



ASSOCIATION OF BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) WITH LIP MORPHOLOGY AMONG ADULT PATIENTS WITH VARIOUS GROWTH PATTERNS - A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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KEYWORDS :

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary orthodontic and orthognathic treatment planning prioritizes facial aesthetics, with particular emphasis on lip morphology as a critical determinant of facial balance and attractiveness.^[1] The lips serve not only as a functional component but also as a primary aesthetic frame for dental structures, influencing overall facial perception.^[2] Recent evidence highlights the importance of considering both hard and soft tissue relationships, including the impact of systemic factors like body composition, to achieve optimal aesthetic outcomes. This paradigm shift reflects the growing recognition that comprehensive treatment must address both occlusal function and facial harmony, with lip morphology serving as a key interface between skeletal foundations and soft tissue drape. As the primary frame for dental structures, lip characteristics significantly influence overall facial balance.^[3]

Conventional assessments of lip morphology have focused on dentoskeletal relationships, incisor positioning, and soft tissue composition.^[4] However, recent research suggests that systemic factors particularly Body Mass Index (BMI) may also impact facial soft tissue structure, including lip dimensions. BMI, a widely used measure of body fat, has well-established links to general health, but its effects on facial and lip morphology remain understudied. Studies by Chu et al.^[5] and Buyuk et al.^[3] indicate a positive correlation between BMI and soft tissue thickness, implying that higher BMI may lead to increased facial volume.

Additionally, vertical growth patterns (normodivergent, hypodivergent, and hyperdivergent) are known to influence craniofacial structure, including lip orientation and proportions. Investigating how BMI interacts with these growth patterns could enhance diagnostic precision and personalized treatment strategies in orthodontics.

This cross-sectional study examines the relationship between BMI and lip morphology across different vertical growth patterns in adult orthodontic patients.^[6]

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Design

This cross-sectional study was conducted in the Department of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopaedics at Best Dental Science College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India, between June 2024 and October 2025. The study aimed to investigate the association between Body Mass Index (BMI) and lip morphology across different vertical growth patterns.

2.2 Sample Size And Selection

The sample size was determined using G-Power 3.1 software, based on an effect size of 0.498822 (derived from Chen et al., 2023^[4]), with an alpha error probability of 0.05 and a power of 0.95. The initial calculation yielded 66 participants, but the final sample was expanded to 72 individuals (aged 18–30 years) to ensure balanced representation across groups. Participants were selected via simple random sampling from patients undergoing orthodontic treatment with a complete permanent dentition.

2.3 Inclusion Criteria:

- Aged 18–30 years.
- Currently receiving orthodontic treatment.
- No history of facial trauma or craniofacial anomalies.
- Full permanent dentition present.

2.4 Exclusion Criteria:

- Facial trauma or craniofacial anomalies
- Previous orthodontic treatment or lip surgery
- Systemic illnesses or obesity (BMI \geq 30 kg/m²)

2.5 Data Collection And Tools

The Following Measurements Were Obtained:

- **BMI:** Calculated using a calibrated weighing scale and stadiometer.
- **Cephalometric Analysis:** Pre-treatment lateral cephalograms were traced using 0.3mm microtip pencils, lead acetate tracing paper, a metal ruler, and a protractor.

2.6 Group Stratification

A. Vertical Growth Patterns:

- Categorized by the Frankfort Mandibular Plane Angle (FH-MP):
- Group 1 (Horizontal growers): FH-MP $<$ 22° (n = 24)
- Group 2 (Vertical growers): FH-MP $>$ 28° (n = 24)
- Group 3 (Average growers): FH-MP 22°–28° (n = 24)

B. BMI Subgroups:

- Underweight (BMI $<$ 18.5)
- Normal weight (BMI 18.5–24.9)
- Overweight (BMI 25–29.9)

2.7 Lip Morphology Parameters

Seven Cephalometric Measurements Were Analyzed:^[7]

1. Upper lip length
2. Basic upper lip thickness
3. Upper lip strain
4. Upper sulcus depth
5. Lower lip length
6. Lower sulcus depth
7. Lower lip thickness

Table 1: Cephalometric Landmarks

LANDMARKS	DEFINITION
S (sella)	The geometric center of the pituitary fossa.
N (nasion)	The most anterior point on the frontonasal suture.
N'(Soft tissue nasion)	The point of greatest concavity in the midline between the forehead and the nose.
Pronasale (Pn)	The most prominent point of the tip of the nose.
Subnasale (Sn)	The point between the columella and the upper lip in the mid-sagittal plane.
Point A	The most posterior midline point in the concavity between ANS and prosthion.
Point B	The most posterior midline point in the concavity of the mandible between the most superior point in the alveolar bone overlying mandibular incisors and pog.

Pog' (Soft tissue pogonion)	The most prominent point on the soft tissue chin in the midsagittal plane.
Labrale superius (Ls)	A point indicating mucocutaneous border of the upper lip. Usually the most anterior point of the upper lip.
Stomion superius (stms)	The lower most point on the vermilion of the upper lip.
Superior Labial Sulcus (Sls)	The point of greatest concavity in the midline of the upper lip between Sn and labrale superius.
Labrale Inferius (Li)	The most anterior point of the lower lip.
Stomion Inferius (Stmi)	The lowest point of the lower lip vermilion border.
Inferior Labial Sulcus (Ils)	It is the deepest point of the concavity between the lower lip and the soft tissue menton.
Soft Tissue Menton (Me')	The lowest point on the soft tissue chin.
U1	Labial surface of upper central incisors.

Table 2: Linear Measurements

Upper Lip Length (ULL)	Linear distance from the point Subnasale (Sn) to stomion superius (sts)
Upper lip Thickness (ULT)	Linear distance from a point 2mm below the point A to the outer border of the upper lip.
Upper Lip Strain (ULS)	Linear measurement from the vermilion border of upper lip to the labial surface of upper incisor.
Upper Sulcus Depth (USD)	Linear distance from the deepest point of the upper lip sulcus (philtrum concavity) perpendicular to the line connecting Subnasale (Sn) and Labrale Superius (Ls).
Lower Lip Length (LLL)	Vertical distance from Stomion Inferius (Stmi), the lowest vermilion point of the lower lip) to Soft Tissue Menton (Me'), the lowest chin contour point).
Lower Lip Thickness (LLT)	Horizontal distance from Labrale Inferius (Li, the most anterior point of the lower lip) to the soft tissue B-point (B', the deepest concavity of the chin).
Lower Sulcus Depth (LSD)	Linear distance from the deepest point of the labiomental fold to the outer border of the lower lip along a perpendicular line to the Li-Me' plane.

2.8 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v25.0. One-way ANOVA compared lip morphology differences across BMI categories and growth patterns, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant.

3. RESULT

The study evaluated 72 participants (aged 18-30 years) equally distributed among horizontal (FH-MP $< 22^\circ$), vertical (FH-MP $> 28^\circ$), and average (FH-MP $22^\circ-28^\circ$) growth patterns, with 24 subjects per group. Each growth pattern category was further stratified into underweight (BMI < 18.5), normal weight (BMI 18.5-24.9), and overweight (BMI 25-29.9) subgroups (n=24 each).

The study demonstrated consistent associations between BMI categories and lip morphology across all growth patterns. Overweight individuals exhibited significantly greater upper and lower lip length and thickness compared to underweight groups (e.g., upper lip length: 20.13–26.13 mm vs. 15.88–21 mm; $p \leq 0.05$), with pairwise comparisons confirming robust differences ($p = 0.000-0.049$). Conversely, lip strain and sulcus depth were markedly higher in underweight participants (e.g., upper lip strain: 10.38–14.13 mm vs. 8.25–10.13 mm; sulcus depth: 7.38–13.13 mm vs. 5.25–7.38 mm; $p < 0.05$).

Table 3: Intergroup Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various Bmi Among Horizontal Growth Pattern

One-way ANOVA- HORIZONTAL GROWTH PATTERN

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Sig.
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
				ULLH	8	
UNDERWEIGHT	8	15.88	2.696	13.62	18.13	
OVERWEIGHT	8	20.13	3.643	17.08	23.17	
ULLV	8	14.25	3.779	11.10	17.40	.014
UNDERWEIGHT	8	11.88	1.126	10.93	12.82	
OVERWEIGHT	8	16.25	3.655	13.19	19.31	
ULLA	8	10.13	2.031	8.43	11.82	.048
UNDERWEIGHT	8	10.38	1.847	8.83	11.92	
OVERWEIGHT	8	8.25	1.282	7.18	9.32	

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Sig.
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
USDH	8	7.13	1.553	5.83	8.42	.018
UNDERWEIGHT	8	7.38	1.847	5.82	8.92	
OVERWEIGHT	8	5.25	.886	4.51	5.99	
LLLH	8	35.88	3.271	33.14	38.61	.000
UNDERWEIGHT	8	34.88	3.399	32.03	37.72	
OVERWEIGHT	8	43.88	3.758	40.73	47.02	
LLTH	8	12.88	2.232	11.01	14.74	.047
UNDERWEIGHT	8	10.88	.835	10.18	11.57	
OVERWEIGHT	8	13.63	2.825	11.26	15.99	
LSDH	8	5.00	2.390	3.00	7.00	.031
UNDERWEIGHT	8	6.00	1.414	4.82	7.18	
OVERWEIGHT	8	3.63	.744	3.00	4.25	

Table 4: Pairwise Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various BMI Among Horizontal Growth Pattern

Post Hoc Tests

Dependent Variable	(i) BMI1	(j) BMI1	Mean Difference (i-j)	Sig.
		OVERWEIGHT	-.375	.971
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-4.250*	.041
ULLV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	2.375	.297
		OVERWEIGHT	-2.000	.416
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-4.375*	.026
ULLA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-1.250	.596
		OVERWEIGHT	1.875	.105
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	2.125	.650
USDV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-1.250	.840
		OVERWEIGHT	1.875	.649
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	2.125*	.024
LLLH	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	1.000	.833
		OVERWEIGHT	-8.000*	.001
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-9.000*	.000
LLTH	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	2.000	.171
		OVERWEIGHT	-1.750	.364
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-2.750*	.044
LSDV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-1.000	.484
		OVERWEIGHT	1.375	.245
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	2.375*	.024

Table 5: Intergroup Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various BMI Among Average Growth Pattern

One-way ANOVA- AVERAGE GROWTH PATTERN

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Sig.
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
				ULLA	8	
UNDERWEIGHT	8	20.25	1.581	18.93	21.57	
OVERWEIGHT	8	22.13	1.458	20.91	23.34	
ULTA	8	15.50	1.690	14.09	16.91	.007
UNDERWEIGHT	8	15.38	1.408	14.20	16.55	
OVERWEIGHT	8	17.75	1.389	16.59	18.91	
ULSA	8	11.00	2.878	8.59	13.41	.033
UNDERWEIGHT	8	12.75	2.121	10.98	14.52	
OVERWEIGHT	8	9.75	.886	9.01	10.49	
USDA	8	7.13	2.563	4.15	10.10	.044
UNDERWEIGHT	8	9.63	1.302	8.54	10.71	
OVERWEIGHT	8	6.50	1.927	4.89	8.11	
LLLA	8	37.88	4.422	34.18	41.57	.031
UNDERWEIGHT	8	36.50	4.036	33.13	39.87	
OVERWEIGHT	8	42.25	4.062	38.85	45.65	
LLTA	8	11.50	2.330	9.55	13.45	.000
UNDERWEIGHT	8	10.13	1.126	9.18	11.07	
OVERWEIGHT	8	15.75	2.121	13.98	17.52	
LSDA	8	5.63	1.188	4.63	6.62	.038
UNDERWEIGHT	8	6.50	1.604	5.16	7.84	
OVERWEIGHT	8	4.75	.886	4.01	5.49	

Table 6: Pairwise Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various BMI Among Average Growth Pattern

Post Hoc Tests

Dependent Variable	(i) BMI1	(j) BMI1	Mean Difference (i-j)	Sig.
		OVERWEIGHT	-1.500	.132
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-1.875*	.049
ULTA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-.125	.983
		OVERWEIGHT	-2.250*	.018
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-2.375*	.012
ULSA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-1.750	.249
		OVERWEIGHT	1.250	.480
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	3.000*	.027
USDA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-2.500	.128
		OVERWEIGHT	.625	.868
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	3.125*	.048
LLLA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	1.375	.790
		OVERWEIGHT	-4.375	.115
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-5.750*	.031
LLTA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	1.375	.347
		OVERWEIGHT	-4.250*	.021
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	-5.625*	.000
LSDA	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-.875	.365
		OVERWEIGHT	.875	.365
	UNDERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	1.750*	.029

Table 7: Intergroup Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various BMI Among Vertical Growth Pattern

One-way ANOVA- VERTICAL GROWTH PATTERN

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Sig.
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
				ULLV	8	
UNDERWEIGHT	8	20.75	2.493	18.67	22.83	
OVERWEIGHT	8	26.13	835	25.43	26.82	
ULTV	8	15.63	2.226	13.68	17.57	.001
UNDERWEIGHT	8	14.75	1.488	13.51	15.99	
OVERWEIGHT	8	19.25	2.315	17.31	21.19	
ULSV	8	10.63	916	9.86	11.39	.000
UNDERWEIGHT	8	14.13	835	13.43	14.82	
OVERWEIGHT	8	10.13	1.126	9.18	11.07	
USDV	8	8.13	1.642	6.75	9.50	.000
UNDERWEIGHT	8	13.13	1.808	11.61	14.64	
OVERWEIGHT	8	7.88	1.688	6.97	8.78	
LLLV	8	43.63	2.825	41.26	45.99	.001
UNDERWEIGHT	8	37.38	6.186	32.20	42.55	

LLTV	OVERWEIGHT	8	47.80	2.878	44.59	49.41
	NORMAL	8	34.63	2.066	32.90	36.33
	UNDERWEIGHT	8	12.75	1.488	12.51	14.99
LSDV	OVERWEIGHT	8	15.75	1.035	14.88	16.62
	NORMAL	8	4.38	1.768	2.90	5.85
	UNDERWEIGHT	8	8.50	1.195	7.50	9.50
	OVERWEIGHT	8	6.13	1.808	4.61	7.64

Table 8: Pairwise Comparison Of Upper & Lower Lip Parameters Between Various BMI Among Vertical Growth Pattern

Post Hoc Tests				
Dependent Variable	(I) BMI	(J) BMI	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
ULLV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	.250	.957
		OVERWEIGHT	-.512 [*]	.000
		OVERWEIGHT	-.537 [*]	.000
ULTV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	.875	.682
		OVERWEIGHT	-.362 [*]	.006
		OVERWEIGHT	-.450 [*]	.001
ULSV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-.350 [*]	.001
		OVERWEIGHT	.500	.564
		OVERWEIGHT	4.000 [*]	.000
USDV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-.500 [*]	.001
		OVERWEIGHT	-.750	.661
		OVERWEIGHT	5.750 [*]	.000
LLLTV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	6.750 [*]	.001
		OVERWEIGHT	-3.375	.275
		OVERWEIGHT	-9.625 [*]	.001
LLTV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	.875	.523
		OVERWEIGHT	-.1125	.350
		OVERWEIGHT	-2.000 [*]	.050
LSDV	NORMAL	UNDERWEIGHT	-.4125 [*]	.030
		OVERWEIGHT	-.1750	.100
		OVERWEIGHT	2.375 [*]	.000

These Trends Were Similarly Observed In Lower Lip Measurements: overweight individuals had greater length and thickness (e.g., 43.88–47.00 mm vs. 34.88–37.38 mm; $p \leq 0.031$), while underweight participants showed deeper sulci (6.00–8.50 mm vs. 3.63–6.13 mm; $p \leq 0.029$). Post hoc analyses (Tukey's test) highlighted the strongest contrasts between underweight and overweight groups ($p = 0.000-0.021$), with normal-weight individuals typically intermediate. All findings were statistically significant, underscoring the influence of BMI on lip structure.

4. DISCUSSION

This study thoroughly examines the relationship between Body Mass Index (BMI) and lip morphology in orthodontic patients aged 18 to 30, while also considering how vertical craniofacial growth patterns influence this association. Using detailed cephalometric measurements including upper and lower lip length, thickness, strain, and sulcus depth the findings confirm that BMI significantly affects lip dimensions.^[8,9,10] Overweight individuals consistently exhibited greater lip thickness and length, likely due to increased subcutaneous fat deposition in the perioral region. In contrast, underweight patients showed higher lip strain and deeper sulci, suggesting reduced soft tissue volume leads to greater muscular tension. These results align with previous research demonstrating that BMI directly correlates with facial soft tissue thickness, particularly in the lips.^{[3][15]}

Further analysis revealed that vertical growth patterns modify how BMI influences lip morphology. In horizontal (hypodivergent) growth patterns, normal BMI was associated with balanced lip structure, while higher BMI led to elongated and bulkier lips. Vertical (hyperdivergent) growth patterns amplified these effects, with overweight individuals displaying the most pronounced increases in lip dimensions.^[11,12,13] This suggests that skeletal elongation combined with excess soft tissue mass intensifies lip changes. However, average (normodivergent) growth patterns showed minimal BMI-related variations, indicating that balanced facial structure may buffer against weight-related soft tissue alterations.^[14]

Clinically, these findings emphasize the importance of considering BMI in orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning. Overweight patients may require adjustments to account for thicker lips that could obscure underlying skeletal relationships, while underweight individuals might need special attention to achieve lip competence and profile harmony. Since extreme growth patterns (hyperdivergent or hypodivergent) are more susceptible to BMI-related changes, orthodontists should integrate BMI assessment with cephalometric analysis for more accurate and personalized treatment outcomes.^[15] This study not only reinforces existing knowledge on BMI's role in soft tissue morphology but also highlights its interaction with skeletal growth patterns, offering valuable insights for clinical practice.

4.1 Clinical Implications

The study findings have important clinical implications for orthodontic practice. Higher BMI patients often show increased soft tissue thickness that can obscure underlying skeletal relationships and influence treatment outcomes, particularly during incisor retraction

and orthognathic surgery planning. This necessitates BMI-specific modifications to diagnosis and treatment approaches, including adjusted torque values, enhanced anchorage strategies, and modified retention protocols. For orthognathic cases, surgeons should account for BMI-related soft tissue variations in their planning. These considerations highlight the importance of incorporating BMI assessment into routine orthodontic evaluation to optimize treatment planning and improve outcome predictability, especially for patients with vertical growth patterns or those undergoing combined surgical-orthodontic treatment. Patient education about maintaining stable weight during therapy may further enhance treatment stability and aesthetic results.^[16,17]

Future studies with longitudinal designs could further elucidate whether BMI changes during treatment directly affect lip morphology and stability. Additionally, 3D imaging techniques could provide more comprehensive soft tissue analysis across BMI spectra.^[11]

5. CONCLUSION

This cross-sectional study demonstrates a significant association between Body Mass Index (BMI) and lip morphology among adult orthodontic patients, with vertical growth patterns modulating these effects. Key findings reveal that overweight individuals exhibit greater lip length and thickness, while underweight participants show increased lip strain and deeper sulci, reflecting differences in soft tissue volume and tension. These trends are most pronounced in hyperdivergent (vertical) and hypodivergent (horizontal) growth patterns, whereas normodivergent (average) patterns exhibit more stable lip dimensions across BMI categories.

Clinically, the study underscores the necessity of integrating BMI assessment into orthodontic and orthognathic treatment planning. For overweight patients, adjustments may be needed to address thicker lips that obscure skeletal relationships, while underweight individuals may require interventions to achieve lip competence and aesthetic harmony. The interaction between BMI and growth patterns highlights the importance of personalized approaches, particularly in extreme skeletal morphologies.

Future research should explore longitudinal BMI changes during treatment and employ advanced 3D imaging to enhance soft tissue analysis. These insights will further refine diagnostic precision and therapeutic outcomes, ensuring holistic care that balances occlusal function with facial aesthetics.

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