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SRI LANKAN BEAUTY STANDARDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON DEVELOPING DYSFUNCTIONAL EATING BEHAVIOURS

Introduction

Beauty standards have been prevalent within people which defines as the quality of being pleasing specially to look at. These beauty standards have affected everyday interactions from the media to the world. People determine what is beautiful from the body shape, to facial proportions to height and weight. There are diverse concepts of beauty according to different societies, beliefs and culture. Crucial beauty Standards in Sri Lanka have made a huge impact on people’s perspective about their body image and most of them suffer from body image dissatisfaction.

Body image dissatisfaction has become a significant public health issue, particularly among young adults and this has led to development of dysfunctional eating behaviours such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder [1].

Goal

Provide information about development of dysfunctional eating behaviors and mental health considering beauty standards, taking Sri Lanka as an example.

Material and Methods of research

This article contains about an anonymous survey which was conducted among Sri Lankan young adults of 16–31 years old and their perspectives about beauty standards in Sri Lanka and their adverse effect on mental health. Furthermore, data from recent studies which has done in Sri Lanka about body dissatisfactions and dysfunctional eating behaviours, data from previously published PubMed, WEBMD, NSCID articles.

The results of the research and their discussion

Sri Lanka is a developing nation with multi ethnic and religiously diverse population. Beauty standards in Sri Lanka was developed within the cultural and religious beliefs in the past history which was not changed until now. The total number of people who participated in this study was 54 with the average age of

23.5. Majority of participants were females 79.6 % and 64.8 % of them are from western province which has the highest population in all the provinces in Sri Lanka which is the nation’s largest social – economic center.

According to the participant’s perspective on beauty standards in Sri Lanka can conclude as, male beauty standards; tall (88.9 %), built muscles (85.2 %), fair skin (66.7 %) and female beauty standards; bigger breast (90.7 %), bigger buttock area (90.7 %) and skinny (81.5 %). All participants (100 %) disagreed on both male and female beauty standards in Sri Lanka and 68.5 % of them claimed that these beauty standards have affected their life. 83.3% of them agreed that these beauty standards are crucial and 92.6 % of them agreed that people who are not according to beauty standards are discriminated in Sri Lanka. Majority of them 94.4 % agreed that females are affected by these beauty standards more than male and Sri Lankans discriminate on body weight (68.5 %) more than other features. 90.7 % claimed that it is important to adjust in to these

beauty standards not to get discriminated by Sri Lankan society and majority of them claimed that they get body discrimination from their peers.

79.6 % of the participants were normal weight, 14.8 % were overweight according to the BMI standards and 51.9 % of them disagreed on BMI parameters to determine their health.

All participants were questioned about their thoughts about food and answers are shown in table 1.

Table 1– Expressions about food

	No	Yes	Sometimes
Feeling guilty or depressed after eating	30 (55.6 %)	11 (20.37 %)	13 (24.1 %)
Feeling uncontrollable around food	30 (55.6%)	17 (31.5 %)	7 (12.9 %)
Regularly eat until uncomfortably full	31 (57.4 %)	16 (29.6 %)	7 (12.9 %)
Eats in secret	43 (79.6 %)	9 (16.6 %)	2 (3.7 %)
Often on a diet	27 (50.0 %)	20 (37.0 %)	7 (12.7 %)
Vomit after eating	47 (87.0 %)	–	7 (12.9 %)

Bulimia nervosa is associate with binge eating and practiced vomiting after overeating. Overeating starts immediately following a diet and restriction of calorie intake. (3) According to the survey analysis participants with developing symptoms of bulimia nervosa can be found. Mostly females are engaged in successful pursuit of thinness that results in serious weight loss which is the first sign of anorexia nervosa which is a psychological and physiological disturbed behaviour, including extreme physical activity, depression and obsessional preoccupation with food, intense fear of gaining weight. (3) Majority of participants (46.29 %) admitted that they worried of their weight and body shape more than their peers and 48.1% of them sees weight as an important aspect of their identity. 40.7 % expressed that they have a fear of gaining weight and 3.70 % have a fear of losing weight. 9.3 % of them eat 3 main meals with snacks, 37 % eat 3 meals, 13 % of them eat 2 main meals including breakfast, 5.6 % eat only one main meal, 1.9 % eat only snacks for the whole day and majority of them claimed that they don't count calories before eating. 37 % of them claimed that they are stressed over food. Majority of participants has tried to blend in with beauty standards and they tried to lose weight with excessive exercises and diet. Some of the participants claimed that even with exercise and diet they still ended up gaining weight. These data can confirm that there are some participants with developing anorexia nervosa symptoms.

According to the survey 96.3 % of people agreed that these beauty standards have a greater impact on mental health of people. From the participants 22.5 % of them are more likely to have a dysfunctional eating behaviour. According to recent researches about eating disorders confirms that girls with low self-esteem are more likely to develop distorted eating in the future and most of the alleged cause of development of eating disorders are; family and peer pressure, teasing and individual influences such as sever body dissatisfaction (4).

According to the survey, participants (96.3 %) agreed that beauty standards in Sri Lanka has a greater impact on mental health issues of people and Sri Lanka should provide more mental health services due to lack of attention to people in need of help.

Conclusions

Beauty standards are critical in the development of eating disorders, which is in line with our study in Sri Lanka; almost three-quarters of young people are not satisfied with their current appearance. Women are more dissatisfied with their physique than men, and most of them are

influenced by the cultural obsession with thinness. We can hypothesize that people who meet beauty standards and have low self-esteem are more likely to develop eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and compulsive overeating. The data obtained can be used in psychoeducational work in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE

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