



Undergraduate

## Introduction

Negative body image is a worldwide issue, particularly, it is highly prevalent among young adults as body plays an imperative role in their age for the expression of their identities.



COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly worsened the public existing body image anxieties and inspired new insecurities for more people worldwide.

Despite body image among university students has been increasingly studied over the last century, no local study assessed body image during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research in body image has recently shifted to 'modern' types of media, for instance the Internet, and especially Social Networking Sites (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

Significant surge in media consumptions as compared to pre-pandemic period (Cellini et al., 2020; Koeze & Popper, 2020).



## Objective

To determine the factors associated with body image perception among Malaysian undergraduate students during COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

Study design	Cross-sectional study
Study location	Malaysia (Online platform)
Respondents	378 Malaysian undergraduate students
Sampling	Convenience sampling
Data collection	Virtually through Google Forms (July to August 2021)

Variables	Instruments Used
Body image perception	Contour Drawing Rating Scale (Thompson & Gray, 1995)
Socio-demographic background	Self-administered questionnaire
Self-weighing frequency	Modified version of self-weighing item (Linde et al., 2005)
Body Mass Index	Self-reported height and weight (Zachary et al., 2020)
Depression, anxiety and stress	Depression, Anxiety and Stress (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)
Duration and frequency of using social media	Self-administered questionnaire
Selfie taking	Modified version of selfie taking items (McLean et al., 2015)
Selfie sharing	Modified version of selfie sharing items (McLean et al., 2015)
Photo manipulation	Self-photo manipulation items (McLean et al., 2015)
Social grooming	Revised version of social grooming scale (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011)

## Statistical Test

IBM SPSS Statistics 26

Descriptive statistics
Pearson product-moment correlation test
Multiple linear regression analysis

## References

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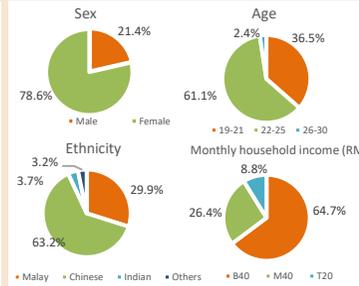


Figure 1: Socio-demographic characteristics

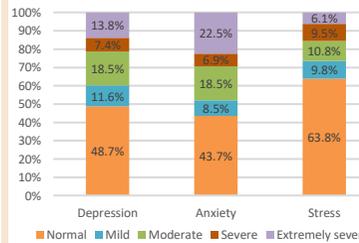


Figure 4: Depression, anxiety and stress severity of respondents during COVID-19 pandemic

Table 1: Relationships between independent variables and body image perception

Variables	r-value	p-value
Age	0.063	0.221
Body Mass Index	0.376**	<0.001
Self-weighing frequency	0.064	0.214
Depression	0.167**	0.001
Anxiety	0.133**	0.009
Stress	0.105*	0.041
Duration of using social media	0.080	0.122
Frequency of using social media	0.005	0.916
Frequency of selfie taking	0.124*	0.016
Frequency of selfie sharing	0.002	0.965
Photo manipulation	0.060	0.242
Social grooming	0.028	0.589
*significant at p<0.05	**significant at p<0.001	

## Results & Discussion

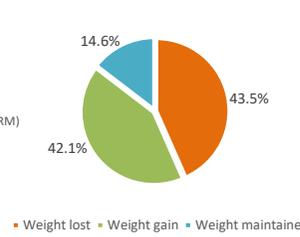


Figure 2: Weight change during COVID-19 pandemic

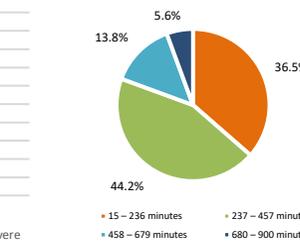


Figure 5: Duration of using social media by respondents during COVID-19 pandemic

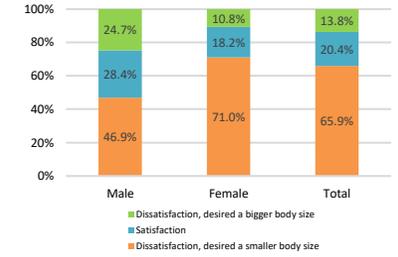


Figure 3: Body image perception of respondents during COVID-19 pandemic

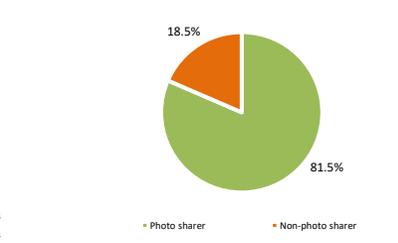


Figure 6: Distribution of photo sharer and non-photo sharer during COVID-19 pandemic

Table 2: Factors associated with body image dissatisfaction

Variables	Multiple regression		
	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	p-value
	B	Beta	
Age	0.071	0.095	0.039
Sex	0.647	0.226	<0.001
Body Mass Index	0.129	0.400	<0.001
Depression	0.014	0.129	0.005

Notes: Multiple linear regression model: R=0.469, R<sup>2</sup>=0.220, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.212, F=26.322, p<0.001

- Majority of the undergraduate students in this study (79.7%) were dissatisfied with their body size especially females (81.8%) as compared to males (71.6%) (Figure 3). Images of women in the fashion industry, magazines, video games remained to be slender, television programs encourage cosmetic procedures and the reshaping of women's bodies to meet the current beauty ideals, the concept of having a slim body becomes a common perception among females.
- Table 2: Age, sex, BMI and depression were significantly associated with body dissatisfaction among undergraduate students.
- BMI ( $\beta=0.400, p<0.001$ ) was the most significant contributor to body dissatisfaction among undergraduate students in this study. BMI is always a major factor in the establishment of negative body image. This finding was supported by a recent study (Alhabib & Dodeen, 2021). The relationship might be due to body image devaluation, internalization of advertised ideas body as well as self-esteem (Ahadzadeh et al., 2018).
- Sex was found to be significantly associated with body image dissatisfaction in which female have a higher body dissatisfaction compared to males. This finding was in line with a previous local study (Tan & Shashikala, 2019).
- Age was found to be significantly associated with body image dissatisfaction and the finding was in line with the previous local study by Sai et al. (2018).
- A recent review done by Barnes et al. (2020) also found that there was a statistically significant association between body dissatisfaction and depression. Depression may cause body dissatisfaction because general negative feelings are funneled into negative feelings about body shape and weight in cultures that idealize thinness.

## Conclusion

- A high body image dissatisfaction was observed among undergraduate students in this study, with more females dissatisfied with their body size than males.
- Those who were older, females, with higher BMI and depressed were found to have higher body dissatisfaction.
- Preventive measures could be initiated in universities on the acceptance of self and individual differences while maintaining optimum body weight and healthy lifestyle.