

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FAMILY LIFE SATISFACTION AND BODY APPRECIATION FOR CHILDREN

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Abstract. The family plays a very important role for child physical and mental development and the whole system such as: schools, communities, governments, corporations need to be aware of, involved in, and committed to the protection and enhancement of child's health . Body appreciation among children has received substantial attention in the health literature so the prevention of harming the body image confirms the importance of relation between personal identity and family. The purpose of this study it is to analyze the role of the family as the critical factor of children perception about their body image. The results showed that life satisfaction correlates positively with body appreciation for Romanian children (n=139), and that a higher level of family life satisfaction predicts a higher level of body appreciation.

Keywords: family life satisfaction, body appreciation, children, body image, body aspect

Introduction

Body image dissatisfaction among children, especially adolescent girls has received substantial attention in the health literature given its link to problematic diet behavior (Crow, Eisenberg, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006; Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Kluck, 2010; Stice, Presnell, & Spangler, 2002;), therefore in the last decades many researchers pointed out through many articles the importance of a positive body image perception as Smolak & Cash (2011) and Tylka (2012) focused on a comprehensive account of the body image concept, one of its facet that has benefitted from this attention is body appreciation, which was defined as “accepting, holding favorable opinions toward, and respecting the body, while also rejecting media-promoted appearance ideals as the only form of human beauty” (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015a, p. 53).

The family plays a very important role for child development and results

confirm the importance of relation between personal identity and family, the latter considered being a predictor of personal and social development, not just a precursor of a high level of self-esteem, but also an expression of new tastes and food preferences (Pellerone, Ramaci, Grana, Craparo, 2017).

Whole systems such as families, schools, communities, governments, and corporations need to be aware of, involved in, and committed to the protection and enhancement of child health and the prevention of these pernicious body image and eating problems that are currently burgeoning among our children and youth (Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016). The development and protection of child self-esteem appears to be a promising approach in the prevention of eating disorders (O’Dea, 2004).

Female body image is intimately bound up with subjective perceptions of weight (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989) and no age group is more preoccupied with body image and appearance than adolescent girls (Bruch, 1981). Dissatisfaction with body image and overestimation of body weight are very characteristic of adolescent females (Fabian & Thompson, 1989).

As a research shows that satisfaction with body weight was low and overestimation of body weight was high among an adolescent girls sample. A majority of the girls rated themselves as being too fat. The results of this research indicates that underweight girls, who maintain a perception of being too fat, suffer significantly more psycho-social distress than other girls. These girls were found to score higher on loneliness and hopelessness than girls who did not think they were fat (Randy, 1991).

In a longitudinal study conducted with mostly European American girls in early adolescence, it was found that intense pressure to be thin from family members predicted girl’s body dissatisfaction one year later. More specific information regarding the content of appearance related comments is needed to understand how family communication shapes adolescent girl’s body image (Stice & Whitenton, 2002).

Mothers are key socio-cultural agents that can influence their daughters to accept or reject their body shapes and sizes. Studies in recent years revealing how negative feedback is linked to girls’ poor body image are a major contribution to the literature. However, the benefits of positive familial communication on body image are far less understood (Romo, Mireles-Rios, 2016).

Body image is a multidimensional construct which is defined as an attitude towards the individual’s body (Cash & Brawn, 1989 apud Schneider, Rollitzs & Henning-Fast, 2016). This construct refers to the way which people think, feel and behave considering their physical aspects (Muth & Cash, 1997). These beliefs are influenced by other body ideals as a social component. (Kerry et al., 2004)

Puberty is a period of awareness of body image and appearance that can influence life satisfaction. The acquisition of a positive body image has been pointed out as one of the central developmental tasks of adolescence (Havinghurst, 1972). In addition, adolescence is a period of strong worries about the shape and size one's body will look as an adult (Bogt et al., 2006). With all the propaganda which takes place in social media adolescents are confronted with demands for thinness that are very difficult to achieve, furthermore, adolescents who are dissatisfied with their body image are more likely to have negative health perceptions (Meland, Haugland & Breidablik, 2007), which in time can lead to low self-esteem, low social functioning and signs of depression (Field, 2004; Gavrilă, 2008), also another research with adolescents and young adults suggests that more time spent on social media (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) can be linked with poorer body image (Fardouly & Vartanian 2016).

Body image dissatisfaction is a serious, global problem that negatively affects life satisfaction. Several claims have been made about the possible psychological benefits of naturist activities, but very little empirical research has investigated these benefits or any plausible explanations for them. Research suggests that negative body image in both women and men stems from pressure to achieve unrealistic ideals of attractiveness (McCreary and Sasse 2000; Striegel-Moore et al. 1986). Frequent exposure to media-based standards of attractiveness, which are often unattainably thin (for females) or muscular (for males), leads to a more negative perception of one's own body (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn 2004; Engeln-Maddox 2005; Grabe et al. 2008).

Life satisfaction is an issue in the lives of adolescents and young adults (Frisch, 2000; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Greenspoon, & Saklofske, 2001). A variety of stressors that take place during this developmental period, such as school pressures and preferable independence from parents, may contribute to feelings of alienation, dissatisfaction often reported by youth. Some of this dissatisfaction is due to a deficiency in positive development, both physiological and psychological (Larson, 2000).

Even if it is well known that family pressure and those of modern mass-media on body aspect may have negative consequences both as adults and children, in Romania research that studies these aspects are very few. Recently, were translated and validated two instruments that measure body appreciation and drive for muscularity for adults (Swami, Tudorel, Goian, Barron, & Vintilă, 2017; Swami, Vintilă, Tudorel, Goian, & Barron, 2018).

Still it is needed more studies to investigate risk factors that lead to negative consequences on body image for adults, children and adolescents. People should be educated to be aware of that they have rights to live a healthy life, from both, mental and physical aspects, helped and thought to manage their

problem for them to create and develop a healthy environment, becoming responsible for their well-being (Vintilă, Marklinder, Nydahl, Istrat, & Kuglis, 2009).

Method

Participants

For this study 139 pupils ($n = 139$), 54% girls, were involved, from 3 different schools situated in Timisoara and its suburbs: W. Shakespeare, Gen. Giroc, Gen. Chisoda. The students aged between 9 and 12 ($M = 10.25$; $SD = 1.08$), were attending different classes from third grade to six grades. All students were Romanian citizens and came from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Procedure

Two instruments were given to the children to fill out. Before, they were precisely trained about the instruments and the specific words found in these instruments, and they were informed about the time needed to fill out the scales. Also they provide demographic data's.

Instruments

Body Appreciation Scale-2 for Children (BAS-2C; Halliwell, Jarmana, Tylka, Slater, 2017). The instrument is a Body Appreciation Scale-2 for adults adaption (BAS-2; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), translated and validated for Romanian by Swami, Tudorel, Goian, Barron, & Vintilă, 2017) and contains 10 items with answers on a Likert scale, where 1 = *never*; 5 = *always*. This scale has a good internal consistence, for our study alpha Cronbach was .87.

Kansas Family Life Satisfaction (KFLS; Schumm, Jurich, Bollman 1986). This scale is a 4-item instrument design to assess satisfaction with three key types of family relationship and with satisfaction with family life as whole. The answers were measured on a Likert scale, where 1 = *extremely unsatisfied* and 7 = *extremely satisfied*. KFLS has a good internal consistency, Alfa Cronbach was .82.

Results

To test the hypothesis we used the linear regression using SPSS for Windows. Life satisfaction variable was considered as a predictor and body appreciation was the criteria variable.

The results reveal that the life satisfaction correlates positively with body appreciation. Thus a higher level of family life satisfaction correlates with a higher level of body appreciation (table 1).

Table 1. Correlations between variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2
BA	39.4795	8.79185	-	.229**
FLS	24.250	5.15624	.229*	-

n = 139; ***p* < .05; BA=Body appreciation;
FLS= Family life satisfaction.

The results of the linear regression sustain the hypothesis and revealed that life satisfaction is a predictor of body appreciation for children ($R = .229$, $R^2 = .052$, $R^2_{adj.} = 0.45$, $F_{change}(1,137) = 7.549$, $p < .05$). The relationship between life satisfaction and body appreciation is significant ($p = .007$). (Table 2)

Table 2. Results of the regression analyses of life satisfaction as a predictor of body appreciation

Predictors	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
FLS	.229	2.748	.007

n = 139; *p* < .05; FLS= Family life satisfaction.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to point out that a good, healthy family life it can predict body image satisfaction and appreciation for children. It is underlined in other research that in this period of childhood (9-12 years – beginning of puberty) a child can gain approximately 10 kg and put 20 cm in height. (Munteanu, 2007). Adolescents are especially vulnerable because body image is particularly salient while they undergo the significant physical and psychological changes of puberty (Ricciardelli and Yager, 2015). These changes can be difficult for them to manage from body appreciation point of view and forming their self-confidence takes a particular place. A person may be dissatisfied with a particular body part, or their general shape, or they may be discontented with their body as a whole.

For the children to understand it is recommended that a parent to inoculate a proper scale of values especially in our days when physical appearance can provoke an axiological crises (Munteanu, 2007). Body image dissatisfaction can be defined as the inconsistency between how a person perceives their body, and how they would like their ideal body to be (Maxwell & Cole, 2012). It is very important a major focus on playing sports and eating

healthily for all family members, and avoid any comments of family members about weight/body shape.

Inheritance of the idea of body dissatisfaction can be a transgenerational maladaptive thought as a research shows that mothers, in particular, seemed to have an effect on how their daughters perceived their bodies. Hearing their mothers passing negative comments about their own bodies caused the daughters to reflect on themselves (Curtis & Loomans, 2014).

Adolescent girls whose peers or family members hold negative attitudes about being overweight have been found to be dissatisfied more with their bodies than are girls whose peers and family members do not hold negative attitudes about weight (Paxton et al., 1999) and girls who felt more accepted by their fathers were less dissatisfied with their bodies (Barker & Galambos, 2003).

Our study reveals that life satisfaction regarding children's family life is a predictor for their body appreciation level. The better family life satisfaction, the higher body appreciation level is. Results reveal that there was a positive correlation between family life satisfaction and body appreciation level which shows that there is a need to provide a healthy environment for children to develop properly from both mental and psychological aspects. A key change for understanding body image has been the development of work on positive body image. Researches on body image had been largely skewed towards a focus on negative body image, but the last decade there was seen a surge of interest in understanding a range of positive body image constructs including body appreciation, body acceptance, and the broad conceptualization of beauty (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

These new developments have enabled a more complete and holistic understanding of body image, including the development of additional scales to measure positive aspects of body image.

Sociocultural theories of body image propose that societies have body shape ideals which are communicated (through media, family and peers) to individuals, who internalize them resulting in body satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Tiggemann, 2011). Maybe, the best known of these models is the Tripartite Influence Model (van den Berg et al., 2002) which proposes that media, peers and family are all key sociocultural channels for the transmission of body ideals.

The advocates of positive body image tend to take the view that positive body image is not just the inverse of negative body image but has unique elements that require understanding (Tylka, 2011). These elements are: having a favorable opinion of the body irrespective of its actual appearance; acceptance of the body in spite of weight, imperfections and body shape; respect for the

body involving engaging in healthy behaviors and responding to its needs; and rejection of media imagery, which helps to protect the body. These elements have been incorporated into a Body Appreciation Scale which has been found to be reliable and valid (Avalos, Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2005) and used for our study.

The results of this study may be used to develop some programs which underline the life satisfaction role in the family context and the relation with children body image concerns. It is necessary for the programs to use professional language which offers authority and prestige. However for not becoming a barrier between professionals and beneficiary, the language used has to be an adequate one for participant's comprehension (Goian, 2010).

Limitations

Like other studies, the present one has its own limitations. There were taken into account only those children who have any siblings and also it was not reported the children who had their parents divorced, lost, or remarried. These aspects could be targeted for future researches.

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