

# Body dissatisfaction

[Health & Medicine](#), [Body](#)



Determining risk factors, consequences, and protective measures of Body Dissatisfaction and Eating Disorders Determining risk factors, consequences, and protective measures of Body Dissatisfaction and Eating Disorders Body image is an individual's perception of his or her own body in terms of sexual attractiveness. Human society has emphasized on beauty of the human body for a long time. However, an individual's perception of their own body may differ from society's standards, thus, causing body dissatisfaction.

As a response to body dissatisfaction, every year, millions of people in the world succumb to potentially life threatening eating disorders. Eating disorders are a group of conditions characterized by abnormal eating habits that may involve excessive or insufficient food consumption, thus, affecting an individual's physical and psychological health. Some common types of eating disorders include bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, binge eating, and obesity. This paper has explored six published articles that conducted research on various factors contributing to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

The articles have examined the influence of society and media, gender and ethnic differences, development of depression, and some protective measures for body dissatisfaction and the development of eating disorders. In today's society, both men and women are pressured to obtain an unrealistic body size and shape. This has plagued even children through toys such as Barbie and Ken. Thin-ideal internalization is a potential risk factor for eating and body image concerns (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Family, peers, and media have a tendency of reinforcing the idea of thinness and its benefits (Thompson & Stice, 2001).

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Therefore, people, especially women view thinness as desirable and have begun to cultivate the norm that places increased value on thinness. Body dissatisfaction increases when women start believing that others do not accept their physical appearance. Women are continuously exposed to images and ideas of thinness, and are led to believe that thinness is an attainable goal. This notion has resulted in body dissatisfaction, as it can be very difficult to match the actual weight with the ideal weight (Thompson & Stice, 2001).

Women see many discrepancies when they compare their bodies with the ideal forms. This causes lowered self-esteem, which can then lead to eating disorders. Media in today's culture has a powerful presence. It does not only glorify thinness, but is also correlated with obesity. Media encourages sedentary lifestyle. Both children and adults spend a lot of time chatting online or watching TV while snacking, thus causing weight gain. Past research has suggested that women are more vulnerable to the influence of media and its effects on body image.

However, recent research has suggested that men are also prone to developing eating disorders because of media's emphasis on muscularity (Botta, 2003). Magazines serve as an important source of fashion and social comparison for adolescents. Reading sports and health magazines have been related to the development of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders for young boys (Botta, 2003). Men are judged on whether or not they have an ideal v-shaped body (Botta, 2003). Magazines motivate and reinforce muscle gain and attainment of a muscular body for men (Botta, 2003).

When men fail to change their body shape, they can become very critical of it and turn to negative eating behaviors. Young men have been found to consume steroids and other kinds of pills to acquire the desired body shape (Botta, 2003). Therefore, to combat the influence of media and society, many researchers have increased media literacy. These interventions have been providing information regarding various techniques used by the media such as air brushing and computer modification to alter the images of thin models, thus, reducing thin-ideal internalization (Thompson & Stice, 2001).

In addition, parents and teachers, with the assistance of media literacy trainers should encourage adolescents to accept their bodies and avoid comparing themselves to the images presented by the media. It is the responsibility of adults to find a way to harness media power for good instead of evil. Results from a research study has also revealed that focusing on the content of the magazines rather than on the models body size and shape can prevent adolescents from developing body image disturbance and eating disorders (Botta, 2003).

Tylka, (2004) has proposed some more factors responsible for the association between body dissatisfaction and eating disorders that include body surveillance, social insecurity, poor impulse regulation, and having someone in the family with disordered eating behaviors. Poor impulse regulation refers to an individual's tendency to engage in negligent and self-destructive behaviors. People with poor impulse regulation and body dissatisfaction have a tendency to resort to unhealthy eating behaviors as compared to others (Tylka, 2004).

Research has showed that people who fail in their relationships and are dissatisfied with their bodies engage in harmful weight regulation techniques (Tylka, 2004). Constantly monitoring and judging one's own body can sometimes cause psychological damage beyond repair. Results have reflected that emotionally unstable people are weak-willed, dissatisfied with their body image, and therefore, develop eating disorders (Tylka, 2004). Regular exposure to individuals such as family members with eating disorders and body dissatisfaction have also led to the development of eating disorders (Tylka, 2004).

Researcher should continue making efforts to create an awareness of these factors and implement interventions to prevent the development of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction simultaneously targeting all the above-mentioned risk factors. Culture plays an important role to determine various factors in a person's life. A number of psychological and behavioral factors of different cultures have been identified as significant contributing factors in the development of eating disorders and body image disturbance.

Acculturation is also a good predictor for the development of poor body image and disordered eating behaviors.

Body image disturbance and dietary restraint have predominantly been found in Caucasians as compared to Latinas and African Americans (White & Grilo, 2005). Higher rates of anorexic, semistravation, and purging behaviors have been identified in Caucasian women (White & Grilo, 2005). There are no ethnic differences related to binge eating (White & Grilo, 2005). It is essential to examine the role of culture as a contributing factor to body dissatisfaction

and eating disorders in order to guide treatment and preventive measures.

Body dissatisfaction and eating disorders can lead to many physical and psychological consequences. According to Thompson & Stice (2001), the prevalence of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders as serious physical and psychological problems has increased recently in the Western world.

Some of the physical consequences include malnutrition, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, negative impact on skin and teeth, infertility and even death. Psychological consequences include depression, anxiety, substance abuse, delinquency, guilt, shame, and even suicide attempts.

Stice, E. , Hayward, C. , Cameron, R. P. , Killen, J. D. , & Taylor, B. (2000) have proposed that emergence of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders mainly take place after puberty. Puberty is a transitional period for both boys and girls from childhood to adulthood. This period can be difficult for adolescents as it involves many physical changes. Undergoing these physical changes can often lead to negative self-image, which in turn can lead to depression. Research has shown that at least 20% of adolescents are likely to develop depression sometime during their lives (Stice et al. , 2000). Women are more prone to be depressed than males because they dislike the physical changes that accompany puberty.

Puberty, therefore, for many is a vicious cycle marked with the beginning of different bodily changes such as weight gain, which can result in poor self-image, causing body dissatisfaction and turning to weight control measures.

The shame and guilt of resorting to such measures have been identified as reasons causing depression (Stice et al. , 2000). It is very essential, therefore, for parents and adults to provide support and teach adolescents

body-acceptance during this transitional period as a protective measure against body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

Peterson, R. D. , Grippo, K. P. , & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (2008) have suggested that women's self-worth should not be based on their physical appearance. Women are often viewed as objects by the society. Results have shown that many women compensate for their feelings of inadequacy, inequality, helplessness, and lack of power by controlling their eating habits (Peterson et al. , 2008). Women, therefore, should be encouraged to be proactive and gain control over other aspects of their lives in order to influence the social structure in different ways (Peterson et al. , 2008).

Society should also give them opportunities based on their merits to enhance their self-esteem as a protective measure. Many different empowerment programs such as Girl Talk, Go Girls, and Full of Ourselves have been established to boost women's morale, self-image, and self-acceptance, to teach them strategies for managing negative emotions, gain education and employment, media literacy, and improve social relationships (Peterson et al. , 2008). Empowerment can serve as a vital protective measure to help women realize that are no longer objects of the society and are not judged based on their physical appearance alone.

Thus, all the above studies provided great insight on the factors that cause body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors. They also highlighted gender and ethnic differences as well as physical and psychological consequences of body image disturbance and eating disorders. Prevention of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders is crucial in order to avoid physical

and psychological complications and the costs associated with them. In addition, adults need to take responsibility for teaching children healthy habits because parental values play an important role in shaping children's development.

They can influence their eating habits mainly by modeling healthy eating and exercise as well as encouraging children to be content with their bodies. Society needs to promote the idea that beauty exists in all shapes and sizes. Individuals should consult physicians to learn healthy strategies of losing weight. In future, interventions to prevent both eating disorders and body dissatisfaction should be integrated can since that will prove to be economical. These interventions should be designed to elicit behavior change rather than only being informative. References Botta, R. A. (2003).

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