

Investigating the Relationship between Body Management and Modern Identity among Married Women in Tehran City

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Abstract

Introduction: One of the characteristics of the modern age is to pay attention to visual symbols. In recent periods, body had found basic importance because of being the most available instrument to exhibit the identity forms and had been transformed to an identity media.

Methods: In this cross-sectional survey, the relationship between body management and modern identity has been studied on 400 married women in Tehran city. The sampling method used in this research is multistage cluster sampling.

Results: In the range of 50 to 87, the mean score of body management was 66.18 that indicates a body management behavior around average among participants. A positive, significant relationship ($r=0.32$) between modern identity and body management was found. Regression analysis showed that modern identity, monthly family income, educational level, and age can explain 20% of the variance of body management.

Conclusion: It may be concluded that the higher the level of modern identity, the higher the level of body management will be. Based on Giddens' theory, it can be stated that in the consumption world, the women according to their tastes and interests are trying to present themselves beautiful and youthful and to make a distinguished personal identity of themselves. Therefore, the body style and statues are some of the mechanisms that the women used to reveal their identity.

Keywords: body management, married women, modern identity, Tehran

1. Introduction

By increasing the importance of self, as a result of modernity, body as its most overt carrier has found special position, and hence in fields related to social aspects of health, such as medical sociology, social medicine, and social psychiatry, trying to understand social aspects of body, such as body management, i.e. manipulating the form of own body, has become an important subject.

In the modern world the body is not merely an organism, but is changed to a sociocultural phenomenon (Freund, 1998) and specifically to a media (Grogan, 2000). This situation can be seen in the film industry (especially Hollywood) and puppet industry (for example Barbie). Since ancient times to present, people had groomed their body according to the values and norms of their society in various methods to produce and reproduce the self-identity. It's a mutual process which occurs under the influence of others and at the same time, will affect others. What is new and augments the importance of the issue is to use the new methods such as surgery and dieting to make form to bodies (Synnot, 1990).

Body management is a mean to reveal individuality and identity. Concept of body management means conscious and continuous alteration in visible parts of body through behaviors such as clothing, adornment, dieting, sport, fitness and plastic surgery (Azad Armaki & Chavoshian, 2003).

Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 2010) believes that, in the age of modernity, body itself has been affected by self-reflection. By creating the fields such as family planning, genetic engineering, and various surgeries, human

body, functionally became an object of choices and various options. According to this phenomenon in the modern age, which is called identity reflectivity, controlling the identity forms and manifestations is equal to interest in the body control. In this regard, methods of body control and management are critical methods of people for differentiating themselves from each other (Haji Amiri, 2006).

If differences and distinctions in lifestyles had been considered as a base to define the status and the identity, then, the visual form of things, persons, and activities will be very important, especially for the people who use them. So, lifestyle is one of the main frameworks of organizing and manipulating social identity and in itself is created via exhibiting appearance. Therefore, firstly, absolute importance of the visual symbols and semblances is in this fact that they are basic resources of determining the mean of everything. Secondly, members of the modern society, aware of this importance, pay special attention to the semblances of everything which is under their control and power limit (Azad Armaki & Chavoshian, 2003).

Among these appearances, the body as the most straight and the most available place can be the carrier and exhibitor of the lifestyle difference and the identity forms will be more important. In the modern social systems, the body has become the main aspect of the cultural and political activity. The beauty industry is increasingly going to grow the socially accepted forms of the body identity (Wellington, 2001).

Tehran, as a metropolitan city, has been affected severely by the changes resulted from modernity, including severe behavioral and value revolutions. It seems that one of the most obvious effects of modernity was identity conflicts resulted from globalization, economic and political heterogeneity, and spreading and creating various fashions. A short glance to media advertisements reveals increasing attention of various layers, especially women, to their bodies. Also, we can see the excessive expansion of cosmetic market, weight control regimes (both for losing and gaining weight), plastic surgeries, and even body building clubs.

Zokaei (2008), based on a review on the quantitative and qualitative researches conducted on the youth, concludes that modernity in Iranian society affected on youths in the form of their increased sensitivity to exerting control on their bodies with the aim of exhibiting a more pleasant picture of them. The rival discourses in public sphere are also significant references informing, understanding, interpreting, and representing the body.

Crossly (2005), using a conceptual instrument called reflexive body techniques (RBTs), had shown that in most categories of body management, women take more control on their body than men and the only domain that men have superiority is in tattooing (Crossly, 2005).

Lee et al (2009), in a research on 301 B.A student girls, concluded that more attention to the changes of body, significant others, and body satisfaction, explain behaviors directed toward body change: Those with less body satisfaction and those who care more about ideas of their significant others, paid more attention to their body changes and attempted more to change their bodies (Lee et al, 2009).

Azad Armaki & Chavoshian (2003) had been shown that the process of controlling forms of personal identity via alteration and controlling physical semblance was related to cultural factors such as education, cultural capital, traditionality of family, and religious commitment rather than structural factors (Azad Armaki & Chavoshian, 2003).

Fatehi and Ekhlasi (2008), also, in a research on 400 women (18 to 40 years from Shiraz) had shown that the body management had a positive relationship with media consumption, body social acceptance and socio-economic status, and a negative relationship with religiosity (Fatehi & Ekhlasi, 2008). Parastesh, Behnoei and Mahmoodi (2008) also, in a research on 380 youth (15-25 years from Babolsar) had shown that there are positive, significant correlation between the youth semblance management and identity in general, i.e. they didn't divide the identity construct (Parastesh et al, 2008).

According to the research have been done by Hajiani (2010), there are three important elements in Iranian social identity construction: national identity, religious identity, and modern identity (Hajiani, 2010). Because both modern identity and body management behaviors are recent phenomena in our society, it can be hypothesized that if an element of identity has had a relationship with these behaviors; it should be this recent one. Is it right in fact? Does the modern identity have a role in forming such behaviors? Which kind of relationships exists between modern identity and body management behaviors?

2. Method

It's a cross-sectional survey with descriptive and analytic purposes, i.e. both the status of the traits "body management" and "modern identity" is described and then their relationship is tested.

The study population is married women living in Tehran. The reason for choosing women was homogenizing the

participants to control gender which is a well-known confounding factor. And the reason for choosing married women was controlling the religiosity factor, because Islamic doctrines restrict some forms of body management to married women; e.g. they can groom just for their husbands.

The sampling method used in this research is multistage cluster sampling. Tehran city includes 22 municipal areas which, according to the socio-economic situation, are located to 3 developmental bands: low (areas 9-10-12-16-17-18-19), middle (areas 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21) and high (areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 22) (Firouzabadi & Imani Jajarmi, 2007). At the first stage, from each developmental band, an area was chosen randomly. In the second stage, from each area, some blocks, and in the third stage, from each block, some participants were chosen randomly and proportional to its population size. The research sample size was calculated based on this equation.

$$n = \frac{z^2 p q}{d^2} \quad n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.0025} = 385 \quad (1)$$

Z: 99% confidence level= 1.96

p: The estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population= 0.5

q: (1-p), The estimated proportion of an attribute that isn't present in the population= 0.5

d: The maximum acceptable error in the survey= 0.05

The calculated sample size is 385, and to compensate the probable attritions and missing data, 5% added to 385, therefore, sample size increased to 400.

Conceptual and Operational definitions of variables

Modern Identity: it is all the perceptions, imaginations, and cognitions that participants exhibit that are not originated in tradition, but are formed under the influence of social and cultural communications with the modern world. The modern identity is open, reflected upon, and unfinished (Hajiani, 2010). To measure the modern identity, Hajiani's questionnaire (2009) was used and its reliability and validity had been measured again.

Body Management: It means alteration and controlling bodily appearances. This concept had been measured by such indicators as weight control (through sport, diet, and medication), medical alteration (plastic surgery on nose and other parts of face and body), and degree of significance of hygienic and cosmetic care (such as daily bath, hairdressing, makeup of the face, using aroma and deodorants, and manicuring (Azad Armaki & Chavoshian, 2003). The reliability and validity of the questions selected for the body management were evaluated.

Reliability and Validity of Questionnaire

Questionnaires were given to the experts (including 3 sociologists, 3 psychiatrists and 3 psychologists) after the primary designing and then it was adjusted to provide face validity. Then, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) used to determine construct validity (Habibpour Gatabi & Safari Shali, 2010). Possibility of carrying out the exploratory factor analysis determined by measure of sampling adequacy, i.e. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett test of sphericity (BTS). KMO test determines that if the research variable variance affected by joint variance of some basic and hidden factors or not? Range of KMO is between 0 and 1. If KMO is about 0.70 and more performing factor analysis is suitable. As it is seen in table 1, the KMO statistic of the body management variable is 0.775 which shows adequacy of the sample and possibility of factor analysis to determine items related to body management. Bartlett test examines the null hypothesis that whether the data correlation matrix is relevant or not? According to table 1, the result of the test, defined significant ($p < 0.001$); therefore we can conclude that the data correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. As table 1 shows, with varimax rotation, seven factors are extracted that in general could explain 61.68% of variance of body management. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81 shows internal consistency of instrument.

Table 1. EFA results and reliability of the items related to body management

Dimensions	Related question and phrases	Factor loading	Explained variance	Eigen value	Chronbach's Alpha	Total Chronbach's Alpha
Body Management	Beauty Surgeries	Beauty surgery of the cheek to make it protuberant	0.79	11.64	5.13	0.84
		The plastic surgery not for the medical reasons but to make the face or the body beautiful	0.77			
		The nose beauty surgery	0.73			
		The chin beauty surgery to make it protuberant	0.70			
		The eyelid beauty surgery	0.69			
	Fitness	Your body weight	0.86	10.95	3.79	0.84
		Fitness	0.85			
		Size of stature and height	0.72			
		Visual type	0.71			
		Visual order	0.68			
	Consultation and study	Consulting about embellishment and beauty	0.76	8.32	2.54	0.76
		Reading the magazines, articles or websites in relation to weight loss	0.75			
		Consulting about weight loss	0.74			
		Reading the magazines, articles or websites in relation to embellishment and beauty	0.68			
	Hygiene	The teeth thread	0.77	8.13	2.01	0.73
		Consequently shaving the nail of hand and foot	0.77			
		Brushing	0.70			
		Daily bathing	0.65			
	Makeup	Freshener substances	0.79	8.01	1.74	0.74
		Embellishment or face shaving	0.78			
Underarm deodorant		0.70				
Shaving		0.57				
Femininity severity	Artificial nails	0.84	8.01	1.47	0.77	
	Factitious lashes	0.73				
	Make the breast small or big	0.56				
	Gel injection to lips to make them thick	0.54				
Clothing	Smart and various scarfs and veil	0.81	6.58	1.16	0.68	
	Smart and various chador (Arabic, sleeved)	0.80				
	Cotton cloths	0.64				

KMO= 0.775; BTS= 3.905; *p*-value< 0.001.

Modern identity variable also has been measured with 14 questions. As results of factor analysis shows (table 2), three dimensions are extracted to define the modern identity variables including “belief to personal emancipations and rationality”, “Occidentalism” and “globalism”. Occidentalism is having tendency to American or Western European culture, technology or values. In general these three dimensions could explain 53.64% of this construct variance. Total Chronbach’s Alpha was found 0.70 for modern identity.

Table 2. EFA results and reliability of the items related to modern identity

Dimensions	Related question and phrases	Factor loading	Explained variance	Eigen value	Chronbach’s Alpha	Total Chronbach’s Alpha	
Modern identity	Everybody is free to have any type of thought or belief whether it be against the other scientific, behavioral and religious beliefs	0.72	26.10	4.82	0.85	0.70	
	Everybody should have a choice on her/his lifestyle if even other people do not accept it	0.72					
	belief to personal emancipations and rationality	If there is wisdom, it’s not needed to religion to manage the society					0.71
	Clothing style (cover and purdah) is related to everyone’s him or herself	0.68					
	Everybody should be free to choose the country to live	0.67					
	Only the wisdom can say us what law should be made to be lucky	0.65					
	Girls should have the right to marry any person without needing their father permission	0.64					
	Occidentalism	How much violence is prevalent in western countries (American and European) in your opinion	0.85	16.75	1.64		0.72
		In international problems American and western countries only consider their own benefits	0.77				
		What is your opinion about lying and hypocrisy in western countries (rate of prevalence)	0.70				
	globalism	Problems and difficulties of other countries (such as air pollution, poverty, AIDS, etc.) is as important as it is for our country	0.66	11.77	1.18		0.54
		The human identity is more important than our Iranian identity	0.64				
		It is important for me to be a member of the world society rather than a member of Iran country	0.57				
		I belief that Iran should have participation in all international institutions.	0.53				

KMO = 0.852; chi-square= 1.560; p -value< 0.001.

3. Result

3.1 Descriptive Results

One-hundred thirty six respondents (34%) lived in the high status area, 142 (35.5%) in the middle status area, 116 (29%) in the low status area and 6 (1.5%) were missed. Also, the mean age of the respondents was 35.03 years (SD=12.93). When the age variable had been classified into 5 categories, it was found that 54.9% of the respondents were in the age group 30 years and lower, 17.4% in 31 to 40 years, 12.2% in 41 to 50 years, 8.4% in 51-60 and 7.1% in 61 years and more. Education level was asked through a close-ended four-choice question under the titles primary, guidance to diploma, university, and seminaries, and results shows that 37 respondents (10.1%) had primary education, 34 (11.7%) had secondary education (guidance to diploma), 285 (77.4%) had university education, and three (0.8%) had religious education. Also, distribution of the respondents according to their social class shows that 5% of the respondents rated themselves belonged to high class, 25.5% to upper-middle class, 48.5% to middle class, 19.6% lower-middle class, and 1.4% of the respondents had attributed themselves to the lower social class.

Body management variable with seven dimensions had been measured by 29 Likert questions that had been valued as 1 to 3, so that, if the respondent selected “I have no opinion”, value 1 was assigned for her; if she responded as “I agree/ disagree” value 2 was assigned; and if she answered as “I completely agree/ completely disagree”, she got value 3. As it's obvious, value 3 shows the most attention to body management, while value 1 refers to the least attention to it. According to the table 3, the mean score of this variable among respondents is 66.18, indicating that performing acts and activities for managing their bodies is around average among our participants. Descriptive information in relation to the body management and all of its dimensions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistic of body management and its dimensions

Variable	Number of questions	Range of changes	mean	Valid number	Respondent condition
Body management	29	50-87	66.18	362	Average to high
Beauty surgeries	5	5-15	10.30	382	average
Fitness	5	5-15	11.56	398	Average to high
Consultation and study	4	4-12	7.97	400	Average to low
Healthy cares	4	5-12	10.69	399	many More
Make up Cares	4	5-12	10.78	395	Many more
femininity severity	4	4-12	8.51	393	average
Clothing	3	3-9	6.25	393	average

After performing factor analysis and appropriating the items, ultimately modern identity had been measured with 14 items. All the questions and items were in ranking measurement, and had been assessed using five-choice Likert spectrums—from completely disagree to completely agree. The mean score of the modern identity among the respondents was 49.79.

Table 4. Descriptive statistic of the modern identity and its dimensions

variable	Number of questions	Range	mean	Valid number	Respondent condition
Modern identity	14	26-67	49.79	348	Rather agree
belief to personal emancipations and rationality	7	7-35	24.26	374	Rather agree
Occidentalism	3	3-15	9.77	378	Not agree, not disagree
globalism	4	8-20	15.71	389	agree

3.2 Inferential Results

Pearson correlation test between body management and modern identity showed a positive, significant relationship between the two ($p < 0.001$). As much as the modern identity is stronger, the body management behavior is stronger too. Also, table 5 shows that body management has significant relationship with the two dimensions of the modern identity including “belief to personal liberties and rationality” and “globalism”, but it had no relationship to the “Occidentalism” dimension.

Table 5. Correlation between body management and modern identity and its dimensions

variable		Modern identity	belief to personal liberties and rationality	Occidentalism	Globalism
Body management	Pearson correlation	0.324	0.170	-0.007	0.141
	P-value	<0.001	0.002	0.903	0.008
	Number of observation	322	345	344	257

Pearson test for the relationship between body management and age showed weak and inverse relationship between them ($r = -0.161$, $p = 0.003$, $n = 363$). While the mean scores of the body management in the high area is 67.63, in the middle area, 66.46 and 63.87 in low area, analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant relationships between residential areas and body management behaviors. Then, Scheffé's post hoc analysis showed that the resource of this variation was the difference between high and low areas. ANOVA also revealed a significant difference among body management of people with different education level. Again, Scheffé's post hoc analysis showed that the resource of this variation was the difference between all of the education level. The results of the Pearson test showed a significant, positive relationship between monthly family income and body management ($r = 0.295$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 354$). ANOVA was used to test the relationship between the social class and the body management that didn't show any significant difference ($p = 0.103$).

Regression model of the body management

Multivariate regression analysis used to measure the effects of modern identity and demographic characteristics on body management, based on OLS and stepwise regression. Among the variables entered into the equation, four variables, i.e. modern identity, monthly family income, education level, and age remained in the final model and in general explain 20% of variance of body management ($R = 0.461$, $R^2 = 0.212$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.200$). Also, Durbin Watson test for this model is 1.696 that shows the residuals or errors are independent. Therefore, the regression model of the body management is as follows:

$$\text{Body management} = 64.631 + 0.283(\text{the modern identity}) + 0.286(\text{the family income}) - 0.125(\text{education level}) - 0.116(\text{the age})$$

Table 6. Regression Statistics of the independent variables (variables that remained in the final model)

Variable	B	Std. EB	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	64.631	6.653	-	9.715	<0.001
modern identify	0.307	0.061	0.283	5.052	<0.001
family monthly income	4.627	0.000	0.286	5.160	<0.001
education level	-3.887	1.737	-0.125	-2.238	0.026
age	-0.121	1.059	-0.116	-2.062	0.040

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Body management among the married women in Tehran city is medium to high. They allocated the meanest makeup and the least mean in advice and study to themselves.

In relation to structuralizing the body management in the new age, Giddens, within pointing out to women's make up in automobile, writes “the space, brings out the possibility of short observation of unknown things in

this known place. Today automobile designers, install a mirror on the visor, to resolve the women's need to makeup". This shows that some aspects of modernity have permeated in their solitude. About structuralizing makeup in the automobile, it should be said that this is a little endeavored to limitations of time and space in the new ages. People need to hurry up to be at home or at work on time. Therefore many drivers stuck in traffic in rush hour. Therefore, a driver, with a steering wheel in one hand and a lipstick in her other hand, becomes structured by time and space of modernity which has moved her makeup from privacy of her bathroom to her automobile (Fatehi & Ekhlesi, 2010).

The modern identity means self- analysis, understanding and imagining which are formed by social and cultural changes and interactions with the modern world. In the range 26 to 67 with a mean equal to 49/79 it shows that the married women have been more accustomed to the modern identity. Based on a correlation study between the modern identity and the body management, the modern identity variable with a %99 confidence level had a significant relationship with body management variable with a correlation coefficient of 0.324. This means that the higher the level of modern identity the higher the level of body management will be. Analyzing the correlation between modern identity and body management, based on the theoretical framework of the research it can be understood that confirming the main hypothesis of the research refers to accepting Giddens' theory, which is about appearance management and personal identity. So the hypothesis of the research is based on internal and external identity dialectic in which the people's personal identity has been judged based on their appearance and body. Based on this idea it can be stated that in the consumption world, the youths according to their tastes and interests are trying to present a beautiful and youthful appearance in family gatherings, in clubs, on streets, and to make a distinguished personal identity of themselves. Therefore, visual appearance in which the youth rely on the beauty and fashion industry, nutrition, sport, and health technologies is the one based on consumption goods and cultural interest as a symbol of identity, therefore, the body style and statues are some of the mechanisms, that the youth used to reveal their identity (Zokaei, 2008). But considering Giddens theory on the relationship between body and identity, we conclude that such a relationship is not presented on the surface of his theory but is in fact revealed in the deep layers of it. This is a point that Zokaei (2008), Azad Armaki and Chavoshian (2003) and Giddens (2010) also pointed out.

Giddens believes that in modern societies and in societies in which the modernity has penetrated the process of finding identity is chaotic and problematic. Increasing individualism, materialism and hedonism in these societies, spread illness circulations that one of its symbols is egotism. He believes that, in the modern society, the people are busy with themselves and think about themselves and considering their identity according to the modern criteria and values, therefore, identity challenge is one of the specifications of the modern societies (Giddens, 2010; Rafatjah, 2008). With changing view about the body the problem of body management and its role in representing personal identity becomes even more serious. Body building and diets are more common among women even in the western societies and is based on information someone has. Its result is either pride or shame both of which are against the self-respect (Rafatjah, 2008).

The relationship between age and body management is confirmed with a correlation coefficient of -0.161 and p -value of 0.003. It means the older one gets the lower her body management becomes, and vice versa. So, the youth do more body management than the elders. We can explain the relationship between the age and the body management by the assumption that people are trying to forget death making themselves busy by changing and renewing activities. These findings are in line with the results of research done by Kosar and Damhorst (2009), Azad Armaki and Chavoshian (2003), Fatehi and Ekhlesi (2010). But, it has not conformity to the studies had been done by Parastesh et al. (2008).

Also, body management had a significant relationship with settlement area. And the p -value is 0.001 to reject the null hypothesis. The mean of the body management in the high area is 67.63, in middle area is 66.46 and in low area is 63.87. The reason for the low mean of body management in the low area can be related to low economic conditions of its population.

Investigating the relationship between educational level and body management, revealed that there is a significant difference among the means of the body management variables according to the educational level of married women. The highest mean of the body management in educational level was in guidance to diploma, and then university degrees, and the least body management mean was related to elementary educations. The reason can be the fact that when girls enter university environments, they encounter many distinctive visual symbols of different groups and due to high comparative sense of womanhood they gain an extra sensitivity to their body management. This finding is in line with the findings of Azad Armaki and Chavoshian (2003), parastesh et al (2008) and Fatehi and Ekhlesi (2010).

The hypothesis indicating a significant relationship between monthly income of the family and body management of the married women is confirmed together. This means that the higher monthly income of the family the higher the attention to body management.

Multivariate Regression analysis results suggest that modern identity, monthly income of the family, educational level and age had significant roles in explaining changes in body management. Based on the results of this study, modern identity had a significant and positive relationship with body management, so, knowing modern identity deeply and correctly and localizing fundamental and indigenous cultural elements it is possible to modify body management behavior. Also it is possible to adjust physical behaviors properly by increasing the knowledge of families about modern identity.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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