

Body image not always a drag on women's wellbeing

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Deakin University psychology researchers have found that body image isn't always a negative experience for women.

As part of her doctoral research, Rachel Chung from Deakin's School of Psychology is exploring women's experiences of their bodies and how this may be connected to how they feel about themselves in different aspects of their lives.

"The prevailing view on body image is that it is almost normal for women to be dissatisfied with their bodies," Ms Chung said.

"Most research on women's body image focuses on negative aspects, such as women's [dissatisfaction](#) with their shape and weight, and adverse factors associated with having a poor body image, such as poor self-esteem or an [eating disorder](#).

"I'm interested in finding out how positive aspects of body image are related to women's sense of well-being."

Around 200 women aged 18 to 76 have already completed the survey for Ms Chung's project.

While past studies have highlighted the negative aspects associated with women's body image, Ms Chung's preliminary findings indicate that body image can also be a positive influence on women's lives.

"How women feel about themselves in general is associated with what they think about their bodies and their [attitudes](#) toward their [physical health](#)," Ms Chung explained.

"Women who were more accepting of themselves—that is they held positive attitudes towards themselves, accepted their good and bad qualities and past life events—reported that they deliberately invested in a physically healthy lifestyle.

"The results revealed that for one third of women their body image had a positive impact on their emotional states, eating and exercise and sexual experiences. For one third of women, the impact was negative, and for one third there was no impact of body image on these variables.

"Women's attitudes about their body image were also related to their interpersonal relationships. Specifically, women who had more positive relations with others also reported that their [body image](#) had less impact on their lives."

Provided by Deakin University

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