



MEDIA-PORTRAYED IDEALIZED IMAGES: COMPARING 'MALE AND FEMALE' LITERATURE REVIEW

MEDYA TARAFINDAN RESMEDİLEN İDEAL VÜCUT: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI KADIN VE ERKEK ALGISI

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Abstract: This paper has focused on the aspects of the media's representation of ideal body images among female and males. This literature review sought to examine the effects of media images on men's and women's attitudes towards their body appearance. Socio-cultural theories of body images suggests that body dissatisfaction results from unrealistic societal beauty ideals and the most valid way of transmitting this is through mass media. In this paper, internalized appearance ideals and appearance social comparisons have been considered central factors accounting body dissatisfaction due to the media images. While, the body dissatisfaction is common among both men and women when they exposed by idealized body images through mass media, social comparison effect shows differences among boys and girls. Significantly, in each single case there is a high signal for certain psychological and physical problems afterwards. The existing literatures have been mostly interested with female body dissatisfaction. Yet, the new phenomenon is mostly focusing on the 'muscularity dysmorphia' problem as well. Differences and similarities are explained in the light of different studies that existed. I reviewed the findings of some literatures on men and women body dissatisfaction and idealized body images.

Keywords: *Idealized body images; the Social Comparison Theory; body dissatisfaction; media*

Özet: Bu çalışma ideal kadın ve erkek vücut resimlerinin medya temsiliyetleri üzerinde durmaktadır. Bu çalışmada medya temsiliyetleri ve kullanılan medya görüntülerinin kadınların ve erkeklerin kendi görüntüleri ile ilgili davranışları üzerindeki etkilerini inceleyen literatüre yer vermektedir. Sosyo-kültürel teoriler, toplum tarafından kabul gören gerçekçi olmayan ideal güzel algısının kitle iletişimi ile aktarıldığını ve bu algının vücut memnuniyetsizliğine neden olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Bu metinde toplumsal karşılaştırma teorisi ışığında, medya görüntüleri sayesinde içselleştirilen ideal görüntünün vücut memnuniyetsizliğinde temel faktör olduğunun üzerinde durulmaktadır. Vücut memnuniyetsizliği kadınlar ve erkekler arasında ortak bir noktadır. Fakat kitle iletişimi tarafından empoze edilen ideal vücut görüntülerinden kadın ve erkekler farklı şekillerde etkilenmektedirler. Aynı ayrı her durumda da belli psikolojik ve fiziksel problemler açığa çıkmaktadır. Mevcut literatüre bakıldığında kadın vücut memnuniyetsizliği ile ilgili çalışmalar daha çok ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bunun yanında, literatürde yeni bir fenomen olan 'muscularity dysmorphia' sorunu üzerinde durulmaya başlanmıştır. Bu önemli problem ile ilgili çalışmaların sonuçlarında ki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar farklı bakış açıları ışığında ortaya konulmuştur. Bu farklılıklar çalışmalardan elde edilen farklı bulgular ışığında karşılaştırmalı olarak ifade edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İdealize olmuş Vücut Görüntüsü; Toplumsal Karşılaştırma Teorisi; Vücut memnuniyetsizliği; Medya*

Introduction

Body image satisfaction during adolescence and every age scales has received excessive attention from multidisciplinary fields because of its significant role as risk factor in both psychological, and physical problems, such as; depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem and so on. The first study on body dissatisfaction has been focused on females because of their higher prevalence of body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2004). Prior to the late 1980s, body image was often viewed as a primarily female problem. However, recent studies have shown that men may also suffer from idealized body images as a result of modern society praises an increasingly muscular male body ideal (Leit & et.al., 2001). While for women it is more likely described eating disorders and other weight-related conditions, for men it is called 'muscle dysmorphia' as to say muscular men perceive themselves as thin and underdeveloped (Cohane & Pope, 2000).

Clearly, the socio-cultural pressures and increasing attendance on body images may affect body image concerns and the resulting body dissatisfaction among males and females. Interestingly, the existing literatures have shown very little evidence/explanations about the nature of the socio-cultural influences that affect both men and boys (Jones, 2004). On the other hand, the extent of body dissatisfaction among girls has frequently been explained by the greater socio-cultural emphasis on idealized women body images. In other words, the old but still valid trend for women 'culture of thinness' typically became and inspiration for 'muscularity' for men (Cohane & Pope, 2000). Like idealized image of female mostly resulted as 'anorexia and bulimia', the idealized images of boys may be especially dangerous because it's not attainable without drugs such as anabolic steroids (Leit & et. al., 2001). Furthermore, it is clear to say that most likely cause of body dissatisfaction among girls is the current unrealistic standard of female beauty, which is also unattainable for most girls (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004).

How boys and girls approach media also points toward body image processing as an important factor in media's effect on body image disturbance. It seems that the potential to affect body image disturbance through exposure mediated by thin ideal endorsement as well as muscular ideal endorsements. This thin ideal endorsements and muscular ideal endorsements may be an outcome of media exposure and processing. The impacts of idealized media images have not been systematically explored. Majority of studies were experimental studies of media image exposure has been on potential changes in body satisfaction after exposure. In this paper I present social comparison theory as a framework because of its ability to account for how men and women approach media images and, are affected in their attitudes and behaviours associated with body image disturbance. The main question is that: *"What are the effects of idealized media images on adolescents' body images?"*

1. Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory applied to body image disturbance highlights that people will compare themselves. Significantly, they made comparison with others to people and images that they perceive to represent realistic goals to attain. It also posits that individuals will be motivated to run goal after a comparison. Moreover, people often make automatic comparisons by seeing idealized media images (Festinger, 1954). Generally speaking, idealized images affect satisfaction with one's appearance through social comparison. People usually want to know about their appearances. Thus they obtain certain kind of knowledge by comparing themselves with others. Furthermore, people often decide unconsciously whether to make a 'downward or upward comparison' with others (Richins, 1995).

Evidence supports a clear role for both family, especially mothers to daughters and the peer group. On the other hand, the mass media due to their pervasiveness and reach are probably the single most powerful transmitters of socio-cultural ideals (Tiggemann & Slater, 2003). The link between media and body

dissatisfaction or disturbed eating behaviour/ muscle dysmorphia demonstrated that media involvement predicts the development of internalized appearance concerns. Several studies applied with social comparison theory have assessed that media exposure and body concern independently report positive correlations between fashion magazines and television consumption among men and women, especially adolescents (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). Critically, not all men and women are equally affected by media exposure, however virtually internalization and the use of appearance for self-evaluation are processes that might develop over time due to repeated exposure to idealized images in media (Shotton, et.al., 2013).

2. Literature Review

In an experiment with 56 female high school students the effects of a one-time exposure to 15 beauty commercials on the perception of physical attractiveness has been tested by using 'cultivation theory'. Similar with Tan (1979) Yu, and et. al. (2011) found that girls who exposed by beauty commercials were likely to believe that physical attractiveness is important than did girls who exposed by natural commercials. Although, one-time exposure is not adequate test of additive effects, he found evidence to causal model proposed by cultivation. He concluded his study by proposing that if one-time exposure could result in attitude change, there is a greater possibility for long-term additive effects amongst girls.

In another experimental design of Slater, and et.al. (2012), 157 college women were exposed by magazine photographs of ultrathin models, average models and no models at all. Stice and Shaw (1994) have found interesting correlation between the thin photos and body dissatisfaction and depression. They concluded that although one-time exposure on women's endorsements of the ideal is problematic, the researchers should mostly focus on longitudinal data with cumulative additive-effects approach. Also, they suggested that there might be some mediating effects, which should also have been taken into account 'how viewers process those idealized images'.

In a different experimental design, similar with Durkin and Paxton (2002) Wan, and et.al. (2013) tested the effects idealized female images in Grades 7 and 10 girls by following predictors of change in body dissatisfaction, depressed mood, anxiety and anger. They assessed the physical appearance comparison tendency, internalization of thin ideal self-esteem, depression, identity confusion and body mass index (BMI). They found that for both grades, there was a significant decrease in state body satisfaction and significant increase in state depression. They defined in grade 7 female adolescents in the experimental condition; decrease in state body satisfaction was predicted. In grade 10, internalization of the thin-ideal, appearance comparison and stable body dissatisfaction is predicted. Overall, they concluded by saying that findings indicate the importance of individual differences in short-term reaction to exposure by idealized media images.

On the other hand, in survey study Shaw and Stein (1994) and later Knobloch-Westerwick, and Crane (2012) tested correlations between media exposure and the internalization of the thin-ideal. Yet, they do not found any significant relationship. They surveyed 238 college women to measure media exposure by combining hours of television shows watched with the number of health and fitness and of beauty and fashion magazines read. Finally, Heinberg and Thompson (1992) used social comparison theory as an approach to effects of others' appearance. They surveyed 189 female undergraduates in order to test their hypothesis. Interestingly, they found celebrity comparisons were significantly linked to increase body dissatisfaction. Also, this predicts the increased tendency for thinness and bulimic behaviours. Furthermore, Harrison and Cantor (1997) explained this situation in their study by these words "thinness depicting and thinness promoting". They found media were related to a drive for thinness not necessarily linked to eating disorders.

Similar with Bradley and Reilly (2014), Durkin and Paxton (2002) study, Blyth et al. (1981) tested 274 boys in Grade 6 and Grade 7. They found that boys who grew early in height displayed greater satisfaction with muscular development and body satisfaction. Moreover, Paxton et al. (1991) measured body figure perception

by a figure drawing and 20 questions on weight and physical activities amongst 221 boys and 341 girls in Grade 7-11. They found that body dissatisfaction scores significantly higher in girls than in boys as to say 9 for girls, 4.2 for boys. Similarly, Hoffmann-Muller and Amstad (1994) found significant results showing that significantly more boys (93%) satisfied with their body shape than girls (63%). Also, their study indicates that more boys (69%) chose the same figure for their actual and ideal shape than girls (49%).

Furthermore, in different studies Ricciardelli et al. (2000) examines socio-cultural influences affecting body image and body change in adolescent boys. Twenty boys in grade 7 (aged 12-13) and twenty boys in grade 9 (aged 14-15) were individually interviewed in their study. They evaluated the influence of social environment including parents, siblings and friends and the media on both body image and body satisfaction. As a result, they found that the social environment (parent, siblings and friends) and media were perceived to have at least some influence over boys' feelings about their bodies. Different from role of media in female body image studies, they pointed out that media were also viewed as contributing to boys' body satisfaction by encouraging greater exercise to alter body size and shape. They claimed that implications of their findings in fostering better health among males are explored.

In another study with experiment, Leit et al. (2001) sought to examine the effects of media images on men's attitudes toward their body appearance. They tested a group of college men by exposure advertisements showing muscular men, whereas control group viewed neutral advertisement. Thereafter, participants performed computerized test of body image perceptions. Significantly, they found that participants who exposed to the muscular body image showed greater discrepancy between their own muscularity and the ideal level of muscularity. Their study highlights that media images even in a single advertisement case, may affect men's views of their bodies and the level of muscularity that they ideally wanted to have.

Cohn et al. (1987) tease out the differences between girls and boys by figure drawings consisted of actual, ideal, most attractive to opposite sex and opposite sex found most attractive. They tested their hypothesis by ten-item survey assessing body dissatisfaction among 283 boys and 288 girls (mean age was 13). Their results articulate that boys' ideal figure significantly heavier than their current perceived figure whereas girls chose an ideal figure significantly thinner than their perceived figure. Their main conclusion was saying that boys and girls were equally dissatisfied with their bodies that they compared the chosen ideal.

Just few years later, Austin et al. (1989) tested 1,200 high school boys' attitudes toward their own body image and shape. Their results show that there is a positive correlation between self-concept and attitudes toward body image. On the contrary, Folk et al. (1993) conducted a fifteen-item body satisfaction questionnaire comprising 15 five-point ratings of body parts among 18 girls and 29 boys in Grade 3 and 29 girls and 14 boys in Grade 6. Moreover, Wood et al. (1996) used Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (PHSCS) to measure psychological functioning among 109 boys and 95 girls age 8-10. Consequently, 35% of boys dissatisfied with their size versus 55% of girls.

Discussion & Conclusion

Overall, the results indicate that media do have an impact on body image disturbance, both directly through body image processing and indirectly by encouraging adolescents to endorse either thin ideal or muscular ideal by establishing realistic ideals. Although it has long been recognized that girls may suffer from disorders of body image, an emerging literature shows that boys also suffer body image disturbances. The present study was designed to examine the socio-cultural influences affecting both body image and the methods used to change body size and shape in adolescent boys and girls. In this literature review, the perceived impact of

family, friends and the media on body image and body change methods. Although the results examined whether any of socio-cultural influences and their perceived impact was related to age of self-image, the negative evaluations attributed to both the media and social comparisons. Looking at the first generation literature, it appears that body image dissatisfaction differs between boys and girls. While girls show a higher perceived body dissatisfaction than boys, who mostly tended to compare their self image with thinner ideal image, nevertheless many boys both tended to have thinner ideal image and a heavier 'muscular' one.

The present studies have replicated the results of previous research for adolescent girls. Not surprisingly, exposure to thin-ideal commercials brought about greater body dissatisfaction, whereas muscular ideal television commercials had only limited impact on boys' body image. This difference between girls and boys could be explained by males do not develop a vulnerability to muscular-ideal media images until late adolescence which later develop changes in the salience of muscularity concerns. Generally, body image for females was significantly more negative after exposure by thin ideal media images than after viewing images of either average size models, plus size models or other commercial products. Overall, the studies suggest that the media's immediate impact on body image is greater and more dramatic for girls than boys, which reflects the general pattern of gender differences in body image literature.

The principal findings of this literature review the main effect size was somewhat greater for females younger. There is a clear need for more experimental research with participants at various developmental stages. On the other hand, the further researches should combine various developmental stages with various pre-existing levels of negative body image and weight concerns. As magazines and television advertisements are not same what they expose ideal body image, future researchers should take this into account. For female studies it is also important implication that what motivates women to read fashion magazines, and also how images of slender beauty affect females in general and some females in particular. One critically important implication that has received insufficient attention to date is social comparison. Aspects of televised commercials and value of challenging cultural ideals are encouraging to study further investigation of this cultural approach.

Taken together, the findings from this literature review suggest that media exposure is linked to female's generalized image and male's generalized image increased investment in appearance and increased muscularity appearance. These effects appear in both female and male studies, they are present multiple outcomes. It is demonstrated in both experimental and correlation studies. Thus we can conclude that media exposure appears to be related to adolescents' body image regardless of individual difference variables, media type, age and other demographical features. Moreover, although some studies were from experimental designs, thereby other studies were from survey designs. Indeed, single methodological approach may answer the key questions, using multiple methodologies may enhance confidence in the validity of results. It is also important to note that use of longitudinal prospective design to offer additional evidence regarding the role of media.

Finally, it would be useful to examine potential negative correlates of media use to which female internalize cultural ideals of thinness and appearances as realistic images. On the other hand, several studies have demonstrated the 'muscular dysmorphia' among male, which operates as personal standard. Although, the idealized image issue is always in the core concern for various disciplines, by giving the prevalence of the mass media we cannot generalize that the majority of girls and boys can be sufficiently perceive the messages. It is unrealistic to expect that all men and women internalize body images exposed by mass media, but it is acceptable to say that notion of attractiveness would be primary importance among adolescent girls. Lastly, it is essential to take into consideration that new policies were adopted in Spain, Italy and so on that excludes

hyper-thin and hype-muscular women and men from modelling, which would be important aspects to find out the changing results in existing literature.

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