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Body Image Perceptions among Dancers in Urban Environmental Settings

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Abstract

Dancers are believed to be predisposed with highly concerned about body image and often strive for thinness. This cross-sectional study was conducted among full-time and part-time dancers to determine the body image perception among dancers in urban environmental settings. A total of 155 dancers had participated in this study. It was found that among those who are in an ideal body mass index, the result shows that 31.9% did not satisfy with their body image. In conclusion, there are a significant numbers of male and female who have unfavourable body image even though they have an ideal body mass index.

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Keywords: Body image perception; physical appearance; body mass index; dancers

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1. Introduction

Body image is regarded to be a multifaceted construct. Body image can be defined as the perception of one's body in terms of how it looks and feels. It is changeable with mood, experience and environment (Croll, 2005). Melan, Haugland and Breidablik (2006) defined body image as the individual, subjective sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's body or physical appearance. Body image also means that a person's awareness about own body (Danis, Bahar, Isa, & Majid, 2014). Hence, the term 'body image' is comprised of two themes that are body perception and body satisfaction. Body perception means that assessment of individual towards his physical aspects of his body. Meanwhile, body satisfaction is more focus on individual's body size and shape that related to the body confidence, body esteem and body dissatisfaction (Burrowes, 2013). In this study, the context of body image will be classified as being satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The desire to have a perfect body weight can induce negative body image perceptions (Castonguay, Brunet, Ferguson, & Sabiston, 2012). Thus, this might lead to critical consequences for the progress of a series of maladaptive behaviours and emotions such as low self-esteem, having eating disorders, depression and are ashamed of their own body (Castonguay et al., 2012) which may affect their quality of life (Abbas, Nikmat, & Almashoor, 2013).

The need to look good might also influence by the characteristics of surroundings that may have an impact on the quality of life of urban dancers (Eusuf, Mohit, Eusuf, & Ibrahim, 2014). The characteristics of the built environment itself may have an influence on the behaviour of a person who lives and using it (Hashim et al., 2012; Ramlee & Said, 2014). Radell (2012) discovered that dancers that use mirrors in dancing training, which is usually a common routine for dancers, experienced a high level of dissatisfaction with their appearance. The usage of the mirror causes not only the dancers are concerned about the whole body, but even a single part of their body is also included in the anxiousness that clouded the judgment regarding ideal body weight. Also, the active space can change the way individuals' interaction with each other (Aziz, Ahmad, & Mahdzar, 2012). The idolization of low body weight, combined with the belief that body size can be altered, can result in the progression of body image distortions (Spadafora, 2010). Those that have body image insecurities also have low self-esteem, unhealthy mental condition, and eating disorders (Castonguay et al., 2012; Luo). Also, the audiences also judge the dancers by their physical appearance (Rahadi, 2012) that might cause more anxiety for them. Thus, this suggests that anxiety about body image can lead to further degradation of the quality of life among dancers. Therefore, recognizing the body image preferences or satisfaction among dancers would help and alter the dancers' lifestyle into a healthier one (Mansor & Harun, 2014; Othman, Lamin, & Othman, 2014).

Body image distortion was notably common among dancers (Ravaldi et al., 2003). The desired to be thinned, which is strongly linked with performers, plays an important role in interfering with the positive view of body image (Abraham, Mira, Beumont, Sowerbutts, & Llewellyn-Jones, 1983; Bettel, Bettel, Neumärker, & Neumärker, 2001; Pierce & Daleng, 1998). Ferrand, Champely, & Filaire (2009) theorized that due to dance as a sport that highlighted slenderness and low body weight, a positive relationship between super skinny image, body weight and physical artistic movement makes dancers a high-risk group for eating disorders. However, this does not imply that being dancers make ones automatically susceptible to developing eating disorders behaviours such as binge-eating, bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa.

The dancer's body dissatisfaction is influenced by the cut-throat culture of the dancing world (Ravaldi et al., 2003). Weight is extremely important for professional performing artist especially for models, actors and dancers. Ku, Abu Osman, Yusof, & Wan Abas (2012), states that, for dancers, postural stability is very important in upholding body balance especially during silent standing, movement, and any actions that need a great amount of balance routine. Since the job requirement needed the dancers to have a low body mass index (BMI), it was predicted that the demands and expectations of the society and the dance itself might influence the perception of body image among the dancers. The deficit in knowledge can lead to wrong perception and fear due to different understanding (Awang-Rozaimie, Sahari, & Ali, 2012).

Dancers have a greater possibility to develop eating disorders than non-dancers are, with respect to weight obsession, body dissatisfaction, and perfectionism (Anshel, 2004). According to Özgen (2009), this group of people are avoiding from gaining weight due to their job necessity. Wan, Wong, & Chan (2001) have noted that a careful selection method is used to select the suitable candidate for performance arts. The perfect performing artist such should have the right figure, proper psychological attitude and talent. The strict criteria are putting the dancers under

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