

Relations of self-esteem and body shame with media pressure, body satisfaction and eating pathology in college females

Conota Beasley & Chavey Fisher

Christine M. Bachman, Ph.D., Faculty sponsor

Abstract

Dissatisfaction with one's body image is correlated with problematic eating behavior (i.e., eating restriction and using diet pills or laxatives). The present study examined relations between self-esteem and feeling shameful of one's body and body satisfaction and feeling pressured to reach the thin ideal portrayed in the media in relation to eating pathology.

Introduction

Evidence indicates that media plays an essential role in females' perception of body satisfaction because of media focus on body ideals and societal pressure to reach the ideal body size. Failure to reach this ideal is internalized and is related to feeling shameful of one's body (McKinley & Hide, 1996). While most females are exposed to similar media pressures, not all will internalize the thin ideal portrayed in the media, and only some will be motivated to diet or use other unhealthy eating and weight loss strategies suggesting that individual differences may protect females from sociocultural pressures (Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw & Stein, 1994). Self-esteem is a predisposing factor of disordered eating (Sassaroli & Ruggiero, 2005).

Methods

Participants and procedure: 119 females, ages 18 to 44 participated in a cross sectional study and completed questionnaires and demographic questions in a group setting monitored by trained research assistants.

Variables:

Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)

Body Shame: subscale measures negative feelings associated with failure of one's body to conform to an ideal (McKinley & Hide, 1996)

Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance: subscale measures media pressure to reach the ideal body (Thompson et al. 2003)

Body Esteem Scale: subscale measures satisfaction with specific body parts (Franzoi & Shields, 1984)

Eating Restraint: subscale assessing food restriction (Rosen et al., 1991)

Eating Disorder Inventory: subscales measure fear of gaining weight subscale and use of laxatives & pills to lose/maintain weight loss (Garner et al., 1983)

Hypotheses:

H1: self-esteem will be positively correlated with body satisfaction and negatively correlated with media pressure

H2: negative feelings about oneself will be negatively correlated with body satisfaction and positively correlated with media pressure

H3: media pressure or internalization of the thin ideal will be negatively correlated with body satisfaction

H4: body satisfaction will be negatively correlated with eating pathologies (fear of gaining weight, eating restraint, and using laxatives and pills).

Results

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 15. Analyses of variance indicated no significant difference across ethnic groups, BMI and the variables of interests. Thus, all participants' data were examined together. Questionnaire items were normalized to minimize the effects of using different Likert response scales. Univariate normality estimates, skewness and kurtosis for each variable were normal.

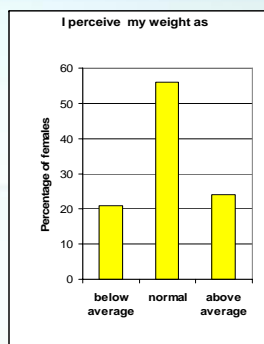


Figure 1

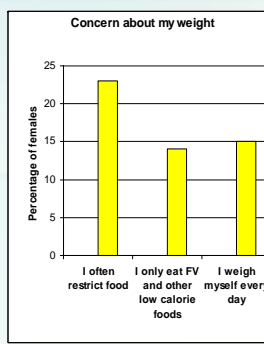


Figure 2

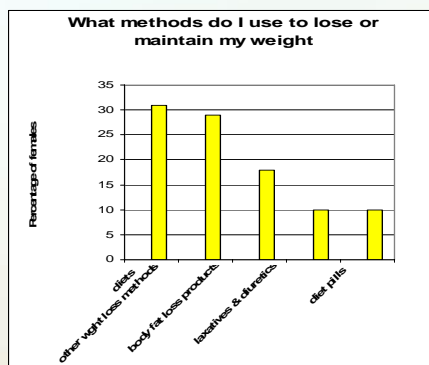


Figure 3

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach Alphas and Zero Order Correlations

#	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Self-Esteem							
2	Negative Feelings	-.32**						
3	Body Satisfaction	.44**	-.48**					
4	Media Pressure	-.16	.53**	-.44**				
5	Fear of Gaining Weight	-.25**	.60**	-.41**	.60**			
6	Eating Restraint	-.07	.36**	-.12	.37**	.55**		
7	Using Pills and Laxative	-.11	.35**	-.17	.42**	.41**	.63**	
	Means	3.96	3.35	3.52	3.68	2.33	1.8	1.22
	SD	.85	1.18	.46	1.93	.76	.9	.66
	Cronbach Alpha	.92	.7	.85	.95	.68	.71	.56

** p < .01

All correlations were in expected directions; yet not all predicted correlations were significant.

H1 was partially supported: self-esteem was significantly negatively correlated with body satisfaction but the relation with media pressure was not significant.

H2 was supported: negative feelings about oneself was significantly negatively correlated with body satisfaction and positively correlated with media pressure.

H3 was supported: media pressure or internalization of the thin ideal was significantly negatively correlated with body satisfaction.

H4 was partially supported: body satisfaction was negatively correlated with fear of gaining weight, but not with eating restraint and using pills and laxatives.

Discussion

These results are consistent with past research. Internalization of media pressure was related to being dissatisfied with one's body and to eating pathologies perhaps to reach the thin ideal. Pelletier and colleagues (2004) suggest that "sociocultural pressures about body image would be positively associated with endorsement of society's beliefs' related to thinness and obesity, which would be positively associated with body dissatisfaction." Females' low self-esteem was positively related to having negative feelings about their bodies, and to body dissatisfaction and fear of gaining weight. More importantly, fear of gaining weight was positively related to eating pathologies perhaps to fit the image females have of attractiveness and happiness. Internalization of cultural messages about thinness is often related to one's perception of physical attractiveness, social acceptance, and happiness" (Moldenhauer, Callicutt, & Leddick, 2001). Women who fall victim to media pressure do not see themselves as beautiful because they do not have the thin ideal body type which may then lead them to developing unhealthy eating habits.

Future research

Special attention should focus on individual differences and perceptions of societal influences when designing interventions to alleviate disordered eating practices. Also, self-esteem should be examined more carefully and use different measures to tap body self-esteem.

References

- Franzoi, S.L., & Shields, S.A. (1984). The body esteem scale: Multidimensional structure and sex differences in a college population. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 48, 173-178.
- Garner, D.M., Olmstead, M.P., and J. Polivy. (1983). "Development and validation of a multidimensional eating disorder inventory for anorexia nervosa and bulimia." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 2, 15-32.
- McKinley, N. M., & Hyde, J. S. (1996). The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale: Development and validation. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 181-215.
- Moldenhauer, K., Callicutt, A., & Leddick, G., (2001). Body Image Among Female College Students, 155-161.
- Orbach, I., & Mikulincer, M. (1998). The body investment scale: Construction and validation of a body experience scale. *Psychological Assessment*, 10, 415-425
- Pelletier, L. P., Dion, S., & Levesque, C., (2004). Can Self-Determination Help Protect Women Against Sociocultural Influences About Body Image and Reduce Their Risk of Experiencing Bulimic Symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, (1) 61-88.
- Rosen, J. C., Srebnik, D., Saltzberg, E., & Wendt, S. (1991). Development of a Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire. *Psychological Assessment*, 3, 32-37
- Rosenberg, M. (1965) *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, J.J. Princeton University Press.
- Sassaroli, S., & Ruggiero, G.M. (2005). The role of stress in the association between low self-esteem, perfectionism, and worry, and eating disorders. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 37, 135-141.
- Stice, E., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Shaw, H. E., & Stein, R. I. (1994). Relation of media exposure to eating disorder symptomatology: An examination of mediating mechanisms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 103, 836-840.
- Thompson, J.K., van den Berg, P., Roehrig, M., Guarda, A.S., Heinberg, L.J. (2004). The sociocultural attitudes towards appearance scale-3 (SATAQ-3): Development and validation. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 35, 293-304.