AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND MEDIA LITERACY ON
WOMEN'S SELF-ESTEEM: A PILOT STUDY

by
RITA HAGE

A project
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND MEDIA LITERACY ON
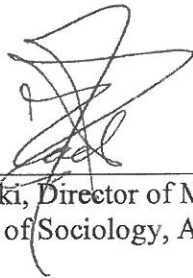WOMEN'S SELF-ESTEEM: A PILOT STUDY

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Rita Hage   for   Master of Arts

                                   Major: Media Studies

Title: Influence of Media and Media Literacy on Women's Self-Esteem: A Pilot

           Study

There is much pressure and influence from the media suggesting ideal standards of thinness and attractiveness for women, thus potentially affecting their self-esteem. Media literacy has been proven to help viewers become more cautious and guarded of media messages that promote stereotypes and ideal perceptions about beauty. The present pilot study examined how media exposure to messages of thin-ideal, beauty, and attractiveness portrayed in the mass media may be related to self-esteem among Lebanese female college students. Fifteen media studies and 15 non-media studies majors, between the ages of 18 and 25, responded to two questionnaires: the Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) and the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS). After the data was analyzed using an analysis of variance, results indicated that exposure to messages of thin-ideal, beauty, and attractiveness portrayed in the mass media was related to low self-esteem. It was also determined that the media influence on self-esteem in media studies students, with higher levels of media literacy, were not significantly different than those who were not majoring in media studies. This could be the result of the small sample size or the consequence of the way media literacy was assumed for students taking media courses. These results are inconsistent with previous literature that showed media literacy to be a preventer against the internalization and social comparison process of media messages.

Keywords: mass media, media literacy, media influence, self-esteem

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I dedicate this study to my father Dr. Joseph Hage, who is the reason for my success in life, for his steadfast love, support, and sacrifices. I also dedicate this study to my mother Myrna and sister Karel, whose love, encouragement, and prayers in times of stress and difficulty provided me the catalyst to continue my Master's project. I owe my success in life to my parents who taught me the value of leadership, education, and sacrifice in achieving greater goals.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a world characterized by instant communications and interactive multimedia, regardless of where one lives, women are constantly subjected to stereotypes and pressures of how thin and attractive they should be. Women live in a world where they are continuously under scrutiny about their appearance and believe they have to go through many means to feel attractive, such as losing weight and undergoing cosmetic surgery (James, 2013). Unfortunately, these pressures of beauty from society and the media have only increased in recent years (Khourchid, 2009).

In past generations and in many cultures, plump women were considered attractive and appealing, such as Marilyn Monroe who was a size 12 (Khourchid, 2009). Other curvy pin-up girls from the 1950s, such as Bettie Page, Sophia Loren, and Mamie Van Doren, were also known as sex symbols; people from all over the world considered them beautiful and stunning (Johnson, 2010). Even in the Middle East, in past generations, men preferred women who were plump and considered them attractive because they were seen as symbols of feminine fertility (Latzer, Tzischinsky, & Azaiza, 2007).

In today's culture, thinness is considered more desirable (Lee, 2008). Overweight women are not only considered to be attractive, but are also stereotyped to be physically unfit, lazy, lacking confidence, and unattractive (Derenne & Beresin, 2006). In some countries, especially in Western cultures, a woman with a small waistline who is physically fit with large breasts is deemed attractive (Khourchid, 2009). Thin women are perceived to get whatever they want, whether it comes to men, certain career jobs, such as modeling or acting, getting into night clubs, or even

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avoiding a speeding ticket (Khourchid, 2009). The views and opinions of Western society about what is attractive have spread to other countries and regions, like the Middle East. Middle Eastern countries have begun to accept the norms of body weight and shape from the West, which has increased low self-esteem in Middle Eastern women (Latzer et al., 2007).

The Middle Eastern population is witnessing a transition from a traditionalist view of what beauty is to a more modern view of beauty (Latzer et al., 2007). For example, in past generations, Saharan women were traditionally seen as beautiful if they were overweight and plump (Khouya, 2013). Fit and skinny women were seen as undesirable, whereas the heavier a woman was the more desired she was by men. In fact, families were proud of their plump daughters, because being heavier meant that the girls belonged to wealthy and noble families, and therefore brought pride to their families (Khouya, 2013). Traditionally, having a large-sized wife meant that she was fertile and would be able to bear many children. As Western media content continues to infiltrate into non-Western areas, however, traditional preferences for large women are dying out in exchange for a thinner Western ideal (Khouya, 2013). Due to mass media and other cultural influences, the new generation of women in the Sahara has changed their traditional view of women's beauty to a more modern Westernized view (Khouya, 2013).

The amount of exposure to Western appearance and body standards might be one reason why traditional values of female roles and beauty have changed in Lebanon (Latzer et al., 2007). International studies have shown that because of media influence, pressures of how thin and attractive women should be, have increased low self-esteem (Lee, 2008). In Lebanese media, for example, women with perfect bodies and

symmetric facial features, with no flaws or imperfections, are prevalent (Farrell, 2012). One example is the famous Lebanese singer Haifa Wehbe, who is known as a national sex symbol in Lebanon (Al-Salim, 2012). She has undergone several plastic surgeries to improve her appearance, including breast and lip augmentation, cheek and chin implants, an eyebrow lift, and a nose job (Admin, 2013). She is not alone; images of actresses and singers, such as Wehbe, with flawless faces and perfect bodies circulating in the media, send a message to women that these features are the ideal beauty for a Lebanese woman.

Everywhere, women feel disempowered and unworthy because of the unattainable beauty ideals that the media portray (Wolf, 1990). Because media are powerful in conveying attractive and thin-ideals, it is important to examine their influence and determine if media literacy and education can prevent or counteract low self-esteem. By building awareness about media messages, media literacy education may provide some type of protection for women to better realize what media ideals one should and should not internalize. Because many women live in cultures where the media emphasize beauty and appearances, it is important to study the relationship between media exposure and media literacy with self-esteem.

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this pilot study was to test and determine the relationship among media literacy, media influence, and self-esteem among female media and non-media studies students in Lebanon. Participants consisted of 15 female college students majoring in media studies and 15 female college students not majoring in media studies, between the ages of 18 and 25. Based on previous studies (Posavac, Posavac, and

Weigel, 2001), it was assumed that women who are majoring in media studies would understand and be more aware of media literacy because media literacy helps them counteract the false beauty ideals portrayed in the media, whereas those who are not majoring in media studies might lack these skills. Both media and non-media studies students responded to questionnaires that measured the media influence (independent variable) and self-esteem (dependent variable).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL

FRAMEWORK

Because of today's focus on beauty and thinness, women and young girls are determined and motivated to achieve this ideal and some have used any means or methods to achieve it, whether through unhealthy dieting or cosmetic surgery. Beauty is defined as "a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). The media construct standards of beauty, through celebrities and models, for women to look up to and admire (James, 2013). The idea of beauty can be construed in "many different ways across time and culture but this subjective concept has been adjusted so women feel like beauty is objective" (James, 2013, p. 1). As famous actress and comedian Tina Fey (2011) joked:

> Every girl is expected to have Caucasian blue eyes, full Spanish lips, a classic button nose, hairless Asian skin with a California tan, a Jamaican dance hall ass, long Swedish legs, small Japanese feet, the abs of a lesbian gym owner, the hips of a nine-year-old boy, the arms of Michelle Obama and doll tits. The person closest to actually achieving this look is Kim Kardashian ... everyone else is struggling (p. 23).

Mass media are influential socializing institutions and from a very young age, girls are exposed to all sorts of media, from television, movies, and magazines, to social media sites; they are part of daily life. Studies have shown that the media can negatively change viewers' perception of reality, and may therefore provide support to

the hypothesis that media pressures placed on women as to how thin and attractive they must be can lead to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. For instance, Derenne and Beresin (2006) reviewed changes in women's body type and figure throughout history and commented on current outlooks towards shape and weight in women. The scholars also researched women's body types in society and discussed the issues of body image and weight concerns of women.

Derenne and Beresin (2006) found that the media can play a large role in shaping how thin and attractive a woman should be, by setting high expectations of how woman should look. The authors found that today's women are faced with unrealistic expectations of how to look and dress every time they turn on the television or read magazines. Unfortunately, this gives women the message that they are not thin or beautiful enough. The authors also established that because of the media and their portrayal of thin ideals, unhealthy body image has increased, which can lead to low self-esteem (Derenne & Beresin, 2006).

Some women tend to follow the unrealistic beauty standards the media set and even risk their own physical and psychological well-being. Anschutz, Engles, and Strien (2008) conducted a study in the Netherlands to determine if media portrayal of thin ideals can lead to body dissatisfaction among women. Participants included 163 Dutch female college students who filled out questionnaires that captured thin ideals and body image from the media. After analyzing the data using structural equation modeling, the authors found that television viewing is related to body image dissatisfaction, which may lead to low self-esteem, because women internalized the thinness ideals portrayed in television programs. The women internalized the unrealistic body ideals and were shown to become at risk for developing low self-

esteem (Anschutz et al., 2008). The study confirmed the hypothesis that thin ideals and pressures from the media are related to low self-esteem.

The media may negatively impact viewers because audiences internalize the messages they watch or read. Grabe, Hyde, and Ward (2008) conducted a study to determine whether or not exposure to thin ideals portrayed in the media could lead to body dissatisfaction in women. The researchers analyzed 77 different studies and tested the connection between women's media exposure to body dissatisfaction and internalization of thin ideals (Grabe et al., 2008). Grabe et al. (2008) concluded that when women were repeatedly exposed to media content, they internalized what they viewed on television and magazines as reality. Thus, the thin ideals that women see portrayed in media are depicted as normal and accepted by them. Overall, high exposure to the media has provoked dissatisfaction with one's body and image, thus resulting in low self-esteem.

Bessenoff (2006) also found that the thin-ideals portrayed in the media are negatively affecting women. The author studied female undergraduates, exposing them to advertisements of either thin or overweight women. The findings showed that women who were exposed to advertisements displaying thin women had increased body dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem. Through social comparison theory, a correlation was found between the thin ideals acquired from the media and negative views of oneself (Bessenoff, 2006). Thus, women participants who engaged in social comparison produced negative views about themselves.

Other studies have reached similar conclusions that the media's portrayal of unrealistically thin women can lead to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in women. Tiggemann and Pickering (1996) examined the relationship between the

exposure of television and body dissatisfaction. The authors administered questionnaires to 94 women and tested the amount of television they watched, their opinions of their bodies, and their drive for thinness. The researchers found that the type of program the women participants viewed, such as movies, soap operas, and music videos, did affect their body image negatively and did raise their ambitions and needs for thinness. As a result, when women were exposed to such media content, they internalized what they viewed from television and magazines. The thin ideals that women internalized were depicted as normal and acceptable to them, and those who watched more television were more likely to internalize what they viewed on television as true and real.

Young girls also feel the need to be beautiful, and try to make it their top priority to look or act like celebrities and models they see in magazines and on television (James, 2013). Dohnt and Tiggemann (2006) tested the role of media influence in the development of body satisfaction in young girls, and how that related to self-esteem. Their sample consisted of 97 girls five to eight years of age, who participated in two interviews with the second interview taking place one year after the first. The authors concluded that the perception of thinness and appearance satisfaction increased over the year, and that the desire for thinness was related to low self-esteem. These findings support the hypothesis that culture and media transmit thin ideals, which negatively influence one's body satisfaction and self-esteem.

According to James (2013), "The reflection women see in the mirror is based on the societal standards of beauty set by the media" (p. 4). These aforementioned studies have shown that media can influence and put high expectations on women regarding how thin and attractive they must be, and that media pressures placed on women to

achieve these ideals can lead to low self-esteem. Based on cultivation theory, the more time people spend watching television, the more they are likely to believe and internalize what they see as social reality (Signorielli & Morgan, 2008). Cultivation theory highlights the long-term and heavy use effects of media on attitudes instead of the behavior of audiences. So, heavy media usage is seen as 'cultivating' attitudes that are more similar to the world of media than to the everyday realistic world. The media may trigger audiences to have a more impractical and unrealistic views of reality. For example, if a woman believes she does not meet the 'beauty' expectations shown in magazines or on television, she will most likely see herself as unattractive and unwanted.

Media literacy and education may help women become more aware and critical of the media messages that are being communicated. Studies have shown that people who receive media education have a greater awareness of what is misrepresented and unrealistic in the media (Posavac, Posavac, and Weigel, 2001; Irving and Berel, 2000). Media literacy interventions can disrupt social comparisons women make when viewing media images, therefore preventing any negative media messages from being accepted. For instance, Posavac, Posavac, and Weigel (2001) conducted a study in which women received two types of media literacy education. The first, the Artificial Beauty condition, discussed how media images of women were unrealistic representations of what beauty is in regard to the perfect looks created by air brushing and software tools like Adobe Photoshop. The second, the Genetic Realities condition, discussed how genetics influence body weight and that women are naturally susceptible to be fuller than the thin women portrayed in the media. The authors found that both media literacy

educational conditions prevented women from internalizing thin-ideals portrayed in the media, and therefore stopped women from making social comparisons.

Researchers have also assessed interventions aimed at reducing body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem by incorporating a media literacy component. For example, Irving and Berel (2000) examined whether media literacy interventions would help reduce negative body image attitudes and promote doubt in media messages among 110 college women. The women were divided into four experimental groups. Participants in two interventions partook in a 45-minute session that consisted of a 15-minute video followed by a 30-minute discussion. In the third intervention, participants only watched the 15-minute video, and the women in the control group did not partake in any intervention. All participants completed questionnaires at the end of the session that measured their body dissatisfaction and media distrust. Women in the control group only completed the questionnaires and no video was shown. The authors found that women in the three interventions increased their skills to be distrustful and cynical of thin-ideals portrayed in media messages.

As elaborated in this section, media literacy education, that is, critiquing and analyzing media content and messages, has been shown to prevent the internalization and social comparison process of media messages (Levine & Piran, 2004). Halliwell, Easun, and Harcourt (2011) conducted a test to determine whether a video intervention could protect adolescent girls from believing in negative messages of what beauty is for women, and if it could prevent body dissatisfaction. The video helped show the false nature of media images, and how attractiveness and thin ideals portrayed in the media are falsely depicted. Participants consisted of 127 British girls between the ages of 10 and 13. Only half of the girls were shown the intervention video before being exposed

to the ultra-thin models or control images. The video was created and made for distribution by the Dove Self-Esteem Fund. The authors found that those who did not view the video before being exposed to the images experienced body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, whereas those who did view the video were less likely to internalize these false media messages of ideal beauty.

Media literacy education endorses health among viewers and enables them to be guarded of media messages that promote risky behaviors and negative perceptions of beauty. Kusel (1999) conducted a study among 173 adolescent girls from two suburban school districts in New York. Participants completed a two-day media literacy program during which videos were shown and discussions were held to distinguish false media practices, critically evaluate media messages, and assess people in ways other than appearance. The author found that girls who participated in the media literacy programs improved their diet, body satisfaction, and self-esteem. This helps to demonstrate the connection between media literacy and resistance to false thin ideals and beauty messages portrayed in the media.

Media literacy has also been proven to be an effective technique to help against risk factors for eating disorders. Wade, Davidson, and O'Dea (2003) conducted a study in which they compared the effectiveness of self-esteem education and media literacy education on risk factors for eating disorders. Eighty-six eighth-grade boys and girls were assigned to one of three interventions (a) self-esteem education, (b) media literacy education, and (c) control group, and measured three times over a three-month period. The authors found that students in the media literacy condition showed less concern for body weight than students who were in the control group and self-esteem education group.

Finally, media literacy has helped counteract representations of attractiveness and thin-ideal messages portrayed in the media. In a study by Irving, DuPen, and Berel (1998) with 24 female high school students in an educational session about media representations of attractiveness, participants watched and discussed Jeen Kilbourne's film "Slim Hopes: Advertising and the Obsession with Thinness." Participants were taught skills to challenge media messages and question personal reactions that may arise in response to the media. Compared to the seventeen female high school students who did not participate in the educational session, the female students who had the training were less likely to internalize the thin-ideal messages and standards the media portrayed. These studies provide evidence that media literacy education provides tools to enable people to examine and scrutinize messages portrayed in the media to help develop skills in making their own media messages (Hobbs, 1998).

This pilot study is significant in that the many past studies about the effects of media on women's self-esteem are overwhelmingly based on populations and samples in Western society (Ferguson, 2011). However, given the global reach of western media, as well as the changing ideals of beauty reflected in other society's media as well, it is important to determine how such messages influence women in other parts of the world, such as Lebanon. There is a scarcity of scientific evidence and statistics on self-esteem issues in Lebanon, but the few studies that have been published show that there is much interest for women to diet and look thin in Lebanese society (Khourchid, 2009). Consequently, this pilot study demonstrated that further research can add to the body of knowledge concerning media influence on Lebanese women's ideal standards of thinness and attractiveness, and how this affects their self-esteem.

In today's culture, women are affected negatively and feel unattractive because of the impossible beauty ideals that the media portray. Because media emphasize the importance of beauty and appearance, it is important to study the relationship media may have on women's self-esteem. Social comparison theory, cultivation theory, and critical media literacy theory are the theoretical foundation of the research in this pilot study.

A. Social Comparison Theory

In 1954, psychologist Lon Festinger devised the social comparison theory, which is a continuation to his theory of informal social communication (Corcoran, Crusius, & Mussweiler, 2011). In his theory of informal social communication, Festinger emphasized the importance of others in the development of one's opinions, and from this theory he developed the social comparison theory to emphasize how individuals use others to satisfy their own need to gain knowledge about themselves (Corcoran, Crusius, & Mussweiler, 2011).

Through social comparison, he noted that people regularly self-evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others, both in physical appearance and ability (Warren, 2006). Whenever people receive information about others, what others have attained and have failed to attain, or what others can and cannot do, they relate and associate the information to themselves (Dunning & Hayes, 1996). Individuals compare themselves through social interactions with their peers, media usage, and other ways. Research has shown that the media can play a large role in social comparison (Warren, 2006).

According to social comparison theory, people compare themselves to others in two ways: downward comparison and upward comparison (Warren, 2006). Downward comparison is when people compare themselves to others who are worse off than they are and such comparison helps raise one's ego and self-worth (Warren, 2006). An example of downward comparison is having an Olympic swimmer compare her lap time to that of an amateur swimmer. Through this downward comparison, the Olympian swimmer raises positive feelings about herself. Upward comparison is when people compare themselves to others who they think are far better or more privileged than they are (Warren, 2006). By comparing themselves to the person, they try to find out what they can do to be more like that person. Warren (2006) concluded that,

> When women compare themselves to the countless thin-ideal models displayed in the media, they are more likely to engage in a process of upward social comparison whereby they think about their physical appearance in comparison to the idealized, ultra-thin models found in magazines, television, the Internet, and movies (p. 4).

For example, through upward comparison, women who look at models in magazines or on television tend to compare certain features they have to those of the models, both in physical appearance and ability. As a result, these women often make changes in their lifestyle or the way they look to achieve the same physical appearance as the models, thus affecting their self-esteem (Catterin, Thompson, Thomas, & Williams, 2000).

The thin ideal is constantly promoted, and this constant reminder of thinness is desensitizing to women, making them feel and think that what they see in the media is healthy and normal (Kovar, 2009). When comparing one's body to those of women

promoted by the media, one starts to experience blame and guilt, which often lead to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Kovar, 2009). Body image and body dissatisfaction are closely related to self-esteem and self-concept (Kovar, 2009). Body dissatisfaction is when people feel and think that their actual physical appearance and body are not how they would ideally like them to be (Kovar, 2009). Thus, poor body image and body dissatisfaction are normally linked to low self-esteem.

From the thin and attractive ideals that the media portray, many women feel they must do anything to attain the beauty as defined and depicted in the media. Social comparison theory influences how people think and feel about themselves, what they are driven to do, and how they behave (Corcoran, Crusius, & Mussweiler, 2011). Women are faced with unrealistic views of what is considered beautiful and appealing every time they open a fashion magazine or turn on the television. Often times, women do not realize that the images and clips they view and internalize are of women who have been airbrushed and photo-shopped, thus hiding imperfect features and flaws. The same goes for men in these magazines, where images have been digitally enhanced. However, even though men also make upward comparisons, research has found that women are more likely to make these types of comparisons (Warren, 2006).

The standards of beauty imposed on women have become unrealistic and difficult to attain. From thin actresses like Keira Knightly to the voluptuous sexy Kim Kardashian and Jennifer Lopez, the media give women false messages of what is beautiful. The media influence society's perception of beauty, thus resulting in women feeling insecure about their appearance and causing low self-esteem, because they compare themselves to these unrealistic ideals. In this study, the social comparison

theory was used to determine whether the influence of messages conveyed in the media are related to self-esteem among Lebanese women.

B. Cultivation Theory

Despite the proliferation of new media, television remains a major source of influence in today's society. Aside from work and sleep, people spend much of their time watching television, and by the time a person turns 70 years old, he or she will have spent about seven to 10 years watching television (Strasburger, 1993). Information gathered from television is an important means to understand how people act, feel, behave, and look (Hammermeister, Brock, Winterstein, & Page, 2005).

Considering the ubiquity of television and its potential socializing impact, in the 1960s George Gerbner devised studies to investigate potential long term media influence, culminating in his cultivation theory. Cultivation theory suggests that television messages help shape and influence individuals' attitudes (Hammermeister et al., 2005). Hence, people who spend a lot of time watching television are more likely to believe the messages portrayed on television (Morgan, 2010). Extensive exposure to television helps shape what people think about the world and how they might view themselves (Morgan, 2010).

For example, Gerbner and his colleagues were concerned about the influence of television, specifically violent programming, and how it might affect the attitudes of the audience, particulary frequent viewers. Gerbner and his colleagues found that heavy exposure to television might not necessarily change the attitudes of individuals, but instead develop unrealistic beliefs about the extent of violence that exists in society (Hammermeister et al., 2005). The researchers concluded that the more time people

spend watching violent television programs, the more they exaggerated the belief of a mean and scary world, known as the Mean World Syndrome (Griffin, 2012). Similarly, research has demonstrated that this concept also applies to other media. For example, Taylor and Lee (1994) concluded that portrayals of Asian Americans in magazine advertisements are a reflection of society's stereotypes, a finding that was consistent with cultivation theory. In particular, Asian models were featured in advertisements for technology-based products, in business press, and science/mechanics publications. Through cultivation theory, readers continued to have negative stereotypes that were reinforced by these advertisements.

As a result, television and other media can be responsible for modeling and cultivating viewers' perception of social reality. Through cultivation theory, people are left with a misunderstanding of what is real, and are more likely to believe and internalize what they see as social truth. Because violence, sexuality, and body image distortions have been prevalent in all media, a range of negative health effects have been associated with excessive media consumption as well (Hammermeister et al., 2005). These effects range from violent and aggressive behavior, to body and self-esteem issues, to health and eating disorders (Hammermeister et al., 2005).

C. Critical Media Literacy Theory

Media, such as television, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet, dominate the daily lives of people around the world. By living in a media-rich world, people are facing many challenges—such as how people connect, learn, and entertain themselves, based on information obtained from different channels of media (McChesney, 1999). Media literacy educators are becoming more interested about media usage in popular

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culture such as television, film, video games, music, and magazines (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

Media literacy enables people to evaluate and analyze messages that are portrayed in the media, while also encouraging people to question and inquire about the messages being portrayed (Hobbs, 1998). The goal is for audiences and viewers to become more media literate and have a clearer perception of the real world and the world contrived by the media (Potter, 2013). The goal of media literacy is for audiences to receive media content without becoming distracted and affected by messages that are harmful (Potter, 2013).

Hobbs (2011) used "five communication competencies as fundamental literacy practices that are now part of learning across all the subject areas" (p. 12). The five fundamental literacy practices are (a) access, (b) analyze, (c) create, (d) reflect, and (e) act. According to Hobbs (2011), access is the first stage in media literacy. It involves using media tools and technology to find applicable and relevant information. The second step is analyze, which involves using critical thinking skills to analyze the reliability, purpose, point of view, and possible consequences of the depicted media messages (Hobbs, 2011). Create is the third step, which involves compiling or composing the intended message for the target audience (Hobbs, 2011). Reflecting involves studying the impact that media messages may have on the audience's behavior and identity (Hobbs, 2011). So, students should reflect on the media messages that are being portrayed, and how these messages can have an effect in their everyday lives. The fifth and final fundamental literacy practice is act, which is working individually and collaboratively to share the knowledge and information to solve problems in the family, workplace, and community (Hobbs, 2011).

How the media form images and beliefs of health and body image is one of the most researched features of media literacy education (Kamerer, 2013). Studies have shown that a background in media literacy can help women become more critical of media messages and the adverse influence they may have on viewers. Media literacy can address impractical thin ideals the media place on women, and may help prevent women from internalizing these unrealistic views of beauty that the media portray. Media literacy makes viewers more cautious about media messages that promote negative perceptions of beauty.

In summary, media literacy can be successful in helping people dispute thin-ideal messages portrayed in the media. Unfortunately, many believe the harsh message of ideal beauty that is the standard and must be achieved, thus increasing low self-esteem. Studies show that a background in media literacy can help women become more analytical and aware of media messages and the adverse influence they may have on viewers (Posavac, Posavac, and Weigel, 2001; Irving and Berel, 2000; Kusel, 1999; Wade, Davison, and O'Dea, 2003). Media literacy education can address impractical thin ideals the media place on women, and can help prevent women from internalizing these unrealistic views of beauty that media portrays.

The purpose of this pilot study was to test and determine if media exposure to content promoting thinness and attractiveness can affect one's self-esteem among female media and non-media studies students. Thus, this study was aimed at answering two principal research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is the exposure to messages of thin-ideal, beauty, and attractiveness portrayed in the mass media related to low self-esteem?

$H1_0$: There is no significant relationship between media influence and self-esteem.

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$H1_a$: There is a significant relationship between media influence and self-esteem.

RQ2: How are students majoring in media studies influenced by media exposure compared to students who are not majoring in media studies?

$H2_0$: There is no significant difference in the media exposure influence on self-esteem among students majoring in media studies and those students who are not.

$H2_a$: There is a significant difference in the media exposure influence on self-esteem among students majoring in media studies and those students who are not.

This pilot study is significant in that, in the Arab world, there are few studies about media exposure and potential effects of such exposure on self-esteem among women. It is important to determine the relationship between media exposure and self-esteem among women in Lebanon, not just women from the West. In addition, there is scarce research conducted in Lebanon about how media literacy can help women from internalizing the thin ideals and false messages of beauty portrayed in the media. Consequently, this study aims at adding to the body of knowledge on the relationship among media exposure, media literacy, and self-esteem, and at encouraging further research among a larger and more representative number of women.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

A. Design

The present research employed a quantitative method using a correlation design to analyze the relationship among media literacy, media influence, and the self-esteem of young female students at the American University of Beirut (AUB). For the purpose of this pilot study, the influence of media was tested to investigate its relation to women's self-esteem among college students who are majoring in media studies, that is, possessing higher levels of media literacy, and students who are not majoring in media studies at the American University of Beirut.

B. Operational Definitions

Self-esteem describes a person's general evaluation of his or her own worth or personal value; it is a positive or negative assessment of oneself (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Low self-esteem is when a person is not confident in his or her own body and has a negative view of himself or herself (Baumeister, 1993). Those who have high self-esteem are assumed to be psychologically content and satisfied, while those with low self-esteem are assumed to be psychologically distraught and depressed (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003).

Media influence is the degree to which audiences perceive that the mass media, such as television and newspapers, advocate that they should behave in a certain way (Xu, Venkatesh, Tam, & Hong, 2010). Media influence can be either strong or weak

depending on the message, the medium, the audience, and the type of effect focused on (Sparks, 2013).

Media literacy is the awareness, understanding, skills, and capabilities required to deduce and interpret media (Buckingham, 2003). For the purpose of this study, students enrolled in media studies are assumed to have media literacy education as opposed to those students who are not enrolled in media studies courses.

C. Instruments

The data was collected using two questionnaires: the Self-Esteem Questionnaire and the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale. Questionnaires were used because large amounts of information can be collected in a short period of time and in a cost-effective way. By using questionnaires, one is also able to collect valuable data that is easy to statistically analyze. However, a disadvantage of using questionnaires may be that participants might read and interpret each question differently and therefore answer based on their own understanding of the question. Another disadvantage of using questionnaires is the inability to probe for responses because questionnaires allow little flexibility for respondents to answer questions in further detail.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data, with two independent variables (media influence and media literacy) and one dependent variable (self-esteem). ANOVA allows the testing of the significance of group differences between two or more groups whereby the independent variable has two or more categories. The Institutional Review Board at the American University of Beirut (AUB) approved this pilot study.

1. *The Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ)*

The Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) consists of 20 items and is made up of three factors: performance, social, and appearance self-esteem (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was derived from the Sorenson Self-Esteem Test (3-items) and the State Self-esteem Scale (17-items). All items were answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all, 2=a little bit, 3=somewhat, 4=very much, 5=extremely). There is no correct answer; the best answer is what the participant feels at the moment. Some items were reversely scored. The higher the SEQ score the higher the level of self-esteem of the participant.

2. *The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS)*

The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS) aims to measure five scopes of media influence: (1) awareness of media's portrayal of thin ideals, (2) the internalization of media's ideals as personal standards of attractiveness, (3) the importance of media being a source of information about attractiveness, (4) the inclination to compare one's body to images portrayed in the media, and (5) pressures from the media to follow the beauty ideals promoted by the models and actors (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001). The scale (see Appendix C) consists of 11 items composed of three subscales representing *awareness* of appearance and thinness ideals, *internalization* of thin and appearance ideals, and perceived media *pressure* to follow to these ideals (Harrison, 2009). All items were answered using a 5-point Likert scale, e.g. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The higher the MMIS score the less influenced the participant is by the media.

D. Participants

According to Cooper and Schindler (2011) and Weiers (2005), a sample size of n=30 or more will result in the normal distribution of the sample's means around the population mean. The following formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size representing a given population (Krejecie & Morgan, 1970):

$$n = \frac{X^2 \, NP \, (1 - P)}{d^2 \, (N - 1) + X^2 \, P \, (1 - P)}$$

n = Recommended sample size.

X^2 = Value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level. X^2 is 3.84 at the 95% confidence level (Cooper & Schindler, 2011, p. 679).

N = Population size. There are 27 females, aged between 18 and 25, majoring in the media studies undergraduate and graduate programs at the American University of Beirut. This number was retrieved from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences from the student roster for the Spring 2014 semester.

P = Population proportion (assumed to be .50 to provide the maximum sample size).

d = Degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

$$n = \frac{3.84 \times 27 \times .50 \, (1 - .50)}{.05^2 \, (27-1)+3.84^2 \times .50 \, (1 - .50)} = 7 \; Media \; Studies \; Students$$

After an equal number of students not majoring in media studies was added, the anticipated sample size was 14. With the desired minimum being 30 participants (Cooper & Schindler, 2011; Weiers, 2005), the final sample size was set to $n = 30$ participants split equally among both groups of students. As a result, the sample size consisted of 15 female students majoring in media studies and 15 female students not majoring in media studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

Participants were between the ages of 18 and 25. This age group was significant to this study because it is during this age that young females focus on their appearance and bodies. Studies show that women's self-esteem is easily influenced during young adulthood, whether it is in a positive or negative way (Pullmann Allik, & Realo, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2011; McMullin & Cairney, 2004). To recruit students majoring in media studies, a classroom visit was coordinated with media studies professors to enlist participants in this study. The non-media studies participants were recruited through convenience sampling due to the easy availability and accessibility of subjects. This pilot study was conducted at AUB during the Spring 2014 semester. Participants were not given any compensation for their participation in the experiment.

E. Procedures

At the start of the experiment, participants were given an informed consent form that provides a brief overview of the subject of the study, but not enough to give away the purpose of the study, along with the procedures, risks, and benefits (see Appendix A). The researcher informed participants that all information provided would remain anonymous and confidential. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Participants had the choice to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons, and were allowed to raise any questions they wanted addressed.

Upon approval of involvement, participants signed and returned the informed consent to the researcher. Once participants signed and accepted the terms of the informed consent, they were asked screening questions. Both media studies and non-media studies students were asked about their age to ensure they were in the 18 to 25 age range. Female students who were not majoring in media studies were asked a

follow-up screening question to make sure they had not taken any media or feminism courses. If participants were eligible to participate in the experiment, they were given the Self-Esteem Questionnaire and the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale. Once participants filled out the two questionnaires, the investigator collected the packet and gave a debriefing of the details of the experiment.

F. Validity and Reliability

Researchers basing their analysis and conclusions on measurement through survey instruments must be concerned with the reliability and dependability of measurement tools (Cronbach, 1951). If the tools used in data collection and analysis are invalid or unreliable, the results will most likely be questionable. Even though the survey instruments used in this pilot study have been used in other studies, a reliability analysis was conducted using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool, and both survey instruments were deemed valid and reliable for this study (see Table 1 and Table 2).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data collection from participants in the study was via two survey instruments: (a) the Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ), a 20-item instrument to measure self-esteem, and (b) the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS), an 11-item instrument to measure one's influence from media exposure. After the data were gathered, they were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. The statistical analysis consisted of a correlation analysis, descriptive statistics, and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with media influence and media literacy as the independent variables and self-esteem as the dependent variable.

A. Reliability and Validity of Survey Instruments

As shown inTable 1, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability tests for the SEQ 20-item survey instrument across the entire sample showed a value of .95. Reliable scores were found for both media studies (.90) and non-media studies groups (.94).

Table 1

Self-Esteem Questionnaire: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Tests

Media Exposure	Sample Size	SEQ Score
Media Studies Group	$n = 15$	.90
Non-Media Studies Group	$n = 15$	.94
All Participants	$N = 30$	.95

As shown in Table 2, for the MMIS instrument, the Cronbach's alpha value was .94 overall, .93 for media studies respondents, and .86 for non-media studies respondents. Consequently, both survey instruments were deemed reliable for the purpose of this study because the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the generally accepted .70 reliability threshold (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 2

Multidimensional Media Influence Scale: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Tests

Media Exposure	Sample Size	MMIS Score
Media Studies Group	$n = 15$	.93
Non-Media Studies Group	$n = 15$	.92
All	$N = 30$	.94

B. Data Analysis

According to Field (2009), it must be determined whether the covariate (Media Literacy) and the independent variable (Media Influence) are independent or not. If the covariate and the independent variable are not independent, the dependent variable will be obscured (Field, 2009). Consequently, before proceeding with the analysis, a univariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the major course of study (Media Literacy) and media influence were independent of each other.

As shown in Table 3, the study major was significant, $F(1,28) = 14.60, p = .001$, which shows that the average level of media influence is independent from the two

major groups. In other words, the means for media influence are significantly different from students majoring in media studies and students not majoring in media studies. Thus, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a valid analysis to conduct.

Table 3

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with Dependent Variable: MMISmean

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7.591[a]	1	7.591	14.60	.001
Intercept	209.472	1	209.47	402.92	.000
Major	7.591	1	7.591	14.60	.001
Error	14.556	28	.520		
Total	231.620	30			
Corrected Total	22.148	29			

a. R Squared = .343 (Adjusted R Squared = .319)

C. Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was developed to determine to what extent the exposure to messages of thin-ideal, beauty, and attractiveness portrayed in the mass media is related to low self-esteem. The null hypothesis ($H1_0$) stated there would be no significant relationship between the media influence and self-esteem. To answer this question, the correlation Pearson r (r) statistic was computed to measure a linear relationship between the two variables.

Table 4 shows the correlations between the SEQ mean and the MMIS mean. Non-media studies students are positively related to media influence and self-esteem with a strong Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .92$, $p < .05$. Therefore, one can conclude that there is a significant relationship between media influence and self-esteem among non-media studies students. The relationship is positive as when the amount of media influence increases than self-esteem decreases. Therefore, non-media studies students are highly influenced by the media, which is shown to lower their self-esteem.

Table 4

Correlations of SEQ and MMIS by Participant Group

SEQ Mean		MMIS Mean
All Participants		
($N = 30$)	r	$.81^{**}$
Media Studies Group		
($n = 15$)	r	$.51^{*}$
Non-Media Studies Group		
($n = 15$)	r	$.92^{**}$

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

 * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 also shows that media studies students are positively related to media influence and self-esteem as well, with a moderate Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .51$, $p < .05$. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between media studies students with self-esteem and media influence. The relationship is positive as the amount of media influence increases than self-esteem decreases. Therefore, media studies students are moderately influenced by the media, which may

affect their self-esteem. Comparatively, non-media students exhibited a more significant positive relationship between media influence and self-esteem, with a significant Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .92$, $p < .01$.

In addition, Table 4 shows that for all participants media influence and self-esteem are significantly and positively related with a correlation coefficient of $r = .81$, $p < .01$. Both groups are shown to have been influenced by media exposure to attractive and thin ideals, but media studies students' self-esteem is not as strongly affected as non-media studies students. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was rejected for both media and non-media students because there was a statistically significant relationship between media influence and self-esteem.

D. Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was developed to determine whether students who are majoring in media studies are influenced by media exposure differently than students who are not majoring in media studies. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) stated that no significant difference would exist in the media exposure influence on self-esteem among students majoring in media studies and those students who are not. The descriptive statistics for mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) with media exposure and media literacy as the independent variables and self-esteem as the dependent variable were performed.

As shown in Table 5, the mean of media studies students who answered the Self-esteem Questionnaire was 3.77 ($SD = .55$), and the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale mean was 3.15 ($SD = .80$). On the other hand, the mean of non-media studies

students who answered the Self-Esteem Questionnaire was 2.75 (*SD* = .66), and the

Multidimensional Media Influence Scale mean was 2.14 (*SD* = .64).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for SEQ and MMIS for Both Groups

Major		Mean (*M*)	Std. Deviation (*SD*)	*N*
Media Studies Group	SEQ	3.77	.55	15
	MMIS	3.15	.80	15
Non-Media Studies Group	SEQ	2.75	.66	15
	MMIS	2.14	.64	15
All	SEQ	3.26	.79	30
	MMIS	2.64	.87	30

The average self-esteem score for students who were in the media studies

program (3.77) was higher than those who did not major in media studies (2.75).

Similarly, the students who were not in the media studies program (2.14) were

significantly more influenced by the media than the students who majored in media

studies (3.15). This may indicate that, on average, the media studies group exhibited

higher self-esteem and was less susceptible to media influence than the non-media

studies group. The next step was performing the factorial ANOVA analysis, also

known as two-way ANOVA. The two-way factorial ANOVA was used to study the

effect of two independent variables (media influence and media literacy) on the

dependent variable (self-esteem), thus testing the main effect of each independent

variable. Moreover, two-way factorial ANOVA tests if the effect of each individual

independent variable on the dependent variable is the same across all levels of the other

independent variable, thus determining if any interaction exists between the independent

variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

In interpreting the two-way ANOVA results, one must verify the generated

Levene's Test values. The purpose of Levene's Test is to determine whether there are

any significant differences between group variances so that they can be addressed

through data transformation (Field, 2009). As shown in Table 6, the p-value (.14),

which is higher than the significance level (.05), indicates that there is no significant

statistical mean difference in self-esteem between media and non-media studies groups.

If the null hypothesis were true, there should be no difference between the population

means, and the ratio should be close to 1; on the other hand, if the population means

were unequal, the F ratio would be larger than 1 (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The F

ratio of 2.21 implies that the difference between the population means is large but

insignificant.

Table 6

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a] – Dependent Variable: SEQ Mean

F	$df1$	$df2$	$Sig.$
2.21	22	7	.14

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
a. Design: Intercept + MMISmean + Major + MMISmean * Major

Table 7 indicates that there is no significant main effect of MMIS Mean, with

the p-value greater than .05. Table 7 also indicates that the overall model is statistically

significant ($F = 3.85$, $p = .04$). However, the variables media influence ($F = 2.37$, $p = $

.12) and media literacy ($F = 4.25$, $p = .08$) were not statistically significant. Moreover, the interaction between media literacy and media influence ($F = .16$, $p = .86$) was not statistically significant. The F values were all either larger than 1 or close to 0.

Table 7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects – Dependent Variable: SEQ Mean

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	16.82[a]	22	.77	3.85	.04
Intercept	286.69	1	286.69	1443.32	.00
MMISmean	8.96	19	.47	2.37	.12
Major	.84	1	.84	4.25	.08
MMISmean * Major	.06	2	.03	.16	.86
Error	1.39	7	.20		
Total	337.04	30			
Corrected Total	18.21	29			

[a]. R Squared = .924 (Adjusted R Squared = .684)

Based on the findings shown in Table 5 and Table 7, it may be concluded that, for the non-media studies group, the relationship between self-esteem and media influence was more significant than that of the media studies group. As a result, there was a failure to reject the null hypothesis ($H2_0$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Because of the ideals found in media, women are constantly bombarded with the message that they are not attractive or beautiful enough and begin to internalize the false beauty ideals that the media portray. Researchers and scholars of media studies have been showing increased interest in media literacy and media influence on self-esteem. There have been a growing number of studies investigating the relationship between media influence and self-esteem, especially among young women. However, research on media influence and self-esteem in the context of the Arab world is scarce. The purpose of this pilot study was to test and determine the relationship among media literacy, media influence, and the self-esteem for female media and non-media studies students in Lebanon. Critical media literacy theory, cultivation theory, and social comparison theory were the theoretical foundation of the research in this pilot study.

A. Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was developed to ask: *To what extent the exposure to messages of thin-ideal, beauty, and attractiveness portrayed in the mass media is related to low self-esteem?* It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between media influence and self-esteem among both media studies and non-media studies students. The study showed that there was a significant relationship between the media influence and self-esteem for both media and non-media students. However, the relationship between the media influence and self-esteem for non-media students was much more significant. These findings show that the media's portrayal of thin ideals can play a major role in forming unhealthy body image and low self-esteem in women.

Thus, it is concluded that the self-esteem of members of the non-media studies group was significantly related to media influence whereas the self-esteem of members of the media studies group was moderately related to media influence. This shows a potential pattern that the more individuals are educated about media effects the less susceptible they are to messages the media transmit. So media literacy may help women become more aware and critical of the media messages that are being communicated, and may also help women be more guarded of media messages that promote negative perceptions of beauty, thus possibly reducing low self-esteem.

B. Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was developed to ask: *How are students majoring in media studies influenced by media exposure compared to students who are not majoring in media studies?* It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the media exposure influence on self-esteem among students majoring in media studies and those students who are not. It was concluded that the non-media studies group was not significantly more influenced by the media than the media studies group. So there was no difference in the media exposure influence on self-esteem among media studies students and non-media studies students.

Previous studies found that media literacy can help prevent the internalization and social comparison process of media messages (Levine & Piran, 2004), and that media literacy interventions could protect adolescent girls from negative media messages, thus preventing low self-esteem (Halliwell et al., 2011). However, the results of the present study do not support the previously mentioned findings. One explanation could be the small sample size of used in this pilot study; thirty participants may not be

enough to assess media's influence on the self-esteem of media and non-media students. Another reason could be that students majoring in media studies might not actually be familiar with media literacy. Just because students are in the media studies program does not define them as media literate. The students could have taken only one media course, had not yet taken any, or have not taken enough media literacy courses. The above results are inconclusive as to whether or not media literacy among young women can be an effective means to counteract negative ideals portrayed in the media.

C. Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study, one being the relatively small sample size. For this reason, these findings cannot be generalized to the broader AUB community or even the broader female Lebanese community. The demographics may not be an accurate representation of the population because not all young Lebanese women can be represented by students from one university, particularly female students who are generally more liberal and Westernized compared to other Lebanese women. The sampling method may also be a limiting factor to this study because convenience sampling was used. The data collection method allowed participant self-selection, thus potentially introducing self-selection bias in this study, which may have had an effect on the findings. Self-selection bias may occur when individuals select themselves into a group causing a biased sample instead of the researcher relying on facts to select the individuals into the group (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

Another limitation is that media studies students were assumed to be media literate just because they have enrolled in media courses. Enrolling in media literacy courses does not necessarily mean that students have the knowledge or skills to be

critical towards the media. Also, the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale may not be the most accurate scale to measure a person's media influence. Cusumano & Thompson (2001) devised the scale to measure media influence from television, film, and magazines. The scale does not measure radio or Internet usage, nor new media that have become pervasive since 2001, including social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

D. Conclusions

The purpose of this pilot study was to test and determine the relationship among media literacy and media influence (independent variables) for female media and non-media studies students at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and their self-esteem (dependent variable). The research method of this study was quantitative using a correlation design to analyze the relationship among media literacy, media influence, and the self-esteem. Through the cultivation theory and social comparison theory, it was shown that women do internalize the beauty ideals portrayed in the media, and believe these ideals to be realistic and true. Only through critical media literacy can women become guarded and critical of these media messages.

Participants were sampled from the American University of Beirut (AUB) with 15 female students majoring in media studies and 15 female students not majoring in media studies, all between the ages of 18 and 25. The study used the Self-Esteem Questionnaire and the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale, that both were deemed reliable and valid in previous studies and in this pilot study. The research questions were formulated to study the relationship among media literacy, media influence, and self-esteem.

Statistical analyses were used to investigate the hypothesized relationship between the variables. Results were mixed, some supporting prior studies and others not. Differences in the hypothesized relationship between media influence and self-esteem of media studies and non-media studies young female students were noted. However, there could be different results if the sample size were larger than the 30 students who participated in this pilot study.

This study adds empirical evidence that there is a relationship between media influence and self-esteem among young women in Lebanon. The study supports assertions by Derenne and Beresin (2006) that because of the media and their portrayal of thin ideals, the media are affecting women negatively, and the desire for thinness has affected women's self-esteem negatively. Other studies have shown that media literacy education might be able to prevent the internalization of these media messages, and that through media literacy women can learn to be more critical of messages from media. The study may explain how the research conclusions apply to women and cultures in a global context, not just in North American or European countries.

The significance of the study for young women and other interested stakeholders is that results suggest further research is needed to examine the effects of media literacy and education on self-esteem among young women in Lebanon. Results from previous literature suggest that there is a possibility for media literacy to help women counteract negative beauty ideals in media. However, further research is needed to help operationally define the specific benefits of media literacy that guards women against media messages. Scholars and researchers may use the results as a guideline to further their research in the field of media studies, especially in a non-Western context.

The demographics of the sample warrant further research both with a larger

sample size and among women older than 24 years across various factors such as economic status, education level, and marital status. The findings of the study constitute a foundation for future research focusing on low self-esteem, specifically to determine whether or not the results for Lebanon apply to more conservative Arab countries that may have higher levels of media censorship and less influenced by Westernized ideals. These findings are important and significant because, like other studies, they confirm that media ideals of thinness and beauty are related to low self-esteem outside of a Western context. The findings of the study justify the need for further research that considers cultural, ethnic, and political influences on self-esteem.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT

IN A PILOT STUDY

Consent to Serve as a Participant in a Pilot Study

Project Title: Influence of Media and Media Literacy on Women's Self-Esteem: A Pilot Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. May Farah
                                     Assistant Professor of Media Studies,
                                     Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media
    Studies

                                     American University of Beirut
                                     mf15@aub.edu.lb

Nature of the Project:
You are being asked to serve as a participant in a research project that involves quantitative methods in the form of a questionnaire. The research is being conducted for a final project in the Department of Media Studies at AUB. The purpose of this pilot study is to determine how current students perceive questions of health and identity. You must be between 18 and 25 years old to participate.

Explanation of Procedures:
As a research participant, you will be asked to complete two questionnaires. Your participation in this research should take no more than twenty minutes. To recruit students majoring in Media Studies, a classroom visit will be coordinated with media studies professors to enlist participants in this study. To recruit students who are not majoring in media studies, the researcher will approach participants on the AUB campus.

As a research participant, you will also receive two copies of the consent form. One copy will be given to you to keep for your own information and in case you need to contact either the investigators or IRB, and the second copy will be signed by you as the participant and returned to the researcher.

Potential Discomfort and Risks:
The research involves no more than minimal risk, and is not expected to produce any discomfort. You are also free to terminate your participation at any time without any explanation. Refusal to participate in the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Confidentiality:
Data obtained in this study will be encoded and kept **confidential.** You are not required to provide your name, and no identifiable information will be linked to the data you provide. Only information that cannot be traced to you will be used in research reports, and only generalized data from an expected group of 30 participants will be published. Your participation is entirely **anonymous.** The principal investigator and co-investigator are the only people who will have access to raw data.

Potential Benefits:

    There are no monetary rewards for participation in this study. By participating you will help media studies professionals understand some aspects of media influence on women.

Withdrawal from the Project:

    Your participation in this study is **completely voluntary**. You may refuse to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also withdraw or discontinue your participation in the study at any time without giving any reasons and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who to Call if You Have Any Questions:

    This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of American University of Beirut. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact IRB, AUB:

    +961 (1) 374374, ext: 5445

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or want to learn about the results, you may contact the:

Principal investigator Dr. May Farah: mf15@aub.edul.lb
01-350-000 Ext. 3827
Nicely Hall
Room 203C

Co-investigator Rita Hage: rjh15@aub.edu.lb
01-350-000 Ext. 3804

_____   _____

Signature of Research Director   Signature of Research Participant

Date _____   Date _____

Time_____   Time_____

APPENDIX B: THE SELF-ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please read the below questions and mark what best represents your answer.

Are you majoring in Media Studies? Yes _____ No _____

If no, have you taken any media studies courses? Yes _____ No _____ any feminist course?   Yes _____ No _____

What is your age? _____

Directions: This is a questionnaire designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. There is, of course, no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself at this moment. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer. Again, answer these questions, as they are true for you RIGHT NOW.

1 = Not at all; 2 = A little bit; 3 = Somewhat; 4 = Very much, 5 = Extremely

SEQ	Question	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
1	I am dissatisfied with my weight. (A)					
2	I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others. (P)					
3	I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now. (A)					
4	I am worried about looking foolish. (S)					
5	I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure. (S)					
6	I feel that others respect and admire me. (A)					
7	I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read. (P)					
8	I am very concerned about my appearance. (A)					
9	I often compare myself to others. (P)					
10	I feel as smart as others. (P)					
11	I feel like I'm not doing well. (P)					
12	I feel self-conscious. (S)					
13	I am worried about what other people think of me. (S)					
14	I feel good about myself. (A)					

SEQ	Question	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
15	I feel inferior to others at this moment. (S)					
16	I feel displeased with myself. (S)					
17	I often think that others don't respect me. (S)					
18	I am pleased with my appearance right now. (A)					
19	I feel concerned about the impression I am making. (S)					
20	I feel unattractive. (A)					

Scoring:

Items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20 are reverse-scored.

APPENDIX C: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

SCALE (MMIS)

Directions: Please read the below questions and mark what best matches your agreement with the following statements. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer, as honestly as possible.

On average, how much time per week do you spend...

Watching TV	Less than 1 hr	1-4hrs	4-7hrs	7-10hrs	10+hrs
Reading Magazines	Less than 1 hr	1-4hrs	4-7hrs	7-10hrs	10+hrs
Watching Films	Less than 1 hr	1-4hrs	4-7hrs	7-10hrs	10+hrs
Online	Less than 1 hr	1-4hrs	4-7hrs	7-10hrs	10+hrs

1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree

MMIS	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	People who are in good shape are better looking than people who are not in good shape. (A)					
2	I learn how to look attractive by looking at models in magazines. (I)					
3	Watching TV or reading magazines makes me want to diet or lose weight. (P)					
4	I try to look like the models in magazines. (I)					
5	Clothes look better on people who are thin. (A)					
6	I compare my body to movie stars. (I)					
7	I would like my body to look like the models in magazines. (I)					
8	Clothes look better on people who are in good shape (A)					
9	I try to look like the actors or actresses in movies. (I)					
10	Watching movies makes me want to diet. (P)					
11	I would like my body to look like people who are on TV. (I)					