

BODY COMPOSITION AND BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION IN PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH COLLEGE STUDENTS



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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).

Objectives

- To assess the body image perception and to compare the results with the true measurements in a group of college students.
- To analyse the differences between normalweight and overweight/obese.

Methods

- 160 females volunteer recruited from the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Portugal) and from the Basque Country University (Spain). All participants gave their informed consent.
- The directly estimated anthropometric measurement and the derived indexes were compared with reference values.
- The assessment of body image perception was made using a somatomorphic software (Pope *et al.* 2000). The difference between the perceived measurements and the ideals were used as measure of body dissatisfaction.
- Data were analyzed using *t test* and Pearson correlations, SPSS vs. 15.0.

Results

- The mean (SD) age of the participants was 21.33 (1.94) years (18.18 - 28.25).

Figure 1. Current and Perceived Measurements of BF (%)

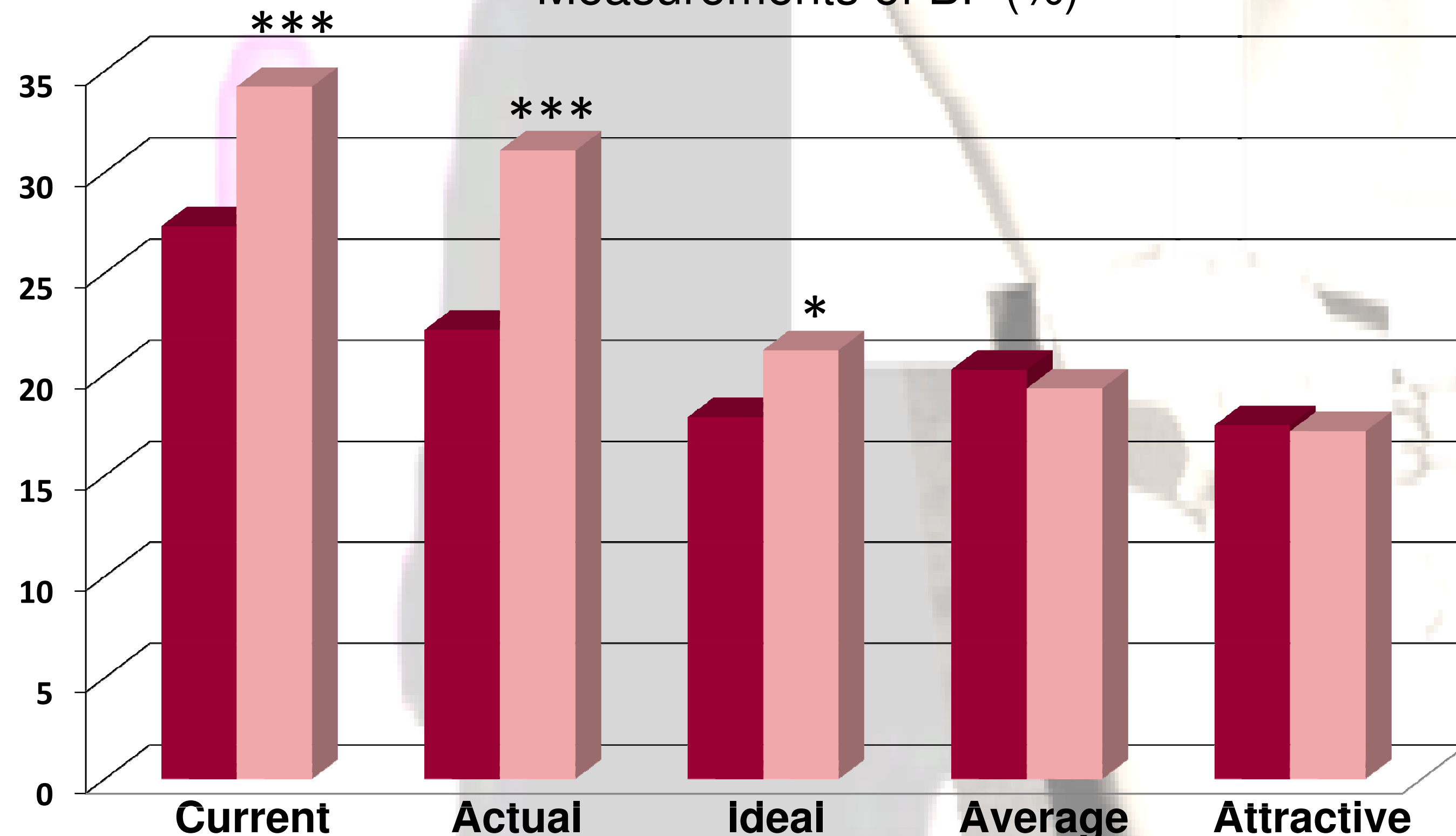
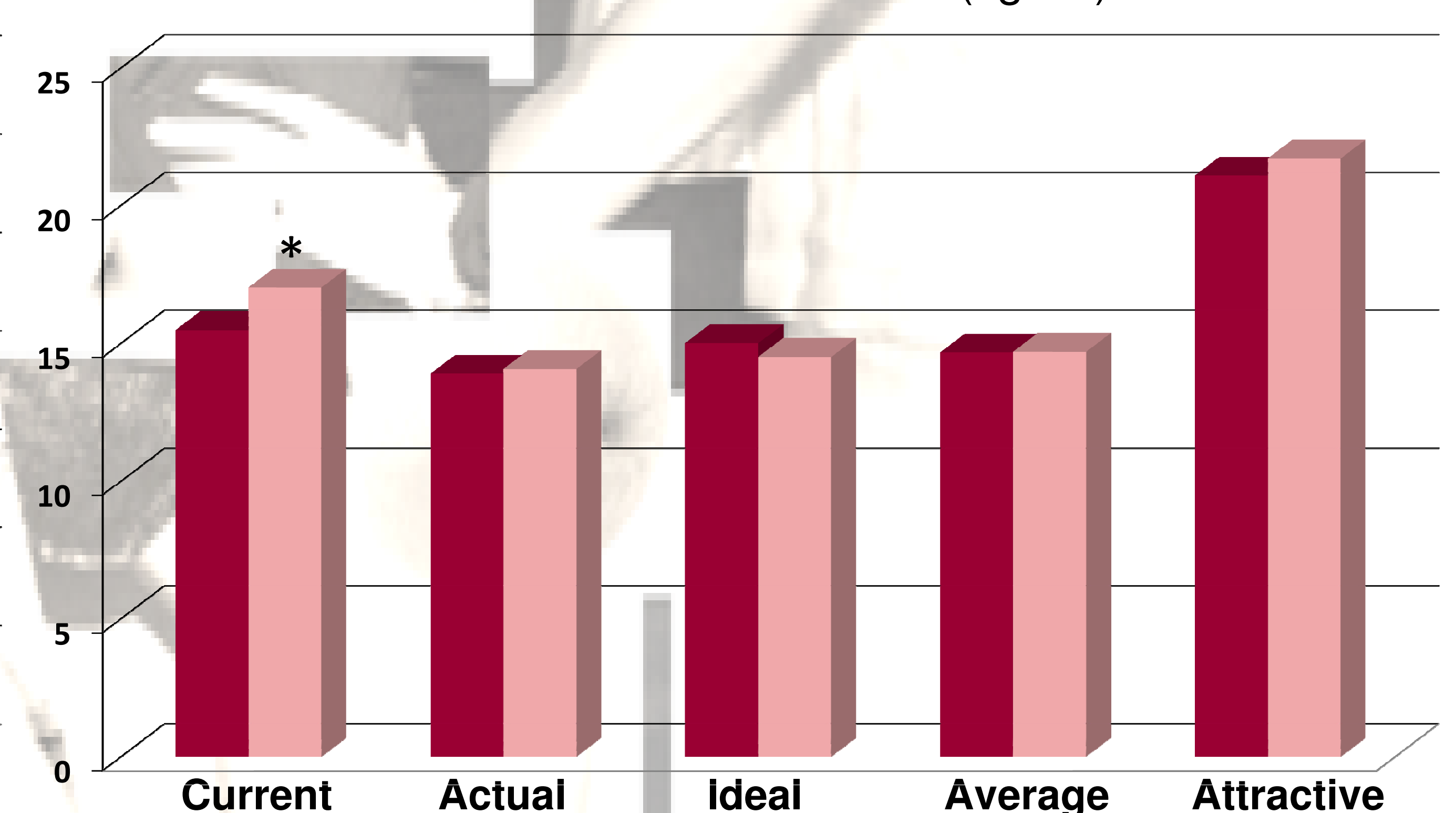


Figure 2. Current and Perceived Measurements of FFMI (kg/m²)



- Correlation coefficients between BMI and FFMI dissatisfaction was 0.172 ($P < 0.05$) and between BMI and BF dissatisfaction was 0.385 ($P < 0.001$).

LEGEND:

BF, body fat; **FFMI**, fat-free mass index; **Actual image**, which better represents her body; **Ideal image**, which represents the desired ideal body; **Average image**, which represents the average kind of body on women with her age; **Attractive image**, which represents the man's most desired female body; **BMI**, body mass index.

* $P < 0,05$; *** $P < 0,001$

■ Normalweight
■ Overweight/ Obese

Conclusions

- The level of body dissatisfaction for the body fat was higher in overweight/obese than in normalweight. This result can be justified for the present canons of beauty and for the overvaluation of the thinness.
- 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. Although would be interesting to investigate body image perception and dissatisfaction in other cultures and religions so it could be compared.

References

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