

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

Isha Charania^{1*}, Harshitha Krishnaveti²

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults. Although extensive research about topics like Anxiety and Emotion regulation have taken place, the complex ever changing situation of the world and the development of advanced technology and social media creates the dire need to undertake research. Through purposive sampling, a total sample of 151 (72 males and 78 females) participants divided into 13-17 age groups (n=76) and 18-22 age groups (n=75) were considered for the study. A correlational research design and between groups research design was adopted. The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Appearance anxiety. Also, Expressive suppression; one of the components of Emotion Regulation was positively correlated with both Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Appearance Anxiety. However, it is found that there is no significant correlation between Cognitive reappraisal and any other variable. The results also show a significant difference on the basis of gender in Social Appearance Anxiety, i.e, Females had more SAA than males. However, no significant difference is seen on the basis of age.

Keywords: *Social Appearance anxiety, Fear of Negative evaluation, Expressive Suppression, Cognitive Reappraisal*

Anxiety is one of the most prevalent disorders which affect people. Much light has been put on anxiety disorders over the past decade, however still anxiety disorders are complex and mysterious. Knowledge of these disorders are complicated by the fact that each one may take a different form with different symptom manifestations, from the presence of intrusive, unmanageable, negative thoughts to fainting at the sight of blood. Yet anxiety disorders have two basic emotions in common: anxiety and fear. Anxiety is the mind's and body's reaction to stressful, dangerous, or unfamiliar situations. Fear, on the other hand, is an immediate alarm reaction to the danger we face that is characterized by

¹Student, St. Francis College for Women, Telangana, India

²Professor, St. Francis College for Women, Telangana, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: May 22, 2021; Revision Received: June 02, 2021; Accepted: June 21, 2021

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

strong fight or flight tendencies. One of the most commonly observed form of anxiety in adolescents and young adults is the social appearance anxiety.

Social Appearance Anxiety

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), is characterized by a strong and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which humiliation or embarrassment may occur. While it's normal to feel some anxiety in some social situations, those afflicted by social anxiety disorder experience intense distress, self-consciousness, and fear of judgment in everyday social interactions. One type of social anxiety is Social Appearance Anxiety, in which anxiety is developed specifically about one's appearance and body shape. Much like the people with social anxiety, individuals with social appearance anxiety experience a fear of negative evaluation by others. However, social appearance anxiety focuses only on the perceived negative evaluation of one's physical appearance. Furthermore, social appearance anxiety is generally based on the stresses that society places on general physical appearance rather than a particular physical feature, such as one's hair or nose. Measures of social anxiety and negative body image are positively associated with social presence anxiety. (Claes et al., 2012). In a study by Koskina et al., (2013) social appearance anxiety was measured between women having Bulimia Nervosa and women under healthy controls. And it was found out that in Bulimia Nervosa, SAAS scores show significant positive correlation with global eating disorders subscales and dietary restraint. In Healthy Controls, SAAS scores are correlated with shape, weight, eating concern, and global eating disturbance subscales.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Social evaluations are an integral part of day-to-day interactions in social groups (Schoeneman, 1983). And the fear of being negatively evaluated is one factor that can lead to the development of social anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation can be described as a fear of being judged badly about one's personality. Cognitive theories posit that this fear may result from biased information processing, particularly when anticipating a fearful event (Clark and McManus, 2002). Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was first identified as a personality trait characterized by "concern about others' evaluations, anxiety over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative circumstances, and the fear that others would negatively evaluate oneself." (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Girls may experience more social anxiety because they are more concerned with social competence than are boys and attach greater importance to interpersonal relationships (Inderbitzen-Nolan & Walters, 2000). Young women are expected to be slim, sexual, nurturing, and compliant, while at the same time, achieve social gracefulness, maturity, and academic success. Findings revealed positive correlation between social anxiety and Brief fear of negative evaluation. The study concluded that fear of negative evaluation produces social anxiety in young adults (university students). Independent t test confirmed the significant difference among male, females as well as among undergraduate and postgraduate students on these two variables. Female students showed more fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety than male students; similarly, undergraduate students showed more social anxiety.

Murat et al., (2016) investigated the fear of negative evaluation and social appearance anxiety of futsal athletes and discovered that women athletes have a greater fear of negative evaluation than men, although no substantial association was found between other variables.

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

The findings of the study also showed that futsal players have a low social appearance anxiety and there no significant relationship between variables.

Emotional Regulation

To conceptualize an anxiety disorder, it is necessary to understand how the individual modulates or regulates one's emotions. Emotion regulation has been theorized to be a construct distinct from anxiety that incrementally explains the onset and maintenance of anxiety disorders (Cisler JM, et al, 2010). The word "Emotion regulation" refers to a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience. "Emotional regulation can be automatic or controlled, conscious or unconscious, and may have effects at one or more points in the emotion producing process." (Gross et al. 1998). Studies on emotional regulation have shown that people with lower levels of anxiety show higher emotional control and social-emotional intelligence.

Difficulties with emotion regulation become prominent when an individual feels overwhelmed with everyday emotions, not just by the experience but due to the interpretation of the emotional experience. This process is where the role of underlying cognitive assumptions comes into play and highlights the strong linkage between thoughts and emotions. A stream of positive thoughts is likely to elicit positive emotions whereas negative thoughts would have the opposite effect. Regulation of both of these types of emotions then, becomes dependent on what thought underlies them. Fear of Positive Evaluation and Fear of Negative Evaluation, in the context of social anxiety, are negative thinking practices that contribute to the development of anxiety in a person, and if these individuals lack healthy emotion regulation skills, they are unable to protect themselves from an intense sense of anxiety in social situations. (Jaismeen Dua, 2019)

Emotion regulation strategies play an important role in one's life. Two of the many emotion regulation strategies are Cognitive reappraisal and Expressive suppression. Cognitive reappraisal refers to thinking about a situation in a manner that can alter its emotional response. Expressive suppression occurs when an individual attempts to inhibit the behavior of emotional expression (Gross, 1998). Hughes et al., (2007) conducted a study that investigated the moderating role of emotion regulation (ER) in relationships between body image concerns and psychological symptomatology. A community sample of 533 boys and girls (11–20 years) completed measures assessing body image thoughts and feelings, domain-specific and general ER strategies, drive for thinness, and bulimic, depressive and anxiety symptoms. Results indicated that ER moderated relationships between body image concerns and both bulimic and depressive symptoms, but not relationships between body image concerns and drive for thinness or anxiety symptoms. Adolescents who reported frequent body image concerns were more likely to have higher levels of bulimic symptoms if they tended to use avoidance and internal dysfunctional ER strategies. Furthermore, if adolescents who had recurrent body image issues used constructive rational acceptance and internal functional interventions occasionally, they were more likely to have higher levels of depressive symptoms.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 151 participants drawn from the metropolitan city of Hyderabad, divided between 76 adolescents of 13-17 age group and 75 young adults of 18-22 age group.

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

Also, the participants were divided on the basis of Gender, with 72 males and 78 females. Purposive sampling was used.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

- **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)** was developed by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003). The ERQ is a 10-item scale designed to measure respondent's tendency to regulate their emotions in two ways; Cognitive Reappraisal (6 items) and Expressive Suppression (4 items). In all samples, ERQ cognitive reappraisal ($\alpha = .89-.90$) and expressive suppression ($\alpha = .76-.80$) scores had acceptable to excellent levels of internal consistency reliability.
- **Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE)** was developed by Leary M.R (1983). It consists of 12 items and each item is rated on a 5 – point Likert scale, ranging from Not at all characteristic of me (1) to Extremely characteristic of me (5). Factor analysis supports the construct validity of the BFNE. The measure demonstrated high internal consistency, $\alpha=.90$, and 4-week test-retest reliability, $r=.75$, in Leary's (1983a) undergraduate sample.
- **The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)** was created by Hart et.al (2008). The SAAS is a 16-item measure examining fear of situations in which one's appearance will be evaluated, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = extremely. The SAAS demonstrates good test-retest reliability, $r=.84$ and good convergent validity.

Procedure

After selecting the suitable measures, arrangements were made accordingly for data collection and various schools and colleges were contacted. The questionnaires were prepared and organized. The study was initiated after permission was sought. Informed consent was taken from the participants after which, the questionnaire was administered. On an average, the time taken to administer the questionnaire was 10 minutes.

RESULTS

Table 1. showing correlation between Emotion Regulation and Fear of negative Evaluation and Social Appearance Anxiety

Variables	FNE	SAAS
CR	.144	.096
ES	.195*	.343**

CR: Cognitive Reappraisal; ES: Expressive Suppression; FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation; SAA: Social Appearance Anxiety

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of Table 1.0 show that there is significant positive correlation between Expressive Suppression and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($r=.195$, $p<0.5$), and between Expressive Suppression and Social Appearance Anxiety ($r=.343$, $p<0.1$). These results imply that increase or decrease in one of the correlated variables leads to an increase or decrease in the variable it is correlated with.

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

Table 2. showing correlation of Social Appearance Anxiety with Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation.

Variables	FNE	CR	ES
SAAS	.544**	.096	.343**

CR: Cognitive Reappraisal; ES: Expressive Suppression; FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation; SAA: Social Appearance Anxiety

Note *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the table 2.0 show a significant correlation between Social Appearance Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($r=.544$, $p<0.1$) and between Social Appearance Anxiety and Expressive Suppression ($r=.343$, $p<0.1$). Correlation results imply that increase or decrease in one of the correlated variables leads to an increase or decrease in the variable it is correlated with. As social appearance anxiety increases or decreases, fear of negative evaluation also increases or decreases respectively.

Table 3.0 showing t ratio of dimensions of Emotion Regulation and Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Appearance Anxiety in males and females.

	Males (n=72)		Females (n=78)		T ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
CR	34.30	5.88	32.55	6.82	1.67
ES	17.65	5.94	18.52	6.16	- .882
FNE	33.52	6.66	35.70	7.61	- 1.85
SAA	37.27	13.93	42.21	14.62	-2.11*

CR: Cognitive Reappraisal; ES: Expressive Suppression; FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation; SAA: Social Appearance Anxiety

Note *t test is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of the table 3.0 showcases no significant difference in emotion regulation and Fear of negative evaluation between Males and Females. However, there is a significant difference of Social Appearance anxiety in Males and Females indicating that females have more social appearance anxiety when compared to males.

Table 4.0 showing t ratio of the dimensions of Emotion Regulation and Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Appearance Anxiety in adolescents and young adults.

	13- 17 age (n=76)		18-22 age (n=75)		T ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
CR	32.81	5.79	33.85	7.06	-.988
ES	17.93	6.16	18.25	5.93	-.324
FNE	35.63	7.89	33.69	6.36	1.66
SAA	41.46	14.54	38.32	14.22	1.34

CR: Cognitive Reappraisal; ES: Expressive Suppression; FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation; SAA: Social Appearance Anxiety

The results show no significant difference in Cognitive Reappraisal, Expressive Suppression, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Appearance Anxiety in the age groups of adolescents (13-17) and young adults (18-22).

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

DISCUSSION

Empirical data of the present study very strongly poses that there is a relationship between the variables of fear of negative evaluation and social appearance anxiety. Also, Expressive suppression is positively correlated with SAA and FNE, and there is no relation between cognitive reappraisal strategy and fear of negative evaluation and social appearance anxiety. Females have showcased higher levels of social appearance anxiety than males. However, no difference was found between the age groups of 13-17 and 18-22.

REFERENCES

- Atasoy, M. (2016). *Study on fear of negative evaluation, and social appearance anxiety of university students engaged in futsal*. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Study-on-fear-of-negative-evaluation%2C-and-social-of-Atasoy-Karabulut>
- Dua, J. (2019). *Role of Emotion Regulation in the Relationship Between Fears of Evaluation and Social Anxiety*. Retrieved from <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5465&context=theses>
- Hart, T. A., Flora, D., Fresco, D., Palyo, S., Holle, C., & Heimberg, R. (2008, March 1). *Development and Examination of the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale*. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1073191107306673>
- Iqbal, A., & Ajmal, A. (2018, November). *Fear of Negative Evaluation and Social Anxiety in Young Adults* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330514590_Fear_of_Negative_Evaluation_and_Social_Anxiety_in_Young_Adults
- Josh M. Cisler, Bunmi O. Olatunji, and John P. Forsyth. (2010, March). *Emotion Regulation and the anxiety disorders: An Integrative Review*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2901125/>
- Koskina, A. (2011, June 16). *Social appearance anxiety and bulimia nervosa*. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21989100/>
- Levinson, C., Rodebaugh, T., & Warren, C. (2013, August). *Social appearance anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of negative evaluation: Distinct or shared risk factors for social anxiety and eating disorders?*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3660512/#:~:text=Social%20appearance%20anxiety%20is%20defined,et%20al.%2C%202008>
- Linardon, J., Brennan, L., Cousins, R., & Rachel, B. (2017, October 31). *Appearance-based rejection sensitivity as a mediator of the relationship between symptoms of social anxiety and disordered eating cognitions and behaviours*. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29112884/>
- Nolan, I., S, K., & Walters, H. (2000). *Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents: Normative data and further evidence of construct validity*. Retrieved from <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2000-02388-006>
- Reichenberger, J., Smyth, J., & Blechert, J. (2018). *Fear of evaluation unpacked: day-to-day correlates of fear of negative and positive evaluation*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10615806.2017.1396826>
- ŞAHİN, E., Kumcağız, H., ERSANLI, E., & BARUT, Y. (2014, January 13). *Self-esteem and Social Appearance Anxiety: An Investigation of Secondary School Students*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED559714.pdf>
- Spokas, M., Luterek, J., & Heimberg, R. (2009, June). *Social anxiety and emotional suppression: The mediating role of beliefs*. Retrieved from

Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23769932_Social_anxiety_and_emotional_suppression_The_mediating_role_of_beliefs
- Turan, N., Kaya, H., & Yılmaz, A. (2019, February 10). *Male Nursing Students' Social Appearance Anxiety and Their Coping Attitudes*. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1557988319825922>
- Verma, K., & Kaushik, p. (2018, January 22). *Social appearance anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in college going students with acne vulgaris*. Retrieved from <http://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijpp3&volume=5&issue=2&article=005>
- Weeks JW. (2005, June). *Empirical validation and psychometric evaluation of the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale in patients with social anxiety disorder*. Retrieved from <https://www.unboundmedicine.com/medline/citation/16029105/>
- White, E. K. (2013). *The Role of Social Physique Anxiety and Social Appearance Anxiety in the Body Checking Behaviors of Male and Female College Students*. Retrieved from https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2963&context=theses_dissertations
- Winton, E. (1995, February). *Social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and the detection of negative emotion in others*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0005796794E0019F>

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Charania I. & Krishnaveti H. (2021). Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Emotion Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(2), 1525-1531. DIP:18.01.157.20210902, DOI:10.25215/0902.157