

International Conference EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY CHALLENGES - TEACHERS
FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY - 3rd EDITION, EPC-TKS 2015

Is the Body Image So Important? Physical Identity in Relation to Gender and Self Esteem

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the relation between the body image (Physical Identity), Self-esteem and gender. Starting from the assumption that the Physical Identity is positive correlated to the Self-esteem we have assessed the Physical Identity and the Self-esteem in relation to gender on a sample of 60 adults, divided in two groups: 30 women and 30 men. The initial assumption was confirmed only for the group of women and it was infirmed for the group of men.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of EPC-TKS 2015.

Keywords: physical identity; self-concept; self-esteem; gender

1. Introduction

Recent researches introduce new concepts in the study of self-consciousness: body ownership - defined as immediate and ongoing experience of body belonging to the subject. We can also discuss about the self localization (self-location) defined as self localization experience to the subject's body in a certain position in space. Psychologists and neuroscientists began to study the experience of the body property by examining the localization of self and studying the assigning of the self to various isolated parts of the subject's body (Botvinick and Cohen, 1998; Ehrsson et al., 2004) and to the entire body (Arzy et al., 2006a; Lenggenhager et al., 2007). In the latest years

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the term of embodiment started to be used in order to make referrals to the self and the body. Starting from these findings, the Physical identity could be assigned to the entire body of a person, or to different parts of the person's body, such as face, belly, legs etc.

Physical identity (PhI) represents the individual's image about his/her own body and the representation of the body in relation to the environment (social and natural environment).

2. Study on Physical Identity in relation to Self-esteem and gender

2.1. Methods and instruments

The study sample was formed by 60 subjects, adults, 30 women and 30 men. The investigation was conducted on a sample of adults aged between 24 and 55 years.

2.1.1. Instruments used

In order to evaluate the Physical Identity (PhI) and Self-esteem (SE) we have used the Identity Structures Inventory (ISI) measuring seven identity structures, including PhI and SE. Each identity is represented in the scale by a number of five sentences denoted from 1 to 5. The final scores are then added to each scale, representing the identity profile of the subject.

The 7 structures measured by ISI refer to the individual subjective perception about:

1. Physical self - Physical Identity (own physicality, bio-physical characteristics of personal).
2. Social self (social identity).
3. Cultural self (identification with a particular culture, including religious aspects).
4. Family self (identification as a member of a family with their own behavioral patterns).
5. Professional self (identification with a particular professional category and with some work).
6. Self-esteem - encompasses both individual beliefs about himself and emotions associated.
7. Behavior directed to itself (resulted mainly from the level of the self-esteem).

2.2. Purpose of the study

The study objective was to evaluate the PhI perception related to SE and gender for the studied sample.

2.3. Results

According to the purpose of the study, the PhI and SE were investigated for both groups (men and women). Comparisons between the groups were also discussed within the present study. The graphic results for each group are represented below.

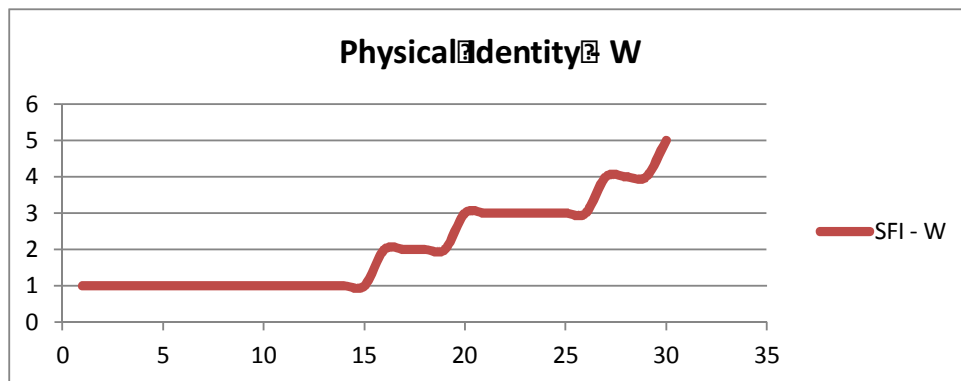


Figure 1. Physical Identity variation (body Self) for women

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