



Impacts of Parenting Behaviors on Adolescent Body Image

Jillian Emerick

Department of Social Work

Capstone Research Advisor: Michelle Martin, PhD, MSW

ABSTRACT

Negative body image perceptions may have significant long-term impacts, particularly among adolescents and youth. A variety of factors can be to blame for these negative body image perceptions. One variable that may impact an adolescent's body image perceptions is the parent or guardian's parenting style. This study investigated the correlation between different parenting styles and negative body image perceptions among adolescents. This study specifically looked at the difference between controlling parenting styles and supportive parenting styles and the impact both styles have on body image perceptions. This study was a secondary analysis of data from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey in the United States. This study surveyed students from fifth to tenth grade. The sample consists of approximately 1,500 adolescents from each grade level. Data collection utilized self-report questionnaires. Parenting styles were measured through the HBSC survey. The answers to this measure were scaled questions aimed at examining the participant's perceptions of their parent or guardian's parenting style and perceptions of their own body image. This study utilized existing literature to better understand the significance of body image perceptions on adolescents. It also used current literature to create a framework for different parenting styles and the impact they may have on their children.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- Negative body image perceptions can be related to several adverse psychological outcomes, such as low life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, and poor self-esteem (Grogan, 2017).

Purpose of Research

- The purpose of the current study is to examine the effects of parenting behaviors on adolescent body image.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between controlling parenting behaviors and body image perception among youth?
- What is the relationship between supportive parenting relationships and negative body image among youth?

Hypothesis

- Parents who display more controlling parenting behaviors will have adolescent children with increased negative perceptions about their body image.
- Parents who display supportive parenting styles will have adolescent children with decreased negative perceptions about their body image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Home Environment and Parenting Styles on Self and Body Image Perceptions

- One of the most significant predictors of an individual's perception of self is the quality of the home environment in which the individual is raised, including the parenting style and quality of the parenting. Childhood family environments may have long-term and enduring impacts (Orth, 2018).

Gaps and Limitations

- A significant limitation in the literature is lack of information on adolescent body image and parenting styles, particularly how different parenting behaviors and styles impact adolescent body image.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- This study is a secondary analysis of the data from the United States Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) from 2009-2010 (Iannotti, 2013).
- The HBSC is a cross-sectional study that explores subject matters to further understand and improve the health of children.
- The survey was administered in a regular classroom setting by a school representative.
- Data collection utilized self-report questionnaires.

Sample and Sampling Method

- Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the study's sample.
- Cluster and stratified random sampling were conducted over three stages to obtain the sample of 12,623 participants.
- The sample was nationally representative. The participants consisted of male and female adolescents in grades five through ten.

Measures

- Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the study variables.
- The independent variable was perceived parenting styles, specifically controlling parenting styles and supportive parenting styles. No questions were asked about parenting styles specifically. However, the current study utilized questions that ask students about how they perceive their parent's actions and how their parent's actions make them feel. The following questions helped assess their perceived parenting styles: My parent/ guardian... and then a thought or action was listed. The following thoughts and actions were asked: "Tries to control everything I do" and "Makes me feel better when I am upset." The student was then given a scale to rank their feelings.
- The dependent variable was negative body image perceptions. No questions were asked about body image specifically. However, the current study utilized questions that ask students about their feelings towards their body. The following question helped assess the student's perception of body image: Feelings about my body... and then a thought or action was listed. The following thought was asked: "Hate my body." The student was then given a scale to rank their feelings.

RESULTS

Inferential Statistics

- A chi-square test was calculated comparing the participant's perceptions of negative body image and the participant's perceptions of parenting styles - controlling parenting styles and supportive parenting styles.

Controlling Parenting Styles

- A significant association was found ($\chi^2(2) = 345.849, p < 0.01$), while a Cramer's V statistic suggested a strong relationship (0.138) indicating that participants that experience negative body image perceptions are also more likely to have a parent or guardian that utilize controlling parenting styles.

Supportive Parenting Styles

- A significant association was found ($\chi^2(2) = 469.183, p < 0.01$), while a Cramer's V statistic suggested a strong relationship (0.138) indicating that participants that experience negative body image perceptions are more likely to not have a parent or guardian that utilize supportive parenting styles.

FEELINGS ABOUT BODY: HATE MY BODY * PARENT/GUARDIAN: MAKES ME FEEL BETTER WHEN UPSET Crosstabulation

		PARENT/GUARDIAN: MAKES ME FEEL BETTER WHEN UPSET				
		Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Don't have or don't see parent/guardian	Total
FEELINGS ABOUT BODY: HATE MY BODY	Strongly disagree	2109	1510	626	40	4285
	Disagree	600	384	355	15	1354
	Neither agree or disagree	345	474	310	9	1138
	Agree	146	224	191	11	572
		102	88	100	7	306
		3382	3080	1651	82	8195

Table 1

Sample Characteristics: (N=12,623)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	6502	51.4
Female	6136	48.6
Age in years	<i>M</i> = 12.95	<i>SD</i> = 1.75
Racial origin		
Black or African American	2164	17.9
White	5903	46.8
Asian	469	3.9
American Indian or Alaskan Native	111	9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	222	1.8
Two or More Races	828	6.8
Hispanic	2392	19.8
Grade in school		
Grade 5	1717	13.6
Grade 6	2050	16.2
Grade 7	2421	19.2
Grade 8	2475	19.6
Grade 9	2072	16.4
Grade 10	1907	15.1

Broad Residence Classification

Unclassified	982	7.8
Urban	3837	30.4
Suburban	4576	36.2
Rural	3247	25.7

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables (N = 12,623)

Variables	f	%
Negative Body Image Perceptions		
Feelings About Body: Hate My Body		
Strongly Disagree	6442	54.7
Disagree	2492	21.2
Neither agree or disagree	1530	13.0
Agree	771	6.5
Strongly Agree	538	4.6
Authoritarian Parenting		
Parent/Guardian: Tries to Control Everything I Do	<i>M</i> = 1.85	<i>SD</i> = 1.152
Supportive Parenting Styles		
Parent/Guardian: Makes Me Feel Better When Upset	<i>M</i> = 1.81	<i>SD</i> = 0.787
Negative Body Image Perceptions:	<i>M</i> = 1.85	<i>SD</i> = 1.152
Hate My Body		

FEELINGS ABOUT BODY: HATE MY BODY * PARENT/GUARDIAN: TRIES TO CONTROL EVERYTHING I DO Crosstabulation

		PARENT/GUARDIAN: TRIES TO CONTROL EVERYTHING I DO				
		Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Don't have or don't see parent/guardian	Total
FEELINGS ABOUT BODY: HATE MY BODY	Strongly disagree	703	1313	2066	99	4271
	Disagree	406	678	702	25	1811
	Neither agree or disagree	346	410	387	15	1158
	Agree	185	217	155	17	574
		177	90	92	9	368
		1907	2708	3402	165	8182

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	345.849 ^a	12	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	330.215	12	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	265.728	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	8182		

^a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.42.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	469.183 ^a	12	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	429.051	12	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	366.873	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	8195		

^a 1 cell (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.66.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between negative body image perceptions among adolescents and controlling parenting behaviors.

- The first finding indicated that controlling parenting styles are highly correlated with adolescents having a negative body image. This finding was consistent with Ellis' (2009) finding which suggests authoritarian parenting styles that favors control are more likely to lead to children and adolescents with unhealthy, negative views of themselves and their body image.
- The second finding indicated that positive parenting styles that encourage support, attentiveness, and positive regard are more likely to result in adolescents with positive body image perceptions and less likely to result in adolescents with negative body image perceptions. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Cassidy (2018), which suggests a healthy relationship between parent and guardian and child correlates with an increased perception of self in children and adolescents.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

- The significant findings of this study are critical in social work practice, as it contributes to the evidence-based foundation clinicians practice on.
- Future studies should utilize standardized measures when conducting research to promote reliable and valid data.

Strengths

- The sample was large and demographically diverse, which contributed to the data's generalizability.

Limitations

- Non standardized measures were utilized in the current study. This may have contributed to inferring inaccurate relationships between variables.
- Utilizing a cross-sectional design made it difficult to understand the lasting effects of different parenting behaviors on adolescents.
- Data was collected using a self-report measure which may have contributed to response bias.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Dr. Michelle Martin, who has spent considerable time working with me over the past nine months. Your constant encouragement and support have helped me tremendously through many challenging moments. I would also like to thank Mom, Karen, and Bradley for being my greatest support system over the last three years. I love you guys so much.

REFERENCES (Selected)

- Cassidy, J. (2018). Handbook of attachment: The nature of the child's ties. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- Ellis, K. (2009). Perceived parental confirmation: Development and validation of an instrument. *Southern Communication Journal*, 67(4), 319-334.
- Grogan, S. (2017). *Body image: understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women and children*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Iannotti, R. J. (2013). *Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC), 2009-2010 (ICPSR 34792)* [Dataset]. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Orth, U. (2018). The family environment in early childhood has a long-term effect on self-esteem: A longitudinal study from birth to age 27 years. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114, 637-655.