

**Perceived Body Image and Its Relationship with the Formation of
Psychological Attitudes Toward Physical Activity as a Social Experience**
(A Field Study in Selected Secondary Schools of Chlef Province)

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Received: 20/04/2026 Accepted: 30/05/2026 Published: 15/07/2026

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the nature of the relationship between perceived body image and its impact on guiding secondary school adolescents toward participating in specific physical activities versus complete physical inactivity. Consequently, the formation of psychological attitudes toward physical activity in adolescents is contingent upon the psychological disturbances experienced due to emergent physiological changes. Adolescents aspire to perceive their growth as satisfying society's acceptable standards; thus, anxiety over body shape constitutes a risk factor leading to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and impaired self-evaluation. Motivation remains a paramount topic for educators, as effective learning requires stimulation that prompts appropriate responses. Attitudes can be viewed as social motivators predisposing behavior, where positive attitudes toward physical activity serve as driving forces toward regular practice. An in-depth field investigation revealed statistically significant relationships between dimensions of psychological attitudes and body image in determining students' (male and female) physical activity preferences.

Keywords: Body Image, Psychological Attitudes, Physical Activity, Social Experience.

1. INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study falls within a series of research efforts focused on psychological attitudes due to their major importance in triggering and directing individual behavior. Specifically, this research examines the relationship between the formation of psychological attitudes toward physical

activity and the perceived body image among secondary school students. The objective is to reveal the clarity of the concept of athletic practice among students, as the latter represents a decisive factor in achieving the goals of sports participation—whether within physical education and sports programs in educational institutions or through extracurricular physical activities. From this perspective, the current study seeks to explore the connection between perceived bodily self-concept and the formation of psychological attitudes toward physical activity. To achieve this objective, the research addresses the following central question: Can the formation of psychological attitudes toward physical activity among secondary school adolescents be influenced by their perceived body image?

1.1 Research Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: There are statistically significant differences between male and female students in perceived body image.
- Hypothesis 2: There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students in the formation of psychological attitudes toward physical activity.
- Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between the dimensions of perceived body image and the dimensions of psychological attitudes formed toward physical activity among secondary school students.

1.2 Research Objectives

- Identify the nature of the relationship between the formation of attitudes toward physical activity and perceived body image among secondary school students.
- Determine the importance of body image for students in physical education and sport, and how this is reflected in their attitude toward specific sports.

1.3 Significance of the Research

Studies on self-concept, including bodily self-concept, are among the most crucial contemporary psychological investigations. In these studies, the individual is both the observer and the subject. Understanding how a person thinks about their body, physique, behavior, and appearance in front of others is essential for comprehending human personality. Every individual possesses a set of perceptions regarding their body image, termed bodily self-concept. Understanding how secondary school students perceive their body image is beneficial across three primary domains:

- **Cognitive Domain:** Individual awareness of various dimensions of body image (external appearance, health status, motor performance).
- **Emotional Domain:** Development of positive student attitudes regarding self-perception and self-worth.
- **Behavioral Domain:** Reflected in student tendencies to act toward themselves in specific ways (e.g., self-tolerance vs. self-deprecation), highlighting the role of gender in shaping behavioral tendencies.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

2.1 Physical Athletic Activity

A vehicle to achieve various objectives by adapting to different fields of physical culture. It serves educational goals within school settings, elite sports performance when specialized, and general recreational entertainment (Abul-Ela Ahmed Abdel-Fattah, 1993, p. 25).

2.2 Physical Activity as a Social Experience

Sports activity involving groups of two or more individuals carries social value and provides opportunities to fulfill specific social needs. As a social experience, physical activity facilitates meeting new people and establishing interpersonal relationships (Mohamed Hassan Allawi, 1999, pp. 444–445).

2.3 Psychological Attitude

Linguistically, 'attitude' refers to posture, bearing, physical stance, or behavior (Thomas, 1991, p. 449). Operationally, a psychological attitude is defined as a psychological readiness whose outcome manifests in an individual's viewpoint regarding a social, economic, or political topic, or concerning values (Abul-Ela Abdel-Fattah, 1993). In this research, it specifically refers to scores obtained on Kenyon's scale of psychological attitudes toward physical activity.

2.4 Body Image

Body image is a crucial dimension of self-concept and personality, referring to individual feelings about one's body (e.g., large, small, attractive, unattractive, strong, weak) (Osama Rabie Amine, 2007, p. 22). According to Schilder, human body image is the mental picture we form of our own body—the pattern upon which our body is mentally constructed (El-Sayed Mohamed Ghneim, 2000, p. 76). It encompasses not only perceived external appearance but also mental representations of bodily functions (Abdel-Halim Mohamed El-Sayed, 2000, p. 302). Operationally, it refers to scores on the 3-dimensional Body Image Scale used in this study (External Appearance, Health Status, Motor Performance).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & FIELD PROCEDURES

The descriptive correlational approach was employed in accordance with the study objectives to describe, analyze, and uncover relationships among research variables. The independent variable was **Perceived Body Image**, while the dependent variable was **Psychological Attitudes Formed Toward Physical Activity**.

3.1 Population and Sample

The target population comprised secondary school adolescents aged 16–18 years across three high schools in Chlef Province: Sidi Akkacha High School, Houari Boumediene High School (Tenes), and Idikra Mohamed High School (Tenes). The total student population across these schools was approximately 2,000 students (1,042 females and 958 males). A sample of 240 students (115 males and 125 females) was selected, representing 12% of the original population. Sampling utilized a purposive procedure for educational stage and gender representation, and a random selection for individual student attributes.

3.2 Research Instruments

Data collection relied on two group-administered written instruments designed for efficiency and standardized administration:

- **Body Image Scale (Mohamed Hassan Allawi):** Measures an individual's unique perception of their body across 15 bipolar adjective pairs split into 3 subscales (5 items each): External Appearance, Health Status, and Motor Performance.
- **Psychological Attitudes Scale (Kenyon G., Arabic Adaptation):** Uses a 3-point Likert response scale (Agree, Sometimes, Disagree). This study extracted the 8-item subscale measuring 'Physical Activity as a Social Experience' (5 positive items: 11, 17, 20, 25, 29; 3 negative items: 19, 39, 49).

3.3 Psychometric Properties (Reliability and Validity)

Test-retest reliability and intrinsic validity were calculated for both instruments as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Coefficients for the Body Image Scale (n = 50, df = 24)

Measurement	Sample (n)	df	Sig. Level (α)	Reliability (r)	Validity ($\sqrt{r}$)
Pre / Post Test	50	24	0.05	0.73	0.85

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Coefficients for the Psychological Attitude Scale (n = 25, df = 24)

Measurement	Sample (n)	df	Sig. Level (α)	Reliability (r)	Validity ($\sqrt{r}$)
Pre / Post Test	25	24	0.05	0.95	0.97

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Hypothesis 1: Gender Differences in Perceived Body Image

Hypothesis 1 posited statistically significant differences between male and female students in perceived body image and its dimensions. Independent samples t-tests were conducted for each dimension (df = 238, critical t = 1.96 at $\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 3. T-Test Results for Gender Differences Across Body Image Dimensions (df = 238)

Dimension	Gender	n	Mean	%	SD	Calc. t	Tab. t	Significance
External Appearance	Male	115	20.45	58.42%	5.23	0.69	1.96	Not Sig.
	Female	125	20.01	57.17%	4.59			
Health Status	Male	115	22.08	63.08%	5.34	7.75	1.96	Significant*
	Female	125	17.54	50.11%	3.63			
Motor Performance	Male	115	18.46	52.74%	2.60	9.64	1.96	Significant*
	Female	125	17.54	50.11%	3.63			

Female	125	15.10	43.14%	2.78
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Discussion of Hypothesis 1 Results: For External Appearance, no significant difference was found ($t = 0.69 < 1.96$), indicating that both adolescent males and females share a close concern for body aesthetics and personal presentation. However, highly significant differences favoring males emerged in Health Status ($t = 7.75 > 1.96$) and Motor Performance ($t = 9.64 > 1.96$). These results reflect socio-cultural constraints that restrict free athletic participation for female adolescents, leading to reduced physical self-efficacy and vitality perceptions. In contrast, males benefit from greater social autonomy and active sports engagement, fostering positive perceptions of physical strength, health, and motor skills.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: Gender Differences in Attitude Toward Physical Activity as a Social Experience

Hypothesis 2 stated that there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in their psychological attitude toward physical activity as a social experience.

Table 4. T-Test Results for Gender Differences in Social Experience Attitude (df = 238)

Dimension	Gender	n	Mean	%	SD	Calc. t	Tab. t	Significance
Social Experience	Male	115	15.18	63.25%	3.13	0.48	1.96	Not Sig.
	Female	125	14.99	62.45%	2.92			

Discussion of Hypothesis 2 Results: The calculated t-value (0.48) was substantially lower than the critical t-value (1.96), confirming Hypothesis 2. Both male (63.25%) and female (62.45%) students demonstrated equally strong positive attitudes toward physical activity as a medium for social interaction. During adolescence, peer acceptance, affiliation, and social integration represent shared developmental priorities regardless of gender. Physical activity serves as a vital bridge for fulfilling these social needs.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: Correlation Between Body Image Dimensions and Social Attitude

Hypothesis 3 posited a correlation between dimensions of perceived body image and psychological attitudes toward physical activity as a social experience.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Body Image Subscales and Social Experience Attitude

Body Image Dimension	Pearson Correlation (r)	Statistical Significance	Relationship Type
External Appearance	0.79	$p < 0.01$	Strong Positive
Health Status	0.77	$p < 0.01$	Strong Positive
Motor Performance	0.33	$p < 0.01$	Moderate Positive

Discussion of Hypothesis 3 Results: All three body image dimensions demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations with social physical activity attitudes ($p < 0.01$). External Appearance yielded the strongest association ($r = 0.79$), indicating that adolescents view physical appearance as their primary 'ambassador' in social spaces. Health Status followed closely ($r =$

0.77), underscoring that physical well-being and vigor enhance social confidence and participation readiness. Motor Performance exhibited a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.33$), supporting the conclusion that overall body perception directly drives social sports inclination.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Perceived body image is a key psychological determinant directing adolescent engagement in physical activity as a social experience.
- External appearance and health status perceptions exert the strongest influence on social sports participation motives.
- Socio-cultural constraints significantly impact female adolescents' perceptions of health and motor performance, calling for educational interventions to promote female sports inclusion.
- Physical education programs should focus on positive body image promotion alongside physical skill acquisition to foster lifelong sports participation.

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