

Prevalence of Body Dissatisfaction in Private School Students **in Juiz de Fora-MG, Brazil**

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In the past few years, the theme of body image and adolescence has become the focus of several investigations. Research on the topic has emphasized several aspects of this construct which range from the elaboration, adaptation and validation of tools capable of verifying issues related to the dimensions of body image and even studies which seek to understand body representations and their consequences in the development of body identity (Amaral, Andrade, Oliveira, Madeira & Ferreira, 2007; Rodrigues & Cruz, 2008; Conti, Frutuoso & Gambardella, 2005).

However, even with these many studies, there are a few studies which investigate the prevalence of body dissatisfaction among teenagers in the school context and which have an epidemiological approach. Studies with this characteristic are important in the sense that they make possible a look, which seeks to learn and interpret the reality studied, serving as a basis for the development of public policies capable of positively interfering in the matter being investigated (Pereira, 1995).

According to Papalia and Olds (2000), adolescence comprises the period from 12 to 20 years old, when there is a turbulence of changes, information, opportunities and choices to be made. The teenager seeks to belong, be included and feel a part of that specific group.

As for the psychological aspects, the authors reported that anything which distinguishes the youngsters from their group of friends is something disturbing and, if this difference is noticed in their bodies the suffering might be even greater, for the bodies which are different from the ideal standard established by society will be marginalized.

Carreira Filho (2005, p. 70) highlights that, "it is at this moment that the concepts of life in society are developed, along with their intimate relationships with the most controversial aspects of our living with others." As such, it is at

that moment that the attitudes the young person has regarding other people's views and the pressure from society on their self-image and on the individual and collective view stand out.

Body dissatisfaction is a feeling of discomfort regarding one's own body and which is related to a cognitive and emotional alteration, resulting in an attitude regarding one's own body (Andrade, 2009). According to Gardner (2004), it can also be defined as a difference between the size that one person perceives his/her body (or part of it) to be and the ideal size for this same person.

In this sense, this study aimed to verify the prevalence of body dissatisfaction of high school students of private schools in the city of Juiz de Fora – MG. The Project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP, Portuguese) of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), being approved on December 14th, 2006 under number 946.252.2006. After the approval, the data collection was performed according to the ethical aspects involved.

The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) validated in Brazil by Di Pietro (2001) was used. This questionnaire is self-applicable and contains 34 questions regarding the state of the people interviewed in the last four weeks, whose answers are presented on a Likert scale from 1 to 6, indicating the frequency with which their behavior happens. A heading was added to the BSQ so as to gather information such as age and the practice of physical activities.

From the total score obtained in the BSQ, four categories are established according to the levels of preoccupation with body image, namely: no preoccupation with body image (≤ 110); light preoccupation with body image (>110 and ≤ 138); moderate preoccupation with body image (>138 and ≤ 167); serious preoccupation with body image (≥ 168).

The information was processed and analyzed by building up a databank in the SPSS software v.16 for Windows. The study of the variables was initially carried out in a descriptive manner and later, through statistical techniques. The T Test, with a significance level of 95% ($p < 0.05$), was used to verify the existence of statistically significant differences.

The sample was composed of 132 students, 70 females and 62 males – respecting the proportionality of the absolute numbers of the population. The students' average age was 16.67 ± 1.163 years old.

The mean score reached by the students was 62.70 (± 27.724). This value suggests that the students are not dissatisfied with their bodies, since it is below 110 points. At first glance, these data seem to contradict the literature which claims that dissatisfaction with body image has reached expressive numbers (Rosen, 2003). Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasize that, according to Di Pietro (2002), scores below 110 points are observed in the majority of the non-clinical population. Higher scores are observed in people with characteristics suggesting dysmorphic body disorders and eating disorders.

When analyzing the averages of the scores regarding sex, the females (88.89 ± 33.182) are significantly more dissatisfied ($p < 0.05$) with their bodies than the males (61.32 ± 26.071).

The data described above corroborate with those found in the literature regarding body dissatisfaction among girls and boys (Vilela, Lamounier, Dellaretti Filho, Barros Neto & Horta, 2004; Branco Hilário & Cintra, 2006; Graham, Eich, Kepphart and Peterson, 2000). Conti (2008) highlights that body dissatisfaction is higher among girls, who prefer thin and slender figures. Among the boys, the preference is for big and muscular bodies.

When only the variable regarding the practice of physical activities is taken into account, it is seen that sedentariness arises as an influence in the increase of teenagers' preoccupations with their bodies. Thus, the average score among those who do not practice physical activities (85.05 ± 35.119) is significantly higher than that of those who do (68.81 ± 29.041).

Schilder (1999) already highlighted physical activity (dance, expressive movement, games, among other) as an important facilitator in the full development of body image. Therefore, one can understand that the lack of it brings to teenagers feelings of dissatisfaction with their own bodies, which could be precursors of a negative body image.

When comparing both variables (sex and physical activities), one can observe that the girls are significantly more dissatisfied ($p < 0.05$) with their bodies than the boys, independently of the practice of physical activities (89.90 ± 34.045 practicing girls and 88.42 ± 33.150 non-practicing girls; 60.19 ± 22.208 practicing boys and 69.90 ± 41.418 non-practicing boys).

From the data exposed above, it is important to emphasize the higher prevalence of body dissatisfaction among the female students, when compared

to the boys. Understanding that culture has mechanisms through which people direct their behaviors, it is possible to understand the use of the body by and for the culture as an object of transmission of cultural codes.

When perceiving body dissatisfaction as a variable which presents more risk to the development of initial symptoms, one can verify the importance of studies not being restricted to the diagnosis of this dissatisfaction. Physical Education as a social and pedagogical practice may be a possible intervention, widening the relations of the students with the world. In this sense, the physical education teacher, by being directly connected to physical activity, must act as a professional capable of encouraging criticism regarding these standards to which everyone is exposed.

Thus, we suggest the creation of public policies capable of contemplating this issue so that it is really possible to develop autonomy in a way to make the relations established with the body flexible, learning to live with the differences in harmony.

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