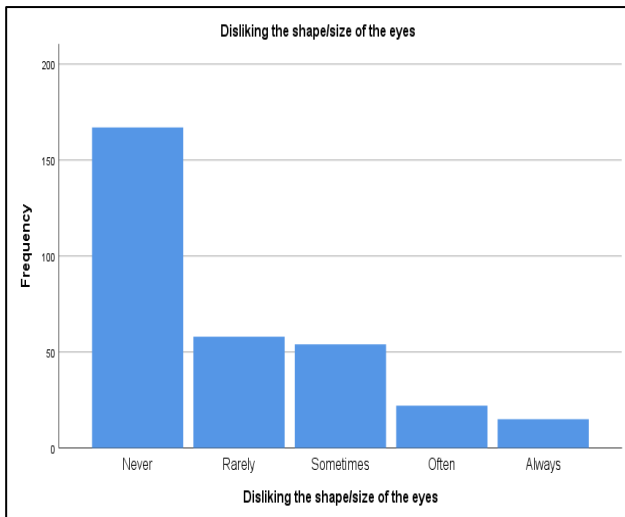
The analysis of body image dissatisfaction (BID) among the participants revealed varying levels of satisfaction with different body features. The results of this survey revealed that out of a total of 316 students, 133 were males and 183 were females.

The majority of participants were satisfied with their complexion, hair texture, and facial features, as indicated by the low means (e.g., "Not having a fair complexion" had a mean of 1.31, and "Disliking the hair texture" had a mean of 1.30), suggesting dissatisfaction with these aspects.

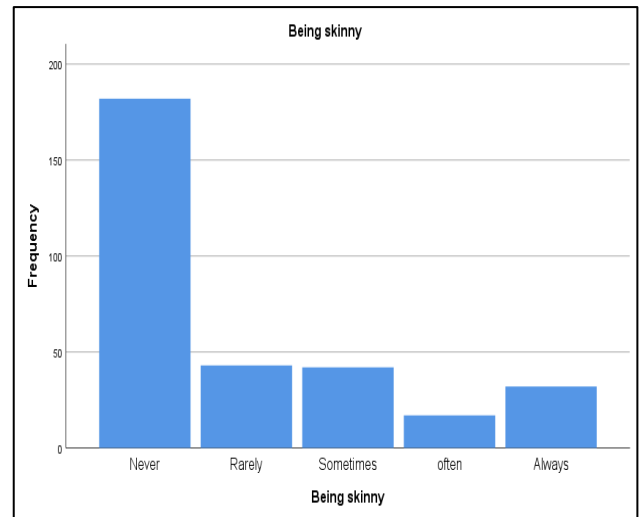
In contrast, body parts such as eyes, nose, lips, and body shape (e.g., "Disliking the shape/size of the eyes," mean=0.56) received higher satisfaction ratings, with means falling below the overall weighted average of 0.96, indicating high satisfaction.



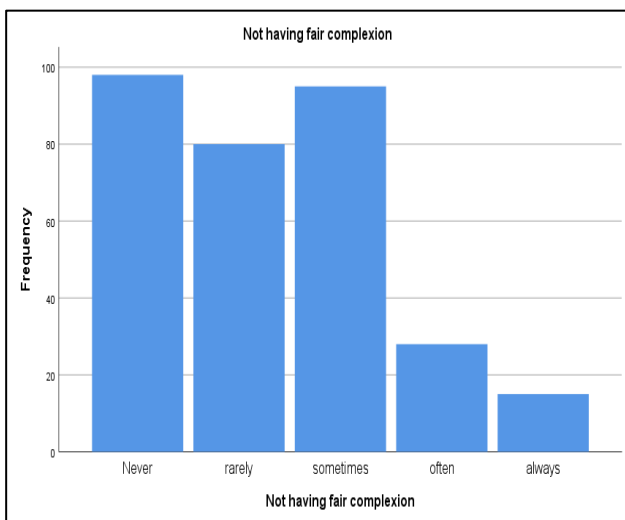
**Figure 1: Bar chart of gender distribution.**



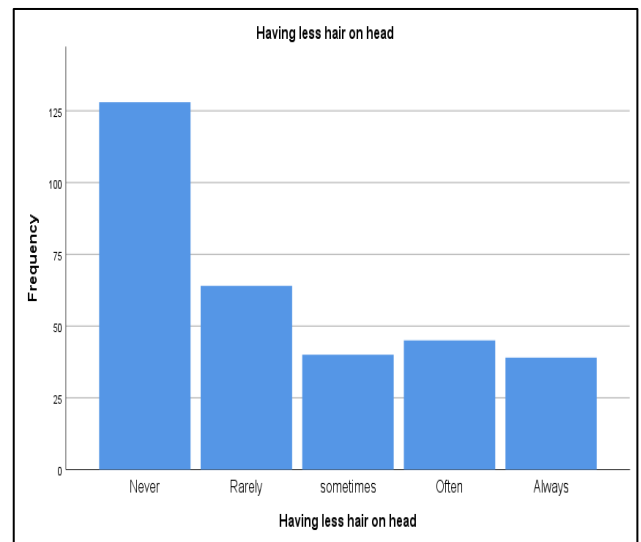
**Figure 2: Bar chart of disliking the shape/size of the eye.**



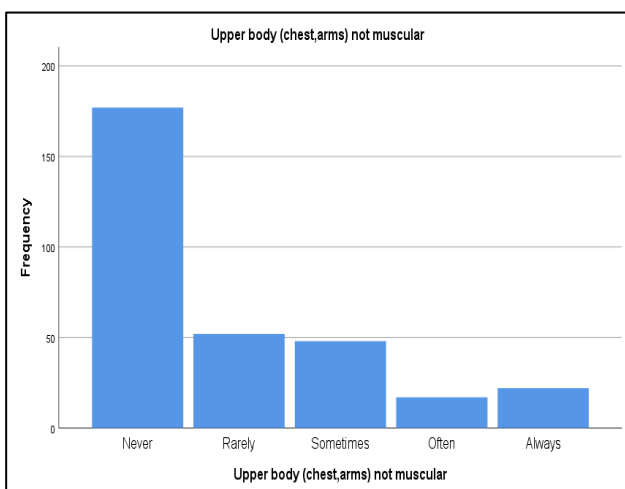
**Figure 5: Bar chart of being skinny.**



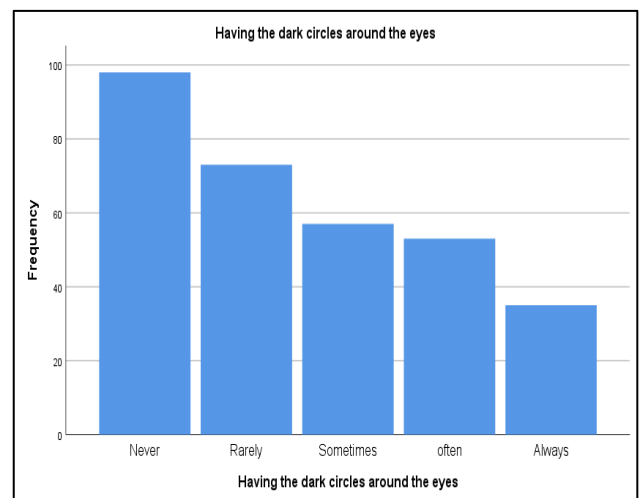
**Figure 3: Bar chart of not having fair complexion.**



**Figure 6: Bar chart of having less hair on head.**



**Figure 4: Bar chart of upper body (chest arms) not muscular.**



**Figure 7: Bar chart of having dark circles around the eyes.**

Specific concerns included dissatisfaction with body weight in relation to height, hair length, and body size, with significant portions of participants indicating desires to change these aspects. For example, 51.6% reported never being dissatisfied with hair length, while 57.6% never felt they were "fat." Similarly, the majority (47.5%)

felt their body weight was in harmony with their height. Overall, body image dissatisfaction was prevalent, with concerns about specific body features, especially among those with lower satisfaction ratings for body shape, size, and specific facial features.

**Table 1: Satisfaction level for factors of body image dissatisfaction scale.**

Items	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)	Means	SD	Decision
Not having fair complexion	98 (31.0)	80 (25.3)	95 (30.1)	28 (8.9)	15 (4.7)	1.31	1.140	Satisfied
Disliking the hair texture	114 (36.1)	67 (21.2)	80 (25.3)	35 (11.1)	20 (6.3)	1.30	1.241	Satisfied
Not having the desired hair length	163 (51.6)	59 (18.7)	45 (14.2)	26 (8.2)	23 (7.3)	1.01	1.284	Satisfied
Having less hair (on the head)	128 (40.5)	64 (20.3)	40 (12.7)	45 (14.2)	39 (12.3)	1.38	1.441	Satisfied
Not having the desired face cut	141 (44.6)	66 (20.9)	65 (20.6)	27 (8.5)	17 (5.4)	1.09	1.214	Satisfied
Disliking the shape/size of the eyes	222 (70.3)	45 (14.2)	26 (8.2)	13 (4.1)	10 (3.2)	0.56	1.020	Low satisfaction
Disliking the shape/size of the nose	167 (52.8)	58 (18.4)	54 (17.1)	22 (7.0)	15 (4.7)	0.92	1.185	Low satisfaction
Disliking the shape/size of the lips	208 (65.8)	55 (17.4)	32 (10.1)	15 (4.7)	6 (1.9)	0.59	0.979	Low satisfaction
Having dark circles around eye	98 (31.0)	73 (23.1)	57 (18.0)	53 (16.8)	35 (11.1)	1.54	1.369	Satisfied
Not having clear skin	72 (22.8)	80 (25.3)	88 (27.8)	44 (13.9)	32 (10.1)	1.63	1.257	Satisfied
Having hair (on the skin)	112 (35.4)	78 (24.7)	51 (16.1)	37 (11.7)	38 (12.0)	1.40	1.382	Satisfied
Not having the desired size/shape of hands.	214 (67.7)	39 (12.3)	40 (12.7)	16 (5.1)	7 (2.2)	0.62	1.031	Low satisfaction
Not having the desired size/shape of feet.	223 (70.6)	44 (13.9)	20 (6.3)	17 (5.4)	12 (3.8)	0.58	1.074	Low satisfaction
Being fat	182 (57.6)	43 (13.6)	41 (13.0)	27 (8.5)	23 (7.3)	0.94	1.306	Low satisfaction
Not having a narrow waist	178 (56.3)	45 (14.2)	39 (12.3)	29 (9.2)	25 (7.9)	0.98	1.331	Satisfied
Not having the desired size of shoulders	214 (67.7)	53 (16.8)	27 (8.5)	8 (2.5)	14 (4.4)	0.59	1.049	Low satisfaction
Having wide hips	219 (69.3)	45 (14.2)	22 (7.0)	16 (5.1)	14 (4.4)	0.61	1.103	Low satisfaction
Having fat thighs	196 (62.0)	48 (15.2)	34 (10.8)	20 (6.3)	18 (5.7)	0.78	1.205	Low satisfaction
Having a protruding stomach	169 (53.5)	52 (16.5)	44 (13.9)	30 (9.5)	21 (6.6)	0.99	1.287	Satisfied
Not having the desired size of the arms	225 (71.2)	44 (13.9)	23 (7.3)	16 (5.1)	8 (2.5)	0.54	1.002	Low satisfaction
Being skinny	182	43 (13.6)	42 (13.3)	17 (5.4)	32 (10.1)	0.97	1.357	Satisfied

Continued.

Items	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)	Means	SD	Decision
	(57.6)							
<b>Not having a slim appearance</b>	186 (58.9)	41 (13.0)	46 (14.6)	18 (5.7)	25 (7.9)	0.91	1.293	Low satisfaction
<b>Being short heighted</b>	189 (59.8)	41 (13.0)	40 (12.7)	25 (7.9)	21 (6.6)	0.89	1.277	Low satisfaction
<b>Not being muscular</b>	170 (53.8)	47 (14.9)	57 (18.0)	18 (5.7)	24 (7.6)	0.98	1.279	Satisfied
<b>Upper body (chest, arm) not muscular</b>	177 (56.0)	52 (16.5)	48 (15.2)	17 (5.4)	22 (7.0)	0.91	1.245	Low satisfaction
<b>Body weight not in harmony to height</b>	150 (47.5)	64 (20.3)	56 (17.7)	26 (8.2)	20 (6.3)	1.06	1.246	Satisfied

N=316, SD=Standard Deviation Decision=weighted, average=25.08/26=0.96

The factor whose mean is more than weighted average mean i.e. 0.96. is considered to have low satisfaction and the factor whose mean is less than weighted average mean i.e. 0.96. is considered to have high satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

We examined the manifestation, etiology, and correlates of body image dissatisfaction in medical students of Nishtar Medical University, Multan. In our study we found an overarching trend in which respondents are moderately satisfied with more controllable aspects of their appearance (e.g., hair texture, length, skin clarity) but show greater dissatisfaction with structural or inherent body features like facial features, body proportions, and fat distribution. At 0.89 for height, 0.91 for slimness, and 0.91 for muscularity of particular body areas, among them the upper body, the respondents voiced disappointment with their physical features. In our study, we found that with a mean score of 1.30 and 1.01, respectively, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the texture and length of their hair.

Similarly, a study by Clayson et al, supports the results of the present study, which show that longer and more textured hair receives greater satisfaction ratings.<sup>16</sup> The mean score of 1.09 for the face cut and 1.63 for skin clarity indicate moderate to high satisfaction with these facial traits. This type of inclination was experienced by Nedelec, et al, and they made their evaluation with regard to the common concern of skin clarity being more common to men and women but to be addressed with products and procedures thus resulting in high satisfaction.<sup>17</sup>

However, encouraging body proportionality, the mean score was 1.06, meaning a positive inclination towards satisfaction on the proportionality of the body. There has always been a link among body imagery satisfaction and body proportionality. Many studies conducted earlier among other authors, such as Tiggemann, have indicated that when the weight/height ratio meets a certain acceptable standard, according to the current study, the great majority of people will be happy with their body.<sup>18</sup>

A cross-sectional study by Furnham revealed similar issues regarding height dissatisfaction, especially in the context of shorter males who are more likely to suffer them because height is associated with strength and manly traits.<sup>19</sup>

Subjects expressed pleasure with their overall muscularity, with a mean score of 0.98, indicating that they were content with not just their arms but also other body parts. Muscularity and gender differences. When muscles bulge out, females wishing to maintain proper body shape are more satisfied with useless body parts such as arms and thighs than when muscles are not noted at all, reasons Fredrickson, et al, have explained that men are likely to be the ones who feel dissatisfaction over muscularity, especially when they feel that the way their body looks does not meet cultural ideals. This is reflected in this study's lower satisfaction scores related to muscularity.<sup>20</sup>

Low satisfaction scores were caused by a high prevalence of dislike for characteristics that involve the lips (0.59), hands (0.62), and nose (0.92). Similarly, Swami et al, discovered that the nose and lips are the facial parts that people are most unhappy with, especially in cultures that value symmetry and specific facial proportions as ideals of beauty.<sup>21</sup> Dissatisfaction was represented by features such as fatty thighs (mean score of 0.78) and wide hips (mean score of 0.61). Many studies Grabe, et al, have found that fat distribution (hips, thighs, stomach) is a major source of dissatisfaction, particularly due to the pressures of thin ideals in modern culture.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, in another study by Tiggermann et al, in 2001 a research questionnaire measuring body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, and its suggested repercussions was filled out by 322 women in a cross-sectional study, whose ages ranged from 20 to 84. Across the age range, body dissatisfaction remained stable, but self-objectification, regular body monitoring, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating symptomatology all significantly decreased with age. The relationship between self-objectification and disordered eating symptoms was found to be mediated by age. The objectification theory



was found to be helpful in clarifying the processes behind the changes in body image that come with growing older.<sup>23</sup> Research indicates that dissatisfaction with body shape, particularly hips and thighs, is more prevalent among women due to societal expectations of slimness, particularly in Western cultures.<sup>24</sup>

Social attitudes towards body shape, external appearance, and weight, especially regarding norms of beauty, might influence one's degree of dissatisfaction with their face characteristics. Such a situation shows an average amount of satisfaction towards body proportions, as there is a correlation between the general body build and the ideal body perception; however, there are areas like the waist, hips, and thighs that persist in making one self-conscious. Greater pleasure with one's skin and hair imply that one is more receptive to cosmetic procedures, which translates into increased enjoyment.

The findings of this study are limited in their potential to be applied to a wider population due to the specificity of the sample location. Numerous demographic characteristics, including participants' socioeconomic level and cultural background, may have an impact on how satisfied they are with their bodies. Assessment of self-reporting is not adequately fulfilled. It's possible that cross-sectional studies miss shifts in body image dissatisfaction over time. Research may focus too heavily on physical appearance, neglecting other aspects of body image, such as functionality or health.

## CONCLUSION

Body image dissatisfaction (BID) involves negative feelings about one's body. It is common among adolescents and college students. It is linked to depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. To minimize BID, it is essential to promote media literacy, encourage positive body talk, positive mental health support. Healthy lifestyle choices and self-care practices should be encouraged. The multifaceted approach can help create a supportive environment and reduce BID.

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