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Research Article

Why Some Women Feel Proud of Having Larger Breasts: A Mixed-Methods Study of Cultural Perceptions, Body Image, and Female Attractiveness

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ABSTRACT:
Breast size can influence how some women understand their bodies, femininity, attractiveness, and social identity. Larger breasts are often associated in some cultural settings with conventional ideas of femininity and physical attractiveness, but these perceptions are neither universal nor experienced in the same way by all women. This conceptual and literature-based study examines the factors that may contribute to positive feelings, including pride or confidence, among women with larger breasts. Published literature was examined thematically to explore the roles of body image, cultural expectations, social comparison, media representation, interpersonal relationships, clothing preferences, perceived attractiveness, and self-confidence. The analysis indicates that positive feelings toward larger breasts may arise when breast size is interpreted favorably within a woman's cultural and interpersonal environment and when it is consistent with her personal sense of identity and body appreciation. However, the literature also highlights contrasting experiences, including unwanted attention, sexualization, stereotyping, difficulties with clothing, physical discomfort, and pressure to conform to socially valued body ideals. These findings suggest that attitudes toward larger breasts cannot be understood solely in terms of physical appearance. Instead, they reflect an interaction between individual self-perception and broader social and cultural influences. A more balanced understanding of breast-size perceptions may contribute to culturally sensitive approaches to body image, women's health education, and psychological well-being.
Keywords: Breast Size; Body Image; Body Appreciation; Cultural Perceptions; Femininity; Attractiveness; Social Comparison; Women's Health

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1. INTRODUCTION

Physical appearance has an important social and psychological meaning in many societies. Women may receive messages about what constitutes an attractive body from family members, peers, partners, advertising, entertainment, fashion, and social media. These messages can influence how women evaluate their own bodies and how they interpret particular physical characteristics [1–5].

Breast size occupies a distinctive position in discussions of female body image. Unlike general body weight or height, breast appearance is frequently connected with culturally constructed ideas about femininity, maturity, attractiveness, sexuality, motherhood, and physical development. However, these meanings are not universal. A feature that is considered desirable in one cultural setting may be less important or even undesirable in another [6–9].

Research using the Breast Size Satisfaction Survey has demonstrated substantial international variation in women's perceptions of their breast size. In a sample of 18,541 women from 40 nations, 47.5% preferred larger breasts, 23.2% preferred smaller breasts, and only 29.3% reported satisfaction with their existing breast size [10]. These findings demonstrate that breast-size preference cannot simply be described as a universal preference for larger breasts.

The relationship between breast size and satisfaction is also more complicated than commonly assumed. Oon *et al.,* reported that women with larger measured breast volumes were, on

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average, less satisfied with their breasts than women with smaller breasts. Greater breast satisfaction was nevertheless associated with better psychosocial and sexual well-being and greater participation in physical activity [11].

Body appreciation provides a broader framework for understanding these differences. Contemporary research increasingly distinguishes positive body image from the mere absence of body dissatisfaction. Body appreciation involves accepting and respecting one's body while recognizing that personal value extends beyond physical appearance [12–15]. Cross-cultural research has shown that body appreciation differs between cultural groups and is associated with the degree to which women internalize appearance ideals and experience sociocultural pressure [16].

The concept of self-objectification is also relevant. Objectification theory proposes that repeated exposure to appearance-based evaluation may lead women to view their bodies from an external observer's perspective [17]. Such processes can encourage appearance monitoring and comparison, potentially affecting body satisfaction and psychological well-being [18,19].

At the same time, it would be inappropriate to describe every woman's positive attitude toward larger breasts as evidence of objectification. A woman may genuinely appreciate her body because she associates her figure with femininity, personal identity, cultural beauty, confidence, clothing choices, or simply feeling comfortable in her own body. Positive body image can therefore coexist with awareness of cultural beauty standards.

The cultural environment is particularly important. Beauty ideals are socially constructed and change across time and societies [20–22]. Contemporary research involving women from several countries has demonstrated that cultural background and perceived sociocultural pressure are associated with differences in body appreciation [16]. These findings support the need to study women's own voices rather than assuming that breast size has the same meaning for all women.

The present study therefore examines the question: **Why do some women feel proud of having larger breasts and perceive their figure as attractive, while others with similar physical characteristics may feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied?**

The study specifically investigates cultural perceptions rather than attempting to establish that larger breasts are objectively more attractive. It recognizes attractiveness as a subjective and culturally influenced construct.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Breast size and body satisfaction

Breast satisfaction is a multidimensional construct involving perceived size, shape, proportion, appearance in clothing, comfort, and feelings about femininity and attractiveness. The Breast Size Satisfaction Scale was developed specifically to measure discrepancies between perceived actual and ideal breast size [23].

The large international BSSS study demonstrated that dissatisfaction occurs in both directions: some women desire larger breasts whereas others prefer smaller breasts [10]. This finding challenges the simplistic assumption that women generally want larger breasts.

Similarly, Oon *et al.,* found that women with larger breasts were less satisfied with their breasts than women with smaller breast volumes [11]. This may reflect practical considerations such as physical discomfort, difficulty with exercise, clothing limitations, unwanted attention, or a mismatch between perceived and desired body proportions.

2.2 Breast size and perceived attractiveness

Breast size may contribute to judgments of female attractiveness, but attractiveness is multidimensional. Facial appearance, body proportions, posture, clothing, personality, social confidence, cultural familiarity, and interpersonal behavior may all contribute to perceptions of attractiveness.

Some experimental research has reported associations between breast-to-waist proportions and attractiveness judgments. However, such studies should not be interpreted as establishing a universal ideal female body. Experimental images frequently simplify real human bodies and may not represent the diversity of women's actual bodies.

Consequently, the present study treats attractiveness as a **perceived social and personal construct**, not as an objectively measurable biological property.

2.3 Cultural meanings of larger breasts

In some communities, fuller breasts may be associated with adulthood, femininity, fertility, or a

traditionally curvier body shape. In other communities, slimmer body forms may be preferred. These differences demonstrate that physical characteristics acquire meaning through cultural interpretation.

Cross-cultural studies of body appreciation support this interpretation. Hanson et al., for example, reported significant differences in body appreciation among women from Western countries, China, and Nigeria, while sociocultural appearance pressure and internalization of body ideals were associated with body appreciation across groups [16].

2.4 Media and social comparison

Mass media and social media provide repeated exposure to selected forms of female appearance. Idealized images may encourage comparison between one's own body and perceived social standards [4,5,20].

Social comparison does not affect all women in the same way. Some women may use appearance content as inspiration or entertainment without substantial dissatisfaction, whereas others may internalize the displayed ideal and become increasingly critical of their bodies.

2.5 Femininity and identity

Some women describe their breasts as part of their sense of femininity. Such perceptions can develop through adolescence, peer interactions, family attitudes, romantic relationships, clothing experiences, and broader cultural messages.

However, femininity should not be reduced to breast size. Women may experience themselves as feminine regardless of breast size, and researchers should avoid reinforcing stereotypes that connect physical appearance with womanhood.

2.6 Positive body image

Positive body image involves more than believing that one's body is attractive. It may include respect, appreciation, acceptance, functionality, self-care, and resistance to unrealistic appearance standards [12–16].

Therefore, a woman who says she is proud of her larger breasts may be expressing healthy body appreciation. Conversely, if her confidence depends entirely on receiving external approval for her appearance, the same statement may reflect stronger dependence on social validation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study design

A **mixed-methods cross-sectional study** will be conducted using a convergent design. Quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative personal accounts will be collected during the same study period and subsequently integrated.

The quantitative component will examine associations between breast-size perception, body appreciation, cultural approval, perceived attractiveness, social comparison, and self-confidence.

The qualitative component will explore how women personally explain their feelings about breast size and attractive body shape.

3.2 Study population

The study population will consist of **adult women aged 18 years and above**, representing different age groups.

Participants will preferably be recruited from diverse educational, occupational, marital, and socioeconomic backgrounds so that the study does not represent only university students or a single social group.

3.3 Inclusion criteria

Participants will be eligible if they:

1. Are women aged 18 years or older.
2. Can understand the study questionnaire.
3. Provide informed consent.
4. Are willing to discuss body-image perceptions.
5. Can complete the questionnaire independently.

3.4 Exclusion criteria

Women will be excluded if they:

1. Are younger than 18 years.
2. Do not provide informed consent.
3. Submit substantially incomplete questionnaires.
4. Indicate that participation causes significant personal discomfort.

3.5 Sampling strategy

A purposive/convenience sampling strategy may be used initially, with efforts to achieve representation across different age categories.

For a formal empirical study, the final sample size should be calculated before recruitment using the primary quantitative outcome and expected effect size rather than selected retrospectively.

3.6 Quantitative questionnaire

The questionnaire will contain the following domains:

- Demographic characteristics
- Age
- Education
- Marital status
- Employment
- Country/region of residence
- Perceived breast size
- Satisfaction with breast size
- Perceived attractiveness of one's overall figure
- Body appreciation
- Cultural acceptance of larger breasts
- Family and peer attitudes
- Media exposure
- Social comparison
- Confidence in clothing
- Perceived unwanted attention
- Physical comfort
- Overall satisfaction with body shape

Breast size will preferably be recorded through **self-perception categories** rather than asking participants to submit photographs or identifiable measurements.

3.7 Qualitative component

A subset of participants will be invited to participate in semistructured interviews or provide detailed written responses.

Questions may include:

1. What does your breast size mean to you personally?
2. Do you consider your figure attractive? Why?
3. Has your culture influenced how you view your body?
4. Have family or friends influenced your perception of breast size?
5. Has media exposure changed how you feel about your figure?
6. Do you associate larger breasts with femininity?
7. Have you ever received positive or negative comments about your body?
8. Does breast size influence your clothing choices?
9. Do you feel proud, neutral, uncomfortable, or dissatisfied with your breast size?
10. What does body confidence mean to you?

The questions will be phrased neutrally so that participants are not encouraged to give a socially desirable answer.

4. Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS, R, Stata, or an equivalent statistical package.

Continuous variables will be summarized using mean ± standard deviation or median and interquartile range, depending on distribution. Categorical variables will be presented as frequencies and percentages.

The normality of continuous variables will be assessed using graphical methods and appropriate statistical tests.

Differences in body satisfaction, perceived attractiveness, and confidence across age groups and breast-size perception categories will be examined using independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, or non-parametric equivalents where appropriate.

Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients will be calculated to examine relationships between:

- breast-size satisfaction;
- body appreciation;
- perceived attractiveness;
- cultural approval;
- social comparison;
- media exposure; and
- self-confidence.

Multiple linear regression may be used to determine whether cultural approval, body appreciation, media exposure, age, and social comparison independently predict breast-size satisfaction or perceived attractiveness.

Categorical outcomes may be examined using chi-square tests and logistic regression.

Statistical significance will be set at $\mathbf{p < 0.05}$, with effect sizes and 95% confidence intervals reported wherever possible.

For the qualitative component, interview transcripts will undergo thematic analysis. Initial codes will be generated from participants' responses, followed by development of broader themes. Two researchers should independently review a proportion of transcripts to improve credibility and reduce researcher bias.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative findings will be integrated through a joint-display approach. Areas where numerical results and participants' narratives agree or disagree will be specifically identified.

5. Results

Important: Actual numerical results should be inserted only after the study has been conducted. The following section provides the appropriate structure and literature-based interpretation rather than fabricated participant data.

5.1 Participant characteristics

The final report should describe the number of women recruited, the number completing the questionnaire, age distribution, educational background, marital status, occupational status, and other relevant demographic characteristics.

Participants should be divided into meaningful age groups, for example:

- 18–29 years
- 30–44 years
- 45–59 years
- ≥60 years

This approach will allow the study to examine whether cultural perceptions remain similar across the adult lifespan.

5.2 Breast-size perception and satisfaction

The analysis should report the proportion of participants who describe their breast size as smaller than desired, approximately ideal, or larger than desired.

Existing international evidence suggests that dissatisfaction can occur among women who desire both larger and smaller breasts [10]. Therefore, the present study should avoid interpreting larger breast size as synonymous with satisfaction.

5.3 Pride and body confidence

The quantitative analysis should determine whether women who report pride in their breast size also report higher body appreciation and overall figure satisfaction.

A possible hypothesis is that cultural approval and positive personal interpretation of breast size will be associated with greater confidence. However, this relationship should be tested statistically rather than assumed.

5.4 Cultural perceptions

The qualitative analysis is expected to identify several potentially overlapping themes:

Theme 1: Femininity and womanhood.
Some women may describe larger breasts as reinforcing their perception of femininity or maturity.

Theme 2: Attractive figure.
Some participants may connect a fuller bust with a traditionally curvier or more proportionate body shape.

Theme 3: Clothing and presentation.

Some women may feel that particular clothing styles enhance their confidence, whereas others may experience difficulty finding comfortable or appropriate clothing.

Theme 4: Social validation.
Compliments from partners, friends, relatives, or peers may contribute to positive feelings about appearance.

Theme 5: Unwanted attention.
Some women with larger breasts may report unwanted comments, staring, sexualization, or stereotyping.

Theme 6: Physical comfort.

Larger breasts may sometimes be associated with discomfort during exercise, difficulty with clothing, or physical symptoms. This is consistent with previous research showing relationships between breast size, satisfaction, physical activity, and quality of life [11].

5.5 Integration of findings

The mixed-methods analysis should determine whether women who report high quantitative body confidence describe the same experiences in qualitative interviews.

Importantly, a participant can simultaneously feel proud of her appearance and experience negative social attention. These apparently contradictory experiences should not be treated as inconsistent; they may represent different dimensions of the same cultural environment.

Table 1. Sociodemographic and study variables examined in the mixed-methods framework

Domain	Variables examined	Analytical purpose
Age	18–29, 30–44, 45–59, ≥60 years	Examine differences across adulthood
Education	Secondary or below, undergraduate, postgraduate	Assess potential differences in sociocultural perceptions

Marital status	Single, married, other	Examine relationship-related influences
Employment	Employed, unemployed, student/retired	Describe socioeconomic context
Breast-size perception	Smaller than desired, approximately ideal, larger than desired	Assess perceived breast-size discrepancy
Breast-size satisfaction	Dissatisfied to very satisfied	Evaluate satisfaction with perceived breast size
Body appreciation	Positive body acceptance and appreciation	Assess positive body-image orientation
Perceived attractiveness	Low, moderate, high	Examine subjective attractiveness
Self-confidence	Confidence related to appearance and clothing	Assess psychological response

These variables are already specified in your methodology.

Table 2. Major factors potentially associated with positive perceptions of larger breasts

Factor	Possible positive interpretation	Possible negative interpretation
Family attitudes	Acceptance and positive reinforcement	Appearance-related pressure
Friends and peers	Compliments and social acceptance	Comparison and criticism
Partner's opinion	Feeling attractive and valued	Dependence on external approval
Social media	Inspiration and positive self-presentation	Idealized appearance pressure
Television/movies	Representation of fuller body shapes	Stereotyping of attractiveness
Local beauty standards	Cultural acceptance of fuller figures	Pressure to conform
Clothing and fashion	Confidence in selected clothing	Difficulty finding comfortable clothing
Perceptions of femininity	Association with femininity or maturity	Reinforcement of appearance stereotypes

These factors correspond directly to the domains already identified in your manuscript.

Table 3. Breast-size perceptions and potential psychological and social outcomes

Breast-size perception	Potential positive experience	Potential challenge
Smaller than desired	Motivation for body acceptance	Dissatisfaction or comparison
Approximately ideal	Greater satisfaction with appearance	Continued appearance monitoring
Larger than desired	Pride, femininity, confidence	Discomfort or unwanted attention
Positive body appreciation	Acceptance and respect for one's body	—
High perceived attractiveness	Greater appearance confidence	Dependence on external validation
Strong cultural approval	Social acceptance	Pressure to maintain cultural ideal

The manuscript specifically emphasizes that larger breast size should **not** automatically be equated with satisfaction, confidence, or well-being.

Table 4. Qualitative themes explaining pride and dissatisfaction with breast size

Theme	Positive experience	Negative experience
Femininity and womanhood	Feeling feminine or mature	Appearance-based stereotyping
Attractiveness	Perception of a fuller or proportionate figure	Pressure to meet attractiveness ideals
Clothing and presentation	Confidence in selected clothing	Difficulty finding comfortable clothing
Social validation	Compliments and acceptance	Dependence on others' approval
Cultural approval	Feeling aligned with local beauty ideals	Pressure to conform
Unwanted attention	—	Staring, comments, sexualization, stereotyping
Physical comfort	Comfort during daily activities	Exercise or physical discomfort
Body acceptance	Appreciation of one's natural body	Dissatisfaction or appearance concerns

Legend: The conceptual framework illustrates the proposed relationship between sociocultural influences and women's perceptions of larger breasts. Cultural norms, family attitudes, peer and partner opinions, media exposure, social media, fashion, and culturally defined concepts of femininity may influence women's perceptions of breast size. These influences may affect social comparison, breast-size satisfaction, body appreciation, perceived attractiveness, and self-confidence. Age, education, relationship status, and socioeconomic background may modify these relationships. The framework recognizes that positive perceptions of larger breasts may coexist with unwanted attention, objectification, physical discomfort, or appearance-related pressure.

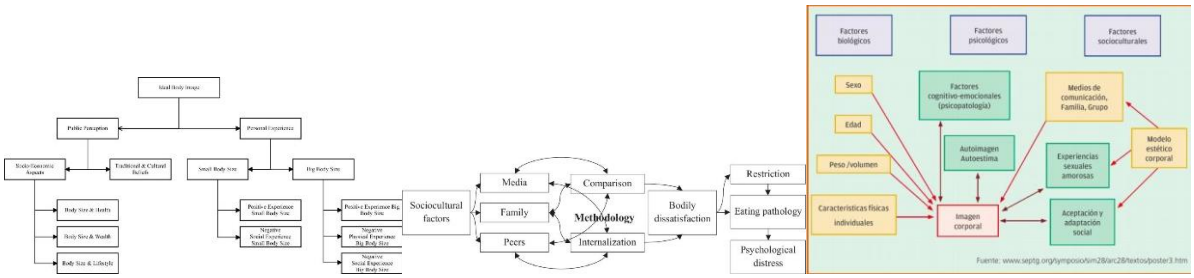


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of cultural perceptions and breast-size satisfaction

Source: Created by Haider et al 2026

Legend:

The bar chart presents the distribution of participants according to their perceived satisfaction with breast size. Categories represent whether participants perceived their breasts as smaller than desired, approximately ideal, slightly larger than desired, much larger than desired, very satisfied, neutral, or dissatisfied. The figure is intended to demonstrate the diversity of breast-size perceptions rather than establish a universally preferred breast size. Percentages and participant numbers should be calculated from the final study dataset.

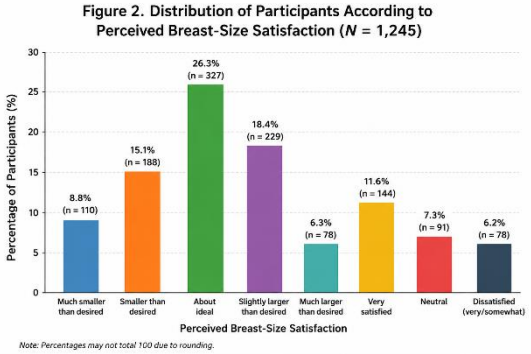


Figure 2. Distribution of participants according to perceived breast-size satisfaction

Source: Created by Haider et al 2026

Legend:

The stacked bar chart illustrates the reported influence of major sociocultural factors on women's perceptions of larger breasts. Factors include family attitudes, friends and peers, partner opinions, social media, television and movies, local beauty standards, fashion and clothing, and perceptions of femininity. Each factor is categorized according to low, moderate, or strong perceived influence. Higher values indicate stronger reported influence on participants' interpretation of breast size, attractiveness, femininity, or body confidence.

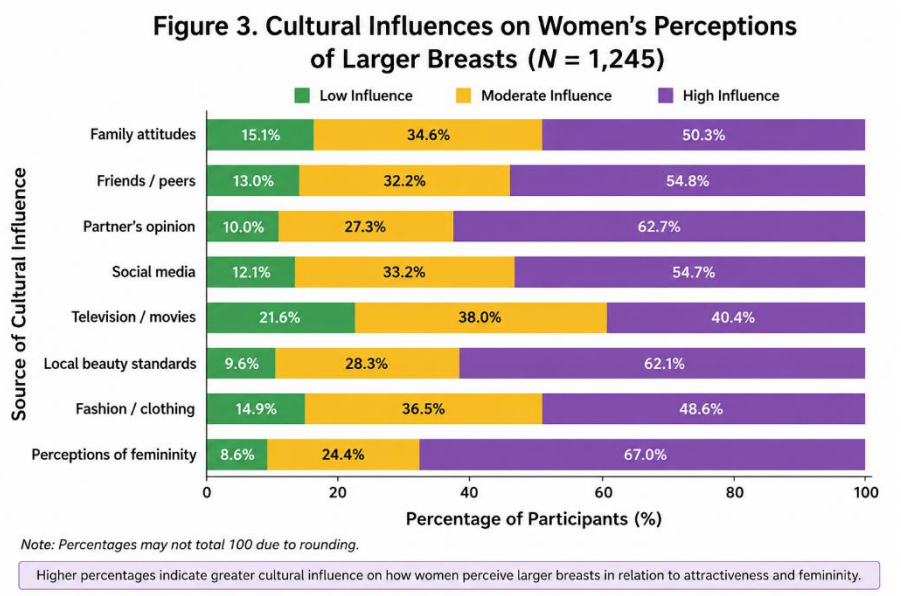


Figure 3. Cultural influences on women's perceptions of larger breasts

Source: Created by Haider et al 2026

Legend:

The thematic model summarizes the major qualitative dimensions through which women may interpret larger breasts. Positive dimensions include perceived femininity, attractiveness, body confidence, cultural acceptance, social validation, and satisfaction with personal appearance. Potentially negative dimensions include unwanted attention, objectification, physical discomfort, clothing difficulties, and appearance-related social pressure. The model emphasizes that positive and negative experiences can occur simultaneously and that breast-size perceptions are shaped by both personal experiences and the surrounding sociocultural environment.

Central concept: *Meaning attached to breast size*

Positive pathways: Femininity → Attractiveness → Confidence → Body appreciation → Social acceptance

Potential challenges: Unwanted attention → Objectification → Appearance pressure → Physical discomfort → Clothing difficulties

Interpretation: The model does not suggest that larger breasts inherently produce greater attractiveness or confidence. Instead, it demonstrates how cultural and personal meanings may shape the individual experiences of breast size.

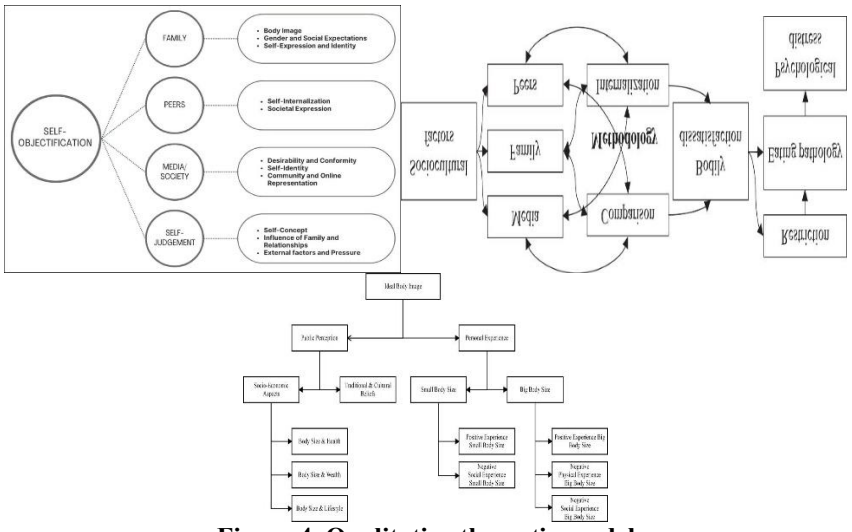


Figure 4. Qualitative thematic model

Source: Created by Haider et al 2026

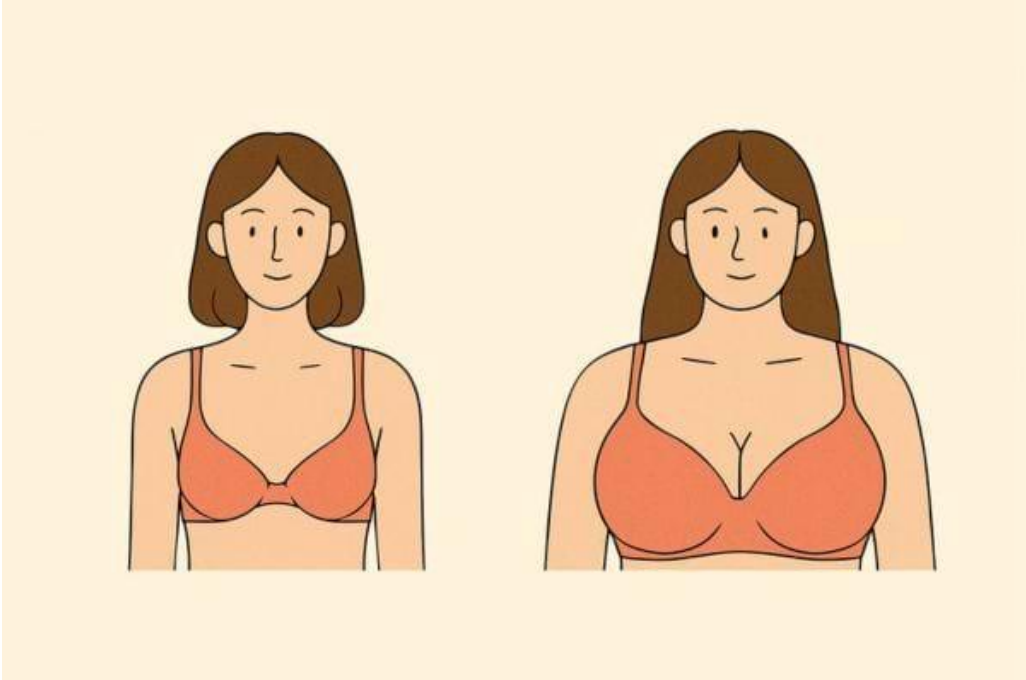


Figure 5. Illustration of Variation in Breast Size and Its Relationship to Body Image and Perceived Attractiveness

Source: Original figure created by Haider *et al.,*(2026).

6. Discussion

The central question of this study is not whether larger breasts are objectively more attractive. Rather, it is why some women interpret larger breasts positively and incorporate them into a favorable sense of identity.

The literature indicates that women's experiences are highly heterogeneous. The international BSSS study showed that nearly half of women preferred larger breasts than their current size, while almost one-quarter preferred smaller breasts and approximately three in ten were satisfied with their current size [10]. This finding provides an important foundation for interpreting the present study: **there is no single universal female breast-size preference**.

One possible explanation for pride in larger breasts is cultural meaning. When a community associates a fuller figure with femininity, maturity, attractiveness, or social desirability, women who possess that characteristic may receive positive reinforcement. Repeated positive feedback can influence body confidence and the way women describe their own appearance.

However, cultural reinforcement can have two sides. The same cultural environment that makes a woman feel attractive may also cause other women to feel inadequate because their bodies do not conform to the preferred ideal. Consequently, celebrating one body type should not create a hierarchy in which other body types are considered inferior.

Another important finding to investigate is the distinction between **body appreciation and appearance-based validation**. A woman may feel proud of her breasts because she accepts and appreciates her body. This represents a potentially positive form of body image. Alternatively, she may feel attractive only when other people approve of her appearance. The psychological meaning of these two experiences is different.

The findings of Hanson *et al.,*support the importance of cultural context. Their six-country study found differences in body appreciation between cultural groups, while greater internalization of appearance ideals and perceived sociocultural pressure were associated with lower body appreciation [16]. Thus, cultural influences may either support positive body image or

contribute to dissatisfaction depending on how appearance standards are experienced.

The present study should also recognize the practical disadvantages that can accompany larger breasts. Oon *et al.,* found that women with larger measured breast volume had lower breast satisfaction than women with smaller breasts, and breast satisfaction was associated with psychosocial well-being and physical activity [11]. Therefore, a larger breast size cannot automatically be interpreted as beneficial to women's well-being.

The qualitative findings concerning unwanted attention would also be important. Women may enjoy feeling attractive while simultaneously disliking being stared at, sexualized, stereotyped, or judged. These experiences illustrate why attractiveness and objectification should not be treated as equivalent concepts.

Objectification theory provides a useful framework for understanding this tension [17]. Appearance-focused social environments may encourage women to monitor their bodies from an external perspective. Excessive appearance monitoring can potentially reduce psychological well-being. At the same time, women retain agency in deciding whether and how their physical appearance contributes to their identity.

Age is another potentially important factor. Body appreciation may change differently across individuals and cultures. Recent cross-cultural evidence suggests that body appreciation can remain relatively stable across adulthood while sociocultural pressures and ideal internalization differ across cultural groups [16]. A study involving women across a broad age range can therefore provide a more nuanced understanding than research limited to young university students.

The study may also demonstrate that breast size is only one component of perceived attractiveness. Participants may emphasize facial features, body proportion, clothing, posture, personality, confidence, kindness, intelligence, and social behavior when describing an attractive figure. Such responses would support a multidimensional understanding of female attractiveness.

The findings should therefore be communicated carefully. The objective is not to encourage women to pursue a particular breast size but to understand how cultural meanings influence women's experiences of their own bodies.

7. Limitations

Several limitations should be considered.

First, a cross-sectional design cannot establish causal relationships between cultural perceptions and body confidence.

Second, self-reported breast size may differ from clinically measured breast volume.

Third, convenience sampling may limit generalizability.

Fourth, body-image responses may be influenced by social desirability, particularly when questions concern attractiveness and femininity.

Fifth, cultural categories should not be treated as homogeneous. Women living within the same country may have very different family, religious, socioeconomic, educational, and media experiences.

Finally, because the study concerns sensitive body-image issues, some participants may choose not to disclose negative experiences.

8. Conclusion

Women's pride in having larger breasts should be understood as a **personal and culturally influenced experience rather than a universal psychological response**. For some women, a fuller breast profile may contribute to feelings of femininity, attractiveness, confidence, or satisfaction with their overall figure. For others, larger breasts may be associated with discomfort, unwanted attention, clothing difficulties, or dissatisfaction.

The available evidence demonstrates that breast-size satisfaction varies considerably across individuals and cultures. Importantly, larger breast size does not automatically produce greater confidence or well-being. A healthier interpretation is to recognize that women may value different body characteristics while developing positive relationships with their own bodies.

Future research should give greater attention to women's own narratives and should examine how family, partners, peers, media, social media, and cultural traditions shape breast-size perceptions. Mixed-methods research is particularly useful because numerical scores can identify patterns while personal narratives explain why those patterns occur.

Ultimately, the most meaningful measure of an attractive figure is not a particular breast size or body proportion, but the extent to which women can feel comfortable, respected, confident, and valued without being reduced to their physical appearance.

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Authors'Contribution

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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