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The Human Body - Between Past and Present, the New Self and Body-Self

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Abstract

The body was both subject and object of the study, analysis and discussion over time for scientists, if we accept the idea that they were at the beginnings of humanity. This statement is supported by the many written and unwritten sources, possibilities to perform movements were the main factor in meeting the necessities of biological, physiological, spiritual, and entertainment specific to humans. Practice of physical exercises to train body image reached the current stage of development of society is the result of multiple determinations, of which seems necessary to highlight the importance of three ones: continued development of formal and non-formal, creating free time as permanent social reality, intense movement and changing specific values of the phenomenon, supported by modern conditions of civilization. Thus, we find that today many individuals of both genders are unsatisfied by their physical appearance, in particular by the size and shape of own bodies. From this point of view it is to distinguish women who are most concerned to change this, most often through diet or using extreme methods of weight control, including starvation, elimination of voluntary food intake, diuretics or laxative abuse and applying exercise programs incompatible with their preparation. This paper aims to demonstrate that physical activity, carried out systematically through a fitness program, contributes directly to the improvement of the structure and functions of various organs and systems of the body. This approach of the problem leads mostly to eat disorder incidence much higher among them than men, which means that it is useful image issues of the body and nutrition lie on a continuum, depending on their severity.

Keywords: body, esteem, content, dissatisfaction, ideal.

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1. Introduction

The human body has become, over time, the mediator of our inner and outer worlds, being responsible for the maintenance and maintenance of this consumable at an appropriate level and for the number and structure of the messages it transmit and / or intermediates with a direct influence on identity of an individual [5]. As a cultural entity and an element of a vast symbolic territory, body is the real, material and biological foundation of human existence and its action in society, a condition and means without which the relationship with the world and the others could not exist [8, 10]. Idea of cult of the male and female body has become more and more powerful in time. For this reason, the accusations and criticisms of the unsightly bodies became more and more fierce, and the uneducated individuals are framed in mediocrity and ethical inferiority. In this context, it is interesting to note that both notions and weak and thin images of the top-models and the bodywork, respectively the muscular of bodybuilders have penetrated into the children's games.

We believe that, both in our country and internationally, there is a tendency to improve the body image, especially among young people and adults with active status.

Sport is an important factor in improving your own body image, making it possible to compare yourself with others, both in terms of physical appearance and level of skill.

2. Problem Statement

Body development and human body attributes are subject of many studies since ancient times, being evidenced by numerous references in literature, descriptions, travels, stories, and the existence of primitive, naive, religious and religious works of art. Over time, man has perfected his physical qualities, in step with these and the moral ones, by using them in order to obtain the necessary goods for living, on the one hand, and on the other hand, in order to measure his forces with others, in wars, or simply in peaceful confrontations to impose their superiority. At the same time, man's tendency to convey to the offspring experience gained in strengthening and potentiating the body has emerged [6]. Human body has been a fundamental objective of Greek education, the Greek apologists of the cult of beauty having left invaluable inheritances represented, among others, by statues depicting people with perfect bodily harmony, being considered true models nowadays [10].

Although it is recognized that they have civilized the world, the Romans giving another meaning to physical exercises and body, to the Greeks, and the citizens of the empire to be robust, courageous, tough and disciplined. With the new current, the human body became again the target of education, the concern of writers, philosophers and physicians, a model for plastic artists. The new man must be always in action, fact that implies a strong body and manifestation of the will of development and manifestation of physical forces. Changes that occur are less spectacular, sometimes unseen. These occur in the mentality of the individuals by abandoning the independence of consciousness and transferring his concerns over the body, which made the person not only to be characterized by the evaluation of his will. but also due to his bodily existence reflecting in gestures and positions, tensions and moments of relaxation specific [4], which has led psychologists to consider that the movement is not only a simplified mechanism of reproducing an exercise, but rather a way of adapting and reacting gradually to the situations that go beyond it, body having consciousness before being object of the movement. Such a body can only be likened to its opposite, considered a defensive mechanism that protects rather than criticizes Western philosophy, emphasizing the private and individualistic dimensions of corporeality in the face of its aspects [5].

Being a multidimensional construction, body image refers to subjective perceptual and attitudinal experiences of a person's body, mainly related to physical appearance [9]. Studies have shown that conceptually as well as empirically, addressing body image attitudes has to be done distinctly, taking into account three main aspects, namely the possibilities of evaluation, implications in the affective plan, but also the degree of commitment to change certain behaviors and attitudes in this respect [1]. Body image evaluation refers to dissatisfaction with the physical attributes of the person as well as the thoughts and beliefs that a person develops about his appearance. These evaluations are the result of some mismatches of actual image and internalized physical ideals perceived by a person [3]. Regarding the implications of body image self-assessments in the context of emotional mental processes, these refer to possible emotional experiences that do not attract the attention that can be generated by different specific circumstances. Cognitive-behavioral research aims to establish the attitudinal level of thorough self-knowledge of its physical aspect and has a determining role in motivating individual to invest in changing this situation [2]. As a result of scientific efforts, girls were more dissatisfied with the body image compared to boys. It has also been established that there is no difference between men and women as regards to perception of family members' pressure to reconsider body image, like weight loss. From this point of view,

girls are more motivated due to mass-media advertising, and boys think of colleagues of all sources referring to increase of the muscle mass [7].

Sport is a favorable context for men to discuss about their own body image, the attributes in this sense being synonymous with those associated with success in the field, competition offering the opportunity to compare with others, both from the point of view of physical aspect and that of level of skill manifestation.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

This paper aims to demonstrate that physical activity, carried out systematically through a fitness program, contributes directly to the improvement of the structure and functions of various organs and systems of the body.

In our research we have started from the following work hypotheses:

- Systematic physical exercises lead to the construction of a positive self-image, increasing self-confidence, which results in a much faster and more effective social integration.
- Fitness is a modern mean of improving functional capacity of the body, physical appearance, helping to establish strong connections between its practitioners.

4. Research Methods

The following research methods were used for the realization of this study: analysis of specialized scientific and methodological literature, pedagogical observation method, interview and questionnaire survey method, measurement and testing methods, pedagogical experiment, statistical and mathematical methods and graphic method.

4.1. Place and subjects

The study has a transversal character and took place over a period of two years (2014-2016), in the urban environment as follows:

- Between September 2015 and March 2016, 96 people of both sexes aged 19-30 years, practicing fitness being interviewed. The purpose was to get information about the reasons that prompted them to practice;
- During the 12 weeks (academic year 2015-2016), two groups of 15 students - girls - aged between 19 and 27 were formed. The experiment group followed a special fitness program to improve functional capacity.

4.2. The fitness program used by experiment group

Students have undergone an initial and reassessed assessment at the end of program implementation, and the values obtained are compared to the baseline to see whether the application of the proposed fitness program has determined improving physical fitness. Each workout must begin with warming. Thus at the beginning of the program the students make 10 minutes of cycling, followed by the warm-up gymnastics of all the muscular groups. During the program, the muscles of the arms, chest, back, abdomen, legs were worked. We opted for 3-4 exercises in each muscle group, 2-4 series of 10-15 repetitions for each exercise. The program took place in the at the university sportive base.

The fitness program was as follow: in the first month we started with 2 series of 10 repetitions, after the first month we added a series and 5 repetitions in addition to the first month. In the third month the number of series was increased to 4 and 20 repetitions.

5. Findings

5.1. Results of the interview survey

The analysis of the data obtained from iteration of the 96 subjects led to the confirmation of hypothesis no. 2 and identification of following types of reasons (Figure 1): discontent with their physical form (75%), the need for physical activity for maintenance (16%) and the need for physical activity for health reasons (9%).

Discontent with their physical form is associated with specific goals, such as fat removal, muscle building, correction of disproportion, weight gain. We believe that the 9% percentage of those exercising physical exercise for worrying health reasons. This means that an average of 8.6 people out of those undergoing the study had some health problems, which might add to the need to intensify exercise.

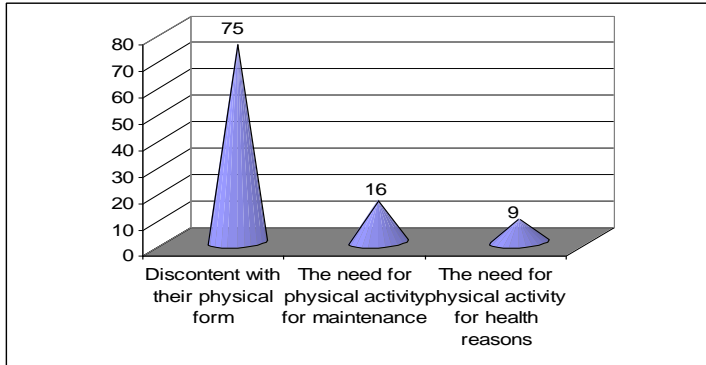


Fig. 1. Reasons to practice physical exercise

The factors that influenced decision to practice fitness or other forms of physical exercise were in the following categories: comparison with others, observations of others, ineffectiveness of slimming regimens. Of these, they influenced decision of the subjects to exercise fitness, the inefficiency of weight-loss regimens (Fig. 2), among women (85%) and comparison with others among men (87%). One possible explanation might be that under the pressure of social-induced physical ideal, both men and women are looking for ways and means of shaping the body to bring them closer to it.

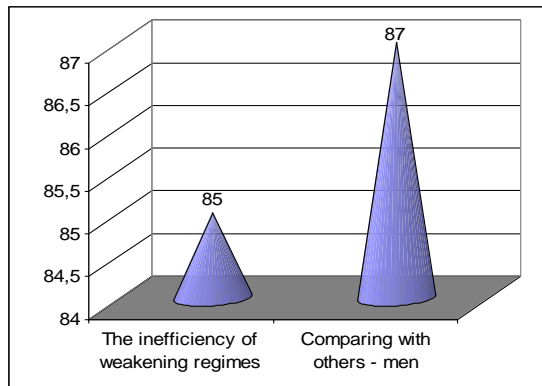


Fig. 2. Factors that influenced the decision to practice fitness

If the ideal male physical form requires a greater share of sports activities to achieve the desired muscle mass (95%), women want to achieve feminine forms and good tonus (87%, Fig. 3). So women’s choice of body modeling can be influenced by concepts and stereotypes such as “Fitness is not good for women because they are masculine”, “A woman must have natural shapes”, “If you practice sport and leave it, you get fatter even more”.

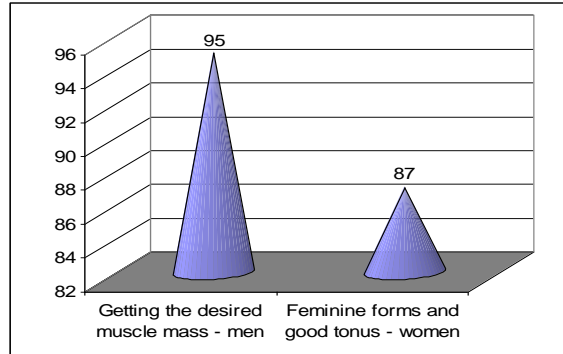


Fig. 3. Factors that influenced body shaping

That is why women go to the massage, use diets and other methods (85%) before practicing physical exercises. The reasons why both sexes lie on the same side are determined by the need to overcome the complexity and the desire to shape or perfecting the body towards ideal physical shape images (75% of women and 80% of men). What can distinguish sexes are the specific physical objectives established in relation to gender images: men want muscle mass and athletic form, some even massiveness (95%), while women want feminine shape and a good muscular tone (90%)

Both male and female subjects (Fig. 4) justify choosing the attributes that characterize this sport: offering harmonious modeling (51%), long-term results (22%), increased efficiency (11%), optimal specializations (11%), effort metering (5%).

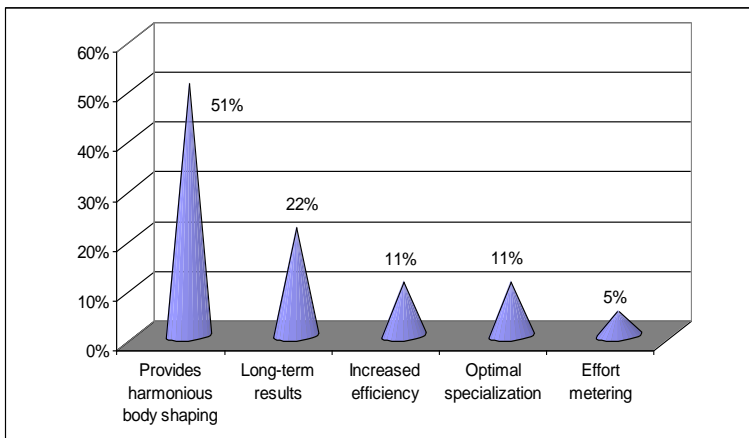


Fig. 4. Subjects' opinion on attributes that characterize fitness

The attribute “optimal specialization” is more often invoked by men, they being oriented towards a better modeling of various parts of the body,

and “increased efficiency” characteristic being more pronounced among women, who have experienced by some ways inefficient body adjustment.

5.2. Presentation and interpretation of data as a result of the fitness program used

Results and data collected during the research were tabulated and represented graphically. For the experimental group data was collected on several variables and correct interpretation of the results obtained by the subjects undergoing verification represent the most important stage in the appreciation of the performance of the two variants of carried out activities: one in which we applied our sports program with elements of the group experimental on fitness and one in which practical lessons of physical education in the curriculum have been normal.

We mention that, in the presented material, figures representing the performances or characteristics of subjects have a particular character, determined by specific conditions of the environment where students came from, previous practice of any sport, school from where they came from, etc. and these could not be generalized.

Social environment, as well as the psycho-physical component, undoubtedly influenced the value of recorded performances.

Table 1. The averages obtained by the subjects of the experimental group research

Age (years and months)	Mass (kg)	Height (cm)	Resting pulse	TA sist. repose	TA diast. repose
21 years, 3 months	57,7	166,5	77,8	124,3	76,3

By calculating the arithmetic mean of the age of the subjects in the experimental group, in the years and months, we obtain a value of 21 years and 3 months and we observe a correct fit within the range proposed by us for the age group of the subjects, ie 19-27 years. Also, in the case of weight and height, average values recorded for the two anthropometric indices are 57.7 kg respectively 166.5 cm, values that fit perfectly into normal for this age group. Regarding the control group, its values do not differ significantly from the ones of experimental group, the average age, weight and height being slightly low, which is considered normally by us. Even the values of the body’s main functional indices are not different from the normal values for the two groups of our research.

Table 2. Environments obtained by control group subjects

Age (years and months)	Mass (kg)	Height (cm)	Resting pulse	TA sist. repose	TA diast. repose
20 years, 9 months	55,2	163,7	77,6	122,8	74,7

The Ruffier test was applied to our subjects in two distinct tests - initial and final - collecting a series of data that was statistically processed.

Thus, following data processing, the values obtained from the Ruffier test are recorded in Tables 3 and 4 on the two initial and final tests in the two groups and represented in Fig. 5.

As an average, the results of the Ruffier test are in ascending progression from one test to another in the experimental group, the values being as follows: 11.8 initial value determining that the discussion of general physical condition is satisfactory and 9.88 respectively as a result of an discussion environment.

Table 3. Average values of the Ruffier test at the initial test for the two experimental and control groups

Group	INITIAL TEST				
	Repose pulse	Pulse 15''	Pulse 1'	Ruffier index	Discussion
Experimental	78,2	134,6	105, 3	11,8	Satisfactory
Witness	80,6	140,5	117, 9	13,9	Satisfactory

Table 4. Average values of the Ruffier test at the final test for the two experimental and control groups

Group	FINAL TEST				
	Repose pulse	Pulse 15''	Pulse 1'	Ruffier index	Discussion
Experimental	74,8	129,1	94,9	9,88	Average
Witness	82,1	141,9	118,8	14,28	Satisfactory

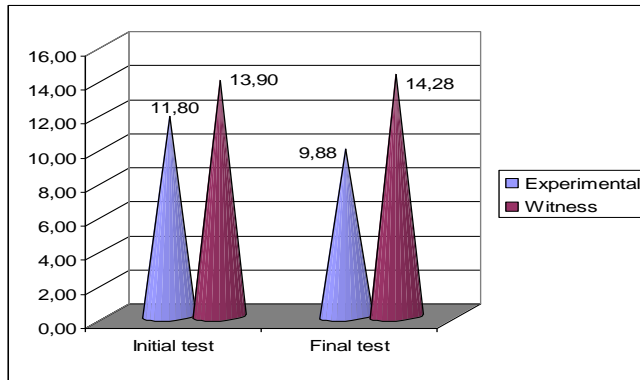


Fig. 5. Ruffier Index evolution of the two groups on tests

Progression of the physical condition is 1.92 points of the Ruffier Index, which leads to significant progress, and in terms of the physical condition of the investigated population included in the control group, the average obtained in the two tests - initial and final - remained around 14 points, with insignificant fluctuation.

We can say that it have being demonstrated and explained above that by implementing our fitness program in practice in the experimental group, the physical condition was improved, as seen by the differences of the average values obtained in the Ruffier test on the two tests - initial and final.

6. Discussions

Trying to take into the consideration importance of body modeling and maintenance from the perspective of those involved, we sought to identify in the responses of possible subjects value orientations inward, towards the image of oneself or outwardly, to the perception of others on their bodies.

It is worth noting that an aesthetic vision of the body is found in the responses of the sexes, with some predominance among those who want to adjust their bodies according to the ideal of masculine or feminine physical shape displayed in advertising spots.

Physical activity becomes important depending on the context, circumstances and people involved.

From this point of view, most of the respondents consider that some professions are physically attractive, but there are also professions that require first of all, to be capable, which means that attractiveness is relative.

7. Conclusions

The present study has confirmed that physical exercise as a mean of improving physical appearance is particularly attractive to a wide range of individuals because it responds to the need to change or to maintain a positive self-image. The results of the social comparison, the “physical aspect” relationship, and the way in which each individual’s physical attractiveness is valued, are factors that induce the need to change or maintain a physical form that is already attractive.

Those who choose fitness as a mean of shaping the body have an assessment of their initial physical form at the time of their decision, along with an image of what they like to do, taking into account their particularities.

If, theoretically, the image of physical form model is influenced by stereotypes and gender perceptions, the study reveals that descriptions of ideal body made by the interviewees, regardless of sex, overlap. It is ideally considered a body of a natural woman without a well-defined muscular body, being rejected by the female ones with too much muscularity.

Through our fitness program, we wanted that systematic physical activity to contribute directly to improve structure and functions of the various organs and systems of the body, demonstrated by a common test, namely Ruffier, applied by modern appliances, installations and technologies.

By comparing results obtained in the two tests we subjected our subjects to, analyzing and processing data and plotting them, we allow to conclude that the subjects to our research from the experimental group, on average, has improved its physical condition by applying fitness program, compared to the students of the control group.

Thus, validity of our hypothesis has been scientifically demonstrated, namely that fitness is a modern mean of improving functional capacity of the body, of physical aspect, helping to establish lasting connections between its practitioners.

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