

Scaling self identity with respect to perceived socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance and personality types among male and female adolescents in the age group of 16 to 25 years

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ABSTRACT

During adolescence, individuals all over the world constantly struggle to cope up with the way they identify with themselves. The objective of this study is to explore how self-identity is related to Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and the type of personality one has. Three standardised questionnaires (Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance - 4 scale, Functions of Identity Scale and the Big Five Inventory) were distributed to a sample of 60 adolescents in the city of Mumbai. These adolescents were in the age group of 16-25 years. The results of the study showed insignificant correlation between Self-Identity with Perceived Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance in both genders. However, the subscale of Internalization (Thin/Low body fat) and Pressure (Media), Self-identity is negatively correlated with Internalization (Thin/Low body fat) and Pressures (Media) in females. The study also shows insignificant correlation between Self-Identity and Personality Types in both the genders among adolescents. However, in the subscale of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, Self-identity is positively correlated with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness in female adolescents. Further, with respect to gender differences in Perceived Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance, there is a statistically significant relation among male and female adolescents for the subscale of Internalisation (Muscular/Athletic). However, other subscales show insignificant differences with respect to gender. Personality Types show no significant difference with respect to gender.

Keywords: Self-identity, Personality types, Appearance, Socio-cultural pressure.

Self-identity refers to a person's self-conception, self-referent cognitions, or self-definition that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions, he or she occupies or a particular behaviour he or she engages in regularly. Self-identities reflect the "labels people use to describe themselves" (Biddle, Bank, and Slavings 1987, p. 326).

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The concept of self-identity is pivotal in the link between social structure and individual action. Satisfactory enactment of roles or behaviours not only confirms and validates a person's self-identity, it also reflects positively on self-evaluation and self-esteem. A person with self-reflective awareness of continuity in identity has enhanced self-acceptance and a greater ability to tolerate ambivalent emotional states that might otherwise occasion a lapse in identity coherence.

Self-Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance

Perceived Socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance refer to the perception and internalization (positive/negative) of feedback received from socio cultural factors around us with respect to appearance. Self-identities, by definition, imply action and are a set of expectations prescribing behaviour derived from a person's social position and considered appropriate by others. Satisfactory enactment of roles or behaviours not only confirms and validates a person's self-identity (Callero, 1985), it also reflects positively on self-evaluation. Today's media such as fashion magazines, social media, family, and peers have the power to multiply, intensify and exaggerate the universal features of beauty. This appears to have a negative impact on individuals' psychological health.

Self-identity and Personality Types

Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual, of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristics, behaviour and thought (Allport, 1961, p. 28). In contemporary psychology, the *Big Five traits of personality* are five broad domains which define human personality and account for individual differences. Research suggests that sense of Identity is found to be significantly related to the Big Five traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Openness) as well as four narrow personality traits (Aggression, Optimism, Tough-Mindedness, and Work Drive).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Allen and Walter (2016) in their "Personality and Body" conducted a systematic review for Personality as a correlate of body image. The results showed that high levels of Neuroticism, Lower levels of Extraversion Conscientiousness were found in negative body image. Agreeableness was not associated with body image. The findings for Conscientiousness and Openness were indeterminate. Neuroticism was related to negative body image in both women and men.

Ahmadpanah et al (2019, p.4236) tested whether higher body-dysmorphic disorder scores were associated with Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance. They expected that a link between higher BDD scores and higher perceived media pressure would be mediated by lower self-esteem (SE). 350 young Iranian adults completed questionnaires covering socio-demographic data, Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance, and SE, while experts rated participants for symptoms of body-dysmorphic Disorder. The results showed that higher BDD scores were associated with higher scores for Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance, while SE was not associated with BDD or Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance. Higher scores for Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and media pressure predicted higher BDD scores, while SE had no influence. It was concluded that among young Iranian adults, Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and BDD scores, as rated by experts', were related, while SE was not. The shared variance between symptoms of BDD and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance was low, suggesting that other factors such as mating and

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career concerns together with social feedback might be more important in explaining symptoms of body dysmorphic disorders.

Lounsbury et al (2007, p.51-70) based on a sample of 2,092 college students found that Sense of Identity was significantly related to the Big Five traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Openness) as well as four narrow personality traits (Aggression, Optimism, Tough-Mindedness, and Work Drive). Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that after controlling for age, year in school, and sex, the Big Five traits accounted for 34% of the variance in Sense of Identity, with the narrow traits accounting for an additional 16% of the variance. A combination of six Big Five and narrow traits account for over 50% of the variance in Sense of Identity for the total sample as well as for demographic subgroups referenced by age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, family characteristics, transfer, and commuter status. It was suggested that personality traits may be influencing sense of identity.

Klimstra et al (2012) related the 30 personality facets of the NEO-PI-3 to five identity dimensions. His study revealed that identity formation was especially facilitated by high levels of Conscientiousness and, to a lesser extent, also by high levels of Extraversion and low levels of Neuroticism. Openness and Agreeableness predicted greater involvement in both the positive side and negative side of the exploration process. Personality facets and their overarching domains, as well as facets underlying the same domain, were often differentially associated with identity dimensions. Additionally, we found that some personality facets both have bright and dark sides, as they predicted both proactive identity work and a weakened sense of identity.

Lenny R. Vartanian & Shanta. Dey (2013) examined the associations among self-concept clarity, thin-ideal internalization, appearance-related social comparison tendencies, and body dissatisfaction. Female university students ($N = 278$) completed self-report measures of these constructs. Structural equation modelling revealed several key findings: (a) thin-ideal internalization mediated the link between appearance-related social comparison tendencies and body dissatisfaction; (b) self-concept clarity was negatively associated with both thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison tendencies; and (c) thin-ideal internalization mediated the link between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction. These findings suggest that low self-concept clarity might contribute to body image problems because it increases women's vulnerability to thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison tendencies.

Carlson Jones et al (2004) evaluated the contributions of three dimensions of appearance culture (appearance magazine exposure, appearance conversations with friends, and peer appearance criticism) and body mass index (BMI) to internalization of appearance ideals and body image dissatisfaction. Four hundred thirty-three girls and 347 boys in Grades 7 through 10 responded to several measures on a self-report questionnaire. The results of path analyses indicated that Internalization mediated the relationship between Appearance Conversations with Friends and Body Dissatisfaction for both boys and girls. In addition, Internalization, Peer Appearance Criticism, and BMI made direct contributions to Body Dissatisfaction for boys and girls, although the strength of the relationships varied by gender. The proposed mediated relation between Appearance Magazine Exposure and Body Dissatisfaction was confirmed only for the girls. The findings provide needed information about the

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contributions of the peer appearance culture to internalization and body image disturbances for adolescent boys and girls.

Aim

To study the Self-identity in Indian adolescents and its relationship with Personality Types as well as Perceived Socio-cultural attitudes towards appearance. We also aim to achieve whether there exist any gender differences in the same.

Hypothesis

Alternative Hypotheses

- (H1). There exists a relationship between Self-Identity and Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among Indian male
- (H2). There exists a relationship between Self-Identity and Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among Indian female adolescents.
- (H3). There exists a relationship between Self-Identity and Personality Types among Indian males
- (H4). There exists a relationship between Self-Identity and Personality Types among Indian female adolescents.
- (H5). There exists a gender difference in Personality Types.
- (H6). There exists a gender difference in Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance.

Null Hypotheses

- 1. There exists no relationship between Self-Identity and Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among Indian male adolescents.
- 2. There exists no relationship between Self-Identity and Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among Indian female adolescents.
- 3. There exists no relationship between Self-Identity and Personality Types among Indian male adolescents.
- 4. There exists no relationship between Self-Identity and Personality Types among Indian female adolescents.
- 5. There exist no gender differences in Personality Types.
- 6. There exist no gender differences in Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance.

Variables

Independent Variable (IV): Self Identity

Dependent Variable (DV): Personality Types and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Technique: Convenient Sampling and Snowball Sampling methods

Size: 60 adolescents (30 male and 30 female)

Age: 16 to 24 years

Tools

- 1. The Functions of Identity Scale (Serafini, Maitland and Adams, 2006).
- 2. Socio-Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4).
- 3. Big Five Inventory (John, O.P., & Srivastava, S. 1996).

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Research design

1. Data collection was done online.
2. Repeated measures design was used and all the participants were administered the three tests.
3. T-test and quantitative correlational research designs were used.

RESULTS

Table 1. Self-Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among male adolescents.

Variables:	Internalization (Thin/Low Body fat) (mean=13.64)	Internalization (Muscular/ Athletic) (mean=14.75)	Pressure (family) (mean=9.6)	Pressure (peer) (mean=9)	Pressure (media) (mean=8.46)
Correlation Coefficients					
Self-Identity In males (mean= 58.81)	r1= -0.08	r2 = -0.03	r3 = -0.1	r4 = -0.12	r5 = -0.19
Significance	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to find the correlation between Self Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance.

Table1. shows the correlation coefficients (r) between Self Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among male adolescents. The results show statistically insignificant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.463) level of significance.

Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted & Alternate Hypothesis (H1) is rejected.

Table 2. Self-Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among Female adolescents.

Variables:	Internalization (Thin/Low Body fat) (mean=11.06)	Internalization (Muscular/ Athletic) (mean=12.4)	Pressure (family) (mean=11.53)	Pressure (peer) (mean=10.73)	Pressure (media) (mean=11.63)
Correlation Coefficients					
Self Identity In females (mean= 57.35)	r1= -0.52	r2 = -0.29	r3 = 0.02	r4 = -0.2	r5 = -0.58
Significance	* $p < 0.01$	ns	ns	ns	* $p < 0.01$

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Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients (r) between Self Identity and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among female adolescents. The results show statistically insignificant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.463) level of significance.

However, the subscale of Internalization (Thin/Low body fat) ($r_1 = -0.52$) and Pressure (Media) ($r_5 = -0.58$) show significant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.46) level of significance. This means that Self-identity is negatively correlated with Internalization (Thin/Low body fat) and Pressures (Media) in females.

Hence, the Alternative Hypothesis (H2) is accepted for the subscale of Internalization (Thin/Low body fat) ($r_1 = -0.52$) and Pressure (Media) ($r_5 = -0.58$) whereas for the other scales it is rejected.

Table 3. Co relational values between Self-Identity and Personality Types in male adolescents.

Variables:	Extraversion (mean=26.71)	Agreeableness (mean=29.46)	Conscientiousness (mean=29.35)	Neuroticism (mean=24.6)	Openness to Experience (mean=41.42)
Correlation Coefficients					
Self-Identity In males (mean= 58.81)	$r_1 = 0.19$	$r_2 = 0.001$	$r_3 = -0.09$	$r_4 = 0.23$	$r_5 = -0.003$
Significance	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients (r) between Self Identity and Personality Types among male adolescents. The results show statistically insignificant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.463) level of significance.

Hence, the null hypothesis 3 is accepted & the Alternative Hypothesis (H3) is rejected.

Table 4. Co relational values between Self-Identity and Personality Types in female adolescents.

Variables:	Extraversion (mean=28.13)	Agreeableness (mean=29.33)	Conscientiousness (mean=30.46)	Neuroticism (mean=26.53)	Openness to Experience (mean=41.36)
Correlation Coefficients					
Self-Identity In females (mean= 58.81)	$r_1 = 0.2$	$r_2 = 0.56$	$r_3 = 0.53$	$r_4 = -0.46$	$r_5 = 0.22$
Significance	ns	* $p < 0.01$	* $p < 0.01$	ns	ns

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Table 4 shows the correlation coefficients (r) between Self Identity and Personality Types among female adolescents. The results show statistically insignificant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.463) level of significance.

However, the subscale of Agreeableness ($r_2 = 0.56$) and Conscientiousness ($r_3 = 0.53$) show significant data at $p < 0.01$ (0.46) level of significance. This means that Self-identity is positively correlated with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

Hence, the Alternative Hypothesis (H4) is accepted for the subscale of Agreeableness ($r_2 = 0.56$) and Conscientiousness ($r_3 = 0.53$), whereas for the other subscales it is rejected.

Table 5. t test among Male and Female adolescents on Perceived Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance.

Variables	t value	Probability ≤ 0.01	Level of Significance	Interpretation
Internalisation (Thin/Low Body Fat)	1.66	0.25	ns	ns
Internalization (Muscular/Athletic)	*-2.99	0.005	$p < 0.01$	significant
Pressure (Family)	0.71	0.48	ns	ns
Pressure (Peers)	-0.81	0.42	ns	ns
Pressure (Media)	1.71	0.09	ns	ns

Table 5 shows the t test values for Perceived Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance in males and females. The t critical is 2.763 at $p < 0.01$ significance level.

There is a statistically significant relation among male and female adolescents for the subscale of Internalisation (Muscular/Athletic). However, other subscales show insignificant differences

Table 6. t test among Male and Female adolescents on Personality Types.

Variables	t value	Probability ≤ 0.05	Level of Significance	Interpretation
Extraversion	9.56	0.11	ns	ns
Agreeableness	16.84	1	ns	ns
Conscientiousness	20.27	0.36	ns	ns
Neuroticism	18.53	0.22	ns	ns
Openness to Experience	23.74	0.79	ns	ns

Table 6 shows the t test values for Personality Types in male and female adolescents. The t critical is 2.048 at $p < 0.05$ significance level.

There is statistically insignificant difference with respect to gender among Personality Types.

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Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and the Alternative Hypothesis (H6) is rejected.

DISCUSSION

Vartanian & Dey (2013), studied self-concept clarity as negatively associated with both thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison tendencies; thin-ideal internalization mediated the link between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction. The findings suggest that low self-concept clarity might contribute to body image problems because it increases women's vulnerability to thin-ideal internalization and appearance-related social comparison tendencies. Higher scores for Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and media pressure predicted higher BDD scores. Research has also shown that self-esteem, particularly among females, is related to others' feedback on body shape and behaviour (Ahmadpanah et al, 2019). As per the results of this paper, there is a nonsignificant correlation between Self-Identity and Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance among male adolescents. However, among female adolescents there exists a correlation for the subscale of Internalization (Thin/Muscular) and Pressure (Media). These findings add on to the growing body of research in this area of study.

With respect to Self-Identity and Personality types, the existing research shows identity formation in general was especially facilitated by high levels of Conscientiousness. Also, by high levels of Extraversion and low levels of Neuroticism. Openness and Agreeableness predicted greater involvement in both the positive side (Klimstra et al, 2013). In another research, Sense of Identity was found to be significantly related to the Big Five traits (Lounsbury, 2017). In the current paper, the results show a nonsignificant data among male adolescents. However, among female adolescents, Agreeableness ($r^2= 0.56$) and Conscientiousness ($r^3= 0.53$) show a significant correlation between Self Identity and Personality Types at $p < 0.01$ significance level being in line with Klimstra et al's findings. In a fairly recent study, Neuroticism was related to negative body image in both women and men (Allen & Walter, 2016). Another study demonstrated that gender differences were found only for Neuroticism, Agreeableness, and Extraversion (Weisberg et al, 2011). However, the results of the present paper showed insignificant data for gender differences with respect to Personality Types.

Another research evaluates the contributions of three dimensions of appearance culture (appearance magazine exposure, appearance conversations with friends, and peer appearance criticism) and body mass index (BMI) to internalization of appearance ideals and body image dissatisfaction. The results of this research show that Internalization mediated the relationship between Appearance Conversations with Friends and Body Dissatisfaction for both boys and girls. In addition, Internalization, Peer Appearance Criticism, and BMI made direct contributions to Body Dissatisfaction for boys and girls, although the strength of the relationships varied by gender. The proposed mediated relation between Appearance Magazine Exposure and Body Dissatisfaction was confirmed only for the girls (Jones et al, 2004). In this paper, gender differences have been found insignificant in other subscales except Internalization (Muscular/Athletic) at $t = -2.99$ and significance level of $p < 0.01$.

Limitations

1. The sample is restricted to only the city of Mumbai and a specific age group with 60 participants.
2. No face to face interaction with the sample
3. Due to 3 elaborate questionnaires the process of filling them could become tedious

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Relevance

Today, adolescents are constantly facing pressures from peers, media and family in regards to their appearance which might impact the way they identify with themselves. Studying these variables gives a direction to strengthen our self identity. Research shows that a major chunk of our Self-Identity is based on the personality traits that we possess; hence being aware of our personality type would give us clarity of self before the factors of caste, race, gender and ethnicity come into play. Studying the gender differences in Personality Types and Perceived Socio-cultural Attitudes towards Appearance gives us an insight into strengths and weaknesses of each gender and empower them accordingly.

Scope

Further research can be done on other age groups belonging to a larger geographical area along with other genders. More research could be done in the area of Self Identity which lacks literature. Social Self-Identity could be studied in relation to the given area of topic. Research can help provide therapy and needed interventions to those with low Self-Identity to improve their sense of self-worth.

CONCLUSION

The overall purpose of this paper was to study the relationship between Self-Identity, Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and Personality Types. Further, if there are gender differences in the three variables. Conclusively, this study proves that there is insignificant correlation between Self-Identity with Socio-Cultural Attitudes towards Appearance and Personality Types. Further, there is an insignificant gender difference among these variables. This study adds on to the existing literature and opens avenues for further scope of research in this field.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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