

## Body Image and Its Predictors in Taiwan : Interpersonal Pressure and Media Agreement As Mediators

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Since the 90's, body image has become an important theme of research in social scientists' eyes. Both domestic and international research has found that people tend to feel more and more frustrated with their body image, and much more people feel dissatisfied with their own body and distort their own body shape. However, most studies focus solely on college students, teenagers and females. This study is based on a large representative survey sample of almost 2000 adults conducted by Academia Sinica at Taiwan in 2003. It reexamines Taiwanese body images (including three components: body distortion, body satisfaction, and body change) and its influencing factors and path.

Results showed that the mean objective body shape (Body Mass Index, BMI) of the sample was within standard health ranges, but people tended to overestimate their body shape (especially females and young people). In addition, gender and age were found to have significant influence on body images. On average, females and young people showed more body distortion, body dissatisfaction and more desire for body change. Older adults showed less body distortion and dissatisfaction and less impact of interpersonal pressure. Moreover, interpersonal pressure was the most significant mediating factor

between gender and age, and body image. Romantic partners' and intimate others' criticism of the body was the first priority of concern for females under 35, and clothes clerks' criticism was second. The influence of media and gender consciousness was not as strong as expected. Finally, using body images as dependent variables, gender and age as independent variables, and interpersonal pressure and media agreement as mediating variables; a structural equation model (SEM) was constructed and found to have an acceptable fit with the data. Objectification theory is applied to illustrate the significant differences between body images according to gender and age; Chinese social orientation is used to explain how interpersonal pressure is a strong effective mediator of gender and age differences; the trade-off between trusting and criticizing media results in a weakening the influence of media, and finally, distinguishing explicit attitudes from implicit attitudes is used to explain the lack of mediation effects for gender consciousness.

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