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Does Men's Body Satisfaction with Specific Parts Differentially Affect Body-image-related Mental Distress by Sexual Orientation? a Comparison of Gay, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Men in Taiwan

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Introduction: Prior research on body-image-related issues has mainly focused on the relationship between overall body satisfaction and health-related outcomes, particularly among Western women. However, there is still a paucity of information on whether body satisfaction with specific body parts is differentially associated with body-image-related mental distress, especially across gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men in Taiwan.

Objectives: To identify the differences by sexual orientation regarding the relationship between satisfaction with specific body parts and body-image-related mental distress among Taiwanese men.

Aims: To develop effective interventions to reduce mental distress related to body dissatisfaction in men.

Methods: A total of 665 male participants were recruited via a popular electronic bulletin board system frequented by Taiwanese youth.

Results: Increased levels of satisfaction with weight were significantly associated with lower odds of body-image-related mental distress across gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men (AOR=0.38, 0.31, and 0.56, respectively). Gay men who were more satisfied with their height (AOR=0.57) and body fat (AOR=0.28), as well as heterosexual men who were more satisfied with their facial features (AOR=0.51), muscle (AOR=0.53), and body fat (AOR=0.55), were significantly less likely to have body-image-related mental distress than their counterparts.

Conclusions: Higher levels of satisfaction with various specific body parts were associated with reduced risk of body-image-related mental distress. Further, these associations varied differentially across gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men. Future research may explore the possible mechanisms through which satisfaction with specific body parts influences men's body-image-related mental distress. Accordingly, interventions could be tailored for men of different sexual orientations.