

Students' Self-attitude and Image of the Physical Self in the Context of Psychological Health

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Abstract: The subject of the research presented in the article is the image of the physical self as a specific phenomenon of self-awareness. The authors provide a brief review of the main approaches to the problem in domestic and international psychology. The image of the physical self is considered as an integrative process in the context of the psychology of health. In this study, we studied the self-attitude to the image of the physical self in the process of comparing the subject's characteristics of external attractiveness with a social standard, in the process of reflective self-esteem. The results of a pilot study focused on the study of qualities that indirectly reveal the subjective representation of a person about his/her body are presented. A correlation and variance analysis of data on the types of attitude to the body among girls and boys was carried out. The study clearly shows that high assessments of the functional characteristics positively correlate with the developing attitude of students to their bodies.

1. Introduction

For modern youth, self-knowledge of physicality remains a tool that corrects mental processes through the body, while ignoring physicality blocks the awareness of individual experiences, the uniqueness of the subject. From the standpoint of psychological health, self-attitude to one's own body also reflects a positive attitude towards oneself as a person as a whole. Dissatisfaction with the body image can cause a negative self-attitude, a decrease in self-esteem, a sense of personal uniqueness. The image of the physical self reflects the psychological health of the young man, because, in the process of socialization, it is the body that loses its natural physical character, becomes the first object of ontogenesis to be mastered and transformed into a universal tool and a sign of identity formation [5]. The relevance of the study considered in this article is due to the contradiction between the increased distribution of the standard of the ideal body, translated as value, and the level of satisfaction with one's own body in boys and girls.

2. Basic Approaches to the Problem

In modern Russian psychology, the concept of the "image of the physical self" is close in content to the concept of "body image," which is understood as a part of the image of the self, reflecting self-attitude as an aspect of self-consciousness [2; 4; 13]. The formation of the image of the body is based on the ideas of a person about his own body, the sum of perceptions, attitudes, assessments associated with the physical appearance, and body functions. W. James distinguished two aspects of the global self. The self-conscious is a reflective formation and the self-object is the content of consciousness. At the same time, he distinguished the following elements of the personality structure: (1) the physical self, including the body and material wealth belonging to a person; social self, i.e. a social status, social roles; (2) the spiritual self as a combination of mental characteristics and properties of human [6]. A. Langle considers the relationship of three areas. The mental sphere is a condition for the existence of the body sphere, which, in turn, can be considered one of the tools for realizing the spiritual sphere.

Moreover, the realization of the spiritual sphere for a cultured person is an essential condition for the healthy existence of the bodily sphere [11]. According to R. Burns, the self-concept determines how the individual

represents him/herself, what he/she thinks about him/herself, and about the possibility of development in the future. The following elements are present in the structure of the global self-concept. The real self is the attitudes related to how the individual perceives his/her actual abilities, roles, status, what he/she really is. The mirror (social) self is the attitude associated with the individual's ideas about how others see him/she. And the ideal self is the attitude associated with the individual's ideas of what he/she would like to become [2].

In our opinion, the image of the physical self of a person is a system component of the entire self-image of the subject, since it is the image of the physical self that can be observed, modified, and evaluated. Psychological health presupposes the mobility of the body-self with an invariable body pattern, the realism of one's body image [17]. Attitudes to one's own body form attitudes that affect the self-image of a person as a whole [16]. In the psychology of health, physicality is a resource of a multidimensional systemic health phenomenon, formed at the physiological, mental, social, and spiritual levels [1]. Interacting with the world, the subject reflects him/herself, supplements and changes the idea of him/herself, the attitude towards him/herself is formed, the adoption or rejection of his/her own personality [14].

From the perspective of the cultural-historical approach, a person's bodily experience can be described as a hierarchically organized quasisystem, the lower level of which, based on the work of physiological mechanisms, is regulated by the overlying psychological level. This level includes the cognitive and emotional-semantic levels, which include phenomena such as mental representations of the body self, the categorical structure of body experience, assessments, values, and meanings associated with body appearance and body functions [10, 15]. D. A. Leontyev substantiates that the meaning for the subject always has a dual nature, on the one hand, acts as an object of his/her consciousness, and on the other, as ways and mechanisms of his/her awareness [12].

Note that the existence of self-esteem of the physical image of the self is defined as self-knowledge. Therefore, the construct of self-esteem is part of the information field of the brain. This aspect emphasizes the influence of self-awareness, its phenomena, such as self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-attitude, on the physiological processes of one's own body [2; 4; 7; 17; 19]. At the same time, value judgments in thinking themselves are capable of evoking and projecting the corresponding sensations in the body. In literature, a similar mechanism of influence is referred to as a secondary meaning of bodily sensation [19]. Not individual sensory impressions but an integral system of the image of the world makes a significant contribution to the construction of the image [1; 3; 8; 19]. The image of the self becomes real for the person if combined with a feeling or sensation. Psychological health implies that the image coincides with reality. In this case, the image of the physical self is adequate to reality and is consistent with the appearance of the body and with feelings. Knowing their body, a person begins to take care of him/herself, which positively affects their self-esteem, development, awareness of his/her resources [13]. Thus, the attitude towards oneself at the level of biological health reflects the projection of the attitude towards oneself at the level of psychological health.

3. Pilot Study of Students' Image of the Physical Self

The purpose of the study is to study the self-attitude to the image of the physical self in the process of comparing the subject's characteristics of external attractiveness with a social standard through reflective self-esteem. In this pilot study, the following system of methods was applied: (1) general methods (theoretical and methodological analysis, the method of generalization and interpretation of scientific data, the phenomenological method); (2) empirical research methods (questionnaire, methodology "Measurement of self-attitude to the Image of the Physical Self" by A. G. Cherkashina [20], methodology "My attitude to my body" by E. B. Stankovskaya [18], methodology "Express diagnostics of the level of psychological health," questionnaire "Individual model of psychological health" by A. V. Kozlov [9]). This toolkit made it possible to distinguish scales related to various aspects of the physical self in the context of psychological health. Mathematical processing of the research results was carried out in the STATISTIC program. Correlation, variance types of analysis, estimation of the statistical significance of the difference in sample arithmetic mean distributions of primary values by Student t-test were carried out.

The empirical base of the study included 82 students of the geographical Faculty of Altai State University, who did not have a pronounced somatic or mental pathology, aged 18 to 20 years, including 64 girls and 20 boys. Using the Student t-test, the following groups of respondents were compared: (1) those respondents who train regularly – these are 52 people (33 girls and 19 boys) who go in for sports, attend sports sections; (2)

those respondents who plan to engage in sports and physical activity – these are 15 people (11 girls and 4 boys); and (3) those respondents who do not plan to engage in sports, physical activity, do not like physical activity – these are 15 people (12 girls and 3 boys).

4. Results

The results of the study of self-relation to the image of the physical self in the process of comparing its characteristics of external attractiveness with a social standard in the process of reflective self-esteem showed the following. First, young men who do not plan to engage in physical activity and sports reliably ($p < 0.05$) note a lower significance of functional characteristics, namely a lower significance of dexterity ($t = 2.59, p = 0.041$), lower the importance of self-esteem of flexibility ($t = -4.86, p = 0.003$), a lower overall level of self-esteem of social characteristics ($t = -2.7, p = 0.045$). Second, young men who engage in sports, physical activity reliably ($p < 0.05$) are distinguished by lower significance of anatomical characteristics, lower significance of the face ($t = 2.46, p = 0.026$), and higher self-assessment of functional characteristics ($t = 2.25, p = 0.040$), namely high self-esteem of endurance ($t = 2.26, p = 0.039$), high self-esteem of strength ($t = 2.44, p = 0.027$), from those who are only planning to do sports, physical activity.

There are significant differences related to physical activity between the girls who plan and do not plan to play sports. First, among girls who do not plan to play sports, the significance of functional characteristics is significantly lower (strength ($t = 2.45, p = 0.023$), speed ($t = 2.06, p = 0.05$)), and clothing self-esteem is significantly higher ($t = -2.011, p = 0.05$). Second, there were no differences between girls who regularly engage in sports, physical activity, and girls who plan to engage in sports, physical activity. Relying on the methods of mathematical statistics, we compared f two groups of respondents who regularly engage in sports and do not engage in sports. As a result, statistically significant differences (table 1, table 2) on the scale “caring for one’s own body” between groups of respondents were identified (Livn’s criterion $> 0.05, F = 0.587, p = 0.046$).

TABLE 1. DIFFERENCES ON THE SCALE CARING FOR ONE’S OWN BODY (ANOVA)

Scale name	Impact comparison	Sum of squares	St. Sv.	Average square	F	Relevance
Caring attitude	Total	507.988	79			
	Between groups	3.092	1	3.092	.587	.046
	Within groups	410.795	78	5.267		
	Total	413.888	79			

TABLE 2. CRITERION OF UNIFORMITY OF DISPERSIONS ON THE SCALE CARING FOR ONE’S OWN BODY

	Livn’s statistics	St.Sv.1	St.Sv.2	Relevance
Caring attitude	1.835	1	78	.179

It should be noted that high ratings of functional characteristics positively correlate with a developing attitude to one’s own body, have a high personal value. This can be explained by the specifics of the training direction for students of the geographical faculty, which is planned to be tested in the main empirical research in an expanded sample of students from other research faculties.

4. Discussion

The cultural-historical approach emphasizes that the laws of development are the same in norm and pathology, and a meta-analysis of psychosomatic phenomenology makes it possible to analyze the processes of sign-symbolic mediation of the image of the physical self and psychological self-regulation as the main forms of personality activity [15]. The primary condition for structuring a holistic self-image is the need for a person to “appropriate” his/her body, its internal and external (social and cultural) content [15].

Awareness of the image of the self is impossible without the formation of a system of conscious perception of the socio-psychological component of the image structure of the physical self. The experience of the subject

refracts the impact of the environment and therefore allows one to identify those aspects of the social environment that in this situation affect this child. But only dramatic experiences allow us to understand real interpsychic contradictions, as the driving force of development, and those qualitative changes in the structure of consciousness that occur as a result [3]. Therefore, the experience directly affects the subject, and dramatic experiences determine the “turning points” in the course of its development. Thus, dramatic experiences of attitude to one's body turn a social situation into a social situation of the development of personal psychological health resources.

5. Conclusion

The image of an ideal appearance, borrowed from the general cultural space of meanings, is appropriated by a specific subject and internalized through a system of his/her needs, values. It acquires a special personality meaning, is embedded in its motivational sphere of needs, affects psychological health. The consequence of such a formed stereotype may be the use by the subject of this standard as a reference point in the reference frame in the description and evaluation of not only himself but also those around him/her. Focusing only on a social standard can, in a certain way, distort the entire process of perceiving one's own physical image, up to destructive changes in psychological health. The results can be used to draw up a psychological program of personal development for boys and girls. In the future, it is planned to study self-attitude, value attitudes in the context of the psychological health of young men and women with different types of attitudes toward the image of the physical self.

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