



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL PHYSIQUE ANXIETY, EATING ATTITUDE AND SELF-ESTEEM: A GENDER BASE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The present study investigated the relationship between social physique anxiety, eating attitude and self-esteem with particular emphasis on gender-base analysis. The sample comprised of 290 participants (145 females, 145 males) selected through stratified random sampling. A correlational research design was employed and data was collected through survey method. Standardized instruments included the social physique anxiety scale (Hart, 1989). Eating Attitude Scale (Garner, 1982) and Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989). It was hypothesized that higher level of Social physique anxiety will significantly predict maladaptive eating attitudes and lower global self-esteem; that females will indicate higher level of social physique anxiety and maladaptive eating attitudes than males; and there will be no significant gender difference exist on global self-esteem. Linear regression analyses revealed that social physique anxiety is the significant positive predictor of maladaptive eating attitude significant negative predictor of low global self-esteem. Independent sample t-test indicated that females exhibited a higher degree of social physique anxiety and more maladaptive eating attitude than males; while no significant gender difference was found in self-esteem. These findings highlighted the influence of social physique anxiety, eating attitude and self-esteem.

Keywords: *Social physique anxiety, Eating attitude, Self-esteem*

Introduction and Literature Review

Social-physique anxiety refers to the apprehension a person feels regarding how one's body is perceived in social contexts, often leading to comparisons and concerns about being evaluated unfavorably by others (Hart et al., 1989). People with this anxiety may fear being criticized for their body shape, size, height, or weight, causing feelings of embarrassment, shame, or discomfort. Situations, where their bodies are exposed, such as in gyms, can make them feel frustrated, nervous, or self-conscious (Najam & Ashfaq, 2012). This form of anxiety is akin to social anxiety and can influence whether individuals choose to participate in physical activities, often in an attempt to avoid being judged for their appearance. Built on the foundation of impression manage and self-presentation theories, social physique anxiety reflects an individual's concerns about how one's physique is evaluated by others (Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Studies show that women with social physique anxiety tend to aspire to slimness, while men are more likely to seek muscularity (Hagger & Stevenson, 2010; Portman et al., 2018). Social physique anxiety is a significant factor as it has been linked to

various psychological and behavioral elements, which are related to health. For instances, social physique anxiety has found to be associated with physical self-esteem (Kowalski, Crocker, & Kowalski, 2001), and upsetting eating attitudes, (Haase & Prapavessis, 1998),

Leary and Kowalski (1990) present a bidirectional model of self-presentation, which highlight how social context drives individuals to manage how they are perceived by others. The model posits that contextual cues prompt individuals to engage in impression management, aiming to project a positive self-image (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). According to the model, people are motivated to present a favorable image of themselves whenever possible, which is referred to as impression motivation. In addition, individuals have various strategies at their disposal to shape impressions others have of them, ranging from implicit personal profile to body language, tone of voice and gestures. In situations, where physical self is prominent, for instances in the gyms and group exercise classes, individuals may expect their body to be evaluated by others, this concern leads to a motivation to avoid unfavorable self-presentation and to take actions to prevent this like skipping gym and choosing loose fitting cloths(Kowalski, Mack, Crocker, Niefer, & Fleming, 2006; Lamarche, Gammage, & Strong, 2009).

Eating attitude refers to an individual's behaviors and connection with meals (Sallet , de Alvarenga & Ferrão, de Mathis, 2010). Eating attitudes are the basis of the growth of eating issues (Naughton,, McCarthy & McCarthy, 2013). Special humans have distinctive attitudes towards eating, as teenager females are regularly cognizant regarding their body weight loss, body shape and displeased with their bodies. Usually adolescent women are at excessive threat of those meals related mindset considering the fact that they may be excessively concerned about dietary habits, body weight and physical appearance. Serious disruption in food related activities is a major determinant of eating behavior (Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005). Harmful eating patterns cause an expansion of wellbeing troubles in addition to bulimia and anorexia nervosa, and unspecified disturbed eating behaviors. Alongside eating issues, bulimia and anorexia nervosa are extra frequent in the urbanized western countries. Society expects from girls to maintain appealing body shape, sending a powerful message about beauty, as a result, teenage girl often evaluate their self-worth and identity based on what they see in the mirror or number in the weight scale (Coldwell , Oswald ,& Reed , 2009).

Third variable of the study is self-esteem. Self-esteem is described as a constructive or pessimistic technique towards identification (Rosenberg, 1965). Low self-esteem is fostered by unachievable standards of thinness (Martin and Gentry 1997; Grabe, Ward, and Hyde 2008). According to Martin, Veer, and Pervan (2007), over two-third of American adults are already above the normal weight, representing a 36% increase over the last 30 years. In addition to that fifty percent of the females are unhappy with their figure and body size as well as obesity (Grabe and Hyde 2006). Studies have suggested a negative correlation between body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem (Kostanski and Gullone 1998). Childhood and adolescence are common times when the battle with low self-esteem and unsatisfactory body image starts, and it often intensifies into harmful behavioral illnesses as disorders of eating, mood disorders and extreme anxiety (Kostanski and Gullone 1998; DeLeel et al. 2011).

Hypotheses

1. Higher level of social physique anxiety will significantly predict more maladaptive eating attitude among university students.



2. Higher level of social physique anxiety will significantly predict lower level of global self-esteem among university students.
3. Female will report significantly higher level of social physique anxiety than male students.
4. Female will report significantly more maladaptive eating attitude than male students.
5. There will be no statistically significant difference in global self-esteem between male and female.

2. Method

Research Design

The research used a correlational research design and survey method was used to examine the relationship between social physique anxiety, eating attitude and self-esteem.

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 290 adults age between 18 to 35 were taken from universities from local communities. The sample included 145 males and 145 females. For this study, stratified convenient sampling technique was used.

Assessment Measures

Social Physique Anxiety Scale: Social physique anxiety Scale was developed by Hart, Leary, Rejeski, (1989). The Social physique anxiety Scale is a 12 items scale designed to quantify the level of anxiety a person has about his or her own body. Alpha reliability of this scale is .70.

Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26). Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) is most widely used standardized tool for assessing symptoms and concerns characteristics of eating disorders. EAT-26—has been established as highly effective on its own for clinical diagnosis. The scale shows high level of internal reliability with an alpha coefficient of .83.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale: Rosenberg self- esteem scale developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965 was used. It is a 10-items scale that measures positive and negative feelings about one's self. Alpha reliability of this scale is .85.

Procedure

Online and paper pencil survey was conducted to collect data from the participants.

Data analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out by using SPSS. Linear Regression analysis was applied for measuring the relationship between predictor and outcome. An Independent sample *t*-test was employed to compare males and females on the study variables.

Results

Table 1: Liner Regression Analysis

predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	p
Social Physique Anxiety	0.41	0.09	0.45	4.55	<0.001

$R^2 = 0.202$

The regression analysis revealed that social physique anxiety significantly predicted maladaptive eating attitude, $\beta = 0.45$, $t = 4.55$, $p < 0.001$. This framework helps us understand that 20.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.202$), indicating high social physique anxiety leads to greater maladaptive eating attitude.

Table 2: Liner Regression Analysis

predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	p
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between Social physique anxiety and self-esteem, suggesting that concerns about physical appearance in social situations can undermine one's overall sense of self-worth. Additionally, studies like Yıldırım & Özgökçe (2023) have emphasized the detrimental impact of Social physique anxiety on broader well-being, often accompanied by reduced self-esteem. Together, results of the study suggests the important role of self-esteem in this context and validates regression results. The fundamental phenomenon for thriving of human life is self-esteem and it represents a person's pessimistic or optimistic approach towards themselves (Rosenberg ,1995). Social-physique anxiety is related to self-esteem, including self-evaluations (Hart et al., 1989). Research suggests that people who experience anxiety regarding their physical looks and appearance are more likely to report low self-esteem and unpleasant emotions (Brunet et al., 2010; Davison & McCabe, 2006). Furthermore, low self-esteem is consistently associated with decreased life containment, primarily because of increase negative effect (Diener & Diener, 1995; McPhie & Rawana, 2012; Ürün & Öztürk, 2020)

The hypothesis of no gender difference in global self-esteem aligns with several studies where gender differences in self-esteem were either minimal or context-dependent. While self-esteem often varies by demographics, the lack of a significant gap in your sample suggests other factors like academic environment or cultural norms—may equalize self-perception between males and females.

Conclusion

The results from the regression and group comparison analyses suggest significant relationships exist within social physique anxiety, eating attitudes, and self-esteem, with notable gender differences. Social physique anxiety negatively impacts both eating attitudes and self-esteem, with females reporting higher levels of both anxiety and more negative eating attitudes as compared to males. These findings align with the broader body of research, which suggests that societal pressures related to body image have a more substantial effect on women, leading to negative outcomes such as disordered eating behaviors and lower self-esteem. However, gender differences in self-esteem were not significant in this study, highlighting the complexity of the issue and suggesting the need for further research.

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