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Effects of Media Body Idealization

Media has become one of the most powerful tools to influence any modern societal life - from politics to entertainment industry and even on the way we ought to live our lives. Media has somewhat dictated the way one looks at things and the values we are supposed to ascribe on them. This phenomenon is more prominent in fashion and modeling industry. With thin, masculine and fit models bombarding the latest clothing line, media silently but consistently tells us how we are supposed to carry ourselves, particularly on how our body is supposed to look like.

This phenomenon has resulted to several things that slowly plague our lifestyle - among which is disproportionate unhealthy dieting, with worse cases resulting to anorexia and other eating disorders - all for the sole purpose of achieving the norms that the media has presented (Tiggemann, Verri and Scaravaggi 293-294). The issues of unhealthy diet and eating disorders are not only phenomenon particularly seen among women. The same issues may be found among men as well, more particularly the members of third sex or the gay men (Dakanalis, Di Mattei, Bagliacca, Prunas, Sarno, Riva and Sanneti 357). The portrayals of how a body is supposed to look like have already taken its toll on this segment of the society. They are trying hard to emulate those thin, fit and muscular models to achieve physical perfection. The media's influence, though not seen, is more apparent than ever.

It has already been seen that constant exposure to media with contents involving a particular body type such as thin, lean or, in case of men,

muscular, have a corresponding effect on the frequency or the number of times a person checks his body (Dakanalis et al. 357). This implies increased consciousness on the way one's body looks like and on how it is supposed to look like. Men are becoming more and more aware of how far or close his body is to perfection - the way media has presented it. The media's presentation of masculinity and manhood has also resulted to the "objectification of male body parts" (Dakanis et al. 358). More and more men are becoming conscious of their physical looks and apparently, links the prominence of muscles, six pack and abs, with masculinity as if their manhood depends solely on it. This cannot be helped though, especially as women today, whose perception has also been dictated by the media, admire, or at least prefer, men with bigger and more prominent muscles. Media's portrayal of men and on how their body is supposed to look like has recorded a different effect on some men, particularly the less vain, heterosexual men. Some do not wish to achieve those demigod-like figures shown in media, but they are nonetheless aware that this is the one worthy of emulation. That said it was shown that some men try to participate in physical activities more than ever to at least lessen the gap from the so-called perfection (Wang 58).

Inclination to physical activities may be more noticeable to men than women. This may be explained by the fact that women are seen to have cared more on the fashion aspect of media presentation than their male counterparts (Wang 58). Women are more concerned in slimming down and being thin, than being fit and be on the healthier side.

Perhaps the most important effect of media's body idealization is body

dissatisfaction (Slater, Tiggemann, Firth and Hawkins 120). More and more women and men become increasingly dissatisfied on the way their bodies look. Women, whose bodies are farther than those shown in ads and other media, tend to be more concerned, which results to eating disorders and even depression to some extent (Slater et al. 121). Consequently, self-esteem is generally affected by this body dissatisfaction, as this one is closely related to a person's confidence. Looking good and feeling good does have some effects on one's ability to face other people or the public in general (Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke 487).

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