Name

Instructor

Course

Date

**The Role of Society on Body Image**

Body image is a critical aspect of an individual life. People care about how they look, and they like to maintain a good body image. According to Farrell, the society has its opinion on how an individual should appear (20). The opinion forces people who believe that they have a negative body image to enhance themselves in order to match the society desires. This pressure on image has forced individuals to do plastic surgery and other correctional procedures in order to fit in the community’s perception about image. Society has a role in shaping an individual’s body image.

Forming a negative perception of your body is called Negative Body Image. The way individuals see themselves is known as body image. A negative body image arises when an individual has an unrealistic opinion towards his or her body. A common example occurs when women or men engage themselves in unusual eating habits. Thus, suffer from eating disorders because they will eat less or more so that they appear thin or fat consecutively. A person begins forming his body image at a young age. Most of the time, people know if they are healthy, attractive and acceptable in society when they are young. A young one growing up realises things about him from family, school and responses from friends. Certain traits also assist in explaining or influencing the body image of an individual, for example, perfectionists and self-critics. These individuals are prone to developing a negative bad image since they have certain parameters that define a perfect body (Grogan 50).

Body image is extremely vital in an individual's life. The media and other society aspects cause an individual to develop a negative or positive body image. The aspects that affect the formation of a negative body image include negative publicity about overweight people, adoration of certain celebrities, and negative responses from people that matter to an individual. The key elements that affect an individual's body image are body weight, and eating disorder. An individual’s body weight always matters, for example, slender individuals will look at themselves in the mirror and believe they have a perfect image. An obese individual will look at herself in the mirror and believe she is more slender until she finds her picture somewhere used in a negative kind of way (Farrell n.p). Another aspect is eating disorders. Individuals develop a negative body image towards their bodies, and this leads them to begin engaging in eating habits that are harmful to the body. Some people have developed weight obsession that has led them to become sick. They might suffer from Anorexia, a disease that occurs when an individual tries to avoid food in order to cut their calories intake.

A negative body image can lead to worse situations such as suicide. Individuals become obsessed about their negative image until they feel unwanted in society. This aspect is critical since other people waste money in plastic surgery, they stress about obtaining the best body image, and others might be diagnosed with depression. Society should evaluate what they perceive as perfect or acceptable. Media should also censor those programs that convince people to change their body image. It is vital to expose the manner in which body image might be distorted by society (Holmstrom, 200).

An examination of current events across the globe in as far as one’s appearance is concerned can help in revealing that society has a lot to play in an individual’s appearance. To begin with, society often talks about the desired attributes of a woman or man’s bodily features. This discussion or remarks aid in contributing to a perception in determining what an individual should look like. A good example to depict this ideology will be the issue of body weight. Body weight has been an issue in every nation. Individuals can judge others in relation to their body weight is an indication that a majority of them will attempt to look for a body size similar to what they believe is better. Through media and even during face-to-face interactions, everyone seems to be concerned about their weight and how it affects their body image (Willett 17). This is illustrative of how concerned society is about this image feature and therefore mounts pressure, or creates a sense of responsibility to individuals in as far as how much they weight. In some cultures, too much weight depicts that an individual is wealthy, in other cultures; this could be an illustration of laziness, lack of exercise, pride, too much eating and so forth. The reaction towards the weight of an individual is influenced by the society they emanate from. People in the developed countries believe that less weight is better and it means an individual is healthy with the perfect body image (Farrell 1). All these may or may not be justifiable, but the point of this paper is that most people would have preferred to remain the way they look were it not for the pressures exerted by society.

In most cases, the natural attributes of an individual’s image are usually, and in most cases unfairly judged by societal perceptions. For example, at puberty stage, one’s body changes in readiness for adulthood related activities such as reproduction (Rodriguea 4). Apart from the physical changes, many other changes take place such as emotional changes in both boys and girls. Rodriguea-Tome et al. article elucidates that body changes in puberty affect youths. These changes really affect the perception that individuals have about their appearance in as far as their image is concerned. As a result, most are forced to work in all possible ways to ensure that they appear in a manner that society expects them to be. Sometimes this is unrealistic, and it makes people behave in strange ways in order to compensate for their perceived unfit image status in the eyes of others.

Beauty is another vital aspect that can be used to justify that indeed society plays a crucial role in one’s image. Ideally, beauty ought to be a natural gift since everyone is born with natural beauty or handsomeness (Grogan 14). This, however, is not the case, as society seems to have some established standards of what beauty should really be. This can be argued otherwise, but the truth of the matter is that many people really undergo much in order to keep what they perceive as a beautiful image (Willett). A good example to this is among married couples that would do all they can in order to remain relevantly attractive to opposite sexes even when there is really no intention of having any further relationships. Young people are also struggling to keep up with the image since they want to attract the opposite sex in order to explore. The young ones will begin experimenting with their parent's facial products in order to remove acne. This might lead to having scars on the face or in their bodies, which could affect them later in their lives. All this trouble emanates from the fact that society reacts to people differently. Attractive people are always given more attention than those who are deemed fewer attractive people. This simply means that society seems to be having a selective or a biased eye when looking at beauty, such that those who are deemed beautiful are given much attention if compared to those who “are not” (Willett). This is justified by the amount of effort that people put in to look attractive, for example through make-ups, dressing, walking styles, articulation of words and smiles among others.

An individual’s public image is also another point of concern in as far as society’s perception of one’s image is concerned. The moment someone appears in public, some people are often concerned about how they looked and presented themselves. In addition, people even calculate the cost of your outfit to determine your class in society (Cash and Smolak 34). In televisions today, a special segment discusses how people wear to a certain event. A Fashion Guru, who associates the image of an individual to their image, carries out this discussion. These shows often shame those who did not wear appropriately, and this might spoil an individual's image. In the US, when the president attends a function, among the things that are given priority in reporting are their dressing styles and the manner in which they presented themselves. In essence, every individual is expected to appear in a certain way. A debate can even emerge in their image in relation to what they were wearing. In case the president or the celebrity did not wear according to people's expectations the public will be angry and write harsh insults in social media. This habit clearly depicts that the image of an individual matters to people. On many occasions, leaders have had to apologize for what they looked like while making public appearances. At times, they appear intentionally in attires that make them feel more natural and better for that matter although the fans will not understand that the leader is relaxing (Holmstrom 197).

Society influences an individual’s image through generation of an imitation culture (Lawrence and Baio 21). Imitation culture emanates from praise of a certain person or style in the fashion or in any other industry. There are celebrities who appear in events that have a unique hairstyle or dress. These celebrities are praised excessively until individuals desire to copy their style. An example is Lupita Nyong’o, an Oscar Award winning actor whose appearance in public made many to imagine she is one of the most attractive women in the world. Her dressing, during the award ceremony was so much celebrated that many have since then tried to adapt her style and in an unfortunate situation, someone even attempted to steal the dress she used on that day sometime after. People are willing to follow such celebrity trends in order to be identified with a certain image. Copying and following such famous celebrity styles affects the body image of an individual. Several people will be influenced by the publicity her looks have been given and do what it takes to look like her.

The most controversial aspect of body image in as far as society's role is plastic surgery. This is an intentional distortion of the body in order for an individual to look differently from the way they used to. Famous people and celebrities have undergone plastic surgery; examples include Wayne Rooney, the Manchester United Football Club player and the late Michael Jackson, one of the most respected pop stars in the world. Rooney, for instance, did this to have hair on the whole of his head, which was partly bald and very normal. Jackson on the other hand did a face and nose surgery which completely transformed the way he looked. He was dark skinned also, and he decided to bleach his skin colour to look like a Caucasian skin. Following these incidents, more people have followed Rooney and Jackson's example since they proved that it worked on others. People have desires and when they realize that their body is not representing the image they have in mind, they use money to get an image that makes sense to them.

This aforementioned scenario then brings the question of why certain people do not appreciate their image. I believe the answer lies in society, which apart from just appreciating an individual the way he or she was born they openly express what could have been better in an individual’s appearance. Von et al. (1240) points out that media makes individuals feel bad about their bodies, and this statement is completely genuine. Media is always responsible for giving people information. When people gather this information, they act on it and waste their money in becoming someone else since they do not have an image of their own. The worst part is that there are few people who encourage the youth to find their own image and do their own activities using their talents. Resources should be released to several schools to educate the teenagers about accepting their body image.

This research has examined various author opinions towards body image and the influence of society on body image. This leads the research to seek answers on what should be done to assist the affected people to accept themselves and their body image. It is a fact that all these people listened or adapted ideologies from media or friends. Individuals act on such information because they are not aware or satisfied with their current body image. At times people seek a better body image and report satisfaction, for example, results in Von, Soest T et al study reveals that a majority of plastic surgery patients show a higher self-esteem and become satisfied with their body image after the operation (1241). The article further reveals that psychological problems remain the same, which is an indication that surgeries do not solve other issues associated with negative body image rather than the body part and a raised self-esteem. The study advises surgeons to examine the issues of these psychological problems since they will hinder the positive results of a successful cosmetic surgery.

It is a fact that a positive body image is beneficial to an individual since it comes with high self-esteem that boosts the confidence levels. Individuals waste their time looking for information that will improve their body image yet they have an answer. Society and media should exhibit the reality and depict natural attributes of an individual. When an individual learns to differentiate reality from acting then everyone will accept his or her imperfect body image. People should learn that celebrities are also real people and their appearance on media is different from their real appearance. The community around you has a responsibility in all this. Trends will keep emerging, and people will always follow. It is vital to be updated although when an individual is aware of his body image he or she will differentiate and select a trend that suits their personality.

In conclusion, the discussion in this study reveals that the most satisfied person in relation to an image appreciates the fact that they are different, and society has different people. An individual should be disciplined enough to choose a trend or additions that will not alter his or her personality. They should seek to satisfy their desires rather than what society expects from them. Many have advocated for people to appreciate themselves since they are perfect in their own ways. Beauty is a gift that everyone was given in their own special way, and it is only discoverable to the special few who show their genuine appreciation. Given this, people should not go through unnecessary strife such as plastic surgery in order to look different unless if it is on a medical background. I believe seeking a better image is essential although it should be for an individual’s satisfaction not to society. Perfictionists way of thinking is very critical. An individuals creativity will be limited if they can’t express themselves the way they are and keep wanting people’s approval. Think outside the box, you are never too big to wear certain types of clothes or engage in certain activities.

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