

A Sociological Study of the Social Determinants of Body Management among the Youth of Gilan-e Gharb County, Kermanshah, Iran

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Abstract: The present study aimed to sociologically investigate the social determinants of body management among the youth of Gilan-e Gharb County, Kermanshah, Iran. The statistical population of the present research consisted of the youth of Gilan-e Gharb County aged between 15 and 29 of which a sample of 402 subjects (148 males and 254 females) was selected through multistage sampling. For data collection, a demographic information questionnaire and a researcher-made questionnaire for body management were utilized. Further, to analyze the collected data, the Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple regression, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used with the help of SPSS 23 Software. The results of the present study demonstrated that the mean of the total body management was 2.82 among both genders. In terms of body management, nearly 3.2% of the respondents were in a good state, 72.9% in an average state and 23.9% in a bad state. Additionally, the results revealed that among the socio-demographic variables; education, socioeconomic status and body management were significantly related. Furthermore, the results of the multiple linear regression showed that among the socio-demographic variables; education ($\alpha = 0.206$) and socioeconomic status ($\alpha = 0.098$) had the strongest and weakest relationship with body management. In general, the proposed model of the present study explained 5.2% of the changes of body management (the dependent variable).

Key words: Body management, social determinants, Gilan-e Gharb county, education, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Today, the body is not merely seen as a biological and psychological reality but it is regarded as a socially constructed phenomenon (Cregan, 2006). Moreover, the body is one of the final indexes and ultimate bases of the social world in which one lives and it is safe to say that having a beautiful body is indicative of the social values and to some extent power and social control (Khajenoori and Moghadas, 2009). In any society, human bodies enjoy two forms of reality: physical and social. Moreover, shape, size, clothing and adornments on human bodies are considered mediums for communicating information to other members of the society (Ebrahimi and Ziapour, 2012). However, the physical attractiveness is among the issues adopting new standards in modern times and is considered one of the factors forming relationships so that body management has become more of the essence and various health-related behavior, including bodybuilding, diets, diverse sports equipment and cosmetics has been developed to look after the bodies (Fazeli, 2003). It seems that too much attention has been

paid to the issue of body along with globalization developments in the modern era, including the politicization of body by feminists, demographic factors, the growth of consumption culture, the emergence of new technologies and moving towards modernity (Abazari and Chavoshian, 2002). To exercise control over one's body and to pay attention to its composition, adornment and outer appearance act as means enabling the youth to retain and display their personal identity (Monadi, 2009). Similarly, one's assessment of normative judgments about the physical features and parameters pertaining to one's body affects one's satisfaction or dissatisfaction in this regard. Thus, body culture denotes the growing importance that the body has acquired as the focal center of one's reflection upon one's real self (Zokaei and Farzane, 2008).

The increasing importance and prevalence of one's choice concerning the selection of equipment needed for body management and appearance apparently ensue from the activities that are performed in the social climate of modern societies. Thus, one's taste in managing body and appearance is among the social behavior through

which people, especially the youth, attempt to represent their identity (Huang *et al.*, 2007) as the manner of body management is perceived as a distinctive symbol in the late modernity, whereby one's meaning of identity is judged (Khajenoori and Moghadas, 2009). In other words, today's societies are increasingly exposed to social changes and cultural developments. Hence, the body is of great importance, attracting the attention of many researchers as instead of entering postmodernity, the world is moving towards an era in which the consequences of modernity have become more radical and global than ever. Therefore, one of the issues raised in this field is body management, prevailing nowadays among the youth (male and female) because body management is conveyed through exercising actions such as choosing clothes, make-up, sports tastes, diets and so forth. Hence, managing appearance can act as a personal and sexual factor in one's identity. In the late modernity, the manner of managing appearance has adopted a distinctive symbol. Therefore, one's manner of body management as a means of distinguishing between identities is attached great importance. Furthermore, body management, representing identity is pivotal to one's perceptions of the real self and other's judgements on one's appearance (Featherstone, 2010).

Numerous studies have been conducted on body, body image, its management and their relations to other variables in the last two or three decades (Ebrahimi and Ziapour, 2012; Ziapour *et al.*, 2016; Mahmoodian *et al.*, 2015; Raghibi and Minakhany, 2012; Khajenoori and Moghadas, 2009; Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2006; Frisen and Holmqvist, 2010; Safari *et al.*, 2016). In a study done by Elmi *et al.* (2010), it was revealed that the variables of cultural consumption, leisure activities, consumer norms, religious beliefs were significantly related to body management. Keyvanara *et al.* (2010) concluded from their studies that there was a significant relationship between body management and one's socioeconomic status. Additionally, Soltani *et al.* (2013) reported that body management was average among the students of Tabriz University and the results of a study conducted by Kozar and Damhorst (2009) indicated that body management was much more practiced by women than men Young (2008) concluded that one's perspectives on one's own body were mainly based on positive images of body shape and size, social expectations, family backgrounds, norms, cultural values and religious beliefs. In relation to bodily ideals and practices among the Norwegian men and women, Rysst (2010) showed that dissatisfaction with body was considered a public health issue, more prevalent among women. In addition, the results of a study performed by Swami *et al.* (2010)

indicated that there was a significant relationship between the cosmetic ideals and dissatisfaction with body across different regions and the variables of age and Western media predicted the ideals of body mass and body weight, respectively. Given the significance of the role that the youth play in the health of societies and setting examples for others, the present study aimed to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the status of body management among the youth (males and females) of Gilan-e Gharb County like?
- Are there any differences between the youth in terms of body management?
- How much do the socio-demographic variables influence body management?

Research hypotheses: There is a relationship between each of the socio-demographic variables (age, education, marital status and socioeconomic status) and body management among the young boys. There is a relationship between each of the socio-demographic variables (age, education, marital status and socioeconomic status) and body management among the young girls. There is a relationship between girls and boys in terms of body management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this descriptive correlational study, the statistical population consisted of the youth of Gilan-e Gharb County aged between 15 and 29, totaling 3361 boys and 3994 girls according to the census conducted by the Statistical Center of Iran in 2006 ($n = 7355$) (www.sci.org.ir). Moreover, a sample of 360 subjects was calculated by Cochran's sample size formula, which was then increased to 400 subjects with the aim of increasing the reliability of the study and reducing the sample dropout (254 girls and 148 boys). As for sampling, since no lists of the statistical population were on hand, the sample selection was not conducted through simple random or systematic sampling. So, the best method was stratified multistage cluster sampling. After selecting a random sample across the city, the questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. Moreover, the inclusion criterion in the study was the participant's informed consent and the exclusion criterion was handing over incomplete questionnaires.

For data collection, a demographic information questionnaire and a researcher-made questionnaire for body management were utilized. The former consisted of six questions about gender, age, education, marital status and socioeconomic status of the sample under study.

Body management questionnaire: This 67-item researcher made instrument was measured by asking questions on weight control through exercise and hygienic and cosmetic care (daily showers, hair care, body care, wearing perfume and cologne and manicure and pedicure (the last two items are only for females). These items were extracted from the definitions of body and appearance management provided in the existing articles and books. Furthermore, to determine the validity of the questionnaire, its content validity was assessed and the experts on psychology, sociology and health were consulted. To increase the reliability of the instrument, a preliminary test was conducted and 30 questionnaires were distributed among the youth of Gilan-e Gharb County. To this end, the respondents were asked to tick the box that best denoted the importance of each item about the hygienic and cosmetic care on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = much, 5 = very much) ($\alpha = 0.89$). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed in previous studies, including Raghibi and Minakhany (2012), Ebrahimi and Ziapour (2012) and Ziapour *et al.* (2016) ($\alpha = 0.76, 0.79\%$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, of the whole 360 subjects under study, 62.3% (254 subjects) were female and 36.8% (148 subjects) were male. Moreover, the mean and standard deviation of the sample's age were 20.3 ± 23.6 . The majority (43.6% or 186 subjects) and minority (20.9% or 84 subjects) of the subjects were within the age range of 20-24 and 15-19, respectively. In terms of the marital status, the majority of the subjects were single (82.1% or 330 subjects) and 72 subjects (17.9%) were married. Furthermore, in terms of education, the high school diploma holders were in the majority (32.3% or 131 subjects) and 104 subjects (25.6%) had an education below high school diploma. In addition, in terms of education, 11.4% of the respondents were studying in middle school, 21.9% in secondary school, 32.8% were high school seniors, 12.9% were A.A. holders, 18.4% had BA/BS degrees and 2.5% were majoring for MA/MSc and higher. Moreover, in terms of the socioeconomic status, 115 (28.6) subjects had low status, 238 (59.2%) subjects with average status and 43 (10.7%) subjects with high status (Table 2-6)

According to the results of the frequency distribution of the dimensions of body management described in Table 1, the amount of attention given to cosmetic surgery among the young boys and girls was 4.1 out of 5.0. Research has shown that the prevalence of surgeries has laid the groundwork for Iranian's tendencies towards facial surgeries and nose jobs because the face is the center of attention and that is why Iranians are very much

into rhinoplasty (nose job) and Iran is known as the nose job capital of the world (Zokaei and Farzane, 2008; Keyvanara *et al.*, 2010; Ziapour *et al.*, 2015a, b).

In the next place, there was body care among both genders, using cosmetics for the external parts of the body, including skin care, hair care, manicure and pedicure, lip care, etc. The means of male and female respondents concerning cosmetics were 3.77 and 3.51 out of 5.0, indicating that the proportion of girls to boys was greater in this regard. At the present-day urban community of Gilan-e Gharb county, boys and girls were similar in the amount of attention they gave to their appearance.

A slimming diet denotes adjusting the food intake and exercise with the aim of improving physical health, including losing weight and keeping fit. The mean of giving attention to slimming diets among girls and boys was 3.65 out of 5.0. Slimming diets have become one of the increasingly prevalent phenomena in the youth culture (both genders). A glimpse of the volume of advertisements in newspapers and specialized publications in recent years is indicative of this attention (Zokaei, 2007). It seems that the characteristics of appearance are of the essence for women because they are of the opinion that more beautiful faces and bodies would assist them with the achievement of economic and social goals and ideals. In fact, the body is seen as a means of achieving things by women because in the patriarchal system of Iran, women with more beauty will be supplied with better opportunities to get married, get promoted and so on Ahmadnia (2005). This finding was consistent with the results of studies conducted by Ahmadnia (2005).

In the final place, there was wearing tight-fitting clothing among both genders. The mean of giving attention to this item among both genders was 3.03 out of 5.0, indicating that girls and boys were alike in this regard.

The results of the present study demonstrated that the mean of the total body management among both genders was 2.82. In addition, in terms of body management, 3.2% of the respondents had high status, 72.9% with average status and 23.9% with low status.

Hypothesis testing:

- There is a significant relationship between the age and body management of the youth (both genders)
- There is a significant relationship between the marital status and body management of the youth
- There is a significant relationship between the education and body management of the youth
- There is a significant relationship between the socioeconomic status and body management of the youth

Table 1: The frequency distribution of respondents in terms of the various dimensions of body management

| The dimensions of body management | Very much | Much | To some extent | Little | Very little | Mean (out of 5) |
|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | |
| Cosmetic surgery (both genders) | 132 (32.8) | 188 (46.8) | 76 (18.9) | 6 (1.5) | 0 | 4.1 |
| Body care (boys) | 22 (8.7) | 102 (40.2) | 114 (44.9) | 16 (6.3) | 0 | 3.51 |
| Slimming diets (both genders) | 18 (4.5) | 236 (58.7) | 140 (34.8) | 8 (0.2) | 0 | 3.65 |
| Body care (girls) | 20 (13.5) | 75 (50.7) | 53 (35.8) | 0 | 0 | 3.77 |
| Wearing tight-fitting clothing (girls) | 25 (9.8) | 51 (20.1) | 89 (0.35) | 86 (33.9) | 3 (1.2) | 3.03 |
| Wearing tight-fitting clothing (boys) | 13 (8.8) | 34 (0.23) | 48 (32.4) | 51 (34.5) | 2 (1.4) | 3.03 |
| Total body management | 0 | 15 (3.7) | 300 (74.6) | 87 (21.6) | 0 | 2.82 |

Table 2: The correlation between the respondent's age and the dimensions of body management

| Body management (age) | Body care | Cosmetic surgery | Wearing tight-fitting clothing | Slimming diets | Total |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Males | | | | | |
| Correlation | 0.202 | -0.050 | 0.180 | 0.050 | 0.145 |
| Sig. | 0.014 | 0.564 | 0.029 | 0.549 | 0.079 |
| Females | | | | | |
| Correlation | -0.059 | 0.082 | 0.019 | 0.039 | 0.004 |
| Sig. | 0.350 | 0.191 | 0.759 | 0.540 | 0.935 |

Total body management (both genders); R = 0.026; Sig. = 0.607

Table 3: Comparing the means of the respondent's total body management in terms of marital status

| Body management/marital status | Frequency | Mean | t-values | Sig. |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|-------|
| Females | | | | |
| Married | 40 | 25.2 | 1.698 | |
| Single | 214 | 25.8 | | 0.091 |
| Males | | | | |
| Married | 32 | 26.1 | -0.732 | 0.456 |
| Single | 116 | 25.8 | | |

Table 4: Testing the relationship between education and body management

| Variables | Pearson correlation coefficient | Sig. |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Body management (males) | 0.089 | 0.155 |
| Body management (females) | 0.131 | 0.112 |
| Total | 0.052 | 0.298 |

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of socioeconomic status with body management

| Group | Socioeconomic status | Frequency | Mean | SD | F-values | Sig. |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------|------|----------|-------|
| Body management (females) | Low | 49 | 25.2 | 0.74 | 3.173 | 0.045 |
| | Average | 72 | 26.2 | 0.66 | | |
| | High | 22 | 26.4 | 0.73 | | |
| Body management (males) | Low | 66 | 25.0 | 0.81 | 5.611 | 0.004 |
| | Average | 166 | 25.9 | 0.96 | | |
| | High | 21 | 26.8 | 0.79 | | |

Table 6: The summary of multivariate linear regression between the independent variables and body management (both genders)

| Independent variables | Standardized coefficients | | R ² coefficient of determination | Standardized coefficient (β) | t-values | Sig. |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------|---|------------------------------|----------|-------|
| | Regression coefficient (B) | SE | | | | |
| Constant value | 2.025 | 0.287 | 0.052 | 7.059 | 0.000 | |
| Socioeconomicstatus | 0.334 | 0.079 | | 0.206 | 4.198 | 0.000 |
| Education | 0.038 | 0.019 | | 0.098 | 1.993 | 0.047 |

R = 0.227

The present study aimed to sociologically investigate the social determinants of body management among the youth of Gilan-e Gharb County, Kermanshah, Iran. The results demonstrated that the mean of body management was 2.82 (56.4%) out of 5.0. Additionally, the results revealed that there was a significant relationship between the socio-demographic variables and body management. The results of the multivariate linear regression showed that among the aforementioned

socio-demographic variables, only the socioeconomic status had the strongest relationship with body management among both genders ($\alpha = 0.206$). In general, the proposed model of the present study explained 5.2% of the changes of body management (the dependent variable). The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient revealed that there was a correlation between both gender's age and body management but the correlation was different for the various dimensions of

body management in terms of significance. In other words, there was a significant relationship between the boy's age and the two dimensions of body care and wearing tight-fitting clothing whereas there was not such a relationship among girls and the results indicated that there was a negative relationship between the girl's age and the two dimensions of body care and wearing tight-fitting clothing. The correlation coefficient of variables showed that with the increase of age, the amount of attention given to body management is reduced among both genders. In addition, the correlation coefficient between age and body management indicated that with the increase of age, the youth's perception of themselves strengthened but this correlation was not significant. The relationship between age and body management can be seen as an attempt to take the remembrance of death away and to divert the mind away from the contemplation of it (even unconsciously) which is realized through engagement with successive and constantly upgraded affairs, including management and body care. According to the concept of body anxiety, many people consider themselves projects, signifying the dangerous environment, fear of aging, illness and death (Shilling, 1993). This result was consistent with the results of studies conducted by Azadarmaki and Chavoshian (2002), Fatehi and Ekhlasli (2008), Ebrahimi and Behnoei (2010), Jamshidiha and Parastesh (2007), Safari *et al.* (2016), Ebrahimi and Ziapour (2012) and Huang *et al.* (2007).

Furthermore, the results of comparing the means demonstrated that the marital status of the youth and body management were related but this relationship was not significant among boys. The results of variance analysis and linear regression showed that there was a significant relationship between the respondent's body management and socioeconomic status. In fact, the mean difference observed in the real sample was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. The variables of the socioeconomic status and education could predict body management among the youth ($R^2 = 0.052$). In other words, it can be stated that with the increase of the socioeconomic status, the amount of attention given by the youth (both genders) to body management is increased. Accordingly, it can be said that the higher the socioeconomic status, the more attention is given by the youth (both genders) to body management. This result was consistent with the results of studies performed by Abazari and Chavoshian (2002), Fatehi and Ekhlasli (2008) and Jamshidiha and Parastesh (2007). It should be noted that the social class to which one belongs will influence one's body management. This result was indicative of Bourdieu's theory indicating that the body was the most

unquestionable manifestation of tastes in different social classes displayed in different forms (Zokaee, 2007). Accordingly, there is an established proportion and balance between food, clothing, residence, education and cars in our social lives. Therefore, various signs in life represent certain mental images among social groups and their relative positions in society. One's cultural sensibility is affected by one's social class, so that those of the upper class enjoy a superior culture and claim distinction, excellence and legitimacy (Fazeli, 2003).

Moreover, the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there was not a significant relationship between education and body management among both genders, being consistent with the results of studies conducted by Abazari and Chavoshian (2002), Ebrahimi and Behnoei (2010), Jamshidiha and Parastesh (2007). The education levels of the youth (girls and boys) showed that the girl's correlation was more than that of boys which might be due to the fact that environments outside families such as schools and universities, cause girls to be faced with distinctions and symbols different from those in other strata, resulting in their giving more attention to the body management compared with boys.

In sum, the youth can monitor their body management through the aforesaid mechanisms with the aim of expressing their tastes confirmed by their social and cultural atmosphere. Each of us as individuals in certain societies is always evaluated by other members of society and parts of these judgements are based on one's face and appearance, forming the basis of social occasions (Ekhlasli, 2009). In other words, beauty and getting full benefits from it (being natural in the past, whereas obtainable nowadays) are manifest features that have always put the ones in possession of these features in better positions in terms of social evaluations compared with ordinary people and those less enjoying these features. Therefore, given the developments in nutrition, health and sports technologies, together with the importance of functionality, autonomy, consumerism, youth and fit bodies influenced by popular cultures broadcast in the new media; body and body orientation have turned into pivotal issues in social and cultural studies of contemporary societies and the overall pictures of societies, major cultural developments and the trends of their changes are provided by the body culture (Featherstone, 2010; Jelodar *et al.*, 2016).

In today's modern world, young people follow certain lifestyles, making one adopt personal identities representing them in the presence of others (Gundersen *et al.*, 2008). So, lifestyles are seen as everyday functions, being displayed in how they get

dressed, what they eat and so on. In addition, to choose or to develop lifestyles are influenced by the pressure groups, their behavioral models and socioeconomic circumstances (Grogan, 2000).

From the viewpoint of Lays, the recent era of modernity is a dramatic visual culture (Azadarmaki and Chavoshian, 2002). Among these appearances, body is resembled to one of the most accessible physical locations that can carry and display differences in lifestyles and identities. Thus, the body is regarded as an identity principle (Giddens). The youth (boys and girls) care about those features in life that are under their control and within the scope of their power. One's identity is carried by one's body and one's lack of power in other fields is compensated through its control and manipulation (Gimlin, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the body and its appearance have turned into a symbolic principle among the youth (both genders). In other words, the further the social activities keep their distance from the traditional societies, one will be more responsible for designing one's body. In today's world (late modernity), managing the appearance of human beings has turned into a means to display one's identity. Therefore, the main characteristic of body management as one of the components of lifestyle in late modernity, adopts an expressive feature because one's present-day social identity matches certain body management (Holliday and Cairnie, 2007). According to the results of the means of the indexes of body management, it seems that young boys and girls alike would like to recover their own personal identities, somewhat distinct from their values and social norms in their surroundings.

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