

**A study on the relationship between Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and  
body image among female young adults in Shillong.**

A DISSERTATION

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled “**A study on the relationship between Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and body image among female young adults in Shillong**” is the result of my own research work carried out under the supervision of Prof. Tanushree Choudhury, Assistant Professor, and Co-supervision of Dr. Grace Tinnunmem Haokip, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia Gardens, Assam.

I further declare this dissertation as a whole or a part thereof has not been submitted to any University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Monaliza Khyriem Diengdoh



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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the relationship between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and body image concerns among young women in Shillong, Meghalaya. Utilizing a correlational research design and a quantitative approach, data were collected from 100 female participants aged 18–30 through standardized questionnaires, including the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-4) and Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-8C). Findings reveal a significant positive association between internalized media ideals, peer influences, and body dissatisfaction, with media pressure and thin-ideal internalization emerging as the most influential factors. Demographic variables such as educational background showed limited impact. The study underscores the importance of media literacy, positive peer influence, and family communication in fostering healthier body image perceptions. Recognizing the study's limitations, including sample size and cultural nuances of measurement tools, recommendations for longitudinal and qualitative research are discussed to deepen understanding and develop effective interventions. This research provides vital insights for promoting body positivity and mental well-being among young women in culturally specific contexts.

**Keywords:** Sociocultural attitudes, body image, media influence, peer pressure, young women, body dissatisfaction, body standards.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Socio-Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance**

Socio-cultural norms and messages outside the family are shaped and influenced by peer groups, being of importance for young people. Most of the conclusions from scientific research concerning the factors which influence the development of body image indicate the Interdependence between the pressure of socio-cultural messages from mass media and internalization of standards concerning ideal slim body, as well as the “drive for slimness” promoted in contemporary standards of women’s body attractiveness (Tiggemann, 2003)

#### **Influence of Media**

Media has long been recognized as a powerful force in promoting beauty standards, and its impact has only intensified with the rise of digital platforms and social media. Traditional media, such as magazines, television, and advertisements, often portray narrowly defined ideals of beauty, predominantly favouring slim, youthful, and symmetrical features. However, social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have revolutionized how beauty is consumed and internalized.

#### **Curated Content and Filter**

Social media allows users to carefully curate their online personas, often presenting an idealized version of themselves. Features like filters and photo-editing apps can create highly polished, often unrealistic images, contributing to the perception that such appearances are attainable and normal (Perloff, 2014). This constant exposure to perfection can lead to heightened body dissatisfaction, particularly among young adult females.

## **Comparison Culture**

Social media fosters an environment of comparison, where individuals frequently measure their own appearance against that of influencers, celebrities, and even peers. Research indicates that upward comparisons comparing oneself to someone perceived as more attractive are strongly associated with lower self-esteem and negative body image (Fardouly et al., 2015).

## **Influencer Marketing**

Influencers often promote products or lifestyles tied to appearance, such as diet supplements, fitness regimens, or beauty treatments. This commercialization of beauty standards reinforces the notion that appearance is a commodity to be constantly improved, further exacerbating body image concerns (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013).

## **Cultural Beauty Standards**

Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward appearance, with beauty standards varying widely across regions and societies. Western cultures have historically emphasized slimness and youthfulness as markers of beauty. These ideals are propagated through global media, often becoming aspirational benchmarks for individuals in non-Western societies (Grogan, 2016). This cultural imperialism can lead to the loss of local beauty standards, resulting in widespread dissatisfaction with one's natural features. the belief that westernization of fashion and beauty are being communicated worldwide, minority cultures are confronted with the possibility of losing their independence in setting up standards of ideal beauty (Yan & Bissell, 2014).

## **Diverse Cultural Norms**

In contrast, some cultures celebrate fuller, more curvaceous body types, associating them with health, fertility, or wealth. For instance, in parts of Africa and South Asia, a fuller figure may be considered more desirable. However, the increasing globalization of Western media has begun to challenge these traditional norms, leading to a convergence of beauty standards that prioritize slimness (Swami, 2015). When individuals belong to a culture that values physical traits different from those promoted by global media, it can lead to a state of cultural dissonance. This conflict between local and global ideals can result in internalized dissatisfaction and confusion about one's body image (Levine & Murnen, 2009).

## **Peer and Family Influence**

Interpersonal relationships significantly shape body image, particularly during formative years and adolescence, when self-perception is most persuadable.

### **Peer Pressure and Comparisons**

Peers play a vital role in reinforcing or challenging societal beauty standards. Peer discussions about dieting, body shape, or appearance can normalize unrealistic expectations, leading to increased body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2004). Social comparisons within peer groups, especially among females, often exacerbate negative feelings about one's body, as individuals may feel pressured to conform to group norms regarding appearance (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001).

### **Family Influence**

Family members, particularly parents, can have a profound impact on body image development. Comments from parents about weight, eating habits, or physical appearance can shape how young individuals perceive their bodies. For instance, daughters whose mothers

frequently discuss dieting or weight concerns are more likely to develop body dissatisfaction (Rodgers et al., 2015). Conversely, positive reinforcement and a supportive family environment can mitigate the impact of societal pressures, fostering healthier body image perceptions. Sibling interactions also influence body image. Older siblings, in particular, can act as role models, either positively or negatively. Criticism or teasing from siblings about physical appearance is linked to heightened body dissatisfaction, while supportive sibling relationships can act as a protective factor (Tucker & Updegraff, 2009).

## **1.2. Body Image**

Body image refers to an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their physical appearance (Cash and Pruzinsky, 2002). It encompasses how individuals view their bodies, whether positively or negatively, and the extent to which this perception aligns with societal ideals. Body image is most commonly defined as a multidimensional construct that includes how one sees, thinks, feels, and behaves related to their body's appearance and function (Cash & Smolak, 2011).

### **Perceptual Body Image**

Perceptual body image refers to how individuals perceive the physical characteristics of their bodies, such as size, shape, weight, and other physical features. It is essentially an individual's mental representation of their body, which may or may not align with their actual physical appearance (Slade, 1994). For example, a person with a healthy body weight might perceive themselves as overweight or underweight due to distortions in their perception. This dimension is particularly significant in understanding body image disorders such as body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) and anorexia nervosa, where individuals struggle with inaccurate or exaggerated perceptions of their bodies (Grogan, 2016). These perceptual discrepancies are

often influenced by external factors such as media representation and cultural norms, further distorting one's self-view.

### **Affective Body Image**

Affective body image relates to the emotions and feelings individuals associate with their bodies. These emotions can range from satisfaction and pride to dissatisfaction and shame. For many young adult females, affective body image is closely tied to societal standards of beauty, leading to feelings of inadequacy when their appearance does not align with these ideals (Tiggemann, 2011). Positive affective body image is associated with higher self-esteem and confidence, while negative emotions often correlate with psychological issues such as depression and anxiety (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Furthermore, this dimension underscores the importance of addressing emotional responses to body image concerns, as these feelings significantly influence mental health and overall well-being.

### **Cognitive Body Image**

Cognitive body image involves the thoughts and beliefs individuals hold about their bodies. These beliefs often stem from societal, familial, and peer influences and shape how people evaluate their appearance. For instance, individuals may think they are "too thin," "too heavy," or "not muscular enough" based on ingrained cultural norms (Cash, 2004). Cognitive distortions, such as overgeneralization ("I am unattractive because I gained weight") or catastrophizing ("No one will like me if I look like this"), can exacerbate body dissatisfaction and lead to harmful behaviours like extreme dieting or cosmetic surgery (Grogan, 2016). Cognitive body image is critical in understanding how societal pressures manifest in personal beliefs, emphasizing the role of media literacy and education in combating negative stereotypes.

## **Behavioural Body Image**

Behavioural body image refers to the action an individual's take based on their perceptions, feelings, and beliefs about their bodies. These behaviours can be adaptive, such as engaging in regular exercise or maintaining a balanced diet, or maladaptive, including disordered eating, excessive exercising, or undergoing repeated cosmetic procedures (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). For young adult females, Behavioural responses often reflect societal expectations, with many adopting potentially harmful practices to conform to idealized standards of beauty (Tiggemann, 2011). This dimension also includes avoidance behaviours, such as refraining from social events or wearing certain types of clothing due to body dissatisfaction. Behavioural body image highlights the practical implications of body image perceptions, underscoring the need for interventions that promote healthy behaviours and self-acceptance.

### **1.3. The Relation of Body Image and Young Adult Females**

According to Erik Erikson's stages of human development, first enumerated in *Childhood and Society* (1950) a young adult is a person between the ages of 18 and 40. Erikson is one of the most influential psychologists on the topic of life stages, he defined young adulthood as a crucial stage that happens after adolescence. It's the point in life when a person emphasizes "identity formation."

As young women navigate their transition into adulthood, body image plays a central role in their overall well-being and self-concept. This period of development is critical for identity formation, self-esteem, and emotional regulation, and societal pressures around appearance can make females particularly vulnerable to body image concerns (Smolak, 2004; Tiggemann, 2011; Harter, 2012). Body image issues are particularly salient among young adult females

compared to males. Traditional gender roles often place a higher emphasis on women's appearance, associating femininity with beauty and youth, which intensifies the pressure on young females to conform to certain body standards (Grabe et al., 2008). The following sections explore the developmental vulnerability of young adult females, the psychological impact of body dissatisfaction, and the emergence of body positivity movements as they seek to challenge traditional beauty norms.

## **Identity Formation and Body Image**

During this developmental phase, young females are heavily influenced by external validation, including approval based on appearance, which can significantly shape their self-esteem and body image. As they seek to understand their place in the world, the pressure to conform to certain beauty ideals can become overwhelming, potentially leading to body dissatisfaction and an overemphasis on physical appearance (Smolak, 2004). This is especially true in a culture where thinness is often equated with beauty and success, leading young females to internalize these ideals as a reflection of their worth.

### **1.4. Social Comparison Theory**

Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory suggests that we compare ourselves to others because for many domains and attributes, social comparison theory is the idea that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others. Are we brilliant or average? Charming or not charming? We cannot tell by looking into a mirror or introspecting, but perhaps we can acquire useful information about these and many other questions by comparing ourselves with others. Indeed, feeling uncertain about ourselves is one of the central conditions that leads people to engage in social comparison and otherwise assess the extent to which we are meeting cultural norms. To whom do we compare ourselves, or how



do we decide what standard of comparison to use? It depends on our motive for the comparison. Do we want an accurate assessment of ourselves, or do we want to simply feel good about ourselves? In general, the desire to see ourselves positively appears to be more powerful than either the desire to accurately assess ourselves or to verify strongly held beliefs about ourselves. But, suppose, for the moment, that we really do want an accurate assessment. Festinger (1954) originally suggested we can gauge our abilities most accurately by comparing our performance with someone who is similar to us. But what determines similarity? Do we base it on age, gender, nationality, occupation, year in school, or something else entirely? In general, similarity tends to be based on broad social categories, such as gender, race, or experience in a particular task domain.

Social comparison process as a cause of conformity, as noted, a person who deviates from consensus with others can expect to be the target of social disapproval. Most people find social disapproval unpleasant so they tend to avoid social possible disapproval and abide to social consensus.

Therefore, this theory, developed by Leon Festinger, posits that individuals determine their own self-worth and evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others. In the context of beauty standards and body image, young adult women may compare their own bodies to the idealized and unrealistic beauty standards portrayed in the media or endorsed by society, leading to negative body image perceptions.

### **1.5. Tripartite Influence Model**

The Tripartite Influence Model, proposed by Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn (1999), is a widely recognized framework that explains the development of body image disturbances and disordered eating behaviours. The model suggests that three primary sources:

peers, parents, and media; serve as key sociocultural influences on an individual's body image. These influences affect individuals both directly, through messages and behaviours, and indirectly, through the process of internalization of appearance ideals and appearance-based social comparison. The model has been instrumental in understanding how external pressures contribute to body dissatisfaction, particularly among adolescents and young adults, and has informed numerous prevention and intervention programs targeting body image issues.

## **1.6. Statement of problem**

This study seeks to investigate the relation between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and the body image of young adult females in Shillong, with respect to exploring specific factors such as educational background and socio-economic status.

## **1.7. Rationale of the study**

Emerging research shows the interplay between Sociocultural factors like media, family, peer pressure and self-internalization as elements contributing to body image dissatisfaction, due to globalization there are specific beauty ideals that has emerged acting as a predictor of how ones appearance should look like and contributing to the bodily dissatisfactions especially in young women as they try to find and understand their place in the world, and are at a stage of identity formation (Smolak, 2004; Erikson, 1950). Further, by examining the demographic factors like educational background and socio-economic status the researcher can explore if the availability or limited resources can contribute to the difference in socio-cultural attitudes and body image perception. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and body image of young female adults in Shillong.

## **1.8. Research Objectives**

- To assess the level of socio-cultural attitudes of appearance among young adult females.
- To assess the level of body image perception of young adult females in Shillong.
- To explore difference in socio-cultural attitudes and body image perception based on demographic factors (educational background and socio-economic status).
- To investigate the relation between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and body image among young adult female.

## **1.9. Hypothesis**

Ho1: There will be no significant relation between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance body image among young adult female.

H1: There will be a significant relationship between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance body image among young adult female.

Ho2: There will be no difference in socio-cultural attitudes and body image perception based on demographic factor (educational background and socio-economic status).

H2: There will be a difference in socio-cultural attitudes and body image perception based on demographic factor (educational background and socio-economic status)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The Review of Literature (ROL) is a critical and systematic examination of scholarly sources relevant to the research problem. It serves as the foundation upon which the current study is built by providing context, identifying theoretical frameworks, summarizing previous findings, and highlighting gaps or inconsistencies in existing knowledge. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing body of literature relevant to the research topic.

#### **2.1. Research on Socio-cultural influences and Body Image.**

Sadeghi et al. (2023) conducted a study to investigate the factors influencing the acceptance of cosmetic surgery among Iranian women, focusing on the role of traditional gender role attitudes and body image. Grounded in theories related to gender roles and body image, the research employs a quantitative design using structural equation modelling (SEM). Sample of the study included 600 female participants aged 18 to 35. Tests used were the short version of Attitude Toward Women Scale (AWS), Beliefs About Appearance Scale (BAAS), Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS), Body Image Coping Strategies Inventory (BICSI), Rhinoplasty Outcome Evaluation (ROE), Acceptance of Cosmetic Surgery Scale (ACSS). Cronbach Alpha was the statistics used to find the result. The findings reveal a significant relationship between traditional gender role attitudes and body dissatisfaction, which mediates the acceptance of cosmetic surgery, highlighting the influence of socio-cultural pressures on women's perceptions of beauty.

Goldfield et al. (2023) conducted a study that aimed to explore how reducing social media usage can enhance appearance and weight self-esteem among youth experiencing emotional distress. The study involved N=220 participants within the aged 17-25 at a Canadian University. The test used during survey was Body Image Disturbance Questionnaire (BIDQ).

Descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, chi-square tests, mixed Analysis of Variance were statistical tools used to find the results. These findings suggest that reducing Social Media Use can be an effective method for improving body image in a vulnerable population of youth.

Lipowska et al. (2020) conducted a study examining how socio-cultural standards promoted by mass media serve as predictors of restrictive and bulimic behaviour. The sample of the study included 514 individuals aged 16 to 63. The tests used were the SATAQ-3 questionnaire for internalization and pressures, as well as the EDI-3 for eating disorder behaviours. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was the statistical tool used to analyze the results. The findings reveal significant differences in the average levels of sociocultural influences on eating behaviours between men and women, indicating that these influences play a crucial role in the development of unhealthy eating patterns.

Rounsefell et al. (2020) conducted a study to on the relation between social media, body image and food choices that influence young healthy adults. to assess how social media engagement or exposure to image-based content influences body image and food choices in healthy young adults. Sample of the study included 11,125 participants, within the age range of 18-30 years. Correlation Analysis, Mean, median and mode were the statistical tools used to find the results. The findings of the study showed their there is a relation between the influence of social media on body image and food choices.

Verrastro et. al. (2020) conducted a study to examine the influence of Instagram on the beauty ideals of young male and female adolescents. Sample of the study included 621 Instagram users within the age range of 13 to 21 years old. The tools used were SATAQ-3, Fear of Negative Appearance Evaluation Scale (FNAES) and Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale. ANOVA, Chi-square analysis, Bivariate Correlations, Hierarchal Multiple Regression were the statistical tools used. The findings revealed that adolescents who edit their

photos before posting them online tend to internalize Instagram's beauty standards more deeply. This often leaves them feeling anxious and uneasy about their appearance, along with an increased pressure to meet social media's expectations. Interestingly, this pattern is not limited to girls but also affects boys.

Ahern et. al (2019) conducted a study to explore the attitudes of young women toward the idea of thinness, the study uses a qualitative research design. The sample of the study included 41 females, within the age range of 16 years to 26 years. Mean and Thematic Analysis was used to find the results. The findings revealed that young women have complex attitudes towards the thin ideal, influenced by various factors such as media, peer pressure, and personal experiences. The study highlights the need for interventions to address the negative impact of the thin ideal on young women's body image and self-esteem.

Tiggerman et. al (2019) conducted a study to examine whether natural, unaltered images on social media affect facial and body dissatisfaction. The sample of the study included N=204 undergraduate female participants within the age range 17-30. Mean, median and mode were the statistics used, the participants viewed either idealized, enhancement-free, or enhancement-free-with-hashtags images, with body and facial dissatisfaction measured. The findings indicated lower facial dissatisfaction with unfiltered images, though hashtags paradoxically increased dissatisfaction, especially in women who edit their photos, further suggesting that natural images can mitigate, but hashtags may refocus, appearance concerns.

Schaefer et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine how thinness pressures differ across White, Black, and Hispanic college women in the United States. The sample of the study included 864 undergraduate female students, within the age range of 18-35 years. The tests used during the study are Demographic information, SATAQ-4, Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Evaluation Subscale (MBSRQ-AE) and Eating Disorder

Examination – Questionnaire (EDE-Q). Separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to find the result. The findings revealed that different sources of thinness pressures were more highly related to negative outcomes within each ethnic group, for White women, each source of thinness pressure was salient for disordered eating, for Black women, family pressure was particularly salient for appearance evaluation, for Hispanic women, family pressure was particularly salient for both disordered eating and appearance evaluation.

Stapleton et. al (2017) conducted a study to examine the impact of exposure to social media-based social comparison information on self-esteem. Sample of the study included 237 participants within the age range of 18 to 25 years old. The tests used were the 11-item Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure, Facebook Intensity Scale, The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and The 35-item Contingencies of Self Worth Scale. Mean, SD and Inter-correlations were the statistical tools used. The findings of the study revealed that while the intensity of Instagram use alone did not directly affect self-esteem, it did when individuals' self-worth was contingent on approval from others. In other words, those who based their self-worth on others' approval experienced lower self-esteem due to social comparison on Instagram.

Brown and Tiggemann (2016) investigated how viewing attractive celebrity and peer images on Instagram affects women's mood and body image. The sample of the study involved 138 undergraduate females. The study uses Social Comparison Theory, highlighting that individuals assess themselves through comparisons with others, leading to body dissatisfaction. The results showed increased body dissatisfaction and negative mood from celebrity and peer images, mediated by appearance comparisons, establishing social media's significant role in shaping body image perceptions.

Earlier Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015) conducted a study on how exposure to fitspiration images on Instagram impacts women's body image. A between-subjects design had 130 female students view either fitspiration or travel images. The results showed that fitspiration exposure increased negative mood, body dissatisfaction, and lowered appearance self-esteem. Findings suggest that, although intended to inspire fitness, fitspiration images may negatively impact body image by promoting comparison.

Fardouly and Vartanian (2015) conducted a study exploring the relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns among female university students, focusing on whether it leads to negative comparisons. The sample of the study involved 227 female, within the age range of 13 to 19 years old. The study used surveys to measure Facebook usage, appearance comparisons, and body image concerns, including the Physical Appearance Comparison Scale and the Eating Disorder Inventory. Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, Mediation Analysis, Repeated Measures ANOVA were the statistics used to find the results. The findings reveal a positive relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns and further it was also found that the direction of comparisons to distant peers had a stronger indirect effect on body image concerns than the direction of comparisons to celebrities and models.

Ghaznavi and Taylor (2015) conducted a study to examine the influence of thinspiration images might impact women's body image and mental health. The sample of the study included 300 participants. Descriptive analysis, SD, mean were the statistics used. The results exhibited that sexually suggestive content often gained higher engagement, illustrating how social media amplifies harmful beauty ideals. This highlights the potential of social media to reinforce body dissatisfaction and promote unhealthy comparisons.

Jaeger and Câmara (2015) conducted a study to explore the predictors of body dissatisfaction among university students, focusing on the roles of media influence and life dissatisfaction



within a socio-cultural framework. The sample of the study included 424 university female students. The tests used were Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ-3) to assess the internalization of media beauty standards, revealing significant relationships between media exposure, life dissatisfaction, and body dissatisfaction. Descriptive analysis, Correlation, Mean, Median and mode were the statistics used. The findings indicated that higher levels of media internalization and dissatisfaction with life were associated with increased body dissatisfaction, highlighting the importance of addressing socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance in interventions aimed at improving body image among young adult female. This study contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the need for targeted strategies that consider the socio-cultural dimensions of body image issues in contemporary society.

Izydoreczyk et al. (2015) conducted a study examining the psychological and socio-cultural risk factors that contribute to the development of negative attitudes and anti-health behaviours towards body image in young women. The sample of the study included 120 young Polish women within the age range of 20 to 25 years. The tests used were the EDI (Eating Disorder Inventory), SATAQ-3 (Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire), and KZWC (Kozłowski's Questionnaire of Body Image). The statistical tools used to analyse the results included the quartile method and measures of central tendency. The findings reveal that the participants exhibited tendencies towards dissatisfaction with their body image and a desire to conform to idealized body standards, influenced by various psychological and socio-cultural factors.

Raman (2015) conducted a study to explore the role of cultural factors such as eating habits, media influence, and societal norms in shaping body image among young adult females in India and Asian-American females in the USA. The sample included women aged 18-30 years. Statistical tools such as descriptive analysis and thematic literature review were used to analyze

the findings. The results revealed significant cultural differences in body image preferences, with Indian women leaning toward curvier ideals influenced by traditional norms, while American women showed a stronger inclination toward the slim ideal perpetuated by media portrayals. The study highlighted the interplay of cultural, societal, and media factors in body image perception.

Clarke et. al. (2014) conducted a study to explore the Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image and to examine if the impact of sociocultural pressures differed for heterosexual woman and lesbian as bisexual (LB). Sample of the study included 472 within the age range 18 to 67 years old. The tests used were the Body Esteem Scale, The Perceived Sociocultural Pressure Scale and f the Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (DEBQ). ANOVA, Mean, SD, Correlation Analysis were the statistical tools used to find the results. The findings revealed that heterosexual women reported more thin-ideal internalization than lesbian and bisexual women. Pressures from media, male romantic partners, and family were strongly associated with weight satisfaction and thin-ideal internalization for both groups, but the impact varied. For heterosexual women, these pressures significantly influenced weight satisfaction and restrained eating, while for lesbian and bisexual women, these pathways were not significant. Pressure from friends did not relate to body image for either group. [An Examination of the Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image: Does Women's Sexual Identity Make a Difference? Caroline J. Huxley, Emma Halliwell, and Victoria Clarke University of the West of England.

Tiggemann et al (2013) earlier conducted a study to explore the body concerns in adolescent girls from the age 16 years above and attempted to understand the underlying motivations for their wish to be thin. The factor exerting the strongest pressure to be thin was the media. Although researchers tend to focus on adolescent populations when exploring body image constructs, evidence suggests that body dissatisfaction is fairly stable across the life span. The inception of social media websites provides a unique opportunity to explore body image across

the female life span. For example, Tiggemann and Slater (2013) found that high-school girls who had a Facebook profile scored higher on all measured body image concerns than non-users in their study.

Quick et. al. (2013) conducted a Longitudinal Study to identify determinants of Body Dissatisfaction in young adults over a decade. Sample of the study included 2134 participants within the age range 11 to 18 years old. The tests used were the Body Shape Satisfaction Scale, BMI and Socio-demographic data. Mean, SD, Inter-correlations, Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis were the statistical tools used to find the results. The findings revealed that for females, Asian ethnicity, low self-esteem, greater body dissatisfaction (BD), and higher BMI during adolescence predicted greater BD 10 years later. For males, factors like Asian or mixed ethnicity, education level, depressive symptoms, greater BD, higher BMI, more parent communication, and less peer weight teasing during adolescence predicted BD at follow-up.

Homan et. al. (2011) conducted a study to explore the influence of viewing ultra-fit photos on female college woman's body dissatisfaction. Sample of the study included 138 females of the age 19 years. The tests used were Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3 and Visual Analogue Body Dissatisfaction Scale. Regression Analysis, Correlation Coefficients, SD and Mean were the statistical tools used. The findings revealed that when college women viewed images of ultra-fit, thin models, they felt more dissatisfied with their own bodies. Interestingly, this wasn't the case when they looked at ultra-fit models of normal weight. The research also showed that whether the women believed in the thin-ideal or athletic-ideal didn't change this outcome. These insights suggest that promoting the health benefits of fitness, while questioning the appeal of extreme thinness, could help lessen body dissatisfaction.

## **2.2. Gap of Literature**

While many previous studies explored on the impact of socio-cultural factors on body image in western and non-western cultures, however there are limited explorations on socio-economic status in relation to body image, how one's educational background and occupational status determines the access to resources and social networks that influences exposure to cultural ideals and media representations that can shape self-perception. This gap limits our understanding on how the factors influences the perception of body image.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter consists of the necessary procedural measures undertaken for conducting the study including the research design, sample size, sampling technique, inclusion and exclusion criteria, variables used, tools used, methods and process of data collection and ethical considerations. The procedural measures mentioned above will provide a clear indication of what the study intends to do, why certain measures were chosen for the study and to precisely lay out enough details to replicate the study.

Research methodology refers to the systematic plan and approach employed in a study to answer research questions or test hypotheses. It defines the tools, techniques, and procedures used to collect and analyse data, ensuring the research is structured and replicable (Hassan, 2024).

#### **3.1. Research design**

The research design used for this study is Correlational research design. Correlational Research Design is a non-experimental method used to examine the relationships between two or more variables to determine if they are associated or correlated, without manipulating any variables.

#### **3.2. Research approach**

A quantitative research approach was used for this study, as the study aims to produce clear objectives by collecting and analysing the numerical data statistically to answer research questions and test hypothesis.

**3.3. Universe:** Young female adults belonging to the state of Meghalaya.

**3.4. Population of the study:** Young female adults age ranging from 18-30 years belonging to Shillong, East Khasi Hills. There are a total of 1,78,034 number of females in Shillong as per the 2011 Census of Shillong's Urban Agglomeration.

**3.5. Sampling technique:**

A Purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. Purposive Sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers select participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research study. Instead of randomly selecting individuals from a larger population, purposive sampling allows researchers to focus on a particular subgroup that can provide rich, detailed information about the research topic.

**3.6. Sample size:** A total of 100 (N=100) young adult women (age range from 18-30 years) has been chosen for the current study.

**3.7. Inclusion Criteria**

- The participants must be between the age range of 18–30 years.
- The participants must reside in Shillong, Meghalaya.
- The participants must have been exposed to societal beauty standards through media, peer interactions, or cultural norms.
- The Participants should be proficient in the language used for the questionnaires (i.e. English).

**3.8. Exclusion Criteria**

- Those have recently migrated to Shillong will be excluded.
- Those who are not available on at least one social media platform.
- Those who are diagnosed with any mental health condition, bodily disorder, body image.

### 3.9. Description of tools

#### 3.9.1. The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4

##### About the Scale:

The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) was developed by a team of researchers led by Lauren M. Schaefer. The team also included Natasha L. Burke, J. Kevin Thompson, Robert F. Dedrick, Leslie J. Heinberg, and several other contributors. The scale was published in 2015.

**Age Range:** The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) is typically used with adolescents and adults. The age range for this scale generally includes individuals from around 15 to 55 years old

The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) consists of **22 items**. These items are designed to assess thin- and muscular-ideal internalization as well as appearance-related pressures from peers, family, and media.

**Subscales:** the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) is divided into subscales. The SATAQ-4 consists of five subscales:

1. **Internalization: Thin/Low Body Fat** - Measures the extent to which individuals internalize the thin ideal.
2. **Internalization: Muscular/Athletic** - Measures the extent to which individuals internalize the muscular or athletic ideal.
3. **Pressures: Family** - Assesses perceived pressures from family members to conform to appearance ideals.

4. **Pressures: Peers** - Assesses perceived pressures from peers to conform to appearance ideals.
5. **Pressures: Media** - Assesses perceived pressures from media sources to conform to appearance ideals
  - The Internalization: Thin/Low Body Fat subscale is composed of five items (Items 3, 4, 5, 8, 9).
  - The Internalization: Muscular/Athletic subscale is also composed of five items (Items 1, 2, 6, 7, 10). The Pressures: Family subscale contains four items (Items 11–14).
  - The Pressures: Peers subscale contains four items (Items 15–18).
  - The Pressures: Media subscale contains four items (Items 19–22)

**Scoring:** The questions are measures on a 5-point Likert scale; Definitely Disagree = 1, Mostly Disagree = 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Mostly Agree = 4, Definitely Agree = 5.

**Reliability:** The SATAQ-4 demonstrates good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.70 to 0.95 for its subscales.

**Validity:**

- **Convergent Validity:** The SATAQ-4 subscales show moderate to large positive associations with measures of body image and eating disturbances, indicating good convergent validity.
- **Divergent Validity:** The subscales generally exhibit no relationship with measures that are theoretically unrelated, supporting good divergent validity.

**Cross-Cultural Adaptation:** The SATAQ-4 has been validated in various cultural contexts, including French, Japanese, and Brazilian populations, demonstrating its robustness and applicability across different groups



**Interpretation:** Interpreting the scores of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) involves understanding the subscales and what higher or lower scores indicate. Here's a breakdown:

1. **Internalization: Thin/Low Body Fat:** Higher scores indicate a greater internalization of the thin ideal, meaning the individual places a high value on being thin and may strive to achieve this ideal.
2. **Internalization: Muscular/Athletic:** Higher scores indicate a greater internalization of the muscular or athletic ideal, meaning the individual values muscularity and athleticism and may strive to achieve this ideal.
3. **Pressures: Family:** Higher scores indicate that the individual perceives more pressure from family members to conform to appearance ideals.
4. **Pressures: Peers:** Higher scores indicate that the individual perceives more pressure from peers to conform to appearance ideals.
5. **Pressures: Media:** Higher scores indicate that the individual perceives more pressure from media sources to conform to appearance ideals.

Each item is rated on a Likert scale, typically from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scores for each subscale are summed, and higher total scores indicate greater internalization or perceived pressure in that domain.

### **3.9.2. Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ-8C)**

#### **About the scale:**

BSQ-8C is the brief form of the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) and it consist of eight items extracted from the full version. In 1993, six shortened versions of the BSQ were established by Evans and Dolan- BSQ-8A, BSQ-8B, BSQ-8C, BSQ-8D, BSQ-16A, BSQ-16B scales, with the purpose of constructing equivalent shortened questionnaires that retained the reliability and validity of the original long version (Welch et al., 2012). The validity and reliability of these shortened BSQs were tested in other languages, including German (Pook et al., 2008) and Spanish (Warren et al., 2008).

**Age range:** 18-30 years.

**Reliability and Validity:** Highest–retest reliability( $r=.95$ ). The internal consistency of the BSQ 8C measured with Cronbach’s alpha was .92. The test–retest reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity for BSQ-8C were high.

**Scoring:** Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1-“Never” to 6-“Always”). The possible scores vary between 8 and 48.

**Interpretation:** Higher the scores indicating greater body dissatisfaction.

Below 19 = no body dissatisfaction.

19-25= mild body dissatisfaction.

26-33 = moderate body dissatisfaction.

33 above = severe body dissatisfaction.

### **3.10. Operational Definitions**

#### **Sociocultural attitude**

A **sociocultural attitude** encompasses the collective beliefs, norms, and expectations shaped by society and culture that influence individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. These attitudes often reflect broader societal values, such as beauty standards, gender roles, and cultural ideals, and they play a significant role in shaping how people perceive themselves and others. In the context of body image, sociocultural attitudes are primarily influenced by media, peers, and family, which often promote and reinforce specific standards of physical appearance (Thompson et al., 1999).

#### **Body image**

Body image is the depiction of one's own body which individuals form in one's mind that is the way in which the body appears to ourselves (Schilder, 1935).

#### **Young Adult**

According to Erik Erikson's stages of human development, first enumerated in *Childhood and Society* (1950) a young adult is a person between the ages of 18 and 40. Erikson is one of the most influential psychologists on the topic of life stages, he defined young adulthood as a crucial stage that happens after adolescence. It's the point in life when a person emphasizes "identity formation."

### **3.11. Methods and process of data collection**

1. Sample size will be selected for data collection and accordingly data will be collected from different areas in Shillong.
2. A purposive sampling technique is chosen for collection of data
3. Standardised questionnaires along with socio-demographic data sheet is prepared for data collection
4. Informed consent will be taken/provided to the concerned participants.
5. Ethical considerations will be ensured to maintain confidentiality of the data.
6. Collected data will be organised for detail analysis of results.
7. Data collected will be analysed using SPSS. Interpretation of the data will be done based on the objectives and hypothesis formulated.

## CHAPTER 4

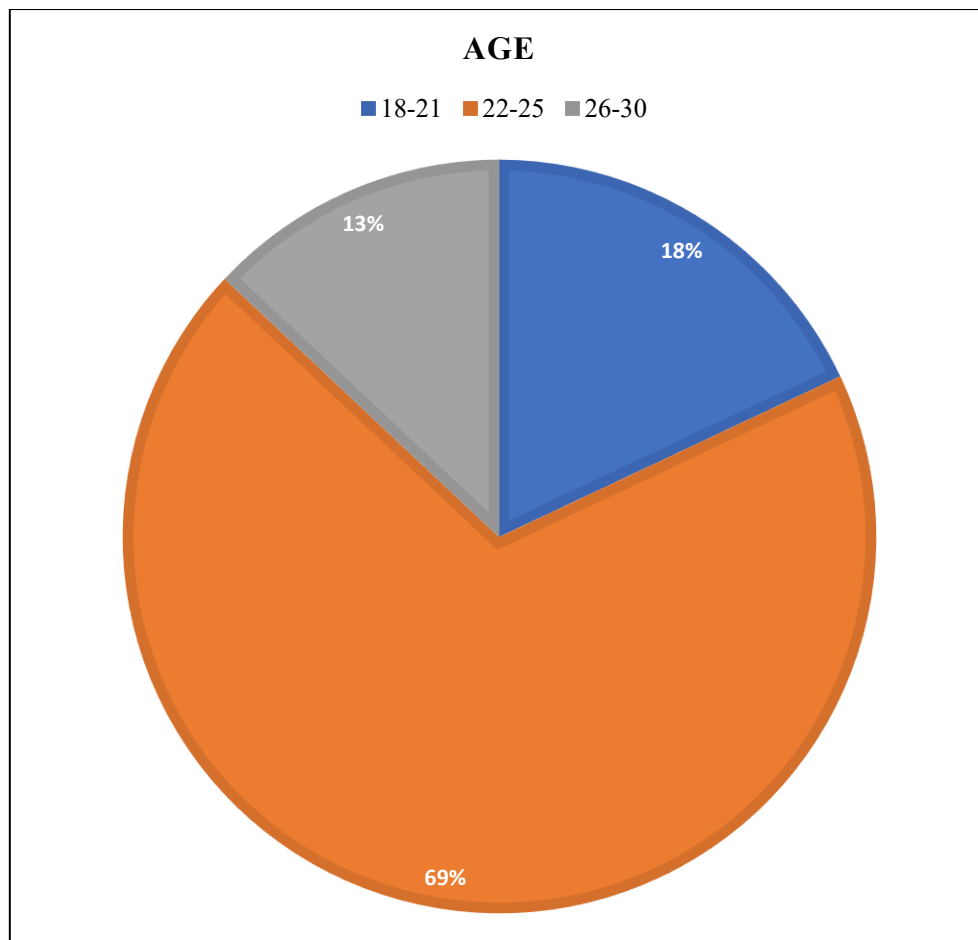
### RESULT AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Socio demographics characteristics of the sample

In the present study, socio-demographic variables were collected from the total sample of 100 participants. They were: *Gender* (Female), *Age* (18 to 30 years), *Ethnicity* (Khasi, Jaintia and Garo), *Educational Qualification* (High School, Undergraduate and Post-Graduate), *Occupation* (Student And Working Professional), *Location* (Urban and Rural) and *Family Type* (Nuclear, Joint and Extended).

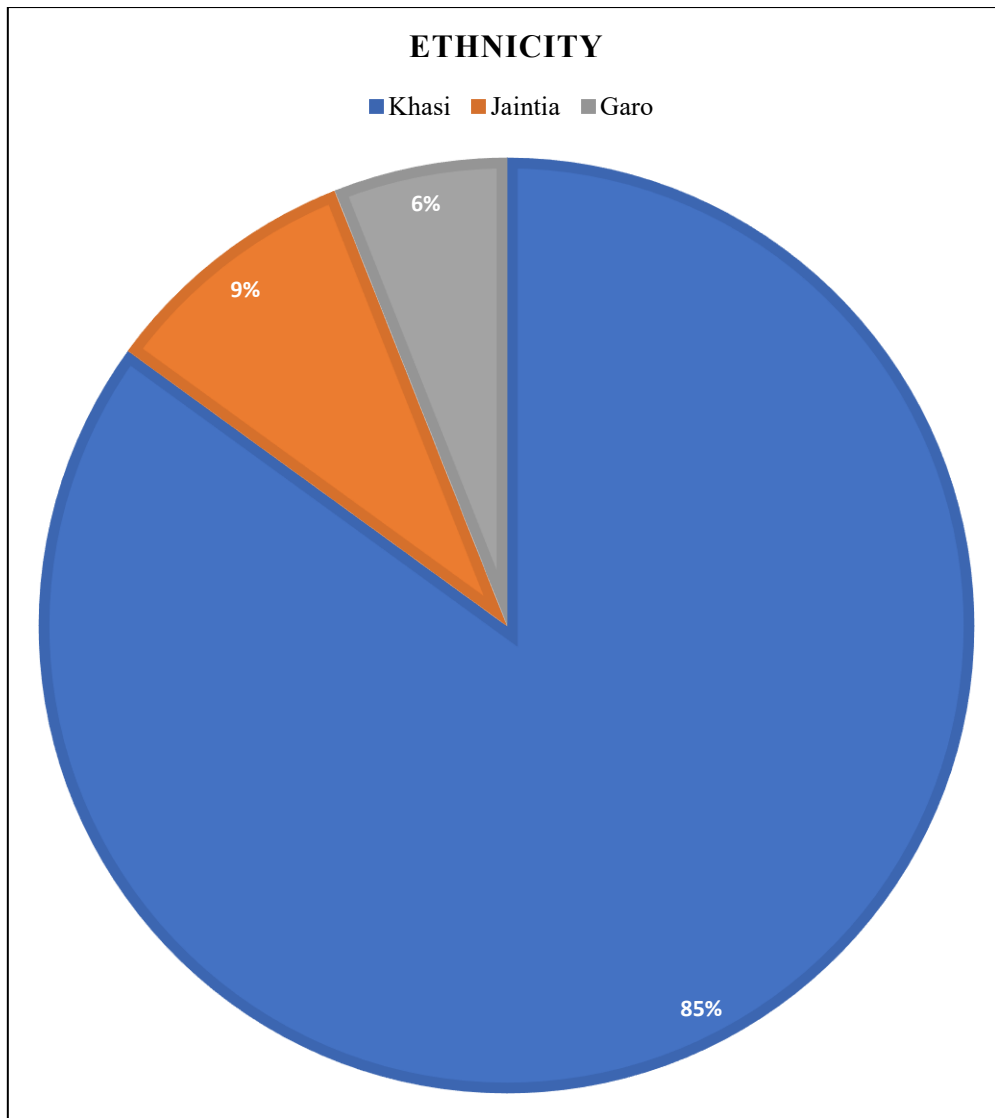
#### Figure 4.1

*Graphical representation of distribution of sample on the basis of socio-demographic characteristics: (a) Age (b) Ethnicity (c) Educational Background (d) Occupation (e) Location and (f) Family Type*



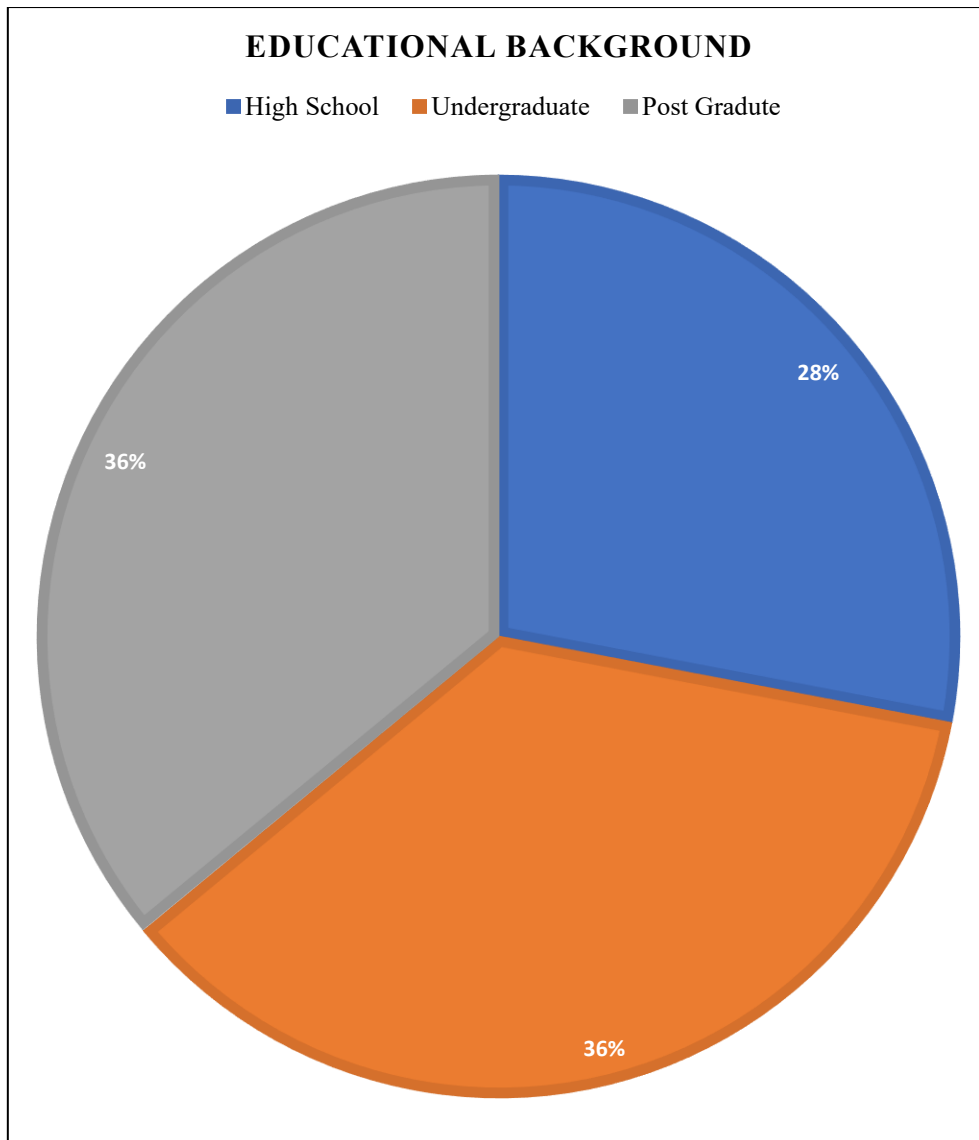
**Fig. 4.1 (a)**

Figure 4.1 (a) shows the distribution of the sample on the basis of *Age*. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of 18-21 years (18%), 22-25 years (69%) and 26-30 years (13%).



**Fig. 4.1 (b)**

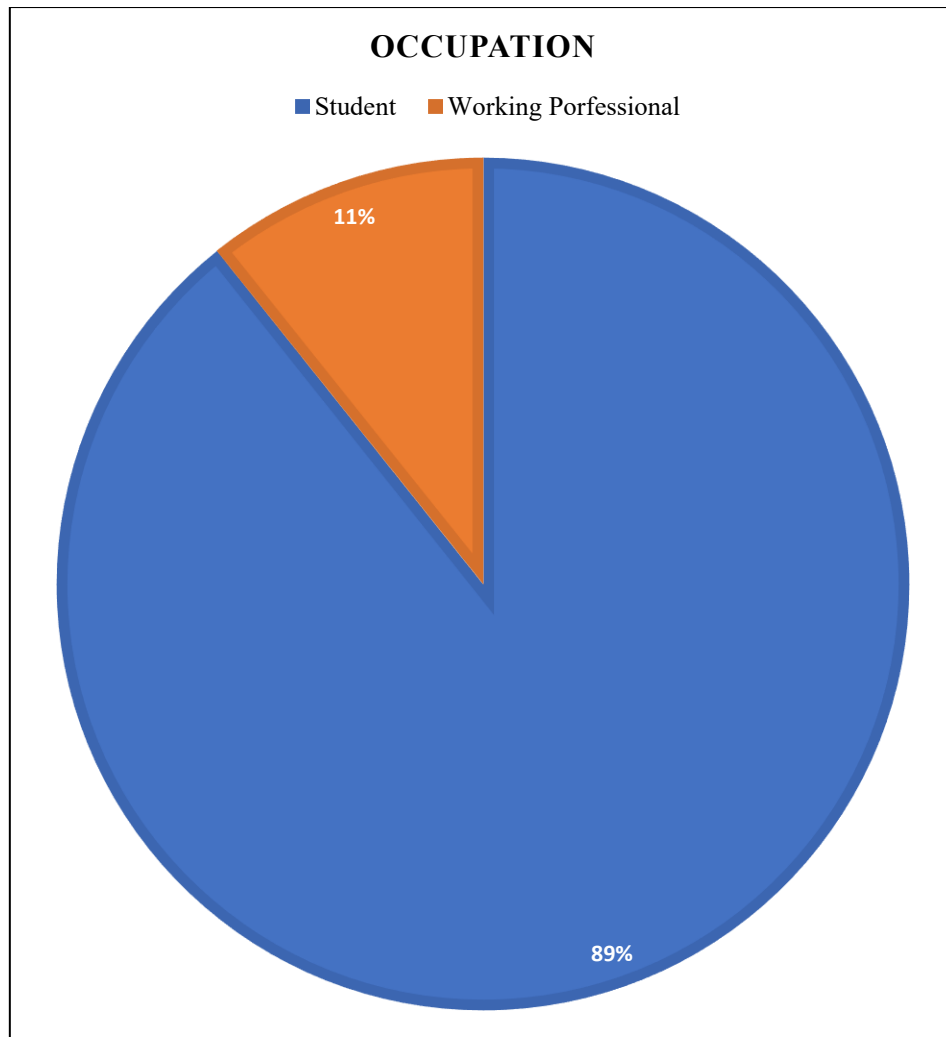
Figure 4.1 (b) shows the distribution of the sample on the basis of *Ethnicity*. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of Khasi (85%), Jaintia (9%) and Garo (6%).



**Fig. 4.1 (c)**

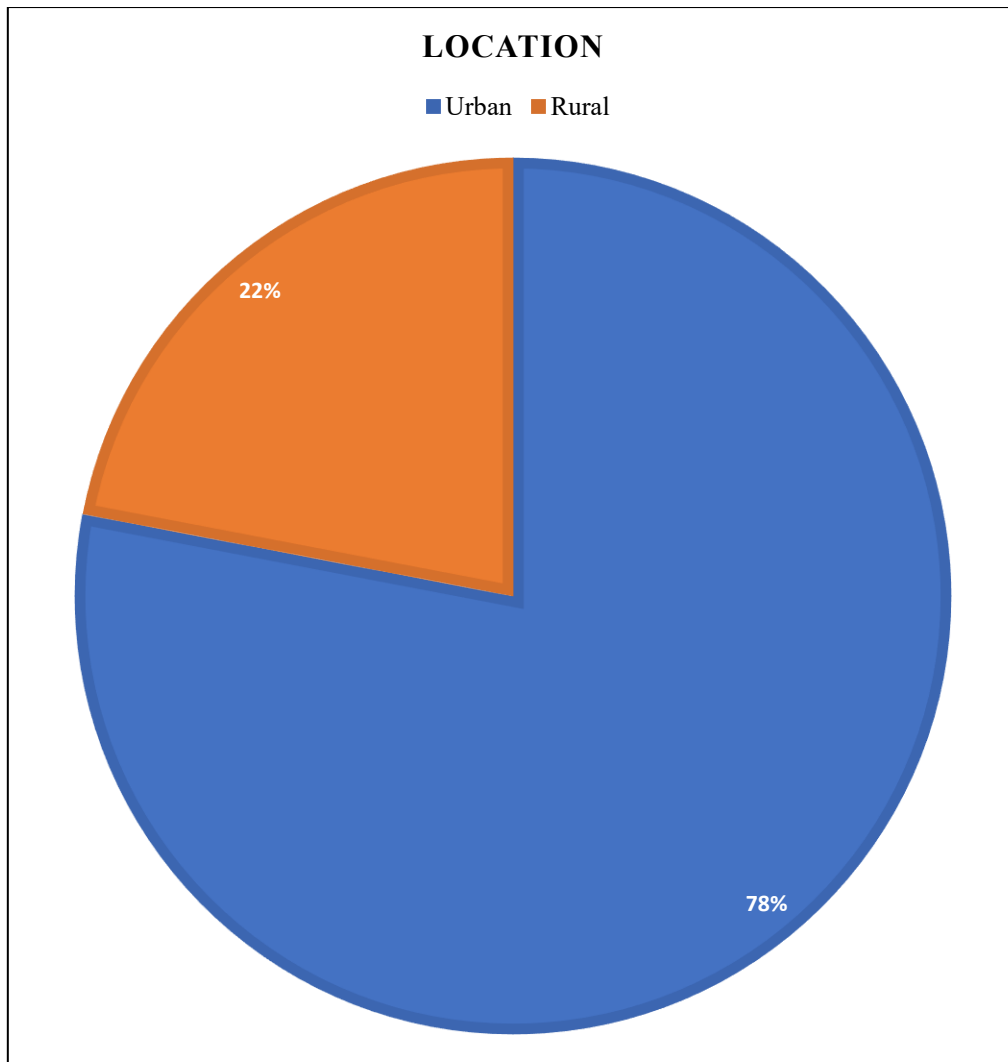
Figure 4.1 (c) shows the distribution of the sample on the basis on Education Background. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of High school students (28%), Undergraduate (36%) and Post-Graduate (36%).





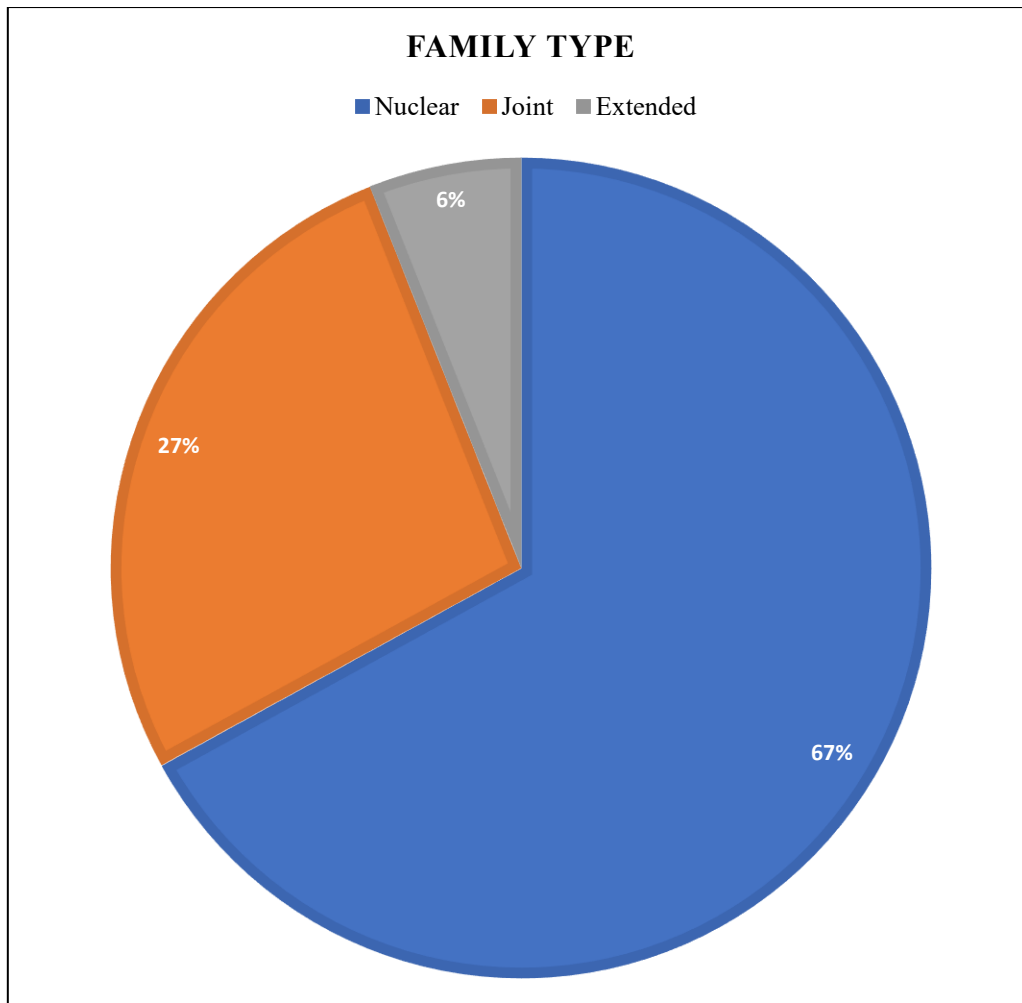
**Fig. 4.1 (d)**

Figure 4.1 (d) shows the distribution of the sample on the basis of *Occupation*. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of Student (89%) and Working Professional (11%).



**Fig. 4.1 (e)**

Figure 4.1 (e) shows the distribution of the sample on the basis of *Location*. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of Urban (78%) and 26-Rural (22%).



**Fig. 4.1. (f)**

**Figure 4.1 (f)** shows the distribution of the sample on the basis of *Family Type*. Out of the 100 female participants, the sample consisted of Nuclear (67%), Joint (27%) and Extended (6%).

**Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample**

**Table 4.2.**

*Mean, SD for Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance-4 among female young adults.*

*(N=100)*

Scale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sociocultural Attitude Towards Appearance Scale-4 (SATAQ-4)	100	1.06	2.94
Internalization: Thinnes/Low Body Fat (IT)	100	14.78	3.83
Internalization: Muscular/Athletic (IM)	100	11.64	4.46
Pressures: Family (PF)	100	10.04	4.30
Pressures: Peers (PP)	100	8.61	3.94
Pressures: Media (PM)	100	11.97	5.30

Table 4.1. presents the mean and standard deviation scores for the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) and its subscales among 100 young adult females. The overall mean score of SATAQ-4 was 1.06 (SD = 2.94), indicating a relatively low overall internalization of sociocultural appearance ideals. Among the subscales, the highest mean score was observed for Internalization–Thin/Low Body Fat (IT) at 14.78 (SD = 3.83), followed by Pressures from Media (PM) at 11.97 (SD = 5.30). This suggests that participants experienced more influence from thin-ideal standards and media-related pressures than from appearance comparisons or muscularity-related ideals.

**Table 4.2.**

*Descriptive Statistics for Body Shape Questionnaire-8C among female young adults (N=100).*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Body Shape Questionnaire-8C (BSQ-8C)	100	23.66	9.00

Table 4.2. shows the mean and standard deviation for the Body Shape Questionnaire-8C (BSQ-8C) among the same participants. The mean BSQ score was 23.66 (SD = 9.00). This score falls within the mild concern range for body shape, suggesting that most participants showed some level of concern about their body image, but it was not markedly severe.

**Table 4.3**

*Mean comparison of groups of Socio-Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance (SATAQ-4) and Body Image perception based on Educational background (N=100)*

Dimensions of SATAQ-4		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-value
Internalization: Thinness/Low Body Fat	Between groups	21.620	2	10.810	.732	.483
	Within groups	1431.540	97	14.758		
	Total	1453.160	99			
Internalization: Muscular/Athletic	Between groups	7.389	2	3.695	.182	.834
	Within groups	1965.651	97	20.264		
	Total	1973.040	99			
Pressures: Family	Between groups	37.229	2	18.614	1.004	.370
	Within groups	1798.611	97	18.542		
	Total	1835.840	99			
Pressures: Peers	Between groups	56.611	2	28.306	1.849	.163
	Within groups	1485.179	97	15.311		
	Total	1541.790	99			
Pressures: Media	Between groups	200.843	2	100.421	<b>3.775*</b>	.026
	Within groups	2580.067	97	26.599		
	Total	2780.910	99			
Sociocultural Attitude Towards Appearance Scale-4 (SATAQ-4)	Between groups	4304.731	2	2152.366	2.552	.083
	Within groups	81794.429	97	843.242		
	Total	86099.160	99			
Body Shape Questionnaire-8C	Between groups	67.027	2	33.514	.408	.666
	Within groups	7963.413	97	82.097		
	Total	8030.440	99			

*Note.* \*significant at 0.05 levels, <sup>ns</sup> non-significant

Table 4.3. presents the results of one-way ANOVA demonstrated that there was a significant main effect of Educational background on Body Image perception at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the dimension of Pressure: Media,  $F(2,97) = 3.77, p = .026$ . However, post hoc test revealed that there were no significant differences between the three levels of educational backgrounds. All other dimensions did not indicate any statistically significant difference between the three levels of educational background. Hence,  $H_{02}$  which states that “*There will be no difference in socio-cultural attitudes and body image perception based on educational background*” is accepted.

**Table 4.4.**

*Relationship between Socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and Body Image among female young adults (N=100)*

	Body Shape Questionnaire-8C
Internalization: Thinnes/Low Body Fat	<b>.623**</b>
Internalization: Muscular/Athletic	<b>.214*</b>
Pressures: Family	<b>.412**</b>
Pressures: Peers	<b>.277**</b>
Pressures: Media	<b>.558**</b>
Sociocultural Attitude Towards Appearance Scale-4	<b>.311**</b>

*Note.* \*\*significant at 0.01 levels \*significant at 0.05 levels

Table 4.4. indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between all the dimensions of Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance and body image among female young adults in the study. A significant positive correlation was found between Internalization: Thinness/Low body fat and Body Image,  $r(98) = .623$ ,  $p = .00$ , between Internalization: Muscular/Athletic and Body Image,  $r(98) = .214$ ,  $p = .033$ , between Pressures: Family and Body Image,  $r(98) = .412$ ,  $p = .00$ , between PP and BI,  $r(98) = .277$ ,  $p = .005$  and between PM and BI,  $r(98) = .558$ ,  $p = .00$ . There was also a significant positive relationship between the overall SCA and BI,  $r(98) = .311$ ,  $p = .002$ . Thus,  $H^1$  which states that “*There will be a significant relationship between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and body image among young adult female*” is accepted.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This present study was intended to study the relationship between Sociocultural Attitude Towards Appearance (SATAQ) and Body Image among female young adults in Shillong. Findings in the present study showed a clear positive correlation between sociocultural attitudes and body image concerns, confirming Hypothesis 1 (H<sup>1</sup>) that states “There will be a significant relationship between socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance body image among young adult female”, this aligns with the Tripartite Influence Model (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999), which suggests that the three primary sources – Media, Family and Peers contribute to the development of the body dissatisfaction. The study included a sample of 100 female young adults from Shillong, Meghalaya, where high SATAQ-4 scores (reflecting greater Internalization of appearance and perceived pressure) were linked to more severe body shape dissatisfaction which can be supported by a similar study conducted in Northeast India found that family, peer and media were significantly negatively correlated with body image satisfaction (i.e. it is positively correlated with dissatisfaction) (Basistha, Ali & Paul). These findings suggest that the sociocultural messages young women receive about body image are strongly associated with how they view their own bodies.

Media plays an important role in today’s world due to globalization; it has become a platform where people are able to access and share unrealistic ideals which can greatly influence the perception of others. In this study the participants scored high on the SATAQ-4 of – Internalization: Thinness/Low Body Fat (IT) and Pressure: Media (PM) subscales, indicating that thin ideal imagery and media pressure were the most prominent sociocultural factors. This is supported by previous research that highlighted how digital media intensifies the promotion of unattainable beauty standards, especially for the youth (Perloff, 2024). Thin-Idealization is

a well known risk factor for body dissatisfaction in women, suggesting that even the modest uptake of media ideals can heighten the concern about one's weight and shape. Family Influence also plays a role as the findings resonate with the literature showing that parenting or familial emphasis on appearance can foster body dissatisfaction which can be supported by the cross-sectional study of Indian undergraduates found that "high family pressure negatively affects body satisfaction in both men and women" (Nebal-Schwalm, 2023). Thus, the combined effects of idealized media imagery and critical family messages likely contribute to the elevated body concerns seen in some participants. These pressures may operate through direct comments (e.g. teasing or encouragement to diet) or through subtle expectations conveyed within the family unit. Additionally, peer pressure was significantly correlated with body image. This aligns with research findings that emphasize the role of peers in reinforcing body ideals through appearance-based conversations, teasing, or comparison (Clark & Tiggemann, 2015). In adolescence and early adulthood, peer groups become highly influential social environments. Peer appearance comparison, especially through social media, has been linked to greater body dissatisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2015). In Shillong's urbanizing youth culture, where social circles are often influenced by trends and online image sharing, peer-driven appearance pressure may be particularly impactful.

Educational background showed a subtle overall effect on perceived media pressure (SATAQ-4), but post hoc tests did not identify specific group differences. This suggests a trend whereby education might influence media-related attitudes, but our sample size or group distributions may have been insufficient to detect where the differences lie. It is plausible that educational attainment can affect media literacy and critical thinking, potentially moderating how pressures are internalized.

In the current study the participants' SATAQ-4 scores indicated relatively low overall internalization of appearance ideals. Nevertheless, the highest subscale scores were for

Internalization: Thinness/Low Body Fat (IT) and Pressure: Media (PM), pointing to a specific concern with slimness as an ideal. This pattern is important because thin-ideal internalization is a key predictor of body dissatisfaction. In practice, it means that even though most young women here do not strongly endorse extreme beauty standards, those who do (or who feel media pressure) tend to experience more dissatisfaction about their bodies.

Consistent with the SATAQ-4 findings, BSQ-8C scores indicated only mild concern about body shape. According to standard cutoffs, BSQ-8C scores from 19–25 is classified as “mild concern with shape”. The participants’ average scores fell in this range, suggesting that on average they have moderate, rather than severe, body dissatisfaction. This level of concern fits the broader cultural context: Indian samples often report body image disturbances, but frequently at lower mean levels than those seen in the most Westernized populations. In other words, while young women in Shillong do internalize thinness ideals to some extent, most maintain a relatively neutral to mildly concerned body image. This mild level of dissatisfaction may be tempered by local values or a diversity of beauty norms in the region.

These findings have important implications for young adult women in Shillong and similar contexts. The strong link between media/family/peer pressures and body dissatisfaction suggests that interventions should target both channels. For media, media literacy and critical education are promising. For instance, school-based media literacy programs (which teach students to deconstruct unrealistic images) have been shown to improve body image and reduce dissatisfaction. Implementing such programs locally could help young women question unrealistic appearance ideals. For families and peers, awareness campaigns or workshops could encourage supportive communication styles. Given evidence that family and peer criticism about weight or appearance can have long-lasting negative effects, parents and siblings should be guided to foster acceptance and self-esteem rather than emphasizing ideal body norms. In practice, healthcare providers and educators in Meghalaya might collaborate to promote

positive body talk, celebrate diverse body shapes, and involve community elders in reshaping traditional beauty messages. Overall, recognizing the roles of media, family and peer means that efforts to improve body image should be multi-faceted, involving educational, familial, and possibly policy-level components.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study found a significant positive relationship between Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance and Body Image concerns among female young adults in Shillong. Internalization of thin ideals and media pressure were the most influential factors, while peer influence also played a notable role whereas education background showed limited impact on the difference sociocultural attitudes and body image.

These findings highlight the need for interventions focused on media literacy, positive peer influence and supportive family communication to promote healthier body image. Future research should included diverse populations and explore these influences in greater depth using qualitative or longitudinal methods.

#### **6.1. Implications of the study**

- This research study raises awareness and educates young women and the community about the influence of socio-cultural attitudes on body image, promoting self-awareness and critical views of media and societal standards.
- This research study promotes body positivity and helps challenge unrealistic beauty standards, encouraging acceptance of diverse body types and reducing body dissatisfaction.
- This research study guides intervention programs, provides evidence-based insights for designing targeted interventions such as media literacy, family communication workshops, and counselling to improve body image and mental health.

- This research study contributes to reducing mental health issues by addressing factors like body dissatisfaction and societal pressures, it can help lower risks of eating disorders, depression, and anxiety among young women.
- This research study informs educational content and guides curriculum developers and educators to incorporate body positivity, self-esteem, and media literacy into school and college programs.
- This research study supports policy development and provides data to policymakers for creating culturally sensitive mental health and wellness policies aimed at promoting healthy body standards.
- This research study empowers community and family structures and encourages supportive family and peer environments, fostering open discussions about appearance and self-acceptance.
- This research study facilitates cultural reflection which highlights local cultural norms and beauty standards, helping communities engage in dialogues about redefining and embracing diverse ideals.
- This research study fosters socio-cultural change and aids society in challenging negative stereotypes and promoting inclusive beauty standards, leading to a more accepting and healthier social environment.
- This research study contributes to research and knowledge, adds valuable data specific to the Northeastern Indian context, filling gaps in existing literature and guiding future societal initiatives.

## **6.2. Limitations of the study**

- Sample characteristics: The study used a modest sample (N=100) drawn from young women in Shillong. This limits statistical power and generalizability. Our results may not apply to other regions of India or to rural populations with different cultural norms.
- As the age of the target sample was limited to 18-30 years, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other age groups.
- Self-report measures: Reliance on questionnaires (SATAQ-4, BSQ-8C) may introduce response bias. Participants might under-report concerns due to social desirability or misinterpret questions.
- Cultural specificity: The SATAQ-4 and BSQ-8C were developed in Western contexts. Although they have been used in India, some cultural nuances of appearance ideals in Shillong (e.g. ethnic beauty standards) might not be fully captured.
- Unmeasured variables: We did not account for factors like body mass index (BMI), mental health status, or social media usage patterns, which could moderate body image. Future studies should control for or directly examine these factors.

## **6.3. Suggestions for Future Research**

- Conduct longitudinal studies to track how socio-cultural attitudes predict changes in body image over time, which would clarify causality.
- Include males and other age groups to see if similar patterns hold. Men's body ideals (muscularity vs. thinness) may interact differently with media/family pressures.
- Employ qualitative methods (e.g. interviews or focus groups) to explore in depth how young women in Shillong experience and interpret appearance pressures. Qualitative insights could reveal cultural factors not captured by standard scales.

- Expand sampling to larger and more diverse samples (different cities, rural areas, educational backgrounds) to test generalizability.
- Test intervention programs (e.g. media literacy curricula, family communication workshops) to determine what approaches effectively reduce body dissatisfaction.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

**Have you ever been diagnosed with any mental condition or bodily disorder?**

- Yes
- No

**Do you Consent to participate in this research study?**

- Yes
- No

### **Socio-Demographic Data Sheet**

1. **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ (in years)
3. **Gender:**
  - Female
4. **Ethnicity:**
  - Khasi
  - Jaintia
  - Garo
5. **Educational Background:**
  - High School
  - Undergraduate Degree
  - Postgraduate Degree
6. **Current Occupation (option):**
  - Student
  - Worling Professional
7. **Location:**
  - Urban
  - Rural
8. **Family Type:**
  - Nuclear
  - Joint
  - Extended

## APPENDIX B

### Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please read each of the following items carefully and indicate the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

Definitely Disagree = 1 Mostly Disagree = 2 Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3 Mostly Agree = 4 Definitely Agree = 5

Items	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is important for me to look athletic.					
2. I think a lot about looking muscular.					
3. I want my body to look very thin.					
4. I want my body to look like it has little fat.					
5. I think a lot about looking thin.					
6. I spend a lot of time doing things to look more athletic.					
7. I think a lot about looking athletic.					
8. I want my body to look very lean.					
9. I think a lot about having very little body fat.					
10. I spend a lot of time doing things to look more muscular.					
Answer the following questions with relevance to your Family (include: parents, brothers, sisters, relatives):					
11. I feel pressure from family members to look thinner.					
12. I feel pressure from family members to improve my appearance.					
13. Family members encourage me to decrease my level of body fat.					
14. Family members encourage me to get in better shape.					
Answer the following questions with relevance to your Peers (include: close friends, classmates, other social contacts):					
15. My peers encourage me to get thinner.					
16. I feel pressure from my peers to improve my appearance.					
17. I feel pressure from my peers to look in better shape.					
18. I get pressure from my peers to decrease my level of body fat.					
Answer the following questions with relevance to the Media (include: television, magazines, the Internet, movies, billboards, and advertisements):					

19. I feel pressure from the media to look in better shape.					
20. I feel pressure from the media to look thinner.					
21. I feel pressure from the media to improve my appearance.					
22. I feel pressure from the media to decrease my level of body fat.					

## APPENDIX C

### Body Shape Questionnaire – 8-Item Version C (BSQ-8C)©

We should like to know how you have been feeling about your appearance over the **PAST FOUR WEEKS**. Please read each question and circle the appropriate number to the right. Please answer all the questions.

#### OVER THE PAST FOUR WEEKS:

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very often		Always
1. Have you been afraid that you might become fat (or fatter)?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
2. Has feeling full (e.g. after eating a large meal) made you feel fat?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
3. Has thinking about your shape interfered with your ability to concentrate (e.g. while watching television, reading, listening to conversations)?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
4. Have you imagined cutting off fleshy areas of your body?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
5. Have you felt excessively large and rounded?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
6. Have you thought that you are in the shape you are because you lack self-control?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
7. Has seeing your reflection (e.g. in a mirror or shop window) made you feel bad about your shape?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					
8. Have you been particularly self-conscious about your shape when in the company of other people?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6					



## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “A study on the relationship between Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and body image among young female adults in Shillong”, is submitted to the School of Social Science and Humanities and to the Department of Psychology, Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia Garden, Sonapur, Assam -782402, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Science in Psychology (Counselling Psychology). During the period of her study 2023-2025, embodies the result of bonafide research work carried out by Monaliza Khyriem Diengdoh, bearing the ID: DU2023MSC0285 under my guidance and supervision.

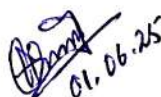


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