

The Role of Social Appearance in Hungarian Young Athletes

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In our research, we were aiming to find answers to high school students (those who are interested and those who are not interested in sports) knowledge and maintenance of their own body. In our study, 600 students (ages between 17 and 19) participated filling out multiple choice questionnaires. Results show that the appearance and clean physique is extremely important amongst high school students. Both girls and boys believe that exercising has a major role in forming our body. Young adults also believe that appearance is important in choosing work, carrier, fame, love and successful inter-relationships. We have also studied the parallel between the inner/outer appearances within oneself. Sixty-nine point two percent of the students believe inner/outer self is in balance and sport is establishing better self security. The importance of human body is not only biology, but cultural aspect in social context. This is the reason why the physical education is a guide in emphasizing to forming ones' body to the person's social character.

Keywords: appearance, social aspect, inner/outer features, self-knowledge, exercise

Introduction

Human body not only biological aspects but also socio-cultural exposure tightly bound with genders, sexuality, sport, physical activity, aesthetics and health (Vingender, 2007). As a part of social science, it is an amazing study-subject. Culture influences society to build the people own approved body image (Mauss, 2000). Development of each culture determines this image.

Studying social aspects of appearance became an important issue in today's society. It had been pressured by media and has been influencing individual opinion, behaviour, values and health. Youth individual development is strained by role models and reference groups they can relate to. Most young adults find their model for behaviour, attitude and opinion in media (Piko & Keresztes, 2007). Thus, the commercial, consumer and marketing interest and influencing the development of well fit, beautiful and young physique automatically appeared. The analysis of the consumer society has to face this fact.

In a consumer society, there are two categories to condition and maintain healthy body: inner body and outer body. The inner body informs us of the state of health and optimal functioning, introducing the autonym individual. The inner body follows cultural expectations within society. In consumer society, these two bodies are linked: the maintenance of inner body is to support the visual effect of the outer body (Featherstone, 1997). To achieve success in any sport, it is important to establish and maintain strong muscles and thin physical body (Dukai-Szabó, 2008). Ladies are aiming to achieve low weight and skinny appearance for their looks, while Gentlemen work out to be stronger, faster and stamina. Sports men and women build their physical body in accordance of their sport. Naturally, there is a difference between body image amongst sports men and women

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and an average person, and those engaged to sport for life are more conscious of building it.

Powerful physical activity can be hurtful and negative experience, however, it is accepted in order to succeed. With will power, this can turn to positive impact. Repetitions build satisfaction and positive body image. Relationship of sport and consumer society builds the physical appearance spiced with cultural power. Advertisements force people to discipline, to become “modern” and “normal”. As narcissism, the consumer society intrigues addiction to exercising: fight against the downfall of the outer body (Cole, 2007).

Our survey studies the judgment and importance of the inner body in relations of gender and practice of sport. Let us presume that 17-19 years old young adults are placing emphasis on their appearances. The view of physical appearance differs between male and female as well as between those who are active and non-active.

Method

Study Objects

We studied 600 young adults: 253 female (42.2%) and 347 male (57.8%). Three hundred and ten persons were (51.7%) not engaged in active sport and 290 person (48.3%) active in sport (exercise minimum three times per week) (see Figure 1).

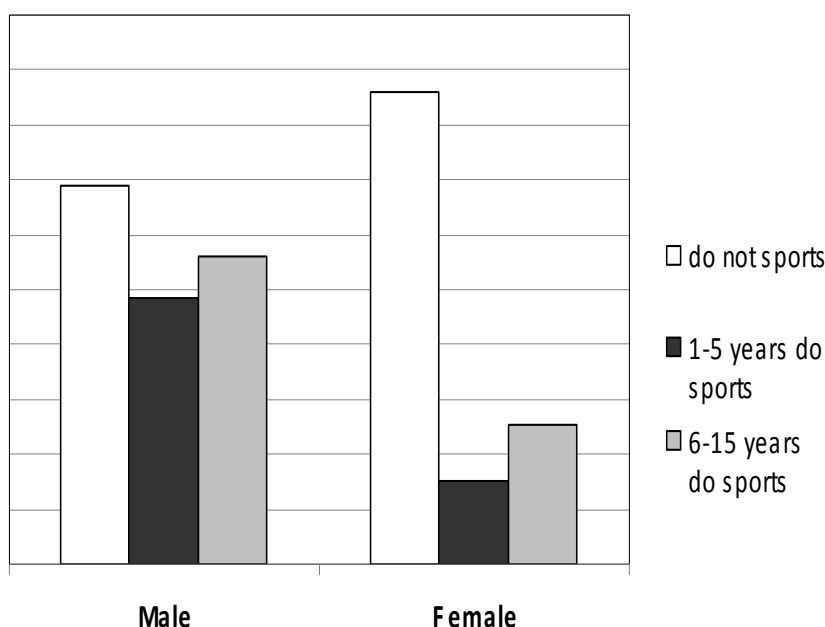


Figure 1. Rate distinguished per gender amongst secondary school students.

Process

The cross-sectional view is established by multiple choice questions. We have used SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences) 15.0 to process our survey: Pearson-khi² and non-parametrical tests (Mann-Whitney U-test and Kruskal-Wallis H-test).

We have studied various subjects: (1) appearance; (2) changing appearance; (3) social aspects of appearance; and (4) balance between inner and outer features, self-knowledge and satisfaction with self. Some questions aimed to see differences between male and female as well as between those who are active and non-active young adults.

Results

Appearance

Our main question was the importance of appearance and its details. We also requested to judge own satisfaction with their physique.

Ninety point seven percent marked appearance as important/very important. There was no significant difference between male and female as well as between those who are active and non-active young adults.

Most important factors were “groomed/neat” (490 persons) and “fresh breath” (451 persons). Least important factors were “eye colour” (18.3%) and “jewellery/body piercing” (17%) (see Figure 2).

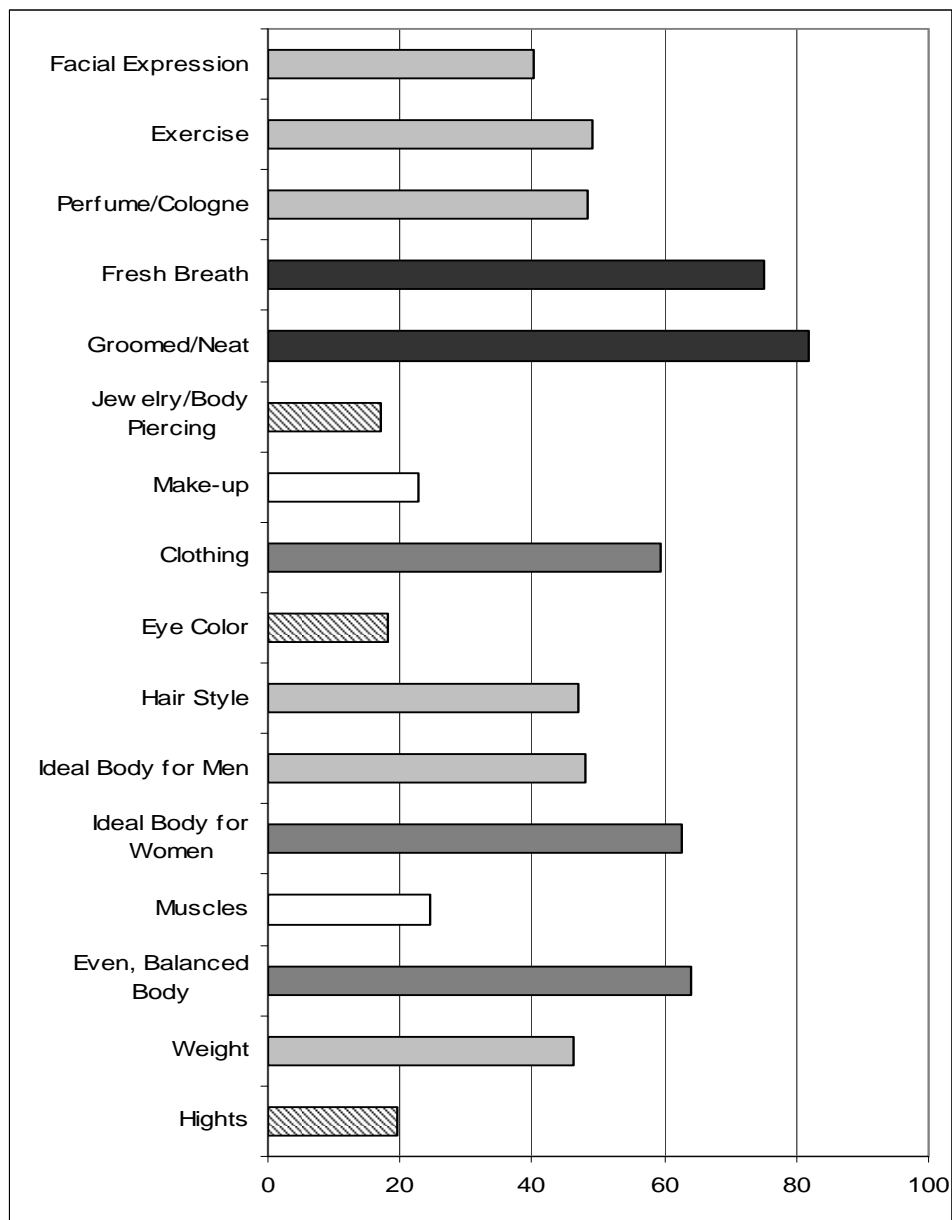


Figure 2. Importance of appearance.

Seventy-five percent of tested young adults are somewhat satisfied with their appearance. Totally satisfied

are mainly male students ($Z = -2.358$). Outcome is about the same for active and not-active in sports. Totally satisfied are those who are active in sports ($Z = -2.358$)

Ladies are unhappy with one of their body parts, mainly with their tights and abdomen, followed by their buttocks, hips and breasts. In case of the abdomen, 63.4% are not actively involved in sports.

Changing Appearance

We were looking to find answer to what methods are being used by young adults to alter their appearance. Then we wanted to know how popular is dieting and we were interested in differences between male and female as well as between those who are active and non-active young adults.

To alter appearance, 69% is willing to exercise, 37.2% chooses diet. Male students are more interested in choosing sport ($Z = -2.066$) and female students prefer diet ($Z = -6.832$). When it comes to choosing between exercise and diet to alter appearance for female students, there is a major difference between those active and non-active in sports. Out of all female students, 64% choose exercise. Out of this 75.3% are active and 59.3% are not active in sports (these chose dieting).

When it comes to judging body weight, we noted a significant difference between male and female students ($Z = -4.751$). Sixty-five point five of total students believe their weight is optimal. While female students who are not satisfied with their weight they believe they are overweight, the male students feel as they are underweight (see Figure 3). There is a significant difference between male and female students in keeping diet ($Z = -11.333$). Sixty percent of the female students and 17% of the male students have dieted at least once. There is no significant difference between active and inactive young adults.

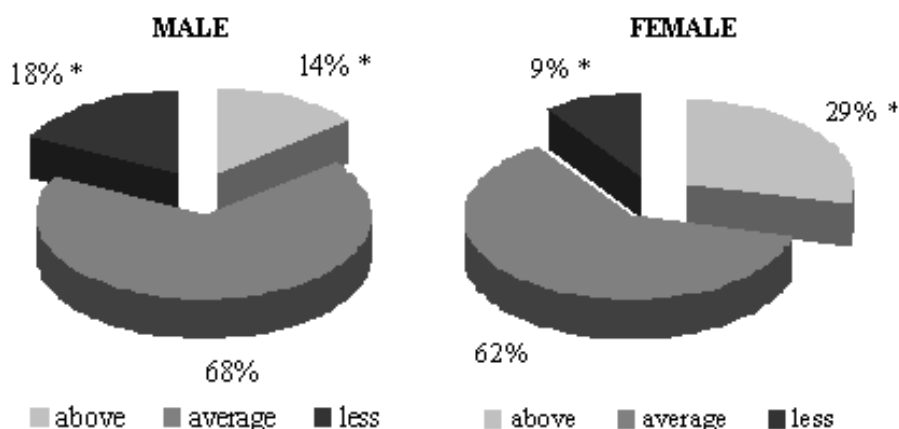


Figure 3. Judging body weight to optimal body weight—male and female students.

Social Aspects of Appearance

Here, we were curious to study young adults' beliefs of what part of life is most significant to have better appearance. We aimed our questions to see what quality and which body part they notice on each other first.

Answers show that appearance does not play a vital role amongst family relations. Sometimes, it does in friendship, academic life and sports. Young adults believe that appearance is important in choosing work (97.3%), carrier (95%), fame (92.7%), love (96.7%) and successful inter-relationships (96.2%).

Young adults emphasize importance of well-groomed partner (78.8%) and somewhat important (69%). Next to this 75.3% believes respecting each other is very important (inner body). Female students place emphasis on their partners' height, self-security and good humour. Male students place importance on their

partners' body shape and body presentation. There is no difference in active and non-active in sports.

When it comes to first impression, both gender look at each others' faces first (evolutionary reasons). Followed by the study of the eyes—mainly in the case of female students ($Z = -6.216$). Male students study breasts ($Z = -6.605$), buttocks ($Z = -2.178$) and legs ($Z = -2.382$) (again: evolutionary reasons). We found difference only between active and inactive male students in sports: Those who are active in sports study buttocks ($Z = -2.755$) and legs ($Z = -2.313$). This means that among 23.92% of the male students who check buttocks, first 3/4th is active in sports and out of 7.78% who checks legs, first 85% is active in sports.

Balance Between Inner and Outer Features, Self-knowledge and Satisfaction With Self

This is the last part of our test. We studied our study group's opinion, if inner and outer features are lined with each other, how well they know themselves and if they are satisfied with themselves.

We learned that 69.2% believes that inner and outer features correspond to each other. There was no significant difference between males and females as well as between those who are active and non-active young adults. Sixty-eight point seven percent believes that they knew themselves well/very well.

There is a significant difference between genders, when it comes to self-knowledge ($Z = -3.272$). Sixty-three point six three percent of female students believe they know themselves well/very well. Seventy-two point thirty-three percent of male students believe they know themselves well/very well.

There was no significant difference between male and female as well as between those who are active and non-active young adults. Total 31.9% of young adults are fully satisfied with themselves. Fifty-four point nine percent somewhat and 13.2% very little satisfied with themselves. There is a significant difference in this area between female and male students ($Z = -5.629$). Twenty-three point seven one percent females and 37.75% are fully satisfied with themselves.

In regards of genders, there is no difference between those somewhat satisfied with themselves and there is difference between those not at all satisfied with themselves: nine point nine percent of the female students and 2.6% of the male students are not at all satisfied with themselves. As believing in themselves, we found major difference between those who are active and those who are not active in sports ($Z = -2.883$).

The outcome shows not much difference between genders and sport activities: sixty-two point zero seven percent those who active and 62.90% those who are inactive in sports somewhat believe in themselves. When it comes to fully satisfied with one-self, basically are those who are active in sport. And naturally those who are not at all satisfied with themselves are those not active in sports.

Conclusions

Our research shows that young adults believe the importance of appearance and clean physique. They believe that positive appearance assists not only in job-landing, carrier and fame, but also in successful relationship and love-life. Media and peer pressure makes female young adults conscious of their abdomen and tights. Sport is promoting to sculpture the physical body to positive appearance.

Young adults are using sports to form their ideal physical body. Sixty-nine percent chooses exercise, however, we need to mention the importance of dieting—especially within female students. Many students guess their weight too much, even if they are ideal, and therefore, turn to diet too often, instead of exercise.

Importance is based not only on the shape of the physical body, but also the hygienic appearance as well. As for the evolution states, importance between genders are first the importance of face and eyes. For male

students, this is followed by appearance of the breast and hip/buttocks.

We have also studied the parallel between the inner/outer appearances within oneself. We were also curious to see if these are in harmony. Sixty-nine point two percent of the students believe inner/outer self is in balance. Most know themselves well. However, male students tend to think more of them than what they are. Female students are more self-secure. Those who are thinking positive of themselves are mainly active in sport-looks, as sport is establishing better self-security.

In post-modern society, we find a new path in private and social life. Inner self is losing importance to outer appearance. This results in numerous new questions: aging, sickness and multi-gender. Importance of appearance alters consumer society and new trends adjust culture to selling to new markets, thus, forcing society to believe in the importance of following a trend that helps to achieve cultural norms. Trends that use instruments linked to “aesthetic outer body” to receive attention and assistance getting on with life easier (Vingender, 2007).

Media promotes socially approved appearance, not only aesthetic strength but also health, spirit as well. The physical inner and outer body offers basic representation of a person. This of course pulls the demographic question to see which one is chosen by the actual society. Values are questioned. It is regretful to establish that in post-modern society, media is emphasizing more on the outer self (Bollók, Menczel, & Vingender, 2010). Pressuring young adults into decisions leads to support the importance of the appearance, while disregarding the vitality of health and inner beauty.

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