

Body Image Effects of Media on Adolescent Girls

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 10 February 2019

Keywords

Body image dissatisfaction, media images, negative body image, school and college girls, women and media

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ABSTRACT

Media images are known to bring social and cultural change in our society. To create consumerism, post globalization has shaped a very unhealthy society for women. Our society encourages women to be slim and trim more than fit and strong; thinness is emphasized more over health. Media images make women feel dissatisfied and discontent with their bodies. If a woman will feel dissatisfied with her body, only then will she strive hard to get a perfect body as women are primary consumers of beauty, fashion, jewellery, clothing, food industry, and health and fitness industry. So in order to increase consumerism, media sets an unrealistic standard of "ideal body" for a woman which is a hard target to achieve. Hence, adolescent girls aspire to have bodies like that of clinically malnourished celebrities and end up developing a poor body image themselves.

There has been constant emphasis of Body Image Effects of Media on Adolescent Girls in various body image literatures, yet not much research has been done on it in India and none in Gujarat. Hence, this research study investigates the impact of media in body image dissatisfaction among teenage and young adult girls in Vadodara District.

1. Introduction

In Vadodaras' schools and colleges (both rural and urban areas), about three-fourth children are undergoing intense pressures of "fitting in the society" and "being socially presentable". Changes during teenage, along with teenagers' growing independence, search for identity, concern with appearance, need for peer acceptance and active lifestyle, can significantly affect their social relations of campus life and may place them further at risk for psychological problems like body image dissatisfaction.

Body image is the perceptions and attitudes one holds toward one's body regarding their body aesthetics and how attractive they perceive themselves. Media have further increased preoccupation with appearance. Young people in particular photoshop their own pictures, or excessively compare themselves to friends or celebrities; fitness or diet-related apps reinforce body image dissatisfaction. Mass media is a mechanism that mediates influences that internalizes societal standards and social comparison processes regarding body appearance.

For adolescents grappling with emerging pubertal changes, comparing themselves to the stars of stage and screen is unavoidable. These are well-planned efforts by media to continually bombard people with well-designed media content and images done deliberately to give an "ideal image" of how society sees the idea of the perfect body. But the truth is that this media content is deliberately communicated to increase sales of the products and services of fashion and beauty industry, health food industry, dieting industry and health clubs, and plastic- surgeries. So media does not give our society balanced messages about body image which leads to dissatisfaction among adolescents for their bodies.

Therefore, this research study deserves more attention and was planned to set a wide application among teenagers.

2. Objectives

The following are the objectives for this research study–

- To understand the body image effects of media on adolescent girls
- To compare perceptions on body image between teenage and young adults girls.
- To understand the concept of ideal female body among teenage and young adult girls.

3. Hypothesis

We have formulated the following hypothesis–

Hypothesis 1: Adolescent girls do not compare their bodies with celebrities and aspire to have a body like them.

Hypothesis 2: There is a no relation between media exposure and body image dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: There is no relation between BMI Group and body image dissatisfaction of adolescent girls.

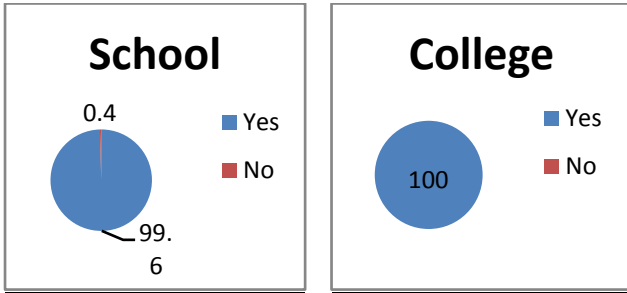
4. Research Methodology

The present study is made based on primary data. A survey was conducted, to understand body image effects of media on adolescent girls in schools and colleges of urban and rural areas of Vadodara district. To understand the impact of media on teenage & young adult girls, it was decided to conduct a survey in schools and colleges of urban and rural areas of Vadodara district. The total numbers of samples were 500 girls, equally divided between schools and colleges of rural

and urban area. We have divided the age group of adolescent girls into 13 to 17 years of school girls and 18 to 22 years of college girls. The areas covered in the field are Pratapgunj, Sayajigunj, Waghodia, and Padra that were chosen by simple random sampling from the list of wards of Vadodara Municipal Corporation. We have used a guided self-administered questionnaire to record Socio-demographic data of the respondents, Body Mass Index (BMI) parameters, and the variables have been derived keeping in mind the Social Cognitive Theory.

5. Results

5.1. Whether girls compare their bodies with any celebrity



Almost 100% of school and college girls of Vadodara district, irrespective of whether they belong to urban or rural area, compare their bodies with celebrities and aspire to have a body like them. Hence we reject the first hypothesis that adolescent girls do not compare their bodies with celebrities and aspire to have a body like them.

5.2. Aspiration-wise Ranking by Adolescent Girls to have bodies like the following celebrities

Ranking of Celebrities by School Girls		Ranking of Celebrities by College Girls	
1.	Alia Bhatt	1.	Alia Bhatt
2.	Kirti Sanon	2.	Deepika Padukone
3.	Deepika Padukone	3.	Kirti Sanon
4.	Anushka Sharma	4.	Anushka Shbarma
5.	Shraddha Kapoor	5.	Shraddha Kapoor
6.	Sonam Kapoor	6.	Kareena Kapoor

7.	Katrina Kaif
8.	Priyanka Chopra
9.	Kareena Kapoor
10.	Saina Nehwal
11.	Kangna Ranaut
12.	P. V. Sindhu
13.	Sonakshi Sinha
14.	Sania Mirza
15.	Vidya Balan
16.	Parineeti Chopra

7.	Katrina Kaif
8.	Sonam Kapoor
9.	Kangna Ranaut
10.	Priyanka Chopra
11.	P. V. Sindhu
12.	Sania Mirza
13.	Saina Nehwal
14.	Parineeti Chopra
15.	Sonakshi Sinha
16.	Vidya Balan

The above table shows the list of celebrities who are currently in trend. These celebrities have been shown in the table as per their ranking that these girls from school and colleges of Vadodara district have done. The ranking is more or less the same from both the age groups. The top eight and the bottom of both eight of both are quite similar except for one or two.

The ruthless culture of Bollywood of body shaming actresses is disheartening. Many celebrities have reported of going through depression and suffering from Bulimia because of it. Actresses like Vidya Balan, Sonakshi Sinha, Parineeti Chopra and many more have frequently been attacked for their sizes or for the clothes they wore. No matter how fine their acting maybe, many actresses have faced brutal criticism and dent in their careers because of their sizes. Parineeti faced a year without work and finally had to give up and lose weight. For every post that Sonakshi uploads on social media, there is at least one comment about her weight. Vidya Balan was asked by the press if she would go on to do women-centric films or think about shedding some weight, so as to get glamorous roles too. Even athletic and fit bodies of P. V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza too are at the bottom. This proves the impact of media on body image dissatisfaction among school and college girls of Vadodara as these girls aspire to have a body like acutely thin celebrities. Hence we reject the second hypothesis that there is a no relation between media exposure and body image dissatisfaction.

5.3. Body Image Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction among Girls across BMI Group

BMIGROUP	UNDER WEIGHT		NORMAL		OVER WEIGHT		OBESE		TOTAL	
	No. of Girls	%	No. of Girls	%	No. of Girls	%	No. of Girls	%	No. of Girls	%
	Satisfied with Height	118	71.1	161	78.2	50	78.1	52	81.3	381
Dis-satisfied with Height	48	28.9	45	21.8	14	21.9	12	18.8	119	23.8
TOTAL	166	100	206	100	64	100	64	100	500	100
Chi square	Value: 3.860, df: 3, p-value: 0.277									
Satisfied with Weight	110	66.3	108	52.4	25	39.1	31	48.4	274	54.8
Dis-satisfied with Weight	56	33.7	98	47.6	39	60.9	33	51.6	226	45.2
TOTAL	166	100	206	100	64	100	64	100	500	100
Chi square	Value: 16.723, df: 3, p-value:0.001									

Both school and college girls were highly dissatisfied with their weight but not their height. Body image dissatisfaction was found to be highly prevalent amongst these adolescent girls with 60.9% of overweight girls and 51.6% of obese girls being dissatisfied with their bodies. Moreover, almost half that is 47.6% girls with normal BMIs were dissatisfied with their weight, and 33.7% girls who were already underweight were dissatisfied with their weight because they wanted to be thinner. Hence we reject the third hypothesis that there is no relation between BMI Group and body image dissatisfaction of adolescent girls.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights a high prevalence of body image dissatisfaction due to impact of media on adolescent girls. There was a time when actresses were proud of their curves and size zero was not the priority back then. No wonder the teenage and young adult girls of Vadodara district have put these celebrities - Vidya Balan, Parineeti Chopra, Sonakshi Sinha into bottom three while ranking for "aspiration to have figures like celebrities". Even athletic and fit bodies of P. V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza too are at the bottom. This proves the impact of media on body image dissatisfaction

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among school and college girls of Vadodara as these girls aspire to have a body like acutely thin celebrities.

Also, in India height of a woman holds less importance over weight. For women to attain ideal body standards, the Indian society puts more pressure over weight than over height (average height of women in India is 5 feet). Media with their daily exposure of tailored media content make adolescent girls believe into extremely skinny bodies as being ideal and perfect which is a tough target to achieve. Hence this proves that media emphasizes on unrealistically thin ideals of celebrities as the norm, cultivates consciousness of body image among adolescent girls, and increases body image dissatisfaction among them.

Acknowledgement

Unconditional thanks to my guide, Dr Kalpana Rao whose patience and sharing of knowledge was pivotal to my research, who helped me get a wider view of this world and without whom this study would have been next to impossible.

Also, big thanks to all the schools, colleges, and participants who provided the information which made this study possible.