

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Strengthening Self-Image and Well-Being Among Female in
Israel**

**An Evaluation Study of “Therapy Through Beauty Care”
Self-Awareness and Beauty Care Workshop**

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Abstract

Scientific background

Studies have indicated a link between self-image, self-confidence, body-image, social-support, social-interaction, decreased anxiety, and the use of beauty-care products in female breast cancer patients and female university students (Brinegar & Weddl, 2014, Taggar, Ozolins, Hardie & Young, 2009). A brain wave study showed a connection between cosmetic use and increased brain wave activity of the frontal lobe. This suggested that cosmetic therapy led to improved interpersonal communication, social status, and self-image (Ikeuchi et al., 2014).

Following a review of studies on mental well-being, Harel Fish (2014) found four resilience factors, universal positive protection factors, whose presence was identified as strong and consistent predictors of the quality of the lives of children and adolescents. The four factors were the presence of a significant adult in the individual's life, a positive daily experience, a sense of self-worth, and a feeling of healthy social connection. The findings led to the development of the intervention strategies model, called "youth resilience" (Harel-Fish, 2014). The youth resilience model forms the basis of the present study.

Study aim

The current study developed a program entitled "Therapy through Beauty Care: Empowering the Self-Image of Women and Female Adolescents in Israel through a Self-Awareness and Beauty Care Workshop" (hereinafter, "Beauty Care Therapy"). The program is a four-session workshop. The study examined whether a program which combines the four resilience factors, together with educational values and active participation in the field of empowerment and beauty, led to improved self-image (social and physical), self-esteem, increased self-care, and improved mental well-being among female adolescents and women in Israel. This subject had not been previously researched.

The program addressed the four factors of the "youth resilience" model, as follows: 1. Significant adult—The program was delivered by a researcher, who served as a significant adult—2. Positive experience—Content was conveyed that raised the participants' sense of belonging and sense of self-worth and encouraged participant interaction—3. A sense of self-

worth—This was fostered by revealing the talents, positive character, and strengths of each participant. In order to increase awareness of the influence of society and culture on self-esteem, the sessions included discussions on the impact of media and advertising, consumer culture, and identification of myths and stereotypes—and 4. Experiencing social connectedness—The program encouraged discourse on the following subjects: the effect of social pressure; the fear of being different; various communication methods (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and mass communication).

At the end of each session assignments were distributed. The assignments required internal and external awareness. They emphasized the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of the participant and those around her. In the subsequent session participants shared their insights gained and their conclusions reached from performing the task. Professional instruction about personal beauty care, hair styling, and makeup techniques supplemented the empowering discussion and the interaction among the program participants. Figure 1 describes the process that the participants in the intervention program experienced.

Figure 1 : The process that the participants in the intervention program experienced

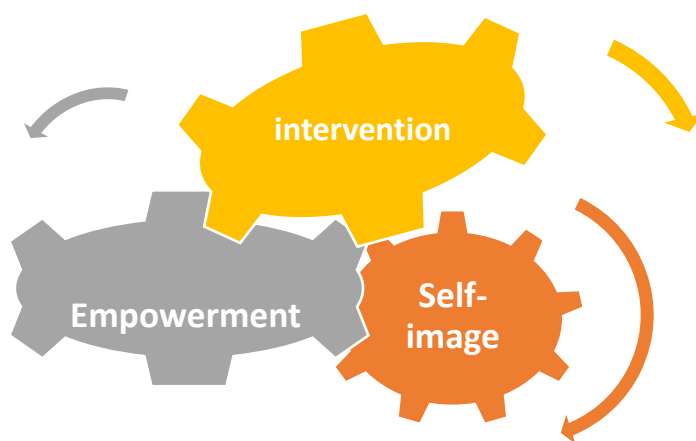


Diagram: The improvement in self-image triggered by participating in an intervention program, led to the empowerment of the participants and an improved sense of well-being which consequently improved their self-image. This formed a self-perpetuating cycle.

Participants

The study involved 141 Jewish Israeli female adolescents and women. The participants ranged in age from 10 to 69 years old. Most of the participants were native Israelis, religious and unmarried. Participants were divided into two study groups. The "Intervention Group" included 74 participants in the "Beauty Care Therapy" workshop (hereinafter "the intervention group").

The "Comparison Group" included 69 participants who did not attend the workshop (hereinafter the "comparison group").

Research method

After explaining the study aim, and signing an informed consent form, participants answered structured questionnaires. After answering the first questionnaire (PRE), the intervention group was given the four-session workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants completed the same questionnaire again (POST). The comparison group answered the same questionnaires, the first questionnaire (PRE), and 4 weeks later the same questionnaire again (POST).

The independent variable was participation in the program "Beauty Care Therapy." The background variables were socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics and a family self-image index. The dependent variables were a social self-image index, a physical self-image index, a self-esteem index, a self-care index, and a mental health and well-being index (hereinafter: "main indices in the study").

The research hypothesis suggests that positive relationships will be found between body image indices (objective body weight [hereinafter: "BMI"], "subjective body weight feeling", "diet", and "love body look") and the main indices in the study, namely an improvement in the "main indices in the study" for participants in the Intervention Group after completing the program vis-à-vis their condition in the pre-intervention measurement and vis-a-vis the Comparison Group.

Main findings

The study found that across the whole sample there was a positive relationship between the level of physical image indices and the level of social self-image indices, the level of well-being indices, and the level of self-esteem indices. The study demonstrated that improvements in the indices of body image, especially the index of "love body look," are positively correlated to the increase in all the "main indices in the study." Additionally, the data indicated that higher body image, "love body look", engendered higher social support and self-esteem. Family support predicted social support, self-esteem, and well-being.

Pre and Post questionnaire responses for both groups were analyzed. The data demonstrably proved that in the intervention program (POST), group displayed increased values in the "social connections" index and in all beauty care indices ("beauty care products usage"; "external care"; "beauty care products improve feeling"). Variances in the intervention group's beauty care index in the body image indices generally explained changes in the self-care index. In post-intervention measurement the indices explained 12.5% more of the variance compared to the pre-intervention measurement as well as at a greater level of significance. In contrast, the comparison group's body image indices did not explain variances in the self-care index.

Conclusions

The present study found that participation in "Beauty Care Therapy" program led to an increased self-care index. The study also demonstrated that body image indices explain differences in self-care indices. In addition, the findings showed that the program significantly improved social relationships and increased self-care indices. The present study conclusions form the basis for constructing future intervention programs that will help promote positive body image, self-esteem, and mental well-being with the help of a combination of knowledge and practical tools in the field of makeup and self-care.

Research contribution

At the theoretical level this empirical study examined the effects of a beauty care intervention program that provided participants with content and tools in the following fields: improving self-image, raising self-esteem, strengthening social abilities, and promoting mental well-being. The present study included a varied population of female adolescents and women including normative female adolescents, national service interns (aged 18-21), female university students, and women facing mental health difficulties. A detailed study of this nature had not been previously conducted in Israel.

On a practical level, there are a number of intervention programs aimed at strengthening self-image. However, to the best of our knowledge there is no program in Israel that combines psycho-educational knowledge in the field of self-esteem and body image with the four

resilience factors. This program does combine them while also giving participants an opportunity to experience the field of external self-care and encouraging them to be aware of their strengths. Letters of recommendation received by Ezer Mitzion Centers, whose trainees participated in the program, as well as a representative sample of the feedback received from the program participants appears in Appendix 9.

The present study detailed a program to promote self-image and strengthen self-esteem in women. It provided practical tools for increased external personal care and contributed theoretical knowledge that raised awareness of the strengths and unique qualities of each participant. The program strengthened participants' social skills and improved their quality of life and mental well-being. It is recommended that additional research be performed on the efficacy of expanding the "Beauty Care Therapy" program to the wider Israeli female adolescent and female adult population.