Static and dynamic body image and eating disorders among non-professional ballet dancers

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Background: As it was shown before, professional ballet dancers are at an enhanced risk of developing disturbances of body image and eating disorders, because of the high pressure to maintain a low body weight. However, there is almost no data on the dynamic body image which might be an important factor especially in this group. Studies with non-professional ballet dancers are very rare, though they might be of a similar risk in developing an eating disorder.

Method: We compared a group of 25 non-professional ballet dancers with 33 control persons concerning several aspects of body image and eating behaviors with the "Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire", the "Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire", the "Eating Disorder Inventory" and the "Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire". In addition to those questionnaire measures, we included a digital distortion technique to get information with respect to the static and dynamic body image.

Results: Results indicate that ballerinas show a higher preoccupation with overweight (p<.05) and food (p<.05) than controls, while eating behaviors were not different in both groups. Additionally, ballerinas scored higher on fitness orientation (p<.05) and fitness evaluation (p<.001). No group differences were found for the other components of body image as measured with the digital distortion technique.

Conclusion: These results indicate that non-professional ballerinas have at the most a slightly enhanced risk of developing eating disorders and body image disturbances as compared with professional ballet dancers. We assume that the pressure to be thin is not as strong on non-professionals as on professionals.