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## Impact of “Thin-body” Media on Body-image of Adults

Body-image is a multidimensional, subjective and dynamic concept that encompasses a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his/her body. It can be positive or negative. There are four dimensions by which the concept of body-image can be understood:

1. Perceptual- The way an individual see himself. It is also called Body Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction and represents a global evaluation of one's body. According to Grabe, Warde & Hyde (2008), it is the overall level of approval or lack thereof that an individual has with their body.
2. Affective- The way an individual feel about the way he looks. It is also known as Body Self- Consciousness/ Objectification and reflects the presence of dysfunctional cognitive schema. It focuses on self- attentional focus and pre-occupation with the body and self-objectification. Self-objectification refers to an individual adopting a view of the self as an object whose value is based on appearance.
3. Cognitive- All thoughts and beliefs an individual has for his body. It is also known as 'internalization of the thin ideal and drive for thinness'; it consists of an individual's adoption of socio-cultural appearance ideals as a personal goal and standard.
4. Behavioral- The actions and behaviors an individual takes in relation to the way he looks and consists of behaviors related to eating and beliefs related to eating like feeling guilty after eating.

Apart from these dimensions, several factors have been introduced by Folger and Reeb (2010) that may impact body-image satisfaction such as Self-efficacy, Anxiety related to body image and Affect related to body image.

### Media and Body-Image Perception

Many adverts in the current media display an image of the 'perfect' woman with an idealistic body and flawless facial features. This ideal woman creates an unrealistic image for women and puts pressure on them to live up to that certain standard. Such culture disempowers women and puts pressure on them to live up to that certain standard. Hargreaves (2004) investigated the impact of T.V. adverts showing thin bodies on women and concluded that such exposure caused a major body dissatisfaction on all the viewers.

Men also face similar burdens in regard to attractiveness, whereby the media's depiction of the ideal muscular physique has caused numerous body dissatisfaction issues among young men. While women face expectations to be increasingly thin, endorsements featuring the muscular ideal, therefore, cause numerous problems for men. The importance men place on muscle and weight may be tracked from the bulked-up action heroes along with brawny characters from video games which present an anatomically impossible ideal for boys just like Barbie promotes body proportions that have become significant for girls.

Media promotion of body ideals is not new as the thin ideal body has been supported for decades. According to Silverstein (1986), there has been a continuous fall in the weight of female figures portrayed by the media to be the ideal-body size. Contrary to it, the weight of

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females in general population increased, thus creating a major gap between ideal and average woman's actual body size.

According to Martins (2009), thin doll like figures and muscular action heroes' bodies are considered ideal body type for men and women respectively and as a result this trend is further extended to representation of characters in video games.

Current media is increasingly emphasizing on trends like '#fitspiration' which promotes thin instead of a fit physique. Their images are often misleading as they present negative messages like restraining diet, objectification and encourage its viewers to be thin.

Thus, exposure to media has shown some serious negative outcomes like decreased self-esteem, increased self-consciousness, physique anxiety, dissatisfaction with one's body, disturbances in eating patterns, irritability, depressive mood symptoms and urge to lose weight.

## **Proposed Method**

### **Aim**

Past literature have shown that even a brief exposure to thin-ideal media has negative implications for the body image in an individual. This provides a base for the present study.

The existing literature lack a complete and comprehensive assessment of the body-image construct and the ability to control for the pre-test sensitization effect. Pre-test sensitization occurs when the administration of a pre-test measure in some way influences participants and causes them to be affected differently by an experienced intervention. The present study will address both these limitations and aims to provide more conclusive findings regarding the effects of thin-ideal media on body image using multiple measures.

The results of the present study would contribute in better understanding of the ways that thin-ideal media influences the different dimensions of the body image. Also, it will help with the development of interventions to prevent body-image problems and associated problems such as eating disorders and self-esteem.

### **Hypothesis**

The purpose of the present study is to examine the following hypothesis:

1. To examine the impact of thin-ideal media on body image.
  1. H1: Participants' body image will become more negative after viewing thin-ideal media, whereas no change will be observed for neutral media.
2. Another objective of the study is to look at how the effect of thin-ideal media carries across the different dimensions of body-image media construct.
  1. H2: Thin-ideal media would have a negative effect on body image across all dimensions.
3. Another objective of the study is to apply the Solomon Four Group Design and post-experimental inquiry in order to determine whether the changes in the scores on body image measures following exposure to thin-ideal media were due to pre-test

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sensitization.

1. H3: After controlling for participant reactivity, there will be evidence of media effect on body image.
2. H4: Even after controlling for pre-test sensitization, the effect of thin-ideal media will be observed on all dimensions of body-image assessments.

## Design

The extent to which reactivity of body-image assessment accounts for changes in scores of body-image measures has been mentioned less in our existing literature. It is unclear the extent to which pre-test sensitization may play a role in pre-to-post changes in body image for participants.

According to Folger and Reeb (2010), only a few studies in the literature have examined pre-test sensitization which found that an increased percentage of participants were aware of the study's purpose, yet the media caused a negative effect on their body image.

Therefore, it is crucial for future researches to examine the effects of pre-test sensitization in a more systematic way which can be done by using a Solomon Four Group design in conjunction with a post-experiential inquiry.

Using the Solomon four-group design within research to control for pre-test sensitization, participants would be randomly assigned to 4 conditions:

- Condition 1: Pre-test Assessment, Exposure to experimental manipulation and Post-Test Assessment
- Condition 2: Pre-Test Assessment, Neutral exposure (control), Post-Test Assessment
- Condition 3: No Pre-test Assessment, Exposure to experimental manipulation and Post-Test Assessment
- Condition 4: No Pre-test Assessment, Neutral and Post-Test Assessment.

This design will allow to exert more control over the variables and check that the pre-test did not influence the results.

## Participants

The study will invite participants from all ethnic groups and gender ranging in the age group of 20-35 years.

## Materials

### 1. Demographic questionnaire

This questionnaire will contain general information items like age, ethnicity, height, weight and the desired weight along with socio-economic status, level of education and yearly income. Also, it will contain queries if participants are involved in any therapy with a Mental Health Practitioner at the time of study.

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## **2. Body Esteem Scale (BES)**

This scale will measure the first dimension of the body image i.e. Body Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction. The BES is a Likert-type scale where participants will score each item on arrange of 0-10 and will examine how an individual feel towards their body parts and shape.

## **3. Self -Objectification Questionnaire**

This scale was developed by Noll and Friedrickson (1998) for measuring the second dimension of body-image i.e. the body self-consciousness/ objectification. Participants will have to rank a list of 10 body attributes on a Likert scale. It is crucial to measure this dimension as it taps into how concerned participants are with their own appearance.

## **4. Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ)**

This scale was developed by Heinberg, Thompson and Stormer (1995) which looks at the third dimension of body image i.e. internalization of the thin ideal and drive fir thinness which according to Grabe (2008) describes an individual's adoption of sociocultural appearance ideals as their personal goal and standard.

This questionnaire will be administered to participants before and/or after viewing the media based on the experimental group that he will be assigned. Participants will have to rate items on a likert-scale ranging from 0-5. It is important to assess the dimension of body image in order to look at the degree of acceptance for society's standards of appearance.

## **5. Brief Eating Beliefs and Behavioral Intentions Scale**

It is a 5-item scale that will ask the participants to rate the degree to which they endorse statements about their eating beliefs. Participants will then be asked to rate items on a likert-scale ranging from 1-5.

## **6. Appearance Self-Efficacy Scale (ApSES)**

This scale was developed by Bardone-cone and Cass (2006) which measures an individual's feelings of self-efficacy in terms of appearance. It will be administered to participants before and/or after viewing the media based on the experimental group they will belong.

## **7. Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale (PASTAS)**

This scale was developed by Reed, Thompson, Brannick and Sacco (1991). It will examine body-image anxiety and consists of questions that the participants will rate regarding their anxiety levels about certain parts of their body. For the current study, a shorter version of PASTAS will be used which will contain 16-items.

## **8. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)**

This scale was developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegan (1998) and it looks at the positive and

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negative affect using a likert-type rating ranging from 1-5. For the current study, the Negative Affect Scale of PANAS was used to measure pre-to-post media changes in negative valenced mood. Participants will rate their affect as distressed or upset.

## Procedure

Participants who will sign-up for this study will be given a consent form before being involved in the study. After the consent form, each participant will complete body-image measures and will view the media individually. Depending on which group participants will be assigned to at the outset of the study, they will complete a pack of self-report questionnaires before and/or after media exposure which will include the demographic form, the Body Esteem Scale, the Self-Objectification Questionnaire, the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire, the Brief Eating Beliefs and Behavioral Intentions Scale, the Appearance Self-Efficacy Scale, the Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale and Positive And Negative Affect Schedule.

In accordance with the Solomon Four-Group design, participants will be randomly assigned to one of the four groups:

- In the first condition, participants will complete the pre-test body image self-report assessments, then undergo exposure to thin-ideal media and then complete the same self-report post-test body image assessments.
- In the second condition, participants will complete the pre-test body image assessments, then undergo exposure to neutral (control) media and afterward complete the same post-test self-report body image assessments.
- In the third condition, participants will have no pre-test body image assessments. Rather they will be directly exposed to thin ideal media and later will be asked to complete post-test body image self-report assessments.
- In the fourth condition, participants will not have any pre-test body assessment and they will experience a control media viewing and afterward, they will be asked to complete post-test self-report body image assessments.

For the present study, 10 pictures of models from famous fashion websites and magazines will be used. For neutral media, 10 images from magazine advertisements will be used which will not represent any models. Both the medias will be shown for 10 seconds per image to the participants based on their allocations.

Subsequently, after media exposure and post-test body-image measures will be completed, a brief post-experimental inquiry will be employed which will assess if the participants will be able to detect the purpose of the study during their involvement.

In the end, the participants will be debriefed both in written as well as verbally.

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