

Committee/Council: Youth Assembly

Issue: Action Paper II on body image and self-esteem

Student Officer: Marianina Papadi, Alkmini Laiou

Position: Head, Co-Head

Introduction

Low self-esteem is one of the biggest challenges that many people are facing nowadays. It's common that young girls and women in the middle age have low self-esteem and with changes in body image. By using the word self-esteem we mean the way people feel about themselves, how much worthwhile and valuable they think they are. How people feel about their physical appearance which is described as body image. Most of the time body image is connected with self-esteem especially for teenagers because they care about how other kids in their age see themselves. The changes their bodies get through and their desire to be accepted is the cause of their struggle with self-esteem as they compare themselves with others for example with



celebrities on television and magazines. Except for puberty there are other factors that influence people's self-esteem as for example social media and family. Images of very thin girls and trained men affect their body image. Parents also, judge their children and the way they look, something that lowers their self-esteem. Kids may as well hear negative comments about their appearance from their classmates. Low self-esteem can have severe consequences. It can cause health problems such as eating disorder and mental ones as you get to hate yourself and your body, you become oversensitive, anxious and fearful, you think you can't offer anything and you become obsessed with being perfect. Studies have also shown that suicidal attempts are common to kids who think with a negative way of their body image.

Definition of Key-Terms

Body Image

Body image according to the Oxford University Dictionary is the subjective picture or mental image of one's own body.

Body Confidence

The term body confidence is used to describe the positive or negative picture of an individual's body image, the extent to which their personal value is tied up with their physical appearance and their incorporated sense of body and self.

Self- esteem

This term describes the feeling of respect an individual has for his or her body.

Eating Disorder

Eating disorders are serious psychological conditions linked to abnormal eating behaviors which have a negative impact on life at a physical, but also a mental extent. Typical eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder.

Obesity

The excessive accumulation of body fat characterizes this medical condition. It has also been related to health risks, such as heart and orthopedic problems. This condition belongs to the biological factors (diagram of background information).

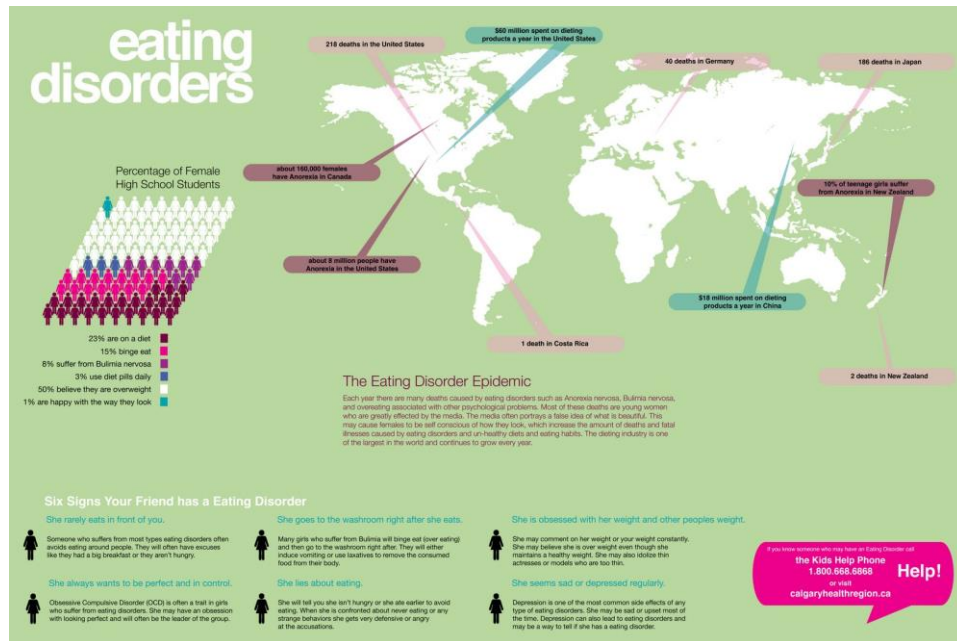
Media

When referring to the term media, we mean the communication channels which provide individuals with news, education, entertainment and data. Included are all broadcasting and narrowcasting media such as magazines, newspapers, television, fax, telephone and the internet.

Social Media

Social Media can be described as cellular phone or internet based applications and tools used in order for individuals to share information with others. Included are blogs, bookmarking sites, popular websites or applications such as Facebook,

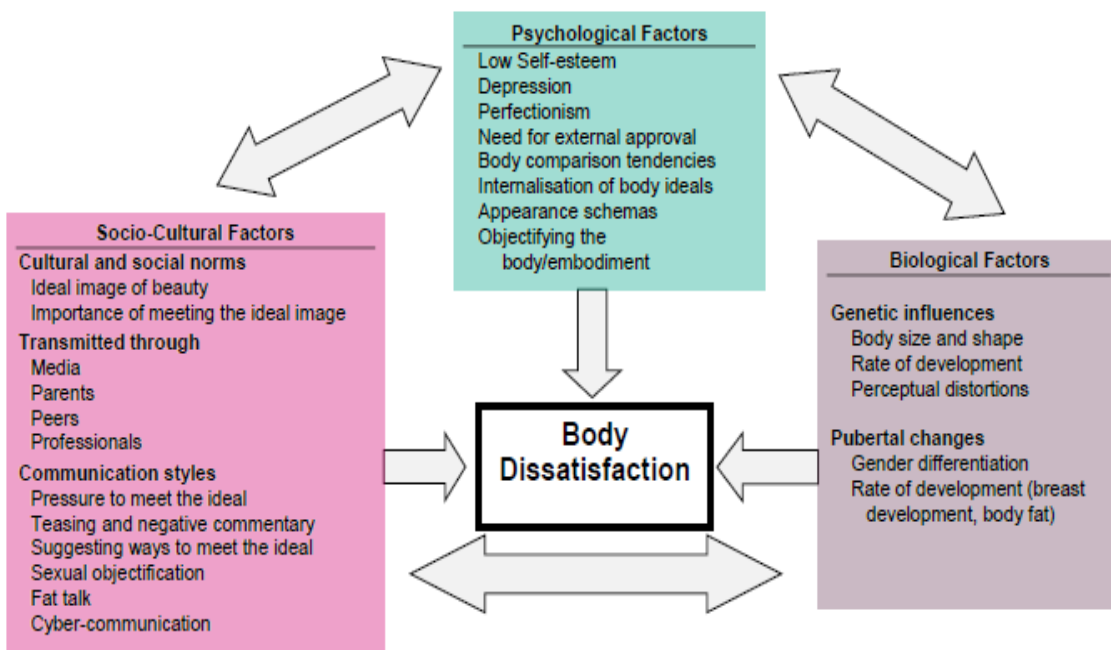
Instagram and Twitter and any aspect which allows interactive activities between its users. It is a subcategory of the larger classification of media.



Background Information

From ancient times humanity felt the urge to create ideals of beauty. As the years went by these adapted to people's needs and demands, having an extremely interesting and different range. Naturally, as all societies have hitherto had, there are beauty standards nowadays as well and no one can argue that there lies a mistake within this fact.

However, what has been drawn to our attention is that these beauty ideals have been narrowly defined and are impossible to avoid or escape from. Therefore, people of all ages and shapes find themselves obsessing over their body image and their flaws. Popular culture promotes this false perception of beauty and thus create low body confidence in various ways. There is a range of psychological, biological, social and cultural factors which influence an individual's image of his or her body. Adamantly the most influential factor is the media and its subcategory, namely social media, which advance pressure to meet the ideal in television, events, advertisements etc. and portray human bodies.



Male and Female- Gender differences

Many carried out surveys have proven that, although males are also highly influenced by beauty standards, they do not develop low body confidence and self-esteem as easily as females do.

90% of adults would like to see a broader range of body shapes shown in advertising and the media (YMCA, ComRes Poll)

72% of girls feel strongly that too much attention is paid to the way female celebrities look

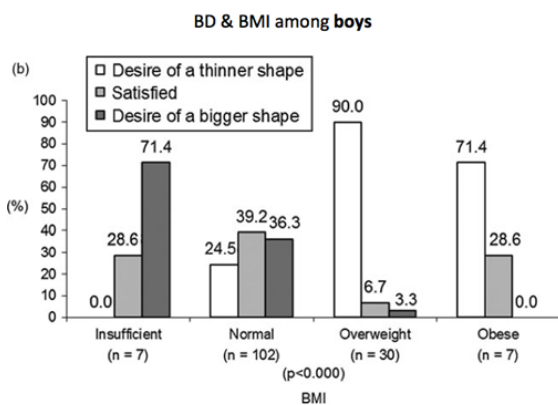
(Girlguiding UK, 2012)

50% of women feel under pressure to look good at all times and 46% of women feel under pressure to lose weight

(MORI, 2010)

Almost one quarter of children aged 10-15 are unhappy about their appearance

(ONS, 2012)



BD among girls

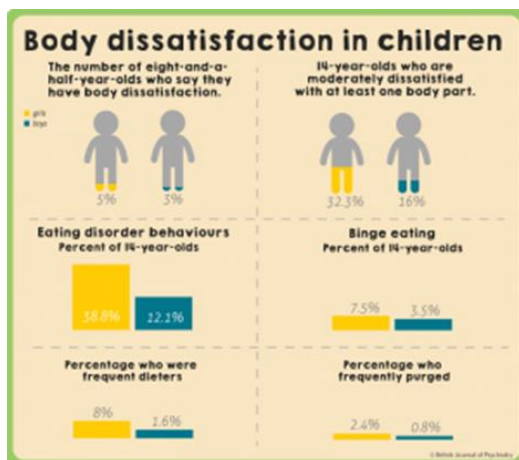
	14 years	18 years	Change with age?
% who want a thinner shape	57.1%	64.8%	↑
% who want a bigger shape	13.4%	4.6%	↓

BD among boys

	14 years	18 years	Change with age?
% who want a thinner shape	44%	38.5%	n.s.
% who want a bigger shape	30.7%	29.1%	n.s.

The beginning

The “body mania” strikes more often at a person’s teenage years, where children start having a clear perception of their milieu. They tend to be more “flexible” as far as forming opinions is concerned and get extremely influenced by our pop culture, especially in matters related to their appearance.



Health impacts

In a world driven by the “diet industry” the obsession with body image is a logical consequence of people’s experiences.

Significantly high percentage of humans have attempted to meet their beauty (body) standards through health damaging(?) manners, such as steroids, or generally dope, plastic surgery and consumption of non-tested supplements.

However there are other impacts not caused by manufactured technical means, but with equally and sometimes more harmful effects. Psychological pressure can establish several eating disorders, which can be proved deadly such as anorexia nervosa.

Many incidents have been brought to the spotlight, thus leading to the creation of body confidence campaigns which encourage people to love their bodies, embrace their flaws and feel confident about them.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

National Association for self esteem

This institution has as goal the personal happiness of every individual in the American society. According to the self-esteem lesson plan which is an approach to improve self-esteem, self-esteem is not about having good grades, or about having a very good job, but how you think of yourself.

I am B.E.A.U.T.I.F.U.L

This organization named from the initials of the words Brave Energetic, Assertive, Unique, Tenacious, Important, Fabulous, Unequaled, Loved, is a non-profit organization which aims to build self-esteem for all women in all ages. Its program has as purpose emotional, social, economic, physical and mental success.

Girls scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

The GSUSA is an organization founded in 1912 and has as member 3.6 million girls and adults all over the world. It wants to achieve healthy development for girls as well as the building of their character, confidence and courage. It also improves self-esteem through the Girl Scout.

La Belle Foundation

La Belle Foundation was found in 1980. It is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to teach self-esteem and –development to public schools. This organization is also known as Self-Esteem Learning Foundation (S.E.L.F). It follows a training based on the La Belle Foundation training and it helps students overcome their problems such as insignificance and unattractiveness.

Japan

Japan is one of the lowest ranked countries in self-esteem. Despite the fact that disordered eating behaviors were related to Western countries it seems that Japanese adolescents are influenced by body image disturbance. Studies have shown that eating disorder rates in Japan have increased during 1980s. Strategies for prevention and decrease are discussed.

United States of America

America's self-esteem problem has as cause the fact that parents, teachers, coaches and etc. have not understood how to deal with self-esteem. As a result they are creating children who have little respect for themselves on which they cannot base their self-esteem. Specifically 53% of girls around 13 living in America are dissatisfied with their bodies and this continuous to grow.

Lowest-ranked nations in self-esteem

Switzerland, Morocco, Slovakia, Fiji, Taiwan, Czech Republic, Bangladesh,

Hong Kong¹

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1680	Anorexia as a medical condition was first diagnosed
1980	Creation of the La Belle Foundation
2001	Survey involving 13.601 students from 9 th -12 th grade shows that 9% of the students have committed suicide and 19% have thought about attempting it, because of their body image.

¹ <http://www.webmd.com/balance/news/20050927/whos-number-1-in-self-esteem>

2006	Anorexic 17 year old girl died three days before Christmas after battling with eating disorder for three years. According to an inquest she was hiding weights to beguile school nurses.
2010	UK Body Confidence Campaign is set up

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events



Although this issue is of utmost importance the United Nations have not drafted any specific document. However, there are various Action Plans and Campaigns.

UK Campaign for Body Confidence

This British Campaign was set up by the government and specifically by Lynne Featherstone MP (Minister for Equalities) in 2010. It now conducts under the leadership of Jo Swinson MP, Minister for Women and Equalities. He campaign promotes, as exactly put in their description:

- Positive and varied models of appearance in the media and other cultural forms
- Individual resilience to low body confidence and media education
- Young people's desire and

confidence in their contribution to society

Included in their work is raising public awareness and educating the youth, conducting surveys about body confidence and hosting events regarding this matter.

BE REAL Campaign on Body Confidence

Be Real is an international movement established by individuals, schools, businesses, public bodies and charities. The movement was created in partnership with *dove* and has various sponsors including Facebook, Bare Minerals and others. YMCA is the leading ambassador of this campaign, directed by Caroline Nokes. Be Real focuses on three sectors. Its aims are Real education, health and diversity.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Since 1980 many organizations have been founded having as goal to boost self-esteem. These organizations try to help people build their character and personality and even help them become successful in many factors of their lives. Of course their work has helped a lot of people but the problem has not been tackled effectively yet.

- La Belle Foundation: One of the projects of this organization is the Santa Barbara Council for Self-Esteem (SBCSE). This event began in January 1986 and during every meeting teachers and community residents have the chance to experience “teaching” of self-esteem.
- I am B.E.A.U.T.I.F.U.L.: IAB workshops are one of the many programs the foundation provides. Participants understand their skills and their capabilities, teens are provided with “tools” to boost their self-esteem and they learn necessary skills in order to make responsible decisions concerning their health.

Possible Solutions

Despite the action of many organizations it seems that the problem has been not addressed effectively. What is really needed in order to improve self-esteem and body image is personal effort. Specifically what everyone has to do is change the way they see their body and how they feel about themselves. However it is difficult to face such a problem alone. Therefore psychological support is necessary. Talking to a parent, a therapist and generally a trusted person can help people see body image from another perspective. As mentioned before there are parents who do not accept their children as they are and they criticize them. That’s why parents should turn to experts who should inform families about the issue and how they can deal with it. Campaigns and advertisements on social media should be organized stressing out the importance of accepting ourselves so that public awareness can be raised. Moreover, many girls, mainly teenagers, suffer from eating disorder. If girls are worried about weight or size the best is to visit a doctor and discuss what they can possibly do. They also can identify which aspects of their appearance can or can’t change. If they have things that they can change then they have to put a goal. Keeping a track on that and in the end achieving their goal is a great way for

improving self-esteem. All these can be achieved by creating a crisis hotline where people can address to if they need help or even by educational programs. As education is a key to solve many problems teachers can touch on the issue, inform the students and discuss such an issue with them by also reminding them that the pictures of women with perfect bodies and successful people on social media are not always true and that they are stereotypes of our society that we shouldn't follow.

Bibliography

"Body Image and Self Esteem." *Body Image and Self Esteem*. N.p., n.d. Web.

Formatiert: Englisch (USA)

Journal Of Research On Adolescence, 15(4), 451–477, and Copyrig.Copyright R 2005, Society for Research on Adolescence *Body Image and Self-Esteem Among Adolescent Girls: Testing the Influence of Sociocultural Factors* (n.d.): n. pag.

Webber, Christine. "How to Overcome Low Self-esteem." *Netdoctor*. N.p., 02 Nov. 2015. Web.

"Self-Esteem and Body Image." N.p., n.d. Web.

"Home." *National Association for Self Esteem*. N.p., n.d. Web.

"History." *SelfEsteem.org*. N.p., n.d. Web.

Girls, Empowering, and And Wome. "SPORT AND GENDER EMPOWERING GIRLS AND WOMEN." *AND WOMENCHAPTER 4* (n.d.): n. pag.*Chapter4_SportandGender*. Web.

Women, Gender Equality and Sport. New York: United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, 2007.*Women and Sport.pdf*. Web.

"Body Image." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web.

"About Be Real – The Be Real Campaign." *About Be Real – The Be Real Campaign*. N.p., n.d. Web.

"Body Confidence on United Nations Agenda." - *News Stories*. N.p., n.d. Web.

Fielder, Claire. "Body Confidence Campaign Progress Report 2013." *The Government's Body Confidence Campaign*. N.p., n.d. Web.

"2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Equality." - *GOV.UK*. N.p., n.d. Web.
