GENDERED PERSPECTIVE OF BEAUTY AND BODY IMAGE

وَمَن يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ
فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY

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I, **Subaita Zubair**, hereby state that my Ph.D. dissertation titled **"Gendered Perspective of Beauty and Body Image"** is my work. It has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from **Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad,** or anywhere else in Pakistan/world.

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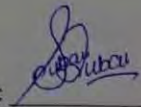
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This is to certify that the research work presented in this thesis, entitled **"Gendered Perspective of Beauty and Body Image"** was conducted by **Ms. Subaita Zubair,** under the supervision of Dr. Saadia Abid, Assistant Professor Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

No part of this thesis has been submitted anywhere else for any other degree. This thesis is submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Field of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

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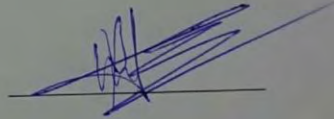
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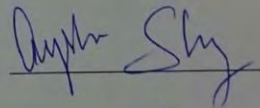Name of Scholar   Ms. Subaita Zubair

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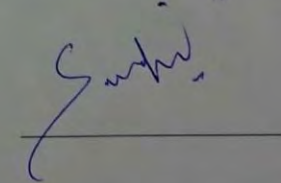
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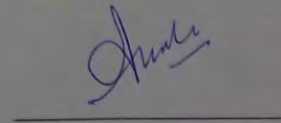   (External Examiner)

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Dedication

To Mughees Ahmad, Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Amna Atif, and Iffat Ara:

Beautiful humans with graceful souls, and captivating hearts

May the heavenly spirits rest in peace

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates gender perception and the definition of beauty and body image. Specifically, it examines gender differences in the conceptualization of beauty and body by cataloging its influence, preference, concerns, and if beauty acts as a means to achieve a specific end. The sample included unmarried late adolescents (age 18-24) and early adults (age 24-34) from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Purposive sampling is applied, and in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation assisted data collection. The respondents are 17 males and 17 females, of which seven were gym-goers. Social comparison and objectification theory are utilized, and thematic analysis is used as a qualitative paradigm. The findings suggest that the journey of beauty and body can be described as a progression. It moves from outward beauty to inner beauty. Regarding the evaluation of attractiveness, generally, upward comparisons are made by men while describing a woman's beauty. Women indulge in both types of comparisons, i.e., upward, and downward, as well as appearance-related comparisons concerning body fat and fitness with peers and family members. The objectification of men's bodies is not much exercised, unlike that of women, because patriarchal society is identified as a general justification. The factor of religion plays its influential role in hindering women's objectification explicitly, but covertly and subliminally, it exists. Women's beauty and men's financial status played their part in determining the attractiveness of individuals. The result of my study shows that the attitude of gym-goers towards their bodies was more indulging as compared to the general society. My research has some limitations, and future inquiries can involve the early adolescence and late adulthood phase of life. The sample size, age, and status of those who went to the gym as well as the general population could be increased. The effects of pregnancy can be studied on the female body. It can consider their attitude and those of people around them towards it. Comprehension of rural people can also enormously contribute to the meaning of beauty and body image in that setting. Lastly, consideration of class, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds could be considered while studying these concepts. Regardless of theorizing, analyzing, and contextualizing the underlying meaning of beauty and body in contemporary culture, we humans are no less

enthralled by its display. Even if we disavow, beauty is ultimately used to valorize its discursive power to define the good, desirable, moral, and what is beautiful is good. As much as we may find solace in the well-worn adages that never judge a book by its cover and beauty is in the eye of the beholder, our daily experience in the social world, and even our responses to the body beautiful, tells us that reality is usually quite the opposite. We are all beholders, and we are all looking far beyond the surface of the skin.

OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 outlines the statement of the problem guiding this qualitative research. It also covers the theoretical background of the research problem under review, the objectives, and the significance of the study. The chapter has highlighted why this topic was necessary to investigate the phenomena of beauty and body image and how it will advance new ways of understanding.

Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the relevant literature which addresses the topic of beauty and body image. This chapter is divided into two main headings. Firstly, it elaborates on the concept of beauty, encompassing the works on beauty stereotypes, the comprehension of attractiveness, and beauty premium. It concludes on the transforming trends of beauty and its considerations in spouse selection. The concept of beauty and body are understood via the journey of adolescence to adulthood. The chapter is further narrowed down to the concept of the body in terms of symbolic value and docile characteristics. The literature review continues its focus on two dominant methods by which a beautiful and physically fit body is achieved, i.e., exercise and dieting. Finally, it highlights the significance of culture in establishing the ideals of beauty in a society.

Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative methods used. The research methodology chapter includes information on the chosen site of study, characteristics of participants interviewed for the research, i.e., the unmarried men and women, and the sampling techniques utilized. It further focuses on the verification of ethnographic data and the processes by which the research questions are formulated for the interviews. Ethical considerations of the study are stated along with the researcher's reflexivity regarding the research journey. The limitations of the study, which will shape any future research, are also indicated.

Chapter 4 the division of dissertation sections is assembled by grounding them on major themes that are established from the study findings and objectives. In this chapter, the conceptualization and social construction of beauty and body image discuss the first objective of the research. It highlights the definition of beauty and

body image according to the indigenous youth of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and their perception and thinking patterns connected to these concepts in Pakistani society. Furthermore, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the progressing theme, both the inner and outer beauty. It is perceived as a passage from physical presentation to personality traits. The chapter is based on the differential preference of men and women concerning beauty parameters and the desired body. It begins by debating the social of skin color and identifying the preferred and undesired complexion by gender. The skin color choices reflect different social stereotypes, Pakistani thinking patterns, familial construction of its desirability, and the role of other communicative mediums. Likewise, the beauty marker of height is interpreted and comprehended. The chapter finally discusses in detail the body, which is considered desirable, preferable, and undesired, based on the individual and social parameters.

Chapter 5 presents the socio-cultural understanding of beauty and body image, according to gender perception. The subchapters are addressed on the second and third objectives of the study, i.e., to explore comprehension of beauty while categorizing its influence, preference, and concerns and examining the proposition that beauty and body are utilized as a means to achieve certain ends. Firstly, it presents the sociocultural construction of an attractive individual by highlighting the differing opinions of males and females. The second theme discusses the veracity of beauty as a means to an end, by citing different personal and public spheres in which this concept is perceived and practiced. Thirdly, as the ideal body image is created by society, the focus is shifted to the other kind of body, i.e., the fat body. The fat body concern is seen to develop in a particular situation, specifically concerning marriage proposals. Finally, this knowledge is gained by narrating the individual's thoughts and their collective understanding of the body before and after marriage.

Chapter 6 is created with the research understanding as it deals with the processes involved in the development of a beautiful body. It finalizes the series of findings chapters by highlighting the factors and social agents that play their role in influencing the body image of a person. The chapter continues with the successive knowledge that in attaining a desired or socially constructed body, two significant

mechanisms are utilized, i.e., dieting and exercise. This section explores the motivational factors behind these two approaches. Moreover, the other identified factors, such as the modes of investment, which play their role in body modification and beauty enhancement, are mentioned. Finally, yet importantly, once the cycle of these stages is completed, the objectification matter is identified. The body is seen as a project to be worked on out of social pressure, self-interest, patriarchal expectations, and media messages.

Chapter 7 discusses the important results of this dissertation and validates the theoretical framework. The first part debates the sociocultural dynamics and individual explanations of beauty and body image. It highlights the objective of my study, which deals with the definitions of these two phenomena, as it progresses from inner to outer beauty. Secondly, it highlights the stereotype and beliefs linked to beauty, leading to the concepts of sexuality and veiling. The chapter unfolds with the aspect of investment and the prevalence of institutions, which play their role in body modification. It further identifies the ascribed and achieved statuses regarding physical characteristics. Moreover, the differential characteristics identified among gym-goers and non-gym-goers are explained. It described their collective connotations about the body in the gym and the idea of gym culture. Finally, it has provided insights for future research.

Chapter 8 summarizes the major points and conclusions of my qualitative study. The study has expanded the understanding of how the body is owned by society and the meanings culture bestows. The men's and women's voices and volumes of differences in their opinion and approach were heard and reported.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within a society that is ideal-focused in nature, men and women experience *theirs* and *other* beautified bodies in diverse ways. The voices emphasizing to stay fit and beautiful seldom halt, and the double meanings concerning perfections and imperfections continue to prevail. The indirect messages regarding a beautiful, desirable person speak louder than the direct ones, and ultimately the expectation is to be an epitome of beauty.

The study's background question is that what is the conception and understanding of beauty and body image for young men and women of Pakistan? My curiosity urged me to find out how the youth from urban areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi perceive these phenomena. The billboards on brands that target facial attractiveness, the cloth lines that fit the perfectly shaped models, and a society in which people still turn their heads when a beautiful person passes by regardless of gender have directed me towards an aim. The goal of the dissertation is to study the concerns, perceptions, knowledge, and actions of youth towards the contemporary societal picture of beauty and body image. After the identification of the topic, the next task was to select an approach that is best for its understanding. The anthropological method of inquiring about the participant's narratives is employed.

Anthropology has asked questions about what human appearance and body image indicate regarding culture and what effects culture has on human appearance and body image (Anderson-Fye, 2012). I believe there is a need is to build and expand scholarly knowledge of these longstanding and contemporary phenomena[1]; as a native person from Pakistan is positioned on the hologram of ideal standards, surrounded by the cultural frame of values, roles, expectations, and societal judgments concerning beauty and body. Another reason for this need is, beauty and body are symbiotic constructs, and the expectations and definitions linked with them by different socializing vehicles are to be explored in this interdependent society. People see what

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[1] Beauty and body image.

is followed and practiced regarding a beautiful body, and this is internalized in their socialization from childhood to adult student life and spouse selection.

The interest of Anthropology lies in the study of human appearance, and it is both "descriptive and interpretive" (Anderson-Fye, 2012, p. 16) in nature. Hence, my query is when we utter beauty and body, does it bridge the subjective and objective perception of it simultaneously? A fair-complexioned person is perceived as white because this color is their objective feature, but what is the magnitude of its subjective explanation and expectation?

The observer has its meaning attached to the skin color, while a society with its institutions has its diverse beliefs about it. The religious and moral voice generally says, "never judge a person on their color." The motherly voice pulls you towards it by saying do not go out in the sun, it will make your skin black, and this affects future marriage proposals, for the in-laws are seeking a beautiful fair moon-like bride. The voice of peers gives tips and suggestions on lightening skin. The inner voice says I am good with myself, but this *but* makes some of them stand up for looking after their bodies to fulfill the current beauty standards or stay fit ideally.

The voices we hear regarding a man that is considered ideal in Pakistani society what about that? A heighted man, with a mustache and a beard or a man having a clean shave with broad shoulders and a big car, which one is readily acceptable? Does the size of a man's body matter to a woman, or the weight of his wallet have more importance? The culture says that beauty is with women, and the criteria of beauty for men are their financial strength. Does a man need to be perfect or fulfill the ideal beauty standards to be selected as a mate, or the cultural voice continue to teach him that he is a prince and will get any princess? Lastly, are his noble principles preferred over his physical attributes? Through all the views, I tried to locate Pakistan's indigenous voice of unmarried man and woman; how they infer the hundreds of beauty and body messages that reach them in daily lives.

How much of these voices and messages matter to the youth? Does it have any effect on their thinking, behaviors, and feelings towards their bodies and of others? Do they

comply with current beauty ideals; do they stay indifferent or follow inner will and motivation? How the youth perceive and reflect their views? Finally, how they think the opposite gender comprehends beauty and body image while standing at the center of this society, with the aura of culture and collectivism surrounding them.

Previous and recent researches enabled me to conceptualize this dissertation's conceptual framework. The Greek Philosopher Plato describes beauty as that which is noble and admirable; and not that Plato implies that beauty means the same thing as virtue or good, but more specifically that beauty facilitates the discovery of the good because "beautiful things strike everyone and arouse everyone's curiosity" (Pappas, 2016, p.1). It is also understood that there is a reason why we perceive something as beautiful, for beauty also does not exist *just like that.* Regarding the evolutionary patterns, the physical human beauty is judged, such as a person having patterns of childlike characteristics, i.e., big eyes, full lips, thin eyebrows, small nose, and chin (Baudouin & Tiberghien, 2004) or consideration of the sexual organs.

If we speak of the historical timeline, beauty has been divided into inner beauty, which is used to describe the goodness of personality and attitude, and outer beauty, concerned with aesthetic appearance. It is argued that philosophically and artistically, these two subsets of beauty are interrelated (Metzner, 2012). Besides the beauty of any kind and various inferences linked with it, in numerous parts of the world, great rewards are given to those who conform to the ideals being set regarding a beautiful person, i.e., they are the recipients of favorable treatment, their employment chances are better, and are perceived as smarter, healthier, happier, more socially competent, and successful.

On the other hand, those individuals who do not conform to these ideals get stigmatized (Cash, 2011). This feeds *what is beautiful is good* phenomenon, which continues to remain embedded in Pakistan's society too, according to my study findings. In accord with this point of view, attractive individuals per societal definition continue to be perceived more accurately and favorably. Individuals' perception of others gets affected by this phenomenon, particularly regarding their

competence and positive personality traits regarding one's attractive and unattractive appearance (Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010).

Keeping all these factors in mind, my study focused exclusively on adolescent and adult unmarried men and women to explore the perception and effects of ideal forms of beauty and body. In this phase of life, an individual mind, body, and social life fluctuates intensely, and adolescents are especially susceptible to the messages delivered by the appearance culture (Wertheim & Paxton, 2011). It has been shown by the research that as many as 50% of the adolescent boys and 70% of adolescent girls hope for modifying the way they look and are discontented with their bodies (Wertheim & Paxton, 2012).

In shaping a person's thoughts and feelings about their body as well as a person's perception regarding ideal body appearance, several factors play their role. The factors in a sociocultural context, i.e., the dominant narratives of beauty, "ways of knowing," and culturally specific and fluctuating beliefs and values play their influential central roles in both cases (Tai Soon, 2013). Given that, there is a difference in what is deemed an ideal body image by diverse ethnic and cultural groups and by different people all over the world (Dlova et al., 2014; Baumann, 2008).

It is also that the frequency of societal messages that are repeatedly telling people how to look and how not to look is intensifying in their occurrence. Appearance culture tends to concentrate more on women, but the focus of society has also intensified male appearance. Due to this reason, boys, and men intensely and gradually perceive their bodies as projects to work on (Murnen & Don, 2012). What my study has found regarding this intensity? The following chapters will reveal in detail.

Sutherland (2011) argues that the dominant narratives of beauty not only encourage individuals to conform to them but also shape how they perceive themselves and their worth. In the coming chapters, my research will uncover that even in Pakistan beauty narratives exist, and if individuals are not adhering to them completely then there is a likelihood that they are judging others on its basis.

Apart from these implications, previous research indicated how idealized images are processed cognitively which stands as a key determinant in studying the impact those images have on the self-perception of beauty or attractiveness (Mills, Shannon & Hogue, 2017). To date, few studies have investigated indigenous meaning and comprehension of body and beauty ideation in developing countries, especially Pakistan. This study is aimed to explore gender differences in defining beauty whilst experiencing aesthetics regarding human bodies and modifying oneself to gain rewards linked with ideal beauty standards.

To sum up, my research has played a role in identifying genders' perceptions regarding theirs and other physical appearance under the umbrella of collectivistic and patriarchal nature, spouse selection, objectification, and social comparison. It has shown the perception of bodily forms, i.e., favorable height, idealized complexion, and appealing body shapes. My study has stepped in to explain the beauty felt by individuals of this society according to individual differences; social construction of the concept, orthodox assumptions, and society held stereotypes related to the beauty of both perceived and ideal type.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Human beings have always coveted beautiful objects, but the desire to look good is touching new heights worldwide. When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Do you see your real reflection or the one that is expected ideally? Does your body reflection meet your perceptions of attractiveness, or do you see someone that does not meet cultural standards of beauty? If this thought prevails, then the scenario demonstrates how much your emotions are tied to your society and culture. Continuous infiltration of sociocultural messages regarding beauty and body image into our daily lives is ever increasing. The unremitting ideas highlight the need to investigate its imprints and in what ways men and women of Pakistani society diversely perceive the ideal yet unrealistic beauty phenomenon.

The changes in the societal standards about a beautiful human and the rapid sprouting of gyms and parlors in the last decade established a sign that the concern for beautification is on the rise. People are now relying on experts, trainers, and their services for achieving ideal body forms. For this reason, the study is designed to explore youth's narratives of perceptual, physical, psychological, social, and cultural characteristics regarding beauty and body. It is aimed to explore this notion at both individual and collective level in the contemporary era and how well it is engrossed by the youth.

Besides, it is indicated by the researchers that the body of a person is not a personal matter. This means that the body does not only influence how we represent ourselves but also how we appear to others (Cazzato et al., 2014). Hence, body representation involves not only subjective but also intersubjective experiences as well. Thus, in a country where matters of veiling, objectification of women, and male dominance run side by side, the questions arise that need to be answered. What are the requirements, standards, or expectations held by men and women when appearance and beauty are a serious matter of concern?

For gaining an in-depth understanding of beauty and body, a qualitative study was carried out. I believe results get generalized in a quantitative study, but firsthand knowledge, subjective feelings, underlying reasons, and justifications, as well as uncovering of trends in opinions, and thought can only be sought in detail by qualitative work.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of my study are:

1. To conceptualize the definition of beauty and body image based on the perception of youth.
2. To explore gender comprehension of beauty and body while categorizing the influence, preference, and concerns.

3. To examine the proposition that beauty and body are utilized as a means to achieve certain ends in Pakistani society.

4. To identify connective factors impacting beauty and body.

1.3 Research Questions

In the context of the purpose of the study, theories, and the literature review, the study sought to examine the following research questions:

1. How does gender as a social construct affect the conceptualization, definition, and perception of beauty (inner and outer) and body image in Pakistan?

2. What factors play their role in influencing body image and beauty in our society and act as the motivational variable?

3. What is the reality of appearance vs. character, ideal man vs. ideal woman, body shape, sizes, height, and skin color, smartness vs. fatness, and pre vs. post-marriage bodies?

4. The reality of social comparison and its indulgence, and the practice of objectification of genders in Pakistan.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

My study utilizes two distinguished theories, i.e., *social comparison theory* by Festinger (1954) and the *objectification theory* by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). Both theories will assist in the comprehension of how youth indulge in the understanding of their body by making a social comparison, keeping in mind one's bodily appearance, cultural standards, and societal messages. Moreover, it will answer whether the youth end up objectifying themselves or others under the influence of socially constructed norms and ideas of beauty.

Even though there are obvious options for choosing other theories; I would like to give reasons for not selecting them based on my research objectives and results. I will only mention two theoretical perspectives that are generally linked with body image: a

self-discrepancy theory[2] introduced by E. Tory Higgins (1987), and a sociocultural perspective by Lev Vygotsky (1978).

Self-discrepancy theory. In the body image literature, researchers typically focus on a discrepancy between how one sees one's self (actual/own) and how one would ideally like to be (ideal/own) while acknowledging that the ideal/own self might well reflect an internalization of society's standards of attractiveness (Vartanian, 2012). My research objectives did not intend to investigate the discrepancies or the gap between the two selves or the third one, i.e., the ought self. Moreover, the participants talked more about objectification, social comparison, and the reasons and types of it.

Sociocultural perspective. It is best thought of as a heuristic or conceptual model; it holds sociocultural ideals and pressures transmitted by parents, peers, and the media as paramount to the genesis of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders (Tiggemann, 2012). One of the objectives of my research was to identify the influence and connective factors in the comprehension of beauty and body, but it was not designed to explore the cause and effect relationship that particularly leads to body disorders.

In the next section, I have discussed the theories that are chosen for my study. I will begin with the theory of social comparison.

1.4.1 Social Comparison Theory

The initial theoretical structure for the social comparison theory was offered by a social psychologist named Leon Festinger (1954) who suggested that individuals through an innate process gather information relating to an attribute or some feature. The social comparison theory states that we humans desire an accurate and objective assessment of our attitudes and abilities. When we are not able to assess ourselves directly, we tend to fulfill this need for self-evaluation by comparing ourselves with other people.

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2 According to self-discrepancy theory there are three domains of self, i.e., the 'actual,' 'ought' and 'ideal.' In combination, there are six self-states described by self-discrepancy theory: actual/own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other, ought/own, and ought/other.

There is a basic distinction in social comparison theory between upward and downward comparisons. Upward social comparisons describe comparisons between an individual and a comparison target that is considered superior to the dimension of interest. Downward social comparisons involve comparisons with a target that is considered inferior to the dimension of interest and provided evidence that an individual is better than others (Kawamura, 2012).

People make comparisons with others regarding many aspects of the self, including appearance, weight, and eating habits (Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison, 2004). Men may make fewer appearance comparisons than women may; the same associations exist between habitual tendency to make appearance comparisons and negative outcomes for both genders. Females are particularly vulnerable to making appearance comparisons, in part because they tend to have a greater social orientation than males (Davidson & McCabe, 2005).

It is also consistent with the greater self-objectification pressure placed on women; their bodies are valued more in terms of appearance than competence (Halliwell, 2012). Correlational research has consistently demonstrated that making frequent appearance-related social comparisons are associated with more negative body image, higher levels of disordered eating, greater investment in appearance ideals (Halliwell, 2012), and negative outcomes (regardless of the direction of comparison) (Fardouly et al., 2015).

When it involves the selection of comparison targets, it is not only limited to the media distal world but can also be chosen from everyday life. In collectivistic societies, an individual's physical appearance is often seen as not only a reflection of the person's internal self but also a representation of the family, extended family, and perhaps even the Asian community as a whole. Because of fluid personal boundaries, it is common for individuals to hear comments or even demands regarding their physical appearances, especially from family members. Individuals who ascribe to collectivistic values also tend to engage in social comparisons to ensure they are conforming to group norms (Kawamura, 2012).

1.4.1.1 Why Chosen This Theory?

Appearance-related social comparisons are central to our body image processing. The theory was chosen because social comparison literature suggests that individuals rely heavily on social comparisons to evaluate themselves on a wide range of dimensions. Social comparisons are related to the uncertainty of the self; they are particularly frequent during adolescence and are used for the process of identity development. The way social comparisons operate is quite complex and the comparisons people make depend on individual differences in comparison tendencies as well as situational factors. Dominant cultural beliefs about appearance do influence the types of appearance comparisons individuals make and are fostering a pattern of self-depreciating comparisons. Social comparisons are central to our everyday experiences and, therefore, will be pivotal to the development of body image throughout an individual's life. (Halliwell, 2012).

Considering these suggestions and dimensions, the social comparison theory assisted in understanding the agent of socialization that the youth of Pakistan relate itself with, i.e., family, peer groups, or mass media while indulging in body comparison. The study has aimed for the comprehension of the bodily held beliefs and standards keeping beauty in mind; it is designed to know whether these images are adopted knowingly or purposely out of comparison or self-introspection. The theory has answered this question in Pakistan's context, that when genders indulge in social comparison, what is the degree of involvement, and what are the repercussions?

1.4.2 Objectification Theory

Barbara Lee Fredrickson and Toni-Ann Roberts (1997) have proposed in their objectification theory that we live in a society where on a person's outward appearance and sexual attractiveness a high value is placed. This leads the individuals to establish their self-worth by determining how well they fit in the cultural norms that are set for the appearance. A large body of research has also documented that in day-to-day living, unlike men, women are more often targeted for sexually objectifying treatment (Calogero, 2012). Even if objectification theory was developed

about women's experiences, research has explored the applicability of this framework to investigate men's experiences as well. A study has shown that men report lower self-objectification than do women, but young male adults are becoming progressively more worried about their physical aspect (Moradi & Huang, 2008).

Moreover, self-objectification processes have been considered to explain the drive for muscularity, excessive exercise, and steroid use in men (Parent & Moradi, 2011). In sum, a great number of studies grounded in objectification theory have elucidated links between self-objectification processes and relevant psychological outcomes both in the females and in the male population.

Regarding women, most of them experience some degree of state self-objectification in situations where attention has been called to their bodies. For instance, receiving catcalls, and catching someone staring at their breasts. Likewise, their gender becomes a salient feature of the immediate social context. For some women, however, this objectified lens becomes engaged virtually all the time, whether they find themselves in public or private settings (Calogero, 2012). Women's greater tendency to self-objectify as compared to men is barely surprising because we are a part of a culture in which women are drowned with media images, and social interaction largely focuses on a women's physical appearance (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998).

1.4.2.1 Why Chosen This Theory?

Objectification can happen on several different levels, from objectifying interactions on a personal level to broader social messages demanding high standards of appearance. The theory was chosen because the objectification theory provides a framework for understanding the experience of being female in a sociocultural context that sexually objectifies the female body. Moreover, it is not simply the presence of men that leads to sexual objectification, but men whose behaviors, attributes, and self-concept are organized around cultural gender ideals. They have a degree of strength and influence over women in the environment and are encouraged to visually evaluate women. Each criterion tends to elevate the others to a new level that contributes to sexual objectification

The objectification theory has helped to investigate the influence society has on youth's self-objectification and its effect on their way of physical presentation. It is also applied to answer the question that whether self or sexual objectification is targeted more at the male or female population at the hands of society and other means of mediums. The study has particularly answered and explored men's objectification in Pakistan's patriarchal society and to what extent men are objectified, based on gender perception.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Many studies on human appearances, body, and beauty have been conducted on men, women, and children by focusing on the cause and effect relationship between body and other factors of self and society. This study is significant in bringing forward the one on one in-depth perception, cognitions, and attitude of single genders, not only towards one's body but towards the opposite sex as well. Furthermore, it has rendered comprehensive views on how men and women view Pakistan's society and culture in propagating the concept and standard of beauty, beginning from the beginning to an adult phase of life.

Likewise, society does not hesitate to portray an idealized form of physical human appearance. Hence, when adolescent men and women view these imageries, the question arises whether genders get cynical regarding their actual self and idealized images. This study has presented subjective and detailed information on how the youth of Pakistani society is grasping all these ideal yet unrealistic beauty images. My research has shown that how participants believe patriarchy, societal, familial, and cultural factors contribute to gender discrimination and objectification based on the standards of ideal beauty and body in Pakistan.

It has been demonstrated by the field of anthropology that individuals understand and identify with their bodies by showing an agreement with their cultural definition of the concept of body image. For the perception of our bodies, there is no universal homogeneousness; what one culture regards as thin, fat, beautiful, or ugly will not be

considered so in another culture (Sault, 1994). My focused observation and in depth-interviews have enabled me to discern the real from the ideal, the tacit from the explicit. It has also reported how much youth connect with the transmission gates of socializing agents towards the comprehension, portrayal, and power of the body.

The study has brought forth the means to an end perspective, which posits that with the power and means of one beauty, desired results can be achieved. This requires involvement in diet, exercise, self-grooming, and fashion, as a means of self-fulfillment, self-expression, and pleasure. Lastly, my comprehensive research has unfolded the truth of whether this society engages in body-related comparison, objectification, and beauty treatments to yield appealing appearance and promising outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

On the subject of human appearance, the Anthropological field of study has exclusively involved four areas of inquiry on the following issues. Firstly, human appearance having a descriptive diversity, secondly, particular appearances are elaborated by culture through body modification and body adornment. Thirdly, interpretation, and description of beauty ideals and lastly, human appearance functioning as a symbol of group membership, either involuntary or voluntary (Anderson-Fye, 2012).

Moreover, a varied and rich ethnographic record is also provided by cultural anthropology, i.e., how the values of various people make sense of specific appearances and appearance-related practices. Cultural anthropologist is not only concerned with this query that among women how widespread the global pursuit of a thin body is, but they are also interested in the local iterations of how and why this is pursued and how it gets represented (Anderson-Fye, 2012). The same concern I intended to reflect in my study from the perspective of both genders.

The question is, what is body image, and why is this phenomenon pursued profoundly? The researchers have defined body image as a person's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings about her or his body and the psychological significance they put on their appearance (Cash et al., 2004; Grogan, 2008). In the 1980s, when the major studies of body images were conducted, they were primarily limited to girls and women. For about a decade, the interest in body image was considered the female concerns and if such apprehensions were expressed by men, then they were regarded as gay or effeminate.

Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) two decades later called attention to the fact that in body image research, boys and men have been ignored; however, among them, the body image concerns were prevalent. They referred to male body image concerns as the "Adonis complex" (termed after the Greek Mythology God who was the supreme

in masculine beauty), which ranged from slight irritations on certain appearance characteristics to sometimes overwhelming life-threatening, body image disorders.

Furthermore, another factor that may contribute to the body image disturbances was transitioning from one culture to another and experiencing a culture clash (Soh et al., 2006). This culture clash is typically experienced in the tension between the traditional values of parents and family, and the values and ideals of the new culture conveyed through media, fellow students, co-workers, and friends. Likewise, acculturation also plays an important role, which applies to the adaptation process that happens when a person belonging to one culture is introduced to other cultures (Kawamura, 2002).

Social and cultural pressures are the reason that leads to body image concerns and consequently influence individuals to show conformity to an ideal body shape that is often said to be unattainable (Tylka & Hill, 2004). The shape of the human body and inherited aesthetic inclinations are not only influenced by sociocultural factors, but the sexual selection has its influence on them as well. High shoulder to waist ratios for men, low waist to hip ratios for women, and traits like smooth and symmetrical skin are considered instinctively sexy (Etcoff, 1999).

The cultural disparity is prevalent, but there is outstanding unanimity across ethnic, class, and national boundaries. Physical characteristics change throughout our lifetime, and how well our appearance fits the ideals and expectations of our culture fundamentally influences how satisfied we are. These physical characteristics include weight, shape, and muscularity, skin color, and the shape of our face and eyes (Grogan, 2008).

To sum up, it has been shown by recent research that in all societies, attractiveness is valued regardless of age, sex, or ethnicity. It is also suggested that beauty standards and attractiveness are cross-cultural and that its standards exist collectively, which implies that the element of attraction is universal and not culturally bound (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002).

2.1 Concept of Beauty

As contended by Etcoff (1999), no definition can capture beauty in totality; however, she cites the dictionary definition of beauty as "something intrinsic to the object or simply as the pleasure an object evokes in the beholder" (p. 8). Moreover, beauty is not only about an aesthetic category that can be just applied to bodies and faces, instead, it was held by Peiss (2000), that beauty also helps to define gender, class, and social status. By this means, social relations, cultural categories, and practices contribute to form beauty ideals, which in the end, create opportunities and commercialization of beauty in all possible forms.

Likewise, it is not only about the beauty ideal that is being created in a way to grasp the viewer's attention, but there is also a factor called pleasure gained out of the aesthetic experience. According to Mish (1989), beauty can be defined as qualities that give pleasure to the senses or exalt the mind. Beautiful things cause pleasure, and it can be perceived in different ways as well as it could be more or less in intensity.

Dating back to Plato, beauty was perceived by many theorists as a property of an object, which can generate a pleasurable experience in any suitable perceiver (Tatarkiewicz, 1970). To establish the critical contributors to beauty, many psychological endeavors were inspired by the objectivist view.

On the contrary, the theorist who belonged to the Sophist's era suggested that anything could be considered beautiful if the senses are pleased by it (Tatarkiewicz, 1970). From this perspective, beauty is a function of idiosyncratic qualities of the perceiver, and all efforts to identify the laws of beauty are futile. This subjectivist view, reflected in expressions like "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" or "de gustibus non est disputandum" (taste cannot be debated), underlies the social constructivist emphasis on the historically changing and culturally relative nature of beauty (Kubovy, 2000).

It is important to study beauty because it affects everyday life, and people have this tendency to judge others and themselves per their ideal beauty image. In daily life, progressively more judgment is carried out based on how a person looks instead of what they do (Bakewell et al., 2006). Over the past century, the ideal image of female beauty has changed, but some beauty characteristics that have remained constant involve, symmetrical facial features, youthful look, and body ratios. The ideal image of beauty, both cross-culturally and time has been epitomized by these characteristics (Sarwer, Magee, & Clark, 2004).

Similarly, other characteristics that involve physical features such as bright eyes, clear skin, and lustrous hair are indicators of beauty, whereas youthful appearance or youthfulness is considered an important determining factor of beauty (Zebrowitz, Olson & Hoffman, 1993). It cannot be denied that in Western societies, beauty is every so often seen as a domain of femininity, but European novelists usually indicate that the concern for a male appearance is possibly perceived as less socially acceptable. However, it is no less prominent than a male psyche feature. The muscle-bound, smooth-skinned, semi-nude form of a male that was once a homoerotic, fringe ideal has now attained an orthodox cultural prominence in an extraordinarily shorter period (Bordo, 1999). The male body and its cultural standing in Pakistan's society are also explored in my study; the aim is to know whether the male body in the Islamic nation is represented in a similar way or differently.

When beauty is the talk of the world regardless of gender, nations, and race, then one popular phenomenon takes the stage. The stereotype of *what is beautiful is good*, acts as a lens, which enables the perceiver to make a quick judgment based on one's appearance. It is held that if an individual has looks and appealing quality irrespective of sexual orientation, then they would be perceived positively without any hesitation.

2.1.1 "What is Beautiful is Good" Stereotype

Since the saying, *what is beautiful is good* was coined by Dion and colleagues (1972) in the 1970s, the tendency to link positive personal qualities with physical attractiveness has been well documented. They suggested that those people who are

perceived as attractive by others get assigned more favorable personality traits and life outcomes. In general, people who have attractive faces are evaluated more positively and are perceived as more intelligent, healthier, socially more powerful, and competent (Zebrowitz & Rhodes, 2004).

Similarly, when the receiver of the help is an attractive individual, the helping behavior increases. Physical attractiveness can play a significant role in securing interview callbacks (Kraft, 2012). Explanations proposed by economists and social psychologists assume that people are financially or pro-socially biased towards attractive individuals. The reason is that attractiveness is a reliable marker of psychological or behavioral characteristics, e.g., personality, intelligence, trustworthiness, professional competence, or productivity (Hamermesh, 2011)

In the domain of education, physically attractive students are judged by teachers as having a higher academic ability, more intelligent, and better adjusted as compared to unattractive students (Ritts, Patterson, & Tubbs, 1992). Deryugina and Shurchkov (2015) found that attractive female university students tend to get better marks. It is confirmed by Hernández-Julián and Peters (2015), but they asserted that this is only for the students who are participating in person; beauty makes no difference for those taking an online course.

People who are thought to be attractive are repeatedly perceived as more favorable. They are deemed more admirable and smarter if they are compared with their less attractive peers. Thorndike (1920) called this assumption the halo effect, under which influence individuals who are ranked highly on one of the dimensions, i.e., attractiveness, are deemed to surpass other facets too, such as intelligence.

In contrast to "unattractiveness is bad," the assumption that "beauty is good" infiltrates the appearance culture, and the young children play their role as recipients through peers, family, and media (Smolak, 2012). Moreover, the idea that only the beautiful deserve and receive romantic love is reinforced by the mass media that plays an essential role in its propagation (Galacian, 2004). These ideas are also seen in the

form of appearance ideals related to beauty and body catered by society, its culture, and various communication channels.

The biasness is not only observed in appearance ideals, but the human body in terms of functionality and attractiveness is scrutinized and traded.

2.1.2 Attractiveness and Beauty Premium

Attractiveness is a prerequisite for femininity but not for masculinity. The word beauty always refers to the female body. Attractive male bodies are described as handsome, a word derived from the hand that applies as much to act than appearance (Freedman, 1986). Qualities of achievement and strength accompany the term handsome, and such attributes are rarely employed in the description of attractive women. These characteristics certainly do not accompany the term beauty as well, which refers only to a decorative quality. Men are instrumental; women are ornamental.

It was repeatedly found in the researches piloted between the 1950s and 1970s that the women were portrayed in advertisements as domestic, decorative, and dependent on men, and was also found to be most apprehensive about personal beauty (Gunter, 2002). In the past, girls were actively discouraged from the expression of vanity, but in terms of propriety and tidiness, girls were encouraged to be concerned with their appearance. The self of an individual was not apprehended in terms of bodily appearance, rather in terms of self-control and religious belief. In the twentieth century, with the rise of media, the emphasis deviated from a person's inward character and providing services to society towards the individual's outer beauty (Cash, 2012).

Relating to the outer beauty imageries in Pakistan, the fashion industry has also grown enormously mainly in print and electronic media, which highlights model careers boomingly. A negative influence on the body image of young university students has been triggered by the media when attractiveness is reflected through all possible angles. The result shows that as compared to women, more young men are also

showing body image dissatisfaction in Pakistan (Khan et al., 2011). Moreover, different businesses have increased rapidly all over the country, which offers awareness and consciousness about health (slimming clinics, gyms), cosmetic surgery clinics, lifestyle change gurus, and businesses like facial and stomach patching, intestinal and stomach reduction (Khan et al., 2011).

Lastly, the idea of beauty premium as demonstrated by the research empowers the individuals who are considered more attractive to earn higher incomes, receive higher student assessments, and in many other ways, get benefited (Cipriani & Zago, 2011). The cultural, societal, and individual impact was intense as the globalization of the beauty industry involved the globalization of what was believed to be attractive

This governance of the attractiveness is unquestionably observed regarding spouse selection, which I have discussed in the following section. It has also addressed the transformation of beauty standards over time.

2.1.3 Transformation: Beauty and Body

It is known that the norms of feminine beauty have transformed significantly with time (Wolf, 2002). Previously, the attractiveness of a female was represented by plump body shape, however; at the end of the twentieth century, the contemporary ideal has emphasized a slender body form. In societies that are traditional or less socioeconomically developed (non-western) societies, the psychological traits of sexuality, fertility, and attractiveness are (or was) related to plumpness (Brown, 1991; Teti, 1995). Extreme weight gain is culturally set as a standard for women in many of these societies, especially before the marriage phase (Pollock, 1995; Popenoe, 2003). Attractiveness was linked with a woman having a plump physique, and in some cultures, not only obesity is appreciated but is also considered as a secondary sex feature (Ford & Beach, 1952; Rudofsky, 1972).

On the contrary, a general preference for a thin body shape has been established as a norm, especially in Western societies. According to Wolf (2002), girls are recurrently exposed to the media's portrayal of an ideal woman, i.e., passive, thin, explicitly

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sexual, while at the same time both family and career-oriented. Women are flooded with the sense of attractiveness and ideal body so repeatedly that these images become what they believe as beautiful, and it turns out to be an image to be strived for (Dittmar & Howard, 2004).

It is important to note that Western media do not merely propagate a thin ideal, which is internalized by individuals in non-Western sites. Instead, Western media present a concoction of values that go beyond the idealization of thinness and that includes consumerism, the glorification of youthful-ness, the veneration of beauty in and for itself, the notion that physical selves are malleable, and that work on the body is both healthy and required (Levine & Smolak, 2010).

In the media, the portrayal of men reflects that male characters who are overweight were less likely to be seen mingling with friends and romantic partners. They are more likely to be seen eating and portrayed as less attractive, unlike characters with lower-weight (Diedrichs, 2012). Keeping ideal body images in mind to which both genders are exposed through media, from studies it was known that unlike men, women are more vulnerable to disturbances regarding body image (Makowski et al., 2015).

In sum, feminist philosophies share the idea that there is sexist oppression that should be resisted. Part of this sexist oppression comes from body and appearance ideals. Feminist arguments about the body contain the themes that the body is not a purely biological entity but is shaped by culture, and that the culture shapes bodies to support the status quo. Beauty ideals are functionally and symbolically disempowering to women. Women are vulnerable to these ideals due to their lack of economic power and their sexually objectified role. Further, forces in a patriarchal, postmodern culture make it difficult for women to recognize, critique and challenge beauty ideals. People are socialized to believe that masculinity ideals that endorse dominance, and femininity ideals associated with submission, represent what is "natural" (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012).

Historian Rose Weitz (2001) has indicated that throughout history societies have maintained ideas about women's bodies including the notion that women's bodies are weak both physically and mentally, that men control women's bodies, and that women's sexuality is threatening to men (women are sexual temptresses who lead men to stray from their normally rational thought processes).

The body of women and their beauty features are also well addressed in another matter, and that involves seeking attractiveness in choosing a partner for life especially, for marriage.

2.1.4 The Selection of Spouse

One of the fundamental tenants offered by the mate-selection theory is that for the two sexes, attractiveness is differentially important (Andersson, 1994; Buss, 1999; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Miller, 1998). Hence, by the human-made selection theory, attractive women are sought by men because the attribute of attractiveness signals reproductive fitness and youth (Buss, 1999; Thornhill, 1998). On the contrary, men with resources are sought by women instead of attractiveness, since such men will be able to provide for children (Buss, 1998).

In Pakistan, spouse selection has been widely perceived as a matter of extreme significance in Pakistanis' lives. It is not just an agreement between two partners but a practice, which involves religion and culture as well. The decisions of parents and other family members are considered highly important in this regard. The spouse selection yardsticks differ from family to family based on their unique way of thinking; however; physical characteristics or facial attractiveness is an integral part of aesthetic preference needed to select a mate of life in different societies of the world, including Pakistan (Hussain & Gulzar, 2015).

In Pakistan, it is preferred that marriages should be arranged by parents rather than by the couple concerned (Shaw, 2001). Despite the sectarian differences, South Asian Muslims are divided into communities, called *Biraderi* (a group of community members belonging to the same caste), *Jamaat* (group), and *Khandan* (family), to

name a few. Marriages are preferably arranged by parents, and such unions have a higher status in the opinion than love marriages, where the couples have exercised their choice (Fazalbhoy, 2006).

Last, of all, western studies show that women may also feel horrendous pressure to show conformity to the cultural standards set for the body and to appear sexy to protect their poor relationship with partner or spouse (Pole, Crowther, & Schell, 2004).

In the next section of my dissertation, I have examined my second primary variable, i.e., body image, and highlighted the significant studies about it.

2.2 Body Image

The term body image is generally defined as how one feels and thinks towards one's body (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Body image in its attitudinal form is evaluated by the measure of four major factors: affect (feelings connected with one's body), global subjective satisfaction (evaluation of the body), behaviors (situation avoidance where the body will be exposed), and cognition (investment in appearance and beliefs about the body) (Thompson & van den Berg, 2002).

Important socializing agents such as parents and peers play their role in conveying body-related messages. In general, the socialization of gender roles involves intense stress on how girls and women should look and appear. If this is overstressed, girls may seek constant reassurance regarding their appearance to make sure they are socially accepted and not exposed to rejection or ridicule. Moreover, young men are frequently depicted as lean, tall, and muscular. Likewise, an orthodox and stereotypical masculine mesomorphic body-build personified by broad shoulders and a slim waist (the so-called V-shape), including a "six-pack" of abdominal muscles, is also presented (Fawkner, 2012).

The renowned phenomenon of objectification takes the lead among the set of causative factors when these ideal body forms are established. According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), self-objectification is the byproduct of the cultural practice of sexual objectification, and this, in turn, leads to the self-surveillance, which brings about mental health risks and psychological effects on victims. Sexual objectification means that women are generally viewed as sex objects for male sexual gratification (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011).

In the Pakistani context, culturally and linguistically diverse and divided, as well as confined within the androcentric male world, the Pakistani women are exploited. They frequently find their bodies the site of emotional, physical, and physiological conflict upon which their fate is eventually decided. Silva (2003), regarding the role of writing that is centered on a female body in Pakistani society, asserts:

> "Writing about the body, breaking down its taboos, and soliciting individual freedom and self-realization by women, for women, has a clear political imperative within a landscape of religious-social repression and patriarchal authority since the body is simultaneously a surface on which social law, morality values, and lived experiences are inscribed. Meanings are carved into and out of bodies" (p.34).

The male hegemony over the female body in Pakistan is a deep-rooted and complex phenomenon. The female body is not only policed and appropriated at the national level through dress code and behavior, but also in terms of its biological functions. Silva (2003) argues that "tropes such as 'mother or daughter of the nation illustrate how a woman's reproductive function and body are instrumentalized in the interests of the state so that reproductive sexuality is admitted along homogeneous national or ethnic lines" (p.38).

Moving forward to the following section, to study body image, the reference group, i.e., adolescents and adults are explored about their body experiences encountered during these phases of life.

2.2.1 Adolescence to Adulthood

Adolescence encompasses significant developmental transitions in the life of an individual, and among them, dissatisfaction with one's body is identified to be an important facet of the female's body image. The dissatisfaction can range from a mild inclination towards different characteristics of a body to severe distress and extreme measures to transform one's body or to avoid criticism of it by the hand of others. Body image disturbances can also concentrate on total body appearances, such as when a girl gets concerned about her body size, shape, and weight. Accordingly, specific body parts or features can also be a part of body image concerns, such as skin properties (texture, degree of tan, color), facial features (eyes, size or shape of the nose, mouth), hair, body parts, strength, and fitness (Wertheim & Paxton, 2012).

Besides body image concerns among adolescent girls, several psychological disorders are also linked with the problems relating to it. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa conceptualization involves an extreme manifestation of having an over-concern with body size and weight. Anorexia disorder is usually said to appear during the period of early to late adolescence, while bulimia is seen to be prevalent in the late adolescence or early adulthood phase (Wertheim & Paxton, 2012).

Some studies have also found that greater body dissatisfaction is reported by adolescent girls than their male counterparts; however, this depends on the type of dissatisfaction that is being measured by the study. Adolescent girls, unlike boys, are much more likely to report a drive for thinness. Boys who show dissatisfaction with their body size tend to be evenly split between those who aspire to be larger and more muscular as well as the ones who wish to be thinner (Wertheim & Paxton, 2012).

Since the 1990s, the development of body image among adolescent boys has received increasing attention and awareness. It is identified that many adolescent boys are displaying dissatisfaction with their bodies, have a range of body image concerns, and they usually engage themselves in body transformation schemes (Ricciardelli, 2012). Nevertheless, a wider extensive range of conventional body goals has been shown by

the boys, and their body ideals, as depicted in the media, unlike those found among girls who are less constrained.

These goals involve gaining weight or muscle and losing weight or staying the same. In non-Western cultural groups, few studies have been conducted to examine the pursuit of muscularity. Nonetheless, two physical traits, which are associated with muscularity, such as robustness and strength, are highly valued across countries in both Africa and Asia (Ricciardelli, 2012).

For pursuing muscularity, extreme methods are also employed which involves the use of anabolic steroids and professional bodybuilding. It is projected that between a fifth and a third of adolescent boys would like to have a larger and or more muscular body. This is also not surprising that anabolic steroid is used by many adolescents and adult males to achieve quick results. Besides, the less extreme methods that are exploited to increase muscle mass involves a large amount of food intake, using exercise and recreational forms of bodybuilding, and consumption of food supplements such as protein powders (Ricciardelli, 2012).

Moving forward to the *adulthood* phase of life, Peat, and his colleagues (2008) contended that more weight and appearance concerns are reported by women than men at all stages of life. They said that a discrepancy between the ideal and current body sizes on silhouette scales are likely to be shown by women of all ages. The self-report measurement shows that the women, in general, desire to be thinner than their current body size.

As far as males are concerned, the films are frequently portraying men in their forties and fifties as sexual and attractive, and having sexual natured relationships with women much younger than their age. It was argued and stated by Ussher (1989), that as women reach the end of their productive years, the culture defines such women as useless and inefficient. She further argues that women of all ages are pushed to indulge themselves in comparison with the slender and youthful role models, and the discrepancies between this image and reality become progressively more evident as the women age.

In the next section, the body is observed from the perspective of Bourdieu and Foucault. It should be noted that understanding of the body based on their work was not utilized as a theoretical approach. It has only highlighted different functions linked with the body from its subjugation to premium value.

2.2.2 Symbolic Value and Docile Bodies

It was found by my study that men's and women's bodies are steered and conceptualized according to their functionality and cultural demands. The findings of my research can be linked with Bourdieu and Foucault's concept of body. Bourdieu (1990) notes how different values of practices become attached to the bodily comportment of men and women, and stresses how bodies become the site of physical capital, or the bodies which are "recognized as possessing value in social fields" (Shilling, 1993: 127).

On the other hand, according to Foucault (1980), political order is maintained through the production of "docile bodies," i.e., passive, subjugated, and productive individuals. Through its many institutions - schools, hospitals, prisons, the family - the state brings all aspects of life under its controlling gaze. The institutional disciplining, surveillance, and punishment of the body create bodies that are habituated to external regulation. They are working "to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls" (Foucault, 1980, p.139) and thus produce the types of bodies that society requires.

Also published in the 1990s was *Femininity and Domination* by philosopher Sandra Bartky who examined a variety of beauty practices expected of Western women. She draws on French philosopher Michel Foucault's postmodern theory to posit that women's bodies are "disciplined" by the culture even without any direct threat. Whereas behavior used to be directly controlled by the threat of force (and actual force), in postmodern societies the control is more disguised. Institutions such as the mass media portray societal ideals that people internalize and use to police their behavior (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012).

Lastly, Foucault's conception of power is important to medical anthropologists who are concerned with the social regulation of the physical body. *Biopower* is a useful concept for the anthropology of the body because it focuses on the body as the site of subjugation and because it highlights how individuals are implicated in their oppression as they participate in habitual daily bodily practices and routines. Power came to operate by the creation of a desire to achieve the perfect body, through such disciplinary practices as physical fitness activities and the monitoring of body weight (Foucault, 1980a).

Physical fitness is generally achieved by two conventional methods. In Pakistani society, one is exercise and the other is dieting. The following section discusses the significance, attitudinal, and functional aspects of both.

2.2.3 Exercise and Dieting

If it is the body and the aim is fitness, beautification, and health, then two main methods are approved by Pakistani people to achieve them. Exercise and dieting are adopted interchangeably by genders to transform their and other's bodies.

It is known that early in life, girls get to learn that their bodies are mere objects that are to be looked at by others as well as appreciated (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Smolak, 2003). By contrast, boys are socialized in a way that their bodies are meant to be comprehended in terms of being agentic, self-regulated, and appreciated by others on how well they function (Smolak, 2003). It ensures that exercise and physical fitness are more focused on by men (i.e., activities thought to be healthy, excluding steroid use in extreme cases) if they face appearance dissatisfaction. Besides, unlike women, they are less likely to do diet (Grogan & Richards, 2002).

In the matter of keeping oneself fit, the factor of exercise also plays its role. Jonason (2007) suggested that in men and women, an evolutionary mechanism has been built, which explains the differences in their exercising behavior. That is to say, that woman is inherently programmed to want to lose weight and exercise their lower bodies. Men are biologically set to build muscles and exercise their upper bodies. A woman shows

a preference for those men who are more muscular and bigger, and men prefer those women who are smaller and thinner (Buss, 1988).

It was found that a more muscular body shape was perceived positively, and the thin physiques were seen negatively by the women who exercised as compared to the non-exercising females. Likewise, exercising women held a positive perception towards their bodies, even though in comparison to the non-exercisers, they were heavier on average. The reason may be that a more toned body is the result of an exercise regime (Grogan, 2008).

Nevertheless, unlike women, men are significantly less likely to be driven to exercise on the grounds of appearance. Exercise is only used by a significant portion of men to transform the way that they look (Grogan et al., 2006). To attain a culturally appraised muscular and slender body, the tradition of bodybuilding is becoming more and more prevalent globally for men (Thompson & Cafri, 2007).

Besides exercise, one of the most common methods utilized by women to look after their bodies is dieting. Indulging in dieting behavior is common, and most women at some time in their lives have attempted to change their shape and weight by reducing the amount of food intake. Women deprive themselves of food to look slimmer, especially before some special occasion or event. Women participate in dietary behaviors to appear thinner because it is a belief that with thinness, confidence is linked (Grogan, 2008).

Most girls by the time of adolescence, irrespective of their weight status, still show weight concerns (Rolland, Farnhill, & Griffiths, 1997; Shapiro, Newcomb, & Loeb, 1997). According to Bordo (2003), in general, eating less to lose weight has been perceived as a feminine activity, and this will not be expected to be a cause of the muscular physique, which for men is considered as a culturally ideal body. Hence, this does not come out as a surprise that, unlike women, men are less likely to diet. With the purpose to achieve a slender physique, men are more liable to bulk up by consuming a high-protein diet, i.e., Atkins diet, or to cut down the fat in their diets than to reduce the calorie intake (McCreary & Sasse, 2002). For young men, muscle

mass and muscle tone are important, and this supports the suggestion that for physical attractiveness, muscle tone is central (Ogden, 1992).

On the opposite side of the western world, as it comes to physical fitness and routine life, Arshad (2008) stated that 79.4 percent of the female population of Pakistan is labeled as homemakers, who are solely responsible for managing the household. The physical activities available for homemakers are quite limited. The culture of joining fitness gyms, yoga classes, or any other such activity is non-existent within the lower class. The nearest they ever get to physical activity is during daily household chores, where activities like cleaning and cooking help contribute to the physical activity counter. For the middle and upper-class urban homemakers, the physical time is further reduced due to house cleaners available at low wage rates to perform most of the daily household chores.

According to a worldwide study by Lee, McCann, and Messenger (2007) on working hours, almost 42 percent of Pakistani workers spend more than forty-nine hours at work per week, which is an extremely high number. Most of the white-collar jobs, like anywhere in the world, are desk jobs, which are extremely low on job physical activity requirements (Leslie et al., 2013). Such a laid-back office environment discourages the employees from any physical activity. Understandably, a person who works approximately ten hours a day will be mentally drained off that he may not want to go for a gym session or a run in the park after getting free from work.

In the following division, the culture, and patriarchal lines and their say towards the body and its types are quoted. The researches will reflect what is expected, preferred, and considered attractive.

2.2.4 Culture and Appearance Ideals

Humans are social beings for whom identity is greatly informed by self-recognition - the acknowledgment and affirmation of one's personhood through others' responses to one's attributes and behavior. The body symbolizes sociocultural values, and beauty, or "the body beautiful," symbolizes sociocultural ideals (McClure, Poole, &

Anderson-Fye 2012). Members of various cultures may differ in the way that they perceive their bodies and ultimately develop different feelings toward their bodies. Unless one lives in isolation from members of a society, the cultural ideal of beauty plays a key role in evaluating one's appearance as well as that of others.

Western feminists have expressed concern about the role of women's bodies in limiting their freedom since the first wave of the feminist movement. In 1914, among the rights listed to assure women's equality in the United States included "the right to ignore fashion." In the second wave of the feminist movement during the 1960s and 1970s, the role of the body was heavily scrutinized. Radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon, and Adrienne Rich questioned the role of women's bodies in limiting their life experiences (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012). Critiques about the body emerged from women's feminist consciousness-raising groups. Women questioned societal expectations that they should constantly try to "improve" their bodies through practices like hair removal, wearing makeup, and dieting. Feminists wondered why women's bodies required such "improvement" (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012).

Some groups and ethnic cultures play their role in promoting a healthier perception of the bodies of women. Despite this, the assumption is challenged by recent findings and showed that dissatisfaction with the body is an issue. It has extended around the globe to various ethnic groups and cultures (O'Dea, 2012). When it is obesity and body, it was argued by Kawamura (2002) that traditionally obesity had been perceived as a symbol of good health, beauty, and prosperity in Asian culture, however; it is no longer considered as that.

In her national best-selling book "Femininity," American journalist Brownmiller (1984) argued that women's appearance and their body-related behavior face distinctive expectations from our culture, and men that reinforce submissiveness in females and male dominance. She traces the history of how women are supposed to move their bodies, use their voices, and wear the (right) clothes. For clothing, distinctive styles for women and men serve to make it clear that women and men occupy different roles in society. While men's clothes became less decorative and

more functional with the industrial revolution, women's clothes did not. Throughout modern history, women's clothes have restricted their movements and served to either hide or emphasize sexualized body parts. Thus, women's clothes are associated with reinforcing their submissive, sexually objectified role (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012).

Bailey (2002) claims that women's personal preferences and opinions often commence from fundamentally internalized patriarchal preferences and beliefs. This suggestion that patriarchy decides what is aesthetically pleasing suggests that the female portrayal in media and advertising and current beauty ideals are, at least to some extent, mediated by the patriarchal ideology.

Likewise, in Pakistani society, a fat girl is not considered a good wife material, says stand-up comedian Faiza Saleem. Firstly, she does not stand up to the conventional standards of beauty and this triggers the concern of "what will people say," and secondly because it is believed her health might affect her having a family later. She thinks that health concerns may be valid, but women of all sizes struggle with conceiving children. It is not a plus-size-exclusive issue, and we need to stop categorizing women as wife material or not according to their color, shape, or height (Lodhi, 2018). The categorization is also observed when appearance ideals are highlighted by socializing mediums.

In recent years, one of the most influential advocates of the appearance ideal image is the internet (Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). It has been shown by previous researches that body dissatisfaction is not caused by the mere exposure of these images by itself. However, it is the tendency to compare one's own body to that of the ideals and the individual's internalization of these images (Dittmar, 2009). The body's ideal internalization implies the process by which an individual adopts the current ideas about what is physically attractive into their personal beliefs (Jones, 2004). The following are the factors that have been taken up by genders about appearance ideals set by society and mass media.

When it involves clothing, economic status is associated with one's way of *dressing*. It has been reported that less desirable social perceptions get associated with a poor

general appearance (e.g., unity, dirty). People are perceived to be low in economic status who are poorly groomed or are dressed in shabby clothing. Conversely, those individuals who are attractively dressed are seen as more competent and intelligent, higher in morality, better adjusted, and sociable than those who are less attractively dressed (Lennon, 2012).

In the matter of dressing, it is a common Western conception that modest dress on the part of Muslim women is simply a mechanism of sexist oppression (Cloud, 2004; Droogsma, 2007; Dunkel et al., 2010; El Guindi, 1999). Although, this may be the case for some, most others seem to appreciate the relative safety and anonymity such coverage affords them. They even go as far as to argue that the Western female custom of dressing (to Easterners) that provocatively and constantly compares oneself to others when in public is much more oppressive than covering up to control who sees "your beauty" (Bigger, 2006).

The factor of religion plays its role in Pakistan's society when the body is a topic. Islam stresses the acceptance of one's body and teaches that Allah commands his followers to take care of the body that He has given them (Mahmud & Crittenden, 2007; Odoms-Young, 2008). The question is how this body is taken care of and perceived in the 21st century by Pakistanis under the umbrella of the religious lens. My research has highlighted this knowledge according to emic comprehension.

Similarly, it is known that orthodox Muslim cultures attach little importance to outward manifestation. The primary source of this attitude besides religion is a tradition and the key channels maybe family and peers. A study of immigrant Muslim women in Australia revealed that internalization of the thin western ideal was correlated with dissatisfaction with appearance, while heritage identification protected against both internalizations of the western ideal and appearance dissatisfaction (Mussap, 2009). Furthermore, the images and attitudes people hold regarding their bodies are not always static; these imageries are ever-changing being susceptible to the changes in environment, experiences, and mood (Nagar & Virk, 2017).

Besides religious teaching, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has its code of dressing. In Pakistan, the dupatta is not a marker of an Islamic identity, because it is a popular form of dress across South Asia among Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim women (Mohammad, 1999). My study has highlighted the opinions and symbols regarding certain kinds of dressing, i.e., what adorning is deemed appropriate and immoral. If it is about the veil, then the emphasis was more on how the women in the veil are perceived.

Apart from dressing, another factor that played a role in the appearance ideal is *skin color*, and it is stated by Margaret (2002), that the color of skin has become a medium of social capital. It functions as a "stratifying agent for women on the dimensions of education, income, and spousal status" (p. 175). Before any Western influence, in Asia, the idealization of white skin is said to have strong indigenous roots and has existed for a long time. Likewise, in Asia, for many centuries, the differences in the color of the skin represented divisions in the social hierarchy, dividing the lower class from the upper class. White skin was regarded as a symbol of femininity, beauty, and upper social class, whereas with the dark skin, the outdoor labor of the lower class got associated (Kawamura, 2002). Furthermore, with wealth and education, light skin may be linked, whereas individuals who had dark skin may be identified as low-income workers (Callister et al., 2011).

Attractiveness is also sought in the matter of *hair* as it had significant social and psychological importance than biological significance. Hair symbolizes an important aspect of our identity, body image, and, eventually, hair loss can result in social and psychological problems. It is also related to the ability to have control over one's appearance as well as perceived attractiveness, and because of this reason, the hair product industry is so large (Hunt & McHale, 2012).

Among men who are younger and not in a romantic relationship, the distress regarding hair loss is generally higher. They also expect progression on hair loss and believe that their hair loss is perceptible. These men, who have hair loss concerns, are reported to show not only greater social self-consciousness, but to be more invested in

their appearance psychologically, unlike men, who experience less distress regarding their hair loss (Fawkner, 2012).

Regarding women, the attribute of femininity is associated with long hair. Long hair is used as a form of adornment, as well as displaying status and wealth throughout the world. Women may use their hair as a tool to their advantage. They may style it in a way that is seen as attractive, or they may also use their hair as a way to opt-out from male attention (LaFlesh, 2012).

Finally, yet importantly, a significant feature in the body image gestalt is the *height* of a person. From most published surveys of men's body image, it is worth mentioning that in general, for less than 20% of the men, height is an area of merely some concern (Fawkner, 2012). When it involves a girl's height, being tall may be problematic for the women, whereas for boys' being short may be challenging (Silbereisen & Kracke, 1993).

In Western society, the term heightism can be observed, which suggests that towards the males' stature and to a certain extent for females,' diverse attitudes are held by individuals (Gillis, 1982). On the concept of heightism, the negative attitude is held towards the short stature and positive for the tall height. In fact, for both males and females, being reasonably tall is deemed to be an attractive characteristic (Grogan, 1999), but in men, it is probably regarded as more attractive (Pope et al., 2000).

In Pakistan, a study by Tariq and Ijaz (2015) found that muscularity and body shape, including height, hair, and facial features were identified as a cause of body dissatisfaction by the university students in Lahore. According to this study, 25% of male respondents displayed moderate to severe forms of body dissatisfaction.

In the next section, I have highlighted the research methodology of the dissertation. The chapter has outlined the study's strategy of data collection, the selection of the sample, ethical consideration, reflexivity, and the research limitations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve rich data on the indigenous understanding of beauty and body image, youth's perceptions, and lived experiences regarding the said concepts[3], a qualitative methodology was chosen for the present research. Descriptive and interpretive methods such as thematic analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation was used. The methods helped in yielding the information regarding the respondent's affective, cognitive, and behavioral approach towards the phenomena being explored.

Thematic Analysis: This method is used as a qualitative paradigm and it is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2019). The reason for choosing thematic analysis was that it is an *essentialist or realist method*, which reports experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants. Moreover, functioning as a *constructionist method* examines how events, realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Regarding my study, collectivism and individualism were the constructs that were kept in consideration, when the participants were asked for their perception and comprehension of beauty and body image in interviews.

Thematic analysis was considered suitable for my research because it allows the coding of interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conversely, the content analysis that is sometimes treated like thematic approaches only permits open coding and creating categories, while formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories and subcategories as abstracting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). It is because of this reason content analysis was not my preference for coding a topic, which needed careful generation, search, reviewing, and naming of themes.

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[3] Beauty and body image.

In-depth, Semi-structured Interview: The technique is chosen as a primary data collection method, which according to the definition is, "The purpose is to enter the world of the participant and try to understand how it looks and feels from the participant's point of view" (Josselson, 2013, p. 80). I prepared a list of themes to be explored; however, the in-depth semi-structured interview generally unfolded in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to pursue issues they feel are essential. The method does not give researchers a route to *the truth*, but they provide a way to partial insights into what people do and think (Longhurst, 2009).

Focus Group Discussion: This method was also selected because it has been a method of choice for exploratory data collection (Bombeke et al., 2012). I choose two groups of unmarried men and women who belonged to educational and professional background. The number of respondents in each group was eight, with ages ranging from twenty to thirty-four years, and included three to four gym-goers. The splitting up in each group was based on gender homogeneity. This division was done on the knowledge that when it is body image and its discourse, girls or boys do not voice their feelings assertively in each other's presence. There is an element of regard towards women's bodies in Pakistan's society. Research also shows that willingness to engage in a group discussion is instrumental in generating useful data and can be achieved more readily within a homogenous group (Krueger, 1994).

Participant Observation: It involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives (Bernard, 2006). It was done in one gym and one female parlor setting[4], while no male saloon was studied for this research. In the gym, only the females were observed. The reason for not studying male salons or observing men in the gym is that Pakistan's society limits women's mobility as well as their roles; it allows limited interaction with the opposite sex, especially in gender-oriented places. Women are welcomed in areas that are demarcated by significant feminine dominion.

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[4] Discussed in detail in "6.3.2.1 Beauty Parlor Construction of a Beautiful Self" section.

Apart from mentioning the reflections from participant observation in findings chapters, it has been entirely highlighted in the discussion chapter of my dissertation. The observational knowledge connected the in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group results for relevance and validity.

Aligning Study's Research Methods with Theoretical Approaches: There is substantial evidence that the comparisons individuals make between their appearance and the appearance of others are related to the extent to which they internalize dominant beauty ideals and underpin the development of an individual's body image. Research in the social comparison context employs four main methodologies: correlational research; interview studies; experimental studies; and diary studies (Halliwell, 2012). I have chosen interview studies as they provide rich and detailed information about everyday comparison behaviors.

In the case of objectification theory, Roca (2018) in her research suggested that future studies should consider interviews or focus groups to explore self-objectification, body surveillance, and appearance comparison. My study has already explored these notions of objectification by using both research methods. The other research queries that have been dealt with objectification theory are mentioned in the last paragraph of the section "1.2.2 Objectification Theory." The focus group also provided access to the body and beauty concepts and the language of participants revolving around these two variables. The participants talked in a way that is similar to their everyday conversation, with the inclusion of slang, jokes, questioning, and argument (Tiggemann, Gardiner, & Slater, 2000).

Focus group and its conversation helped to have a clear comprehension of how the meaning is constructed by the participants, i.e., "not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way" (Kitzinger, 1995, p.299). The discussion reflected the actual interpersonal encounters and media encounters of objectification, the construction of meaning, and how the youth get affected by it accordingly. It identified the reasons and justifications for indulging in social comparison and self-objectification consequently.

Lastly, the research method of participant observation proved effective in proffering a first-hand experience of our society's gym culture and how eastern women relate to the body and beauty standards and how they pursue them by indulging in social comparison and objectification. The method has enabled me to paint a complete picture of body attitude, behaviors, and cognitions by merely observing the gym environment and its members.

Both the observation and conversation with gym-goers have highlighted the reality of how women in the gym have formed the meaning of body size and marital status, the indulgence in comparison with the fellow gym-goers, and seeing one's body with specific measurement. Direct observation has revealed the noticeable comments on fellow member's body parts, the important and unnecessary fitness as well as exercise-related conversations and suggestions that portray that women are objectified by the same gender too. The observation has also led to the discovery of fellow gym-goers stepping daily on the weighing machine[5].

3.1 The Study Site

To acquire a broad range of vision, beliefs, and experiences on the beauty and body, I selected the participants from the urban field of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The metropolitan area of Islamabad-Rawalpindi lies between longs 72°45′ and 73°30′ E. and lats 33°30′ and 33°50′ N. in Punjab, Pakistan. Islamabad is the national capital and the hub for all governmental activities; Rawalpindi is an older and much larger city and is a center of industrial, commercial, and military action.

The reason the urban area of Islamabad and Rawalpindi are selected is that the cities are an embodiment of a diversity of cultures, ethnic groups, and peoples. There is also a great extent of multiplicity about the cultural outlook, living conditions, religious beliefs, food and dress patterns, traditions, and customs of the urbanites.

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[5] This signifies that the body's beauty is determined by the scale needle to prove to oneself or the society that we are striving to become what we are suppose or aspire to be.

The Gym: Gym-goers were chosen from the 'Stay Fit-Your Fitness Partner' gym in Rawalpindi and 'Fitdiction' gym in Islamabad. Participant observation was only in the former one. The 'Stay Fit-Your Fitness Partner' gym has three floors, and on the first floor, there is a reception area and gym section. On this level, aerobics is done and has 2 to 4 kg dumbbell accessibility, treadmill, and elliptical machine. The second floor has all the strength training machines, and it has limited timing for usage since men also use it. The third floor has a treadmill and punching bag, which according to the trainer has been removed from the first floor because the girls did not make use of it. The punch bag was considered a part of the masculine regimen.

Figure 1 'Stay Fit' gym in Block D Satellite Town, Rawalpindi, Punjab.

Figure 2 First floor: Reception area with a receptionist, left and gym trainer, right.

Figure 3 First floor: Treadmills, core machine, and muscle massager.

Figure 4 First floor: Elliptical, and exercise bicycles.

Figure 5 Second floor: Strength machines.

Figure 6 Second floor: Dumbbells corner.

Figure 7 Second floor: Strength machines.

Figure 8 Third floor.

Figure 9 Third floor: Machines and matting for kung fu and yoga practice.

The Beauty Parlor: 'Nikhar Beauty Saloon' from Rawalpindi was selected, and two employees of the beauty parlor were interviewed. The purpose was to gain insight into the client's attitude towards their beautification and current trends that were followed. Interviews with parlor employees were not done in an in-depth manner but instead were asked questions to get awareness and add knowledge to the discussion of my study.

Figure 10 Nikhar Beauty parlor: House No D6, 6th Road, Satellite Town, Rawalpindi, Punjab.

3.2 Sampling Unit and Technique

The research involved the individuals that are labeled as the *youth* in this study. The age range of the sample was late adolescence (18-24) and early adulthood (24-34) (Newman & Newman, 2012)[6]. The study was not intended to explore differences in perception based on age; instead, it was just used as a definitive standard for understanding the youth period. The word adolescence comes from the Latin *adolescere*, which means, "to grow into adulthood" (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009), and this phase of life was chosen because the physical and psychological changes in puberty increase the strength of the focus on the body (Rumsey, 2002).

The number of respondents comprised 17 males and 17 females, of which seven were gym-goers. Overall, 34 participants were interviewed for the study that was college and university students. Some of them were in the professional field, whilst most of the respondents were ongoing students.

The participants were interviewed either in a public area, such as a coffee shop, or their homes for they find it comfortable. Interviews were conducted depending on the respondent's availability and that was asked from them one day prior through text message.

The disproportion in sample size is considered a sample imbalance, which means that the size of the sample in one group is very different from that in another group. The less variability in one group is a sign that one set was considered more homogeneous, e.g., the group that followed fitness behavior and regime versus the group that did not have any physical activity routine.

Purposive Sampling Technique: It was applied since the aim is to focus on certain characteristics of a scattered population relating to the researcher's study questions and concerns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This technique involves the

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[6] The age limit defined for 'late adolescence' and 'early adulthood' was chosen from Newman and Newman's chronological approach to present development across the life span

identification and selection of those individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and knowledgeable about the phenomena of interest.

Primarily involving young urban people in the research process benefits the participants other than the research itself. Young people provide first-hand knowledge of youth cultures and can often formulate more youth-appropriate questions in a language that young people can relate to (Kirby & Bryson, 2002). Engaging in purposive sampling connotes that sampling is seen as a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how to do research, i.e., the way that a researcher chooses sample must be tied with his objectives (Palys, 2008) and I follow this approach.

Why Urbanites Only? Urban youth was selected because as modernization increases globally, the ideologies and perceptions about beauty and the body shift accordingly. This change can be observed in cities. As an ethnographer, I was interested in the meaning and urbanite's expression of the research topic. It is well-known that the lifestyle of urban areas is very fast, competitive, and challenging. Due to this reason, urban youth always feel to compete for the best, and they try to keep themselves in good shape and conform to beauty trends. Based on these grounds, I was profoundly keen to know about urbanite's attitudes, feelings, and behavior towards body image and beauty.

Characteristics of Gym-Goers vs. Non-Gym-Goers: The male and female gym-goers were those who were occasionally exercising, i.e., not more than five or six days a week. They were either doing a brisk walk in the park, roads and doing gym (cardio and weight lifting). Being a member of the gym was an advantage to access to gym-goers as a sample. One male trainer from this gym was also interviewed to identify how gym-goers perceived body, exercise, and fitness.

Non-gym goers did not indulge in intense exercise or any dieting routine. They either were satisfied with their bodies or were aware that they are fat, healthy, or skinny. The least they did was walk on the road after dinner. It was done for the sake of health, and that too was not religiously followed.

It is known that in the 21st century, everyday life offers fewer opportunities for physical activity, and the resultant sedentary lifestyles have severe consequences on public health (Purohit & Singh, 2012). Researchers have shown that individuals engaging in regular exercises such as gymming, swimming, have improved and better self-esteem, better body image satisfaction (Lepage & Crowther, 2010). The gym-goers were selected with this presumed notion that they may have a different attitude towards their body and appearance as compared to the non-gym-goers.

Miscellaneous Sample Characteristics: Firstly, the interviewees belonged to the Punjabi ethnicity, and only this group was chosen. The ethnic group was solely preferred with the intent that demographically it is the Punjabis who comprise the largest single ethnic group (44.7 percent) in Pakistan's population (Misachi, 2018). The second-largest ethnic group namely the Pashtun were not selected because according to Mann (2006) "male honor in Pashtun society is proactive and expressed through aggressive and violent behavior, whereas honor for females is necessarily passive, submissive, and centered around avoidance of shame" (p. 3). In general, the Pashtun woman is expected to live according to prevailing social norms, cultural values, and the tribal code. Although the study of dissertation variables could undoubtedly yield diverse results if a comparative study would have been done; I believe an entire study can be conducted on Pashtun ethnic group to produce remarkable knowledge regarding Pashtun's women, men, body, and beauty.

Thirdly, the chosen sample represents only unmarried people for interviews and focus group discussions. The justification for excluding unmarried individuals is given in the next section of "3.3.1 Formulation and Validation of Interview Tool." Lastly, rural youth was not considered for the research sample. The importance of beauty and body image concern among males and females was not at all meant to be explored based on the difference of one's origin[7]. Moreover, it can be asserted that we do not know enough about rural youth's subscription to mainstream notions of ideal body image and beauty. This assertion can be taken as a direction for future research to study the perception and behavioral influences of rural youth linked with beautification and body ideals.

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[7] Urban or rural.

3.3 Verification of Ethnographic Data

I choose to be an ethnographer who collected the majority of data through techniques that facilitated the direct recording of information, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Observation as a supplement to interviews has allowed investigating participants' external behavior and internal beliefs. I also included knowledge that was shared in 'informal conversations,' which took place between the interviewees and me at the beginning and the end of the interviews. The 'interview discussion' meant the conversation that took place regarding the in-depth interviews. The other type of information, i.e., the 'casually observed' was added in the discussion chapter of the dissertation. This kind of observation was done in the gym setting.

During the interviews, some participants needed assistance in describing their opinion by requiring appropriate English terms, and they were candidly assisted. A list of words was orally shared so that the respondent may choose the best suitable expression that matched their illustration. They were also clarified if they did not understand a particular term, and most commonly, *body image* and *toned* was asked by some respondents to be explained.

Some of the data yielded from interviews were considered extraneous and was removed by consulting it with the supervisor. For instance, the definition of inner beauty, outer beauty, and the definition of a beautiful person was asked from participants. The responses were replicated in the latter one; hence, it was excluded from the findings chapter as it reflected similar and recurring knowledge.

To maintain objectivity, the type of data that my readers may consider offensive or inappropriate[8] per cultural values is also included in the findings chapter. The respondents outspokenly shared personal opinions and connotations[9] regarding the

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[8] Page 100 (gym goer, age 29), page 105 (age 28), age 106 (age 29), page 107 (age 29), page 109 (age 26), and page 221 (age 24).
[9] Page 112 (age 31) and page 135 (gym goer, age 30).

least preferred skin and body type, especially the ideal body shape. The words are enclosed in the 'square brackets' for reading and understanding accessibility.

Respondent Validation: The validity of my qualitative research was also checked by a technique known as respondent validation. The method requires research participant responses to the first drafts of interpretive research reports. They are also expected to respond again to its accuracy and to the interpretive claims that are being made (Bloor, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The speakers crosschecked the verbatim cited in original Urdu expression, with their translation in English by the researcher. The intention was to validate their point and opinion. It enabled a positive correlation between the meaning conveyed by the interviewee and its analysis by the researcher.

I also shared the 'discussion' chapter with four of the study's respondents. They were requested to honestly comment, and reflect their opinion regarding how I theorized my study findings to which they belonged in the course of extensive interviews. I would highlight a few of their remarks and recommendations. Firstly, I was asked to explain the expression *womanly muscular*[10] which I have mentioned in the discussion chapter. Secondly, it was suggested to replace the term *significant difference* as it is generally used when SPSS or statistics is involved in quantitative research. Thirdly, it was recommended to find a particular concept that could reflect the respondent's distinct point of view, when beauty and perception was the interest. I choose the term *selective perception*[11] for its explanation per respondent recommendation.

The respondents proposed their suggestions varying from rephrasing to validating the finding with previous or recent research. They agreed with the conclusion of my study.

3.3.1 Formulation and Validation of Interview Tool

Based on relevant past and present literature on beauty and body image as well as the theories on social comparison and objectification, an interview protocol was

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[10] Page 228.
[11] Page 252.

administered for the pilot study. Additionally, I included some questions that I was keen to explore in Pakistani culture based on my interest, observation, knowledge, and curiosity such as, 'Do you make friends regarding their outer appearance,' and 'Have you ever let someone else define or influence your body image?' The responses to these questions; however, did not yield extensive data to be included in the research. But similar opinions were also identified in other comparable queries and they were incorporated.

The first phase of the interview protocol development focused on the alignment between interview questions and research questions. This alignment was intended to increase the utility of interview questions in the research process (confirming their purpose) while ensuring their necessity for the study (eliminating unnecessary ones). After the conduction of the pilot study, an additional slight revision was done. This step assisted in adjusting or adding interview questions. It facilitated the identification of gaps that existed in what is being asked or yet to be explored.

The type of questions that are included in the in-depth interview schedule is: *transitional* (have you ever indulged in body self-evaluation through comparison with others? If yes, then with whom mostly?), *key* (how do you define inner and outer beauty), *indirect* (in our culture, do people emphasize more on inner beauty or outer beauty? why and what do you think is the reason?) and *direct* (what types of female bodies do the media most present?).

In an in-depth interview schedule, the following themes were covered: beauty and body image definition, culture, media, beauty and body image, appearance evaluation, objectification, and social comparison with relevance to beauty and body. The interview questions were asked in the chosen languages, i.e., Urdu and English, based on the comfort and willingness of the sample to respond in the preferred dialect. I would like to mention that since the sample was a knowledgeable one, most of them opted to answer in English.

The Rationale for Pilot Study: According to my preordained approach for this research, the intention was to explore beauty and body image as per the perception of

unmarried individuals, and it meant to exclude the married ones. To justify the approach, I needed a pilot study that not only aimed to explore the perceptions, but it helped in redefining my interview questions. To establish a ruling, whether the exclusion of married individuals is reasonable, two married[12] and two unmarried individuals[13] were interviewed. The aim was to know how much married and unmarried life interferes with one's concern for a beautiful body.

The data gathered in the pilot study from married and unmarried respondents suggests that most of the married people had reasons and justifications for not indulging in body care. The significant reasonings involved: a change in priorities after marriage, the intensity of responsibility, job workload, mental stress, hectic routine, marriage life that involves kids and household duties, and women's post-baby body. However, one married female said that those who devotedly look after their bodies before marriage continue it after as well. Nonetheless, most of the time eating patterns, and exercise routines are disturbed due to family commitments, and pregnancies. For these reasons, married individuals were excluded, and unmarried men and women were studied.

I intend to highlight that in Pakistan's society, it is deemed that unmarried individuals have a life of independence and free will at their parents' home. They call it the golden years of one's lifespan. The youth may be dependent on their parents, but family accountabilities were not reported by unmarried respondents which may become a reason to hinder one's attitude towards their body.

Percentage analysis could not be done since the number of participants chosen was lesser in numbers. However, the terms 'many, more, or majority,' and 'some or few' were used repeatedly to show the intensity of similar and diverse responses. The implication of these terms can be understood in the following way:

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[12] One male and one gym-goer female.
[13] One male and one female.

1. Many[14]: More than or equivalent to five respondents
2. Some[15]: Less than or equivalent to five respondents
3. Most gym-goers: More than three or equal to
4. Some gym-goers: Less than three or equal to

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Before the conduction of interviews or focus group discussions, informed consent was gained from each participant (see Annexure B). They were given the right to withdraw from the interviewing process anytime by their will. The researcher also affirmed that confidentiality would be maintained, and their names will not be mentioned. The interviewee was also given awareness of the duration of participation. The interview can last from 90 minutes to 150 minutes. It was shared that the data collected from participants will be used for dissertation writing, journal publication, and seminars.

3.5 Reflexivity

In the last several decades, it has become commonplace for contemporary ethnographers and contemporary ethnographies to reflexively position themselves personally, theoretically, historically, experientially, and politically within the ethnographic scene. In addition to the honest grounding reflexive positioning makes possible, we believe that it also has tremendous constitutive potential. For that reason, we see value in reaching beyond the practice of introducing oneself (or one's group) at a narrative's outset or situating oneself at various points within the ethnographic narrative. When reflexive establishments of position are made public and shared processes, they become ways for project participants to meaningfully introduce themselves to each other, and to begin identifying places where their different interests, motivations, and passions might overlap (Campbell & Lassiter, 2015).

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[14] More or majority.
[15] Few.

What is reflexivity for me in research? Before I go into detail, I would like to cite the division of reflexivity by which I have explained my journey. Reflexivity can be divided into two types: prospective and retrospective. Prospective reflexivity refers to the effects of the researcher on the study, whereas retrospective reflexivity refers to the impact of the study on the researcher (Attia & Edge, 2016). I was inspired by an ethical responsibility to be transparent and accountable to myself regarding my presence and effect on the research. As a result, I hoped that the voices of the study participants would resonate more fully throughout the research process.

Prospective Reflexivity*.* Being an anthropological researcher, I had to be aware of my voice too. For my qualitative research to be credible and trustworthy, I need to present my anticipation for this research and preliminary biases. I was acutely aware of the Pakistani construction of the concept of body and beauty - the different socializing agents playing their role in affecting them. However, I needed to know more even though I am a part of this society for the last thirty-six years. This need helped me with the formation of my study topic.

Reflecting on my research experience, I will first review the influence on the study's topic by positioning myself as a whole-person-researcher. Since the dissertation is about beauty and body, I would like to share that I exercise daily and envision myself remaining in shape since I started this journey back in 2014, February. The curiosity, do people show the same consistency to look after their body over the years the way I did; or the shortcuts and temporary body obsession remain the general approach for them. This inquisitiveness to me was prompting and sparking. Moreover, the purposive sampling and the selection of unmarried youth as sample reflected my relationship status and choice. Being single myself, I wished to know whether life without kids, husband, and married life is the same for them as it is for me when the body and staying attractive is the consideration. This thought motivated me to think of studying this blurred idea in my research.

My motive was an intense focus on how Pakistan's youth produced their definition and idea of beauty and body. Did the definition depend only on individual understanding? Do the sociocultural dynamics have their role too? Although I

privileged the men's and women's perception of beauty and body image in my study, it was important to recognize and leave space in the interview design for genders to voice out other forms that played a role in defining it for them.

Regarding my role, I also disclosed parts of my personal experiences and thoughts with the respondents while discussing and probing my research topic. My intention for using self-disclosure in this deliberate manner was to position myself as a person with whom they can readily feel compatible. The reason was to let the men or women possibly see some reflection of themselves in me, i.e., my first position may be of a researcher, but I was a human like them who was willing to share her views when asked. I believe this approach allowed them to participate in the study with comfort. For example, when the research begins with the question 'define body image,' some of them could not comprehend the term. For this purpose, a few of the participants asked me how I defined it. My participation in the form of rejoining paved the way for interviewees to feel assured that it will not be a one-way conversation and communication. They can reach out to me any time, to ask me, stop me, and get eager for the interview to be continued.

The definition of interviewees was not considered the last word as it was delivered. The reason is during the period of my research I did not lose my grip on this approach that whatsoever they were telling; there was a reason, meaning, and experience behind it. I learned this technique from my supervisor. I remember when I did the pilot study; an interviewee defined body image as 'smart and sexy.' I presented that to my supervisor and she asked, 'What is smart? What is sexy?' I replied this is her definition, and then her answer was what I strongly held on to until the end of dissertation writing. She guided me by quoting the idiom that I need to do this, *baal ki khaal nikalna*, which means I need to go into fine minutiae and dig deep down the details. With this approach, I remember even the question[16] whose answers yield 'no,' I used to ask why it is a no. I get to realize that there was still some knowledge in that mere two-letter answer.

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[16] For example, question like "Do you ever wish to look like someone?"

However, I failed to use the approach to dig deeper knowledge in one question as it made me feel nervous in one situation. Also, responses and the body language of more than a few respondents made that situation awkward. The uneasy feeling in me developed because of my cultural upbringing and personal stance of not discussing body openly with men, especially the body type. For example, the question 'What types of female bodies do the media most present?' did yield general answers. However, when I read a list of body types to probe more, I not only felt hesitant reading but observed that men stopped making eye contact with me too. Concerning girls, they shyly giggled or laughed aloud at those body types.

The options of question included 'Skinny, big breasts, pretty, big butts, show lots of skin, flat stomach, curvy, tall, in shape, tan/ fair, sexual, hourglass figure, lots of make-up, perfect hair.' When the participants choose the options of big breasts or big butts, I did not dare to ask them, why, what is the reason behind it. The experience of asking two respondents highlighted my nervousness and their uncomfortable body language while listening to the options. It made me stop going into detail in the later interviews. The precise answers were not included as reasoning was absent.

Retrospective Reflexivity. I would also like to share how the research and the researched had affected me. The in-depth interviewing with my respondents over a long period and the interaction that continued post research is mentionable. Beginning with the interview, every so often during the informal conversion, the answers of respondents made me ponder in another dimension. For example, how other respondents will respond if I inquired about the same matter that emerged out of the researcher-respondent conversation. Sometimes this divergence from respondents during informal conversation helped me establish the reliability of similar thoughts when crosschecked with the opposite gender.

The post research interaction also had the interviewees consult me regarding my fitness routine. They also established a friendly discussion on how their bodies can be looked after healthily. I felt a bond with them when I started interviewing, and until now, it persists with some.

I would also highlight the respondent's views and responses that had me affected in a particular way. It had me talk to myself as 'that is how people think?' and this made me enthusiastic about probing them so that the world could know that beauty is more than anything is. The *whys* and *why not* made me see new horizons of thoughts, which got reflected in every other person's opinion that I interviewed. Individual differences, at times, spoke more volumes than expected societal similarities.

Challenges. Finally, the problems concerning my research were not demanding, but one of the challenges I faced was regarding a participant, who was perfectly giving me detailed responses. However, near the end, he felt like the interviews should wind up early. Later, he shared that his girlfriend was feeling jealous of this one on one meeting. He was not able to come back in the interview process the way he entered.

The other challenge involved the selection of meeting places for in-depth interviews. I gave my female interviewees the freedom to choose the meeting place, i.e., home, or public. Regarding men, I had my reservations because of my need for security. The reason was my family, which did not allow one on one interviews in a male's home. With those participants, I planned to meet in public: even though some of them I knew, but this did not matter. Lastly, my mother was always informed when I had a scheduled interview with male and female participants.

3.6 Research Limitations of Study

The research had some potential limitations, which I will address so that future studies on this topic can fill up the gaps. Firstly, any imminent study can involve early adolescence, late adulthood, as well as middle childhood as a sample. One of the noteworthy research inferences suggested that girls as young as six years old express thinness concerns and have awareness about dieting (Murnen & Don, 2012). The evidence calls for a serious reconsideration of the role of this phase in building a positive or negative conceptualization of body and beauty. Secondly, the sample size of married gym-goers can be considered to have an in-depth knowledge of fitness habits and post-marriage routine. Moreover, the effects of pregnancy can be studied

on the female body by married women. It can consider their first-hand experience, attitude, and those of others around them towards it.

Thirdly, indigenous comprehension of rural people can also enormously contribute to the meaning of beauty and body image in its setting. Fourthly, participant observation can be carried out in male saloons to have a one on one understanding of beauty trends and fashion services that are frequently availed by the customers.

Fifthly, when it comes to sexuality and sexual orientation, my study did not include questions on same-sex attractions or homosexuality and its relation to beauty and body image. Hence, future studies can focus on this concern in Pakistan's society. Lastly, the reflection of class, diverse ethnic groups, or socioeconomic backgrounds can also be considered.

In the next chapter, I will highlight the research *findings* and *answers*, beginning with the chapter "Conceptualization and Social Construction: Beauty and Body Image."

4. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION: BEAUTY AND BODY IMAGE

Beauty is a universal part of human experience; it provokes pleasure, rivets attention, and impels actions that help ensure the survival of our genes (Etcoff, 1999). For many centuries outer beauty was overvalued and worshipped since it was deemed to be inner beauty representative, as Francis Bacon reviews that, "virtue is nothing but inward beauty; beauty nothing but outward virtue" (Bacon, 1884). Likewise, it cannot be denied that the perception of what creates beauty has developed and evolved throughout the generation, it is understood with one's bodily forms, and standards set for it by society. Cultural anthropologist Nicole Sault points out persuasively how self-evaluation and perceived evaluation of others feeds into the formation of body image. She writes that we are "social mirrors to each other," relying on the responses and reactions of others around us to ascertain for ourselves how we look and who, therefore, we are (Sault, 1994).

Keeping this thought and evolvement in mind, I intend to explore Pakistan's gender perspective and conceptualization of beauty and body image. I set out to find individual comprehension of these phenomena, which are attached to our lives both visibly and imperceptibly. The understanding further extends to the social construction and categorization of prime beauty and body markers such as fair complexion, height, and body preference in the opposite and same gender. These concepts emerged persistently in the participant's responses during interviews and focus group discussions.

Two significant concepts regarding beauty are central to the discussion, i.e., definition, and perception of inner beauty and outer beauty, which appeared as a theme from interviews. Explanation of these concepts will give a broader understanding of how people who belong to this society conceptualize the phenomena of beauty and body image. The following chapter has elaborated on different structural, symbolic, and functional meanings linked with a person having inner and outer beauty.

4.1 Defining Inner and Outer Beauty

My research question explored native meanings and perceptions associated with inner and outer beauty. Moral conduct, ethics, communication style[17], etiquette, positive nature, the man of the words[18], honesty, and self-respect for oneself and others, remain some of the major traits connected with a person who has inner beauty. In contrast, outer beauty is how one carries oneself morally according to the cultural teachings and in a physically presentable way, has a good personality and the way we treat others. Besides, how we sit and stand and judgments based on cultural inferences linked with posture remain some of the features that are related to outer beauty in a person.

I must clarify the order of the compilation of responses under the heading of the definition of inner beauty being primary, followed by the title of outer beauty. It is not intended or based on any reasoning.

4.1.1 Female Definition of Inner Beauty

When defining feminine beauty, Goodman, and colleagues (2008) suggested that female beauty is "multidimensional" (p. 159). Based on this statement, I will put forward the understanding of inner beauty indicated by female participants in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. I will begin by highlighting the inner beauty in the context of one's character and disposition.

4.1.1.1 Beauty is Character and Truthfulness

Focus group discussion identified that the character of a person is one of the signified traits that naturally radiates its beauty. Even if someone lacks physical beauty but is a person of character, they can easily succeed in gaining any person's appreciation regardless of their background, partialities, or favors. Respondent (age 19 and 25) stated respectively, *"Any sensible man from this society will never go for facial*

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[17] Polite and not harsh.
[18] A person who shows commitment to his words.

details such as the type of eyes, nose, etc. He will always choose invisible beauty, i.e., your character. The character is the way you sit properly, your communication, your mode of behaving with others," and *"It is how you deal with other people."* Character entails our ethical standpoints and moral compass, some of which are culturally and personally specific, while some are universal. The character has a much more general agreement as to what signifies a good one, i.e., righteousness, loyalty, honorable, and truthfulness[19].

What is truthfulness for respondents? A character consisting of transparency and truth is also a form of inner beauty. Are you faithful to others? Does your attitude reflect your true inner self? If this is what your character is about, then it is believed to be the most beautiful form of inner beauty in Pakistan's culture, as an interviewee (age 21) said, *"It is the purity of your character, your truthfulness, i.e., being honest and faithful."* I will share this understanding from my interviews that if you are of what you display in your character, i.e., realness and reliability, you will be admired and favored. Otherwise, people have a common tag for the opposite of such a persona as a hypocrite.

Respondents defined a *hypocrite* as a person who says something but means something else, and his actions are not the accurate reflections of his words. Thirty and twenty-four-year-old interviewee stated correspondingly, *"Being evenhanded with other people and not being fraud or hypocrite. It is to be genuine and honest (gym-goer)."*

آپ منافق نہیں ہو ، آپ دوسروں کو تکلیف نہیں پوھچا تے اور آپ وفادار اور ایماندار ہو۔

This expression means, *"You are not a hypocrite; you do not hurt others and are sincere and loyal."* Inner beauty was thought of as being authentic, true to oneself, and other people.

Likewise, other respondents shared views respectively as: *"A true person is not into conceit, i.e., does not have a double personality. Being genuine is his inner*

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[19] Interview discussion.

and outer beauty both (age 20)," and *"Inner beauty is about sincerity and not being hypocrite, i.e., whatever is within you must be seen on the outside too (age 32)."* Hypocrites are also not respected because their actions and words give a false impression of their values, and this solely disappoints the people when they discover the truth about them.

Lastly, inner beauty comprising of trustworthiness and caring characteristics are also indicated by emphasizing its importance at the individual and partner level. The interviewees stated correspondingly, *"Loyal, caring, and that is it for me. Being faithful and trustworthy, particularly in a relationship are few of the traits that are highly valued in this society (gym-goer),"* and *"How true a person is, i.e., being honest."* Loyalty is not only expected at an individual level but in relationships, as it is significantly cherished and considered as one of the important qualities in a mate. It is believed that if you have a loyal and understanding partner, the rest does not matter[20].

Moving forward to the second parameter, my respondents indicated pleasant demeanor and treatment of others as a criterion of inner beauty. The beauty of actions is not only confined to self or mates, but to the society and its people to which we belong collectively. Being true is good, but implementing and extending that goodness in terms of behavior towards others has its undeniable beauty.

4.1.1.2 Benevolence in Behavior

One of the best gestures we can show to another person is compassion and gentleness[21]. When someone exhibits positive decorum and the right way of dealing with others, people remember them for this conduct in expressions like, *"This person seems to have a good family background,"* *"Their parenting has been done well,"* or *"They know the excellent ways of treating people."* A twenty-four-year-old respondent stated, *"It is about your moral values, how you treat a person who is not even meant for you."* The good treatment of others was not limited to family or

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[20] Informal conversation.
[21] Interview discussion.

friends, according to respondents. It was indicated that if you are good, then you are respectable towards everyone, regardless of relation, ethnicity, or background.

Likewise, being good to others irrespective of any gain is also deemed a form of beauty and goodness. Respondents suggested that when you handle people with your thoughtful ways, especially in a time of their need and without expecting them to be useful in return, it is beauty. It was underlined that *"If you are helpful towards someone whom you recognize and the one you are not acquainted with and do not brag about one's good deed towards them, this is inner beauty (age 19),"* and *"How you assist and care for others in time of their need and what possibly you can do for them (age 28)."* Helping others is one of the ideas that have been around for thousands of years, and it is a part of a meaningful life. Aristotle also wrote that finding happiness and fulfillment is attained by loving rather than being loved.

Another dimension of this definition involved one's graceful way of talking and communicating style. The interviewee stated, *"It is a polite form of speaking with others,"* and *"The good stance with people, i.e., the way you talk and give respect (gym-goer)."* Showing respect to the person you are talking to is essential if you expect people to see you as a polite and refined person. Moreover, with a strong sense of self, a person is likely to move quickly past small talk inviting everyone into the heart of the conversation. A self-confident person who utilizes a polite tone makes others feel better about them too[22].

In the third description, inner beauty was defined in terms of morality and ethics, particularly righteousness, self-respect, and being fair. It is about being a man of principles and integrity.

4.1.1.3 Morality and Respect

In Plato's tradition, an inwardly beautiful person is identified with a moral person (Hume, 2006). According to my findings as well, inner beauty in a person includes traits of morality and quality of being honorable as twenty-six and twenty-years-old

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[22] Informal conversation.

stated, *"Beauty is morality, your goodness. It is about how much you stay within your limits, and when you speak it is fair,"* and *"When a person has good morals, he shows a good demeanor for others (gym-goer)."* Beauty is not only about the outward positive expression you have for others, but it also entails being aware of one's boundaries. Once you know your limits, you are sensible enough to know where and what to express and to behave appropriately. It is not about being fair and honorable in every act towards others only but being just to oneself also[23].

Inner beauty is being a master of principles, i.e., protecting and keeping one's honor is important than pleasing others for worldly gain. Respondent (age 22 and 31) shared individually, *"A person of inner beauty owns high levels of morality. They will never sacrifice or give up their morals and dignity for the sake of other's happiness,"* and *"If you respect yourself, you will not keep any negativity as a part of your existence."* Respondents elaborated *negativity* in a way that when one keeps their self-respect in check, they will not only honor their self-esteem but will not bring harm to other's dignity too. They are true to themselves and others, for they know the beauty and veracity of being honorable and respecting.

According to interview discussions, some people always keep self-respect above all; they do not compromise on it, whereas some sacrifice their principles and pride in making other people happy. It is observed, and my study discussion suggests that those individuals who are dependent on others or do not respect themselves, will sacrifice their inner self so that the other person remains contented and pleased. A person who is taught not to bear unjustified wrongdoings on oneself will never give up their grace and dignity to endure it unjustly. *"She will fight for it till the end and even may let go of that person who poses a threat to her respect (gym-goer, age 31)[24]."*

The fourth definition of inner beauty discusses positivity in one's personality and an optimistic influence on others.

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[23] Interview discussion.
[24] Informal conversation.

4.1.1.4 Optimism and Positive Feelings

Positivity in a person's personality is beauty, i.e., casting positive feelings instantaneously from one's presence and showing good spirits feelingly. Respondent (age 19 and 28) indicated, *"Talking positively as well as giving a smile to others is good moral conduct. People who motivate you positively also belong to this category,"* and *"If you meet a person and immediately get positive vibes, it means they have a personality of dispersing positivity."* The respondent explained that when you are in the company of a positive person, even for a few moments, you would quickly realize that this person keeps positive energy in their personality. You wish to be around such a person, for they send off positive energy, which is, after all, good for one's healthy life too.

On the contrary, if a person spreads negative energy, one instantly feels drained and emptied. You also do not feel comfortable in their company and indeed try to run off. Likewise, other respondents stated, *"It is your morals and ethics, i.e., good behavior. It is about your control, influence, and a personality from whom people always get positive vibes."*

اندرونی خوبصورتی یہ کی آپ کی مثبت فطرت اور مزاج ہے

This statement means, *"Inner beauty is your positive nature and temperament."* It was reflected in discussions that an influential person is believed to have positive, inspirational traits, optimism, and positive vibes in them. For some philosophers like Gaut (2007), inner beauty is closely connected to but is not only about moral goodness. Intelligence, humor, and optimism, for example, also contribute to inner beauty.

According to my study, optimism or optimistic nature involves characteristics of kindness and humanity. Respondent age twenty-nine and twenty-two stated, *"Inner beauty is being kind and having humanity in existence,"* and *"It is about your kindheartedness."* Discussions revealed that in some cases, a person of inner beauty is not concerned with outer beauty. For them, it is about an absolute kind heart and being humane, for these eminent qualities are enough to make a person appreciable in

the eyes of others and themselves. Belonging to a collectivistic society has its role in making people believe that the self is not detachable from society. They are eventually judged for who they are, what they do, and believe in, being a part of this culture.

The fifth definition of inner beauty by females encompassed the type of personality and discrete preference level that people keep in mind while giving their best of attention and disposition to others.

4.1.1.5 Beauty is your Personality

"Inner beauty is your personality (age 24)," and according to respondents, personality and diverse positive dispositions is a part of inner beauty's unique feature. It encompasses your different colors of personality as, *"How you represent yourself in front of others and whether you are selfish, friendly or of reserved nature, etc. (age 23)."* What is the definition of personality? Personality refers to those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feelings, thinking, and behavior (Pervin, Cervone, & John, 2005). My study result shows that beauty is not just about different skin colors and body shapes, but it is your appealing personality characteristics, which are reflected at the individual and collective levels.

Some individuals exhibit these personality attributes according to their receiver. When the matter is 'spouse selection versus choosing friends,' the recipient's beauty and significance of their personality traits are considered differently. Participant age twenty-seven years old said,

> *"With colleagues, friends, and people, you have no romantic involvement; this whole beauty thing does not matter. I will look for a genuine person, who is not pretentious and does not have a show-off personality. If a person does not fit in the physical standards of beauty, but if they are down to earth, then this is the real beauty. If they have outer beauty, they may seem attractive for the time being, but if they have a negative attitude and have no talking manners, then that person has no beauty. If we consider soul mate, then ethics matters, i.e., related to religion and his moral character. But in our*

relationship with random people, we are not bothered for any detail as long as they are good with us."

My research findings indicate that while a mate is being chosen, besides considering good behavior, their religion and character are considered in many instances. The culture in which we are living and the factor that a person has a religious background, particularly in certain instances offering prayers in daily life (as held compulsory in Islam), is also considered. The character also holds importance because people in Pakistan's society do not like to prefer a mate (both male and female) who have multiple sexual relations (known for being promiscuous) but instead go for a person belonging to a [well-respected family].

This kind of family is known for good morals, family image, and character. It is regarded as a blessing in the sense that you do not have to strive to achieve this image. You were born in this family. Sometimes a man or woman is merely chosen without seeing them, but by just considering the noble family they belong to. It is a source of guarantee for their excellent character since they are a part of such a family[25]. The notion of ascribed status is reflected in this thought and the way it plays its role in spouse selection, especially.

In the next section, I have highlighted the female definition of outer beauty and the attributes they associate with the concept.

4.1.2 Female Definition of Outer Beauty

Outer beauty is defined more in the sphere of physical attributes, including appearance, size, shape, and complexion. Moreover, how well a person makes them presentable by the choice and way of clothing? How you talk and the tone you use with other people says a lot about who you are. As one respondent (age 28) stated in detail that,

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[25] Interview and focus group discussion.

"Outer beauty, of course, includes height (men taller than women), weight (neither over nor underweight), body structure (appealing with balanced complexion and skin color -not overly black- but fair), and [hair (long and straight as it reflects professionalism and attractiveness)]. How you represent yourself in the external environment, how you dress, the way you walk, sit, and stand. Even the way you move with society is also about your external beauty."

The body of a person is not just a biological component, but there is an increasing notion of what aesthetically is acceptable based on an individual definition. The body is seen as something that is expected to be in a certain ideal way, and only in that form, it is considered outer beauty.

The following categorizations in this section have explained outer beauty based on recurrent participant responses.

4.1.2.1 Attractive Physical Characteristics

Human beings are predisposed to judge others by their physical appearance and manifestation since visual cue is the primary kind of information, we get about a person that we meet. Outer beauty was perceived in terms of physical appearance, of how well a person appears in a way that his/her physical features remain admirable and reflect beauty. Respondents defined outer beauty as, *"Physical appearance, i.e., overall body, and face; happy and welcoming (age 25),"* *"How you physically appear (age 24),"* and *"Your appearance and the way you walk (age 19)."* Moreover, a gym-goer (age 30) expressed, *"Outer beauty is how you carry yourself regardless of your fat, bulky, obese or toned appealing body."* For some participants, outer beauty was about appealing physical manifestation head to toe, but for others, it was about the power and ability to represent oneself.

It was also mentioned that people who are in shape sometimes do not know how to carry their bodies while walking and by their choice of clothing. People can buy expensive clothes, but that does not mean they will look stylish in them too. Not

everyone has this understanding to carry them gracefully and elegantly regardless of the cost of clothing, size, shape, and facial appearances[26].

Interviewees indicated that different facial appearances give different impressions. One can judge a person by the shape of eyebrows, as frequently a sharped shaped eyebrow person is stereotyped to be a cunning and clever one[27].

> *"If innocence and softness appear on her face, I will say she is a beautiful girl. In the case of boys, if they have a long nose, big eyes, a broad forehead, dimpled chin (it suits some), and shaped jaws, then these are good features. However, if that person's face reflects wickedness, then he will not seem beautiful to me either. Physical beauty is not necessarily about facial features or cultural standards in which you should fit. If you have a good impression on your face, it will make you look beautiful regardless of your complexion (age 27)."*

> *"Outer beauty is that which is good to be seen and possess a pleasant personality (age 17)."*

Respondent elaborated that a person may lack appealing attributes, but if they have a happy face with a charming personality, it will excel outer beauty to any degree. Nevertheless, this definition belonged to some participants, and for others, beauty was defined in terms of physical characteristics.

Physique and bodily characteristics from skin tone to fitness level and body shapes are also involved in outer beauty definition. From an individual and cultural standpoint, fair skin is an indication of beauty, status, and attractiveness, according to my study. Previous research also shows that individuals who have fair complexion are deemed beautiful, lucky, and rich (Kerr, 2005).

Different respondents gave their perception of beautiful physical qualities as *"It is about one's color (fair), physique whether they are fit or not (age 22)," "Should look smart, i.e., hourglass figure (age 24),"* and *"It is smart (attractive and in shape), good height (above 5 feet), fair color and stylish in appearance and clothing (age*

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[26] Informal conversation.
[27] Interview discussion.

28)." The complexion and good looks were recurrently identified to be an epitome of beauty, especially fair skin in girls as respondents stated respectively:

<div dir="rtl">گوری رنگت خوبصورتی ہے یعنی نا زیادہ کالا نا زیادہ گورا</div>

This means *"Fair complexion is beauty, i.e., neither too black nor too white (age 32),"* and *"A good looking guy and fair complexion in girls is outer beauty (age 20)."* The lighter the skin tones especially fair women, the more desirable a person is considered by Pakistan's people. Conversely, the darker the skin tone, the more negative is the stereotypes and biasness projected onto that person especially lower and inferior status linked with it.

The second definition of outer beauty included the way of dressing and the diversity of images and expectations associated with different types of attires.

4.1.2.2 Manners of Dressing

Clothing reflects one's personality and can impart information about the kind of person one is[28]. People appreciate a well-dressed person. Are there any points and cautions to be considered while dressing and be valued in Pakistan? It was expressed in interviews that while dressing, these factors should be kept in mind, e.g., decency, maintaining grace, and not deviating from the fashion limits set by Pakistan's society. It was known from focus group discussion that fashion limits include not indulging in nudity of body, wearing jeans (according to some interviewees), sleeveless shirts, Capri[29], and tights (for some it is not acceptable) as it reveals the bareness and shape of legs.

Respondent elaborated on outer beauty as, *"Representable either in a decent way or may seem pleasing to self and other's eyes. Externals should not be flaunted in a way that it may yield negative mocking or remarks like 'she seems so graceless for she has crossed the limits of all ethics and fashion' (age 23),"* and "Sense of dressing in terms of righteousness (decently clothed not nude), neatness, maintaining one's style and

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[28] Based on interviews.
[29] A trouser that reveals ankles and some portion of legs below the knees.

charm. Adornment must appear pleasing and acceptable to others (age 19)." However, why a woman wishes to be acceptable in the eyes of its observer? Does not this reflect the notion of objectification according to the respondent's answer?

Objectification has its roots rising from male-dominated society, and the "male gaze" is one of the most important factors to be addressed in a patriarchal society. Researcher Dow (2003) classified the male gaze to be a societal factor in which women wish to be viewed as acceptable through the eyes of men. Is it true in Pakistan as well? The male gaze gets prevalent as we grow up through stages; different expectations and thoughts are linked with the same body. The phenomenon of the male gaze exists, and it reflects the power of male existence.

What about a women's gaze? The reality is that the concept of beauty is attached to the women's body. For the most part, her body is seen as a point that has the power of attraction and possibilities. Moreover, if they do not epitomize the idyllic form of female embodiment, then they lack those standards, and this will make their value become less in the market of matrimony and those jobs, which require beautiful and appealing women. Are these standards and boundaries held equal for everyone?

To answer this reflective thought of mine, according to my study, in Pakistan's society, if a woman crosses fashion limits, they are seen with a disapproving opinion. Yet, these standards are also different according to the relationship status and can be considered as situational prone. With this reference, [I would like to quote a male respondent (age 26) as he stated, *"We want a wife in a veil and a girlfriend in jeans, and yes, these are some standards. In the spouse selection, we not only see decency in personality but dressing too. However, if it is a girlfriend, then it is about pleasure and pleasing adornment for them."*] Until the end of time, modesty and decency are expected from women in Pakistan, a patriarchal society at its best.

Participants held different perceptions as they indicated that dressing sense does matter, and neatness and keeping oneself tidy. Cleanliness in terms of body and neat clothing is a part of religion too. Simplicity is also said to have its beauty, and it does not require branded or expensive clothing to appear externally beautiful. Research

showed that people who are more fashion conscious and involved in fashion or branded clothing tend to spend more on clothing to demonstrate a high level of brand attraction (Stephen, 2006). Lastly, it was stated that even if a person is not following fashion, they should be well dressed to appear pleasingly.

The third definition of outer beauty encompasses communication style, of how a person talks, the beauty of both kinds, and the element of confidence.

4.1.2.3 Miscellaneous Beauty Perceptions

Some people indeed have a considerable portion of innate natural charm, but the art of conversation is a skill that few have mastered. Nobody is born with a silver tongue, but with the passage of time, proper training, learning, and observation, anybody can learn to converse in desirable ways. Interviewees also indicated that facial expressions hold a significant value when you are speaking to someone, as it reflects your intentions towards the person. *"While talking, if your face is not straight and friendly, it gives a bad impression and nulls your outer beauty. If you are contentedly pleased while talking, it gives a good impression and makes you look likable (age 19)."* Likewise, another interviewee age 25 stated that,

آپ کیسے بات چیت کرتے ہو، یعنی نا زیادہ اونچا اور نا ہی کرخت لہجہ میں

This statement means, *"It is how you talk, i.e., not loud or in a harsh tone."* Implied by my study, it was known that in Pakistan's society, when you talk aloud, people come up with remarks as *"Do not shout like an illiterate person or like a donkey as it is known for its loud bray."* Women, unlike men, are particularly disapproved and not much appreciated if they speak in high volume. From them, a soft pitched voice tone is expected as it reflects the sophistication and good mannerisms in their personality.

A male voice was thought to be a part of a yardstick for favorable judgment; the husky and heavy mannish voice was expected in males. It was shared that a light voice is considered girlish, whereas a heavy strong voice is a part of manhood. The

male respondents were also asked which feature is liked by women in an ideal man and they stated, *"Girls like deep voice as they think that deep voice of the male is more attractive (age 20),"* and *"Heavy voice is a symbol of idealism in men."* Male interviewees affirmed this opinion, and it was indicated that the way a man speaks and utters words have a substantial effect on the listener. It is known that for men, it is important to have a masculine effect in their sound, which is surely manifested in a voice with a deeper tone.

Besides one voice, the findings suggest that if you ask people what they find beautiful about a person, many of them will possibly begin to describe someone's physical features. It typically goes like this: *"I like big eyes, long hair, big muscles, and a shaped body, and so on."* Rarely do you hear someone answer, *"What makes someone beautiful to me is the exhibition of their kindness, loyalty, compassion, and sense of humor?"* Nonetheless, how much beauty of both kinds matter[30]? Is the presence of both beauties complementing each other? Does one of them outshine others?

These questions are raised when beauty is seen from different approaches, hence one of my interviewees stated,

> *"In today's world, both inner and outer beauty matters one way and the other. Even if you have every attribute related to outer beauty but lack in inner, the entire outer beauty loses its charm. I believe outer beauty is just one side of the picture, and the other side is inner. If your inner beauty is not refined or cultured, you cannot become a good human. No matter how hard I try to look beautiful, if my manners, morals, training, way of talking, and dealing with people will not be perfect, then my outer beauty will not matter (age 28)."*

Both beauties had their significance as it comes to assessing them to different degrees. These two forms of beauties were governed by another personality characteristic defined by the respondent as the appropriate confidence level.

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[30] Researcher reflexivity.

One interviewee shared that outer beauty is about one's level of confidence, and if a person is assertive enough in a constructive way, he can surpass others irrespective of any physical form of beauty. *"It is confidence, but there is a minor difference between arrogance and confidence, so you should stick with the later one. No matter how you appear regardless of being black, white, tall, short, your confidence makes you shine like a star,"* shared a thirty-year-old female. Researchers Goldman and Waymer (2014) indicated that beauty in terms of confidence is not defined as a physical feature, but rather as an attitudinal state, implicating that if a woman accepted her as beautiful, then by definition she is beautiful. On the contrary, the absence of humility, in conjunction with confidence was regarded as less than appealing. Besides, associating beauty with a person's positive and confident outlook, outer beauty was also perceived according to situations and relationships.

Favoritism of outer beauty over inner regarding different relation, context, and persons vary. Like it or not, you are judged on how you appear and behave. Society has a different way of perceiving individuals, and it is determined to stick with it. A respondent expressed her views,

> *"You will always find a mother speaking highly of her outwardly beautiful son or daughter, even though in reality they are not attractive at all. However, that same mother will always have sharp eyes in judging the beauty of other's daughters and sons. It is a common practice and natural attitude in this culture that people always show open likeness towards the person or a thing that is closely related to them and little aptitude to appreciate other's beauty. On average, if you are talking at the societal level, then it is all outer beauty. However, individually, if you are willing to be in a relationship, then inner beauty matters a lot, as you have to spend the rest of your life with that person. A wedding involves family handling, parenting, looking after everyone and it can only be handled by a person of inner beauty (age 31)."*

Research indicates and validates that women, regardless of culture, are more likely to perceive a higher number of negative messages about appearance as compared to men (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2009). In Pakistan, also, this attitude prevails, and women are objectified in every possible way, from receiving the negative inferences based on their looks and forms, but also the societal held thoughts.

The diverse reasons and stereotypes are associated with appearance, but choosing outer beauty over inner was linked with errors and weakness of one's personality. In Pakistani society, shortcuts have their way when it judges people. Individuals, in most cases, will not use their intelligence to form an opinion[31]. Respondent stated, *"Culture mostly emphasize outer over inner because it is a personality flaw; they are hasty in nature, they love more of a dramatic outer look as compared to real inner beauty. They do not know that this outer look is temporary."* Likewise, the respondent identified the beautification and materialization of outer appearance as one of the craziest tendencies pursued by people. *"In our ongoing cultural trend, people are too much into showing off, the manifestation of everything, ornamentation, and how much you highlight yourself outwardly. The more you are into this, the more publicity and fame you receive for this."*

Even though the emphasis on outer beauty was justified in its distinct way, the irony of this practice and preference was not denied either. It was recurrently indicated that although outer beauty is cherished, it is still that form of beauty that fades with time. In the end, the real beauty stays and shines in the inner form. Age and its stages cause a decline in everything, and so changes are seen in human skin and appearance. The inner beauty of any type keeps excelling everlastingly[32].

In the next section, I have presented male perception and understanding of inner beauty and the qualities and characteristics associated with it.

4.1.3 Male Definition of Inner Beauty

Male participants defined inner beauty as morality, good behavior, and one's persona. A man who commits to their words and has good nature also comes in this definition. Women and inner beauty were defined under the umbrella of beauty classification and how a person communicating style matters in building a positive image on others. One of the respondents beautifully stated his view of beauty and humans as,

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[31] Focus group discussion.
[32] My study claims and findings.

ایک اچھی شخصیت جو آپ کے دل کو چھو جائے وہ خوبصورت ہے. اس بات کو ہم یوں کہہ سکتے ہیں کہ میں نے برے لوگوں کو مہنگے کپڑوں میں دیکھا ہے. اور خوبصورت لوگوں کو بوسیدہ کپڑوں میں دیکھا ہے.

This means, *"A good soul which touches your heart is beautiful. It is just comparable to saying that I have seen despicable people in expensive clothing; I have seen beautiful people in untidy clothes (age 29)."* Personality is all it takes to make a person appear appealing, and no cost of clothing matters in this case.

Moving forward, the first definition of inner beauty was perceived in terms of ethics and good manners.

4.1.3.1 Morality and Etiquettes

What is morality as inner beauty? Respondent (age 19) stated, *"Good behavior and good morals"* defines a person's inner beauty. Different respondents identified inner beauty as *"One's moral values, ethics, and code of conduct (age 22),"* and *"No negative or arrogant attitude rather compatible in nature (age 30)."* Based on the manifestation of these morals, a person is judged instantly by the observer. You are what you exhibit, or you are not what you display, in either way, you are judged regardless of gender[33]. As it seems, morality is one of those attributes we care about most when forming impressions of a person. Goodwin, Piazza, and Rozin (2014) stated that morality is an influential factor when the assessment of others is carried out on a global level.

Morality is a significant part of etiquette as it gives an acceptance of how people's actions influence others and take responsibility for one's actions. It is about how civilized and balanced you are. Twenty and twenty-eight-years-old indicated, *"How well-mannered a person is,"* and *"A balance in a person's rising and sleep time, his eating and drinking (water) behavior. They must have attributes of a groomed personality, quality of social influence, social conformity to social norms, and how religious you are."* Balance in life comes in physical, spiritual, social forms, and

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[33] Focus group discussion.

maintaining balance helps us to rejuvenate and rejoice in life. It allows us to gain perspective that assists us to make healthier choices regarding any domain of life; we achieve a sense of calm and composure, and the ability to see the big picture[34]. Apart from keeping a balance between self and collective ways of life, another composed characteristic was expected in a person, i.e., treating others respectfully.

Inner beauty in terms of respectfulness meant being humble with everyone and not having undesirable judgmental qualities about others, according to my study. Biasness and disrespect towards fellow members of society pave the way to an infinite invitation of arguments and dilemmas that yield no solution or peace rather disharmony between them. Different views emerged respectively as, *"If you have respect for other people in your heart and you are not discriminative or biased then it is your superior inner beauty (age 25)," "Hold respect for others and never lie (age 28),"* and *"How an individual deals with people (age 30)."* Respecting others in this culture is considered important since religion has a strong role in this teaching. Islam places great emphasis on manners and on the proper way of dealing with others, whether they are Muslims or not. In the reference, the 11th verse from the Chapter of Chambers in the Holy Quran states,

> *"O you, who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people; perhaps they may be better than them, nor let women ridicule (other) women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by (offensive) nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after one's faith. And whoever does not repent, then it is those who are the wrongdoers."*

The second definition of inner beauty involves the commitment quality of men based on promising words and other desirable personality traits. It has highlighted communication style, tone, and objectionable attitude towards the usage of inappropriate words while talking.

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[34] Interview discussion.

4.1.3.2 Diverse Personality Traits

A man is said to have inner beauty if he keeps his commitments and promises. It is an example of something fundamental about human society; we value honesty and reliability in a person's personality more than displays of extravagance[35]. Twenty-seven and twenty-four-years-old shared, *"He should not be a liar but humble, compromising and a man of commitment. He should show tolerance and strength in time of unsettlement; he should neither be materialistic nor have a negative ego,"* and *"Consistency in nature, fulfill his promises, and be brave."* Respondent cleared that a man of strength is also said to have control and the ability to stand firm in adverse situations. They held that consistency in personality enhances one's confidence and strength in character. Compromising nature was expected from males too, as it is a trait mostly expected from women in Pakistani society, but if a man owns it, the aftermath remains a balance and harmony.

Inner beauty also involved certain good qualities that a person possesses. Different interviewees indicated inner beauty as, *"Fun loving nature, should not be lazy, be adventurous and love traveling (age 20),"* *"Good morals, helping nature and a big heart (gym-goer, age 22),"* and *"Good in nature, helpful, be sacrificing, and he will understand what you wish to say by just looking at your facial expressions in different situations (age 25)."* People with remarkable morals and ethical character are appreciated and are admired for their noble nature of helpfulness and intelligence potency. This nature evokes belief and trust in him as a person of integrity who stands out as a symbol of hope in a society marred with dishonesty[36].

Good verbal communication is also a part of a person's refined personality and inner beauty, whereas with which tone and pitch, the person talks also matters. The way a woman speaks has a bearing for some man, as twenty-nine-year-old said, *"It is your style of speaking, and if it is a girl, then womanliness should reflect by the way she talks, i.e., kind and soft in the form."* Polite speech patterns are more associated with women and so they are expected to talk in a delicate tone as it reflects feminine

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[35] Focus group discussion.
[36] Informal conversation.

characteristics. It is believed that *"A person with inner beauty talks in a good way (age 19)."*

Gender differences in same-sex conversation by the previous studies demonstrate that women as compared to men are more indirect, collaborative, and polite in conversation, whereas men are more direct, competitive, and impolite (Coates, 2004). Through my research, it was affirmed that influential communication refrains both genders from the usage of cursing and foul language in their talk. A gym-goer (age 22) stated, *"The way he talks, his usage of language particularly, i.e., abstaining from abusive words and he should not be hyper in nature."* Although this male respondent deemed the beauty of man's language to be free of curses, I would quote a female response that highlighted gender differences in the usage of foul language. The female respondent maintained,

> *"Even in this culture, gender discrimination is seen when foul language is used. Males frequently use curse words targeting 'sister and mother.' If a woman uses such foul language, she is just considered immoral or unladylike. I will agree that it is not well mannered to abuse, but males are nowhere much stopped from it either. It is considered manliness for them."*

Research also indicates that when women's language is a concern, certain connotations will be perceived immediately, i.e., cooperative, polite, correct, woman-like, and powerless. Towards women's language, these are the ineradicable and conventional thoughts. Women are trained to talk like a woman and are not supposed to talk like men, i.e., being rough (Lakoff, 2004).

The third definition of inner beauty encompasses good character, social dealings, and the compromising nature of women.

4.1.3.3 Women and Beauty

According to Levey (1997), Hume was of the opinion that women must be chaste than men, and it was only required by women to be modest. As stated by Hussain (2006) in Pakistan, the major religions such as Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity promote chastity and obedience for the female gender. Likewise, a twenty-four-year-old said, *"Regarding women, I like good character girls, i.e., morally good, and virtuous. They must also have attributes of sincerity and loyalty."* One of the studies entailed nine articles grounded in research in Lebanon, Pakistan, Jordan, Occupied Palestine, Yemen, and Turkey came up with the following findings that female chastity on which family honor was based followed convention (Critelli & Willett, 2012). In these cultures, girls, as well as a women's body ownership, were in the hands of her family.

The character of a woman includes their way of interaction with people in Pakistani society and considerable debates on a female's compromising nature. Gym-goer participants (age 28 and 22) expressed one on one, *"It is about the character and moral of women and the kind of public dealings these women have, i.e., how she meets and greet others with humbleness and courteously,"* and *"She should have understanding nature, quality of sacrifice/compromise and dare too."* Relationship demands and role-playing responsibilities are well performed if a woman compromises more than a man.

Contrary to this notion, sometimes, confident women are also admired. The daring nature signifies women as self-confident and courageous, so to bear the hardship of life and relations along with their partner. Nonetheless, women are primarily conditioned to believe that they are the weaker gender and must make the most personal compromises[37].

How is the term *compromise* perceived in Pakistani society? I will quote the response of a female participant here,

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[37] Interview discussion.

> *"In this culture, people expect a woman to compromise primarily. Here compromise does not mean 50-50[38] efforts from both genders, but it means 90% sacrifice from females to let the matter be handled peacefully. She is deemed as an idol of sacrifice and why not, it is male dominant society. Some people may expect a female to be brave; however, the majority expects her not to convey her views directly, but submissiveness is her trait. Conversely, if she is positively straightforward, it is misinterpreted to be her arrogance."*

Women are the soul of every society, and they play a crucial role in every aspect of human life. The tolerance and adjustment of women have helped every family to maintain a better and peaceful life. It is all because of this culture, which promotes the teaching and practices of compliance and obedience in women.

Besides the expectations of compliance when the personality of an ideal woman is defined, then her skills, usefulness, and abilities are attended. *"They should take care of the house (age 23),"* this is the quality widely sought in females as a part of their compelling beauty description. A twenty-seven-year-old male said, *"An ideal woman in this culture is the one who apart from being pretty and innocent, can handle and carry out all the tasks required to maintain and manage the house. She should provide every need of the children as possible as she can. That woman is ideal who takes care of everything at home, especially in the kitchen."* Girls who know and can perform household chores especially kitchen errands are considered appropriate as a mate.

In Pakistan's society, importance is given to home-cooked food, which must be fed to one's family of any type, i.e., nuclear or extended. A girl is thought to be an expert in cooking abilities, since keeping a chef is not much of a trend in average families. A female respondent shared her similar views on ideal women as,

> *"Concerning beauty, a woman is thought of in terms of her skills at performing household chores and being able to cook (age 26)."*

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[38] The expression is used for equal distribution of perception.

4.1.4. Male Definition of Outer Beauty

Outer beauty is perceived in the context of a fantasy notion and a body that has a balanced form. It gets associated with fiction, *"which is just temporary and is meant to satisfy your eyes (age 29)."* Outer beauty exists at a superficial level, which mainly diminishes with time. The outward beauty may have its persuasive charm, but eventually, inner beauty undermines it. I will now put forward my participant's definition of outer beauty that involves one's body manifestation and appearance.

4.1.4.1 Appearance and Dressing

Overall appearance and the way a person dresses are a point on which people have judged right away, as it is the first impression and is marked as outward beauty. Twenty-nine and twenty-seven-years-old defined outer beauty respectively, *"The appearance a person holds is what significantly matters,"* and *"It is a person's visibility, his dressing, hairstyle, and his way of get up in gatherings (gym-goer)."* However, why people link external importance with a presentable physical appearance[39]? The responses indicated that physical manifestations and sense of dressing are tied to people's perception of other's social status and favored social treatment received out of it[40].

The judgment of a person based on their physical attraction is inevitable; the impression that "looks are a factor" is developed into us on an integral level. Regarding the dressing style, a person's attire has been shown to express positive qualities with first impressions being formed in a fraction of a second (Todorov, Pakrashi, & Oosterhof, 2009). People also tend to pay attention to the shoes they and others wear, as one of the interviewees (age 24) stated, *"A good way of appearance and dressing involves bearing of accessories such as wristwatches and good shoes, which matters when I judge somebody."* However, what social cue is held with the choice of shoes?

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[39] Researcher reflexive thoughts.
[40] Interview discussion.

Adopting the Gosling and colleagues (2002) idea of an identity claim, people with higher income may be more likely to wear shoes with high-end brands as a means to exhibit their social status. My interviews also revealed that good appearance, expensive attires, and accessories form a positive impression. People nowadays know what the most expensive and mediocre brand is. However, being decent by personality is equally necessary as held by participants. Interviewees indicated that if you lack mannerism in your personality, the sense of dressing remained fruitless. Respondents (age 23 and 27) said, *"If a person is well dressed and has no etiquettes of how to talk then that dressing is useless,"* and *"It is a good dressing sense, he should have a sense of style and clothing, but still be decent in personality."*

Besides, inner beauty was deemed important by males if a person is expected to have an outer beauty of some type. In addition to appropriate decorum, being in shape and good dressing also go hand in hand, and it was asserted that *"If a person has a shaped body every type of dressing will suit it."* Gym-goer age 18 said, *"Outer beauty is being in shape, and having a good sense of dressing."* Even though physical appearance is not to be judged while developing an opinion of someone, but it is still sustained. It is the most natural impression that is effortlessly held at first sight[41].

Moving on to the second definition of outer beauty, men included women's stylishness, body shape, and skin complexion as its parameters.

4.1.4.2 Women and Outer Beauty

When male respondents were interviewed, they candidly expressed their opinions regarding females and various forms of beauty linked with them. For men, an attractive female figure is of fair skin tone, wearing a trendy dressing, which is the key factor in making her stand out from the crowd. A woman who dresses in style effectively illustrates her femininity. Twenty-two and twenty-years-old said,

> *"She should wear a stylish dress since one looks good in it," and "Female figure that is in shape and fair complexion, i.e., white."*

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[41] Interview discussion.

The way individuals are fashioned through makeup, behavior, and clothes represents the social position and sexual identity, that is to say, the dressed bodies signify tools of self (Craik, 1993). Interpretation of the body image is significantly known by the types of dresses and has additional implications in a responsive attitude (DeLong et al., 1980). Besides judging females on their bodies, their beauty also was compared with the body and beauty of celebrities.

A woman's outer beauty was measured by keeping celebrities and different body shapes into consideration. Striegel-Moore (1995) asserted that girls are socialized in a way to view self-concept in terms of relational self; this suggests the significance of defining oneself regarding others and considering the opinions, thoughts, and ideas of others (Latimer-Kern, 2009). Three respondents shared their views respectively,

> *"The criteria is Katrina Kaif (Famous Indian Bollywood actress who is known for her well-shaped body) or coke bottle phenomena (36-32-36 breast-waist-hip ratio) (gym-goer age 28)," "It is having smart, i.e., curvy body (gym-goer aged 22),"* and *"If she is over slim I like that too but not a fully formed figure (age 30)."*

It is all about making the social comparison and then evaluating the female's body based on that comparison. The male interviewees repeatedly mentioned celebrities' especially female Bollywood film actors, when it was asked to define the body in its ideal form. Besides, fantasizing about celebrities' bodies and seeing women in that lens of appealing shape, among my all respondents, only one showed a preference for *patli dubli,* meaning slim (skeletal or skinny) body type. The reason remained his personal preference and attractiveness associated with this physique.

The third explanation of beauty comprises the males' tall height, skin complexion, appearance, and personality.

4.1.4.3 Physiognomies and Personality

"Outer beauty is dependent on one's face and body," stated a twenty-three-year-old male. Different respondents expressed similar height measurements and fair

complexion as two of the leading outer beauty attributes of men. [I would quote the recurrent ones as *"Tall height (6 feet) and a fair complexion (age 23),"* *"Heighted (5'9" feet), and fair in complexion (age 24),"* and *"Fair and tall (5'8" feet) (age 28)."* The combination of these two attributes was a guarantee to be perceived as the finest form of beauty]. Even the males defined taller height in men as a parameter of outer beauty. Having a tall height and 'looked up to' strike at the subconscious level. This caused the taller men to feel that they have superior qualities. Tall height also gets associated with strength in men, which makes them perceived as stronger[42].

Other descriptions involved looking after one's body and having a decent personality, as gym-goers defined outer beauty, *"It is all about his maintained body"* and *"A perfect body and personality."* A clear difference exists in three forms, between an obese person, a person with imbalanced body parts, and the one who has maintained his body. It is not about having a shaped body only; it is about how much effort you put in to keep it that way. This may involve your good eating habits and exercise regime.

Conversely, a respondent included personality characteristics as an aspect of outer beauty when he (age 29) shared, *"A person with outer beauty does not have aggression in his personality and always reacts in an appropriate positive way."* That kind of man is sensible by nature and can keep his calm and stay composed when faced with hostile situations. In such scenarios, sound actions and rational thinking are not a game for everyone according to my study finding. A male respondent also defined the personality of a man in the ideal perspective as:

وہ نا ہی شراب پیتا ہے اور نا ہی تمباکو نوشی اور نا ہی لڑکیوں کیطرف متوجہ ہوتا ہے. وہ خیال رکھنے والا، پیار کرنے والا، سمجھنے والا اور عقلمند ہے. اس کی سماجی اور معاشی حثیت اچھی ہو، اوریہ ہر انسان کی ترجیح ہے.

This means, *"He neither drinks nor smokes and he is not into girls. He is caring, loving, understanding, and is mature. He is well settled and has social status; this is preferred by every person (age 28)."* In Pakistani society, smoking, and drinking by a

man is a matter, which is objected to by this society and mostly by parents of a female while choosing a male mate.

Lastly, inner, and outer beauty was defined in a definitive manner by twenty-eight-years-old, as he stated,

> *"Beauty at first thought is more of a physical and visual element than a psychological or behavioral one. Today most people define beauty in multiple ways, the most common of which is the segregation of beauty in a person into inner and outer beauty. Moreover, beauty, a combination of many features, includes a person's intellect, kind-heartedness, self-discipline, wisdom, politeness, and all the positive psychological possibilities. To avoid mentioning these qualities, we have derived the term inner beauty, which otherwise is more of a personality trait combination because beauty in its true nature exists in the realm of physical sense only (a beautiful sight, a beautiful smell, beautiful song, taste, etc.). Personal and psychological qualities must be defined using other terminologies; 'a nice person' for example is one way to say it."*

My study has asserted that people are more easily defined on their bodily impression, appearance, and hence, immediate thoughts and judgments are formed. The segregation of beauty is affected by a few of the primary factors that have caused a change in cultural thinking towards assessing and emphasizing outer beauty, i.e., the outcome of processes involved in acculturation. It has further led people to groom and pay attention more to their outer manifestation rather than focusing on their inner values and character. The interviewee (age 27) said,

> *"Social networks, globalization, and media expansion are the main driving forces behind the change of perception and eventually affecting an entire culture. For this reason, people have given up working on their character development and rely more on improving their appearances leading to an entire generation with low values of personality and enhanced outer beauty."*

It is known that our culture has evolved a lot in the past few years; there was a time when outer beauty stood secondary to the inner one. People always appreciated those with a strong and decent character more than the looks. However, these days a

paradigm shift has occurred, resulting in more emphasis on the outer looks of a person[43].

Interviews suggest that the world has its ways, and if you want to have the truth, then you should know that modern society often perceives beauty as something external only, as the accuracy of features and proper appearance. Our notions of the ideal beauty are embodied in outer beauty. External beauty is not only about the perfection of all body elements or about one's health and body shape. It is also inner spirituality: the rich world of thoughts and feelings, moral dignity, respect for others, self-respect, and so on. In simple words, inner beauty is reflected in the appearance.

The appearance is broadly understood in terms of the body and its reflected beauty. The next major section has highlighted women's and men's definitions of the term body image.

4.2. What is Body Image?

What is body image? As I asked respondents, I get to know that belonging to the same culture and society; the definition varied from one person to another. However, some responses followed similar identification patterns of bodily characteristics, which are defined under the broad umbrella of body image. The interviews done with males and females highlighted a multiplicity of meanings, perceptions, and thoughts towards one's body, body surveillance, and body image.

Shilder (1950), a pioneer of body image research, defined body image as "the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves" (p. 11). Being criticized for too simple, researchers argued that the construct of body image is more multifaceted (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002). Presently, body image is defined as a complex and multidimensional construct, a person's mental representation of their body, encompassing perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral body aspects (Grogan, 2008).

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[43] Focus group discussion.

Thompson and colleagues (1999) stated that there is 16 diverse classification of the term body image employed by clinicians and researchers. These definitions involve satisfaction with appearance, the accuracy of size perception, satisfaction with the body, satisfaction with weight, evaluation of appearance, body concern, appearance orientation, body schema, body perception, and body esteem. While literature diversely defines body image, for my research, I must explore the indigenous understanding of body image in Pakistan's society.

Moving forward to body image definition, the chapter will investigate the meaning of body image, which has a psychological, spiritual, or physical experience of respondents. The objective of my focused discussion and interview is to discern the real from the ideal, the tacit from the explicit.

4.2.1 Female Definition of Body Image

Presently, the consideration of the body as a medium enables women to express and portray their identity. The contour of the body is the center of attention for every woman as they think it to be the ultimate portrayal of themselves. Today our bodies control our lives, thinking patterns, and relationships (Edult, 2000). According to my findings, body image by females was stated in the context of body perception, beautification, and idealized body image, which leads to appearance dissatisfaction. Body image was defined in terms of presentation of the body, toned physique, and diverse body shapes with different connotations associated.

In the first section of this theme, I have highlighted women's view of the body in terms of the perceptual and affective components. The findings of my study have shown how satisfaction and dissatisfaction are experienced with one's own body when perceived by others and oneself.

4.2.1.1 Body Perceptions and Feelings

The perception of body image reflects a subjective and multidimensional construct, which includes an individual's self-perceptions about their bodies. The definition also

comprised satisfaction with one's body and how one feels towards it. As respondents shared respectively,

> *"Body image is physical (bodily appearance, size, and shape) and psychological body perception (satisfaction, dissatisfaction) and emotional perception which is your feelings towards your body (age 20),"* and *"Our body should be in a way that we may feel good when we look at it and eventually feel satisfaction because of its image (age 29)."*

Research indicated that, generally, women, unlike men, are much more concerned about their appearance. The main reason for this is that their appearance is pivotal, as it implicates how others assess them on it (Jackson, 1992).

Similarly, the interviewee (age 27) highlighted the affective aspect of the body as, *"It is your feelings towards your body, whether you are satisfied with some body parts or dissatisfied."* Dissatisfaction towards the body was also involved in the periphery of body image definition. When the expectations and stereotypes associated with the body are not fulfilled, one gets dissatisfied. If your body is deviating from the ideal body standards that are set, then other people judge you without any guilt.

The anxiety and dissatisfaction triggered by the ideal body image portrayed by compelling media are perceptible. This kind of idealistic image affects its viewers who are vulnerable to this open idyllic standard. Some of them may not be affected, but others feel dissatisfied and worried about their bodies, a process known as body surveillance. Body surveillance is the habitual monitoring of how one's body appears.

According to the objectification theory, women may use body surveillance as a strategy to determine how other people will view and treat them. Researchers often conceptualize body surveillance as a cognitive-behavioral manifestation of objectification (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). A respondent aged 26 said, *"Body image is one worthless concept as depicted on media; it is rubbish because it is making people worried; people are not satisfied with their bodies."* People are anxious because they cannot achieve unrealistic forms of the body easily. They do not understand that these perfect shaped bodies have tons of handwork, trainers, and

nutritionist behind them. They are earning from their beautiful bodies as it is a demand for their career, and their living is dependent on such a lifestyle[44].

The second definition of body image encompassed female perception of their bodies, keeping the formation of impression, dressing, and being fit to be seen by others in check.

4.2.1.2 Body Presentation and Impression

Belonging to a collectivistic culture, the emphasis placed on the opinions and expectations of the society regarding the body is common. People tend to see themselves and their actions while keeping this reservation in mind. A respondent (age 28) said, *"The way you carry yourself, your style, how you dress, how you present yourself according to your cultural needs is all about body image."* Research shows that there are cultural differences between collectivism and individualism regarding body image dissatisfaction (Grabe & Hyde, 2006). Makino and his colleagues (2006) demonstrate that Asian women experience high levels of body image dissatisfaction because of the collectivist culture that values social conformity, the need for social approval, and sensitivity to public scrutiny.

Is presenting one according to cultural needs and gaining approval requires an ornamental approach to form a perfect impression? The response, *"Are you presentable enough for the impression you have on others (age 23)?"* has caused body appearance to be perfected via different enhancing methods, i.e., dressing, and cosmetics. A person's clothing choice can profoundly affect the impression they transmit and are consequently a sort of effective communication too.

The respondent said, *"It is your physical appearance, i.e., how you dress up that it may make you feel good and how much you feel presentable by adding little makeup to your face at times, while some have [permanent make up] on their face (age 25)."* Research shows that one of the most basic reasons people wear cosmetics is to look better, that is, to beautify themselves. Looking better may involve multiple

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[44] Informal conversation.

motivations, such as looking more sexually attractive, younger, more glamorous, or more put together, i.e., more groomed, and cared for (Russell, 2012). Interview discussion revealed that makeup gives a refined touch to one's skin, and so the unevenness is covered. It makes a person look fresh, beautiful, and ready to go.

Similarly, bodily presentation is diversely perceived when the dressing up of the body is seen in the spatial context. A gym-goer (age 27) shared that,

> [*"In Pakistan, I will say that if it is posh areas of Islamabad such as sector F6, F7, Kohsar Market, or and Safari Villas in Rawalpindi, then people are kind of civilized and do not stand and stare at you if you are wearing some high fashioned clothes. The former three places are marked by a huge presence of foreigners and the upper class. The thing is in old-fashioned, backward, or traditional areas; you are supposed to cover your body per the spatial demand. The presentation and impression must be modest and well mannered. Would you not feel alien if you will wear a bikini in a place where a burqa is needed? I know I am sarcastic, but that is how it is. Even some foreigners wear shalwar kameez or dupatta in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. They respect the dressing code and the concept of a covered body in Pakistan. So, if a Muslim woman is not following it, she will be stared without any doubt and will not feel secure in this situation."*]

There are no written rules or laws regarding the kind of clothing one must wear in a certain space. It is observed, learned, and unconsciously wore in those settings repeatedly. A gym-goer shared that,

> *"When we go to Peshawar[45], we cover our heads or wear long chaddar[46]. I have seen my mom doing it, and I have observed that the male gaze significantly exists there. If I am going without my head covered or in some modern clothing, I am sure I will have a train of followers or disapproving eyes that will reflect that I am not in my decent sense of attire at all. I cover that area because that gives me a sense of confidence and protection. I deep down know that I am not a part of their culture, but*

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[45] Peshawar, city, central Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, northern Pakistan. People in Peshawar are conservative in terms of clothing or socializing, which is why we see a lot of shuttlecock burkas or chaddars or abayas.
[46] A large piece of clothing for covering body head to toe.

> *I am wearing what that culture expects me to wear. I do not feel alien at all."*

The covered body and space go side by side as based on interviews. In Islamabad and some areas of Rawalpindi, modern dressing[47] is not seen in an objectionable way. People are accustomed to that kind of dressing, but some areas do trigger the male gaze, judgmental attitude, and shock.

The following third definition involved diverse body compositions associated with the meaning of body image.

4.2.1.3 Physique and Body Types Dichotomy

In Pakistani society, a person's body judged through the lens of the appropriate physique is not surprising. It is not only about a perfect body appearance, but for some interviewees, it was also a matter of proper body form. Respondents shared their definitions respectively, *"Body image is your physique, i.e., your build or figure in shape, neither obese nor skeletal (age 22),"* and *"Physique of a person, their structure, i.e., neither over muscular nor skeletal (age 19)."* The body of a person is highly deemed of in its finest forms of composition. It is generally about a well-balanced body, which means it should be in equal distribution, and undoubtedly, this body type gives an appealing appearance according to participants.

Another significant contribution to the definition of body image was the body types. These body types were generally labeled by most interviewers in terms of *smart*[48], *fat*[49], or *weak*[50], and by gym-goers' (both male and female) the terms *toned*[51], *shaped*, and *sexy*[52] were frequently used while defining a perfect or ideal body type. Also, physique or body type entailed another parameter to judge body image, and that involves perfect body measurements.

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[47] Jeans and shirt, Capri, tights, and sleeveless clothes according to interviews and focus group discussion.
[48] In shape, i.e., having less fat, gives a healthy look, balanced weigh (not over or underweight)
[49] Having extra body fats that make you appear bulky/obese/over-weight or out of shape
[50] Gives skinny or skeletal look, low body fat level, boney structure, sick appearance, under-weight
[51] Shaped figure, moderately muscular, proper fat distribution
[52] Appealing body shape and parts, mostly an hourglass figure.

Body image was expressed in terms of well-known body calculations. The makers of Wonder Bra state that a woman's proportions should be 36-24-36. By industry standards, this ideal woman would simultaneously be a size four hips, size two waists, and a size ten bust (Harrison, 2003). An interviewee (age 30) with a similar preference stated,

> *"It should be sexy, i.e., having a figure of 36-24-26 (breast-waist-hip ratio) as it is also promoted through media. The body must be toned, i.e., shaped."*

Even though respondents just marked this body type as sexually appealing, but research has deep reasons for this preference. Body fat distribution provides information about health, age, fertility, and sexual-oriented behavior (Singh & Singh, 2011), and women who have an hourglass shape body are more attractive to men (Dixson et al., 2009).

In the succeeding section, I focused on male perception and definition of body image and the different meanings that are perceived for this term.

4.2.2 Male Definition of Body Image

The body image concept for boys was striving for a muscular physique and balanced build. In gym settings, boys engage in intense exercises, especially weight training, for many hours per day[53]. Interviews indicated that boys rarely admit they are unhappy with their physiques but reflected on physical impression and personality. A good build body in the first encounter reflects a positive mark. Boys also want to look good, but they may not want to confess it. This is because the traditional notions of masculinity exclude any interests or traits that are feminine, i.e., things like intensive self-grooming and dieting. Boys are, after all, meant to play tough, masculine, and being dominant[54]. Males defined body image in the following diverse ways.

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[53] Gym trainer verdict.
[54] My study assertions.

4.2.2.1 Muscular and Proportioned Body

Studies indicated that body image assessment in men relates to a desire for increased muscularity and reduced body fat (Nowell & Ricciardelli, 2008), which is different from women's desire for weight loss. One of the respondents (age 27) stated, *"Men's body image is about a muscular body,"* and for few others, an average body is not what defines a male body, rather it should have a muscular build. This type of build mostly gives an attractive look, and according to some opinions, it reflects manliness. Besides having a muscular physique, a proportioned body build is beautiful.

According to interviewees, a balanced physique reflects an appealing body image. The gym-goers expressed

> *"Body image depends on the height, and with it, a person's upper and lower body frame must go in balance, i.e., one must not have too broad upper body and extra slim lower body which may give an abnormal disproportion look (aged 30),"* and *"A good physique. i.e., the body should have the right balance between upper and lower body (age 22)."*

Even though most of the respondents just stressed the beauty of this body shape for it makes a man look attractive, but previous research has its answer for this preference by females too.

The research stated that women prefer a body shape that bears information about a man's dominance in the form of ability and strength to protect. A body shape with broad shoulders and a narrow waist and hips will be most favorable to women (Swami & Tovee, 2005). Participant defined body image as a balance between thinness and fatness as, *"Being in good shape and being chubby, i.e., you are neither slim nor fat, but you are in between (age 25)."* Chubby does not mean being heavy, but it denoted that a male body should have some fat and muscle on it, so it may give a good impression of his body.

The second definition of body image entailed personality connotations, stereotypes, and a person's way of talk and walk.

4.2.2.2 Body Image is Personality and Body

According to Halliwell and Dittmar (2003), a man tends to focus on functionality. The body of a person reflects the living style from a sedentary to an active one. Male respondents (age 22 and 27) stated respectively *"A good body image having balance presents a healthy mind,"* and *"Your body makes your personality, i.e., a person's body type will reveal whether he is lazy, active, or strong. If he is fat, he will be associated with laziness, and if active, it means he is physically fit."* Research also shows that overweight people are generally perceived as more lazy, dishonest, mean, and incompetent in comparison to others (Brewis et al., 2011).

Besides judging a body based on one's size and shape, the gait of an individual is also one of the primary factors that can be easily accessed by an observer. The observation assists them in forming impressions and making judgments about another person (Book, Costello, & Camilleri, 2013). The way a person walks reveals much about them and their personality. However, the problem is that we treat a person's gait considerably as we address their face, clothing, and accent, i.e., as a source of information about the kind of person they are. It is the beauty and skill of a man to carry the body properly that when he walks, it should reflect some dominance and manliness[55].

Respondent (age 22 and 25) gave their understanding of a man's gait as *"Catwalk like gait on the ramp,"* and *"The body image involves almost everything such as your way of walking, your accent, and one should possess attractive qualities."* Attractive qualities in a person are always a win-win situation. It is not about having and grooming physically attractive parts, but one can prime their personality by attending to tiny details about their existence, i.e., gait, and accent.

These attributes, if looked after properly, can build one's persona and impression favorably. In behavioral studies, the tone of voice has been consistently shown to signal cues to emotion (Johnstone et al., 2006), and intent and thought (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). For this reason, the perception of voices plays a

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[55] Interview discussion.

profound role in forming first impressions either in a one on one setting or listening to someone's voice from a distance.

The third definition involved diverse types linked with body besides the impression formation and attire quality.

4.2.2.3 Body Types and Body Impression

The term body image is linked with females, and significant professional figures as respondent stated, *"Body image is all about girls, wrestlers, and athletes (age 24)."* Nevertheless, why it got associated with these three figures? Respondent elaborated that for girls, it is about their bodies and to form a good impression they look after it. For the latter two, it is about their profession for which they build their bodies. They must maintain it to keep going on successfully.

Different sizes and shapes also get included in body image definition, and a person is assumed to have this aptitude to acknowledge each body type as unique in its very own way. Gym-goer (age 23) said, *"Skinny, fat, muscular, no muscular body type, and all other types of bodies are what body image is about."* In a culture where body image is presented in its idyllic forms, the attitude of having body positivity is healthy.

It is important to love your body, feel comfortable in your skin regardless of the shape and size you are. It is about accepting other's body differences too rather than body shaming or forming negative judgments on their physical features. However, the definition of body image did not constrict itself for having accepted in all or specific forms. High expectations for the body prevail in some distinct manner. The power of magnetism and an appealing strong pull of a man's body image is expected.

Beliefs about body image are often characterized in terms of its appeal, i.e., possessing irresistible exterior quality, which should be noticed, as the respondent said, *"It is all about appeal when someone is forming the first impression from their attractive appearance. It should be worth watching, and it must attract you to itself*

automatically (age 28)." An impression may be formed on the outward shell, but the judgment is enough to assess a person's overall personality and nature.

According to the researcher, the first impression is the episode when a person encounters another person and develops a mental image of his or her personality. The image based on perceptible characteristics includes physical appearance, body language, voices, facial expression, and the surrounding environment. Psychology researchers are also of this view that the first impression is formed in limited exposure (as shorts as 100ms) to unknown faces (Willis & Todorov, 2006). Hence, when opinions get formed on appearances, one important factor, i.e., dressing, is noticed in the context of personality and professional field.

The way a person dresses is one of the parameters to evaluate someone's persona. Findings suggest that dressing was not only the interest of females, but males also showed dressing concern according to body type. Respondent stated, *"A person dresses according to their personality, i.e., if I am an athlete, I will dress to expose my body because it is in shape. And if someone is short, they will dress accordingly to make appearance seem taller (age 28)."* Research also shows that the fitting of a garment contributes to the comfort and confidence of the wearer (Klepp, 2008). Body type or body image is finally credited with the way it appears and the impression that forms out of that appearance.

Anthropology has had a long-standing interest in body image due to its focus on diversity and the meaning of appearance. Early European anthropologists, working during the "age of exploration" and the "age of enlightenment," were fascinated by the variable appearance of peoples they encountered. Questions about the diversity of appearance in terms of body size and shape, skin color, body modification, and body ornamentation were part of the earliest set of questions of anthropology. They wondered, "How are they similar to or different from us?" Questions about physical appearance, and later body image, continued to flourish in anthropological studies up to the present day (Anderson-Fye, 2012).

In the following theme, the lens is on the social construction of primary markers of a beautiful body that emerged significantly in interviewee responses. These involve fair skin complexion, gender height, along with other body categories and preferences. The participants highlighted the stereotypes and cognitions associated with the beautiful body and positive prospects and expectations linked with it. One of the important declarations about the proceeding section is that both genders were also inquired to provide their understanding and idea of the opposite sexes' perception regarding research queries.

4.3 The Skin Color

Culturally held concepts and thoughts regarding fair complexion in Pakistani society are evident. The sociocultural flooding of fair skin impression, as well as positive and negative values associated with it, remains notable. To have an in-depth comprehension, I explored the youth mindset behind the perceptions held for different skin complexions. Interview results verify that in Pakistani society, a person is more judged on their skin color tone based on overall appearance assessment. Previous research shows that in many areas of modern Asia, white skin continues to be valued. It can be seen in advertisements as skin whiteners and cosmetics intend to provide a whiter appearance. White skin is valued as a sign of social power in Western countries, and tanned skin is valued as a sign of health and vitality in the United States (Kawamura, 2011).

My study has highlighted the conceptualization of different skin complexions in Pakistan society by both genders. It is necessary to give a comprehensive understanding of cultural and native stances associated with white/fair skin complexion as well as tan[56]/wheatish and black tone. Females were not only asked about their preference of male skin tone but generally, what is a cultural and individual choice for skin complexion in both genders. I will begin by discussing the female perception and preference of skin color.

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[56] The term is interchangeably used for brown skin.

4.3.1 Female Perception

Females indicated the preference for fair and tan complexion in men. They were of this perception that most boys have a liking for fair skin tone than tan and wheat color skin in a woman. The fair complexion was frequently associated with beauty, an idea instilled by society, parents, and Pakistan's mass media channels. Lost in this common sphere of judgment, some people consider the intelligence of a girl secondary and fair skin tone as her primary asset. What about the skin color of a man? One of the recurrent responses of female interviewees suggests that male complexion is not a matter of issue. If they have the looks and more importantly if they are financially stable, then you have won a jackpot[57].

The matter of skin complexion cannot be separated from the person's culture. Asians have a wheatish skin tone, and because of this reason, a fair complexion is preferred in females. Similarly, Westerns prefer tan complexion, as they are fair and white in skin tone. Research also validates that in western countries, some studies (Swami, Furnham, & Joshi, 2008) have shown that tanned skin complexion was deemed more attractive.

In the first section, I have listed the channels that are playing their role in propagating the desirable image of skin complexion in Pakistan as indicated by the participant and in what way it is perceived.

4.3.1.1. Societal Construction of Desired Skin Complexion

Society has played an essential role in proliferating standards of beauty and the ways it can be achieved. Thirty-years -old gave the essence of Pakistani culture as,

> *"Unfortunately, we are living in a society where the scale of beauty is measured through the fair complexion and scale of intelligence by the English language."*

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[57] Interview and focus group discussion.

If you are fair in color and speak English, you may be regarded as a foreigner, and this thought is considered highly classified. It gives an image of some high status and good class. However, societal views are not the only source of depicting fair complexion as ideal; media also has its role.

Songs and advertisement spread the message that a fair-complexioned person has nothing to fear since they can achieve anything with it, from the best of career to matrimonial. There are songs on fair skin color such as,

<div dir="rtl">

گورے رنگ کا زمانہ کبھی ہو گا نا پرانا، گوری ڈر تجھے کس کا ہے ؟ تیرا تو رنگ گورا ہے .

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This statement means, *"It is the era of fair complexion, this era will never get old. What are you afraid of a girl? Your complexion is fair."* She further states that *"There is a 'fair and lovely' advertisement conveying the message that if you get fair, you will achieve everything, i.e., home, job, and proposal (age 27)."* Positive and hopeful outcomes associated with fair complexion are enough to infuse in the mind of this nation that the ultimate win-win endearing situation is in having a fair skin tone. Previous research validates that not only does skin lightness affect perceptions of a woman's beauty, it also affects her marital prospects, job prospects, social status, and earning potential (Ashikari, 2003).

Besides, *"Media promotes fairness intensely such as every cream is fairness cream, and in every ad, it is communicated to make your complexion better (age 22)."* The betterment of skin complexion is understood in the societal context and its importance. The message seems as it is something compulsory but some follow, and some do not. However, the message regarding fair complexion continues to prevail and is continuously endorsed by celebrities.

Whiteness remains an important element in the contemporary postcolonial Asian understandings of beauty and has become a commodity in the marketplace. Skin lightening products are popular not only in Asian cultures but in other non-white cultures as well (Del, 2002).

The attainment of a fair skin tone to meet beauty standards is not restricted to oneself; however, it is also sought in one's mates. In both cases, the female becomes the recipient of this predisposition. Gym-goer (age 29) said, *"Boys seek fair white girls even if they are [dark as a sweeper]. Mothers-in-law searches for girls who are fair because fairness is beauty. Even though in Islam, there is a teaching that no white has superiority over black and no black has superiority over white except righteousness, but who cares?"* It is a general perception inculcated through media and families that people with fair color skin are always beautiful. The black-skinned person gets associated with hard laborers or low casts such as that of house cleaner or sweeper. No doubt, that fair complexion has its appeal, but choosing a person on their skin tone is not a reasonable act[58].

Research states that if an opportunity is given, light-skinned people will be hired on a dark-skinned person from the same race (Mason 2004), or a lighter-skinned woman will be chosen to marry rather than a darker-skinned woman (Rondilla & Spickard, 2007). People may have their preferences for light skin out of self-choice, but this cannot be denied that the dominant aesthetic concerning fair complexion is so deeply embedded in our culture that one cannot escape it.

Likewise, fair complexion as an emblem of beauty is not only promoted by culture or media, but it is also delivered to us by those who are around us since childhood, i.e., our family and relatives. Interviewee aged 24 said,

> *"From the very beginning of our childhood, it is instilled in our mind that '[do not go out much in the sun or do not drink tea, you will get black].' [Unless you are born fair, then it is another case, you have inherited a beauty, and what do we call that, an ascribed status? Yes. For example, Kashmiri and Pathans have white complexion and flawless skin]. Besides, these concepts continue to keep influencing our whole life. Moreover, if you have to define someone's beauty, you will say, 'oh how beautiful she is; so fair and white'. To boys, it is taught that the fair one is beautiful."*

According to another respondent, *"In our culture through advertisement and collectivistic mindset, it is observed that a fair looking baby and bride are always*

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[58] Interview discussion.

adored as compared to the dark one. It is said that anyone who has white skin tone will be automatically liked regardless of their unattractive facial features (age 29)." Fair skin has an attractive quality as observed by the responses and opinions and it is not limited to adults, but children also get included in the judgment scale. Nobody hates his or her children based on color; however, fondness for the white color in babies is evident[59]. Sometimes this quality is overlooked if other factors are considered important.

Factor such as a female's family background is credited as a girl's attractive asset over her outward appearance. Eighteen-years-old said,

> *"Boys consider the family background of girls, and this preference compensates her complexion. If she is fashionable and knows how to carry herself, her complexion will be overlooked too. If she is fair and does not look good in overall appearance or is not presentable, she will not be preferred either. Society and culture have promoted the preference for fair complexion. Girls are chosen with the fair tone so that later in family functions, at least she will be shown off with confidence because of her ideal complexion."*

This ideal complexion may be considered as a symbol of beauty, but if a person is not presentable attire wise, this beauty is of no use. It is all about how you appear, according to some respondents, for it can overlook beautiful features and easily balance one's unattractive looks. Apart from the preference for one skin tone or one's appearance aptitude, some people go for the complexion of any type.

"Some black girls also seem hot, so we never know what boys like mostly. Some girls and boys may prefer fairness, but for some complexion does not matter (age 24)." Although the fair color may be said to possess the beauty that is unique undeniably, other complexions as that of tan or black also seem to radiate beauty. One can say beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder for the person who is observing; after all, they get to decide what is beautiful. Similarly, among different complexions, *gandumi*, i.e., wheatish or light brown color has its significance. A respondent indicated, *"Boys*

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[59] Interview discussion.

prefer wheatish as well as fair color. They find attraction in both skin tones." White skin complexion may be preferred by many, but exceptions still exist where other tones of skin are liked as well.

Females asserted that wheatish tone is preferred by boys and is thought to be an indication of beauty because *"Our eastern culture is famous for its wheatish and tan looks in girls and not the white skin for it is a Western or White people skin tone."* In accord with my study participants, it is generally known and observable how foreigners or westerners indulge in tanning their skin because they possess fairness of another degree. They find attraction in tan or wheat tone, and for this, they lay hours for sunbath to tan their skin for achieving that attractive look.

A female respondent (age 27) expressed,

> *"Standard of beauty is depicted in your music and literature as you commonly hear statements like girls with peacock gait and eyes beautiful as deer. Every song is on fairness; there is nothing on dark or tan color except the song made on* سانولی سلونی سی محبوبہ *which means 'dusky beauty like beloved. Even in that case, she was beloved and not any random girl who is considered beautiful for her dark complexion."*

Only if the cited female is 'beloved,' then there is a probability that the song can be easily sung for her dark or tan color. There is no room for an average tan girl in the songs to sing about.

In the next section, I have highlighted how females have perceived fair male complexion. How the looks of a man and their financial status are viewed when the question is about the importance of skin color.

4.3.1.2 Is it only About Male Complexion or Other Factors Matter?

Based on female responses, it was identified that male skin color of different tones was preferred, and some were considered undesirable. Women did not admire too much fairness in men because various reasons are linked with that complexion and

will be discussed in the following section. In males, the good looks, body forms, and status also get preferred when the preference for skin complexion was being asked. To begin with, what fair complexion in males is considered according to females?

In males, the fair/white skin tone is linked with a good image and looks. Fair complexion in males was chosen out of personal preference and media or societal influence. Different respondents stated their views respectively,

> *"White skin is more attractive in males (age 30)," "Fair complexion suits men (age 23)," "Boys seem attractive in fair complexion (gym-goer, age 18)," and "Image of fair tone in boys is good, and standards have been made that fair will be accepted and not black/dark colors (age 19)."*

Black or overly black skin tone in males is not approved and appreciated. Factors of media and society are instrumental in this inclination. In media, a black person is never seen in a leading role, yet an inferior person gets a role due to tan complexion[60]. Next, to the fair complexion, normal or medium skin complexion was preferred in males since much of fairness has its undesirable implication. Too much fairness is deemed to give a girlish look in boys, and it did not provide any manly image. The respondents expressed respectively,

> *"Normal fair tone in boys is more acceptable as too much fair complexion does not seem good rather feminine (age 20)," "Medium complexion in boys is acceptable, i.e., neither too white nor too tan. Too much fairness does not give much of a manly look unless you have a muscular body and jaw lines on face (age 30)," "Too much white skin tone does not suit males. Only in novels and movies, this fair characteristic gets associated with them (age 27)," and "Utterly white skin complexion in men gives a girlish look, and it does not seem good at all (age 19)."*

Fairness, beauty, and women are so much associated that too much fair skin complexion in men is perceived to reflect feminine quality. This mindset has become the reason because of which genders are judged on their mere skin tones, and whiteness in men is generally disapproved. However, in some hues of fairness, it is acceptable.

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[60] Focus group discussion.

Likewise, in movies, you will see a fair hero, but you will also see tan media stars these days but never black. In real life as well, too much fairness is never expected from males rather a good color, i.e., medium brown or medium fair. If a person is a little dark in tone, it is justified by saying that when did boys have fair skin? If they have too much fairness, it is perceived that they lack manliness elements because white skin is allied with females and they are known to be fragile[61].

Besides liking for fairness in men and associating undesirable qualities with it, there were also those respondents who had diverse indifferent perceptions towards male skin complexion. Respondents stated respectively,

> *"Those girls who prefer fair skin boys are insane; instead, if they would have been sensible enough, they would not have opted for skin complexion in evaluating someone. Similarly, people prefer fair color individuals without any thought or understanding. In doing so, they negate this reality that fair people can also be evil from the inside (age 25)," "If a guy has fair color only a few people will admire it (age 30)," and "Where ever your fate is written you go there. A boy is not necessarily meant to have beautiful or fair complexion so that a girl can marry him (age 22)."*

It can be observed from my study responses that different justifications and beliefs are given for men's complexion. At the same time, several assumptions are also linked with genders and their preference for skin complexion.

If women are considered a fool for seeing complexion/color while choosing men, then why do not they consider men unwise for selecting women for their complexion/color? Culture, society, and even family keep fostering the message that skin color does not matter in males. The reason is apparent, it is a male-dominated society, and it teaches how they want a woman, a fair woman indeed. Since the color of a man holds no significance, there are still other factors, which are identified and attended.

Various responses affirm that looks, body forms, and status have more importance as compared to shades of complexion. Respondents expressed *"Girls see whether he is*

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[61] Interview discussion.

handsome, smart (normal average weight, i.e., neither under nor overweight) and earns good (age 26)," and *"These days' girls see whether a boy is well settled, financially strong, educated, and is an earning hand (age 30)."* Research also shows that social status is generally more significant for men's attractiveness than for women's (Buss & Barnes, 1986).

Besides status, if a male is handsome and has appeal, then this is it, as the respondent stated, *"As long as boys are handsome, color does not matter (age 29)."* Indeed, *"It does not matter,"* said another interviewee and participants repeatedly justified it by saying that males have the upper hand in this society. Based on responses and opinions, one can say that no shape or color holds significance if men are being judged. However, men may be rejected or accepted on these factors during spouse selection, but their supremacy cannot be denied, it is a patriarchal society.

In the next section, I have discussed another type of skin complexion and the meanings associated with it. My interpretation has explained why tan or brown skin tone is regarded in men.

4.3.1.3 What About Men's Wheatish and Black Complexion?

"Girls prefer tan boys because the fair color or too much white skin tone does not seem beautiful as compared to tan skin (age 29)," expressed by the interviewee. According to my study, wheatish (light brown) complexion or tan in males is approved as it is regarded due to specific reasons. Respondents shared their reasons *"Wheatish is preferable because in Asia this color is considered a symbol of beauty (age 29),"* *"Tan is preferred, as fair will give girlish looks (age 31),"* and *"Tan or wheat-complexion in boys is preferred because they seem attractive in that tone (age 18)."* The wheatish tone is preferred because the image associated with it is mostly masculine, i.e., *"With somewhat tan complexion boys seem strong and hardworking (age 32)."*

Similarly, other interviewees expressed, *"Wheatish gives manly and rough tough looks. Those who are much fair and on top of that clean shaved seem* [*utterly gay*]

(age 28)," "I believe wheatish tone gives strong look (age 23)," and *"Tan boys give manly look and seems good. I hate extra white boys because they seem to be gay."* Responses have yielded that fairness in men not only reflected femininity but for some respondents being gay is perceived by such color. This is a common perception because wheat or brown is the skin color of people of Pakistan and with a brown male manliness and normality are associated.

Conversely, fairness in men unlike in their female spouse has a different connotation. *"Fair complexion in males will decrease the female's value. By this, I mean that if a man will be fairer than a woman, he may arrogantly think that his wife is less attractive as compared to him. It is because of the concept that media has instilled in their mind that fair is beautiful and this continues to prevail (age 30)."* It cannot be forgotten that fairness is a value regardless of who possesses it. Hence, the more a skin complexion inclines towards white color; perception begins to change naturally and drastically. However, inclination towards the darker hue, i.e., black has its prospects as reported by my study.

Some female respondents held black complexion unattractive and perceived it undesirable. Fear of being mocked on the dark complexion of one's mate was also present.

> *"In our culture, wheatish skin complexion in males gives a good look and attractive appearance. Black skin color boys do not seem good to the eyes and you cannot look at them longer. Even this type of thinking also exists that what people will say that I have a black color husband, i.e., they expect male complexion not to be jet black. It is also an irrational fear that people may start mockingly naming him [کالا which means 'black'] due to his black skin tone (age 29)."*

A black skin toned person is many times teased for being black because such tone has no regard in this society. It was further shared by the respondent that *"Superiority is associated with white color and negative personality traits particularly lower status is linked with dark skin tone in Pakistan."*

Too much black complexion in males is also connected with the weak image as a respondent said, *"They should neither be too black nor too white because too white boys mostly seem like a delicate girl. Black skin tone gives a dull personality image; they do not seem dominant rather submissive in first look (age 32),"* and *"Too much black and fair people always seem odd. However, there is a perception among girls about an ideal man, i.e., tall, dark, and handsome boys. It is due to this perception girls agree on the complexion part (age 26)."* This criterion for an ideal man is observed in novels or girl-to-girl conversation. If a man matches the standard, he is the most fortunate and well fit in the situation.

Lastly, besides these criteria, it was expressed by the interviewee that the only thing that matters is the size of private parts in males*,*

> *"If we put all things aside, in boys the value is mostly placed on* [*the size of his penis, the bigger the better*] *(age 29)."*

Western culture has influenced Asians in many ways, and being surrounded by western message through media we can find examples in these lines size does not matter which in essence inflicted to mean "Size does matter; the size of penis matters; the size of a penis matter to women because a larger penis means greater sexual satisfaction" (McKee, 2004). Moreover, men's concern for penis size is also fueled by cultural messages associating penis size with masculinity.

Kilmartin (2000) observed, "Real men are described as having huge penises. The penis is sometimes described as his manhood" (p. 215-216). The men of my study nowhere mentioned whether their penis size matters but one male respondent expressed during the interview that in the big picture of a marriage proposal, older women of families say that for marriage a man should be earning and he should be a man enough. The hidden meaning implies that his penis should be operational without any disorder, as communicated by the interviewee.

The next section has explained how fair complexion in females is considered highly valuable and treasured in Pakistani society.

4.3.1.4 Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Only the Fairest Stands Above All

Female respondents repeatedly ascertained that boys prefer fair color in girls because in Pakistani culture fair looks are always admired and thought of as beautiful. It is that hue of color that makes you stand out from the crowd. Other factors associated with fairness in females will unfold in the chapter. I will begin by quoting a respondent view,

> *"Boys prefer fair color and flawlessly beautiful skin in girls, and on top of that how much educated they are? In our culture, white color is preferred and demanded by boys, since we Asians have wheatish or peach skin tone and do not have much of fair complexion (age 28)."*

It gives an overall appealing and sophisticated image if a person has a fair complexion and is educated. If an individual has these two qualities, they are considered the most exquisite combination, and it is especially sought in Pakistani females.

Likewise, boys prefer fair color because *"they find attraction in it (age 28)."* Previous research indicates that light-skinned individuals, within and outside of a given racial or ethnic group, were perceived to possess more favorable traits than their dark-skinned counterparts (Maddox, 2004). Whiteness does not only surrender to these qualities but is positively commend too.

Fair toned girls are blessed in a way that they are complimented and appreciated much as compared to other skin tone*s. "In Pakistan, it is seen that a girl who is white and fair is always complimented in terms of beauty, i.e., oh how beautiful she is (age 26)."* Moreover, *"In our culture boys think that white color has utmost beauty in it as compared to the tan or black one (age 19)."* With this mindset, males have a reason to ground their preference for fair complexion in females.

More respondents validate this reality as, *"Only fair complexioned girls seem beautiful and facial features of fair girls are also thought to be beautiful (age 19),"* *"It is a general concept that those who are fair seem beautiful (age 29),"* and lastly *"Boys think there is an attraction in white and you get more attracted to this color*

(aged 30).'' Beauty and attractiveness are two qualities linked with fair skin in females, according to the women who were interviewed for my research. Nevertheless, how do these traits get associated with fair skin?

Dominant, historically rooted cultural values, which equate white or light skin tone with beauty or goodness and devalue dark skin tones as undesirable or ugly, are learned through explicit parental and peer endorsements. Even in the 21st century in Pakistan, these perceptions and cognitions are developed because of the role of family and friends. Based on the respondent's view, it was held that an individual's social observation has its role in perceiving white skin in an ideal way.

Respondents indicated that fair complexion owns its powerful statement and needs no cosmetics or makeover as compared to tan skin. The reason remains that *"Without makeup fair skin tone is still attractive. Although wheatish skin tone is also attractive in girls, if you do not wash your face in the morning then that tan tone seems* [*dirty as 'shit'*] *(age 26),''* and *"Boys believe fair skin colors are beautiful and they will also look pretty without makeup (age 27).''* White skin tone in girls mostly gives a clean and elegant image.

The dressing style is also complimented because of the fair tone itself, as twenty-eight-years-old stated, *"With fair complexion, girls seem stylish to boys and dressing seems good due to the complexion.''* Advantages linked with white complexion do not end on being regarded as beautiful, appealing, or likable, but other aspects of one's personality are also enhanced by it. It is equivalent to saying that fair complexion opens gates to opportunities and incredible chances for females, especially when it is spouse selection or matrimony.

The white complexion and nuptial chances go hand in hand, as the demand and expectation for the future bride are to be of white skin tone[62]. A twenty-six-year-old interviewee expressed that females are not only valued because of this color, but they are also given the privilege to be chosen as a mate based on this complexion. People, after all, wish to be seen and stood by beautiful and attractive fair complexion lass.

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[62] Focus group discussion.

A respondent (age 25) said, *"Boys always prefer fair girls, even if they are [black as African]. Maybe it is believed by them that fair girls are beautiful, and they must be chosen as their mate."* The black as African is perceived more in a mocking tone than in terms of beauty. Researchers have also shown that men face far less pressure as compared to women to have fair skin. Darker skin tone in men may be compensated by assets such as having a well-paid job, overall economic security, and a good personality, whereas women are likely to be evaluated solely on their outward physical appearance. Thus, women with a dark or very dark skin tone may be viewed as an undesirable potential bride (Jha & Adelman, 2009).

Contrary to this research finding, one of my respondents (age 30) said, *"I have hardly heard that guys have any problem in getting married to a tan girl since some of them claim color does not matter, but still the majority are into fair complexion in girls."* The ultimate choice may be fair color, but if it is tan, he will not back off; a girl is a girl after all, and that is what a man needs at the end of the day[63]. Besides forming perceptions, one factor cannot be overlooked when we talk about skin complexion and its influencer's, i.e., media.

Media promotes the persona of fairness in conjunction with its gains directly and indirectly. The people of this society blame the same media for creating such an impression. Even if out of two, one person is not following or considering such an ideal image, the other will still have this whole phenomenon at the back of their mind. This image either influences their action or gives them grounds to judge others based on color. *"Boys demand fair color in girls because the image of fair and slim has been created in our culture by media (age 23)."* Media does not have its hand only in the creation of fairness ideals, but it also promotes body shape in which slimness is the preferable image and standard.

The media promote beauty and body image in every possible way. Media portrayal of fairness has also inculcated this thing in the mind of our society that fairness has the edge on black tone as a respondent (age 27) said, *"Boys like white girls since blacks are not acceptable in Pakistani culture. After all, the media has created an image that*

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[63] Interview discussion.

fair is beautiful." Beauty is frequently linked with white color in Pakistan. White has a natural attraction in it, and automatic fondness is to be found in its observers[64]. Moving forward, I will now talk about the male perception of fair skin in Pakistani culture.

4.3.2 Male Perception

According to male's perception, it was drawn that females prefer fair and wheatish color in male companions.

> *"It is a 50-50[65] vision in both genders, some may prefer white, and others prefer wheatish. I prefer wheatish in girls as compared to fair because I am myself fair (age 28)."*

In our culture, people desire fair males, but for some females, this complexion is not an issue or matter of interest, it is all about the inner beauty of a man. On the contrary, some females, as per the male opinion were more into body structure rather than skin tone. The white complexion was desired in women by men out of influence caused by media and the concept that beauty is in fairness. This reason was also indicated by female respondents aforementioned in section "4.3.1.1. Societal Construction of Desired Skin Complexion" of this chapter.

4.3.2.1 Women Skin Color: Perception and Connotations

"Beauty is in fairness" was also considered by male respondents when choosing female complexion. This color always had its strong favor and points because from cultural roots to media and societal standards to individual preferences, fair complexion gets votes over any other skin tone. An interviewee also indicated that complexion in females elicits different kinds of connotations and perceptions.

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[64] Interview discussion.
[65] The expression is used for equal distribution.

Respondent (age 19) stated, *"There are some girls who are fair and have no attraction, and then there are girls who seem attractive with fair complexion. Eventually, I believe beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder."* It is not an assurance that fair complexion always has a persuasive position, for the observer has its role. Sometimes white beauty followed by status and appeal all get unattended if the perceiver has a taste for the brown or dusky complexion[66]. Besides the individual preference for complexion, does fair color in females always a symbol of attractiveness?

Respondent (age 31) affirmed,

> *"It does not mean every girl who has fair skin will appear attractive. In fair tones, there is a certain level of shade where the attraction is felt. In extra fair complexion, the attraction is not much, i.e., some people may say she is just a* [*white chicken*]*, meaning she has the color but no attraction."*

When it concerns the degree of white complexion, interviews and discussion came up with the following ideas. Sometimes facial features matter along with fair complexion because those people who have average looking facial features simply appear attractive with fair color. This is how unappealing features are compensated. Moreover, some may have beautiful features, but the over fair complexion causes a loss of charm. There needs to be a balance in white complexion. Then again, some females with wheatish complexion win the hearts. Nevertheless, the wheatish tone is also preferred, with some exceptions.

Respondent age 27 stated, *"Wheat color is only preferred if eyes are beautiful, but colored eyes do not seem likable on wheatish tone either."* It is observed that wheat skin with green or blue eyes gives a strange, muddy, or unsuited image. However, an interviewee indicated, *"If a girl is tan or black but is beautiful and has attractive facial features, even these qualities will not make her outstanding (age 26)."* Sometimes the perceiver believes that beautiful attributes are not enough to

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[66] Interview discussion.

compensate for the wheatish tone. However, some respondents are in favor of this complexion.

"I do look for tan or slightly beyond moderate tan skin tone (age 29)," and *"I never differentiate whether a girl has white or black complexion. I believe she should have a good nature (age 28),"* expressed by participants. The discussion goes back to inner beauty versus outward appearance, manifesting that any complexion loses its meaning if a person has beautiful nature. The inner beauty of a person undoubtedly excels and needs no cosmetics to enhance it. Besides individual persona and observer's preference for the complexion, media has its role in spreading the message of fairness to a considerable degree.

It was indicated that fairness in girls is admired out of the media's influence. Due to globalization and exposure to the western world, its trends and standards are accustomed effortlessly. Respondents stated,

> *"Fairness in girls is preferred because we people are impressed by western culture (age 30),"* and *"Above 80% boys prefer white skin in girls all due to the influence of media which shows that complexion should be fair since beauty lies in it (age 20)."*

Other than the influence of media, the family and matrimonial factors play an important role in constructing beauty notions. These aspects were also identified by female interviewees. Respondents indicated *"Even in homes we see this influence especially those mothers-in-law who expect a fair daughter in law (age 30),"* and *"In many cases, the complexion is the main criteria to choose a partner. I guess for the majority of men, woman's beauty comes before education, family, and customs; sadly, beauty in our society is defined by a women's complexion (age 28)."* Still today, the mindset of Pakistani society perceives fair-complexioned females as superior to those who have a dark complexion.

In the following section, male participants have highlighted their opinion about skin complexions and connotations linked with them.

4.3.2.2 Men Complexion and Its Hues

Male respondents implied that fair complexion was not an issue for males as compared to females who are judged and chosen on this skin tone. Female respondents also voiced a similar opinion in the section "4.3.1.2 Is it only About Male Complexion or Other Factors Matter?" of the present chapter. Male participants indicated that for some females, wheatish and fair skin tone in males did matter. Interviewees believed that females were also concerned with factors such as status, body build, and nature. For some females, male complexion was not important as the respondent said, *"For girls, color does not matter in men; hence, boys can have any skin tone, fair, tan, or black (age 24),"* and *"Complexion is the least point women consider in males. Overall built and frame matters and other things, i.e., job and social status (age 28)."* Why is social status preferred on skin complexion?

According to my participants, females simply feel secure if a person is well settled. Complexion does not promise security or a safe future. The status of males, job stability, money, as well as good nature is significant. Likewise, research has validated that in women physical attractiveness is valued largely than in men (Li et al., 2002), and social status is valued in men primarily than in women (Sadalla et al., 1987).

Moreover, it is maintained that what is kept in complexion if the financial status is strong. The skin color, height, and anything else do not matter if the interest is in status[67]. Nevertheless, status is not the only factor that can compensate for a man's color, form, or appeal. The nature of man is considered by females too; *"Girls only see that a man should be good, has good nature and personality, i.e., physically good, mentally strong, good height 5'8" and be masculine and strong (age 26),"* and *"Male complexion does not matter for girls, they even find attraction in dark color. All they want is a caring, loving guy (age 22)."* The positive personality of men is important to females; the complexion is just another part of the body; mind and heart are of great importance to girls.

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[67] Interview discussion.

Furthermore, other complexion hues were also accepted in males by females, which included tan and fair color tones. The tan tone in men was taken with some exceptions as well. Gym-goer (age 27) expressed, *"Fairer color in boys is preferred, and if they are tan, then they should be of a good height. If body visibility is extraordinary, tan skin characteristics are disregarded."* Oppositely, one male interviewee expressed a general opinion regarding too much fair color in males, as *"I have mostly heard female friends or family members saying that 'that guy is so white and does not seem pleasant'."* He stated he did not know the reason why, but from my study interviews, it was repeatedly indicated by females that too much fairness in men was linked with being feminine or gay.

Fairness in boys was also preferred by some females, as participants expressed. *"Girls prefer fair looking guys (age 23),"* *"Males having fair tone are attractive (age 26),"* *"Westerners fair skin tone seem beautiful to some girls, and they expect the same from eastern boys too (age 28),"* and again it is thought that *"A boy who has fair color will always be liked by every female unquestionably and by this society too."*

Boys held a similar impression that females are influenced by Western white skin, which makes them wish for this color in Pakistani males. Attractiveness, neatness, and tidiness are generally linked with fair skin in males. It is also like saying that *"If there are two colored walls, the white wall will look more prominent than black because as compared to white, the black wall will not seem good (gym trainer)."* Nevertheless, a respondent has his idea of fair color as a mediator when the complexion of white and black is put on the scale. Gym-goer (age 30) expressed,

> *"Girls wish 100% fair color in boys, and for every person, white and black are two extreme sides of complexions. Moreover, not everybody has a universal preference for the white complexion, just as not every person likes black. But it is a fair complexion that is admired by all because it can be regarded as a medium tone between too white and too black skin complexions."*

Fair complexion is viewed as the balancing tone and is maintained to have modest value if it is compared with the complexion of two extremes. It is like too much of anything is bad according to my study findings.

Besides fair complexion, the wheatish tone was also preferred by females in males without any exception. Following opinions were held:

> *"Girls prefer both fair and tan color in boys since both complexions seem good on them (age 28),"* and *"It is wheatish male color because females find it attractive (age 22)."*

It was a dichotomy of opinions because according to males, both fair and wheatish tone was considered appealing in men. They reflected this perception by keeping women's perspectives in mind. The complexion and its conceptualization did not only include white, brown, or black tones. It was found that physical characteristics of height played its role in compensating an individual lacking in the societal created ideal image of beauty and body.

In the next section, the significance of gender's height is explored in detail as the respondents were asked a simple question that is a tall height preferred over a small height and vice versa. The question has yielded extensive data on different types of height in men and women and the diverse meaning and impression linked with height.

4.4 The Gender Height

Men and women are sexually dimorphic, i.e., body size and shape differ in both genders. When the height of genders is discussed, different qualities and traits are associated with taller versus small height men and women. For some respondents, male height or stature was a concern, whereas, for others, it is all about a man's financial strength. Media and cultural messages play their role in the preference for height in both sexes. Feelings of dominance with a taller male and inferiority complex felt by males with tall height females were also marked. Short height in females was

linked with femininity and delicacy, whereas in males, it was regarded as odd and against the societal image.

4.4.1 Female Perception

Females were of this view that taller males had their absolute physical appeal that reflects certain positive qualities that are highly favored by women. Research also shows that an important feature of male attractiveness is considered their stature (Pawlowski & Koziel, 2002), and women are most attracted to tall men (Pawlowski & Jasienska, 2005).

In the first section, I have highlighted the desirability of tall height men and the types of characteristics linked with this bodily feature.

4.4.1.1 The Expected Tall Man and Reflection of Dominance

Men with a height ranging from 5'8" feet to 6'2" feet were preferred by female participants because this height gives an appealing and dominant appearance. Different respondents expressed their views,

> *"Boys should have a good height such as 5'8" feet or above since tall height gives a good impression (age 19)," "It is a tall 6 feet height in boys because short boys neither seem good nor attractive (age 18)," and "Boys should have tall height, close to 6 feet since trait of dominance is associated with it (age 19)."*

Tall height in men is considered a substantial feature of male attractiveness' and the characteristic of strength and domination is linked with it repeatedly. *"I prefer tall height men, i.e., 5'11" to 6'3" feet because it gives a manly look and they seem like a person of strength and dominance,"* stated a 30-year-old gym-goer. It was shared by another interviewee that security and protectiveness are felt in the arms of a taller man

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with a good build body. It is like someone is hiding you from the dangers of this world; these strong arms are enough to make you feel protected[68].

If height signals physical dominance, taller men likely make women feel smaller, protected, and perhaps more feminine as well. In line with this idea, earlier research has found that women who had more traditional gender role expectations were less likely to date shorter men (Salska et al., 2008). Likewise, a gym-goer expressed similar views as *"I would like my man to be taller than me because it does give feelings of confidence, and this feeling cannot be felt from a man shorter than me."*

Besides preferring a taller man of 6 feet, girls reported that regardless of any specific height, men should be taller than women anyway. Media plays a role in shaping this kind of thinking towards male height. The interviewee (age 30) indicated,

> *"Boys must be taller than girls, even if it is one inch. However, boys seek girls shorter than them even if she is one inch shorter. It is because from the beginning we have seen in media that a 6 feet tall height hero is accompanied by a 5 feet girl, but you will never see a short height hero and a tall girl."*

Furthermore, media and other diverse factors teach and portray that a taller man is always expected beside a girl irrespective of any specific height. Respondent aged 20 said,

> *"Girls prefer tall boys, even if they are one inch taller than them. Media, societal norms, family values, and every parent wish that the man beside their daughter should be tall. However, their daughter should not be taller than a man is. Girls also think about how they will wear heels if a boy is short. Even media also portray a protagonist as smart and tall type."*

Tall height males no doubt have an unbeatable factor for this physical characteristic. Yet, when it is about the tall height in females, qualities are reversed, and attitude towards it changes. In the next section, I have explained why taller females are perceived disapprovingly and why men feel an inferiority complex out of it.

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[68] Informal conversation

4.4.1.2 The Tall Woman: Its Disapproval vs. a Prompting Male Complex

Sexual dimorphism preferences are more likely to be molded by internalized social norms about appropriate roles established for both genders. It was indicated by a thirty-two-years old gym-goer,

> *"A boy will not tolerate it if a girl will be taller than him. This concern is mostly seen during wedding moments when we get to hear, 'oh, the girl is taller, and oh, she is also taller than a boy.' For boys, this is very unacceptable. It is a blow to their self-respect and hence, feels complex. This all thinking is shaped out of media and cultural influence."*

Previous researches say that if you are having a relationship in which the man is shorter than a woman is, then this disrupts social expectations and makes the subject being vulnerable to ridicule (Swami et al., 2008a). Tall height in females was disapproved because it gives birth to the feelings of inferiority complex in males, a perception repeatedly shared by females. Responded (age 20) held a similar view as,

> *"Boys will not like it if girls are equal to their height or taller than them because then they will feel inferiority complex. Our culture influences this because it has made an image of a taller male versus short height female."*

Research indicates that if a woman is taller than some men are, then she is also deemed more powerful than they are. Hence, that woman defies the myth of men's innate power over women (Judge & Cable, 2004).

Fear of mocking also predominated in people of this society on the issue of tall height in girls as compared to a man. *"If a girl is taller 5'8" and above, she might be commonly named as electricity pole, ladder, huge donkey, or statement like she seems a mother to her husband, indicating as being elder (for tall height makes a girl appear elder)[69]."* Other respondents aged 19 and 28 shared their views as, *"It will seem odd and look bad in appearance. Moreover, everyone will criticize the boy for being shorter, and the girl for being taller,"* and *"Our society will not spare them and*

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[69] Focus group discussion.

criticize frequently. From the beginning, this trend has been endorsed, and boys and girls are following it."

Moreover, one respondent also held that currently tall height in boys rarely exists as she said, *"I believe these days' boys do not have that much of a height, so taller girls are not preferred as a mate."* Another interviewee made an amusing comment by laughing that *"These days it is by default these defective goods, i.e., males are coming out, they are not taller the way they used to be."* If taller females are not spared and objectified, so are males, who also follow the same fate if their height turns out to be small.

Lastly, despite the element of disapproval related to taller females, a thirty-year-old respondent stated, *"I have seen shorter boys showing a preference for taller girls. I believe such boys want to overcome their inferiority complex and compensate for their short height by showing such preference."* "If we speak culturally then tallness in males is commonly linked with positive attributes*, i.e.,* strength, power, and superiority, whereas the absence of it, i.e., shortness in men typically implies a variety of negative qualities such as weakness, inferiority, and powerlessness" (Butera, 2008, p. 12).

In the following segment, I have presented different connotations and inferences linked with the three types of height in women.

4.4.1.3 Height: Average, Short, and Medium

The average height of females in Pakistan is considered promising and favorable. Gym-goer stated, *"5'4" to 5'8" female height is preferable because this is the average height of girls in Pakistan, and men taller than this female height are easily accessible. Proposal issues are faced if a girl is too short or too tall. In boys 5'5" to 6'1" feet is preferred because, with such heights, those average height range girls are easily adjusted."* However, in some cases, if a boy is tall (around or above 6), then his parents will seek a girl even inch shorter than he is, they will not go for a shorter

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female, i.e., 5 or 5'3" feet[70]. The question is, why does this much shortness have objections?

The short height of females was associated with unattractive and unlikable body appearance. *"Below 5'5" is a shorter height and does not seem good or likable. If a boy is tall and the girl is short and later when she gets fat, she seems awkward. If you have medium height and get healthy, you can still seem good,"* and *"Height of girls below 5'5" feet were not considered pleasant. One of the reasons for this mindset was that if a girl is shorter than preferred height and if she also gains weight after marriage, the appearance of her body will seem graceless,"* as expressed by two respondents, respectively. The beauty of the body is seen in its balanced form, but if it is the opposite, i.e., overweight, underweight, and has short stature, it is considered out of the range of attractiveness.

On the contrary, short height is liked by some males per female perception as two respondents stated *"In girls, boys like short height less than 5'4" feet; I believe they find it cute (age 27),"* and *"Boys usually prefer girl's height to be shorter so that when they stand with them, both of them look beautiful (age 29)."* In a range of these diverse heights, precisely what is accounted for as a normal height in women?

The common 'normal' or 'medium' height preferred in females was defined as follows. *"Normal height is 5'4" or 5'5","* *"Boys like medium height in girls from 5 to 5'6" feet or in between (expressed by two different respondents),"* and *"Girls should be 5'4" or above"* as expressed by differently aged respondents. Hence, according to one of these respondents, 5 feet height women were considered as medium height, whereas in the previous definition, height below 5'5" feet was considered small. As stated by another respondent, 5 feet girls were acceptable because *"taller girls do not look good, I believe they neither look attractive."* Therefore, personal choices and a height dependent society go side by side in judging a women's height.

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[70] Focus group discussion.

In the last collection of mixed perceptions, females gave their diverse views regarding a woman's height. It has reflected their opinion about men's perception of a female height by keeping different reasons in their mind.

4.4.1.4 Miscellaneous Height Preferences

Factors that were held significant in preference of female height entailed its desirability in relative terms, both genders preferring equal heights in each other, tall height boys fancying shorter females and girl choosing male appearance over height.

In the debate of tall versus short height, relative height is also considered by females,

> *"It is a general rule; suppose a girl is 5'1" or 5'2" feet, then a boy should be 5'10" feet. According to boys, girls should be shorter than they are, and it does not matter what short height. If a boy is 6 feet, then they will like a girl who should be 5'7", 5'8" feet, and not 4'10" feet. Relative to a man's height, a girl should have a good height,"* stated by twenty-nine-years old.

It is an expectation of balance between each other's height so that it may give a pleasant appearance of their presence together. Moreover, responses indicated that if a person is tall, then they seek tall height in their spouse as well.

Not only do tall men seek tall women as their partner, but also the mothers-in-law play their role while considering height in their daughters-in-law. Gym-goer (age 30) said, *"If boys are tall, they expect tall girl beside them, i.e., 5'8" feet and above. Mostly those mothers-in-law whose son is tall, they search for tall daughters-in-law so they may appear perfect with their sons."* Other respondents also stated, *"If a boy is tall, he will demand a tall height girl otherwise there is no issue," "Boys prefer tall height girls,"* and *"Boys like tall girls these days and girls also prefer tall boys because I think a tall person has much more attractive personality."*

Moreover, the concept of tall height in females is also backed by the tall models, convincing that eventually, the tall height has its appeal. *"A tall person always has*

attraction and even if you see models, it is their height that considerably matters in modeling, i.e., 5'6", 5'7", 5'8", and even 6 feet are better in females." On the contrary, it was asserted in an interview discussion (gym-goer 32),

> *"[Those people who consider the family background in female proposals do not judge a woman's height. For them, an honorable family is enough to verify the strength of a female character in spouse selection]. This status is something that is 'inherited.' Despite everything, short female height does not have to do anything with one's inner beauty or morality."*

Quite the opposite, some girls believed that height alone is not considered for an appealing female body, but other factors are considered as well. *"Boys prefer tall 5'5" to 5'7" feet and smart girls, i.e., healthy, but neither overweight nor skinny."* A smart body type is recurrently viewed as desirable according to the female belief. Moreover, representing the perception of male height, one respondent stated, *"Girls mostly go for appearance or maybe a tall boy but handsome, i.e., having an attractive face (fairness), colored eyes, and muscular build (age 25)."* If the tall height is sought in males, then their appearance is also kept in mind when the judgment on their body is done.

Lastly, apart from preferences and likeness for different heights and physical characteristics in both genders, it was ascertained by a respondent, *"It is all about one's preference and likeness as a general rule. Mostly, I think boys are not much bothered about a girl's height, and they do not care (age 27)."*

I would validate some of my research findings with previous western researches. Albeit, female interviewees, held these perceptions regarding their belief about how men view women's height. Previous studies have given direct results on men perception when it says that men (a) prefer those women who are shorter than themselves or at least those who are not taller than them (b) if a man is taller then he will prefer taller women, and (c) shorter women tend to be rated as more attractive by men (Courtiol et al., 2010; Salska et al., 2008; Swami et al., 2008a).

4.4.2 Male Perception

According to the interviews, boys mostly preferred short or average height girls. If a boy is tall, he will look for a girl shorter than him. Moreover, heels suit short height girls, and while standing beside a tall man, it gives a good image. For some respondents, tall girls have their advantage, i.e., any fashion or dressing fits this height more as compared to shorter. On the contrary, short height in girls was favored because it was associated with cuteness and innocence by male respondents.

In the first part, I have highlighted men's perception of height and their perception of what women think of which type of height is desired in men.

4.4.2.1 Why the Desirability for Tall Man?

Tallness indicates that the man is in charge and is the provider (Swami et al., 2008a). *"From a female perspective, a taller male is preferable because of two reasons. Firstly, it looks graceful, and women feel secure with a man who is taller than she is, she feels protected. Secondly, there is a misconception in women that taller guys have big wee-wees (penis),"* gym-goer aged 24. The sense of security was also mentioned by females when they thought of a taller man.

Male interviewees indicated that girls favor tall height boys because attributes of beauty and attractiveness are linked with it, i.e., *"Girls like tall height (6'1" feet) for they find it beautiful,"* and *"Girls prefer above 6 feet height in boys, they believe it is attractive."* Other twenty-two-years old marked, *"Girls like tall boys, i.e., 5'11", or 6 feet. Tall boys only look good when they carry a good body, i.e., well build and in shape."* Tall heights are sometimes not enough; If a man has a height, then that body should be looked after in terms of shape and size as well. Besides these associations and connotations linked with tall stature, the factor of media also plays a role in depicting the wonders of tall men.

A gym-goer (age 28) stated, *"In our culture girls prefer tall boys, because of media impression that tall guys give a smart appearance."* Cultural and media messages

propagate the ideal standard of height that a boy who is taller than a girl will give more of an ideal impression. Besides being taller, a man is also expected to keep a sense of balance between his height and weight.

A person always seems odd to the eyes, i.e., if he is short and has a heavy chest or upper body. Mostly such people are regarded as a box walking around, rather than a human. Gym-goer (age 30) stated,

> *"Ideal man is to have a balanced structure in comparison to his height. His upper and lower body should be in balance, i.e., if he is too short, he should not build his upper and lower body, i.e., heavier legs. If he is smart physically, it is a plus point."*

Another twenty-year-old stated, *"Height of ideal man should be 6 feet, and his weight should be consistent with his height."* Hence, a tall height is not enough to make a man look attractive, and if he is overweight with tall or short height, it will give a graceless appearance in both ways.

Regarding the tall height and their significant preference over time, theories claim the following results. Social exchange theories assert that women favor men with greater access to resources, such as status and power. Because of gender roles/stereotypes perspective, on average taller people are afforded higher status and power. These theories and findings suggest that height will be more important to more women than to men (Stewart, Stinnett, & Rosenfeld, 2000). However, in line with the findings of my study, status or socioeconomic resources were not linked with tall height men. As maintained by my research, only the effects of physical dominance, sense of security, and strength were associated with tall height males.

Previous research showed that taller men are rated by women as being more attractive than their shorter peers are, and this occurs independently of other factors such as socioeconomic status. Considering this research, my study results validate this finding. Earlier research also shows that taller men are more likely than a shorter male to be in a long-term relationship with a woman, to have a more long-term relationship, and to have fathered children. While comparing it with my study, the respondents of

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my research did not mention these likelihoods and prospects. Stature is, therefore, not just important in a physical sense but also seems to provide an advantage because of the positive personality and behavioral characteristics attributed to it (McPherson, 2012).

In the last section of this theme, I have mentioned how men perceive the height of women in Pakistani society.

4.4.2.2 The Preference for Shorter or Taller Woman?

Previous research shows that women typically prefer men who are taller than they are, and men usually prefer women who are their height or shorter (Salska et al., 2008). Male respondent shared his perception of women height in the following way,

> *"She should not be taller than a man because it would look odd. We have a social stigma towards genders where male represents dominance, the position of power and women represent fragility and innocence, so in a couple at first glance, it should reflect that."*

The Pakistani society has a record book of stereotypes, shortcuts, and stigma associated with both genders, with its scale heavier and inclined towards the judgment of female existence. It is a continuum where male strength lies at one end and female fragileness at the other, per the results of my study.

Besides female's verdicts, which I have quoted earlier, males also verified that tall height in females gives an unusual appearance, particularly when standing as a couple or generally with a woman. This odd image is the outcome of cultural and media influence[71]. She is meant to be smaller, as stated by a gym-goer (age 27), *"They expect her to be a little shorter than them. Moreover, if girls are fond of wearing heels, then they will look taller than the boys' will. The point is girls should have that much height that even if they wear heels, they must stand equal to boys."* The matter of wearing heels according to the height of males was a concern and perception exhibited by both genders.

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[71] Interview discussion.

Likewise, other respondents shared their views as *"Boys do not like girls with tall height because if a girl is taller than a boy, it gives an odd image (age 30),"* *"If there is a tall boy, he will expect a normal height girl (5'7", 5'8" feet) because girls look beautiful and appear suitable with tall boys (age 28),"* and *"If girls are shorter in height as compared to boys then it looks good. This whole mindset is due to media and cultural influence (age 30)."* It is the way of this society; standards are set by keeping both genders in mind, i.e., what is considered a good height in men and women, what is favored, what is deemed odd, and what stereotypes are linked with inches and feet is another story.

Respondents of my study sometimes had just one answer to give, *"This is how this culture is, this is how our society works."* Society also preaches a persuasive message on gender-related personality constructs linked with height, as one respondent identified, *"Society has this image that guys should be taller, elder, and stronger than girls. According to the image, tall and muscular is more protective, short is feminine, girly, and cute."* The body height is not the only measurement, but it entails in it the personality traits that are looked up and followed staunchly.

Other calculations of height were also mentioned when the medium and average height of girls was reported favorable. 5'4" and 5'5" feet height was generally preferable in females, according to male respondents. Different interviewees stated their views as, *"I prefer medium height in girls, i.e., 5'4","* and *"Boys in majority like a girl who has medium height and maybe that is why 5'4 is considered to be an ideal height."*

5'5" feet in girls was also enough to make them appear fitting besides a taller male as different respondents shared respectively,

> *"Average height in girls, i.e., not more than 5'5" feet and neither too short nor too tall, so they will not overshadow male height and look perfect in this expected height."*

> *"Boys prefer 5'5" feet height in females because lower than this will make them seem much shorter. Also, in front of a taller person, a shorter female*

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seems a dwarf. We at times say 'see a little child (referring to short women) is walking with her mother (mockingly denoting a tall man)'."

"Boys like girls who have a height of 5'5" feet or above."

Too much short height is not only disapproved but also faces ridiculed comments and mocking. Thus, is it just about the height that matters above all at the end of the day? Gym-goer (age 28) stated, *"Height of girls does not matter because some boys are not mindful about it in our culture, I believe." "There should be a girl at least, this is it,"* as shared by an interviewee in this discussion. If you are just a girl, then this is enough for you to have a worthy existence. We need a girl to fulfill our needs, and the matter of height is blurred when practical life takes over.

However, for another respondent, the figure for girls held more importance as compared to their height. Gym-goer (age 22) said*, "Boys only go for the figure; they are more attracted to girls who have a curvy body type regardless of their height."* The curvy figure is the kind of body that seems more attractive than the height itself. It is considered ideal because it is not only in the trend but has its appeal.

Nonetheless, what are the other bodily characteristics that are considered important based on one's views and social construction of it? The body ideals are part of societal trends, which are emphasized by the pop culture within the society and its socializing agents. What people must realize is those body ideals are subjective towards real beauty, and it hardly focuses on self-love and appreciation, which is long-lasting throughout all the body's ideal transformations.

In the next section, I have presented the perception of men and women regarding the most preferred or ideal body type in both genders.

4.5 Ideal Body Predilection: Same and Opposite Gender

Research shows that women's relationship with their bodies is often fraught with judgment, insecurity, and comparison to unrealistic standards (Wiseman, 2002). Body image consists of experience and an evaluation of the physical self. In the current Western society, the focus of body image is on weight and shape, both of which are especially salient for women (Piran, 2001). In contrast, the Western ideal for male beauty has become synonymous with leanness and muscularity. It is labeled as the muscular ideal for men. Having this understanding, I have explored the insight of female and male beauty regarding the individual, cultural, and societal standards of body shapes, sizes, and their connotation in Pakistani society.

4.5.1 Female Perception

Females have come up with a variety of body shapes that are looked for in both genders. A multiplicity of connotations has been linked with different types of male and female bodies, and various characteristics thought beyond the body domain. Besides physical appearance, external factors of fate, male earning, beauty, and intelligence also are reported.

4.5.1.1 Men Body: From Masculinity to the Clean Dentals

Manliness. The male body was deemed to give an impression of manliness and decency in appearance rather than giving a delicate girlish image, i.e., a skinny body type. Discussions held that *"When a man sends off a strong masculine image, females automatically feel secure and protective."* An interviewee stated, *"His height and built should give stance of a man and not a womanly type boy who has thin arms like girls. He must be six feet, and a man should appear like a man, in my opinion."* The smart boy was also defined in terms of decency of outward image instead of their body shape, *"Boys should seem decent in appearance (age 26)."*

It was commonly shared in discussions that *"Male should always appear decent, civilized and a gentleman. He should not give an image of a mummy daddy delicate type or a vagabond macho man image."* Moreover, a gym-goer also marked that *"Girls parents always convey (to them) to find a man who in true sense is a man, i.e., not the vulgar or immature type who does not know how to be decent and responsible in every domain of life."* Responsibility in men is expected because only such type of a man can handle life problems, be in charge, and it is with that man life can be spent properly. Besides these characteristics, the appearance of the male body was also measured by the element of muscularity.

Men Muscularity. In males, muscularity is looked upon in the same way as weight, thinness, and body shape are sought in women. The media continuously broadcast images of muscular models and celebrities. It at times significantly highlights the drastic transformation of the actor's bodies determined for specific roles. Participants stated,

> *"For me, it is male smartness, i.e., muscularity, and abs (age 18)," "A smart boy will not be skinny per my choice, he will be a little bit more muscular (age 23),"* and *"Their body image should be good, i.e., having abs or six-packs (age 26)."*

Abs or six-pack culture does exist in this society, but few interviewees excluded abs from being a part of the preferred male body as twenty-years-old said, *"Muscular and smart body shape, i.e., flat tummy, broad chest, and absence of abs (flat abdomen is enough), arms should be muscular."* Participant asserted that in Pakistan, a male body at first glance is not perceived in the form of digits. You will hardly see anyone saying for a man, a *"30-inch waist, 40-inch chest, or 15-inch bicep, but for girls, you will hear 36-inch breast, 39-inch hips, 24-inch waist, and hip-length hair."* Men's body parts are described in an adjective form, such as broadness, tallness, and muscularity.

This muscularity takes a step back when girls prefer *looks* in a male mate rather than their muscular body. Respondent (age 28) stated, *"I prefer the good looks of a guy over his smart body. If a person is smart but is not good looking, I will not go for him.*

If I give an example of a smart and good-looking boy, then these days it is Hamza Ali Abbasi[72]and Zahid Ahmad[73]." Sometimes the looks and facial characteristics of a man take the lead, and their bodily forms are overlooked regardless of how desirable they may seem.

Inner Beauty. On the contrary, probing in discussions and interviews recurrently revealed that inner beauty should always be seen in a mate because you can survive with an unattractive man who is kind, but never with an attractive one having an ugly heart. Among these contrasting opinions, one of the interviewees expressed her views regarding the looks and form of the male body as not to be a concern at all.

> *"I have known from girls younger than my age that they are not concerned to have a guy who is extraordinarily smart, good looking, or beautiful. A wife is going to gain fat after marriage, faces the pregnancy phase, but boys do not get fat or chubby like girls. Marriage is followed by changes in the body, and the more mature a girl gets, the metabolism slows down, so automatically women gain (age 29)."*

With these bodily changes, women associate different feelings because they are aware that the transformation is more visible in them, unlike men. Does this have any effect on the relationship or their thinking patterns? The fear of abandonment and affairs outside a relationship is a concern of females if a male partner is more in shape than them. However, some girls are also not concerned about attractiveness in men because they know if their partners will be smart, then they have to look after themselves too. It is also perceived that a smart man can naturally play the role of a young-looking gent and so can win the attraction of many women[74]. When it comes to females, this strategy was not identified by any participant.

Lastly, two kinds of attitudes towards the post-marriage body prevail in women. It is believed by most of the females that women in Pakistani society tend to let go of the body concerns for this reason that they are married and have kids to look after all the time. On the contrary, another thing is also in their mind that a wife has to look after

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[72] Hamza Ali Abbasi is a Pakistani theatre, film and television actor, model, and director.
[73] Zahid Iftikhar Ahmed is a Pakistani television actor and former RJ.
[74] Interview discussion.

herself and strives to appear attractive since males' eyes do seek beauty in women. If a wife fails to provide it, then he may seek it in other women in some cases.

Besides all these concerns and anticipations, the male body and its appeal were also evaluated by the way he dresses.

Way of Dressing, Space, and Body. Females showed a preference for male bodies on which dressing suits perfectly. Wearing jeans out of context is not admired in men, as a twenty-eight-year-old old female stated, *"Decent dressing, i.e., his dressing should be according to occasions rather wearing jeans everywhere."* On official occasions, men are expected to wear formal clothes as suits with ties, whereas on informal events, anything can be accepted from *shalwar kameez* (traditional clothing) to jeans and shirts. Another twenty-three and twenty-seven-year-old said, *"He should dress up casually or suited booted according to the environment he is in,"* and *"Of course dressing sense should be according to the age group he belongs to."* People are also expected to dress with one's age, and decent dressing is expected, as a person gets older or grows up.

Funky, modern, or up to date dressing is expected of teenagers and those in early adulthood. A person is always expected to be well dressed, belonging to any age group. Dressing either makes your personality or ruins it. If it is not according to your height, shape, or weight, it will give an opposite, objectionable, and undesirable image of self[75]. Respondent (age 27) stated, *"A smart boy should have a body but not that hideous physique which is built out of extreme gym work. He should have a body on which clothing suits well, so his body seems likable."* A study has also shown that females tend to prefer a moderately developed male torso than extremely muscular physiques (Barber, 1995). Overbuild body gives an unusual image, mainly when muscle growth seems abnormally big and broad on men.

Bodily Characteristics. In the list of body and its desirable traits, an interviewee (age 20) gave her definition of a smart build man by keeping in mind the upper and lower torso, as

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[75] Focus group discussion.

> *"He should not be either thin as a slab or too broad or fat but rather the middle of these two. He must have broad shoulders and legs of strength rather than pencil or toothpick size legs. His arms should not be lean but standard size, neither fat nor thin, but in between of these two. Broadness is accepted, but excessive fat over that broadness will not be tolerated. Boys may choose a fat woman, but girls will prefer smart (bodied) ones."*

Media and societal image of the fat body, and stereotypes regarding fatness were some of the reasons; females wished to have a smart body in their mates. A respondent shared, *"Media has its impact, and in this fast pace world, like women, men too are considered beautiful if they have a well-maintained healthy body. His appearance should be outstandingly decent even if he is not educated or beautiful facial wise."* It was generally believed that if a person has a good sense of adornment and manifestation, then this quality would act as compensation for his lacking in any bodily feature.

Regarding a male body, other kinds of concerns were also shown. Some people have anxiety about what others will think if a girl is smart as compared to her bulky or fat mate. A protruding belly was considered a disapproving factor when defining the characteristics of a smart body in males. *"His tummy should not be protruding and have a well-shaped body,"* as expressed by an interviewee. *"A boy with a protruding belly gives an image of an uncle or aged person just as a bald person's impression. However, what image will be created if a man with a belly sticking out is walking with an attractive, shaped body female? The answer is it is terrible[76]."*

The term *uncle* was used while referring to a male who seemed older than his age when his body was not in shape or muscled; instead, it was overweight and bulky. However, I would like to give a detailed meaning of this term's usage in Pakistan. Firstly, it is used to present second-degree relatives such as the father's sister husband, mostly stated as *Phophaa* in the Urdu Language, or the mother's sister husband as *Khalu*. It is also used for father and mother's brother, and the term for them is *Chacha* (for the younger brother of the father), *Taaya* (for the elder brother of the father), and for mother's brothers, it is *Maamu*.

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[76] Commented by a respondent in the focus group discussion.

Secondly, the term uncle is also uttered in its symbolic means, such as a respectful way of addressing anyone who is significantly older than one is. Finally, clarifying the connotation of our interviewee's perspective, the term uncle was sarcastically used to reflect someone who seems elder because his body does not reflect the body of a young man, especially if he is bald or fat. Appearing bodily older is not desirable because it indicates you are not young enough.

Besides judging a man's beauty on their body size, one respondent was of the view that *"His teeth should be clean as if he smiles one should not feel bad in the heart (age 24)."* White teeth have their significance, as it reflects the image that a person looks after their hygiene, and keep their teeth clean. White teeth add to the attractiveness quality of a person, whereas yellow teeth set this off. Finally, yet importantly, adornment accessories like watches are considered. Wearing the wristwatches reflects a men personality as, *"Those boys who wear a watch instead of wrist bracelets seem decent to girls,"* shared by twenty-years-old. A bracelet gives a boyish image, and a watch is associated with *being a man* persona.

In the next section, I have highlighted how female body shape is perceived in various manners by women of Pakistani society.

4.5.1.2 Women Body: From Smart Body to Fitness Shortcuts

Bartky (1990) argued that society encourages gendered bodies through expectations related to the size and shape of the body (women should be smaller than men and thin), related to how one can move the body (women are more restricted in their movements; e.g., in proportion to body size women take smaller steps and keep their limbs closer to their bodies), and how one adorns the body (women should look sexually enticing to men and their faces should not show signs of wear or deep thought). She argues that if women discipline their bodies in such a way, it reinforces their deference to men.

This "control" of women's bodies might occur without their conscious awareness. Bartky (1990) argues that women are so surrounded by forces that encourage their

sexual objectification that they internalize this objectification and start to monitor themselves. Thus, no direct rule of women's bodies is necessary to ensure compliance. Further, Bartky contends that women resist questioning their beauty care rituals since they operate like sacraments giving women a sense of control to deal with inevitable feelings of body shame that result from unrealistic expectations. While achieving a sexy body might gain women a sense of control and some attention from others, it will lead to little real respect or power. Although women are supposed to focus on appearance, they are ridiculed for doing so (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012). In the next paragraph, I have continued with the female's perception of the ideal woman body in Pakistan's society.

Smartness. Female respondents not only perceived smartness as the preferred body shape in men, but they also thought of it for themselves too. With a smart body of a female, attributes of youthfulness, confidence, and sense of dressing are associated. [A gym-goer (age 30) expressed her views as,

> *"For boys, a smart girl will always give an impression of a young hood. Moreover, walking beside a smart girl brings the feeling of confidence and superiority for males."*]

An attractive, smart female spouse has been personified with the assurance of feelings of supremacy for some males as per the female's perception. A smart body in females was thought of as a perfect body on which any kind of dressing goes well. The interviewee (age 26) expressed,

> *"Boys prefer smart girls, i.e., they should have a good figure, so when they dress up, they appear to fit in it. Man can easily and confidently make their friends meet their smarty."*

It was found that people who were associated with attractive partners were rated more favorably as compared to people who were linked with unattractive partners (Hill & Buss, 2008). It was contented by Winegard and colleagues (2013) that the way people flaunt their prestige goods to boost their status, similarly flaunt, or show off their attractive mates as well.

Smartness in females was also linked with having appropriate body weight. Participants expressed, *"Boys prefer smart girls who are not overweight (age 18),"* and *"Most boys wish the girl to be smart, i.e., not overweight but having an attractive body with curves. [Curvy is sexual] (age 30)."* These standards of ideal weight, which are set for women, are very inappropriate, as they do not consider what effects these thoughts have on women. I would refer to the quote of one of my interviewees (age 31) who voiced out self-fat talk annoyance as,

> *"I am fed up with looking at this scale, and it does not even budge. I have tried hard this time, but nothing has paid off. The needle is still there, and that makes me depressed."*

Research shows that fat talk has been associated with a myriad of maladaptive consequences. For instance, verbalizing discontent with one's body is significantly associated with body dissatisfaction and mental health issues (Arroyo & Harwood, 2012; Arroyo, Segrin, & Harwood, 2014; Rudiger & Winstead, 2013; Shannon & Mills, 2015).

Curves or Skeletal. In the pursuit of ideal body weight that is considered neither over nor underweight by participants, the female's smart body was also supposed to maintain its appeal without losing all its flesh and curves. The body is considered skinny/slim/smart if it has appropriate flesh. With these body types, a person is believed to appear less skeletal or very thin because they have the required amount of fat in the body rather than being boney.

لڑکے صرف خوبصورت جسمانی ساخت کو اہمیت دیتے ہیں، لڑکی صرف ہڈیوں کا ڈھانچہ نہیں ہونی چاہیے.

This statement means, *"Boys prefer smart girls and by smart means, a woman should not be bony like a skeleton."* Another criterion of preferred female body size was *zero-size* which did not mean that a person is scrawny. *"Boys expect zero-sizes; skinny but not skeletal like they must have figures and curves because it gives a sexy look,"* stated twenty-year-old.

According to Salman and colleagues (2014), zero-size body type is an emerging concept of modeling on the ramp in the fashion industry of Pakistan. However, according to my study, zero size was identified by females and males, but women participants nowhere wished to have this body size. Besides a skinny body, the hourglass figure was another significant inference of the smart female body.

The hourglass body shape is generally known to participants because of media, and some song lyrics speak for 36-24-36 body measurements, commonly known as an hourglass or Marilyn Monroe figure. *"Smart girls are the ones who have an* [*hourglass figure, i.e., narrower at the waist and heavy at bust and butts*]*: a media portrayal,"* marked by twenty-years-old. Another interviewee (age 29) stated, *"Guys always need a smart girl which means, a girl having* [*big breast, slim waist, and a flat belly, i.e., hourglass figure*]. [*Like if someone sees them, they utter: wow sexy figure*].*"* These parts are deemed to reflect sensuality and sexiness, as claimed by a participant during the interview discussion.

According to Simmons and colleagues (2004), a typical hourglass shape is said to have a big bust and hips that are almost equal, with a moderate waist indentation. This shape proposes that mostly those female body regions are actively attended by men where female fat accumulation is greatest and achieve an appreciation of the hourglass shape.

Media also propagates this shape along with the prospects linked with ideal body types that have paved the way to new obsessions and bizarre thinking patterns of people. Movies, advertisements, and songs indicate what body completely allures the opposite sex. *"Media has promoted that a girl should be fair and smart, i.e., physically attractive. Under its influence, boys tend to seek smart girls no matter what they are. Moreover, in the past, mothers used to have their daughter get married easily, but now media has brought awareness regarding chubby girl versus smart girl,"* expressed by gym-goer.

Standards of body image and beauty have not only pressured girls but mothers too. Media has undoubtedly highlighted in the movie, dramas, and advertisements the

body shape or size, which is more valuable. This has effortlessly caused stress on mothers, for they wish their daughters to get married without any difficulty. The trouble is caused by ideal body types in females, which are now openly sought by this society and have provided short cuts to achieve them.

The Easy Way Out. Short cuts like extreme fad diets do make the majority of people quickly shed weight and fats, but then again, such people fail to acknowledge that indulging in these shortcuts will eventually prove to be harmful to health. Even if the figure and body size is a concern, and if people are taking the adoption of bodily and beautification forms on their nerves, it is not healthy. A gym-goer stated,

> *"One should be comfortable with their body, and if you are oversize or zero size, you should indulge in healthy activities, workout, consume more vegetables and fruits to look after your health. The world is not about 36-24-36 measurement, but the reality is that a healthy shaped body will always give a fine appearance than the one who is obese and out of shape. I believe this has nothing to do with standards set by culture or media. There is a thing called aesthetics, even though the preference for obesity over smartness is preferred in some societies, but this is all out of culturally held standards. The eyes do seek beauty; symmetry and shape things."*

Another gym-goer (age 32) shared,

> *"Beauty procedures are in Pakistan so that we can appear perfectly ideal, but it is not availed by the majority. This involves going under the knife; however, I have not seen a boob job or butt implants trend around me. I also have not seen a celebrity having it even if we assume, she had small size breast or butt. Lip fillers can be seen on celebrities or a Botox treatment. I have heard about gastric sleeve surgery or liposuction so that weight and fat can be reduced. In general society, these all trends may be followed by 2 out of 10 people as far as I know."*

In the following topic, I have put forward female respondents' attitudes towards a fat or bulky body. How it is perceived in Pakistani society distinctly and why the smart body is considered better.

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4.5.1.3 Is Body Image Independent of Fate, Smartness, Or Status?

Spousal Body and Fate. Body and marriage were repeatedly linked together by respondents in interviews and focus group discussions. The two factors get reflected when it is a talk about ideal body shape and leads to a successful marriage proposal. Moreover, fate, which is said to determine the matter of marriage, is also considered dominant in ruling out any bodily forms, which are held responsible for mate choice. The respondents aged 26 and 30 stated,

> *"I believe, maybe in love, or arrange marriage (done by the will of parents) or even in an unmarried life, sometimes people prefer smart figure in each other. Maybe as time passes, the boys see the figure in girls, and girls see men's handsomeness. Nevertheless, when it is the marriage, you will ultimately marry the person who is written in fate, regardless of these aspects,"* and *"Of course both boys and girls prefer shaped ones but what luck gives you, you go with it."*

Respondents' answers and discussion of my study shows that no matter what the relation, husband-wife, girlfriend-boyfriend, or any marriage type, an attractive figure is always thought of and expected in an opposite-sex partner. People wish to feel pleasurable in the company of a good looking and smart bodied mate. The intensity of these preferences varies based on the span of a relationship, i.e., in short-term relations, it is all about outer beauty in both genders. However, this preference is also anticipated in marriages, but some believe that fate has its hand in giving us the mate regardless of what we idealize. Besides, one dominant element is identified that influences all these aspects.

This single factor controls the prospects of attractive physical appearance, marriages, and spouse selection, and it is a male-dominated society according to the responses. *"In our society, males have their upper hand and hold; they get a shaped girl almost certainly. Girls may not get a shaped boy, but eventually, he would be either fat or thin (age 30)."* This kind of society has its profits and gains for males only, from power to control, mate choice, and body preferences.

Intelligence vs. the Body. The smart body is not only perceived in size and shape. One respondent identified the smartness of mentality in defining a smart body. A respondent (age 29) told,

> *"Boys out of nature are always fond of physically smart girls and do not bother about their mental smartness. Those girls who are mentally smart, i.e., knowledgeable, are perceived as a threat since boys are of this nature that they know everything better than girls do. Boys firstly focus more on the girl's physical appearance and then on their brain or heart. Girls also prefer smart men based on physical appearance. However, most girls also seek smartness in terms of a man being mentally smart irrespective of fatness or physical appearance."*

The general intellect and intelligence of men are perceived by themselves to be higher. Men also find it intimidating if they have to date an intelligent woman (Hazarika, 2017). While intelligent women are being discussed, Hazarika (2017) stated that she heard many men saying, I am scared of her, she is intelligent, competent, and so much in control. These thoughts are held as if they are negative attributes. However, man's intelligence is generally linked with success in a wide variety of circumstances (Kuncel et al., 2004), and it is expected to be greatly valued in a long-term mate. For example, if a man is more intelligent than a woman is, then it means that he is perceived to have more access to material goods and resources involving those that are linked with bigger social success and standing (Gottfredson & Deary, 2004).

Men Status or Smartness? It has been supported by the earlier study that the social dominance and success of potential mates are attended by women (Gangestad et al., 2007). Based on my research results, the earning of males and how much settled they are is the only concern in some females when appearance versus earning is sought in a mate. A respondent said,

> *"In boys, it is not seen whether they are fat, utterly beautiful, smart, or whatsoever. It is seen if he is earning better, his assets, being well off, has a good family, possess a car, and everything, so girls say yes. I have also noticed young girls marrying an older man because he is well settled."*

It was shared by a gym-goer that I have seen my friend married to an older person twice her age, just because he lives alone and earns well. The priority to breathe in a place that is only shared by both spouses is enough to let female neglect the aging factor in a man.

Besides body shape and social power, the human body was perceived in the following terms. It was identified that *smartness* is not only measured by keeping body characteristics in mind, but smartness itself is a perception of a positive feature, which is naturally favored in surprising forms. Gym-goer (age 30) said, *"In our culture, the criteria of smartness is that a person, both girl and boy should look beautiful, attractive and at first glance seem appreciable. People, for this reason, do not prefer fat ones; rather, opt for smart girls and boys."*

Smart bodied people are repeatedly chosen over individuals who are fat because only the smart one is believed to possess certain desirable qualities. Respondent aged 22 and 29 reveals, *"By smart, it means they must have smart dressing sense, be in shape not overweight, and also having a body appeal,"* and *"In comparison to fat boy, a tall, slim or smart male will be preferred. Why not fat? Because I guess it is human nature, you always go for the physical appearance first whether girls or boys."* Physical appearance has its worth in many ways, and people feel attracted to those who have some appeal and seem good to the eyes, regardless of gender. However, if a man lacks any appealing body characteristics, then a remedy is also devised by females to make them appear attractive.

Interviewee response indicated that a body, which is not ideally built, could be compensated by achieving a healthy body, which is an easy remedy. It does not mean one has to join a gym to fulfill those ideal standards of body image. At times, body surveillance is enough to make individuals think that how one's body could give an impression that is acceptable and admirable. *"[A smart boy must build his body so that one may see him and say "wow,"] and if he has not built his body, at least he must not be extra slim and skinny. He must be healthy and should not have excessive fats on his body (age 29)."* A healthy body can be achieved by eating healthy food, making good choices while eating, walking, and staying active.

Lastly, respondents aged 24 and 29 were of this view that the compassionate nature of a man is what wins and overshadows everything, as they stated, *"I think girls are not much bothered about the body shape of boys. Whatsoever type body he has, he must be caring,"* and *"Moreover, to a great extent, some girls also seek a guy who is good at heart and does not bother for their physical characteristics."* Inner beauty is sought over outer beauty because the heart matters over the body for them.

In the following division, I have presented the male perception towards ideal body shape and the preferences associated with different body forms in men and women.

4.5.2 Male Perception

Males preferred female body shape and size, which is considered physically beautiful, for instance, have hourglass measurements, are smart and in shape, curvy, and not skeletal thin. The perception of the attractive male body included muscular form, good looks, smart build, and status. I have also asked male respondents questions on what they think which body form is preferred by females. Firstly, I will be explaining men's views on what they think about the preferred women's body and shape.

4.5.2.1 What is Considered an Appealing Women Body?

I will begin this chapter by quoting the words of a twenty-eight-years-old respondent who defined an ideal woman regarding her beauty, from her eyes to status as,

> *"She should be beautiful, eyes as beautiful as a lake,* ناگن جیسی چال *which means, 'gait as a snake' and body parts should be acceptable, i.e., attractive and alluring. She should be educated, the only daughter of her parents, and has a good nature. An ideal woman in the light of beauty must be a jack in all trades."*

These all qualities are what a typical person thinks, the respondent stated and expects in his mate for life, and if you find these all qualities then you already have won a jackpot.

A woman having an appealing and shaped body was thought of as an icon of pride and confidence. A similar judgment was held by female participants when they gave their opinion on behalf of men thinking patterns. It is believed that in the presence of an appealing mate (both male and female), one always feels inner gratification, and contentment because you know all eyes are on the attractive person whom you have chosen as a mate.

It was expressed, *"Boys prefer smart girls, i.e., physically attractive and in shape because when he attends functions with that girl as his wife, then a fat wife will not seem good beside him,"* shared by twenty-two-years-old. Sangrador and Yela (2000) found that a partner's physical attraction was linked positively to levels of satisfaction, passion, intimacy, and commitment. Women not only face body-related opinions in their daily routine but their bodies are also highly judged when indulging in spouse selection. *"They are assessed based on physique and looks, not only by the man they are going to marry but also by his entire family (age 23)."* Researchers indicated that in mate selection, physical attractiveness is, in general, considered a significant feature (Swami & Furnham, 2008).

Besides seeing women's bodies in the context of mate choice, the body was also seen through the lens of different shapes and sizes. Among female body shapes, the *hourglass* body was a body type that was positively evaluated and looked upon by males. This body type is thought to have its substantial appeal as compared to other bodies. Interviewee (age 29) said, *"Boy prefers slim waist but a heavy butt, bust, and thighs, and this figure is also known as an* [*hourglass figure*]. *There should be some fat on her."* The famous measurement 36-24-36, known as hourglass figure in women, was also formerly voiced by females when they gave their perception of male preference for a woman's body shape.

Another male (age 30) also stated, *"Smartness is [36-24-36 (breast-waist-hips ratio)] and having appealing body characteristics. The thing is that if a girl's upper body (breast) is heavy and her belly is also heavy, then she will lose attractiveness in her upper body. There should be a balance."* A women's breast and hip are a symbol of sexiness, and in their proper balance have an appealing pull.

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Apart from an hourglass body, *chubby body* shape in females was also chosen by some males in comparison to skeletal body type, which is believed to repel attraction. They should not appear like a *kehat zadgaan*, which means a famine-stricken person who has been deprived of food. *"Some fat should be there to be eaten,"* marked by a respondent. To be eaten in a sense that the fat should be enough to make her sexually gratifying and be enjoyable.

Gym-goer (age 27) said, *"Boys believe that a girl should neither be skeletal thin nor fat and mostly say that she should be little chubby, i.e., have some healthy fats and not overweight. If she is having a thin layer of skin on her body, it will never be appealing."* Another twenty-four-year-old respondent maintained, *"Boys prefer good figures girls', i.e., she should not be overly skinny but a little fat in a healthy way."* Besides these bodily forms, another body type that is the skinny kind was also sought in females.

Skinny body type was thought of in the sense of being delicate and girlish by the male respondents. Why do people desire this image in humans and things? A respondent justified by saying, *"Men like skinny girls because it is about being feminine, delicate, and it seems good. Have not you noticed that people like delicate things; even they buy it for their house decoration (age 28)?"* Moreover, another interviewee expressed, *"Men prefer slim body type in women, but to a certain limit, not too skinny. In our culture, it is preferred that a woman maintains her weight limits, retaining the softness and delicacy, which distinguishes her physique from that of men."* A woman with a muscular build is thought to give an image like that of a male body; it is believed that a woman should reflect an innocent, fragile look[77].

In a pool of these subjective judgments and thoughts associated with skinny body type, other respondents shared, *"Some men perceive thin girls as smart and beautiful and some man like curvy girls. Generally, [curvy] is more admired due to the obvious sexual reasons."* Thin and curvy body types are considered beautiful and seductive per individual preferences and perception. A curvy body is deemed as sensual because it is claimed that the sight of body cuts and curves does provoke males.

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[77] Interview discussion.

Nevertheless, for one male respondent, the facial aspect is the only feature considered by few males when the bodily form is a question to be addressed. Twenty-two-years-old said,

لڑکے صرف خوبصورت چہرے کو اہمیت دیتے ہیں، نا ہی جسمانی ساخت کو . ان کی پسند صرف دل لبھا نے والی صورت ہوتی ہے.

This means, *"Boys want a good face, no smartness nothing. They seek attractiveness of a girl's face that is gratifying enough."* A beautiful face looks good in the eyes of the observer and gives a pleasing sensation. Hence, the body is not considered if one has facial beauty.

In the following unit, I have discussed the unequivocal viewpoints of male respondents regarding their preference for ideal male body shape.

4.5.2.2 The Male Body: How Both Genders Perceive It?

Male participants asserted that shaped or smart body in males was favored because *"They seem good with that body type (age 22),"* and *"Only a physically smart man will look good as there is a saying that a 'fat person has no life' (age 24)."* The concept of a smart body excludes fatness, obesity, unattractiveness, and an imbalanced body. The smartness of the body is perceived in terms of goodness in personality and appearance, fulfilling the *what is beautiful is good* stereotype. The opposite of it is true in this culture and is declared that who is fat has no life. By this statement, it means that he has nothing attractive or healthy to live for in his life. That person will always have health issues, will never look appealing, will not get favors the way attractive ones get. He will also lack opportunities in life, especially in the employment sector, and he will not be appreciated the way a physically smart person is[78].

The physically smart person was not only generally appreciated, but this smartness was sought in spouse selection too, i.e., *"Girls prefer smart boys such as in shape and handsome. If he is a smart husband in appearance, people will appreciate him (age*

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[78] Interview discussion.

22)." The attractive appearance is of value because it yields societal appreciation too; besides, the imaginable preference for it. Nevertheless, focus group discussions and interviews with both genders identified two significant findings in the matter of mate choice and status.

For some females, financial strength matters more as compared to a man's looks or build. If he has the money, then what is to be done with looks or sexual pleasure as one respondent asked? Sexual desires last for some time, and outer beauty diminishes with time. If you will not have money, the relationship will end up in financial conflicts and disharmony. This will further lead to mental distress and destroy the spousal amity.

On the contrary, according to one respondent, the monetary value did not hold any significance when it is a fat man. *"If a girl is doing love marriage, she will seek a slim and smart guy. On the contrary, if a boy is rich but fat, she will not marry him. In arrange marriage, she may accept a fat one."* Marriage types also determined the female's preference for the male body.

If it is a love marriage, then physical appearance and appeal will matter for numerous people, but if it is an arranged marriage, any body type is considered by the majority. The reason is that in a love marriage, you are choosing a mate for yourself, so you aim to choose the best and the one worth looking at forever. However, in an arranged marriage, a mate is selected for you, and in most cases, your choice is not much considered. Nonetheless, we have seen such couples in love marriage in which a person is rich and fat, and they both seem happy together[79].

In the spouse selection, the muscular male body is also considered. Females also discussed and valued muscularity in the ideal man. A male respondent stated,

> *"Girls will prefer a slightly built muscular body in her mate, out of her fascination for the attractive physical appearance and looks of her*

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[79] Informal conversation with interviewees.

husband. She probably has always thought of her husband to stand out and win the game in terms of looks in both casual and formal dressing."

Another twenty-seven-year-old held the same opinion, as *"Girls prefer a smart, shaped, muscular boy who must appear attractive too."* A blend of the muscular body with an attractive appearance was considered a winning combination, as pointed by participants. This muscularity can be achieved by working out in the gym. Gym-goer (age 23) stated, *"Guys work hard on their body to appear manlier, muscular, and more dominant. Broad shoulders may be inherited, but [you can make your chest pumped up and seem broad by chest exercises]."*

Masculinity is also candidly expected by females too, as a respondent said, *"Now they look for gym-goer, muscular type. He should be a caretaker, heavy muscular type, and when he walks beside you, he should be noticeable (gym-goer, age 24)."* It was indicated by the male respondent that women now go for those men who look after their bodies and muscles by going to the gym, inculcating that the appearance culture has taken its lead. He is noticeable if he has a muscular, broad image.

Nevertheless, regarding appearance, two different perspectives have emerged from participant's opinions. *"Girls prefer smart, shaped boys because if you are physically smart, then your looks will always give a good image (age 24),"* and *"A boy should be handsome and heighted; there is no smart and shaped thing. If he is handsome, he will look bodily smart too."* Appealing looks can only surface if it is supported by the appealing body or if you have only attractive looks, then those looks are enough to reflect your body as appealing. Sometimes an attractive body dominates the looks and sometimes looks take over the body.

However, when the physical appeal is the question, then height cannot be negated. A participant stated, *"I think sometimes it is just height that matters in males or some women idealize it. The rest of the body shape is not of concern generally, unless the man is too fat."* Height is recurrently verified to be a factor after which one's body size, shape, complexion, and unattractiveness can be effortlessly compensated. Even though the tall height was highly preferred in males as the previous chapter revealed

but according to one participant, *"A boy should have a well-built body even if they do not have height."* Hence, the body is deemed to be in its finest form; if it is not tall height or has attractive looks, then at least it should be proportioned and in its balanced form[80].

Lastly, interviewees identified that whosoever body type or personality you have, you tend to seek similar characteristics in the opposite sex as well. Gym-trainer (age 22) said,

> *"If a person goes to the gym, he will ask for a smart girl who is in shape. I may go for a heighted girl, but some others may prefer a beautiful girl based on facial features. If a man is modest, he will expect a humble girl for him. In boys, mostly, this concept prevails that a girl should be beautiful (physically attractive), hot (seductive appeal, proportioned curvy body), and heighted (above 5'6"). Whatsoever body types a person is they want the same type in another person."*

These similar thoughts were also shared by the female respondent in her interview discussion that *"I have a male cousin, who works out and looks after his body. His wife gained weight and got fat after pregnancy. I know that he persistently says to his wife to lose weight and get smart, for he expects her to keep in shape. After all, he is in shape."* Another gym-goer, age 23, had similar opinions, *"Skinny girls like skinny boys, fat ones, however, may look for any; they are not egoistic about their bodies. Boys like curvy and petite body type in girls, and I am into curvy ones."* The selection of body size was dependent on one's body shape and personal preference towards it.

The next section will highlight the facial and head characteristics that are considered attractive and significant by the male respondents in both genders.

4.5.2.3 The Preferred Head and Facial Features

Baldness in males was mostly seen with judgmental eyes. It gave an effect of someone who is either older or uncle, and this perception was considered unattractive.

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[80] Views of a participant.

However, women may wish to have a mature male partner, but they still desire a man to have an aura of a handsome young male.

<div dir="rtl">وہ گنجا نہیں ہونا چاہیے کیونکہ پھر وہ بڑی عمر کا لگے گا.</div>

This statement means, *"He should not be bald because he will appear or give a look of an uncle,"* stated twenty-five-years-old. Those who are losing their hair may feel anxiety about hair loss naturally; the stereotypes of those who are bald are, for the most part, negative. Studies found bald men are rated older and less attractive than men who have more hair. Men with hair were also considered intelligent and good mentors. Balding men were considered unhappier, less successful, and even less personally likable than men who had more hair. Another study from 1971 found that people described the bald men in sketches as 'bad'. Baldness is found to cause stress in men, along with less satisfaction regarding their body image (LaFlesh, 2012).

Moreover, twenty-eight-year-old expressed his similar views as *"He should have hair and not be bald. In our culture, the bald person is thought of as aged or being old. Likewise, the beard and mustache should suit him too."* Beard or mustache is also a part of manliness. Once there was a comic on Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari because he shaved his famous dark big mustache during his reign. The comic stressed by saying that, مچ نی تے کجھ نی which means, *"If you have no mustache then you are nothing."* Big mustaches that are curled from the end always give a dominant image whereas a beard that is appropriately cut holds a similar compelling manly image[81].

Beard is kept in Pakistani society because of various reasons; it is a personal likeness, the positive connotation of manhood linked with it, current trend, or following the Islamic style of facial hair. Respondent (age 33) indicated that in this culture, the preferences of people have its extreme, i.e., *"Some people say, a boy should be clean shaved and the one who is inclined towards Islamic perspective believe he should have beard and mustache."* Another twenty-two, twenty-six, and twenty-five-year-old shared, *"He should have a beard like the one in trend,"* *"He should have a little beard and heavy mustache which are in fashion these days,"* and *"Somewhat beard*

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[81] Focus group discussion.

as well as mustache.” However, besides the beard and mustache image, what is the status of a clean shave?

Twenty-year-old shared his views as *“In our culture, it is thought that those boys who have beard and mustache are more of a gentleman and seem attractive as compared to teenage college boys who are mostly clean-shaved and give a youthful look.”* Attributes associated with a bearded man are favorable as compared to a clean-shaven person. However, some also prefer a clean shaved look, as twenty-four and thirty-years-old said,

> *“He should be clean shaved and fair,”* and *“In boys, clean shaved ones are more appreciated, but nowadays I have seen that French beard and light beard guys are also liked.”*

Discussion with the males highlighted that preference for mustache and beard or stubble form gives the manly image. Oppositely, a clean shaved man is deemed to look younger and less aggressive than a bearded one. Besides, bearded men also give the perception that he is too lazy to remove it or groom himself. The diversity of reasons is associated with these forms, and opinions vary according to one's preferences and choices[82].

When facial characteristics are evaluated on the beard, mustache, and clean shave, then baldness is considered out of the question, and having different types of hair is highlighted. *“It should be normal a haircut and not spikes,”* stated a twenty-two-year-old respondent. In hairdo types, spikes hairstyle was not approved as it gave a funky look, and decency was expected to be a trait of a man. Different interviewees stated, *“He should not have spikes rather decent hair (age 25),” “His hairdo should be decent, not like spikes cut (age 26),”* and *“Decent hairs, just like an office or professional boys have unlike spikes hairdo (age 30).”*

Hair texture was also accounted by thirty-years-old, as *“They should have black thick hair that is a criterion in Asians.”* Black thick hair texture is said to be a part of Asian

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[82] Informal conversation.

man beauty since they inherit it naturally. However, hair is not the last feature to be judged on; attention was also paid to another facial part named the nose.

For some respondents, the ideal man was also thought to have a normal nose considering a particular size and shape. Respondent aged 22 and 24 mentioned,

> *"Nose should not be too big that only it gets prominent, but some people have such face structure that their [big nose] does not get noticed. It should not be too thin that it seems like Tom and Jerry's witch nose,"* and *"A normal nose, i.e., it should not be that fat that only it gets prominent on the face, overshadowing all other features. It should not be that thin that it gives an evil look."*

Female respondents do not like a too thin nose or fat nose in males as it gives an undesirable image. On the contrary, a 28-year's old respondent said that if you have attractive eyes, then a [big nose] gets balanced. *"Boys are not much bothered whether they have a big nose or any other part. If eyes are beautiful and the nose is big, then beautiful eyes compensate these all weaknesses."* Therefore, if you are lucky to have beautiful eyes, then according to women, your big nose will not matter to them. A respondent also believed that facial features are not specially meant for boys, but one thing that matters is their looks, *"I will not say they should have shaped eyes because a man with the big nose will be accepted. Overall looks do matter and attract."* Why the looks of a person take over finally?

Respondents in focus group discussions have shared that the looks of a person reflect an overall image. It may not reveal what lies inside, but some respondents did claim that an ugly heart reflects on the face. Most importantly, the looks fulfill the superficial social construction of ideal beauty and body. If it fits the lens, the individuals and society welcome the beautiful person without any objection.

4.6 Summary

Beauty is seen with the lens of inner and outer vision. The concept of beauty is perceived with diverse inferences yet reflects some mutual perception as shared by genders. In the domain of inner beauty, upright moral conduct, real and agreeable character, proper behavior with others, and how gracefully a person communicates has their charm. When it is outer beauty, it is how a person dresses and carries themselves, sits and stands, displays decent self-impression as well as beauty standards that are followed in its definition.

A beautiful person is defined to be the one with a blend of both inner and outer beauty or the one who has such incredible inner beauty that it is visible on his outside as well. By definition, a physically attractive person is also deemed to own the beauty of its kind, for it always is attended at first glance. This finding can be supported by Dion and colleagues (1972) as they stated that our appearance is one of the most prominent and accessible personal characteristics that presents itself before the rest in social interactions.

The chapter also uncovered respondents thinking patterns and individual differences in perceiving and defining body image in a different manner and logic. For many, it was a topic of appearance and impression formation, which further fed two attitudes: appearing good for oneself and others around them. These feelings are produced under the influence of ideal images, which highlight the best forms of bodies. The body was considered a significant channel of measuring someone's personality just by a look at their appearance, which entails a person's way of clothing, voice, and gait.

The concept of fair complexion, height, and ideal body preference in the opposite and same gender in Pakistani society was discussed. Fair color, attractive looks, and appealing personality always received more favors than obese, dark skin-colored sexes. Fair complexion is assumed to open gates to opportunities and incredible chances for females, especially when it is spouse selection or matrimony. In men, a fair complexion is not only associated with femininity but being gay as well. In men,

brown skin color is deemed to have a masculine image, but sometimes that skin color is also accepted with exceptions. However, a beautiful face is not always a guarantee that it will bring you utter happiness. This truth cannot be denied that a beautiful heart will still have its way to make you feel beautiful.

A recurrent female preference for taller, broad-chested, and wide shoulder man with whom feelings of security are associated was highlighted. Male body parts are not visualized in the form of digits, unlike that of women. Although various body shapes are mentioned, man status is frequently regarded as a symbol of his beauty even if body image discussion is at hand. Males have shown a preference for skinny and shaped girls who are neither thin (skeletal) nor fat but are mediocre in terms of a healthy, toned, and curvy body. The height of females is meant to be smaller than males, even if it is an inch lower. Society has its images of a taller man and short women since it gives an appropriate and proper image. Few tall girls get preferred if men are themselves taller.

Body shape and size are seen with a scale in which perfect readings include proportioned bodies and forms in both genders. On the continuum of fat and thin scale, skinny and curvy stood significant, for it connoted the concept of neither fat nor slim perception. Some meat is expected on those bones, to reflect appeal and attractiveness. Diversity of responses reveals that the features that matter for some do not even hold importance for the others. Sometimes the smartness of the body takes over the beautiful facial features, and other times it is the opposite. Some say overall looks matter, whereas other believes that even one attractive feature can make a person stand beautiful.

In the next chapter of "The Sociocultural Understanding," I have highlighted how the attractiveness of a person has played a role in the favorable treatment of individuals. The thought that the beauty of an individual is used as a means to an end has been explored, and if a person is fat, then what kind of biasness is shown towards them. The fat and weight are further perceived in the matter of pre and post marriage body.

5. THE SOCIOCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Research has proposed that every culture has its standard of beauty and the characteristics of a beautiful face are perceived by them because of that (Rhodes, 2006). The previous study has shown that men are attractive by status and power, or only by being men. Femininity, then again, is associated with the efforts women make to become attractive. Unlike masculinity, femininity is not an innate quality, but an inborn absence of masculinity. This absence is compensated through participation in the female beauty system and the transformation of the woman into something feminine (De Grazia & Furlough, 1996).

Beauty cannot be quantified or objectively measured; it is the result of the judgments of others. When people are asked to define beauty, they tend to mention abstract, personal qualities rather than external, quantifiable ones (Freedman, 1986; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Hence moving on to my chapter, the indigenous comprehension of beauty and body image is explored by keeping cultural factors, individual differences in perception, and societal influences in mind.

The sociocultural construction of a beautiful body repeatedly emerged from research data. Questions such as are attractive people treated more favorably after being judged on their abstract qualities, or it is all about the beauty of physical characteristics gathered intense data and opinions. Another question based on the objective of my research, i.e., beauty as a means to an end, yielded substantial description and insight. Females so extensively voiced the idea that a whole section was included on its knowledge, based solely on their conception of it. The male understanding of this phenomenon was highlighted in the "5.1.2 Male Perception" section of the chapter. The chapter also reveals the societal image of the fat body and the type of body that is considered preferable before and after marriage.

The following section has highlighted the participant's view of cultural expectations, unbending values, and norms associated with the concept of an attractive person in Pakistan's society.

5.1 Attractiveness: The Magnetic Power

I will cite a meta-analysis of over 900 studies on the effects of physical attractiveness on the outcomes for both children and adults by Langlois and colleagues (2000). It was found that from childhood people that are more attractive enjoy much more favorable treatment than their less attractive counterparts do. Therefore, are beautiful people generally accredited to have an advantage, mainly when it is social interaction and favorable treatment? Just as some reactions are involuntary, the positive favor towards attractive people happens without any forethought; instead, it is instinctive.

Why do these reactions happen in the first place? What is the underlying thought behind these involuntary actions of people towards attractive individuals? Are there people who believe that this phenomenon does not even exist, and favors are just given according to one's own need rather other's personality charm? What are the reasons and justifications that are provided behind the actions that put attractive ones ahead and unattractive ones pushed aside or not even thought of[83]? This section has tried to answer the concerned questions and has explained the thinking patterns of genders.

5.1.1 Female Perception

Female respondents exhibited the notion that women, unlike men in this society are treated in a highly favorable manner. Even just being a girl can yield any fondness, but if she is attractive and courteous, she will be treated promisingly and gently. Different factors such as beauty as a means to an end, *what is beautiful is good* phenomenon, and the value of physical attractiveness plays its role in causing the perceiver to treat the female gender kindly.

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[83] Researcher's reflexive thoughts.

5.1.1.1 Differential Preference

Treating attractive people positively was also claimed to be dependent on the situation, different stages of life, skills, and status. Respondent (age 24) explained,

> *"The meaning of attraction remains different at every stage and gets favorable handling likewise. Since childhood, others have found me attractive for being a bright student, a shining child, and an obedient daughter for my parents. Then in this society, the one wearing expensive clothes, having a lush push home, car, and status is considered an attractive species that gets appreciation everywhere. A person with strong traits such as power, highest grades, yet lacking in ethics and values is also regarded as attractive, treated positively, and respectively in this society. Lastly, regarding the marriage and marketing field, physical beauty is preferred and given favorable treatment."*

Similarly, the gym-goer (age 28) stated, *"Mostly in some jobs, there are particular posts which require attractive people. In some posts, they prefer qualifications and, in some cases, prefer both. Eventually, the main preference in today's world is 'money'; the one who has it everyone is for them. Hence, if some unattractive person has money, even they will be favored in this culture."* The findings of my research suggest that the power of money can bring anybody to your feet because such people in society are considered influential. The weight of the male wallet is sometimes more substantial than the greatness of one's character. Keeping the factor of money at a side, responses also indicated that sometimes it is a choice of perception and preference when attractive physical traits and a person's abilities are put on a scale.

A gym-goer indicated that fundamentally two diverse groups exist in which favorable treatment is given accordingly,

> *"In school, college, and these kinds of institutions, cute girls or boys are favored. If you talk about professionals, doctors, engineers, and corporate level people, here abilities, qualifications are kept above all rather than your cuteness. It is not a universal law that if you are attractive you will get favors everywhere; it is not like that. So, in a mature and well renowned professional circle, your skills are considered primarily."*

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It is as simple if we say; hard work pays off for your skill and does not need an external makeover to stand out. In professional life, at times, professionalism is only expected.

In the next section, I will highlight how attractiveness is approached with different mindsets and behaviors.

5.1.1.2 Differential Judgment and Treatment

In agreement with my study findings, attractiveness is not only assessed in the professional and public domain, but it is considered as a ground to judge anyone anywhere. Friends, siblings, colleagues, shopkeepers, and even the people we do not know are also ridiculed just for their unattractive facial features. Since we also belong to a collectivistic society, we tend to gain social acceptance on our every action or step. If we do not conform to it willfully, unconsciously, it is still influencing our decisions and judgments towards various matters, especially companionship and beauty.

Standing with an unattractive companion is dreaded by some because interviewees believe that people can judge your very existence because of the unattractive person who is standing beside you. Beings humans, we wish to get social approval and appreciation from the company we keep, and having attractive individuals in one's companionship is a thumbs up by society[84]. The interviewee (age 27) said,

> *"If you go to the market, the salesman will pay more attention to the female who is completely groomed and beautiful as compared to the untidy, plain clothes one. They will think some unsophisticated girl has come to them. Moreover, if we get to know that a man is evil or a girl is immoral, and not having good looks, we give negative remarks and curse them on their facial or physical features. Lacking in attractiveness is a point of weakness which we easily make use of in a negative sense."*

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[84] Interview discussion.

Biasness towards siblings based on skin tone is also identified. Eventually, fairness has its toll on relationships too, as the respondent stated, *"If there are two sisters, one is fair, and the other is black, importance will be given to the fair one. The reason is she is fair, and this makes her superficially attractive (age 23)."* Skin color and attractiveness are playing its significant role when favorable treatment is given in this society. Moreover, this attractiveness is further observed in future mates, per my study answers. A gym-goer stated,

"In our society, the noticeable thing is only considered, regardless of gender. If we talk about girls in our society, it will be seen when and with whom they will get married. What are her best qualities? In this process, it is preferably seen how attractive and beautiful a girl is and what skin color she has. The majority of people in this society see girls with this ideology. Secondly, if a girl is beautiful, innocent, and talks good, her undesirable aspects (dark complexion, small height) are overshadowed because her attractive characteristic becomes dominant. Thirdly, boys in this society are evaluated on their social status and job. Attraction in boys may be preferred by some but not the majority. Overall, in our societal position, marriage, or any fields, it is seen how much a girl is beautiful and how much a boy earns, and then they get treated accordingly."

Henceforth, my study has indicated that in Pakistan, during the process of spouse selection, beauty is sought in women as status is pursued in men. Another factor that is considered important in spouse selection besides attractiveness is age as a participant stated, *"According to our society the* [*age of bride to be should be between the age 15 to 20*] *so that they could be kept under the influence and repressed easily."* It is believed that at this age, a girl's mind is not as smart as compared to a mature woman in the 30s. Hence, she can be easily molded according to one's desires and principles.

Lastly, a respondent highlighted the regional factor for playing its role in the preference of inner beauty over outer manifestation, he stated

ہم ابھی بھی دیہی علاقوں میں کچے مکان دیکھ سکتے ہیں لکن ان میں رہنے والے لوگ صحت مند ہیں اور ان کا ماننا یہ ہے کہ لوگوں کی ظاہری خوبصورتی سے زیادہ باطنی خوبصورتی اہمیت رکھتی ہے.

This means, *"In rural areas, we can still find fragile homes but strong people living in them; their emphasis is more on inner beauty rather than outer (age 27)."*

In contrast, people in urban areas not only judge individuals on their exteriors but status too, i.e., where a person lives, and what kind of home they have or in which area they belong. They are status-conscious, apart from being a worshipper of outward manifestation and beauty.

In the next section, I gave male understanding and opinion on how they perceive the matter of attractive individuals in society and the role of culture in it.

5.1.2 Male Perception

According to male respondents, favorable treatment is given out of a belief that you may get to have an attractive person for yourself, especially women. It is either in the form of their company for mere moments and possibly be fortunate enough to form a relationship. Job domains and academia are accounted to provide a platform for biased treatment just on the ground that you are an attractive and appealing person.

This kind of treatment is mostly carried out of *what is beautiful is good* stereotype. You appear beautiful, and the world will be at your feet because they will be in this illusion that you are good too. The way a person dresses up is also one of the factors that have generated differential treatment from the observer in Pakistani society. Your dressing speaks on behalf of who you are, and the societal assumption associated with dressing is fulfilled. The suppositions are discussed later in this section.

5.1.2.1 Discrimination Based on Appearance

"Sometimes, inner desires motivate you to begin an affair with a beautiful person. This motivation is because of the man's nature to incline towards beauty. You wish to treat her in a good way so that you may have her for your inner desires (gym-goer, age 28)."

"For both genders, this favorable treatment exists especially in office life where favoritism prevails. The attractive one will be everybody's favorite.

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These people are given favor so that their attention can be gained or they may get close with them (age 26)."

The beauty of a person, especially of women, is used by the male perceiver to meet their needs. Previous research has shown that the benefits of physical attractiveness extend into the occupational domain. Attractive job candidates frequently fare better on various job-related evaluations and outcomes than unattractive candidates (Shahani-Denning, 2003). Likewise, gym-goer (age 24) said,

> *"If you see people of Pakistan in the occupational domain, they do not focus on the skills of a person (employee) rather beauty, and in between these all aspects comes the feeling of lust. Then again, it depends on person to person; some give this favorable treatment so that they may appear good in the eyes of others or to have them for personal gain."*

Being lascivious and feeding one's desire was again identified to be a part of human nature behind all this commotion of treating an attractive person favorably. It is a form of reciprocity; a male believes that he is appropriately treating an attractive woman, so he expects the good favor in return in any way. It will either make your place in the good books of the person who received that favorable treatment or the ones around her. The highest thought dwells on owing that person. This promising treatment is observed at the private and public level persistently and is identified by female respondents too.

Male participants reported that it was the most attractive females who receive positive handling in almost every possible domain. *"In offices, they get favor and even if they do not get favor, they get compliments (age 29),"* and *"In government offices, if you are standing in a queue, a man will give importance to female and will allow her to stand at the front. Even among female cousins, if someone is more attractive, everybody will be around them (age 30)."* Beauty is worshipped, and it makes a person feels good when that beautiful person is made to feel worthy. Likewise, two respondents expressed their view as,

> *"Wherever there is beauty, especially if a woman is beautiful, she will get favors. It all happens out of gender biasness in job fields and every*

occupation. In Taunsa Shareef[85] where homosexuality prevails, the hotel boy or barber will be handsome because people will get happy from him. It is a man's nature they get pleased by beauty (gym-goer, age 29)."

"Favor is given to an attractive appearing person in different organizations. Your appealing appearance matters, especially in the fashion industry and in jobs where you interact with other people such as in banks and airlines (age 28)."

Attractiveness has magnetic powers, which attract everyone around it regardless of age, gender, and ethnicity. The appealing appearance of genders used as a means to attract customers and generate revenue in business. My study has also revealed that different domains cater to the power of attractive humans, and among them is academia.

5.1.2.2 "What Is Beautiful Is Good" in Academia

It was indicated that the educational field bears practices of considering attractiveness as a root of defining someone's worth. It validates that their beauty is used to determine their importance.

"In educational institutions, students get a high score on possessing attractive characteristics (age 23)."

"I have observed that in my university department, during interviews and selection, the authority will give preference to attractive people. Beauty is, after all, a silent commendation (age 29)."

It relates to the stereotype that *what is beautiful is good*. On this ground, favorable treatment is given to a person who has an appealing physical exterior because it is believed that she would possess positive personality characteristics too. It is known that humans marvel at the existence of beauty around them. The hidden scheme is to be identified, that why in academia the selection process is expected to include attractive candidates. The trend of teacher and student friendship, the informal

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[85] A subdivision of Dera Ghazi Khan District in Punjab.

meetings that involve candid conversations and sharing food in the teacher's office, and sitting with students' group in university café are common.

With relevance to this, a respondent shared that *"I know a student who is under the supervision of her dissertation teacher, and went with him on a musical function. Many other female students go out with their male teachers for seminars in an expensive hotel, especially the one I know, i.e., Serena[86]."* I was amused and asked the interviewee why a teacher will do this. He replied, *"The teacher wishes to maintain his soft image of the personality depicting that he has an acceptance for modernity, i.e., the teacher-student endeavors."* I again inquired why the student would choose to go to such places. He replied, *"The student thinks that he is good and credible enough to have academic endeavors. It is like saying "aik ticket pay do mazay," which means that "on one ticket you get to enjoy two ways." You are going to a posh hotel, one purpose is the seminar, and the other is enjoying having good food."* What about the boys? If they go, then what is the reason for going?

The respondent said, *"If you ask about me, then I will go with future planning in the head. I will meet the organizers, the funding company that organized it. If by chance I would meet some old colleague who is present there then I will spend time with him."* Both the scenario triggers two functions, the manifest, and latent.

In the former function, the student gets a chance to participate in the seminar held in one of the famous and exclusive hotels in Islamabad. She gets to meet the people from an academic perspective. The latent component reflects the opportunity, which is availed by the teacher and is shared with the student. The latent function varies according to gender. Similarly, it provides both genders the development of a student's social capital and extending of her social circle. In the case of a male, they have to take their place in the market after academics. They know they must earn and be the breadwinner at the end of the day. Having good social relationships will help them move ahead in finding a good job position and spouse selection. The excellent

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[86] Serena comprises a collection of 36 luxury resorts, safari lodges, and hotels, which are located in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Mozambique) and Central and South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan).

food is the factor, which cannot be denied. Nobody will say openly that he or she is going to Serena and will enjoy the food there. It is meant to happen in any way; it is inevitable.

Besides academia, *what is beautiful is good* is observed in the general routine of life too. The beauty itself is a factor that has its position and a powerful connotation. Even if you have no time to judge someone, but there are two people around you, naturally you will choose the attractive one. The element of confidence, positive characteristics are associated with being beautiful.

> *"Not only in our culture, but I would also say in most of the cultures around the world, attractive or beautiful people are treated favorably. Yet again, it depends on some factors. For instance, if the same gender is taken, males might do justice and will not treat attractive males with an extra favor. If it is the opposite gender, the same male is more likely to prefer the attractive female. The reason behind this is that it takes time to know somebody and normally you will prefer an attractive person over an average one because that seems appealing to your eyes (age 26)."*

Similarly, another participant voiced, *"A sight of beauty is a joy forever. It is obvious beauty attracts and physical attraction is powerful (age 24)."* In consonance with my study: power, biasness of treatment, and goodness are a few of the typical traits interlinked with beauty or a beautiful person. This beauty was not only restricted to one's attractive beautiful existence but what one wears also gets accountable. Researches indicated that clothing is considered a non-verbal medium of communication that expresses a wide range of societal information (Schofield, 2005), an identity represented in visual symbolic form, and other personal characteristics shown non-verbally (Johnson et al., 2002).

My research asserts that a good sense of dressing yields favorable conduct from the people belonging to this society as respondents shared views, respectively. *"If you see a person's elegant dressing you will automatically feel to respect them, to have a good conversation, or maybe assume that they belong to [well-to-do family] (age 22),"* and *"This is a stereotype that is believed by illiterate people, i.e., the thought that attractive one is smart, intelligent and good. Moreover, because of good*

dressing, people are treated positively. For them, a person with a bad sense of dressing must be a fool and illiterate (age 25)." Based on my study findings, a sane person was recurrently believed to choose inner beauty. Those who relied on cultural short cuts and stereotypes such as *what is beautiful is good*, will always judge a person on external physical cues. In the above participant response, the ascribed status of the family in terms of economic strength got associated with one's apparel.

People are judged on their color, facial characteristics, appearance, and clothing. Step out in the world, and societal judgment will have all its arrows pointed at you, scrutinizing your very existence. People also have a very firm opinion about the beautiful person, and this has led to prejudice and discrimination vividly. It is a sad truth; the attractiveness of a person has become the basis for assessing one's overall personality from the best of my study knowledge. This base is also thought of in another way. Respondents believe that this attractiveness and beauty have a cost, and it is used as a tool to achieve certain things.

5.2 Beauty as a Means to an End

In this section, I have only intended to highlight female perceptions. They have stated and emphasized that in any sector of society, beautiful persons, especially women are seen with distinct judgments and attention. Their beauty is utilized as a means to achieve something desirable not only by themselves but by society too. The findings have supported the objective of my study on which this section is based.

Thirty-one-years-old respondent expressed her views,

> *"Based on attractive features or personality, females are more welcomed by the employer in any sector than those who deserve it. It is an 80:20 ratio[87]. Sometimes it is a disadvantage to being attractive because people/employers/colleagues ask inappropriate favors from a good-looking person to help them. In return, these attractive people get where they dream of standing in life. Not every person goes down against their*

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[87] The distribution, which signifies that 80% of favors are given to women per respondent's view.

dignity, but nowadays attractive people are taking advantage of being attractive only to survive well in society."

At times, this is a give and take relation, the winner remains an attractive individual who moves further towards pursuing those dreams. These favors help females in being selected for the job. Initially, their beauty has played a role in securing a position, by getting and giving favors.

Job interviews, biasness observed in the hiring, and selection based on attractiveness are stated, and the inclination is more towards the female gender as compared to men. The primary reason for this attitude and behavior entails the foresight and profit of the company's increment in their promotions and sales perspectives. You are using their beauty as a means to achieve an end; you are making use of their attractiveness to bring more revenue to your very organization.

> *"Attractive people are attended positively regardless of gender. However, beautiful girls are hired, and the company seeks its benefit in this selection, considering an increase in their company's promotion and sales (age 24)."*

Unquestionably, beauty sells in unimaginable ways from the company's first-class positioned employee to the front desk worker. Banks and marketing institutions have front desks occupied by attractive females, with this thought that attraction itself will play a role in drawing customers towards their schemes and institutional goals. Eighteen- and thirty-years-old gym-goer and non-gym-goer age thirty-three stated respectively,

> *"In Pakistani culture, things are done by considering the beauty or attractiveness element. Mostly in banks and marketing institutes, on receptions, females are seated so that they serve as a source of attraction for customers."*

> *"In jobs, attractive girls are chosen in customer care, front desk and secretaries are all those who have attractive looks. I believe the employers feel good when beautiful employees are nearby. I have seen people act polite and kind when an attractive girl is around them or is seeking some*

assistance from them. In airline jobs and modeling, I think attractiveness in both genders is observed. People also believe if a person is beautiful, then they will also be good in nature or personality."

"In our culture, mostly the front desk job or receptionist is given to attractive girls to attract their customers."

It is generally known that in job positions in which person-to-person communication is necessary, attractive candidates like front-desk officers or receptionists are required. Likewise, Wolf (2002) has suggested that "beauty" has become an additional, unspoken job requirement for women in many professions, even when physical attractiveness is irrelevant for job performance. If this is the case, then in "front office appearance jobs," like a restaurant hostess or office receptionist, beauty and skin color must matter even more.

Besides these jobs, other professions were also identified by the interviewees in which biased treatment of attractive females prevailed, i.e., students and teachers in academia are worshipped for their beauty. Males shared the same opinion in the previous section. Research indicates consistency with the attractiveness stereotypes as students rate highly attractive teachers as more competent, better at motivating students, and better at stimulating learning (Chaikin et al., 1978).

Research has also proposed that on student evaluations, attractive college instructors score high (Riniolo et al., 2006). One of my participants expressed, *"Even in the educational domain it is considered that beautiful teachers should be hired because as she will smile, she will seem good to her students and this will increase motivation for studying (age 19)."* Their beauty is utilized as a medium to increase the motivational factor in students. Besides the teaching aptitude of a teacher, her beauty is used to gain positive mental growth in students. They render positive vibes and energy from their existence to students[88].

On the contrary, regarding the student's attractiveness, the teacher's attitude is also found to be discriminating.

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[88] Interview discussion.

> *"In academia, good-looking students get a good ranking, all out of teacher's biasness (age 30),"* and *"Even in academics, teachers give a high score to attractive students as compared to rest, it is all about what is beautiful is good stereotype. They are beautiful, and it is perceived that they must be competent go-getter and intelligent (age 25)."*

In both cases, attractiveness remains the only reason to assess someone positively on their looks and appealing characteristics. My study has indicated that besides academic biasness, female respondents asserted that in the job field, men, unlike women, are not selected on their attractive attributes. Beauty in women is mostly used as a means to achieve ends in almost every practical or professional field of life in Pakistani society.

> *"In the job domain, boys are not given preference for their physical traits even if he is muscular. Exclusive of occupation, generally favor is given to boys based on their qualities, i.e., [belonging to a good family], having a bank balance, educated or have any other ability (age 33)."*

Males are, after all, the providers, and breadwinners in this society. Roles and responsibilities are profoundly expected of them besides considering their family status in terms of goodness. Their looks may be held significant in some fields such as that of modeling, airlines, but not in domains where revenue can be easily generated. In this case, only females are employed and regarded. Women are also not only considered out of their beauty but sometimes another dominant factor plays its role, i.e., frustration and lust at the observer end.

> *"I remember one of my attractive friends. Whenever she used to go to the canteen in our school, the boy there used to deal with her first and even gave her concession, and nobody cared for us. The reason is that this kind of mindset has been established where we attend attractive individuals right away. They are the frustrated people that they only go for beauty and not for the character (age 28)."*

Being lascivious is not only confined to the public level but in the job sphere, this personality characteristic is also prevalent. Respondent (age 22) said, *"Attractive females are favorably dealt mostly in the job field because people here are lascivious. Out of this nature, they will treat women in an extra polite way."* People who give

extra favors to females because of their attractiveness were considered flirty and lustful by my respondents. Because of this nature, people are extra caring towards an attractive individual. Moreover, it was believed by one respondent that attractiveness takes you ahead only in the public sphere rather than in a job-related domain. The reason is,

"Publicly or in social life, attractive people get favored by some lascivious natured people. In the professional domain, confidence, educational skills, and whole personality are counted. I believe where there are professional fields and people, looks and attractiveness do not matter (age 27)."

No doubt, beautiful people are shown a kind demeanor, especially females in private or public spheres. However, being attractive is not a golden pass to everything or everywhere. Where professional skills are expected from qualified people, attractiveness is put aside.

Lastly, if you are good looking and fair, then you will be considered highly beautiful. Gym-goer (age 30) said.

"Even in friends, you also wish to have a stylish, beautiful fellow, and in almost everything, you crave attractiveness. The reason behind all this is that since the beginning, our system is like that. Media has its massive influence, and since childhood, these criteria and standards are instilled in our minds in which we regard fair ones as being beautiful and all-rounder."

Beauty in individuals is sought in every possible atom of their existence. These expectations are learned from the socializing agents, especially that of family foremost and later by mass media, which transmits beauty prone messages. You are judged on the societal held parameters of beauty, and this beauty is used and abused in different spheres of life. Beauty has its power and family, media, and peers create this concept of power. A beautiful person is considered influential at the end of the day.

The influential person is also not expected by this society to have fats or be obese. If a person has fats, then the lens gets sharp, and scrutiny touches the peaks of discrimination. The following part of the chapter has highlighted the perception, attitude, and behavior people aim towards a fat person. It will begin with the understanding of females proceeded by males.

5.3 Fat Body: Stigmatization and Discrimination

The ideal body has been demarcated with size, shape, and form. This form is read, seen, and thought of in terms of beauty, beautiful, and a beautiful body. Unfortunately, this ideal appearance is seen from an established lens, and it does not include the body that goes beyond the determined appealing body measurements. The plus-size models do exist in western society, and they promote that every body size is worthy, but society keeps reflecting its biased thoughts for a fat person everywhere.

5.3.1 Female Perception

"In this society, if a girl is fat then it is a problem. People who are involved in marriage proposals say that if she is so fat what will become of her after marriage. So fat girls are not accepted," commented a female interviewee. A girl with a fat body is believed to face difficulties after marriage in the face of becoming fatter, less attractive, and welcoming negative societal views. Popular culture's obsession with thinness has also led to weight biases involving stigma and discrimination of people of size. Rarely do we see fat people depicted favorably in the mass media and this leads to the mocking behavior in the perceiver?

Respondent age twenty-six said, *"Fat people are mostly joked about and have become a target of taunts."* These jokes can be inoffensive and are rendered by family or friends that may not be intended to hurt, but sometimes this mocking produces feelings of dissatisfaction in both genders. *"People taunt the fat ones only, as smartness is mostly about health and fitness. It is a mindset of people that a smart*

person is energetic and active whereas fat ones are considered to be lazy," as specified by a twenty-seven-year-old girl.

The concept of a fat body is not only limited to specific personality attributes or lifestyle, but this fatness is also attended in mate choice and selection. With a fat female, illness, shame, and old age are also linked. The interviewees stated, *"Boys prefer slim smart ladies because fat girls mostly report more physical problems. Boys usually do not take responsibility for these matters, so they prefer a slim one. Smart girls are generally active and report fewer physical problems (age 32),"* and *"Boys prefer smart girls; nobody will like and want a wife who is fat (gym-goer, age 28)."*

Nevertheless, why men keep choosing smart women as a mate? A respondent age 25 indicated,

> *"The mind of boys is under pressure regarding the body of their female partners. They have this concern that if they will bring a fat girl as a mate, 'what people will think' because it is evident that fat girls always seem older rather young (age 25)."*

Society's reaction seems important because the fat partner is not fulfilling the societal criteria of an ideal body in one's spouse. *What people will think* stirs a feeling of embarrassment and that a person is not confident enough. Besides men, does a woman feel the awkwardness in choosing a fat male as a mate? The probing yielded, *"Girls prefer smart body, tall boys (6 feet), rather than fat boys because if you are fat, you will not look attractive (age 23)."* Hence, what are the reasons that are held by women when they say that a fat mate is not favored?

A twenty-year-old respondent shared her perception as, *"They think their social image will be affected, so they prefer to roam with a smart one. Our media promotes that those people who are good and hero are not fat and fat ones are always shown as a loser. That fat guy is the only single friend of the hero who has no girl with him."* Another female also stated media as a major reason behind building up the stereotypes linked with the fat body in both genders. *"A guy should not be fat or bald, and it is promoted by media that a smart guy will never have a fat body. If a person is*

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fat but has good intelligence and values, he will be appreciated, but at first glance, outward appearance is considered influential," stated an interviewee, age twenty-six.

Although the media may promote an idyllic image of a male body, it is admitted by females that if a man has positive personality characteristics, he will still be chosen. *"These days, it is very hard to find a spouse, so whatever proposal comes, parents accept it for their daughters,"* a response in focus group discussion. Besides, a thirty-year-old respondent said, *"In most cases, if it is a fat boy, this factor will not let females turn down the proposal, they need a man by the end of the day."*

Common thinking was identified in discussions that *"Parents would like the marriage responsibility of their daughters to get fulfilled on time. She is also taught that she does not have to look for beauty or body type in the male. It is the inner beauty of a person that matters most, and suppose if she gets a handsome mate who abuses her the very next day, then what is the purpose of that guy?"* So, the question arises, do some men appreciate women for their fat or bulky body the way they are accepted?

In girls, a smart body in terms of 'bulkiness' is preferred by males over skinny or skeletal female body shape according to female respondents.

> *"She should be smart, neither skinny nor skeletal but little bulky. I think to some extent, boys prefer fat girls too, i.e., little bulky but having [curves] because maybe they think of such type as more hot (gym-goer, age 32)."*

A female body with slight fat levels was also preferred by males according to female perception. It was believed that such a body does reveal your size and shape hence becoming a cause for appeal. The respondents expressed,

> *"Mostly boys consider girls to be fat (not obese) so that their figure may seem hot (age 26)."*

> *"A friend of mine told me that, I have a curvy body. I am neither lean nor fat but have appropriate healthy fats distribution (hourglass type) that makes me appealing. If body parts are curvy and get visible due to these*

> *curves beneath the clothes, then such reflection and visibility become a cause of appeal and seductiveness to some men (gym-goer, age 32)."*

Nevertheless, do men perceive fatness in the same way as women have perceived it? Do they perceive fatness under the influence of the thought created by society, or is it their opinion? Is it true? The next part has explored the male's perception of a fat body.

5.3.2 Male Perception

One of the most vulnerable groups exposed to appearance discrimination is individuals who are overweight or obese. Overweight and obese persons are openly stereotyped as being lazy, unintelligent, unsuccessful, and lacking in self-discipline and willpower (Puhl & DePierre, 2012). *"Too fat girls are not liked since fatness means a person does not care for their wellbeing and how to carry their body properly. It is also considered unhealthy, as there are many diseases associated with fat people. The ratio of fat-bodied woman to conceive a child is a problematic issue,"* and *"In case of fatness, either in males or females, it is associated with laziness,"* stated a respondent age twenty-five and twenty-four.

In Pakistani society, almost every negative and objectionable characteristic is linked with the fat body, which appears in fat talk, beginning from social stigma to negative social image. Moreover, health complications and diseases such as knee problems, blood pressure, sugar, and conceiving complications due to overweight body type are other factors. The first thing doctors advise an obese or fat person is that they should lose their weight first, and everything will fall back into place.

Besides complex outcomes associated with the fat body, it was also asserted that the impression and effects caused by a fat body or fat talk remain unpleasant. The fat discussion involves degrading the body shape and weight of oneself and others (Nichter, 2000). Gym-goer aged twenty-eight and twenty-two stated, *"Both men and women prefer shaped body over fat ones because fatness always gives an ugly impression,"* and *"Obviously girls will not prefer fat one because they think that*

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roaming with a fat boy will affect their personality or image; people may pass negative judgment that she is roaming with a fat man." A female respondent also indicated the undesirable feelings and images associated with a fat mate in an earlier section.

Nonetheless, how are these negative images and schemas regarding the fat body is created in a viewer's head? It is suggested that appearance-related media exposure serves to activate appearance schema; therefore, primes individuals towards schema relevant information. This behavior subsequently produces appearance-related cognitive bias (Cassin et al., 2008). The interviewee (age 24) said, *"Both of them prefer smart people, i.e., in shape and physically attractive rather than a fat one because this smart individual is considered ideal under the influence of media."* Smart body type is deemed as ideal out of media influence and individual preference. These favor for smartness over-rules and stigmatize the fat body in both genders in Pakistani culture. However, optimism still prevailed when a respondent declared indifference to body favoritism.

Gym-goer (age 22) was of the view that body shape, sizes, and appeal are not those authentic choices that describe an individual, he said, *"I do not go along with these choices. These things do not define a person: what he is, and what he is from inside."* Similarly, another participant said, *"Who cares what body type a man or woman has, if you are a girl or a boy, this is enough to make you take place as a suitable mate[89]."* Being a complete man or woman is sufficient to let you stand as eligible for being a mate. Another respondent stated, *"But there are some boys who may say, whatsoever body type be a girl, they are ready to accept it (age 28)."* The perception exists that regardless of any body type, people in this culture are willing to accept girls out of their needs and desires.

The need is most reflective when the body is seen in the context of marriage. What kind of expectations is linked with the body of a man and woman when fat and weight is the concern in the context of matrimony? The next section has discussed the gender point of view regarding it before and after marriage.

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[89] Shared by a participant in a focus group discussion.

5.4 Individual-Collective Perception: Pre and Post-Marriage Body

The cultural and societal expectations of a person's perfect body have an impact on the thinking patterns and attitudes of both genders[90]. The degree of fatness versus fitness, overweight versus smart healthy body, is the leading factor to trigger this kind of thinking. These influence the genders to involve themselves in their finest of physical representation and manifestation. Excessively engaging in fat or weight reduction before marriage is more reported by female respondents than after marriage. However, why do females engage themselves in body-altering activities? It is because, in this culture, appealing body characteristics of females get them preferably chosen as a successful life partner. This attitude is not much for males because their physical beauty is not the top priority; instead, their status and financial power are measured to judge them as an ideal mate.

In this section, I have highlighted unmarried men and women's perception of post and pre-marriage indifferences, preoccupations, and body care as it mainly involves looking after one's body *weight* and *fat* level. Gender responses have revealed how unmarried males and females perceive this issue based on their thinking patterns, understanding, and cultural impact while looking after one's body as a result of body surveillance. The term *concern* is repeatedly used in the chapter, and it means the feelings and intensity of interest, comprehension, or involvement participants have towards the body. Does body care constitute oneself, or is it objected collectively? Does mutual contribution towards each other's bodies exist? Or else, one partner keeps looking after their body under societal expectation and pressure. I have explored these answers in the following segments.

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[90] Findings of my research.

5.4.1 Female Perception

Female respondents indicated that most of the girls show involvement with their bodies before marriage, and for some of them, it is not a point of botheration. They have also talked about their perception towards male body preoccupation and indifference both pre and post marriage. Moreover, both genders have been found to show mutual care and concern towards their bodies, according to female interviewees. A study also shows that 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 (Anderson & Park, 2003).

5.4.1.1 Women Pre-Marriage Body Involvement

The research results proposed that the concern for bodyweight or fats has been a matter of significance for females at different stages of life. This apprehension takes its dominant form before marriage for many females and after marriage for a few. The struggle to lose bodyweight or fat before marriage was because of societal expectations for attracting better marriage proposals. It was believed that a successful proposal could not be won if one is fat or overweight. Furthermore, to look beautiful on the wedding day is also one of the main reasons girls enthusiastically shed their body weight[91].

"It is before marriage girls are concerned with their weight by keeping marriage proposals in mind," shared by twenty-two-years-old. Moreover, expectations of one's future mate also become a cause of body involvement, as a participant stated, *"They want to appear slim afore marriage because of the expectations from their future husband. It raises the concern that they want to look good as a bride."* Nevertheless, what are the underlying reasons behind these concerns, out of which women indulge in body involvement and modification?

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[91] Informal conversation.

Fear of rejection, feelings of inferiority complex, and damaged confidence were identified in the focus group and interview discussions. These characteristics are the adverse outcomes of the criterion set for the female's body in Pakistani society. The aim behind the standards is to win the approval of those who are determined to decide women's fate for wedlock. A British feminist psychotherapist, Orbach (1978) took a social constructivism perspective on body image. She asserted that the reason behind women's uneasy relationship with their bodies is due to sex inequalities. To appear attractive to men, women are socialized to achieve a particular type of body. According to her, in a patriarchal society, this perception is being rooted where women are expected to present themselves and to exercise control only in the limited home environment or towards them. However, men are expected to act and use control over others (Blood, 2005).

Interviewee age eighteen and thirty stated *"Girls know if their body is not as per the societal standards of body image, i.e., smart and not overweight, then she will be rejected,"* and *"It is mostly before marriage most girls are concerned for their body because in our culture smart girls are preferred. If you fulfill this thinking, then you will yield good proposals and societal approval."* Unfortunately, concern for body image did not only begin from marriage proposals or societal expectations but it was observed from the start of adolescent years.

One respondent claimed the teenage years to be responsible in which girls tend to their bodies. She stated, *"In teenage life, girls are more concerned about losing their fat, getting slim and making their bodies toned (age 28)."* Generally, the body changes and transforms during the teenage phase of life, and so does teenager's thinking and feelings towards their bodies. There are two groups of people in that phase, one is concerned, and start looking after their bodies either by dieting or doing exercise. The other group faces anxiety and overeats to cope with the stresses[92].

In the following section, the female's lack of interest in their body after marriage is explained and inferred.

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[92] Interview discussion.

5.4.1.2 Women Post-Marriage Body Indifference

An interviewee stated, *"A small ratio of girls is concerned for their toned body before and after marriage,"* whereas, another respondent age twenty said, *"After marriage, they do not focus on their bodies because the priority is given to their family and not to themselves particularly regarding their bodies."* Research validates that maternal identity has been identified as a moderating factor for body image. Evidence suggested that the pregnant woman's view of her role as a mother reduced the emphasis placed on physical appearance. Throughout the progression of pregnancy, the role of motherhood became increasingly essential, and appearance decreased in relative value (Rocco et al., 2005).

Participants were of a similar view that after marriage, a girl's attention and preference are more on her responsibilities towards household, family, and kid rather her appearance in most of the cases. Research has shown that in the South Asian family, the position of household leader is held by the women, and they exhibit this by taking care of their offspring and husbands through meal preparation and handling of house chores (Chowbey, 2017). Similarly, my research respondents stated their views respectively,

> *"Girls think that after marriage husbands will not be concerned regarding their (wife's) body because he has more things to worry about in life. After marriage females have one common reason to justify their weight, i.e., because of looking after household chores they get tired and do not have time to look after their bodies. Furthermore, the moment you get married, you have children, and you start looking after them (age 24)."*

> *"I believe this attitude, i.e., looking after body fat or weight is not after marriage because then girls do not have time. They have kids who take up their time and if they get the time they want to sit down and take rest rather do exercise (age 27)."*

After marriage, pregnancy and household responsibility is not the only reason for having an indifferent attitude towards the body, but eating habits are also credited. In

certain circumstances, dieting was discouraged after marriage in some households.

> *"Mostly, females ignore their bodies after marriage because they are more concerned about getting pregnant. Furthermore, elders in our society discourage dieting and exercise after marriage because it is thought by them that dieting may cause pregnancy issues. They want to see their daughters-in-law pregnant as soon as possible instead of seeing them have a concern for the ideal slim body,"* stated twenty-eight-year-old.

It was held that excessive dieting could make women deprive themselves of healthy nutrients, which becomes a cause of a problematic pregnancy. The woman's body is not entirely a matter of her possession, but other people in Pakistani society, especially mothers-in-law, also own it. The concern is they want a healthy grandson and nowhere they can allow the daughter-in-law to gamble with her health through dieting. Besides these reasons, justifications were also given to validate disinterest in post-marriage weight.

After gaining weight from pregnancy, females show indifference towards their body mass by sharing that *"They believe that after marriage, due to pregnancy, if females gain weight, it is considered normal, and is okay. Reproduction and labor are considered a powerful tool by women because this process elevates the status of a woman from a wife to mother,"* stated the participant (age 22). No one can disapprove of her body for carrying extra fats because everyone knows that with pregnancy comes weight and fat, they see this gain as natural. *"Now, you have to eat for two, and you are not alone; you carry a life inside you, so you must eat double[93]."* Moreover, a respondent stated,

> *"There will be dinners and functions following a marriage. You eat and overeat. Then a woman will have a baby, and all these post-baby side effects will get blamed for an increase in body weight, and overeating will be overlooked (age 22)."*

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[93] Commented by a respondent in an interview discussion.

Lastly, beauty as a means to an end is validated as responses indicate that the attractive body plays its role in attaining the status. Well, what is a desirable end or status? Respondent (age 26) said, *"This all concern comes to an end for the females after marriage. Now they are married, and the goal is achieved by the smart body."* Getting married itself is a goal, which, when achieved, opens ways to independence and feelings of security. The things on which you are judged before marriage, i.e., body, and beauty, are buried under a new priority list of responsibilities linked with married life, husband, and kids.

> *"Once they get married, the bodyweight concern is hard to be seen or worried for, and they may say 'who will now have eyes for us except our husband',"* expressed an interviewee.

The only person concerned for your body is now your husband, and it depends on him what he seeks from you, the food at the proper time, or a slim body size after kids. Moreover*,* discussions also proved that as soon as you have the ticket to be married, you achieve a long-lasting position. *"After marriage, body-weight or fat is not much of a concern because you have accepted the girl already. Now nothing can happen, you cannot change her,"* said a participant age nineteen. You cannot change her because she has all that she was seeking from the beginning. She is married and enjoys her status of being in a new position. Nobody is going to reject her on her new body and she has more to offer than that body itself. Roles, responsibilities, family, household, decisions, children, all are now asking for her attention and not her body.

In the next section, I have highlighted women's perception of whether men take care of their bodies' pre and post marriage, or it is not a crucial matter to be considered by the men in Pakistani society.

5.4.1.3 Female's Reflection: Male Preoccupation and Indifference

[*"Some boys care for body image before and after marriage as well. They are those who have inner motivation for their bodies from the beginning,"* indicated a participant age twenty-four]. People who have an inner drive to maintain fitness level

and look after one's body weight and fat are those who have incredible self-interest and body image attachment[94]. [*"Only those guys who have body fat or weight concern before marriage will continue to have it after marriage (age 21),"*] and *"This attentiveness is high among those who are taking their body image seriously before marriage and continue to look afterward,"* expressed by two respondents respectively.

It can be seen from these responses that only those men were believed to show attention for body image who already had it before marriage. It is a continuation of their body interest regardless of context and change of status. One of the interviewees stated that the reason behind a male's pre-marriage body concern is *"They want to look good. Men believe that they can get a good mate because of their muscular body type (age 29)."*

Another interviewee indicated men interest in the post-marriage body as,

> [*"I have seen some boys at my office who tend to look after themselves so that they may appear young. I believe the reason is they wish to appear charming around their female co-workers rather than look married due to slightly overweight. Some of them are married and have not disclosed yet (I got this information from their Facebook profile). Like why someone will hide that he is married and have one kid? Surely, they do not want to lose female attention or interest if they will appear married. Due to this, his wife will always judge him as* [insincere] *(age 26)."*]

I also asked a random male interviewee to comment on this female interviewee's perception, and he verified by saying*, "Boys show body fat concern after marriage because they want to look young rather seem like a married guy,"* stated twenty-five years old. According to him, for a man, the possibility of staying charming and gaining attention on one's body after marriage matters to some.

Conversely, a female reported that men might not show concern for body image after marriage because of the following reasons. "*I have seen many men around me with fat protruding bellies after marriage. Since a man does the job, they come home tired*

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[94] Interview discussion.

too. Moreover, as time passes, both the couple age together, and inner energy also decreases. Eventually, a man thinks that now we have our mates and that is it (age 29)." Men of my study also have a similar view that once they have a partner, nothing else matters, especially body image.

Hence, are there any cases or perceptions in which both partners show mutual care for the body after marriage? My next section has answered this question.

5.4.1.4 Miscellaneous Factors in Body Concern

In the debate of pre and post-marriage bodies, there were also those respondents who believed that for both genders, body weight, and fat is a mutual concern. However, in a matter of some females, in-laws play an important role in a woman's body image because a girl is meant to stay smart. Nevertheless, what has caused this kind of thinking? Respondent (age 25) said, *"Nowadays both genders are concerned about their bodies, but females have a higher ratio because girls have to keep their in-laws happy. Media has also influenced their thoughts that if they are slim, they will surely get a good mate, and they will look good with that body type."* Besides media, personal factors and mate desire leads a person to look after their bodies.

A 30-years-old gym-goer highlighted personal preference in body image involvement as*, "Both genders are concerned because they just want to seek smartness, healthy body and to look good."* Besides factors of external pressure, self-motivation, and self-preference, a partner's expectation continues to be one of the reasons for obsessing over one's body image and appearance pre and post marriage. A respondent stated, *"Overall, it is not much of a concern for the general population unless some males feel it for themselves or their female mates demand a muscular fatless body in them (husbands) after marriage."* Hence, men are now not alone in presenting their expectations for the desired body in their mate after marriage. Women can also request a particular body shape or type in their partner.

Lastly, a gym-goer stated, *"Before marriage, the focus is intensely on the female body in our society since more demand is placed for having a smart physique. After*

marriage body concern rises because there is a competition level between the daughter-in-law and others in her in-law's family." This interviewee also shared an account of her married friend, regarding her body image concern and affinal involvement towards it. She shared that,

> *"In my friend's affinal and consanguineal family, obesity is incredibly present. She is the only one who is more into looking after her body even after four kids. She has a treadmill machine, elliptical, twisters, and dumbbells and looks after her eating habits. While attending functions, she gets to hear, 'oh, you are losing so much,' 'look at your face it is losing its freshness,' and 'how much you will starve yourself.' I can feel they are feeling jealous of her body transformation. At the end of the day, she feels satisfied from the inside because she does not have that much level of body fat on her. The truth is clothing suits much on the shaped and smart body. She believes she looks better than them."*

Besides these competitive and influencing factors, body well-being was also seen as a personal choice while looking after one's body. The outcome is simple; inner satisfaction is the result of this bodily care.

In the next section, I have mentioned men's perception of pre- and post-marriage bodies, keeping body weight and fat concerns in mind.

5.4.2 Male Perception

Male respondents like girls have also talked about their perception of body involvement, indifference, and the mutual concern of both genders towards their bodies. Most of the male's responses do coincide with those of female perception, validating that the thinking patterns almost remain similar to the topic of pre and post-marriage body.

In the first section of this division, I have highlighted men's views on how women exhibit involvement with their bodies before marriage.

5.4.2.1 Male's Reflection: Female Pre-Wedding Body Involvement

The belief that 'attractive female body is the foundation of getting a good partner' was also indicated and identified by male participants. They affirmed it as a stereotype that greatly prevails in Pakistani society. People employ it without any guilt, not thinking what feelings they will instill in females by sending them this message that attractiveness is all they need in a partner.

"Before marriage, girls are obsessed with their body image (age 24)," as another also shared the similar reason that this is because *"they are mostly 'concerned' for their bodies (age 30)."* After marriage, females are just too busy looking after their family instead of their body. *"Before marriage, it is one of the biggest 'concerns' because if their body is attractive, then they will get a good and handsome partner,"* stated twenty-eight-year-old. However, this attractiveness was not only meant for appealing body features, but a good weight is also in the league.

Male participants contended that ideal body weight is one of the main factors for which females maximally strive to reduce their weight or fat. Twenty-seven- and twenty-nine-years-old interviewee said, *"Girls think their weight should be less. They are conscious, for they know that girls only get a good guy if they are smart,"* and *"Girls have this concern that their bodyweight should not increase because they want to look like a bride on their wedding not like the mother of the bride. All the stress to remain smart is before marriage."* It is one of the sad realities that females are judged by others, as well as assess themselves on the dimensions of sizes and shapes and above all scale numbers. *"If you are unhealthy or weighty, you might not be seen as a girl/boy rather sarcastically teased as being a mother or 'uncle'[95]."*

There is also another reason for looking after one's body and appearing beautiful as a bride. A twenty-two-year-old stated, *"They want their wedding albums to turn out perfect."* Health concern or not, a female has a fondness for having a perfect wedding album. Hence, if obesity or fatness is noticeable, it is believed that the results of the pictures will turn out to be imperfect and not beautiful. The motive behind body

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[95] Interview discussion.

involvement pre-marriage does not end with these reasons. To appear good and showing conformity to male demands is also one of the signified drives for females to lose weight.

> *"Girls are more conscious than boys before marriage because, in our society, male demands shaped body, having curves because it appears sexual, hourglass-like figure and good looks in the girl (age 28)."*

From looks to curves, from attractiveness to being active, all positive traits and characteristics are associated with a good-looking female. It develops a higher probability of being selected as a mate. Earlier research shows that fitness-related evolutionary theories propose that appearance cues, such as attractiveness, are genuinely indicative of a person's characteristics, health, and value as a mate (Rennels, 2012).

In the following course, the male respondents have indicated the reasons and expectations that they believe are held by females. These reasons have justified female's interest and insignificant attitude towards their bodies after marriage.

5.4.2.2 Male's Reflection: Female Post-Marriage Involvement and Insignificance

A male participant indicated that *"It is an after-marriage concern towards their body weight because women simply wish to look good (age 24)."* The appearance culture and to appear good are the factors that are keeping women in this society to look after their bodies' post-marriage phase. Another gym-goer (age 28) stated, *"Before marriage girls are only concerned for their body fat or weight, and after marriage, they want to keep themselves fit."* It is not the matter of what scale says or to appear good, but 'being fit' and 'looking after one's fitness' is a post-marriage body involvement motivator.

Body involvement is reflected by those who show the tendency of self and body care. Two respondents shared similar views *"Some girls after marriage do get concerned about body fat or weight, particularly those who gain weight after their babies."* It is all about priority, a woman who has self-interest will always look after her body and

take time to get back to what she was. Baby or the hectic routine after marriage cannot stop a person from looking after their body if they are determined enough to look after their fitness.

In contrast, a male respondent age twenty-nine mentioned that for some females this body image involvement continues for a limited time by referring to the following two reasons,

> *"After marriage, this concern continues for more than one and a half years, but after the first baby, everything changes. Secondly, your goal has been achieved, and you are married now."*

This opinion is affirmed by most respondents in interviews and discussions and ends on this statement, *"now you have kids."* After kids, your body, and priority towards it change, your responsibility increases, and so does your role expectations. According to male interviewees, once the wedding has taken place, it is a 360-degree or a U-turn: not only is your body ready to encounter transformation, but your level of duties and priorities are determined to change.

In this entire situation, the concern for body size and shape faces a halt. *"Body image post-marriage is just a matter of talk; you do not have time for these things both in the case of girls and boys. The responsibilities, house chores, and the job have taken place,"* and *"Because after marriage it is difficult for many to maintain body due to the responsibilities, kids and house chores and to lack interest,"* stated twenty-eight and thirty-years-old respectively. Moreover, twenty-four-year-old said, *"After the wedding, they own a marriage agreement of having a partner for life and thus divert their attention towards other life matters and responsibilities."* Responsibilities and house chores are two of the signified reasons that become a leading cause of obstacle between one's body and fitness while kids and time served in their errands as another.

"She has a kid, so what is the purpose of reducing oneself? Females are devoted towards married life; they tend to think of everybody else, excluding their body image," expressed a male respondent. I would refer to a female interviewee's response here, for she shared a similar perception. She expressed that,

> *"Females are said to put others first, everything, every person is their priority. If it is food, they will make sure everyone will eat first, her kids, her husband. If it is a task, she makes sure her work is done in the end, let others be satisfied. If it is the body, she will try hard to nourish her kids' body, and when it is her turn, then body rest is all she needs."*

Likewise, another male interviewee aged twenty-seven stated his opinion in these words *"It is babies now, and women become a bull."* She has no time to look after her; she has babies to attend to. The respondent also explained the relationship between the female body and family choice in this way that *"If a fat girl is chosen from our family or relatives, the boy will commit and compromise because of family reasons or terms. Else guys do like smart girls as their partner."* The body size and shape of a woman are ignored when the family gets involved in a person's marriage. They respect the decision that is made by their family and show compliance, and this is a common practice in collectivistic societies. I would mention another female interviewee account on this theme as,

> *"I have a friend who is 5'3" and her husband is 6'2" in height. The future in-laws did not say that we want a tall height girl for our tall son. I think decent families do not indulge in these illiterate stupid types of demands."*

The next section includes the perception of males regarding the men's concern as well as indifferent attitude towards body image before and after marriage.

5.4.2.3 Men Pre- and Post-Marriage Preoccupation and Unconcern

"If I tell you about myself, I am already conscious, and I would be more conscious after marriage. I hate it when people say their belly is sticking out because they are married," and *"As far as I am concerned, I am still and will be involved with my body after marriage,"* stated thirty and twenty-seven-years-old respectively. Self-interest and motivation for keeping one's body fit and healthy before and after marriage was the concern of a few men. However, after marriage, body fixes are not only confined to the female body, but males also face rude remarks on body transformation.

One of the common transformations involves protruding belly in males. A boy/man with such a belly is generally, in a sarcastic manner, labeled as 'being married.' Protruding belly and being married go hand in hand as if they are a synonym with one another. The label is commonly seen with disapproval and an unwelcoming attitude. Likewise, when it is a matter of pre-marriage body, age groups are also accounted for body enhancement.

"Boys are concerned for their body before marriage, and mostly above age 25 are into it. Some get concerned for their physical appearance afterward and may join a gym to lose weight but not for muscle formation," stated a gym-goer. Boys also have this inclination to look after their appearance; they wish to look physically appealing, just like females who are highly known for this disposition, according to my study. However, one gym trainer age twenty-two said that,

> *"Mostly, males go for muscle formation, which plays a role in fat and weight loss. Some of them do cardio (jogging or brisk walk) for endurance and losing weight, and this varies according to individual preferences[96]. It was highlighted that if some males are concerned before marriage to lose weight, then the reason will be the inner drive."*

Emphasizing inner passion, one respondent stated, *"Boys are concerned before marriage due to inner motivation and interest. However, the concern is never due to the reason that 'they should look good' because this intention is only linked with girls."* Like girls, boys do not work out to 'look good,' but they do it to keep their fitness level. The body is kept in shape by forming muscles, and if you attain this all, your body will look good than the average body around you. The beautiful body is used for another purpose by some men.

The illicit affair is the reason behind a man's concern for his body, a male interviewee age twenty-seven indicated *"Some of them may have the intention to get married or maintain extramarital affairs. They do not want to look like uncle after gaining weight but instead, look young."* In males, a concern to look after one's body is related to one's interest in females. Assuredly, it is deemed that youthful appearance will always

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[96] Interview discussion.

have its attraction as compared to a person who looks older than his age due to the unshaped body. Youthful looks will always offer your opportunities to have any girl you want; the elder impression can repel this attraction[97].

Earlier one of the female respondents said that a man looks after their bodies post marriage to appear young or fit enough so they may keep attracting the opposite sex for long (5.4.1.3 Female's Reflection: Male Preoccupation and Indifference). This reason was affirmed by the male respondent for being accurate, as he (age 30) asserted, *"They do not wish to lose their manliness appeal after marriage. They are concerned before and after marriage because it is their thinking that they should look fit and attractive."*

On the other hand, one participant stated male indifference towards body after marriage in this way, *"Mostly guys let go of this worry after marriage because eating habits change and fortunately, they get everything on the bed and indulge more in the outing (age 27)."* After marriage, since a man has a wife to look after him besides his mother too, he feels at ease. His wife is day and night there to fulfill his needs, from basic to physiological. He becomes a carefree person, he can even demand food on his bed, and a wife does satisfy. Then it is outings, gatherings, and functions not only with friends and colleagues but also with the wife. Meals and snacking increases unbelievably in the very first year for both genders. This adds up to the scale and measurement.

In the last section, I have explained why men believe that the body is taken care of by both men and women.

5.4.2.4 Men and Women: Body Concern

Summing it up and keeping both gender's views at hand, it was believed by male participants that females look after their bodies due to societal demands or affinal pressures, and for some women, the inner drive works. In the case of boys, it is the

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[97] Informal conversation.

inner motivation and the desire to maintain physical appeal to keep attracting females around them.

A respondent said, *"According to my perception, both the genders show concern after marriage for their body fat or weight because people around them taunt and tease them for being overweight and having bulky bodies (age 22)."* Research on aesthetic ideals suggests that beauty constructs are mediated by family and social networks. In these spheres, dominant notions of attractiveness that are promulgated within the society may be reinforced verbally through actions such as praising, teasing, and shaming (McClure, Poole, & Anderson-Fye 2012).

It was indicated that before marriage, boys, and girls out of demands, expectations, and interests look after their bodies. After marriage, sometimes no external interference is needed, a personal decision has its role. *"Some husband and wife may say that they have gone old, so it is not a point to worry about (age 22)."* When couples share their mutual interest in eating similarly, they are both aware that they will gain weight together as well. My study asserts that at times, it is a mutual weight preoccupation, or one of them looks after weight. The last option is both remain unconcerned according to some participants.

Weight gain after marriage is itself a reason that makes both genders work on their body. Gym-trainer mentioned, *"Some ladies, leave their grown babies to their maids, and then come to the gym for exercises to lose weight and remain smart. Boys show concern because they want to look smart until their marriage. After 5 to 6 months of their marriage, they will go to the gym saying I have gone fat, let us go to the gym. This attitude is more in gym people and then the general ones (age 22)."* However, a marked difference was identified by one respondent in the ratio of girls and boys who were involved in body image concern both before and after marriage.

According to the interviewee, if the concern continued after marriage in both genders, it means that both had the preoccupation before marriage as well. It was all about self-interest and inner motivation in this situation. Twenty-two-years-old gym-goer was of the view,

"1 out of 100 girls are concerned both pre and post-marriage. Most girls are concerned after marriage because they get worried and talk about how much they have gained weight and fats. Moreover, we do not have a healthy culture and environment, and so fitness is rarely to be seen. However, boys are less concerned, and I may say 50/100 is concerned before and after marriage. If some boys or girls are concerned about fitness, they will keep this attitude pre- and post-marriage."

Discussions revealed, it is like living in a culture and society where body image and beauty are foremost associated with the female gender, and so she has been objectified in different phases of life accordingly. From teenage years to motherhood, the body of the female is expected to be in shape, maintaining its attractiveness. However, with males, the pressure is less, and so the expectations with the body form. A protruding belly becomes a cause to look after one weight in some males. Self-interest also motivates a male both pre and post-marriage. Otherwise, body image is generally ignored.

5.5 Summary

Being attractive has its worth and value in the eyes of all those who are seeing and observing beauty. We are naturally inclined towards a beautiful person and are ready to believe all the assumptions and ideas associated with it. Schemas and biased standards play their role in judging people on their appearance and attractiveness. This biasness leads society to treat gender according to body and beauty ideals.

Thoughts come into action when *the beautiful is good* stereotype is actuated. A person is believed to possess good qualities and hence is given favorable treatment from academia to a general life routine. The beauty of a person is thought of in terms of something that can gain any possible end. You are beautiful and have an ideal kind of body, and then this will make you stand as a person who is credible for a job position, matrimony, and academic selection. However, if you are fat, then get ready for facing the dire consequences in the face of taunts and discrimination. No, you are not eligible as a perfect candidate for marriage foremost. The fat body is not shown approval and desirability the way a shaped body is shown.

When it comes to appearance, results also revealed that it is a female gender, which is mostly preoccupied with their body size and shape before marriage. The reason is that women face more social pressure, societal expectations, media influence, and a demand for being in shape so that they can be considered for an ideal mate. After marriage, some of the women look after their bodies out of expectations held by in-laws, which is inculcated by the culture in which we live. However, others do not show concern because they have responsibilities to look after and fulfill, from family to kids and kitchen.

Males have the upper hand because it is identified that it is male dominant society. Expectations are not for them about body image, but if they are looking after it, it is all out of their will, needs, and reason. He knows that even if he is obese, he will still get a hand of a smart woman. This kind of society has its profits and gains for its males, from power to control, mate choice, and body preferences in them.

In the following chapter of "The Metamorphosis and Outcome," different dimensions linked with body image are explored. These include the factors that influence body image, motivating dynamics behind dieting and exercise, the investment in achieving a beautified body, and lastly, body objectification.

6. THE METAMORPHOSIS AND OUTCOME

The sociocultural perspective on physical attractiveness focuses on how cultural values and practices affect body image. Some Asian cultures have traditionally valued a full figure as a sign of prosperity, beauty, and health. However, cultural values appear to have shifted towards thinness as the standard of beauty for women (Kawamura, 2012). There is strong evidence that sociocultural influences are significant in determining young people's standards of beauty and in suggesting how important appearance should be considered (Wertheim & Paxton, 2012). My study has highlighted the dominant sociocultural agents that play their role in communicating and influencing the ideal forms of the body in Pakistani society based on gender knowledge.

This chapter has also focused on queries such as who influences body image and beauty in Pakistani society. The motivating factors for attaining an ideal body are indicated by participants to be achieved through dieting and exercise. The motivational factor leads to the investment mediums that play their role in enhancing and transforming beauty and body. This eventually draws attention to gender differences observed in the issue of objectification of the body in Pakistani society. Perception and attitude of both genders have assisted in exploring the intensity of processes and means involved in the beautification of body image and beauty.

6.1 Factors Influencing Body Image

Most Asian cultures are predominantly collectivistic. In collectivistic cultures, individuals are embedded within their group identity, and the notion of a separate, autonomous self is de-emphasized. Even an individual's physical appearance is often seen as not only a reflection of the individual's internal self. It is also a representation of the family, extended family, and perhaps even the Asian community as a whole (Kawamura, 2012). Keeping cultural reality into consideration, the chapter has investigated major as well as minor factors that are believed to have an influence on gender body image in Pakistan.

6.1.1 Female Perception

The female respondents identified media as one of the primary sources to influence body image in this society. If women are shown happy and successful in media because of their thinness and attractiveness, then the opposite holds, i.e., fat ones are the sad, lazy, and unsuccessful ones. Other responses identified consanguine, affinal, peers, family taunts, eating patterns, beauty products, and motivational speakers as the factors that have an impact on a person's attitude towards one body and others.

6.1.1.1 Influence of Media

The media is regarded to be a conveyor of sociocultural values regarding ideal body shape and size, which creates an understanding of the ideal man and woman (McCabe, Butler & Watt, 2007). The media, due to the idealized and beautiful body images portrayed on it, influence Pakistanis. Respondents shared their views respectively,

> *"People are fascinated by mass media because they idealize some of the media actor/actresses, their ideal body, how they carry it, and their way of dressing (gym-goer, age 28)."*

> *"People in our culture are influenced by the idealized representation of body image that is portrayed in mass media (age 25)."*

They see the perfection in them; for no doubt, it is the ultimate form of flawless body portrayal. Previous research shows that media is asserted to be one of the major channels to establish celebrity status. Moreover, another significant influence of media that is considered worrisome is, they promote unachievable and unrealistic figures by beautifying skinny celebrities (Maltby et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, the question is what kind of feelings the observer has when they view such a form of the body. A girl of age twenty-seven years stated, *"Media has incredible influence because when we fat girls see smart women on TV, i.e., in shape and beautiful girls, we wish to become beautiful like them. When I see somebody's*

beautiful skin, I wish to have that kind of skin too and even hair like them." These images raise wishful feelings in the observers. The beautifully depicted model in the advertisements becomes successful in playing with consumer and viewer psychology. The motive is to influence the observer's beauty so that the people who are watching it can question the beauty they possess. The process continues, and either that product is bought, or home remedies for one's beauty begins.

McCabe and colleagues (2007) also propose that women felt worse about their bodies after exposure to thin-ideal images. Women generally overestimate their actual body size, believing they are too fat and ugly, even though they are not. Research shows that women usually experience higher rates of body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, and their feelings about the body are closely tied to self-esteem. They also engage in extreme body-transforming behaviors as compared to men. It can be explained by their subordinate gender role related to men and the greater self-objectification that accompanies this societal position (Murnen & Don, 2012).

Moreover, these fascinated images are also exposed to other forms of mass media, i.e., movies and advertisements.

> *"In movies, it is always shown that heroines are never fat or overweight; they are always slim, i.e., physically smart and in shape. In modeling programs, they are also communicating that girls and boy models are tall, and you will not see any short height model. It means that tall height is being idealized (gym-goer, age 19)."*

Research shows that in every culture, each period of history has its standards of beauty, and these standards have significantly changed over time. Current western societies are inordinately emphasizing thinness as an ideal for female beauty, and women receive more social pressures to be beautiful than ever before (Basow, Foran, & Bookwala, 2007).

Class and Media. The social pressure of beauty and its standards are also determined by the 'class system' that is prevailing in Pakistan. The class is one of the factors that

have been identified to play a role in mass media viewer's perception and is elaborated in the following way.

['Educated' people who know how to use their minds are not much influenced; instead, they see what is worthy of being followed]. They can differentiate between right and wrong, reality, and fantasy. Respondent (age 27) said that

> *"Less-educated class are thought to be 'influenced' by Indian media's portrayal of body image, whereas educated ones are thought to follow Western media, Hollywood, or their television seasons. However, body image does not only involve just a figure or body, but it encompasses overall appearance and whatever fashion you are following."*

The media depiction of body image was not only conveying ideal body forms, but it was establishing the complete effect produced with attractive outer and adornment. If the body is there, beauty must complement it in any way through either beautiful features and toned texture or updated fashion and high fi clothing.

One important thing can also be grasped from the influence and class demarcation in the above interview. Why was the less educated class not linked with western media? The viewing capability of this class is believed to be limited to Indian media. The western world is thought to attend by the upper class, reflecting the compatible match between these two. Conversely, twenty-two-years-old held her views that the upper class and middle class are more influenced than the lower class because the reason is,

> *"Lower-class does not have much access to social media, so they do not have ample understanding of these body image matters. Much of the effect is on the upper class because social media is in their hand, and it is somehow psychologically affecting you, and your subconscious makes you attain or be like those ideal forms."*

You are a part of a society that is continuously judging you on your appearance. The lower class must make both ends meet to fulfill their basic needs, especially hunger. However, for the class whose needs are already filled, they look up to these patterns for further fulfillment. The participants generally perceived the elaboration of less-

educated as well as upper and middle class as follows. The upper class includes wealthy proprietors, mill owners, and high-level bureaucrats. The middle class consists of professionals like doctors, IT experts, and lawyers. The lower class is low ranking government employees, factory workers, plumbers, tailors, masons, drivers, and construction workers.

Media and Gender Differences. Besides class, when it comes to gender differences, a respondent believed that males are more influenced by media regarding one distinct matter. A twenty-six-years-old stated that men are,

> *"Influenced by six-pack bodies of their idealized celebrities like Shahrukh Khan[98] and John Abraham[99] who are known for their six-pack abdomens. They want to be like them and they want to have bodies like them."*

Another participant said,

> *"Different media personalities are idealized by people and they want to be like them. However, the point of influence matters; girls are inclined towards having a smart body (trim and fatless), whereas boys want to have a muscular body. You may have seen this frequently in teenagers when they comment that they want to be like Salman Khan. Girls also idealize some media personality."*

On the contrary, a female (age 25) asserted, *"Boys are not much influenced by media in our culture because they have more outdoor activities as compared to girls and their entertainment on TV is movies."* Men are mostly found watching movies or sports in their spare time, or they hang out with friends. The same indifferent attitude towards being influenced was also held for women as an interviewee (age 27) stated, *"Girls are hardly influenced because they are not into these images nor their attention is towards these matters. They are not into fitness in general, they are into*

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[98] Shahrukh Khan, an Indian film actor, producer, and television personality. Khan frequently appears on listings of the most popular, stylish, and influential people in India. He made heads turn when he appeared with perfect six-pack abs in "Om Shanti Om" (Bollywood movie)

[99] John Abraham is an Indian film actor, producer, and former model who appear in Hindi films. His athletic and muscular physique has contributed to his status as one of the most influential sex symbols in Bollywood.

being slim." Women are thought to get slim in the shortest span and as quickly as possible.

Another interviewee expressed, *"Only those males and females will be highly influenced who are already dissatisfied with their body image or who want a healthy inspiration or motivation by such body images of celebrities (age 29)."* Social comparison is highly prevalent since the result shows that people make upward comparisons with superstars. Either they end up getting motivated, or they get dissatisfied knowing it is not that easy to achieve such an ideal body form.

Most of the female respondents indicated that although women are fascinated by media messages on the body and are influenced by it; however, some women asserted that this is not the truth. For a woman, it is all about trimming down, so that you are no longer called or considered fat. The female participants may idealize, but they did not directly mention any celebrity whom they wished to be like. Even if you do not desire to be like them, society has institutions that can assist you in making you look and feel beautiful.

Institutions and Body. When celebrities are looked upon and made comparisons with, the societal institution also steps in. It provides a common person with a foundation that helps them to be like celebrities one way or the other. This service is not only for women, but it is availed by men too. Presently, institutions like male saloons and grooming centers are more to be seen, and beauty products for men are in numbers. Participant (age 26) stated,

> *"Due to existing male grooming practices, I have noticed my brother has more hair products than mine. He has curly hair, so he looks after them a lot. Regarding media influence, recently, a Bollywood movie came out in which the hero kept a unique getup, style of beard, and hair. Many Pakistani actors and even common people followed it. They kept that style of beard, and it shows it does influence after all."*

[Male beautification and products sold for enhancement are found to be in an extensive range for men too. Besides hair grooming, facial products as "fair and

lovely," which was initially meant for females, is now available for males as fair and handsome]. *"Ever since the macho look was replaced by the metrosexual look, men have started taking an interest in their appearance. For this purpose, the media and beauty industry has put forward products that are helping both genders in grooming rituals, (gym-goer, age 32)."* The grooming is meant to make them appear with good skin color, i.e., white because the perception reflects that too much dark skin does not fit the beautiful skin complexion criteria.

The media influence is not only confined to the body shape, but skin complexion is also targeted, especially in women. Preference of skin tone, particularly in females as compared to a man, is considerably stressed in advertisements, as a respondent stated, *"They are teaching us how to become white from black; they are promoting fair skin by hiring fair models (age 18)."* Besides portraying preferred complexion and idyllic forms of the body on media programs, responses indicated that media channels also play their role in a beautified body propagation.

> *"A growing trend of morning programs on television promotes a healthy life by incorporating exercises and healthy eating patterns. The increase in morning shows is bringing awareness in TV viewers regarding the current standards of beauty, body image, and fashion in every sense (gym goer)."*

It is up to the audience for what they seek from these programs, i.e., motivation, and inspiration or nothing at all, according to my study participants. However, it was believed that the degree of influence regarding the body was hindered by one factor, i.e., religion.

Religion and Body. Religion was recognized as one of the influencing factors in shaping the attitude of people towards adornment and body. Respondent stated, *"Women are not much influenced because most of them bring the matter of religion in it. They believe that in Islam, fashion is not allowed, particularly the skin revealing fashion such as sleeveless shirts, fitting shirts, or wearing tights that may expose your body shape and size. When some people keep these things in mind, nothing matters to them, and they are not affected by the idealized images."*

Muslims generally do not resent the restrictions placed on their dresses by their religion, and most regard it as a proud principle of their faith. In general, standards of modesty call for a woman to cover her body, particularly her chest. Skin-tight, body-hugging clothes are discouraged for both men and women. The overall appearance of a person should be dignified and modest. The religion of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism shun materialism, in which the physical appearance of a person is seen as an external materialistic good because it takes a person away from spiritual growth (Kawamura, 2012).

The second factor that influences body image is the consanguine and affinal aspect, emphasizing how parents, cousins, in-laws, and partners play their role in the development of body image.

6.1.1.2 Influence of Consanguine and Affinal

After the media, another major factor that influences body image in Pakistani society is parents and family. It was known from interviews that some parents employ mocking statements towards their daughter's body and indulge in criticism. Twenty-two-years-old said,

> *"Parents are the major influencers on body image. They simply tear you down with taunts and scorn, e.g., my mother frequently says, you are so weak (underweight), and if the wind will blow it will take you away. You are also studying, and due to your weakness, we will not be able to see you next semester (meaning, I will become invisible under the burden of studies)."*

Respondent stated that the weak body is not approved because it is believed that a female body should be somewhat filled up. One day she will get married and too skinny girls do not look good. Research shows that in most, if not all, Asian cultures, there is much more pressure on women than men regarding physical appearance does. Parents may exert pressure on their daughters through explicit comments about appearances. Similarly, via implicit expectations to keep up the appearances to not bring negative attention to the family (Kawamura, 2012). Besides parents, the second

influencer involved cousins, who played their role as someone who is seen as a challenger.

The bodily fit cousins were physically good and with whom they felt jealous and motivated to begin a workout regime. Jealousy or motivation always had two basic drives; either you get motivated to improve body size so that you can become like them or better than them. *"Cousins are our direct competitor, we make a direct comparison with them,"* an interviewee aged twenty-nine stated.

Considering cousins as competent and making comparisons with them, it was held that *"Those cousins, who are healthy or fat as you, remain a source of satisfaction, that yes someone else is like you after all. However, those cousins who possess fitness or have shaped bodies remain a cause of pressure because they have that body that you indeed wish to have (gym-goer)."* Research also shows that in upward comparison, people compare themselves to those they believe are better than themselves, and which leads to body image dissatisfaction (Lewallen & Behm-Morawitz, 2016).

Humans have the drive to measure themselves, their opinions, and status by making a comparison with other individuals; this phenomenon is a social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). The results of my study indicate that females do indulge in social comparison in one's family circle. The social comparison made from the body image concern was not only induced by the familial factor. The in-laws were also indicated to have their effect on one's body, especially females in Pakistani society.

"It is for the in-laws and marriage that girls start reducing weight," stated twenty-year-old. It is reported that the most common expectations held by in-laws were the demand to have a girl who has good looks, physical attraction, adequate weight, and a toned body. If a daughter in law has such qualities, she will be lovingly chosen and valued[100]. Partner's opinion was also pointed out by one of the respondents to be a significant factor in influencing one's body image and feelings towards it. Research

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[100] Interview discussion.

has shown that both the presence and quality of interpersonal relationships have a strong influence on body image attitudes (Fawkner, 2012).

Interestingly, it has been suggested that among young women, body dissatisfaction is related to seeking feedback from their partners and their partners providing their opinion (Rodgers, 2012). Gym-goer said,

> *"Your partner (fiancé) or best friends play an important role as they can give you emotional support, e.g., my partner says that I stress a lot regarding my body image and I should relax for I can achieve the goal of shaping my body. People around you are seeing your body; they can mock your thighs and hips (if they are fat or appealing). In that case, if you have a good partner who is in love with you and not your body, he can motivate you that you can do it rather telling you that you are fat or weak. If you want to lose weight, you must have a good partner (age 19)."*

Previously, qualitative research has suggested that positive feedback from male partners has benefits in terms of women's confidence, self-esteem, and feelings about their bodies (Ambwani & Strauss, 2007). The discussion with my female participant proposes that strangers in this society also play their role in carrying out fat talk regarding one's body. They easily and readily mock a person's body without having any relationship with the person. Facial expression and eye movements can easily convey which body part is gazed at, talked about, and shown displeasure.

In the following section, the perception and opinion of male respondents regarding miscellaneous influencers on body image are explored.

6.1.2 Male Perception

Like females, males identified media as one of the significant influencers in the context of body image and appearance-related apprehension. Appearance-related social comparisons have played a central role in theorizing about body image. Contemporary culture places great emphasis on manifestation, and its concern is central to many people's self-concept; therefore, the outer body is a salient comparison dimension for many people (Halliwell, 2012). Secondary to that, friends,

siblings, and parents play their role in flooding body image concerns per my participant's answers.

6.1.2.1 Influence of Media

Social media promotes an ideal portrayal of the body image corresponding to the current trends and standards. *"Internet involves social media, i.e., Facebook. Every day a new theme or concept is generated on the body through these mediums. It is then shared, and eventually, its users are influenced (age 28)."* On social media platforms, many images are posted (on Facebook every hour, 10 million new photographs are uploaded) (Mayer-Schonberger & Cukier, 2013), which provides users frequent opportunities to make social comparisons related to appearance. Research states that comparing one's appearance to others especially to those who are considered more attractive than one is can lead to negative body image (Myers & Crowther, 2009).

> *"Social networking sites such as Instagram and Facebook have pages that are primarily body image prone. I have liked pages of fitness, and when one sees those images, they think they should have a body like this (age 22)."*

A study indicates that the appeal and magnetism of a social media platform such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have generated billions of users that are active daily (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Besides the medium of the internet, which has made its Pakistani viewers indulge in making comparisons regarding their bodies, respondents also indicated the impact of television.

Like females, males identified morning shows aired on television and movies as an influencing factor on one's body image. Respondent (age 27) stated, *"Morning shows draw attention to fitness, diet programs, and exercise regime."* In morning programs, different diet programs depending on calorie intake and lifestyle are shown. It is spreading a healthy message to people so that they may look after their health properly.

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Besides TV programs, in the movie industry, there are *"Movies, both Indian and Hollywood, which emphasize body image. In Indian movies, mostly the songs, especially item songs, promote such type of dressing which highlights body shape and influences body structure (age 27)."* The term *item number* has an obscure origin because most likely its meaning is derived from the objectification of sexually attractive women. The classic meaning of item number refers to highly sexualized songs with racy imagery and suggestive lyrics (Mary, 2016).

It was also affirmed that *"Regardless of any type of images which are being portrayed by media stars, and celebrities, in the long run, the concept of ideal body image still gets portrayed."* This representation of the idyllic body is enough to instill unrealistic thoughts towards one's body. It becomes a source of influence and inspiration in diverse forms, and certain professions become a reason. A gym-goer (age 22) stated this profession as,

> *"Wrestlers and actors generally influence body image in our culture. Wrestlers represent a physically fit body image and qualities of strength. We are also influenced by particular actors because of the power of their fame."*

Research demonstrates that people do make spontaneous and frequent appearance comparisons with media images and celebrities. Women reported more comparisons with models and strangers than men did, and men reported more comparisons with professional athletes than women (Halliwell, 2012). Hence, the results of my study can be linked in the case of males. However, females did not mention or compared themselves with any model or stranger in the interviews or group discussion. Family and in-laws were a dominant source of comparison for them.

A gym-goer summed up media influence in two words for men, *"It is medicines and anabolic steroids that are the results of idealized body image portrayed in media (age 22)."* Several potential physically enhancing supplements that those wanting to be more muscular are available for use. Clinical research evidence suggests that the most effective type of supplement is the group of anabolic-androgenic steroids. They are synthetic derivatives of testosterone that accelerate the body's natural ability to

masculinize and build muscle tissue, allowing people to develop a degree of muscularity that they would not be able to attain naturally (McCreary, 2012).

Another gym-goer expressed the degree of being influenced as, *"Let me sum up, in our culture after watching such images, some of the people seeing and observing these idealized images are doing something about it, while the rest is just watching it and not getting influenced at all (age 30)."* Either you will get up from the couch and look after your body, or you will remain there, showing indifference. It needs hard work and determination to care for one's body healthily. There is also a possibility; you can be influenced by it negatively and positively. According to some participants, the class of individuals matters when the impact of idealized images is the subject.

If it is an educated class, then their concern is with external appearance, and if it is a rural class, then it is the physical strength. The interviewee said,

> *"In rural areas, people are not concerned with body image issues because if you are physically strong to perform work or household chores, it means you are healthy. Educated people are more involved because they are paying attention and show involvement for the outward manifestation than body capabilities (age 29)."*

Oppositely, an interviewer (age 30) considered thinking patterns as a reason behind being influenced. He explained thinking of two classes in an opposing way as compared to the previous respondent's views.

> *"It always depends who is on the viewing side as uneducated people are highly influenced because they believe whatever they are seeing is the only world and solution. Educated people have a different way of thinking, and they know what is behind these idealized images."*

[The difference between educated and uneducated is based on their ability to be more knowledgeable as compared to the illiterate individual who lacks proper education and judgment in their life]. For the uneducated, the reality about the body that is portrayed on media seems absolute and not relative based on findings.

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In the next section, media celebrities are referred to, with whom male participants make the social comparison.

6.1.2.2 Celebrities: Influence and Comparison

> *"Especially through Facebook and other social media sites, the body image has its effects. The way media is showing [Salman Khan] and Katrina (Bollywood actors and models); people will wish to be like them (age 28)."*

> *"After watching movies of Salman Khan and Shahrukh Khan (Indian actors), some boys wish and say they want bodies like them. They strive to build their body in that way for a month, and then they are done. Because they know they will not be able to achieve it completely, and it requires hard work. Nobody is willing to do it to that extent (age 22)."*

> *"People do not realize that celebrities' life is different from ours. Even if they are doing movies, their personal life involves people who look after their healthy food and workout routine. It is their job to look good and beautiful, healthy, and fit; they are paid for this all. This truth must be realized, else people will keep striving and may fail at times. You are not Shahrukh Khan, you are an average person doing 9 to 5 job looking after family (gym-goer discussion)."*

Many people keep their ideal celebs as inspiration and motivation. As gym goer stated, *"I follow, and I am positively inspired by [Arnold Schwarzenegger[101], Lazar Angelov[102], and Ulisses Jr[103]]. I not only wish, but I try to maintain like them, I do work hard (age 22)."* Male respondents also shared that females make comparison with media images and wishes to be like celebs to achieve an ideal body image. It is considered as a devaluing aspect of oneself if one indulges in comparison with those images. Some wish and try to achieve while others wish and let go.

Social comparison theory addresses people's tendency to compare their attributes and behaviors to those of others, especially when the characteristics, e.g., beauty, are important, and when standards for evaluation are well defined. It also denotes the

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[101] An Austrian-American politician, actor, filmmaker, and former professional bodybuilder.
[102] He played professional basketball for ten years and is a Bulgarian bodybuilder.
[103] A New York bodybuilding and body composition coach.

mediating process in which females compare themselves with idealized images in the mass media. On perceiving that their body shape or weight fails to meet the thin standard, they show increased weight and body dissatisfaction (Levine, 2012).

Likewise, gym-goers stated, *"By watching those actors or actresses on media, people wish that they also want to be like them. I believe such people do not have their image, they want to adopt other's body image for themselves (age 23),"* and *"Boys, out of six-pack influences also aim for abs, those who do not have it, want it because the media is stressing on abs phenomena (age 22)."* However, a few females sometimes perceived idealized forms of beauty and body with a wishful heart. Male respondents expressed, *"Girls wish to be like those idealizing images, but they do not work out to achieve it even out of that influence."* Workout and proper diet are required to gain this kind of body, and motivation is required above all.

The third major influence identified by males was that of peers and their debates regarding the body. Second to that comes one's family, which includes mothers and sisters that are accountable for the propagation of ideal body image.

6.1.2.3 Influence of Peers and Family

Interviewee aged twenty-two stated that how the peer factor and fat talk sometimes convey the message of the beautified body between groups of friends. He said,

> *"Friends influence body image more in Pakistani culture. When male friends sit together and have chitchat, they will mention that 'that person is having a good body build' and acknowledge that he has a good physique. This, directly and indirectly, conveys what body type is being idealized and appreciated in both genders."*

Research shows that one of the main reasons why adolescent boys may engage in body change strategies is to increase their popularity among same-gender and opposite-gender peers. More specifically, it is argued that boys who have a muscular body, which demonstrates the strength and athletic prowess, are more likely to be perceived as popular with their peers (Ricciardelli, 2012).

Appearance related concern was not only a matter of debate for females but from the interview, it was known that when boys too sit in groups, discussion on the body is a common topic. The dialogue exchange shows the type or form of the body that is famous and approved. Besides peer's channel of communication, one's family also plays a role in body talk.

Early research shows that there is evidence that parents can influence the body image of their children in direct ways. Direct means include parental commentary about the child's weight or appearance or the imposition of rules about food and eating (Tiggemann, 2012). A twenty-nine-year-old stated, *"It is the family and in them is the mother figure that dominantly influences body image. Mothers have concerning nature for both male and female children regarding their bodies, i.e., whether their child is obese or weak, they will remark anyway. They are dominant influencers in our society and culture."* Siblings also play a central role in influencing body image as a gym-goer said, *"If you are fat or thin, your sisters, friends, and family will all criticize and comment, i.e., take care of yourself, why have you gone fat, get yourself thin and vice versa."* This appearance-related concern is induced using taunts and criticism.

Moving on to the next section after identifying the factors that influence body image in Pakistani culture and the ideal form of body through socializing channels. I would underline motivational factors behind physical exercise and eating patterns to achieve that ideal body. If an individual is influenced or self-concerned to have that body, then different strategies are required. Male and female participants identified that dieting, exercise is needed, and for that, one needs motivation.

6.2 Motivating Factors behind Dieting and Exercise

In the earlier period, the concept of dieting has been synonymous with the desire to be thin and losing weight (McCreary, 2012). Moreover, attempts are made by many people to alter their appearance or physical performance by employing lifestyle behaviors such as dieting and exercise (Hildebrandt & Alfano, 2012). For someone

who is in the range of overweight, their dieting attempts are fueled not only by a desire to enhance their body image but also to gain social acceptance and improve health risk and comorbidities (Lowe, Coletta, & Katetrman, 2012).

In this chapter, factors are highlighted that play their role in Pakistani society for motivating both genders to indulge in dieting and exercise when considering body image and attractiveness. Foremost, motivational factors such as one's inner motivation, in addition to external control, remain one of the strong forces in looking after one's body. Media is also leading influencers to promote the idea of a thin and toned body. Lastly, health issues associated with the unhealthy body were identified as a motivating reason to look for one's body at a later age.

6.2.1 Female Perception

Females have identified marriage proposals as one of the significant motives that make women indulge in the exercise routine. Second to that comes the factors of media, friends, and family who become a source of motivation towards body transformation.

6.2.1.1 Motivational Mediums: Marriage, Media, Mankind

Individuals who ascribe to collectivistic values tend to engage in social comparisons to ensure they are conforming to group norms. Those with different body types, physical appearances, or physical disabilities that deviate too far from the norm may experience not only their disappointment but also the disapproval of their family or community. Therefore, motivation to change one's physical appearance for those in collectivistic cultures may be to avoid shame, to fit in, and be accepted by the group, group acceptance (Kawamura, 2012). Pakistan is also said to be a collectivistic society. Hence, in this chapter, it will be explored that when body image is the issue, then how it is dealt with by two common methods.

A recurring focus turned up during discussions and interviews. It was indicated that conformity to certain physical appearance ideals was held by Pakistani society so that

females may find a suitable proposal for their marriage. Both genders highlighted that for getting marriage proposals, outward beauty is a necessity, and in girls, it significantly matters. Worthiness is associated with one's physical manifestation and this is generally achieved by exercise and food control.

Quoted by twenty-two and twenty-eight-years-old respectively, *"Proposals are the reasons girls try to make themselves smart, i.e., toned, appear less fatty. They know if they are fat, it will affect their marriage proposals. Fat girls are considered the last option,"* and *"It is because of the marriage, girls usually go on a diet and exercise before it, because they want to look slim in their wedding dress. They also want to show off their body to their in-laws, conveying that they are slimmer than them."* In line with my study findings, the thin ideal phenomenon has an impact on this society since it motivates people to transform their bodies.

It is frequently held that a toned body has more positive prospects than the one that is out of shape and overweight[104]. The idyllic body is achieved by two significant moves, and an interviewee has identified this by stating, *"Mostly for girls, ideal slim figure is the primary motivating factor, and to achieve that figure they go for crash diets[105] and exercise (age 28)."* This thin ideal is identified as one of the significant byproducts of media in Pakistani society.

Media portrays images, which promise social acceptance for men and women; therefore, these body types become desirable, especially for women. Advertisements often have adverse effects on men and women, women particularly, who often have a fear of being unattractive or old (McCabe et al., 2007). Respondent (age 29) likewise reported,

> *"Media has its hand in motivating people by sending out the message that if a girl will be smart (toned) and fit enough (attractive, in shape, and well dressed), proposal chances will increase and she will easily get a job. Smartness and its outcomes are the reasons girls get motivated to diet."*

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[104] Informal conversation.
[105] A weight-loss diet undertaken on an urgent, short-term basis to achieve very rapid results.

The images are so fascinating, especially the outcomes that people get effortlessly attracted to its impression, and some struggle to attain them. The achievement of the smart body is hence proof that this type of body is strived to achieve certain ends, i.e., desired job and proposals in the case of women. However, media is not the only promoter of this image of a body, family, and friends have their role when the body is the subject.

Family and friends raised body image concerns by disapproving remarks, which according to some interviewers, surprisingly acted as a cause of motivation and not depression. This motivation leads them to take up customary ways[106] to look after their bodies. Respondents expressed,

> *"It is all about the complaining and taunting of others regarding body image, which now and then keeps you motivated. Challenging statements like 'Can you make yourself lean or smart?' and 'Can you do it?' are common motivators. Sometimes good compliments also motivate you, i.e., 'stay smart like this' and 'you look good this way' (age 20)."*

> *"Negative comments which mostly fat people get to hear at the hands of their family and friends become a cause of motivation. I believe positive comments do not motivate a person that much as compared to negative criticism (age 19)."*

Research shows that peers, family members, and even strangers can play their role in exerting pressure to be thin and expecting social standards to be met. When a person makes interactions with others, they are confronted with expectations, opinions, and comments and possibly to their criticisms (Cash, 2011). Weight loss is promoted markedly, and when it is about thinness, then through approval manifestation, compliments, one's feelings of willpower and self-control, it gets reinforced (Leonard, Foulon, & Guelfi, 2005).

In the next section, different factors that play their role as motivating dynamics for body image concern and beautification are explained.

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[106] Dieting and exercise.

6.2.1.2 Miscellaneous Motivational Factors

Different motivational standpoints that affect body image in Pakistani society were indicated by the female respondents encompassing the need for fashion, the influence of motivational speakers, health concern, and mate happiness. Furthermore, feelings of jealousy, feeling competent, and power of self was pointed out to motivate an individual towards achieving the idealized body forms from dieting and exercise.

One of the interviewees considered fashion as a key factor behind bodily transformation and manifestation. She stated,

> *"Fashion is the major reason because when you get ready, you wish for yourself to look smart. If you are in shape, that fashion will suit you. Another reason is your loved ones; you will achieve that smartness for their sake or happiness. Some spouses also do fashion for their mates."*

Jackson and Lyons (2012) identified that young women often take part in practices that are aimed at altering their appearance and physique to gain social acceptance. Besides aiming for bodily changes for being socially approved, it was maintained that the obese or unhealthy form of the body should itself be the drive for people to look after their bodies.

Interviews and focus group discussions identified that *"Attention is only paid to health in late adulthood after the 40's when doctors recommend walk or exercise to look after one's health because every disease such as diabetes, blood pressure, or even backache is associated with the overweight problem."* One of the interviewees commented, *"People will never know that obesity is a disease, but one should get motivated to get rid of it (age 32)."* Nevertheless, people merely choose to go slim so that they can raise feelings of jealousy in others as the interviewee said, *"There are so many motivating factors to diet and exercise and one of them is to look beautiful, pretty, seem young, and to make other people jealous."* Being slim induces this feeling in oneself, that you are better than others, bodily.

On another note, a twenty-eight-year-old gym-goer stated, *"It is about the matter of competition that motivates girls in our culture to diet or exercise. They look at other smart girls, and they feel that they can be smart too."* It shows that girls compare their bodies with those who have smart physiques. It is what they wish for, and it is what they strive to have. Females indicated that they indulge in comparison with other females who are slimmer to them. Besides all these aspects, some respondents identified 'self' to be the sole motivator behind positive steps taken towards the body.

Self-esteem plays a central role in the mental health of young people. Positive self-image and a strong sense of self-worth are likely to help young people become more content with their bodies (O'Dea, 2012). This motivational characteristic involved an inner voice that motivates oneself to look after form and appearance. [Respondent (age 25) stated, *"In my case, it is an inner will, i.e., the voice that comes from inside that I must do something about my body."* A gym-goer also said, *"As long as you will not wish for fitness, you will not be able to reduce your weight. You must have the willpower and that much determination that if I have to do it, I will do it and it is for your good (age 19)."*] It is believed that a person who has control over oneself, could only take this bigger step in weight management regardless of media or cultural pressures.

Research has demonstrated that people who have an internal locus of control feel empowered in making healthy decisions. Most likely they will not internalize as much as the external pressures from culture, media, peers, and family. Moreover, those who had a high perception of control can effectively block media messages of thinness. Such people develop more healthy self-esteem by considering their whole selves (Aubrey, 2006). One of the gym-goer from my study said,

> *"I am never influenced by any media celebrity on body image. I may appreciate their body, but I am enough motivated to get up and workout for the sake of keeping my body healthy and fit. I believe I have a high self-concept and feelings of narcissism towards my body. You are given this life once, why not live it beautifully by carrying a healthy bod."*

Body involvement is not only triggered by 'self,' but this high sense of self is also achieved through the social institution of the gym. Motivation to work out and attain a fit body is generally carried out by men in gym premises, which involve bodily and capital investment.

In the following section, I will highlight men's perception of the motivating factors behind dieting and exercise in Pakistani society.

6.2.2 Male Perception

According to male respondents, the self of a person, impression formation, attaining a specific body type, muscular body, and its connotation played their role in motivating men to look after their bodies. Moreover, social comparison in the workplace, the matter of matrimony, and religion also played their part in body transformation. As simple as it can be explained, one respondent stated, *"It is a normal thing in our culture that if you have a well-shaped body people will appreciate you. This will eventually motivate you to exercise and look after your food (age 22)."*

6.2.2.1 Is it Extrinsic or Intrinsic Motivation?

> *"Most guys get motivated to look after their bodies so that they could impress people with it (age 23)."*

The question arises that why people wish to form a good bodily impression in certain contexts. Research shows that impressions resulting from the physical attractiveness stereotype are evident in the types of social interactions that adults and children experience. Individuals interact more positively with attractive targets than with unattractive, perhaps due to the greater social appeal of attractive persons (Rennels, 2012). Showing off one's appealing physical appearance is one of the leading motivational factors to take up exercise and watch your food intake. This is done to cause a positive impression on the viewer.

Besides impression formation, significant connotations that are linked with diverse body types in different Pakistani cultures also become the reason for body transformation. The culture of society informs us about the various body shapes and sizes that are appreciated and the standard ways they can be changed. Previous research indicated that obesity is traditionally favored by some cultures and is regarded as a sign of wealth, health, and fertility among young women (Eknoyan, 2006). One of the respondents stated,

> *"From a native point of view, Punjabis'[107] have bulky bodies, and that body type is appreciated because it is associated with health and wealth. In rural areas, skinny is not appreciated, for it looks like weakness and malnutrition. However, in Islamabad, skinny is liked so that the girl may seem younger. In Pashtun[108] culture, it is bulky, and strong body types are preferred so that it can perform chores, and this ability is preferred in girls (age 27)."*

The activity level, eating patterns, and body weight are all likely to be influenced by the culture in which a person is living. Inside a culture, conditions transform over a period, and the historical phase is said to have a strong influence on levels of thinness and fatness of individuals and populations. Mostly, it is suggested by analysis that in this world, most cultures value moderate level fatness and shun it at its extreme form (Sobal, 2001). My study validates this point as the result shows that neither too fat nor too thin is preferred in Pakistan. The societal image of the body is created differently in different cultures and is expected to follow. Besides linking different meanings with body type in cultures, the trend of six-packs in men, however, cannot be ignored in this discussion.

Western media and Indian movies play an active role in portraying abdominal muscle attractiveness by employing renowned actors and models that viewers usually follow[109]. *"Guys get motivated so that they may achieve smartness, i.e., by having shaped bodies involving six-packs, meaning no fats on their body,"* expressed a

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[107] A native or inhabitant of Punjab. Punjab is a geographical and cultural region in the northern part of South Asia, comprising areas of eastern Pakistan and northern India

[108], The Pashtuns, historically known by Afghans and Pathan, are an ethnic group native to Afghanistan and North-Western Pakistan.

[109] Known from interviews and focus group discussions.

twenty-eight-year-old interviewee. In the last two decades, one of the most significant shifts in visual culture has been the propagation of male body representation. Other than having a large upper body and broad shoulders, men now place a high value on the flat abdomen.

To achieve the 'six-pack' look of the abdomen, many men go to great lengths so that they could get their abdominal muscles perfectly tuned, rock hard, and resist a strong punch (Ricciardelli & Williams, 2012). According to the findings of my study, six-packs or abs were mostly associated with a smart body that is deemed to have its appeal.

The appealing factor of the body is not only confined to the eyes of society; to look good for oneself does matter for some individuals. Participant (age 23) said, *"It is self-motivation, you wish to show off to yourself first."* Moreover, abstaining from having a protruding belly was also identified as it was stated, *"Guys get motivated for exercise because they wish to maintain their body, to keep them fit, and in shape so that their belly will not stick out (age 24)."* It has already been mentioned that the protruding belly[110] was not considered a likable body characteristic.

Moving on to the next motivational feature factors of occupation, the influence of people at the workplace, matrimonial phase, and religion is reported, when males and body image are the concern.

6.2.2.2 Motivational Spheres of Career, Marriage, and Religion

The professions that require a good shape or athletic body is said to become the cause of exercising in males. People are rejected in specific jobs that require a physically fit body, especially in Army recruitment. A twenty-two-year-old respondent said, *"As a youngster, I wished to join the army; it keeps you motivated to remain fit."* Research says that sustaining body composition and desirable weight is an essential part of maintaining general health, physical fitness, and military appearance (Nolte et al., 2002).

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[110] Page 187.

The workplace was another platform where colleagues and co-workers play an important role in making you ponder over body image. It induces in your certain feelings, as *"Sometimes it is a feeling of competition or inner desire to look better than others."* A thirty-year-old respondent identified another factor as he said, *"The people who are around you, your colleagues who have a normal healthy body, they influence, or motivate you to exercise. You think if they have such bodies, then you can also have a similar body type."* It is like indulging oneself in social comparison with your colleagues or friends at the workplace.

Research demonstrates that for self-enhancement and self-improvement, people may engage in social comparisons (Wood, 1989). The comparisons that are upward in nature are motivated by the desire for self-improvement. From the comparison target, an individual generally either learn something or get inspired to make changes in themselves. Besides the job requirement of a physically fit body and comparison with colleagues, two other factors were also identified. Marriage and a distinctive religious facet motivate males to look after their body builds.

Marriage was one of the leading influencers on both genders to concentrate on their weight problem and to look good. It is held by the results of my study that an appealing body can easily attract good marriage proposals, especially in girls. Respondent (age 25) stated, *"When you are about to get married, you are highly conscious about being fat, and this anxiety prevails even in some boys."* Another interviewee said, *"Mostly they get motivated to do exercise and diet before getting married (both girls and boys) because they want to look slim on their wedding day."* Getting in shape before marriage is about making your body appealing to the eyes of observers. Likewise, the body was also perceived in the context of religiosity and the expectations from the male body under its context.

The 'strength of body' is considered essential because it is believed to be a product of Islam rather being motivated by bodybuilding images and celebrity endorsing six-pack bodies on media.

[*"A man should be strong because if he is doing jihad[111] he should be physically powerful and strong enough to fight. Second is our history, in which wrestling and horse riding in our prophet time show people were strong,"* as expressed by a 22 years old gym-goer].

Studies by Grogan and Richards (2002) on men's body image concluded that a considerable part of male body image is linked with functionality rather than appearance. My study results also indicate that a man with a muscular body was well regarded since connotations of manhood, courage, and functionality are linked with it commonly[112].

In men and women, the functionality of the body is achieved by investing in it either by enhancing it with beauty institutions or by utilizing gym services. Men and women have beauty salons to tend to their beauty. Beauty is attended by society and individuals, as known from study results. A beautiful person is in demand and has both market and human capital. Across societies and times, people have spent substantial resources - time, effort, and money - to enhance their beauty. Therefore, in the next section, I have discussed how women and men avail and invest in beauty services and the kind of body investments they make in the gym world.

6.3 Investment: Achieving a Beautiful Body

"All genders invest and it is not only women. It seems that women spend more because of more options, endorsement, and inflated rates. However, men spend too. Women spend on beauty and body to content themselves and others on the stated and intended standards made by the community. On the contrary, there are outliers too who either spend as a habit or to join the bandwagon; and those who spend because they enjoy the 'art and science' behind beauty and body (female, age 25)."

The perception does not end here as other respondents shared that women invest, so they feel better about themselves and to look good and stay young. It is also because of the reason that they either want to or feel the pressure to do so. The pressure can be

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[111] A war or struggle against unbelievers.
[112] Interview and focus group discussion.

from family, society, media, and or loved ones, as known from this chapter's first two sections. However, investment is also out of one's interest in body and beauty. The basis is, people wish to look good for themselves; it makes them happy and satisfied.

Moving forward, I will now present females and male perception of investments involving beauty and body image. They have highlighted beauty parlors and gym investing when a beautiful body is a concern. The capitalizing will reflect the enhancing, transforming, and permanent form of beauty. I want to clear that males were not observed in saloons, unlike my participation in the beauty parlors[113].

6.3.2.1 Beauty Parlor Construction of a Beautiful Self

A parlor is a place where you can achieve the beauty that you wish for, or enhance it in a way society expects to see you as. What hair color and hairstyle is a part of fashion these days? The fashion or the natural hair color dye and the straightening of hair permanently; beauty procedures that are considered best without damaging them is preferable. What eyebrow shape is in trend? Skin bleaching or skin waxing? What is effective in making the facial hair appear less? Are girls supposed to have hair on the face because facial hair is identified with a manly attribute?

Research contends that facial hair affects the self-confidence of women and makes them worry about their appearance (Lipton et al., 2006). A participant said, *"I have my upper lips threaded every two weeks because I do not wish to appear like a man or a hairy bear (gym-goer, age 32)."* Women's body hair is gendered as they reflect manliness that clearly shows that hair is not expected on a woman's body. A female body is seen in the context of smoothness, silkiness, appeal, and hairlessness. So how can one get rid of a hairy body and enhance it according to standards?

The most common beauty service for this was *threading*, which involves the removal of extra hair from eyebrows and upper lips. It is utilized because it gives a refined look. Some female clients come after a week, while others after two weeks for hair removal. The rate for upper lips was 100 Pakistani rupees in Nikhar Beauty Parlor,

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[113] The reason for this choice is given on page 36 in the "Participant Observation" section.

and for full eyebrows was 200 rupees. A facial treatment involved cleansing ranging from 1500 to 3500 rupees. It was obtained before events, occasions, or once a month with a follow-up.

Figure 11 Nikhar Beauty parlor list of services and charges.

Observation in parlor yielded the knowledge that if you have gone for threading of upper lips or shaping of eyebrows, the unsought bombardment of beauty tips is given. This flow of suggestions has a subliminal message in them, i.e., if you will get this treatment, all your beauty and body flaws would be controlled and enhanced. I heard a worker saying, *"You have pores, when was the last time you had a facial?"* The customer wonders and asked, *"Umm…why what happened?"* The answer by the employee reflects a direct message that *"It will give your skin a glow and reduce your pores, and we have five or so different types of facials."* The options are given to capitulate the customers to the promising beauty, and hence the income is generated.

Society, media, and peers also keep conveying this message that a woman's skin is best if it is flawless and hair-free. Peers have a funny way of reminding you about

your grown mustache lines, as *"Hey, your broom-like sticks have grown (giggling),"* *"Your mouse mustache is out,"* and *"When did you go to the parlor last time, you have a manly mustache."* Focus group discussion asserts that you will not see anyone celebrating a grown mustache line in girls even by the hands of one's family and close friends. It is a point of ridicule; you are objectified because everyone is expecting neat and clean skin in you, as you are a girl.

From the participant observation, it was known that when suggestions and beauty tips were offered; some customers showed indifferent responses, a few had facial disapproval of what they offered, and some said that they would think of it. The effect of these beauty suggestions is also dependent on the receiver's temperament, i.e., they can either get quickly convinced, or they keep a check on their budget or spending nature. The worker's message is mostly filled with beauty suggestions, and all ideas are based on current trends and fashion being followed in society and media.

The parlor experts are doing what they are told to do and they give their suggestions to the client that what will either suit them or not. When these ideas are given, it was observed that some followed while others did not. Some also give sincere suggestions, like *"Do not have 'hair cut down[114],' it damages hair,"* and *"Use oil for your hair as they are dry."* Sometimes a thing that is in fashion is thought to attain per societal thought. After all, you need to look beautiful to feel appreciated and approved. You are being objectified by the hands of these parlor workers.

Regarding fashion, the discussion revealed that most people follow a fashion that does not even suit their age, especially hair dying. A typical fashion is of blond hair dying because Pakistani girls and boys mostly have dark and light brown hair besides black. Blond hair was perceived as a trend that can only be carried by one kind, as it was said, *"This blond dye is a western fashion, and their jokes on blondes depict them as 'dumb'* [*I believe people who are following this blond hair fashion in Pakistan are dumb (age 24)*]*."* Hair dying also involved fashion colors, highlights, and streaking. With different hair colors, diverse personalities, and thinking patterns get associated.

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[114] The process involves bleaching of your hair, and it can make your hair dry, brittle, frizzy-looking and prone to breakage. Hydrogen peroxide and ammonia are the most used bleaching agents.

Generally, according to the different gym and non-gym-goer participants, the following associations were linked with these [hair colors],

[**Blonde-haired** *person was seen as "The over type (means who are over the top), seem Jewish, or reflect Christian beauty standard (gym-goer)," "Attractive (gym-goer)," "Youth (gym-goer)," "Dumbness but attractive (non-gym-goer)," and "It raises an expression that 'oh my god' what have they done to their hair. It suits people with a fair complexion and what matters most is how some carry that hair color (non-gym-goer)."*

Black *as "Decent (non-gym-goer)," "Asian, Arabic, or Persian beauty (gym-goer)," "Basic, boring but smart (non-gym-goer)," and "Natural or decent (non-gym-goer)."*

 Red *as "Outgoing (non-gym-goer)," "Stylish (gym-goer)," "Funky yet too bad (non-gym-goer)," Unique and different (gym-goer)," and "Popstar (non-gym-goer)."*

Colored (pink and blue) *as "Psycho person or the one who represents emo's (gym-goer)," "Stylish or funky (gym-goer)," "Outgoing, loud and confident (non-gym-goer)," "A girl who is funky minded, who knows how to enjoy her life regardless of her age (gym-goer)," and "Color of teenagers (non-gym-goer)."*

White hair *as being "Old (non-gym-goer)," "Carefree, and careless enough to not dye them into another color mostly black or brown to look good (gym-goer)," "The person who does not color them, means he/she is okay with personality, accepting natural change, living life accordingly regardless of age barrier (gym-goer)," "Sobriety and color of old (non-gym-goer)," and "Depends on the age bracket having it but usually it reflects maturity and oldness (non-gym-goer)."*]

Another reason for hair dying was to cover the greyish and white hair since this hue gave an aging effect. The reality is, too much hair dying turns the hair white quickly. *"It needs to be fixed to give a fresh, youthful look,"* expressed a gym-goer age thirty. Besides hair dying, *"[Straightened hair also gives a neat and cool kind of look; there is some appeal and catchiness in women who have straight hair. It looks perfect and professional (gym-goer, age 32)]."*

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Another form of beauty transformation stated by the respondent was, *"Permanent make up was done by some women, as one of my relatives has* [*a glitter eye make up on her eyes that is availed permanently*]. *I believe it is to be overly obsessed with one's appearance and to look attractive (age 26)."* Other beauty investments involved a pedicure and manicure that was done occasionally or once or twice a month to give a neat and shiny look to feet and hands.

The aging process is not seen within specific age brackets. If a person has white hair, does not look after their beauty, and has crossed a particular age, then you are not thought of as a young person. A gym-goer aged thirty-two shared her views in beauty investment and aging as,

> *"Women invest in their beauty because they not only like to appear beautiful but also youthful. Nobody likes to look old; my cousins say they do not wish to die early or turn old. I desire to die young (being nonserious) or grow old gracefully. This society also has strange standards based on aging. If you are crossing 30, damn, you are looked at with an undesirable lens.* [*Even a bride is expected to be between sixteen and twenty-one*]. *Young, fresh, and beautiful and see you are easily objectified."*

The younger a person is, the better, and beautiful he or she is considered in Pakistani society. The individual, having youthful looks and appearing youthful, is highly appreciated in our society. If a person does not have such freshness, then they can avail parlors, which are providing their beauty services to enhance your looks and youthfulness.

Lastly, the beauty parlor environment was perceived as relaxation and transforming space. For some, it was all about beauty and not money. It was also a matter of loyalty with service providers. It made the clients come to the same parlor for more than a decade, regardless of the rise in treatment fairs. In home and beauty, mostly, the females were concerned with the use of face wash, while only a few used the soaps or scrubs to look after their skin. Some of them were careful about branded products, while a few declared they are not brand conscious. Mascara, eyeliner, blush on, and lipstick was a part of most of the women's routine to appear fresh and beautiful.

Figure 12 Common room where haircutting, makeup, and threading was done.

The beautiful image is not only desired by females, but males have their opinions to address this truth. The next section has discussed men's perception of beauty investment.

6.3.2.2 The Men's Outlook of Beauty Investment

Males[115]and their involvement in beauty were generally responded in terms of being *moderate, hardly, I do not,* or *never* invest in it. Responses indicated that the exertion in beauty is not even bothered, and the non-gym goers mostly expressed this. One of them indicated the reality of investment by general men as,

> *"Men have their priorities; they are lazy and careless. The priorities range from earning money, love life, family, and friends. Very few men take care of themselves (age 29, non-gym-goer)."*

However, a gym-goer (age 27) said that *"Everyone invests in their beauty, it is not only women; they invest for the sake of self."* Another gym-goer age thirty stated,

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[115] Both by gym-goers and non-gym-goers.

"Investment in beauty is made because everyone wants to look good. It is to impress others." On being asked, is the impression formation a result of one's thinking, or it is out of social pressure and expectation. The gym-goer replied, *"This pressure can be on some of them; it all depends on the way one thinks."* One respondent was of this view,

> *"I just want to look good and feel good about myself, that's about it. However, I do not go to a parlor and shit like that. I do not use any face cream, just basic stuff."*

For men it was mostly about their beard styles, keeping it up to date, and getting their hair cut suitably. Those who were in their professional lives habitually shaved to give a clean and manly look. Haircutting was identified to take place either once or twice a month and within weeks. Generally, beard styles were looked after every week and within weeks[116]. Conversely, some non-gym goers reported that it was rarely attended.

In one gym-goer case, a high concern for beard styling was reported three times a month. Moreover, one of the common beauty investments according to some male respondents was face wash and most of them said it to be mostly branded. It was stated that if it is skin, then it should not be played around with unknown brands. In a rare non-gym-goer example, one respondent showed much concern about his body and skin by highlighting the usage of gel, branded face wash, oil, and lotion for skin. The hair gel was used on occasions by some respondents[117]. Males did not identify any saloon or home-related beauty procedure that was used to enhance, transform, or permanently bring change in their bodies.

Besides beautification practices in which some men and women indulged, body modification and transformation are also observed in the gym settings. In the proceeding section, I have explained how male and female respondents perceive the world of fitness.

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[116] Both by gym-goers and non-gym-goers.
[117] Both by gym-goers and non-gym-goers.

6.3.2.3 The Woman in the Gym Space

Being a member of the gym myself, I was able to have first-hand knowledge of what female gym-goers do with their bodies and what motivates them to be there. My participant observation has also yielded knowledge regarding the type of questions that are asked as the new person becomes a part of the 'gym culture.' The term refers to the culture within the gym setting.

The interaction with female newcomers was generally initiated in the form of a standard question; she was asked whether 'you want to lose weight or fat.' The receptionist or a trainer inquires it so they could guide them regarding the rate of exercise packages and fitness goals. The payment packages are divided into floor usage (Figure 13).

There are three floors; the first floor has cardio machines such as treadmill, elliptical, twister, and some lightweights ranging from two to five kgs. The second floor has strength training machines and battling ropes. The third floor has a boxing bag, three treadmills, and a place to practice yoga or Kungfu art. The timing is determined for each floor, which means the men, and women have separate times for using all floors. A unique culture is created at the gym; a woman only exercising space.

In the gym space, there was a sense of support, sociability, and friendship between the staff and members who frequently visited the facility. They can help you with general guidance, diet plans, or can hire trainers for physical workouts. There is a clear choice whether you wish to be trained by a male trainer or a female. In my time there, I only saw 3 to 4 women who took guidance from a male trainer regarding exercises aimed at losing or shedding weight and fat.

Figure 13 Gym packages based on the exercise types.

Three Gym-Goer Groups with Different Vision. It is evident from the participant observation that three groups of women exhibited different motives to join the gym. One group was keen to lose weight and was fixated with the weight scale needle to budge. They were more concerned with their *abdominal, buttock, and thigh fat* and wished to appear bodily shaped. Among this group, some were there to lose overall body fat. These all aims were for appearing smart, to generally look good, health concern, before and after marriage body interest, and for the sake of fitness. This group, for the most part, used the cardio floor, as it was believed that the cardio form

of exercise is the most effective workout for weight reduction. Some of them attended aerobic classes available on the cardio floor. Lastly, they were hardly seen on the strength-training floor.

Research shows that the ideal body may not only govern the use of the gym but also the types of exercises in which women participate. Many participants indicated workout preferences with a heavy focus on cardio, mixed with light toning exercises. It is consistent with the literature on women's gym use that females will use cardio to burn calories (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010), and will lift weights in a restrictive manner (Johansson, 1996).

The second group was concerned with muscle formation, and they were using both the strength floor along with cardio. They knew that with muscle building, the body gets toned and shaped; the former group was mostly lacking this knowledge. Every muscle of the body is targeted by this group to appear well-shaped. The aim was not to build muscles like men but to be [womanly muscular][118] was enough. It was believed that muscle exercises help people to remain fit muscle wise, not only at this age but prove beneficial in the later period. In Pakistan, you commonly see women walking in a pendulum gait due to weak knee muscles. For this, the doctors mostly recommend walking so that legs muscle can get stronger, and the gait can be made proper by shedding unnecessary fat and body weight. A gym-goer was aware that to avoid this problem in the later stage of life, one should look after their body in every possible way.

The third group was taking aerobics classes and spent most of the time on the cardio floor. However, once a week, they all had a class on the strength floor to train their muscles. They were looking after their diet, and some of them followed diet planners given to them by the trainer. The diet planner has a payment feature, and it was designed to help the gym-goer for shedding fat.

It was reported in informal conversations that one of the famous centers that helped millions of people reduce their fat was a "British Slimming Clinic." According to its

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[118] To have average toned muscles that does not at all resemble the men's muscular image.

website, the statistics say that 9.5 million people in Pakistan have reduced their weight whereas another 75 thousand people living abroad have benefited from it and the fats reduced by them ranged between 20 to 256 lbs (British Slimming Clinic, 2016). Their products helped the clients in suppressing hunger, along with a diet chart to be followed. It was known that the weight and fat were reduced, but once the diet plan stopped, people gained more weight than their previous ones. Males did not mention British Slimming Clinic, and many were not even aware of it when asked about it. It was typically popular among girls and was highly availed before marriages so that they could achieve some desired weight.

Is weight only a concern for women? Do men indulge in weight reduction too? With what mindset are males looking after their bodies in the gym. The next section has explored men's bodies in the gym setting.

6.3.2.4 Men Body and Physical Training

The section does not have observational knowledge regarding men and their exercise regime because participant observation was not carried out in male timings of gym settings. The information was obtained from interviews, and the body parts that were particularly targeted by the gym-goers emerged from the respondent's answers.

For males, the common body parts that are trained were *biceps, shoulders, chest, legs, and abdomen* was the concern for which exercise was taken up. The intent is to gain muscles, stay fit, appear muscular, has a toned and ripped body. Ripped means that there is zero to no fat on the body so that muscles could become visible as much as possible. I interviewed one of the gym trainers who revealed information about the perception of the general use of protein supplements and how the general population confuses it with steroids. He shared,

> *"Protein powder such as 'whey' was used by most male gym-goers as a source of protein intake to gain muscle mass. However, some had a misconception that it is a form of a steroid (surprised face reaction). Steroids were taken by those who were into extreme muscle building or were signed up for competition."*

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He further shared his knowledge of gym-goers behavior as,

> *"People are aware of the side effects of steroids or know that it is not the natural way of building muscle, but you cannot enforce things on clients. It was identified that bodybuilding was taken out of media influence, inspiration from favorite celebrity bodies, and eventually showing off oneself."*

The exercise was taken up by some gym-goers to transform their body by keeping in mind the bodies of celebrities known for their well-built physique. Steroids were taken to boost muscle formation and bulk.

Besides media celebrities, self-motivation[119], social comparison[120], and religion[121] also had a role in looking after one's body size, shape, and strength. The ideal bodies are represented in the society in the form of a standard; some look up to them and are influenced, and some do it out of self-interest.

The self-interest for the body does not mean that the knowledge about the body was known to everyone, especially on the topic of muscles versus fat shedding. The gym trainer shared that approximately two out of ten gym-goers knew that muscle building leads to fat loss. Interviews from females also revealed that hardly a few of the females know that fat can be reduced by muscle formation. In both genders, this belief was collective that cardio, especially the usage of a treadmill, is the major reason for fat and weight cut down.

Another question during an informal conversation with the trainer was, do genders share the reason behind joining the gym. He said that girls hardly share the purpose of joining; it is like six out of ten who keep it to themselves. However, the most common reason, which is disclosed, is marriage. Among male gym-goers, it was observed that not many of them hesitated, but out of ten, four to five did show reluctance.

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[119] Page 213 (age 25 and gym goer age 19), page 179 (age 24), and page 180 (age 21) on self-motivation and inner will to look after the body.
[120] Page 206, section "6.1.2.2 Celebrities: Influence and Comparison."
[121] Page 218, gym goer age 22, the response on being physically strong as it is a product of our religion.

The gym world has its community that has its own rules, expectations, and beliefs. The body is trained, put under stress with intense workouts, followed by diet plans and food charts. Nevertheless, the question is why this hassle is done? If fitness is the reason, then it is not much seen with scrutinized eyes. In men, bodybuilding is either done out of fitness reasons, obsession with muscle building, self-interest, or inspiration from celebrities. In women, it is due to marriage proposals; weight gained after marriage, fitness, and self-motivation.

The body is continuously under construction for those where social reasons are existing dominantly. The image of the body in its most beautiful forms is presented by society. The image is shown so that these forms can be achieved. Achieving it means that people are expressing conformity to societal standards of ideal beauty and body. Why conforming? Conformity is an assurance for positive outcomes and promising societal approval. The dark truth behind this representation and compliance is the concept of objectification.

In the last division of this chapter, I have explained objectification being encountered in Pakistani society and the gender differences that can be observed in its practices.

6.5 Gender Differences in Body Objectification

To objectify is to treat something that is not an object as an object, which can be used, manipulated, controlled, and known through its physical properties. It has been documented by research that for sexually objectifying treatment, women, unlike men, are targeted in their day-to-day lives more often. Generally, it appears that women and girls face a more compartmentalized and fragmented view of their bodies; however, the bodies of boys encounter a more holistic and functional view (Calogero, 2012).

This chapter has aimed to explore gender understanding of objectification, keeping Pakistani culture in mind. The discussion has highlighted gender differences observed in objectification, the medium that has propagated it, and eventually biased thinking patterns of observers and society. According to the results of my study, the concept of

objectification is typically deemed in terms of sexual objectification, and the attractiveness of the human body is expected intensely, particularly that of women. Advertisements, media, and male dominant society were three of the most significant factors associated with the practice of objectification in Pakistani society.

6.5.1 Female Perception

Females indicated that the presence and manifestation of women, especially in male advertisements is proof that their body is seen as an object. It is as if a woman's body is being used as a powerful tool for anything to be sold or thought of effectively. Other perceptions of respondents involved the following factors, which I have discussed turn by turn.

6.5.1.1 Objectification in Media and Society

> *"Whatsoever be the type of advertisement, for all intents and purposes girls will be in it,"* as marked by the twenty-five-year-old respondent.

The data provide substantial evidence that advertisements on electronic media were the major culprit that highly objectifies women as compared to the man in Pakistan. Females are employed to represent beauty and unattainable ideal body goals. The values associated with such idealism involved getting a perfect mate, a successful career, a happily ever after phenomenon, and objectionable thinking patterns of its viewers towards the other sex. One of the interviewees stated,

> *"If you see cigarettes, shaving, and motorbike ads, all will possibly have females. What does a girl's presence have to do with these objects and advertisements? They are used along the primary object to enhance its sales and image. By creating that perfect image, they win in by making people go insane, as they instill such perfect body expectations in them (age 29)."*

Likewise, a gym-goer (age 19) expressed her views,

> *"Objectification is pertaining more to girls' bodies as women are hired in shaving cream advertisement, and they just have to say this statement 'smooth shave.' Boys are also objectified, e.g., in a 'care honey cream' advertisement, a male figure is shown in the end, indirectly conveying that if you (female) use this cream, you will easily get a handsome male. Girls are more used in advertisements because they are employed as an object possessing the qualities of beauty and thin ideals. She is just glamorized."*

According to the respondent, glamorized means that girls are portrayed as highly desirable, and attractive. Research also indicates that sexually objectifying messages communicate to women that if they use a particular shampoo, whitening cream, or body lotion, they will increase their likelihood of being involved with a good-looking man (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003).

Besides advertisements, men and women are objectified in different spheres of mass media, as the respondent stated, *"Both genders are equally objectified in dramas, modeling, media, acting, and dancing. Even boy's height, weight, and the complexion are judged in modeling programs besides girls."* Another respondent highlighted that the lyrics of songs play their role in women objectification, as she said,

> *"There is a song name* آفرین آفرین *, which means 'delightful and elegant,' and it is all about the description of a beautiful body and face of a girl. I hate its lyrics because as a woman, I will not like to listen to it, as her whole existence is objectified in a fantasized way."*

A study by Calogero (2010) shows that media encounters of sexual objectification occur in every form: prime-time television programs, sports programs, television commercials, cartoons and animation, internet, music videos, music lyrics, video games, magazines, and newspapers, cell phone applications, and billboards.

Other than the role of media, patriarchal, or male-dominated society was also one of the chief reasons that caused female objectification. In Pakistan, objectification of females, unlike males, is perceived to be usual and expected, i.e., *"Girls are more treated as an object because it is male-dominant society. Men demand that they*

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should be treated as superior and entertained at any cost (gym-goer, age 32)." The participant further shared her views in the following way that,

> [*"Females are continually stared at or gazed with the lascivious eyes by most men. Still, at this time, if you will see a girl driving with her father or a girl walking alone or standing on the home terrace, a man will stop or slow his walking pace. He would like to have a full view of that beauty even if she is covered by the veil. If you are standing on the road then to avoid the other's continuous stare, you will try to cover your bosom, even if it is meant to hide with a book or a file that you are holding on your way to college or university. If you go to some developed area in Islamabad, the case is different. People do not stare at you much in Centaurus[122], F-6 Super Market[123], or Kohsar Market[124], but if it is Moti Bazar[125] in Rawalpindi, the male gaze will not spare you. You may seem some alien to them who is without dupatta or chaddar there, as the area is not developed or posh. The mentality of people and the spatial difference can be the reason to trigger the intense gaze. However, it is not like that that in Islamabad people do not stare at you, but the degree of prevalence is more in backward or less developed areas (age 32).*][126]

If an environment is sexually objectifying, then without any doubt, there is an approval and acknowledgment of the male gaze in that setting. It was asserted by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), "The most subtle and deniable way sexualized evaluation is enacted -and arguably the most ubiquitous- is through gaze or visual inspection of the body" (p. 175). Sexual gaze was reframed by Quinn (2002) as a "girl watching", a specific, yet subtle type of sexual harassment that is not under women's control and cannot be avoided. Girl watching is a targeted tactic of power, where the gaze of men is used to validate their right to sexually and physically assess women. From a male perspective, "acts such as girl watching are simply games played with objects: women's bodies" (Quinn, 2002, p. 398).

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[122] The Centaurus is a mixed-use real estate development in the city of Islamabad, Pakistan. The project includes a 36-floor hotel, three 23-floor residential and office towers and a five-story shopping mall
[123] The sector F-6 was established after the transfer of Capital from Karachi to Islamabad. It is surrounded by residential areas where homes and embassies are situated. In this place, you could find many foreigners. Imported goods and products are available here with locally produced things.
[124] Kohsar Market is a small upscale commercial area located in the northeastern sub-sector of Sector F-6, Islamabad. It is mainly known for its collection of upscale cafes and European restaurants.
[125] Moti Bazar is one of the oldest bazaars in Rawalpindi city. It is a hub of business activities.
[126] Gym-goer informal conversation.

Besides holding males and media responsible for objectifying women, other important factors were indicated by females, which I have explained in detail in the following section.

6.5.1.2 Compliance and Constraint

Women may develop a preoccupation with the appearance of their bodies, viewing themselves as objects that are controllable and can be altered to fit with social ideas (Tylka & Hill, 2004). Individuals internalize these messages and begin to evaluate themselves based on appearance, otherwise known as self-objectification (Wagner-Oehlhof et al., 2009). According to my study, the objectification of females has been there for a long, but mostly it is not just a culture or society to be held responsible for this act. It is by the will of females that the objectification happens because indirectly, they are showing compliance with the societal ways.

> *"Girls are to be blamed for this objectification issue because they are allowing it to be done with them at the hands of media and society. The image is that a girl should look perfect; the perceptions are prevailing for long, and because of this they are easily objectified."*

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) identified self-objectification as the first psychological consequence to emerge among girls and women because of living in a sexually objectifying cultural milieu. This objectified societal setting further continues the act in different professional fields that considers the body of a person significant and so gendered objectification is practiced accordingly,

> *"In professions such as doctors and engineers, girls and boys are not objectified. I believe in occupations besides medicine and engineering where body image is the center of attention, the body of both genders is objectified."*

Questions arise that since both genders are objectified in media and certain professions respectively, then while hiring attractive females versus a male, who needs to be appointed? What motive companies have in their mind if they are

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allowing a good looking female to take a seat and handle customers at the front desk and not choosing a male for it?

A twenty-five-year-old stated her answer, *"Objectification is just for girls because wherever you may go, whatsoever organization there will always be girls who are meant for representing it. It is believed that girls are easily listened to and paid attention to."* Females are not only appreciated for their physical appeal but because of their attractive attributes and spontaneous attention, uncountable favors are delivered. Organizations and marketing businesses are aware of how to play with consumer psychology and to sell one's product successfully by keeping females as powerful bait.

Even though organizations and society are playing an efficacious part in sexual objectification, it was still held that there are some restraints in explicitly practicing objectification. The constraint was generally due to the religion of Islam that is practiced in Pakistan.

> *"Even if the issue of sexual objectification exists in culture, it is not much exposed because there is an element of religion that restricts it. Islam does not allow objectification because characteristics of modesty, chastity, and consideration are taught (age 27)."*

In protecting women against self and sexual objectification, religion is considered an important factor. Islam protects woman's modesty and proclaims respect for them. If objectification is practiced, it is not done directly, such as displaying seminude models on billboards that the society can see. Baring of skin is not openly attempted in general songs or serial dramas, but in some movies, it exists.

In the next section, I have highlighted men's opinions about the objectification of the body in Pakistan and their perception of gender differences in body objectification.

6.5.2 Male Perception

"Objectification was not much of a concern in media time ago, but currently it is adopted through western media," indicated by the male interviewee. Interviewers claimed that the adoption of this trend has successfully led to the concurrence and rise of women's objectification in Pakistan. Businesses, organizations, products, and sales success are all associated with an attractive female who is hired and objectified for a specific position.

6.5.2.1 Female Body: A Profitable Prospect

In Pakistani society, if you anticipate a successful trade, a female is a prerequisite. Responses affirmed that it is a man's psyche to get attracted to beautiful women, and in this way, objectification of a female existence fulfills the purpose of attracting customers and consumers. *"To run a sound business female receptionist at the desk should be beautiful enough to gain consumer's attention (age 25),"* and *"In gym reception, there will be a girl to promote gym message and attract the people (age 24)."* Consumer's responsiveness is targeted in gym settings where females are hired as a receptionist to attract the members. It makes them feel pleasurable if a receptionist greets them with a charming smile, gentle words, and an attractive physique. It creates an effect of satisfaction or inner gratification[127].

Moreover, the success of any organization is positively linked with an attractive female as a respondent indicated,

> *"Girls are being objectified and used as a source of success for any firm. If you see the sales business, there will be females. I have also observed that boys frequently go to those shops where girls are doing the job as attendants. Some boys go on a spree to impress them; boys have this nature of being flirty."*

Concisely, female's attractive attributes were substantiated to bear positive, profitable, and productive results in any business field. *"You will notice that most girls are*

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[127] Interview discussion.

selected as brand ambassadors, it is all because of this reason that they will attract more consumers," and *"They will put girls in the advertisement so more and more people may view it,"* as expressed by two participants.

According to Malär and colleagues (2011), one of the tactics of marketers is that they depict brands in the sense of aspirational goods. With the help of this method, the product seems appealing to the buyers since, through this method the individuals realize their 'ideal self.' In these types of advertisements, the imageries that are utilized are deemed as an inspiration to its viewers. They are anticipated to form a disparity between themselves and the model portrayed in that mode of communication. It further makes the viewer feel challenged so that they could become more comparable to these models. Eventually, these models are viewed as aspirational (Nichols & Schumann, 2012). The attractiveness of the model can influence the behavior of consumers and so promotes the purchase intention. If the model is deemed attractive, then the goal of the product purchase will increase (Wang et al., 2012).

On the contrary, similar to one of the female interviewees' responses mentioned in section "6.5.1.2 Compliance and Constraint," a male gym-goer (age 27) also accused the woman of being a reason for their objectification.

> *"Women are objectified in many things: she is sexualized, be it in modeling, media, and professional working environment, usually in customer service or sales. Otherwise, flat out as a product of her in prostitution, and this can be either willingly or by force. Nevertheless, women have also played a strong role in their objectification when she chooses to be a prostitute and accept herself as a product and get benefited."*

The participant further expressed his opinion as,

> [*"The new trend involves carrying out body business underneath the apparel that is considered modest since the beginning. The "veil" is the new vogue, and in some areas of Islamabad, women in the veil are present. I heard from my uncle that this business prevails on the streets of*

Lahore[128] too. Either it is their spot to be picked up, or they know any prospective man can be the payee for her body. The point is now every woman in the veil can be seen with a suspicious eye. What is the guarantee that the woman under a veil is not a [sex worker]? They may be hiding under this covering so that they could not be recognized in the community and hide their identity successfully."]

It is by the very will of females, sexual objectification is carried out with or without a veil. This perception of *one's will* was asserted by both males and females interviewed for my research. Moreover, the objectification is not only limited to the body, but the female's familial roles are also objectified as they are expected to be flawlessly executed.

"She should do household chores and outside workings. Our culture has gone desirous for girls; they expect more and put more burdens on them. Even if a boy is fat, he will expect his girl to go to the gym, do running, and remain fit for appearance. Moreover, when she gets fit, they get insecure that now everyone would see her, and this attitude should not prevail. I have seen these days' women are used as an object, which is completely unfair. I hate those guys who treat women as an object," as stated a respondent aged twenty-two.

Women are objectified in every possible way, from body, beauty, and brains, to having skills of running a family and looking after a list of household chores. She is the house caretaker; she is thought to be perfect in her diverse roles from being a daughter, wife, mother, and the rest affinal status.

Nevertheless, objectification is successfully practiced in male-dominated societies according to my participants' opinions, and I have illuminated this assessment in the next segment.

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[128] Lahore is the capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab. Lahore is the country's second-most populous city.

6.5.2.2 Male Dominance and Legacy

In a society, patriarchy is manifested by men holding a position of superiority, practicing dominance, and power over women. The perceptions are accurate for genders in Pakistani society considering my study's results.

> *"In this society, girls are only objectified because male dominance is prevailing. Male dominant culture set standards and demands on its women so that they could be what they want them to become,"* expressed by the twenty-eight-years old interviewee.

Focus group discussions revealed that demands and expectations placed on females did not end within the four-wall boundary of home. It further encompassed her bodily appearances, sexuality, gender roles, ideal forms of beauty, and above all, female presence that is meant to attract anyone. The beauty forms further qualify females to have a good place in the work environment, or else they will not be considered.

"Trend says if you are not smart, then you will not have an opportunity especially in jobs," stated a participant. Fulfillment of ideal body and attractive standards paved a bright path for females. *"If a girl is not eligible for a job, she will still be selected based on her attractive looks. It is a male dominant society after all; body and beauty standards are set for females, especially."* These body standards also are observed in matrimony and are a common factor identified in both gender's perceptions.

Kniffin and Wilson (2004) present the example of a man evaluating a woman as a potential partner for marriage. The woman possesses certain physical traits that contribute to her perceived attractiveness, for example, "Her youth, health, symmetry, waist-to-hip ratio, and so on" (Kniffin & Wilson, 2004, pg. 89). Likewise, my interviewee held that,

> *"Boys are objectifying girls in our culture. In the matter of marriage, in rural areas, they will choose the girl who will have a strong and sturdy body to work and walk by their side and perform chores easily. However, in urban culture, people look for outer appearance and objectify women according to body and beauty standards. In the case of males, mainly after*

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marriage, guys pose jokes on the protruding belly of their male married friends and so objectify and make fun of their body in this way (age 26)."

Feminist theory predicts that countries with strong patriarchal traditions, rigid gender roles, and very rapid social change are more likely to promote the ideal body that leads to higher body image concerns (Ricciardelli, 2012).

The strong patriarchal tradition in Pakistan is quite clear, and keeping this reality in mind, respondents have stated that unlike females who are highly targeted for objectification, males are nowhere found to be standing in this queue. However, if male objectification is seen, then the ratio is still little to none. Regarding body objectification, some of the respondents talked about protruding belly in men, and it was considered undesirable by both genders. The rest asserted that sexual objectification of men is a concern of western society where the male body is portrayed in its ideal muscular or lean muscle mass form from billboards to magazine cover.

"In the west, boys are more objectified, but here in our society boys have still not come out of girl's aura (age 25)." Despite everything, males in this society are trapped and impressed by a woman's mere presence. Whatsoever be happening around them, they are stuck in the sensation of women[129]. Similarly, another interviewee stated, *"Men are hardly in this boat. Maybe in the west, there are some rare examples, but in a male-dominated society like Pakistan, they are rarely objectified or sexualized (age 28)."*

Lastly, in the next section, I have put forward the belief and perception of respondents that both genders are objectified equally.

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[129] Informal conversation.

6.5.2.3 Objectification of Both Sexes

In all the above responses where males gave testimony of females to be objectified in every occupation, few respondents indicated that both men and women are equally objectified in advertisements[130] and causal outings. Gym-goer (age 30) was of the view,

> *"Both genders are objectified side by side and are incomplete without each other. They are presented together, as you see in advertisements that if a girl has a dull complexion, a boy will not respond to that girl. However, when that girl has the desired complexion, she may reject the same guy too."*

This objectification in real life has made both genders act in specific ways. The beauty of both genders now matters such that the acceptance and rejection of a person are all based on their skin color rather than their character. It confirms that the societal standards and cultural expectations held towards idyllic body image exist in a demoralizing state.

Simultaneously genders also show concern for outward bodily manifestation when going out in public. A gym-goer (age 22) expressed,

> *"Males and females, both are objectified. Firstly, it is boys, if they have to go somewhere, they will check whether their body is looking good in clothes corresponding to occasion or situation. Those boys who have to go to the beach, especially in Dubai they will wax their hair that is of chest mostly to show off their toned body and cuts. For those girls who are into body shaping, when they wear tight revealing clothes, they get worried. They are concerned about fat exposure, as they wish to avoid societal disapproval and body shame so that they are not openly scrutinized. Conversely, they want their toned body muscles to be visible in that tight-fitting, expecting societal acceptance based on bodily standards and compliments."*

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[130] This belief was also held by female participants.

Body shaming messages has made men and women preoccupied with their appearance and presentation. A person feels that he or she does not fit in society if the body is not according to the societal or media standards of beauty. You and your body are judged on that parameter, and the response and behavior of the perceiver are shaped by their judgment about you.

6.6 Summary

The chapter has provided answers to the questions of how diverse cultural factors and stressors play their role in defining and influencing the body image of both genders. The youth of Pakistani society has identified different motivational factors for achieving an ideal body and the standards that are associated with it in media, society, and culture. Other than these influencing mediums, the thinking patterns, stereotypes, and patriarchal mindset have also played a significant role when it concerns looking after and judging one's body.

Findings have highlighted the ways of distinguishing between real and ideal body. It has reflected how the youth can comprehend superficial from real in the war of idealized body image demands and portrayal. Results have identified patterns of conformity towards media and societal body standards. Moreover, it has represented the self-sufficient power of looking after one's body image for the sake of health and fitness to maintain an ideal image of the body. To achieve this kind of body, society has offered institutions and individuals have a way of investing. The investment has highlighted the forms in which beauty is sought from enhancing methods to transformation and permanence kind.

My research chapter validates the objectives of this study, i.e., social comparison practices and gender differences in objectification. Moreover, the stereotype of *what is beautiful is good* was highlighted and favorable outcomes associated with success, marriage proposals, and peer likeness reveals that it does exist in Pakistani society.

In the next chapter, I have concluded my dissertation and have highlighted what we have come to know and can comprehend from my research.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to highlight the underlying conceptualization and explanations regarding beauty and body image by unmarried men and women in Pakistan's society[131]. The lived experiences of participants from childhood to adulthood enabled the study to bring a bigger picture of how a beautiful body is visualized and symbolized. This visualization did not halt on one's body, but it extended to those around them. For this purpose, I needed to focus on two things in my study. Firstly, the individual narratives accentuating cognitive, behavioral, and operational relations with body and beauty. Secondly, the comprehension of collectivistic nature and involvement of the society in constructing and expecting a beautified body in gender was focused. The queries were included in interviews and focus group discussions and elaborated through participant answers.

My study contributes a profound understating of beauty and body in the light of interviewee responses based on individual knowledge and social construction of the concepts under study. However, to list a few previous works in Pakistan, the focus has been on anxiety on body image among female students of Pakistan (Mahmood, Shaukat, & Usman, 2018), the zero-size body physique, and fashion models' health (Salman et al., 2014), beauty parlor business in Pakistan: problems & prospects (Ahmad & Siddiqui, 2013) and impact of today's media on university student's body image in Pakistan (Khan et al., 2011).

Despite these valuable quantitative research works; the goal of my ethnographic qualitative work is based on gender's subjective reflection and narratives. The research did not intend to seek any cause and effect relationship to study the phenomena. It also did not focus on socioeconomic status and economic classes (upper, middle, and lower). However, it aimed to explore the connective factors affecting body and beauty based on research questions and participant's responses.

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[131] The study was done in the city of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

In the preceding discussion, I will highlight the basic assertions that emerged out of my study findings, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and participant observation.

7.1 Sociocultural Dynamics and Individual Descriptions

The greater than ever number of parlors and gyms in the areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad is a strong indication that interest and awareness of body and beautification are proliferating. Society, parents, peers, and social media have ways of delivering ideal beauty and body messages. The self has its lens to judge a body against the beauty kaleidoscope strongly clutched by society. Institutions such as religion, education, occupational, parlors, and gyms have their say in the acceptance, preference, and control of pursuing beauty. Hence, the body can be seen as a stage on which these all factors leave their imprints. In considering this information, culturally valid gender narratives on the matter of human appearance are yielded.

In this part of the discussion, I want to turn to two contrastive conceptions that I encountered in the participant's accounts. The contrast sheds light on how we might think of the body not only as of the vessel in which beauty is preserved and sought but also importantly, as the capacity to reflect inner beauty in one's existence. The study findings revealed that every so often, an abstract quality could make a person appear beautiful. It is understood that if a person has an inner beauty of morals[132], commitment, and truthfulness, then outward physical features are overlooked. The justification lies in this argument that the positive character and personality of a person has a substantial value than that of a physical feature or measurement.

When it is about women, inner beauty is seen in terms of one's moral character, i.e., *acha kirdaar aur ikhlaaq* that means good character and morals. By my study definition, a woman who looks after her character implies, she is not flirty, promiscuous, neither too bold nor loud, or too aggressive. Good character is also based on good behavior which is considered accommodating, submissive, and

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[132] Per participant views, it is about good to others, having a positive attitude, unbiased, and well mannered.

compromising. Elderly women and people have a belief that with these qualities, women can successfully run any state of affairs. A woman with a sharp tongue can certainly not survive a situation or a relationship that requires *Thanda pita*, which figuratively means cold bladder, signifying a person who does not lose his or her grip and remains composed in challenging circumstances. These inner beauty qualities act as a credible instrumental aspect of one's personality within a society.

Besides inner beauty, society also places a higher price on the bodily attractiveness of women, unlike that of men. It propagates societal objectification by never-ending cultural scrutiny. This encourages a woman to evaluate their social capital in terms of how a body should be. The value is supposed to increase their chances of mate selection particularly. While seeking beauty in a female spouse, messages are delivered in the form of metaphor, i.e., چاند سی دلہن which means *a bride as beautiful as the moon*. This is the most striking form of comparison, which is generally made by Pakistani society for the measurement of a woman's beauty.

On a deeper level, this representation has a subliminal meaning attached to it. A moon is considered complete and beautiful when it is in full form on the fourteenth day, and it reflects the light of the sun in a luminous way. Likewise, a girl with all attractive outward physical features is only considered beautiful. This beauty is not only sought in spouse selection but in other fields of life with a different motive.

In employment and media, the beauty of women is pursued as a means to generate revenues. The acquisition of physical capital is connected to Bourdieu's (1990) terms, to the conversion of (bodily) status into other forms of capital, such as "economic" (e.g., the acquisition of money), "cultural" (e.g., the acquisition of education), and "social" (e.g., the development of social networks or contacts). I will discuss the economic aspect in the next paragraph and the cultural and social forms of capital in section "7.2 Beauty Stereotyping and A Means to An End."

My study has discovered that with the women's body, *economic power* is linked. The beauty of women is utilized to attract the opposite sex from advertisements to movies. Consumers are affected by the mere presence of their favorite celebrities in

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advertisements targeted for all social classes. This, in turn, makes them buy products, watch movies, and show the brand following that as a result produces money. Their bodies create a fantasizing vision in their viewers to achieve the body these celebrities have. The message is delivered that if this type of body will be attained, the favorable outcomes will be plausible.

The social image of celebrities is also profoundly judged on their beautified body because it is used as a tool to influence its viewers. However, in the war of fat and fit, at times, the beauty of the face wins the game. When media and society declare that fat people are not beautiful, and only a sexy body can be commercialized, there are exceptional examples of Pakistani television actors. Atiqa Odho[133] and Fazila Kaiser[134] nowhere stand in the skinny ideal line of the body. These actors are in their 50's and are lasting in their successful acting roles. Moreover, both are plump or heavy but not obese. They are well known for their beauty, and it is reflected by their appealing and attractive facial features. Historical presentations of the body involve the idealization of plumpness (Swami, Gray & Furnham, 2007), the proclamation, which still holds the truth in Pakistani society.

The plumpness is preferred in a way that the women of our mother's generation desire today's youth to be *smart*, which is neither skeletal nor boney. Some healthy fat is meant to be there on the body, and by healthy means, the body is not obese. This fat level is linked with one's reproductive quality and being admired as a partner for a marriage proposal. Society or media may have perpetuated the message of thin ideals and zero sizes, but in the light of my study findings, these messages are equally considered as unrealistic or too idealistic. Girls want to get bodily smart and thin at the end of the day and not zero-size.

The general connotation linked with zero-size is *kehat zadgaan*, meaning famine-stricken, and *dhaancha*, which means being a skeleton. Both implications are not

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[133] Atiqa Odho is a beauty queen, Pakistani television and film actor, television host, and the namesake of her own founded cosmetics brand.
[134] Fazila Kaiser, is a Pakistani television actress, producer, writer, chef who appeared in television dramas. Since then, she has been a major television personality for over four decades.

considered desirable. The utility of the body loses its meaning if there is no balance between the bone, flesh, and fat.

7.1.1 Progression from Inner to Outer Beauty

Balance is observed in the conceptualization of beauty and body image; the scale tilts towards the traits of the outer and inner beauty of a person. The journey of beauty and body could be described as a *progression*. In the beginning, the beauty looks are desired and if a person has it, they can get society's attention naturally. The next step involves forming social contact or initiating a relationship. Once you have that beautiful person, it becomes a source of confidence and pride, because after all, you have the most attractive human standing beside you[135]. Then comes either the engagement period and for those who enter in marriage in no time they get to know the person's nature. Respondents' recurrently stated that at the end of the day, inner beauty matters because you have to spend the rest of your life with this person.

If a person is chosen for outer beauty, the same person can be ditched on their unpleasant inner qualities. For example, some people do not compromise on their dignity, it is out of the question; if someone threatens it, they are not appreciated. Moreover, cooperation is expected more from women than a man in a relationship. A man is hardly likely to compromise because he is a part of the dominant male society. He has the advantage of doing what his heart desires since he knows that women are to be seen as submissive and passive beings, manacled by structures of male hegemony. The beauty of women is still held more accountable in such a social construction and system, regardless of such inner characteristics possessed by a man. Anyway, are men evaluated on their outer beauty too in this system?

Previous research shows that although men are assumed to place sole emphasis on physical appearance, it is also valued by women (Caryl et al., 2009). Before this research, I thought that women in Pakistani society did not care much or extremely about the physical attractiveness of men. Culture has an active role in inculcating the message that beauty and women go parallel. However, results came out the opposite;

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[135] Based on participants' responses.

a man's complexion, handsomeness, and body forms are preferred, especially when choosing a mate for life. A male body is also perceived in the form of broadness, tallness, and muscularity. It is expected to give an overall masculine appearance. For some women, the status of a man was overlooked if he was bald or dark-complexioned.

According to female perception, this selection parameter was mostly observed in love marriages where you have the choice to take the best man in physical terms. In arrange marriages by family, you must accept what is chosen for you, and this did not guarantee physical attractiveness in men. In this case, it is seen whether he is earning good and belongs to a decent family.

In the next section, I have discussed how the body and beauty of men and women are stereotyped. It will reflect on the power of attractiveness and the beauty acting as a means to achieve a particular end.

7.2 Beauty Stereotyping and 'A Means to an End'

When beauty is stereotyped, then its perception and preference go hand in hand. Differential treatment based on physical attractiveness stereotyping is seen in employment and educational settings[136]. Generally, a positive impression of an attractive candidate is formed out of stereotyping that results in the recommendation and selection of hiring as compared to the unattractive one. This approach is also called *what is beautiful is good* phenomenon, which was pioneered by Dion and colleagues (1972). The perspective holds the view that a favorable personality characteristic is associated with beautiful and attractive individuals. Based on these qualities, people are naturally inclined to treat women more favorably, and hence, the desired outcomes are effortlessly attained.

In *employment domains* in which physical attractiveness is a prerequisite, women are hired with a bodily appeal. The need is to engage consumer attentiveness so that they

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[136] Linking my study findings to Bourdieu's (1990) conversion of bodily status into capital form, as mentioned in the previous section

could be capitulated with their aura, and surrender them to the deal or purchase. Profit is produced, and sales are positively affected. The woman's body is used as *social capital* and a beautified centerpiece, which is placed on its seat with the motive to be admired, craved and pursued. People associate joy with beauty and naturally incline towards a woman with a beautiful existence. It gives them feelings of ecstasy and gratification.

In *educational institutions*, at the initial stage, students are selected for their attractive appearance. They are considered competent and intelligent based on their appealing physical traits, and this reflects *cultural capital*. Overweight individuals are negated mainly due to weight-based prejudice, and this leads an attractive individual to achieve favorable educational outcomes. Connotations like laziness and ugliness of appearances are linked with a fat person regardless of gender. On the opposite end of a continuum, activeness and being energetic is associated with a smart bodied person. Cultural appreciation, companionship, and one's social image are also affected by the size of the person.

Nevertheless, why has Pakistani society formed such a positive impression for attractive women? Based on my recurrent study findings, these qualities are reflected in movies, television, poetry, and social media platforms that put a greater emphasis on attractiveness for females than for males. In the case of men, their financial status and stability matter for considering them eligible. This picture is painted with the message that with economic strength basic needs can be fulfilled. The beauty of a man is with his functionality and not his appearance except in rare cases.

Society socializes individuals to believe that attractiveness is more important for females. Believing it becomes incorporated into people's attractiveness stereotype and schemata since childhood. This attitude subsequently affects the processing of information about men and women later in life. Hence, because of beauty stereotyping, a beautiful woman is judged with a positive mindset, hospitable stance, and bestowed favoritism based on her appeal.

The favoritism is not given free of cost; it is believed that this indulgence has its reasons. The motives involve having a beautiful person in one's company and initiating a relationship. In contrast, the same approach consequentially entails an unfavorable attitude toward individuals who do not fit the societal standards of beauty. This approach leads to social comparison, objectification, and internalization of beauty ideal for some men and women. All of this ends up in body and beauty investment to gain favorable impressions and acknowledgment in private and public life while socializing.

It was also found that if one has to socialize and create a good impact, then they should look good head to toe. The necessity of appearing good was dependent on the attitude or personality of a person. It was believed to play a significant role in one's intensive grooming and perceiving other's beauty on its basis. It was candidly stated that *"I should look fresh because I am also attracted to the fresh people. I do not like dull skin, dull face, and dull attitude in people."* This finding can be validated by the psychological concept of [selective perception]. The perceptual system of an individual processes only that which it believes to be most relevant. Selective perception occurs when individual limits the processing of external stimuli by selectively interpreting what he or she sees based on beliefs, experience, or attitudes (Sherif & Cantril, 1945).

Besides being selective, women consciously and unconsciously use their beauty measures so that the possible positive outcomes can be achieved. Thorpe (2009) recognizes that "there are women who take advantage of their charm and that beauty has indeed a market value" (p.20). These values involve being the best candidate for marriage by shredding one's fat and weight to attain an ideal figure required in a mate. In the job domain, the beauty ladder is used to step up in the succeeding employment status. Economists have long recognized what has been dubbed the *beauty premium,* the idea that pretty people, whatever their aspirations, tend to do better in, well, almost everything (Bennet, 2010).

Considering this beauty premium in men, based on my research findings the male body was seen with the following perspective. It was asserted by men that the body

was appropriately built to show off and satisfy oneself rather than getting favors out of it. Some men, regardless of this claim, revealed that well build body was used by males as a means to portray them as younger. It was believed by both genders that some men pre and post marriage keep themselves fit so that they do not lose their appeal and keep attracting women. They do not wish to appear older, and they like to give an impression of being youthful rather appear like a father of kids. The approach is not considered appropriate in Pakistani society, because, after marriage, loyalty from a husband is expected and appreciated. Having the intention to appear unmarried signifies that he is not sincere towards his relationship[137]. Such men are considered flirtiest for this attitude towards the body.

The body and beauty are not only perceived by different attitudes and approaches based on stereotypes, shortcuts, prospects, and gender roles. They are further segregated in terms of their sexual appeal pleasing to the eyes versus the covering of the body to protect it from objectification. The real practices, as well as double standards, take the lead from the stereotyping lane.

7.2.1 Sexuality, Veiling, and Sexual Orientation

Critic John Berger's well-known quote has been true throughout the history of Western culture. My research on the eastern side of the world in the main city of Islamabad and Rawalpindi validates this truth. Berger (1972), in his book "Ways of Seeing," stated, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women but the relation of women to themselves" (p. 48). A man stares because he is a man, a common alibi for this conduct. A woman senses a feeling of discomfort signaled by the body, and so the bosom and bottom are covered right away with the *dupatta[138], scarf, or chaddar[139]*. These body parts are linked with sexuality per my study and are also not to be

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[137] Page 180 (age 26).

[138] A length of material worn arranged in two folds over the chest and thrown back around the shoulders, typically with a salwar kameez, by women from South Asia.

[139] A large piece of cloth that is wrapped around the head and upper body leaving only the face exposed, worn especially by Muslim women.

revealed per religious and cultural teaching. This eventually introduces the concept of veiling and covering.

The covering of women's bodies triggers a mixture of feelings and connotations. The veil is a sort of identity formation and a sense of security. However, my study has revealed that how the veil *was* generally perceived versus how it *is* differently identified by my participants, based on a new pursuit associated with the apparel. A veiled woman was considered more favorable as a mate as compared to the girlfriend in jeans[140]. The concept of women in jeans is still comprehended in terms of modernization, an unorthodox way of adornment.

Conversely, responses also showed that in social functions, a well-dressed, smart bodied spouse was admired. It was believed that this kind of partner induces feelings of confidence in their men[141] and raises feelings of admiration in others[142]. She is perceived to have a body on which dressing should fit properly and appear appealing. For this reason, it is necessary and expected from her body to have a proper figure and curves[143]. Curvy is sexy, and it is the cause of seductiveness in men. However, these curves are also not supposed to be visibly perceived in some locations and are deem to be covered.

The seduction and well-groomed factor are dependent on situational cues, and so does a covered body. It is an intriguing perception that emerged from my findings and showed a correlation between public space and the dressed body. If it is a developed or posh area of Islamabad, a woman feels confident and somewhat secure. If it is an old-fashioned area of Rawalpindi, then the image is that the men in that place will be staring at you without any pause; rather, it is a slow play-act[144]. In some cases, both places may trigger discomfort, but the prevalence is much in conservative areas[145].

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[140] Page 70 (age 26).
[141] Page 135 (gym goer, age 30).
[142] Page 137 (age 29) and page 141 (age 29).
[143] Page 136 (age 30), page 144 (last paragraph) and 171 (gym goer, age 32).
[144] Page 234 (age 32).
[145] Page 90 (age 27).

Regarding situational context and body, recently in this society a woman wearing a veil or burqa[146] while standing in a particular area was not seen as pious rather considered a promiscuous figures[147]. These girls were available in some specific locations, especially nearby a public road or sector in the evening time. They were using this covering to hide their identity. Research also shows that in Pakistan, sex-trade does exist as one of the open secrets, but it is still illegal. Culture and traditions do not allow the exposure of such a profession (Qayyum, 2013). The veil is used to hide this horrendous activity and a person's identity to avert societal condemnation, but the male gaze will still not stop there.

In the context of modest covering, the prevalence of the male gaze was also identified. Even though some women may be in the veil, the males will not stop themselves from staring at them. If a woman is considered modest in a veil, she is still a victim of male gazing, and that veil will not stop anybody from looking at her. He must gaze because he is a man it is normal for them, and because she is a female so she is seen as a sexual object. What is hidden underneath the veil causes a level of curiosity, and that is reflected in the action and intensity of the male gaze.

Being a researcher, my curiosity is that have men covered their bodies right away if they catch women staring at their private parts? The thought itself seems surprising and hilarious in this society. The image appears in contradiction of the male hegemony and manly representation in Pakistan. Unlike women's body parts, they are not judged based on the numbers regarding the size of the bicep or the circumference of the chest. The reason can be validated by previous research that women are more likely to be picked apart by the brain and seen as parts rather than a whole. Men, on the other hand, are processed as a whole rather than the sum of their parts (Gervais et al., 2012). The size may not matter or be discussed, but the description in terms of chest broadness and tall height does reflect manliness and dominance and is expected from men in this society.

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[146] This statement is from an informal conversation. A burqa is an enveloping outer garment that worn by women in some Islamic traditions to cover them in public, which covers the body and the face.
[147] Page 238-239 (gym-goer, age 27).

The concept of *masculinity* or *sexiness* does exist in the perception of men towards themselves and other men, and women's definition of being sexy for oneself and another woman. Nonetheless, in the matter of others, this perception was held for the body of models, famous actors or actresses, bodybuilders, or those acquaintances who were merely seen as an inspiration for keeping oneself fit.

Even though this kind of attraction may exist in our society, but it was not vocalized or shown acceptance in interviews or focus group discussions. One of the significant reasons is the religion of Islam that prohibits same-sex attraction in the Holy Book. However, Majeed (2015) wrote in "The Express Tribune" an online newspaper website that in the 2010 US National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, seven percent of women and eight percent of men identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

In Pakistan, one can assume that the same or a lesser percentage of the Pakistani population belongs to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. Pakistan is a conservative and patriarchal society where members of the LGBTQ community must live secret and self-confined lives to avoid discrimination, stigma, and abuse. Under the weight of homophobia, heteronormativity, and genderism, they are forced to adopt a lifestyle according to society's assigned gender roles and expectations.

In the next section, I have explored the belief that the ideal body image and concept of beautiful women and manhood are, at times, dependent on social institutions that provide us beauty services, e.g., parlors and gym.

7.3 Investment and Institutions

Investments: One of the connective beauty factors that lead to body image involvement indicated investment in beauty and body. This requires *time, money, and energy* if we are trying to fix the perceived societal created beauty flaws. Do we want our body in a certain way because we think it is right or because we were culturally

conditioned to believe, it is right? *Time* is spent in saloons and gyms in the quest for a beautiful body. People are exhibiting their capital boundaries in the attainment of beauty services, procedures, and body toning facilities. Those who do not want to go to the gym can avail themselves of online training packages. They are offered by personal trainers or instructors from gym institutions and can be directly hired from their official social media platforms. It is also a psychological investment, as the clients feel satisfied and happy if the services are perfectly done and provided to make them feel and appear flawless.

This perfection is a sociocultural construction, which is created with a memo that a clean and clear image is believed to send off its spell bounding effects. The distances traveled reflect the expenses it takes to reach the parlors and gyms for those who live at a distance. The clients exhibit loyalty because they are offered valuable services and body training, so *money* is not a problem because it is about 'feeling good' and 'looking fit.' Altogether, different socio and psychological elements are triggered when a person takes a step towards beautification.

Energy is not only spent in traveling form, but there is also visual energy by which genders surround themselves, and it costs humans to look after their bodies intensely. Social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and beauty blogs, are viewed frequently by participants. They are playing their momentous role in portraying the best form of an attractive body. The body is commercialized in its best possible form so that it could leave an impelling imprint on its viewer's cognitive map. This body is thought to achieve by spending tremendous energy in gyms because the institution says it will make you fit. The same fitness is easier to get by using the money on shortcuts in the form of steroids and supplements.

Moreover, money and time speak stridently in their contextual form in Pakistani society. Be it weddings, birthday parties, funerals, Eid Festival, or Independence Day; people go idealistic when it comes to shopping and appearance. Clothing brands have established themselves by creating a strong and massive impact on society. In

Pakistan, for the past few years, Muharram[148] has become more of a festival instead of a month of mourning (Pro Pakistani, 2017). The most sold cloth during this month is black colored as it denotes the intent of grieving. But, is it more like displaying yourself on a ramp in a fashion show with a black theme, or is it really about your sorrow regardless of conscious branded adornment?

The question is what does this shift presents. About three to four years ago, designers started kicking off collections in black, white, and monotones in pret or unstitched clothing before the month of Muharram. This shows that designers are reeling in consumer's demand for such sort of apparel. It is like a reciprocal situation, and the market is bringing what the clients are demanding. It can be said that clients are ready to take what the market is offering because the month is about mourning, which the society has sported in black appearance from day one. The people were already wearing black clothes, then why not branded black edition of outfits. An individual in society has two approaches to it, i.e., the brands face backlash, or the majority follows. Eventually, being presentable with the black identity out of one's attire is observed.

Lastly, the presentation is not only dependent on ways of investment but also on how far an individual is willing to appear attractive and bodily fit in society. To appear beautiful and toned, beauty parlor and gyms step in to execute their part.

Institutions: The sociocultural institution of a beauty parlor is playing its role in telling you how to look and how not to because society has set the beauty standards. Parlors are built to provide you beauty services so that an individual could feel better and beautiful about himself or herself. It is like perfecting your imperfections, a claim once uttered in an advertisement. However, who defines these imperfections? It was inferred that society, family, and media have their role in defining what is considered normal and standardized.

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[148] In this Islamic month, Muslims (especially Shia sect) all over the world, mourn over the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, one of the beloved grandsons of our Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). He was martyred brutally at the battle of Karbala.

The socially declared imperfect skin tone such as tan or dark complexion then needs creams, sunscreens, and facial services that are invented to overcome the dark hue. The dark color is not held desirable because inappropriate and sometimes negative connotations are linked with it. People are even rejected on dark complexion when it is spouse selection or forming a relationship. A fair complexion is a beauty tool, and the *lived individual body* and the *social body* has already held this idea as truth. The person knows that he or she is considered beautiful with that complexion. The society also perceives her complexion as attractive, and the individual knows about this perception too.

In men's case, it was identified that now a day, face care, nails being buffed, and pedicure services are available in male saloons. One common treatment, which men avail as a groom is the facial or cleansing. They also want to look good besides their beautifully groomed bride. Although the deeply conservative Pakistan has strict notions of masculinity where men are often expected to be rigid therefore the flamboyant styling is to be avoided ("Are male beauty salons the next big thing in Pakistan?," 2018). This thinking may be changing with time, but there are still those men who do not avail facial treatment before marriage, because, for some men, this is still a feminine activity and not the masculine one.

The other types of feminine activities from the female perspective were understood with the help of participant observation and interviews with parlor employees. It was revealed that body waxing was sought, and many young girls and women in their early adolescence to late adulthood had hair removal services. The services involved waxing of face along with arms and legs, but the parlor excluded waxing of private parts, especially the vagina per its rules. A Muslim female is forbidden to see other women's private parts, and per parlor policy, it is unacceptable service. Islam guards us to cover our private parts as Quran 7:26 states, "O Children of Adam, We have brought down to you garments to cover your private parts…"

The removal of private parts hair is based on the concept of purity in Islam. The body has a right on you, and it should be looked after in terms of cleanliness. A person offers five times prayers daily, so their body is supposed to be cleaned inward and

outward. You are standing in front of your Creator, and these are bodily obligations that should be fulfilled.

Some parlors do offer this service, so it depends on the parlor that whether they are allowing the waxing of private parts keeping religion out of it. One of the employees said that they (parlor employees) had asked a male *mufti,* which means a legal advisor about this matter. It was told that it could be done because it is about the purity of the body, and the intention of seeing that part is not based on lust or pleasure. It is similar to that of the doctors and gynecologist profession. It is important to note that in the removal of hair from a female private part, a male authority is sought and questioned. Female scholars do exist but why the male *mufti* was approached, remains an interesting question. Are they more knowledgeable and have more credence in their declaration than females? Society knows that if there is any religious matter, the first person to turn to should be a *'molvi'* religious scholar or *mufti*, and that is a male.

In the continuation of investment and institutions regarding beauty and body, I will present the idea of body and status. If a person inherits the status of a beautiful body, then he or she is spared from all the scrutiny. However, to achieve a beautified body, society has offered different ways in which successful measures can be taken to stand beautiful per societal standards. Hence, what is the comprehension of ascribed and achieved body in Pakistani society?

7.3.1 Ascribed and Achieved Body

Sex is ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology. Gender is an achieved status: that is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means (West & Zimmerman, 1987). According to my research understanding[149], parameters concerning beauty and body at individual and societal levels emerged, which can be contemplated to have both ascribed and achieved status. Although this outlook[150] did

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[149] Based on the study, my findings, and participant perception depicted in interviews and focus group discussion.
[150] Achieved and ascribed status of beauty and body.

not surface as a theme in the findings chapter, some of the participant's responses[151] raised this noteworthy argument, which I believe needs an analytical lens for its understanding.

In humans, the most apparent carrier of status markers is the body, hence it is fundamental for status attributions. The sociocultural context shapes the body, so ascribed markers such as skin complexion and eyes color or acquired ones such as clothing styles implicitly communicate who the person is (i.e., they are expressive-categorical social cues). These markers of beauty are based on 1) 'individual and societal' basis, or 2) they are accepted in its 'combined' form and 3) eventually some features work as a 'compensation' for the physical structures that are not in the range of standard beauty as defined by my study.

Individual and Social Basis. From my research point of view, individuals identified markers of beauty that emphasize *skin complexion and height* and which somewhat has a sociocultural ground to it. White skin color in males is desired as it is an expected feature of a handsome man, but overly white reflects gayism or feminism per individual definition. For those men who have a slightly dark brown complexion, the beauty industry has introduced "fair and handsome" cream to overcome this color, as it does not fit the beauty standard for fair skin[152]. In females, the white complexion is preferred because it mirrors beauty and attractiveness. This connotation has its societal roots, but individuals widely adopt it. However, overly white is not preferred, for it is linked with a white chicken[153], which is believed to have no appeal.

The mutual point to which men and women agreed was that in men, physical characteristics such as height and economic status are more sought rather than skin complexion. The economic status is perceived in two ways, by belonging to a well of family, pointing at the ascribed nature of one's inheritance that is prioritized over one's bodily traits, or emphasizing how much a person earns, targeting the achieved status.

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[151] Page 66 (first two paragraphs), page 100 (age 24), page 123 (gym goer, age 32), page 147 (gym goer, age 23), page 163 (age 22) and page 167 (age 33).
[152] Last paragraph on page 198, ending on page 199 first paragraph.
[153] Page 112 (age 31).

The other marker is the tall height in men as maintained by both genders. I will foremost highlight an inconsistency towards one of the variables linked with tall height in previous research. The study asserted that tallness is associated with strength and power; people usually attribute taller height to people having higher social positions (Pawlowski, 2012). However, as established by my study, socioeconomic status, or social positions were not linked with tall height. The rest of the two determinants showed similarity to my results as both genders associated the effects of physical dominance, sense of security, and strength with a tall heighted male. The virile image of the male gender is psychologically perceived as compelling out of their bigger physical build. The man's body is commonly discerned in terms of a built physique, tall stature, broadness, and roughness that mostly reflect manhood eminence. Height cannot be achieved to reflect manhood since it is an inborn feature, but the broadness of the chest can be achieved by working out[154].

Regarding the female height, mutually genders agreed that tall height in women is not preferred, especially if the height of a man is shorter as compared to hers. Male hegemonic image is bruised if a woman is taller than male, so commonly both genders expect an inch shorter height in women to maintain the height balance established by society.

Acceptance for Combined Form. The chest broadness in men is held attractive when it is combined with a balanced core, i.e., broad shoulder and chest over a trim waist, which reflects V shape body known as mesomorph build. A balanced body is also dependent on a male height. On short stature, too broad shoulders or heavy legs do not suit unless you are six feet and with that ideal weight is expected. According to women, in men, the tall height ranging from 5'8" to 6 feet is considered beautiful if it is combined with a fair complexion in men[155]. In women, based on both gender views, smartness of the body is not merely a thin form, but the body parts should be based on a combination of the following features, big breasts over the tiny waist, and big butts,

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[154] Page 147 (age 23).
[155] Page 84 (first paragraph).

which is also known as the hourglass or 36-24-26 figure[156]. The figure is preferred since it reflects the sexuality and appeal of its highest form.

Source of Compensation. The appealing features of the human body and beauty also play their role as compensation to the features that are considered undesirable by individuals or society. Male participants shared that that women think if a man has a big nose, then this unattractive feature can be compensated if he has beautiful eyes. It was generally believed that if a man has a good sense of adornment and manifestation, then this quality would act as compensation for his lacking in any bodily feature. For women, a man has this opinion that her respectable family ground can negotiate a girl's dark complexion and her sense of fashion and way of carrying herself can be ignored. Women were of the view that a female's beautiful eyes could compensate for dark complexion in girls.

Similarly, compensation also encompassed the factor of belonging to a good family that overlooks one's physical impression if it is not consistent with societal beauty standards. A person is acceptable and eligible because, as per society, he or she belongs to *shareef khandaan*, i.e., the honorable family that is an ascribed status. It is indicated, "Some characteristics of the sociocultural identity are fixed through birth, while other features of the identity can be changed" (Eriksen, 2007, p.20). This kind of family is thought to have a respectable image because of an excellent reputation, pleasant demeanor, positive social relationships, and sometimes an influential dogmatic position. Families in which women practice veiling is also considered an honorable family unit since piousness and chastity are the qualified values linked with this attire.

Other than attire, there are modes and means through which individuals can achieve what is considered desirable by society. Beauty and body do not end within the boundaries of home. The society offers, what these individuals are showing their hunger for in actuality. The emerging points are discussed in the following section.

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[156] Based on both gender responses, page 137 (female, age 20 and 29) and page 143 (male, age 29 and 30).

7.3.1. Ways and Means: Achieved Body

People who do not have attractiveness per societal and media definition, they can achieve the desired body and beauty with the help of social institutions named gym and parlors. Moreover, the makeup industry, brand clothing, health, body and fad diet supplements, and steroids can help them to achieve the ideal results. The three forms that emerge from my study involved the 'temporary economical,' 'temporary pricey,' and 'permanent expensive' form of achieving a beautified body so that it can be aligned with the achieved status.

The first *temporary economical* method includes dying hair with economical fashion color. According to LaFlesh (2012), "Hair is personal because it is a part of our body, yet it is also public because it is on display for others to see" (p. 490). Hair color or dyes have been given *personality* characteristics or a particular *thought* by participants. It influences the impressions of others formed about our existence and character[157]. In a simple explanation, white is deemed with gentle connotations but mostly regarded with oldness and maturity, and the blonde-haired person is seen in the objectionable form generally as dumb but somewhat attractive.

Other economic forms of beauty involve bodily[158] and facial services from reasonably priced parlors. It reflects a need to achieve graceful, attractive looks, and keep one updated according to fashion and current trends without spending much. Beauty practices are also performed at home[159] to keep the skin flawless and clean. One of the beauty hacks includes colored lenses in the hue of green and blue that are thought to be attractive. Colored eyes are also considered favorable in spouse selection, and this likeness entails a future vision of having children with colored eyes. Most people do not inherit green eyes, and this color is seen as an innate feature of the Pashtun[160] and

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[157] Mentioned in detail on page 222 on 'hair colors.'
[158] For example, threading, waxing, and pedicure, and manicure.
[159] It involves anti-aging cream, face wash, toners, and exfoliators.
[160] The Pashtuns, historically known as ethnic Afghans or Pathans, are an Iranian-speaking ethnic group native to South-Central Asia, who shares a common history and culture.

Kashmiri[161] ethnic group in Pakistan. These groups are also known for their smooth skin and fair complexion[162].

The second *temporary pricey* form involves the branded clothes that are in trend these days, and some lines of clothing are linked with the status symbol[163]. According to Riggio and Riggio (2012), "People find well-groomed others to be more attractive than the less well-groomed. Grooming and clothing also convey social status. People also make judgments of ability based on dress and even odors on clothing" (p. 427). Daily house wear is not possibly expected to be a brand, but people buy a few expensive clothes to wear on special occasions to reflect status in a social gathering. In this form also come those gyms which are costly, but people may join it for a specific period to achieve bodily goals, especially before marriage. One can also gain beauty services from famous expensive parlors[164] and especially on a wedding day or specific events. The aim is to appear as attractive as possible in a social setting, and it is out of self-grooming interest too.

Self-grooming also involves care for one's hair. Hair straightening is one of the common trends these days, which is availed by women and men who have either loose or curly hair or even those who have a natural straight look. This service can be availed from economical and pricey hair treatments[165]. The image produced out of straight hair is professional, appealing, and refined[166]. LaFlesh (2012) was of this view that "Hair that connotes 'tameness' is used to signal cooperation within dominant societal norms over hair that is considered extreme or 'wild'" (p. 487).

The third *permanent expensive* form of achieving a beautified body involved hair transplants, liposuction, laser treatment for hair removal, lip fillers, and permanent make up[167]. Women can successfully employ cosmetic products, especially permanent

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[161] Kashmiri are ethnic Kashmiris who practice Islam and are native to the Kashmir Valley.
[162] Page 100 (age 24).
[163] Some expensive brands are Bareeze, Chinyere, Khaadi Khas, and Gul Ahmad. Among the prestigious designers wear Maria B, Amir Adnan, and Deepak Perwani are listed.
[164] Such as Sadaf Farhan, Sobia's Salon, Allure Salon, and Spa, Porcelain, Hermain Khan.
[165] For example, hair extensions, rebounding, extensor, and keratin.
[166] Page 67, first paragraph (age 28) and Page 222 (gym goer, age 32).
[167] None of it was availed by my participants, but the response showed it did exist in society, page 223 (age 26) and page 89 (age 25).

makeup, to enhance their appearance (Goldman & Wollina, 2014). Moreover, joining costly gyms and going to pricey parlors, in the end, reflect the degree of a person's status that is mostly upper class and upper-middle class. You can choose to walk in a public park without paying any dime, or you can join an exorbitant gym to do the same walk on upgraded treadmill machines.

If you are not born or fitting according to the sociocultural criteria of beauty and body, and then there is nothing to worry about it. The same society itself has invented new forms of technology and procedures so that such people can avail of these services, to achieve beauty in every possible way. You are a step away from feeling and becoming beautiful. According to my study, society has so much to offer because it is a loop of presentation, enticing, and availing. Even if the enticing is missing, things and services are availed because the media is showing what is in trend and the eyes can see in its surroundings that it is prevailing.

The prevalence of the concept of a beautiful body was studied by interviewing gym-goers and non-gym-goers. Although the study objective was not to focus on the gym and non-gym attributes, it aimed to explore the attitudinal difference between these groups. The next section highlights important findings based on their responses.

7.4 Gym-goers vs. Non-gym-goers

Differences in gym-goes and non-gym-goers responses yielded the knowledge that non-gym goers are pursuing to invest in dieting because of the family pressure and the taunts concerning bodies. Likewise, males showed concern to lose fat so that they could look good as a groom, and it was more dominant in some non-gym goers. Teasing on appearance was delivered by the mothers, sisters, and friends with an anticipation that the receiver of it, i.e., either girl or a boy will care for the body.

In the case of girls, the taunts do take a serious tone and expression that appears more in a coercive approach. The concern for the body is mostly out of health problems, and this awareness prevails in some families that boys should look after their health

and are not supposed to be overweight. Patriarchy and hegemony linked with the male body do prevail, but due to media and bodily awareness, the expectation with a male body is now shown to some extent if not greater. This should be clear that only *expectations* are held; they are not forced.

However, these expectations exist loudly for females in spouse selection. When it is a matter of marriage, in Pakistani society, the demand is that a girl should be slim, and at times, this expectation is openly conveyed to the girl's family[168]. A girl recently in July joined 7 to 8 p.m. aerobics class, as her in-laws had demanded that she should join the gym because they want a smart bride. The marriage is due in December, but she is here because she is expected to show compliance with their demand. Otherwise, it will be considered apathetic if she will not follow and this kind of behavior is not expected from a bride to be. On the contrary, interviews showed that men in Pakistani society are not candidly demanded by in-laws to join a gym for body transformation. However, peer pressure is sometimes involved that pushes the groom to look after their body before marriage, especially in the non-gym goer case.

When the matter is of body and appearance, then the male gym-goers who are physically conscious avail body care treatments, especially waxing of the chest and core area. The need is to show off one's body muscle definition, and this can be visible without hair on the body. The hegemonic reflection is achieved through the visibility of well build body. The idea is that beauty is linked with a hairless body in those who are in body sculpting, but not everybody agrees to hair removal.

For the general society and even in some gym-goers, a hairy chest is a symbol of man's beauty; it reflects manhood and a robust personality. A hairless body, as well as having less facial hair, was identified with being gay and feminine based on participant views. It is like saying it reflects fragile masculinity. In Pakistan, men are more expected to be a *tough guy* rather than a *pretty boy*. Femininity traits only go

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[168] Based on interviews and informal conversation.

with a woman[169], and because of this reason, a woman who lifts a dumbbell is thought of with a masculine image striving for building body.

The gym is filled with women of all ages, not only unmarried but married women as well, starting from the minimum age of twelve years old (joined for Karate or Kungfu). For women, the primary concern remains weight or fat loss, and to some extent, muscle gain. Research shows that women come to the gym, do aerobics, and lift weights to keep their muscles strong, lose weight and fat (Arshad, 2008). It was affirmed by my study findings that only those women who are into body fitness, the married life, or children are not a hurdle in their exercise routine at the gym.

In its continuation, I will highlight in the proceeding section how women in the gym perceived one another's body and pose diverse questions on gym goer bodies.

7.4.1 Collective Connotations and Gym Culture

My direct observation in gym settings proclaims that the gym may seem interesting because of highly equipped exercise machines, air-conditioned halls, and big mirrors on the wall that triggers endless pictures to be uploaded on social media. However, they are more interesting as a place because thinking patterns, diverse connotations, and a person's expectation with not only one's but also other bodies take a more or at times less explicit form.

For example, a woman who lifts weights in a weight room is viewed differently than a woman who lifts weights during an aerobics class. The former is more likely to be seen as transgressing gender norms because she is using a space, which is historically marked as masculine. This signifies that she could be building large, unfeminine muscles in the process. The woman who strength-trains in the aerobics room may be doing similar bodywork, but in a space that was created for women.

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[169] Based on interviews, feminine traits of being polite, compassionate, soft-spoken, and well-mannered are linked with a female. In physical terms, clear, hairless skin is considered feminine with a smart body type devoid of well-formed muscles like those that males have.

Furthermore, in the gym setting few common questions were posed by gym-goers that foremost included, *are you married?* Undoubtedly, gym-goers were mostly married and were trying to lose weight after the first or second baby or after many years. There were also unmarried women too in the gym. However, why the question, are you married is posed frankly? Of course, sometimes the marital question is reasonable when census takers come, or social scientist invites us to the lab, we want to be counted and understood.

In a gym setting, the question has become a part of a dominant gym culture created by its very members. It is an introductory question, which is used to form an impression regarding a person's identity. If you seem younger than your age, claim you are married, and have kids, then an astonishing facial expression will appear. If a married or an unmarried woman who is in the early 20s, having an overweight body is talking with an unmarried status woman aged 35, the feelings are incredibly different. It may arise feelings of jealousy and comparison in some married women as one of them said, *"I wish I could have a body like you[170]."* The status awareness leads to the next question based on the visual cue that reflects your body as already well-shaped.

The second inquiry probed that if you are physically fit with a proportioned body, then *"Why are you working out? You do not need any exercise because you are already fit."* The common answers were that: they are doing it to stay active, healthy, or remain physically on top form. It is a general perception in a gym that exercise is for fat and unhealthy people, as well as those women who are there to shed pre-marriage and post-marriage baby fat or weight. This fat and weight are lost for spouse selection before marriage, and after marriage, some in-laws, or spousal expectations push a woman to shed weight. In some women, the *self* becomes a cause of motivation.

Thirdly, if they are being told that you are into building muscles, questions arise such as, *"Do you wish to body build," "Can you punch someone easily if you will build muscle," and "Did you get some bodybuilder or boyfriend for whom you are intensely doing an exercise."* All these questions reflect a male image and manliness, body, and

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[170] Referring to an unmarried gym-goer who recently joined a gym.

muscle building, punching, and working on one's body out of a male partner prospect are all related to one influence, and this is a 'the man' himself. These questions are instantaneously enquired and it is one of the common attitudinal attributes of gym-goers and non-gym-goers.

Fourthly, from my observation on the strength floor, while often having a conversation in between exercises, I get to know one point. Just about 3 out of 8[171] had the knowledge that muscle exercise also leads to fat reduction and body toning, rather commonly associating muscle exercise with bodybuilding. Cardio exercises such as aerobics and the use of the treadmill and elliptical were highly associated with weight and fat loss. Few women on the strength floor knew how much weight could be used on machines per person's capacity of lifting.

I have seen three cases in which one house job doctor told me that she raptured her muscle ligament while extending it beyond her muscle power. It was guided in the presence of a female trainer. The same trainer was recommended to discontinue exercise, for she lifted the barbell on her already painful back and was admitted to the hospital. After two days she comes back to the gym and said to me, "*I already gained 2 kgs in hospital. The doctor has stopped me from working out because I stretched my back by lifting a heavyweight after a long time.*" The instructors know but it is not a hundred percent knowledge. Most of the gym-goers do not know the perfect angles in which the body can be bend and trained. However, exercise is continued because the body is to be changed. Women are motivated enough to work on their bodies to get smart and thin. One or two male trainers are employed, and they know about the relationship between machine and body.

Body modification and beauty enhancement have a function, and individuals are willing to pay for the cost of being beautified. These functions are further divided into two folds, which enable us to understand the underlying reasons and motives for achieving a beautiful body. In the next section, manifest and latent functions of beauty

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[171] Mostly there are either six or eight girls between 10 30 a.m. to 5 30 p.m. on the strength floor. In one hour of my time on the strength floor, excluding me 5, girls are present. It gets only crowded if the aerobics class has its strength session on Thursdays.

and body image are presented, and the personal judgments based on these functions are highlighted.

7.5 Latent and Manifest Functions

People are taught to *never judge a book by its cover* and know that *beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder*; however, the reality is usually quite the opposite. The manifest function of beauty is supposed to please our senses. The good looks are assumed to play a hypnotizing role in society. The costly ability to maintain and achieve good looks certainly performs the latent functions of adding to corporate profits and disenfranchising those who cannot afford the means. In this society, we expect that the better-looking woman is going to get the job over the fat and ugly one. This woman will reap the social benefits, while the girl who is not bodily wise socially approved, will not. The issues with impression management that we have today in our society are perpetuated through the media and the way it portrays body image.

Just as the family and peers affect a person's body image, society and media are also influenced by the consumer or capitalist society. The image is made, so we have a specific role to play and a certain way to look similar to it. If we do not fit into this image, then we cannot go as far in the social world as the one who may be ideal in the looks department. Big corporations feed on this strategy and make the public even needier of the perfect body image by throwing it in their faces every day on the television and the magazines.

The feeding of idealized body and beauty standards conditions the people thinking patterns and so people judge other existences effortlessly. I will narrate three events that took place in a café and gym setting, with an attempt to explain the details of the conversation that happened between a gym-goer and me. It will give a clear picture that some people are quick to offer their judgments.

In the first scenario, I was sitting with a male gym-goer in the university Café area. While interviewing, a question came up, *whether people are judged more on their*

appearance or character. At that instant, a girl in a long gown[172] and scarf, which was covering her head, passed by us. It was candidly shared by the interviewee that this kind of girl will be seen with approving eyes because girls in gown or veil are perceived as pious and good. My inquisitiveness urged me to ask who is not considered virtuous then. The immediate reply stunned me as the interviewee pointed his finger at me, and this made me ask him the reason why.

The truth to discern is if you are not wearing a *dupatta* or a scarf on your head, which is supposed to cover the hair necessarily, and if you are wearing tights or leggings, then this sense of dressing does not reflect the latent function of being honorable or religious for many. The manifest purpose of a cloaked body says that the body is well covered according to cultural and religious standards. However, when another girl passed, it was shared by the participant that he has a recent crush on her. That girl was not in the veil, but since she was his choice, so no immorality was associated with the outfit. Personal preference justifies modernism, which is the improper dressing of a woman, but if it not your choice, then the same person is only considered on moral grounds.

Reality is sometimes opposite to the illusion, we may be seeking something that gives pleasure to our eyes, but the societal messages regarding beauty and body remain there. The voice of the good, the bad, and the ugly regarding one's and other's body and beauty keeps operating at the back of our heads. Consistent with my study findings, either this voice affects people's judgment, or it is not a matter at all.

Secondly, in a gym setting, while I was working out on the strength floor, a girl entered and started observing the area. At that time, four girls, including me were working out. After a short time, she came to me and asked, are you a trainer? To which I said no. Some other questions were asked, and then she left by telling, that *"I was just inquiring about this floor."* As I returned to my exercise machine, a gym-goer laughed and conveyed that it is obvious why she enquired me only. She said that the reason is in all four of us, she just saw you, and you were well-shaped and bodily fit versus us three who are fat and bulky.

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[172] A piece of clothing, which covers the whole body of women.

She stated that the new girl would have believed that only a toned person could be a trainer and not the overweight ones like us. Her sensitivities made me feel for her because it is all because of the popular cultural images, which portray girl's bodies in such a way that they become the norms. Due to this portrayal, girls learn to evaluate themselves and others (Oliver, 1999).

The body manifestation eventually played its function by triggering my fellow gym-goer latent judgment. It is based on an already established image of a good build and shaped body linked with a fit person who is quickly attended for her appearance as compared to the fat one. Hence, to make her feel confident, I said that anyone could be a trainer, he/she only needs certification to train others. It does not mean at all that a trainer is ought to have well build body or an abdomen reflecting abs.

Lastly, the thoughts affected because of the gym's popular culture were observed in another gym-goer's attitude towards themself. As I have mentioned before that the foremost question being posed to a new gym-goer was, *are you married?* In my case, I would generally ask, what is the purpose of your workout? A gym-goer replied to my question that once a woman came to their house for the proposal of matrimony. The woman told her that she is good in height, however, is bulky, and needs to lose weight for a successful marriage proposal. Therefore, the gym-goer passionately said that it is like a do or die situation.

Nonetheless, she ended the conversation by saying a statement, which I was not expecting. It was expressed by her that *"she is not a married woman."* I humbly responded that I nowhere perceived this, but it is good if she is looking after her health. The shaped body is not only seen with the approving attitude and judgment; it is perceived with a thought that this kind of body is fit enough to belong to a trainer and not an ordinary gym person.

The point is popular culture is created within the premises of the gym, and that is established by its members. If you are coming to the gym, then the belief is that you are here to lose marriage and baby-related weight. This belief is not only linked with heavy girls, but the smart bodied ones are also perceived as married who are here to

work on their inches and scale. This type of popular culture has a way of influencing gym goer's attitude and cognitions. The gym is hardly seen as a place for fitness by all women but a space to achieve the ideal type of body approved by society. Unfortunately, the approach has become a standardized norm of gym culture.

If a shaped body is seen at gym premises then everyone looks up to them and indulge in comparison. They feel that their body can be worked on to get a similar kind of body. In the next section, I will validate the theoretical perspective of my study with its results.

7.6 Validation of Theoretical Perspectives

The theory of *social comparison* and *objectification* has made its contribution to the research analysis. It has enabled me to analyze that to what extent social comparison is made by both genders, the degree and nature of comparison, and the reality of how youth perceives social comparison. Objectification theory has brought forth the role of institutions in objectifying gender and gender differences in the practices of objectification. Moreover, what factor hinders it in Pakistani society?

To validate the truth and claims of ethnographic research in terms of its theoretical adequacy, I must say that my study speaks to a unique group of people at a specific moment in time, even though it replicates some of the earlier theoretical claims.

7.6.1 Social Comparison Theory

The achievement of an appealing physical body can be understood by the theoretical framework of social comparison. In the evaluation of an attractive body, comparisons are made by both genders. In gym-goers, the *self* played a significant role in looking after one's body. The social comparison theory has enabled me to understand that in the attractiveness evaluation, i.e., upward comparisons were made by male interviewees while only describing a woman's beauty. It was perceived by female

participants that teenage boys do indulge in comparing their bodies with male celebrities.

Men showed a liking for female body calculations by keeping the female celebrities in mind. This preference, however, nowhere contends that on its basis, women were rejected. It was just a 36-24-36 figure for females, which was considered in making a comparison. The figure was used because the measurements are famous for reflecting sexiness. The social comparison that is based on body measurement while thinking of an ideal female was more carried out by men for women. Men to some extent were motivated and inspired by bodybuilders. However, they did not compare their bodies with their target and neither show anxiety as an aftermath, unlike women did.

Previous research shows that an individual's choice of comparison target is related to the specific motivations for the comparison (Halliwell, 2012). Theoretically, downward comparisons are used when an individual wants to boost positive self-regard, for example, when they are under threat. If an individual is interested in self-evaluation, they make lateral comparisons with a target who is similar, just slightly better, or only slightly worse on the dimension of evaluation. Upward social comparisons are used for both self-evaluation and self-improvement (Halliwell, 2012). My study has shown that men also indulge in lateral comparison, especially with their colleagues for body motivation.

Speaking of women, they did compare their bodies to female celebrities without mentioning famous personalities. They did not show interest to have a man who may have a body like that of male celebs in the media. In one case, only a man's *looks* got compared with a celebrity while defining outer beauty due to personal fondness. Women from the general population indulged more in both types of comparisons, i.e., upward, and downward, and engaging in appearance-related comparisons, especially body fat and fitness with peers and family members. Downward comparisons were frequently made with cousins and in-law family. This comparison was contextual and relational because, in social settings, e.g., marriage functions, university or professional domains, relatives, peers, and colleagues' bodies are under the lens of scrutiny.

Research validates that the individuals vary to the extent when they engage in social comparisons; some people habitually make more social comparisons than others, and this seems to be driven by individual differences in personality factors (Halliwell, 2012). My study has validated by revealing that women who were gym-goers were mostly motivated to look after their bodies. It was out of self-motivation and inner will for some. They hardly reported any upward comparison for modifying their bodies or felt depression out of it, as they showed strong personality characteristics. Weakness in one's personality and self-concept were linked with poor body perception.

7.6.2 Objectification Theory

Moving forward to the other theoretical framework, the objectification of gender bodies was influenced by sociocultural, religious, and individual factors. It was recurrently shared that the objectification of male bodies was not much exercised as compared to women in Pakistan. In the advertisement, both genders are equally objectified, but the scale of objectification is more profound at the women's end. Likewise, the media stood out as a medium that keeps symbolizing women as 'beauty is all about women.' The revenues generated from their commercialized beauty and commodified body can never be the same as compared to getting it from the male body.

Besides media, the socializing agents of peers and family are also playing their best roles in promoting and objectifying what is acceptable in terms of a beautiful body. Peer conversations about what kind of body is appealing or comments like *wow this is how a body should be like* suggests that the body is objectified in every possible way. These behavioral patterns affect the receiver's perceptual and attitudinal standpoints towards one's body. This, in turn, results in appearance-related concerns, which further leads to body modification achieved through dieting and exercise by some individuals, but not many.

Another important finding, which surfaced was that in an indigenous setting, blatant sexual objectification of women's bodies was practiced but not openly. This

hindrance was caused by the factor of religion that associated modesty with a woman's body. Modesty was also perceived in a contradictory manner when human relations were the point. In spouse selection, objectification was not only prevailing in the sense of bodily form but personality traits too. If it is a short-term relationship, as in girlfriend and boyfriend, a girl in jeans meant for pleasure was sought but for a woman who is chosen as a wife, piousness in character and decency of dress was expected.

Moreover, a previous research finding says that it is important to note that experiences of sexual objectification occur outside of women's control (Calogero, 2012). Some responses of my study contradict this assertion because it was affirmed that women are themselves playing a strong role in their objectification. Even though, patriarchy or male hegemony was frequently blamed for its hand in women's objectification. Adjacently it was emphasized that if a woman will not allow it in the first place, it would never happen without their will. Hence, the matter of being objectified is utterly in women's control.

Things are not what they appear to be. At the peripheral level, society, culture, and media are blamed for women's objectification, but females themselves confessed that this is not the truth. There is a statement, "where there is a will, there is a way;" and women are willing for their commodification, while industry and society are making use of them by revenue-generating ways and in matters of spouse selection.

7.6.2.1 Commodification of Beautiful Body

Considering my study findings, the *commodification* of women's bodies by society was repeatedly visible in spouse selection. Women are preferred on the type of body that is the product of the commodified system and reflects sexuality. She is deemed to be in shape with no excessive fats because she is supposed to appear beautiful and appealing. The beautiful body acts as a means to achieve good marriage proposals because if you are a skeletal body type, then you are not considered fit for being a

partner[173]. It takes an ideal woman to stand out of the crowd to achieve that status easily.

Socializing agents such as family, peers, and media play their role in depicting how an ideal woman is ought to be. If she needs a successful marriage offer at the right age, which, according to society, is as early as possible, then the societal standards of beauty are to be followed. This beauty standard is affecting the cognitions and perceptions of its viewers to judge a woman's beauty and body with a highly judgmental lens.

These cognitions have their forms because the moment you cross the age of 25 and 30, you are no longer considered a young girl because a girl between 16 and 21 is desirable by society as a wife and bride[174]. You are thought of as a woman, who would be fat, sitting at home and doing nothing but just house chores. If it is 35, then you may be labeled as aunty, and this connotes that you must be having kids. Overall, for girls across the age of 30, it is believed that marriage proposals have fewer chances at that phase of life because the golden age of 20s has passed[175]. Eventually, men with their mothers are seeking a 20 or 19 years old young and beautiful girl. There is a common saying that *"If your conduct is not good, at least your face should be."* The statement is used in the sense that if a daughter-in-law does not have good behavior then at least she should keep a beautiful face to show off to society.

When it concerns men, the intense commodification of the body was not present in a way it was for females, but when it is men's social status, the ax hangs right on their heads. Society has openly highlighted this message that with men, beauty is not linked, but the strength of their socioeconomic status is desired. He is commodified in a way that if he has the car, bank balance, and financial stability, then he is considered beautiful and a suitable partner.

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[173] The claim is established in in-depth-interviews.
[174] Page 158 and Page 223 (gym goer, age 32).
[175] Based on informal conversations with participants.

In the last section of this chapter, I have highlighted the possible suggestions and implications that can help future research on beauty and body image.

7.7 Implications for Future Research

The indigenous research offers the opportunity to refine and validate the concepts and cognitions that emerged from the findings. More research is necessary to elaborate on the novel results, and the paradigms must be verified by those who are married. The in-depth study needs to be conducted on married men and women to get firsthand knowledge of the information that is perceived by unmarried participants.

Married individuals could be asked questions like, *"What is the reason or drive that some men[176] indulge in the workout regime after marriage besides responsibilities,"* and *"Is fitness only a concern for married gym-goers or the general population show interest with the same degree?"* The participant's perception had shown that those who carry fitness routines before marriage continued it later as well. This opinion was held by the non-gym-goers, gym-goers, and it needs to be explored. Moreover, another question *"Why the lascivious or flirty nature is associated with a man's involvement in his body after marriage."* This is a claim by the unmarried male and female participants, and it can be studied from the perspective of married men and women.

In the case of female body and spouse selection, results indicated that families with moral backgrounds do not consider a female body as a measurement of her beauty for choosing her as a potential mate for their son. Likewise, her beauty of character can be judged by her honorable social class. Besides this, the rejection of girls in a matter of an ideal spouse selection cannot be denied. The information needs to be investigated by involving the women who faced rejection because of their body and whether they felt depression or anxiety as an aftermath. Moreover, the mothers of men can be interviewed, who set out to seek a beautiful daughter-in-law. Their

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[176] Gym-goers and non-gym goers.

interview can help all to understand the beauty parameters they have set for selection and the reasons behind their choice and rejection.

On similar lines, when it is family and body image, body-teasing research has shown that the majority reported the teasing to come from peers, and many studies have examined the frequency and impact of teasing by family members (Menzel, 2012). It is known from my study findings that both genders have identified mothers and siblings as a primary figure in inducing body and appearance-related messages. I believe the role of a father should be explored in the context of beauty and body in Pakistani society. Questions like what kind of role a father plays in the beauty and body image of their daughters and son will yield interesting results.

Another significant finding of my study highlighted that both genders believed that thinking patterns varied when educated[177] vs. uneducated and upper vs. lower class perceived ideal body image and beauty portrayed on media. The diverse responses came out to be contradictory because respondents believed that in the educated or upper class, there is a realization that ideal body images are unrealistic and are impossible to be attained. So, getting affected by them was out of the question. On the contrary, it was believed by some genders that these images are having possible effects on their thinking and subconscious because this class has more access to social media.

Similarly, the uneducated or lower class had no time to pay attention to these images, for they are busy making both ends meet. However, it was also believed that being uneducated makes people fail to realize that these images are not realistic and try to pursue them naively. Future research, if carried out on these variables will help to clarify which parts of these perceptions are real and which category of viewer gets affected by keeping the class system and educational level in mind.

It was also revealed that, unfortunately, we are living in a society where the scale of beauty is measured through fair complexion and scale of intelligence through the English language. I believe this concept can be investigated in detail, keeping

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[177] The definition of educated people by an interviewee is elaborated on page 196 and 205.

different ethnicities, age groups, and social status in consideration to find out whether this notion is accepted by all or not.

Lastly, field experimentation, which attempts to capture more real-world validity, should be the next step in examining the implications and consequences of fat talk for groups of females and males. Fat talk has been defined as everyday conversations between individuals that are characterized by negative and disparaging comments regarding food dysregulation, weight, and/or body shape. Both women and men are known to engage in fat talk (Engeln-Maddox, Sladek, & Waldron, 2013).

This kind of dialog was primarily observed in the gym setting around females, which is mentioned in the discussion chapter. The reason for their fat talk was mostly based on dissatisfaction about body parts, especially the belly, thigh, butt, and saggy upper arms. It was also mentioned in informal conversations and interviews, regardless of gender. However, hardly a few male participants mentioned this phenomenon. The fat talk was not examined among males in the gym setting, and so further research can elaborate an in-depth knowledge.

8. Conclusion

The imperative message regarding the current research is that the objective was not to emphasize beautified body issues of genders keeping their age or gym/non-gym status in mind. It was to establish men's and women's narratives, conceptualization, and their worldview of beauty and body image. The understanding was documented under the umbrella of *their* experience, highly personal perception surrounded by the voices of culture and society as accentuated by the youth chosen for the study.

The findings of my research support the idea of *embodiment* that originated in the work of a philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) and is endorsed by Chrisler Johnston-Robledo (2017) in their book "Woman's Embodied Self: An Introduction." The *lived body* is accredited as a social agent that is worked on, gazed at, and is interconnected with different self and socio-cultural expectations. The male body is perceived by its functionality and hegemony[178]. However, the female body is seen in terms of ornamental value whose bodily patterns are for the visual gratification of others and, in some cases, for *self*.

The visual display of a female body is observed with a 3D approach[179], the 'width, depth, and height' all perceived in one glimpse. While judging a woman on physical presentation, the body is seen with a kaleidoscope containing her gender roles, beauty ideals, stereotypes, and apparel. Reflection based on these portions produces mesmeric revolutionizing patterns that gratifies the male gaze and feed the hegemonic desire. This puts the women in a complex relationship with their bodies.

Firstly, a woman knows what her body is foremost capable of, and that is reproduction and a site of labor. Secondly, she is a vessel, which, if molded correctly by herself or by the hands of society, has invincible social, cultural, and capital value. Thirdly, she knows, and she is aware that her body is perceived as a source of pleasure and the enabler of agency. Fourthly, the body and the personality are believed as noble and virtuous when it is dressed modestly or covered with a veil.

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[178] Based on my research finding, hence validating the literature review.
[179] Based on my study interpretation.

The concept of a veil or covering a body has its religious grounds. The Quranic message on veiling and covering oneself empowers women. The turning point is that the secure identity and self-assured relation with a body in a veil are now shaken. This sense of identity has an additional symbolic image attached to it by my study. The emblematic connotation of veiling from previous researches was associated with: modesty, fashion, body, and faith (Lewis, 2013), fashion, politics, and faith (Tarlo, 2010), modesty, privacy, and resistance (El Guindi, 1999), and visual, spatial, and ethical hijab (Hamzeh, 2011).

My research provides a novel symbolism in which a veiled woman is perceived as a 'veiled sex trader.' A sex worker with a veiled face or body, standing in a particular area of Islamabad and Lahore, has negatively generalized the image of a veil and the women in the veil herself. A veiled woman is perceived in terms of an easily available sexual object. Why is the veil chosen in this kind of trade? Because the sex worker does not wish to be recognized[180], and the veil is a desired apparel of secreting within this patriarchal community where women are killed in the name of honor by its men.

A man in this society also understands that he has the power to tell women how their body is ought to be and in what ways it should and should not function. They are also aware that men body is perceived in terms of strength and manliness, so even if they are fat, short, and bald, they will get a beautiful girl without any effort. To tame a woman's body, the handbook of bodily instructions also comes from family, peers, media and advertising, religious texts, and finally yet importantly from other women, which include in-laws and women who are searching for daughter in law.

The message is clear that a woman's body should reflect *femininity, fragility, and piousness*. However, the contradictory research finding is that besides piety they are expected to be *sexy* (but not slutty), *thin* (but balanced or plump in the right places not skeletal bony), *tall* (but shorter than man), *controlled* (in their tone, posture, behavior, and apparel), and have *toned muscles* (but should not reflect masculine muscularity).

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[180] With reference to interviewee response on page 238 (gym goer, age 27).

These standards for ideal beauty and body are also formed by assertive ways of society and its culture. To be accepted in society, bodily standards are expected to attain by women than men. The outcomes entail a successful spot in spouse selection, preference in employment and educational journey, favorable treatment, and nepotism in daily life affairs out of *what is beautiful is good* stereotype. To accomplish such promising status, society provides institutions to men and women to make this journey easy.

Gyms and parlors are present to discipline bodies by exercise, along with diets, supplements, beauty procedures, and services to appear in one's best form. The market plays its role in generating revenues out of makeup, clothing lines, and skincare collection. However, facial surgeries are rarely observed even in celebrities except for lip fillers or Botox, but fat reduction methods that involve liposuction are prevailing in the society.

These approaches are adopted so that men and women can match the ideal image; avoid the stigma and stereotypes that are generally linked with a fat body, unattractiveness, or dark complexion. Stereotypes are activated in the observers of bodies, and those stereotypes can result in approval or disapproval, approach, or avoidance. To escape this, some people indulge in social comparison and self-objectification. However, individuals who have high a self-concept, practice self-care ascending from self-motivation and condemn comparison and being objectified.

Likewise, an individual who indulges in social comparison and is objectified by the hands of society and family suffers the *affective* component of body image that is anxiety, fat talk, and appearance-related concerns. The *behavioral* aspect involves indulging in fad diets (mostly women), restricted eating or portion control, and an intensive workout routine. In some cases, the behavior is not even affected; an unmarried person either is highly satisfied with their body or perceives that after marriage, you have the license, so body image is kept in the Pandora box. The *cognitive* factor in a woman involves a preoccupation with body weight, fats in specific body parts, and weight machine's needle. In a man, it is the muscular formation, toning, and fitness concern.

Finally, to voice my study thoughts, I would like to conclude by saying that humans are considered social animals, and this will never make them stand apart from society. Individualistic or collectivistic society, humans will make interactions once they step out in the world. Be it a gaze, a statement, or a touch, the human body is approached one way or the other. The body is owned by society, and the meanings that culture bestows on the body are profoundly explored in my study based on unmarried men and women narratives. The individual voices of genders with different tones and volumes of behavior, attitude, and cognitions are reported so that they could be heard clearly, as the collectivistic society functions in the background as a hymn.

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ANNEXURE A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Please provide a response to each of the following questions

Name _____

Age _____

Marital Status

- Married _____
- Single _____
- Divorced _____

Gender

- Female _____
- Male _____

Education/Profession

- School_____
- College_____
- University_____
- Any other _____

ANNEXURE B

CONSENT FORM

Research Title: Gendered Perspective of Beauty and Body Image

Researcher: Subaita Zubair

I have been given information about the *Gendered Perspective of Beauty and Body Image* research and discussed the research project with Miss Subaita who is conducting this research as part of a Ph.D. degree in the Department of Anthropology at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

1. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate, and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.

2. Confidentiality will be maintained in my participation.

3. I am aware of the duration of participation.

4. My name will not be used when my responses will be quoted.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for these purposes (e.g., dissertation, journal publication), and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed Date

…..../…...../…...

Signature

_____