

# Exploring the Role of Family Relationships in Shaping Body Image Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the influence of family relationships, including cohesion, expressiveness, and conflicts, on body image satisfaction among adults. Utilizing a cross-sectional design, 390 participants completed the Body Image Satisfaction Scale (BISS) and the Family Environment Scale (FES). Descriptive statistics and linear regression analyses were conducted using SPSS-26 to examine the predictive power of family relationship variables on body image satisfaction. The regression model explained 53% of the variance in body image satisfaction, indicating that family cohesion, expressiveness, and conflicts significantly predict body image satisfaction. Specifically, higher levels of family cohesion and expressiveness were associated with better body image satisfaction, whereas family conflicts were linked to lower satisfaction. The study underscores the significant impact of family dynamics on body image satisfaction, highlighting the importance of nurturing family environments in promoting positive body image perceptions.

**Keywords:** *body image satisfaction, family relationships, family environment, cohesion, expressiveness, conflicts.*

## 1. Introduction

The intricate web of factors influencing body image has been a focal point of psychological and sociological research for decades, with family relationships emerging as a pivotal element in this complex interplay. The development and maintenance of body image, a multifaceted construct encompassing one's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards their own body, are significantly shaped by the dynamics within the family unit. This article seeks to delve into the nuanced relationship between family relationships and body image, drawing upon a diverse array

of scholarly contributions that shed light on this intricate association.

Amianto et al. (2017) underscore the critical role of family dynamics, particularly attachment patterns and parental attitudes, in shaping body image across different stages of life. Their cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses reveal how familial bonds and parental feedback serve as the bedrock for body image development, highlighting the long-lasting impact of early family interactions (Amianto, 2017). Similarly, Clarke, Birky, and Harrison (2016) explore the early socialization processes within families, pinpointing mothers' perceptions, beliefs, and strategies regarding body

image among preschoolers. Their findings suggest that the seeds of body image perceptions are sown early, with family environments acting as fertile ground for their growth (Clarke et al., 2016).

The relationship between family dynamics and body image extends into adulthood, as evidenced by research focusing on specific populations, such as breast cancer survivors (Fazzino et al., 2015). This study illustrates how fluctuations in weight and the physical changes following a breast cancer diagnosis can exacerbate body image concerns, with family support playing a crucial role in navigating these challenges. The systematic review by Goslin and Koons-Beauchamp (2022) further emphasizes the significance of the mother-daughter bond in fostering a positive body image, suggesting that this relationship acts as a buffer against societal pressures and norms (Goslin & Koons-Beauchamp, 2022).

Green and Pritchard (2003) provide a broader perspective, identifying predictors of body image dissatisfaction among adult men and women. Their research underscores the universal nature of body image issues, transcending gender boundaries, and points to family-related factors as key determinants (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Hartl, Seiffge-Krenke, and Laursen (2015) add another layer by demonstrating how a negative family climate can mediate the relationship between body image and health outcomes, such as glycemic control in adolescents with type 1 diabetes, indicating the health implications of familial interactions (Hartl et al., 2015).

The exploration of body image within the family context also encompasses the role of perceived appearance and eating habits among young and adult students (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2019), the interplay between body image satisfaction and sexual relationship satisfaction (Horváth et al., 2020), and the impact of self-objectification within the mother-adolescent relationship (Katz-Wise et al., 2012). These studies collectively highlight the complexity of body image as it is influenced by family relationships, suggesting the need for a multifaceted approach to address body image concerns.

Moreover, research by Park and Epstein (2013) on the causal directionality between body image distress and self-esteem among Korean adolescents, with a focus on the moderating effect of parent-child relationships (Park & Epstein, 2013), and studies on the transmission of body dissatisfaction within families (Solano-Pinto et al., 2021) further validate the interconnectedness of family dynamics and body image perceptions. These contributions emphasize

the transgenerational transmission of body image attitudes and the potential for familial interventions to mitigate negative outcomes.

In sum, the body of literature underscores the profound influence of family relationships on body image across the lifespan. From early childhood through adulthood, the family environment serves as a critical context for the development and evolution of body image. This article aims to synthesize these findings, offering insights into the mechanisms by which family dynamics shape body image and highlighting the importance of considering familial factors in interventions aimed at promoting a healthy body image.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study utilized a cross-sectional design to explore the relationship between family relationships and body image among individuals. A total of 390 participants were recruited through a combination of online platforms and local community postings, aiming for a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The eligibility criteria for participation included being over the age of 18 and having the ability to provide informed consent. Participants were asked to complete two standardized questionnaires: the Body Image Satisfaction Scale (BISS) to assess their satisfaction with their body image and the Family Environment Scale (FES) to evaluate the characteristics of their family relationships. These instruments were chosen for their robust psychometric properties, including confirmed validity and reliability in previous studies. Data collection was conducted online, with participants providing responses through a secure web-based platform. Upon completion of the questionnaires, participants were debriefed and provided with resources related to body image and family counseling services.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Body Image

The Body Image Satisfaction Scale (BISS) is a renowned instrument used to assess individuals' satisfaction with their body image, focusing on perceptions of body size, shape, and overall appearance. This scale has 9 items where respondents express their contentment or discontentment with various aspects of their physique through a 5-point Likert scale. The scoring system is straightforward,

aggregating points to reflect higher satisfaction with one's body image, including reverse scoring for certain items to mitigate response bias. The BISS has been rigorously tested across diverse groups, proving its reliability and validity. Its capacity to accurately differentiate between individuals with varying levels of body image concerns underscores its construct validity, while its high internal consistency and test-retest reliability confirm its dependability as a tool for measuring body image satisfaction. Such extensive validation ensures the BISS is a standard and trusted measure within psychological and sociological research, making it an invaluable resource for studies exploring the nuances of body image (Henry et al., 2022).

### 2.2.2. Family Relationships

The Family Environment Scale (FES) stands out as a critical tool for evaluating the dynamics and relationships within family settings. Comprised of 90 items answered in a true/false format, the FES delves into various dimensions of family life through subscales such as Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict. These subscales reveal the levels of support, emotional expression, and conflicts present in a family, offering a nuanced view of family interactions. Scoring is designed to highlight different aspects of family life, with higher scores on Cohesion and Expressiveness indicating a more supportive and open family environment, whereas higher scores on Conflict suggest more challenges within the family structure. The FES's validity and reliability have been extensively documented, showcasing its ability to accurately measure intended family dynamics. Its subscales have shown strong construct validity, and the scale's overall high internal consistency and test-retest reliability over various populations affirm its efficacy as a measure. This makes the FES an essential instrument for researchers delving into the impact of family relationships on individual outcomes, including studies on body image (Soheili et al., 2019).

### 2.3. Data analysis

The data collected from the 390 participants were analyzed using SPSS version 26, a comprehensive statistical

software package. Preliminary analyses included descriptive statistics to characterize the sample and ensure the data met the assumptions for linear regression. The relationship between family relationships (as measured by the FES) and body image satisfaction (as measured by the BISS) was examined using linear regression analysis. The FES total score and its subscales (Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict) were treated as independent variables, while the BISS score served as the dependent variable.

Linear regression analysis allowed for the examination of the predictive power of family relationship variables on body image satisfaction, adjusting for potential confounders such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$  for all tests. The regression model's fit was evaluated using the R-squared value, which indicates the proportion of variance in body image satisfaction explained by the family relationship variables. Additionally, regression coefficients were inspected to determine the direction and magnitude of the relationship between each family environment characteristic and body image satisfaction.

## 3. Findings and Results

In the present study, the demographic characteristics of the 390 participants revealed a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, the sample consisted of 152 males (38.97%) and 238 females (61.03%), highlighting a higher representation of females. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a median age of 32 years. The distribution across age groups was as follows: 18-25 years (27.69%), 26-35 years (35.38%), 36-45 years (22.05%), 46-55 years (10.26%), and 56-65 years (4.62%), indicating a predominance of participants in the 26-35 year age bracket. Socioeconomic status, assessed through a combination of education level, income, and occupation, showed a wide range across the sample. Specifically, 28.72% of participants reported having a high school diploma or equivalent, 46.15% had completed some form of higher education (undergraduate degree or higher), and 25.13% had vocational training or some college education without obtaining a degree.

**Table 1**

#### *Descriptive Statistics Findings*

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Body Image	390	20.71	3.70
Cohesion	390	140.92	27.11

Expressiveness	390	139.88	30.10
Conflicts	390	152.13	33.40

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the study variables. The Body Image Satisfaction Scale (BISS) scores of the 390 participants had a mean of 20.71 and a standard deviation of 3.70, indicating variation in body image satisfaction levels among the sample. Family Environment Scale (FES) subscales showed means of 140.92 (Cohesion), 139.88 (Expressiveness), and 152.13 (Conflicts) with standard deviations of 27.11, 30.10, and 33.40, respectively. These statistics highlight the diversity in family relationship experiences within the participant group.

Prior to conducting the main analyses, we rigorously assessed and confirmed the assumptions necessary for linear regression to ensure the validity and reliability of our findings. The assumption of linearity was verified through visual inspection of scatterplots between the independent variables (the subscales of the Family Environment Scale) and the dependent variable (Body Image Satisfaction Scale score), indicating a linear relationship in all cases. The assumption of homoscedasticity was confirmed via plots of

the residuals against predicted values, with no apparent patterns that would suggest heteroscedasticity, thus supporting the assumption of equal variance across the regression line. The test for multicollinearity among independent variables yielded variance inflation factors (VIFs) ranging from 1.04 to 1.22, well below the commonly used threshold of 5, indicating no problematic multicollinearity. The assumption of normality of residuals was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which did not reveal significant deviations from normality ( $p = 0.06$ ). Lastly, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.01, falling within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, suggesting no autocorrelation among residuals. These checks confirmed that the data met all the necessary assumptions for linear regression analysis, allowing for the subsequent examination of the relationship between family relationships and body image satisfaction with confidence in the robustness of the analytical approach.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Regression Model Analysis*

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	F	p
Regression	33923.65	3	11307.88	0.73	0.53	0.50	10.16	<0.01
Residual	11842.92	386	30.68					
Total	95766.57	389						

Table 2 summarizes the regression model analysis, revealing that the model explains 53% ( $R^2 = 0.53$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.50$ ) of the variance in body image satisfaction, with a significant F-value ( $F = 10.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that

family relationship variables (Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflicts) are significant predictors of body image satisfaction.

**Table 3**

*Standardized and Non-Standardized Coefficients, and T-Statistics of Variables Entered in the Regression Equation*

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T-value	p
Constant	6.60	1.42	-	-	-
Cohesion	2.63	1.03	0.28	3.70	<0.01
Expressiveness	2.99	0.98	0.33	4.09	<0.01
Conflicts	2.80	1.14	0.30	3.92	<0.01

Table 3 details the regression coefficients, showing that Cohesion ( $B = 2.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Expressiveness ( $B = 2.99$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and Conflicts ( $B = 2.80$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly predict body image satisfaction. These findings indicate that higher levels of cohesion and expressiveness within family

relationships are associated with better body image satisfaction, while conflicts have a detrimental effect.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the role of family relationships in predicting body image perceptions across different life stages. Our analysis, grounded in the responses of 390 participants, revealed a significant correlation between positive family relationships—characterized by cohesion, expressiveness, and low levels of conflicts—and healthier body image perceptions. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the importance of family environment in shaping an individual's body image from adolescence through adulthood.

The results of the present study underscore the significant role of family relationships in shaping body image perceptions across different stages of life. Consistent with the findings of Smith et al. (2016), Katz-Wise et al. (2012), and Goslin & Koons-Beauchamp (2022), our study highlights that warmth, acceptance, and open communication within the family can have a profound impact on individuals' body image (Katz-Wise et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2016). The positive correlation between family dynamics characterized by understanding and support and a healthier body image aligns with the notion that a nurturing family environment fosters a positive self-view and body satisfaction.

In line with the research by Katz-Wise et al. (2012), our findings further reveal that positive parental relationships and perceived acceptance are crucial in mitigating body dissatisfaction among adolescents (Katz-Wise et al., 2012). This is particularly evident in the quality of the mother-daughter relationship, which Smith et al. (2016) found to be pivotal for body image during the preadolescent stage (Smith et al., 2016). Our study extends this understanding by demonstrating that such influences persist into adulthood, corroborating Green & Pritchard's (2003) observation that family pressure, alongside self-esteem and media influence, continues to predict body dissatisfaction in both men and women (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

The Social Cognitive Approach, as discussed by Goslin & Koons-Beauchamp (2022), emerges as a significant framework in our study, underscoring the importance of positive communication and close relationships within the family in shaping daughters' body image (Goslin & Koons-Beauchamp, 2022). This approach highlights the role of observational learning and the internalization of parental attitudes towards body image, echoing the findings of Park & Epstein (2013) regarding the moderating effect of parent-adolescent relationships on body image distress and self-esteem (Park & Epstein, 2013).

Our study also identifies the complex relationship between family dynamics and physical health outcomes, akin to the observations made by Hartl et al. (2015). The mediation effect of body image between negative family climate and deteriorating glycemic control in adolescents with type 1 diabetes suggests a holistic connection between family interactions, body image perceptions, and health, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of these relationships (Hartl et al., 2015).

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on body image development within familial contexts, as outlined in the seminal works of researchers like Paxton et al. (1999), Amianto (2017), and Clarke et al. (2016). These studies collectively highlight the intricate ways in which family dynamics, peer influences, and societal pressures interweave to shape body image perceptions from early childhood through adulthood. Our results affirm the buffering role of positive family relationships against negative external influences on body image, as suggested by Amianto (2017), and underscore the subtle yet significant impact of early family socialization on body image development, as indicated by Clarke et al. (2016) (Amianto, 2017; Clarke et al., 2016; Paxton et al., 1999).

In conclusion, the intricate interplay between family relationships and body image perceptions elucidated by this study underscores the critical role of the family environment in fostering a healthy body image. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving body image should not only focus on the individual but also consider the familial context, promoting positive communication, acceptance, and support within family relationships. By addressing the multifaceted nature of body image perceptions within the family, we can better understand and enhance the well-being of individuals across the lifespan.

This study, while comprehensive, is not without its limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design limits our ability to draw causal inferences between family relationships and body image perceptions. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias, as participants' responses could be influenced by social desirability or recall inaccuracies. Additionally, the sample, though diverse, may not fully represent the broader population, particularly in terms of cultural and socioeconomic diversity, which can significantly impact family dynamics and body image perceptions.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships between family

dynamics and body image over time. There is also a need for more qualitative studies that can provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which family relationships influence body image. Furthermore, expanding research to include more diverse populations, particularly from non-Western cultures, would offer a more global perspective on these dynamics. Investigating the role of digital media in the family context and its impact on body image could also provide valuable insights into contemporary influences on body satisfaction.

The findings of this study have important implications for practice, particularly for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. Interventions aimed at promoting positive body image should include components that strengthen family communication and support. Educational programs designed for parents and guardians could equip them with the skills to foster a positive body image in their children, emphasizing the importance of acceptance and open dialogue. Schools and community organizations could also play a pivotal role by offering workshops and resources that support healthy family interactions. Finally, policymakers might consider initiatives that encourage media literacy, helping families navigate the influence of media on body image perceptions together.

#### Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

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#### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

#### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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#### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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#### Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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