

ASSESSMENT OF BODY IMAGE IN WOMEN WHO DO

BODYBUILDING

Fernanda Dias Coelho, Pedro Bebert de Carvalho, Ana Carolina Soares Amaral, Maria Elisa Caputo Ferreira.

Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora.

According to Schilder (1999), body image is the mental representation of one's body, that is, the way it is perceived by a person. It is not only what is felt by the senses but also the ideas and feelings regarding one's own body, which are mostly unconscious. This author adds dynamism to the concept by stating that body image is continuously destroyed and rebuilt according to experiences lived.

Body satisfaction is one of the most important aspects related to body image and it is through it that a person shows his/her (dis)satisfaction with his/her appearance. It is a subjective component of body image and is related to the size of the body or of parts of it. Besides, Standards and norms of the dominating culture are capable of influencing people, causing body image disorders (Gardner, 1996). Thompson (1998) adds that it is associated with cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics. Shih and Kubo (2002) state that body dissatisfaction has been identified as the discrepancy between the perceived body and the desired, and the more distant they are, the more dissatisfaction there is.

In post-modern society, there is a disregard of subjectivity and a super valuation of image. There is a narcissistic cult of the body, which is sold as merchandise, where it is more important to have perfect measurements than to feel, think and create, and being thin is considered ideal (Souza & Campagna, 2006).

The search to practice physical activities is, many times, linked to body dissatisfaction (Damasceno, Lima, Vianna, Vianna & Novaes, 2005). The practice of regular exercise is not related to health as the main factor. For some groups, aesthetics has become a crucial point and health is a consequence of being fit.

The number of gyms in Brazil are becoming more and more representative. They are stages for the so-called “cult of the body”. When they are not seen as a way of transforming the bodies of individuals, the gyms end up with the function of maintaining the results of aesthetic surgeries or of the use of anabolic steroids (Iriart, Chaves & Orleans, 2009).

According to Bossi (2009), body building promoted the increase of fat-free mass, triggering the process of hypertrophy. In this sense, there is also an increase in the size of the muscle and, consequently, an increase in body dimensions. A study made by Pedretti (2008) found data which demonstrate the concern of the people who do this kind of exercise with becoming strong and “big”. Therefore, one can conclude that this type of activity must be analyzed carefully, since the objective of the person practicing body building may not represent the loss of weight and measurements.

Based on what is exposed above, this study aimed to assess the body satisfaction of women who do body building in a gym in Juiz de Fora-MG, Brazil.

Initially, the subjects signed a Free and Clarified Consent Term, in which all information about the study was provided. The participation was voluntary and the people interviewed were informed that they could quit the study at any time. The project was approved by the Ethics Committee under protocol number 1928.272.2009.

A sectional study was carried out, and the main tool used was the Brazilian version of the *Body Shape Questionnaire* (Di Pietro, 2001). The items of the BSQ were designed to measure the concerns and satisfaction with the shape of the body. On a Likert scale, the subject points how often, in the past four weeks, the events proposed by the alternatives happened to her. The final Brazilian version kept the 34 original items and four factors: “self-perception of the body shape”, “comparative preoccupation”, “attitude” and “severe alterations” (Campana & Tavares, 2009).

From the score obtained, there is the following classification: when the total score is less than or equal to 110 points, the result indicates *no* concern with body image; when the total sum is higher than 110 or lower or equal to 138, this total shows a *light* concern with body image; when the total points are higher than 138 or lower or equal to 167, it shows a *moderate*

concern with body image; and, in the case of a score higher than 168, it shows a *severe* concern with body image.

In addition to the BSQ, the weight and height of the subjects were taken so as to calculate the body mass index. This is the most widely used tool to analyze the nutritional and overweight status of populations of athletes and non-athletes (Anjos, 1992).

From the BMI, the subjects are classified into the following categories: values between 20 and 24.9 describe the desirable limit for an adult man or woman (Group 1); BMI between 25 and 29.9 indicate degree I of obesity (Group 2); between 30 and 40 indicates degree II of obesity (Group 3); and values higher than 40 indicate obesity degree III (Group 4) (Marins & Giannichi, 2003).

Fifty women who practice body building and went regularly to a gym in the city of Juiz de Fora - MG were interviewed. The subjects averaged 34.90 years of age (± 10.446) and the average BMI was 22.426 (± 3.290).

The average of the BSQ score was 85.90 (± 26.679), corresponding to no concern with the body. However, some subjects obtained a score which demonstrated some body dissatisfaction, and one of them reported severe dissatisfaction with the body.

In order to identify the existence of links between the BMI and the level of body satisfaction, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used ($p < 0.05$). The test detected a positive relation, but a low one, between the variables, suggesting that the higher the BMI, the higher the BSQ score and, therefore, the higher the body dissatisfaction ($r = 0.323$),

These data corroborate the study carried out by Ferreira and Leite (2002) in which the authors identified that the group of obese women obtained higher levels of dissatisfaction with body image in comparison with the group of non-obese women.

However, Segal, Cardela and Cordás (2002), when confronting the results obtained, pointed to the inexistence of a direct link between the BMI and body image dissatisfaction and/or distortion. They pondered that this relation is present with the perceived overweight and not with the truly overweight and emphasized the relevance of the psychological components in the assessment and representation process of body image.

A study performed by Kakeshita and Almeida (2006) about body size with people of both sexes showed that 87% of the women interviewed would like to reduce the size of their silhouettes and 73% of the men wished to increase it. Studies like that one demonstrate that body dissatisfaction reaches people of both sexes, but women are more susceptible to it.

Regarding weight training, Kelley and Neufeld (2010) have carried out a study on body image with men and women. In it, the authors verified that the search for a thin or muscular body is not gender-related. Therefore, both men and women are looking for body satisfaction through the increase in muscle mass. Results like these confront studies regarding gender and also the results of this study, in which women look for a thin and slender figure while men prefer a muscular body.

Although this work related BMI to weight training, the results observed confirm data found in other studies in the area of body satisfaction and demonstrated that dissatisfaction mainly reaches people who are overweight but considered healthy.

This study was able to verify that women who do weight training, who have an above average BMI, showed dissatisfaction with their appearance. In conclusion, further studies in this area are important to the extent that they provide an in-depth look into this group.

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