

## Social Physique Anxiety, Self-esteem and Depression among College going Students: A Gender Comparison

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to examine the gender difference in social physique anxiety, self-esteem, and depression among college going undergraduate students (Male=50, Female=50) ranging from 18 to 21 years. The present study was a cross-section study. The research design in the present study was explorative in nature. Participants were randomly selected for the study. Social physique anxiety, Beck's depression inventory (BDI-II), and Rosenberg self-esteem scales were administered. A significant gender difference was not found in social physique anxiety. However, mean score suggested that female students (Mean 32.10, SD=6.43) perceived slightly more social physique anxiety than the male student (Mean =31.27, SD=5.514). In self-esteem, the significant gender difference was not found in self-esteem between both groups. An independent samples test indicated that the scores on self-esteem were significantly higher in male (M=18.82, SD= 5.02) than female respondents (M=17.72, SD=4.62),  $t = 1.139$ ,  $p = 0.258$ . A significant gender difference in depression was found between both the groups. Female respondents (M=19.06, SD=10.56) have slightly higher score in depression than male respondents (M=17.72, SD= 4.62), with a  $t$  value of  $-2.604$  and  $p = 0.011$ . Social physique anxiety has a negative correlation with self-esteem ( $r = -.077$ ) and positive correlation with Depression ( $r = .035$ ). Similarly, self-esteem was negatively correlated with social physique anxiety ( $r = -.077$ ) and has a significant positive correlation with depression ( $r = -.377$ ). Depression is also found positively correlated with social physique anxiety ( $r = 0.35$ ) and has a negative significant correlation with self-esteem ( $r = .377$ ). There is a need for providing psychological care among college going students to deal with social physique anxiety and other mental health issues.

**Keywords:** *Social Physique Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Depression*

Leary & Kowalski (1990) described social physique anxiety as a socio-psychological variable, which exhibits the feeling of distress about own physique while one perceives to be arbitrated by others (Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). According to

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the American Psychiatric Association (2000), social physique anxiety is very similar to social phobia or social anxiety disorder, in which individuals carry a fear of being negatively evaluated by others and those who are very concern about this negative evaluation are found to develop more negative, distorted mental representation about their appearance (Turk et al., 2008). Females have found to be reported with greater social physique anxiety than males (Hart et al., 1989; Kowalski, Mack, Crocker, Niefer, & Fleming, 2006). Another gender analyses disclosed that females are more prone to anxious towards physique than male (Eklund, Kelley, & Wilson, 1997; Frederick & Morrison, 1996; Haase & Prapavessis, 1998; Kruisselbrink, Dodge, Swanburg, & MacLeod, 2004; Lantz, Hardy, & Ainsworth, 1997; Mack, Strong, Kowalski, & Crocker, 2007) even in younger populations (Hagger et al., 2007; Smith, 2004); though, it was found, much of the research on social physique anxiety has been focused on female (Chad & Spink, 1996; Eklund & Crawford, 1994; Eklund, Mack, & Hart, 1996; Haase & Prapavessis, 2001; Hausenblas & Mack, 1999; Kowalski et al., 2001; McAuley & Burman, 1993). Consequently, an individual's physical appearance has a numerous impact on physical and psychological and wellbeing (Cafri et al., 2005; Flament et al., 2012; Menees, Grieve, Mienaltowski, & Pope, 2013). Anxiety towards physique is found to be associated with various factors including self-esteem, body image, dissatisfaction with appearance, etc. (Hagger & Stevenson, 2009). Self-esteem a was found as a noteworthy predictor of social physique anxiety in female athletes (Martin et al, 1997). According to, Tok, Tutor & Morali, 2010, body fat percentage (BFP) has a significant role in making the level of social physique anxiety high, and which (SPA) is responsible for lowering self-esteem.

Although Davison et al, (2006) stated that both male and female perceive self-esteem differently on their basis of social physique anxiety, in the female, the reason behind low self-esteem signified their importance of others evaluation towards their bodies whereas, general attractiveness was found as a strong predictor of men's self-esteem levels. In another study conducted by Russell and Cox, (2003), also described that body image dissatisfaction and social physique anxiety are high among Caucasian college-aged females lessening levels of self-esteem. Similarly, between the African and American male with alike BMI levels, Caucasian males recounted with a high level of social physique anxiety and low self-esteem. A study carried out among dental students in Udaipur, India, revealed that low self-esteem was strongly negatively correlated with depression; and it also stated the existence of gender comparison in self-esteem and depression. Male participants reported a high score in self-esteem and a less score in depression (Nilesh, Vijay, Gunjan, Prashad et al, 2018). Therefore, this present study was carried out in Guwahati city, Assam, on both male and female group to see the gender differences in social physique anxiety, self-esteem and depression.

### ***Objectives:***

1. To assess and compare social physique anxiety among college-going students on the basis of gender.
2. To study and compare the level of depression among college-going students on the basis of gender.
3. To explore and compare self-esteem among college-going students on the basis of gender.
4. To see the correlation between social physique anxiety, self-esteem and depression among college going students.

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### *Hypotheses:*

1. There will be no difference in social physique anxiety among college-going students on the basis of gender.
2. There will be no difference in depression among college-going students based on gender.
3. There will no difference in self-esteem among college-going students on the basis of gender.
4. There will be no correlation between social physique anxiety and depression among college going students.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The present study was a cross-section study. The research design in the present study was explorative in nature. Colleges affiliating to Gauhati University were selected on the basis of convenient sampling. A simple random technique was used in the selection of sample students (lottery method). The sample of the study consisted of 50 Male and 50 Female undergraduate students (only Science stream) were selected for the current study. Students of both gender, aged between 18-21 (Undergraduate students of Science) and those willing to give consent were included.

### *Tools for Data collection:*

1. **Socio-demographic data sheet:** A socio-demographic data sheet was used to collect information's regarding age, gender, religion etc
2. **The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965):** The self-esteem scale, which measures global feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. This 10-item scale and Scores range from 10-40, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem in the respondents.
3. **Beck's Depression Inventory-II (Beck, A.T., Steer, R.A., & Brown, G.K. (1996):** Manual for the Beck Depression Inventory-II) The BDI-II is a widely used 21-item self-report inventory measuring the severity of depression in adolescents and adults (13-80 Years). Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 3, based on the severity of each item.
4. **Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS) (R. Leary, 2013):** Social physique anxiety scale (SPAS) a 12 item self-report scale to measure social anxiety related to the physique. SPAS were developed by M. R. Leary (2013). It demonstrated both high internal and test-retest reliability.

### *Procedure*

Prior to the beginning of the current research, colleges were selected in Guwahati city according to the convenient sampling and then permission was taken from the college administration. 100 samples of students including 50 males and 50 female students were selected by lottery method using simple random sampling technique and those who were selected they have explained the nature and objectives of the study. After that, they were asked to give consent and only after getting their consent to participate in the study and Participants are assessed with a socio-demographic datasheet and followed by applying Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Beck's depression inventory and social physique anxiety scale. Obtained data were analysed in SPSS software system.

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### *Statistical analysis*

Data were analysed using SPSS version 21 software system. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation and t-test were derived for the sample responses to check the differences of social physique anxiety, depression and self-esteem in both genders (Male and Female). Again chi-square was applied against the socio-demographic profile. Pearson correlation method was implemented to determine the degree to which all the variable including social physique anxiety depression and self-esteem were correlated.

### *Ethical consideration:*

Purpose of the study was purely research oriented. There was no intention to harm others self-respect. Confidentiality was maintained regarding the results

## RESULTS

Table (1) shows the gender distribution of the participants. In the total sample of 100, both male and female respondents were in equal number i.e. 50% respectively. In table 2, gender comparisons in the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are shown. In birth order domain, 34% of male respondents were 1st born, 12% middle born, 34% last born and 20 % were only children. While in the female, 50% were 1st born, 14% were middle born, 34% were last born and only 2% were only Child. In this present study it was found, 46% male students stayed at home, 26% at the hostel, 16% in rent alone and 12% stayed in rent with his friends. Same way, 50% of female students stayed at home with family and 38% in the hostel, 4% stayed alone in rent, and 8 % female stayed in rent with friends. From all the male participants, 64% belongs to general category, 24% were from OBC category, 2% were SC category and 10% were ST and from all Female participants 44% were general, 38% were OBC, 6% were SC, and 12 % were from ST category. In both group majority of the students belongs to Hindu religion i.e. male Hindu students were 84% and female 92% rest only 6% male and 1% female were Muslim, 6% female were Christian whereas no Christian students found among all the participants, and 4% male participants reported as others religion. From the participants, it was found that 90% of male students were non-tribal and only 5% were reported as tribal, same way, 88% of female students were non-tribal and 12% were tribal. In the type of family variable, 62.0% male has reported that they belong from a nuclear family, 18% from joint family and 20% of male students had a single parent. Similarly, 70% female student family pattern was nuclear, 22% were having a joint family and 8% had a single parent. To determine the gender differences in sociodemographic table chi-square method was applied. According to the findings from table 2, significant gender differences were found only in birth order variable ( $\chi^2=8.964$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.030$ ) and in religion ( $\chi^2=8.753$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.033$ ).

Table- 3, showed no significant difference in age between both group ( $p=.302$ ,  $t=1.037$ ,  $df=98$ ). In female respondents,  $M=19.22$ ,  $SD=0.67$  and male respondents  $M=19.38$ ,  $SD=0.85$  were found.

Table 4 shows the gender difference in social physique anxiety. An Independent t-test was applied to find out the significant gender difference in two groups. A significant gender difference was not found in social physique anxiety. However, mean score suggested that female students (Mean 32.10,  $SD=6.43$ ) perceived slightly more social physique anxiety than the male student (Mean =31.27,  $SD=5.514$ ).

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In table 5 has shown a significant difference in self- esteem between both groups. An independent samples test indicated that the scores on self-esteem were significantly higher in male (M=18.82, SD= 5.02) than female respondents (M=17.72, SD=4.62),  $t= 1.139$ ,  $p= 0.258$ . Table 6 shows a significant difference in depression between both the groups. Female respondents (M=19.06, SD=10.56) have slightly higher score in depression than male respondents (M=17.72, SD= 4.62), with a  $t$  value of  $-2.604$  and  $p= 0.011$ .

In table 7, Social physique anxiety has a negative correlation with self-esteem( $r=-.077$ ,) and a positive correlation with Depression ( $r= .035$ ). Similarly, self –esteem was negatively correlated with social physique anxiety( $r=-.077$ ) and has a significant positive correlation with depression ( $r=-.377$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). Depression is also found positively correlated with social physique anxiety ( $r=0.35$ ) and has a negative significant correlation with self-esteem ( $r=.377$ ,  $p=0.01$ ).

**Table 1: Gender distribution**

Variables		N=100	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	50
	Female	50	50

**Table 2: Socio demographic profile**

Variables		Male	Female	$\chi^2$	df	p
Birth order	1 <sup>st</sup> born	17(34.0%)	15(50.0%)	8.964	3	.030
	Middle born	6(12.0%)	7(14.0%)			
	Last born	17(34.0%)	17(34%)			
	Only child	10(20%)	1(2.0%)			
Current stay	With family at home	23(46.0%)	25(50.0%)	5.208	3	.157
	Hostel	13(26.0%)	19(38.0%)			
	Rent alone	8(16.0%)	2(4.0%)			
	Rent with friends	6(12.0%)	4(8.0%)			
Caste	General	32(64.0%)	22(44.0%)	4.523	3	.210
	OBC	12(24.0%)	19(38.0%)			
	SC	1(2.0%)	3(6.0%)			
	ST	5(10.0%)	6(12.0%)			
Religion	Hindu	42(84.0%)	46(92%)	8.753	3	.033
	Muslim	6(12.0%)	1(2.0%)			
	Christian	0(0.0%)	3(6.0%)			
	Others	2(4.0%)	0(0.0%)			
Ethnicity	Tribal	5(10.0%)	6(12.0%)	.102	1	.749
	Non tribal	45(90.0%)	44(88.0%)			
Types of family	Nuclear	31(62.0%)	35(70.0%)	3.014	2	.222
	Joint	9(18.0%)	11(22.0%)			
	Single parenting	10(20.0%)	4(8.0%)			
	Extended	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)			

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**Table 3: Gender difference in age**

Variable	Male		Female		t	df	p
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD			
Age	19.38	.85452	19.22	.67883	1.037	98	.302

p>0.05

**Table 4: Gender difference in social physique anxiety**

Variable	Male		Female		t	df	p
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD			
Social physique anxiety	31.72	5.51	32.10	6.43	-.317	98	.752

p>0.05

**Table 5: Gender difference in self esteem**

Variable	Male		Female		t	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Self esteem	18.82	5.025	17.72	4.624	1.139	98	.258

p> 0.05

**Table 6: Gender difference in depression**

Variable	Male		female		t	df	P
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD			
Depression	17.72	4.624	19.06	10.564	-2.604	98	.011

p<0.05

**Table7: Correlation among score of social Physique anxiety, Self-esteem and Depression**

	Social Physique Anxiety	Self esteem	Depression
Social Physique Anxiety	1	-.077	.035
Self Esteem	-.077	1	-.377**
Depression	.035	-.377**	1

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

## DISCUSSION

This study intended to measure the anxiety relating to physique and its relation to depression and self-esteem comparing with two groups-male undergraduate students and female undergraduate students. Analysis revealed a significant gender difference in depression and self-esteem. In this study, from the mean analysis, it was found that social physique anxiety is slightly higher in female students than male students. However, in the present study, the significant gender difference was not found in social physique anxiety between male and female students. Therefore, it suggests that the hypothesis is accepted. Ekland et al, (1997) found that females tend to be significantly higher than that of males on social physique anxiety. The present study revealed a significant difference in depression between male and female students. Female participants have a slightly higher score in depression than male participants. Therefore, it suggests that the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis is rejected. Research in gender difference in depression in the United States, conducted by Gorman (2006) found that women are more likely to experience symptoms of depression rather than men. The present study showed no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female, therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, although mean score suggesting that, self-esteem was slightly higher in than female respondents. The similar result was found in a study conducted by

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Bleidorn et al. (2016) on age and gender differences in self-esteem where, the significant difference was seen between gender and self-esteem, reporting higher self-esteem in male than females. Another research on gender differences in self-esteem also stated that male adolescents have higher self-esteem than female (Chubb et al., 1997; Eccles et al., 1989; Labouvie et al.). Likewise, several studies revealed that men have higher self-esteem than female (McMullin & Cairney, 2004; Robins et al., 2002; Twenge & Campbell, 2001), although in few studies have reported gender difference to be minimal (Orth et al., 2010; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). The present study suggested a negative correlation with self-esteem and positive correlation with Depression and also found a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and depression. In support for this inverse association, a study has been found conducted by Trzesniewski et al., (2006) which stated that adolescents with low self-esteem developed more depression and anxiety disorder during adulthood than adolescents with high self-esteem. For this present study only a limited sample was selected, therefore based on this small sample there are no possibilities of generalizing the results of the whole students' population.

### CONCLUSION

The current study shows that a significant gender difference was not found in social physique anxiety and self-esteem among male-female undergraduate students. Although it revealed a significant gender difference in depression, where it was found that female students perceived more depression compare to male students. Apart from this, the current study also stated the existence of a correlation between self-esteem and depression. Therefore, it is suggested that in every college there should be a counsellor or clinical psychologist to help out the students in various domain of mental health and wellbeing, with the usages of various therapy according to the needs. So that student can overcome their problems, maintain a balanced life and show academic progress along with other co-curricular activities and also in field of sports.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

There is no conflict of interest.

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