

Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Body Esteem, Depressive Symptoms, and Academic Performance Among Adolescents

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Introduction

Importance of Body-esteem

Previous research focused on global self-esteem on life outcomes. However, broadly defined self-esteem cannot adequately represent the diversity of content-specific domains of self.¹ Moreover, parts of self-concept may be arranged hierarchically according to individual experiences and particular situations.²

Factors contributing to Depressive symptoms

- Academic achievement is one of the central challenges faced by the adolescents, and low academic achievement is associated with mental health problems.³
- Adolescents who perceive their physical appearance negatively and experience body dissatisfaction are at risk for developing depressive symptoms.⁴

Importance of Gender-differentiated Study

- Little is known about the role of gender in the influence of domain-specific self-esteem on academic performance.
- While the literature documented that low body-esteem predicts depressive symptoms, most studies focused on female.⁵ It is unclear whether the negative relationship between body esteem and depressive symptoms applies to boys.

Study Objectives

This study aims to explore gender differences in the relationships between

- body esteem and academic performance
- depressive symptoms and academic performance
- body esteem and depressive symptoms

Materials & Methods

Data

Cohort 2 of the ARCHIVE study was used.

Total N = 81. (F=43, M=38)

Measures

- Body-esteem: Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BESAA)
- Depressive Symptoms: Mood And Feelings Questionnaire (MFQ)
- Academic Performance: Weighted GPA

Statistical analyses

Pearson-Product Moment Correlation tests were conducted using SPSS to examine the general relationships among variables.

Results

Body Esteem and Academic Achievement

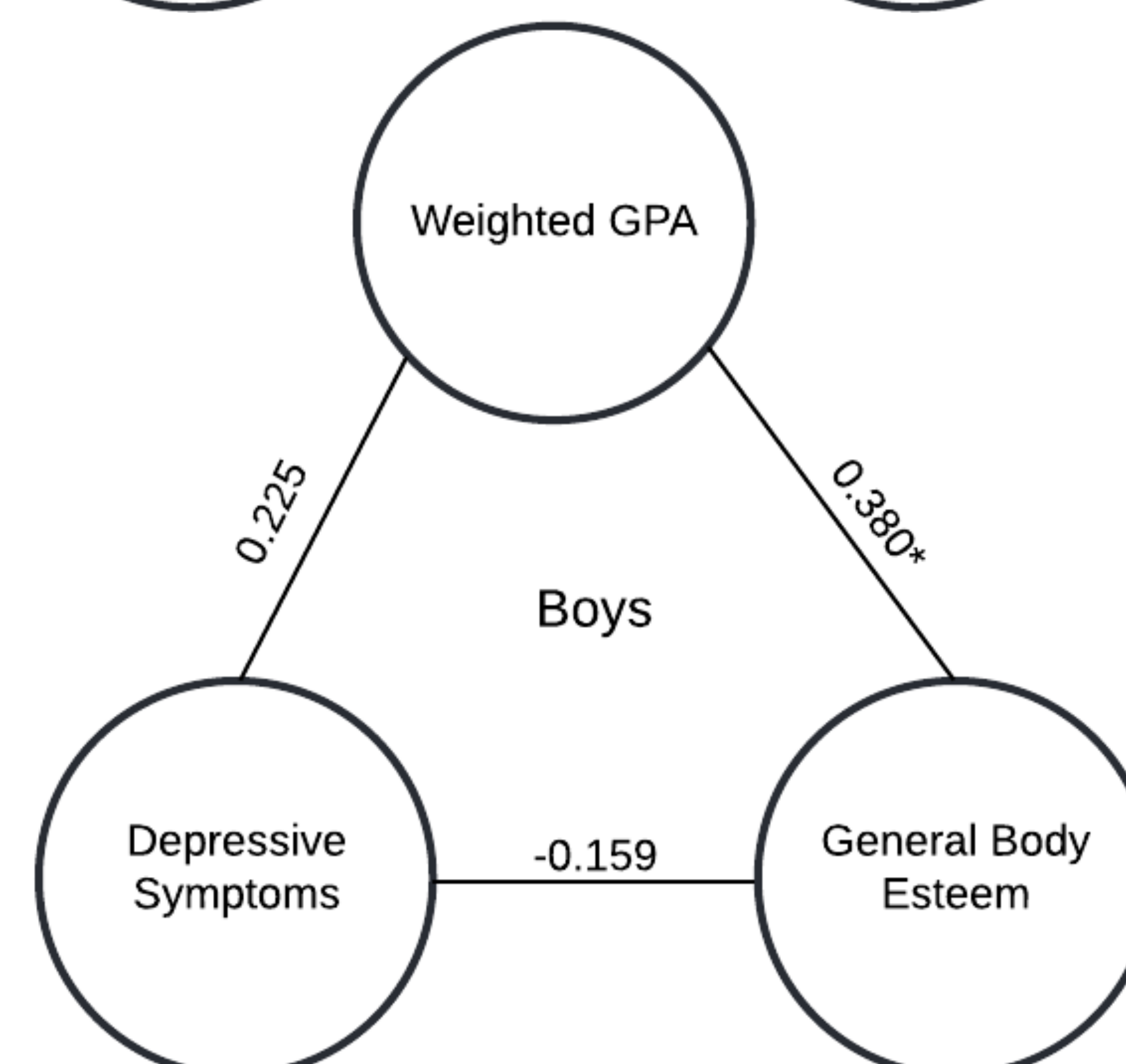
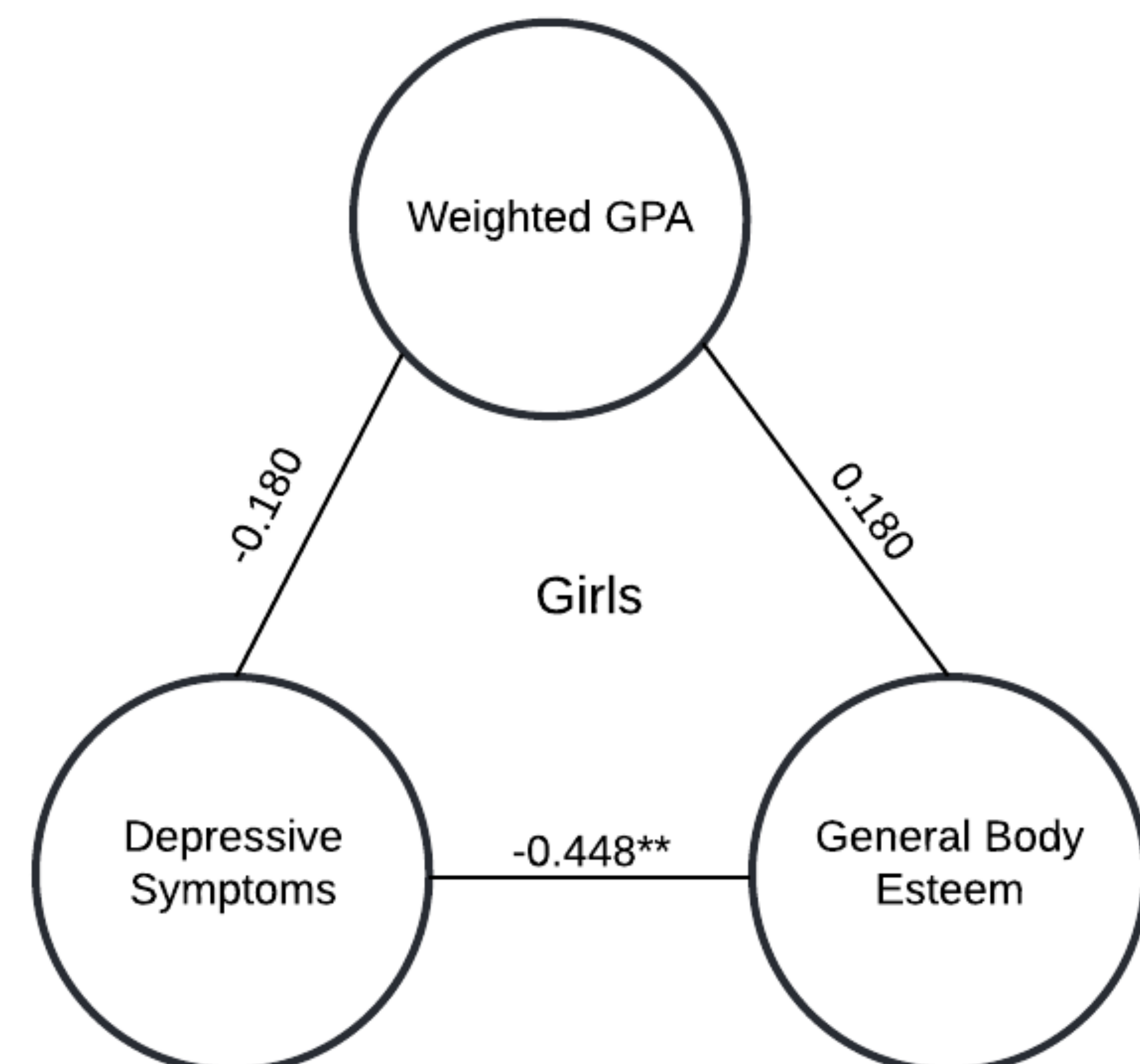
Body-esteem was significantly, positively correlated with academic performance only for boys.

Depressive Symptoms and Academic Achievement

No significant relationships between depressive symptomatology and weighted GPA were found in both groups.

Body Esteem and Depressive Symptoms

Body-esteem was significantly, negatively correlated with depressive symptoms only for girls.



Discussion

Body Esteem and Academic Achievement in Boys

Among body-esteem sub-scales, only attribution (perception of evaluation of one's body and appearance attributed to others) was significant.

- *Self-consistency theory*
Adolescent boys may aim to maintain a high social status.

Body Esteem and Depressive Symptoms in Girls

All three sub-scales of body-esteem were significant.

- *Internalization of the social standards*⁶
Girls may tend to define themselves in terms of physical appearance and body image. They may feel anxious and depressed because of their perceived failure to reach beauty standards in the culture.

Implications

- While the current study points to the possibility of gender differences, future studies are needed to validate the findings.
- Given the potential gender differences in the relationships that are observed in this study, future policymakers may tailor the interventions to address the unique needs of girls and boys.

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