

Summary

This doctoral thesis investigates the relationship between body-self relations, self-compassion, and health-related quality of life (HRQOL) among young and older Iranian men residing in Iran and Europe. The study addresses the increasing recognition that body image constitutes a significant aspect of psychological well-being, and that body-related concerns among men can affect their health, social functioning, and overall quality of life. Additionally, self-compassion is identified as a psychological resource that may enable individuals to respond more adaptively to body-related concerns, self-criticism, and social pressures.

This study employs a cross-generational focusing specifically on Iranian men living in and outside Iran. Their experiences of body image and masculinity are influenced by the interplay between traditional cultural values and globalized appearance ideals. By comparing men residing in Iran with Iranian men living in Europe, the research examines how varying social and cultural contexts may relate to body-self relations, self-compassion, and health-related quality of life (HRQOL). Additionally, the study compares younger men aged 22–35 years with older men aged 60 years and above to determine whether these associations differ across stages of adulthood.

This study included 640 Iranian men: 300 residing in Iran and 340 residing in Europe, specifically Germany and Sweden. Within the European sample, 233 were younger men and 107 were older men. The study used three standardized instruments: the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), the Persian Self-Compassion Scale (P-SCS), and the World Health Organization Quality of Life Questionnaire-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF). The study was conducted from 2021 to 2026, following ethical approval and informed consent procedures. Statistical analyses included reliability testing, descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analyses, moderation analyses, and structural equation modeling.

The findings indicate a significant relationship between body-self relations and HRQOL. More positive body-self relations were associated with better quality of life. Self-compassion was also positively associated with HRQOL across its physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. The analyses further suggested that self-compassion may partially explain the relationship between body-self relations and HRQOL. In addition, the moderation analyses indicated that self-compassion may influence the strength of the association between body-self relations and quality of life, supporting its potential protective role in the relationship between body-related concerns and well-being.

The age-related findings were multifaceted. In the age-group model, age did not significantly moderate the relationships among body-self relations, self-compassion, and health-related quality of life (HRQOL). However, incorporating country of residence into the model revealed a significant interaction between age and body-self relations, indicating that the association between body-self relations and HRQOL may differ across age groups depending on the broader living context. The study also identified differences in HRQOL between Iranian men residing in Iran and those living in Europe. These differences should not be attributed solely to cultural factors, as country of residence encompasses a range of social, economic, healthcare, environmental, and demographic variables.

Overall, the study supports an integrated perspective on men's well-being, emphasizing that both body-self relations and psychological responses to body-related experiences are important for HRQOL. Self-compassion is particularly relevant, as it may serve as a psychological resource for coping with body dissatisfaction and negative self-evaluation. This research contributes to the literature by simultaneously examining body image, self-compassion, and HRQOL among Iranian men from different generations and cultural contexts. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of considering men's body image within the broader context of health and psychological well-being, rather than viewing it solely as a matter of physical appearance.

The findings have potential implications for health promotion and psychological interventions. Approaches addressing men's body image may benefit from incorporating self-compassion, self-acceptance, mindfulness, and reduction of excessive self-criticism. Such interventions should also be culturally sensitive and should consider the multidimensional nature of quality of life. Finally, because the present study is cross-sectional and observational, causal conclusions cannot be drawn. Future longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to clarify the temporal relationships among body-self relations, self-compassion, and HRQOL across different cultural and developmental contexts.