



Photo Cred: Sticker Fashion Substack

Is Roblox Tarnishing Young Children's Perception of Body Image?

Introduction

Founded by David Baszucki and Erik Cassel, the children's video game Roblox (2006) is a beloved platform in which millions of games find their place and kids find solace. The game's discretion allows children ages 13 and older to play, but welcomes younger children and adults as well. Notably, recently popular games have introduced fashion, namely *Dress to Impress*, *Fashion Diva*, and other rising plays. Each of the same objectives, players must follow a theme in order to place on a podium, massing coins and stars to rise in level and purchase more clothing.

Albeit the games' humorous nature, there is significance in recognizing the potential impact that, mainly young girls, can have by playing. Commonly in each game is the default female character with a slim, hourglass figure and the default male that is muscular and lean, with no other body type options. Although it can be argued that this body type is realistically more prevalent in society's runway scene, there has been steady emergence in mid to plus size models in runway and to highlight this in a children's game can be crucial to body inclusivity.



Photo Cred: Roblox, Dress to Impress, Group & Gigi

The Types of Games and Their Potential Effects

With over 10,000 players daily, Dress to Impress is one of the prime examples of fashion games in Roblox at the moment. A plethora of clothing for players to choose from with a variety of themes, many find themselves immersed in the game's simplicity and creativity. However, upon playing, it can't be helped but noticed that default characters only have slim figures with hourglass silhouettes or muscular male builds. Despite these body types being more commonly seen in runway, it is worth mentioning that they aren't the only body types, and that there is gravity in demonstrating this fact to an audience mainly of young children. For as long as society has known, media has put unnecessary emphasis on slimmer builds or muscle, and only as of late, body positivity has become increasingly celebrated. However, even this 'celebration' can still be ostracizing as society applauds those who are mid to plus size for "being brave", when actually, feeling this way should be normal. If a younger player base has exposure to more body types, it's possible that there can be less taboo regarding mid to plus size runway models and that they're worth existing in fashion as much as slimmer builds are.

Why is this an issue?

In the PubMed article, "The impact of media on eating disorders in children and adolescents" by Anne Morris and Debra Katzman, there is correlation in how the images children see on screen influence their life. "48% of children played [Roblox] for an average 130 minutes/day" (Lang 2024), states the study, "Roblox...dominates Kids' Screen Time Says New

Study”, which is even an improvement from what it was years previously. This in conjunction with Morris’ and Katzman’s study reveals significant implications as their research explains that “media exposure predicted disordered eating symptomatology, drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction...endorsement of personal thinness and dieting in men”, bridging the fact that if children have shown to spend multiple hours on Roblox, some being on games like Dress to Impress, it can be suggested that the prolonged exposure to the thin or muscular body types on their screen can reinforce disordered eating or mentality. Thus, for games to strictly include bodies only seen as ‘acceptable’ in society raises genuine concern for young players who may want to emulate the character they are playing as, or believe that fashion only represents those who fit media beauty standards.

What Can be Done?

As Roblox has a daily 70 million players (Shewale 2024), most of them being children, it is important that games can display essential representations of society, such as body inclusivity that can nourish the decades-long issue of the media’s effect on body image. For games like Dress to Impress to include other body types than the default slim or muscular ones can be impactful for the primarily adolescent and young audience. Size inclusivity, as studied in recent years, has shown that it “celebrates body positivity, acceptance, and self-love” according to fashion blog Printful. The blog also highlights one clothing brand’s, Aerie, ability to bring gratitude and positivity amongst social media influencers after creating clothing and lingerie lines with sizes that genuinely fit plus-sizes, unlike other brands that market off of inclusivity when their sizing says otherwise. Body inclusivity has proven to show that it creates a positive impact for all body types to feel represented and loved. Therefore, for these aspects to be included in Roblox fashion games where it is notorious for its younger audience, can have real, beneficial impacts on how they may view themselves as worthy, rather than dissatisfied that some may not see their reflections in games they love to play. Further, with advancement in fashion, more body types are now seen on the runway with models like Ashley Graham or Paloma Elsesser, two out of many who can be inspirations for young boys and girls to embrace their bodies. It can create profound change for children and adolescents who are increasingly online, a crucial step in preventing more body images to be tarnished by the media.

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