



Exploration of Relationship between Content of Media, Body image and Choosing Clothes among Male and Female University Students

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Abstract

One of the effective factors on formation of an individual's body image and body management that leads to picking a special wearing style is media. The content of media can play a considerable role in shaping an "ideal body" or "a negative/positive body image". This image, therefore, affects choosing clothes as one of dimensions of body experience. Accordingly, the present research investigates the relationship between content of media, body image and choosing clothes among male and female university students. To do this, a survey method was used. The population consists of 300 male and female students in associate degree, undergraduate and graduate degrees at Islamic Azad University. The participants aged 18-30 were selected through the random sampling method. Using the Cochran's formula, 163 subjects were selected as the sample size. For the data collection, two standardized SATAQ-3 and researcher-made questionnaires in form of Likert scale were applied as the research instruments in order to measure the background factors like age, sex, and social status. The obtained results indicate that a positive and meaningful association exists between content of media and body image. Also, body image positively relates to choosing clothes. However, no meaningful association was observed between age, sex, and social status and body image.

Keywords: Body image, content of media, clothes, social status, body dissatisfaction.

Introduction

In the world today, along with technological advances and growth of rationality, greater attention is given to personal aspects of humans. Issues that hundred years before might be simple and banal, currently are in center of notice. One of such less considered issues is body image. The concept of body image is a multifaceted notion that can affect different behaviors in different conditions or/and is influenced by physical growth, individuals' interactions with social environment, accidents, and physical injuries. Moreover, the domain of body image idea and tendency to be seen beautiful besides concerning to it has expanded to the point that it has become one of individuals especially youths' engagement. This, consequently, makes youths spend much time and money thinking about some physical changes in their body¹.

This happens in a way that these individuals spend many hours thinking about their body image and through changing their make-up style, wearing various clothes and standing in certain position strive to conceal their appearance deficiencies resulted from their mental image they have about their body².

How much having a positive body image and to be seen beautiful considerably increase youths' confidence and social participation, having a negative body image and unpleasant perception from physical body cause anxiety, depression, social isolation, mental disorders, and weak self-concept and confidence³.

Many several studies have been conducted on association of puberty, body image, and self-esteem among young adults in western countries. The obtained results indicate that girls who were dissatisfied from their body or weight possessed lower rate of self-esteem compared with those with a positive body image. Indeed, adolescents after puberty usually strike to get more similar to the ideal cultural patterns are propagated by the mass media.

On the other hand, the reason for ignoring the role of clothes in the body image investigations is that clothes in general and fashion in specific has been regarded as a primitive and useless issue, thus there is no motive to perform independent studies in this field⁴. Moreover, a large pool of body image studies belongs to a specified age range of women when weight and body shape become highly crucial. However, as women age wearing styles and other body management strategies find more importance since women gain more control over the inevitable and unmanageable process of aging and related physical transformations. Furthermore, wearing and clothes differ from other dimensions of body image like weight and body shape because it is in much extent manageable.

Accordingly, it is a necessity to conduct more independent researches on the relationship between content of media, body image and choosing clothes.

Research Background: To mention some studies, Rezaei,

Inanlou and Fekri performed a study naming “body management and its relation to social factors” and realized that the concept of body and reflective bodily identity of individuals are of consequences of the consuming community⁵. The researcher stated that through changing physical features of body, peoples attempt to construct a social body, i.e. a body is accepted by the social system in terms of its physical, beauty and wearing styles.

Riahi in an investigation titling “examination of gender differences and rate of body image satisfaction” worked on the impacts of some socio-mental factors⁶. The population consisted of all students at Mazandaran University that 360 subjects were selected through the available sampling method. The findings indicated a meaningful gender difference in satisfaction from body image. That is, female students reported more body dissatisfaction.

Movahed et al worked on relationship between media, body image and self-esteem and desire to make up among 601 students at university of Shiraz⁷. They concluded that the subjects used makeup and tended to use it as well. The findings also showed that a large number of participants were dissatisfied from their body image. Moreover, the relationship between self-esteem and body image was negative and body dissatisfaction directly associated to desire to makeup. Also, body dissatisfaction had a correlation with desire to makeup and components of disorder in social functions possessed a meaningful relationship with both dimensions of makeup.

Khanjani et al in their research naming “examination and comparison of mental status and body image of plastic surgery applicants with non-applicants” among 124 subjects found out that a meaningful difference exists between applicants and non-applicants of cosmetic surgery on the basis of anxiety disorders, depression and body image⁸.

Tavasoli and Modiri in their investigation on women’s tendency to cosmetic surgery in Tehran with 426 participants concluded that the greatest motive for these women to do plastic surgery is to become more beautiful in order to increase their confidence⁹. This preference, in one hand is affected by some personal characteristics and on the other hand is influenced by external obligations. In a way that single and highly educated women hold more negative body image and low confidence. Furthermore, family, friends, relatives, husbands, physicians, satellite and TV channels are considerably effective on such tendency respectively. However, the women’s desire to plastic surgery was irrelevant to age, employment, class, life satisfaction, beliefs and religious attitudes.

Fatehi and Ekhlesi realized in their research that women pay close attention to all aspects of body management¹⁰. The investigators also understood that a direct and meaningful relationship is present between media consumption, social acceptance of body, and socio-economic status and body

management. Though, a reverse and meaningful relationship was observed between religiosity parameters and body management.

As Kwon, Miller and Davis, and Solomon and Schopler stated interest in clothes inversely relates to social consciousness, but directly correlates with created body or conscious body¹¹⁻¹³. These scholars reason that all women desire to specifically focus on type of dressing and fashion when they participate in social activities and in life as well. As a result, it becomes to some extent difficult to recognize their wearing preferences and favorite styles.

In other study, Harden and Scheetz indicated that women with more desirable body image choose clothes that highlight this positive image¹⁴. Though, women with less desirable body image pick clothes to coat their whole body.

Cattarin et al in their investigation showed some TV commercials to girl students¹⁵. In this research three groups of advertisements associated to physical attractions, slim women and advertisements had nothing to do with the physical appearance in their contents. The participants were asked to compare themselves with female models in the ads and pay attention to the advertised products. No specific instruction was given to the participants.

The investigators figured out that the group that had watched physical appearance advertisements and had compared themselves with them after watching the ads illustrated the lowest possible body satisfaction.

Bessenoff in a study understood that women with high levels of body image strike more to get engaged with social comparisons through media pictures¹⁶. Furthermore, these women more probably will experience the negative consequences of such comparisons.

In a study with meta analysis method on previous 25 researches have been conducted until 2001, Groetz et al concluded that after getting exposed to pictures of slim body women, the young women experience an undesired sense toward looking at other pictures¹⁷. Moreover, women with negative body image are intended to be affected more by the negative impacts of watching these images.

Accordingly, the present study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between content of media, body image and choosing clothes among male and female university students. Thus, the following research hypotheses are addressed:

The major hypotheses: i. The content of media directly associates to body image. ii. Type of body image directly associates to choosing clothes.

The minor hypotheses: i. There is a direct relationship between

age and body image. ii. There is a direct relationship between sex and body image. iii. There is a direct relationship between social status and body image. iv. There is a direct relationship between family size and body image.

Methodology

The present research adopted a survey method. The population consisted of 300 male and female university students with associate degree, undergraduate and graduate degrees at Islamic Azad University aged 18 – 30 years old. Through the simple random sampling method and the Cochran’s formula 163 participants were selected. In order to collect the required data, two researchers– made and standardized SATAQ-3 questionnaires were applied in form of the Likert scale.

Where: N= total number of population, t= 1.96 in 95% level of confidence, d=approximation in estimation of the parameter $0.0025=0.05$, P= probability of presence of the property (0.5), q= probability of absence of property (0.5)
 n = sample size

Validity and reliability: In order to test the questionnaires validity a pilot study was conducted and the Cronbach’s alpha was used as a means for measuring the questionnaires reliability separately. The obtained alpha values were accepted for either research instruments and so the questionnaires were distributed among the participants.

Furthermore, to test the face validity some experts’ opinions were asked. The Cronbach’s alpha for researcher made questionnaire was obtained 0.76 and for the standardized survey was calculated 0.884.

Results and Discussion

The descriptive findings: In this section some descriptive data relevant to the variables are presented.

Table-1
 Descriptive statistics of body image, choosing clothes and media

Variables	Mean	Sd	SE	Variance
Body image	10.7178	0.3784	4.44098	19.722
Choosing clothes	16.1718	0.358	4.577	20.958
Media	21.33	0.542	6.930	48.038

As table-1 shows, the mean scores for body image equal 10.7178, choosing clothes 16.1718, and media 21.33. Also, the calculated standard deviation for body image is equal to 0.3784,

choosing clothes 0.358, and media 0.542. The variance for body image is 19.722, choosing type of clothes 20.958 and media 48.038.

The inferential findings: In this section some inferential findings and test of research hypotheses are provided.

Test of the major hypotheses: H1: Content of media directly associates to body image. For examination of relationship between content of media and body image, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient test was adopted. The Pearson’s correlation coefficient value was achieved 0.503 in Sig= 0.00. Considering the obtained coefficient value, it can be concluded that content of media positively correlates with body image. Moreover, since Sig <0.05 the H1 is confirmed. This means that media directly correlates with body image. Table- 2 presents the results.

Table-2
 Pearson’s correlation coefficient test for content of media and body image

Variable	Pearson’s correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and content of media	0.503	0.000	163

H2: Type of body image directly associates to choosing clothes. To test the hypothesis, Pearson’s correlation coefficient test was used. The Pearson’s correlation coefficient value was computed 0.634 in Sig= 0.00. Considering the achieved correlation coefficient, it can be concluded that choosing clothes directly associates with type of body image. Also, since Sig <0.05 the H2 is approved. This means a direct relationship exists between type of body image and choosing clothes. Table-3 shows the results.

Table-3
 Pearson’s correlation coefficient test for type of body image and choosing clothes

Variable	Pearson’s correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and choosing clothes	0.634	0.000	163

Test of the minor hypotheses: H1: There is a direct relationship between age and body image. To examine the H1, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient test was adopted. For this hypothesis, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient was calculated 0.002 in Sig=0.985. Considering the correlation coefficient value it can be reasoned that a negative and weak correlation exists between age and body image. Moreover, since Sig. >0.05, the H1 is rejected and age does not directly associate to body image. Table-4 presents the results.

Table-4

Pearson's correlation coefficient test for body image and age

Variable	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and age	0.002	0.98	163

H2. There is a direct relationship between sex and body image. For measuring the H2, the Pearson's correlation coefficient test was applied. Here, the obtained value is equal to -0.122 in Sig=0.121. According to the obtained correlation coefficient, it is concluded that a weak and negative correlation is present between sex and body image. Moreover, because Sig>0.05, the H2 is rejected and so, no meaningful association is observed between sex and body image. Table-5 represents the results.

Table-5

Pearson's correlation coefficient test for body image and sex

Variable	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and sex	-0.122	0.121	163

H3. There is a direct relationship between social status and body image. To test the H3, the Pearson's correlation coefficient test was utilized. The correlation coefficient for the H3 was calculated 0.001 in Sig=0.202. Considering the correlation coefficient value, it can be concluded that correlation between social status and body image is weak and positive. In addition, since Sig>0.05, the H3 is rejected. So, no meaningful association was evident between social status and body image. Table-6 indicates the result.

Table-6

Pearson's correlation coefficient test for body image and social status

Variable	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and social status	0.100	0.202	163

H4: There is a direct relationship between family size and body image. To examine the relationship between family size and body image, the Pearson's correlation coefficient test was adopted. The correlation coefficient value for H3 computed 0.15 in Sig=0.05. With regard to the calculated coefficient value, it can be reasoned that a weak and positive correlation exists between family size and body image. Moreover, since the level of significance is 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed. Table-7 shows the results.

Table-7

Pearson's correlation coefficient test for body image and family size

Variable	Pearson's correlation coefficient	Sig	No
body image and family size	0.151	0.05	163

Discussion: Doubtless in the contemporary world, media have more rigorously affected different social and individual levels. If in the past access to media was restricted, today, thanks to technological advances and entering the information age, this impact has enlarged. In the modern world, media have not been employed exclusively for data transfer; they however, have been actively engaged in numerous social changes nowadays. One of these effects is the impact on individual and his/her mental image. Through conveying a bulk of diverse information and alluring advertisements, the media inculcate audiences that the advertised instruments and strategies are quite necessary for them to change their mental or physical image.

On the other hand, being affected by different types of programs including TV shows, satellite channels, movies, music videos etc., audiences constantly get busy to change either intrinsically or extrinsically. Actually, media have penetrated the very private environments of human life. Media have become so empowered that can persuade an individual to do a cosmetic surgery or to spoil someone's positive body image and thrust him/her at non-stop comparisons with the ideals media have imposed on the him/her.

Taking the above points together, conducting different investigations on the effect of media as one of social and individual influential elements as well as its consequences could be the subject of several social studies. In this regard, in the present paper the relationship between content of media, body image and choosing clothes among male and female university students were explored. According to the results, the content of media considerably affects individuals' attitude toward body image. Also, the results of the first main hypothesis indicate that the content of media directly associates with body image.

That is to say, watching different forms of media products, videos, TV shows, satellite channels etc. , stands as the significant factor in change of the individual's attitude towards his/her body image and making a sense of body dissatisfaction and attempt to change this image. As a matter of fact, the content of media convinces the audience that his/her habitus is far from the existing social or even global beauty standards. So, to get much more closed to these ideals, the viewer requires to do cosmetic surgeries or follows other body management techniques.

Conclusion

Accordingly, the obtained results are in accordance with Groetz et al¹⁷, Cash et al²², Heinberg and Thompson¹⁸, Cattarin et al¹⁵, and Bessenoff¹⁶ results.

The results of the second main hypothesis signify that type of body image directly associates to choosing clothes. In other words, type of body image considerably affects choosing clothes. How much the individual holds a negative body image or is more dissatisfied, s/he chooses clothes to lessen this dissatisfaction and covers those parts of body should not be seen. Actually, wearing dark and looser clothes is one mechanism the individual adopts to hide unpleasant parts of the body. These results, thus accord with Harden, Butler and Scheetz¹⁴, Kwon and Parham²³, and Rudd and Lennon¹⁹ results.

Test of the first minor hypothesis, relationship between age and body image, indicated that these variables weakly correlate together. That is, age should not be considered as a hindrance factor in holding body dissatisfaction or negative body image. Older individuals even like the younger can be affected by media and display a negative body image and do attempt to change this image via body management techniques.

Measuring the second minor hypothesis showed that sex and body image have a poor relationship and the hypothesis is rejected. This means that men and women manifested no meaningful difference in their attitude towards body image or body dissatisfaction. Although women are more sensitive to their body image, the content of media equally does affect men and women's body image and body dissatisfaction. These findings are in accordance with results of Movahed et al⁷, Riyahi⁶, Askari et al²⁴, Tavasoli and Modiri⁹, Furnham and Greaves²⁰, Wardle²¹, Joffa Paul Kwaku²⁵ and Alemmebrat Kiflu²⁶ results.

Regarding the relationship between social status and body image, no meaningful association was found. To say, individuals with higher social status will be more dissatisfied. So, according to the present paper findings, peoples with higher education and family status hold no positive image and are less satisfied. Indeed, individual's social status bears no significant impact on not holding a negative body image.

After examination of relationship between body image and family size, it was concluded that family size is effective on type of body image. In other words, individuals in larger families are more probable to hold a negative body image, though individuals in smaller families may show a positive body image.

Recommendations: Almost certainly, being satisfied from whole physical body and consequently having high confidence and social participation are among the important factors can determine the rate of social dynamism in a society. Also, as

media are an integrated part of everyday's life, making a balance between using media and less negatively affected seems critical. Therefore, the following recommendations are provided for social policy makers and the government to prevent from negative impacts of media.

To have active and highly confident individuals, they have to be trained that body image is a changeable concept and can be affected with different variables. It is recommended to hold some workshops and teach peoples to believe in their other abilities not spend money to change their physical appearance.

It is recommended that a few TV shows are produced besides other programs to familiarize viewers with some fake beauty standards are being advertised in satellite channels.

To decrease the social pressure on women about their physical appearance, it is suggested that in university curriculums some courses are designed to make female students more confident and help them to believe in their own talents and capabilities instead of physical beauty only.

Because wearing dark clothes is a common strategy among less satisfied individuals, it is recommended through guided advertisements or social drivers, wearing light color clothes are encouraged.

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