

PERCEPTION OF BODY-ESTEEM AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS:
A SURVEY

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Perception of Body-Esteem among Adolescents and Adults: A survey” prepared and submitted by Jennifer Pillay Yau in particle fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Psychology is hereby accepted.

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ABSTRACT

Low body-esteem or body dissatisfaction has been found to be correlated to depression and eating disorder and this problem is affecting individuals of different groups. This research investigates the age group difference, gender difference, and geographical location difference in body-esteem among adolescent and adults. This study is a survey research in which the participants ($N = 80$) were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling from Melaka and Manjung. The Body-Esteem Scale (BES) by Franzoi and Shields (1991) was used as the instrument to measure body-esteem in this study. The results showed that adolescents were more satisfied than adults on several items, especially adolescent females; there was a difference in body-esteem between males and females; and participants from urban and suburban population was more satisfied than the other on different items and dimensions. Specific intervention programs could be developed for different groups through this finding.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic, or personal.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BES	Body-esteem Scale
LGD	Local Government Department, Malaysia
PA	physical attractiveness
PC	physical condition
SA	sexual attractiveness
SES	socioeconomic status
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UBS	upper body strength
UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
WC	weight concern

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of study

Many studies centering on the topic of body-esteem or body image have been conducted over the decade (eg., Franzoi, 2001; Nowak, 1998; Rodgers, Salès, & Chabrol, 2009; Smolak, 2004). Body-esteem or body image refers to how an individual perceive, think, and feel about his or her own body (Grogan, 2008). In regards of body-esteem, researchers have studied on the differences in age groups (eg., O'Dea & Caputi, 2001; Smolak, 2004), gender (eg., L.R. Jones, Fries, & Danish, 2005; Lokken, Ferraro, Kirchner, & Bowling, 2003; McKinley, 1998; O'Dea & Caputi, 2001), culture (eg., Akiba, 1998; Jung, Forbes, & Chan, 2010), ethnic (eg., L.R. Jones et al., 2005; Koff & Benavage, 1998), and socioeconomic status (SES) (eg., O'Dea & Caputi, 2001). Some of the differences found show that different nominal groups do show different level of body-esteem.

Studies have also been conducted on the correlation between body-esteem and several other variables such as self-esteem (eg., C. Davis & Katzman, 1997; Lau, Cheung, & Ransdell, 2008; Tiggemann, 2005), exercise (eg., Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005a), eating disorder (eg., Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2009), and depression (eg., C. Davis & Katzman, 1997). These correlations have raised concerns about the issue of perceived body-esteem, which may significantly distress the individuals who are heavily influenced by the perception of their body-esteem.

Some researches have also investigated on the causes of low body-esteem, or body dissatisfaction, hypothesizing causal relationships with the media (eg., Dens, De Pelsmacker, & Janssens, 2009; Jarry & Kossert, 2007; Rodgers et al., 2009) and social comparison (eg., Bailey

& Ricciardelli, 2009). Finding the root of body dissatisfaction can help to provide insights on the prevention of eating disorders, low self-esteem, and also depression.

Statement of problem

In this new era, the ideal body image which is often portrayed in the media is affecting almost everybody, males and females, children to adults, and people from different cultures and backgrounds. Having a low body-esteem or body dissatisfaction is unhealthy, often correlated to depression, eating disorders, and low self-esteem. It is important that measures are taken to prevent and treat body dissatisfaction as negligence of this issue will negatively impact both individuals and the society. Studying age group difference, gender difference, and difference between geographical locations can provide information on targeting certain groups in the intervention of body dissatisfaction.

Significance of study

Studies on body-esteem of adolescents and children have been well investigated (eg., Mirza, D. Davis, & Yanovski, 2005; O'Dea & Caputi, 2001; Smolak, 2004; Tiggemann, 2005), however there have been few researches on the body-esteem of adults (eg., Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2009; Rodgers et al., 2009). Therefore, the current study served to give additional information on the perception of body-esteem of adults. More importantly, the difference in the perception of body-esteem between adolescents and adults has not been extensively studied, citing only literatures which reviewed on the body-esteem of adolescents and adults separately (eg., McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004). Thus, this study provided quantitative data on the difference in these two age groups. It is important to investigate on difference in these two age groups as the result could provide insights for further discussions and researches on how development could change perceptions on body-esteem.

There have been more studies on gender differences for this topic (eg., C. Davis & Katzman, 1997; L.R. Jones et al., 2007; Lokken et al., 2003), mostly in specific geographical areas. The current study also focused on specific geographical areas to investigate on this gender difference. There are a number of studies which has studied on the gender difference in body-esteem in the region of Asia (eg., C. Davis & Katzman, 1997; Luo, Parish & Laumann, 2005). Therefore, this study is significant as it provides generalized statistical information on gender difference in body-esteem in Malaysia. Furthermore, older studies on body-esteem focuses on the female population (eg., Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2009; McLaren & Kuh, 2004; Rodgers et al., 2009), as researches have found females to score higher on body dissatisfaction (L.R. Jones et al., 2007; Lokken et al., 2003). However, for the past decade, more studies on male's body-esteem have been conducted (eg., Bardone-Cone, Cass & Ford, 2008; Jung et al., 2010) as researches have found that males are growingly concerned about having a more muscular body (L.R. Jones et al., 2007; Jung et al., 2010). Thus, with the different underlying causes of body dissatisfaction for both genders, it has become increasingly important to study the gender difference in body-esteem.

Studies on body-esteem have been conducted in urban areas (eg., Abrams & Stormer, 2002; Luo et al., 2005) and in rural areas (eg., Baturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2000; L.R. Jones et al., 2007). However, there have not been many researches which use the suburban population as their target group. Thus, this study is important in providing insights on body-esteem among the suburban population. Besides that, the difference in body-esteem between urban and suburban participants has not been given much attention. Therefore, this study serves the significance of providing information on the difference between these two areas.

Purpose of study

The purpose of the current study was to investigate on the differences in the perception of body-esteem among several nominal groups – age group, gender, and geographical location. Differences were investigated between adolescents and adults, males and females, and urban population and suburb population. Investigating these differences could provide insight on designing a better prevention or intervention program for body dissatisfaction besides providing additional data on body-esteem among adolescents and adults in Malaysia.

Research questions and research hypotheses

(1)

Research question: Is there a difference in the perception of body-esteem between adolescents and adults?

Research hypothesis: There is a difference in the perception of body-esteem between adolescents and adults.

(2)

Research question: Is there a gender difference in the perception of body-esteem?

Research hypothesis: There is a gender difference in the perception of body-esteem.

(3)

Research question: Is there a difference in the perception of body-esteem between residents from the urban and suburb area?

Research hypothesis: There is a difference in the perception of body-esteem between residents from the urban and suburb areas.

Operational definitions

Body-esteem. As mentioned earlier, body-esteem, or as some refer to as body image, is an individual perception, thoughts, and feelings about his or her own body (Grogan, 2008). This includes psychological notions such as how one perceives and acts towards one's body, and experience of personification (Grogan, 2008). Moe (1999) described body-esteem as one's perception about the appearance of his or her own body. Negative body-esteem causes a person to be unable to feel good about his or her own body (Moe, 1999). The current study refers to body-esteem as how one feels about parts of his or her own body.

Adolescent. Adolescence is defined as the stage of development occurring between puberty and adulthood (Cardwell, 2003). According to Santrock (2009), this is the period which is entered at approximately 10-12 years old and ends at 18-21 years old. There are various views about this period of development by different psychologists. For example, Sigmund Freud said that following puberty, one's instinct increases, causing emotional imbalance. He also said this is a period where adolescents disengage from their family before entering adulthood (Cardwell, 2003). On the other hand, Erik Erikson explained the period of adolescence through the Identity versus Identity Confusion stage in his psychosocial stages. He explained that during this stage, adolescent tries to find out who they are and their places in the society, which may lead to the formation of personal identity or identity confusion (Berk, 2009).

Adult. Adulthood is often broken into three stages which are early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood (Santrock, 2009). The current study's adult refers to those in the period of early adulthood. This stage of development begins in the early 20s and last through 30s (Santrock, 2009). In Erikson's psychosocial stages, this is the sixth stage of development which

is intimacy versus isolation. Here, individuals start forming intimate relationship which includes friendship and romantic relationship which leads to either intimacy or isolation (Santrock, 2009).

Urban. According to Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2009), urban areas is defined as gazetted areas with their neighboring built-up areas which have a combined population of 10,000 inhabitants or more, or specific developmental areas which have at least 10,000 inhabitants and at least 60% aged 15 years and above involved in non-agricultural activities. Built-up areas refer to areas next to gazetted areas and have at least 60% of its population whom are at least 15 years old involved in non-agricultural activities. Specific developmental areas refer to areas which can be identified and separated from gazetted areas and built-up areas by 5km or more and have a population of at least 10,000 or more with 60% of the inhabitants whom are at least 15 years old involved in non-agricultural activities (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2009). The current study uses the criteria status of city council by the Local Government Department, Malaysia [LGD] (2010) to determine urban areas.

Suburb. Suburb, on the other hand, refers to an area which is distanced from the centre of a city (Longman, 2003). Merriam-Webster (2010) defined suburb as a faraway area from the city or town. In the current study, the criteria status of municipal by LGD (2010) is used to determine suburb areas. According to LGD (2010), this area has at least a population of 150,000 and the inhabitants are involved in industrial activity, business, and tourism which will contribute to the expansion of the area.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various researches have been conducted and from these studies researchers and psychologists have proposed theories centered on the topic of difference in body-esteem among different groups, some in which was proven and some which still needs to be investigated further. In this literature review, various theories and factors were presented based on previous findings by other researchers. Besides that, early and recent researches which have focused on the topic of age group, gender, and geographical location differences in body-esteem were reviewed.

Theoretical framework

Sociocultural influences. Sociocultural influences are one of the major factors which researchers have cited to be the cause of differing perceptions in body-esteem among population groups. Ricciardelli and McCabe (2001) found sociocultural influences as a strong predictor of body dissatisfaction in both adolescent boys and girls. Furthermore, Smolak and Stein (2006) found in their study that sociocultural factors, particularly the media is a contributor of striving for muscularity in adolescent males. Significant others were also found to play an important role in influencing body change behavior and body image perception in adolescents (Vincent & McCabe, 2000).

As for gender difference, McCabe and Ricciardelli (2005) explained that girls may become more aware of the sociocultural ideal standard of beauty, and as they progress through adolescence, they might strive to achieve that ideal. Whereas for boys, as they reach puberty, their bodies are more likely to conform to the sociocultural ideal, making it less important for them pay attention to their bodies (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2005).

Through the sociocultural theory, Smolak (2004) explained that boys are not expected to meet the adult male ideal muscular body, but girls are expected to meet the adult female ideal thin body which indicates that the pressure on girls to achieve the ideal body begins earlier than for boys. It was also found that men were less pressured to change their appearance in order to conform to ideal appearances when compared to women (Bardone-Cone et al., 2008). However, Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) said that neither gender could escape from the sociocultural's pressure to attain the idealized body. Specific factors in the sociocultural domain such as the media, parents and peers are further explained.

Media. The media is one of the sociocultural influences which have been well investigated, some on the effects on body-esteem and some on the causal relationship. In an earlier study, Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kilmartin, Forssmann-Falck and Kliewer (1998) found a surprising result that adolescents in their study did not cite media as an influence for body perception. Polce-Lynch et al. (1998) explained that adolescents may be unaware of the messages which are conveyed by the media to them and therefore this awareness remains unconscious in adolescents. However, in their later study, media was found to be a source of pressure for adolescents to strive for the ideal masculine or feminine appearance (Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kliewer, & Kilmartin, 2001). A recent study by Dinç and Alisinanoğlu (2010) on the other hand found that media is an important source of appearance comparison for adolescents.

On gender difference, several other studies further found that adolescent girls are more influenced by the media to change their body compared to adolescent boys (D.C. Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Y. Lee, 2004; Ricciardelli and McCabe, 2001). Strelan and Hargreaves (2005a) said that the media delivers the message to the population in general, and specifically to women, that a woman's value is measured through her appearance and not through the person she is.

Supporting this, McLaren and Kuh (2004) said that the prevalent weight dissatisfaction among women is usually blamed on thin women images that are ever present in the media.

The media portray images extremely thin women as normal and achievable by all women, and they deliver the strong message that thinness is essential for one to be regarded as physically beautiful (McLaren & Kuh, 2004; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005a). The desirable body type portrayed for women is more limited than for men on television and fat women are the single group most likely to be ridiculed (Smolak, 2004).

Parents. As for influences from parents, Ricciardelli and McCabe (2001) found that boys and girls receive strongest pressure from their mother to lose weight. On the other hand, Vincent and McCabe (2000) found in their study that both parents play fundamental role in influencing weight-loss behavior in adolescent girls whereas only fathers play a role in influencing adolescent boys' weight gain behavior. An older study by Levinson, Powell, and Steelman (1986) cited parental evaluation of adolescent's weight to be highly correlated with adolescent's body image, though the causal relationship is debatable.

Several studies also mentioned that females are often pressured by mothers to be thinner and mothers are always encouraging their daughters to lose weight (Benedikt, Wertheim & Love, 1998; Vincent & McCabe, 2000). On the other hand, boys who perceived their fathers to pressure them to lose weight reported body dissatisfaction; however girls do not receive pressure from fathers (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001). However, in a study by Kelly, Wall, Eisenberg, Story, and Neumark-Sztainer (2005), adolescent girls who scored high body-esteem had parents who supports a healthy diet and exercise and de-emphasize the act of dieting to lose weight.

Bearman, Presnell, Martinez and Stice (2006) found in their study that lack of social support from parents and peers serves as a predictor of body dissatisfaction for adolescents as

they might be vulnerable to conform to body ideals, but with support they would receive protection from feelings of body dissatisfaction. Aubrey (2006) also found vulnerability to media influence in those who lack social support. A recent study by Crespo, Kielpikowski, Jose, and Pryor (2010) found that higher connectedness with family predicts higher body satisfaction in adolescent girls but not boys, explaining that girls receive more sociocultural pressure and that support from family gives girls a secure environment where they can change their body image perceptions in a good way.

Peers. Besides that, peers were also found to be a factor in body-esteem, especially among adolescents. D.C. Jones and Crawford (2006) reported that adolescents received great influence from their peers regarding their appearance. In addition, Ricciardelli and McCabe (2001) found that influence from same-gender friends serve as a predictor of body modification for adolescents. Furthermore, D.C. Jones et al. (2004) found in their study that interaction with peers, either normal appearance related conversation or peer criticism on appearance is significantly related to the internalization of body perception among adolescents.

Young adults in colleges and universities are also influenced by their peers in how they perceive their body. Bardone-Cole et al. (2008) argued that in tertiary setting where males spend a lot of time together with other men, they are more likely to be influenced by their peers in their perception towards their body. This explanation can also be applied to women.

Social comparison theory. A theory that could be applied to understand body-esteem is the social comparison theory. According to Festinger (1954), human tend to evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparing with others' opinions or abilities. D.C. Jones (2001) found in a study that adolescents often use their peers and media models as targets for body appearance

comparison. D.C. Jones (2001) mentioned that those who engage in more social comparison reported higher level of body dissatisfaction.

This theory could also explain the gender difference in body-esteem which has been frequently reported, in which most found that women engage in more social comparison compared to men. Franzoi and Klaiber (2007) found that women have higher likeliness to use attractive models to compare their bodies compared to men. D.C. Jones (2001) found in a study on adolescents that girls engage in social comparison in attractiveness more than boys.

Self-objectification theory. Another major theory that could be applied in difference in body-esteem between adolescents and adults is the self-objectification theory. This theory uses several different names such as objectification theory, objectified body consciousness, and as mentioned self-objectification theory. This theory implies that women are influenced by sociocultural context to view their bodies as object and conform to ideals (Fredrikson & Roberts, 1997). According to the findings by Slater and Tiggemann (2002), this theory is equally applicable to the two age groups.

Lindberg, Hyde, and McKinley (2006) said that objectified body consciousness is speculated to begin during sexual maturation, which is during adolescence period, in which they experience and observe sexual objectification which results in them engaging in objectification. Fredrikson and Roberts (1997) on the other hand, mentioned that younger women are often the target of objectification. In explaining this, Tiggemann and Williamson (2000) suggested that young women are more influenced by the media's messages as those messages are being targeted at them.

The objectification theory can be applied to understand gender difference as well. According to this theory, Westernized societies sexually objectify or materialize the female body

in which women face through continual evaluation such as male gazes and the media (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005a). Strelan and Hargreaves (2005a) further explained that the continuous exposure to the sociocultural belief that women are to be measured by their appearance causes women to internalize society's view of them. The society's view of the female body influences women to view their bodies as objects and to feel shame when they do not meet the idealized standards of the society (McKinley, 1998). Studies have found that women engage in self-objectification more than men (Fredrikson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005b).

Furthermore, Aubrey (2006) found sexually objectifying media as a predictor of self-objectification, appearance anxiety and body shame in women. Strelan and Hargreaves (2005a) said that the objectification theory can be applied to men as well and suggest that portrayal of muscular images by the media would cause men to believe that such body is ideal and valued by the society, and thus would strive to achieve it.

Cultural backgrounds and social class. Difference in residential areas may reflect difference in societies or communities and as mentioned by Adams, Turner & Bucks. (2005), people who live in different cultures or societies face different pressures concerning body image. As depicted by Li, Hu, W. Ma, Wu, & G. Ma (2005), some rural areas in China view being fat as being wealthy and healthy. This explanation could be applied in the theory that people from a less urbanized society may be less concerned about their body image.

On social class, Bourdieu (1984) said that social class difference plays a role in how one puts in effort and time in their body appearance investment. However, McLaren and Kuh (2004) found in their study that there is no relationship between appearance esteem and social class.

Benevolent sexism and gender role. Franzoi (2001) also studied on the correlation between benevolent sexism and women's body-esteem in which it was found that women who hold high benevolent sexism beliefs tend to score higher on the sexual attractiveness subscale of body-esteem compared to women who hold low benevolent sexism beliefs. It was speculated that women who hold benevolent sexism beliefs tend to become involved in grooming practices in order to become more facially attractive which is perceived by the norm to be ideal (Franzoi, 2001).

Discussing gender roles, a study by Cash, Ancis, and Strachan (1997) found that women with conventional thoughts about gender role were more concerned about their appearance, and have maladaptive perceptions about their body appearance. Likewise, one may also assume that suburban residents may have a more conventional way of thinking compared to urban residents.

Self-esteem. According to Jarry and Kossert (2007), in a society where thin media images are idealized and considered important, women with low self-esteem may divert their focus from low self worth to appearance as another source of self-esteem. Furthermore, thin media images are important and are easily available sources of self-esteem for women who face self-esteem threats in areas unrelated to body image (Jarry & Kossert, 2007).

Polce-Lynch et al. (2001) suggested that more girls than boys try to conform to the body ideal portrayed in the media in order to feel good about themselves. Jarry and Kossert (2007) also explained that as this behavior is defensive, it is expected that in an environment where thin images are prioritized, women who face self-esteem threats may proclaim, in defense, that they are more satisfied about their appearance than unthreatened women, who in fact, do not feel the need to compensate to sustain self-worth.

Besides that, Furnham et al. (2002) also found girl's body-esteem to be related to self-esteem more than boys'. They explained that those with low-self esteem who are in a society which prioritize the ideal body, would feel less worthy of themselves, which led to a low body-esteem. A study by Jarry and Kossert (2007) showed that after seeing thin models, women who face self-esteem threats proclaimed that they are satisfied with their appearance and considered their body image to be less important than those who did not receive self-esteem threats.

Cash, Morrow, Hrabosky, and Perry (2004) explained that adults may report less body dissatisfaction as entering working world might have caused them to evaluate their self-worth based on achievements instead of appearance. Based on these findings, a person's self-esteem can be boosted in many different ways, and conforming to the thin ideal to increase body-esteem is perceived to raise one's self-esteem.

Puberty. The concept of puberty is significant in explaining age and gender difference in the perception of body-esteem. Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) found in their collection of data that adolescent's body image perception undergoes a leap of change between the ages of 13 and 15 years. Verplanken and Velsvik (2008) said that adolescents experience significant changes in their bodies and often go through periods of body dissatisfaction. In an earlier study, Collins and Plahn (1988) expected difference in age in their study, explaining that young adolescents might experience body dissatisfaction with the changes in their body due to puberty, older adolescents might start to accept their new bodies, and young adults might be less concerned about their bodies.

Gender difference has also been hypothesized in relation to this factor. Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) explained that the increase in girls' body mass, especially around the hips and thighs as a normal course of puberty, results in a body physique which is different from the

standard ideal thin body. On the other hand, several studies found that older adolescent boys receive greater pressure from their peers regarding their appearance, which may imply later onset pubertal changes for boys (D.C. Jones et al., 2004; D.C. Jones & Crawford, 2006).

Human mating. Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages and Darwin's theory of sexual selection could also be applied to understand the age difference in body-esteem. Erikson (as cited in J. Feist & G.J. Feist, 2009) proposed that during early adulthood, the crisis of personality development revolves around intimacy or isolation. Buss (2006) explained through Darwin's theory of sexual selection that one would have preference for certain qualities possessed by the opposite sex and that this desire could create evolutionary change.

The current culture emphasizes thinness in women and muscularity in men, qualities which are considered preferable for most people (Furnham et al., 2002). Therefore, during early adulthood when one focuses on creating close relationships, attractiveness is prioritized as one of the human mating strategies. Thus, the attention on appearance may cause some to develop low body-esteem if their appearances do not conform to the current ideal.

Denial and minimization. Gender difference has been well investigated, but the findings might have affected by men's denial or minimization. According to Bardone-Cole et al. (2008), findings which indicated that men are less influenced by the media might be due to men thinking that the media does not portray ideal appearances or that they do not wish to accept the fact that they are comparing their appearance to what the media portrays as ideal. Adams et al. (2005) also mentioned that denial or minimization by men regarding their concern over body image may have influenced findings by previous researches which found higher body dissatisfaction in females. Furthermore, Paxton et al. (1991) suggested that results of lesser body dissatisfaction in boys may be because boys are less critical about their body compared to girls.

Western acculturation. Modernization also plays a role in the development of body dissatisfaction, especially in the urban communities. Mousa, Mashal, Al-Domi, and Jibril (2010) explained that through modernization, the lifestyles of the population changes as well including changes in eating styles and dressing styles which changes the body image ideals to the Western “thin” ideal.

Early researches

On age group differences in body-esteem, an earlier study by Paxton et al. (1991) found that there were a significant number of adolescents who were dissatisfied with their body. In another study, Benedikt et al. (1998) found that a large percentage of their adolescents sample are dissatisfied with their body shape and weight and are constantly involved in weight-loss behaviors.

Past researches mostly studied on body-esteem in women; creating a stereotypical perception that body-esteem affects women at most. Women were found to be least satisfied with their hips, thighs, legs, stomach’s appearance, agility, buttocks, feet, figure, physique, waist, nose, sex organs, body hair, weight, and face when compared to men (Davis & Katzman, 1997). On the other hand, men did not report any significant dissatisfaction with any of their body parts when compared to women (Davis & Katzman, 1997). Paxton et al. (1991) further found that girls reported higher body dissatisfaction on all measures compared to boys. McKinley (1998) also found that women reported higher surveillance, body shame, and ideal body discrepancy compared to men.

This gender difference is not only found in Western populations, but also in non-Western populations. In a study, Chinese women were found to have higher body dissatisfaction compared to men (Davis & Katzman, 1997). A longitudinal study conducted by Rosenblum and

Lewis (1999) found that adolescent girls' body image worsened while adolescent boys' body image improved over the period of study. Longitudinal studies are important as they reveal the development framework of body-esteem, not only age differences.

The ideal body appearance perceived by most women is the slender figure while for men it is having a built-up body. In the study conducted by Davis and Katzman (1997), it was found that more women wanted to be thinner and more men wanted to be heavier, conforming to these ideals.

Gittelsohn et al. (1996) found in their study of an isolated population that the participants wanted a body closer to the current ideal but their perception of an ideal body is not that thin or muscular. There were not many studies on the difference in body-esteem among populations of different geographical locations. Many studies were conducted in urban and rural areas and comparisons were rarely made. Furthermore, the topic of study has rarely researched on the body-esteem of populations in the suburban area.

Recent researches

Tiggemann (2004) said that it is rational to expect to have a lower body-esteem as one ages, as every year will take people further away from the thin or muscular body which is perceived as ideal. Bearman et al. (2006) proved that, for adolescent girls, increase in age leads to increase in body dissatisfaction. Extensive studies on body-esteem were conducted among adolescents or adults, but studies on the differences between these two age groups are insufficient.

The review by Tiggemann (2004) found that aging causes both gender to move away from the youthful thin or muscular ideal. However, Grippo and Hill (2008) found in their study that women experience body dissatisfaction throughout their lifespan. However, Hoyt and Kogan

(2001) found in their study on college students with the mean age of 20 that the participants were satisfied with their body appearance.

Li et al. (2005) found in their study that adolescents and children as young as five years old of both genders were greatly dissatisfied with their body. In addition, Standley, Sullivan and Wardle (2009) found in their study that a significant percentage of adolescents who have normal weight felt that they are too fat. A study on adolescent girls in Jordan also found that 21.2% of the sample had body dissatisfaction supporting their hypothesis that body dissatisfaction is prevalent in non-Western countries (Mousa et al., 2010).

A longitudinal study conducted in the United States also reported high body image dissatisfaction and engagement in weight-loss behavior among normal weight and underweight adolescents (Liechty, 2010). In another longitudinal study by R. Isomaa, A.L. Isomaa, Marttunen, Kaltiala-Heino, & Björkqvist (2011) which was conducted in Finland found that most adolescents had an incorrect perception about their weight.

O'Dea and Caputi (2001) found some puzzling results in their study which include overweight adolescent perceiving their weight as 'about right' and some overweight adolescents trying to gain weight. They explained that adolescents may be unaware of their weight and are not worried with the general body image stereotype (O'Dea & Caputi, 2001). Dinç and Alisinanoğlu (2010) also found in their study that adolescents scored relatively well on body satisfaction and majority felt good about their bodies.

McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004) mentioned that past studies have focused on body dissatisfaction in females and that findings of body dissatisfaction in males are still vague. McLaren and Kuh (2004) described the concern with and anguish about body appearance, especially weight as an extremely gendered phenomenon. Smolak (2004) however, regarded this

statement, which is usually interpreted as boys and men not having body image problems as not true.

Multiple studies found that women had lower body satisfaction than men (Hoyt & Kogan, 2001; Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000). Bardone-Cone et al. (2008) found in their research that more factors affect women to conform to ideal appearances compared to men. The study conducted by Lokken et al. (2003) found that women tend to strive for unreasonably low weight. Even when both genders are matched on a measure of body focus, parts of body often associated with dieting or ideal body appearance, women continue to show greater body dissatisfaction compared to men (Lokken et al., 2003).

Luo et al. (2005) also found that Chinese men are more satisfied with their body appearance and weight compared to Chinese women. L.R. Jones et al. (2007) found that Caucasian females scored higher on body dissatisfaction compared to Caucasian males. Rodgers et al. (2009) found that majority of the young women in their sample wanted a thinner body and over 80% wanted to lose weight.

A cross-sectional study conducted by Storvoll, Strandbu, and Wichstrøm (2005) found in their adolescents sample that girls had higher body dissatisfaction compared to boys at both times. Several studies on adolescents also found that girls reported higher body dissatisfaction on all measures compared to boys (Verplanken & Velsvik, 2008; Vincent & McCabe, 2000). A study conducted on Turkish adolescents also found that males had higher body satisfaction than females (Dinç & Alisinanoğlu, 2010).

In a study on male's body dissatisfaction, it was found that men also find their bodies different from their idealized bodies (Adams et al., 2005). Lorenzen, Grieve, and Thomas (2004) also found in their study on college men that brief exposures to muscular body cause men to

report body dissatisfaction. The study by Hoyt and Kogan (2001) further found that men are dissatisfied with their chest, abdomen, and upper arms, body parts which are significantly featured in the media.

In a study on Malaysians, Mellor et al. (2009) found that adolescent boys' body image was comparatively high across all ethnic groups. Mellor et al. (2009) explained that this may be due to young Asian men's body shape which does not conform to the Western muscular body ideal. Bardone-Cole et al. (2008) found that men scored high on pressure to have an ideal body which increases anxiety about their body image and thus leading to body dissatisfaction as they realized that their body does not conform to the ideal body appearance.

Furnham et al. (2002) on the other hand, found that some males wanted to be heavier while some wanted to be thinner, however most females wanted to be thinner. Several other studies found that females were more concerned about their weight or body shape whereas males are more concerned about their body muscularity (Grossbard, C.M. Lee, Neighbors, & Larimer, 2009; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2005).

Smolak (2004) explained that findings indicating that females have higher body dissatisfaction than males are misleading. The author said that most of the finding have fairly small sample, the samples are mostly Whites, and that the studies use several different measures of body image (Smolak, 2004).

On the difference in body-esteem between urban and suburban populations, Luo et al. (2005) found that among urban Chinese women, only 38% regard themselves as attractive. On the other hand, Welch, Gross, Bronner, Dewberry-Moore, and Paige (2004) found in their study that children from urban areas scored higher on body satisfaction compared to students from other geographical locations explaining that there may be different cultural standards in different

areas. The lack of findings on this difference gives this study a more significance in studying the difference in body-esteem between urban and suburban populations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The current study is a survey research using a cross-sectional design. Questionnaires were distributed to participants through non-probability sampling, which included purposive sampling and snowball sampling. In the urban population, all adolescent samples ($n = 20$) were taken from students of a secondary school. For adults in the urban population ($n = 20$), mail survey was used in which participants was selected through snowball sampling. As for the suburban population ($n = 40$), all samples were selected through snowball sampling.

Respondents

The sample of the study consisted of 80 respondents ($N = 80$) whom are selected through non-probability sampling. In balancing the age groups, 40 adolescents between the ages of 13 to 18 years old ($M = 15.875$) from secondary schools and 40 adults between the ages of 21 to 30 years old ($M = 22.1$) from universities and colleges were selected. The study did not include adults aged above 30 years old to avoid the possibility of having extreme scores. Furthermore, the adult group focuses on young adults. This limited age range was decided as shortening the age range could prevent the study from producing extreme scores.

The current study uses the criteria status of city council and municipal to determine urban and suburb areas respectively. For the urban area, samples was taken from Bandaraya Melaka which has a population of 474, 500 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). Whereas, for the suburb area, samples was taken from Bandar Manjung which has a population of 239, 400 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010).

In balancing the gender groups, 20 males and 20 females from the adolescents group were selected and the same balancing method is applied for the adults group. Next, in balancing the geographical location group, 10 urban residents from Bandaraya Melaka and 10 sub-urban residents from Bandar Manjung were selected from the males-adolescent group. The same method of balancing is applied to the other three gender-age groups.

Instrument

The Body-Esteem Scale (BES) which was developed by Franzoi and Shields (1994) were used as the sole instrument in this study. The original BES is a 35-item self-report questionnaire which measures how one feels about parts of their body. In this study, 3 items, item number 26 (sex drive), item number 28 (sex organ), and item number 31 (sex activities) were taken out from the questionnaire because it may be irrelevant to the adolescents group. Thus, the questionnaire used in this study only consists of 32 items. Furthermore, the items in the questionnaire, which originally consist of names of body parts or functions, were modified to first person narrative form of sentences.

The measurement scale used in this questionnaire is an interval scale on a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The scores for each item are accumulated to get the total score. The score ranges from 32 to 160, with higher scores being indicative of higher body-esteem. According to McKinley (1998), the internal reliability for the BES is .91 for women and .95 for men. A demography section is also included in the questionnaire, which includes gender, age, and location.

Besides that, the BES can also be measured based on three gender specific dimensions. These dimensions are, (1) Physical Attractiveness (PA) for males (Item 3,6,11,13,16,21,22,23,26,31) and Sexual Attractiveness (SA) for females (Item

1,3,6,11,13,20,21,22,29,31); (2) Upper Body Strength (UBS) for males (Item 7,12,14,15,18,19,20,25) and Weight Concern (WC) for females (Item 2,8,10,14,16,23,24,25,27,32); and (3) Physical Condition for males (PC_m) (Item 2,4,5,8,9,10,15,17,25,27,28,30,32) and females (PC_f) (Item 4,5,7,9,12,15,17,28,30).

Procedure

Before the survey. A pilot test was initially conducted before proceeding further with the distribution of questionnaires. A feedback section was included in the questionnaires used in the pilot test to evaluate the usability and weaknesses, if any, of the instrument. Thirty questionnaires were distributed to Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) students through convenience sampling method. For the urban adolescent sample, permission was asked from the principal of the secondary school involved before conducting the survey in the school.

During the survey. After the permission to conduct the survey in the secondary school was granted, the survey was conducted with the assistance of one of the teachers. As for the rest of the participants, the questionnaires were distributed through mail survey and manually handing out the questionnaires.

After the survey. It took approximately three months for all the questionnaires to return. Each questionnaire was checked to make sure that there were a balanced number of participants from each group. Furthermore, items on each of the questionnaires were checked to see whether there is a missing value. After that, data analysis follows.

Data analysis

Analysis of data includes descriptive statistics which includes mean and standard deviations for each item in the questionnaire. Besides that, independent two-sample T-test was used to evaluate the differences in body-esteem among the groups. Differences were made for

each item and also the total body-esteem score. The three gender specific dimensions were also measured and independent two-sample T-test was used to differentiate the age groups and geographical location groups. Differences between gender groups could only be analyzed between the PA dimension for males and the SA dimensions for females. The other two dimensions could not be differentiated between genders because of the difference in the number of items. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used during the analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The results are separated into three parts: results for difference in age groups, gender groups, and geographical location groups. The mean, standard deviation and t-value were calculated for each item on the questionnaire to evaluate differences in satisfaction on various body parts among the groups. Furthermore, independent two-sample T-test were carried out in determining the differences between nominal groups using the total body-esteem score. Analysis of differences were also made based on the three gender-specific dimensions using independent two-sample T-test: Physical Attractiveness (PA) for males and Sexual Attractiveness (SA) for females; Upper Body Strength (UBS) for males and Weight Concern (WC) for females; and Physical Condition (PC_m) for males and Physical Condition (PC_f) for females. Gender groups were only differentiated on the first dimension, PA and SA as other dimensions have unbalanced number of items.

Based on the total score of the Body Esteem Scale (BES), the range of the distribution of score is 70 with a minimum score of 73 and a maximum score of 143 ($M = 109.29$, $SD = 13.93$). Most of the scores clustered around the score range of 100 to 121. The skew of the distribution of score is almost symmetrical.

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in the perception of body-esteem between adolescents and adults.

Table 1

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for BES items between adolescents (n = 40) and adults (n = 40)

Items on BES	Adolescent Mean (SD)	Adult Mean (SD)	t-value
Body scent	3.65 (1.03)	3.18 (1.13)	1.968
Appetite	3.70 (.91)	3.45 (.88)	1.251
Nose	3.68 (.73)	3.35 (1.15)	1.514
Physical stamina	3.22 (.83)	3.20 (.99)	.122
Reflexes	3.38 (.87)	3.60 (1.13)	-1.000
Lips	3.35 (.74)	3.67 (.92)	-1.749
Muscularity	3.20 (.88)	3.00 (1.22)	.840
Waist	3.32 (.92)	3.32 (.80)	.000
Energy	3.28 (.88)	3.23 (1.21)	.212
Thighs	3.12 (.72)	3.18 (.98)	-.259
Ears	3.60 (.87)	3.58 (1.01)	.119
Biceps	3.27 (.99)	3.15 (1.15)	.523
Chin	3.90 (.84)	3.38 (.95)	2.613 ^a
Bodily built	3.28 (1.36)	3.00 (1.01)	1.026
Physical coordination	3.50 (.93)	3.45 (.71)	.269
Buttocks	3.52 (.96)	3.25 (.81)	1.385
Agility	3.20 (.97)	3.32 (.76)	-.642
Shoulders	3.65 (.92)	3.65 (.77)	.000
Arms	3.65 (.92)	3.55 (.96)	.475
Breast/Chest	3.25 (.71)	3.42 (.90)	-.965
Eyes	4.00 (.78)	3.60 (.93)	2.082 ^a
Cheeks/Cheekbones	3.80 (.72)	3.42 (.90)	2.051 ^a
Hips	3.33 (.86)	3.22 (1.00)	.480
Legs	3.55 (.90)	3.40 (.93)	.732
Figure/Physique	3.48 (.72)	3.22 (.89)	1.383
Feet	3.45 (1.01)	3.18 (.98)	1.232
Stomach	3.32 (.94)	3.22 (.97)	.466
Health	3.85 (.86)	3.75 (.84)	.525
Body hair	3.55 (.99)	3.47 (.96)	.345
Fitness	3.35 (1.21)	3.40 (.98)	-.203
Face	3.53 (.88)	3.15 (.98)	1.808
Weight	3.52 (1.09)	3.15 (1.10)	1.535

^a $p < .05$
 $df = 78$

Age group difference among body parts items are shown in Table 1. Adolescents were more satisfied on the following body areas when compared to adults (chin, eyes, and cheeks/cheekbones). Adults on the other hand did not display higher satisfaction than adolescents on any items.

Table 2

Mean, standard deviations, and t-value for total BES score between adolescents and adults

	Mean (SD)		t-value
	Adolescent	Adult	
Total BES score	111.45 (11.09)	107.12 (16.14)	1.399

Evaluating the differences of the total score of BES between adolescents and adults, the result of the t-test showed that there was no difference in body-esteem between adolescents ($M = 111.45$, $SD = 11.09$) and adults ($M = 107.12$, $SD = 16.14$), $t(78) = 1.399$, $p > .05$. (see Table 2).

Table 3

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for gender specific dimensions between adolescents and adults

	Mean (SD)		t-value
	Adolescent	Adult	
Physical Attractiveness/ Sexual Attractiveness	36.38 (4.16)	34.15 (5.86)	1.959
Upper Body Strength	28.25 (3.51)	29.30 (3.98)	-.886
Weight Concern	33.20 (4.47)	29.75 (5.56)	2.163 ^a
Physical Condition (Male)	46.60 (4.15)	46.60 (6.25)	0
Physical Condition (Female)	27.90 (5.38)	27.05 (3.91)	0.571

^a $p < .05$

Differentiating the gender specific dimensions, the result of the t-test showed that there was no difference in the Physical Attractiveness and Sexual Attractiveness dimensions between adolescents and adults (see Table 3). As for the other two dimensions, differences were made separately for both genders because of the uneven number of items. The result of the t-test showed that there was no difference in the Upper Body Strength dimension between adolescent and adult males. However, there was a difference in the Weight Concern dimension between adolescent and adult females in which adolescents showed higher satisfaction. As for the Physical Condition dimensions, both gender groups showed no difference between adolescents and adults.

Hypothesis 2: There is a gender difference in perception of body-esteem.

Table 4

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for BES items between males (n = 40) and females (n = 40)

Items on BES	Male Mean (SD)	Female Mean (SD)	t-value
Body scent	3.50 (1.09)	3.32 (1.12)	.710
Appetite	3.65 (.83)	3.50 (.96)	.746
Nose	3.70 (.79)	3.32 (1.10)	1.756
Physical stamina	3.60 (.90)	2.82 (.75)	4.190 ^a
Reflexes	3.75 (1.01)	3.22 (.95)	2.403 ^a
Lips	3.58 (.78)	3.45 (.90)	.662
Muscularity	3.58 (.84)	2.62 (1.06)	4.448 ^a
Waist	3.48 (.88)	3.18 (.81)	1.587
Energy	3.52 (1.04)	2.98 (1.00)	2.414 ^a
Thighs	3.42 (.81)	2.88 (.82)	3.008 ^a
Ears	3.62 (1.01)	3.55 (.88)	.356
Biceps	3.68 (.92)	2.75 (1.01)	4.297 ^a
Chin	3.78 (.86)	3.50 (.99)	1.327
Bodily built	3.52 (.99)	2.75 (1.28)	3.039 ^a
Physical coordination	3.68 (.73)	3.28 (.88)	2.218 ^a
Buttocks	3.45 (.88)	3.32 (.92)	.624
Agility	3.38 (.81)	3.15 (.92)	1.162
Shoulders	3.60 (.87)	3.70 (.82)	-.528
Arms	3.82 (.84)	3.38 (.98)	2.202 ^a
Breast/Chest	3.42 (.93)	3.25 (.67)	.965
Eyes	3.95 (.82)	3.65 (.92)	1.543
Cheeks/Cheekbones	3.72 (.75)	3.50 (.91)	1.210
Hips	3.50 (.99)	3.05 (.82)	2.223 ^a
Legs	3.65 (.80)	3.30 (.99)	1.735
Figure/Physique	3.48 (.82)	3.22 (.80)	1.383
Feet	3.52 (.91)	3.10 (1.06)	1.931
Stomach	3.38 (1.03)	3.18 (.87)	.936
Health	4.02 (.70)	3.58 (.93)	2.447 ^a
Body hair	3.55 (.90)	3.48 (1.04)	.345
Fitness	3.68 (.94)	3.08 (1.16)	2.533 ^a
Face	3.52 (.91)	3.15 (.95)	1.808
Weight	3.58 (1.06)	3.10 (1.11)	1.963

^ap < .05
df = 78

Table 4 displays gender difference among body part items. Compared to females, males were more satisfied on the following body parts (physical stamina, reflexes, muscularity, energy, thighs, biceps, bodily built, physical coordination, arms, hips, health, and fitness). Females on the other hand did not show any higher satisfaction than males on any items.

Table 5

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for total BES score and gender specific dimensions between males and females

	Mean (SD)		t-value
	Males	Females	
Total BES score	115.28 (12.14)	103.30 (13.12)	4.237 ^a
Physical Attractiveness/ Sexual Attractiveness	36.35 (4.46)	34.18 (5.64)	1.913

^a $p < .05$

As seen in Table 5, differentiating the total score of BES between the genders, the result of the t-test showed that there was a difference in body-esteem between males ($M = 115.28$, $SD = 12.14$) and females ($M = 103.30$, $SD = 13.12$), $t(78) = 4.237$, $p < .05$ in which males showed higher body-esteem than females. As for the gender-specific dimensions, the result of the t-test showed that there was no difference in the Physical Attractiveness and Sexual Attractiveness dimensions between males ($M = 36.35$, $SD = 4.46$) and females ($M = 34.18$, $SD = 5.64$), $t(78) = 1.913$, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference in the perception of body-esteem between residents from the urban and suburb areas.

Table 6

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for BES items between urban residents (n = 40) and suburban residents (n = 40)

Items on BES	Urban Mean (SD)	Suburban Mean (SD)	t-value
Body scent	3.62 (1.08)	3.20 (1.09)	1.752
Appetite	3.72 (.85)	3.42 (.93)	1.508
Nose	3.62 (1.17)	3.40 (.71)	1.040
Physical stamina	3.42 (.90)	3.00 (.88)	2.136 ^a
Reflexes	3.72 (.88)	3.25 (1.08)	2.160 ^a
Lips	3.60 (.90)	3.42 (.78)	.929
Muscularity	3.08 (1.25)	3.12 (.85)	-.209
Waist	3.30 (.97)	3.35 (.74)	-.260
Energy	3.40 (1.03)	3.10 (1.06)	1.284
Thighs	3.25 (.98)	3.05 (.71)	1.043
Ears	3.60 (.98)	3.58 (.90)	.119
Biceps	2.98 (1.12)	3.45 (.96)	-2.036 ^a
Chin	3.60 (.81)	3.68 (1.05)	-.358
Bodily built	2.78 (1.21)	3.50 (1.09)	-2.822 ^a
Physical coordination	3.38 (.93)	3.58 (.71)	-1.084
Buttocks	3.15 (.83)	3.62 (.90)	-2.453 ^a
Agility	3.08 (.89)	3.45 (.82)	-1.967
Shoulders	3.82 (.78)	3.48 (.88)	1.886
Arms	3.68 (1.02)	3.52 (.85)	.715
Breast/Chest	3.20 (.85)	3.48 (.75)	-1.530
Eyes	4.05 (.88)	3.55 (.82)	2.644 ^a
Cheeks/Cheekbones	3.70 (.82)	3.52 (.85)	.937
Hips	3.30 (.91)	3.25 (.95)	.240
Legs	3.42 (1.04)	3.52 (.78)	-.487
Figure/Physique	3.22 (.83)	3.48 (.78)	-1.383
Feet	3.28 (1.06)	3.35 (.95)	-.333
Stomach	3.22 (1.07)	3.32 (.83)	-.466
Health	3.88 (.82)	3.72 (.88)	.789
Body hair	3.52 (.82)	3.50 (1.11)	.115
Fitness	3.15 (1.10)	3.60 (1.06)	-1.866
Face	3.60 (1.06)	3.08 (.73)	2.584 ^a
Weight	3.35 (1.17)	3.32 (1.05)	.101

^ap < .05

df = 78

The difference between the residents from urban and suburban area in body part items is shown in Table 6. Participants from urban area are more satisfied with their physical stamina, reflexes, eyes, and face when differences were made to participants from suburban area. On the other hand, participants from suburban area revealed higher satisfaction on the following body part items when differences were made to urban area participants (biceps, bodily built, buttocks).

Table 7

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for total BES score between urban and suburban participants

	Mean (SD)		t-value
	Urban	Suburban	
Total BES Score	109.70 (17.11)	108.88 (10.00)	.263

Differentiating the total score of BES between participants from the two geographical locations, the result of the t-test showed that there was no difference in body-esteem between urban area participants ($M = 109.70$, $SD = 17.11$) and suburban area participants ($M = 108.88$, $SD = 10.00$), $t(78) = .263$, $p > .05$. (see Table 7).

Table 8

Mean, standard deviations, and t-values for gender specific dimensions between urban and suburban participants

	Mean (SD)		t-value
	Urban	Suburban	
Physical Attractiveness/ Sexual Attractiveness	36.20 (5.58)	34.32 (4.61)	1.639
Upper Body Strength	29.10 (4.48)	28.45 (2.89)	.5448
Weight Concern	29.45 (5.95)	33.50 (3.62)	-2.600 ^a
Physical Condition (Male)	48.40 (6.10)	44.80 (3.52)	2.287 ^a
Physical Condition (Female)	26.00 (5.43)	28.95 (3.25)	-2.085 ^a

^a $p < .05$

Differences in the gender specific dimensions revealed that there was no difference in the Physical Attractiveness and Sexual Attractiveness dimensions between urban and suburban participants. The result of the t-test also showed no difference in the Upper Body Strength dimensions between urban and suburban male participants. However, there was a difference in the Weight Concern dimension for females in which suburban participants scored higher satisfaction compared to urban participants. Furthermore, there was a difference in the Physical Condition (Male) dimension in which the urban participants showed higher satisfaction compared to suburban participants. Results also found a difference in the Physical Condition (Female) dimension however in which suburban participants revealed higher satisfaction than urban participants. Notice that there was a greater dispersion in scores among urban participants than suburban participants across all dimensions (see Table 8).

Summary

Summarizing the results, the current study found that adolescents were more satisfied than adults on three parts of their body; and in females, adolescents were also more satisfied than

adults on the Weight Concern dimension. Males were found to be more satisfied than females on seven items and on the total score of BES. Results on the difference in participants from different geographical location revealed interesting findings. Urban and suburban participants were more satisfied than the other on several items and in females, suburban participants were more satisfied than urban participants on the Weight Concern dimension. Furthermore, on the Physical Condition dimension, urban males were more satisfied than suburban males but suburban females were more satisfied than urban females.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The current research investigated the differences in body-esteem between variable groups, specifically – age, gender, and geographical location. It was hypothesized that there is a difference in body-esteem between adolescents and adults; males and females; and urban and suburban residents.

Difference in the perception of body-esteem between adolescents and adults

The results revealed that in females, adolescent were more satisfied than adults on their weight concern. This mirrors the findings of Bearman et al. (2006) which found that as age increases, girls tend to feel more dissatisfied with their body. It is hypothesized that adolescents may be unaware of their weight and are less concerned with the body image stereotype (O’Dea & Caputi, 2001). This result is also parallel to that of the objectification theory which explains that young women are more influenced by the media as they are the target of the messages (Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000).

It was also found that there was no difference in the total Body Esteem Scale (BES) score, the Physical Attractiveness (PA), Sexual Attractiveness (SA), Upper Body Strength, and both Physical Condition (PC) dimensions between adolescents and adults. This is contrary to the expectations of Collins and Plahn (1988) which predicted higher body satisfaction as age increases. This contrast can be attributed to the time gap in which today’s adults are concerned about their body as well due to the “thin-muscular” ideal that has been spread all over the media. Furthermore, the difference in age between the adolescents sample and the adults sample in this study was small and therefore possible differences might have been reduced.

Gender difference in the perception of body-esteem

On gender differences, the current study found that males reported higher satisfaction on 12 items on the questionnaire compared to females. Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) explained that girls experience increase in body mass, especially around the hips and thighs during puberty which brings them further away from the ideal thin body. These two body parts, the hips and the thighs are two of the 12 items mentioned in which females reported less satisfaction compared to males. Furthermore, when compared to females, males did not report any less satisfaction on any of the body parts, comparable to the findings of C. Davis and Katzman (1997).

The results further revealed that males had higher satisfaction on the total BES score compared to females. These findings correspond to the findings of many other previous researches (Hoyt & Kogan, 2001; Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000) and also those conducted in the Asian context (C. Davis & Katzman, 1997; Luo et al., 2005; Dinç & Alisinanoğlu, 2010).

Difference in the perception of body-esteem between residents from the urban and suburb areas

Results on the difference between urban and suburban revealed interesting findings in which both variable groups revealed higher satisfaction than the other on different items and dimensions. Urban participants revealed higher satisfaction on four items (physical stamina, reflex, eyes, face) on the instrument while suburban participants revealed higher satisfaction on three items (biceps, bodily built, buttocks). Furthermore, there was no difference in the PA and SA dimensions between these two geographical location groups. These variations in results is comparable to previous findings in which some found that urban residents had higher body satisfaction (Welch et al., 2004) and others found that less urbanized residents were less bothered with their body image (Gittelsohn et al., 1996).

It was also found that suburban females were more satisfied on the Weight Concern and PC_f dimensions compared to urban females. This contrast the findings of Cash et al. (1997) which suggest that women with more conventional thoughts about gender role, implying less urbanized populations, are more concerned about their body image and tend to have faulty thoughts about their body. The difference in results from previous researches can be attributed to the fact that the suburban communities are not much less developed than the urban communities and that women from less urbanized communities now have more opportunities and are more educated than how it was in the past.

Urbanized society have been said to be influenced by the Western ideal of having a thin or muscular body. However, suburban communities may not differ as much from the urban community. In Malaysia, channels through which the media spread the ideal body message are available to the population of the suburb communities as well. Therefore, geographical location difference or cultural difference may not have an effect on body-esteem among these two groups.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the external validity of the findings. Firstly, the small sample limits the generalization of the results to the population. Furthermore, the adults sample consists of participants mainly in their early twenties, and therefore the results can only be generalize to the early twenties adults population.

Besides that, having participants from only one urban area and one suburb area decreases the external validity of the results. Although Bandaraya Melaka falls into the urban category, there are other cities that might represent the urban population better such as Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur.

Another limitation of this study is the demographic variables of the participants. The male urban participants are mainly of Malay ethnicity while the female urban participants are mainly of Chinese ethnicity. The suburban participants consist of mainly Chinese participants. Besides that, most of the adult participants are private college or university students.

Besides that, the use of nonprobability sampling in this study decreases the external validity of the findings as the sample may not represent the population. The use of snowball sampling also has its limitation in which it is unknown whether the sample is representative of the population.

Yet another limitation of this study is the instrument, which is a self-report questionnaire. Self-report questionnaires rely heavily on the honesty of the participants. Therefore, there is a possibility of error as participants might misinterpret or misunderstand the items on the questionnaire. Furthermore, in self-report measures, participants tend to answer in a socially desirable way which decreases the reliability of the results.

There was also a greater dispersion in the body esteem scores among participants from the urban area, making the results in relation to this less reliable. Furthermore, despite some of the differences found between the variable groups, this study did not make distinctions on the size of that difference. Another limitation is the existence of possible extraneous variables such as body mass index, weight, height, and SES that might have affected the results of this study.

Suggestions for future research

In increasing the validity of the findings, future researchers might find it useful to include other age groups such as older adults and children. However, having different age groups will only reveal age differences in body esteem. Longitudinal study is proposed in order to see the effect of age on body esteem. It is suggested that participants from various urban and suburb

areas are included in the sample. It might also be useful to include rural area as one of the variables in order to generate a more reliable finding on geographical location differences in body esteem.

Besides that, it is also suggested that future researches consider a more diverse sample, including different ethnic or racial groups and working adults. For studying adults, it could yield different results if participants from public tertiary institutions are included, as they might have different SES. On the sampling limitation, a random sampling would yield results of higher validity and reliability.

Recently, studies have included male samples into the study of body-esteem which confirms that body dissatisfaction is not a phenomenon that affects females only (eg., Adams et al., 2005; Bardone-Cone et al., 2008). Even though males revealed higher satisfaction on body-esteem in this study, previous researches have found that males do experience body dissatisfaction, particularly on muscularity (Lorenzen et al., 2004; Smolak & Stein, 2006). Therefore, future researches should use muscularity as a variable to study body dissatisfaction in males.

Conclusion

Body-esteem concerns are affecting people from different age groups, males and females, and people from different places. Body dissatisfaction is now an alarming issue which affects not only young adults whom are the targets of the thin/muscular ideal, but also children (eg., Li et al., 2005; Mirza et al., 2005), adolescents (eg., Bearman et al., 2006; Crespo et al., 2010), and older adults (eg., Grippo & Hill, 2008).

The current study found that there is difference in body esteem between adolescents and adults except in females; adults were more concerned on their weight compare to adolescents.

However, it is important to note that the adults sample were mostly in their early twenties in which their age are quite close to those of the adolescent sample. Females were revealed less satisfaction than males on several items and total BES score, which mirrors the findings of many previous studies (eg., C. Davis & Katzman, 1997). There was an even more interesting pattern of results concerning the difference in body-esteem between urban and suburban samples in which both groups were more satisfied than the other on different items and dimensions.

Future researches should include larger samples and a more diverse sample to generate a more reliable finding. Besides that, other variables such as sexual orientation should also be taken into consideration in future studies. Prevalence on body-esteem of different nominal groups can help future researchers in developing better interventions for the purpose of preventing and treating body dissatisfaction.

As body-esteem for different groups are somewhat different, interventions used to prevent or treat body dissatisfaction should also be designed differently for each group. An intervention which caters to the needs of the whole population might not be as effective as one which is designed specifically for a certain group. Interventions to prevent and treat body dissatisfaction are important as body dissatisfaction have been revealed in previous researches to be correlated to depression and eating disorders (Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2009; C. Davis & Katzman, 1997).

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: The Body Esteem Scale



The Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields)

I am an undergraduate student of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman who is conducting a survey on body esteem for my final year project. I would like to get some honest feed back from you regarding this research. This questionnaire measures how you feel about the parts of your body – your body esteem.

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Section A: Demographic Details (Circle wherever is applicable)

Gender: Male / Female

Age: _____

Location: _____

Section B

Instructions: On this page are listed a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree nor agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1	I have a nice body scent	1	2	3	4	5
2	I like the size of my appetite	1	2	3	4	5
3	I like the structure of my nose	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have a good physical stamina	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have good reflexes	1	2	3	4	5
6	I like how my lips look	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am attractively muscular	1	2	3	4	5
8	I like the size of my waist	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have a high energy level	1	2	3	4	5
10	I like my thighs	1	2	3	4	5
11	My ears are nice	1	2	3	4	5
12	I have attractive biceps	1	2	3	4	5
13	I like the way my chin is	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am bodily built	1	2	3	4	5
15	I like my physical coordination	1	2	3	4	5
16	My buttock looks nice	1	2	3	4	5
17	I am physically agile	1	2	3	4	5
18	I like the width of my shoulders	1	2	3	4	5
19	I like my arms	1	2	3	4	5

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree nor agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

20	I like the size/shape of my breast/chest	1	2	3	4	5
21	I like how my eyes appear to look	1	2	3	4	5
22	I like my cheeks/cheekbones	1	2	3	4	5
23	I like the size of my hips	1	2	3	4	5
24	I like how my legs look	1	2	3	4	5
25	I have an attractive figure or physique	1	2	3	4	5
26	I have a pair of nice feet	1	2	3	4	5
27	I like the appearance of my stomach	1	2	3	4	5
28	I am healthy	1	2	3	4	5
29	I am comfortable with my body hair	1	2	3	4	5
30	I am physically fit	1	2	3	4	5
31	My face is considerably attractive	1	2	3	4	5
32	I am happy with my current weight	1	2	3	4	5