The Implementation of the Body Positivity Movement In Society

A Social Perspective

AP Seminar

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Introduction

For the past few decades, commencing from the mid 1980s, the United States has been one of the top 20 ranking countries with the highest obesity rates. Throughout these years, the citizens of the United States have become dedicated to including and supporting the people of plus size Body figures, and making sure they feel safe within society, this movement has become known as the 'Body Positivity Movement', which encourages the people to love their bodies and accept their inner beauty. This movement has taken shape and moved from circle talks to mass media pages, but now the question is 'To what extent do the body positivity movement and social media influence each other?' Social media along with the body positivity movement, both propose harms and benefits for the people. In a 2024 review done by *Dove Medical Press Ltd*, it was identified that the social edit algorithm led to harmful body expectations, however it was also deemed that the benefits of the body positivity movement can only go so far, (Mazzeo, et al. 2024). Given any background, it may be easy to assume that the media is impactful on the body positivity movement, however, the impact of them within society goes both ways.

The Body Positive Society

The arguments regarding whether or not the media is truly body positive have been going on for years, and it has been identified that although it may seem to be quite the opposite, social media and society itself tries its best to be body positive inclusive for the people of plus size body figures. In a study done in 2019 regarding the inclusion of plus size women within society, it was stated that although there are several things that still need some working; society and social media has made strong efforts to include them, whether that be with body positive content on Instagram and Facebook or with inclusion regarding clothing and the encouragement of self love, (Bombak, et al. 2019). Regarding social media, it is witnessed that there are many more

available usages for social media regarding body positivity. In a 2023 study regarding the effects of social media on body positivity, it was deemed that the humoristic and informational aspects of Instagram allow people to promote and encourage a positive view of oneself, (Fasoli, et al. 2023). Social media is a very popular method and way of connecting people, but it is not the entire aspect of society, furthermore, the encouragement of the body positivity movement can take root within books and other means, not just theology or social media. This can be seen within a study done in 2024 regarding illustrations that promote body positive aspects within children's picturebooks, especially through its promotions of self love and the establishment of a lifestyle for a healthy body, (Xu, et al. 2024). Similarly, the positive promotion of the body positivity movement is also seen within television shows. Within the study done in 2023 regarding the aspects of the body positivity movement that were presented within a television show for adolescents, it was identified that there is a great encouragement of body appreciation and self love that is being presented, tat being with healthy eating habits or going against non-body positive ideals, (Maes, et al. 2023). Influence within society regarding the body positivity movement has been largely seen, leading to a more welcoming environment for the people, but does it differentiate from the influence the body positivity movement holds within society? How different could they be?

A Body Positive Mentality

Yes, it is important to implement a body-positive society, and it's doing a great job at it, however all attempts at encouraging the movement are proven futile if there is no body-positive mentality. The influence of social media is undoubted, but we have to remember that any social media feed will present to you what you have searched for previously and in general what you post. In a study presented by *Taylor & Francis Ltd.*, it was identified that many people utilize

social media as a way to stand up for a cause and not just for the benefits of oneself, but there is no form of identifying that any of those posts represent a form of self care, (Jerrentrup, 2021). The movements presented within social media are inspired and commenced by the people themselves, referencing to the point that the movements are just a reflection of the peoples mentality. In 2018, a study presented by the *Journal of Eating Disorders* identified that a movement used to inspire muscle building does not differentiate from a movement made to inspire weight loss because the mentality of the people are one in the same, (Alberga, et al. 2018). A positive mentality is needed to promote body-positivity within society as it is the way people are able to perceive you and where you stand. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace* presented a study in 2022 in which it was identified that most people that are presented as members of the body positivity movement, utilize social media as a means to promote encouragement and confidence, along with this it was also identified that social media reflects the events that are occurring in ones life or the reason has already gone through, meaning that the pictures posted present are done with a purpose for the audience, (Brito and Torres, 2022). Social media is a pathway for several people, it promotes. Expression of oneself and information of other subjects, however it all depends on the mentality of a person, meaning that this mentality can promote and break down any movement that is going on, most significantly, the body positivity movement. In a study done in 2021 by the *Journal of Experimental Psychotherapy* it was found that the emotional stability and perception of the person, can produce the discouragement or encouragement of the body positivity movement within social media, (Molnar and Postelnicu, 2021). Social media has an immense impact on the body positivity movement, but it also has to be witnessed that the mentality of the people participating in said movement are what impact the feeds of social media, expressing the point

that social media is impacted by the body-positivity movement just as much as the body-positivity movement is impacted by social media.

Conclusion

The body-positivity movement is the promotion and expression of self-love and self-appreciation and it has taken a great part within today's society, however it is both impacted and the impact. It has been noted that society impacts the body-positivity movement through social media as well as books, making sure to promote it in every way possible. Similarly, it has also been identified that the body-positivity movement itself impacts social media through the present mentality of the people as they share their experience as people of bigger size. Both the body-positivity movement and social media influence and impact each other in various forms and they always will due to their relation and interconnectedness, the only issue that does arise is how far the people decide to take this movement, and what those impacts may look like.

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