MEDIA INFLUENCE ON BODY IMAGE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Body image is one’s own perception about their body. It varies from person to person. Ideal body image is a hype created by media and people compare themselves with that and try to follow it. If they do not fit into that ideal body image they become worried and change their eating practices and engage themselves in body changing strategies. Especially during their young adulthood individuals give more importance to their body image. Hence the present study aimed at finding out the relationship between media and body image among young adults.

Methodology

Ex-post facto research design was used in the present study. Using purposive sampling technique, 400 participants were selected, in which 200 were males and 200 were females. Average age of the participants is 21. Participants were assessed with body image and body change inventory and (Ricciardelli& McCabe, 2001), Media influence sub-scale (Ricciardelli& McCabe, 2001.

Results

Karl Pearson product moment correlation was used to find out the relationship between the variables. It was found out that media influences the importance of body image, body image concern, eating practices and body change strategies among young adults. Age was not significantly associated with any of the study variables. Independent t test was used to find out the gender difference. It was found that female were more concerned about their body image and hence engage in more in body change strategies when compared to male. None of the demographic variables such as socio economic status, educational qualification, going to gym and preferred social media did not influence the body image of the young adults.

Implication

The study implied the necessity of counseling the young adults about healthy eating practices. Also they need to be trained to enhance their bodily self-esteem. It is the responsibility of psychologists, social workers and sociologist to create awareness among the community about health eating practices.

KEYWORDS: Body Image, Media, Young Adults

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INTRODUCTION

In this modern era everyone likes to be recognized and appreciated. To gain the center of attraction, they try to follow the trend that is being followed. Media act as bridge between people and trend. It lets people know
the current trend. Through media people update themselves about the current happening around the world. Modern trend is being set by media people like actors, models, VJ’s etc. Common people try to copy them thinking that they will be accepted only if they fit into that category. They constantly compare themselves with people around and if they do not fit in they are being affected psychologically. They tend to undergo depression, anxiety, social phobia, and eating disorder.

Young adults are susceptible to these kinds of media influences. Young adulthood starts from the age of 20 and goes up to 40 years. This phase of life brings changes to a person in various aspects. In order to create a specific identity they engage in various behaviours.

While creating an identity, they give more importance to body image. In today’s world it’s very common that society creates a pressure that goes along with “ideal body image,” particularly among younger generation. While size-zero models and six-pack covers whole of the today’s magazines and media, insisting an unhealthy obsession with size-zero figure and six packs, young people are targeted much and they undergo some form of pressure to look in certain way which is determined by media and society. These obsessions have become more common these days and it is present in all parts of the world.

In general whenever we think of weight reduction or skinny figures our imagination get struck with women alone. But majority of the people don’t realize that weight issues and disordered eating are a steadily growing problem among men as well. Though it’s not talk of the town, male’s ideal body-image has also changed consistent over past years right from a being slim, stylish look to a fixation on nearly impossible muscles and masculinity. The average weight of the man has been constantly increasing.

Negative male body image has been much talked when compared to women body issues. Nevertheless, there are many common issues among the both the groups and their fight to indentify the “ideal” body.

When a person is not happy about the way they look, they develop body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction is an internal development but can be predisposed by several other factors. For example, parents, siblings, cousins, friends, acquaintances, teachers and the media all have an effect on how a person view and feels about themselves and their own appearance. Individuals who are with people who judge other by appearance or people those who get negative responses about their physical appearance are at a higher risk of developing body dissatisfaction.

Media become one of the most important reasons in influencing. Irrespective of their ages people are flooded with images through television, books, magazines, social media and advertising. These images often encourage impossible, unobtainable and highly stylized appearance ideals which have been fabricated by media people. People, who feel they don’t fit into these so called ideal images, has more change to undergo sever body dissatisfaction which causes psychological and physical problem to their day-to-day life.

Body image and self-esteem start in the mind, not in the mirror. The way we portray ourselves can change the way we understand our value and self-worth. Healthy body image and self-esteem predicts well-being and various other psychological outcomes. In addition, body dissatisfaction has been found to be a mediator between BMI and psychological health outcomes, including self-esteem and depressive mood. Thus the link between a person’s weight psychological health is accounted by his or her level of body dissatisfaction.

Media influence on human is becoming high. Knowing or without knowing people try to imitate the person they see on media. People do not see the ill-effects caused due to this. These observations are extremely concerning for those
who work with adolescents, as advertisers often emphasize sexuality and the importance of physical attractiveness in their efforts to sell products. This type of advertising could place excessive pressure on adolescents and young adults to focus on their appearance more critically. In addition to that, young girls experiencing the profound physical and hormonal changes during puberty are greatly impacted by persuasive marketing tactics (American Association of University Women, 1994).

Body image and the media has always been talk to the town. Social workers are very much concerned about the over-sexualized imagery we are exposed to. This issue of over exposure to sexuality has led individuals to think too much about their body image and in turn to a negative body image and development of eating disorder. This reflects in lower body self-esteem. A number of data published during recent times, show the increasing number of people concerned with their appearance, and media being the main reason behind it. It is the media which give idea about changing body shapes. Young people are very much worried about their ideal body image due to the expectation of the society and they constantly worry about the same. This ideal body image has been extended not only to advertising but also to music, video and other fashion industries.

Effect of media on body image starts right from young age. Media has created unhealthy obsession of being thin and muscular. Most of the images in media have made people feel “YOU’RE OKAY, I’M NOT OKAY.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

India is country with huge youth population. Due to globalization, change is seen among young adults in the way they eat and dress. To put in simple terms we find changes in the life style of the young individuals. Social net works like face book, twitter helps the individuals to reach any one in any corner of the world. They are updating themselves with current trends in lifestyles. Celebrities also set new trends among youngsters. Most of the youngsters were found to be adherent followers of these celebrities. Youngsters are ready to do anything for their favourite stars. If their favourite star changes his body to six packs, ten they also try to change into six packs. If a actress maintains zero size figure then her followers also try to do the same. Hence it is very much clear that media influences the individual by all means. Media influences the importance of body image, body concern and eating practices. Indian is well for its tradition and culture. But no more the same old tradition is being followed. In the recent past there is lot of change in eating habits. This is mainly due to media influence. Most of the studies related to body image have been done in western countries. Hardly we found studies conducted in India. Hence the present study aimed at finding out the influence of media on body image among young adults.

HYPOTHESES

As the researcher could not find much reviews in media influence and body image conducted in Indian population null hypotheses has been formulated. The study was designed to test the following hypotheses:

- Media would not be significantly related to importance of body image among young adults (Hypothesis 1).
- Media would not be significantly related to body image concern among young adults (Hypothesis 2).
- Media would not be significantly related to eating practice among young adults (Hypothesis 3).
- Media would not be significantly related to body change strategies among young adults (Hypothesis 4).
- Age would not be significantly related to media, importance of body image, body image concern, eating practice...
and body change strategy (Hypothesis 5).

There would be no significant gender difference in importance of body image, body image concern, eating practice and body change strategy (Hypothesis 6).

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Body Image

Body image is a multidimensional construct that represents how individuals think, feel, and behave with respect to their physical appearance. Body image consists of two components: body image evaluation (comprises the evaluative thoughts and beliefs an individual may have about his or her appearance), and body image investment, (the extent to which an individual focuses on his or her physical appearance and engages in body-altering behaviors) (Morrison, Morrison, & Hopkins, 2003).

Media

Media is a form of communication outlet or tool that is used to hoard and convey information. It is either connected with communication media, print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting and publishing.

Tools Used

- The body image and body change inventory (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001).
- Media influence sub-scale (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001).

TOOLS DESCRIPTION

Personal Data Sheet

All the participants were initially asked to fill the demographic details such as age, sex, height, weight, educational qualification, parent’s educational qualification, socio-economic status, if they go to gym, number of friends, preferred media, and number on hours spent on media. Then, they filled the Body Image and Body Change Inventory (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001) and Media influence scale (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001).

Body Image and Body Change Inventory

The Body Image and Body Change Inventory have 4 sub-scales.

- **Importance of Body Image:** This scale measures the extent to which an individual gives importance to various parts of their body.
- **Body Concern:** This scale measures the extent to which an individual are concern about various parts of their body.
- **Eating Practices:** This scale measures how much individuals change their eating practices in order to maintain their ideal-body image.
- **Body Changing Strategies:** This scale measures how much individuals engage in body changing strategies order to maintain their ideal-body image.
Media Influence Scale

**Media Influence Scale**: This scale measures how individuals are influenced by media on the grounds of body image.

**RESULTS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
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<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Importance of Body Image</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Body Image Concern</td>
<td>27.56</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Eating Practices</td>
<td>36.69</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51**</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Body Changing Strategies</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**0.01 level of significance**

From the above table it is clearly seen that media has influence on variable such as importance of body image, body concern eating practice and body changing strategies. Hence hypothesis 1 stating that Media would not be significantly related to importance of body image among young adults, hypothesis 2 Media would not be significantly related to body image concern among young adults, hypothesis 3 Media would not be significantly related to eating practice among young adults, hypothesis 4 Media would not be significantly related to body change strategies among young adults are rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Age</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Body Image</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Image Concern</td>
<td>0.04(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Practices</td>
<td>0.08(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Changing Strategies</td>
<td>0.06(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Influence</td>
<td>0.03(NS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS-Not significant

The above table shows that there is no significant relationship between age and other variables of the study. Hence hypothesis 5 stating “age would not be significantly related to media, importance of body image, body image concern, eating practice and body change strategy” is accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Importance of Body Image</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.319(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Image Concern</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>27.42</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.95*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>27.82</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Eating Practice</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>35.86</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>5.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>37.71</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Changing Strategies</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15.91</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>2.90**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>17.19</td>
<td>4.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Influence</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.398(NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS Not significant; *0.05 level of significance; **0.01 level of significance
The above table reveals that males and females differ in body concern, eating practice and body changing strategies. The value is not significant for importance of body image and media and hence the hypothesis 6 stating that “there would be no significant gender difference in importance of body image, body image concern, eating practice and body change strategy is practically accepted.

DISCUSSIONS

Young adults now-a-days are crazy about their favorite stars. They do anything for their favorite stars. Cosmetic industry and beverage industry make use if this trend among youngsters to sell their products. Media influences to a larger extent in the body image of the individuals. Many young adults are giving importance to body and they are much worried about their image. In order to maintain the social image, they undergo a lot of changes in their eating practice and also engage in body changing strategies. Few are even ready to undergo cosmetic surgery to look appealing. Hence the present study aimed at finding out the influence of media on body image among young adults.

From the present study it is clearly seen that media influence the young adults. The scores of the individuals reveal the same. With regard to the importance of body image, both male and female give importance. When it comes to body image concern men and women differ. However both males and females are concerned about their body image. Eating practices also changes frequently and the media influence.

It was found that media was significantly related to importance of body image among young adults. Hence hypothesis stating media would not be significantly related to importance of body image among young adults is rejected. Since every now and then media suggest for attractive outlook, zero size, six packs it is evident that media influences the importance of the body image.

As this study is limited only to particular age group there is no significant relationship between age and other variable of this study. If the age range was high there would be possibility of increased media influence in earlier stage and decline as age goes. This can be possible as young people follow the anything that comes on media without thinking about their ill-effects, as age goes people will start to think do what is right and what is healthily. Another reason could be young people tries to impress others with their looks. This is age where people want to be noticed.

For instance if there is an advertisement promoting a product for weight loss in 2 weeks, youngsters buy them immediately expecting the same result, whereas middle-aged people think before buying it. Even if media starts giving importance to plus sized figures people will try to switch to them.

India is a country where people get influenced by western culture but they don’t internalize them. But want to hit the gym just of the name sake or due to peer group. Only few people will follow the instruction given by the gym instructor. Few people want to attain their “ideal body image” but they either do work-outs or doing dieting. Many people do not realize that both work-outs and dieting go hand-in-hand and that is the proper way to maintain a healthy body.

Thus the present study showed that media influences the body image of the young adults. It was also found out that none of the demographic variables had a significant correlation with body image. Most interestingly it was found that young adults preferred media is social networks than print media and TV. However the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. Further studies required to be done to generalize the findings.
Limitations

- Sample size is small when compared to actual population.
- Study was conducted only on people who were resided in and around Chennai.
- Other variables which had influence over body image such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, assertiveness were not considered.

Implications

The present study has suggested that media has influenced the perception of body image young adults. The study implied the necessity of counseling the young adults about healthy eating practices. Also they need to be trained to enhance their bodily self-esteem. It is the responsibility of psychologists, social workers and sociologist to create awareness among the community about health eating practices.

Suggestions for Future Study

- As individuals starts giving importance to their body image from the on –set for puberty. Hence future research can consider the age range from 13-25 to know the intense of the media influence.
- Intervention can be designed improve assertiveness, self-esteem so that improve the bodily self-esteem.
- The future study could be done at a wider angle as a cross sectional study, so as to generalize to all age groups.

CONCLUSIONS

From the present study it is very clear that media influences the body image of the young adults. None of the demographic variables such as age, sex, educational qualification, socio economic status, preference for gym and preferred media influence the body image. Very interestingly it was found out the young adults prefer social networking to other media like TV and print media. So the influence is mainly through the social networking.

REFERENCES


