

Should size 0 models
be allowed on the
catwalk essay



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In the world that we live in, it is more likely to see a size zero model prancing about your television screen than a woman with healthy weight and size.

Nowadays however, the pressure is on for young women to be as skinny as they can be, which borders on the skeletal. Although some believe this is beautiful, the 'ideal' body, it is a massive health risk and an unrealistic ideal to aspire to. For whose benefit is the media perpetuating this image and how damaging is this to our young people?

Research has shown that twenty six per cent of teenagers often don't eat breakfast, that twenty two per cent skip lunch and that ten per cent regularly go without either. Young girls, even young boys, are very impressionable and unfortunately they try to follow the trends which can slowly kill them. If someone saw a starving animal, you would call the RSPCA, so why is society allowing young girls to slowly starve themselves to death? We can all relate to being a teenager and how it is truly awful not to feel comfortable in your own skin, but do such drastic measures have to be taken?

Most people only see the physical changes to someone who is size zero, or trying to be. The health risks and dangers to a size zero are the same as someone who is suffering from anorexia. The effects on a young person's health are detrimental and usually involve weakening of bones, lower energy and concentration levels, bad breath, skins more prone to breakouts, hair and nails becoming brittle, and the weakening of muscles. It doesn't look too good to have bones sticking out of your body either and in no way can that be defined as beauty.

Dicing with the possibility of death is a pretty big health risk. Size zero became front page news when Luisel Ramos, an up and coming model who gained her big break but was told she needed to slim down in order to walk the catwalk, collapsed on the runway during Uruguay's Fashion Week. She died of heart failure after living on only lettuce and diet Coke for two months before her debut. This girl however, did not die in vain because after her death, Madrid Fashion Week banned size zero models.

The following month Milan did the same, banning all models with a body mass index (BMI) of 18 or below, which itself is very unhealthy and underweight. In 2007, The British Fashion Council promoted the creation of a task force to make guidelines for the fashion industry. They also urged fashion designers to use healthy models. However despite such worthwhile measures The International Herald Tribune recently reported that most models actually had a BMI of 12-14 which is well below the minimum BMI that they should have.

While Italian fashion labels Prada, Versace and Armani have agreed to ban size zero models from their catwalks. An inquiry reported in September 2007 that up to forty per cent of models could have an eating disorder and made a number of suggestions to promote health, yet ruled out a ban on size-zero models. Larger sizes fourteen and sixteen would also be introduced into shows and all models under the age of sixteen would also be banned.

In September 2010, Victoria Beckham banned size zero models from her New York Fashion Week runway show. She reportedly banned twelve models from appearing in her show after saying they were 'too skinny', stating that

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her clothes will be modelled by “ healthy girls who look ‘ realistic’ to encourage a positive image to impressionable teens”. Israel banned underweight models in March 2012 and their law states that women and men hired as models must be certified by a physician as having a BMI of 18. . This also requires the inclusion of an informational note in adverts using photos manipulated to make models look thinner. One modelling agent, who had helped promote the bill, suggested that the fall in typical dress sizes for models in the preceding fifteen to twenty years amounted to “ the difference between death and life”. However, another described the law as “ arbitrary” and “ not appropriate for every model”.

The changes are already being made and there is a growing recognition that zero is not a realistic size. However, many size zero models do not take kindly to them being classed as ‘ ill’ and ‘ unhealthy’, they believe as it is their life they should be able to do as they wish with it. They feel they are not hurting anyone else and still believe that they are fine as the sizes that would now be regarded ‘ skeletal’ and a ‘ danger to their health’, would have been acceptable sizes ten years ago.

The fashion designers of today make their clothes smaller in order to sell more, meaning that a size six ten years ago is a size zero nowadays. It’s a belief that the ‘ nicer’ clothes are always in smaller sizes, making women want to be more slender. These women also believe that the treatment towards them is very harsh as no-one says anything to the people who are overweight, all the negative attention goes to those who are underweight and they don’t think that’s fair.

If women are allowed to be overweight, then why can't they be their version of healthy? To them they are perfectly fine, there's nothing wrong with wanting to look and feel good about yourself so long as you have control over your own body? However, to look emaciated or skeletal is not an image of beauty and an insult to those who are genuinely starving in the world. In conclusion, it is a strong belief of mine that more action should be taken against size zero models.

More attention needs to be shone on this important issue, because while fashion models choose to cultivate an emaciated look to sell clothes, vulnerable young girls are increasingly seeing this look as something they should aspire to. Society should be reminded that there is more to beauty than looking like skin and bones and should there be any doubt about this we would do well to look at images of the famous fifties icon, Marilyn Monroe, who for much of her life was a size sixteen, who would argue that she was one of the most beautiful women in the world and comfortable in her own skin?