

Understanding the Pathways from Body Dissatisfaction to Life Satisfaction in Generation Z: Mediating Effect of Bullying and Coping Strategies

¹Mehrab Sajid

^{*2}Dr. Mohammad Saifullah Qureshi

³Ishtiaq Ahamd Awan

⁴Ayesha Tariq

⁵Ifra Ahmad

¹MS Clinical Psychology Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University Islamabad.

^{*2}Assistant Professor Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University Islamabad.

³Clinical Psychologist, Bacha Khan Medical Complex Swabi

⁴MS Clinical Psychology Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University Islamabad.

⁵MS Clinical Psychology Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST University Islamabad.

Abstract

This study investigated the psychological pathways linking body dissatisfaction to life satisfaction among 200 Generation Z adults (aged 18-27), examining bullying victimization and avoidant coping as mediators. Using validated scales - the Body Image Concern Inventory ($\alpha=.77$), Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale [MPVS]; Mynard & Joseph, 2000 ($\alpha=.82$), Brief COPE's Avoidant-Focused subscale ($\alpha=.75$), and Satisfaction with Life Scale ($\alpha=.55$) - results revealed significant negative correlations between body dissatisfaction and life satisfaction ($r = -0.26, p < .01$). Mediation analyses demonstrated that body dissatisfaction increased both bullying victimization ($\beta=.23$) and avoidant coping ($\beta=.28$), which in turn reduced life satisfaction ($\beta=-.20$ and $\beta=-.16$ respectively). Bullying mediated 14.5% of the total effect (indirect effect $B=-0.040, CI[-0.082,-0.012]$), while avoidant coping mediated 18% ($B=-0.024, CI[-0.049,-0.002]$), confirming both as significant but partial mediators. These findings suggest that interventions targeting body image concerns should simultaneously address bullying prevention and adaptive coping skills to improve life satisfaction in Generation Z.

Keywords: Body Dissatisfaction, Life Satisfaction, Peer Victimization, Generation z, Avoidant Coping

INTRODUCTION

The generation Z, also called the digital natives, smoothly incorporate the Internet into all spheres of everyday life working, shopping, socializing, and entertainment (Niklova, Dulovics and Stehlikova, 2022). Gen Z has never lived without the Internet; in contrast to older generations who had to accommodate to the digital technology later in their lives (Barnova & Krasna, 2018). This state of endless engagement in the digital world defines who they are, their self-image, and how they relate to each other, so the digital environment becomes in actuality another component of reality. Nevertheless, this hyper-connected life includes psychological dangers especially in terms of body image. Raised in a visually orientated world of online presence, Gen Z is exposed to unrealistic versions of beauty causing them to constantly be in a state of social comparison and increased levels of appearance anxiety. It has been established that exposure to curated highly unrealistic images on the social media has led to body dissatisfaction and low esteem among individuals and more widely, mental health issues (Niklova et al., 2022). A combination of these factors influences the general well-being of a generation that has appropriated itself by defining itself through a digital experience which demands an urgent action to alleviate its psychological outcomes regarding the lived experience of a generation on the internet.

Body dissatisfaction also correlates negatively with life satisfaction because people who see differences between their actual and desired body image tend to have lower well-being in general. It has been demonstrated that increased body dissatisfaction ensures decreased psychological well-being and lower levels of life satisfaction in various cohorts (Ferreira-Barbosa, 2024). It further leads to negative self-appraisals and maladaptive behavior due to sociocultural pressures and the internalization of idealized body ideals (Ruggieri et al., 2024). Moreover, this dissatisfaction indirectly decreases subjective well-being and life satisfaction as a result of increased stress and avoidance coping strategies (Ruggieri et al., 2024). These results indicate that the problem of body dissatisfaction is not an end-on-its-own phenomenon but a complex construct that affects the quality of life in general.

Bullying can be relational (i.e., efforts to damage a targeted youth's relationships or reputation), physical (i.e., pushing), or cyberbullying, among many other types. According to Gladden et al. (2014), bullying is struggling, is a violent act or a series of violent acts intended to cause harm, and is characterized by an imbalance of power. Yet, bullying victimization subtypes commonly co-occur (Wang et al., 2010). Previous studies show that teenage girls may have more intense body dissatisfaction (Fernandez-Bustos et al., 2019) or negative body image (Kantanista et al., 2015) than teenage boys. Studies show that overweight adolescents tend to report more bullying and body dissatisfaction (Fox & Farrow, 2009). Olweus (2013) takes bullying as peer aggression where one or several students try to torment their target. Bullying usually involves generation z and most often take place in learning institutions. There are three criteria established to classify bullying: These special features can be described in terms of the following criteria: (a) intentionality; (b) repeatability; and (c) power differential. It focuses on the fact that a bully wants to harm a target victim with the knowledge that the type of interaction being imposed on the target is going to cause distress to the named or targeted victim. Bullying also has the characteristic of repeated in which a victim is bullied by the bully at different times. The repetition of the element of bullying may help to strengthen the intentional element of the aggression, in situations where the bully intentionally carries out a behavior which he knows will stress the victim. Last of all, bullying comprises an aspect of power where one side feels that he/she is an inferior or weaker person to the other. It can be a power that is

real such as a person being taller than the other but it can be associated with class power such as the level of acknowledgment from fellow peers. Bullying is known to happen without any regret being made by the victim and is part of the proactive aggression category. Premeditated aggression is characterized as aggression anticipated to accomplish a specific function, function in the case of bullying it is to victimize the other person (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Olweus, 2013). An individual can commit bullying in three capacities. One is by engaging in the bullying. In relation to the said act, those who perform it are known as the bully (Olweus, 2013). The second role of anyone in bullying is as the victim, where he/she is the one that is being bullied. Last of all, there may be part and parcel of both the bullying process, as well as being bullied by other peers. In relation to bullying studies have shown that young women were more likely to develop body image concerns due to being bullied for their looks (Berne et al., 2014). The rationale that was used here was based on the conclusions made by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) that women cared more about appearance than men did. But as came across this study it has been established that yes actually, men too, are bullied and tease for their looks quite often but not about the similar aspects of their looks (Zimmer- Gembeck et al., 2021). Boys are usually bullied for being small or weak, and thus, most have issues regarding their size in comparison to women, which in contrast, girls are usually bullied for being fat, and thus, they want to be slim (Zimmer- Gembeck et al., 2021). These findings support the previous literature that regards the constructs of drive for muscularity, as a desire for more developed muscles that is more typical for male participants, and a drive for thinness, as a desire to be smaller typical of female participants (Voelker et al., 2015; Zimmer- Gembeck et al., 2021).

Coping strategies are a key element that helps generation z to deal with the emotional and psychological impacts of body dissatisfaction. Specific interventions can either prevent or exacerbate adverse effects related to the concerns of body image. Coping mechanism in the case of body dissatisfaction therefore acts as a mediator between body image concern, self-esteem and quality of life (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Coping is the use of thoughts and actions to handle stressful events, whether internal or external (Folkman S 2014). Recent research suggests that such adaptive coping strategies as problem solving and emotional regulation might mitigate the effects of body dissatisfaction and bullying on mental health outcomes (Compas et al., 2017). More complex categories can be formed by organizing the various cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies constituting coping (Skinner et al., 2003). Studies also show also that the person who is bullied will tend to use other maladaptive strategies, including avoidance or rumination which are bad for emotions. This proves that bullying not only contributes to the enhancement of body dissatisfaction, but also facilitates the development of a social context of social bullying of psychological problems related to body images (Griffiths et al., 2017). Stress management is defined as the strategies and plans individuals employ to regulate stressful environments both intra and interpersonal. It is the term applied more narrowly to the actualization of intentional and deliberate actions, in contrast to “defence mechanisms”, which are maladaptive unconscious or preconscious processes that both reduce or endure stress. The two general categories of coping are (a response to the stressor) and proactive coping (an effort to reduce future stresses). To a greater extent both women and men from Western countries have many opportunities to view nearly perfect-body imagery (Dittmar, H 2007, Gattario, K.H. et.,al 2015) and as a result, are likely to experience threats to body image (Cash, T.F 2012). In fact, several ordinary circumstances or occasions inclusive of seeing oneself in mirror, swimming costume, looking at photographs and videos posted on social networks, can incite thoughts and feelings regarding the body that

Edeals with in adverse ways and the feelings that seem oppressive to them. In response to them, people use cognitive and behavior change methods (Cash, T.F.; Santos, M.T.; Williams, E.F 2005). Cash et al., (2005) described three strategies that can be used to cope with body-related threats: positive rational acceptance, avoidance and appearance remedial. It includes refusal to engage in a confrontation with a situation, which makes the parameter of body image significant or the rejection of appearance-related cognitions or thoughts, which are considered as threatening. Appearance fixing is the act of alteration and improvement and correction of perceived by an individual as being imperfect or too abnormal for outside presentation using one's physique and attractions (Cash, T.F.; Santos, M.T.; Williams, E.F 2005). They are both defined as maladaptive because they represent a negative reinforcement for those cognitive processes that underlie body dissatisfaction and body image distress by decreasing momentarily appearance related thoughts and feelings (Cash, T.F 2012). On the other hand, positive rational acceptance is posited to be adaptive because it tends to offer an accurate and none judgmental perception of one's self which assists individuals to embrace their talent and values (Cash, T.F 2012).

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) that has the following assumptions of stress and coping being key determinants of a psychological well-being. This model explained as body image dissatisfaction acts as a chronic stressor, which provokes maladaptive avoidant coping (e.g., social withdrawal), which intensifies the dissatisfaction in life; bullying victimization would be a secondary stressor, mediating the relationship between body dissatisfaction and social-evaluative threat; and differences in individual coping strategies (adaptive and avoidant) would determine whether being stressed leads to a decrease in life satisfaction. The model fits with our results that even partially mediating the body dissatisfaction-life satisfaction relationship, avoidant coping suggests dealing not only with the primary stressor (body image) but also coping with it.

LITERATURE GAP

Generation Z is a primary target for bullies and this study established a strong relationship between bullying and body dissatisfaction. If young people have some issues connected with thinness, they can become vulnerable to, for example, image control teasing, or body slammed. This external criticism tends to worsen internal perceived body dissatisfaction therefore worsening self-esteem and, in the process, reduces life satisfaction. Therefore, bullying intervening in this case as a mediator between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem. Whenever individuals come across battling related to Bullying based on appearance, they always end up to adopt societal standards on beauty which in turn brings about more self-dislike and evil feelings regarding their own body. This cyclic effect makes body dissatisfactory foster greater susceptibilities to bullying and consequently enhance detrimental impressions of body image. A generation z may always get a low self-esteem and this will indeed reduce their life satisfaction levels. In this way, while bullying does not directly mediate body dissatisfaction in boy's body image, it mediates the impact that results Body dissatisfaction mediates the harm of body image concerns on the affected boys' psychological and emotional Life Satisfaction through bullying (Juvonen et al., 2017).

Body dissatisfaction has become an alarming risk to the mental health of Generation Z, and many researchers are coming forward to assert the higher predispositions of developing depression, feelings of anxiety, and reduced life quality because of these body dissatisfactions. Although current studies have proven that there is a relationship that exists between bullying and suicide, there is a missing link in the deeper

aspects of the relationship in terms of significant mediating effects of bullying and coping strategies. As young digital natives who have developed a unique exposure to social media-driven beauty ideals, and then have been placed under as yet unstudied pandemic-related stressors, it can be safely assumed that the experiences of body dissatisfaction in this population group may represent a slightly different pathway of allegiances not delineated in the existing literature. Conspicuously, lacking are also the empirical studies that would explore how body dissatisfaction can contribute to the rise in appearance-related bullying, and that would explore how various coping mechanisms may consequently moderate the effects on overall well-being. Such insufficient understanding of the mechanism adversely affects the potential to develop effective interventions that may otherwise provide a break in this pathological process. Until these interconnected pathways between body dissatisfaction, bullying experiences, coping response, and ultimately Life Satisfaction are unpacked, methods of supporting the mental health of Generation Z may not reap the benefits of targeted intercession that may, in turn, lead to further improvements in the mental health of this generation. The study is useful in filling both the research and practice gaps because it examines bullying and coping strategies as pivotal variables between body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction among this vulnerable group.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the direct relationship between body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction among Generation Z.
2. To investigate the mediating role of bullying in the pathway from body dissatisfaction to Life Satisfaction among Generation Z.
3. To assess whether coping strategies (maladaptive) mediate the relationship between body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction among Generation Z.

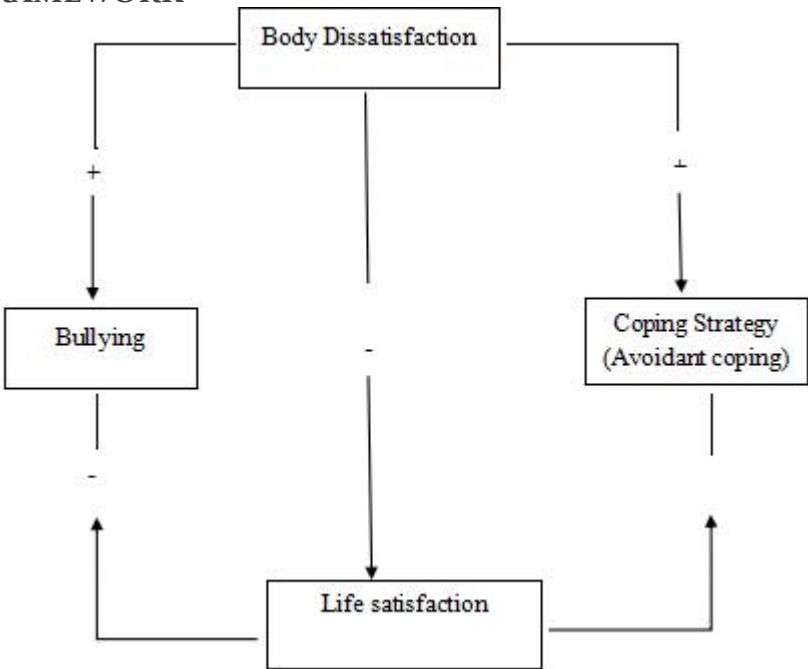
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the direct effect of body dissatisfaction on Life Satisfaction among Generation Z?
2. Does bullying mediate the relationship between body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction?
3. Do coping strategies (maladaptive) mediate the body dissatisfaction-Life Satisfaction relationship.

HYPOTHESIS

- H1. There is a negative relationship of Body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction among Generation Z.
- H2. Bullying have mediating effect on the relationship between body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction.
- H3. Maladaptive coping strategies significantly mediate the relationship of body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



RESEARCH DESIGN

This cross-sectional study examined the pathways linking body dissatisfaction to well-being among Generation Z, with bullying and coping strategies as mediators. Data were collected from undergraduate and graduate students (ages 18–26) across colleges and universities in Islamabad, using purposive sampling to target individuals.

SAMPLE

The sample for the main study of this research also comprised of Generation Z (18-27 years), (N = 200) using purposive sampling technique from Islamabad.

TABLE 1: GENDER WISE SAMPLE DETAIL (N=200)

Male	Female
100	100

INSTRUMENTS

BODY IMAGE CONCERN INVENTORY (BICI) (LITTLETON 2005)

The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI), developed by Littleton in 2005, is a 19-item self-report measure designed to assess concerns related to body dissatisfaction, particularly focusing on dysmorphic concern. Participants are asked to rate how often they experience the feelings or behaviors described in each item on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The BICI captures various dimensions of body dissatisfaction, including body image discrepancy, body image shame, and appearance-related anxiety. The scale has shown strong internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of .93, indicating high reliability. The BICI is a valuable tool for understanding the impact of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem and life satisfaction, making it an appropriate instrument for this study focused on Generation Z.

SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE (SWLS) (DIENER ET AL., 1985)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. 1985, is a short, 5-item scale designed to measure an individual's overall cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. Unlike other scales that measure specific aspects of well-being, the SWLS focuses on a person's subjective evaluation of their life as a whole. Respondents rate the items using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), providing a

wide range of responses. The SWLS does not include any reverse-coded items, as all 5 items are positively worded. Regarding psychometric properties, the SWLS demonstrates excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging between 0.80 and 0.90.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL PEER-VICTIMIZATION SCALE (MPVS)(MYNARD & JOSEPH, 2000)

Mynard and Joseph (2000) created the Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale (MPVS). The MPVS is a 16-item $\alpha = 0.82$ self-report tool intended to evaluate the different forms of bullying that teenagers have encountered throughout the previous academic year. On a three-point rating system, respondents indicate how frequently they experience bullying behaviors such physical violence, verbal abuse, social manipulation, and property damage: Not at all (0), Once (1), and more than once (2). The potential scores for each subscale range from 0 to 8. The influence of bullying as a mediator between body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among Generation Z will be assessed using this scale in the current study.

BRIEF COPING SCALE (CARVER, 1989)

This study of Brief Coping Scale will use the 28 item brief form which was originally a sixty item inventory in the year 1989 by Carver. It is in a four point likert system: "such as 1 = I usually do not do this at all; 4 = I usually do this a lot". It estimates the variations of coping strategies, which are classified on three sub-types, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping. The internal consistency of the tool was checked on student sample and it came out to be between 0.62 and 0.92, the test retest reliability coefficient ranged between 0.46 and 0.86.

PROCEDURE

Sample for this study is consisted of Generation Z of ages 18-27 years, selected from the area of Islamabad. A purposive sampling. technique was followed to recruit participant based on their availability and willingness. Permission was granted by colleges in Islamabad to collect the data from the student. The college administration was nice and cooperative. All participant has to sign the consent form and were briefed on the study's purpose, ensuring the confidentiality and providing the instruction for completing the questionnaire. Structured questionnaires were self-administered and the paper-and-pencil technique was employed to administer the same with each questionnaire taking only 10-15 minutes to complete in average. Participant were asked whether they want refreshment, which were provided as a appreciation. We thank the administrator for the cooperation. The data was processed for statistical analysis (Descriptive statistic, Regression, and correlation).

RESULTS

The analysis of data from Generation Z regarding body dissatisfaction together with self-esteem and coping strategies and life satisfaction relationships used SPSS version 26. The analysis of body dissatisfaction versus overall life satisfaction relationships includes descriptive statistics with correlation analyses and regression analysis and mediation models. This result provides dedicated attention to how self-esteem functions as a mediator alongside different coping strategies that encompass emotion-, problem-, and avoidant-focused strategies.

4.1 INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DATA

Table 2 has revealed alpha coefficients of all instruments, mean, standard deviation, the actual and potential range of scores and skewness and kurtosis of data distribution.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND ALPHA RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS SCALE (N= 200)

Sr.	Scale	No. of Items	α	M	SD	Range		S	K
						Actual	Potential		
1	BD	19	.77	60.93	11.71	22 – 90	19 – 95	-0.06	1.08
2	LS	5	.55	18.99	6.00	5 – 35	5 – 35	-0.16	0.74
3	CS	29	.86	81.72	10.64	36 – 99	28 – 112	-1.30	3.03
	AFC	8	.75	23.55	3.32	13 – 30	8 – 32	-0.94	1.08
4	BS	24	.82	41.25	10.10	18 – 68	24 – 96	. 0.15	. -0.45

Note: BD= Body Dissatisfaction, LS= Life Satisfaction, CS= Coping strategies, AFC= Avoidant Focused Coping, BS= Bullying scale a= Alpha reliability, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, S = Skewness, K = Kurtosis

Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients for Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics for every study variable. With a mean score of 60.93 (SD = 11.71), the Body Dissatisfaction scale ($\alpha = .77$) has high internal consistency. With a mean score of 18.99 (SD = 6.00), the Life Satisfaction scale ($\alpha = .55$) exhibits comparatively low internal consistency, indicating caution when interpreting conclusions based on this measure. With a mean score of 21.54 (SD = 7.62). The Coping Scale's great internal consistency is supported by its outstanding reliability ($\alpha = .86$) and mean score of 81.72 (SD = 10.64). With means of 22.85 (SD = 4.95) and 35.33 (SD = 6.73), respectively, the coping subscales, Avoidant-Focused Coping (AFC $\alpha = .65$) exhibit respectable reliability. The bullying scale $\alpha = .82$ and mean and skewness is in normal range. The majority of variables' skewness and kurtosis values fall within permissible bounds, indicating roughly normalcy.

TABLE 3: SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE (N = 200)

DEMOGRAPHICS	DESCRIPTION	F	%
AGE	Early Adults (18-22)	61	30.5
	Late Adults (23-27)	139	69.5
GENDER	Male	100	50
	Female	100	50
EDUCATION	High School	73	36.5
	Bachelor's	90	45.0
	Master's or Higher	37	18.5

Table 3 presents the sample's socio demographic details (N = 200). The majority of participants (69.5%) are late adults (ages 23–27), with 30.5% of the sample being early adults (ages 18–22). The sample's gender distribution is equal, with 50% of participants being men and 50% being women. Those with a bachelor's degree (45.0%) are the most educated group, followed by high school graduates (36.5%) and those with a master's degree or above (18.5%).



To explore the associations between body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, coping styles, and life satisfaction, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted. The results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4: PEARSON CORRELATION AMONG BODY DISSATISFACTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION (N=200)

VARIABLE	1	2
BODY DISSATISFACTION	-	-.26**
LIFE SATISFACTION	-	-

Note: ***p<.00, **p<.01, *p<.05

Table 4 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients that look at the connections between coping mechanisms, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and body dissatisfaction. Life happiness and body dissatisfaction were shown to be significantly correlated negatively ($r = -0.26$, $p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1, which states that life satisfaction decreases as body dissatisfaction increases.

To the mediating role of Bullying between Body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction, a mediation analysis was conducted.

TABLE 5: MEDIATION ANALYSIS FOR BULLYING BETWEEN BODY DISSATISFACTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION (N=200)

Paths	B	T	P	F	β	R ²
Path a (BD → BS)	0.215	3.412	0.001	11.642	0.231	0.053
Path b (BS → LS)	-0.187	-2.987	0.003	8.923	-0.208	0.043
Path c (BD → LS, Total Effect)	-0.276	-4.893	<0.001	23.941	-0.302	0.091
Path c' (BD→ LS, Direct Effect)	-0.236	-4.215	<0.001	17.766	-0.258	0.067

Note:BD= Body Dissatisfaction, LS= Life Satisfaction, BS= Bullying scale, β = Standardized regression coefficient, B= Unstandardized coefficient

The mediation analysis reveals three key findings about these relationships. First, Path a demonstrates that body dissatisfaction significantly predicts greater bullying victimization ($B = 0.215$, $p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.231$), explaining 5.3% of the variance in BS. Second, Path b shows that increased bullying significantly predicts lower life satisfaction ($B = -0.187$, $p = 0.003$, $\beta = -0.208$), accounting for 4.3% of variance in LS. The total effect of BD on LS is significant ($B = -0.276$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = -0.302$), explaining 9.1% of variance. When controlling for BS, the direct effect remains significant but is reduced ($B = -0.236$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = -0.258$), indicating partial mediation. The significant indirect effect ($B = -0.040$, calculated as 0.215×-0.187) suggests that about 14.5% of BD's negative impact on LS operates through increased bullying, while the remaining 85.5% is explained by other direct mechanisms. These results support the hypothesis that bullying partially mediates the BD-LS relationship, though most of the effect remains direct.

TABLE 6: EFFECT PATHWAYS SUMMARY

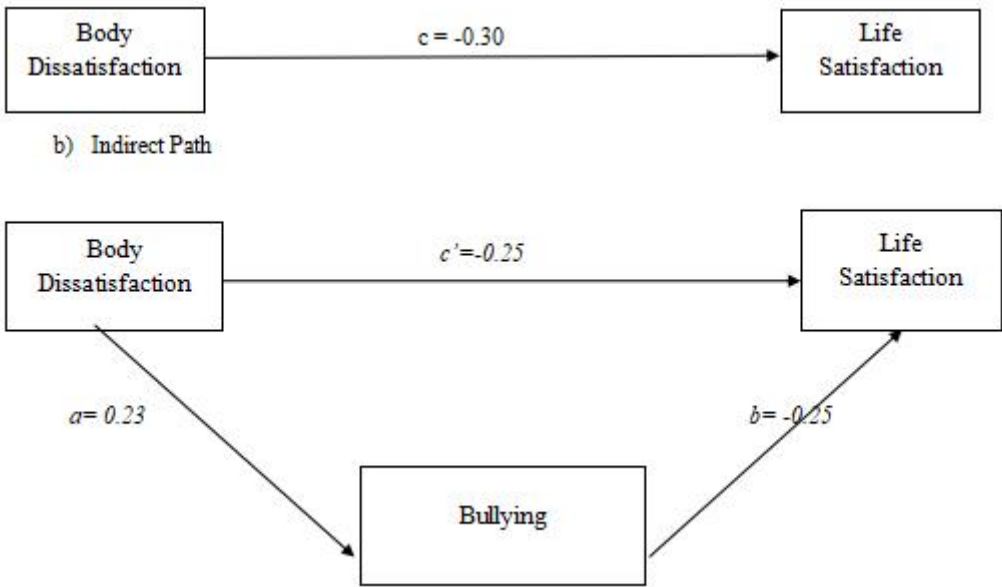
Pathways	B	T	P	F	R ²	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effects (BD → LS)	0.236	-4.215	<0.001	17.766	0.067	-0.338	-0.112
Indirect Effects (BD → BS → LS)	-0.040					-0.082	-0.012
Total Effects (BD → LS)	-0.276	-4.893	<0.001	23.941	0.091	-0.422	-0.208

Note: B = coefficient, p = significance, Direct effect (BD → LS), The indirect effect is (BD → BS, BS → LS), The total effect = (direct effect + indirect effect) calculated using bootstrapping

The analysis reveals a significant relationship between Body Dissatisfaction (BD) and Life Satisfaction (LS), with bullying (BS) playing a partial mediating role. The total effect shows BD has a substantial negative impact on LS (B = -0.276, p < .001), explaining 9.1% of the variance in life satisfaction. When examining the direct effect while controlling for bullying, BD remains a strong predictor of LS (B = -0.236, p < .001), accounting for 6.7% of the variance. The significant indirect effect (B = -0.040, 95% CI [-0.082, -0.012]) confirms that bullying victimization partially mediates this relationship, representing approximately 14.5% of the total effect. These findings indicate that while body dissatisfaction primarily affects life satisfaction through other mechanisms, bullying victimization contributes meaningfully to this relationship. The negative coefficients across all pathways consistently demonstrate that higher body dissatisfaction leads to both increased bullying experiences and decreased life satisfaction, with bullying accounting for a modest but significant portion of this detrimental effect.

FIGURE 4

a) Direct Path



To the mediating role of Avoidant Coping Strategy between Body dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction, a mediation analysis was conducted.

TABLE 7: MEDIATION ANALYSIS FOR AVOIDANT COPING STRATEGY BETWEEN BODY DISSATISFACTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION (N=200)

Paths	B	T	P	F	β	R ²
Path a (BD → AC)	0.0816	4.2294	0.0000	17.8875	0.2878	0.0829
Path b (AC → LS)	-0.2956	-2.3073	0.0221	10.0998	-0.1635	0.0930
Path c (BD → LS, Total Effect)	-0.1342	-3.8155	0.0002	14.5580	-0.2617	0.0685
Path c' (BD → LS, Direct Effect)	-0.1100	-3.0295	0.0028	10.0998	-0.2146	0.0930

Note:BD= Body Dissatisfaction, LS= Life Satisfaction, AC= Avoidant Coping, β = Standardized regression coefficient, B= Unstandardized coefficient

The mediation analysis's findings show a strong correlation between life satisfaction (LS), avoidant coping (AC), and body dissatisfaction (BD). Path "a" demonstrates that BICI has a modest effect size ($\beta = 0.2878$), explains 8.29% of the variation in AC ($R^2 = 0.0829$), and substantially predicts AC ($B = 0.0816$, $t = 4.2294$, $p < 0.01$). With a minor effect size ($\beta = -0.1635$) and a significant prediction of SLS ($B = -0.2956$, $t = -2.3073$, $p = 0.0221$), path "b" shows that AC explains 9.30% of the variation in SLS ($R^2 = 0.0930$). BICI's overall impact on SLS (Path "c") is modest ($\beta = -0.2617$) and significant ($B = -0.1342$, $t = -3.8155$, $p = 0.0002$), accounting for 6.85% of the variation in SLS ($R^2 = 0.0685$). The direct impact of BD on LS (Path "c' ") remains significant ($B = -0.1100$, $t = -3.0295$, $p = 0.0028$), with a higher effect size ($\beta = -0.2146$), explaining 9.30% of the variation in LS. These data show that avoidant coping somewhat mediates the association between body dissatisfaction and life happiness, but the direct effect of body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction remains considerable.

Table 8: Effect Pathways Summary

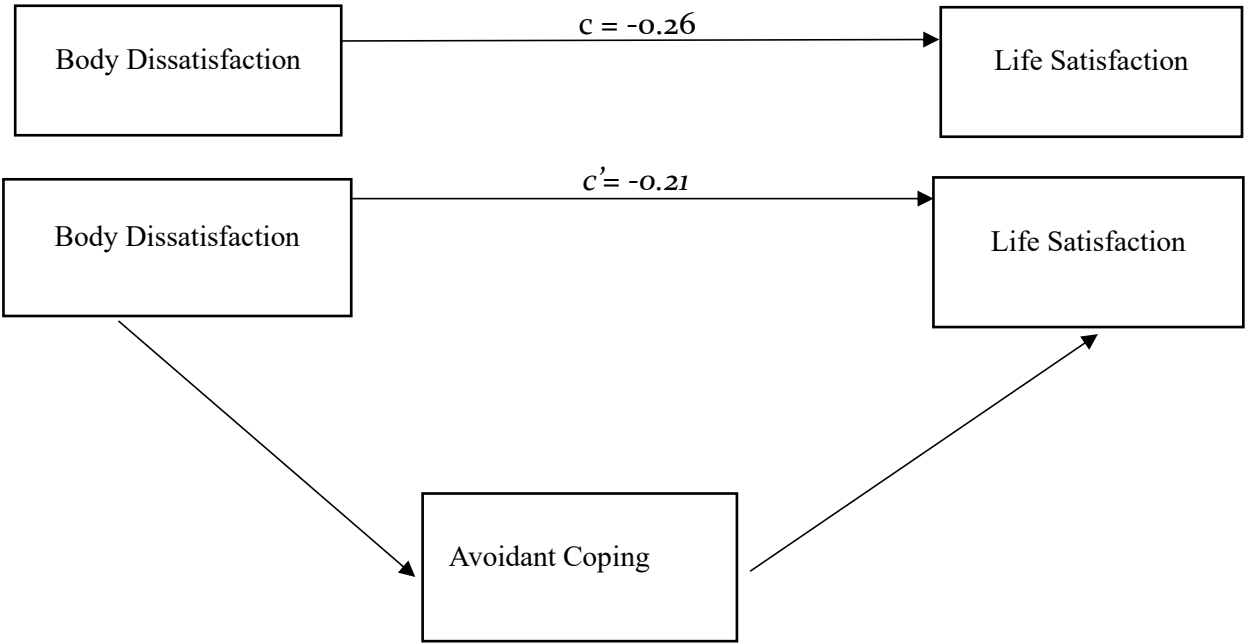
Pathways	B	T	P	F	R ²	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effects (BD → LS)	-0.1100	-3.0295	0.0028	10.0998	0.0930	-0.1817	-0.0384
Indirect Effects (BD → AC → LS)	-0.0241	—	—	—	—	-0.0485	-0.0023
Total Effects (BD → LS)	-0.1342	-3.8155	0.0002	14.5580	0.0685	-0.2035	-0.0648

Note: B = coefficient, p = significance, Direct effect (BD → LS), The indirect effect is (BD → AC, AC → LS), The total effect = (direct effect + indirect effect) calculated using bootstrapping.

Body Dissatisfaction (BD) had a statistically significant overall impact on Life Satisfaction (LS) ($B = -0.1342$, $t = -3.8155$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.0685$). The direct effect of BD on LS persisted even after controlling for the mediating effect of Avoidant-Focused Coping (AC) ($B = -0.1100$, $t = -3.0295$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.0930$). With a 95% CI ranging from -0.0485 to -0.0023, the indirect impact through avoidant-focused coping was also statistically significant ($B = -0.0241$), indicating that avoidant-focused coping partially mediates the association between life satisfaction and body dissatisfaction

Figure 6

a) Direct Path



DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between body dissatisfaction, bullying, avoidant coping, and life satisfaction among Generation Z individuals. The findings support existing literature while providing novel insights into the mechanisms underlying these associations. Our results demonstrated a significant negative correlation between body dissatisfaction and life satisfaction ($r = -0.26$, $p < .01$), reinforcing previous research that highlights body image concerns as a robust predictor of diminished psychological well-being (Grogan, 2021). This aligns with sociocultural theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that upward social comparisons particularly in appearance-focused environments like social media can lead to negative self-evaluations and reduced life satisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2020).

The current study's findings regarding bullying as a mediator offer substantial contributions to our understanding of the psychological pathways linking body dissatisfaction to diminished life satisfaction. The results confirmed Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that bullying serves as a significant partial mediator in this relationship, with an indirect effect of $B = -0.040$ (95% CI [-0.082, -0.012]). This mediation pathway warrants careful theoretical and practical consideration. The stress-vulnerability model (Monroe & Simons, 1991) provides a robust framework for interpreting these findings. According to this model, body dissatisfaction operates as a chronic stressor that increases susceptibility to negative environmental influences, including peer victimization. Our results align with this perspective, showing that individuals with higher body dissatisfaction are more likely to experience bullying (Path a: $\beta = 0.231$, $p = .001$), which subsequently leads to decreased life satisfaction (Path b: $\beta = -0.208$, $p = .003$).

The research validated that avoidant coping mediation analysis indicated that BD was a significant predictor of AC (path a: 0.2878 , $p < .001$) which was a significant negative predictor of LS (path b: -0.1635 , $p < .05$) in addition to the fact that there was a significant negative path between BD and LS. This observation is consistent with what the recent empirical evidence reports. As an example, studies have found that greater body

appreciation is linked to reduced avoidance coping mechanisms and these avoidance behaviors show a negative relationship with total psychological well-being (e.g., self-acceptance and subjective well-being) in adult samples in women, using pathway analyses, respectively, these indirect paths via avoidance were significant, and partial as would indicate similar mediation. In adult women, but not in their men, the probability of mediation effects like yours has been significant, partial, indicated at least (Ruggieri et al., 2024). The findings also advocate the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which indicates that the body image issues are considered uncontrollable and the individuals will be inclined to participate in avoidance, which is a maladjusted manner by which distress is enhanced.

LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION

There are numerous limitations that must be taken into account in this study. First, it has used convenience sampling of universities in Islamabad, a limitation that limits the other population findings to generalizations. Second, the study cannot infer the causal relationship between body dissatisfaction, bullying, coping styles and well-being because it was a cross-sectional study. Third, the self-report measures are also subject to response biases (usually social desirability) and are limited in the amount of objectivity that can be attained in data (e.g. behavioral observations). Lastly, they did not take into consideration various confounding factors such as the frequency of use on social media or the influence of the family that might interfere with the reported associations. Future research ought to address these drawbacks using longitudinal designs to derive causal pathways and involving more and representative forms of sampling. Consideration of more intervening and moderating variables (e.g., self-esteem and social support) would help obtain a more detailed picture of the dynamics between body dissatisfaction and well-being. Future studies should incorporate additional coping strategies (e.g., emotion regulation, cognitive reappraisal) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of protective mechanisms. Comparative research across generations (e.g., Millennials vs. Gen Z) is needed to examine cohort-specific patterns in the body dissatisfaction-well-being pathway. Based on these findings, practical interventions, e.g., school-based programs of appearance-related bullying reduction and workshops of adaptive coping skills promotion, can be created. Generational and cross-cultural differences also represent an area that should be studied further so that the results could be more applicable.

IMPLICATION

The results of the research have great implications to research and practice. This study has been able to construct and expand on theory development, such as the Transactional Model of Stress, in relation to the Generation Z, through working out the process through which body dissatisfaction relates to well-being through bullying and maladaptive coping tools. In practice, findings demonstrate the importance of school-based interventions addressed to appearance-related bullying and adaptive coping styles implementation and the fact that mental health professionals would need to become active in using these mediators in working with body image issues. On a policymaking scale, the results of the study recommend the tightening of the rules on what kinds of social media content can be promoted that promotes unrealistic beauty standards and more spending on prevention of mental health measures within the educational system. The research concludes by requesting that a multisystem response which includes clinicians, educators, policymakers and families is necessary to address the adverse pathways that body dissatisfaction has in leading to lower well-being in such a risky group.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that body dissatisfaction undermines the well-being of Generation Z through both direct effects and indirect pathways involving bullying and maladaptive coping. Appearance-related bullying encourages avoidant coping, which further harms mental health, especially in the pressure-filled digital environment. These findings highlight the need for integrated interventions that combine anti-bullying measures, body positivity initiatives, and coping skills training. Mental health professionals should address these interconnected factors together, and future longitudinal research should explore protective elements and the role of social media in shaping these dynamics. Ultimately, body image, peer relations, and stress management must be tackled systemically to protect youth well-being.

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