Understanding health behaviour and body image among adolescent students – a cross national comparison - and other activities

Kuzman, M; Nilsen, T; Mikkelsen, BE, Sado, F; Brandao, MP; Romani, AQ & Sudzina, F; Michel, S.; Bergmueller, A.

Abstract:
Health status perception and behaviour are important factors that have a strong influence on the wellbeing of both citizens and societies. Higher education has a considerable influence on how health behavior and body image among adolescents are dealt with. Universities play an important role in shaping the knowledge, skills and competencies of the future generation and hence in shaping future society. Young people in these facilities are both creators of future society as they are the subject of present policies and there is a growing concern on the fact that school and the facilities of higher education should bare targets of public policy. Students in higher educational facilities can be expected to be the decision makers of the future and as such their beliefs and attitudes as well as behaviour in relation to health are important factors that influence not only individuals but can be expected to have an impact for the future of our societies. Understanding the relationship between health, health behavior and self perceived body image among adolescent students is therefore of considerable interest. The study aimed: i) exploring health behaviour and body image perception and attachment style among university students at higher educations; ii) investigating how self-perception of body image, health behaviour, and health status and attachment style, among university students is interrelated; iii) discussing policy implications of the findings including the need for training package for university teachers and tools for use in higher education and policy recommendations to decision makers and educational planners. The paper presents the study methodology from the work that were conducted in working group 4 of the Appearance matters COST action and the preliminary findings from the survey that was conducted in Germany, Portugal, Croatia and Czech Republic. The activities and findings from the work that the group has been carrying out on health, health behaviour and body image in schools for vocational training are also shown here.

Conference on Appearance Matters. Ljubljana. April 21-22

Three levels of education

Higher Education

Higher Education University

University of applied sci.

Youth Education

Vocational School

Planned activities

• Two activities were planned.
  • 1) A survey on body image and health issues among students in higher education settings and
  • 2) an intervention study on body image and health issues among students in vocational/disadvantaged settings based on existing case study interviews (Denmark).

Identify potential sources of funding & develop funding bids to underpin future research activities
Build relationships & partnerships to facilitate research during and beyond the life of the Action
Identify key stakeholders and experts and raise their awareness of the extent and impact of appearance dissatisfaction
Consider the particular needs of minority and socially marginalized groups

EU FUNDED PROJECTS

The combined experience of appearance psychology researchers and practitioners who work for organisations providing vocational training and/or guidance counselling at national and European levels.

Why?
The practitioners has no or very limited knowledge about how concerns with appearance can influence health, behavioral and outcomes.

MIRROR

Face value project

IHEM | Innovative Health Educational Module

Mirrors newer Project - http://www.mirrorsproject.eu
Face value project - http://www.facevalue.cc
IHEM Project - http://www.ihem.no
Appearance Matters Project - http://www.appearancetraining.com

NEW PROPOSALS

* All Aboard- training program development for youth workers in inclusion of youth with visible difference in core activities
* Package 27- streamlining application and project management practices for NGOs and Public organisations
* PACKAGE 15 - training for health care workers working with children born with orafacial clefts and/or craniofacial conditions
* PROJECT 24: training for healthy prevention and healthy life style
* Tackling First in Education
* PACKAGE 46 - training for health care workers working with children born with orafacial clefts and/or craniofacial conditions
* Cutting Edge Training: Optimizing medical services for children undergoing appearance changing procedures via innovative training of professionals
* Acknowledge me - A Coaching Kit for creating Better Opportunities for Social Inclusion, Learning and Employability in Europe
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Why are educational settings interesting?

• Health Promoting University
• The lifelong learning perspective
• Universities as “sampling units”
• Schools as health promoting and “protected places”

Aim & objectives

• To exploring health behaviour and body image perception and attachment style among university students at higher educations.
• Investigating how self-perception of body image, health behaviour, and health status and attachment styles, among university students is interrelated.
• Discussing policy implications of the findings including the need for training package for university teachers and tools for use in higher education and policy recommendations to decision makers and educational planners.

Methods

Survey Methodology

- Only validated questionnaires were used and to new ones were developed.
- The part of the questionnaire that dealt with body esteem scale (Mendelson, 1997; Rosenberg, 1979; Franzoi, 1984)
- The vulnerable attachment style (Bifulco, 2003)
- Validation of the Portuguese Body-Esteem scale (Brandao, under review)
- In addition questions on alcohol, tobacco use, sexual behaviour, internet as well as eating behaviour, smoking and physical activity was added based on methodology from HBSC (health behaviour of school aged children).
- English version of the questionnaire was used to design a web-based questionnaire (WBQ) so that the questionnaire could be circulated simply by a hyperlink and so that data could be collected automatically, for a speeded up data collection.
- National contact points and LSSC’s were offered the option to translate it into national language and to do their own data-collection. This included an option using paper-based questionnaires.

I worry about the way I look

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Scientific areas in sample
I worry about the way I look

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Skewedness in gender

- In addition to the social skewedness there is a gender dimension since women generally eat more in accordance with the official dietary guidelines compared to men.
- It is shown that men in general have less regular meals than women. Especially breakfast and lunch.
- Men eat less dietary fibre than women, and they consume more fat and alcohol.

Vocational school agenda DK

- High Drop out
- High absenteeism
- "we can’t be sociologists all of us"
- New focus on handicraft
- Study ambience and health as "a remedy"
- New school reform 45 min Pd/8 hours teaching

Vocational schools agenda DK

- Dietary behaviours have been shown to be associated with SES.
- Males with low adult SES unlike females had a dietary pattern rich in meat, sauce, potatoes, fast food, sweets and rye bread.
- Adults with high SES were shown to have intake more dominated by a green food pattern rich in fruits and vegetables.

Some results from the Gearing Up the Body Intervention

Vocational schools agenda DK

- Skewedness in gender
- Middle managers


Not a core business
“The students and the teachers are here in order to develop professional skills as the first priority but of course topics such as diet and nutrition and how to live a healthy lifestyle need to go into their mindset and this is not how we used to work in the school.”
Senior managers

Process needed
“We need a process where we discuss health along with the teachers that is supposed to implement it in real life, get an understanding of what health is and make them want to grow it from the shop floor level.”
Middle managers

Norms for participation
“...so they were unhealthy many of them and did not want to expose themselves in public doing exercise and the norm was that it was OK to sit inside the class drinking energy drinks instead of exercising”
Middle managers

the "social" is important
“For the breakfast we at the transport and logistics really managed to turn it into a social event”
Middle managers

the right tools missing
“We do not have the necessary facilities to pump up the pulse and make them sweat”
Middle managers

Recommendation
• Integrate mental & physical health in curricula
• Develop tools for students
• Develop “train-the-trainer” program
• Create awareness
• Make policy

Next step
• Finalise the full 5(6) country study
• Publish in ICCAS 2017 Proceedings
• Publish a full paper

Many thanks for your attention!
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