

Media effect on body image and eating disorder

Tahiyat Abdulaziz^{a,b}

Correspondence:tahiyat.othaim2010@gmail.com

^a Zoology department, College of science and art, Al-Qassim University, Alqassim Saudi Arabia

^b BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT, MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, Houghton , MI, USA

Abstract: According to National Eating Disorders Association, 70% of 6-12 years olds want to be thinner. The media and TV shows are the cause of changing view of beauty among youth. Many cases of depression or teenagers bullying associated with classifying others as fat or unattractive. According to Groesz et al., (2002) study, the body image among teenagers was affected negatively by viewing thin models while viewing average size and plus size didn't affect the view of body image significantly. Usually, teenagers are the age group influenced negatively by body image. Impossibly thin model shown in media, competition between friends, and society's emphasis on external beauty are important causes of anorexia. While, there are serious effects as well both mentally and physically.

Keywords: body image- depression- anorexia- society- media

----- ◆ -----

1. The media and anorexia

The negative impact of the media is a major contributor to anorexia. TV shows advertise skinny models, magazine standardizes beauty in limited body size and classify ads present thinner models on the internet. Yamamiya and others say, "Exposure to the media image of thin-and-beautiful woman negatively affects the body image and mood states of young women." (2005). All types of media made the XS size the most socially, attractive shape among the women. Also, separated advertisement for loose weight products like the supplement, herbal tea or medicine, and equipment for losing weight. Showing the women after losing weight more attractive is one of the major cause of body dissatisfaction. Thus, the use of proteins shakes, growth hormones or anabolic/injectable steroids has increased among teenager's boys and girls 4.7% and 1.6% respectively (Field, 2005).

The media does not consider body index differences among different races or ages. According to Deurenberg et al. 1998, using the standardized method considering two factors, BMI body mass index and fat distribution in the body showed that different race have higher body fat to the same BMI. For instance, the same BMI for Singaporeans has the higher percentage of body fat compared to Caucasians. Moreover, the media and societies reflect the human value according to their appearance. According to Brumberg 1997 in *Beauty at any cost* magazine, since childhood girls learn how beauty is more important than personality.

Additionally, the competitive feeling among friends is generated from media and society. Because of that teenager girls compete to be skinnier to be acceptable and attractive instead of focusing on health body. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Services and Resource Administration (HRSA) in *Beauty at any cost* magazine states that one of the reasons for teenagers bullying is overweight for the victim which was increased since 1990. Also, as Robinson 2006, says that obese adults considered unacceptable and at higher risk of bullying and victimization. Therefore, setting ideal models according to body size among celebrities influences the teenager of their body perceived value. *Sex Roles in Beauty at any cost* magazine reported that only “30 minutes of watching TV can deeply effect women’s body image. Ferguson and others 2011, state that the competition and body dissatisfaction increased among girls with unattractive BMI in the presence of a handsome man and competitive environment.

2. Diet disorder

As a result, the effects appear as diet deficiency or diet disorder, unhealthy habits and other physical problems. “Body-image disturbance and eating disorders are a significant physical and mental health problem in Western countries” (Thompson et al., 1999). For example, the teenagers who focus on one nutrient substance instead of real food like the vitamins or powders

while ignoring the protein and minerals (Dorsch and Bell, 2005). Also, Smoking among young people to get a good shape due to rumors circulating that smoking contributes to losing weight. Chen et al., state that smoking reduce “hypothalamic NPY and fat mass” which contribute to weight loss (2006). According to a study, Disordered Eating Is Widespread among U.S. Women (2008) in Beauty at any cost magazine “13% of women smoke to lose weight.”.weight loss pills increase, and there is ignorance about the damaging effects of some medicines or herbal teas.

Furthermore, the mental effects were evident in depression increase among teenagers who cannot meet media standard size. Corcos et al. (Brausch 2009) reported that great percentage (15-40%) of females with diet disorder such as bulimia tried to commit suicide “at least once.” Pomilia and others (2006) say people who suffer from diet disorder such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia have a higher suicide rate than general population.

Anorexia nervosa was considered the most of deathly malnutrition among psychiatric disorders (Keel et al., 2003). Similarly, Papadopoulos et al., 2009, stated that “Anorexia nervosa is characterized by high lifetime mortality from both natural and unnatural causes.” Anorexia is a diet disorder and underestimated disease that requires a lot of care according to Raymond 1986. Diet disorders such as anorexia affect the body organs leading to serious consequences, starting from a disturbed mental function, unbalanced metabolism and ends with death. According to Patricia 2003, women with anorexia suffer from compulsive craving as a result of malnutrition and a physiologic hunger. Moreover, lack of vitamins and minerals associated with impaired night vision caused by vitamin A deficiency. Anorexics suffer from calcium loss from bones and teeth, premature osteoporosis, fracturing and loss of height in extreme cases. Additionally, self-starving might weakened the heart because of the huge drop in minerals that cause low blood pressure, cardiac arrest, or even death. Malnutrition also reduces enzymes production that are

essential for digestion. A study reported a low blood cell count for individual with anorexia leading to risk immunity. Kidney failure is another consequence of malfunction, reduced blood vessels and weak heart that increase body waste. The unbalanced metabolism because of the body struggling to maintain low metabolism to conserve tissue reduction affect thyroid gland function (Portela, 2005).

Conclusion: media neglected the fact that body image might be affected by different types of BMI and different race which contributes in enormous risky consequences. However, raising the awareness in school and family might reduce a lot of the media bad influence. Since media created the body image issue, it can be diminish effectively through involving famous movie stars with average size to emphasize the importance of healthy diet to reach teenagers level. On another hand, showing in movies the medical complications associated with diet disorders will convey the message along with society awareness contribution.

References

- Brausch, A. M., & Gutierrez, P. M. (2009). The role of body image and disordered eating as risk factors for depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 39(1), 58-71.
- Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*. (Random House, 1997) p.195.
- Beauty at any cost. *The Consequences of America's Beauty Obsession on Women & Girls*. <http://www.ywca.org/>
- Chen, H., Hansen, M. J., Jones, J. E., Vlahos, R., Bozinovski, S., Anderson, G. P., & Morris, M. J. (2006). Cigarette smoke exposure reprograms the hypothalamic neuropeptide Y axis to promote weight loss. *American journal of respiratory and critical care medicine*, 173(11), 1248-1254.

- Corcos, M., Taieb, O., Benoit-Lamy, S., Paterniti, S., Jeamment, P., & Flament, M. F. (2002). Suicide attempts in women with bulimia nervosa: frequency and characteristics. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 106(5), 381-386.
- Deurenberg, P., Yap, M., & Van Staveren, W. A. (1998). Body mass index and percent body fat: a meta-analysis among different ethnic groups. *International journal of obesity*, 22, 1164-1171.
- Disordered Eating Is Widespread among U.S. Women.” Online Survey by SELF Magazine in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2008. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. National Women’s Health Information Center. <http://www.womenshealth.gov/news/english/614866.htm> (online poll of more than 4,000 women between the ages of 25 and 45)
- Dorsch, K. D., & Bell, A. (2005). Dietary supplement use in adolescents. *Current opinion in pediatrics*, 17(5), 653-657.
- Field, A. E., Austin, S. B., Camargo, C. A., Taylor, C. B., Striegel-Moore, R. H., Loud, K. J., & Colditz, G. A. (2005). Exposure to the mass media, body shape concerns, and use of supplements to improve weight and shape among male and female adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 116(2), e214-e220.
- Ferguson, C. J., Munoz, M. E., Contreras, S., & Velasquez, K. (2011). Mirror, mirror on the wall: peer competition, television influences, and body image dissatisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 30(5), 458-483.
- Groesz, L. M., Levine, M. P., & Murnen, S. K. (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 31(1), 1-16.
- Keel, P. K., Dorner, D. J., Eddy, K. T., Franko, D., Charatan, D. L., & Herzog, D. B. (2003). Predictors of mortality in eating disorders. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60(2), 179-183.
- Papadopoulos, F. C., Ekblom, A., Brandt, L., & Ekselius, L. (2009). Excess mortality, causes of death and prognostic factors in anorexia nervosa. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 194(1), 10-17.
- Patricia A. Miller, *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003)

Portela, D. 2005. The dangers of eating disorders.

Pompili, M., Girardi, P., Tatarelli, G., Ruberto, A., & Tatarelli, R. (2006). Suicide and attempted suicide in eating disorders, obesity and weight–image concern. *Eating behaviors*, 7(4), 384-394.

Raymond E. Vath, M.D. *Counseling Those With Eating Disorders*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986).

Robinson, S. (2006). Victimization of obese adolescents. *The Journal of school nursing*, 22(4), 201-206.

Sex Roles: A Journal of Research (March 1999). “Television situation comedies:

Female body images and verbal reinforcements.” http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2294/is_5-6_40/ai_55082333

Thompson, J. K., & Heinberg, L. J. (1999). The media's influence on body image disturbance and eating disorders: We've revised them, now can we rehabilitate them?. *Journal of social issues*, 55(2), 339-353.

Thompson, J. K., & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-ideal internalization: Mounting evidence for a new risk factor for body-image disturbance and eating pathology. *Current directions in psychological science*, 10(5), 181-183.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Services and Resource Administration (HRSA). “A Troubling Trend: Girls and Bullying” Fact Sheet. <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adult/indexAdult.asp?Area=prothrow>

Yamamiya, Y., Cash, T. F., Melnyk, S. E., Posavac, H. D., & Posavac, S. S. (2005). Women's exposure to thin-and-beautiful media images: Body image effects of media-ideal internalization and impact-reduction interventions. *Body* 2(1), 74-80.