

## Research Article

# Negative Body Image and Low Self-Esteem: A Study of athletes for Solutions through Inspirational Intrinsic Positive Self-Esteem

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**Abstract:** The intent of this paper is to designate how a unitary body turns to be the property of the society and thus this intended body gets positive or negative images based on the weight of the society imposed characterization. Thus, the low or high esteem on the part of the common people emerge and they chase for attaining that images for high –esteem. The paper tends to dig out whether the athletes who possess a type of superhuman like physique fall victim to this peril of society and it is undoubtedly true even to them. The paper guides how an athlete may enable to come out of the box of imposed image and lead life with their imposed duty of play by being oneself.

**Keywords:** Body Image, Self-Esteem, Imposition, Negative Impression, Athletes.

## 1. Introduction

Self-esteem is a concept that can be applied to everyone as it entails the evaluations of a person's' attributes, skills, and a measuring tool of self-worth. Center for Young Women's Health in the topic of *Self-Esteem and Body Image* opines that (2019) Body image is a factor of developing self-esteem on the part of a person (para. 1). It is crucially marked that body image is also an imposed ideation from social way of accepting a characterization that dignifies how a body, from physical sense, can be thus the society creates a negative body image which is characterized by a lack of confidence and negative thinking and feeling about oneself (para. 2). Persons experiencing low self-esteem usually feel unimportant, useless and unloved. According to Rosenberg & Owens (2001), people with low self-esteem tend to be hypersensitive and they have a fragile sense of self that can easily be wounded by others. It is commonly known that exercise is beneficial for physical and particularly mental health, as exercise boost overall mood (Weir *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the author by being convinced with the correlational tie between negative body image and low self-esteem tends to draw attention to the fact how the patronization of physical education can redress this apparent psychological state of human affair through studying the depth of problems and prospective ways of dissolving the problems existing among athletes.

The clear and unitary motive of the study aims to gain a better understanding on athletes' perceptions of their self-esteem and body image in attempts to recommend techniques that can either enhance or maintain existing self-esteem and body image levels which may establish the urgency of being oneself by being happy with their possession.

## 2. Literature Review

Self-esteem encompasses many factors including aspects such as body image, feelings of competence and self- satisfaction (Jafee & Wu, 1996). The term self-esteem is used to

describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. In other words, how much you appreciate and like yourself. Whereas, body image is defined as the mental representation of a person's emotional attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their own body (Brazier, 2017).

Body image can be viewed both positive and negative depending on the individual perception. A person with a positive body image is aware of their body shape along with their appearances. They believe other people would accept and think that they are attractive (Brazier, 2017). When a person believes that they do not look attractive, they possibly will begin to have negative feelings about their body image and that they don't measure up to what society, family, friends, and the media expects (Brazier, 2017). This is in comparison to when an athlete performs well or feels successful; he or she can feel good about him or herself. However, the opposite is also true: despair and low self-esteem are the results, when an athlete does not perform well or view him or herself as a failure (Cohn, 2006).

Body image, physical activity and participation in sports, have also been strongly connected to self-efficacy (Alzubaidi & Kazem, 2013). These activities have been reported to improve body image and increase self-esteem. According to Ikeda & Naworski (1992), body image and self-esteem are knitted together and are responsible for how people feel about themselves. Therefore, improving self-esteem is more likely to be improved at a faster rate than accepting one's body image but both are possible. However, one has to have a certain level of confidence in order to achieve both (Alzubaidi & Kazem, 2013). Equivalent to other findings was a research that was conducted by (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). They used five hundred and seven participants (507) which were adolescents to examine the role of gender, age, and body mass index in the development of self-esteem, body image and body weight. This examination found that children were dissatisfied with their bodies that had low self-esteem. The researchers also revealed that self-esteem is more likely to influence body image among girls than boys (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003).

Another study conducted by (Eyal, & Te'eni-Harari, 2013), "examined the relationship between media exposure and early adolescents' body image perceptions." Based on the survey that was conducted among three hundred and ninety one (391) students; seventh and eighth grader, the study found that exposure to media has a negative outcome on their perception of body image (Eyal, & Te'eni-Harari, 2013). The study looked at the most viewed television characters and applied the social comparison theory to have a clearer understanding of why adolescents has body image issues (Eyal, & Te'eni-Harari, 2013).

Most times people compare themselves to other that they see in the media or come in contact with and then unconsciously engagement in social comparison with those people. Furthermore, social comparison with actors or other characters from the media was found to positively predict an actual/ideal body shape difference which project negative body image (Eyal, & Te'eni-Harari, 2013).

Koff, Rierden & Stubbs (1990) conducted a study which supports that higher levels of self-esteem were related to higher levels of body image satisfaction. As well as Forst (2004) who examined the relationship between self-esteem and body satisfaction in three age groups of females. These studies have shown, a significant positive relationship was found between perceived self-efficacy and body image (Alzubaidi & Kazem, 2013). In addition, there were positive correlations between self-esteem, body image, and weight satisfaction, and this proposed that as body satisfaction increases, so does self-esteem.

Another reason for these differences might be due to the differences in motivation for participation in physical activities. Consistent with previous studies from Koivula (1999) found that individuals who take part in sports have a higher perceived physical self-efficacy. However, boys seem to have higher sense perceived physical self-efficacy than girls, but there were no differences between boys and girls in body image (Alzubaidi & Kazem, 2013).

Research of American elementary school girls was conducted by (Gallivan, 2014). Sixty nine percent (69%) of these girls who read different magazines, stated that they were influenced by pictures they saw (Gallivan, 2014). The girls' concepts of an ideal body image were altered, due to the images portrayed by embedding thoughts of them wanting to lose weight and become thinner.

Survey of the contents of Seventeen (17) magazines found that the largest percentages of pages are devoted to articles about appearance (Gallivan, 2014). Television commercials, programming, along with other advertisements and movies almost exclusively feature thin, healthy looking people (Gallivan, 2014).

Other studies that were conducted in Australia, reported that young girls undergo a great deal of pressure to have the perfect body image that the media portrays (Gallivan, 2014). In addition, further results indicattes that seeing thin models on television and in magazines made young girls and some young adults feel that they are not good enough, pretty enough, or thin enough to have the ultimate body image (Gallivan, 2014).

The researchers also concluded that in many instances, the media influences had been reinforced by peers and family (Gallivan, 2014).

### **3. Methodology**

Challenges athletes face with self-esteem and body image, have long been examined. Research from hundreds of articles written on this topic had been conducted by many psychologists such as (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003; Alzubaidi & Kazem, 2013; Ikeda & Naworski, 1992), along with many other. (Gallivan, 2014; Eyal, & Te'eni-Harari, 2013), studied showed that the media also play an enormous role in regards to the challenges athletes face with self-esteem and body images.

The aim is to conduct workshops that are geared towards the challenges athletes face with their self-esteem and body image in addition to have a clear understanding of how they feel about their self- esteem and body image and what are some of the contributing factors.

Several workshops and questionnaires will be used to gather information on the real life conditions and experiences that athletes are faced with on a daily basis as they train in their specific area of sport.

Data will be gathered from a small group of athletes from the secondary schools in Tobago. There will be a total of two (2) participants from each school who will be attending these workshops, both males and females.

Recommendations of relevant techniques to foster positive mind-sets of individual's self-confidence and self-perception of their body image that will assist in improving their self-esteem will also be considered.

#### 4. Workshop Overview

Date	Activity	Allotted Time	Resources
9/11/2018	Introduction	5 Minutes	
	Group activity	30 Minutes	Pens/Paper
	Power point presentation (Self-esteem)	1 Hour	Power point
	Discussion	15 Minutes	
15/11/2018	Group activity	30 Minutes	Flash Cards
	Power point presentation (Self-Confidence)	1 Hour	Pens/Paper
	Discussion	15 Minutes	Power point
20/11/2018	Group activity	30 Minutes	Games
	Power point presentation (Athletes' burnout)	1 Hour	Power point
	Discussion	15 Minutes	
28/11/2018	Group activity	30 Minutes	Pens/Paper
	Individual activity	5 Minutes	Worksheet
	Power point presentation (Self-image)	1 Hour	Questionnaire
	Discussion	15 Minutes	Power point

#### 5. Results

The male participants consisted of eighty percent (80%) of the total population of participants and the female participants were twenty percent (20%).

The data gathered about the participants' perception of self-esteem and body image as an athlete, indicated that sixty percent (60%) of the participants had generally high self-esteem. While forty percent (40%), showed lower levels of self-esteem. It is however noted that one hundred percent (100%) of the participants also suffered with minor body image issues as they still were in pursuit of attaining their ideal body.

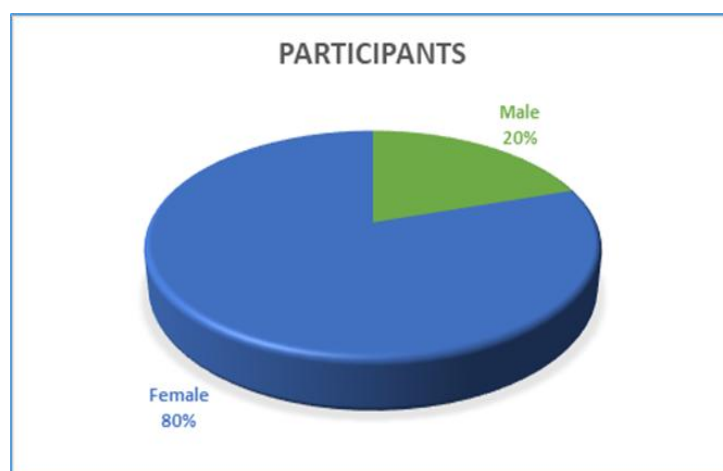
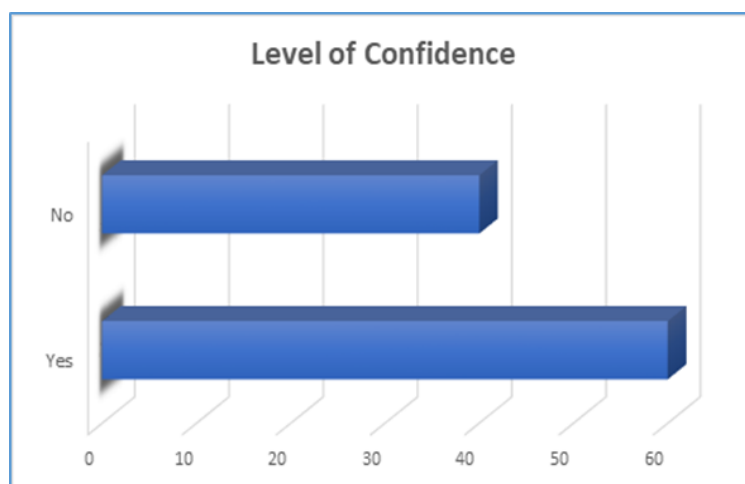


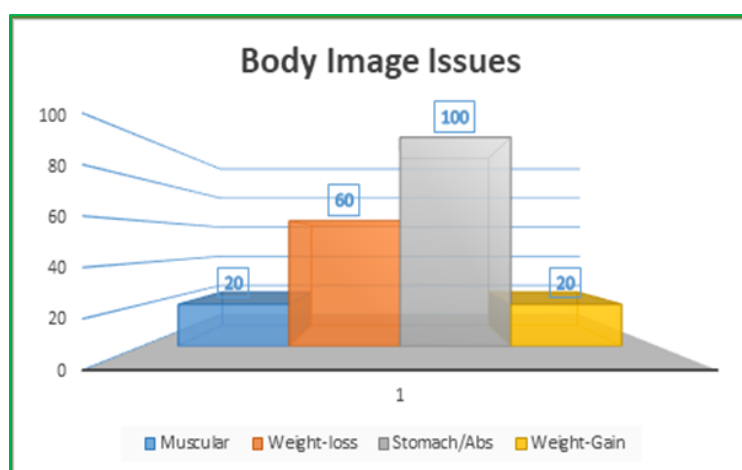
Figure 1. Responses from Participants

The pie chart displays statistical evidence that highlights a community project. Data was gathered from a small group of athletes attending secondary schools in Tobago. A Total of ten (10) participants were available for participation and answering the questionnaires from the workshops. The chart represents the percentage of males and females responses.



**Figure 2. The Level of Confidence**

The data in this chart is the result from question number four which asked “ Do you feel confident about your body image as an athlete?”. 60% shows athletes who feel confident about their body image, while 40 % of the data represents athletes who do not feel confident about their body image.



**Figure 3. Body Image Issue**

The bar chart presents body image issues within athletes. One hundred (100%) of the athletes indicated dissatisfaction with some aspects of their body image. All the athletes have abdominal issues. Among those athletes sixty percent (60%) wants to lose weight, twenty percent (20%) wished to gain weight, and twenty percent (20%) desired to have a muscular body image.

## 6. Discussion

Results as shown in **Figure 1**, depicting the available population in terms of percentage levels of each gender's feedback being presented for the study showed a notable difference as female participants surpassed male participants. This showed a possible gender bias occurring

as the available responses collected in the study only provided a female perspective on the measure of self-esteem and body image in athletes (Sommer, 2017).

Additionally, on the evaluation of confidence or self-esteem levels, the results showed insignificant comparisons between athletics and high self-esteem levels. This was evident because sixty percent (60%) of the athletes conveyed their self-esteem levels to be high whilst forty percent (40%) indicated low self-esteem levels. The disparity between high levels of self-esteem and low levels of self-esteem was somewhat minimal. Thus, these findings showed insignificant relationships between athletes and high self-esteem levels. On the evaluation of body image issues, significant levels were noted. This was indicated in the athletes' feedback as a resounding one hundred percent (100%) expressed displeasure with some aspects of their body image. This was communicated as one hundred percent (100%) of the athletes expressed dissatisfaction with their abdominal area. In addition, within the aforementioned one hundred percent (100%), sixty percent (60%) wished to lose weight, twenty percent (20%) wished to gain weight, and twenty percent (20%) desired to be muscular.

This illustrates a strong correlation between athletes and high body image issues. In analyzing the results, it was observed that athletes possessing high self-esteem, low self-esteem, and most if not all suffered with body image issues. As a result, it was highlighted to the participants that there are many common factors which can be used to shape their perceptions and self-esteem. These factors include their own internalization, media or society and their support systems. Subsequently, the researchers strategically implemented a number of techniques which may be believed could assist in maintaining high self-esteem levels in athletes which will also assist in creating balance in their lives, and this also applies to enhancing body image levels for the athletes. The final session of the workshop was where the implementation of techniques was disseminated and demonstrated to prove they can be easily integrated in their lives of our participants. The relevant techniques were first introduced to enhance or maintain confidence or self-esteem levels for the participants. The first technique was given to them for practice was to maintain high self-confidence. Then it was emphasized to the participants that maintaining high confidence level is an internal process that lies within oneself.

In addition to the suggestion of maintaining high self-confidence level in the participants, The understanding of the researchers of Burton's (2015) definition of self-confidence, which is the ability to trust in oneself, and particularly, in one's capabilities in becoming successfully or at least being satisfied with one's position in life. We also recommended reading or listening to motivational audio books and also to use positive affirmations. Consequently, the use of positive affirmations reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation and behaviour (Carey & Forsyth, 2016).

## 7. Conclusion

The pre-conceived view of the athletes' self-esteem was that it would depict higher levels as well as healthier perceptions of their body image. This viewpoint was then altered as the findings revealed that the athletes' self-esteem levels proved to be lower than expected as the results indicated insignificant levels of high self-esteem levels in their admissions. The viewpoint of healthy perception of body image in athletes was also modified as all of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with some physical characteristics of their body, and this showed that athletes are having body image issues. This evidence could possibly solidify that the participants' body image issues were derived from their aspirations to attain an ideal



fitness or physique. This desire could have been heightened due to the athletes being possibly vulnerable to the media's influence of the socially acceptable images and messages being portrayed.

The psycho-educational techniques utilized in the workshops were supported by theoretical explanation. It facilitated the fostering of one of our key objectives to provide participants with resources to enhance and sustain their self-esteem and positive body image. This stemmed from my ability to acknowledge that the athletes are foremost human that may have similar pressure to accomplish personal goals as anyone else within their sport. The aim was to empower them with knowledge so they could possibly implement measures to permanently instill healthy opinions of their self- concept and how to execute their goals effectively. It then may be reiterated that they should always try to be mindful to avoid extrinsic factors being the center of their high self-esteem. Rather, it should be on the basis of intrinsic factors such as one's positive attributes be internalized for inspiration and confidence.

## 8. Recommendation

The Study makes stunning revelation that an athlete also suffers from negative body image that leads to low self – esteem which reminds of the fact that the athletes are, being socially constructed, biased with the society imposed idea of body image. However, some ways and ideas can be recommended for them as

- i) Body is uniquely self – representative allowing unique shapes, sizes and colors and these enforce that every athlete should think for regularization of their activities without thinking an ideal body image.
- ii) They are to reduce stress levels, reduce body fat, promote restful sleep, and boost overall self-confidence and self-esteem.
- iii) The athletes have to learn their sport by allowing themselves to perform actions in the sport, and not focus solely on their coaches' critiques or their own negative thoughts. This allows them to assess their capabilities, see their strengths and improve on any weaknesses.

## 9. Appendices: Self-Esteem Measurement toolkits for workshop

### 9.1 Item no1: About Me Completing Sentence

#### Appendices: Self-Esteem worksheet

**About Me**  
Sentence Completion



I was really happy when... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Something that my friends like about me is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



I'm proud of... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



My family was happy when I... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



In school, I'm good at... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Something that makes me unique is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

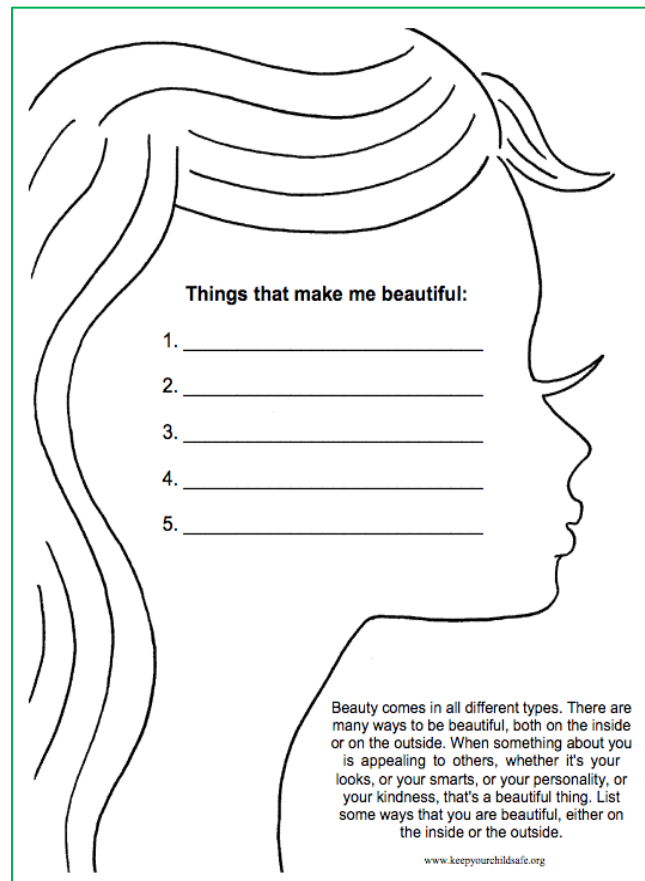
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### 9.2 Item no 2: Setting Goals

- 1) Something I want to accomplish in the next week:
- 2) In the next month:
- 3) In the next year:
- 4) In five years:

### 9.3 Item no 3: Beautifying Ideas



Things that make me beautiful:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Beauty comes in all different types. There are many ways to be beautiful, both on the inside or on the outside. When something about you is appealing to others, whether it's your looks, or your smarts, or your personality, or your kindness, that's a beautiful thing. List some ways that you are beautiful, either on the inside or the outside.

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### 9.4 Item no 4: Toot Your Horn

- ✓ I like myself because...
- ✓ I'm an expert at...
- ✓ I feel good about...
- ✓ My friends would tell you I have a great...
- ✓ My favorite place is...
- ✓ I'm loved by...
- ✓ People say I am a good...
- ✓ I've been told I have pretty...
- ✓ I consider myself a good...
- ✓ What I enjoy most is...
- ✓ The person I admire the most is...
- ✓ I have a natural talent for...
- ✓ Goals for my future are...
- ✓ I know I will reach my goals because I am...
- ✓ People compliment me about...
- ✓ I feel good when I...



- ### 9.5 Item no 5: Flashcards



<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
If you could be friends with any famous person in history who would it be and why?	Share a characteristic you admire in others.	Describe something someone should do to make you feel happy.	Share the greatest wish you have ever received.	Share something you would like to do but haven't yet.
Share a happy event in your life.	Name a personal accomplishment that made you proud.	I feel good about myself when _____	Describe your perfect vacation.	Name something you would like to be better at.
Give someone in the group a high five.	Give a compliment to the person to your left.	<b>FREE</b>	Talk about someone you admire.	Compliment the person to your right.
Stand up and say "I am _____ and I can do anything I set my mind to."	I am good at _____.	I feel best when people _____.	Stand up and let everyone give you applause.	Talk about 3 things you are grateful for.
Say something positive about yourself.	Give a compliment to the person to your right.	I am happiest when I _____.	My favorite part of the day is _____.	Give the person across from you a compliment.



## 9.6 Item no 6: Survey Questionnaire

### Self-esteem and Self-image Survey

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your gender and age?

Male (13-16)      Female (13-16)      Male (17-19)      Female (17-19)

2. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest), how would you rate your self-esteem?

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   ☐ 8   ☐ 9   ☐ 10

3. Do you feel comfortable with the size and/or shape of your body?

Yes

No

4. Have you ever wanted to change your body purely for cosmetic or aesthetic reasons?

Yes

No

If yes, (Please explain)

.....

5. If you could modify your body (e.g., lose weight, gain muscle, and change the size/shape of specific body parts), would you?

Yes

No

If yes, (please explain)

.....

6. Do you worry about how others perceive your body?

Yes

No

7. Has the size or shape of your body ever prevented you from doing something you wanted to do?

Yes

No

8. Has the media (television, movies, magazines, music videos) ever negatively influenced how you feel about yourself?

Yes

No

9. Have you ever felt pressured to fit into a culturally "ideal" look (thin and delicate for females, strong and muscular for males)?

Yes

No

10. Does your self-esteem influence your mood? (For example, your mood may be worse on days you do not feel attractive or good about your looks)?

Yes

No

## 9.7 Item no 7: Questionnaire Qualitative Judgment

Directions: Please circle the number for each question that best describes your agreement with each statement. (3) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (1) Strongly Disagree (0) Disagree

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal par with others. ....3 2 1 0

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.....3 2 1 0

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I'm a failure.....3 2 1 0
4. I am able to do things as well as other people.....3 2 1 0
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of..... 3 2 1 0
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.....3 2 1 0
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself..... 3 2 1 0
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.....3 2 1 0
9. I certainly feel useless at times..... 3 2 1 0
10. At times I think that I am no good at all.....3 2 1 0

**Conflicts of interest:** There is no conflict of interest of any kind.

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