

ABSTRACT

Research has suggested that body image is an important construct that deeply impacts wellbeing and happiness. There is evidence that this influence is greater for women than for men, although this may be changing. The current study investigated how expatriate women's body dissatisfaction was related to relocating to Thailand. In Thailand, the average female BMI is about 15% less than in the USA and the UK. Previous research in this area with North American women showed that women continued to compare themselves unfavourably with thinner women even though it was detrimental to their body image. The study explored what role appearance comparison played in the body dissatisfaction of female expatriates relocating to Thailand by surveying expatriate women (n=107) living and working in Thailand. The Physical Comparison Scale - Revised, the Body Scale Questionnaire and the Stunkard Body Figure Scale were administered to this sample. The result suggested that participants who engaged in frequent appearance comparison would continue to do so regardless of the relocation, and likewise with those who engaged in less degree of comparison. Consistent with previous findings, frequent appearance comparison was related to higher degree of body dissatisfaction. It was also reported that the participants' level of body dissatisfaction was significantly related to the perceived body discrepancy between their actual body shape, their ideal and their perception of the average Thai women's body shape.

Keywords: body dissatisfaction, appearance comparison, social comparison, expatriate adjustment.