Abstract

The negative effects of media exposure on young women’s body image have been empirically tested and well established, however little is known about this relationship in middle-aged women. The current study, based on Sociocultural and Social Comparison theories, aims to investigate the effects of media exposure on middle-aged women’s body satisfaction, aging appearance satisfaction and mood. Participants will be randomly allocated to view one of four visual presentations containing images of different aged models or scenery. Women aged between 35 - 55 years will be recruited via snowballing emails, social networks and recruitment flyers. Data will be analysed in SPSS using several one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVAs).

Introduction

- Body dissatisfaction is associated with detrimental biological, psychological and social outcomes.
- Sociocultural Theory has singled out the media as an important facilitator of body dissatisfaction.
- Social Comparison Theory purports that women compare themselves to idealised media images and if they evaluate themselves negatively they may become dissatisfied with their own appearance.
- Detrimental effects of the media have not been empirically tested in middle-aged women.
- In Middle-
  - Sociocultural pressure is felt to be both thin and youthful
  - Aging Appearance Anxiety may exacerbate negative comparisons.
- This study aims to understand the effects that viewing idealised female images has on middle-aged women’s self-perception, in particular how that relationship is affected by varying the age of the model viewed.

Hypotheses

1. The post-test levels of body satisfaction will be significantly lower in the middle-aged model condition compared to the younger and older models and scenery.
2. The post-test levels of aging appearance satisfaction will be lower in the older model condition compared to the scenery condition.
3. The post-test levels of negative mood will be significantly higher in the middle-aged model condition compared to the scenery condition.

Materials

- Visual Stimulus Material – Images of scenery and female models were collected from the internet. Each condition contained 8 images and lasted 3 minutes.
- Based on ratings received from a pilot study, models were selected and matched on attractiveness for their age and how slender they were and placed into one of three age groups, ≤ 30, 35 – 55, or ≥ 60 which became the experimental conditions:
  • Condition 1: young models ≤ 30 years.
  • Condition 2: middle-aged models 35 – 55 years.
  • Condition 3: older models ≥ 60 years.
  Plus the control:
  • Condition 4: scenery.
- Visual Analogue Scales (VAS) will be used to assess changes in participants body image measuring:
  - Body satisfaction.
  - Aging appearance satisfaction.
  - Mood.
  - Confidence.

Procedure

- Participants will be randomly allocated to one of the four conditions to complete an online survey.
- Participants will complete a total of eleven pre-test VAS measuring state body satisfaction, aging appearance satisfaction and mood, and then view a three minute slideshow of relevant media images.
- Immediately following the slideshow, participants will complete the post-test VAS and a demographics questionnaire.

Design and Analyses

- An internet based, between-subjects, randomised, pre-test, post-test experimental design will be utilised on four image conditions: young, middle-aged and older models and scenery.
- Several one-way MANCOVAs will be conducted to assess any differences between the four conditions on the post-test VAS scores of the body satisfaction, aging appearance satisfaction and mood measures.
- IV = condition; CV = pre-test scores; and DV = post-test score.

Participants

- G*Power analysis proposed a sample size of ≥ 150 participants.
- Females aged between 35 – 55 years.
- Recruitment will be via surveys, flyers and social networks using snowballing techniques.

References