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ATTITUDE TO BODY IMAGE IN YOUTH

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The article focuses on the importance of a positive attitude towards body image. The concept of body image has become a central issue in biological and medical science, as well as in psychology, philosophy, cultural and feminist studies. Body image issues have increased worldwide over the last 30 years and do not only concern young people but affect people of all ages.

Introduction. Many young men and women are concerned about their body image. Body image is not just what we see in the mirror. It involves memories, assumptions, and generalizations. Throughout history, humans have given importance to the beauty of the human body. Society, media, and popular culture often shape how a person sees their own body. We are bombarded every day with images of perfection. But these messages may be harmful because the standards of physical attractiveness portrayed by the media are hard to live up to.

Body image is the mental representation one creates. Body image encompasses a mental picture of one's physical appearance, body functions and other features. Body image is subject to all kinds of distortion from internal elements like emotions, moods, early experiences, attitudes of parents, and much more. Nevertheless, it strongly influences behaviour. The body is the indicator for "weakness", "fatigue" as well as "strength", "excitation", etc. The body reveals itself in the sphere of sexuality, religious experience.

Main part. Appearance is an important aspect in one's life. Teenagers spend long hours in front of a mirror and pay disproportionate attention to outfits. The reason is that they are often unhappy with their appearance, feel anxiety. Outrageous clothes make them stand out in a crowd and help them feel worthy and valued. Teenagers who feel confident about their physical appearance do not need such a "confirmation". When we get older, concern about appearance usually decreases. Teenagers get used to their appearance, accept it and stabilize the aspiration level associated with it. Young men and women are concerned about their mental abilities, their personality traits (morality, competence, sociability) and vocational choice. They tend to prioritize career success and effective interpersonal relationships [1].

Self-esteem often serves as a means of psychological protection. The desire to have a positive self-image often induces an individual to exaggerate his advantages and minimize his disadvantages. In general, the adequacy of self-evaluations seems to increase with age. Adults' self-assessments on most indicators are more realistic and objective than juveniles'. The reason is that adults' self-assessments are affected by great life experience, mental development and stabilization of the aspiration level.

Teenagers with low self-esteem are especially vulnerable to anything that somehow affects their self-esteem. They are oversensitive to criticism and teasing. They feel other people do not value them. They are unhappy if they cannot reach their goals in their work. They cannot accept their own flaws. Because of this, many of them seem to be shy, withdrawn, they try to escape from reality and enter the world of dreams, and this escapism is by no means voluntary. The lower the level of one's self-esteem, the more likely they suffer from loneliness. It is important for young people to be accepted by society.

Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception [3].

There are four aspects of body image: 1) a perceptual body image - how one sees his/her body. This is not always a correct representation of how one actually looks; 2) an affective body image - the way one feels about his/her body. This relates to the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction one feels about his/her shape, weight and individual body parts; 3) a cognitive body image - the way one thinks about his/her body. This can lead to preoccupation with body shape and weight; 4) a behavioural body image - behaviours in which one engages. When a person is dissatisfied with the way they look, they may isolate themselves because they feel bad about their appearance or employ destructive behaviours to modify parts of the body they do not like [2].

A positive body image occurs when a person is able to accept, appreciate and respect his/her body. A positive body image is important because it is one of the protective factors, which can make a person more resilient to eating disorders. In fact, the most effective eating disorder prevention programs are based on two approaches: a health promotion approach, focusing on building self-esteem and a positive body image, and a balanced approach, focusing on nutrition and physical activity.

A positive body image will improve self-esteem, self-acceptance, healthy outlook and behaviours.

The attitude towards one's body carries out a regulative, controlling, integrating, stabilizing, protective function. Body image is related to self-expression. The perception of one's body changes over the years [3].

A negative body image leads to a distorted perception of one's shape - people may become preoccupied with what they feel to be bodily flaws; they are convinced that only other people are attractive and find it difficult to accept the way they look; they may experience discomfort, dissatisfaction, shame, or even disgust in relation to their appearance; they may feel uncomfortable and awkward in their bodies [3].

According to the cognitive theory, dissatisfaction has the following components: appraisal (based on thinking) and perceptual (based on perception).

We conducted research to find out gender differences in attitude to body image in youth. We used a questionnaire on body dissatisfaction (developed by O.A. Skugarevsky and S.V. Sivukha) [6].

Students of Polotsk State University aged 18 to 24 took part in the study. Out of 40 students, there were 20 males and 20 females.

We analyzed the empirical data and obtained the following results.

The significance level was $p > 0.05$, therefore, the differences in gender attitude to body image were not significant. Thus, the males and females are equally concerned about their bodies.

According to the results, we can say that both males and females want to improve their body as much as possible. All young people want to have a slender figure. Most do not accept their body as it is.

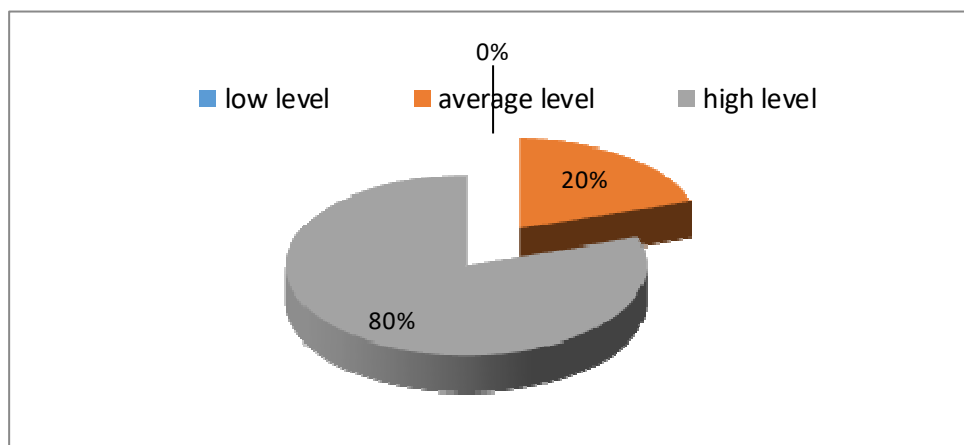


Fig. 1. Level of body dissatisfaction (males)

According to the data, we can conclude that 80% of the young men have a high level of non-acceptance of their bodies, 20% have an average level. The young people with a low level of body acceptance were not found in the study. According to the data received, it can be concluded that males reflect on their physical self.

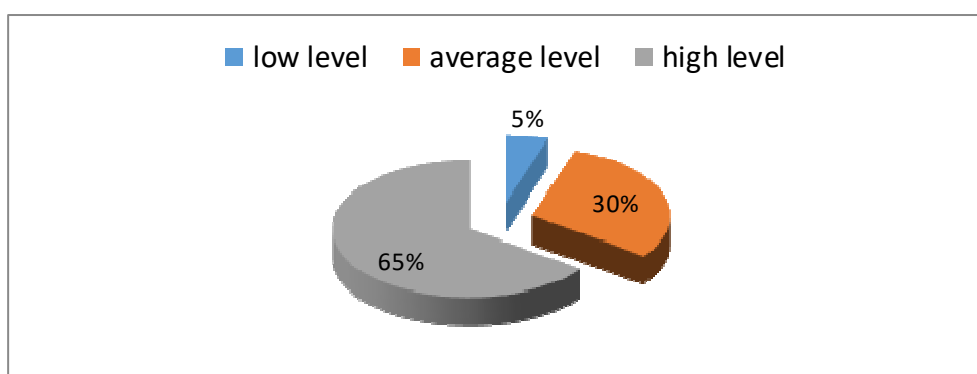


Fig. 2. Level of body dissatisfaction (females)

65% of the females do not like their own bodies, 20% accept their bodies, but they want certain changes. Only one female is completely satisfied with her body.

Conclusion. Body image is considered a multi-dimensional concept that includes perceptual, attitudinal, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Body image, in most definitions, is a mental picture of the size, shape and appearance of one's physical body and one's feelings concerning these characteristics and one's body parts.

Body image can have a wide range of psychological and physical effects. Women all over the world are evaluated and oppressed by their appearances. Males also face similar burdens in regards to attractiveness, whereby the media's depiction of the ideal muscular physique has caused numerous body dissatisfaction issues among young men. Teenage boys in particular, are now three times more likely to suffer from body dysmorphic disorder, with numbers reaching 45% since 1991[4].

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions: the gender differences in attitude to body image are not significant. This means that today young men are concerned about their bodies as much as young women are.

The number of males and females who do not accept their bodies is much greater than the number of males and females who are satisfied with their bodies. Most young people want to modify parts of the body they do not like. Everyone wants a slender figure and attractive appearance.

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