

EFFECTS OF MEDIA ON BODY IMAGE.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of media influence continues to be a growing cause for concern in Ireland today. It is seen by many as both an increasing burden causing body image distortion and also as a pathway to psychological illness such as low self esteem, depression, anxiety and eating disorders. It is the aim of this research project to explore media influences on body image, and the resulting effects on self esteem, eating habits and mental health in males and females. A non-experimental correlational design was used. Data was collected from 100 males and 100 females. Participants completed a questionnaire which comprised of Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (ROSBC) and Media Influence Scale. Two sets of variable were measured in this study; these are the **criterion variable** which includes body shame, body surveillance, body control; **and the predictor variable** which is media. This research aims to add to the previous researches that have been carried out in relation to the effects of media on body image. More commonly, females are thought to be more influenced and affected by media images. Men, on the other hand, are believed to be less influenced, and thought to have more control over their bodies. The results showed “a significant difference between the effects of media images on males and females respectively”. Future researchers may look at a larger sample as results may show to be more representative of the general population. Also, future researches may use a wider range of questionnaires as this would help explore deeper into the issues of the influence of media images on body image.

KEYWORDS: Media, Eating disorder, Body image, Body shame, Body surveillance, Body control.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of media images and its effects on body image has attracted a substantial amount of attention from the public as well as researchers in various disciplines. In terms of the cause, researchers now have reached to a consensus that mass media are at least partially responsible for the chronic states of bodily discontent and unhealthy attitudes toward eating widespread among women in most Westernized societies

MEN, WOMEN AND THE MEDIA.

Millions of people are constantly living with a dreadful feeling about how they look; that is to say, they are not satisfied with their body image, which inevitably leads to low self esteem. The media constantly portrays ideal images for men and women; thin and slender for women, broad and muscular for men. Magazines and newspapers also often tend to depict models and ultra thin athletes. Before, stars were appreciated for their talents and not looks, nowadays, stars are all about their bodies, they are singing and selling their bodies. Increasingly, size zero has now become the commonly acceptable trend which every young woman must aspire to attain in order to be accepted in our ever-growing social sphere and society. This usually has very destructive effects and consequences such as eating disorders, as can be seen in various articles which will be discussed in this study.

Body dissatisfaction is a major concern amongst both genders, particularly amongst females. The first purpose of this study is to provide a detailed understanding of body dissatisfaction among men and women by testing how body shame, body surveillance , internalisation of the media body ideal and perceived pressure from the media are associated with body dissatisfaction, and if they contribute to the explanation of gender differences in body dissatisfaction.

Men are generally believed to have a more positive body image than women. That is, they tend not to see any flaws or faults in their physical appearances, while women are quicker to pick out flaws on their bodies, that is, women are hardly ever satisfied with their body shape and sizes.

However, as some men try to attain a muscular physique, they become obese in the process, and this often leads to the development of negative body image. This is often referred to reverse anorexia.

THE MEDIA CONTROLS THE MIND

With regards to media and body image, the 21st century is characterised by an increased driving force towards attention to body image. Television, advertisements, print media and internet often are the dominant force in creating an idealized perception of male and female body image and shapes and sizes; the thin ideal for women, and muscular ideal for males. Very often, these ideals are unrealistic and unattainable. Survey shows that over 60% of women are dieting in order to attain a perfect body image (McCabe, Butler and Watt, 2007).

UNDERSTANDING BODY IMAGE (IDEAL AND ACTUAL BODY SIZE)

According to McCabe et al, 2007, body image may be described to be the perceptions, attitudes, emotions and personality reactions of the individual in relation to his or her own body. Body image is the picture that a person has of his or her body, and is often measured by asking the person to rate their current and ideal body shape using a series of depictions. The difference between these two values is the amount of body dissatisfaction.

Research shows that our body image has an effect on how we feel about ourselves, what we do, whom we meet or marry and also influences our career path.

Disturbed perceptions of body image are reflected in distorted perceptions of body size (McCabe et al, 2007). The attitudinal components reflects the affect we have about our bodies, and when disturbed, typically results in discrepancies between one's ideal and actual body.

Research shows that negative body image leads to other health problems such as depression, obesity, low self esteem and disordered eating. Body image dissatisfaction can often lead to negative psychological functioning and poor quality of life. Very often, women receive messages from their close friends, family, co workers, partners, and from the global fashion industry. Body dissatisfaction shows negative evaluations of one's body, and has been found to be as a result of exposure to thin ideal by the media, which often leads to low body image, low self esteem and even depression (Holstorm, 2004)

MEDIA AND THE MESSAGE

The most powerful conveyors of sociocultural ideals are the mass media and therefore play an important causal role towards the development of body dissatisfaction (Grogan, 1998). Most theories of body image and dieting disorder assign the role to sociocultural factors such as media (Harper and Tiggemann, 2008).

The media promotes a certain physical image of males and females, and this can be seen in commercial advertisements, television and magazines. While the female body was once linked to a larger more fuller body size, nowadays, societal expectations emphasize a smaller body size, and models in advertising have become increasingly thinner over time. Various medical organisations have urged publishers and broadcasters to be more responsible with regards to the extremely thin women they tend to depict as role models.

According to research, the more exposure women have to the media, the more likely they are to show disorder eating patterns. A study found that female participants, who watched entertainment TV where the main characters were visibly thin, scored high on the eating disorders subscale which include eating disorder symptoms such as bulimia, drive for thinness, anorexia and body dissatisfaction. Also, the media portrays the ideal male body as lean and muscular, emphasizing muscle mass and physical bulk.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The debate of media influence on body image has led to the development of various theories in order to enhance our understanding of the topic.

SOCIAL COMPARISON: Very often, people evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others, often people similar to them and also attractive. Researchers explain that comparison could have negative effects on a person. The social comparison theory helps to explain why both men and women who report more media exposures feel better about their bodies. It also explains why people may feel bad about themselves when they do not compare favorably with thin models. Social comparison explains that people may compare themselves with others who are slightly better than them in order to enhance their motivation to improve a particular element of their body. Social comparison may increase satisfaction on that dimension because people see results of an improvement and become motivated. People who engage in more media use seek out thin and muscular images in order to gain motivation to lose weight and exercise. Social comparison theory also posits that people engage in downward comparison, by comparing themselves with those less fortunate people. By doing this, satisfaction increases within the person. Downward social comparison theory supports the hypothesis that engaging in downward comparisons with overweight models has a positive effect.

Another theory that may be used in the relationship between the media and body image is the social cognitive theory which assumes that people learn and they model the behaviors of other attractive people. This relates to women that they find the perfect thin ideal model and imitate them through dieting, and eventually the development of eating disorders.

We seek to compare ourselves to others who we believe are similar to ourselves to determine our level of abilities and success. For example, body dissatisfaction is associated with the tendency to compare one's body to other's bodies, which includes wishful thinking to look like a swim suit model. This in excess could lead to emotional distress, feeling of shame and powerlessness, low self esteem, emotional problems such as clinical depression, social phobias and bulimia and anorexia (Dittmar, 2009)

OBJECTIFICATION THEORY

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) stands on the notion that girls and women are prone to internalize an observer's perspective as a primary view of their physical selves. Objectification theory argues that the female body is subjected to constant monitoring, which in turn leads to body dissatisfaction and even disordered. The increase in body objectification for women, and in some cases men, has made women to begin to make effort change their physical appearance through diet, exercise, beauty products, cosmetic products, surgery and through unhealthy eating habits.

Fredrickson et al 1997 posits that females are being treated as a body, viewed predominantly for its use by others, particularly for pleasure. They point out that women's experiences of objectification varies differently among women, as there is differences in ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and other physical and personal attributes. However, all women equally experience some form of body objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This in turn leads to body surveillance and body shame.

McKinley and Hyde (1996) showed that body surveillance and body shame contribute to body dissatisfaction. Body Surveillance is described as monitoring one's self in terms of viewing one's body as an outside observer. According to McKinley and Hyde 1996, body shame is defined as an emotion women may feel when one's own body does not conform to internalized body ideals. It has been suggested that body surveillance can result in body shame by contributing to the realization of a discrepancy between one's own body and an internalized body ideal (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997).

Body control is another aspect of body objectification theory, although research shows that it has no significant correlation with body dissatisfaction, nor have there been any gender differences in control beliefs and body dissatisfaction. Women report higher objectified body consciousness than men and that in Western culture women learn to internalize an objectifying observer's perspective of their bodies more than men. Body objectification has been shown to be associated with different psychological problems including disordered eating and depressed mood.

According to Fredrickson and Roberts 1998, body surveillance led to increased body shame which led to restrained eating in women, but not in men. However, according to Tiggemann and Duane (2009,) body surveillance was associated with depressive mood and disordered eating in both men and women.

This study aims to examine the differences in levels of body surveillance, body shame and body dissatisfaction in both males and females. In particular this study proposes that internalization of media ideal images would mediate the association between body surveillance and body dissatisfaction in both males and females, which is also caused by perceived pressure to conform.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Body image has risen as an important aspect of mental and physical wellbeing. There is a question of whether the body perfect ideal in the mass media is a core risk factor for negative body image for men and women, particularly in women. Previous studies have confirmed that one's body dissatisfaction or negative body image can be acknowledged as the thing that comes before negative self perception, negative emotional states and unhealthy body related behaviours. It is therefore important to have a general knowledge of the risk factors of body dissatisfaction. Body perfect ideals are communicated by the media to us from an early childhood stage; there is therefore a desire to have a thinner body from such a young age, after exposure (Dittmar, 2009). Body image can be said to be a psychological construct, which can be defined as a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his or her body (Grogan, 1998). Body dissatisfaction on the other hand is a person's negative thoughts about feelings about his or her feelings (Grogan, 1998). The way a person views his or herself is largely determined by social experiences, such as media images.

MEDIA INFLUENCE AS AN ISSUE

It can be said that the media is the most widespread and influential conveyor of sociocultural values regarding ideal body size and shape, which creates an understanding of the ideal man and woman (McCabe, Butler & Watt, 2007). Media appears to be the main factor impacting on a woman's body concern, and media is the main source and most powerful influence on body image perception. Newspaper, magazines, television and internet have been demonstrated to play a strong role in creating a current perception of the ideal man and woman. Media portrays images that promise social acceptance for men and women, therefore these body types become desirable, especially by women. Today's advertisers generally emphasize the importance of physical attraction, which often puts pressure on men and women to focus on their appearance. These advertisements often have adverse effects on men and women, women particularly, who often have fear of being unattractive or old (McCabe et al, 2007).

This often impacts adversely on women's body image, and it often leads to unhealthy behavior as they strive for the super-thin body idealized by the mass media. Likewise, boys or men strive for the well-built media standards. It can be argued that lack of clearly defined sense of self leads to comparison and wanting to be like that.

Constant exposure may influence audience to be self-conscious about their bodies and to be obsessed over physical appearances as a measure of their worth. (McCabe et al, 2007). Body image in men shows that boys as young as 8 years old show concern over being the right shapes and many adults men's self esteem is related to how good they feel about their body shape. Women are thought from an early age to be body conscious, they are under constant pressure to be a role model to their children, and to stay skinny and attractive. The question is, why do people want to be thin and for whom do they want to be thin? For themselves or the society?

The question this research aims to explore is to find out how body perfect ideals in the media have a negative impact on body image and behavior of both men and women. In the western world, the mass media sends powerful messages through ideal body images which say that we must look thin in order to look good. Striving to attain such goals is concerning and worrying, as the person could become discontent with his/her body, especially if it differs from the so called norms of the society. Society's expectations shape our beliefs about the ideal body image, and this is sometimes harmful. Different people have different ideas of the perfect body image, but we all are still severely influenced by societal pressures and the media (McCabe et al, 2007). The society tells us what kind of body to strive for, and we also see images of perfect body all around us on television, movies, newspaper, magazines and online. Exposures to these images are very unhealthy.

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND MEDIA INFLUENCES

Researchers have suggested that the media has an impact on the ideal body size of both men and women. Exposure to media affects perceptions of ideal bodies (McCabe et al, 2007). The effects of media on male attitudes have received little research attention. The ideal body for men portrayed by the media is a muscular body type, portrayed as a v-shaped body with broad shoulders and narrow waist, emphasizing muscle and bulky physique (McCabe et al, 2007). Men therefore overestimate their chest; they want larger chest and smaller hips. Recent survey showed that 13% for men believed that the television media influenced their perceived body image and 6% believed that fashion magazines influenced their perceived body image (McCabe et al, 2007). Previous research showed that women felt worse about their body after exposure to thin ideal images. Women generally overestimate their actual body size. Very commonly, most women believe they are too fat and ugly; even though they are not, therefore overestimate their body parts (McCabe et al, 2007).

Survey stated that 23% of women believed that the television media influenced their perceived body image and 22% believed that fashion magazine influenced their perceived body image (McCabe et al, 2007). The ideal body they have in mind is different from their current bodies. Various studies have showed that the media primarily focuses on thin female images, which in turn leads to the continuous existence of body image distortions and dissatisfaction among women. Recent research found that women who viewed fashion magazines were less satisfied with their bodies (McCabe et al, 2007). However, some report positive self-valuing and self-uplifting effects after exposure to the media. Hence, media images may be processed very differently depending on which self related viewpoint a woman holds with respect to the thin ideal during exposure (Dittmar, 2009). Also, recent research showed that more than 70% of women agreed strongly that media gave them the idea to lose weight, that they should exercise more to lose weight and that they should eat less to lose weight. Also, almost all women strongly disagreed that the media gave them the idea to gain weight. Also, men agreed that the media gave them the idea to be more muscular (McCabe et al, 2007).

The tendency to compare one's self to others who possess the thin ideal is the main source of negative perceptions, attitudes and feelings towards oneself. The difference between the media image and the actual body size may increase distortion in men and women. It leads to increased negative mood, greater body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms and belief that they are physically unattractive (Dittmar, 2009).

The length of time of exposure to media may also be accounted to be a factor that predicts body image attitudes and perception, that is, the number of hours spent viewing television or reading magazines, watching television shows (McCabe et al, 2007). The more we see something, the more we tend to believe it. Research conclusions have predicted that media exposure would be more likely to predict perceptions and attitudes of the body for men and women participants. However, the amount of time a person dedicates to watching television could have an impact on the effects that this media images would have.

Also, the dedicated amount of time a person spends on viewing fashion magazines and fashion images online plays a role in impacting the life of such individuals, which could have a negative effect, such as self comparison, distorted body images or even low self esteem. Attaining the ideal body size may be genetically unachievable. That is to say, some people have natural big body size and shapes, and trying to get a slimmer body shape or smaller body size may be naturally impossible, no matter what they do. This could lead to obsessive nature as people could become engrossed with achieving the ideal body.

MEDIA AND MEN

The issue of body dissatisfaction among men in western society is largely ignored. According to Tiggemann, M. and Duane, A. 2009, body dissatisfaction which is common among women has also become increasingly common among men. Body dissatisfaction among men is said to lead to negative consequences including the development of eating disorder, obsessive exercising, depressive moods and low self esteem. Tiggemann et al, 2009 explains that sociocultural ideal body images caused high level of body dissatisfaction among both men and women. Such ideals, they explain, leads to self evaluation and social comparison. That is, viewers of such ideal images begin to assess and compare their actual body shapes and sizes with those ideals.

Ideal body images are often transferred through various ways including family, peers, but most notably by the mass media (Tiggemann et al 2009). The media increasingly portrays lean and highly muscular body shape for men, with narrow waist and hips, and this is said to be a cause of increasing body dissatisfaction among men. According to a study carried out by Tiggemann, M. and Duane, A. 2009, men showed depressive moods and muscle dissatisfaction upon exposure to television commercials which featured male models. Tiggemann et al 2009 explained that body dissatisfaction is usually greatest among men who had low body evaluation, caused by social comparison. Such men feel physically less attractive. However, men do not engage in much social comparison to idealized media images as do women.

SOCIOLOGICAL PRESSURE TO BE THIN (I WISH)

In the western world, the mass media sends powerful messages to look thin. Society's expectation shapes our beliefs about the ideal body image, which could be harmful. The society tells us what kind of body to strive for. All around us, we see images of perfect body for example on TV, movies, news papers, magazines and on the internet. The media play a very strong role in creating a current perception of the ideal man and woman.

What is also more important is the extent to which body perfect media ideals become such a central aspect of a person's identity. Men and women strive to look just as the media images. Internalization of these media images have been proposed as a more important contributor to body image dissatisfaction. Internalization accounts for differences in body image, eating dysfunctions and poor self esteem. Its impact is more on women, and that is not to say that it does not affect men also. This has led to the rise in requests for skin creams, cosmetic surgeries etc, with the goal of wanting to stay young. Also leads to increased steroid use for men.

Today's advertisers often lay emphasis on the importance of physical attractiveness which very often puts pressure on men and women to focus on their appearance. Advertisements made women fear being unattractive and old, which impacts on body image. Women and men therefore strive for the ultra thin body idealized by the media. This makes females and males to become self conscious about their bodies and to be obsessed over physical appearances as a measure of self worth.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Cultural beliefs also impacts on body image. In western societies, cultural prejudice is in favor of slender body shape, and against overweight. Slenderness is generally seen as the normal body shape to aspire towards, and it is associated with happiness, success and youthfulness and social acceptability. Being overweight is linked to laziness, lack of will power and being out of control. Overweight is seen as physically unattractive and is also associated with other characteristics (Grogan, 1998). There is therefore prejudice against abnormal body shape. Most women experience body dissatisfaction, and this has an impact on their behavior and therefore most women try to change their shape and weight (Grogan, 1998).

COGNITIVE PROCESSES

It has been argued that body image occurs as a cognitive process, and has to do with how a person feels or their disposition about themselves in their mind; which is related to their body posture and also expressive of an action or emotion (McCabe et al, 2007). Disturbed feelings of oneself are shown through distorted perception of body size. Attitudinal components on the other hand show the way we feel about our bodies, and when disturbed, leads to differences between one's ideal and actual body (McCabe et al, 2007)

NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Body dissatisfaction and negative self esteem about one's body leads to a range of physical and mental health problems including disordered eating, obesity, body dysmorphic disorder, depression or low self esteem. It also leads to unhealthy consequences such as cosmetic surgery, unbalanced dieting habits or steroid abuse. It can therefore be argued that body image is a core aspect of physical and mental well being (Dittmar, 2009).

Exposure to media images encourages both young and old people to evaluate their bodies and it also leads to eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia, due to excessive dieting, excessive thinness, over exercising and other health compromising behaviors, in order to relieve perceptions of inadequacy that is to say, in order to ease themselves of the feeling that they do not fit in or that they are inadequate.

Negative body image, particularly in women, which leads to negative self perception, which is, viewing one's self or one's body in a negative way; negative emotional state and also leads to unhealthy body related behavior (Dittmar, 2009).

Other risks associated with eating disorder include anemia, nutritional deficiency, osteoporosis, cardiac problems, infertility, amenorrhea, ovarian and endometrial cancer, increased exposure to illness and infections and poor wound healing. Also, stress and depression can occur, as well as body image dissatisfaction and perfectionism, all of which have damaging effects. Eating disorder starts from youth period and advances to middle years. Issues of eating disorders are very serious, and could lead to death if not properly treated (Dittmar, 2009).

Recent reports have shown that the level of both men and women's perception of their body was not strongly influenced by their exposure to the media or their current attitude toward the media. These findings suggest that the media does not have a major impact on the accuracy of adult men's or women's level of perceptual distortion. Media has a larger impact on the attitudinal aspect of body image (ideal) and on the perceptions of the media ideal (McCabe et al, 2007).

What is of more crucial concern is the extent to which body perfect media ideals become central aspects of a person's identity? Exposure to body perfect media ideals may lead to obsession to get such body shape. Also, a person could try every possible means to make such ideal images their personal image. For instance, person could undergo plastic surgery in order to look like Barbie doll, for example (Dittmar, H. 2009).

Research found a link between physical attractiveness and positive personal qualities. Furthermore, people that are fat are blamed to have caused it for themselves.

NORMALIZATION OF MEDIA IMAGES

Normalization of media ideals is the idea that media images are the acceptable and appropriate way that we should look like and shape that we should strive for. Recent studies have claimed that this contributes to the distorted perceptions and attitudes that men and women have of their bodies (McCabe et al, 2007). Internalization of media images have been proposed as a more important contributor to body image, e.g. internalization of societal standards of appearance, which accounts for varying body image, eating disorder and self esteem (McCabe et al, 2007).

Normalization and self comparison with media images leads to unhealthy habits and disordered eating such as anorexia and bulimia. It also results in excessive dieting or excessive thinness, and other health compromising issues such as osteoporosis, cardiac problems, anemia, and ovarian cancer.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

Media is seen as the most influential conveyor of sociocultural values regarding ideal size and shape. The impact of body perfect ideals from the mass media is the core risk factor for negative body image for men and women. Recent studies have confirmed that negative body image or body dissatisfaction leads to negative self perception, negative emotional state and unhealthy behaviors. Images of the unrealistic body perfect ideals are transmitted and reinforced, which impact our perception and attitudes towards our bodies.

Media portrays images that promise social acceptance, therefore these body shapes become desirable. Pressure is therefore put on men and women to get such appearances. In the western world, society shapes our beliefs about the ideal body image. People, particularly women strive to attain this ideal body shapes and sizes. For some, attaining such body size is genetically unachievable, the therefore engage in unhealthy behavior such as disordered eating.

Also, we tend to normalize and compare ourselves with the images of those we believe have the ideal body shape, and this could lead to body dissatisfaction. This contributes to distorted perceptions and attitudes that men and women have of their bodies. This could in excess lead to emotional distress, feeling of shame, low self esteem and other emotional problems.

Surveys have showed that media has an impact on the ideal body size of both men and women, as it are seen to affect our perception of the ideal bodies. Survey showed that women felt worse about their bodies, which leads to body image distortions and body dissatisfaction.

Also, they claimed media gave them the idea to eat less in order to lose weight. However, some women report positive effects after exposure to media. The amount of time spent viewing media images also has an impact on the effects such images has on an individual.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of the media on perceived body image of adult men and women. This study focuses on the “unrealistic body perfect ideals” transmitted and reinforced by social influences, particularly the mass media, which has a widespread influence capability. This study is designed to evaluate the extent to which the level of media exposure and attitudes towards media impacts on the perception and attitudes that men and women hold toward their bodies. Both the way we feel and think about body image are the focus of this research.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis put forward for this study are:

1. The first hypothesis states that there would be a significant difference in body surveillance for males and females.
2. The second hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant difference in body shame for males and females.
3. The third hypothesis predicts that there would be a significant difference in control levels for males and females.
4. The fourth hypothesis states that there would be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence.

METHODOLOGY

1. PARTICIPANTS

In this research, a total of 200 participants were used. Amongst this group of population, there were a total number of 100 males and 100 females, all of whom will be above the age of 18 years. Participants were randomly selected. During this research, individual males and females above the ages of 18 were presented the research questionnaire to fill. These people were of different race and ethnical backgrounds. They include people of African, Irish, American, Indian and Malaysian, to mention a few. Participants were randomly approached at different times and places, including school, restaurant, church, offices etc. The aims and objectives of the research were relayed to each participant. The purpose for which the research was being carried out was also relayed to participants, as well as ethical considerations and rights of participants during the research process.

2. MATERIALS/MEASURES

Various questionnaires have been used to carry out research concerning media influence on body image in the past, some of which this study will also make use of.

Media influence questionnaire was used. It is a 10-item survey that evaluates the messages participants receive from the media regarding their body. 3 items measure the pressure to lose weight; 3 items measure the pressure to gain weight, 4 items measure pressure to increase muscle tone. Participants are required to respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. Questions include: the media gives me the idea that I should be slimmer.

The Revised Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Quinn & Lewis, 2005) was used. This scale was developed and validated to measure objectified body consciousness in young people. It contains 3 subscales, (a) surveillance (viewing the body as an outside observer), (b) body shame (feeling shame when the body does not conform), and (c) appearance control beliefs.

The surveillance subscale measures how frequently individuals would monitor their body and how often they would think of their body in terms

of how it looks, rather than how it feels. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher level of body surveillance.

Body shame subscale assesses the extent to which a respondent feels shame if they do not fulfill cultural expectations for their body. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher level of body shame.

The control subscale measures an individual's sense of control that they have over their weight and appearance. A high scorer would believe that they could control their weight and appearance if they work hard enough, whereas a low scorer would believe that weight and appearance is controlled by factors such as genes or heredity. This subscale consists of 8 items (e.g. 'I can weigh what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough'). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'not sure', (4) 'agree', and (5) 'strongly agree'. Scores can range between 8 and 40 with higher scores indicating a higher sense of control over weight and appearance.

3. DESIGN

This research was carried out using a non-experimental correlational design. Two variables will be measured, predictor and criterion variables. **Predictor** variable was *media images*, the **Criterion** variables includes body shame, body surveillance and body control.

4. APPARATUS

SPSS PASW statistic 17 software was used to compute and analyze the results given on the questionnaire.

5. *PROCEDURE*

First of all, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the content and structure of the questionnaire was efficient and suitable for distribution. The booklet was distributed to 5 different people. They were given a brief overview of the nature and aims of the research. The researcher remained in the room whilst the participants completed the questionnaire. A note was taken of the approximate time it took to complete the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the participants were asked if they had any issues of difficulty whilst completing the questionnaire.

Permission to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the supervisor, Dr Bernadette Quinn. Questionnaires were then handed out to participants who wished to take part in the research, all of whom were over 18, including males and females. This took less than 10 minutes, averagely 8 minutes. The researcher was present during the completion of the questionnaire to answer any questions any of the participants may have had. Once the participants completed the questionnaires, they were collected and put into a folder to ensure anonymity. The participants were all thanked for taking part in the research and for sparing their time. The same procedure was carried out in various locations in order to get 100 male and 100 female.

6. *ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:*

As a researcher, understanding the importance of ethical considerations and making use of it while carrying out a research is very important. Also, relaying it to participants is equally important. Understanding that in order for a research to be validated, it must be ethical. Therefore, ethical considerations were taken seriously and effectively. Firstly, informed consent was sought. Permission was seeded from participants before taking part in the research, asking if they would like to take part in this academic research.

Secondly, the participants' rights must not be undermined. Participants must have the right to remain or withdraw from the research process. That is to say, they must not be forced to remain in the research, and likewise, they must not be forced to answer a question in a particular way.

Thirdly, the issue of confidentiality must be taken seriously and held in high esteem. Personal information and other information shared by participants must be treated confidentially and held in high esteem. Participant's information must not be shared publicly, except permitted to do so. In carrying out the research, high standards and integrity must be held. Therefore, the names of participants were not required.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

When data was collected, negative answers were recorded, and total scores were computed. And all data was analyzed using SPSS 17.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics: descriptive statistics for body surveillance, body shame, body control and media influence are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard deviation for all the variables used in the analyses for Men and Women

	GENDER OF RESPONDENTS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SURVELANCE	Male	100	25.46	5.25
	Female	100	21.87	5.23
BODYSHAME	Male	100	28.34	5.55
	Female	100	26.15	5.31
CONTROL	Male	100	21.48	4.43
	Female	100	21.79	4.20
MEDIA	Male	100	25.04	8.69
	Female	100	31.86	9.31

As can be seen from the table above, males scored higher for surveillance and body shame than females. For surveillance scale, males mean score was 25.46 with a standard deviation (SD) of 5.25, while females scored 21.87 with a S.D of 5.23. This supports hypothesis one which states that there would be a significant difference in body surveillance for males and females. This means that males experience higher body dissatisfaction than females. This is very interesting because it goes contrary to previous research which shows that females would usually experience body dissatisfaction.

For body shame, males scored higher than females with a mean score of 28.34 and a S.D of 5.55, while for females it was 26.15 with a S.D of 5.31. This result therefore suggests that males have higher self shame and are more conscious of their bodies than females. However, females scored higher than males for control scale and media influence. Females' mean score for control scale was 21.79 with a S.D of 4.20, while that of males was 21.48 with a S.D of 4.43. For the media influence scale, females scored 31.86 with a S.D of 9.31, while males scored 25.04 with a S.D of 8.69. This in essence means that females have less control of their bodies than males, and also, females are more susceptible to media influence than males

Inferential Statistics

T-test analysis

HYPOTHESIS ONE: The first hypothesis states that there would be a significant difference in body surveillance for males and females. In support of hypothesis one, the males showed higher body surveillance than girls. Mean = 25.40, SD = 5.25 for males and mean = 21.87, SD = 5.22 for females. An independent samples t-test carried out indicated that there was a significant difference in mean scores of body surveillance for males and females $t(198) = 4.841, p < .001$. Therefore the hypothesis was supported.

HYPOTHESIS TWO: The second hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant difference in body shame for males and females. The mean scores for body shame were higher for males (mean = 28.34, SD = 5.55) than females (mean = 26.15, SD = 5.31). An independent samples t-test was carried out and indicated that there was a significant difference in mean scores of body surveillance for males and females $t(198) = 2.851, p < .001$. Therefore the hypothesis was supported.

HYPOTHESIS THREE: The third hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant difference in body control for males and females. The mean scores for body shame were lower for males (mean = 21.48, SD = 4.43) than females (mean = 21.79, SD = 4.20). However, an independent samples t-test was carried out and contrary to the hypothesis, indicated that there was no significant difference in mean scores of body surveillance for males and females $t(198) = -.508, p > .05$. Therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Correlational analyses

HYPOTHESIS FOUR: The fourth hypothesis states that there would be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence for females but not for males. For males, correlational analyses indicated that there was a non significant relationship between body surveillance and media ($r = -0.108, p > .05$). For females however, there was a significant high relationship between body surveillance and media ($r = -.387, p < 0.001$). Therefore hypothesis four was supported.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of the media on perceived body image of adult men and women. This study focuses on the “unrealistic body perfect ideals” transmitted and reinforced by various social influences, particularly the mass media, which has a widespread influential capability. This study aims to extend previous researches by examining the extent to which media exposure and attitudes towards media impacts on the perception and attitudes that men and women hold toward their bodies. Both the way we feel and think about body image are the focus of this research.

The first hypothesis states that there would be a significant difference in body surveillance for males and females. In support of the first hypothesis, males showed higher for body surveillance than females. The mean scores for body surveillance were higher for males than for females. Also there was a significant difference in mean scores of body surveillance for males and females. This shows that on average, males have higher levels of concern in relation to body surveillance, while females have low levels of concern in relation to body surveillance when compared to men. This result however is very interesting as it goes contrary to previous research findings such as Fredrickson and Roberts 1997 in objectification theory which explains that women report higher objectified body consciousness than men in Western culture; women learn to internalize an objectifying observer’s perspective of their bodies more than men, thereby leading to body shame and dissatisfaction among women. This objectified body consciousness has been commonly and permanently associated with females within our society. However, contrary to this assumption, this study finds that males are more influenced by media ideal images, therefore more body conscious than females. This result however supports the findings of Tiggemann, M. And Duane, A. which finds that body dissatisfaction has become increasingly common among men due to the idealised muscular images portrayed by the media. They explain that due to social comparison and self evaluation with idealised media images, men often tend to feel dissatisfied with their muscle size and tone, with the wish to become more muscular. They therefore engage in unhealthy behaviour such as obsessive exercising.

This shows that males showed higher levels of body surveillance when exposed to the media images, while females showed lower levels of body surveillance when exposed to the thin ideal images portrayed by the media, when compared to males.

The second hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant difference in body shame for males and females. In support of this prediction, males showed a difference in the level of body shame for females. The mean scores for body shame were higher for males than females. This result however is very interesting as it goes contrary to previous research findings such as Fredrickson and Roberts 1997 in objectification theory which explains that women report higher objectified body consciousness than men in Western culture; women learn to internalize an objectifying observer's perspective of their bodies more than men, thereby leading to body shame and dissatisfaction among women. On the contrary, this study finds that males show higher levels of body conscious than females, and supports previous research carried out by Tiggemann et al 2009, which finds that men showed symptoms of body shame and body dissatisfaction when exposed to media idealised muscular images. This finding shows that males also experience body shame when exposed to the media images; a fact that is usually ignored in our society.

The third hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant difference in body control for males and female. The mean scores for body shame were higher for females than males. However, this difference was not significant, as it was very low. Therefore the hypothesis was not supported. This result supports the ideas of McCabe et al, 2007, which says that both men and women are almost equally influenced by societal pressures from the media to attain a perfect body image. The media portrays a muscular v-shaped body with broad shoulders and narrow waist, emphasizing muscle and bulky physique for men. Men therefore overestimate their chest; they want larger chest and smaller hips. Survey showed that 13% for men believed that the television media influenced their perceived body image and 6% believed that fashion magazines influenced their perceived body image (McCabe et al, 2007). McCabe et al 2007 also propose that women felt worst about their bodies after exposure to thin ideal images. Women generally overestimate their actual body size, believing they are too fat and ugly; even though they are not. Survey stated that 23% of women believed that the television media influenced their perceived body image and 22% believed that fashion magazine influenced their perceived body image (McCabe et al, 2007).

This in turn leads to the continuous existence of body image distortions and dissatisfaction among women.

The fourth hypothesis states that there would be a significant positive correlation between body surveillance and media influence for females but not for males. Correlational analyses indicated that there was a non significant relationship between body surveillance and media for males and there was a significant relationship between body surveillance and media for females. Hence, this means that men were less likely to focus on their body surveillance when exposed to media images, unlike women, who were most likely to be influenced by media images after exposure. Therefore hypothesis four was supported. Previous researches in relation to media influence and body image have all proposed and found that there is a relationship between media and body surveillance. Researches in this field have always proven that exposure to media ideal images leads to a feeling of body consciousness, especially for females. Females are always thought to be highly influenced by what they see in the media, which consequently leads to body surveillance. Often, females tend to engage in poor eating habits such as under eating, and also over exercising in order to attain the body shapes and sized that they come across in the mass media.

LIMITATIONS

There were a number of limitations that may have affected this study. Firstly, the size of the participating population was 200, 100 male and 100 females. This may have been too small, which may have had an effect in carrying out this research. The number of people used for this study is nothing compared to the general Irish population, for example, therefore not representational. If the sample size was increased, results may have been different and more representative.

Secondly, the form or method in which the researcher used in selecting her participants could act as a limitation to the research. Simple random sampling method was used to select participants. Participants were just randomly approached at different locations, mainly among DBS students. This study therefore is only applicable to Ireland due to the nature of the sample being narrow. If a wider range of participants were studied, the results would be more applicable to the general or worldwide public. Future research should look at the view of participants of all age groups in order to accurately investigate the effects which media has upon them. A longitudinal study which follows individuals over a long period of time will provide a more thorough understanding of the changes that occur over one's existence.

Thirdly, another factor that might serve as a limitation to this study is the fact that the research depended on reports made only by the participants. These results were analyzed based on the assumption that participants responded honestly and accurately to these questionnaires, stating correctly how they feel. However, it is also possible that participants responded to these questions based on how they believe it is more acceptable, therefore leading to a bias in their answers, resulting in a bias in the research.

Furthermore, the types of research questionnaire used may have acted as a limitation to this research. For this research, ROSBC and media influence scale were used. This has limitations on what kind of questions would be asked, thereby limiting the scope of the research. Further research should use a wider range of questionnaires in order to explore wider grounds of this topic area.

Lastly, in terms of generalizability, it is important to state that this study was conducted in among Irish men and women. It is therefore unclear to what extent findings of this study generalize to other cultural environments. However, Ireland is a Western culture and, therefore, there is no particular reason to assume that the findings could not be generalised to other Western cultures or that the scales would not be appropriate.

This study was designed to evaluate the extent to which the level of media exposure and attitudes toward media impact on the perceptions and attitudes that men and women hold toward their bodies. This study has only carried out a research on adults over the age of 18 years, but it is important to point out that body dissatisfaction caused by media influence starts from youth period, and advances to middle years. It is communicated early to children.

What these research has revealed is the power of media to influence how both men and women have not only identified with images seen in the media, but also how these media helped to shape how they come about to see themselves, their relationship with others and the world. This study has looked at media influences on body image, and the resulting effects on self esteem, eating habits and mental health in males and females. This research aimed to investigate the effects of media on body image. This topic area has been found interesting as various researchers have carried out previous research to investigate this social issue, and several conclusions have been drawn

Millions of people grow up and are constantly living with a dreadful feeling about how they look, that is to say, they are not satisfied with their body images, which inevitably leads to low self esteem. With regards to media and body image, the 21st century is characterized by an increased driving force towards attention to body image. Television, advertisements, print media and internet often are the dominant force in creating an idealized perception of male and female body image and shapes and sizes; the thin ideal for women, and muscular ideal for males. The media constantly portrays ideal images for men and women; thin and slender for women, broad and muscular for men. Men are generally believed to have a more positive body image than women.

Millions of people are dissatisfied with their body image; this is due to the effects that media ideal have upon us, as a result of internalization, objectification and normalization of these body ideal images. The mass media is a dominant driving force to body image dissatisfaction. Normalization of media images and self evaluation causes people to experience a high difference between their ideal body shape and size and actual body shape and size. This often leads to disordered eating, feeling of depression and in some cases death.

Social comparison pressures men and women to conform and strive for these idealized body images, that is, wishing to have bodies that look like these images, forming an identity from such. As discussed above, survey found that more than 70% of women agreed that the media sends messages that gave them the idea to lose weight. However, length of exposure to these media images determines level of influence. Cultural beliefs and ideas also influence body images. The accumulation of all these effects leads to negative psychological and cognitive consequences, as well as health hazards.

CONCLUSION

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the media influence on body image and its effects on men and women, and also any discrepancies, if any in this media influence.

We live in an era where body shape and size obsession has become normal part of life. This study has discussed the issue of body image and its importance on mental and physical well being. Media is seen as the core risk factor for negative body image for men and women, and studies confirms that this leads to negative self perception, negative emotional state and unhealthy behaviours.

Ultimately, the findings from these researches confirm what researchers of media images and body image have argued—that there is a connection between media and body image distortions.

Media images are a fertile ground for not only conceptualizing an ideal body image, but also a critical context for normalisation, self evaluation and social comparison.

This study has found that media images affect males and females, and there is a significant difference between influences.

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APPENDIX 1

This survey was conducted on a total of 200 people, 100 males and 100 females in 2011

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each statement below and circle number that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each one:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

1. I rarely think about how I look.....1 2 3 4 5

2. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something
must be wrong with me.....1 2 3 4 5

3. I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks
they are born with.....1 2 3 4 5

4. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable
than whether they look good on me.....1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the

- effort to look my best.....1 2 3 4 5
6. A large part of being in shape is having that kind of
body in the first place.....1 2 3 4 5
7. I think more about how my body feels than
how my body looks.....1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't
look as good as I could.....1 2 3 4 5
9. I think a person can look pretty much how they want
to if they are willing to work at it.....1 2 3 4 5
10. I rarely compare how I look with how other
people look.....1 2 3 4 5
11. I would be ashamed for people to know what
I really weigh.....1 2 3 4 5
12. I really don't think I have much control over how
my body looks.....1 2 3 4 5
13. During the day, I think about how I look many times.....1 2 3 4 5

14. I never worry that something is wrong with me when
I am not exercising as much as I should.....1 2 3 4 5

15. I think a person's weight is mostly determined by
the genes they are born with.....1 2 3 4 5

16. I often worry about whether the clothes I am
wearing make me look good.....1 2 3 4 5

17. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether
I am a good enough person.....1 2 3 4 5

18. It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight
it's probably always going to be about the same.....1 2 3 4 5

19. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.....1 2 3 4 5

20. Even when I can't control my weight, I think
I'm an okay person.....1 2 3 4 5

21. I can weigh what I'm supposed to when
I try hard enough.....1 2 3 4 5

22. I am more concerned with what my body can
do than how it looks.....1 2 3 4 5

23. When I'm not the size I think I should be,

I feel ashamed.....1 2 3 4 5

24. The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes.....1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each question and circle the appropriate number on your answer sheet.
Please answer all questions.

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

1. I like to read fashion magazines that feature thin models.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I like to watch fashion shows on T.V. that feature thin models.

1 2 3 4 5

3. When I see a picture of a female model or actress, I pay attention to her body shape.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I like to watch entertainment shows featuring thin celebrities.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I like to browse in malls and pay attention to the latest fashions.

1 2 3 4 5

6. If I could afford it, I would like to go to New York fashion shows.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I like to watch award shows on T.V. and admire the clothes worn by famous female stars.

1 2 3 4 5

8. I like to watch exercise/fitness videos and shows on T.V. featuring well toned women.

1 2 3 4 5

9. I like to watch movies with famous actresses.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I like to watch videos on MTV with popular music stars.

1 2 3 4 5