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**TÍTULO:** Imagen positiva del cuerpo en niñas adolescentes: posibilidades de la formación mediante las tecnologías psicológicas educativas.

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**RESUMEN:** Este artículo analiza la promoción de una imagen corporal positiva para las adolescentes. En el experimento formativo participaron adolescentes de 14 a 15 años (N = 59). El experimento reveló que la imagen corporal positiva puede promoverse para las niñas mediante el entrenamiento dirigido a reducir la ansiedad sobre el peso corporal y las formas, expandiendo los estereotipos internalizados sobre el cuerpo y aumentar el valor del cuerpo (diferencias en los componentes de la imagen corporal antes y después del entrenamiento es significativo en  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** imagen del cuerpo, imagen positiva del cuerpo, adolescencia, tecnologías psicológicas educativas, formación en forma de entrenamiento.

**TITLE:** Positive body image in adolescent girls: possible ways of promotion through psychological and educational technologies.

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is analyzing promotion of positive body image for the adolescent girls. The formative experiment involved teenagers aged 14-15 years (N=59). The formative experiment revealed that the positive body image may be promoted for the girls by training aimed at reducing anxiety about body weight and shapes, expanding internalized stereotypes about the body and increasing the value of the body (differences in body image components before and after the training are found to be significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

**KEY WORDS:** body image, positive body image, adolescence, psychological and educational technologies, training.

**INTRODUCTION.**

In post-industrial society the emphasis on appearance is becoming ever strong, we may say that modern society is obsessed with the issues of body attractiveness. The flow of messages about how a person should or should not look is called the appearance culture, i.e. a culture focused on appearance. Socium not only sets standards for body and appearance, but also regulates human behavior with regard to one's own body: one of the main ideas of modern society is the idea of pliability of the body and the need to control it and consciously change it through exercise, diets, drugs and plastic surgery. The key message of the appearance-focused culture is quite destructive: "If you don't meet the modern standards, you are not trying hard enough". In such a context, negative perceptions of one's body become so widespread that they are even referred to as normative. Both men and women have been under intensifying pressure in terms of their

appearance and body over the past decades, but women are still more vulnerable in this respect. Modern society is conveying unrealistic beauty standards to young people, in particular the standard of unrealistically thin body for girls and women, which leads to an increase in food disorders, especially among adolescents and young women.

Data collected around the world show the same trend - an increase in the number of children, adolescents and young women with eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa (Kamenetskaya & Rebeko, 2015, Amianto et al., 2016). For example, in Iran, scientists have found that only 0.25% of respondents with all types of eating disorders were diagnosed in 1990, compared to 24.2% in 2015 (Rauof et al., 2015). Body image disturbances lead to problems in reproductive and sexual life of people, there is evidence suggesting that distorted body image has a negative impact on sexual relations (Quinn-Nilas et al., 2016) and reproduction (Morozova et al., 2015).

## **DEVELOPMENT.**

### **Literature Review.**

For many years, research into the body image has been addressing the factors contributing to the negative body image, and only recently, the research focus has started shifting towards definition of a positive body image, its determinants and psychological-educational technologies to promote it (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

Among the factors that determine the body image, both individual and environmental factors are distinguished. Analyzing the system of factors determining the body image, we find that most of them contribute to the development of a negative body image at all stages of socialization (Belogay, 2019).

Under a positive body image, we mean a value-based perception of the body, including acceptance and appreciation of the body, a more flexible and integrated idea of beauty, and bodily behavioral strategies based on the idea of "body as a value". Positive body image constitutes a backbone of positive self-concept and positive self-perception (Belogay, 2019).

High self-esteem and optimism are among the individual psychological determinants of a positive body image (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

Family micro-factors that determine a positive body image are positive verbal and non-verbal feedback from family members, family messages and the implementation of value-based behavioral body strategies and practices by family members, as well as the established secure affection for the primary object of attachment. Peers may also contribute to promotion of a positive body image - this happens if their comments on appearance are opposed to the socio-cultural standards (Kelina et al., 2011).

Over recent decades, researchers have developed and implemented various programs intended to promote a positive body image in adolescents and young people (Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2018). The success of such programs indicates that a positive body image may also be promoted through short-term programs that help participants to expand their internalized understanding of beauty.

### **Research Materials and Methods.**

The objective of this study was to explore the possible ways to promote positive body image in adolescent girls. In order to test our hypothesis about the possibility of promoting a positive body image in adolescent girls, we developed a model of psychological and educational support.

### **Research Basis and Sample.**

Training was delivered to the 8th-grade students of the general education school in Kemerovo in 2017-2018 academic year. The experiment covered 59 girls aged 14-15. 28 girls made up an

experimental group and 31 girls were included in the control group. The training lasted for 12 weeks with weekly training sessions. One training session coincided by duration with one lesson. Participants were selected for the control and experimental groups on the basis of the voluntary motivated consent of adolescents and their parents.

In order to achieve the purpose consisting in creating conditions for promoting positive body image, it was necessary to solve the following tasks: to facilitate the broadening of internalized stereotypes; to help build a protective filter through raising media literacy; to cultivate more favourable opinion of the body and focus on the functionality of the body rather than its appearance.

The content component of the model is represented by the principles of support, which are divided into two groups: processuality, progression, nondirectivity, interrelation with everyday life; principles of direct support activity: ethical principles; correspondence of the declared purpose to the content of the work and professional competence of the specialist.

The content aspect of the program suggests work in several dimensions: reflection on the relationships between body image, self-esteem and psychological well-being; correction of rigid internalized stereotypes; increase of media literacy; search for resource areas and work with problem areas; reflection on body experience; development of body care strategies.

The technological component of the model includes diagnostic, corrective-developing, and organizational-methodical stages.

The diagnostic stage results in determination of the content components of the adolescent girl's body image, identification of factors and peculiarities of body image ontogenesis and optimization of the request for help. The results of the diagnostic stage serve as the basis for designing the developing interaction program. The design phase involves defining the structure of the support program and its targets and documenting the program. The program specifies the stages, tasks and methods of work and forecasts the results.

Active (main) stage implies the implementation of an impact program. Psychological training was chosen as the main technology for working with teenagers. As part of the training, the adolescents were informed that the program is meant to promote the acceptance of their bodies by the girls. Drawing on the body image promotion model developed by us, we have focused on changing attitudes, beliefs and knowledge associated with the idealized body image, expanding internalized socio-cultural standards of the body, and developing or strengthening skills that will contribute to promotion of positive body image and prevention of eating disorders and global body dissatisfaction. Successful testing of the program was favored by the interest of students in the issues raised.

The first work module was devoted to the discussion of what a body image is, how it affects a person's self-esteem and psychological well-being. At this stage, we also discussed factors that contribute to the negative and positive body image.

The second module was dedicated to the problem of body idealization and the discussion of how existing stereotypes destroy positive body images and lead to the eating and other disorders. At this stage, exercises aimed at criticizing the ultra-thin body standard were introduced.

The third module featured detection of discourses in the life of teenagers focused on weight and their influence on body image.

The next module of training dealt with the task of raising (developing) media literacy among adolescents. Here the role of social and other media in the lives of teenagers and the perception and use of social media were discussed. Teenagers learned to critically evaluate and filter information, especially visual information; recognize and reduce negative comparisons.

The fifth module was centered around promotion of the body acceptance and shifting the focus from appearance to functionality of the body. This stage also involved the review of differences

between body care and body transformation strategies, as well as the problems of nutrition and physical activity.

The achieved results were amplified by making references during the training to such subjects as biology, chemistry, life safety and physical education.

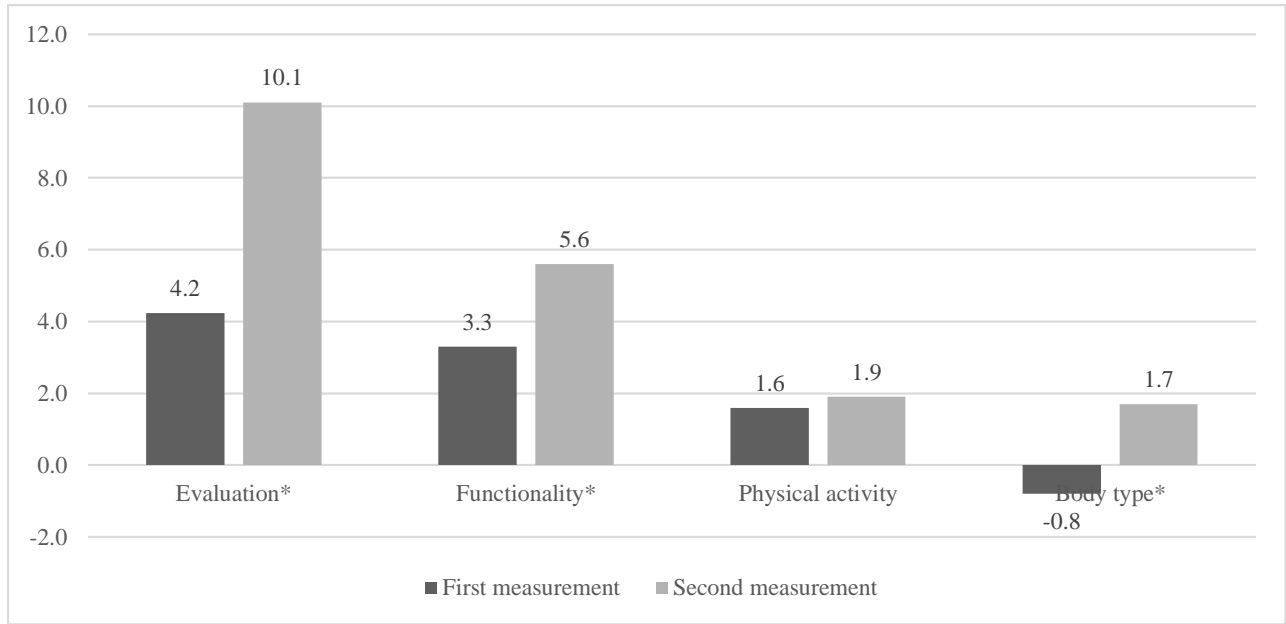
A meeting was held with the parents of the teenagers who participate in the experiment, where the same topics were discussed as during the training for teenagers, and advisory support was provided, including through online technologies.

The follow-up psychodiagnostics was carried out 3 months after the end of the program. The data were collected using the following personal questionnaires: "Lifelong dynamics of satisfaction with appearance", "Body image", "My body", as well as the interviews. The results were processed using statistical methods, i.e. Student's t-test and dispersion analysis.

### **Results and Discussion.**

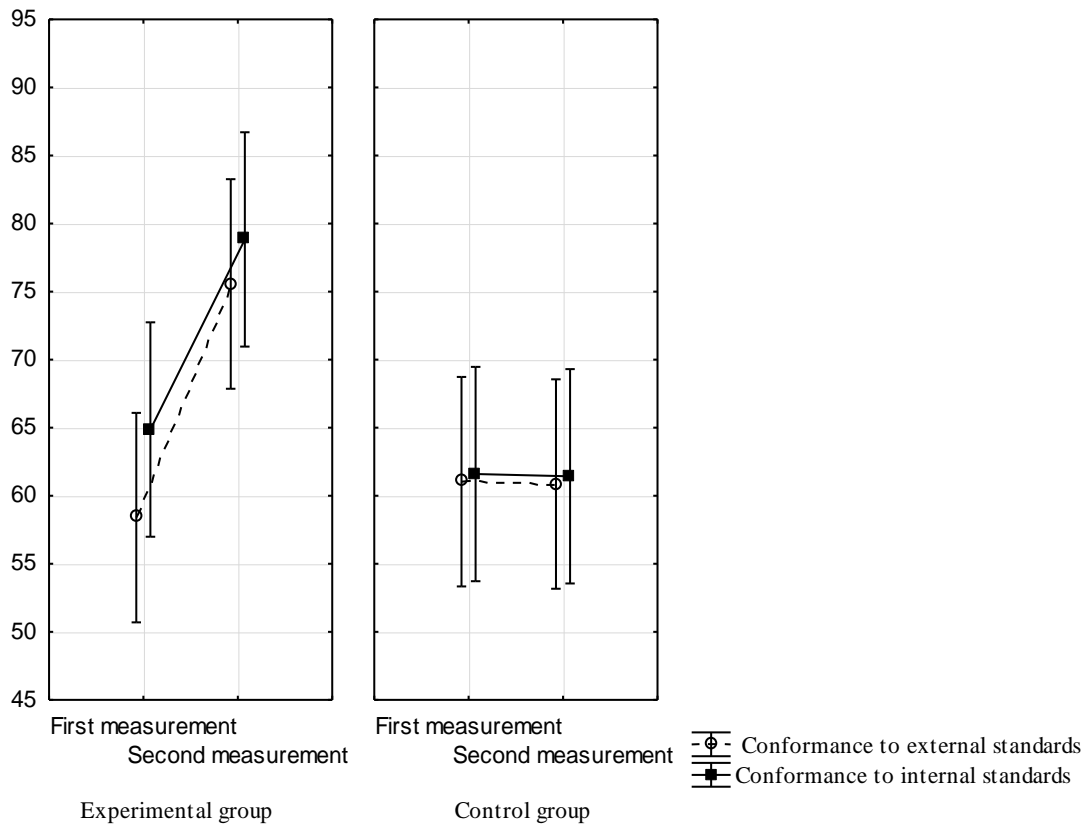
The experimental and control groups of adolescent girls had no significant differences in body image prior to the experiment: all adolescents were characterized by a low degree of body acceptance, undervaluation of body functionality, and demonstrated internalized stereotypes of a slim, young, sexualized body, and shared the idea of viewing the body as a project.

First of all, we noticed that after participating in the psychological training, the content characteristics of the information and evaluation component of the body image changed. The body evaluation score has significantly increased (Fig.1). The body functionality score has also increased, which is an important indicator speaking to the growing positive body image, the body typescore has changed - the body has been perceived as thinner and more miniature. As concerns the physical activity, no significant differences were found between two measurements.



**Figure 1. Information and evaluation component of the body image of teenage girls participating in psychological training (\* $p \leq 0,01$ ).**

When evaluating the degree of conformance to internal and external standards after the training, the girls in experimental group gave much higher scores (Fig. 2).





**Figure 2. Degree of Conformance to Standards in Experimental and Control Groups of Teenage Girls ( $p \leq 0,05$ )**

The results are presented on the left chart. Before the training, differences between the groups were not statistically significant ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). The second measurement in the control group exhibited no significant changes in the scrutinized parameters after several months. The results are presented on the right chart. In experimental group the scores for both a degree of conformance to the internal standards and a degree of conformance to the external standards increased, which means that for adolescents a need to conform to the external standards still remains strong.

At the same time, interviews with training participants showed that by raising their media literacy and creating a protective filter, their perception of beauty and attractiveness became more flexible and less dependent on external assessments and standards. In definition of a “beautiful body” they started placing greater emphasis on health and functional capabilities of the body. In everyday life, girls have become more receptive to body needs by implementing body care strategies. And they pointed out that movement and food bring more pleasure now, physical activity is not perceived as a heavy duty, and nutrition has become healthier without significant restrictions.

As for the control group, there were no significant changes in the body image components and interrelations between them.

Correlation matrices for the experimental group before and after the training are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1. Correlation between body image components in adolescent girls before participation in training ( $p \leq 0.05$ )**

	Satisfaction with Appearance
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	5 years old	10 years old	Present time
Score	0.32	0.38	0.59
Functionality	0.38		

**Table 2. Correlation between body image components in adolescent girls after participation in training ( $p \leq 0.05$ )**

	Satisfaction with Appearance			
	5 years old	10 years old	15 years old	Present time
Score	0.45	0.49	0.53	0.55
Functionality	0.39	0.37	0.39	

Comparison of correlation matrices in the experimental group before and after the training shows that the total number of correlations has increased and more interrelations with body functionality have appeared. Fewer interrelations before the training may be associated with the major transformations that a teenage girl's body undergoes during this period. Psychological training facilitated integration of the body image components, thus making the body image more holistic.

The techniques of cognitive behavioral approach targeting by their definition the intermediate link of body functions - attitudes and evaluative judgments - were especially useful in work with teenagers. The techniques of filling the void, decatastrophization, re-formulation and reattribution allowed girls to experiment with their attitudes and interiorized stereotypes and to verify their narrowness and inconsistency. Special attention was paid to the critical evaluation of the ultra-thin body ideal. Criticism by adolescents of the unrealistic ideal led to cognitive dissonance, which caused psychological discomfort and reduced support for the ideal and led to a change in perceptions of beauty.

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

During adolescence, the image of the girl's body is associated with external standards and socio-cultural stereotypes of a slim, sexualized female body and the idea of viewing the body as a project, but gradually. The majority of adolescent girls aged 14-15 years are characterized by a low degree of body acceptance and a significant gap between the images of the real and the ideal body. In general, the surveyed group of adolescent girls showed normative dissatisfaction with the body, which is consistent with the data obtained in European, American and Latin American samples.

Psychological training has shown its effectiveness as a technology of promoting a positive body image in the teenage girls. In body perception, the adolescents' focus has shifted from the assessment of appearance to the assessment of body functionality, the degree of body acceptance has increased, and the concept of beauty and attractiveness has expanded.

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