

Influence of appearance anxiety and self-confidence on female's exercising habit

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ABSTRACT

Regular exercise is considered as an essential and healthy behaviour that people take forward throughout their life. An increased importance and practice of regular exercise through a variety of possible ways are visible in the present society. The major accepted reasoning behind this practice is to gain self-confidence or else to manage the appearance anxiety among individuals. The study focusses to understand the influence of these factors in the exercising behaviour of individuals. The sample of the study consisted of 100 women including both exercising and non-exercising ones and the scales used were Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) and the Self-Confidence scale. Independent sample t-test and regression were carried out to reach the conclusion that appearance anxiety significantly influenced exercising behaviour and had a predictability of 13%.

Keywords: *Appearance anxiety, Exercising behaviour, Self-confidence*

Health is an individual's physical, mental, and social wellbeing. A healthy person is someone who is devoid of any physical or mental ailments and the one who enjoys good interpersonal relationships. In the fast changing world, even though there is a great focus on unhealthy habits like eating junk foods, people are recently adopting several healthy behaviours and making changes in their lifestyle due to a variety of reasons. This may be due to the increased concerns on several chronic lifestyle diseases or about one's outer appearance. People are beginning to be overly concerned about being negatively evaluated by the society based on one's looks and therefore started adopting various healthy behaviours and attitudes that contribute to the enhancement of one's outer appearance. Such rare groups of populations regardless of gender differences are surfacing nowadays.

The increasing use of social media that prompt people to showcase a better image of oneself towards a judgemental society, may be a factor influencing this matter. A better socio-economic status may be another factor that has a great influence. People who have better provisions to various healthcare facilities are more prone to adopting healthy behaviours. Everybody has a sense of self-image about oneself that includes physical, mental and social elements. Be it the outer appearance or the inner behaviours or attitudes, each and every

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person has a concern about the influence of his or her self-image on the society and also the fear of being negatively evaluated by others. Therefore, people always work hard on maintaining a positive self-image amidst a society they live in. Following a balanced diet, exercising regularly, avoiding stressful environments and sedentary lifestyles, are some healthy behavioral changes that could help in producing changes.

Self-confidence can be said to be the belief of an individual in himself or herself and their abilities, and also the freedom of doubt. Self-confidence is a vital element in an individual's life that is required to lead a happy and satisfied life. It helps people to develop the belief that they have the ability to do anything in life but many people lack this quality. Looking deep inside ourselves and attaining the belief that any obstacle in life can be overcome, accelerates the self-confidence within an individual. Self-confidence is one of the qualities that we have control over. It is something that cannot be taught. To develop self-confidence one must first believe in oneself before others. For the upliftment of one's confidence, people try to keep their image in front of others as well as within themselves a stable and perfect one. Engaging in regular exercise activities has been a common method chosen by individuals to remain fit and maintain their self-confidence. People often seek validation from society before self-validating themselves. How we look, dress, and feel are most often determined by the society rather than the individual himself or herself.

A similar related concept of major importance is the Appearance anxiety which in simple terms refers to the anxiety about the negative evaluation by others on one's physical appearance or body appearance. It is a main characteristic feature of eating disorders, such as bulimia nervosa. A person with appearance anxiety is always concerned about what if people find them unattractive. When people get into society, they get nervous of the feeling that their appearance is monitored by people surrounding them and hence when people stare at them or click their pictures, they attribute a firm belief that people are noticing their flaws, even in the absence of any supporting evidence. Social anxiety and social appearance anxiety might appear to be similar but the latter focuses only upon the evaluation of others about their physical appearance alone. Previous studies have indicated that social appearance anxiety is associated with greater levels of body dissatisfaction, social anxiety, perfectionism, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa. Overcoming this anxiety has been an essential part for the further easygoing of the life of individuals. There has been an increasing trend in the choice of exercise from the earlier period of time which includes participating in fitness centers like zumba classes, gymnasium centers, yoga classes, acrobatics, or simply go for a jog every morning and do simple workouts by themselves. The necessity to know the factors that would have led to such a change in the importance and put forth of exercising behaviour have been the base of the present study and it tries to focus upon appearance anxiety and self confidence among women.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A variety of research related to exercise behaviour along with its impact and influential factors have been worked out over years. Many researches have cleared the positive effects of exercise upon the physical and psychological health of individuals (Dishman & Jackson, 2000; Paluska & Schwenk, 2000). The positive impact of regular physical exercise on psychological variables like anxiety (Martinsen, 2008), social self-efficacy (Alemdağ, 2013), happiness (Özkara, Kalkavan, & Cavdar, 2015) and much more have been proved earlier. The study results by Özerkan have shown the significance of physical attributes and bodily attitudes as factors that influence social life and also specified the psychological importance of body image in individuals (Özerkan, 2004). Body mass index (BMI) have

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been given enough significance in relation to exercising behaviour and the study by Titchener has proved a positive relationship between BMI and appearance-based social anxiety (Titchener & Wong, 2015). This relationship was found to exist strongly in a female-only or predominantly female sample through a number of studies (Diehl, Johnson, Rogers, & Petrie, 1998). At the same time, it can't be neglected that there remain contrary studies to it (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2011). Appearance anxiety has been found to motivate the exercising behaviour among individuals through a study by Brudzynski, L. R., & Ebben, W. (2010) along with supporting studies that men have higher social appearance anxiety than women (Altintas and Asci, 2005) while men had lower social anxiety than women (Villiers, 2009). A study by Austin Rettke has cleared that the ones who exercise will have lower social physique anxiety than those who don't frequently exercise.

Aim

The aim of the present study is to investigate the influence of appearance anxiety and self-confidence on a female exercising behaviour and to understand the predictive nature of appearance anxiety on females exercising habit.

Need and significance of the study

The changing world and the equally changing society has brought about changes in the pattern and nature of behaviour of individuals. An increasing trend in the adoption of regular exercise has occurred from some point in the recent past. A lot of research is conducted focussing upon exercise psychology realising its importance in today's world. This study breaks the common assumption of doing regular exercise for the improvement of self-confidence and alongside adds that people exercise on a regular basis to keep their appearance anxiety under control. There are a variety of problems that could arise in an individual when their appearance anxiety gets out of control like the body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorder and many more. People with appearance anxiety are thus found to be satisfactory by undergoing regular exercise through any of the possible different ways. This study thus helps to inform those with appearance anxiety that regular exercise is a good way to maintain their anxiety under control. It also provides knowledge to the fact that self-confidence isn't that major factor which influences the exercising behaviour of individuals.

Hypotheses

1. There is no statistically significant mean difference in appearance anxiety between females who regularly do exercise and those who don't.
2. There is no statistically significant mean difference in self-confidence between females who regularly do exercise and those who don't.
3. Females' appearance anxiety can't predict their exercising behaviour.

Delimits of The Study

The sample size of the study was limited to just 100 women and hence can be considered as a delimiter. The questionnaires were provided to the sample in English and were reported to be difficult for the sample population to complete accurately. The sample considered in the study was selected through convenient sampling and thus has its own limitations.

Sample

The sample for the present study consists of 100 women belonging to three age ranges - below 25, between 25 and 35 and above 35, of which 50 were regular exercisers and 50 weren't. The samples containing non-exercisers were drawn randomly from the female population while the sample of exercising women were drawn from those women who

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regularly exercise either at their own houses or go to fitness centres (gymnasiums, Zumba classes, aerobics, etc.) in Thrissur district.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

- 1. Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI):** The scales used were the Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) and the Self-Confidence scale. The Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) is a 10-item 5 points liked scale developed by Veale in 2014. The AAI was found to have good convergent validity with correlations of 0.55 with the clinician rated YBOCS-BDD and 0.58 with the PHQ9. Internal consistency was high, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86
- 2. Self-confidence scale:** Self-confidence scale has been developed by Dr. Manikandan, Department of Psychology, University of Calicut. It consists of 13 items in Malayalam language with 5-point Likert type response category. The reliability of the two sub-dimensions as well as the total scale was estimated by the method of Cronbach Alpha and found to be 0.74 for the social dimension and 0.78 for the personal and 0.84 for the whole scale. The data collected using the scales were statistically analysed using t-test and regression to reach the conclusion of the study.

The objective of the present study is to investigate the influence of appearance anxiety and self-confidence on a female exercising behaviour and to understand the predictive nature of appearance anxiety on females exercising habit. Independent sample t-test was employed to understand the difference of appearance anxiety and self-confidence among exercising and non-exercising females and simple linear regression was conducted to calculate the predictive nature of appearance anxiety on females exercising behaviour.

Table No. 1 Descriptive Statistics and Independent sample t-test of Appearance anxiety Among Non-Exercising and Exercising Women

Women	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Non - Exercising women	50	8.07	5.232	-2.947	0.01
Exercising women	50	12	5.106		

The table 1 shows the mean value of appearance anxiety among non-exercising women (N= 50, M= 8.07, SD= 5.232) and exercising women (N= 50, M= 12, SD= 5.106). To test the hypothesis that exercising brings up no significant change in the mean of the women's appearance anxiety, an independent sample t-test was used to experiment the hypothesis. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's F test's (Levene, 1950) ($F(98) = 0.032, p = 0.899$). The variation between women's appearance anxiety and exercising habit was tested for statistical significance ($t(98) = -2.947, p = .01$). It's clear from the data that appearance anxiety plays a major role in the exercising habit of a woman.

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Table No. 2 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Sample t-test of Self-Confidence Among Non-Exercising and Exercising Women

Exercising	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Non - Exercising women	50	50.97	8.502	0.208	0.836
Exercising women	50	50.57	6.468		

The table 2 shows the mean value of Self-Confidence among non-exercising women (N= 50, M= 50.97, SD= 8.502) and exercising women (N= 50, M= 50.57, SD= 6.468). To test the hypothesis that exercising brings up no significant change in the mean of the women's self-confidence, an independent sample t-test was used to experiment the hypothesis. 'The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's F test' (Levene, 1950) ($F(98) = 2.065$, $p = 0.156$). The variation between women's Self-Confidence and exercising habit was tested for statistical significance, $t(98) = 0.208$, $p = 0.836$. It's clear from the data that Self-Confidence plays a major role in the exercising habit of a woman.

Table No. 3 Simple Linear Regression Between Appearance anxiety with Exercising and Social Support

Variables	R	R ²	Change R ²	β	F value	Sig.
X = Appearance anxiety	0.361	0.13	0.115	0.361	8.685	0.01
Y = Exercising						

To determine the ability to predict individuals' appearance anxiety based on their habit of exercising, simple linear regression was conducted. A substantial regression equation was discovered ($F(1,99) = 8.685$, $p = .01$), with an R^2 of 0.13 between individuals Appearance anxiety and Exercising. Women's predicted appearance anxiety is equal to $4.13 + 3.93$ where Exercising is coded as 1 = Non-Exercising women, 2 = Exercising women. Exercising women Appearance anxiety is 4.13 units higher than non-exercising women. The analysis has concluded that Exercising can predict appearance anxiety up to 13% accurately.

DISCUSSION

The major aim of the present study was to investigate the influence of appearance anxiety and self-confidence on the female exercising behaviour. Many studies have focussed upon exercise psychology and revealed a variety of factors that influence the exercising behaviour of individuals. There is always a common assumption that exercise is focussed and put into practice to maintain the self-confidence of individuals. It's taught from an early age that to remain healthy and stable both mentally and physically, exercise is an essential ingredient. Self-confidence emerges in individuals when they themselves feel to be fit to the perfect idea they have made about individuals in common over their ages. Similar factors like self-esteem, feedback and recognition, self-worth, belief in oneself and so on are also influential factors for the development of self-confidence. The results of the present study puts forth a contrary idea that exercising behaviour in women isn't influenced by self-confidence according to the population of women in Kerala. This provides a light onto the dominant thought of need for self-confidence that leads to exercising behaviour to be not the compulsorily major reason behind. It's not necessary for an individual to choose for regular

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exercise in order to be confident in life. It doesn't reveal that exercise is never a choice by people to become confident but isn't a dominant choice by people.

The results of the study also reveals that the appearance anxiety of women is pretty high among the population of exercising women when compared to their counterparts. Appearance anxiety can thus be considered as a factor that influences individuals to choose to exercise regularly in a variety of possible ways. Appearance anxiety has been of great concern under research as it's connected with the social appearance anxiety and social wellbeing of individuals. Studies have reported that men have higher social appearance anxiety than women (Altintas and Asci, 2005) while men had lower social anxiety than women (Villiers, 2009). Studies have also revealed that the Body-Mass Index (BMI) of individuals is positively related to social appearance anxiety (Titchener & Wong, 2015) and thus the maintenance of BMI is considered important by people. Proper exercise is one of the best ways to maintain the BMI of individuals and thus people adopt the exercising behaviour to control and balance their appearance anxiety. The study results of Brudzynski and Ebben (2010) have also reported a similar result. An uncontrolled appearance anxiety is found to be reasons for Body Dysmorphic Disorder, eating disorders and Body Dysmorphia. Proper control of appearance anxiety is thus an important factor in the life of every individual. Thus, regular exercise is a very beneficial activity chosen by people to manage their appearance anxiety and maintain their wellbeing. The result of regression analysis upon the prediction of appearance anxiety based on exercising behaviour reveals that it could be predicted with 13% accuracy.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that appearance anxiety influences the exercising behaviour among women and has a predictability of accuracy 13%. Self-confidence can't be considered as an influential factor according to the present study.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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