The Impact of Social Media on Body Shame

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Abstract: The media plays a very important role in today's society, it not only provides information and news, but also plays a role in guiding and shaping public opinion. With the popularity of the media and the abundance of content, more and more young people pay attention to the topic of body shame. Using the method of literature review, this paper analyzes the content of the research topic of body shame. Research has found that media may induce body shame, which can lead to more and more serious physical and psychological problems, because biased reporting and discriminatory remarks can also bring body shame to people; Other studies have also explored the differences in how men and women treat body shame, and the reasons for their differences. Therefore, the negative influence of the media on body shame cannot be ignored, and the difference in the treatment of body shame between men and women is inevitable.

Keywords: body shame, gender differences, media

1.   Introduction

Body shame is a universal psychological phenomenon in human society, and the research on this aspect can involve individual psychological development, cultural environment differences, gender differences and other factors. Awareness of body shame is something that all people need to have, because studying body shame can help individuals better understand and cope with body-related issues and promote self-acceptance and self-esteem. Studying body shame can also help us better understand its psychological mechanisms, influencing factors, and social significance, while further studying body shame can promote gender equality. It is not difficult to see that body shame is the most concerned and important topic of contemporary people. This essay uses an overview approach to cover a number of body shame-related topics, such as the media's impact and how body shame differs for men and women. At the end of this paper, several methods for improving body shame are also proposed for future research.

2.   Impact of Body Shame

Body shame is the term for making disparaging remarks about others' outward traits, such as their appearance, body type, weight, etc., whether consciously or unconsciously，and then causing certain psychological shadows and harm to the other person; Or it is their own objective requirements for the body. Individuals may think that they are not good enough to anxiety and inferiority psychological process. Body shame is also a self-conscious feeling in humans, often because of social circumstances

and an individual's evaluation of the body in a particular context. People may feel shame because they feel that their body parts or appearance do not conform to socially acceptable standards, or go against personal preferences. Body shame is a phenomenon that resonates with many young people these days, especially on social media. Consciously or unconsciously, people label others because of their bodies, for example, thin people are called "telephone poles" or "bamboo poles," and tall people are called "fat pigs." In this general environment of body shame, over time, people will have low self-esteem. The body standard is subjective tendency, if you are not confident, body shame will follow. For example, in the summer, many young girls clearly like but dare not wear slip dresses, for fear of hearing: "Such arms are also interesting to wear slip dresses?" However, the most fundamental reason for body shame is that most people are obsessed with the perfect food. In their eyes, women must have a tall body, but not too thin. Men must be over 180cm tall. And these so-called standards are people's pursuit of perfection. In real life, how many people can really meet this so-called standard? As a result, people can develop feelings of shame and even anxiety in such circumstances. Thankfully, as society has evolved and societal values have changed, attitudes towards body shame have gradually changed as well. In some societies, body positivity and self-acceptance movements are on the rise, encouraging people to combat body shame and develop positive self-image and body attitudes.

Research has shown that anxiety, depression, and self-esteem among 12 - to 18-year-olds are strongly related to perceived body image dissatisfaction (BID), and there has been a growing trend of body shaming among adolescents in recent years. Many young people will feel anxious and even suffer from depression because of their poor body shape [1]. This shows that too much anxiety about body shape can cause psychological problems. Weight-based health assessments are usually based on the number on the scale and the "body mass index" known as BMI. BMI requires four physical data points (height, weight, gender, and age) to calculate. But it should not be the only way to evaluate human health, because the standard of health is different for everyone, so nothing should be a measure of body size！ It is precisely because of these so-called standards that many people feel anxious. At the same time, after experiencing a shameful situation, the body may have a series of reactions, such as flushed cheeks, rapid heart rate, sweaty hands, dry mouth. So, people are hardwired to feel shame, and shame is part of our biology.

3. Influence of Media

Media is an important part of today's society and has a profound impact on people's ideas, values and behaviors. Under this influence, the media tends to have some influence on body shame. Media advertising also has an impact on body shame. Many advertisements link goods with body image, emphasizing that buying a certain product can change one's appearance or body shape and become the perfect image in people's minds. This kind of advertising sends a message that only having a certain standard of body image can be accepted and recognized by society. This perception can easily lead to feelings of shame, which can lead to unhealthy psychological and behavioral habits. A 2005 study of 39 women found that 12 out of 24 magazine ads were about body image. From this data, it can be seen that half of these ads promote products about the body, which are called ads featuring idealized images [2]. So, as can be seen from these ads, when people are exposed to such perfectionist or idealized images, people will feel uneasy and even anxious. The study found that the media's labeling of a body as being too thin to be perfect could negatively affect young women. Regardless of the size of the models in the advertisements, the study discovered that the effect on women was similar [3]. In China, there is a shopping software called Taobao. Taobao has many shops selling clothes, and the standard of these clothes sizes is increasingly outrageous. For example, the recommended weight of S-size clothes is 30~40 kg. Many people's first reaction when they see this standard is that they are too fat to fit into a size S dress. This is a very serious phenomenon; it is because of these unreasonable clothing sizes. It will make many women have body anxiety and think

that because of their own bodies so they cannot buy the clothes they want. At the same time, people who fit this size are in the minority. Therefore, this will not only make people feel anxious, but also not conducive to the business of the store.

A recent study used cutting-edge research methods like the Internet, including social networking sites, to better understand how mass media can have a substantial impact on body image and eating disorders. The study showed that the majority of the characters in the ads were women and targeted at women, with 74% of people already using SNS and terms such as "eating disorders," "body image" and "body dissatisfaction" among the most searched on the site [4].So in this study, it can be seen that the targets of body image ads are mostly women, and many people are also willing to search the website for information about body image. This anxiety can also affect eating, and body shame can lead to depression, eating disorders, and body dysmorphic disorders [5]. Eating disorders refer to abnormal eating behaviors, including binge eating, anorexia, bulimia and suffering from anorexia or bulimia. These behaviors may be an attempt to control or change one's weight, image, or appearance. For people who want to change who they are because of body shame, eating disorders may be a coping mechanism. By controlling their diet, they hope to achieve their ideal body. For example, many people do not eat in order to lose weight, or even eat three meals a day, which in the long run will make the body lose the most basic intake of nutrients. Similarly, in a 2021 study, 1,138 participants and 193 patients with eating disorders filled out a questionnaire that included the Eating Disorder Scale. It is not difficult to see from the questionnaire that social media can increase people's body dissatisfaction and desire for ideal bodies, so they will develop eating disorders [6]. So, eating disorders themselves have a huge impact on health, and the fundamental reason for this is social media.

Nowadays, there are a lot of body-insulting comments on social media, and it is these comments that knock the confidence of many young people. The effect of body shaming on self-confidence is obvious. When a person is physically shamed or teased, they tend to feel self-conscious, embarrassed, and hurt. One study showed that many students liked to post pictures of themselves on social media, and those who talk about body shaming reduced students' confidence by 6.9% [7]. So, body shaming can cause a person to be reluctant to go to some public places and not have the confidence to wear the clothes they like. In this case, they will avoid interacting with others or entering social situations because they fear they will be humiliated or laughed at again. This withdrawal behavior may further erode their self-confidence, creating a vicious cycle. Shaming can be harmful to a person's mental health as well. Being subjected to body shaming on a regular basis can cause emotional issues like anxiety and low self-esteem. In summary, social media can reinforce body shame, which can result in various physical and psychological issues.

4.   Differences in Body Shame Between Male and Female

The differences in the treatment of body shame between boys and girls are mainly due to socio-cultural and individual psychological factors. In most cultures, though, there are some differences between men's and women's attitudes toward body shame. A study investigated body image issues among 11-15 year olds in Malaysia. The study found that most teenagers were concerned about their body shape. The study found that most teenagers were concerned about their body shape. Despite the fact that the majority of those surveyed could perceive their weight status correctly, a significant percentage of them misjudged their weight. Women are more likely than men to consider themselves obese. Women score higher on body dissatisfaction than men and prefer a slimmer body type [8]. The study revealed that women and men had different ideals of what it means to be perfect, with women preferring slimmer bodies and men preferring larger bodies. Most cultures tend to emphasize competition and strength when educating men and gentleness when educating women. This results in men being more accepting of their bodies and happy to show off who they are, while women are more

likely to feel shy and have a strong sense of privacy. A study has found that young New Zealand women were dissatisfied with the perception of female body image in Western culture and wish they were thinner. Both men and women prefer slim bodies and good looks, but women are more likely to internalize these norms. These results indicate that New Zealand women are unhappy with their bodies and want to slim down, while men are exactly the opposite [9]. Therefore, from this study, it can be observed that women are more concerned with their body management than men, and may become more anxious while focusing on their body. All in all, men and women have different standards for their body shape, which depends on the cultural environment and family environment, and each individual has different standards for body shape. But most women go for thin bodies and men go for tall bodies. On this basis, women pay more attention and care about their body shape than men, so they will also be more sensitive than men, and become more anxious.

The differences between men and women also come from their own thoughts about the opposite sex. The study showed that for 248 male and 227 female college students, there were some differences in how they described their bodies. The study showed that for 248 man and 227 woman, there were some differences in how they described their bodies. Men are very happy with their bodies. Women, on the other hand, think their current body is heavier than their most attractive body, which is also heavier than their ideal body. Men thought women would prefer someone taller than them, while women thought men would prefer someone smaller than them. The findings showed that men's perceptions helped them feel good about their bodies, while women's perceptions put pressure on them to lose weight [10].The study proved that it was not just the cultural environment that influences women and men to change their perceptions of the perfect body based on each other's perceptions, but the perception of the two is vastly different, which contributes to the gender gap in body shame. At the same time,the study examined gender disparities in youth participation in sports and other activity, particularly in terms of body image teasing. A survey of 714 adolescents found that girls had lower rates of participation in organized sports but higher levels of teasing. Girls are laughed at by their peers.The study concluded that teasing and a focus on body image may lead to a decline in girls' participation in sports and other physical activities [11]. Because women are ridiculed more about their bodies, they are not willing to participate in some physical activities, so they have no way to exercise their bodies, and their immunity is reduced. This is not a good sign. All in all, men and women have different ideas about body perfection and body shame, with different results and effects.

5.   Discussion and Suggestion

To sum up, the influence of body shame on contemporary young people is complex, and it may come from different media, such as advertising or wechat business. Even though men and women have different attitudes towards body shame, there is no denying that body shame brings more or less side effects to everyone. Although social media and external values sometimes have a negative impact on them, positive self-identification and mental health education can help them cope with this impact, such as adjusting their mentality through psychologists or support groups on social media. Future research can further explore the influence mechanism of body shame and how to prevent it. To provide more comprehensive support and help for individuals and society.

6.   Conclusion

Body shame is one of the hottest topics around, and it can't happen without the help of the media. And with the help of these media,，such as advertising，will bring unnecessary anxiety to many people, and even suffer from some mental illness. Moreover, gender differences can also exert an influence on the treatment of body shame. It is true that body shame has caused many problems for most young people, but it is important that young people should pay more attention to their physical

health and inner beauty, and not just strive for physical perfection. And by improving body shame, the social environment will also become more understanding and inclusive.

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