



# THE IMPACT OF MEDIA PORTRAYALS ON COLLEGE GIRLS' VIEWS OF BEAUTY AND HAPPINESS: AN INVESTIGATION ACROSS DIFFERENT STUDY GROUPS

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**Abstract:** The portrayal of beauty standards in media significantly influences societal perceptions of body image and happiness, particularly among college girls, a crucial demographic group undergoing formative personal and social development. Reviewing existing literature highlight the prevalence of the significant influence of media, especially digital editing, on perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards, leading to negative body image outcomes among women. This study explores how media portrayal of beauty standards impacts college girls' perceptions of body image and happiness across various socio-educational backgrounds. Through examining opinions of college girls from different study groups—urban vs. rural, government vs. private colleges, and undergraduate vs. postgraduate levels—the research aims to understand how diverse environments shape attitudes towards media-driven beauty standards. Findings suggest a pervasive influence of media on college girls' perceptions of beauty and happiness, irrespective of their backgrounds. The study underscores the importance of targeted interventions to address the potentially negative impact of media on college girls' well-being and highlights the need for further research in this area.

**Index Terms** - Media Portrayals, College Girls, Beauty Standards, Body Image, Happiness

## I. INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of beauty standards in media has a profound impact on societal perceptions of body image, self-worth, and happiness. College girls, being a critical demographic group, are especially susceptible to these influences as they navigate formative years of personal and social development. Previous research has indicated that exposure to media representations of actresses and models can shape young women's perceptions of ideal body image and influence their own views of happiness and satisfaction with their appearance.

In this study, the association between opinions about feeling of greater happiness if one resembles the actresses and models shown in media and the different study groups of college girls were investigated. Specifically, the perspectives of college girls from urban versus rural areas, government versus private colleges, and undergraduate versus postgraduate classes were examined. By assessing these groups, one can identify whether different backgrounds and environments influence perceptions of happiness in relation to beauty standards portrayed by media.

The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of how media influence intersects with different social and educational contexts, potentially shaping the outlooks and aspirations of young women. Identifying whether there are notable differences across these groups can inform targeted strategies for addressing the impact of media portrayals on body image and overall happiness among college girls. This

research is especially relevant as media continues to play an ever-increasing role in shaping societal beauty standards and personal well-being.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Body image encompasses an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and emotions regarding their own body (Cash, 2004; Grogan & Richards, 2002). Much of the research in this field has concentrated on body dissatisfaction, particularly concerning dissatisfaction with body size, shape, or weight. Body dissatisfaction is defined as the negative self-assessment of one's body in terms of overall appearance, shape, weight, or specific body parts (Grogan, 2016).

A positive body image extends beyond merely the absence of dissatisfaction with one's appearance; it entails a true appreciation of the body's abilities (Tylka, 2011). Individuals with a positive body image recognize and value their bodies for their functionality, rather than focusing solely on their external appearance. In contrast, those who have concerns about their body image place excessive emphasis on their looks, including appearance, weight, figure, size, or shape. This can lead them to avoid social and personal situations where they believe they are being judged based on their appearance.

Body image concerns are prevalent among adolescents. In an Australian survey, young people ranked body image third on their list of personal concerns, after stress and academic issues, highlighting its significance as a personal issue. Few girls express a preference for a larger body size or weight, with many aspiring to be underweight instead. Girls often associate being thinner with greater happiness, health, attractiveness, and success in relationships with boys (Wertheim & Paxton, 2011).

Adolescent girls tend to be more concerned than boys about body surveillance, body shame, and appearance-related anxiety (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Girls primarily focus on the aesthetic aspects of their bodies, often viewing them more critically than their functional qualities and expressing a stronger desire to change these features compared to boys. Notably, when girls are prompted to consider the functional aspects of their bodies, they report fewer negative evaluations and lower levels of body dissatisfaction (Abbott & Barber, 2011).

It is well-recognized that women face greater societal pressures than men to conform to specific body shapes and sizes. Research on gender portrayals has revealed significant differences in how men and women are depicted in terms of body weight. Content analysis indicates that women are often presented as exceptionally slim in the media, while men are usually shown at an average weight. Notably, fashion models are slimmer than 98% of women in the United States (Smolak, 2004).

Magazines targeting girls and young women often showcase conventional slim images as standards of attractiveness. These publications reinforce the prevailing cultural expectation that thinness is a prerequisite for women, including adolescents (Guillen & Barr, 1994). The digital editing of model images further exposes women to even more idealized and slender body types (Bordo, 2003 a & b).

The print media, particularly women's magazines, have a significant impact on their readers by presenting specific definitions of an attractive woman (Ferguson et al., 2013). These magazines can influence a woman's perception of herself by conveying what is socially acceptable behavior (Ferguson et al., 2013).

Many researchers have assessed body satisfaction in women after exposing them to images of slim fashion models using projective methods, often finding a decrease in body esteem (Groetz et al., 2002). The effects of media exposure are generally short-term, making a woman feel closer to her ideal self by identifying with the models and adjusting her current body image (Myers and Biocca, 1992).

Women who exhibit high levels of self-discrepancy in body image tend to engage in social comparison with media images, making them more susceptible to negative outcomes (Bessenoff, 2006). Social comparison appears to play a role in this process, with women who have internalized the thin ideal and experience a greater discrepancy between their actual and perceived ideal body being at greater risk of negative consequences.

## III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a diverse group of 360 college girls was randomly selected from Girls' Colleges in Udaipur city, Rajasthan, representing undergraduate and postgraduate students from both government and private institutions, and from urban and rural areas. The selection was balanced, with 180 urban and 180 rural participants, further divided equally between government and private colleges, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate levels. A structured questionnaire was used to examine the impact of media exposure on participants' body image consciousness. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale to gather data and ensure clarity for respondents. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, with a significance level set at 0.05.

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Association between opinions about the of Media Portrayals Impact College Girls' Views of Beauty and Happiness and study groups (Urban Vs Rural, Government Vs Private and UGVs PG) is given in Table-1.

Table 1: Association between opinions about the of Media Portrayals Impact College Girls' Views of Beauty and Happiness and study groups (Urban Vs Rural, Government Vs Private and UGVs PG) of college girls

		Media Portrayals Impact College Girls' Views of Beauty and Happiness					Total	Chi-Square (p value)
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indecisive	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Total Urban	F	3	12	0	39	126	180	7.391 (0.117)
	%	1.7%	6.7%	0.0%	21.7%	70.0%	100.0%	
Total Rural	F	0	7	3	40	130	180	5.809 (0.214)
	%	0.0%	3.9%	1.7%	22.2%	72.2%	100.0%	
Total Government	F	2	14	2	41	121	180	1.707 (0.789)
	%	1.1%	7.8%	1.1%	22.8%	67.2%	100.0%	
Total Private	F	1	5	1	38	135	180	1.707 (0.789)
	%	0.6%	2.8%	0.6%	21.1%	75.0%	100.0%	
Total UG	F	2	8	1	37	132	180	1.707 (0.789)
	%	1.1%	4.4%	0.6%	20.6%	73.3%	100.0%	
Total PG	F	1	11	2	42	124	180	1.707 (0.789)
	%	0.6%	6.1%	1.1%	23.3%	68.9%	100.0%	
TOTAL	F	3	19	3	79	256	360	1.707 (0.789)
	%	0.8%	5.3%	0.8%	21.9%	71.1%	100.0%	

The Table-1 provides data regarding the association between college girls' opinions about the impact of media portrayals on their views of beauty and happiness across different study groups (urban vs. rural, government vs. private, and undergraduate vs. postgraduate students). The data includes frequencies (F) and percentages (%) of each opinion category (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Indecisive, Agree, Strongly Agree) within each study group, as well as overall totals. The analysis also includes Chi-Square tests and their respective p-values, which provide an indication of whether there is a significant association between opinions and study groups.

**Urban vs. Rural:** The analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in opinions between urban and rural college girls regarding the impact of media portrayals on their views of beauty and happiness. The p-value of 0.117 suggests the difference in opinions between the two groups is not statistically significant. This implies that despite potential differences in lifestyle and exposure to media between urban and rural settings, the college girls' views on this topic remain consistent across both environments. The opinions in both groups follow a similar pattern, with the majority of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

**Government vs. Private:** Similarly, the comparison between students from government and private colleges did not show any significant association (p-value of 0.214) regarding the impact of media portrayals on their views of beauty and happiness. The majority of respondents from both types of institutions agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that attending either type of institution does not notably influence students' opinions on the matter. Both groups have a similar distribution of opinions, with a significant portion of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

**UG (Undergraduate) vs. PG (Postgraduate):** The data also shows a lack of significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students' opinions (p-value of 0.789) on the influence of media portrayals on their views of beauty and happiness. Both groups displayed similar opinions, predominantly agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. This consistency suggests that the level of education does not greatly affect the students' perspectives on the impact of media portrayals. Both groups exhibit similar opinions, with the majority of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

The overall findings from the analysis indicate that regardless of whether college girls are from urban or rural areas, government or private colleges, or are pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate course, their opinions on the influence of media portrayals on their views of beauty and happiness remain largely consistent. Most respondents across all groups agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, pointing towards a pervasive influence of media portrayals on college girls' perceptions of beauty and happiness. This consistency across different study groups suggests that media portrayals have a broad and uniform impact on college girls' perceptions in the context of beauty and happiness. In general, the majority of respondents across all groups agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that media portrayals impact their views of beauty and happiness.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research sheds light on the profound influence of media portrayals on college girls' perceptions of beauty and happiness, regardless of their socio-educational backgrounds. The findings indicate a consistent pattern across different study groups, including urban versus rural, government versus private colleges, and undergraduate versus postgraduate levels. Despite potential variations in lifestyle and exposure to media, the majorities of college girls agree or strongly agree that media portrayals significantly impact their views of beauty and happiness.

These results emphasize the pervasive nature of media influence on college girls' perceptions of beauty and well-being, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address the potential negative effects of unrealistic beauty standards perpetuated by the media. The study highlights the importance of further research in this area to develop effective strategies for promoting positive body image and happiness among college girls, taking into account the diverse social and educational contexts in which they exist. Ultimately, fostering a healthier media environment and promoting media literacy are essential steps towards empowering young women to cultivate a more positive self-image and enhanced well-being in today's digital age.

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