



Body Shape Perception in Relation to the Apparel Choices of the Young and Late Adult Women of Peshawar

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ABSTRACT

The current study was conducted to examine how young and older women in the Peshawar city perceive their body image which influences their clothing choices. The selected sample of women whose age ranged between 20-50 years were evaluated by using the Stunkard body image measure. The correlation between actual body mass index (BMI) and perceived body image was significant indicated by 39% of female population having a favourable impression of their bodies. Women with a poor body image often use clothing to camouflage their protruding body parts. Positive body image leads to a preference for fitting clothing, while negative body image favours loose-fitting clothing. The study also examined the impact of patterns on women's body image, finding that women enjoyed all types of prints in their attire. The study would be distinctive in the field of fashion industry which enable a woman in identifying real body image (BMI) and perceived body image, hence help in designing attires to camouflage minor flaws.

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1. Introduction

Body shape perception is a complex mental concept involving appearance, behavior, self-beliefs, affection, cognitive abilities, and attitude (Striegel-Moore, Franko, Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002). It encompasses an individual's perception of their body, including size, weight, and thoughts. This mental representation influences their overall appearance and body parts, and is closely related to body pleasure and beauty (Lennon & Rudd, 1994). The National Eating Disorders Association states that "body shape refers to how individuals perceive themselves, including height, weight, and shape". It indicates their ability to comprehend, realize, notice, and act on their bodies. The perceptual aspect captures feelings, thoughts, qualities, and beliefs about body shape by evaluating self-courtesy effort and engagement in appearance.

Body form is influenced by perception, feelings, and physical senses, however, it can change in response to mood, physical knowledge, and environment. Female teenagers are expected to practice highly forceful perceptions of body shape since they experience significant bodily modifications in their figures during the puberty stage. Self-respect and other people's opinions have a significant impact on body form. The societal and cultural standards of attractiveness and appearances have a significant impact on body forms (Croll, 2005).

1.1. Perception of Body Image in Women

Women are increasingly concerned about their body images due to societal norms and thin, tiny images. Self-assurance is crucial for self-perception and can be influenced by societal beliefs and ethnic standards. Women's bodies undergo significant somatic changes during adolescence and pregnancy, leading to heightened self-consciousness. In accordance with Cash (2008), one-third of body cathexis is connected to an individual's self-esteem. Females grow

more self-conscious about their body parts when they go through considerable physical changes during adolescence.

Media representations of women's body shape can significantly impact their perceptions and others' views. These unrealistic body shapes, exaggerated and focusing on slimness, can be threatening to young females (Trampe, Stapel, & Siero, 2007). Models' images may also negatively affect women more than men, as they are more attracted to these images and exhibit low confidence. Normal-sized women are twice as likely to perceive themselves as bulky and have dysfunctional appearance (Cash, 2008). Distorted perception refers to the inability to accurately analyze an individual's body shape and weight. Body shape dissatisfaction involves continually checking the looking mirror negative emotional states, negative body image, obsession with body looks, and behavioral features like self-evaluation and ignorance of others' circumstances.

1.2. Relation of Body Image with Clothing

Negative body form is a skewed perception of one's shape in which some portions of the body are identified that are not actually exist there. People who have a undesirable body shape image believe that other people are more attractive and their physique, shape, or size is an indication of personal failure. These folks are ashamed, uneasy, and anxious about their appearance. Females with significant body dissatisfaction avoid social interaction with each other (Caccavale, Farhat, & Iannotti, 2012). To accomplish this goal females engage in a variety of practices, the most admirable is their focus on clothing.

Clothing is crucial for women's lives, and selecting appropriate clothing styles depends on their body shape (Entwistle, 2023). Clothing serves three main purposes: protection, humility, beautification, and trimming. Clothing can serve as an essential for humility, beautification, and protection in a variety of ways. Dress can vary across states, countries, and even within the same country, reflecting their values. Clothing and body shape have equal values on one's self-image, reflecting their perception of their body and societal representation. Clothing is often used to enhance women's appearance and convey figure frame, influencing self-esteem and self-image (Rudd & Lennon, 2001).

Clothing can alter body shape, close the gap between ideal and actual figure size, achieve artistic ideals, style social images, and pique onlookers' curiosity. It can draw attention to certain body parts while hiding others, and using desired apparel, jewelry, cosmetics, or colognes can improve body form (Cash, 2008; Sproles & Burns, 1994). Females generally purchase dresses, footwear and other accessories with particularly attractive look. A few persons who have an undesirable body image consider their physique, shape, or size a sign of personal failure and interruption in social interactions though, despite they can achieve a desired body image by camouflaging minor flaws.

In the current study the actual body perception of female participants of Peshawar were identified and explored in relation to their apparel choices. The study aims to investigate adult women's body shape perception and clothing attitudes, focusing on actual body image (BMI) and attire usage to camouflage flaws. This research would be distinct study in the field of fashion designing which facilitate in identifying real body image (BMI) and perceived body image.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data Collection

A total of 185 young and late adult women between the ages of 20 and 50 were chosen randomly from the city of Peshawar. Each individual's BMI, comprising weight and height, was measured to assess their real body image as well as body perception using the Stunkard body image scale (Adelson & McCoach, 2010). A self-structured questionnaire. The list of participants was stratified in the preliminary stage according to the locality, institute and residential area or work place.

From each of the stratum, a sample was selected by simple random sampling technique followed by collection of required data through self-constructed questionnaires. The questionnaire was formulated to examine the individual's wardrobe selections, shopping behaviour and preferences based on their body cathexis and overall perceptions of body image.

2.2. Measurement of variables through Stunkard Scale

The Stunkard's scale or Figure rating scale is a psychometric measure that is a source of determining the level of body dissatisfaction among men, women and children. Both the dependent variable (body shape perception of women) and the independent variables (clothing attitudes in relation to their body image and their satisfaction) were measured following the standard scale. This scale comprised of nine silhouettes ranging from very thin to very fat figure images (Grogan, 2021). In current study, respondents selected the silhouette that best matches with their existing body size for comparison of their body image with standard ranking.

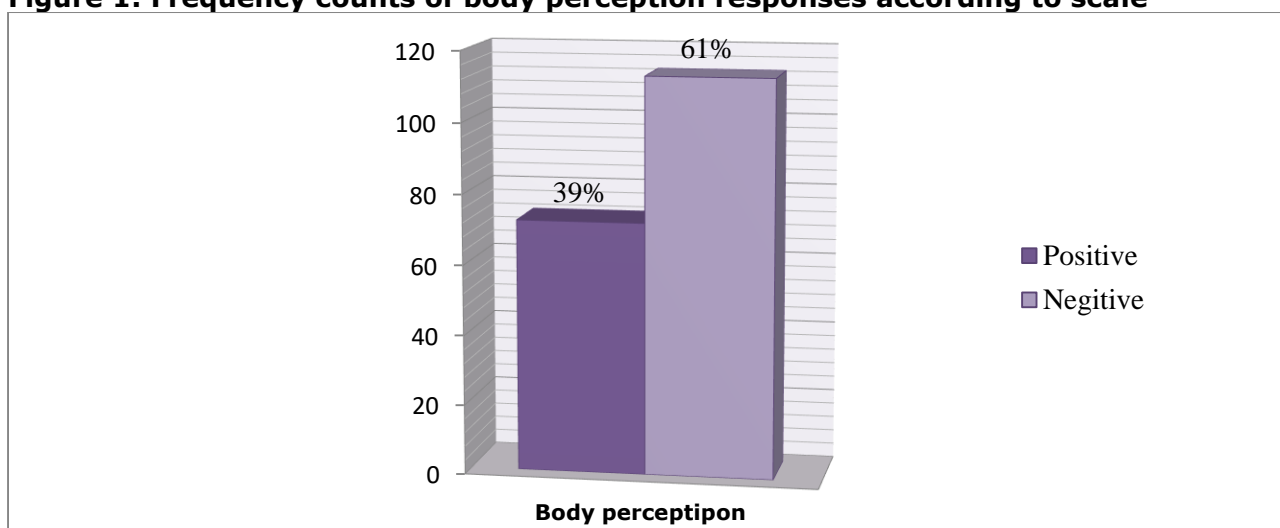
2.3. Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 through Chi-square test to find out the relationship between two variables. The results were further summarized in the form of as tables and bar diagrams.

3. Results

The summary of results presented in tables and figures regarding the body weight perception with actual body weight & height (BMI) and apparel choices of the females of Peshawar. Figure 1 exhibits the frequency counts of the positive and negative body perception of the respondents. Among 185 females, 39% had positive perception about their body i.e. as they really were, while 61% perceived themselves as different than standard scale. Table 1 compares the real body weight (BMI) frequencies of individuals derived on the basis of the sample's weight and height to their perception. The results suggest that 11.8% of the samples were underweight, 49.7% were normal, 23.2% were overweight, and 15% were obese. The actual BMI of samples was compared to their perceived body image according to the Stunkard Body Image Scale.

Figure 1: Frequency counts of body perception responses according to scale



The findings shows that a total of 22 females were found to be underweight based on their actual body weight, with 9.7% having a positive perception of their body i.e, underweight, while only 2.16% considered themselves to be normal despite being underweight. According to their actual BMI, 49.7% of females were classified as normal, with only 1.6% and 1.08% as overweight respectively. In real ratings, the ratio of overweight and obese samples was 23.2% and 15.1%, respectively, but 5.4% of the respondents considered themselves to be overweight, indicating a negative body image.

When the overall BMIs was compared with body perception scale, it is clear that the majority of the respondents had an unfavorable impression of their bodies. Furthermore, the chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between real body image (BMI) and perceived body image, and highly significant results were obtained (Table 1). The observed data indicated a close association in this regard, as it was hypothesized that girls in Peshawar might have negative opinions about their bodies.

Table 1: Assessment of Results for Actual Body Weight with Body Perception According to Scale

Body perception according to scale	Actual body weight (BMI)				Total
	Underweight N (%)	Normal N (%)	Overweight N (%)	Obesity N (%)	
Underweight	18 (9.7%)	44 (23.7%)	4 (2.16%)	6 (3.24%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	4 (2.16%)	43 (23.2%)	33 (17.8%)	9 (4.8%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	0 (0%)	3 (1.62%)	4 (2.16%)	7 (3.7%)	14 (7.56%)
Obesity	0 (0%)	2 (1.08%)	2 (1.08%)	6 (3.24%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	22 (11.8%)	92 (49.7%)	43 (23.2%)	28 (15.1%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2(9,185) 68.761, p < .05$

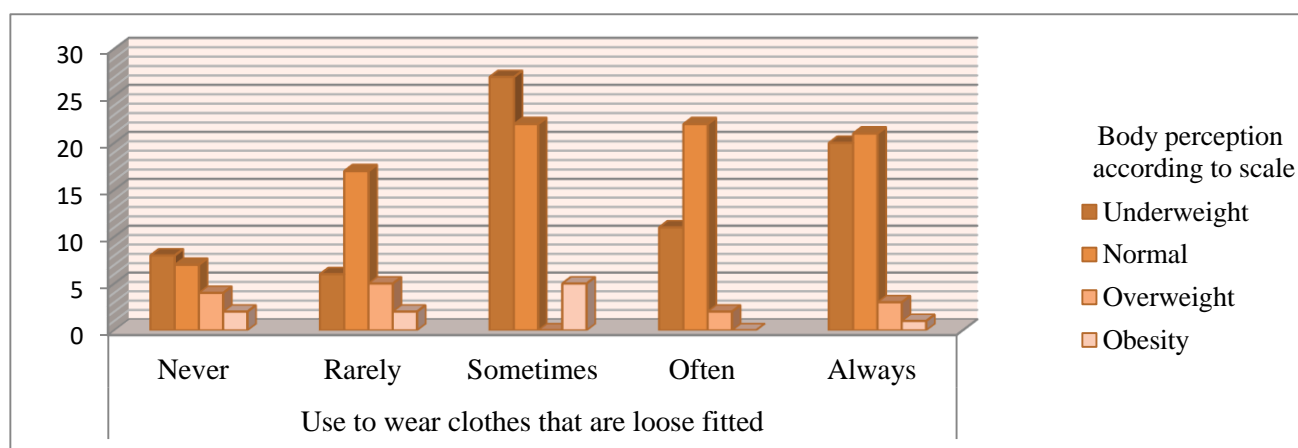
The most important component in the fashion world is apparel fit. The current study investigated two aspects of fitting, namely loose fitting and tight fitting, as determined by sample responses (Table 2). Because of negative body perception, a female who is overweight may perceive herself as thin, and a female who is slender may perceive herself as fat. As a result, an overweight female may opt for tight, revealing attire, whereas an underweight female may opt for loose-fitting, baggy apparel. Figure 2 represents the frequency counts of loose fitted clothes with body perception of respondent

Table 2: Assessment of results for loose fitted clothes with body perception of respondent according to scale

Body perception according to scale	Loose fitted clothes					Total
	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Always n(%)	
Underweight	8 (4.3%)	6 (3.2%)	27 (14.6%)	11 (5.9%)	20 (10.8%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	7 (3.8%)	17 (9.2%)	22 (11.9%)	22 (11.9%)	21 (11.4%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	4 (2.2%)	5 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.1%)	3 (1.6%)	14 (7.6%)
Obesity	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.1%)	5 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.54%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	21 (11.6%)	30 (16.2%)	54 (29.2%)	35 (18.9%)	45 (24.3%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2(12,185) 25.144, p < .05$

Figure 2: Frequency Counts of Loose Fitted Clothes with Body Perception of Respondent



The cross tabulation regarding amount of money spent on clothes with the body cathexis of women has been displayed in Table 3. It is evident that maximum ratio of women spends a reasonable amount of 5000 – 10,000/- on clothing items i.e. 23.8% were satisfied and remaining

22.7% dissatisfied. The summary of data with respect to frequency counts of tight fitted clothes with body perception of respondent is shown in Figure 3.

Table 3: Assessment of results for tight fitted clothes with body perception of respondent according to scale

Body perception according to scale	Tight fitted clothes					Total
	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Always n(%)	
Underweight	15 (8.1%)	11 (5.9%)	17 (9.2%)	15 (8.1%)	14 (7.6%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	18 (9.7%)	11 (5.9%)	8 (4.3%)	30 (16.2%)	22 (11.9%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	7 (3.9%)	4 (2.2%)	1 (0.54%)	1 (0.54%)	1 (0.54%)	14 (7.6%)
Obesity	6 (3.2%)	3 (1.6%)	1 (0.54%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	46 (24.9%)	29 (15.6%)	27 (14.6%)	46 (24.9%)	37 (20%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2 (12,185) 31.477, p < .05$

Figure 3: Frequency Counts of Tight Fitted Clothes with Body Perception of Respondent

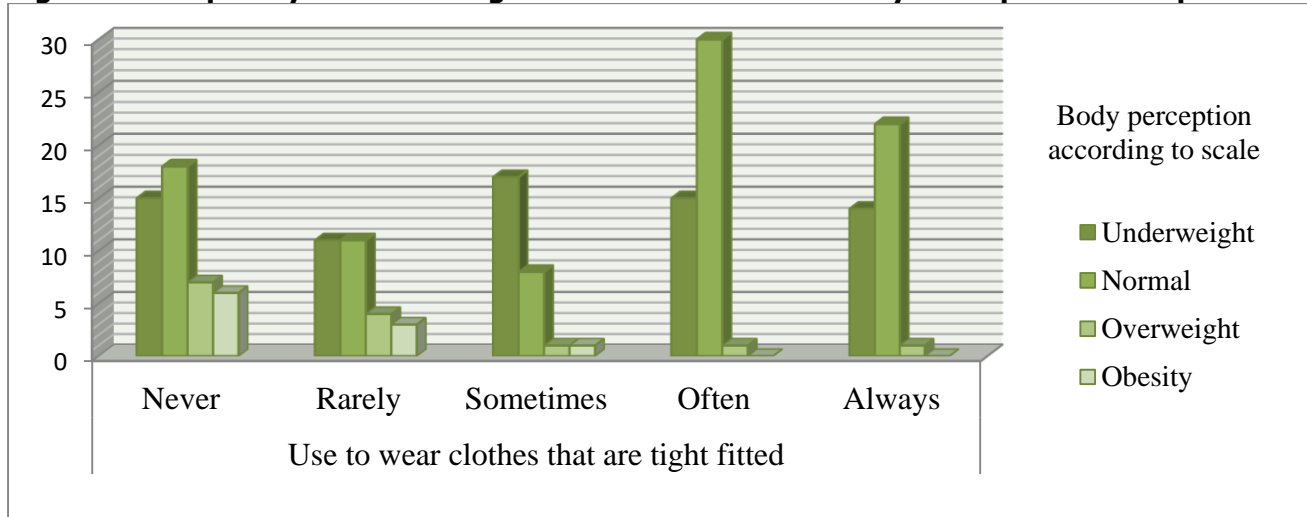


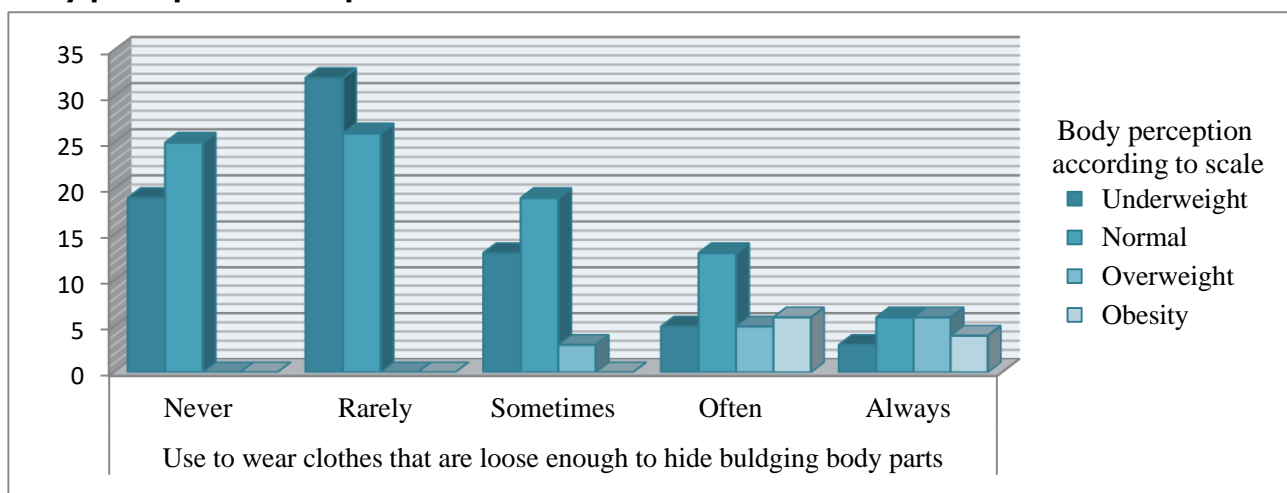
Table 4 represents the results with respect to women who perceived themselves as overweight or obese and they commonly choose loosely fitted clothes that can hide their bulging body parts. Moreover, the cross tabulation exhibited significant relationship between clothes which are loose enough to hide bulging body parts with body perception of the women ($\chi^2 (12,185) 66,901, p > .05$). The frequency counts of clothes for the same results displayed in Figure 4.

Table 4: Assessment of results for clothes, loose enough to hide bulging body parts with body perception of respondents

Body perception according to scale	Use to wear clothes that are loose enough to hide bulging body parts					Total
	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Always n(%)	
Underweight	19 (10.3%)	32 (17.3%)	13 (7.0%)	5 (2.7%)	3 (1.6%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	25 (13.5%)	26 (14.1%)	19 (10.3%)	13 (7.0%)	6 (3.24%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.6%)	5 (2.7%)	6 (3.24%)	14 (7.6%)
Obesity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (3.24%)	4 (2.2%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	44 (23.8%)	58 (31.4%)	35 (18.9%)	29 (15.7%)	19 (10.3%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2 (12,185) 66,901, p > .05$

Figure 4: Frequency counts of clothes, loose enough to hide bulging body parts with body perception of respondents



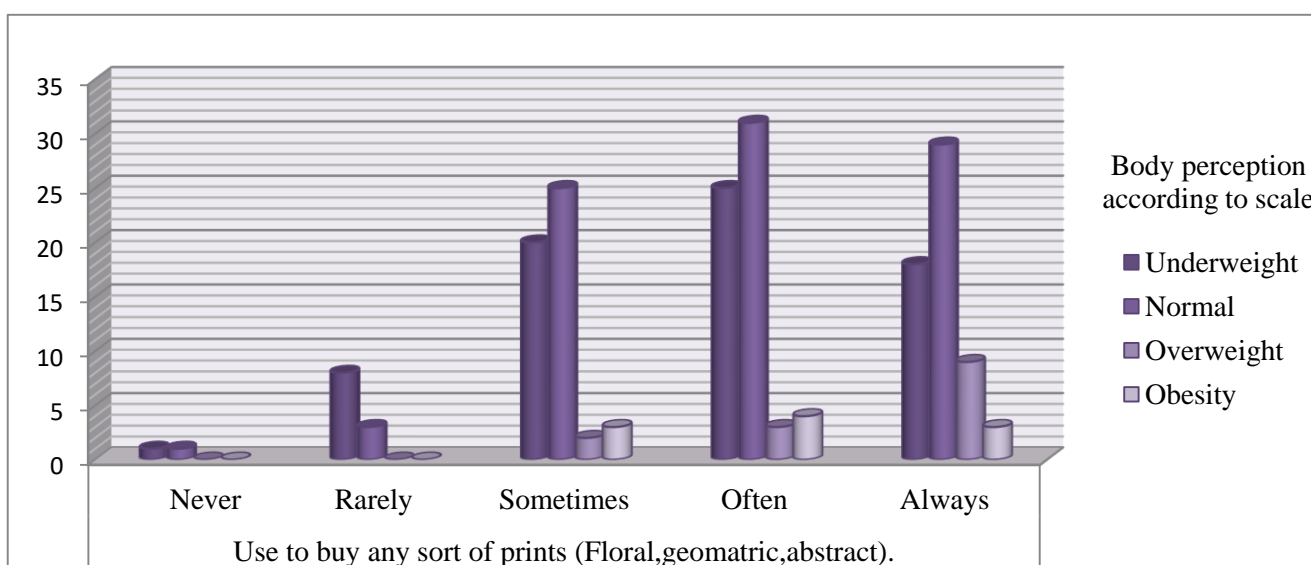
The assessment of prints in clothing with body perception of women showed not any pronounced response as all of them equally favored floral, abstract and geometric prints. According to the Chi-square value ($\chi^2 (12,185) 13.388, p>.05$), a non-significant association between variables was found. In case of frequency counts of the results (Figure 5) it is clearly evident that mostly women preferred all types of prints overlooking their body perception.

Table 5: Assessment of results for prints in clothing with body perception of respondents according to scale

Body perception according to scale	Any prints (floral, geometric, abstract)					Total
	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Always n(%)	
Underweight	1 (0.54%)	8 (4.3%)	20 (10.8%)	25 (13.5%)	18 (9.7%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	1 (0.54%)	3 (1.6%)	25 (13.5%)	31 (16.8%)	29 (15.7%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.1%)	3 (1.6%)	9 (4.9%)	14 (7.6%)
Obesity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.6%)	4 (2.2%)	3 (1.6%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	2 (1.1%)	11 (5.9%)	50 (27.0%)	63 (34.1%)	59 (31.9%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2 (12,185) 13.388, p>.0$

Figure 5: Frequency Count Prints in Clothing with Body Perception of Respondents



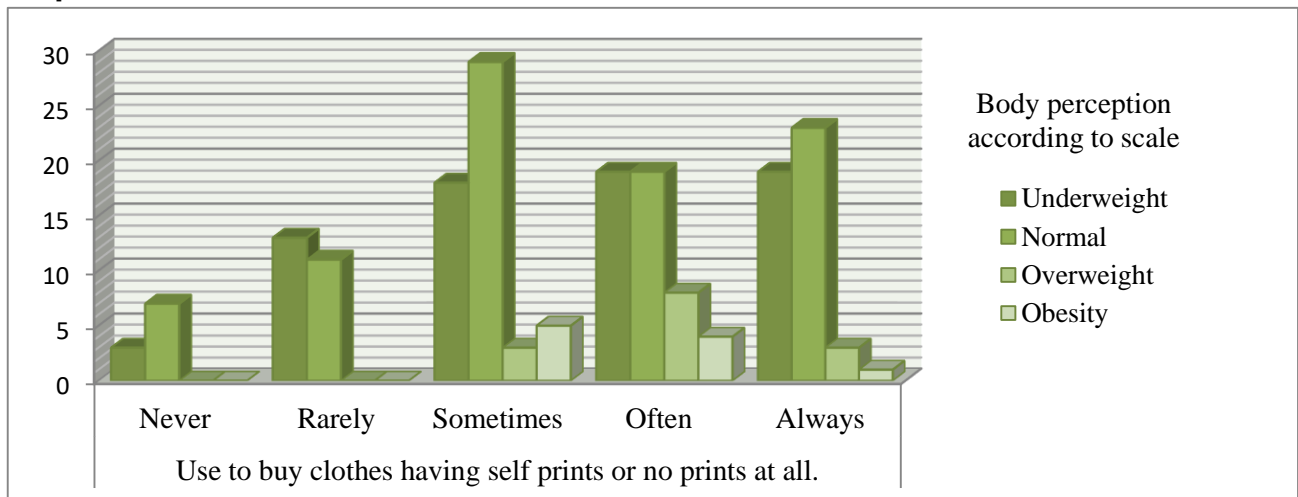
Evaluation of results for choice of self-prints and non-printed clothes relative to body image of the participants is given in Table 6. The majority of women ignored self-prints or plain fabric in their apparel. Nonetheless, the test findings ($\chi^2 (12,185) 17.013, p>.05$) revealed no link between body perception and self-prints or plain clothing. A clear depiction of the same data can be taken from Figure 6 in the form of frequency count.

Table 6: Assessment of results for self-prints or non-printed clothing in relation with body perception of respondents

Body perception according to scale	Self-prints					Total
	Never n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	Often n(%)	Always n(%)	
Underweight	3 (1.6%)	13 (7.0%)	18 (9.7%)	19 (10.3%)	19 (10.3%)	72 (38.9%)
Normal weight	7 (3.8%)	11 (5.9%)	29 (15.7%)	19 (10.3%)	23 (12.4%)	89 (48.1%)
Over weight	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.6%)	8 (4.3%)	3 (1.6%)	14 (7.6%)
Obesity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.7%)	4 (2.2%)	1 (0.54%)	10 (5.4%)
Total	10 (5.4%)	24 (12.9%)	55 (29.7%)	50 (27.0%)	46 (24.9%)	185 (100%)

$\chi^2 (12,185) 17.013, p>.05$

Figure 6: Frequency count of self-prints or no prints at all with body perception of respondents



4. Discussion

Body perception develops the feeling of satisfaction (Body cathexis) or dissatisfaction related to distorted figure among females. According to current study generally the satisfaction level of women in Peshawar was found to be low as compared to the satisfaction with respect to body image perception. According to the present data, the majority of women had a poor perception of themselves. It was discovered that some girls were normal according to their BMI but classified themselves as overweight on the standard rating scale. It was reported by Grogan S. 2016, that ladies with positive body image were mostly satisfied while with negative body image resulted in high dissatisfaction level.

Another conclusion reveals that most women had a negative perception of their own body size and weight considering it to be excessive and inappropriate (Matz, Foster, Faith, & Wadden, 2002). In general, several females try to transform their actual body image through different practices; e.g. exercise, dieting and clothing etc. An individual's identity can be enhanced by the appropriate utilization of clothes. Hence, a change in the perception of body and self can successfully be achieved through change in an outfit.

To determine whether clothing fitting can affect body cathexis, the preference for loose fitting clothes was compared with the respondent's body perception. The frequency results (figure 2) revealed that mostly women, either obese or overweight, preferred to wear loose fitting clothes. Similarly, some normal or underweight women like loose-fitting clothing, while others

did not. The results displayed a substantial association between body perception and loose fitting garments.

In consistent with this view, (Ogle, 1999) claimed that clothing is most typically used to alter body parts, hence women frequently use loose or oversized clothing to camouflage areas that are thought to be overly large. (i.e., long shirts to hide stomach, hips etc.). Similarly many females find it undesirable to wear tight fitted apparel due to the cultural impact and its relationship with fitting hence, they did not want to emphasis their body parts. No evidences of relationship were found between prints and the body perception of females.

5. Conclusion

Body perception and body cathexis are major factors that influence females purchasing decisions. Concerning the negative or positive perception of women according to the Stunkard scale and its comparison with the sample's actual BMI, it was discovered that the majority of women (61%) did not view their figure as it was in reality. Despite being overweight and obese some women were found to be overconfident considering themselves as normal, with no sense of body image flaws.

Women had no specific association with their body perception and prints (geometric, floral, or abstract) on apparels A Chi-square test used to cross-check the strength and reliability of the individuals' perception with their actual BMI revealed that predominantly women had unfavorable perceptions about their bodies, showing highly significant results. For comparison of self-prints or plain fabrics the results were cross tabulated with individual's body perception and it was discovered that women prefer self-prints or plain fabric in their clothing, irrespective of their obese, overweight, normal, or underweight body.

The most important component in fashion is the fit of the outfit. According to the findings of the current study, obese and overweight females preferred to wear loose-fitting clothing, however some normal or underweight women preferred to wear loose-fitting clothing as well. In accordance with the statistical analysis, the results revealed that loose and tight fitting garments had a significant relationship with body perception identifying the fact that clothing fitting is largely dependent on women's personal preferences and body perception.

5.1. Recommendations

An individual's body image and how one feels about themselves play an important role in clothing preferences and attitudes. A change in dress could result a change in the attitude toward the body and self. Therefore, it is recommended that the fashion designers of Pakistan should style women's clothing as a way to camouflage perceived figure faults and temporarily improving body cathexis. Further research is needed to promote positive self- image of women with a purpose to create a new and better perception of the body.

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