

## Influence of Media on Students in Kannur District, Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

Every individual is exposed to media at a tender age. Media often portrays a typical image that has led to setting up of certain beauty standards in a society. Previous researches had shown these beauty standards are unachievable, which leads to low self-esteem, feeling of inadequacy and to eating disorders in individuals. Current study analyses the influence of media on students and its relationship with body appreciation and internalization of socio-cultural ideals. The sample (N= 204) consists both male and female students within the age group of 16 to 23 from rural and urban areas. The tools used for the present study are Socio-cultural attitude towards appearance questionnaire (SATAQ-4), Body Appreciation Questionnaire (2006) by Dr.TracyTylka. A Self developed questionnaire adopted from various studies was used to measure influence of media. Results indicate that media has influence on students and it has significant relationship with internalization of socio cultural ideals. The study also finds though both male and female students are influenced by media at same levels, internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance is higher in males.

**Keywords:** *Media, Body Appreciation, Socio-Cultural Ideals*

Media often portrays unrealistically thin images of women and muscular images of men through advertisements and movies. As a result, certain beauty standards have been formed in our society, which are unachievable. This has to be read along with the fact that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, media plays an inevitable role in everyone's life. Adolescents are no exception to this. They are exposed to as many as eight to ten hours of various media per day (Irving, 2008). Thus, media can be an influential factor in shaping or changing their attitudes and beliefs. It is also the period when they begin to view themselves as individuals with unique qualities and beliefs (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Additionally, appearance is the most important factor for overall positive self-esteem, especially among females (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). According to a study conducted in 2012 by Dr. Sasi Rekha V and Dr. K. Maran on 955 women in India, 76% of them aspired to have a smaller body size than their existing one. Thus, it is important to know the role of media in shaping similar attitude of individuals towards their body appearances. Interestingly, there has been extensive research to prove that exposure to television and magazines that depict females

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with thin “ideal” body physique can create strong body dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem and body image (Irving, 2008). However, only very few studies were conducted in Indian context pertaining to this issue. One such study (Krithika, 2015) was conducted among 500 girls near Madurai. The respondents revealed that, though they do not believe in the advertisements, it persuades them to get hold of the item and also, they make a direct comparison with the models in the advertisements.

Socio-cultural ideals like the thin/fair-ideal are most influential when they are internalized. Internalization of socio-cultural ideals of attractiveness is accepting or agreeing with social standards of beauty. As media plays the key role in spreading these ideals, researches has found that increased media consumption leads to increased internalization of thin ideal (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005; Tiggemann, 2003). Also the level of internalization increased as the level of comparison increased (Russello & Salenna, 2009). Another study (Heinberg & Thompson 1995; Thompson, Heinberg et.al) revealed that a tendency to internalize media messages regarding ideals for attractiveness has been suggested as one potential mediator between exposure to these messages and the development of eating and sleep related disturbances.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Social Comparison Theory:** Social comparison theory was first suggested by Festinger in 1954 (as cited in Wykes & Gunter, 2005). It states that individuals make comparisons between themselves and others who possess certain desired qualities or traits, and these comparisons help the individuals to establish their identity. Also, individuals differ in their tendencies to compare themselves to others. Those who are more likely to choose inappropriate comparison targets or to take part in upward comparisons are also more likely to be influenced by socio-cultural ideals, especially those dealing with appearance (Gunter & wykes, 2005). The more an individual engages in social comparison the more negative the media's influence will be. Social comparison theory can be seen as the chain that links together the media's effects on” internalization of ideals, self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction. (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005) found that men and women who were predisposed to social comparison were more aware of thinness norms and were more likely to internalize those norms. Researchers have also discovered that those who used social comparison were more affected by exposure to the thin-ideal and therefore had more weight concerns, more body dissatisfaction, and lower self-esteem (Bessenoff, 2006; Botta, 2003; Posavac& Posavac, 2002). The problem rests in an individual's dependency upon comparison to others in an attempt to define themselves.

#### ***Significance of the study***

Previous researches and available data gives a strong evidence for negative influence of media. However, majority of the studies focus on its effect on self-esteem and eating disorders. Also, influence of media is calculated in terms of usage which is an indirect measure of influence. The present study attempts to find the influence of media on students and its relationship with socio-cultural attitude towards appearance and body appreciation as there haven't been much studies assessing this relationship. Additionally, this research will help in understanding the cultural difference if any, in influence of media to Indian population as there aren't considerable researches in Indian context.

## METHODOLOGY

**Sample:** The research was conducted among school and college students from Kannur district of Kerala. The samples (N=204) contains both male (80) and female (124) students aged from 15 to 22 residing in rural and urban area of Kannur district. The sample was taken from Chinmaya Institute of Technology-Chala, Kendriya Vidyalaya-Kannur, Progressive English School-Pazhayangadi, WIRAS-Vilayancode, St. Joseph's College-Pilathara. The sample were drawn using convenient sampling method. The minimum age was 15 and maximum age was 22. The mean age calculated was 17.7 and standard deviation was 1.7

### Tools

The following tools were used for collecting the data for the present study:

- **SATAQ-4(Socio-cultural Attitude Towards Appearance Questionnaire):** This scale was used to measure the level of internalization of socio-cultural ideals related to appearance. The scale consists of four dimensions: internalization of body appearance, family pressure, peer pressure and media pressure. Internalization of socio-cultural ideals of attractiveness is accepting or agreeing with social standards of beauty. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability for this scale for the present sample is 0.83.
- **Media Influence Scale:** A self-developed questionnaire is used to measure the influence of media among the participants. The scale measured influence of media at cognitive and behavioural level. Items prepared was presented to panel of experts and also administered to a sample of 15 to improve the validity of the scale. The final scale after corrections, consisted of 9 items. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability of the scale for present sample is 0.75.
- **Body Appreciation Questionnaire (2006)** by Dr. Tracy Tylka was used to measure the body appreciation of the participants. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability for this scale for the present sample is 0.81.

The major variable of the study was to find the influence of media among students. So the researcher formed a research question to see whether media has any influence on the sample. Q1. Does media influence on the students of Kannur District of Kerala.

The careful review of researches paved way for forming the following hypotheses dealing with various relationships between the variables under study.

- H1. There will be no significant correlation between influence of media and internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance.
- H2. There will be no significant correlation between influence of media and body appreciation.
- H3. There will be no significant correlation between internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance and body appreciation.
- H4. There will be no significant correlation between media influence and internalization of body appearance.
- H5. There will be no significant correlation between family pressure and body appreciation.
- H6. There will be no significant difference in gender on influence of media among students.
- H7. There will be no significant difference in gender, in internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance.
- H8. There will be no significant difference in gender in internalization of body appearance.

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- H9. There will be no significant difference in gender on body appreciation of students.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table1. Descriptive Statistics for Media Influence, SATAQ and Body Appreciation**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
<b>Media Influence</b>	204	11	43	27.33	6.25
<b>SATAQ</b>	204	26	90	53.51	12.65
<b>Body appreciation</b>	204	19	65	51.17	7.12

From the above table, mean score for media influence obtained from the sample (Mean=27.33, SD=6.25) was slightly higher than the mean score of the scale (minimum score=9, maximum score=45, average=27). This shows that media has influence on students.

*Table 2: Correlation Among Media Influence, SATAQ and Body Appreciation*

	Media	Internalization of Body Appearance	Family Pressure	Peer Pressure	Media Pressure	SATAQ Total	Body app
<b>Media</b>	1	.326**	.100	.066	.269**	.303**	.093
<b>Internalization of body appearance</b>	.326**	1	.204**	.304**	.183**	.732**	.009
<b>Family pressure</b>	.100	.204**	1	.653**	.362**	.688**	-.164*
<b>Peer pressure</b>	.066	.304**	.653**	1	.418**	.768**	-.089
<b>Media pressure</b>	.269**	.183**	.362**	.418**	1	.630**	-.128
<b>SATAQ total</b>	.303**	.732**	.688**	.768**	.630**	1	-.106
<b>Body appreciation</b>	.093	.009	-.164*	-.089	-.128	-.106	1

**Hypothesis 1** states that there will be no significant correlation between influence of media and internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance. From Table 2, Result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between SATAQ and Influence of media ( $r=.303^{**}$ ). Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected. This means that as the influence of media increases, level of internalization of socio-cultural ideals of appearance will also increase. This goes in parallel with the previous finding that increased media consumption leads to increased internalization of thin ideal (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005; Tiggemann, 2003).

**Hypothesis 2** stated that there will be no significant correlation between influence of media and body appreciation. Result shows that there is no significant correlation between influence of media and body appreciation ( $r=.093$ ). Thus hypothesis 2 is accepted. Although previous studies revealed that influence of media will create body dissatisfaction and poor self-esteem. (Irving, 2008), current study shows that media does not affect body appreciation.

**Hypothesis 3** stated that there will be no significant correlation between internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance and body appreciation. Result shows that there is relation between SATAQ and body appreciation but it's not significant ( $r = -.106$ ). Thus

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hypothesis 3 is accepted which means that even if internalization of socio-cultural ideals of attractiveness is high, it will not affect the body appreciation of the individual.

**Hypothesis 4** stated that there will be no significant correlation between media influence and internalization of body appearance. Result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between internalization of body appearance and media influence ( $r = .326^{**}$ ). Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 5** stated that there will be no significant correlation between family pressure and body appreciation. Result shows that there is a significant negative correlation between family pressure and body appreciation ( $r = -.164^*$ ). Thus the hypothesis is rejected. This is suggesting that people of different age groups must be agreeing to the social standards of beauty

**Table 3: Mean Difference Among Male and Female Samples in the Variables Under Study**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Media</b>	Male	80	27.3250	6.82841
	Female	124	27.3468	5.87684
<b>Internalization of body appearance</b>	Male	80	30.3000	5.70676
	Female	124	24.5806	6.33624
<b>Family Pressure</b>	Male	80	9.2500	3.67165
	Female	124	9.3226	3.28720
<b>Peer Pressure</b>	Male	80	9.6000	4.14790
	Female	124	9.1129	3.55265
<b>Media Pressure</b>	Male	80	8.5500	3.71415
	Female	124	7.7984	4.04644
<b>SATAQ Total</b>	Male	80	57.7000	12.39069
	Female	124	50.8145	12.12360
<b>Body Appreciation</b>	Male	80	50.9500	6.66732
	Female	124	51.3226	7.42939

Table 3 shows that, there is no mean difference in gender on influence of media among students. There is a high mean difference in gender on internalization of body appearance and socio-cultural attitude towards appearance. The means scores in other variables and various dimensions of SATAQ scales are having very low mean differences. A careful observation of these scores clearly explains that there is not much difference between male and female students when it comes to media influence and Body appreciation. Both groups are similarly influenced.

**Hypothesis 6** stated that there will be no significant difference in gender on influence of media among student. The table 4 shows that mean score for media influence among male and female are the same (27.3). The T test scores indicates there is no significant difference in gender on influence of media. So, the hypothesis is accepted. This shows that all the students get influenced by media regardless of their gender.

**Table 4: T Test Scores of Male and Female Difference in the Variables Under Study**

	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Media</b>	1.389	.240	202	.981
<b>Internalization of Body Appearance</b>	.506	.478	202	.000
<b>Family Pressure</b>	2.058	.153	202	.883
<b>Peer Pressure</b>	1.599	.208	202	.372
<b>Media Pressure</b>	.066	.798	202	.183
<b>SATAQ Total</b>	.005	.942	202	.000
<b>Body Appreciation</b>	.280	.597	202	.716

**Hypothesis 7** stated that there will be no significant difference in gender, in internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance. From the above tables it is clear that there is significant difference in internalization of socio-cultural appearance among male and female. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. This indicate that though both male and female are influenced by media at same levels, internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance is higher in males.

**Hypothesis 8** stated that there will be no significant difference in gender in internalization of body appearance. Above table shows that there exists a difference, hence the hypothesis is rejected. This result suggest that males are more concerned about their body than female as the mean score for this in male is higher than that of female.

**Hypothesis 9** stated that there will be significant difference in gender on body appreciation of students. Tables show that there is no significant difference between male and female in body appreciation, hence the hypothesis is rejected.

## **CONCLUSION**

Results of the present study indicates that students are influenced by media and also media is a factor for internalization of socio-cultural attitude towards appearance. But there is no significant relation between media influence and body appreciation for the sample of students. This study shows that pressure from the family members is a contributing factor in decreasing one's body appreciation. Even though both male and female are influenced by media at same levels the results shows that males internalize socio-cultural ideals of appearance at a higher rate.

However, there are certain limitations for this study. The size of the sample (N=204) is small and also, they were taken only from one district of Kerala. As the sampling method used was convenient sampling, broad generalization from this result is not possible. Some suggestions for future research in this issue are it can be done with a large sample size, including people of different age groups from various districts. Also, measuring body-esteem of the sample could be more useful. A longitudinal study can be done to understand the changes in attitude taking place during adolescents due to the influence of media.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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