

Physical Activity and Positive Self Talk and its Effects on Body Image



Ashlee Barton
Department of Social Work

Introduction

Negative feelings towards one's own self and physical appearance seems as if it is an integral part of who they are. Existing research suggests that harboring these negative feelings over time can have a detrimental effect on mental health.

- People who had little to no self compassion typically experienced poor mental health outcomes that were linked to low self esteem and poor body image perception (Marshall, Parker, Ciarrochi, Sahdra, Jackson, & Heaven, 2015).
- 2012 Study found that girls who previously rated high body dissatisfaction ultimately had increased self esteem outcomes after practicing positive self affirmations (Armitage, 2012), which was a source of information that heavily influenced the trajectory and methodology of this study.

While negative feelings of the self can have detrimental effects on mental wellbeing, these negative feelings of body image do not have to be permanent. In fact, there are ways to increase self esteem and raise perceptions of the body, as indicated by previous research and for the subject of this particular study.

Hypothesis:

Integrating physical activity & positive affirmations will have a positive impact on perceptions of body satisfaction and body confidence.

Methods

- Single-Subject Design
- 11 week Baseline & Intervention period
- Body Confidence Survey adapted from valid & reliable Body Image Scale by Hopwood et al.
 - Minimum score of 5, meaning extremely low level of body confidence, and a maximum score of 35, meaning an extremely high level of body confidence, were used to determine the levels of body confidence.
 - Some reversed scores to encourage reliable answers
- Baseline- 3 weeks of no intervention
- Intervention 1: physical activity three times per week for forty minutes each session (4 weeks)
- Intervention 2: positive affirmation about the self once per day (4 weeks)

Baseline Period

- Subject answered Body Confidence Survey once per week, for three weeks
 - Scored extremely low: average of 6.67 out of 35
- No interventions used here
 - Served as a reference point to evaluate the relationship between interventions and body confidence

Intervention 1: Physical Activity

- Consisted of *scheduled* time at the gym three (3) times per week, for forty minutes each session for a duration of four weeks.
- Body Confidence Survey answered once per week for four consecutive weeks
 - Average score of 11.5 out of 35

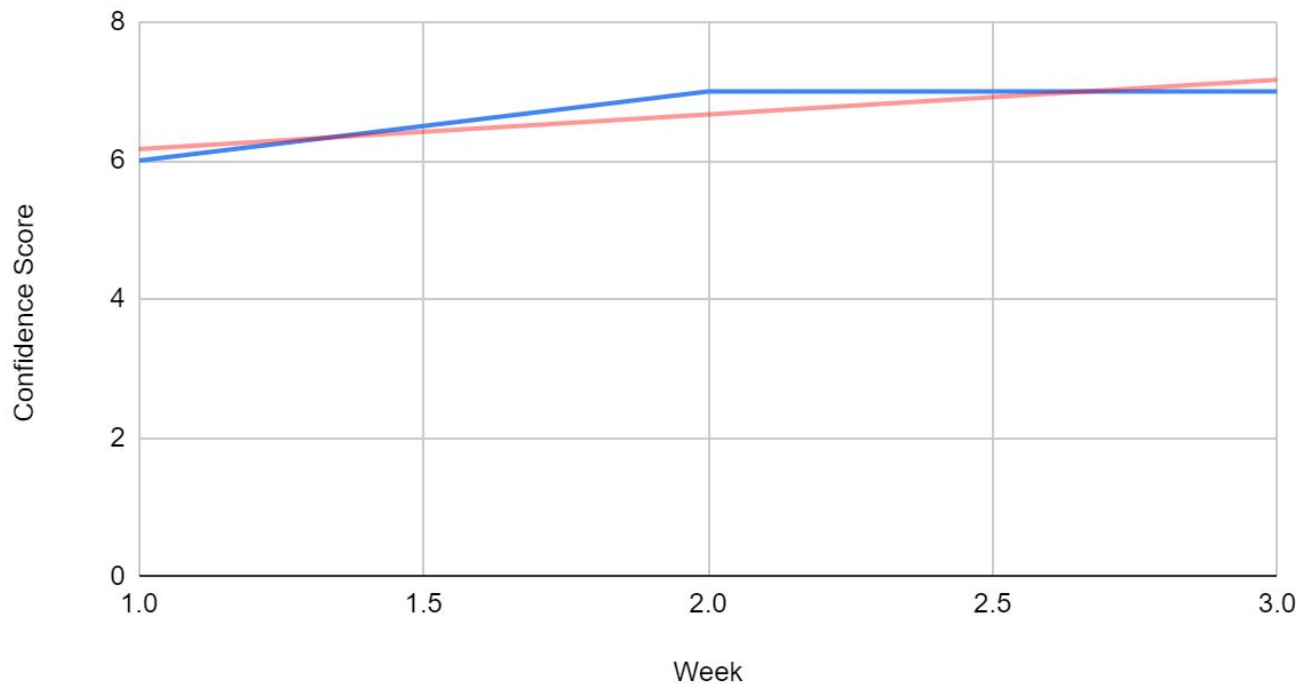
Intervention 2: Positive Affirmations

- Affirmations recorded *daily* for four weeks
- Google Form utilized to keep track of data entries
 - form consisted of a box that allowed the subject to submit a short answer to the question, “what is one thing you like about yourself?”
- Body Confidence Survey answered once per week for four consecutive weeks (after intervention 1)
 - Average score of 15 out of 35

Results

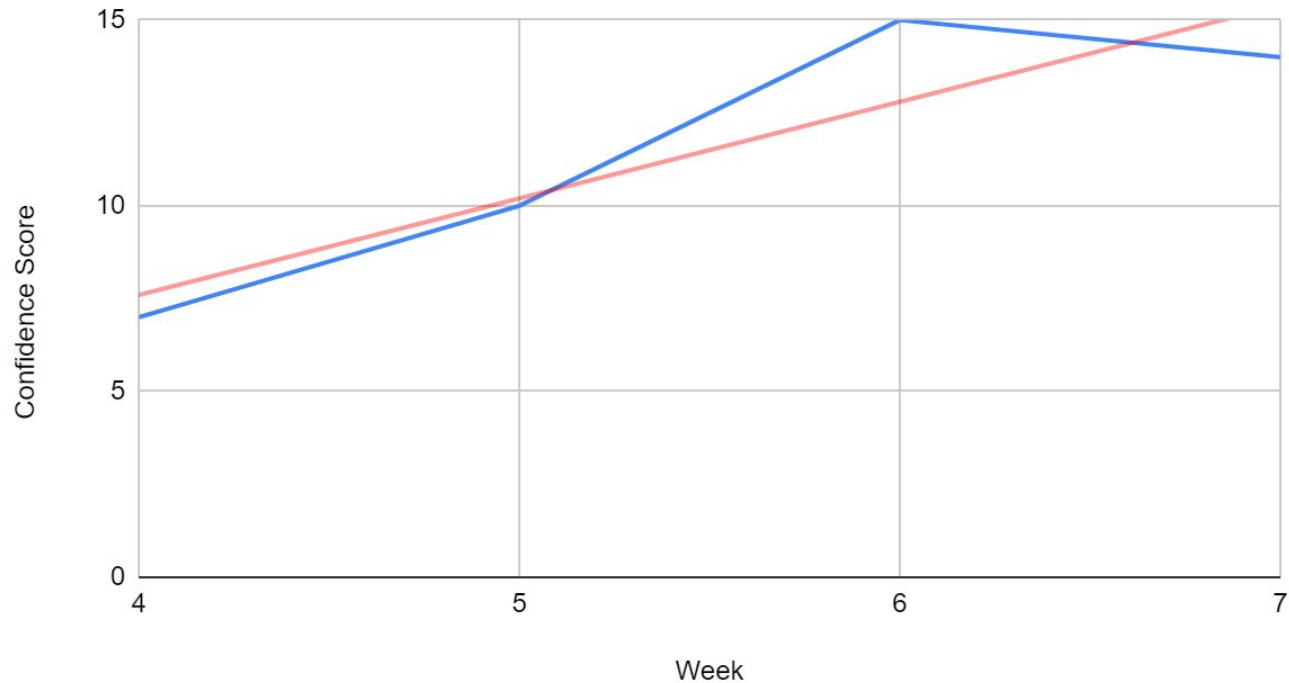
Baseline Period

Baseline (no intervention) & Confidence Score



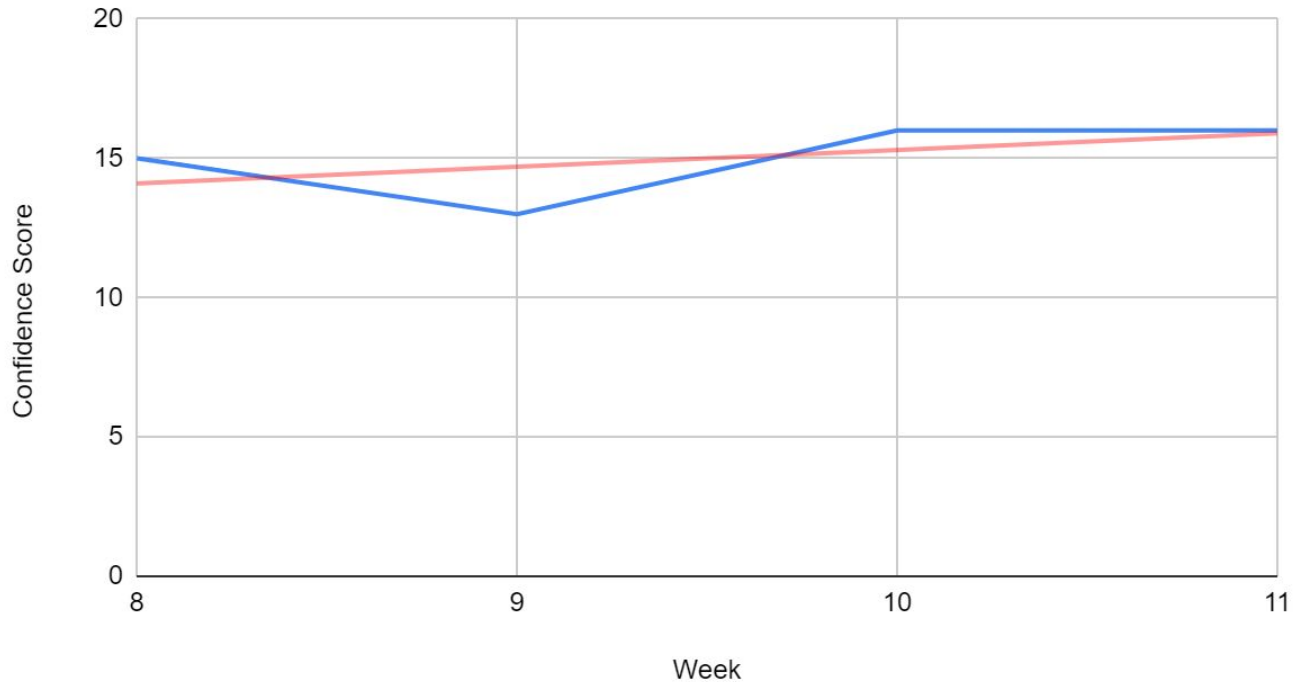
Intervention 1: Physical Activity Period

Intervention 1 Physical Activity & Body Confidence



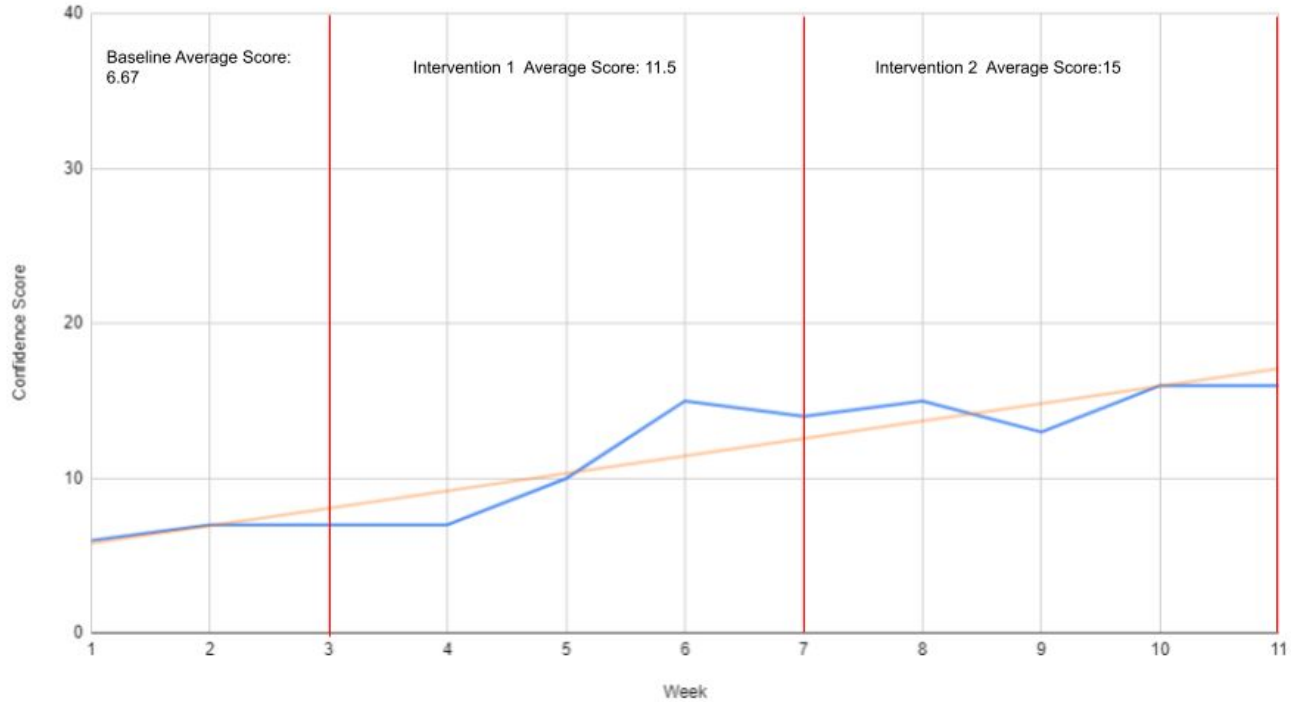
Intervention 2: Positive Affirmations Period

Intervention 2 Positive Affirmations & Body Confidence Score



Overall Results

Body Confidence Scores Before & During Intervention



Results (Cont'd)

- Physical activity had a positive relationship with perceived body confidence
 - Higher average score on survey than baseline, but lower average than daily affirmations
- Positive affirmations had a positive relationship with perceived body confidence
 - Higher average survey score than both baseline period and intervention 1
- Trendline has larger slope for physical activity: highest increase in scores

Discussion

Limitations

- NOT generalizable- SSD with one subject
- Self Reporting- possible bias
- Graded project- possible bias
- Survey was created by experimenter
 - Adapted from reliable and valid source, but this specific tool has not been tested as reliable or valid
- Intervention periods were the same length, but frequency of intervention differed (3 days vs 7 days per week)

- Limitations exist that could have skewed outcomes, and study cannot be determined to be generalizable
- It is worthwhile to explore the idea that positive affirmations and increased physical activity have an impact on body confidence because these are interventions that most people can do by themselves on a limited budget based on data gathered
 - more people may be able to prevent mental health issues that stem specifically from lack of body confidence
- This experiment *was* a success because it improved the mental wellbeing of the subject; the goal of the study

The goal of social workers, by nature, is to ensure that at the very least, one person is positively affected by an intervention

References

Armitage, C. J. (2012). Evidence that self-affirmation reduces body dissatisfaction by basing self-esteem on domains other than body weight and shape. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(1), 81-88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02442.x>

Marshall, S. L., Parker, P. D., Ciarrochi, J., Sahdra, B., Jackson, C. J., & Heaven, P. C. L. (2015).

Self-compassion protects against the negative effects of low self-esteem: A longitudinal study in a large adolescent sample. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 74, 116-121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.09.013>

Thank You!

Please utilize this time to
provide feedback or ask any
questions.