

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUILDING AWARENESS OF BODY

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Abstract: The culture of the modern world assigns a huge importance to the beauty of the external body, treating attractive appearance as a determinant of success and happiness. Physiological changes taking place in the body of a young person correlate with changes in the perception of his body. The article aims to define the role of social media in influencing the perception of the body by adolescents aged 16-19. The survey questionnaire was used as a quantitative research technique created by the authors and the Sylwetek test (DRS, Contour Drawing Rating Scale). 190 teenagers were included in the study. The conclusion to be drawn from the conducted empirical study is that social media are an important factor in creating a vision of one's own body among maturing people. The statistical analysis of the test results showed a statistically significant discrepancy between the ideal self and the real self in the body image among the examined group of young adolescents.

Keywords: body image, self-discrepancy theory, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

The culture of the modern world assigns a huge importance to the beauty of the external body, treating attractive appearance as a determinant of success and happiness. The physiological changes that take place in the body of a young person also lead to changes in the perception of their body. The period of adolescence shapes the belief that physical attractiveness is a factor that regulates norms and social functioning. Changes that take place in the sphere of external appearance have certain consequences. The adolescent learns to see himself, the opposite sex and the role of physical attractiveness in creating social relations (Brzezińska and Piotrowski, 2010; Izydorczyk and Rybicka-Klimczyk, 200). According to him, slim people, directly associated with attractive people, are much more successful, happier, and more accepted by society. People in adolescence compare their appearance with

the patterns presented in social media, which in some cases may lead to distorted body image and, consequently, to self-destructive behavior (Radziwiłłowicz and Lewandowska, 2011).

Social media (also known as social networking sites) refer such online platforms as Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, one of the main assumptions of which is to present your own visual or text content, available to other users of these websites. In 2021, the number of active social media users was 4.2 billion. This figure is the equivalent of 53% the world's population (Digital, 2021). Such a large percentage of people using social networking sites has become a field of psychological, social and health research. An increasing number of authors take up the subject of body image shaped through social media. These dependencies become interrelated due to the fact that people who use them want to match the ideal of beauty, using various, restrictive methods of following them, and on the other side- they add perfectly styled, modeled (and often modified in editorial programs) photos, do not reflect real silhouettes. It's becoming a reason to feel remorse and to have psychological problems, caused by perception of own body as insufficiently synonymous with the canon of beauty, leading to a constant pursuit a subjectively perfect body. On the other hand, the #bodypositive movement, reaching more and more users, indicates the beauty of the human body not through the prism of kilograms (BMI index) or the amount of muscle tissue, but care and respect for your own body as a carrier of all experiences, problems and sublimity life (Rodgers and Melioli, 2016).

The canons of beauty have changed over the centuries. In the sixties of the last century, the image of a slim female figure was created, which was no longer just an attribute of models, but began to be a determinant of beauty for all young girls. In 1989, the canons of the beauty of a slim woman appeared in Europe, and increased the risk of development eating disorders among adolescents and students (Żydek-Bednarczuk, 2020). Particularly noteworthy is the spread of ideal body dimensions. Already from an early age, children are bombarded by information about what a woman is supposed to look like, for example by the image of a Barbie doll. For boys, such a determinant are, among others superhero figures (Haryszne et al., 2019). The virtual body image created in the 21st century in social media is an artificial body, built by information obtained on the Internet. The identity built on this foundation is called by researches spirituality 3.0 (Żydek-Bednarczuk, 2020). So, could an artificial creation affect the self-image by young people? Aiming to achieve a perfect body does not come from nowhere. Young people who move their lives to the virtual world have to face the fact that they will be judged, which is why so many of them idealize their image in order to look and feel better. Presenting yourself through the right choice of clothes, makeup, size of body is a key element in building your identity. In the 21st century, everyone wants to be happy, and often this achieves this by showing off their body, which is no longer part of the subject but becomes an object. The boundaries between the real and the virtual world became unclear (Uchoa et al., 2019). Contemporary culture shapes the image of the body as an determinant of happiness, prosperity and success. The formation of the body image is a process, and adolescence is the stage of its greatest development (Lacey and Birtchnell, 1986).

Body image is a concept having its source in 1950. It was created and started by Paul Schilder. He defined the image of the body as "the image of one's own body which is created in the mind of every human being." The body image is an image, which an individual has about his appearance by acquiring them through his own development and created relationships (Schilder, 1950). Image evaluation is a wide range of human attitudes with regard to the body: from satisfaction, through dissatisfaction, until deformed images. Britek-Matera emphasizes that the approach on own body is a constantly changing process. Therefore, it is not stable, it changes under the influence of the mood and the impact of society (Britek-Matera, 2008). The authors distinguished two most popular theories concerning the formation and experience of the body image.

1) Theory according to William James

James identified two types of "I": the subjective self and the objective self. The objective self, otherwise known as the "body self", is divided into the following aspects:
 -Physical self - body, family, material goods, i.e. clothes, home
 -Social self - related to social experiences. It depends on the performed in society
 - Spiritual self - shows what is happening in consciousness

The subjective self is the awareness of body experience through external sensation and emotions (Mirucka, 2005).

2) Tory Higgins' I discrepancy theory.

The theory assumes the existence of entering into relations three "I" . We distinguish "real me" - who I am at this moment; "I perfect" - who I would like to be; "I ought to" - who I should be. The discrepancy between these states can lead to difficult emotions. Particularly noteworthy is the discrepancy between the "ideal self" and the "real self", it is a source of experiencing sadness and personal dissatisfaction with oneself. Man aims at minimize difficult emotions through positive and negative actions (Britek-Matera, 2008; Porycka, 2016). The elements that make up the image of the body can be divided into three aspects - cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Table 1)

Table 1
 Elements that make up the image of the body

Elements that make up the image of the body		
Cognitive aspect	Emotional aspect	Behavioral aspect
Thoughts about the body • Theories existing in the modern world about the body • Facts and myths about the body • Body size assessment	Feelings related to body weight • Feelings about body size • Level of satisfaction with the body	Body actions: -Physical activity - Eating habits - Weight loss trials -Beauty treatments

Source: Porycka, 2016; Kobierecka, 2016; Rybicka-Klimzuk and Brytek-Matera 2008

2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The article aims to define the role of social media influencing the perception of the body by young adolescents aged 16-19. The research tool used in the work was a questionnaire created by the author for the purposes of the work. The sample of respondents was selected using a non-probable technique, i.e. the snowball method.

The empirical study was conducted in January and February 2020 in the Śląskie Voivodeship.

Table 2
Characteristics of the studied population

Feature of the population	Group	Participating respondents	
		number	percent
In total	-	190	100%
Sex	woman	99	52%
	man	91	48%
Age	16 years	23	12%
	17 years	37	20%
	18 years	63	33%
	19 years	67	35%
Domicile	A city with up to 20,000 inhabitants	114	60%
	A city with more than 20,000 inhabitants	42	22%
	Village	34	18%
Type of secondary school	Secondary school	129	68%
	Technical school	61	32%
BMI value	average	22.3 kg/m ²	-
	highest	34.8 kg/m ²	-
	lowest	15.6 kg/m ²	-
	underweight	20	10.53%
	correct weight	132	69.47%
	overweight	28	14.74%
	obesity	10	5.26%

Source: own study

In terms of their nutritional status, the vast majority of the surveyed respondents complied with the standard recommended by WHO (69.5%). Only 10.5% of the respondents were characterized by too low body weight, and 20% were overweight or obese.

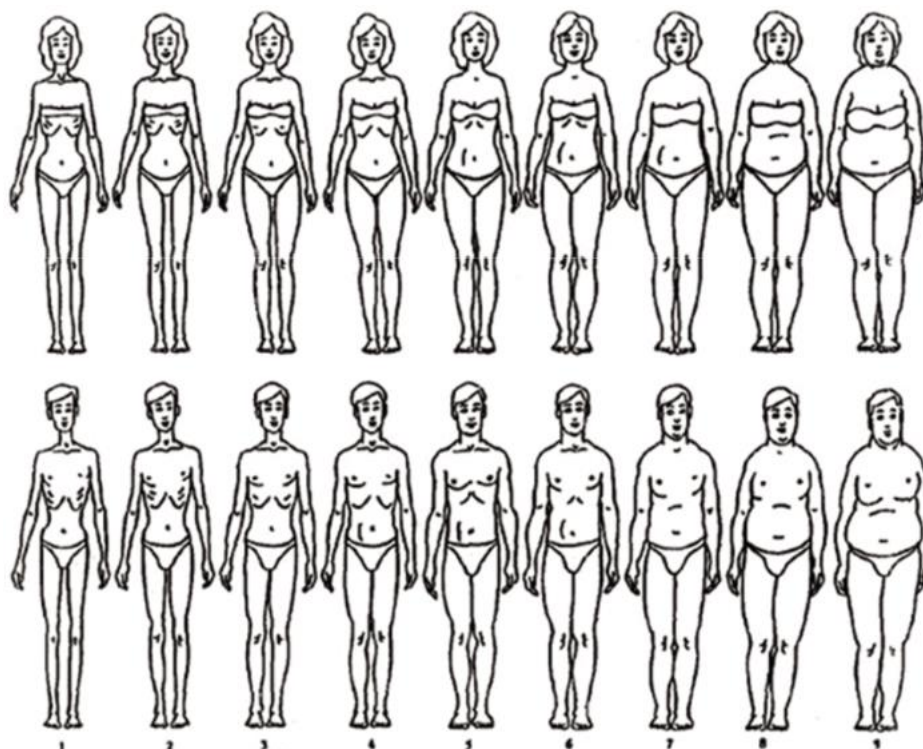


Fig. 1. Silhouette test by Thompson and Gray

Source: Boutelle et al., 2014

Table 3

Interpretation of the body shape test according to Thompson and Gray based on BMI (41); assessment of the ideal and actual female figure (n = 99) and male figure (n = 91); assessment of the ideal male figure according to women (n = 99) and the ideal female figure according to men (n = 91)

Silhouette number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
BMI	16	17.9	18.9	19.7	21	23.8	26.5	32.5	>33	
Interpretation BMI	Underweight		Correct weight			Overweight		Obesity		
Perfect and real figure according to women										
		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Type 7	Type 8	Type 9
Actual silhouette	N	0	1	9	5	10	12	27	25	11
Perfect silhouette	N	0	17	31	30	16	5	0	0	0
Perfect and real silhouette according to men										
		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Type 7	Type 8	Type 9
Actual silhouette	N	0	5	12	26	28	15	2	3	0
Perfect silhouette	N	0	0	5	12	59	14	1	0	0
The perfect male figure according to women										

		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Type 7	Type 8	Type 9
Perfect silhouette	N	0	9	19	26	33	2	2	0	0
The perfect female figure according to men										
		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Type 7	Type 8	Type 9
Perfect silhouette	N	0	0	3	16	65	12	3	0	0

Source: own study

Women subjectively chose a figure that reflected their body. Among women, the most common choice was figure 7 (determining the type of overweight ($n = 27$) and 8 (figure of an obese woman $n = 24$) (Figure 1). The vast majority of men chose the type of figure No. 5 ($n = 28$) and 4 ($n = 26$), characterized by BMI considered to be the correct weight (Table 1). The figure No. 9 considered the highest obesity was marked by 11 female respondents, and at the same time none of the male respondents. Gender is the determining factor of the indicated dependence. No respondent identified himself with the silhouette marked with number 1 (a silhouette showing a large underweight). In the next part, the respondents subjectively determined which type of figure reflects the ideal appearance of a woman / man. Among men, the highest percentage ($n = 33$) were those who considered the ideal female body as a reflection of figure 5 (normal body type according to the BMI index (Table 1). In the group of women, the most frequently selected was type 3 and 4. The overwhelming majority of respondents (women $n = 65$; men $n = 59$) defined the ideal male figure reflecting the figure No. 5. During adolescence, young people face not only the subjective opinion on their own body, but also are exposed to the stimuli and canons of beauty that are set by their friends' community and social media. Respondents admit that they compare themselves with photos posted on social media. This tendency applies to both groups: women and men. The percentage is 80% and 78%, respectively, which is the overwhelming majority of respondents. Social media produces a space for creating your own image. It is often unreal, subjected to editorial techniques and preceded by script preparation. The respondents also indicated that they would like to look like their mentors known from social media. The group of 75% man and up to 95% woman indicated that it is a way for them to change their appearance .

3. DISCUSSION

A slim figure promoted by society becomes a model of beauty for young people which are interesting in striving. This often leads to a disturbed assessment of body image. The presented study showed that the young women participating in the study had an inadequate body image. Their BMI, calculated according to the WHO reference scale, was within the normal range, and the women nevertheless described their body dimensions as larger (characteristic of overweight and obese women). The vast majority of adolescents showed a disturbed relationship between "real self" and "perfect self". A similar observation was reported by Głogowska and Kasprzyk, whose studies on a group of 13-15 year-old girls proved that girls have a problem with

determining body dimensions and wanted to be much thinner than they really are (Głogowska and Kasprzyk, 2016). Interestingly, this tendency increases especially in the group of slim girls with normal BMI (Głębocka, 2009; Wojtyła-Buciora, Klimberg and Wojtyła, 2018). In the empirical research on body image, Głogowska and Milde emphasized that during adolescence, girls are not satisfied with their body, because it changes diametrically in relation to childhood (Głogowska et al., 2011). During puberty develops tertiary sex characteristics and a characteristic figure with a typical distribution and amount of adipose tissue develops in both sexes - girls' breasts grow, hips round, their body weight increases - these changes are not always a positive aspect for all. Teenagers would like to stay slim above all. Developing the topic, it may seem surprising to study the relationship between body weight, body image perception and weight loss attempts among young African American, Hispanic and white girls. According to them, the perception of body image and the motivation to undertake weight loss diets differs according the ethnic groups. White and Hispanic girls had a more negative body image than young African American girls (Eppersen et al., 2014). Interestingly, a few years later, Buckingham-Howes S et al (Buckingham-Howes et al 2018) confirmed that larger body size is more acceptable among African-American girls, however, increased body dissatisfaction is also associated with higher BMI in them, and it is growing the percentage of girls dissatisfied with their appearance. Research among Polish girls, as well as numerous scientific reports in other ethnic groups lead to the conclusion that the BMI index correlates with the body image, the lower index - the higher the body image assessment. It is also worth noting that conducting research on the body image of adolescents points out the serious problem that modern teenagers. The body is a determinant of happiness for them, so they push on to make it happy perfect.

In recent years, the problem of eating disorders among boys is noted increasing more and more often. So far, research has focused on girls and their disturbed body image. The analysis of own research showed that young men, compared to respondents of the opposite sex, less often are dissatisfied with their body. There were no significant disproportions between the perception of the body in reality and the ideal image they would like to be. Completely different results were presented by Jessica H. Baker et al., According to which as many as 80% of Swedish boys in the study group were not satisfied with their body. Interestingly, she showed that there are very significant differences in dissatisfaction among the boys and girls surveyed. Female adolescents usually want to be leaner and have a lower body weight, while male adolescents are not satisfied when their body weight is low and aim to increase muscle mass and decrease body fat (Baker et al. 2019). The interest in the subject of the risk of eating disorders in men is constantly growing. (Głębocka, 2009; Riccobono, 2020; Badenes-Ribera et al., 2019) showed, inter alia, that attempts of gaining weight during adolescence are increasing triple. However, the most disturbing fact is that the majority of men who wish to gain weight and muscle mass are within the normal BMI range. Different results of the empirical study may result from different factors taken into account in the study (own research focused on the general assessment of dissatisfaction with the body, and not on specific aspects such as, for example, muscle mass). "Has success size XS?" The answer to the question should be sought in the consumer culture, which uses social media to provide the message: being

beautiful will give you success, wealth and satisfaction. Research confirms that the pressure of the media more strongly feel by girls than boys (Uchoa, 2019; Ludwisiak, 2016; Barcaccia et al., 2018; Izydorczyk and Sitnik-Warchulska, 2018). Scientists conducting research in this field are focused on the mechanisms why young people are so prone to the influence of media. Clark, Tiggeman points out that not only exposure to ideal figures in the mass media lead to disturbances in the body image in adolescents, but a key role play social comparisons (Clark and Tiggemann, 2008). The same relationship was observed in the own research. Female adolescence after seeing the photos of the models, wanted to be slimmer, while male adolescents, seeing muscular men, wanted to increase their muscle mass. In the course of considerations, the author also emphasized that boys studying magazines with muscular men, felt extremely bad when they compared their body with a picture in a newspaper. This once again emphasizes that the most important thing is to compare yourself to the perfect figure, and not just to watch the perfect figure on the Internet (Botta, 2003).

The body in the 21st century has become an artificial created and subjected to norms. It is an element building a new identity, a new "me" based on likes, comments and sharing from the virtual world. Thus, the boundaries between what is real and what is virtual became unclear (Żydek-Bednarczuk, 2020). The first patterns of a perfect female and male figure come from childhood - the child experiences it playing toys and watching fairy tales. Boys' desire to increase muscle mass may have a strong relationship with the childhood image of popular muscular figures from fairy tales, computer games. In 1999. Harrison Pope and colleagues measured the circumference of popular figurines, incl. Batman. Iron Man, etc., which they then compared with the appearance of a real man. Surprisingly, the level of muscle growth of the figures has significantly increased over the last 20 years, but also exceeded the level of muscularity of bodybuilders (Pope et al., 1999). For girls, a Barbie doll can be a determinant of femininity. Interestingly, Rogers investigated that comparing proportions of a Barbie doll with the real woman, that she at a height of 170 cm should weight only 23.5 kg. and her breast ought to weight about 17 kg, which is ridiculous (Rogers, 2003). In most fairy tales, characters called villains are presented as ugly, neglected, obese or with distorted body parts, by contrast, good characters are beautiful, delicate, well-groomed and well-dressed. There is one conclusion for a child: beauty is good, and evil is ugly.

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