Body Appreciation and Loneliness in Early Adolescent Girls: A Pubertal Comparison

Pegah Matourypour
PhD in Nursing, Medical Surgical Nursing Department, Nursing & Midwifery Faculty,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Mohadese Ramezani
MS student in Nursing, Nursing & Midwifery Faculty,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Iman Taheri
MS student in Nursing, Nursing & Midwifery Faculty,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Ehsan Jalal Abadi
MS student in Nursing, Nursing & Midwifery Faculty,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Nafiseh Torabbeigi
Bachelor of Science in Nursing,
22 Bahman research and treatment training center, Neishabur

Abstract

Introduction
Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, encompassing significant physical, psychological, and social changes. Puberty, as a key indicator of this stage, brings about bodily and sexual transformations that can lead to negative body image and increased feelings of loneliness in girls. Although both body appreciation and loneliness are independently associated with mental health, no prior studies have directly examined the relationship between these two variables. This study aims to compare body appreciation and loneliness in girls with and without pubertal signs in first-year high schools in Nishabur City.

Method
This descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional study was conducted among female students in first-year high schools (guidance) in Nishabur City during the 1402–1403 academic year. A cluster random sampling method was employed to select participants. Data were collected using a demographic questionnaire, the Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2), and the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 25, including descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, chi-square tests, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to control for age and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Results
The mean age of the girls studied was 14.17 years (SD = 0.86), and the mean BMI was 20.17 (SD = 2.94). Significant differences were found in age and BMI between groups with and without pubertal signs, while no significant differences were observed in other individual or clinical characteristics. The average loneliness score was 49.81 (SD = 10.91), and the average body appreciation score was 38.32 (SD = 8.6). ANCOVA revealed no significant differences in body appreciation and loneliness between the two groups after controlling for age and BMI. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between loneliness and body appreciation in both groups, indicating that higher feelings of loneliness were associated with lower levels of body appreciation.

Conclusion
The findings indicate that girls with and without pubertal signs experience similar levels of loneliness and body appreciation. An inverse relationship exists between loneliness and body appreciation, suggesting that increased loneliness is associated with decreased body appreciation. These results highlight the complex interplay between these variables during adolescence and underscore the need for comprehensive psychological and social support strategies during this critical developmental period.

Keywords
Body appreciation, Loneliness, Pubertal signs, Adolescence, Mental health