



## The "Standard of Beauty" and "Ideal Body" of the Descents of the Licensing Course in Physical Education

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### Abstract

The work aims to understand how the students of the Physical Education Degree Course perceive the affect of the ideas of what the Beauty Standard and the Ideal Body are. It is a field study and has a qualitative character. Electronic means were used to apply a questionnaire, containing closed and open questions, as a way to collect information. It was concluded that the need for fitting into a Beauty Standard and following an idea of an exemplary Ideal Body is rooted in the thinking of students as academics and future Physical Education teachers.

**Keywords:** Body; Beauty Pattern; Physical Education

### Introduction

The body is the field of study of Physical Education, whether the body in its biological, anatomical and physiological aspect or the body in its social aspects of interaction with other individuals or through the elements of Body Culture.

The social pressure for a certain standard of beauty to be followed is increasingly strong. The collection arises in daily life through mass communication vehicles, which reinforce stereotypes to be followed, and through social media, which grow every day with the emergence of profiles dedicated to showing a body "healed" or showing exercise routines and diets.

Understanding how students of the Physical Education Degree Course perceive the affectation of the "Standard of Beauty" and "Ideal Body", within what is socially constructed, is important to know how future professionals deal with these issues and how they can be passed on in the social environment.

There is a stereotype of what would be the "Ideal Body" for Physical Education teachers, since they deal with the Body and with the practice of physical exercises seems to be socially inconceivable that some physical education teacher is fat or who does not have the body well defined by exercises.

The aim of the research is to understand how the students of the Physical Education Degree Course perceive the imposition of the Standard of Beauty and the Ideal Body. In order to collect the information necessary for the construction of the work, a questionnaire was applied, containing closed and open questions, through an electronic form of the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was made available in the messaging application used by the students. There is a group with the majority of course students and serves to exchange messages between them and provide information more quickly.

Participation was by voluntary membership. The access link was made available in the group and was available for completion

for 5 days, between 18 and 23 November 2020. After this period the form was configured to receive no more responses.

The Course is undergoing a reorganization of the Curriculum Matrix and has 5 regular classes, they are: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> periods. Currently the Course has approximately 200 students enrolled and 167 students are present in the messaging application group, of which 32 participated in the survey.

With the research carried out, it was possible to perceive that the students' thought of the need to fit into a Standard of Beauty and follow an idea of exemplary Ideal Body because they are academics and future physical education teachers is still rooted in the students' thoughts.

### Methodology

The research is characterized by being qualitative in nature. For [1]: both quantitative and qualitative research present differences with weak and strong points. However, the strong elements of one complement the weaknesses of the other, fundamental to the greater development of science (p.34).

Qualitative research is characterized by worrying "with the deepening of the understanding of a social group, an organization, etc" [1]. Also, according to the authors: Qualitative research is therefore concerned with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on understanding and explaining the dynamics of social relations. (p.32).

Despite using quantification to express the students' answers to the questions asked, the research does not assume a quantitative character, because quantification is not the main factor of the research.

The answers were analyzed through content analysis. [2] presents that content analysis is "a set of communications analysis techniques".

For the author: It is not an instrument, but a range of paraphernalia; or, more rigorously, it will be a single instrument, but marked by a wide disparity in forms and adaptable to a very wide field of application: communications (p. 37).

To ensure the anonymity of the participants and to be able to encourage them to respond more sincerely, without fear of suffering

some kind of reprisal or judgment due to opinion, the questionnaire did not ask for any possible form of identification. It was not necessary to register the email and no other form of personal identification was requested. The general questions of the questionnaire aimed to know only the gender that the students identify with and the age group in which they are.

The questionnaire already had the Free and Informed Consent Form, containing all the information necessary to understand what the research was about, as well as the contact to resolve any doubts. Everyone who was willing to fill out the form accepted the terms of the survey.

### Results and Discussion

Thirty-two students participated in the study, 23 women and 9 men. 18 participants are between 18 and 22 years old; 7 are between 23 and 26 years old; 3 are between 26 and 30 years old; and 4 are over 30 years old.

The first specific question of the questionnaire aimed to know about individual satisfaction with the Body. The students were asked if, "Are you satisfied with your body?" 18 participants stated that they were satisfied and 14 said they were not. Then they were asked if: "If you could change something in your body, would you change?". 20 students said yes, they would change something in their bodies, while 12 said they would not.

There is a conflict relationship between the answers indicated in the first question in relation to the second question. While 14 stated that they were not satisfied with the Body, the number of participants who affirmed their desire to change something was higher, reaching 20 participants. This number of university students dissatisfied with body image is close to the results obtained by [3] and with the results of [4].

[4] present that the high number of academics dissatisfied with their body image: may be related to the intrinsic demands to the profession and the course, causing them to constitute a population at risk. The pressure inherent in certain courses and professions combined with the perspectives of healthy and beautiful body can favor inappropriate behaviors of eating and physical activity (p.165).

When asked to justify the reason for wanting to perform some body change the answers were related to aesthetic aspects such as

losing weight or gaining muscle mass, as can be seen in the answers below: STUDENT 1 - I wanted to lose weight and put breast prosthesis because I feel fat and with very little breast. STUDENT 24 - Not only for aesthetics, but would try to maintain a daily training routine, aiming for my physical goals (gain of muscle mass) and consequently related to a healthier life.

The following question sought to know if they felt pressured to follow a certain body pattern because they were physical education students. 17 students stated that they felt pressured to follow a certain body stereotype, while 15 said they did not feel this pressure.

Still questioning the pressure for a certain body pattern to be followed, he was asked if: "Have you ever been negatively asked about your body appearance?". 26 answered that they had already been questioned in a negative way, while 6 said they had never suffered from questions. Next, they were asked if they had already negatively questioned any colleague and/or teacher about the body aspect. 21 stated that they never questioned, while 11 said they had already asked some questions.

When asked to justify the reason for questioning another person about their body aspect, the answers were related to health questions or to the professional practice of the Physical Education teacher, as can be seen in the answers below: STUDENT 7 - I saw a girl in a gym she was fat and worked there, and I thought how she works there and is fat. STUDENT 27 - Usually you think: how can a Physical Education professional be fat, or nutritionist. But then you mature. STUDENT 29 - Yes, I felt dissatisfied with my body aspect and compared a lot with the bodies seen in magazines and television and in gyms.

[5] present that individuals seek to fit within a certain standard not to "look beautiful for themselves, but to be appreciated by others". This search for acceptance, according to the authors, takes place, "because science began to homogenize the body and the profile of beauty, making the equal be desirable and the different despised" [5] (p.1).

[6] presents in his research that: Physical Education to the extent that it deals with the body in (or) society, tends to be associated with the production, formation and development of also aesthetic standards. In this way, it is necessary to challenge the hegemonic patterns of the body (p.6).

[7] present that when it is related to beauty, "the pattern of body beauty would be a set of characteristics that a body should present to be considered beautiful by a certain group of individuals" (p.392).

Physical Education should assume a more questioning role about the aesthetic standards that are imposed and provide debates and discussions in order to better understand how students are being affected by this imposition and how this can affect their personal, academic and future professional lives.

The following question of the questionnaire aimed to know if they believed that physical education students and teachers should follow a body pattern and then should justify the answer given. 30 answered that teachers and academics should not follow a body pattern, while 2 said a pattern should be followed.

When the justifications of the response were analyzed, it was possible to perceive the existence of a circulating discourse. Many who said it was not necessary to follow a body pattern ended up writing in the justification a response that contradicts the previous one, as can be seen in the answers below: STUDENT 2 - I do not say standard, but it is important to spend a healthy appearance, even more in the health professions, our body is like a reflection of the professional, as well as ethical conduct and our way of dressing. STUDENT 9 - Because we have to represent what we say and study and believe. We have to live, not so strictly, but having a moderate lifestyle and focused on health and well-being. Be what you represent. You have to take responsibility when wearing the physical education shirt. STUDENT 16 - Like, I'm personal wanting to grow in the business, and I'm a little overweight, my clients won't want a personal like that, they want to see you always well, with the body up to time, so i can get inspired by you or something. STUDENT 18 - I do not think they should follow a body pattern, but for all the knowledge of these professionals well they could be a little more concerned with their health, and whether or not this influences the appearance.

We sought to know if they were aware that body/aesthetic patterns were an imposition to be followed. He was asked, "For you, is there a social pressure to follow certain body patterns?". 30 answered yes and only 2 said there was no pressure.

When they presented the justification of the answer only 1 student justified there is no social pressure, because he believes that:

"They feed what you already defend and do not necessarily manipulate us" (STUDENT 3). The other students highlighted the media as responsible for imposing a pattern to be followed.

STUDENT 5 - The media exposes the body culture that society has built. It is an expression that contributes to the objectification of the human being, through a pattern of unreal beauty, which aims to move the beauty market. That leads to a sick society. STUDENT 7 - The media has created an ideal body image that does not exist naturally, to sell products because without products you can not achieve that body that is the standard considered by them. Which is actually nothing standard and never was. STUDENT 16 - The greatest influencer in the scope, she who "commands and desmanda" in the standards, dictating the rules of how it should be, not only in aesthetic behavior, but in various contexts.

The above answers highlight the role of the media as a propagator of a model to be followed and came to a result similar to what Lima, Lima and Carvalho (2016) obtained in their research.

[6] points out that: the cultural industry maintains direct relations with the media that is responsible for humanizing material goods, eroticizing products. For the author, the media reinforces the hierarchical systems of values, making beauty the high point of this hierarchy. Since, the media explore a wide range of speeches and advertisements, which seek to induce consumers to buy beauty products or instruments aimed at the practice of physical exercises, with appeals that promise healthy and beautiful bodies in a short time. As a result, millions of people around the world spend their fortunes on regimes, cosmetics, among others to acquire the perfect body (2008, p. 3 APUD Anzai, 2000).

[8] present the idea of Nicolino, Wanderley and Oliveira (2010, p.439) highlighting that "the search for a sculpted and delineated body, important requirements and attributes for better social acceptance" (2016, p.5). The media is a propagator of this type of body model, imposing on individuals a pressure and a charge to reach a certain model and stigmatizes individuals who do not fit the imposed model.

For [9]: The notion of strong, thin and perfect body is supported especially by the intense media discourse, which ultimately influences conducts and, in an obvious way, the bodies of physical education teachers themselves and those with whom they interact (2016, p.2).

[10] highlight that: Socially, the healed and toned body confers not only physical attributes, but is also associated with intense care for the body, professional and sentimental success, symbol of male virility and synonymous with female ostentation (2015, p.85).

[11] (Apud Goldenberg and Ramos, 2002) refer to the civilization of forms, such as today's time when the beautiful, young and thin body became an object of consumption, exalted, above all, by the media and advertising.

Finally, participants were asked to answer what they thought was a beautiful and ideal body. It was possible to perceive in the answers that some defend specific models of what would be a beautiful and ideal body, although only 2 have argued that it should follow a pattern when questioned earlier. The answers that advocate standardization were as follows: STUDENT 9 - Unfortunately it is rooted in my mind the perception of body without anatomical and median deformity for thin and fat. I do not think very muscular body beautiful, it would be hypocrisy if i say that I think all body beautiful, but I consider very happy bodies that have their physical structures and normal functionalities, that yes is perfect. STUDENT 18 - In my opinion a beautiful body is that body with the appearance of a spotted body, but without exaggeration for both women and men, the ideal body is what the individual is in BMI standards, but also with a functional body, after all a functional body will bring many benefits to the individual.

The above answers corroborate the idea that physical appearance is responsible for greater social acceptance. Whether or not the individual is conditioned to be socially accepted because his or her body appearance is considered to be adequate.

[8] present that: Thus, the need for consumption within a culture that privileges physical appearance as a definer of the "social representation of the body" is created at every moment, and encourages the search for a "beautiful" body, sculpted and delineated, pointed out as the "ideal" as a synonym for health and a better social acceptance. In this context, the graduation of Physical Education should constitute a space that allows students to understand critically and question this narcissistic "idolatry" of the body; physical education understood as a socially linked health producer in contemporary times (2016, p.2).

The other students answered that the beautiful and ideal body is related to the aspects of accepting oneself, having a good self-es-

teem in relation to the body, as well as being a healthy body. They did not highlight body shapes to be followed, as can be seen in the featured responses: STUDENT 5 - Ideal body is unique human body and respected in its particularities. A beloved and respected body is beautiful. Beauty is point of view, which should not be imposed, but contemplated. STUDENT 7 - The beautiful body is one that you feel good about, that you feel happy in it. If you feel a need to always be changing something in your body or doing everything to have an idealized body, it can be a sign that you are not really seeing yourself and loving yourself, but actually loving others and seeing others and trying to please them. STUDENT 20 - Beautiful body for me is a healthy body, whether it's fat or thin. Ideal body is one that does not prevent staff from performing any activity that he considers pleasurable, whether to have an ice cream or perform a race. It's no use being a skinny person who only talks about getting thin and in his diet. If the person is happy and without any pathology is worth it. STUDENT 21 - The beautiful body is the body in which people can feel good and the ideal body is one that people feel good about, without having reason for change. The beautiful and ideal body is not in the advertisements we see on TV or in women's magazines considered more beautiful, the beautiful and ideal body depends a lot on our body design that we have.

The idea that the beautiful and ideal body should be a body of a person who is satisfied with himself and that is accepted in his own way, besides being a healthy body and that does not restrict the individual from performing practices that are pleasurable to them appear in statements that demonstrate a greater concern with the way the individual perceives himself and builds his identity.

This idea of body aesthetics as a phenomenon that involves the construction of identities is also brought by [6]: In this sense, body aesthetics should not necessarily be seen as a phenomenon in itself, but as part of a broad phenomenon that involves the construction of identities. Understanding these identities being constituted in the body and that this body refers to a subject (2008, p.6).

Because it is related to the construction of identity processes and is subjective, the idea of what is beautiful can vary from each individual, making it even difficult to create a way to measure (or qualify) the beautiful. The following speech illustrates this perception by students participating in the research: STUDENT 22 - There are several ways to be beautiful, just as each individual body has its

particularity different from the other; the body may have different beauties, and for me there is no beautiful body design.

### Considerations

With the research carried out, it was possible to perceive that the students' thought of the need to fit into a Standard of Beauty and follow an idea of exemplary Ideal Body because they are academics and future physical education teachers is still rooted in the students' thoughts.

This perception may be related to social pressure for individuals to fit a certain aesthetic pattern, thus becoming better socially accepted. There is still the charge that because they are academics (and future physical education teachers) they should exhibit a slim, thin, turned and defined body by physical exercises, because how they will work with the body should be an example of the body to be followed.

It is important that throughout the formative course students are always encouraged to reflect on the issues of the body related to health and aesthetics and that they seek to develop a critical sense so that they can understand how the influence of the media, whether mass or social media, influence the perception of what is beautiful, desirable and encouraged to achieve.

The Physical Education Degree Course should train individuals who are able to think critically and seek to have a better understanding of the Body and the social aspects that affect it. Thus, it would not be, in the professional and social environment, an individual who stimulates the search for an unattainable standard that is imposed and that afflicts many young people who conflict with their perception and body image.

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