

Sociocultural Influences on Men of Color's Body Image Concerns: A Structural Equation Modeling Study

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Abstract : Negative body image is one of the most common causes of eating disorders, and it is not only happening to women. Regardless of the increasing attention that researchers and practitioners have been paying to the male population and their body image concerns, men of color have yet to be fully represented or studied. Given the consensus that the sociocultural experiences of people of color may play a significant role in their health and well-being, this study focused on assessing the mechanism through which sociocultural factors may influence men of color's perceptions of body image. In particular, this study focused on untangling how interpersonal and media pressure, as well as ethnic-racial identities and perceptions, would impact body dissatisfaction in terms of muscularity, body fat, and height in men of color and how this mechanism is moderated across different ethnic-racial groups. The structural equation modeling approach was therefore applied to achieve the research goal. With the sample size of 181 self-identified Black, Indigenous, and People of Color male participants aged 20-50 ($M=33.33$, $SD=6.9$) through surveying on Amazon's MTurk platform, the proposed model achieved a modestly acceptable model fit with the pooled sample, $X^2(836) = 1412.184$, $CFI = 0.900$, $RMSEA = 0.062$ [0.056, 0.067]. And $SRMR = 0.088$, And it explained 89.5% of the variance in body dissatisfaction. The results showed that of all the direct effects on body dissatisfaction, interpersonal appearance pressure exhibited the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.410^{***}$), followed by media appearance pressure ($\beta = 0.272^{**}$) and self-hatred feeling ($\beta = 0.245^{**}$). The ethnic-racial related factors (i.e., stereotype endorsement, ethnic-racial salience, and nationalistic assimilation) statistically influenced body dissatisfaction through the mediators of media appearance pressure and/or self-hatred feeling. Furthermore, the moderation analysis between Black/African American men and non-Black/African American men revealed the substantial differences in how ethnic/racial identity impacts one's perception of body image, and the Black/African American men were found to be influenced by sociocultural factors at a higher level, compared with their counterparts. The impacts of demographic characteristics (i.e., SES, weight, height) on body dissatisfaction were also examined. Instead of considering interpersonal appearance pressure and media pressure as two subscales under one construct, this study considered them as two separate and distinct sociocultural factors. The good model fit to the data indicates this rationality and encourages scholars to reconsider the impacts of two sources of social pressures on body dissatisfaction. In addition, this study also provided empirical evidence of the moderation effect existing within the population of men of color, which reveals the heterogeneity existing across different ethnic-racial groups and implies the necessity to study individual ethnic-racial groups so as to better understand the mechanism of sociocultural influences on men of color's body dissatisfaction. These findings strengthened the current understanding of the body image concerns existing among men of color and meanwhile provided empirical evidence for practitioners to provide tailored health prevention and treatment options for this growing population in the United States.

Keywords : men of color, body image concerns, sociocultural factors, structural equation modeling

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