

Body Image Coping Strategies among University Students and Variations in Terms of Gender in a Developing Country

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ABSTRACT The transition to adolescence is accompanied by rapid, unexpected and novel experiences in social, cognitive, physical, emotional and psychological domains. The issue of body image and perceptions of fatness and slenderness have also become central to western culture and values. The current study examines cognitive and behavioural body image coping strategies among university students, and variations in terms of gender. A quantitative research approach was used to collect data from a sample of 639 undergraduate and post graduate students from a university. The Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory (BICSI) was used to measure coping strategies. The findings indicated that for university students, both genders rely on appearance fixing and positive rational acceptance as their coping strategy, whereas female students rely to a greater extent than male students on these two coping strategies. Perception of body image can influence students' body image and students should be aware of how day-to-day events and situations can activate thoughts, interpretations and conclusions that often trigger positive or negative cognitive and behavioural reactions to their body image experiences and ensuing coping strategies and behaviours.