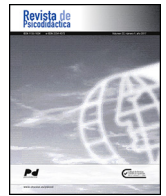




Revista de Psicodidáctica

www.elsevier.es/psicod



Original

Analysis of Sociocultural Stereotypes Towards Thin Body and Muscular Body: Differences According to Gender and Weight Discrepancy[☆]

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 October 2016

Accepted 9 February 2017

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Body image

Validation

Ideal body

Palabras clave:

Imagen corporal

Validación

Cuerpo ideal

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, to adapt and validate a two-factor model of Body Change Inventory to the Spanish context, in order to measure the *orientation towards thin body* and *orientation towards muscular body*. The second aim is to analyse the sociocultural stereotypes towards thinness and muscular body according to the sex variable combined with the discrepancy with the current weight. The sample consisted of 1022 students (488 girls and 534 boys) between 9 and 12 years old (female: mean = 10.41, *SD* = .66, males: mean = 10.47, *SD* = .68). An analysis was performed on the psychometric properties of the scale using different tests that enabled it to be considered as a valid and reliable tool. The results of variance analysis showed that both girls and boys intend to lose weight in the search for the thin body ideal, while more boys are pursuing a muscular body, regardless of whether they intend to lose, gain, or maintain weight.

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Análisis de los estereotipos socioculturales hacia cuerpo delgado y cuerpo musculoso: Diferencias en función del sexo y discrepancia con el peso

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene un doble objetivo. En primer lugar, adaptar y validar al contexto español un modelo bifactorial del Body Change Inventory para medir la *orientación hacia cuerpo delgado* y *orientación hacia cuerpo musculoso*. Un segundo objetivo es analizar los estereotipos socioculturales hacia la delgadez y el cuerpo musculoso según la variable sexo combinada con la discrepancia con el peso. La muestra está compuesta por 1022 estudiantes (488 chicas y 534 chicos) de entre 9 y 12 años (mujeres: *M* = 10.41, *DT* = .66; varones: *M* = 10.47, *DT* = .68). Se analizan las propiedades psicométricas de la escala mediante diferentes análisis que permiten considerarla instrumento válido y fiable. Los resultados del análisis de varianza indican que tanto chicas como chicos pretenden perder peso en la búsqueda del ideal de cuerpo delgado, mientras que son más los varones quienes persiguen un cuerpo musculoso, independientemente de si pretenden perder, ganar o mantener peso.

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[☆] Please cite this article as: Granero-Gallegos A, Martín-Albo Lucas J, Sicilia Á, Medina-Casabón J, Alcaraz-Ibáñez M. Análisis de los estereotipos socioculturales hacia cuerpo delgado y cuerpo musculoso: Diferencias en función del sexo y discrepancia con el peso. Rev Psicodidact. 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psicod.2017.02.002>

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Introduction

With the objective of achieving the sociocultural patterns of an ideal body, both men and women adopt behavioural changes such as non-healthy diets, the use of supplements and steroids, or excessive physical exercise (Blashill, 2011); which can pose a risk to health (McCabe et al., 2015). Amongst women, thinness is associated with beauty while feminine appeal is identified with extremely thin bodies (Jackson, Jiang, & Chen, 2016). In contrast, the literature reports that the ideal male body varies to that of women (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). The male usually pursues an ideal of a mesomorphic-type muscular body (Muris, Meesters, van de Blom, & Mayer, 2005); an ideal closely linked to the culture of masculinity and the role associated to the figure of the male as being powerful, strong and efficient (e.g., Edwards, Tod, Molnar, & Markland, 2016). What is interesting about these studies is that, as with women, the social and cultural pressure to achieve a body ideal can lead to body dissatisfaction (Pope et al., 2000).

To measure the desire that women and men show towards the ideals of a thin body and the ideals of a muscular body, two main instruments are used. In the case of thin body orientation, the *Drive for Thinness* (DT) is employed, a subscale of the *Eating Disorder Inventory* (EDI; Garner, 2004), although this is mainly in female populations. Of the instruments available to measure muscular body orientation, the most used (Tod & Edwards, 2013) is the *Drive for Muscularity Scale* (DMS; McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Nonetheless, both instruments have limitations. For example, they define the orientation towards the ideal body in relation to pathological consequences (e.g., eating disorders, protein ingestion and anabolic agents), which can limit their use in a non-clinical population. Furthermore, different studies report that the reagents do not measure equally in men and women, given the different orientation of each instrument (see for example, McCreary & Sasse, 2000).

To overcome these limitations, in the present work we opted to adapt the *Body Change Inventory* (BCI) of Ricciardelli and McCabe (2002) since this instrument can measure the ideals for thin bodies and muscular bodies in both men and women using the same conceptual base. The BCI measures the strategies related to feeding and physical exercise aimed at changing the body. Although initially counting on three factors of six items each, in the present work a two-factor model was employed – composed of strategies to lose weight (*Strategies to Decrease Body*) and strategies to augment muscular mass (*Strategies to Increase Muscle Size*) – as used by most prior validation studies (e.g., McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004; Mellor, McCabe, Ricciardelli, & Merino, 2008). Moreover, two-factor model for the BCI is the same as has been adapted to other contexts such as the Malaysian (Mellor et al., 2009), Chilean (Mellor et al., 2008) and Chinese (Xu et al., 2010). The overlap of two of the original factors, as reported by Ricciardelli and McCabe (2002), has led to the use of this two-factor model.

On the basis of the above, the first objective of our study was to adapt and validate a two-factor model for the BCI to measure *orientation towards thin body and orientation towards muscular body*. Thus, in Spain, we have an instrument that has the same conceptual base, which can measure the attitudes and behaviour towards body change. This instrument allows us to compare the two ideal stereotypes predominantly defined in the literature for both men and women, and to study if each ideal is associated with different attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural consequences.

Nevertheless, orientations towards an ideal thin body and an ideal muscular body usually differ in the ways girls and boys perceive their weight; that is to say, the way in which each group perceives their weight; and this variance can reflect the internalisation of social norms with respect to different body ideals

and the pressures that men and women perceive in achieving a particular ideal (e.g., a thin body ideal for women and a muscular body ideal for men). In both cases, any discrepancy with current weight reflects dissatisfaction, in such a way that the person usually presents changes in attitudes and behaviour towards gaining or losing weight (McKinley, 2006). Although weight discrepancy is a commonly used variable in studies on women (e.g., Castonguay, Brunet, Ferguson, & Sabiston, 2012; Lin, McCormack, Kruczkowski, & Berg, 2015), it is also included in certain research on both sexes (Ambwani & Chmielewski, 2013; McKinley, 1998). In general, the studies show that the people who reflect greater weight discrepancy present more negative psychological, affective and behavioural consequences on health (feeding behaviour disorders, low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, etc.) (see for example, Arciszewski, Berjot, & Finez, 2012; Castonguay et al., 2012). In spite of this evidence, until now there has been no research relating weight discrepancy with orientations towards thin body and muscular body ideals within the same work.

In general, the research shows that women tend to report a lower weight than their real weight (Ambwani & Chmielewski, 2013), at the same time as manifesting more than men their desire to have less weight than they actually do (McKinley, 1998). This proves relevant because it could explain the tendencies of men and women towards different body ideals. However, even though research over recent decades suggest that women seem more orientated to thin body and men to muscular body, this does not exclude the possibility that both body ideals can be found in both groups (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004; Ryan & Morrison, 2013). Therefore, analysing thin body and muscular body orientations in relation to weight discrepancy can help to explain the effects that social body norms have nowadays on men and women. Indeed, it could transpire that thin body and muscular body orientations are not only affected by the person's sex but also by the type of discrepancy that the person shows with regard to their weight. For example, Lin et al. (2015) showed that orientation towards thin body in women is associated to the weight discrepancy that they perceive with respect to their partners. In particular, women who perceive a partner's preference for thinness (even when the partner does not report such a preference) show greater orientation towards thin body form than women that do not manifest such discrepancies. These data suggest that weight discrepancy could indicate the internalisation of particular body ideals, independent of the person's sex. Therefore, to investigate this relationship, a second objective of the study was to analyse sociocultural stereotypes towards thin and muscular body combining the variables, sex and weight discrepancy.

Method

Participants

The sample selection was probabilistic and, for convenience, based on the students available. In total, 1022 students participated (488 girls and 534 boys) from eleven education centres and aged between 9 and 12 years (girls: $M = 10.41$, $SD = .66$; boys: $M = 10.47$, $SD = .68$) from two Spanish provinces – Granada (76.4%) and Almería (23.6%). The students were in the fifth (47%) and sixth grade (53%) of primary school. Of the girls, 61.8% reported that they wished to lose weight, 18% to maintain their weight and 20.1% to put on weight. Of the boys, 52.2% reported that they wished to lose weight, 21.9% to maintain their weight and 25.9% to put on weight. Likewise, to analyse the scale's temporal stability, an independent sample of 52 primary students (26 boys and 26 girls) was used, with ages between 12 and 13 years ($M = 12.77$, $SD = .83$).

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