

Original Research Article

# Assess the Attitude of Women Regarding Body Image during Pregnancy and Post Partum Period

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Motherhood is a beautiful process, where by mothers safely delivers a child. It is the magic of creation. The process of giving birth is both joyous and beautiful experience on earth. Many women find it difficult to deal with all the different changes taking place in their bodies. Satisfaction with body image of a woman is important because it is one of the factors that determine her physical and mental well being. A negative body image can lead to many health problems like obesity, eating disorders and depression etc.

**Methods:** A descriptive design was used with convenience sampling technique. The sample for study consisted of 60 post partum women from Rural Health Centre, Pohir & Urban area (Shimlapuri) Ludhiana. Modified Body Attitude Questionnaire (Ben -Tovim Walker, 1991) was used to assess the attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period. Data was collected by self-report (interview) method.

**Results:** Findings of the study revealed that majority of the women had mean age of  $27.83 \pm 0.98$ , elementary education, non working, vegetarian and belonged to upper lower class. More than half of the women (63.3%) had negative attitude regarding body image and (36.7%) of the women had positive attitude regarding body image. Occupation, BMI, planned pregnancy and currently breast feeding status had significant impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period.

**Conclusion:** Majority of the women had negative attitude regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period.

**Key Words:** Attitude, Body image, Pregnancy, Post partum period.

## INTRODUCTION

Women's relationships with their bodies are often fraught with judgement, insecurity and comparison to unrealistic standards. Perceived body image consists of an experience and evaluation of the physical self. In the current society, the focus of body image is on weight and shape; both are especially salient for women. Body satisfaction among women has been found to be in a state of "normative discontent", whereby the majority of women are dissatisfied with their appearance. Across

different groups and individual trajectories, there are both commonalities and differences in body image, with women on average desiring to be thinner, while preoccupation with weight, shape and appearance varies based on life stages and events.

Pregnancy is usually a happy and joyful time during which mothers prepare for new arrival, but pregnancy is also a time of changes, both physical and emotional. Body image is one of the particular concerns during pregnancy. Women do

continuous struggle to achieve that pre pregnant body image and shape which makes them to be appeared attractive. [1]

Modern trend is to be slim. Especially young adult women are more conscious about their body image. Now days, because of changes in physical appearance, young women doesn't show much interest to go for early pregnancy & breast feeding their babies. [2]

However, body image has been found to be an important component of self-esteem, efficacy and quality of life, especially among women of childbearing age. Individuals with high self-esteem are more creative, successful, healthy, self-confident, assertive and capable of expressing ideas easily and they are largely seen as socially compatible people. [3]

Although some women may experience relief from maintaining the cultural ideals of being thin, many women experience at least some unhappiness with the shape and size of their body both during pregnancy and postpartum. And although there is strong evidence linking health risks for the baby and mother associated with being overweight, the added societal, familial, or personal pressures one can experience to maintain a certain body image/shape, even during pregnancy, can be overwhelming. It can be discouraging, especially when celebrities are observed to return to their pre-pregnancy weight in as little as a few weeks. [4]

During pregnancy, self-esteem level may decline as women find themselves feeling fat and less attractive. [5] On the other hand, many women enjoy being pregnant, reveal their growing roundness and feel good externally as well as internally. While others bodily changes causes worry and creates a background of discomfort and anxiety about how large they are and about whether they will ever get their shape back. The awareness regarding bodily needs, personal comfort or discomfort about feeding, ease or uneasiness about living in a post partum body helps to

determine the attitude of a mother towards her infant. [4]

Satisfaction with body image of a pregnant woman is important because it is one of the factors that determine her physical and mental well being. A negative body image can lead pregnant women to unhealthy diet, to refrain her from eating, or to purging. By developing an understanding of the relationship between body image and pregnancy, possible interventional and precautionary opportunities for pregnant women can be recommended and evaluated like emphasis on antenatal and postnatal exercises, diet pattern & meditation. [3] The spread of education and awareness have ensured that there is a perceptible change in attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period and the winds of change have ushered in new thinking, despite the figures of overweight, body dissatisfaction and negative attitude.

So, women today appear to be experiencing overwhelming dissatisfaction with their bodies. Studies showed that estimated 80% of women are unhappy with their appearance and in the last 25 years 16% increase in obesity prevalence among women of child bearing age. [6]

Post partum women might feel surprise & shame when they cannot return to their pre-pregnancy shape & weight. Studies found that 63% of women reported "much concern" about return into a "normal" figure in just two weeks after giving birth & 75% of women were concerned with their ability to return to a normal figure at six months post partum, 39% women were still dissatisfied with their weight. When a mother feels negatively about her body, it can lead to feelings of depression and even to the development of eating disorders, which can in turn lead to eating pathology in her child. [7] Depression could provoke body dissatisfaction either through diminished self-esteem or overeating, weight retention, and obesity, each of which have been linked to perinatal depression and/or anxiety. [8]

The prevalence of overweight in an urban population of India, as found in the National Family Health Survey during 2005-2006 was 38%, and prevalence of obesity was 2.24%. Excessive gestational weight gain, defined as over 35 pounds for normal weight women, over 25 pounds for overweight women, and over 20 pounds for the obese may be associated with long-term weight retention or obesity, which could in turn lead to body dissatisfaction. [9] However, it is still not clear which weight characteristic (e.g., prenatal weight, postpartum weight, or pre-pregnancy to postpartum weight gain/retention) is most important in predicting body dissatisfaction. Also unknown is the contribution of certain social variables, such as employment status, marital status, number of children, or baby's gender to postpartum body dissatisfaction. [10]

Body dissatisfaction may lead to postpartum depression. "Depression can lead mothers to be non responsive, inconstant or rejecting of the infant, placing the mother-baby attachment at risk". [9]

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Descriptive research design was used to assess the attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period in selected areas of district Ludhiana, Punjab. The sample size was 60 post partum women within 42 days of delivery.

The sample was drawn using convenience sampling technique, a type of probability sampling technique; keeping in mind the set inclusion and exclusion criteria. Tool consists of two parts: Socio-demographic profile, Maternal profile and Modified Body Attitude Questionnaire (Ben-Tovim Walker, 1991) to assess attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period. The content validity of research tool was determined by expert's opinion. The reliability of tool was estimated by test retest method. A pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility of the study, on the

sample of 06 participants in the same setting where the study is to be conducted as per the study objectives. The data was collected over a period of one month. The investigator first introduced her to the subjects and explained the purpose of gathering information. After obtaining the informed consent from the subjects about the confidentiality of information, the researcher assessed the attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period through self report (interview) method. Analysis of data was done in accordance with the objectives of the study. Data obtained was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Calculations were carried out manually using calculator, Microsoft excel, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 20 version.

## **RESULTS**

Socio-demographic variables of post partum women showed that out of 60 subjects, more of the women 43 (71.7) were between age group of 21-30 years and 17(28.3%) were between the age group of 31-40 years. Mean age of women was  $27.83 \pm 0.98$ . Regarding the educational status, more than half of the women 34 (56.7%) had Elementary education, followed by 13 (21.7%) had secondary education and graduate & above. According to socio economic status, slightly more than half of the women 32(53.3%) belonged to Upper lower class (IV), followed by 21(35.0%) to Lower middle class (III), 4(6.7%) to lower class (V) and remaining 3(5.0%) to Upper middle class (II).

Maternal profile of post partum women inferred that out of 60 subjects, 23(38.3%) women were with 2<sup>nd</sup> gravida, followed by 21(35.0%) women were with 1<sup>st</sup> gravida and 16(26.7%) with  $\geq 3^{\text{rd}}$  gravida. According to their parity, 27(45.0%) women had 1<sup>st</sup> parity, 20(33.3%) had 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13(21.7%) had  $\geq 3^{\text{rd}}$  parity. As per number of live birth, 27(45.0%) women had given 1 live birth, 21(35.0%) had given 2 live birth and remaining 12(20.0%) had given  $\geq 3$  live

birth. 46(76.7%) women had no history of abortion, followed by 11(18.3%) had history of 1 abortion & remaining 03(05.5%) had history of  $\geq 2$  abortion. Regarding still birth, 59(98.3%) women had no history of still birth while only 1(1.7%) had history of 1 still birth. Likewise breast feeding status, 56(93.3%) women were doing breast feeding to their child and only 4(6.7%) were not doing breast feeding to their child.

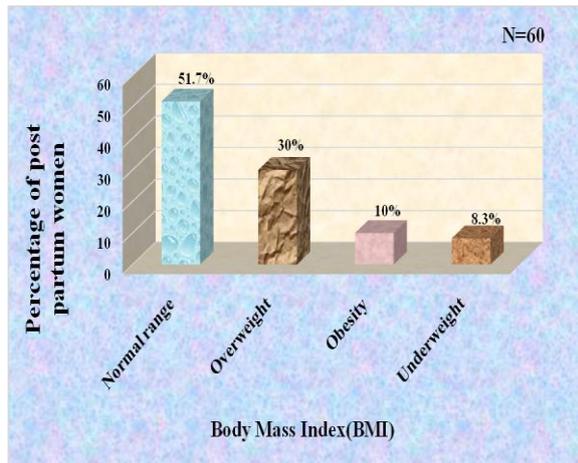
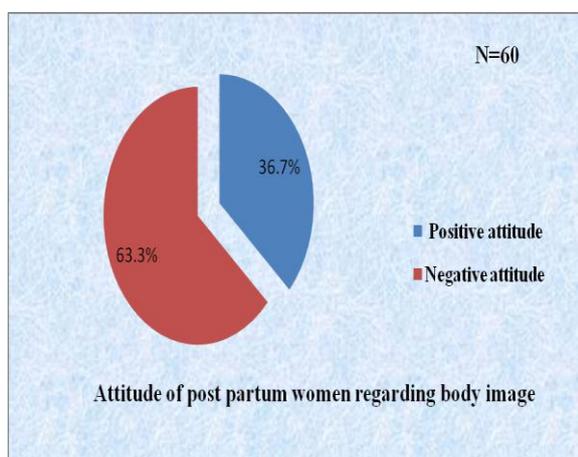


Figure 1. Distribution of post partum women as per their Body Mass Index (BMI).

Figure 1. depicts the distribution of post partum women as per their Body Mass Index (BMI) which shows that 31(51.7%) women had BMI with normal range, followed by, 18(30.0%) women were overweight, and 06 (10.0%) women were found to be obese and only 05 (08.3%) women were underweight.



Maximum score=180 Mean  $\pm$  SD= 101.23  $\pm$  20.773  
Minimum score=36

Figure 2: Attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum Period.

Figure 2 depicts the attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period which showed that 63.3% women had negative attitude regarding body image and 36.7% of the women had positive attitude regarding their body image.

Table1: Association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with selected socio-demographic variables. N=60

Socio-demographic variables	n	Attitude score	
		Mean $\pm$ SD	F/t p value
<b>Age (in years) #</b>			
21-30	43	100.79 $\pm$ 20.734	00.260
31-40	17	102.35 $\pm$ 21.468	00.494 <sup>NS</sup>
<b>Educational Status</b>			
Elementary	34	99.79 $\pm$ 22.119	00.458
Secondary	13	106.15 $\pm$ 20.223	00.635 <sup>NS</sup>
Graduation and above	13	100.08 $\pm$ 18.264	
<b>Occupation</b>			
Working	06	95.83 $\pm$ 13.378	00.668
Non working	54	101.83 $\pm$ 21.443	00.036 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Socio-economic status (Kuppuswamy's scale 2014)</b>			
03	03	90.33 $\pm$ 11.719	01.452
21	21	101.86 $\pm$ 22.621	
32	32	104.03 $\pm$ 20.078	00.237 <sup>NS</sup>
Upper middle class (II)	04	83.75 $\pm$ 14.315	
Lowermiddle class(III)			
Upper lower class (IV)			
Lower class(V)			
<b>Dietary habits</b>			
Vegetarian	41	102.78 $\pm$ 18.952	00.578
Non vegetarian	08	94.13 $\pm$ 22.554	
Eggetarian	11	100.64 $\pm$ 26.504	00.564 <sup>NS</sup>

# Mean age  $\pm$  SD = 27.83  $\pm$  0.98

\*Significant (p<0.05), NS-Nonsignificant (p>0.05)

df= 58(for t- test), df=59(for f test)

Maximum score=180, Minimum score=36

Table 1 depicts the association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with selected socio-demographic variables which showed that occupation and working status of women found to be significant at (p<0.05). But the other variables like Age, educational status, socio economic status and dietary habits of post partum women were found to be non significant at (p>0.05)

Table 2 depicts the association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with BMI. BMI of post partum women were found to be significant as (p<0.05).

**Table2:** Association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with BMI. N=60

BMI classification (according to WHO criteria 2004)	n	Attitude score	
		Mean ± SD	F/t p value
Underweight (<18.50)	05	83.20 ± 9.834	12.354
Normal range(18.50-24.99)	31	92.71 ± 17.474	
Overweight (≥25.00-29.99)	18	112.22 ± 16.605	
Obesity (≥30.00)	06	127.33 ± 14.733	

\*Significant (p<0.05), NS-Non significant (p>0.05)  
Maximum score=180, Minimum score=36  
df=58(for t- test), df=59(for f test)

**Table3:** Association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with selected maternal variables. N=60

Maternal characteristics	n	Attitude score		
		Mean ± SD	F/t p value	
Planned pregnancy	Yes	53	95.83 ± 13.378	00.668
	No	07	101.83 ± 21.443	00.036*
Currently Breastfeeding status	Yes	56	101.09 ± 21.463	00.199
	No	04	103.25 ± 05.909	00.013*

\*Significant (p<0.05), NS-Nonsignificant(p>0.05)  
Maximum score=180, Minimum score=36  
df=58(for t- test), df=59(for f test)

Table 3 depicts the association of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with maternal variables which revealed that planned pregnancy and currently breast feeding status found to be significant as (p<0.05).

## DISCUSSION

Regarding maternal profile, 88.3% women had planned pregnancy. These findings were supported by a cross-sectional study conducted by Bahadinbeigy K, Garrusi B, Etminam A& Nematallahce VR (2014) on 255 post partum women whose results showed that 86% of subjects had planned pregnancy. [11]

The major findings of the study showed that 63.3% women had negative attitude regarding their body image during pregnancy and post partum period. These findings were supported by Gjerdingen D, Fontaine P, Crow S, McGovern P, Center B & Miner M (2009) who conducted a prospective longitudinal study on 506 post partum women in university of Minnesota, their results showed that most of the

postpartum women had negative attitude towards their body image. [12]

In the present study, mean score for obesity was (127.33±14.733), for overweight (112.22±16.605), for normal weight (92.71±17.474) and for underweight was (83.20±9.834). So, there was a significant relationship of attitude of women regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period with BMI as (p=0.001).

The findings were supported by a study conducted by Morin KH, Brogan S & Flavin SK (2002) on 45 African American among post partum women, which showed that the mean score for the overweight/obese group was (3.4±0.42), for the normal weight group the mean score was (2.8±0.22) and for the underweight group it was (2.6± 0.24). It showed that higher the mean score more was the negative attitude and found that the attitude was strongly associated with BMI (p<0.05). [13]

Another supported study conducted by Walker (1998) revealed that the postpartum women who retain more weight or higher post partum body mass index (BMI) had negative attitude with their body image (p<0.05).

In the present study, there was a significant association of attitude of body image with planned pregnancy (p<0.05).

A supported cross-sectional study conducted by Bahadinbeigy K, Garrusi B, Etminam A& Nematallahce VR (2014) in Iran which showed a statistically significant of attitude with planned pregnancy (p<0.05). [11]

In present study, significant association of attitude of body image with breastfeeding was also found. Women who were doing breastfeeding to their babies had positive attitude regarding their body image as compared to those who were not doing breast feeding to their children. These findings were supported by Mariella Micallef (2010) who conducted a research study on body image as a barrier to breastfeeding. The results showed that there was a strong association between the body

image attitude and breastfeeding ( $p < 0.05$ ).<sup>[14]</sup>

Another prospective longitudinal study conducted by Gjerdingen D, Fontaine P, Crow S, McGovern P, Center B & Miner M (2009) on predictors of mother's post partum body satisfaction in University of Minnesota. It was also showed that there was a significant relationship between attitude and breastfeeding ( $p < .001$ ).<sup>[12]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that most of the women had negative attitude regarding body image during pregnancy and post partum period. The association of occupation, BMI, planned pregnancy and currently breast feeding status were found to be significant as ( $p < 0.05$ ).

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