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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA INFLUENCE AND PERSONALITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BODY APPEARANCE SCHEMA – A STUDY AMONG COLLEGE GOING GIRL STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT:-

**M**edia has become an indispensable part of our life and the potential influence of media on psychological well-being of young population has always been a topic debated for years. There have been various psychological aspects to which media have its on influence or role to play.

Literature puts forth the evidence of relationship of media with concept of beauty or physical attractiveness. The perceived body image plays a major role on various dimensions of human social life. The constant viewing of thin models and celebrities has started influencing young population on their perception of body image. An alarming fact is that continuous exposure to media has in fact fostered the growing dissatisfaction of young females about their appearance.

The present study aims to find out the relationship of media influence on appearance schema among college going girl students and also their personality influences on the same variables. The sample is drawn from an autonomous college in Coimbatore and consists of 100 girl students in an age range of 18-22. The tools which would be used are

1. Multidimensional Media Influence Scale. (2000).by- Keery, Helene, et al
2. The Appearance Schemas Inventory by Cash, T. F. (2000).
3. Neymann Kohlstedt test for Introversion- Extroversion

The study hypothesizes that there would be significant correlation between media and appearance schema on the sample studied. Recommendations for future research would be a an exploratory study on influence of more personality traits, social media, peer groups on media influence and body schema



**KEYWORDS:** Media Influence, Appearance schema.

### INTRODUCTION

Media influence or media effects are used in media studies, psychology, communication theory and sociology to refer to the theories about the ways in which mass media and media culture affect how their audiences think and behave.

### MEDIA INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENTS

Adolescence is a period where the individuals go through various changes with regard to their physical, social and emotional maturity. There are several influential factors to which adolescents are

highly prone to. And the most importantly is the media. Media influences tend to alter their mindset and behave according to the media portrayal of societal demands.

Adolescents spend a enormous amount of time with the media majorly being the social media and mass media like television. Social media like facebook is found to have one of the most influences followed by television and magazines. The effects of media influence are both positive and negative. But the unfortunate fact is that the negative influences outplay the positives.

Literature supports that media has an influence on alcohol abuse, drug abuse, violence, self and body image etc. The most popular form of media that adolescents use is the Internet. Web sites that adolescents regularly visit include Yahoo, AOL, MSN, and Microsoft. Several of these Web sites have minimal restrictions and contain information regarding drugs, alcohol, sex, and violence (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation [KFF], 2002).

Television is another type of media that has become increasingly popular, as adolescent programming is now more common (KFF, 2002). Unfortunately, alcoholic beverages are frequently advertised during youth-oriented programming. In fact, young people see more commercials for alcohol than for clothes or any other product (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth [CAMY], 2005).

Furthermore, several television shows portray forms of violent behavior as glamorous and powerful with little or no consequence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2001).

Movies are another form of media that is admired by adolescents, especially those that contain scenes where characters are violent. This material can initiate aggressive behavior (i.e., robbery, assault, rape, or homicide) and thoughts in adolescents, especially right after they witness the violent act portrayed on film (HHS, 2001).

Magazines are also frequently viewed by adolescents. However, many magazines, especially those geared towards adolescents, often contain pictures of models with unhealthy body weights (MediaScope, 2000). As we all know media exerts an enormous influence on all phases of human life. But it paves a dangerous path for those in the teenage group particularly girls. Teenagers are particularly susceptible to such media influences and pressures. Most adolescents get exposed to media and they tend to interpret what the society demands from them in terms of self image, behavior and mannerisms.

### Media influence and adolescent girls

It is not surprising that adolescent girls do have a tendency to go on strict diets, which is terrifically harmful to the body and also go on heavy exercises. To state reasons is beyond the scope of this paper and therefore one of the major reasons supported by literature is the influence of media. At a very young age girls are exposed to messages on beauty and physical attractiveness through media. Studies also prove that media can have a negative impact on self image, body image and self esteem among teenage girls. Media tends to portray girls as nothing but objects of beauty and desire.

A "thin media" movement has been tunneling forward with the idea of creating more preoccupation with one's own body. Though media influence is not a negative phenomenon, still it shows few negative impacts on young population and their mental set. Research evidence portrays links between eating disorders and media especially in young female adolescents. Attaining a "pure anorexic figure" has already become a dream of a few. There are plethora of sources to which individuals can look for social comparison, but mass media is seen to be one of the most intruding influences, especially for women. Television, advertisements, magazines, and other forms of popular media provide a reference for social comparison. Images in the media generally project a standard to which women are expected to aspire, yet that standard is almost completely impossible for most women to achieve (Schooler et al., 2004; Thompson & Covert, 1999). Women almost always fall short of standards that are expected of them regarding physical appearance. Particularly for women, it is difficult to go through a day without viewing images that send the message, "you're not good enough." The pervasiveness of the media makes it very challenging for most women to avoid evaluating themselves against the socio-cultural standard of beauty (Milkie, 1999). Most companies that target women in the media actually attempt to foster social comparison with idealized images, in order to motivate women to buy products that will bring them closer

to the ideal (e.g. diet products, makeup, hair products). If women see a discrepancy between themselves and the images they view in advertisements (which they almost definitely will), they will be more inclined to buy the products that are advertised (Thompson & Coover, 1999)

Appearance schema is a cognitive component of body image. Body image is nothing but how individual thinks about his/her own body. It has been always noticed that body image is low with people who hold appearance schemas.

The thin media propaganda has gone viral and women tend to internalize those into their schemas and they continue to have a body dissatisfaction which leads to a negative body image or appearance schema.

If there is a large discrepancy between a person's internalized ideal body and their real body, a person's confidence in and satisfaction with their appearance is often negatively affected. Media images of women are in a way that a realistic ideal image of body cannot be internalized. This increases the discrepancy between what a person feels their physical appearance is, and what it should be.

Researchers have found that women who have an internalized ideal body that closely resembles the socially represented ideal body are at a particularly high risk to develop body image it has been mostly difficult to alter the society's view of thinness as a beauty principle.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **André Calero Valdez, Anne Kathrin Schaar, Martina Ziefle (2013)** examined the impact of perceived formal correctness, formal politeness and workflow compatibility of social media applications (email, blog and chat) on the acceptance of social media in the working context. They additionally analyzed the impact of personality on users' perceptions toward social media etiquette. Therefore examined correlations between two Five Factor Model (FFM or Big Five) personality traits (conscientiousness and agreeableness) and requirements for formal correctness, formal politeness and compatibility. Linear regression shows that requirements for social media etiquette are strongly influenced by conscientiousness, age and social media expertise. Differences in etiquette are evaluated in regard to formal addressing, correct spelling, acronym and emoticon usage, work disruption and perceived urgency. Furthermore differences in etiquette between different media are explained.

- **Correa.T et.al (2013)** did a Survey from a national sample of U.S. adults show that more extraverted people are more likely to use social networking sites, instant messaging, and video chats, while those more open to new experiences tend to use social networking sites more frequently. Also, emotional stability is a negative predictor of social networking site use. That is, individuals who are more anxious and unstable tend to rely on these sites. When looking at a specific use of social media to create political content emotional stability was a negative predictor, whereas extraversion had a positive impact. These findings confirm the usefulness of combining explorations of personality and digital media usage

- **Gwendolyn Seidman (2013)** examined the relationship between the Big Five and the use of Facebook to fulfill belonging and self-presentational needs. One hundred and eighty four undergraduates completed a survey assessing personality and Facebook behaviors and motivations. High agreeableness and neuroticism were the best predictors of belongingness-related behaviors and motivations. Extraversion was associated with more frequent use of Facebook to communicate with others. Self-presentational behaviors and motivations were best predicted by low conscientiousness and high neuroticism. Results suggest that conscientious individuals are cautious in their online self-presentation. Neuroticism, agreeableness, and extraversion were positively associated with the tendency to express one's actual self. Neuroticism was positively associated with the expression of ideal and hidden self-aspects. The motivation to express these self-aspects mediated the relationship between neuroticism and self-disclosure.

- **Ferguson, et.al (2011)** examined influence of personality and media influence in three samples of young adults: Mexican-Americans (n = 232), Croatians (n = 455) and English (n = 150). Results indicated that trait aggression was a consistent predictor of both violent crimes and depression across samples. General personality

variables were less consistent predictors of violence, although neuroticism consistently predicted depression across samples. Media violence exposure did not predict negative outcomes except among Croatians for whom exposure to violent video games predicted fewer violent crimes, and exposure to television violence predicted increased violent crimes.

- **Sinton, Meghan M.; Birch, Leann L. (2006)** examined girls' weight status (BMI), depression, and parent, sibling, peer, and media influences as predictors of appearance schemas in 173 pre-adolescent girls. Hierarchical regression results indicated that appearance schemas scores were associated with girls' level of depression, perceptions of parental influence on weight concerns, appearance related interactions with other girls, and awareness of media messages; perceptions of sibling influence on weight concerns and BMI were not independent predictors. In addition, appearance schemas were associated with girls' level of body dissatisfaction.

- **Amy Brown and Helga Dittmar (2005)** investigated two factors first, the level of attention at which women process thin images and, second, appearance schema activation as an underlying process that mediates the exposure–anxiety link, Thin models increase weight–related anxiety to the extent that women internalize the thin ideal, but anxiety is heightened further under conditions of high attention.

- **Marika Tiggemann(2005)** investigated the relationship between several aspects of television viewing, in particular total exposure, selective viewing of specific genres, and motives for viewing, with body attitudes among adolescents. Participants were 1,452 secondary school students who completed questionnaire measures of eating disorder attitudes and symptomatology, internalization of appearance ideals, appearance schemas, and uses of television. Participants also provided a detailed account of their television watching in the previous week, from which measures of total exposure and viewing of specific genres were generated. It was found that total television time was not related to any body image variable for either boys or girls. However, the time spent watching soap operas was related to drive for thinness in both genders. This relationship was mediated by internalization and appearance schemas. The time spent watching soap operas and music videos was also related to drive for muscularity in boys. Three major components of television usage were identified: entertainment, social learning, and escape from negative affect. The latter two uses had substantial correlations with negative outcomes for both genders. The similar pattern of correlations observed for boys and girls suggests that similar processes are operating in the two genders. It was concluded that television watching does have an impact on young people's sense of body image but that the critical aspects are the type of material and motivations for watching, not the total amount of television watched.

- **Schooler et al. (2004)** found that women who reported greater exposure to television programming during adolescence were more likely to experience high levels of body image disturbance than females that did not report such levels of exposure. In addition, certain types of programming seem to elicit higher levels of body dissatisfaction in females.

- **A study done by Tiggemann and Slater (2003)** found that women who viewed music videos that contained thin models experienced increased levels of negative mood and body image disturbance. Music videos seem to send a particularly direct message those women should live up to the socio-cultural ideal; women portrayed are almost always direct representations of what our culture considers beautiful. In addition, music television is an increasingly influential form of media, especially for adolescent and college females.

- **Jaehee Jung and Sharron J. Lennon (2003)** examined the effects of women's appearance self-schemas and exposure to attractiveness media images on body image, self-esteem, and mood. Women's response to media images was expected to vary according to an individual difference variable, appearance self-schema, or cognitive representations of organized information about the self in relation to appearance. Collegewomen

volunteers (N = 168) were divided into two groups (schematic and aschematic) on the basis of appearance self-schema; half of each group was exposed to photos of attractive images, whereas the other half was not exposed to any images before completing measures of body image, self-esteem, and mood. Women who are schematic on appearance exhibited lower body image, lower self-esteem, and more negative mood than did those who are aschematic on appearance. Neither exposure to media images in conjunction with appearance self-schema nor exposure alone affected response on body image, self-esteem, and mood.

- **Tiggemann and Slater (2003)** found music television to be a powerful instigator of the social comparison process in young females. Their study found that exposing girls to thin and attractive images of women portrayed in many music videos led to increased levels of body image disturbance. In addition, the study showed that videos portraying the thin ideal triggered more self-reported social comparison than control videos that did not contain such images.

- **Amanda J. Weber, Nancy A. Schaubhut, and Richard C. Thompson (2000)** examined the extent that personality type [as defined by the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator Instrument] differentiated individuals when utilizing various social networking sites. Individuals differed in opinions and frequency of use among the differing sites, however most of the differences were observed through preference pairs, rather than whole-type.

- **Laurel J. Wickman (2000)** determined the correlation of the media influence on the body image of adolescent females. A detailed description of the development of body image, large targeting of the media upon adolescents, the dangers of negative body image, and the benefits of a positive body image were the focus of this study.

Data collected from adolescent females enrolled in a required psychology class during the fall of 2000 at a high school in the Midwest was utilized. Results showed that the media is a significant factor in the assessment of one's body image. Items focusing on the fact that attractiveness ideals stem from magazines, movies, actresses/actors, models were found to be highly significant. The participants also agreed with questionnaire items that made appearance a high priority in our society.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The population was adolescent girls from the age range of 18-22. The sample consisted of 100 girls in this age range from arts and science colleges in Coimbatore. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling.

### Variables

**Media Influence:** Media influence or media effects are used in media studies, psychology, communication theory and sociology to refer to the theories about the ways in which mass media and media culture affect how their audiences think and behave.

**Appearance schema:** Appearance schema is a cognitive component of body image. Body image is nothing but how individual thinks about his/her own body.

**Introversion:** The direction of or tendency to direct one's thoughts and feelings toward oneself.

**Extroversion:** Extraversion is the act, state, or habit of being predominantly concerned with and obtaining gratification from what is outside the self.

## INSTRUMENTATION

- Multidimensional Media Influence Scale. (2000). by- Keery, Helene, et al
- The Appearance Schemas Inventory by Cash, T. F. (2000).

- Neymann Kohlstedt test for Introversion- Extroversion

**The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale - Adolescent Version** is a paper and pencil instrument, used to assess females’ recognition of societal/ cultural standards of appearance. It does not require any training to administer the test and it is hand-scored to obtain the results.

The Multidimensional media influence scale had subscales of Internalization (Item nos : 3,10), Importance (Item nos : 1,5,9,12,14), Comparison (Item nos : 4,6,8,11, 13) and Awareness (Item nos : 2,7).

**The Appearance Schemas Inventory** is a paper and pencil instrument, used to assess females' beliefs or assumptions about their physical appearance and the influence of appearance on life. It does not require any training to administer the test, and is hand scored to obtain the results.

It has three subscales like Body Image Vulnerability (item nos 2,4,5,9,11,12), Self Investment (Item nos : 1,3, 6,7,8) and Appearance stereotyping (item nos : 10, 13 ,14).

Statistical computations like mean and standard deviation of each subscale of both the scales were computed

**Neymann Kohlstedt Test for Introversion and Extroversion** is “yes or no” type test with 50 items. The score is computed with the help of the scoring key and the personality type is determined according to that.

The subscale scores of both media influence scale and appearance schema was also correlated using Pearson’s product moment correlation

**Null Hypothesis:**

There is no significant difference between extroverts and introverts with respect to media influence

**Statistics used**

Statistics used are percentage analysis , pearson product moment correlation, and t test

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table :1 shows the statistical findings of media influence scale**

	<b>Internalization</b>	<b>importance</b>	<b>comparison</b>	<b>awareness</b>
N	100	100	100	100
MEAN	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.7
S.D	1.044	1.113	0.663	1.187

It shows that the highest mean is for internalization (2.9) which is the inculcation or internalizing the ideal of thinness in body appearance followed by Awareness of the ideal of thinness (2.7) and the lowest on Importance of media (2.4 ) and comparison of one’s own body with that of thin models (2.4)

**Table :2 shows the statistical findings of Appearance schema**

	<b>Body image vulnerability</b>	<b>Self investment</b>	<b>Appearance stereotype</b>
N	100	100	100
MEAN	3.2	2.7	2.5
S.D	1.01	1.15	0.78

It shows that the highest mean is for Body image Vulnerability (3.2) which i reflects assumptions that one's appearance is inherently defective and socially unacceptable, followed by Self investment (2.7) which reflects the belief that one's appearance is central to one's sense of self and influential on one's life and beliefs in the necessity of the pursuit and management of physical attractiveness and Appearance stereotyping (2.5)which



reflects assumptions about the social goodness/badness of an attractive/unattractive appearance

**Table 3. Pearson product moment correlation of subscales of the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale and subscales of the Appearance Schemas Inventory ( N=100, sig= 0.05 )**

	<i>Body image vulnerability</i>	<i>Self investment</i>	<i>Appearance stereotype</i>
<i>Internalization</i>	0.564	0.521	0.464
Importance	0.352	0.542	0.324
Comparison	0.334	0.382	0.452
Awareness	0.356	0.425	0.433

The correlation values portray a range from 0.324 at the lowest (between importance and appearance stereotyping) to 0.564 at the highest ( between Internalization and Body Image Vulnerability). Every subscale of both the scales are correlated and show a positive correlation which is significant at 0.05 level

**Table :4 showing the Percentage analysis of Introverts and extroverts in the sample**

N	INTROVERTS	EXTROVERTS
100	34	66
PERCENTAGE	34%	66%

**Table no :5 showing the t value for the internalization subscale (media influence) between introverts and extroverts**

Personality type	N	Mean	S.D	T-value	Significant level
extroverts	66	3.66	0.26	5.86	Significant at 0.05 level
introverts	34	1.75	0.25		

The T value ( 5.86)clearly shows that there is a significant difference in the level of internalization between introverts and extroverts and thus the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table no :6 showing the t value for the Importance subscale (media influence) between introverts and extroverts**

Personality type	N	Mean	S.D	T-value	Significant level
extroverts	66	3	1.2	2.81	Significant at 0.05 level
Introverts	34	1.5	0.33		

The T value ( 2.81)clearly shows that there is a significant difference in the level of Importance between introverts and extroverts and thus the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table no 7: showing the t value for the Comparison subscale (media influence) between introverts and extroverts**

Personality type	N	Mean	S.D	T-value	Significant level
extroverts	66	2.5	0.31	0.473	Not significant
introverts	34	2.25	0.91		

The T value ( 0.473 )clearly shows that there is no significant difference in the level of Importance between introverts and extroverts and thus the null hypothesis is accepted

**Table no : 8 showing the t value for the Awareness subscale (media influence) between introverts and extroverts**

Personality type	N	Mean	S.D	T-value	Significant level
extroverts	66	3.33	1.46	2.85	Significant at 0.05 level
introverts	34	1.75	0.25		

The T value ( 2.85 )clearly shows that there is a significant difference in the level of Awareness between introverts and extroverts and thus the null hypothesis is rejected.

### CONCLUSION

- The results portray that the sample as a whole has a high level of media influence especially in the internalization subscale
- The subjects have scored high in Body ImageVulnerability subscale of Appearance schema
- The correlation signifies that there exists a significant positive correlation between all the subscales of both Multidimensional media influence scale and appearance stereotyping scale. Therefore media influence is related to appearance schema
- When the extroverts and introverts are compared , ot shows that they have a significant difference in the all the subscales of media influence except importance
- Therefore according to the study results , personality differences exist with respect to media influence among adolescent girls.

As per the results of the study since it could be concluded that media influence can lead to development of appearance schema, it is important to understand the vulnerability of adolescent girls as they are continuously exposed to media. There are studies which throws light on the fact that excessive preoccupation with one's own body could lead to emotional disturbance and even low self esteem. Steps should be taken in future by the collaborative effort of parents and significant others to monitor their child's exposure to media and also give them support and proper care as they grow up.

### Limitations of the study

- The sample size is small
- The study is confined to only a meager section of the population therefore the probability of generalization is questionable

### Recommendations for future research

- The study could be done on different population and would be conducted on adolescent boys
- Personality variables like narcissism could be considered for further study
- A specific research on social media ( like facebook) could be conducted

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