



Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers

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Abstract

The increasing focus on physical appearance, especially among young adults, can lead individuals to become overly preoccupied with how their body is viewed by other people. These experiences are especially heightened in environments which focus on physical appearance. The present study investigated the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers. The study sample consisted of 202 participants between 18 and 35 years of age, including males and females. Data was collected using the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) and the Body Appreciation Scale-2. Statistical analysis included Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and t-test. Results indicated a significant weak negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation in both Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers, with these relationships stronger in Gym-Goers. No significant gender differences were found in Objectified Body Consciousness, whereas a significant gender difference was found in Body Appreciation with males reporting higher levels of Body Appreciation. Gym-Goers reported higher Objectified Body Consciousness, while no differences were found in Body Appreciation in both the groups. Results support the influence of appearance-focused environments on body consciousness and the protective role of Body Appreciation in reducing the negative consequences of objectification. Gender differences in Body Appreciation also suggest the influence of societal appearance expectations for women on perception of their body.

Keywords: Objectified Body Consciousness, Body Appreciation, Gym-Goers



Introduction

In today's society, individuals are often faced with social and cultural messages that focus on physical appearance through the media. Contexts which place a greater focus on physical appearance, individuals tend to feel that their body is viewed and evaluated by others around them (Moya-Garófano & Moya, 2019). Societal expectations about physical appearance and a feeling of not being able to meet these expectations results in higher levels shame for the body and constant body monitoring (Gattino et al., 2023). However, positive feelings about one's body have been found to play a protective role against societal body ideals (Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2021). Gym environments, which often place emphasis on physical appearance, can heighten individuals' awareness of their bodies.

Objectified Body Consciousness (OBC) is defined as "a third-person perspective that locates an individual's body-self relationship primarily in the appearance of her/his body as an outside observer rather than in how her/his body feels or what her/his body can do" (John, 2003). Objectified body consciousness also involves endorsing cultural body standards (so that the standards appear to originate from the self) and believing that (with the appropriate amount of effort) achieving these standards is possible (Dakanalis et al., 2015). In simple terms, Objectified body consciousness is "the tendency to view oneself as an object to be looked at and evaluated by others" (Kalimi, 2023). Though objectification was originally thought of as unique to females, recent research has shown that males are also vulnerable to objectification. For males, objectification is often associated with striving for masculinity, as it is commonly viewed as an essential feature of a masculine physique.

McKinley and Hyde (1996) conceptualized objectified body consciousness as comprising of three components: body surveillance, body shame, and appearance control beliefs. The central component of OBC is *Body Surveillance*, in which individuals constantly involve in monitoring their own bodies and judge their body in the same way an outside observer would. This behaviour occurs to ensure conformity with societal body standards and to prevent negative evaluations from others. When individuals constantly involve in self-surveillance and try to adhere to the societal body ideals, it leads to negative experiences when they feel they do not meet these standards (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). These negative experiences result in body shame. *Body Shame* occurs when individuals feel that they do not



meet the cultural appearance standards and have a sense of failure in achieving those standards (Boursier et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Body Appreciation, defined as “accepting, holding favourable attitudes toward, and respecting the body, while also rejecting media-promoted appearance ideals as the only form of beauty” (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). It involves accepting one’s body regardless of its appearance and size or deviations from sociocultural appearance-related stereotypes, and respecting and loving one’s body; it is also the ability to deny sociocultural pressures relating to appearance and engaging in health promoting behaviours, including intrinsically motivated physical activity and exercise (Baceviciene et al., 2024). Accepting one’s body regardless of how it appears, and having a positive attitude towards the body and appreciating the body based on its functions, rather than on how it looks has been found to protect against negative consequences of body dissatisfaction (Kriaucionienė et al., 2024).

An examination of the research literature conducted on body image indicates that most of the research have focused on the negative aspects. This has led to a focus only on describing and treating negative body image, and not on ways to promote a positive body image. Taking into consideration the impracticability of such single-sided approach to body image, recently researchers have diverted their attention towards positive body image. Positive body image *does not* indicate the mere absence or a weaker presence of negative body image. It is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct which goes beyond satisfaction with one’s body. The dimensions of positive body image include appreciation of one’s body, showing acceptance and love towards one’s body, a broader conceptualization of beauty, a healthy investment in one’s appearance, and feeling positivity inwardly towards one’s body (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

Literature Review

Gao et al. (2026) conducted a study which examined the association among the variables of Body Appreciation, Body Talk, Self-objectification, Negative Affect, and symptoms of Disordered Eating in females. The sample consisted of a total of 130 Chinese female university students. The results found that those who engaged in negative talk about the body engaged in higher self-objectification and had lower body appreciation. Negative body talk was related to



eating disorder and negative affect. Positive body talk was related to higher body appreciation in females.

Butt & Khan (2025) investigated the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness, Social Appearance Anxiety, and Disordered Eating Patterns. Results found a strong positive correlation between all the variables. Social appearance anxiety mediated the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Disordered eating patterns. Also, Social appearance anxiety predicted disordered eating in the sample.

Karam et al. (2025) examined the relationship between Exercise Addiction and Disordered Eating and the role of Body Appreciation and Body Dysmorphic concerns in this relationship among sports practitioners. Results showed that body appreciation mediated the relationship among exercise addiction and disordered eating. Higher levels of body appreciation were associated with decreased disordered eating. Dysmorphic concerns were found to mediate the relationship among exercise addiction and disordered eating. Increased exercise addiction was associated with greater dysmorphic concern for the body and disordered eating.

Marmara, Hosking, & McLean (2025) investigated the relationship between Body Appreciation, planned physical activity, Self-Compassion and positive well-being. There was a significant moderate positive relationship between body appreciation and self-compassion (.57). Intrinsic motivation to exercise had a positive relationship with body appreciation (.46). In females, body appreciation mediated the relationship between planned physical activity and positive well-being. In males, intrinsic motivation mediated the relationship between self-compassion and planned physical activity.

Rationale of the study

The aim of this research is to explore the relationships between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among gym-goers and non-gym goers. Previous research on Objectified Body Consciousness have mainly focused on the negative aspects of body image. This research addresses this gap and will focus on the positive role of Body Appreciation in reducing the negative impact of Objectified Body Consciousness.

Gym environments can lead to a heightened awareness of how one's body is viewed by others and a feeling that they do not meet the fitness ideals. Therefore, it is important to assess body and appearance-related concerns in this population. Very limited studies focus on studying



gym going population in the context of Objectified Body Consciousness. The present research aims to assess levels of Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among gym-going young adults and compare it with non-gym-goers. This comparison will help to understand whether exposure to environments that emphasize on physical appearance results in higher levels of objectified body consciousness in gym-goers.

This research will also look into the gender differences between males and females in Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation. Examining gender differences will help to understand whether females are more prone to Objectified Body Consciousness than males, especially in a fitness environment. This study will also help young adults who engage in physical activity understand how appreciating one's body can help them manage the negative influence of cultural fitness ideals.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.
2. To assess whether there is a gender difference in Objectified Body Consciousness among Young Adults.
3. To assess whether there is a difference in Objectified Body Consciousness between Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers among.
4. To assess whether there is a gender difference in Body Appreciation among Young Adults.
5. To assess whether there is a difference in Body Appreciation between Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers among.

Hypotheses

H_{a1}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.

H_{a1a}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers.

H_{a1b}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Non-Gym Goers.



H_{a2}: There will be a significant gender difference in Objectified Body Consciousness among Young Adults.

H_{a3}: There will be a significant difference in Objectified Body Consciousness between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.

H_{a4}: There will be a significant gender difference in Body Appreciation among Young Adults.

H_{a5}: There will be a significant difference in Body Appreciation between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.

Research Method

The study is correlational and comparative in nature. A correlational design was used to assess the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation. A comparative design was used to assess gender differences and differences based on physical activity status (gym goers and non-gym goers) in Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation.

Tools

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS)- The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale is a 24-item self-report questionnaire that measures body consciousness. It was developed by Nita Mary McKinley and Janet Shibley Hyde in 1996. The scale has 24 items and responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The total score is calculated by adding up the scores on 24 items (after reverse scoring negative items), which results in a possible attainable score range of 24 to 168. A higher score suggests greater levels of body consciousness. The test-retest reliability of the OBCS over a 4-week period ranged from 0.80 to 0.85 for all the three subscales suggesting high overall scale reliability.

The Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2)- The Body Appreciation Scale-2 was developed by Tracy L. Tylka and Nichole Wood-Barcalow in the year 2015. The scale has 10 items and is a self-report measure containing items measuring one's acceptance of, favourable opinions towards, and respect for their own body. The scale is designed for adolescents as well as adults. The internal consistency of the Body Appreciation Scale-2 was reported to be .94 and .93 for females and males respectively. BAS-2 correlated positively with appearance evaluation (.80) and was negatively correlated to body dissatisfaction (-.73) for both males and females.



Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 202 participants which included 102 gym-goers and 100 non-gym goers from the age range of 18 to 35 years. The gym-goers group had a total of 52 males and 50 females, while the non-gym goer group had 50 males and 50 females.

Data Collection

Data was collected by distributing the questionnaires online via Google Form as well as offline questionnaires. Consent was taken from each participant before the data was collected. Then the respondents were provided with the personal data sheet in which they had to fill in the relevant demographic details and other additional information. The respondents were then administered the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) and the Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2). The respondents had to answer the questionnaires as per the instructions provided. The expected time for completion was approximately 20 minutes. The responses were then scored and coded as per the instructions provided in the scoring key of the manual of each scale.

Data Processing

The data collected from the participants was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Pearson's Correlation was used to assess the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation. The t-test was used to assess differences in Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation with respect to gender and physical activity status (Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers). All analyses were performed at a significance level of .05.



Results and Discussion

H_{a1}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.

H_{a1a}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers.

Table 1.1 Correlation between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Gym-Goers.

Variables	Correlation
Objectified Body Consciousness	
Body Appreciation	-.34***

The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among gym-goers. A weak significant negative relationship was found between the two variables, $r(100) = -.34$, $p = .004$. Therefore, as Objectified Body Consciousness increases Body Appreciation decreases.

A study that was undertaken by Sundgot-Borgen et al. (2021) support the above findings. The study investigated the relationship between appearance-related pressures and body appreciation among individuals who engaged in exercise. Results found a negative relationship between appearance-related pressures and body appreciation.

Objectified Body Consciousness leads to an individual's focus on how their body looks rather than how their body feels (Calogero, 2012). In physical activity settings, when individuals feel that they are judged based on how their body appears to others, they tend to internalize this view of an outside observer. When they feel their body does not meet the societal bodily standards and that their self-worth depends on how their body looks, they fail to accept and have a positive attitude towards their body, thus resulting in lower appreciation for the body.



H_{a1b}: There will be a significant negative relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Non-Gym Goers.

Table 1.2 The correlation between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among Non-Gym Goers.

Variables	Correlation
Objectified Body Consciousness	
Body Appreciation	-.28***

The relationship between Objectified Body Consciousness and Body Appreciation among non-gym goers was analysed using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient. There was a weak significant negative relationship between the variables, $r(98) = -.28$, $p = .004$. Therefore, as Objectified Body Consciousness increases Body Appreciation decreases.

The findings are consistent with results of a study conducted by Katznelson et al. (2021) which found that self-objectification was related to negative experiences with one's own body.

Objectified Body Consciousness can result in negative attitudes towards one's body. When individuals feel that they do not meet the bodily standards they tend to feel ashamed about how their body looks. Self-objectification leads to excessive focus on outward appearance which reduces individuals' positive experiences with one's own body (Katznelson et al., 2021).

H_{a2}: There will be a significant gender difference in Objectified Body Consciousness among Young Adults.

Table 1.3 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Objectified Body Consciousness (OBC) with respect to Gender.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	df
Objectified Body Consciousness	Males	101	91.20	13.93	1.277	.581	200
	Females	101	93.87	15.64			



The above table indicates that the mean obtained for males in Objectified Body Consciousness was 91.208 with a standard deviation of 13.93 and the mean for females was 93.871 with a standard deviation of 15.64.

A t-test was employed to statistically examine gender differences in Objectified Body Consciousness. The results indicated that there was no significant difference $t(200) = 1.277, p = .581$ in Objectified Body Consciousness among males and females.

These findings are consistent with results of a study conducted by Wang et al. (2020), in which gender differences were examined in the relationships between Body Talk on Social-Media and the Objectified Body Consciousness components of Body Surveillance and Body Shame. Results showed no significant differences between males and females in these relationships.

One possible reason for the absence of gender difference is that physical appearance of both males and females is emphasized in today's world through social media (Dittmar, 2009). This exposure of individuals to an ideal body type results in body comparison with others. Men also are found to internalize the muscularity ideal portrayed in the media (Daniel & Bridges, 2010). This may result in both females and males to experience body shame and heightened awareness of how they are looked at by others.

H_{a3}: There will be a significant difference in Objectified Body Consciousness between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers among Young Adults.

Table 1.4 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Objectified Body Consciousness between Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers among Young Adults.

Variable	Young Adults	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	df
Objectified Body Consciousness	Gym-Goers	102	98.17	13.93	5.892	.001	200
	Non-gym Goers	100	86.79	13.52			

The above table shows that the mean of Gym-Goers for Objectified Body Consciousness was 98.176 with a standard deviation of 13.93 which is higher than the mean of 86.790 for Non-gym Goers with a standard deviation of 13.52.

The t-test was used to examine the difference in Objectified Body Consciousness among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers. The results indicated that there was a significant difference t



(200) = 5.892, $p = .001$ in Objectified Body Consciousness among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers.

A study conducted by Prichard & Tiggemann (2008) support the above findings. The aim of the study was to find the association between exercise type and body image and self-objectification among women who engaged in physical activity in fitness centres. Results found that self-objectification was higher among those who exercised at the gym compared to those who exercised outside the gym setting. Exercising in a gym-based fitness setting can increase an individual's awareness of how their body looks due to frequent exposure to mirrors. Also, exercise at the gym is focused on achieving an ideal body type, which makes individuals feel dissatisfied with their current body type and that it should be changed (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Advice from trainers or instructors which focus on physical appearance can also increase self-objectification (Indhupriya & Gnanaselvi, 2025). Exercise settings reinforce self-objectification which leads to higher sociocultural pressures to achieve an ideal body type which reduce body appreciation (Mathisen et al., 2020).

H_{a4}: There will be a significant gender difference in Body Appreciation between males and females among Young Adults.

Table 1.5 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Body Appreciation between males and females among Young Adults.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	df
Body Appreciation	Males	101	42.32	6.91	.749	.002	200
	Females	101	41.50	8.59			

The above table shows that the mean of males for Body Appreciation was 42.32 with a standard deviation of 6.91, whereas the mean for females was 41.50 with a standard deviation of 8.59.

The t-test was used to examine the difference in Body Appreciation between males and females among Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers. The results indicated that there was a significant difference $t(200) = .749$, $p = .002$ in Body Appreciation between males and females among gym-goers and non-gym goers.



These findings are consistent with findings of a study conducted by Alcaraz-Ibáñez et al. (2017) which found higher levels of Body Appreciation in males as compared to females. Tylka & Wood-Barcalow (2015) also found that undergraduate males reported significantly higher levels of Body Appreciation as compared to females. One reason for such differences could be that females are more subject to societal bodily ideals which can lead to dissatisfaction with one's body as compared to males. Females engage in upward social comparison in which they compare their bodies to those of others' which they idealize. The negative consequences of such comparisons seem to be stronger in females as compared to males which reduces appreciation for one's body (He et al., 2020). On the other hand, men are less likely to experience appearance-based evaluation leading to more positive attitude towards their body as compared to females (He et al., 2020).

Ha5: There will be a significant difference in Body Appreciation between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers among Young Adults.

Table 1.4 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Body Appreciation between Gym-Goers and Non-gym Goers among Young Adults.

Variable	Young Adults	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	df
Body Appreciation	Gym-Goers	102	41.78	8.35	.242	.211	200
	Non-gym Goers	100	42.05	7.21			

The above table shows that the mean for Gym-Goers was 41.78 which was slightly lower than the mean for Non-gym Goers which was 42.05.

The differences in Body Appreciation between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym Goers among young adults were analysed using the t-test. The results showed that there was no significant difference $t(200) = .242$, $p = .211$ between Gym-Goers and Non-Gym goers in Body Appreciation among young adults.

The findings of Tavares & Campana (2012) provides an explanation. The study assessed body appreciation among individuals who engaged in physical activity and sedentary individuals. Results found no significant differences between physically active and sedentary individuals in body appreciation.



Even though physical activity is commonly believed to promote positive perceptions about the body, participation in exercise alone may not automatically lead to increased body appreciation (Tavares & Campana, 2012). Body appreciation reflects acceptance, respect, and positive regard toward the body, which may depend more on psychological factors such as self-perception, internalization of societal standards, and self-compassion rather than on exercise participation alone. Body appreciation during physical activity is also influenced more by intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, and mindful acceptance rather than exercise participation alone (Baceviciene et al., 2024).

Conclusion

An increased awareness of how one's body looks and is viewed by others leads to reduced satisfaction with one's body and negative attitudes towards the self. The findings indicated that higher Objectified Body Consciousness was associated with lower Body Appreciation, suggesting that increased awareness of how one's body is evaluated by others contributes to more negative body-related attitudes. These relationships were stronger in gym-goers, suggesting that greater appearance pressures and appearance-focused exercise motives in fitness environments reinforce self-objectification (Mathisen et al., 2020; Homan & Tylka, 2014).

No gender differences were observed in Objectified Body Consciousness, suggesting that men and women may experience similar body-image pressures and evaluations (Dittmar, 2009; Kriauciūnienė et al., 2024). On the other hand, a significant gender difference was observed in Body Appreciation suggesting that females are more subjected to appearance ideals and engage more in social comparison as compared to males (He et al., 2020). However, gym-goers reported higher Objectified Body Consciousness than non-gym goers, highlighting the appearance-focused nature of fitness settings (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008), while Body Appreciation did not differ by physical activity status, indicating simply taking part in physical exercise may not be sufficient to improve positive attitudes toward the body (Tavares & Campana, 2012). Findings of the study support the protective role of the positive self-attitude of Body Appreciation against the detrimental consequences of increased preoccupation with one's physical appearance. Findings also suggesting the possible role of appearance expectations for women in reducing positive body-related attitudes.



Limitations of the study

- The research was limited to only participants from South Goa, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings
- Since the measures were self-report in nature, participants may have not answered based on how they actually feel due to a concern for how they wish to be perceived
- The study did not compare results across various age groups
- The study was restricted to only gym-based fitness environments
- Other potentially influential factors such as social media exposure, body weight, type of gym environment (i.e. whether only for females/ males) were not taken into account

Implications

The results of the study provide valuable insights into the body- related challenges experienced by individuals who engage in gym-based physical activity. The findings highlight that gym environments may lead to increased objectified body consciousness and appearance-focused self-evaluation, which can negatively influence body appreciation. Findings also suggest the negative influence of appearance expectations for women in reducing body appreciation. Understanding these challenges can help future researchers and practitioners better identify the psychological pressures faced by gym-going populations regarding body appearance and societal bodily ideals. Furthermore, the results can contribute to the development of targeted interventions, awareness programs, and educational initiatives aimed at promoting Body Appreciation. Such programs can encourage individuals to focus on body functionality rather than overly focusing on appearance, thereby fostering a healthier body image and reducing the negative effects associated with Objectified Body Consciousness. The findings will also help in developing ways to help women in rejecting the unrealistic appearance-related pressures and promote Body Appreciation.

The study will be helpful to individuals who engage in physical activity at the gym to identify how appearance-focused gym environments influence perceptions of their own body and attitudes towards themselves. It will help them understand how appreciating their body based on its abilities can reduce the negative consequences of objectification.



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