

The effects of media on body image and self esteem

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of the mass media on self esteem and body image in both males and females, aged between 18 and 25. The media has been found to be the most powerful conveyor of socio-cultural values regarding body ideals, size and weight, which has been linked to body dissatisfaction and in turn, related to other health concerns such as depression, low self esteem and eating disorders. There were a total of 150 participants who took part in this study; 89 females and 61 males. A quantitative non-experimental correlational design was used. Participants completed a questionnaire booklet containing three different questionnaires including The Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a body image questionnaire (Maynard, 2009), and a media usage questionnaire, which was designed for this particular study. Data from these questionnaires was analysed using SPSS. The analysis revealed that males have lower body image than females, but there is no relationship between media usage and body image or self –esteem. It also revealed, contrary to assumption, that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and body image, for both males and females.

Introduction

Much research has been conducted that states that women often have negative feelings about their body, and that the mass media greatly contributes to this. The media is a conveyor of socio-cultural values regarding ideal body shape and size, which creates an understanding of the ideal man and woman (McCabe, Butler & Watt, 2007). There has been increasing debates on whether women's bodies portrayed in the media are a risk factor for negative body image for both men and women, particularly in women. Body image has become an important aspect of one's mental health, self-esteem and well-being. In western society, images of unattainable body ideals fill magazines, TV advertisements, movies and social media sites, and these images generally reflect those of the thin idealised women (Cory & Burns, 2007).

It has also been recognised that body ideals change throughout generations. During the 1950's, women were encouraged to be of a different physique than nowadays. The ideal in the 1950's was to be curvy with a small waist, and recently, the ideal has changed to one of thinness. Nowadays, the media portrays women as the 'thin ideal' without imperfections.

This ideal consists of women who are of a slender feminine physique, with a small waist and little body fat. Harper and Tiggemann (2008) found that 94% of women's magazine covers depicted an image of a thin idealised body. These images are not only difficult to attain, but can even become dangerous for one's mental and physical health.

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) argues that girls and women subject their body to constant monitoring, which in turn leads to body dissatisfaction and sometimes, even eating disorders. Whilst body objectification is increasing, it has made women and girls make a conscious effort to change their physical appearance through any way possible.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) report that the internalisation of idealized images often

results in many negative psychological effects including depression, anxiety and ultimately eating disorders and with the increase in accessibility to these images, the concern for these effects is larger than ever before.

Recently, social media has become a huge part of everyday life for most, particularly for young people. This is due to on-going advancements in technology in the last five decades. Nowadays, in Ireland, there is 1.6 million people with Smartphone's, making access to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, easier than ever before. There have been many studies and debates on whether the media has negative or positive effects on society as a whole, but negative theories seem to outweigh the positive. Whilst the media can provide us with news and entertainment, and even be educational at times, there is an increasing debate on the negative effects it has on men and women.

During a review of mental health practice, Radford (2007) stated that the Barbie Doll depicted the perfect body image of what a woman or girl should aim for. Many studies have revealed the negative impact of the media on females. Stephen and Perara (2014) showed that young women were highly influenced by model images on what they perceive to be attractive, and although there have been many other similar outcomes on studies across the globe, there has been less light shed on how the media could affect male body image and self esteem. Up until recently, there have not been many concerns, for male body image and self esteem, but these ideas have increased throughout the last three decades. Leit, Gray and Pope (2011) measured the muscle mass of male models posing for Playgirl Magazine, and found that the size of men's muscles have been steadily increasing throughout the years. As well as this, Barlett, Vowels and Saucier (2008) proved that these muscular ideals can affect men just as much as the thin ideal can affect women. Their study revealed that exposure to the media was significantly related to males aged between 12 and 23 feeling worse about their bodies.

Results from two meta-analyses concluded that as men felt pressure from the mass media, they felt worse about their bodies.

The present study aims to extend the research on the effects of the media on body image and self esteem, for both men and women. Using a quantitative method, this study seeks, in particular, to discover whether the mass media negatively affects young men and women, aged between 18 and 25 in Dublin, Ireland. This study is also concerned with the body image of Irish men, in comparison to women. A profuse amount of previous research focuses on how a woman's body image can be greatly lessened and there is recent, but less research indicating poorer body image and self esteem in men. The present study aims to discover if men have as low body image as female's, or even less, whether media use effects body image and self esteem, and if there is any correlation between low body image and low self esteem.

Literature Review

Body Image & Self Esteem

Body image has been defined as a view of one's own overall physical appearance, and is established as an important aspect of self-worth and mental health across the life span (Harter, 1998; Altabe & Thompson, 1996). It is related to self-esteem, sexuality, family relationships and identity. It has also been defined as the internal representation of your own outer appearance; your own unique perception of your body (Thompson et al., 1999).

Although it is closely related to sexuality and identity, it can be said to be most closely related to self esteem. Much research has shown that negative body image and body dissatisfaction leads to low self esteem. Self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness. It is the sum of self-confidence and self-respect (Branden, 1969). If one does not take a positive attitude towards their body, it can lead to feelings of worthlessness and confidence levels can be hindered. It is also well established that self-esteem is a good indicator of overall well-being (Jackson, 1993; Harter, 1998).

Studies have shown that the increases in eating disorders are due to either negative body image and or low self-esteem. The pathological eating behaviour patterns in such cases, serve as a coping mechanism to these negativities (Button et al., 1997; Mitchell, 1996). Body image can be said to be a psychological construct, which can be defined as a person's perception, thoughts and feelings about his or her body. Body dissatisfaction on the other hand, is a person's negative thoughts about his or her feelings and these feelings are largely determined by social experiences, such as media images (Grogan, 1998).

Observably women and men with negative body image experience negative feelings about themselves, and although it has been found that the negative feelings that some women have

about their bodies are only minor annoyances, for others the negative feelings they have can cause great distress that interferes with their everyday life (Cash, Antics & Strachan, 1997). When negative body image or low self-esteem becomes severe it can lead to other more serious disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia, and this has been found to be true especially in the case of adolescent girls (Croll, 2005 & Field et al ., 2001). Self-esteem is so intrinsically linked to thoughts about one's body that physical appearance has consistently been found to be the number one predictor of self-esteem at many ages (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2006).

The Media's Portrayal of women

It is said that the media is the most widespread form of mass communication. For decades, it has been influencing society in many ways. The media is the sole source of what the public sees and it is responsible for how it is portrayed and unfortunately, it has become a conveyor of socio-cultural values regarding ideal body shape and size, which creates an understanding of the ideal man and woman (McCabe et al., 2007). Because there are many different types of media, increasing in the last few decades, there are different ways in which people can be affected by it. Some of these types include newspapers, books and magazines, movies, radio, television and the internet. More often than not, women are portrayed as the 'thin ideal' without imperfections. This ideal is the idea that women must be of a slender feminine physique, with a small waist and with little body fat. Many theorists believe that certain images in the media have an impact on body image and in turn, promote low self esteem. Idealized images in the media are recognized as an important external trigger of body dissatisfaction (Mulgrew, Volcevski Kostas, & Rendell, 2013).

It has been found that when the media is portraying an ideal body image, it can lead to a body image disturbance in some women as well as implicating the development of eating disorders in some women (Altabe & Thompson, 1996). Women's magazines, probably more

than any other form of mass media, have been criticized as being advocates and promoters of the desirability of an unrealistic and dangerously thin ideal (Wolf, 1990). According to Pollack-Sied (1989) the media does not show heavy women leading normal social lives, and Cash & Prunzinsky (1990) found that slim women are seen as glamorous people living glamorous lives.

Media influences and gender differences

Females

The concept that the mass media can affect the body image and self esteem of girls and women is not a new phenomenon and has been circling ever since celebrities, such a pop stars, have become famous, not for their talents, but for their looks. These looks are then portrayed through the media and they become 'ideals' for the population. Very often, these ideals are unrealistic, and surveys show that over 60% of women are dieting in order to attain a perfect body image (McCabe et al., 2007).

Objectification Theory

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) is a theory based on the idea that females are prone to internalize an observer's perspective as a primary view of their own physical bodies. This theory argues that girls and women subject their body to constant monitoring, which in turn leads to body dissatisfaction and sometimes, even eating disorders. Whilst body objectification is increasing in women, it has made women and girls make a conscious effort to change their physical appearance through any way possible. This can include diet and exercise changes, which in some cases may be beneficial, but a lot of the time these changes come through surgery and unhealthy eating habits, which in turn leads to

disorders such as bulimia and anorexia. Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) explained that a woman's body is commonly viewed for its use by others, particularly for pleasure.

According to Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) all females experience some form of body objectification, but it can vary between women and girls depending on age, class, sexuality and ethnicity. When a woman is subjected to body objectification, this then leads to body surveillance and body dissatisfaction. Body Surveillance has been described as constantly monitoring yourself in terms of viewing one's body from an outsider's perspective. Body surveillance can then result in body dissatisfaction by contributing to the realization of a discrepancy between one's own body and an internalized body ideal (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). In western cultures it has been shown that women report higher levels of body objectification, than men, and that women learn to internalize an observer's perspective of their bodies more so than men.

Radford (2007) completed a scientific review of Mental Health practice which expressed the idea of American women's mental health being constantly affected by the media. Radford claims that most women are involved in a physically and psychologically damaging battle with their weight and inability to live up to social ideals. This allegedly leads most women to eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem. It also states that even though these claims have been widely repeated in books, news related media, and journals both popular and scholarly these assumptions have received very little critical attention.

Radford heavily focuses on the idea of the Barbie doll depicting the perfect body image of what a girl, or women should aim for. The review explains how there has been many studies that have suggested that the media influences body image, but have lacked a specific conclusion on whether women find models, such as Kate Moss more attractive or prettier, or whether it is simply because of her stick thin figure. Radford makes reference to other

articles claiming the lack of answers on this subject. The role of socio-cultural factors in the aetiology of eating disorders has been widely accepted. Nevertheless, how or by whom the pressure to be thin is transmitted to young girls remains unclear (Field et al, 1999).

Stephen & Perera (2014) conducted a study where by 30 female Malaysian and Chinese participants aged between 18 and 23 were recruited from the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. They were asked to wear a tight fitting, grey tank top and bicycle shorts so that the body shape of each individual was visible. They compared differences in preferences, attractiveness and health, between groups exposed to images of models of varying attractiveness and body weight. Results indicated that participants preferred a lower weight for attractiveness than for health. Furthermore, women's but not men's preferred BMI (Body mass index) for attractiveness, but not health, was influenced by the type of media images to which they were exposed, suggesting that short term exposure to model images affect women's perceptions of attractiveness but not health.

Similar results can be seen in a study completed by Champion & Furnham (1999). Their participants consisted of 203 teenage girls of different cultures. Each girls BMI was calculated. They were then asked to indicate which of five categories; 'thin', 'slightly underweight', 'just right', 'slightly overweight' or 'fat' they felt they belonged to. A pictorial scale was then presented to each participant, consisting of a series of seven line drawings of the female figure, labelled from A-G, ranging from extremely thin on the left to obese on the right. The participants were asked to indicate which figure they considered to be most like them, which they considered the norm and finally, which figures they would most like to look like.

Overall, the results concluded that many participants in this study believed themselves to be slightly overweight or obese, when in fact only 32% of them could actually be defined as this

according to health statistics. Furthermore 54.1 % of all girls wished to have a thinner body shape and 53.8% even wished for a body shape thinner than that which they perceived as normal. Additionally, age seemed to play a huge factor on overall body satisfaction. It was found that the older group of girls who were aged 18 and above expressed more dissatisfaction with their weight, more dissatisfaction with various body parts and more dissatisfaction with their general body image, than girls from the youngest age group, who were under the age of 18.

Krahe & Krause (2010) examined the influence of thin and normal weight models. The participants they used were 50 female undergraduate students at a university in Germany, all of which were of Caucasian origin. They were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. These included thin models and normal weight models. The average age of the participants was 22.2 years. Their results concluded that women who saw advertisements depicting thin models were more likely to choose the diet variant of a snack than women who saw the same advertisements in which the original model's image was manipulated to be of normal size. 64% of participants in the thin model condition, but only 28% of participants in the normal model condition, chose the diet snack over the normal snack.

It is clear from the research such as Stephen & Perera (2014) that body dissatisfaction is prominent in females aged between 18 and 23. All three of the studies mentioned ranging from 1999 to 2014, found that girls preferred a slimmer figure to what they have themselves, were conscious of their weight and or believed that their own weight was above what the healthy norm should be.

Males

There have been considerable fewer studies on the effects that the media may have on males. The predominant focus of the research between negative self-images and media has been on

women. Research has shown that women who were exposed to thin "ideal" media representations had decreased self-esteem (Smith, 2000) and body satisfaction (Champion & Furnham, 1999) compared to those women who were not exposed to the same ideal images.

Although, there has been less of an interest in how the mass media can have negative effects on men, the idea has increased in the past three decades. Dunn, Barnes & Gokee (2011) investigated men's body image and eating disorders in comparison to women's. Participants were 472 undergraduates, 337 of these were women and 135 of these were men. They were recruited from classes at a large south eastern metropolitan university. They completed a series of surveys, including a muscularity attitudes questionnaire, The Eating Disorder Inventory, a physical appearance state and trait anxiety scale and The Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire. The results showed that participants believed that men can have just as low body image as women, if not less, but that some stereotypes still exist in regard to only women having body image issues.

Furthermore, studies such as Leit et al., (2001) suggest how the media can affect these results in men. This study measured the reported muscle size of centrefolds of Playgirl magazine and found that the male models depicted in these magazines have been steadily increasing in muscularity in recent years. Additionally, Pope, Olivardia, Gruber et al., (1999) showed that modern toy action figures are growing substantially in muscle size across the past three decades. Some research has shown that males who feel pressure from the mass media have decreased self-esteem (Muris, Meesters, Van De Blom et al., 2005) and decreased body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004). Cafri, Strauss & Thompson (2002) reported that in their study, on average, males desired an additional 14.96 pounds of muscle mass. Muscularity dissatisfaction in turn was associated with lower life satisfaction, and lower self esteem.

Similar results were seen in a study by Barlett, Vowels et al., (2008). This study conducted two meta-analyses in order to determine the extent to which pressure from the mass media influenced men to conform to the muscular "ideal". A total of 25 studies contributing 93 effect sizes were included in two meta-analyses, which revealed that exposure to the media was significantly related to males aged 12 to 23 feeling worse about their own bodies. Results from the two studies suggested that as men felt pressure from the mass media, they felt worse about their bodies.

In contrast with this, there are studies that demonstrate opposite results. McCabe & Ricciardelli (2003) found that the pressure from the mass media was negatively correlated with strategies to increase muscles, suggesting that the number of hours spent exposed to the mass media did not make boys want to increase their muscles. Supporting McCabe & Ricciardelli (2003), very similar results were seen in a study done by Sanne (2012) who gathered 50 undergraduate male students, 28 of which were in an experimental condition and 22 in a control condition. In the experimental condition participants were exposed to idealized media content and in the control condition participants were exposed to neutral media content during a short movie's commercial breaks. Contrary to their expectations, there was no difference in overall body self esteem as measured by the body esteem scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984).

Additionally, a study conducted by Mulgrew et al., (2013) further portrayed that men are not as influenced by the media as women. They gathered a sample of 51 of men from an Australian regional university. This particular study did not have a specific age group. The age range was broad and varied from 18 to 64 years with 48% of the sample being 23 years old or younger. The media images used were taken from 2013 editions of Australian men's health magazines. The images used included high levels of bare body exposure, low levels of activity, and high levels of posing. They hypothesised that the group exposed to model

images would have poorer appearance satisfaction. The results were opposite than expected.

There were no group differences in level of confidence, muscle tone satisfaction or mood.

It is clear that there are inconsistencies in the literature regarding the media's influence on men's body image and self esteem. Between 2001 and 2002, Leit et al (2001) as well as Cafri, Strauss & Thompson (2002) reported that from their studies males' desired additional muscle mass, possibly due to the increase in muscle mass from toy action figures or the growing size of muscles of male models presented in Playgirl magazine. On the other hand, many studies from the same time period such as McCabe & Ricciardelli (2003) and afterwards, displayed opposite results. Such studies concluded that there was no correlation between media exposure and lessened self esteem or body dissatisfaction in males.

The influence of the media on adolescents

Clark & Tiggeman (2006) conducted a study with 100 female participants aged 9 to 12 years old. This study examined the combined influence of media and peer factors. The girls completed questionnaire measures of media exposure including television and magazines, peer influence and body dissatisfaction. Their height and weight were also measured. 49% of the girls displayed a desire to be thinner. The influences of socio-cultural factors were confirmed in addition to biological determinants, such as body mass index. Their exposure to appearance-focused media was not directly related to their body dissatisfaction, but was indirectly related via their conversations about appearance amongst peers.

Although most studies prove that many females express a desire to be thinner or are at least somewhat influenced by model images, as seen in Stephen & Perera (2014) and Clark & Tiggeman (2006), results show that girls aged between 9 and 12 are more so influenced by peer conversations than exposure to TV or Magazines, suggesting that teenagers and young adult women could possibly be more influenced by the media than prepubescent children.

Similar results were seen in previous studies such as Champion & Furnham (1999). They concluded that from their results, participants from their older age group, aged 18 and above, were more affected by the media, than the participants from the younger age group who were under the age of 18.

A study supporting that adolescents are less influenced by the media, and possibly more influenced by their peers is a study by Bevelander (2013). This looked at eating habits in young people in America. This study particularly focused on social media interaction. It measured the impact of peers on palatable food intake of young people within a social media setting. In order to determine whether this effect was moderated by self esteem, this study examined the roles of global explicit self-esteem, body esteem and implicit self-esteem (Bevelander, 2013). The participants used in this study were young males. They were asked to play a video game, interacting with other peers, who were in fact instructed to inform participants of their eating habits, which consisted of eating near to nothing, or just candy. It was concluded that those who had low self esteem were more affected by the eating habits of peers. Youngsters conform to the amount of palatable food eaten by peers through social media interaction. Those with low body image or low self esteem may be more at risk to peer influences on food intake (Bevelander, 2013).

On the other hand, a study with adolescent participants was completed in a Canadian school during the same year (Spurr, Berry & Walker, 2013). The participants in these studies included 28 females and 18 males between 16 and 19 years of age. Nine focus groups were conducted with a total of 46 participants. The study was divided into A and B. In Study A, the questions were written to provide the participants opportunity to express their beliefs and experiences in relation to psychological wellness. Some interview questions that were asked included “What does psychological wellness mean to you, are there positive or negative influences on your psychological wellness, and does psychological wellness contribute to

your overall sense of well-being?’’ The focus group questions for Study B were revised based on the emerging findings from Study A. Examples of interview questions from study B were ‘what are adolescent idealistic perceptions of a healthy body, how do adolescents describe what a healthy body looks like, and are there positive or negative influences on a healthy body?’’ The results from this study concluded that there were Common themes that emerged from the focus group discussions in both studies. Some of the themes included the negative impact of media on adolescent body image and pressure to conform to the Western views of physical appearance.

Aim

This research project sets out to investigate whether the mass media has an influence on the body image and self esteem of young people, aged 18-25. It will also investigate whether males can have equal or lower body image than women.

Hypotheses

There are four main hypotheses for this study. They are as follows:

1. Males will have equal or lower body image than women.
2. There will be a negative correlation between media use and body image. Participants, both males and females exposed to the media more, will have lower body image.
3. There will be a positive correlation between body image and self esteem. Participants with lower body image will also have lower self esteem.
4. There will be a negative correlation between media use and self esteem. Participants exposed to the media more, will have lower self esteem.

Methodology

Materials

All participants completed a short booklet of questionnaires containing The Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a media usage questionnaire and a body image questionnaire (Maynard, 2009). Prior to this, participants also answered three demographic questions. These included age, gender and nationality. In addition to the questionnaire booklet that was prepared, access to the three questionnaires was completed through Facebook, which was linked to Survey Monkey.

1.

The Self Esteem Scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965), in order to measure feelings of self worth or self acceptance. This 10 question scale is scored using a 4 point response format, beginning with 1= strongly agree, to 4= strongly disagree. This response format is put alongside statements such as ‘I certainly feel useless at times’. Scores range from 10 to 40. 10 being the lowest and indicating low self esteem, and 40 being the highest, indicating high self esteem.

2.

The body image questionnaire used was taken from a post on Healthyplace.com. It was created by Cindy Maynard in order for readers to learn if they have a negative body image. The format is simple. It consists of nine questions and includes ‘YES’ or ‘NO’ answer options. Two of the Questions included were ‘Do you avoid wearing certain clothes because they make you feel fat?’ and ‘Do you want to change something about your body?’ in which participants responded ‘YES’ or ‘NO’ to.

3.

The media usage questionnaire was created for this study. The bases for this questionnaire was taken from a version on SurveyMonkey.com. Most of the questions have been edited to suit this particular study. It includes 7 questions relating to how often or how much one spends engaging with the media. The format of this survey varied. Most answer options include a 5 point option list ranging from 'extremely often' to 'not at all often'. This was displayed next to questions such as 'how often do you read magazines?'

The other formats that are used in this questionnaire include a 5 point option list ranging from 0-1 to more than 7, and this was used in conjunction with questions such as 'on a typical day, how many hours do you spend watching online news?' and another option included a 6 point list ranging from 'Less than a few times a month' and 'more than once a day'. This option is only included with the last question of the 7, and this is 'How often do you log into social media networks?' The final variation of answer options ranges from 'a great deal' to 'none at all'. This is also a 6 point list, and the type of question related to this option is 'how much do you enjoy watching movies?'

Participants

In this study a total of 150 participants were used in this study, 89 of which were female and 61 of which were male, who were all aged between the ages of 18 and 25. The access to these participants was gained through handing out copies of the questionnaire booklet to students across various universities in Dublin, Ireland, but majority of the responses gathered was through the use of Survey Monkey. This was then used as a link on Facebook and students, both male and female, between the ages of 18 and 25 were asked to complete the questionnaire. It was made known that anyone who participates in the study must be a student in Dublin, between the ages of 18 and 25. The age range was quite narrow as this study was

interested in the effects of the media on young people. The average age of participants was 20 years old.

Design

The present research study uses a non-experimental correlation design. The criterion variables within this research include body image and self esteem and the predictor variables include media exposure and gender.

Data Collection

Data was collected by handing out questionnaire booklets to students in various universities. The remainder of the questionnaires were collected from Survey Monkey with the help of Facebook to ask students to fill it out. A total number of 150 questionnaires were collected. The booklet included a brief outline as to the nature of the study and also outlined ethical considerations such as confidentiality. The research stated the importance of honesty and full completion of each section. At the end of the booklet there was also a section which featured telephone numbers and email addresses to relevant organisations and help lines that participants may have found useful. After the questionnaires were answered they were immediately kept safe and private until the researcher was to begin an analysis. When all the data was collected, all answers were re-coded and total scores were computed using SPSS. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were found using SPSS, and Pearson's correlation was used. The significance level used was 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

The importance of ethical considerations and enforcing them during the research is crucial and therefore all ethical considerations were taken seriously. There were various ethical issues that had to be taken into account. The age of participants was one of the main concerns. The researcher had to make sure all participants were above the legal age of 18, and any participant who was under this age, must be permitted by a legal guardian. Another ethical consideration was that the nature the study may affect participants in a negative way. To ensure this concern would not leave any participant upset, information for help lines were included. Confidentiality was also a concern. In order to maintain anonymous participants, majority of questionnaires completed were gained through the use of Survey Monkey, meaning the researcher cannot see any form of identity of each participant, bar their age, gender and nationality, as asked by the demographic questions. Participants were also reminded on the beginning of the questionnaire booklet that all data will remain anonymous.

In order to ensure the printed copies of booklets remained anonymous, all paper work was held in a secure place until needed. Immediately before commencing the questionnaire consent was gained through a short summary of the topic of the research. Participants were also made aware that the completion of the questionnaire was completely optional.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The aim of this research was to investigate whether young people who are exposed to the media through the use of social networks, magazines and TV have lower body image and or self esteem. All of the statistics were computed with SPSS 22 for Windows. 150 participants were analysed for this study, 89 of which were female and 61 of which were male. Three questionnaires were answered by participants; one on self esteem, one on body image and one on media use. The table below reports the mean, minimum score, maximum score and standard deviation for the criterion variables body image, media usage and the predictor variables, self esteem and gender.

Gender	Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	Total media use	88	13.00	28.00	20.5682	3.40316
	Total self esteem	86	15.00	38.00	27.7093	4.98673
	Total body image	84	11.00	20.00	17.3452	2.09701
Male	Total media use	59	7.00	26.00	20.1525	3.27905
	Total self esteem	60	18.00	40.00	29.5667	5.39104
	Total body image	58	10.00	20.00	14.7414	2.51005

As can be seen from the table above, the mean score for female's body image (Mean =17.34, SD= 2.09) was higher than that for males (Mean= 14.74, SD=2.51). The maximum score for body image was both the same for males and females (maximum=20), and the minimum score for body image was slightly different between genders (minimum females=11, minimum males=10). It can also be seen that the mean score for female's self esteem (15.00) is higher than that for males (7.00).

The mean score for media usage was very similar between males and females, with females scoring an average of 20.56 (SD= 3.40) and males scoring an average of 20.15 (SD= 3.27). The minimum and maximum scores for media usage were quite different between males (minimum=7, maximum=26) and females (minimum=13, maximum=28).

Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1 predicted that males would have equal or lower body image than females. The data was spilt into males and females using SPSS. This showed that the mean score for female's body image (Mean =17.34, SD= 2.09) was higher than that for males (Mean= 14.74, SD=2.51). Therefore, this hypothesis was proved. The average body image score for males was 2.6 lower than the score for females.

Correlations

Correlations were found using Pearson's correlations on SPSS. The significance level used in this study was 0.05

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there will be a negative correlation between media use and body image; young people exposed to the media more, will have lower body image, for both males and females.

Results correlated for variables in hypothesis 2, showed that there was a negative correlation between media usage and body image in females, but on a non-significant level.

($r=.105$, $n=83$, $P>.05$). This suggests that media usage may affect body image in females if examined on a larger scale, but was not found to be significant in participants from this study.

In males, there was a positive non-significant relationship between media usage and body image ($r=.245$, $n=56$, $P>.05$). Although this correlation was found to be non-significant at .68, it was nearly significant, suggesting that male body image is not affected by the media in a negative way, and with a larger scale of participants, males may in fact benefit from media exposure. From these results between media exposure and body image hypothesis 2 was not proven, for neither females nor males.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there will be a significant positive correlation between body image and self esteem for both genders, meaning the lower one's self esteem the lower one's body image, and vice versa.

Results correlated for variables in hypothesis 3 showed that there was negative significant relationship between self esteem and body image for females ($r = -.249^*$, $n=82$, $P<.05$) and an even more significant relationship between these variables for males.

($r=-.345^{**}$, $n=57$, $P<.01$). These results do not prove the hypothesis to be correct. These results suggest that there is negative correlation between one's body image and self-esteem, meaning the higher one's self-esteem, the lower one's body image, particularly in males.

Again, hypothesis 3 was proven, for neither females nor males.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that there will be a negative correlation between self esteem and media for both genders, meaning the more one is exposed to the media the lower their self esteem. This is also predicted to be more significant in females.

Results correlated for variables in hypothesis 4 showed that there was a non-significant positive relationship between self esteem and media usage for both males ($r=.020$, $n=58$, $P>.05$) and females ($r=.160$, $n=85$, $P>.05$). These results suggest that for both males and females, the media does not affect self esteem. Although males showed a non-significant positive result between media usage and self esteem, the significance came to $.883$, and the positive correlation was only at $.020$, therefore a larger sample size of men could have made this result into a negative correlation between media usage and self esteem, but again, remain non- significant. Like hypotheses 2 and 3, hypothesis 4 was not proven.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of the media on the body image and self esteem of young men and women, aged between 18 and 25 studying in Dublin, Ireland. This study focuses on the unrealistic body thin or muscular ideals that have been broadcasted to us through mass media, which has a widespread influential capability. Such sources include magazines, TV and movies, and social media websites including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which are widely popular amongst people of all ages in Ireland. This study aimed to extend previous researches by examining whether or not young Irish people, are affected by the media in a negative light, in terms of both body image, and self esteem. It also aimed to decipher whether females or males have lower body image, and if self esteem and body image coincide with each other.

There were four hypotheses and assumptions for this study. The present studies' four specific hypotheses were that; 1. male's will possess the same level of body image or lower body image than females, 2. there will be a negative correlation between media usage and body image in both males and females, meaning the more media exposure a participant injures, the lower their body image, 3. there will be a significant positive correlation between body image and self esteem in both males and females, meaning participants with lower self esteem will also have lower body image, and vice versa, and 4. there would be a negative correlation for self esteem and media usage in both males and females, meaning the more media exposure participants injure, the lower their self esteem.

Hypothesis 1 said that males will have equal or lower body image than females and this turned out to be true in the present study. Lower scores in the body image questionnaire indicated lower body image. Out of 61 males, there was a mean score of 14.74 for body image, compared to the mean score of 17.34 for females. The minimum score for males was

7, nearly half of what the female's minimum score was, at 13, which is quite a significant difference. On average, males displayed lower body image than females in the present research. This result is in line with hypothesis 1, and previous research supports this. Dunn, Barnes & Gokee (2011) investigated men's body image and eating disorders compared to women's and the results showed that participants believed that men can have just as low body image as women.

There has been theories that support this idea, and why men's body image has become an as concerning epidemic as women's body image. Between 2001 and 2002, Leit et al (2001) and Cafri et al (2002) reported that males' desired additional muscle mass, possibly due to the increase in muscle mass from toy action figures or the growing size of muscles in male models which have been presented in Playgirl magazine. On the other hand, conflicting research from the same time period, such as McCabe & Ricciardelli (2003) and afterwards, displayed opposite results. Such studies concluded that there was no correlation in media exposure and lessened self esteem or body satisfaction in males. Some of these studies are outdated and greatly conflict each other and even with only 61 males, concluded that males can have as low body image as females.

The second hypothesis, that there will be a negative correlation between media and body image in both males and females, meaning media exposure will lower body image, was not proven. Results correlated for variables in hypothesis 2 showed that there was a negative correlation between media usage and body image in females, but on a non- significant level. This suggests that media usage may affect body image in females on a larger scale, but was not found to be true of participants from the present study. In males, there was a positive non-significant relationship between media usage and body image. Although this correlation was found to be non significant, it was nearly significant, suggesting that males body image is not affected by the media in a negative way and with a larger scale of participants, males may in

fact have showed that their body image is not negatively affected by the mass media whatsoever, and maybe even in a positive way. These results indicate that media exposure does not affect body image, for neither males nor females, but there is an abundant amount of research that completely contradicts this.

Research from Stephen & Perera (2014) resulted in Chinese women preferring lower weight for attractiveness, after being exposed to model images, suggesting that short term exposure to model images can in fact affect a woman's body image. Very similar results were seen in a study by Champion & Furnham (1999). Overall, their results concluded that a lot of participants believed themselves to be slightly overweight or obese, when in fact only 32% of them could actually be defined as this according to health statistics. Furthermore 54.1 % of all girls wished to have a thinner body shape and 53.8% even wished for a body shape thinner than that which they perceived as normal, after being exposed to different shaped women.

Studies from Krahe & Krause (2010) concluded that women who saw advertisements depicting thin models were more likely to choose a diet variant of a snack than women who saw the same advertisements, in which the original model's image was manipulated to be of normal size. 64% of participants in the thin model condition, but only 28% of participants in the normal model condition, chose a diet snack over a normal snack.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a positive correlation between one's self esteem and one's body image, meaning that it was hypothesised that if a participant had low self esteem, they would also have low body image, and this was assumed for both males and females. Results calculated for variables in hypothesis 3 showed that there was negative significant relationship between self esteem and body image for females and an even more significant relationship between these variables for males, meaning that the higher one scored in body image the lower one scored in self esteem, or the higher one scored in self-esteem,

the lower one scored in body image. These results do not prove the hypothesis to be correct. These results suggest that there is negative correlation between one's body image and self esteem, meaning the higher one's self esteem, the lower one's body image, particularly in males.

In contrast with this result, there are huge amounts of studies and theories that support that self esteem does in fact go hand in hand with body image. It has been said that body image is established as an important aspect of self worth and mental health across the life span (Harter, 1998). The link between the two was found to be remarkably strong, with an average correlation of .65 in the US and .62 in other countries such as England, Canada, Japan, Holland, Ireland, Australia, and Greece (Harter, 1999).

Having a distorted view of one's body is believed to be linked to low self-esteem among adolescent girls, which in turn has been linked to the development of eating disordered behaviour (Croll, 2005 & Field et al., 2001), and in 2006, it was said that self esteem is so intrinsically linked to thoughts about one's body that physical appearance has consistently been found to be the number one predictor of self esteem at many ages (Ata et al., 2006).

This Idea that self esteem does contribute to poorer body image and eating disorder symptoms has also been agreed by Green & Pritchard (2003) & Furnham et al (2002). Furnham et al. (2002) also explained that the self esteem of adolescent girl's is linked to a lean body image. In their study 235 adolescents were surveyed on the subject of eating attitudes, self esteem, reasons for exercise, and their ideal versus current body size and shape. They found very few girls desired to be heavier, and a much greater percentage of adolescent girls than adolescent boys associated body dissatisfaction with the concept of self esteem. Also, specific reasons for exercise were found in relationship with low self-esteem and disordered eating (Furnham et al, 2002).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that there would be a negative correlation for self-esteem and media usage in males and females, meaning the more media exposure participants injure, the lower their self esteem. Results showed that there was a non-significant positive relationship between self esteem and media usage for both these results suggest that for both males and females, the media does not affect self-esteem, therefore hypothesis 4 was not proven.

Although there is not much research completed to indicate that media exposure or usage will directly influence self esteem in a negative way, there are studies that show that the media influences body image, which then indirectly affects one's self esteem. There has also been much research completed to show body image is strongly linked to self-esteem. These two results lead to the formation of hypothesis 4, on whether exposure to the mass media can affect self esteem.

Studies such as Champion & Furnham (1999) show that female body image is affected by the media. Their study used 203 participants, specifically teenage girls, of different cultures in order to determine their body image. They concluded that a lot of participants believed themselves to be slightly overweight or obese, when in fact only 32% of them could actually be defined as this, according to health statistics. Furthermore 54.1 % of all girls wished to have a thinner body shape and 53.8% even wished for a body shape thinner than that which they perceived as normal.

There is also research to show possible effects on men. Barlett et al., (2008) conducted two meta-analyses in order to determine the extent to which pressure from the mass media influenced men to conform to the muscular "ideal". A total of 25 studies contributing 93 effect sizes were included in two meta-analyses, which revealed that exposure to the media was significantly related to males aged 12 to 23 feeling worse about their own bodies. Results

from the two studies suggested that as men felt pressure from the mass media, they felt worse about their bodies.

These two studies show that both the body image of males and females are affected by the mass media, and further research suggests that these participants may then in turn, have decreased self esteem. Body image is related to self esteem as well as sexuality and family relationships and has been established as an important aspect of self-worth and mental health across the life span (Harter, 1998). It is also well established that self esteem is a good indicator of overall well-being (Harter, 1998 & Jackson, 1993).

Body image can be said to be a psychological construct, which can be defined as a person's perception, thoughts and feelings about his or her body. Body dissatisfaction on the other hand, is a person's negative thoughts about his or her feelings and these feelings are largely determined by social experiences, such as media images (Grogan, 1998). With regard to the previous research, it is possible that results seen in the present study would not be seen in a larger sample size, and that if body image is not affected by media exposure, subsequently, self esteem will not be either.

Limitations & Recommendations

There were a number of limitations that may have affected this study. To begin with, the sample size of this study was 150 participants, 89 of which were females and 61 of which were males. This may have been too small, which would have then had an effect on carrying out the research. The number of participants used in this study is fractional in comparison to the number of young people aged 18-25 studying in Dublin, and Ireland as a whole. If the sample size was increased, results may have been different and become more representative of the truth.

The method that was used in the present study could have also greatly affected results. In view of the fact that majority of participants were students from Dublin studying in Dublin, with the exception of a few participants from other countries studying in Dublin, this study is only reflective on whether an Irish person's body image and self esteem are affected by the media. If a wider range of participants were studied, the results would be more applicable to the general or worldwide public.

Previous research on this topic used different materials to the present study. A great deal of previous studies have used methods of exposing the participant to media images in order to perceive body image and self-esteem directly afterwards, through the use of questionnaires. The present study used questionnaires to measure the amount of media use a participant exposed themselves to, and gauged this against a body image and self esteem questionnaire. This difference, could have greatly affected results.

Another factor that might serve as a limitation to this study is the fact that the results only depended on answers given by the participants. The results were analysed based on the assumption that participants answered all questions honestly and accurately throughout the three questionnaires, stating correctly how they feel, their habits and media use. However, it

is also possible that participants responded to these questions based on what they believe to be more acceptable, therefore leading to a bias in their answers, resulting in a bias in the result of the research.

There are a number of recommendations that could be considered by future researchers if carrying out comparable studies. Firstly, it is advised that future researchers could benefit from using a larger sample size of participants. The present study used 150 participants, and results did not coincide with previous research and did not correspond with 3 out of 4 hypotheses. In view of the fact that the majority of participants in the present study were from the same ethnic group, it may have affected results and have not represented reality. Therefore, it is also suggested that using a broader spectrum of nationalities may give more accurate results, and would become more applicable to the general public or on a worldwide scale.

It is also recommended that for further research it would be beneficial to edit the body image questionnaire and include more answer options aside from 'YES or 'NO'. If options such as 'sometimes' or 'rarely' were include, it could have gave the researcher more accurate results. Another suggestion for future studies would be to collect all data via social media sites with the use of Survey Monkey. This could lessen bias or untruthful answers if the researcher is not face to face with a participant, as well as other participants amongst them.

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the media influence on body image and self esteem and its effects on young people, between the ages of 18 and 25, in both men and women. It is universally known that body image has become an important aspect of one's mental health, self-esteem and well-being. If one does not take a positive attitude towards their body, it can lead to feelings of worthlessness and confidence levels can be hindered. This study aimed to extend previous research on how the media affects young men and women. Nowadays images of unattainable body ideals fill magazines, TV advertisements, movies and social media sites, and these images generally reflect those of the thin idealised women (Cory & Burns, 2007), and with advancements in technology, it is now easier than ever before to be exposed to images portraying these ideals

Ultimately the present research did not support what most previous research has argued. Majority of research illustrates that the media, whether it be model images or movies and TV, does in fact have a negative effect on the body image of young people across the globe, and it turns out that their self-esteem is affected. The present study demonstrated that men have lower body image than women, and this contradicted various outdated research, but proved comparable with a handful of recent studies. Conclusively, this study did not prove that there was a correlation between media and body image or self-esteem, but it did suggest that men can have as low body image as women.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire Booklet

This study is concerned about how the media can affect adolescents self esteem and body image.

Please answer each section as honestly as you can, do not spend too long thinking about each question as there are no right or wrong answers. Any information that you give will remain anonymous, you are not required to write your name anywhere on this survey. I hope you find this interesting, and I would like to thank you in advance for your time and co-operation.

If you require any further information concerning this research, please contact me at the email address below.

Sinead Gorman

Email: 1770159@mydbs.ie

Please complete the following demographic information.

What is your age? _____

What is your gender: Male: ____ female: ____

What nationality are you? _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number to the right of the statement as follows:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = disagree

4 = strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | I feel that I have a number of good qualities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | I am able to do things as well as most other people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | I feel that I do not have much to be proud of | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | I take a positive attitude towards myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 | On the whole, I am satisfied with myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | I wish I could have more respect for myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9 | I certainly feel useless at times | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

10 At times I think I am no good at all

1 2 3 4

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following questions and circle YES or NO accordingly

1. Have you ever avoided sports or working out because
You didn't want to be seen in gym clothes?

YES NO

2. Does eating even a small amount of food make you feel fat?

YES NO

3. Do you worry or obsess about your body not being small,
thin or good enough?

YES NO

4. Are you concerned your body is not muscular or strong enough?

YES NO

5. Do you avoid wearing certain clothes because they
make you feel too fat?

YES NO

6. Do you feel badly about yourself because you don't like your body?

YES NO

7. Have you ever disliked your body?

YES NO

8. Do you want to change something about your body?

YES NO

9. Do you compare yourself to others and "come up short?"

YES NO

10. Have you ever gone on a diet or are you doing it now?

YES NO

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following questions and tick the box that applies most to you

1. How often do you read magazines?

- Extremely often
- Very often
- Moderately often
- Slightly often
- Not at all often

2. How often do you watch television shows?

- Extremely often
- Very often
- Moderately often
- Slightly often
- Not at all often

3. On a typical day, about how many hours do you spend watching TV?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6-7
- More than 7

4. On a typical day, about how many hours do you spend reading online news?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6-7
- More than 7

5. How often do you log into social media networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)?

- Less than a few times a month
- A few times a month
- A few times a week
- About once a day
- More than once a day

6. How much do you enjoy watching movies?

- A great deal
- A lot
-
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

7. How often do you watch music videos on MTV, Youtube etc?

- Extremely often
- Very often
- Moderately often
- Slightly often
- Not at all often

If you are concerned with or affected by any of the raised issues please do not hesitate to contact the following organisations:

AWARE (For those effected by depression)

Helpline phone: 1890 303 302.

Email: supportmail@aware.ie

BODYWHYS: (The Eating Disorders Association of Ireland)

Helpline phone: 1890 200 444

I would like to thank you for taking part in this study and would remind you that all information given here will remain anonymous. If you would like to know more about this

study, please do not hesitate in contacting me at the email address printed on the front of this booklet.

Sinead Gorman

Appendix 2

Correlation output table in SPSS 22

The screenshot displays the SPSS Statistics Viewer interface. The main window shows the following content:

```

CORRELATIONS
/VARIABLES=total_selfesteem total_mediause total_bodyimage
/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG
/MISSING=PAIRWISE.

Correlations

[DataSet1] P:\MARCH 31ST SPSS !!!!!!!!!!.sav
  
```

Correlations					
What is your gender?			total_selfeste em	total_mediau se	total_bodyima ge
female	total_selfesteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.160	-.249*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.143	.024
		N	86	85	82
	total_mediause	Pearson Correlation	.160	1	-.105
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.143		.346
		N	85	88	83
male	total_bodyimage	Pearson Correlation	-.249*	-.105	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.346	
		N	82	83	84
	total_selfesteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.020	-.345**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.883	.009
		N	60	58	57
total_mediause	total_mediause	Pearson Correlation	.020	1	.245
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.883		.068
		N	58	59	56
	total_bodyimage	Pearson Correlation	-.345**	.245	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.068	
		N	57	56	58

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

```

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=gender
/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

Frequencies

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=age
/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.
  
```

A yellow box with the text "Double-click to activate" is positioned over the bottom right corner of the correlation table.