

---

## **Age Differences in Body Image Perceptions of Tribal Adolescents**

**S. Beulah Margaret<sup>1\*</sup> and P. Sreedevi<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, PJTSAU, Hyderabad-500 004, India.*

### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author SBM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author PS supervised the project and contributed the final version of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

### **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/CJAST/2017/38528

#### Editor(s):

(1) Ming-Chih Shih, Professor, Department of Health and Nutrition Science, Chinese Culture University, Taiwan.

#### Reviewers:

(1) Hannah Mills Mechler, Texas Woman's University, USA.

(2) Atsushi Oshio, Waseda University, Japan.

(3) Ayodele Kolawole Olanrewaju, Babcock University Ilishan, Nigeria.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history/22843>

**Original Research Article**

**Received 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017**  
**Accepted 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018**  
**Published 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

---

### **ABSTRACT**

The present study on age differences in body image perceptions of tribal adolescents was conducted at Tribal welfare schools and colleges in and around Adilabad district. Expost- facto type design was adapted for the study. The sample comprises of early adolescents in the age range of 11-13 years (90) and late adolescents in the age group of 16-18 years (90), thus total 180. The major results of the study indicate that late adolescents had low positive perceptions on body image and had more regrets on their hair texture, used more cosmetics, accessories and took more initiatives like changing diet to lose weight for their physical outlook when compared to early adolescents.

*Keywords: Body image perceptions; tribal adolescents.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence comes from the Latin word "Adolescere" which means grow to maturity. It is a transition stage from childhood to adulthood which takes place between the age of 10 and 19 years. It is usually divided into two phases: early adolescence, 10 to 14 years and late adolescence from 15 to 19 years [1]. Adolescence is a period of life during which many important body changes take place mostly determined by pubertal development. While going through puberty it can amplify body image concerns. During the pubertal period, morphological changes occur in both sexes. Such sudden changes in physical appearance may influence adolescents' assessment of their body image, which is a multidimensional construct involving the accuracy of the perception that the person has regarding his body shape, size, facial features and physical attributes. Thus, Perceptions of the physical body are the part of self-concept, and they form an integral part of overall self-worth. The evaluation of one's size, weight, or other aspects of the body are the essential components of the physical aspect of body image and satisfaction. Holsen, Carlson and skogbrott [2] indicated that body satisfaction gradually increases through adolescence and it stabilizes in adulthood. The study indicated that urban adolescents were reasonably satisfied with their body image and younger age groups had few regrets regarding their appearance [3].

Body image is one of the significant components of the individual's self-concept that provides the opportunity to reach a more healthy physical and mental state [4]. Much research was explored on body image perception of adolescents abroad when compared to India. Very few studies were conducted in urban as well as rural areas in India but hardly there are any studies conducted in the tribal area. Although there are few studies on body image, much focus was given on adolescent girls than boys. Hence, the present research was taken up to study the perceptions of body image and to examine whether there are any age differences among early adolescents (11-13) and late adolescents (16-18) of tribal area of Adilabad district, Telangana.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adilabad district of Telangana was randomly selected for conducting the study because it is

one of the underdeveloped areas and the tribal population is more. The list of schools and colleges in and around the villages of Adilabad district, Telangana state were selected which were procured from Integrated tribal welfare agency (ITDA) based on accessibility and availability to collect data for the study. Random sampling was used to select the sample. The sample was drawn from schools and colleges in and around villages of Adilabad district. The Sample comprised one hundred and eighty adolescents which included equal number from both the genders.

Body image perception schedule developed by Divya and Mayuri, 2014 was used and few changes were made to the schedule. The schedule consisted of 5 domains with 65 items with an uneven distribution in each domain which measures different aspects of body image perceptions of respondents. They are as follows

1. Perceptions on my body
2. Extent of satisfaction towards physical attributes
3. Regrets about my body image
4. Extent of usage of cosmetics and accessories for maintaining desirable body image
5. Initiatives taken to maintain a desirable body image

## 3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Tripartite Influence Model

The Tripartite Influence Model of body image and eating disturbance proposes that three formative influences (peer, parents, and media) affect body image and eating problems.

The model also contains two mediational processes connected to body image, eating problems and internalization of the thin ideal and excessive comparison to others. It also often forms the foundation for the development of effective interventions that aim to improve body image among adolescent girls. Most of the research on social and cultural factors that influence adjustment and satisfaction with appearance has broadly focused on negative body image, and weight and shape concerns. These influences tended to be consistent across appearance-related conditions including scarring, skin conditions and other visible differences [5].

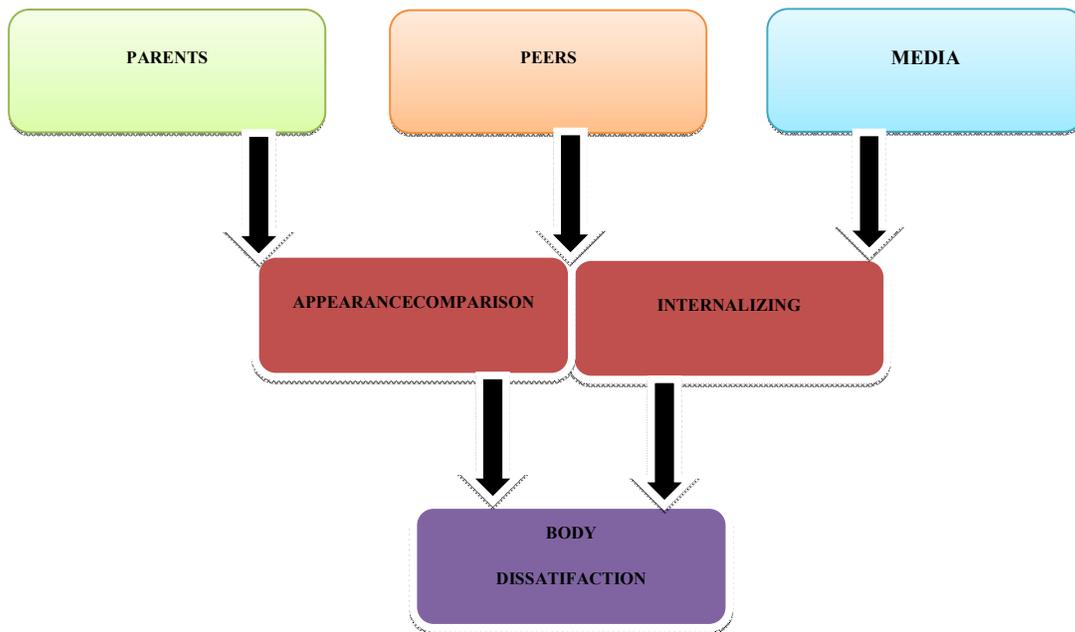


Fig. 1. Flow diagram of tripartite influence model

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From the Table 1 related to age differences on general perceptions of body image it can be inferred that body image of early adolescents had high perceptions when compared with late adolescents which means young adolescents perceived that looking beautiful is important for success of life as it had more advantages and it is important to try to look beautiful as beautiful people were loved more by others and happy in their lives when compared to late adolescents. The overall body image was also found to be

significantly high for early adolescents when compared to late adolescents which might be because physical self-concept would be high among early adolescents as they were extreme conscious about their body and spend more time in taking care of their body when compared to late adolescents. Whereas late adolescence driving their importance more on career and life settlement. The present finding is supported by Hargreaves and Tiggemann [6] who found that physical appearance was more important to early adolescents.

Table 1. Age differences in perceptions of body image of tribal adolescents

Perceptions of body image	Early		Late	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Looking beautiful/ handsome is most important for success in life	4.25	0.85	2.18	1.20
Beautiful people get more advantages in life	2.84	1.15	2.13	0.99
No other talent can replace physical beauty	2.73	1.05	2.52	1.40
It is important to try and look as beautiful as possible	3.86	1.37	3.1	1.37
It is important to spend money in order to look beautiful	3.92	1.18	3.43	3.40
Beautiful people need not try very hard to succeed	2.24	1.343	2.15	1.26
Beautiful people are loved more by others	4.05	1.21	3.64	1.36
Happiness depends on how beautiful one is	2.8	1.475	3.63	1.36
Total	26.68	3.92	22.81	5.47

\*\*P-value < 0.01 level of significance, \* < 0.05 level of significance

No significant age differences were found on perceptions like talent can replace physical beauty, it is important spends money to look beautiful and beautiful people need not to try very hard for success. This indicates that both the age groups might agree on beauty is important and it is essential for the success of life.

The Table 2 clearly showed that early and late adolescents have significant differences on physical attributes such as height, complexion, skin texture, waist measurement, eye size, nose shape, ears shape, mouth shape, neck shape and shoulders at 1% level of significance. And for the other attributes such as weight, hair length, hair texture, hair color, chest measurement and eye color the differences were at 5% level of significance.

It can be inferred that early adolescents had low satisfaction with regard to their physical body attributes when compared to late adolescents. This might be because the social comparisons with thin media ideal, living in fantasy, imaginary audience may be more for younger adolescents when compared to older adolescents. Hence, they may be dissatisfied. Late adolescents had high satisfaction towards physical attributes than that of early adolescents which might be because

late adolescents reached their growing stage and they do not have control over it. Hence, they may accept their body.

No differences were found on hip measurement for both the age groups which means both early and late adolescents have similar levels of satisfaction on hip measurement, which may be due to efforts taken by adolescents for body maintenance to secure thin ideal image.

For the regrets about their body no differences were found on any aspect except for the hair texture at 5% level of significance which indicates that early adolescents had high regrets on hair texture when compared to that of late adolescents.

Though there was no significant difference, it was also observed that (see table 3) early adolescents had regrets on noticeable features such as height, weight, chest and waist measurement and late adolescents had regrets on facial features of the body. This indicates early adolescents low acceptance of their body attributes and worried more about body image than late adolescents. As age increases interest towards maintaining a functional healthy body image increases.

**Table 2. Age differences in the extent of satisfaction towards physical attributes of tribal adolescents**

Extent of satisfaction towards physical attributes	Early		Late	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Height	7.12	2.20	8.01	1.83
Weight	7.04	2.21	7.68	1.82
Complexion	6.37	2.42	7.37	2.11
Skin texture	6.00	2.258	7.81	1.84
Hair length	6.45	2.60	7.37	2.30
Hair texture	6.6	2.30	7.28	2.06
Hair Colour	6.85	2.33	7.63	2.67
Chest measurement	6.81	2.18	7.58	2.15
Waist measurement	6.37	2.19	7.25	1.82
Hip measurement	6.7	1.96	7.18	2.16
Eye colour	6.92	2.45	7.7	2.50
Eye size	6.08	2.35	7.48	2.58
Nose shape	6.36	2.07	7.73	2.22
Ears Shape	6.45	2.32	7.78	2.43
Mouth shape	6.58	2.37	7.96	2.08
Neck shape	7.13	2.02	8.05	2.11
Shoulders	7.36	1.92	8.2	1.81
Total	113.26	24.37	130.14	23.83

*P-value<0.05 level of significance, \*\*0.01 level of significance*

**Table 3. Age differences on regrets about my body image of tribal adolescents**

Regrets about my body	Early		Late	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
height	2.12	0.99	1.86	0.98
weight	2.01	0.93	1.8	0.81
complexion	2.28	0.95	2.35	0.92
hair length	2.15	0.87	2.3	0.92
Hair texture	1.97	0.94	2.32	0.88
eyes size	2.02	0.87	1.76	0.91
eye color	1.62	0.90	1.75	0.87
nose shape	1.73	0.81	1.83	0.93
skin texture	2.44	0.86	2.27	0.94
mouth size	1.61	0.63	1.48	0.60
neck shape	1.48	0.76	1.52	0.82
shoulders	1.52	0.83	1.71	0.91
Chest measurement	2.05	0.90	1.77	0.87
Waist measurement	1.77	0.85	1.72	0.79
Hip measurement	1.76	0.87	1.9	0.82
Total	28.6	6.33	28.4	5.82

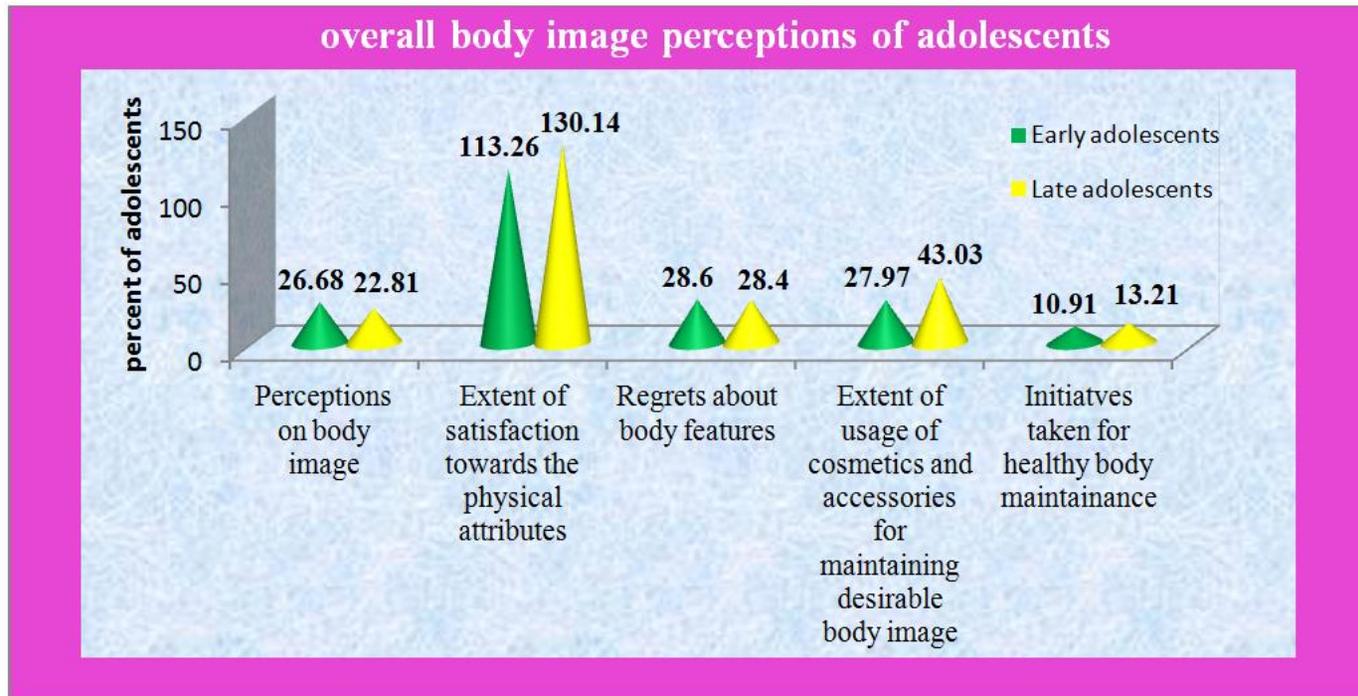
**Table 4. Age differences on extent of usage of cosmetics and accessories for maintaining desirable body image of tribal adolescents**

Types of cosmetics and accessories	Early		Late	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clothes	2.92	0.64	3.15	0.71
Shoes/ Sandals	2.68	0.61	2.54	0.62
Fairness Creams	2.23	1.23	3.31	0.97
Moisturizers	1.78	1.08	2.88	1.10
Accessories ( Ear rings, Bangles, Bands)	2.38	1.08	3.16	0.96
Talcum powder	3.08	1.09	3.06	2.19
Hair straighteners	1.17	0.57	2.2	0.92
Hair smootheners	1.05	0.34	2.51	0.98
Blemish removers	1.04	0.20	2.23	0.94
Face Cleansers	1.17	0.71	2.74	1.11
Face packs	1.18	0.55	2.81	1.06
Sun screen lotions	1.14	0.55	2.12	0.84
Eye liners	1.05	0.31	1.55	0.82
Eye shadow	1.02	0.21	1.48	0.76
Complete makeup set	1	0	1.37	0.68
Hair removers	1	0	1.74	1.05
Shaving kit	1	0	1.86	0.93
Visits to Beauty Saloons	1	0	2.24	0.97
Total	27.97	3.95	43.03	8.26

*P-value<\*0.05 level of significance, \*\*0.01 level of significance*

The usage of all the cosmetics and accessories (see table 4), late adolescents spend more money and have high concerns when compared to early adolescents. Late adolescents spends more on clothes, Fairness Creams, Moisturizers, Accessories, Hair straighteners, Hair smootheners, Blemish removers, Face Cleansers, Face packs, Sun screen lotions, Eye liners, Eye shadow, Complete makeup set, Hair

removers, Shaving kit and going to Beauty Salons for desirable outlook and regular body maintenance. Because late adolescents may be more aware of body care and more concerned towards their facial features which are noticed by others. Hence, they are spending more on their accessories and cosmetics when compared to early adolescents.



**Fig. 2. Total perceptions on body image of tribal adolescents**

**Table 5. Age differences in initiatives taken to maintain a desirable body image of tribal adolescents**

Initiatives taken to maintain a desirable body image	Early		Late	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Changed diet to lose weight	1.24	0.64	2.52	1.31
Changed diet to gain weight	1.71	0.98	1.78	1.17
Exercised at home	2.02	0.63	2.11	0.62
Joined a gym for exercise	1.95	1.33	1.73	0.90
Joined a yoga center	1.87	1.23	2	1.12
Went to skin clinic for treatment	1.06	0.44	2.05	1.40
Joined Weight reduction Programs	1.03	0.31	1	0
TOTAL	10.91	3.08	13.21	4.17

*P-value*<\*0.05 level of significance, \*\*0.01 level of significance

Whereas no significant differences were found on shoes/sandals and talcum powders which means both the age groups were buying the product at equal plane. As basic needs are vital for any individual to protect themselves and to maintain their self [7].

From the Table 5, it can be inferred that respondents showed significant differences to the statements on “changing their diet to lose weight” and “visiting skin clinic for treatment” at 1% level, in which late adolescents took more initiatives when compared to early adolescents which might be because late adolescents are more conscious about their fitness for healthy body. Similarly Meland, Haugland and Breidablik [8] revealed that girls in older age groups reported dieting and dissatisfaction with regard to weight and appearance more often than boys and younger age groups.

It is also interesting to note that there were no differences found on additional diet for weight gain, doing exercise at home and joining in gym, yoga center or weight reduction programme, which means both early and late adolescents were on par with each other in the above activities for maintaining desirable outlook.

From the above Fig. 2 it can be concluded that there were age differences on overall body image perceptions of early and late tribal adolescents. Early adolescents had high perceptions regarding importance of beauty and felt being beautiful has more advantages and in life. Late adolescents were more satisfied with their physical attributes than that of early adolescents. Late adolescents spent more money on usage of cosmetics and accessories and took more initiatives for maintaining fit and healthy body image than that of early adolescents. Both early and late adolescents

were on par with each other and expressed similar level of regrets.

In comparison with other western countries tribal adolescents were reasonable satisfied with their body image with very less regrets which might be due to lack of awareness and lack of knowledge regarding the positive body image whereas adolescents from western areas were highly dissatisfied with their body image than that of Indian tribal adolescents. Study found that dissatisfaction with the face, height, and hair was positively correlated with overall body dissatisfaction among Malaysian Malays and self-esteem, dissatisfaction with body areas typically included in measures (weight/shape, upper, middle, and lower body, and muscles [9]. Diana and Laura [10] in their study found that the sensitivity to detect face, arms, chest, waist, hips, thighs and calves were greater in boys than in girls. Higher sensitivity was more on hip and waist and smaller was seen in arms and face. Young adolescent boys with higher education have shown greater differences than their counter partners.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Finally it can be concluded that there is a strong sense of body image perception among adolescents, and they are concerned about changing unsatisfactory dimension if they can being strongly influenced by the fashionable world and are trying to compete in almost all the aspects. Education programs should be given to early adolescents to avoid undue importance to physical body. Parents should guide and motivate their adolescents to have realistic perceptions and to give more focus on functional aspects of body rather over emphasizing their esthetic body to promote body satisfaction, self-esteem and healthy psychological development.

## ETHICAL AND CONSENT

Participants were gathered from schools and colleges of tribal adolescents with the permission of the school and college principal and approval and willing of the participants.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Age limits and Adolescents. Paediatric Child Health. 2014;8(9):577.
2. Holsen I, Carlson JD, Skogbrott BM. Body image satisfaction among Norwegian adolescents and young adults: A longitudinal study of the influence of interpersonal relationships and BMI. Body Image. 2012;9(2):201-208.
3. Divya V, Mayuri K. Body image perceptions and its correlation with self-esteem of adolescents studying in engineering colleges of Hyderabad. The International Journal of Indian Psychology. 2015;3(1).
4. Knauss C, Paxton SJ, Francoise DA. Relationships amongst body dissatisfaction, internalisation of the media body ideal and perceived pressure from media in adolescent girls and boys. Body Image. 2007;4(4):353-360.
5. Appearance Research Collaboration. Factors associated with distress and positive adjustment in people with disfigurement; 2012.
6. Hargreaves DA, Tiggemann M. Body image is for girls: A qualitative study of boys' body image'. Journal of Health Psychology. 2006;11(4):567-76.
7. Divya V, Mayuri K. Body image perception schedule. Unpublished thesis of PJTSAU. Adolescent's (18-20 years) perceptions of body image and its relationship to their self-esteem; 2014.
8. Meland E, Haugland S, Breidablik HJ. Body image and perceived health in adolescence. Health Education Research. 2007;22(3):342-350.
9. Mellor D, Hucker A, Waterhouse M, bintiMamat NH, Xu X, Cochrane J, et al. Cross-cultural study investigating body features associated with male adolescents' body dissatisfaction in Australia, China, and Malaysia. American journal of men's health. 2014;8(6):521-31.
10. Diana AGG, Laura A. Body size estimation: Discrimination of subtle differences in male and female body parts. Mexican Journal of Eating Disorders. 20167(2):85-96.

© 2017 Margaret and Sreedevi; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*

*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*  
<http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history/22843>