



## **Explore the Relationship between body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Regarding to the role of women in society, social, economic and cultural structures of society and women's personality system will affect on their performance. In this study the relationship between body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women was compared. The body image and coping styles are two variables that were examined. The samples includes 90 employed in municipal health houses and 90 unemployed women in Tehran, the average age of employed and unemployed women were 33/79 and 34/22 years, respectively. With regard to the issue of correlation and causal-comparative methods and data were collected by means of two questionnaires: 1. Fisher Body Image Questionnaire (1970). 2. Lazarus coping strategies questionnaire (1985). The resulting data were tested by multiple regression method. The results showed that there is a meaningful relationship between body image and different direct coping styles such as accepting responsibility and positive reappraisal. According to the data analysis there is a significant difference between body image in employed women and unemployed ones, employed women are more satisfied with their body image and are used more effective coping strategies.*

**Keywords:** Body image, Coping style, Employed women, Unemployed women.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Body image is a central concept for health psychologists. Mental image of body is often defined for the degree of satisfaction of physical appearance[1]. This picture is start forming from the birth stage and will be completed by the growth of person and change during the different stages of person's life[2]. Body image is related to the person's special relationship with his/ her body, especially on person's beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and activities that are related to his/her physical appearance. Body image affects the relationships between the people, obviously, that if the person doesn't have a good and suitable perception of his/her body, as a result he/she will experience the frustration in association with others. For women which body images are very important dissatisfaction and concern about appearance are related to dissatisfaction of themselves and generally their life.

Today, in most countries, the life style of the family with an earner has changed to the families with two people working, and most of the couples both are employed. In spite of that an employed woman will better support her husband as compared to the unemployed one and they have better situation from economic aspect and they experience less anxiety in financial problems, but in their life there are some kinds of family and working conflicts such as job stress, high working pressure, role conflicts, problems related to child care and maintenance of adults and issues related to job, family balance and personal needs. So, employed women as compared to unemployed ones will have different social performance, by paying attention to different problems in life, based on when people are faced with psychological pressure after evaluating the position, they will determine confrontation responses and psychological adaptation [3]. In any above pattern, they will define confrontation strategies and psychological adaptation and intermediate between optimism and evaluation of psychological pressure on psychological adaptation[4].

Coping styles are the person's coping process for tension management, Atkinson *et al* define coping behavior as a way in which a person will encounter with his/her social and physical environment and will move his/her sources for tension inhibition. Lazarus *et al* reported that collation consists of behavioral

and cognitive attempts for managing internal and external special needs and contractions between them that they evaluate as a pressed factor or a factor more than person's ability [5]. Lazarus has emphasized that cognitive processes become mediator between environmental conditions and person's behavioral and physiological reactive. In the other words, in emotional experiences essentially evaluation and not situation itself will determine the quality of emotional experience [5]. It means that excitements follow from evaluations, and if we change our evaluation, our excitement will change too and this process is reevaluated.

Mental health experts have done different researches because of the importance of body image in social contacts and interpersonal relations and also the effect of coping styles in confronting with emotions and life challenges. La Rocque [6] studied the relationship between body image and sex avoiding on 362 students at University, the results showed that persons with more negative body image had more tendencies in avoiding sexual activities. In addition, sexual self-esteem, sexual satisfaction and sexual tendency were intermediate variables that justify this contact. Ouwehand [7] studied the effectiveness of coping strategies in changing life important events. This research was done on 123 people, the results showed that there is a meaningful relationship between coping skills and aim switching and there is no relationship between coping skills and physical contacts. In general, research results showed that using coping skills are effective in decreasing stress causing factors studied sexual differences and its effect on satisfaction of body image [8]. They show that there is a meaningful sexual difference between women and men on satisfaction of body image, it means that, women as compared with men have reported more dissatisfaction. The main aim of this research is determining the relationship between body image and coping styles and its difference among employed and unemployed women. Based on this subject, the following hypotheses have mentioned:

- 1: There is a relationship between body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women.
- 2: There is difference between body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

### A) The statistical community, sample and the method of the implementation of the research

The statistical community of this research consists of employed women in municipal health houses and unemployed women in Tehran. As to the community was big for sampling, we marked (using cross) randomly different part of Tehran map and each part determined health houses of that area, then ballot between them and sample health house defined. The referred women to the determined health house and women employers there used as a research samples. In fact the samples were chosen by simple random sampling (a cross on the map), and available and targeted (unemployed women) methods. The number of samples is 180 that consisted of three groups 30 employed women with the average age of 33.79 and three unemployed groups of 30 unemployed women with the average age of 34.22 in three area of Tehran municipal 2, 12, 20. This research is a descriptive correlation and casual-comparative type. Data collecting method was field and used Fisher's body image and Lazarus's coping strategies questionnaires.

### B) Assessment tools

- 1) **Fisher's body image questionnaire:** body image test has been made by Fisher in 1970 and it has 46 questions and each question has rating scale from 1 to 5 [9]. The value of this test has been evaluate by Yazdanjoo [10] in Iran. Test calculated correlation coefficient in first and second implementation by Pierson's method is 0.81 for first-year students, 0.84 for second-year students, and 0.87 for third-year- students and 0.84 for all students. By paying attention to the meaningful level of these coefficients ( $p > 0.001$ ) we can accept that there is meaningful correlation image between scores derived from test first run and scores derived from test second run. In this research, body image questionnaire stability also calculated by Cronbach alpha method that is orderly equal with 0.93 [10].
- 2) **Lazarus's coping strategies questionnaire:** strategies questionnaire of Lazarus has made based on invoice of coping strategies by Lazarus and Felkman in 1980 and revised in 1985 [3]. This questionnaire has been built based on Lazarus-Felkman recommendation about tensioning. The sample that coping styles were extracted consisted of 75 white couples whit one kid. Finally, factor analysis took place on 750 observations and led to extract eight scales which are direct coping, get away, self-control, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, evasion-avoiding, planned problem solving, and positive reassessment [3]. Kronbakh Alfa coefficient is in 61% to 79% scales.

## RESULTS

In this study 180 persons have been participated and the high percent of participants whether employed or unemployed people have reported that they do not have the previous history of psychiatry disorder

and drug (more than 80%). Coping styles of the sample group was studied, and the results for employed women show that the highest average is for seeking social support coping styles (1.79) and the lowest average is for evasion-avoiding coping styles (1.08). Body image average among employed women is 1.78 and among unemployed women is 1.66 and has calculated with standard deviation 25.79 and 25.51, respectively. Based on these averages values the employed women has gained more score than unemployed ones. Table 1 shows the multivariate regression coefficient of body image and coping styles. According to the  $R^2$  value in Table 1 we can conclude that the amount of body image is defined able from coping styles in presented model. Based on Beta standard deviation, positive reassessment has the most effect in defining body image variance Aunit change in positive reassessment variance resulting in 0.414 change in body image variance which shows this relation is positive and direct ( in Alfa level 0.01 it means that with the ensure of %99 and t: 4.296). And also there is positive and meaningful relationship between body image and direct coping with the amount of Beta 0.168 (in Alfa level 0.05 it means with the ensure of %95 and t: 2.03), there is negative and meaningful relationship between body image and seeking social support with the amount of Beta -0.192 (in Alfa level 0.05 it means with the ensure of %95 and t: -2.234) and finally, there is negative relationship between body image and accepting responsibility with the amount of Beta -.278 ( in Alfa level 0.01 it means with the ensure of %99 and t: -3.288).But from statistical aspect there is no meaningful relationship between body image with other coping styles.

**Table 1- Multivariate regression coefficient of body image and coping styles**

Criterion variable	Predictor variables	Beta standard coefficient	t	Meaningful level
Body image	Fixed effect		15.899	.000
	Direct coping	.168	2.031	.044
	Get away	.102	1.317	.189
	Self control	.001	.011	.991
	Evasion-Avoiding	-.070	-.913	.363
	Seeking social support	-.192	-2.234	.027
	Accepting responsibility	-.278	-3.288	.001
	Problem solving	-.085	-.889	.375
1	positive reassessment	.414	4.296	.000
	R	.455	$R^2$	.207

**Table 2- the conclusions of Pierson's correlation matrix about the relationship between body image and coping styles in employed and unemployed women separately**

			Employed women	Unemployed women
1	Body image	r	1.000	1.000
2	Direct coping	r	.159	.168
3	Get away	r	.152	.179*
4	Self control	r	.229*	-.274**
5	Evasion-Avoiding	r	-.047	-.032
6	Seeking social support	r	.078	-.312**
7	Accepting responsibility	r	-.102	-.152
8	Problem solving	r	-.044	-.049
9	positive reassessment	r	.183*	.298**

(r= Pierson correlation amount)

(\*= meaningful in Alfa level 0.05) (\*\*=meaningful in Alfa level 0.01)

By paying attention to the above table data and the amount of (r) in related to body image and coping styles the relationship difference between employed and unemployed women is explained below:

- **Get away:** among employed women, there is no meaningful relationship between body image and get away coping styles, but among unemployed women, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between body image and get away coping styles in Alfa level 0.05 and correlation amount 0.179.
- **Self control:** among employed women, there is there is a positive and meaningful relationship between body image and self-control coping style in Alfa level 0.05 and correlation amount 0.229,while among unemployed women, there is a negative and meaningful relationship between body image and self-control coping style in Alfa level 0.01 and correlation amount -0.274.
- **Seeking social support:** among employed women, there is no meaningful relationship between body image and seeking social support coping style, but among unemployed women, there is a negative

and meaningful relationship between body image and seeking social support in Alfa level 0.01 and correlation amount -0.312.

- **Positive reassessment:** among employed women, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between body image and positive reassessment in Alfa level 0.05 and correlation amount 0.183, and also among unemployed women, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between body image and positive reassessment in Alfa level 0.01 and correlation amount 0.298.

There is no meaningful relationship between body image, direct coping of coping styles, evasion-avoiding, accepting responsibility and problem solving among employed and unemployed women, and obtained relatively equal result.

## DISCUSSION

First hypothesis studied the relationship between body image and coping styles in employed and unemployed women, results showed that this hypothesis will be emphasized, it means that the relationship between body image and coping styles and the relationship between body image and direct coping are meaningful, this result is agree with research results of references [7,11].

In explaining this result, we can say mental image of a person represents the size and the shape of body figure which consists of feelings that a person has about characteristic of his/her body organs structure. In fact, there is a meaningful and direct relationship with vast domain of thoughts and deeds that a person uses when encounters with internal or external pressure conditions. Positive image of body causes that, persons especially women do not be under social pressures for being slim and they act with more self-confident and they enjoy life and use from more effective coping styles. Dissatisfaction of body appearance can effect on social performance and interpersonal relations. Research findings show this subject that there is a meaningful relationship between body image and effective coping styles

Each of pivot excitement style components are attempting to escape from direct confronting with problem. Furthermore, (as much as possible they search for losing feelings arising from problem confronting by neglecting a problem and neglect apparent aspects of problem situation in a framework and they reach resulted feelings of it in the least possible amount) please edit these sentences completely because it is not clear. So, pivot excitement style components instead of problem solving approach are in the following of problem rejection and rolling in excitements arising from a problem.

Second hypothesis has settled in studying relationship difference between body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women. By paying attention to the amount of (r) there is a meaningful difference between the relationship of body image and coping styles among employed and unemployed women in this research from statistical aspect. That is in agree with the results of references [6,8]. Based on this hypothesis employed women have more consent of their body image and they use more effective coping styles. In other words, body image has close relationship with self-confident, self-respect, self-image and identity. People who have more positive and more realistic definition from their body, experience safer interpersonal relationships and are more successful in their jobs. This kind of people's attitude and behavior are healthier than some ones who do not have positive and suitable body image. Coping styles are cautious and logical ways for confronting with life agitations, these mechanisms are methods that people do them unconsciously and unwillingly when the incidence of stress till he/she can somehow reduce the risk of stress effects. These mechanisms are mental and do not make up any change in objective status of stress factor, but they only give a person an opportunity till he/she find a logical and suitable solution. Maltaby [12] reported that some ones who have consent of life use from more effective and more suitable coping styles [12]. Employed women in stress time use more from problem solving, seeking social support and self-control and unemployed women in stress time use more from evasion-avoiding style, maybe we can say that, the opportunity for attending in community and experience different roles has had suitable role in creating and growth of effective coping styles in them.

This research has being accompanied by limitations that we can point to the below cases:

- By paying attention to this subject that this research is correlation and post event, therefore its scientific explaining is not possible, and just its correlation is explainable.
- Lack of ability to control obtrusive variables, such as, family problems.

By paying attention to research results will be suggested that:

This research accomplishment will be measured longitudinal and its results will be measured in long term till will be specified variables characteristic and their stable and unstable results.

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