

The Study of Emotional Regulation in Relationship Between Body Image Acceptance and Relationship Satisfactions

Sandhya Shree¹, Chandru²

¹Under Graduate Student in Psychology, Rathinam College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore - 641021, Tamil Nadu, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Rathinam College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore - 641021, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract— Human relationships, specifically intimate marriages, are significantly shaped by the interplay of psychological, emotional, and social factors. This study investigates the complex relationship between body image acceptance, emotional regulation, and their combined impact on relationship satisfaction. While contemporary cultural ideals often foster negative body perceptions leading to shame, insecurity, and withdrawal from intimacy, positive body image encourages self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Central to this dynamic is emotional regulation, which serves as a critical bridge that determines whether body-related emotions are expressed constructively or destructively within the partnership. Drawing upon a multi-theoretical framework including Social Comparison, Objectification, Self-Discrepancy, Attachment, and Broaden-and-Build theories this research explores how internal psychological processes shape external relational outcomes. The study aims to analyze emotional regulation as a mediating factor and identify gender differences in how body dissatisfaction influences marital happiness. By integrating these variables, the research addresses a significant gap in existing literature and offers practical implications for marital therapy. Ultimately, this study provides a holistic framework for developing interventions that support both individual self-concept and the quality of shared lives in an image-conscious society.

Keywords— Body Image Acceptance, Emotional Regulation, Relationship Satisfaction, Marital Therapy, Social Comparison Theory, Attachment Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage and intimate relationships are profoundly shaped by the complex interplay of psychological, emotional, and social factors, with body image and emotional regulation standing out as primary determinants of relational quality. In a society dominated by idealized cultural standards of attractiveness, individuals often internalize these external pressures, leading to a multidimensional body image construct that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral evaluations of their physical selves.

Positive body image fosters a holistic appreciation for one's uniqueness and functionality, promoting resilience and self-esteem. Conversely, negative body image characterized by dissatisfaction and shame often results in maladaptive behaviors, such as withdrawing from physical intimacy or seeking excessive external validation, which creates significant barriers to marital satisfaction. The impact of these self-perceptions on a relationship is heavily mediated by emotional regulation, the essential process through which individuals manage and express their feelings. Effective regulation acts as a buffer against stressors, enabling partners to communicate vulnerabilities and resolve conflicts constructively. However, difficulties in regulation can cause body-related insecurities to manifest as jealousy, irritability, or emotional distance. By integrating theoretical frameworks such as Social Comparison Theory, Objectification Theory, and Attachment Theory, this study explores how internal psychological processes translate into external relational outcomes. Ultimately, understanding the synergistic relationship between body acceptance and emotional regulation is vital for developing holistic interventions that support both individual well-concept and the enduring quality of shared lives.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Romantic relationship satisfaction is complexly intertwined with individual personality traits and interpersonal dynamics, with research consistently highlighting the negative impact of narcissistic traits on relational well-being. Specifically, men's grandiose narcissism and women's vulnerable narcissism have been found to directly undermine their own satisfaction, while a partner's narcissistic traits—such as a male partner's vulnerable narcissism—can significantly lower the satisfaction of their counterpart (Casale et al., 2020). These associations are often mediated by perfectionistic self-presentation, illustrating how the need to appear perfect can erode the foundations of a healthy partnership (Li et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the quality of communication serves as a critical indicator of satisfaction; while positive communication rarely predicts long-term changes, fluctuations in negative communication are robustly associated with concurrent shifts in how satisfied couples feel within their relationships (Aderyani, Moghadasin, & Hasani, 2023; Chen et al., 2021). Beyond interpersonal dynamics, individual well-being is frequently compromised by body image concerns and disordered eating behaviors, which are increasingly shaped by modern media exposure. Systematic reviews indicate that intensive social media use and exposure to thin-ideal standards are significantly related to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and the internalization of ideal body standards among adolescents and young adults (Huang, Peng, & Ahn, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). These concerns often manifest as restrained eating, particularly among college populations, where body dissatisfaction and the overestimation of weight serve as primary risk factors for low dietary diversity and energy-restricted diets (Yong et al., 2021; Vincente-Benito & Ramírez-Durán, 2023). In younger populations, these behaviors are further exacerbated by social stressors such as weight-related teasing and bullying, which are consistently associated with a greater risk of eating disorders and negative body image (Day et al., 2022).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between emotional regulation, body image acceptance, and relationship satisfaction among young adults. It follows a cross-sectional, non-experimental approach, collecting data at a single point in time using standardized questionnaires.

IV. PROCEDURE

The study was conducted among 100 both male and female participants residing in Coimbatore, aged between 19 and 30 years. Participants were selected using the convenience and snowball sampling technique, where initial respondents were asked to refer other eligible participants from their social circles. This method was chosen to efficiently reach women in the target demographic who are currently in romantic relationships. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three standardized tools: the Body Image-Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (BI-AAQ-5), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross and John, and the Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale.

A brief demographic section was also included to collect information such as age, education level, relationship status, and relationship duration. The questionnaire was distributed through both online platforms (e.g., Google Forms) and in-person where feasible. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed.

V. CONCLUSION

The present topic highlights that body image acceptance and emotional regulation are two fundamental psychological constructs that profoundly influence the quality of marital and intimate relationships. Positive body image fosters self-esteem, emotional well-being, and intimacy, while negative perceptions lead to insecurity, conflict, and dissatisfaction. Emotional regulation acts as the critical bridge or mediator, determining whether body-related emotions are expressed constructively through adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal or destructively through maladaptive patterns like suppression and withdrawal. This study underscores that addressing personal insecurities and enhancing regulatory capacities are vital for maintaining relational harmony. By unraveling these intricate links, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individual self-perceptions shape relational outcomes. Ultimately, these findings pave the way for more holistic approaches in psychological counseling and marital therapy, offering preventive value in reducing marital discord and promoting healthy, fulfilling partnerships in an image-conscious society.

REFERENCES

- [1] Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2022. Relationship science contends that the quality of couples' communication predicts relationship satisfaction over time.
- [2] John Gottman Routledge, 2023. In its original volume, first published in 1993, John Gottman details years of research involving questionnaires and observations of married couples in pursuit of the determinants of both marital happiness and divorce.
- [3] LeShai Renee' Hunt Walden University, 2022. Research indicated positive correlations between relationship satisfaction and mindfulness among White couples.
- [4] Qian Huang, Wei Peng, Soyeon Ahn Media psychology, 2021. A growing body of research on the media's effects on body image suggests that media of different forms plays a vital role in shaping people's body image concerns and behavioral intentions.
- [5] Sarah Grogan Routledge, 2021. Fully revised and updated, Body Image 4th Edition provides a comprehensive summary of research on body image in men, women, and children drawing together research findings from the fields of psychology, sociology, and gender studies.



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435(Online) Volume 15, Issue 02, February 2026)

- [6] Maria Manuela Peixoto Healthcare 2023. Sexual satisfaction is a relevant indicator of sexual health, and psychotherapeutic interventions for sexual dysfunction also promote sexual satisfaction in men and women.
- [7] Maximiliane Uhlich, Nasim Nouri, Regina Jensen, Nathalie Meuwly, Dominik Schoebi Journal of Family Psychology, 2022. Distressed couples report more conflicts, less sexual satisfaction, and lower relationship quality.
- [8] Cuiting Yong, Hanmei Liu, Qiping Yang, Jing Luo, Yufeng Ouyang, Minghui Sun, Yue Xi, Caihong Xiang, Qian Lin Nutrients, 2021. This study aims to explore the association between restrained eating, body image, and dietary intake among Chinese college students.
- [9] Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2022. Relationship science contends that the quality of couples' communication predicts relationship satisfaction over time.
- [10] Michelle A Harris, Ulrich Orth Journal of personality and social psychology, 2020. Theorists have long assumed that people's self-esteem and social relationships influence each other.
- [11] Yuhui Wang, Xiaochun Xie, Jasmine Fardouly, Lenny R Vartanian, Li Lei New Media & Society, 2021 A bidirectional relationships exist between selfie behaviors and these body-related variables over time.
- [12] Georgios Paslakis, Carlos Chiclana Actis, Gemma Mestre-Bach Journal of Health Psychology, 2022. There is evidence for associations between pornography exposure and sexual behaviors of adults and adolescents.
- [13] Constanze Schlüter, Gerda Kraag, Jennifer Schmidt International journal of bullying prevention, 2023. Body shaming (BS) is a popular term for a type of negative social interaction, which frequently occurs in social media.
- [14] Ximei Chen, Yi-jun Luo, Hong Chen Sex Roles, 2020. Body image victimization experiences that include appearance-based teasing, "fat talk," and negative comments by parents and peers have been found to be associated with female adolescents' disordered eating behaviors.
- [15] Panagiotis Parpottas, Iliada Spyrou Students' Online Risk Behaviors: Psychoeducational Predictors, Outcomes, and Prevention, 2025 Technological advances have brought a revolution in communication, which in turn has influenced many aspects of personal relationships.
- [16] Hosein Rezaii Aderyani, Maryam Moghadasin, Jafar Hasani Sexual Health & Compulsivity, 2023 This study examines the connection between sexually dysfunctional beliefs, sexual well-being, and marital satisfaction among Iranian married women.