BODY COMPOSITION AND BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION
IN PORTUGUESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

Pereira E, Lacerda F, Valador N, Ferro-Lebres V
Superior Health School, Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal
E-mail address: lmv_deletolca@hotmail.com

Introduction

Body image is the perception each one have, imagines or senses about his/her own body (Skrzypek et al., 2001).
Some population groups, particularly young women, are victims of social pressure imposed by an extreme slimness esthetic model (Stice et al., 2003).

Methods

- 102 college women students from the Bragança Polytechnic Institute, from different areas of knowledge (Education, Technology and Management, Agriculture, Health).
- The directly estimated anthropometric measurement and the derived indexes were compared with reference values.
- The Body Image Perception and Body Image Dissatisfaction were estimated using the Somatomorphic Matrix (SM) and Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ34). For data analysis it was used a t-test and Pearson correlation, by means of SPSS Vs15.0.

Results

There were No Significant Differences found between:
- FFMI Perception and Dissatisfaction and BF Perception according to real BMI
- BMI Perception, BF Perception and Dissatisfaction according to Body Shape Concern
- Areas of Knowledge

Table 1 - Differences in BF Dissatisfaction according to Real BMI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>BMI Classification</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BF Disatisfaction</td>
<td>Underweight/Normalweight</td>
<td>-6.60 ± 2.38 ***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overweight/Obesity</td>
<td>-12.47 ± 3.06 ***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - FFMI Dissatisfaction according to Body Shape Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>BSQ34 Classification</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FFMI Disatisfaction</td>
<td>Not worried</td>
<td>4.65 ± 1.56 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately worried</td>
<td>3.15 ± 1.49 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - BMI Dissatisfaction according to Body Shape Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>BSQ34 Classification</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI Disatisfaction</td>
<td>Not worried</td>
<td>-1.80 ± 0.25 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately worried</td>
<td>-3.50 ± 0.51 ***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremely worried</td>
<td>-1.79 ± 0.19 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- BM: body mass index
- FFMI: fat free mass index
- Actual image: which lender represents to body image.
- Ideal image: which represents to the ideal body.
- Average image: which represents to the average kind of body on women with her age.
- Attractive image: which represents to the most desired female body.

Conclusion

- The women either with low weight or with overweight/obesity, badly perceived their BMI. Those with low weight believed that they had more weight and the others less than what they had in fact, respectively.
- No significant differences were found between areas of Knowledge. Possibly, there are other factors with a greater influence than Knowledge.
- More than evaluate body image perception, this study, emphasize the importance of delineating strategies that permit health professionals to empower the youth to avoid a wrong individual body image perception induced by the excessive mass media messages.
- Additional research is needed to understand the reasons why women feel displeased with their body image.
- It would be interesting to investigate body image perception and dissatisfaction in other cultures and religions so it could be compared.

References


Acknowledgments: Authors express their gratitude to Adail Meira (Translator) and Servicos de Acção Social - IPB for the collaboration.