

Influence of Gender and Self-Esteem on Appearance Anxiety among Undergraduate College Students

Ayyappath Archana Sunilkumar¹, Cheriyan Shany², Durga K S³

^{1,2}3rd B.Sc. Student, Department of Psychology, Christ College Irinjalakuda

³Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Christ College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda

Abstract: *One of the biggest issues faced by teens and young adults in their life is appearance anxiety. The purpose of the study was to understand the influence of gender and self-esteem with appearance anxiety among undergraduate college students and to understand the predictive nature of students' self-esteem and gender on appearance anxiety. Undergraduate college students of age ranging from 18 to 21 were considered randomly from educational institutions of Irinjalakuda municipality. Equal number of male and female students were considered. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Appearance Anxiety Inventory was used to measure appearance anxiety and self-esteem of the sample population. The research concluded that there exists a moderately strong relation between appearance anxiety and self-esteem, and there lies a significant difference of appearance anxiety among male and female undergraduate college students. It is also revealed that gender is a much stronger predictor of appearance anxiety than self-esteem.*

Keywords: *Appearance anxiety, Self-esteem, Gender, Undergraduate college students*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of self-esteem has always been central to the psychologist for conducting their research. It has now successfully added itself into the list of household words. Coopersmith defined global self-esteem as "a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself" [7]. Our self-evaluations according to James are connected to the beliefs [16], which we hold regarding our abilities to accomplish our personal goals whereas Cooley claimed that our self-esteem totally relies upon the perceptions regarding what others think of us [6]. Hence, in valued "domains a global self-esteem encompasses perceptions of abilities and perceptions of social acceptance" [15]. Harter claims that self-esteem somewhat stays stable within major developmental, but is less stable during the transitional periods, for instance, the transition between middle childhood to adolescence [15]. Self-esteem concept might not be understood till an individual is an adolescent and starts to reflect on his/her personal values [8]. It has become a major part of the adolescent's self-understanding and is susceptible to external as well as internal influences during adolescence [2]. That's the reason parents, teachers, therapists, and others have started to put their efforts on working for boosting self-esteem because they assume that self-esteem will lead to positive outcomes. Many researchers have started to study about the role played by gender in influencing adolescents' self-esteem. The patriarchal societies claim self-confidence as solely male features whereas for girls having self-confidence has always been considered a breach of traditional gender roles. That's the reason recent studies have concluded that in the boy's self-esteem is relatively higher than girls. Boys are often seen more in situations which are linked to encouraging power, conflict, competition and excitement whereas girls are linked to situations of support, intimacy, co-rumination and self-disclosure. While boys developing emotions is more to externalising problems its vice versa in girls [2]. A very important source of self-esteem is an individual's body image [29]. As a child grows up, he/she tends to build an image of themselves which is developed by what people see in them and what they can or cannot do. Opinions related to our bodies if are really poor then it causes low self-confidence and self-esteem. The concept of body image is multidimensional, "behavioral component involves body-related behaviors, perceptual component involves the perception of body characteristics and the cognitive-affective component involves attitudes, cognitions and feelings toward one's body" [5], [32], [34], [36]. Szabo studied the relationship between self-esteem and body – image in young adults and found out that discrepancy in ideal and perceived body image is linked to low self-esteem [30]. Festinger in his social comparison theory said that the comparison done by an individual about himself/herself with others is either downwardly or upwardly [10]. "The Upward comparison leads to lower satisfaction whereas downward comparison leads to a feeling of superiority" [19]. Globally, a new cultural stereotype has appeared which is the linking of physical attractiveness with personal positive qualities. Not just European countries, but also the Asian countries are of the opinion "the marker of health and fertility a small waist has always been an invariant symbol of feminine beauty" [24].