

## Prime Facets of Body Image Concerns: Peer Pressure and Social Avoidance

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to enlighten how peer-pressure and social avoidance/distress is related with various dimensions of body image (appearance, health, & self-classified weight) among adolescent girls. A total of 125 college adolescent girls were taken from rural area for this study. Purposive random sampling design was used for result analysis. The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), Peer Pressure Scale and Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) were administrated regarding data collections. Results disclosed a significant negative relationship with body image concerns and peer pressure among adolescent college girls.

**Keywords:** *Body Image, Peer Pressure, Social Avoidance, Distress*

An individual's own subjective experience of their body, a complex multifaceted construct (affective, cognitive, behavioral, & perceptual) consisting of perceptions about own-self, attitudes and evaluations of how we bodily appear is termed as body image. It is a human being's thought/feeling which can change in positive way through social impact (Grogan, 2006). In every individual, adolescence period is a phase of most rapid physical and emotional development. Adolescent females are aware of the social influences, about socio-cultural ethics regarding body appearance and image. Numerous bodily and psychological changes occurred in the adolescence phase in females that influence, and is influenced by body image, for example gender roles, and gender identity formation. It is an important mental health concern for adolescents for the reason that it includes how they feel and see about themselves (Fallon, 1990). Additionally, the feelings and thoughts are developed by females about their physique will follow them throughout adulthood and these types of transition is particularly more hectic for females. It is a fact that age of 12-20 years is of utmost importance for body image perception development in individual, peak levels of body dissatisfaction among girls (Adams, Katz, Beauchamp, & Cohen, 1993). This pervasive body dissatisfaction among girls has been described as a "normative discontentment" (Levine & Smolak, 2002).

Numerous results, such as, have suggested that dissatisfaction with body is a major aspect in development and continuation of eating disorders (Stice et al. 2002). Heywood et al. (2006)

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stated in his study that body dissatisfaction was related with dieting behaviors, tactics to decreasing weight, control on diet and bulimia in females. In other words, the slim body in current societies plays a significant role for the development of negative emotions associated with body dissatisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Groesz, Levin, & Murnen, 2002). Appearance evaluation is an important aspect during adolescence strongly associated with the body image. Adolescents always want to become centre of attraction seeing that they effort to develop a unique style according to their socio-cultural norms with the same age group in which they are identified (American Psychological Association, 2002). Formation of body image perception in adolescent girls is directly influenced by culture and norms of society. The socio-cultural information related to appearance comes from social media images that originate in beauty advertisements, television, movies, magazines, internet sources and peer groups (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002).

Peer group and social pressure play a vital role in the body image development in girls during adolescence, also peer pressure influences the eating habits of girls and frustration towards their body (Sullivan, 1953; Liebermann et al., 2001). Varied researches have revealed the upshot of peer mockery on body image and disorderly eating among girls during puberty (Grigg, Bowman, & Redman, 1996; Mukai, 1996). Females who suffered joking about their body weight /appearance during adolescence experienced more body dissatisfaction in adulthood (Cash & Green, 1986). Moreover, researches have also come out with the fact that females at puberty, having a more slim body and good-looking personality experience healthy relationship with peer group along with improved societal approval as compared to overweight girls (Langlois & Stephan, 1977; Lerner, 1969). Preceding literary works also lead to the belief that 80% of adolescent girls converse about their poundage, figure, body structure and diet intake and control among their age groups (Levine & Smolak, 2002).

Agitation of social conditions in addition to humiliation or embarrassments in social situations is referred to social anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). It is conceded as a salient constituent for apprehension of individual's interpersonal behavior and psychological functioning (Leary, 1983). Gross and Rosen (1988) study stated that females with distorted eating behavior were inclined to have a high need of social appreciation, experience of social anxiety and low level of self-esteem. Additionally, the findings of a research conducted by Godart, Flament, Lecrubier and Jeammet (2000) revealed that social anxiety is a predicting factor of disordered eating symptoms. Hart et al. (2008) suggested in their study that overall body appearance is strongly related with social phobia than figure because of collective pressure on overall beauty of body. In adolescence phase, lower social support and experience to peer ridicule behaviors enhance mental distress, as well as anxiety and depression (Boivin, Hymel, & Bukowski, 1995; Vernberg et al., 1992).

### *Objective*

To analyse the interdependence of body image, peer pressure in addition to social avoidance.

### **Hypothesis**

- H1. Body image concerns will negatively associate with peer pressure and social avoidance.
- H2. Peer pressure will positively associate with social avoidance.

## METHOD

### *Sample*

The current research work was conducted among college going girls belonging to rural areas. Formerly, five colleges were located in rural areas randomly selected from Haryana (India). Initially a total of 125 participants (rural area college girls) pursuing their bachelor degree with age ranged 17 to 20 years ( $M=18.62$ ,  $SD = .08$ ) were randomly selected using random sampling method. There were 40 students studying in the first year, 51 in the second year and 34 girls studying in third year. These girls were 17 years old constituting 13%, 18 years old were 30%, 19 years: 40% and 17% girls were 20 years old. The Body height for all participants ranged from 140 cm to 172 cm and body weight ranged from 37 kg to 68 kg.

### *Procedure*

Present day analysis endeavors for to explore the interrelation between body image (appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, health evaluation, health orientation, & self classified weight), peer pressure and social avoidance. The investigation was carried out by means of a self administrated questionnaire using scales discussed below. Random sampling was used for the data correlation.

### *Measures*

- **The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ):** This Questionnaire is a 69-item self-report inventory with the first fifty-seven items answered in a five point Likert scale form for the assessment of cognitive, behavioral, and affective components of body image (Cash, 2000). MBSRQ norms for subscales are based on the mean and SD. The reliabilities of the MBSRQ subscales were based on Cronbach's alpha and one month test-retest reliability. Reliabilities in the sub-dimensions pertaining to females are: Appearance Evaluation (.88, .91), Appearance Orientation (.85, .90), Fitness Evaluation (.77, .79), Fitness Orientation (.90, .94), Health Evaluation (.83, .79), Health Orientation (.78, .85), Illness Orientation (.75, .78), Body Areas Satisfaction (.73, .74), Overweight Preoccupation (.76, .89), and Self-Classified Weight (.89, .74). The test-retest correlations are derived from college going student participants (MBSRQ Users' Manual, 2000).
- **Peer Pressure Scale:** This Scale was developed by Sandeep Singh and Sunil Saini, S. (2010). This tool is capable of being dispensed independently and in a small group as well. It is a self-report, uni-dimensional and 5-point Likert scale. It takes around 20 minutes to answer all the items of the scales. The instruction regarding the filling up of the scale is given on the question sheet of the scale. Range for minimum to maximum scores lies between 25-125 where high score depicts high peer pressure whereas low score represents less peer pressure. Test –Retest reliability 0.33, internal consistency 0.77 and Predictive validity was found with HIV risk perception 0.22 and attitude towards alcohol and drugs abuse 0.22 significant at .01 levels.
- **Social Avoidance and Distress scale:** Social Avoidance and Distress scale (SAD) (Watson & Friend, 1969) is a functional instrument which was developed to quantify social anxiety. It consists of 28 items based on true-false format which measures two aspects of anxiety i.e., four experiences- distress, discomfort, fear, anxiety and the avoidance of social situations. High scores are directly proportional to higher levels of social anxiety. The range for internal consistency estimate counts from 0.77 to 0.93 (Caplan, 2007; Watson & Friend, 1969).

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The present investigation is intended to find out the correlation between body image, peer pressure as well as social avoidance amid college going females. Pearson product moment method was applied in accordance with the objectives of the investigation.

A perusal of correlations revealed in Table –I demonstrated that three dimensions of body image as: appearance evaluation, fitness evaluation and fitness orientation correlated negatively with peer pressure. A significant association between appearance evaluation and peer pressure has been found with the calculated correlation value as  $-.30, p < 0.01$ . Another dimension dedication has also been found to be correlated with the peer pressure as shown in table-I, and has been found that dedication is significantly correlated peer pressure with the correlation value as  $-0.24, p < 0.01$ . Peer relations dedicated to the concerns of attractiveness, good-looks and appearance leads to dissatisfaction with body (Clark & Triggerman 2006).

*Table I Mean, standard deviations and correlations among the measures of study (N=125)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Appearance Evaluation	-						
2. Appearance Orientation	.31**	-					
3. Fitness Evaluation	.08	-.09	-				
4. Fitness Orientation	.45**	.07	.28**	-			
5. Self Classified Weight	.13	.09	-.12	.00	-		
6. Peer Pressure Scale	-.30**	-.08	-.24**	-.22*	.01	-	
7. Social Avoidance scale	-.09	.01	-.10	-.14	.29**	.11	-
M	25.86	28.38	10.38	43.84	2.90	68.53	16.76
SD	4.12	7.66	1.97	5.17	0.46	14.77	2.97

*\*Significant at .05level; \*\*Significant at.01 level.*

The fitness orientation, a facet of body image has been found to be negatively associated with the peer pressure with a calculated correlation value  $-.22, p < 0.05$ . Similar results were found in the various studies and concluded that females reported about being socially assessed via physical appearance along with peer strains adhere to appearance prospect (Merten, 1996; Milkie, 1999; Paxton, Schutz, Wertheim, & Muir, 1999; Taylor et al., 1998). Lieberman, Gauvin, Bukowski, and White (2001) directed an extensive review and concluded that components of peer pressure were significantly correlated to predict eating behavior, symptoms of dieting, and body esteem. Similar results obtained from a study by Paxton, Schultz, Wertheim, and Muir (1999), suggested that peer group attitudes contributed notably to eating behavior, prediction towards body image concerns, and signs of dieting on Australian adolescents’ girls.

Furthermore, it can be observed from the results in Table-I that self-classified weight, a dimension of body image and social avoidance have a positive and significant correlation; i.e.,  $0.29, p < 0.01$ . But social avoidance was not significantly related with another four dimensions of body image as well as with peer pressure. Hereby conclusion suggests that peer pressure is significantly related with the body satisfaction among adolescent girls whereas social avoidance and distress are not significantly associated with body image among rural girls.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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