

Influence of makeup on the well-being and self-esteem of women

Wpływ makijażu na samopoczucie i samoocenę u kobiet

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Abstract

Introduction. The modern world “bombards” us with the image of a “perfect woman”, which makes more and more women compare themselves with the media image and experience the feeling of growing dissatisfaction with their own appearance. Numerous attempts are made to modify it in order to achieve the desired image. With the help of makeup, women’s well-being and self-esteem are significantly enhanced.

Objectives. Assessment of the influence of makeup on women’s well-being and self-esteem.

Material and methods. The study group consisted of 790 randomly selected women of different ages, who completed the authors’ own questionnaire consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions concerning the influence of makeup on women’s well-being and self-esteem. The study was conducted in the period from October to December 2018.

Results. Makeup has a positive effect on the self-esteem of 56.1% of the studied women. There was a significant difference in the perception of one’s own appearance with and without makeup: 55.2% of respondents admitted that makeup has a positive effect on their well-being, while in the case of 58.4% it improves their self-confidence. Over a half (55.7%) of respondents believes that makeup increases women’s physical attractiveness.

Conclusions. Makeup may be included in the group of beauty treatments, which have a positive impact on the women’s psyche. It improves their well-being and affects their self-confidence. Moreover, makeup enhances self-esteem as well. Women believe that it also contributes to their physical attractiveness.

Key words: self-esteem, well-being, makeup, physical attractiveness

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Streszczenie

Wprowadzenie. Współczesny świat „bombarduje” nas obrazem „idealnej kobiety”, co sprawia, że coraz więcej kobiet porównuje się z medialnym obrazem i odczuwa narastające niezadowolenie z własnego wyglądu. Podejmowane są liczne próby jego modyfikacji w celu osiągnięcia pożądanego wizerunku. Z pomocą przychodzi makijaż, który znacząco wpływa na samopoczucie i samoocenę u kobiet.

Cel pracy. Ocena wpływu makijażu na samopoczucie i samoocenę u kobiet.

Materiał i metody. Badana grupa liczyła 790 losowo wybranych kobiet w różnym wieku, które wypełniły autorski kwestionariusz złożony z 20 pytań jednokrotnego wyboru dotyczący wpływu makijażu na samopoczucie i samoocenę u kobiet. Badania przeprowadzono w okresie od października do grudnia 2018 r.

Wyniki. Makijaż wpływa korzystnie na samoocenę 56,1% badanych kobiet. Wśród ankietowanych odnotowano znaczącą różnicę w postrzeganiu własnego wyglądu bez makijażu i po jego nałożeniu: 55,2% badanych przyznało, że makijaż pozytywnie działa na ich samopoczucie, a w przypadku 58,4% wpływa na wzrost pewności siebie. Ponad połowa (55,7%) ankietowanych uważa, że makijaż podnosi atrakcyjność fizyczną kobiet.

Wnioski. Makijaż można zaliczyć do grupy zabiegów upiększających, które pozytywnie wpływają na psychikę kobiet. Poprawia ich samopoczucie oraz wpływa na pewność siebie. Makijaż podnosi ponadto samoocenę. Kobiety uważają, że wpływa również na wzrost ich atrakcyjności fizycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: samoocena, samopoczucie, makijaż, atrakcyjność fizyczna

Background

Nowadays, mass media “bombard” us with a perfect image of a woman, showing that she should be physically attractive, emotional, caring, sleek, and, in addition, have time for herself, her home and her family. More and more women judge their own appearance and compare it with that created by media, and as a result they feel growing discontent. Their self-esteem suffers as a result of this, and as a trait it affects their mental well-being, level of life achievements and individual health. The judgement of one’s own appearance largely determines the level of general self-esteem. It has been proven that body image significantly influences girls’ well-being and self-esteem,¹ and in adult women physical appearance is ranked higher in the hierarchy of values than in men.²

Already in 1989, intercultural studies revealed that a partner’s high physical attractiveness was the most desirable feature for a man, and women aware of this tend to focus too much on their own appearance.³ Another study found that the number of women dissatisfied with their own appearance is 4 times higher than the number of men dissatisfied with it.⁴ Dissatisfaction results in low self-esteem, and this exacerbates their well-being. Women therefore strive to look like a “media perfection” and make numerous attempts to modify their image. Cosmetology and esthetic medicine come to their aid, offering a constantly growing range of treatments – all in order to satisfy the expectations of customers.⁵ A less invasive method of improving the appearance is makeup. An unbreakable link between appearance and mental health has been discovered, and it has been proven that improved appearance enhances self-confidence, which has a positive effect on our well-being.⁶

In her research, Gawron confirmed the thesis that beauty treatments have a positive effect on women’s self-esteem and improve their well-being.¹ A woman, focusing on her-

self, makes numerous observations on the basis of which she shapes the level of her self-respect, i.e., self-esteem.⁷

The level of a person’s self-esteem has a huge impact on many aspects of their life. People with high self-esteem are characterized by better health and well-being and greater personal achievements. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, indicates the lack of acceptance of one’s own self, accompanied by negative emotions, failure to cope with stress and bad mood.⁷ Self-esteem affects one’s well-being, but also influences less obvious aspects of a person’s life. A study conducted in 2008 revealed that women’s self-esteem influences their satisfaction with the relationship with their partner. A woman who has a higher self-esteem is more satisfied with the relationship than a woman who has a lower self-esteem.⁸

Physical attractiveness is one of the most important factors in interpersonal relationships, especially those newly established. It has been confirmed that it has a direct impact on whether one wants to arrange a meeting with another person, but also plays an important role in an existing relationship.⁹

Physical appearance is not a constant trait – individuals are able to influence and modify it. Already in 1986, a youthful face with firm skin, full lips and large eyes was considered to be the most attractive.¹⁰ When applied properly, makeup can bring us closer to the desired features of appearance. Color cosmetics can be used to manipulate one’s physical attractiveness and have an impact on the psyche by increasing self-confidence.¹¹ Women who are dissatisfied with their facial and bodily appearance are more likely to use cosmetics.¹² One study has shown that cosmetics applied to the face play a significant role in the positive perception of women by men. Men were asked to evaluate the attractiveness of different women with and without makeup. The results confirmed that the women wearing makeup were considered more attractive. It was also discussed which of the factors

– makeup or neat hair – will contribute more to a positive overall assessment of a woman. Makeup was rated more highly, which means it has a greater impact on the assessment of a given woman's personality.¹³

Mulhern et al. in 2003, conducted a study in which the volunteers were photographed in 5 scenes: no makeup, with foundation makeup, only eye makeup, only lipstick, and with full makeup. The results explicitly indicated that the most attractive is the face in full makeup, both in the assessment of women and men.¹⁴ The scientific studies conducted so far confirm the positive impact of makeup on the physical attractiveness of women,^{10–12} as well as the beneficial effect of cosmetic treatments on the improvement of their well-being and self-esteem.¹ In order to combine these 2 topics in a different configuration, the authors decided to present in this article the results of their own research concerning the impact of makeup on well-being, self-esteem and physical attractiveness of women.

Material and methods

In 2018, a questionnaire consisting of 20 close-ended, single-selection questions was prepared and conducted. The research tool was the authors' own questionnaire and the material for the research was collected in the period from October to December 2018. The research involved 790 randomly selected women from 5 age groups (<19, 19–25, 26–35, 36–45, and >45). Women completed the questionnaire online. Respondents were guaranteed full anonymity and voluntary participation in the questionnaire, which they were informed about before they started to complete the questionnaire – which in turn affected the reliability of the collected data. The selection of the study group according to gender was intentional, while the age of respondents was random. The first part of the questionnaire related to sociodemographic data of respondents, such as: age, marital status, current social status, and having children, which enabled the characterization of the study group. The following questions were to determine a woman's attitude towards makeup – how long she has been doing it and how often she does it in a week. Questions included in the last part of the questionnaire were intended to examine whether makeup affects the way a woman perceives her appearance or whether it contributes to the change of her well-being. Respondents were also asked to self-assess their appearance both before and after applying makeup. The research method was the analysis of secondary data. Quantitative analysis of the collected material was performed.

Results

Women aged 19–25 (69.1%) were the most numerous group of respondents. The 2nd position was taken by re-

spondents aged 26–35 (21.8%), so 90.9% of respondents were women aged 19–35. This time is related to 2 stages in a woman's life. The 1st one, i.e., between the age of 19 and 25, is connected with continuing education, which was declared by 43.2% of respondents. The 2nd stage is full-time work and 42.7% of respondents indicated such a status. Only 8.4% of respondents declared that they are housewives or are on maternity leave. The least numerous group of respondents were disability pensioners and pensioners, who constituted 0.4% of respondents, and 5.4% of women belonged to other social groups. A considerable part of respondents – 79.5% – were in a relationship, of which 17.2% were married and 62.3% were in informal relationships. The majority of respondents (85.1%) did not have children. Among the studied women, 94% started to wear their makeup on a daily basis before reaching the age of 25. As many as 70.7% declared that they apply makeup at least 5 times a week. Only 3.4% of women never wore makeup. A substantial number of respondents (72%) asked to judge their appearance without makeup on a scale of 1–5 points (the greater the number, the better the perception of their body) awarded themselves 1–3 points (Table 1), which indicates low self-esteem of women without makeup. The maximum number of points in this question was awarded to a mere 5.6% of women. The next question concerned the assessment of one's own appearance after applying makeup (as each of them does every day) – 89.8% of women awarded themselves 4–5 points (Table 1). These 2 questions reveal that makeup has a beneficial effect on women's self-esteem and thus positively influences their perception of their own bodies.

More than half of the respondents (53.7%) when asked about the possibility to leave home to go to a shop or work without makeup declared that they would have no problem with it. The remaining respondents justified their different choice with a bad mood or shame caused by their own appearance without makeup. What is interesting, the proportions change when answering the question about going out without makeup to a family meeting or a meeting with friends. The majority of women would not want to find themselves in such circumstances without makeup, as this would involve a sense of discomfort, shame about their appearance and fear of negative opinions about them. A significant influence of makeup on the improvement of well-being was reported by 55.2% of the studied women (Table 2), while 56.1% believed that it improved self-esteem. According to 55.7% of respondents, makeup significantly improves physical attractiveness, while 41.8% said it only improves it occasionally (Table 3). As many as 97.5% of women are convinced of the beneficial effect of makeup on their physical attractiveness. In the conducted study, 58.4% of women declared that makeup significantly enhances their self-confidence, while for 38.4% it only happens sporadically (Table 4). Only 1.9% of respondents indicated that makeup does not improve their self-confidence.

Table 1. The influence of makeup on women's self-esteem**Tabela 1.** Wpływ makijażu na samoocenę u kobiet

Question	Possible answers	Selected answers	
		n	%
Imagine yourself without makeup and make a self-assessment. How many points will you give yourself? (scale 1–5, the more points, the better your own body perception)	5 points	44	5.6
	4 points	177	22.4
	3 points	372	47.1
	2 points	151	19.1
	1 point	46	5.8
Imagine yourself in your everyday makeup, the one you do every day, and make a self-assessment. How many points will you give yourself? (scale 1–5, the more points, the better your own body perception)	5 points	277	35.1
	4 points	432	54.7
	3 points	63	8.0
	2 points	13	1.6
	1 point	5	0.6

n – number of the analyzed characteristic in the sample.

Table 2. The influence of makeup on women's well-being**Tabela 2.** Wpływ makijażu na samopoczucie kobiet

Question	Possible answers	Selected answers	
		n	%
Have you observed that makeup has a positive effect on your well-being?	definitely, always	436	55.2
	sometimes	313	39.6
	very rarely	20	2.5
	definitely no	14	1.8
	I don't know	7	0.9

Table 3. The influence of makeup on women's physical attractiveness**Tabela 3.** Wpływ makijażu na atrakcyjność fizyczną kobiet

Question	Possible answers	Selected answers	
		n	%
Do you believe that makeup increases the physical attractiveness of women?	definitely, always	440	55.7
	sometimes	330	41.8
	very rarely	8	1.0
	definitely no	2	0.3
	I don't know	10	1.3

Table 4. The influence of makeup on women's self-confidence**Tabela 4.** Wpływ makijażu na pewność siebie u kobiet

Question	Possible answers	Selected answers	
		n	%
Does makeup give you more confidence?	definitely, always	461	58.4
	sometimes	303	38.4
	very rarely	15	1.9
	definitely no	11	1.4
	I don't know	10	1.3

Discussion

The results of the study allow us to include makeup in the group of treatments that positively affect women's self-esteem and well-being. In the study of 2013, it was revealed that women began to perceive themselves better and feel more secure as a result of beauty treatments.¹ Female self-esteem is not constant throughout life. In the majority of respondents, it changed positively (61.6%), while in others – negatively (17.1%).

One study discussed changes in self-perception in women of different ages.⁵ Life of a woman was divided into 3 stages. The first of these occurs around the age of 18, when the focus on the external appearance is noticeable, accompanied by insecurity, shame and all kinds of anxiety. The cause of these feelings is comparing our own body to a “perfect body” created by media.⁵ Sometimes this triggers a desire for self-improvement, which results in a drive for positive changes in one's appearance in order to minimize the difference between one's own body and a “perfect body” as much as possible.¹⁵ In the author's own research, most respondents declared that they had started to wear makeup before they reached the age of 25. Already at this age, women focus on appearance and strive to achieve the “perfect look” promoted by media. Despite the possible negative feelings of women in this age group, this period is the most satisfying, because the body is in the best shape and closest to the perfect image. Then, around the age of 25, a woman enters the stage of psychosocial development, which is related to the beginning of professional activity and the desire to start a family.⁵ Loss of skin firmness, weight gain and difficulty in returning to the former shape are the example consequences of this age. Satisfaction with one's own appearance gradually decreases, which was confirmed by the answers to the question concerning the change in self-esteem over the last 5–10 years. It has been observed that the negative change is most visible in women aged 19–35, i.e., when a woman is consumed first by student life, then by professional life and later on by family life. The last stage is around the age of 40, when a woman pays less attention to her own body and focuses more on her own intellect, skills and interpersonal relationships. This is probably due to the development of identity.⁵ Moreover, middle age is the time when people often account for their dreams and assess their lives based on whether or not they have fulfilled them.¹⁶

This division into 3 stages confirms the results obtained in another study conducted in 2015, which observed that younger women rated themselves more vital and felt better about their physical attractiveness.¹⁷ Older women showed greater mental self-acceptance and acceptance of their own lives as they are. The moral area is the only one in which mature women have demonstrated a higher level of self-esteem. This area includes assessing the validity of one's own conduct and satisfaction with one's own be-

liefs. The study found that older women are more capable of making sacrifices for their loved ones and that caring for one's own needs often ends up feeling guilty because of this. Their sacrifice for others also means that they need the recognition of other people more than younger women. Their behavior may result from their childhood upbringing.¹⁷ In the younger women, however, it has been observed that they are more convinced of their own imperfections and more sensitive to their own behavior because they aspire to what the world expects of them – independence, self-confidence and high self-esteem.¹⁷ In order to improve the attractiveness of their faces, women decide to use color cosmetics. In the conducted questionnaire, a high percentage of women (70.7%) declared that they do it at least 5 times a week, and a relatively small number of respondents (only 3.4%) did not wear makeup every day.

Women are aware of the fact that makeup enhances their physical attractiveness,¹¹ which has also been confirmed by studies. The hypothesis that faces with makeup are more attractive was also confirmed by an experiment with the use of brain neuroimaging. Each respondent was presented with more than 100 facial images and discovered that the brain becomes more active when the person looks at a more attractive face with makeup.¹⁸

In addition to the proven influence of makeup on physical attractiveness,^{11,18} it was decided to verify how makeup affects the sphere of professional work. Among the respondents who perform professional work, 77.5% have direct contact with the customer. In previous years, a study was conducted in which a group of men and women were asked to evaluate the same faces presented with and without makeup, in 2 separate photographs. Participants chose the ones with makeup and found that these people could work in more prestigious workplaces.¹⁹ These results show that women who use cosmetics can manipulate the way they are rated,¹¹ and this can be useful in social situations where they can be judged by their appearance, for example during an interview.¹⁹

The study also examined how the appearance of the waitress, and more specifically her makeup, will affect male clients. The experiment was conducted in a restaurant. The waitresses were divided into those with and without makeup. They were instructed on how to behave in order to minimize the impact of the behavior on the client's final assessment. The results showed that the waitresses wearing makeup gained more favor with the men, which led to higher tips. However, this correlation was not noticed among female customers.²⁰

Conclusions


Two conclusions may be drawn from the conducted study. As a beauty treatment, makeup significantly improves women's well-being and they are aware of it. It also


enhances their self-esteem and physical attractiveness. It has become an integral part of women's family celebrations and social life.

On the basis of the questionnaire results it is possible to classify makeup as a beauty treatment that affects not only the appearance but also the well-being and self-esteem of women.

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