

Relationship between Appearance-Based Rejection Sensitivity, Fear of Intimacy and Body Image in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed at studying the relationship between anxious concerns of one's appearance with one's opinion on their body image and the fear of intimacy. Appearance refers to the way someone looks. Body image is the perception of one's body. To investigate the relationship between appearance-based rejection sensitivity, fear of intimacy and the subscales of body image perception. To check how strongly these variables can affect each other in the age group of 18-25 years old men and women. It was found that there is a weak relation between all the variables, i.e., appearance, body image and fear of intimacy.

Keywords: *Body Image, Fear of Intimacy, Appearance-Based Rejection Sensitivity*

The word "appearance" describes how something or someone appears to the naked eye. It includes all of the physical traits, characteristics, or qualities that the senses, especially sight, may observe or perceive. Overall, appearance pertains to the visual impression we have of someone or something when we first meet them, and it frequently influences how we initially judge, impression, or feel about them. However, it's crucial to keep in mind that a person or thing's look is only one part of them and may not always represent their underlying nature, skills, or traits.

Appearance

A person's perspective, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards their own body are referred to as their "body image." It includes how people view their size, shape, weight, and other physical characteristics, as well as how they evaluate their overall physical traits. Body image is influenced by a variety of things, including cultural values, media portrayal, peer and family pressure, personal experiences, and societal standards of beauty.

In a research study, the negative effects of an appearance risk on self-esteem and mood were protected in participants with a high Appearance-RS who were engaged in self-affirmation (thought of personal abilities) or had a secure attachment primary (thought of a close and loving connection). (Park L. , 2007)

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Body Image

Body image can significantly affect a person's sense of worth, self-worth, and general mental health. A realistic and accepting view of one's body, feeling at ease and confident in one's own skin, and recognising the individuality and diversity of various body types are all examples of having a good body image. Numerous factors, such as body mass index (BMI), family, social media, the media, peer pressure, self-esteem, and others, can have an impact on one's perception of their body. Poor body image might start at an unforeseen young age. (Webb, et al., 2017)

A negative body image, on the other hand, entails having inaccurate or unrealistic opinions of one's body, feeling unsatisfied or critical of one's looks, and engaging in hazardous behaviours or negative self-talk in an effort to achieve a projected ideal body shape or size. Body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, disordered eating habits, and other mental health problems can result from having a negative body image.

There is a tonne of research to suggest that most women and girls have unfavourable perceptions of their bodies. Many people are unhappy with their bodies, especially their size and weight, and want to lose weight. As a result, weight has been accurately referred to as "a normative discontent" for women. There is also mounting evidence that men and boys are beginning to feel unsatisfied with their bodies, though (for the time being) at a slightly lower rate than their female counterparts. Finally, body satisfaction and appearance esteem are likely the biggest contributors to overall levels of global self-esteem, meaning they play a significant role in how people feel about themselves overall. (Tiggemann, 2011)

It's critical to understand that each person's perception of their body is unique and varies tremendously. Instead of concentrating primarily on looks, promoting a healthy body image entails encouraging body acceptance, appreciating body variety, challenging false beauty standards, supporting self-care and self-compassion, and advocating a balanced approach to health and well-being.

Fear of Intimacy

The psychological and emotional breakdowns known as fear of intimacy, also known as intimacy avoidance or intimacy phobia, is characterised by a persistent and unjustified fear or reluctance to enter into close, intimate relationships or to allow oneself to be emotionally open with others. People who struggle with a fear of intimacy could also harbour a deep-seated dread of rejection, abandonment, or emotional injury, which makes them steer clear of or sabotage close relationships.

Numerous factors, such as past traumatic experiences, attachment type, low self-esteem, fear of dependency, fear of losing independence or control, fear of engulfment, or unfavourable attitudes about relationships, can have an impact on how the fear of intimacy presents itself and influences how it may be experienced. This fear can make it difficult for a person to trust others, to be vulnerable emotionally, to open up to others, or to maintain emotional distance in relationships.

Having a fear of intimacy can significantly affect a person's capacity to establish and sustain happy relationships. It can obstruct emotional connection and personal development, as well as cause feelings of loneliness, isolation, and relationship unhappiness.

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A 2012 study found that participants who were more sensitive to rejection because of their appearance were more likely to report beliefs and behaviours that resembled BDD symptoms, believe that cosmetic surgery is acceptable for both interpersonal and intrapersonal reasons, and believe that they would consider getting cosmetic surgery in the near future. (Calogero, Park, Rahemtulla, & Williams, 2012)

In a 2004 study it was found that women had worse body image concerns as compared to men and bigger women had more concerns than lighter. (Cash, Phillips, Santos, & Hrabosky, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The study aimed at checking the following hypotheses:

1. It was hypothesized that the fear of intimacy is positively affected by the appearance-based rejection sensitivity.
2. It was hypothesized that the body image perception positively affects one's appearance-based rejection sensitivity.
3. It was hypothesized that the fear of intimacy is positively affected with body image perception.
4. It was hypothesized that sex-related differences would be present for both the preceding hypotheses, where women will be more affected than men in both cases.
5. Lastly, it was hypothesized that the sub scales of body image individually have positive relation with appearance-based rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy.

Sample

Participants were 103 young adults and consisted of both men and women of all races aged between the range of 18-25 years.

Instruments

1. **Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity (Appearance-RS) Scale (Long and Short Form)**
Using a 15-item questionnaire, the Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity (Appearance-RS) Scale (Long and Short Form) (Park L. E., 2013) examines participants' character processing system, which is marked by anxious fears and the anticipation of being rejected because of their physical attractiveness. The complete 15-item ARS scale is evaluated using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from highly unlikely to very likely. The Appearance-RS scale was found to be a reliable, valid scale for both genders. The scale shows a high degree of internal consistency and test-retest reliability, which are signs of a rather strong and coherent personality processing system. Self-esteem, appearance CSW, attachment styles, personal-RS, neuroticism, and self-rated beauty are dispositional factors that are expectedly connected to appearance-RS.
2. **Body Self-Image Questionnaire- Short Form (BSIQ-SF)**
Body Self-Image Questionnaire- Short Form (BSIQ-SF) (Rowe, 2015) is a 27 statement items questionnaire including sub-scales. The Body Self-Image Questionnaire- Short Form (BSIQ-SF) is a 27-item questionnaire with sub-scales (Rowe, 2015). A 5-point Likert scale response of a (Not at All True of Myself), b (Slightly True of Myself), c (About Halfway True of Myself), d (Mostly True of Myself), or e (Completely True of Myself) is given after each brief sentence that makes up a BSIQ item. These responses are evaluated from 1 to 5, with the exception of a few negatively worded sentences that require reverse grading.

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3. **Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS)** Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) (Descutner & Thelen, 1991) is a 23-item questionnaire used to measure fear of intimacy, which is defined as a person's limited ability to share deeply intimate thoughts and feelings with a highly valued individual due to worry.

Procedure

Only young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 were used to recruit participants. Online media was used to disseminate information about the study, including all of its guidelines and objectives. Each subject gave their informed consent. They were prompted to enter their name, age, and sex as well as other demographic information. Participants answered to three distinct series of questionnaires after deciding to take part in the study, which they did online.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

2. Regression

2.1 Regression of Fear of Intimacy

The scores for fear of intimacy were found to be, $R^2 = .256$, $F(1, 83) = 2.484$, $p = .013$. This shows that the relation between the variables is weak.

	Male (N=30)		Female (N=53)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Appearance-RS	11.6600	3.56842	9.7635	3.46646
Fear Of Intimacy Scale	96.3000	13.41679	95.6792	16.59197
Overall Appearance Evaluation	8.7000	1.95024	9.4717	2.10862
Health Fitness Influence	9.2667	2.31834	9.64115	2.48916
Investment In Ideals	9.4333	2.56882	9.0377	2.88205
Health-Fitness Evaluation	8.8000	3.06707	9.6038	2.55959
Attention To Grooming	8.5000	2.81315	8.7925	2.64836
Height Dissatisfaction	9.4667	2.95639	7.8679	3.86323
Fatness Evaluation	7.2333	3.07025	7.1132	3.57696
Negative Affect	7.3000	3.28161	6.5660	3.61891
Social Dependence	8.0333	2.35597	7.3208	2.76498

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Fear of Intimacy with other variables.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Fear of Intimacy	95.9036	15.41745	83
Appearance-RS	10.4490	3.60051	83
Overall Appearance Evaluation	9.1928	2.07457	83
Health Fitness Influence	9.5060	2.42132	83
Investment in Ideals	9.1807	2.76363	83
Health-Fitness Evaluation	9.3133	2.76268	83
Attention to Grooming	8.6867	2.69565	83
Height Dissatisfaction	8.4458	3.62664	83
Fatness Evaluation	7.1566	3.38390	83
Negative Affect	6.8313	3.49850	83
Social Dependence	7.5783	2.63245	83

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Table 3. Model Summary for Fear of Intimacy with other variables.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
						R Square Change	F Change
1	.506 ^a	.256	.153		14.18718	.256	2.484

a. Predictor: (Constant), SD, HFI, HFE, ABRs, AG, NA, HD, OAE, II, FE

Model	Change Statistics		
	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	10	72	.013

a. Predictor: (Constant), SD, HFI, HFE, ABRs, AG, NA, HD, OAE, II, FE

Table 4. ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4999.346	10	499.935	2.484	.013 ^b
Residual	14491.882	72	201.276		
Total	19491.229	82			

a. Dependent Variable: Fear of Intimacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), SD, HFI, HFE, ABRs, AG, NA, HD, OAE, II, FE

Table 5. Coefficients^a for Fear of Intimacy with other variables.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	76.899	8.847		8.692	.000
Appearance-based RS	.886	.504	.207	1.759	.083
Overall Appearance Evaluation	1.194	1.065	.161	1.121	.266
Health Fitness Influence	-2.029	.931	-.319	-2.179	.033
Investment In Ideals	-.111	.808	-.020	-.137	.892
Health-Fitness Evaluation	.774	.765	.139	1.011	.315
Attention To Grooming	.581	.801	.102	.725	.471
Height Dissatisfaction	.619	.589	.146	1.052	.297
Fatness Evaluation	.255	.690	.056	.370	.713
Negative Affect	1.551	.677	.352	2.292	.025
Social Dependence	-1.430	.990	-.244	-1.445	.153

2.2 Regression for Appearance based Rejection Sensitivity

The scores for appearance-based rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy predicted, $R^2 = .285$, $F(1, 83) = 2.864$, $p = .005$. This shows that the relation between the variables is weak.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for Appearance based Rejection Sensitivity with other variables.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appearance-RS	10.4490	3.60051	83
Fear of Intimacy	95.9036	15.41745	83
Overall Appearance Evaluation	9.1928	2.07457	83
Health Fitness Influence	9.5060	2.42132	83
Investment In Ideals	9.1807	2.76363	83
Health-Fitness Evaluation	9.3133	2.76268	83
Attention To Grooming	8.6867	2.69565	83
Height Dissatisfaction	8.4458	3.62664	83
Fatness Evaluation	7.1566	3.38390	83

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Negative Affect	6.8313	3.49850	83
Social Dependence	7.5783	2.63245	83

Table 7. Model Summary for Appearance based Rejection Sensitivity with other variables.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
					R Square Change	F Change
1	.533 ^a	.285	.185	3.25006	.285	2.864

Model	Change Statistics		
	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	10	72	.005

a. Predictor: (Constant), SD, HFI, HFE, FoI, AG, NA, HD, OAE, II, FE

Table 8. ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	302.493	10	30.249	2.864	.005 ^b
Residual	760.530	72	10.563		
Total	1063.023	82			

a. Dependent Variable: Appearance-RS

b. Predictors: (Constant), SD, HFI, HFE, FoI, AG, NA, HD, OAE, II, FE

Table 9. Coefficients^a for Appearance based Rejection Sensitivity with other variables.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-2.97	2.901		-.102	.919
Fear of Intimacy	.047	.026	.199	1.759	.083
Overall Appearance Evaluation	.027	.246	.015	.108	.914
Health Fitness Influence	.356	.216	.240	1.647	.104
Investment In Ideals	.178	.184	.136	.966	.337
Health-Fitness Evaluation	-.059	.176	-.045	-.336	.738
Attention To Grooming	-.124	.184	-.093	-.678	.500
Height Dissatisfaction	.174	.134	.175	1.293	.200
Fatness Evaluation	-.114	.158	-.108	-.726	.470
Negative Affect	-.255	.158	-.247	-1.613	.111
Social Dependence	.495	.222	.362	2.224	.029

DISCUSSION

The current study concentrated on analyzing the connections between body image, intimacy phobia, and appearance-based rejection sensitivity. The study also computed regression, the scores for appearance-based rejection sensitivity and fear of intimacy predicted, $R^2 = .285$, $F(1, 83) = 2.864$, $p = .005$. The scores for regression of fear of intimacy were found to be, $R^2 = .256$, $F(1, 83) = 2.484$, $p = .013$.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to take into account the limitations of the current investigation. First off, the study only comprised a small number of subjects, some of whom were excluded from the computation of gender variations because they were outliers. Second, the study's cross-sectional design precludes the use of simple explanations. Thirdly, because the data was gathered using an online platform, bias may have been introduced by a variety of social and intrapersonal factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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