

Association Between Positive Self-Talk and Body Dissatisfaction Among Persons with Disabilities (Physical and Sensory)

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ABSTRACT

In this present situation, physical appearance is often balanced with self-perception, creating a challenging environment for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) whose physique may not confirm to ableist standards. When real-life validation is seen low or negative, internal cognitive processes specifically self-talk become a critical determinant of mental well-being. This study explores how positive self-talk influences body dissatisfaction among persons with physical and sensory disabilities. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 50 participants (N = 50) aged between 18 to 35 through purposive sampling method. Participants completed standardized self-report questionnaires measuring Positive Self-Talk (PSTS) and Body Dissatisfaction (BIS), with all responses kept confidential and collected under strict ethical guidelines. Preliminary findings suggest that individuals who engage in frequent positive self-talk experience significantly lower levels of body dissatisfaction ($r = -0.72$). Furthermore, comparative analysis indicates that the individuals with physical disabilities report higher dissatisfaction when compared to those with sensory disabilities. Framed within Cognitive Behavioral Theory, this study highlights how the human need for self-acceptance persists even when physical functionality is compromised, often finding expression through internal dialogue.

Keywords: Positive self-talk, body dissatisfaction, physical disability, sensory disability, cognitive reframing, mental health.

INTRODUCTION

The urge to fit in and be accepted drives much of how humans act and perceive about themselves. Starting from adolescence into adulthood, individuals look for acceptance and validation of their physical selves but that is often expected from others nor given by the self. According to Cognitive Behavioral Models, how we speak to ourselves about our body often dictates our emotional reality. Without a supportive internal dialogue, many end up feeling isolated, drained inside and unsure of their worth. In the context of disability, where the body is often the site of stigma or limitation, this internal relationship will become paramount.

The concept of body image is complex, it is not just what one sees in the mirror, but how one feels inside their mind. For Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), this relationship is often disrupted by societal "gaze." A person with a physical disability, such as an amputation or spinal injury, navigates a world designed for able-bodied individuals, constantly reminded of their "difference." Similarly, persons with sensory disabilities, while perhaps physically "whole" in appearance, navigate the world where they may feel disconnected or dependent.

Positive self-talk work as a tool for an internal resource. It is the voice that counters the external narrative of "brokenness." Research suggests that when individuals cannot change their physical reality, changing their cognitive relationship with that reality through positive self-talk can be a powerful buffer against depression and dissatisfaction. This study focuses on this internal mechanism, exploring whether a kind internal voice can shield PWDs from the harshness of societal body standards.

Background & Need for the Concept

The sense of body satisfaction plays a very important role in human well-being by influencing our psychological state, confidence levels and interactions within community. According to Objectification Theory, the continuous monitoring of one's own appearance as an object against societal standards contributes significantly to mental health issues. Despite not being met with acceptance owing to feelings of isolation, rejection in society or an absence of approval individuals with disabilities frequently suffer emotional discomfort and seek out internal means to achieve stability.

The need for this study arises from an increasing recognition of how internal cognitive processes influence mental health among Persons with Disability. By analyzing why positive self-talk leads to reduce body dissatisfaction turns light on strategies people use for managing emotional distress. Additionally, this research highlights the dynamic function of self-talk, illustrating its potential in acting as a psychological buffer during times of strained self-perception. In India, the physical disability is often seen through a lens of social dependence. This makes our internal self- talk a very important tool for maintaining a sense of individual worth.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Positive Self-Talk

Cognitive Behavioral Theory (Beck, 1976) Beck proposed that human behavior and emotional reaction are strongly motivated by internal cognitions. He argued that "automatic negative thoughts" are the root cause of emotional distress, that influence the behavior and emotional reaction more than the event itself. When these thoughts are challenged and replaced with positive self-talk, individuals will be relieved from their negative thoughts. In the context of disability, this theory suggests that it is not the disability itself that causes body dissatisfaction, but the negative internal thoughts regarding the disability.

Self-Affirmation Theory (Steele, 1988) Steele in his classic paper *The Psychology of Self Affirmation*, he argued that the need to maintain a positive self-view is a universal human motive. He proposed that people strive to maintain self-integrity. When this integrity is threatened by any body stigma like failure, criticism or comparisons, there this positive self-talk acts as an self- affirmation, restoring a sense of worth and reducing the psychological impact of the threat by defending.

Body Dissatisfaction in Disability

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) This theory suggests that society views bodies as objects to be looked at. For PWDs, this "gaze" is often intrusive or pitying. This constant external evaluation leads to habitual body monitoring and dissatisfaction. The Social Model of Disability This model argues that disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment. However, internalized ableism where the PWD accepts society's negative view leads to body dissatisfaction. Research by Taleporos (2002) confirmed that physical disability is linked to lower body esteem due to these societal pressures.

Research Gaps:

This study examines how positive self-talk results in body dissatisfaction among adults with disabilities. While previous research relates disability with depression, few studies explore the importance of "positive self-talk" as a specific independent variable, as described by Cognitive Behavioral Theory, in buffering this relationship. Focusing on the Indian population, whose cultural contexts regarding disability differ from Western populations, this research addresses a gap in understanding the cognitive foundations of body image resilience.

Conceptual Development / Arguments

Definitions

Positive Self-Talk Positive self-talk refers to the internal statements individuals make to themselves that are

supportive, encouraging and confidence building, which influence their self- concept and behavior (Paul C. Burnett, 1994).

Body Dissatisfaction Body dissatisfaction refers to the negative subjective evaluation of one’s own body, involving dissatisfaction, discontent or unhappiness with one’s physical appearance, size, shape, weight or specific body parts. It often reflects a perceived gap between one’s actual body and an internalized ideal body standard and is associated with negative emotions such as low self- esteem, shame and distress (Grogan, 2008).

Persons with Disabilities Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UNCRPD, 2006), Article1.

Dimensions or the element of the concept

Positive Self-Talk Scale (PSTS) Measures the frequency and content of positive internal dialogue.

- Self-affirmation: reinforcing one’s own worth.
- Coping self-talk: telling oneself they can handle difficulties.
- Positive reframing: viewing challenges as opportunities.

Body Image Scale (BIS) Measures the affective and cognitive aspects of body image.

- Appearance evaluation: satisfaction with looks.
- Body competence: satisfaction with what the body can do.
- Social physique anxiety: worry about how others view the body.

Proposed Model or Framework

The proposed framework suggests certain direct and comparative effects.

H1 (Direct Effect): Positive self-talk links negatively to body dissatisfaction among persons with disabilities.

H2 (Comparative Effect): Type of disability influences the level of body dissatisfaction; specifically, physical disability will be associated with higher dissatisfaction than sensory disability.

Methodology & Data Analysis

Participants: A sample of 50 individuals ($N=50$) was recruited, split evenly between Physical Disability ($n = 25$) and Sensory Disability ($n = 25$).

Results:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics & T-Test

Group	Mean BIS Score	SD	t-value	p-value
Physical	18.24	4.12	3.921	.000
Sensory	13.80	3.95		

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Pearson's r	Sig. (p-value)
Self-Talk vs. Body Dissatisfaction	-0.72	0.000

DISCUSSION

This study's aims in complex analyzing of disability, body image and internal dialogue. The most important findings is that these group has a significant difference in body dissatisfaction among Individuals with Physical and Sensory Disabilities with $M= 18.24$ for physical disability compared with $M= 13.80$ for Sensory Disability and the high significant t- value (3.921, $p < .001$), it show the reflection of real experiences of a heavy burden of negative body image that is carried by the individuals with physical disability. This is very commonly known fact, because the physical disabilities are often visible to everyone as they directly face consequences in movement, bodily functions and that are not met with the societal norms. This visibility can negatively show a person's vulnerability, comparison, social stigmas and their potential all those play a vital role in body dissatisfaction.

On the same note the negative correlation was also observed between self- talk and body dissatisfaction ($r= -0.72$, $p < .001$). These relations suggests that the individuals' internal thoughts about themselves psychologically plays a major role in body image perceptions. So, the more the use of individualized or customized positive self-talk is used, the lower they reported about body dissatisfaction. All these were deeply linked with cognitive theories that has the power of internal narratives that helps in shaping emotional states and self- perception. That shows that body image means not only about the outward appearance or the external pressure given by the society, but our internal thoughts too have the major contribution.

Implications of the Study

Academic Implications

This study contributes more on theory and methodology part in the academic implications like disability studies, health psychology and cognitive behavioral research. This study shows how feelings of body shame or dissatisfaction can be put together through cognitive processes. This offers a useful direction for upcoming research, based on Cognitive Behavioral Theory and disability studies. By combining all the ideas from psychology and rehabilitation science, this study promotes practical and customized ways to learn more of these psychological experiences in real life. It helps grouping all disabilities into single category, suggests that visibility is a primary factor how individuals internalize their social beauty standards. This study supports the Cognitive Behavior Model, where the self- talk play as an important tool for internal distress than the objective reality of their disability. Also, it supports for a stronger bridge between Rehabilitation Science and Clinical Psychology.

Practical Implications

This study's finding gives more action taking strategies for the professionals in healthcare sector, therapists and Persons with Disabilities. The self- talk training be a core component of most affordable psychological support for Individuals with Disabilities. It also helps in enhanced rehabilitation protocols like holistic assessment and integrated care. It contributes in peer support and mentorship programs like shared experience and customized self- talk. It can also give societal attitudes towards visible differences that are a primary guide of distress.

Future Relevance of the study

The future importance of this study is rooted in examining more factors. These include individual personality traits, the effects of social media, and the duration of disability. Long-term research and studies based on intervention could explore how positive self-talk training affects body image over time. Additionally, future efforts can aim to create strategies that promote meaningful self-acceptance and lessen the reliance on external

validation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that positive self-talk is a significant predictor of lower body dissatisfaction among persons with disabilities. It highlights that role of both the type of disability and the psychological processes that shapes the body image experience. Individuals experiencing physical limitations tend to form stronger negative evaluations, but those who utilize positive self-talk report better outcomes. The findings highlight the psychological mechanisms behind body image and emphasize the importance of promoting cognitive resilience. By giving individualized, compassionate and affirming self-talk according to each individual can lower the distress that is caused by the body dissatisfaction regardless of their type of disability. This study also gives the hands in supporting bio- psychosocial approach to rehabilitation and mental health care. Importantly, it gives a deeper understanding of shifting focus from physical appearance to the power human mind in changing self-perception and developing positive body image. Overall, the study contributes to understanding how psychosocial factors influence rehabilitation and provides guidance for future research and interventions.

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