



Do I Know My Body Size? An Examination of College Students Involved in Fashion

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Significance of Research. Women tend to have strict ideal standards about their body sizes and types (McVey & Davis, 2002). The ideal standards of appearance for women in the U.S. include a “thin body and fitness” (Lee & Johnson, 2009). It has been found that healthy body image in the society increases one’s self-esteem and prevents negative self-evaluations (Lee & Johnson, 2009). Body image perception can be related to the individual’s fashion involvement because the extent of self-confidence varies by culture and personal characteristics (Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). According to Goldsmith et al. (1996)’s theory, people involved in fashion tend to have distinctive self-concept. Specifically, fashion leaders have high levels of involvement in fashion and appearance management. Thus, they have higher self-confidence about their self-expression and may have higher body satisfaction. Fashion involvement can be expressed in several different ways and being a fashion model is one of the paths. Female college students often show their interests in fashion by volunteering to be a model for a senior fashion show. Also, their preferences of a certain clothing style reflect or be reflective of their fashion involvement. This raised following questions: What are the actual and perceived body sizes of the college students wanting to be a fashion model? Do they have any distinctive body image perception? Do they have a better understanding of their weight status and sizes? Thus, this study aims 1) to understand how college students involved in fashion perceive their body images and 2) to assess their body image discrepancies between the actual body sizes and perceived sizes.

Methodology. Data was collected from college students who applied to be fashion models between 2011 and 2014. Total of 127 females were participated in this study. The average age of subjects was 20.76, and 67.7% of them were white. First, participants were asked to fill out questionnaires, pertaining to the self-evaluation of body weight status and clothing size. Then, they were scanned with a 3D body scanner to obtain actual body images and body dimensions. The actual body images and dimensions were assessed with BMI weight status, and ASTM D 5585-11e1 standard size charts for adult female misses figure type. The difference between an actual body image and a self-evaluation of body image was used for the measure of discrepancy. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis of the contingency table were used in this study.

Results. When the model call was announced through the college, a requirement to be a model was stated as: height should be 67~72" and waist 26~28". However, 43.3% of the participants were below the height requirement and 67.7% were larger waist than the requirement. Although college students wanting to be a fashion model were confident of their body images, 72.44% of them could not identify their actual sizes what they wear when they were asked about their sizes. Subjects who are heavier weight status than BMI status tend not to know their sizes, while subjects who are skinner than BMI weight status tend to express clearly more about their actual sizes. Their body image discrepancies were significant between the requirement of being a model and the actual body sizes ($\chi^2 = 6.22, p < 0.05$). When we compared their answered sizes to the

ASTM D5585-11e1 (2013) standard size, their sizes were different from the standard. Since ASTM standard size tables include two body types such as “Curvy (a typical way of defining missy figure)” and “Straight”, sizes were analyzed in two body types. ASTM missy straight figure has dimensional differences: Bust-waist 5.50~6.75", Hip-waist 7.50~9", Hip-bust range 2~2.25". ASTM missy curvy figure has dimensional differences: Bust-waist 7~8.25", Hip-waist 9.75~11.25", Hip-bust range 2.75~3". Compared to these two body types in ASTM, subjects had various body dimensions, showing differences: Bust-waist 0.42~10.76" (SD=2.17), Hip-waist 3.22~14.68" (SD=2.14), and Hip-bust -4.65~9.6" (SD=2.56). We also found that there was a discrepancy between the standard body type and actual body type. According to ASTM Missy Curvy figure sizes 2-4 (=waist 26~28"), only 10.2% of subjects met a criteria to be a model. According to ASTM Missy Straight sizes 2-4, 17.3% of them can be fit to be a fashion model, and the rest did not meet the criteria. Their answers were significantly different by the size groups. While models who are close to the criteria (Size 0-4, waist 26~28") tend to know their actual sizes, models who do not meet the criteria did not think that they would wear their actual large sizes ($\chi^2 = 58.923$, $p < 0.05$). This tendency of a discrepancy shows in large sizes. For instance, 83.33% of size group 6 disagreed with actual sizes. In the large sizes group (sizes 10~20), all of them disagreed with their actual sizes. The size groups were analyzed further to find out their clothing shopping style and influence in their fashion. Overall, 33.70% of them do not have any influence of their clothing style and 25.41% answered influence by celebrities. Of the subjects, 47.78% get an idea of such a style from magazines, 18.33% are from TV, and internet (8.33%). For their clothing, 87.40% answered that they care “fit”. However, 66.93% do not care much about cost. Of the small size group, 42.86% care about brand while other size groups do not care about the brand ($\chi^2 = 15.076$, $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion and Implications. Overall, college students with involvement in fashion tend to be confident about their body images. They seem to know or pretend not to know about their sizes. Although this might be related to current inconsistent sizing systems in the apparel industry we found that students involved in fashion have a discrepancy between the actual body size and perceived body size. This result might be beneficial to the fashion industry understanding the young generation. Also, future research is needed to fully clarify a discrepancy of the perceived body images that might be related to different cultural dynamics, individualism and collectivism.

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