‘Happy Being Me’ in the UK: A controlled evaluation of a school-based body image intervention with pre-adolescent children

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Background
Negative body image in children: A Public Health concern?

- 40-50% 6-12 year olds report body dissatisfaction (Smolak, 2011)

- Risk factors for negative body image?
  - Internalisation of cultural beauty-ideals
  - Appearance-related conversations
  - Appearance-related comparison
  - Appearance-related teasing
‘Happy Being Me’ (Richardson & Paxton, 2010)

- Targeted known risk factors for negative body image, while also incorporating a self-esteem component

- Positive effects on:
  - Overall body satisfaction
  - Risk factors for negative body image
  - Eating behaviours
  - Self-esteem
  - Intervention topic knowledge
Present study...

- School-based body image interventions have shown potential; however, evidence is inconclusive
- Focus on risk factor reduction in adolescent girls

Therefore...

- Evaluation of an adaptation of ‘Happy Being Me’ with pre-adolescent girls and boys
Methods
Participants

- 88 year six children ($M = 46$, $F = 42$) recruited from two primary schools

- Quasi-experimental design
  - Intervention ($n = 43$)
  - Control ($n = 45$)

- Age – 10 and 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **SESSION 1** | • Educate on media literacy  
  • Reduce internalisation | • Media manipulation techniques  
  • Appearance does not equal value  
  • Ideal-bodies over time |
| **SESSION 2** | • Educate on appearance-related conversation / teasing  
  • Reduce appearance-related conversation / teasing | • What are appearance conversations and ‘fat-talk’?  
  • What can be done to avoid engaging with that behaviour? |
| **SESSION 3** | • Educate on appearance-related comparison  
  • Reduce appearance-related comparison  
  • Revisit and recap the issues covered within the program | • Introduction to appearance comparison and negative impact  
  • What can be done to avoid engaging with that behaviour?  
  • Emphasis on positive qualities not related to appearance |
Materials

- Original materials adapted for use with pre-adolescent girls and boys:
Measures

- Pre-, post- and three month follow-up questionnaire:
  - Demographics (BMI, age)
  - Body satisfaction
  - Risk factors for negative body image
  - Eating behaviour
  - Self-esteem
  - Intervention topic knowledge

- Measures assessed for validity and reliability
- Likert-scale response
Results
Girls

Mixed between-within MANOVA revealed a significant* positive change from baseline to post-intervention for...

- Body satisfaction**
- Appearance-related conversation
- Appearance-related comparison
- Eating behaviours
- Intervention topic knowledge

* p < 0.05

** maintained at three month follow-up. 3 (baseline, immediate post-intervention, follow-up) x 2 (intervention, control) ANOVA calculations
## Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Baseline M (SD)</th>
<th>Post-intervention M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body satisfaction</td>
<td>11.60 (3.03)</td>
<td>13.63 (2.93)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural-beauty internalisation</td>
<td>17.35 (5.55)</td>
<td>15.19 (5.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance-related conversation</td>
<td>12.89 (5.90)</td>
<td>10.19 (4.51)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance-related comparison</td>
<td>14.33 (3.91)</td>
<td>11.56 (3.98)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance-related teasing</td>
<td>45.60 (11.96)</td>
<td>39.11 (10.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrained eating</td>
<td>9.25 (4.84)</td>
<td>8.11 (4.48)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional eating</td>
<td>6.65 (3.25)</td>
<td>4.84 (2.19)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>2.90 (0.91)</td>
<td>3.33 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention topic knowledge</td>
<td>13.75 (4.30)</td>
<td>16.58 (2.85)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. All mean scores moved in a positive direction

- Higher score = desirable
- Lower score = desirable
Boys

Mixed between-within MANOVA revealed a significant* positive change from baseline to post-intervention for...

- Cultural-beauty internalisation
- Appearance-related conversations

* p < 0.05
### Boys

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<th>Measure</th>
<th>Baseline M (SD)</th>
<th>Post-intervention M (SD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body satisfaction</td>
<td>13.52 (3.26)</td>
<td>14.00 (3.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural-beauty internalisation</td>
<td>17.04 (5.86)</td>
<td>14.00 (5.84)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance-related conversation</td>
<td>12.35 (6.09)</td>
<td>9.27 (5.57)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance-related comparison</td>
<td>12.30 (3.84)</td>
<td>9.09 (3.85)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance-related teasing</td>
<td>35.78 (10.84)</td>
<td>32.09 (12.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrained eating</td>
<td>7.77 (3.46)</td>
<td>6.52 (3.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional eating</td>
<td>5.70 (2.27)</td>
<td>5.09 (2.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>3.57 (1.20)</td>
<td>3.55 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention topic knowledge</td>
<td>14.39 (3.33)</td>
<td>16.00 (2.51)</td>
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- **Higher score = desirable**
- **Lower score = desirable**

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Discussion
Discussion

- **Mixed findings**
  - Different from original application
  - Encouraging in short-term
  - More effective with girls
  - Potential for future application

- **Limitations**
  - Sample size (particularly at follow-up)
  - Non-randomised conditions
Conclusions

- Novel application
- Girls and boys affected by negative body image concerns
- Additional sessions – for maintenance and consolidation
- Future replication with larger sample
- Refinement of intervention materials
Questions?

Contact us...

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