

Influence of the media on the appearance of teachers of São Paulo

Influência da mídia sobre a aparência de professoras de São Paulo

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Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the media's influence on the appearance of female teachers of Early Childhood Education and Primary School I from private schools of São Paulo, SP. **Methods:** It was a cross-sectional study with teachers from 4 schools of São Paulo, SP. The teachers were submitted to an anthropometric assessment and the "Sociocultural Attitude Questionnaire" (SATAQ- 3) was applied to check how media could influence their appearance. **Results:** Fifty-five teachers, with mean age of 37.49 years old, participated in this study. Most of them (76,3%) were classified in the socioeconomic classes A and B. The mean Body Mass Index of the teachers was 26.6Kg/m² and the mean body fat percentage was 41.9%. Teachers most influenced by the media were older, had higher socioeconomic status and higher percentage of body fat, but only this last association was statistically significant. It was found that teachers with longer experience period presented lower scores in SATAQ (p=0.030). **Conclusions:** The teachers with higher scores in the questionnaire had higher body weight and higher body fat percentage. In addition, more experienced teachers were less influenced by the media.

Keywords: Media. Influence. Teachers. Appearance.

Resumo

Objetivo: Avaliar as influências da mídia sobre a aparência de professoras da Educação Infantil e do Ensino Fundamental I de escolas privadas do município de São Paulo. **Metodologia:** Estudo transversal realizado com professoras de 4 colégios paulistanos.

As docentes foram submetidas a avaliação antropométrica e responderam ao “Questionário de Atitudes Socioculturais” em relação à aparência (SATAQ-3) para verificar a influência da mídia. *Resultados:* Participaram 55 professoras com idade média de 37,49 anos. A maioria das participantes (76,3%) foram classificadas nas classes sociais A e B. O Índice de Massa Corporal médio encontrado foi 26,6Kg/m² e a média de percentual de gordura corporal foi de 41,9%. As professoras mais influenciadas pela mídia eram mais velhas, de maior classe socioeconômica e com maior percentual de gordura corporal, porém, somente esta última associação se mostrou estatisticamente significativa. Foi observado que quanto maior o tempo de profissão menor o escore no SATAQ-3 ($p=0,030$). *Conclusões:* As docentes com maior pontuação no questionário tiveram maior peso corporal e percentual de gordura corporal mais elevado. Além disso, as docentes mais experientes sofriam menos influência da mídia.

Palavras-chave: Mídia. Influência. Professores. Aparência.

Introduction

The growing feeling of discomfort in relation to the body and to the body image itself, accompanied by a sense of inadequacy, is increasingly common phenomenon that have led the contemporary subject, especially the female subject, to illness.¹

The ideal body has undergone substantial change in the mid-twentieth century, characterized by the spread of thinness need for women and muscular bodies for men. Although the standards of beauty imposed by society change over time, today's standards are ubiquitous and extend to the entire community through the media and social networks.²

Thus, media influence is considered one of the ways in which the behavior of individuals and groups is affected, and nowadays it plays a crucial role in the formation and reflection of public opinion, reproducing the self-image of society. Studies show that the media can influence values, norms and aesthetic standards incorporated by the modern society, constituting itself as transmitter instrument and reinforcer of the corporeal social ideals.³

On the other hand, while the ideal body continues to be promoted by the media and social discourse, the need for fast and easy food and the advertising of fast food networks figure in the media concomitantly, and the prevalence of overweight and obesity increases in modern societies, placing the individual even more distant from the sociocultural ideal.⁴

The difference between the current body and the one considered “ideal” by the media can promote low self-esteem and is one of the factors for body dissatisfaction.⁵ Often such dissatisfaction induces risk behaviors for Eating Disorders (EDs), such as the use of restrictive diets and weight control methods (use of laxatives, diuretics and anabolics, induction of vomiting, excessive practice of physical activity).^{6,7}

Gondoli et al.⁸ and Rodgers et al.⁹ point out that the media is the main negative influencing agent in the body image of young people and children. Some authors point out that the exposure of bodies of models and actresses usually have an immediate impact on sociocultural morphological idealization, especially in female subjects.^{10,11}

On the other hand, the role of the school and educators, especially those of the female gender, as an influencer in promoting satisfaction with body image and student self-esteem has not been sufficiently investigated. It is possible that the dissatisfaction of teachers with their own body image impairs their performance at work and negatively influences students, especially the younger ones, who see models of behavior in these teachers.

In this panorama, the present study sought to evaluate the influence of the media on the satisfaction with the body image of teachers of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education I from private schools in the city of São Paulo.

Methods

This is a cross-sectional study, with primary data collection, in which teachers of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education I, from 4 private schools in the Northern Zone of the City of São Paulo - SP, Brazil, were evaluated.

As inclusion criteria, it was defined that the participating teachers should be between the ages of 19 and 65 and maintain contact with the students at least once a week, including the teachers of basic education and those who taught English classes, physical education and dance.

Procedures

Initially, all volunteer teachers answered a questionnaire for socioeconomic and labor characterization, with emphasis on variables related to basic education (undergraduate), discipline they taught, how long they have been practicing the profession, and for what and how many classes of students they taught classes.

The Brazilian Economic Classification Criterion (CCEB - version 2016) established by the Brazilian Association of Companies and Research (ABEP), which estimates the purchasing power

of Brazilians, was used to assess the socioeconomic situation, classifying the population in economic strata: A1, B1, B2, C1, C2 and D-E. The CCEB is based on the acquisition of assets, adding to each item a score whose resulting value resulted in the socioeconomic classification of the family according to the cut-off points.¹²

After that, the teachers were submitted to nutritional status evaluation. To measure body mass, a digital balance (WISO®) with a capacity of 180 kg and leg-to-leg bioimpedance analysis was used to estimate the percentage of body fat. The teachers were weighed without shoes and without clothing or heavy objects.

To measure height, an inelastic and inextensible tape measure with a capacity of 2m was used, which was fixed vertically on a wall, without a skirting board.

The teachers stood erect, barefoot, their heels together and leaning against the wall, as well as their shoulders and buttocks, keeping their arms extended along the body and their eyes fixed forward on the horizon (*Frankfurt Plan*).¹³ Next, a square was placed on the vertex of the volunteer, fixing it against the head, so that the height was measured.

Based on the values found (weight and height), the Body Mass Index (BMI) (kg/m^2) was calculated using the formula: $\text{BMI} = W / H^2$, whose results were classified according to the World Health Organization recommendations for adults.¹⁴

The values obtained for percentage of body fat, through bioimpedance, were evaluated according to the cut-off points proposed by Lohman et al.¹⁵

Instrument

Teachers answered the Sociocultural Attitudes Questionnaire regarding the appearance (*Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale* - SATAQ-3) developed by Thompson et al.,¹⁶ translated into Portuguese and validated by Amaral et al.¹⁰ This instrument evaluates the influence of sociocultural aspects on the body dissatisfaction of individuals. The SATAQ-3 is a self-administered questionnaire with 30 questions, each of which having five possible answers: 1) Strongly disagree 2) Partially disagree 3) Neither agree nor disagree 4) Partially agree 5) Strongly agree.

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 and the level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.¹⁷ The resources of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequencies) were initially used. Data on sample characterization and nutritional status were described in terms of measures of central tendency and percentage distribution.

For the SATAQ-3 results, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to verify homogeneous variance and a covariance analysis was used to verify if age, BMI and training could influence the results.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to verify the data distribution. The correlation between SATAQ and variables (age, working time, weight, height, body mass index and body fat percentage) was determined using the Pearson correlation test.¹⁸

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed with a factor to compare the SATAQ score according to the BMI classifications and the percentage of body fat followed by Bonferroni *post hoc*. In addition, we categorized the SATAQ score into terciles to compare the other dependent variables. The analysis of the association between the SATAQ score and the independent variables was performed by multivariate linear regression.

Ethical Aspects

All the teachers completed the Informed Consent Form (TCLE), after being clarified about the study procedures. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the São Camilo University Center under No. 1.709.826.

Results

The sample consisted of 55 teachers, all of them female, 49.1% of Early Childhood Education and 50.9% of Primary School I, with a mean age of 37.49 years (SD = 12.04).

The average exercise time of the profession among the participants was 14.8 years (SD = 10.16). Most of the teachers who participated in the research were undergraduated in Pedagogy, with specialization in Psychopedagogy (92.7%), and taught classes in several disciplines, with 85.5% of teachers working only in one school (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that 54.5% of the participants had children and most of the teachers were divided into social classes A (32.7%) and B (65.4%).

Table 2 presents the results concerning the evaluation of the nutritional status of the teachers. The mean BMI found was 26.6 Kg/m², indicative of overweight. The distribution in BMI categories also showed that most of the teachers (58.2%) were overweight. The estimated average body fat percentage was 41.9%, which is considered “very high” according to the cut-off points proposed by Lohman.¹⁵ Only 3.6% of the evaluated teachers presented percentages of body fat considered “ideal”.

Table 1. Distribution, in absolute and percentage numbers, of the variables of socioeconomic characterization of teachers. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	/(%)
Age	
19-29	22(4)
30-39	5(9.1)
40-49	17(30.9)
>50	1 (20.0)
School	
1	17(30.9)
2	14(25.5)
3	16(29.1)
4	8(14.5)
Academic Education	
Physical Education	2(3.6)
Pedagogy / Psychopedagogy	51(92.7)
Other	2(3.6)
Discipline	
Physical Education / Dance	2(3.6)
Various	50(90.9)
Other	3(5.5)
Class where she teaches classes	
Early Childhood Education	27(49.1)
Primary Education I	28(50.9)
Works in more than one school	
Yes	8(14.5)
No	47(85.5)

continue

Variables	/(%)
Children	
Yes	30(54.5)
No	25(45.5)
Economic classification	
A	18(32.7)
B1	24(43.6)
B2	12(21.8)
C1	1(1.8)

Table 2. Distribution, in absolute and percentage numbers, of the anthropometric variables of participating teachers. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	Mean (SD) or (%)
Weight (kg)	71.0 (11.47)
Height (m)	1.6 (0.06)
BMI (kg/m ²)	26.6(3.81)
Categorical BMI*	
Eutrophic	23(41.8)
Overweight	23(41.8)
Obesity grade I	8(14.5)
Obesity grade II	1(1.8)
% Body fat	41.9 (7.82)
% Categorical body fat*	
Ideal	2(3.6)
High	10(18.2)
Moderately High	1(1.8)
Very high	42(76.4)

*categorical data.

The teachers' average score on the SATAQ questionnaire was 82.1 points (SD = 18.37), with the most influenced reaching 115.00 points and the least influenced presenting 72.65 points.

According to the results presented in Table 3, the majority of the teachers less influenced by the media (Tercile 1) were aged between 40-49 years, with no statistically significant difference observed. Yet, the most influenced were the youngest teachers, in the age group of 19-29 years.

Teachers with lower scores on the SATAQ were in socioeconomic level A and those with higher scores were in socioeconomic level B. In addition, most teachers who scored higher in SATAQ (terciles 2 and 3) had no children (40 and 36%, respectively). However, such associations were not statistically significant.

Table 3. Comparison of the characterization variables of the profession (frequency and percentage) with the SATAQ classification in terciles of the participants. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	Tercile 1	Tercile 2	Tercile 3	p-value
Age				
19-29	4(18.2)	8(36.4)	10(45.5)	0.442
30-39	3(60)	1(20)	1(20)	
40-49	8(47.1)	5(29.4)	4(23.5)	
>50	3(27.3)	4(36.4)	4(36.4)	
School				
1	4(23.5)	6(35.3)	7(41.2)	0.321
2	8(57.1)	3(21.4)	3(21.4)	
3	3(18.8)	8(50)	5(31.2)	
4	3(37.5)	2(25)	3(37.5)	
Academic Education				
Physical Education	1(50)	0	1(50)	0.717
Pedagogy / Psychopedagogy	16(31.4)	18(35.3)	17(33.3)	
Other	1(50)	0	1(50)	

continue

Variables	Tercile 1	Tercile 2	Tercile 3	p-value
Discipline				
Physical Education / Dance	1(50)	0	1(50)	0.908
Various	16(32)	17(34)	17(34)	
Other	1(33.3)	1(33.3)	1(33.3)	
Class where she teaches				
Early Childhood Education	7(25.9)	12(44.4)	8(29.6)	0.300
Primary Education I	11(39.3)	7(25)	10(35.7)	
Works in more than one school				
Yes	3(37.5)	2(25)	3(37.5)	0,828
No	15(31.9)	17(36.2)	15(31.9)	
Children				
Yes	12(40)	10(33.3)	8(26.7)	0.399
No	6(24)	9(36)	10(40)	
Economic classification				
A	7(38.9)	6(33.3)	5(27.8)	0.800
B1	7(2.92)	8(33.3)	9(37.5)	
B2	4(33.3)	5(41.7)	3(25)	
C1	0	0	1(100)	

Chi-square test; *p<0,005.

In Table 4, it can be observed that teachers who are members of Tercile 2, according to SATAQ scores, had a mean body weight of about 9 kg lower than the other terciles ($p = 0.032$). A trend of association between the mean BMI and the SATAQ score was observed.

The teachers who were most influenced by the media according to SATAQ had higher body fat percentages ($p = 0.032$).

Table 5 shows the correlation analysis between SATAQ scores and several study variables. It was observed that the lower the time of profession of the teachers, the higher the SATAQ score, and a weak and inverse correlation was observed, but statistically significant.

According to Table 6, it is possible to observe that as the age of the teachers increased, a decrease of 0.53 points in the SATAQ was observed ($p = 0.030$).

Table 4. Descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation and frequency and percentage) of the anthropometric variables with the SATAQ classification in terciles of the participants. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	Tercile 1	Tercile 2	Tercile 3	p-value
Weight (kg)	74.02 (13.02) #	65.50 (10.63)	73.81(8.78)	0.032*
Height (m)	1.64 (0.05)	1.61 (0.06)	1.63 (0.05)	0.323
BMI (kg/m ²)	27.25 (4.42)	24.92 (2.92)	27.71(3.55)	0.054
BMI ^a				
Eutrophic	9 (39.1)	10(43.5)	4 (17.4)	0.072
Overweight	9 (28.1)	8(25)	15(46.9)	
% Body fat	42.41(7.24)	38.48(7.28) *	45.10(7.83)	0.032*
% Body fat ^b				
Ideal	0	1(50)	1(50)	0.603
Above the ideal	18(34)	17(32.1)	18(34)	

Chi-square test for categorical data; ANOVA with single factor for continuous data; Bonferroni's post hoc: # Tercile 1 is different from tercile 2; t Tercile 2 is different from tercile 3; $p < 0.005$. *Overweight (IMC>25Kg/m²);

^bAbove the ideal (>35%).

Table 5. Correlation analysis between SATAQ scores and variables of participating teachers. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	r	p-value
Age (years)	-0.22	0.106
Weight	-0.02	0.866
Height (m)	-0.03	0.777
BMI (kg/m ²)	0.00	0.982
% Body fat	0.11	0.421
Time of profession	-0.29	0.030*

Pearson Correlation; * $p < 0.005$.

Table 6. Univariate linear regression analysis to verify the association of independent variables on SATAQ. São Paulo, SP, 2016.

Variables	Coefficient P	IC95%	p-value
Age (years)	-0.336	-0.747; 0.074	0.106
Time of profession	-0.529	-1.005; -0.053	0.030*
Weight	-0.037	-0.478; 0.404	0.866
Height	-11.952	-96.192; 72.288	0.777
BMI	0.015	-1.312; 1.343	0.982
% Body fat	0.260	-0.383; 0.903	0.421

*p<0.005.

Discussion

The studies that investigated the SATAQ instrument were carried out in populations of young adult university students and adolescents. Although research involving this subject has drawn greater attention from the scientific community in recent years, no study has so far applied the instrument to assess the influence of media on teachers, especially at the national level.

The average age of the teachers of this research was 37.49 years, with 54.5% having children and with an average time of profession of 14.8 years. A survey conducted by Santos & Marques,²¹ in 59 municipal schools of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education in Southern Brazil showed that 70% of teachers were in socioeconomic level B and 18.4% in socioeconomic level A, and almost half of the sample (47.8%) had up to 10 years of profession and 68.6% had at least one child. The profile of the teachers in this study is similar to that of the present research.

The mean BMI of teachers in the present study was 26.6Kg/m² and the mean body fat percentage was 41.9%. The study by Santos & Marques,²¹ carried out in municipal schools in the city of Bagé, RS, Brazil, with 1,004 teachers, found that the prevalence of excess body weight among Early Childhood Education and Primary Education I female teachers was 46.7%. Another research, also carried out in a school in the South of the country, with teachers of Elementary School, showed a prevalence of 29.4% of excess weight, values lower than those found in other studies.²²

In the present study, more than half of the teachers presented excess body weight according to the BMI (58.1%), and almost one-fifth of the sample was already obese. The study carried out by Santos et al.,²³ with Early Childhood Education teachers from a private school in São Paulo showed a lower prevalence observed in relation to overweight (52%), with 39% of teachers being overweight and 13% being obese.

The average SATAQ score reached by teachers was 82.1 points, and the lowest scoring teachers were older and had longer working time. In addition, the participants who scored the lowest score belonged to the highest socioeconomic class and had no children.

No study that used this instrument to evaluate media influence on teachers was found in both the national and international literature, which made it difficult to discuss our findings.

A Brazilian study carried out by Alvarenga et al.,²⁴ with 2,414 university students from all regions of Brazil, which used SATAQ as an instrument to evaluate the influence of the media, showed an average score of 85 points, values higher than those found in this study. The research showed that, in relation to the age group, the older participants had lower total score, as in the present study. In relation to income, it was observed that students with lower income had lower SATAQ scores, as observed in the present study.

Another national study developed by Dunker et al.²⁵ with adolescents aged 15 to 18 years showed that the higher the family income, the higher the score obtained in the SATAQ. The mean SATAQ score for adolescents in public schools was 86, compared to 90 for students in private schools. These data would confirm the general idea that the ideal of beauty applies more incisively to individuals of more privileged economic strata. However, these results were not verified in our research.

A more recent study (2015)²⁶ conducted in the city of Juiz de Fora with Brazilian university students evaluated the prevalence of body dissatisfaction, media influence and eating behavior. The mean SATAQ score among women was 82.7 points - values similar to the present study. The research found that the higher the BMI and body dissatisfaction, the greater the influence received from the media.²⁶

The study carried out by Felden et al.²⁷ with university students from Santa Catarina, which evaluated the internalization of body ideals, showed a SATAQ score also very similar to the present study, 81.5 points for women. When analyzing the subscales of the instrument, it found that the men want to have a more athletic (muscular) body and women feel more pressured by the media in having lean / longiline bodies.

In the present study, in relation to the Nutritional Status, the BMI of the participants who scored the lowest and highest score in the SATAQ was approximately 27kg/m², and those that obtained the highest score had the highest percentage of body fat (45.1%). In the study carried out by Alvarenga et al.,²⁴ in the same way, the higher the BMI of the participants, the higher the total score in the SATAQ.

Groez et al.²⁸ found in their meta-analysis, which evaluated 25 international studies, that the effect of experimental manipulations of the beauty ideal by the media has a greater effect on younger participants. Researchers also observed a worsening of body image when people are

in contact with images of thinner people. Yet, Madanat et al.,²⁹ in their research with women in Jordan, also found that older women had lower scores on SATAQ.

A close observation of women's magazines and television programs highlights how the topic of weight loss and the search for the "ideal body" predisposes to greater concern with the body, use of diets and compensatory behaviors, which helps to understand that individuals farther from the sociocultural ideal feel worse, more influenced and pressured.^{30,31}

A study evaluating the influence of the media on young adults in India found that the internalization of media ideals has a role in body dissatisfaction and striving for thinness even in a developing country and that, therefore, there should be potentially similar risk factors in different cultures.³²

The identification of risk factors for body dissatisfaction and occurrence of EDs is essential for the development and implementation of effective treatment and prevention programs. A study carried out with 173 American university students showed that media influence can be a causal risk factor for feeding and weight problems, and that media pressure would strongly influence an individual's tendency to adopt disordered attitudes and eating behaviors.³³

Regarding the limitations of the present study, the first consideration refers to the sampling process itself which, for convenience and, therefore, not probabilistic, should be generalized with caution. It is important to report that it was difficult to get other educational institutions to allow this study to be carried out with their teachers, so that we could enlarge the sample of this research.

In addition, our study was limited only to data analysis of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education I teachers, so it is interesting that it is replicated with a larger and more diversified sample in public schools and other Brazilian cities and regions.

The instrument used to verify the influence received by the SATAQ-3 media does not have its own classification, making it impossible to state if the teachers have low or high media influence.

Conclusions

The average score obtained in the SATAQ by the teachers of the present study was lower than that reported in the scarce studies carried out in the country and in the world. However, none of these surveys were conducted with teachers.

There was an inverse and significant correlation between the teaching time and score in SATAQ-3, showing that more experienced teachers were less influenced by the media. In addition, teachers with higher scores on the questionnaire had higher body weight and higher fat percentage.

It is important that teachers working with children at an early age and in the formative phase of the personality, who are considered models for their students, broaden their knowledge about the influence of the media and its role in EDs and body image, so that they can incorporate these themes into their classroom education programs.

Collaborators

Gori M carried out the bibliographical survey, data collection and participated in the analysis and interpretation of these data. Renata Viebig RF was responsible for the conception of the study as work supervisor. She participated effectively in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Conflict of interests: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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