



## Body Dissatisfaction and Associated Factors: A Study of a Group of Moroccan Adolescents'

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### Dear Editor-in-Chief

Adolescents are a vulnerable group to the body dissatisfaction that causes unhealthy attitudes and behaviors. Many factors affect the body image dissatisfaction (1). Given that many studies conducted on adolescence body image in developed countries, body discrepancies are found in developing countries. According to the literature, a lack of data is noticed in this field in Morocco.

The aim of the study was to describe degree of body dissatisfaction and its relationship with gender, age, physical activity and weight status among a group of Moroccan adolescents. We carried out a cross-sectional survey in secondary

schools in Marrakesh, Morocco. The study was conducted on 487 adolescents (223 boys and 264 girls), with the average age of 14.6 yr. Gender, age, physical activity information (hours/week, sport activities), and Body Mass Index (BMI) were applied in this study. Stunkard's figure rating scale (2) was used to assess body image dissatisfaction. Written consent form was obtained from the participating adolescents and their parents.

Body dissatisfaction was prevalent in 61.0% of the adolescents. The proportion of dissatisfied adolescents was noticed more among boys 65.0% as compared to girls 57.6% (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Proportions of satisfied and dissatisfied adolescents according to gender, age, physical activity and BMI categories

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Modalities</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied: Desire to gain weight</i>	<i>Dissatisfied: Desire to lose weight</i>	<i>χ<sup>2</sup> test</i>
Gender	Boys	35.0	48.4	16.6	19.9
	Girls	42.4	29.5	28.0	$P < 0.001$
Age (yr)	10-14	41.4	34.1	24.5	4.0
	15-18	36.3	42.9	20.8	$P = 0.13$
Physical activity	0 hours/week	42.0	34.2	23.8	9.6
	1-5 hours/week	30.9	42.3	26.8	$P < 0.05$
	≥ 6 hours/week	43.9	41.1	15.0	
BMI categories	Underweight	23.8	76.2	0.0	128.2
	Normal weight	43.2	39.6	17.2	$P < 0.001$
	Overweight	23.0	3.3	73.8	



This, however, was in disagreement with another study conducted in the West (3), which frequently reported that girls were more dissatisfied with their bodies than boys were. This difference in favor of boys suggested that the results of Western contexts might not be appropriate for the contexts of developing countries owing to socio-cultural differences.

38.2% of dissatisfied adolescents wanted to gain weight and 22.8% wanted to lose it. More girls wanted to lose weight than boys did. In contrast, boys expressed more the desire to gain weight. The relationship between body dissatisfaction and gender was highly significant. Girls were generally more concerned about their body image, with greater dissatisfaction and concerns about losing body weight, such attitude could be due to their exposure to thin-ideal internalization through media. The proportions of body dissatisfaction were relatively higher among the youngest group of adolescents (63.8%) than the oldest ones (59.6%). In addition, the youngest group of adolescents wanted more to lose weight than their older counterparts. However, the oldest age group wanted to gain weight. Nevertheless, the difference in body dissatisfaction by age was not statistically significant.

Dissatisfied adolescents desiring to gain weight engaged more in physical activity more than those desiring to lose weight did. In the present study, dissatisfied adolescents desiring to gain weight engaged in physical activity more than their counterparts who were willing to lose weight. This engagement in physical activity decreases body dissatisfaction (4) since a negative body image may act as a barrier to physical participation among adolescents (73.8% in overweight) desiring to lose weight (5). According to the weight category, underweight and overweight (including obesity) adolescents were the most dissatisfied, 76.2% and 77.1%, respectively. This fact reflects the good perception of adolescents for both current and ideal body image and therefore their body image weight. However, among this group of dissatisfied adolescents, 76.2% of underweight adolescents wanted to gain weight and 73.8% of their overweight counterparts

wanted to lose it. Indeed, adolescents' body dissatisfaction was strongly associated with their corpulence. The lower or higher was the BMI, the more the adolescents were dissatisfied and desired to gain or lose weight respectively. This fact was also revealed already (6). In fact, body dissatisfaction is linked to weight status, which incites the individual to adopt behaviors to lose or gain weight in order to have a body image seen as ideal. This study highlighted a high prevalence of body image dissatisfaction and indicated the need to include the topic of body image in the school curriculum.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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