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Performance Pressure and Body Image: A Study of Professional Models in the Fashion Industry

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SUMMARY: *The influence of fashion electronic magazines on models' psychological stress has become an interesting topic of research for interdisciplinary scholars. In this paper, questionnaires and scales were adopted for gathering data related to the effect of reading electronic magazines on the stress of professional fashion models, including their performance pressure and body image. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with label variable method was employed for testing common method variance (CMV) using two methods for minimizing methodological bias. The multi-model technique improved the reliability of research outcomes. Results indicate: There are three variables, including "internalization of media-ideal body image," which show notable disparities at the 0.01 and 0.001 levels among four demographic variables such as gender. Body shape perception is more similar to the desired form of "underweight" models according to the aesthetic standards of the fashion industry. CMV testing shows that demographic factors such as gender affect and control models' performance stress and body image perception.*

KEYWORDS: *fashion models; performance pressure; body image; CFA; CMV*

1 Introduction

Modeling was first commercialized in the past and had the sole purpose of marketing clothes and advertisement. Gradually, it developed into an art in its entirety. An ideal model should have information on all sorts of artistic disciplines such as fashion, music, dancing, performing arts, sculpture, photography, and fine arts in order to express his/her artistic talent through performances [1-4]. The world of professional modeling is far more challenging than one could possibly imagine. Models are required to perform their tasks with great efficiency and keep themselves physically flawless [5-7].

The main factors that create performance pressure on professional models are job demands and public evaluation. Because of the type of job they do, models have to travel from one city to another or even from one country to another, as they take part in fashion weeks, advertise various products, and walk the runway [8-11]. All of these trips, flights, and other arrangements make the models' body and mind always be in a highly stressed condition. At the same time, since they are public persons, their every step and action is monitored by everyone around. The external evaluation of how they look is very high [12-14]. Even minor missteps can trigger public criticism and attacks, creating immense psychological burdens from this invisible

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pressure.

An outstanding appearance becomes the standard for models in the fashion industry. With changes happening in the fashion industry, there is always change in the body demands for models, hence becoming one of the fundamental requirements in the profession [15, 16]. There are stringent standards set by the fashion industry regarding the body of models, concerning body weight, measurements, and proportionate body heights. Models have to engage in extreme measures such as intense diets and rigorous exercise to satisfy these demands [17-19]. Intense diets result in health complications like nutritional problems and metabolic disorders, while rigorous exercise leads to physical injuries such as joint damage and muscle strains [20, 21]. Some models suffer from psychological disorders due to body image distortion and become depressed [22-24].

This research focuses on the impact of performance pressure and body image on professional models within the fashion industry, and in particular, on how external pressures and image manipulation through fashion e-magazines affect the psychological state and performance of models. Using self-made questionnaires together with multi-scale measurement data, we derived M (method factor) and F (trait factor), and used Common Method Bias (CMB) test to examine whether there is a CMB effect between the two factors. Based on this, the label variables were generated to increase the level of discrimination. This was further compared with the substantive variables in constructing the common method variance bias (CMV) model.

2 A Methodology for Studying Model Performance and Image Based on Deviation Testing

2.1 Research Foundation Design

2.1.1 Selection of Research Subjects

This study adopted cluster sampling whereby 120 professional models within the fashion industry in City A were selected at random as subjects for the research. The questionnaires were administered in groups and collected consistently, resulting in 120 valid responses being received, making it 100% response rate.

2.1.2 Application of Research Methods

At the beginning of the survey, the researcher clarified the guidelines for filling out the questionnaire for all respondents and asked each respondent to fill it out on his/her own within 30 minutes. In this study, a questionnaire, which was developed by the author himself/herself, was used as a tool for data collection. There were two parts in the questionnaire. Part one was about the reading habits of these 120 professional models about fashion e-magazines.

2.1.3 Application of Research Tools

1) Media Ideal Body Image Internalization Scale

The instrument employs a modified form of the Socially Prescribed Attitudes Questionnaire concerning body appearance, using reverse coded statements on a 5-point scale. It assesses the degree of acceptance of distorted perceptions of one's body as dictated by the media within oneself, with an internal reliability factor of 0.857.

2) Negative Body Image Scale

Negative Body Self Scale is the measure to be used. The Negative Body Self Scale comprises of forty questions, which involve five dimensions of negativity, such as fatness,

physical appearance, shortness, face, and thinness. It includes reverse-scored items and employs a 5-point scale. Higher scores indicate greater overall negative body image. The internal consistency coefficient is 0.896.

3) Social Appearance Anxiety Scale

The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale was employed. This scale comprises 12 items, with Item 1 being reverse-scored. It uses a 5-point scale, where higher scores indicate greater social appearance anxiety. The internal consistency coefficient is 0.901.

2.2 Testing the Variation Model for Common Method Bias and the Label Variable Method

2.2.1 Mathematical Model for Evaluating Common Method Variation (CMV) and Its Effects

A test consists of m items $x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_m$ that measure n trait factors $F_1, F_2, \cdots, F_n$. Assuming a linear relationship between method factors (M) and trait factors (F), item x_i can be expressed as:

$$x_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} a_{ij} F_j + b_i M + \varepsilon_i, i = 1, 2, \cdots, m \tag{1}$$

Here, a_{ij} represents the loading of item x_i on trait factor F_j, b_i denotes the loading of item x_i on method factor M, and ε_i signifies the test error for item x_i. It is assumed that test errors are uncorrelated among themselves and independent of both method factors and trait factors. It is generally assumed that a single method factor exists within a single measurement unless there is sufficient justification for multiple method factors.

The mathematical model based on CMV can reveal how method effects influence relationships between traits. Assuming all variables are standardized, let x and y denote scores measuring traits F_x and F_y, respectively. The corresponding formula is expressed as follows:

$$x = a_x F_x + b_x M + \varepsilon_x \tag{2}$$

$$y = a_y F_y + b_y M + \varepsilon_y \tag{3}$$

The correlation between x and y is:

$$\begin{aligned} (x, y) &= \operatorname{corr}(X, Y) = \operatorname{cov}\left((a_x F_x + b_x M + \varepsilon_x)(a_y F_y + b_y M + \varepsilon_y)\right) \\ &= a_x a_y \operatorname{cov}(F_x, F_y) + a_x b_y \operatorname{cov}(F_x, M) \\ &\quad + a_y b_x \operatorname{cov}(F_y, M) + b_x b_y \operatorname{var}(M) \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

If method factors and trait factors are uncorrelated, we obtain:

$$\operatorname{cov}(F_x, M) = \operatorname{cov}(F_y, M) = 0.00 \tag{5}$$

Then:

$$r_{(x,y)} = a_y b_x r + b_x b_y r \tag{6}$$

Here, $r = \mathrm{cov}(F_x, F_y)$ represents the true correlation between traits. Without method variance, the correlation effectively measured by the scale is $a_x a_y r$. However, due to method variance, the measured correlation becomes $r_{(x,y)}$. In practice, a represents the degree to which the scale effectively measures the trait, which is positive; b represents the influence of method factors on measurement items, which can be either positive or negative. Analyzing the impact of CMV on trait correlations involves the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: If trait correlation r is positive and b_x and b_y share the same sign, the method factor strengthens the trait correlation.

Scenario 2: If trait correlation r is positive but b_x and b_y have opposite signs, the method factor weakens the trait correlation.

Scenario 3: If the trait correlation r is negative and b_x and b_y have the same sign, the method factor weakens the trait correlation.

Scenario 4: If the trait correlation r is negative and b_x and b_y have opposite signs, the method factor increases the trait correlation.

As seen above, whether CMV amplifies or attenuates trait correlations depends not only on the method itself but also on the nature of trait relationships. For instance, in Scenario 2, despite positive trait correlations, CMV exhibits an attenuating effect because the method factor influences items measuring different traits in opposite directions. Among the four scenarios, two amplify correlations while the other two attenuate them. In short, method effects may distort the true relationships between traits, making it essential in empirical research to examine whether common method bias (CMB) is severe.

2.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Label Variable Method

Labeled variables (Mv) are variables introduced by researchers that are theoretically unrelated to traits. To distinguish them from labeled variables, trait variables are termed substantive variables (Sv). Due to measurement by the same method, common variance (CMV) exists between labeled variables (M) and substantive variables (F). From the mathematical model of CMV, labeled variables function to some extent as method factors. Figure 1 presents the actual model and competing model of the CFA label variable approach. In the figure, loadings on M are constrained to the unstandardized loadings in the CFA model, while loadings on F1 and F2 are constrained to the unstandardized loadings in the baseline model.

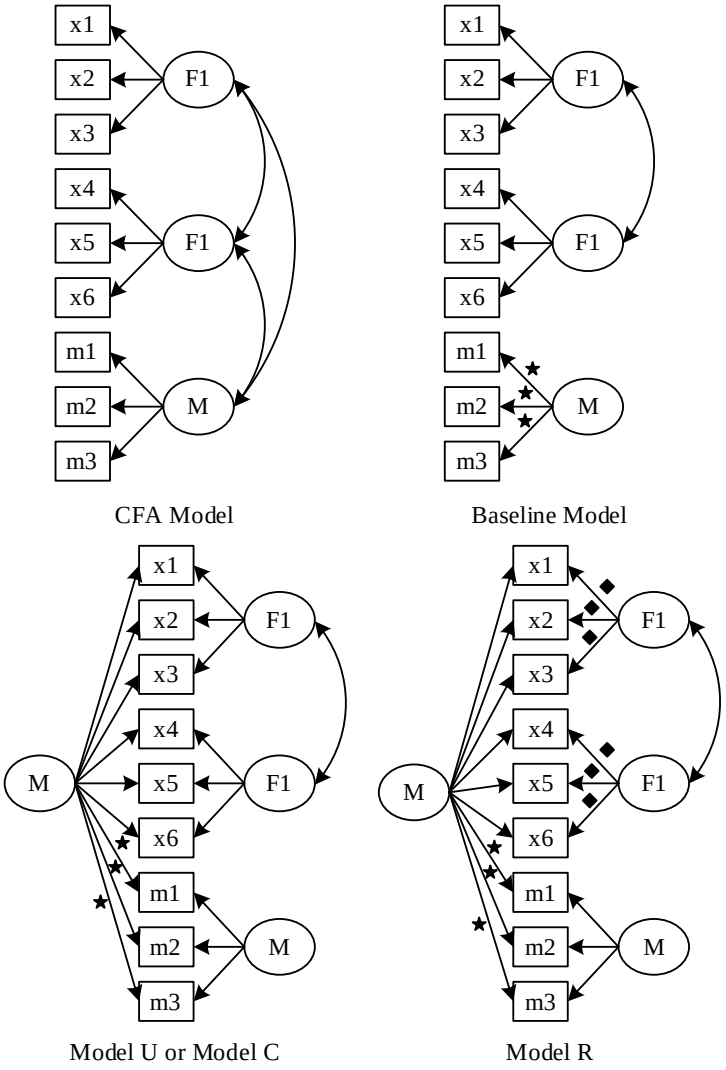

Figure 1: The competitive model of the CFA label variable method

The CFA Label Variable Method involves several models: the CFA model, the benchmark model, model R and two nested models—model C and model U First, the CFA model is estimated to obtain unstandardized parameter estimates. Then, the benchmark model is estimated by constraining the loadings of indicators $m1-m3$ to match those obtained from the CFA model. Next, run either model C or model U : - In model C : The six loadings of indicators $x1\sim x6$ on M are constrained to be equal (indicating the measurement method has the same effect on all indicators). - In model U : The loadings of indicators $x1\sim x6$ on M are allowed to be freely estimated (indicating the measurement method has different effects on each indicator). The difference between models C and U lies in whether the six loadings of indicators $x1\sim x6$ on M are equal or freely estimated. Finally, model R is constructed, where the six loadings of indicators $x1\sim x6$ are constrained to match those obtained in the baseline model (equivalent to no CMV); Model R assumes that even if the indicators $(x1\sim x6)$ of substantive variables are influenced by the label variable, their loadings on the substantive variables remain unchanged.

This testing method posits that if CMV exists, the loadings of substantive variable indicators on the label variable will not be zero. If CMB exists, the loadings of substantive variables will be biased. Therefore, if CMB is severe, model R will show significant divergence from

models C or U.

The CFA label variable method resembles the ULMC approach for method factors with measurement indicators, but its testing steps are more complex. Figure 2 outlines the complete testing workflow developed in this paper.

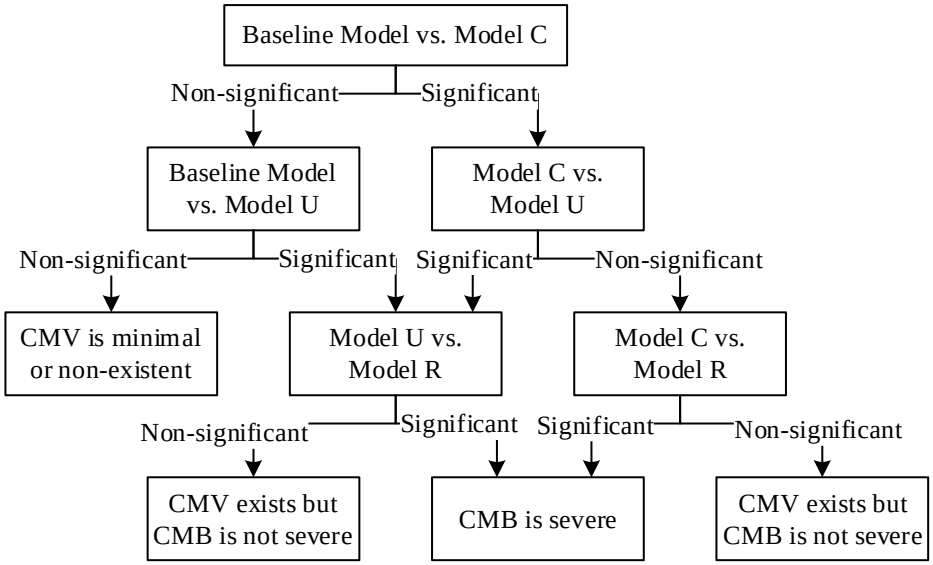

Figure 2: The verification process of the CFA label variable method

Step 1: Compare the benchmark model and model C to test for the presence of CMV. The benchmark model assumes no CMV exists, while model C posits CMV and incorporates a strong assumption—that method effects have identical influence. If the two models differ significantly, CMV is present, but whether CMB is severe requires further testing.

Step 2: If the benchmark model and model C differ significantly, proceed to this step; otherwise, go to Step 4. Before assessing the severity of CMB, first verify whether the strong assumption of model C holds. Model U assumes CMV exists but posits differing method effects. Thus, compare model C with model U: if the difference is significant, the strong assumption of model C fails; otherwise, it holds.

Step 3: Test whether CMB is severe. Model R assumes CMV exists but that indicator loadings on substantive variables remain unchanged, thus allowing CMB to be ignored. Therefore, compare model R with either model C or model U (whichever is superior, and whichever is compared against model R). If the two models differ significantly, CMB is severe and cannot be ignored; otherwise, CMV exists but CMB is not severe.

Step 4: If the benchmark model and model C show no significant difference, this does not confirm the absence of CMV; it may also indicate that the strong assumptions of model C do not align with reality. Model U assumes differing effects of method, which may better reflect reality. Therefore, this step compares the benchmark model and model U; if the two models show no significant difference, it indicates that CMV is minimal or absent, and the analysis stops. If the difference is significant, CMV exists and the method effect influences differently; proceed to Step 5.

Step 5: Compare model U and model R with the null hypothesis that CMB is not severe. A significant difference indicates severe CBM. If insignificant, CMV exists but CBM is not severe, suggesting high accuracy of research results.

3 Analysis of the Relationship Between Professional Model Perception and Behavior Shaped by Fashion Media

3.1 Perceptions and Intentions of Professional Models Influenced by Fashion Magazines

3.1.1 Statistics on Perceptions of Ideal Body Shape

From the analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire and scale assessments, it becomes clear that the professional models foresee that their personal image will conform to the standard aesthetic presented in fashion magazines and related media materials. Table 1 illustrates respondents' perceptions regarding the statement: “Slimness represents the contemporary fashion standard for professional models' physiques.” Table 2 presents statistical findings on models' views concerning the assertion: “The ideal physique resembles the standard body type featured in fashion magazines.”

In the question of the cognition of the ideal body shape in the minds of professional models, and also the internalization of the body shape standard of "ideal thinness" by professional models, it was found that as many as 85.00% of the surveyed professional models "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the view that "thinness represents the fashion of today's professional model body shape", and nearly 75.00% of the respondents said "agree" or "strongly agree" with the judgment that "the standard body shape of the model in fashion magazines is better". This shows that after reading and accepting the influence of fashion magazines, professional models' perception of the ideal body shape is obviously "thin", and the degree to which "ideal thinness" is established and internalized as a "social fashion" is quite high.

Table 1: Respondents' perception of Slimness represents fashion

	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage
Valid data	Strongly disagree	2	1.67	1.67
	Disagree	10	8.33	8.33
	Generally	6	5.00	5.00
	Agree	52	43.33	43.33
	Strongly agree	50	41.67	41.67
	Total	120	100.00	100.00

Table 2: Respondents' perception of Standard figure like fashion magazine model

	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage
Valid data	Strongly disagree	10	8.33	8.33
	Disagree	6	5.00	5.00
	Generally	14	11.67	11.67
	Agree	50	41.67	41.67
	Strongly agree	40	33.33	33.33
	Total	120	100.00	100.00

3.1.2 Statistics on Body Image Attitudes and Weight Loss Intentions

In the survey on body image attitudes and weight loss intentions, most models believe their body shape requires alteration. Table 3 presents satisfaction data from surveyed models regarding the statement “I would be more satisfied if my body resembled that of a fashion magazine model.” Table 4 quantifies the models' intentions regarding the statement “I need to

lose weight compared to fashion magazine models." The proportion who 'agree' or "strongly agree" that they would be more satisfied if their body resembled that of a fashion magazine model is 33.33% each. This indicates that over 65.00% of surveyed models aspire to achieve the standard body type featured in fashion magazines. At the same time, in connection with the existing tendency towards fashion media's promotion of thinness as beauty, 50.00% of participants "agree" they need to be slim compared to fashion magazine models, and 18.33% "strongly agree" with this statement. Thus, the percentage of those who are planning to change their appearance is more than 65.00%. According to the basic statistics, fashion magazines have a great impact on models' body image perception.

Table 3: Data on body satisfaction of the survey participants Frequency

	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage
Valid data	Strongly disagree	5	4.17	4.17
	Disagree	15	12.50	12.50
	Generally	20	16.67	16.67
	Agree	40	33.33	33.33
	Strongly agree	40	33.33	33.33
	Total	120	100.00	100.00

Table 4: Survey respondents' data on their intention to lose weight Frequency

	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Effective percentage
Valid data	Strongly disagree	18	15.00	15.00
	Disagree	8	6.67	6.67
	Generally	12	10.00	10.00
	Agree	60	50.00	50.00
	Strongly agree	22	18.33	18.33
	Total	120	100.00	100.00

3.2 Analysis of Modeling Performance Pressure and Body Image Based on Survey Data

3.2.1 Statistical Analysis of Demographic Variables

To ensure the validity of research variables, Table 5 summarizes demographic information from 120 surveyed models. Among the 120 models, male and female models each accounted for 50.00%; the urban proportion slightly exceeded the rural proportion at 62.50%; and only children constituted 66.67%. Based on years of experience, models were categorized into four groups, with those working in the fashion industry for 4-5 years constituting the largest proportion at 35.00%. The selected survey subjects demonstrated demographic diversity in their basic information, meeting the requirements for variable extraction in this study.

Table 5: Demographic variable information of the models (N = 120)

Name	Category	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	50.00%
	Female	60	50.00%
Residence registration	Rural	75	62.50%
	Area	45	57.50%
The situation of the only child	Yes	80	66.67%
	No	40	33.33%
Length of time spent in the fashion industry	<1 year	25	20.83%
	2-3 years	30	25.00%
	4-5 years	42	35.00%
	>5 year	23	19.17%

3.2.2 Tests of Differences in Variables Across Demographic Groups

Independent samples t-tests were conducted on three variables: “Media Ideal Body Image Internalization (IIM)”, “Negative Body Image (NBI)”, and “Social Appearance Anxiety (SAA)”. Using gender and household registration as examples, the analysis of differences in each variable across demographic variables is presented. Figure 3 shows the results of the gender-based difference analysis for each variable. Figure 4 presents the results of the household registration-based difference analysis for each variable. *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$. “Internalization of Media Ideal Body Image (IIM)” showed significant differences at the 0.01 level by gender, while “Negative Body Image (NBI)” and “Social Appearance Anxiety (SAA)” showed significant differences at the 0.001 level by gender. Simultaneously, “Internalization of Media Ideal Body Image (IIM)” also showed a significant difference at the 0.01 level based on household registration status, while the other two variables did not exhibit significant differences based on household registration status. Combined with other difference tests, it was found that social appearance anxiety levels differed significantly between only children and non-only children. Models with shorter tenure in the fashion industry (<1 year and 2-3 years) showed significant differences across all three variables compared to those with longer tenure (4-5 years and >5 years). That is, based on the results of the difference tests, due to varying degrees of exposure to fashion magazines among professional models with different characteristics—for example, models born in urban areas may have read fashion magazines since childhood and thus have a higher acceptance of the ideal body image portrayed in magazines than models born in rural areas—there are relatively significant differences in the performance pressure and body image of the surveyed models.

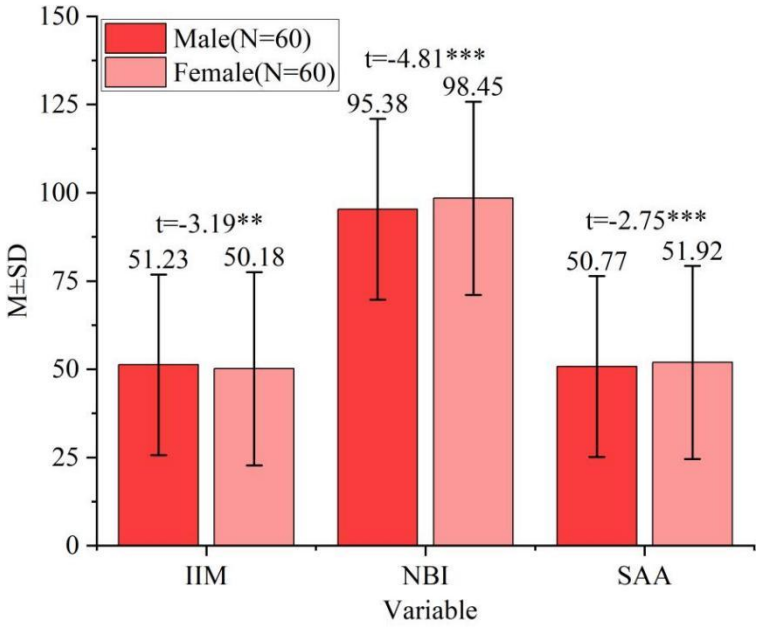

Figure 3: Analysis results of the differences in each variable across genders

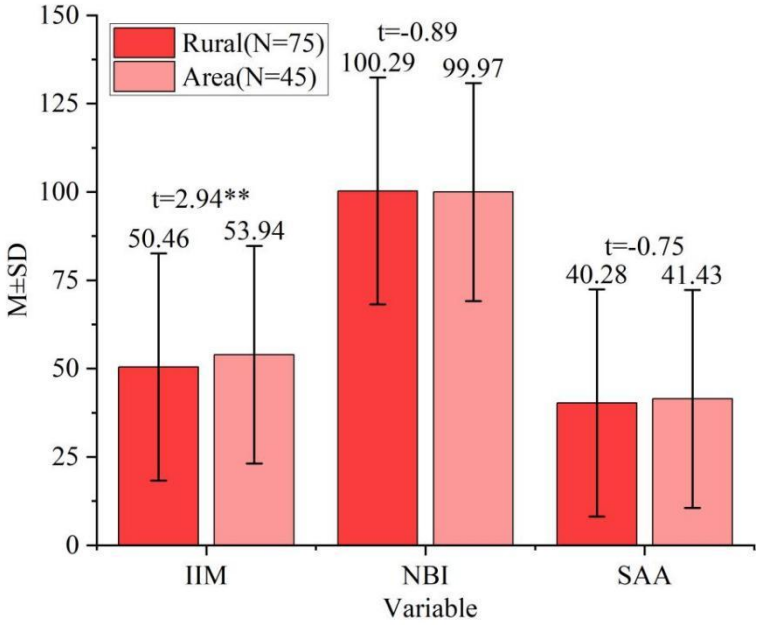

Figure 4: Analysis results of differences in variable across household registration

3.2.3 Descriptive Statistics of Body Image for Models at Different BMI Levels

Beyond differences in demographic variables, survey results indicate that models are more concerned with BMI levels, specifically changes in body image. Therefore, this study categorizes surveyed models into three groups based on BMI levels to conduct descriptive statistics on perceived body shape and ideal body shape. Table 6 summarizes the descriptive statistical analysis. The table reveals that the perceived body shape of the underweight group (M=0.07) is positive, while that of the normal group (M=-0.38) and overweight group (M=-0.46) is negative. This indicates that the underweight group perceives themselves as slightly heavier than their actual body shape, whereas the normal and overweight groups perceive themselves as thinner than their actual body shapes. The underweight group's ideal body shape

was positive (M=0.08), while the normal group (M=-1.27) and overweight group (M=-1.78) had negative values. This indicates that the underweight group perceived their ideal body shape as slightly heavier than their actual weight, whereas the normal and overweight groups perceived their ideal body shape as significantly lighter than their actual weight. Mean values show that the underweight group's perceived body shape (M=0.07) and ideal body shape (M=0.08) both approached their actual body shape (0.00). This shows that the underweight sample group has greater body shape accuracy and satisfaction. This is because the fashion industry places great importance on thin body shapes as ideal bodies. In relation to this, it is clear that the body image of the models is close to that of the fashion magazines.

Table 6: Differences in perception of ideal body shape in models of various BMI

BMI	N	BMI Index	Perceived average body size	Proportion of individuals with negative score for body size perception	Ideal body type average	Proportion of negative scores for the ideal body type
Underweight group	45	15.92±0.27	0.07±0.12	48.21%	0.08±0.24	52.47%
Normal group	30	19.71±0.55	-0.38±0.31	89.45%	-1.27±0.53	92.43%
Overweight group	45	25.46±0.89	-0.46±0.23	98.37%	-1.78±0.51	99.28%

3.3 Bias Analysis Based on the Label Variable Method

After completing the data analysis on body image cognition and behavior, methodological error testing was conducted by constructing a bias model. This section focuses solely on gender to examine its moderating and mediating effects in the relationship between internalization of media ideal body image and performance pressure. Table 7 presents the results of testing the relationship between internalization of media ideal body image and model performance pressure, moderated by gender. Media ideal body image internalization significantly and positively predicted negative body image (β=0.82, $p<0.001$) and social appearance anxiety (β=0.45, $p<0.001$); negative body image significantly and positively predicted social appearance anxiety (β=0.20, $p<0.001$). The interaction term between internalization of media ideal body image and gender significantly predicted negative body image ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$), while the interaction term between negative body image and gender significantly predicted social appearance anxiety ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$). However, the product term of media ideal body image internalization and gender did not significantly predict social appearance anxiety ($p > 0.05$), indicating that gender did not significantly moderate the direct effect in the mediation model. Based on the significance comparison using the labeled variable method, gender exhibited a moderating effect on mediation but no direct effect. This aligns with the empirical finding that “the internalization of media ideal body image significantly influences women's negative body image and social appearance anxiety more than it does for male models.” This confirms the validity of the research.

Table 7: Regression of Internalization of Ideal Images and Performance Pressure

Regression equation		Overall fitting index			Significance of regression coefficient	
Result variable	Predictor variable	R	R^2	F	β	t
Negative body image	-	0.48	0.23	56.39	-	
-	Internalization of ideal body image in media	-			0.82	11.03***
	Gender				0.75	6.28***
	Internalization of ideal body image in media * Gender				0.53	3.19**
Social appearance anxiety	-	0.63	0.42	85.67	-	
-	Internalization of ideal body image in media	-			0.45	9.27***
	Negative body image				0.20	8.38***
	Gender				0.92	2.41***
	Internalization of ideal body image in media * Gender				-0.05	-0.84
	Negative body image * Gender				0.31	5.23***

4 Conclusion

This study examines the impact of fashion magazine standards in media communication on perceptions of professional models and performance pressure, employing bias testing methods to enhance the credibility of research findings. Based on CMV test results, over 65% of models believe they should align with fashion magazine model images and consider measures like dieting to achieve an “underweight” level. Basic demographic factors like “gender” and “hukou status” significantly influence acceptance of models' media fashion images at the 0.05, 0.01, or 0.001 significance levels. Compared to “normal” and “slightly overweight” models, the perceived body shape (M=0.07) and ideal body shape (M=0.08) of “slightly thin” models were closer to reality. However, bias test results indicate that demographic variables only exert a mediating effect. The fundamental cognitive influence on models' performance pressure and body image stems from the fashion magazine standards shaped by the media.

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