

Relationship between Body Image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety among College Going Students

Aditya Farsole^{1*}, Amtullah Dodia²

¹Head, Department of Psychology, Vanita Vishram Women's University, Surat, India

²Student, Department of Psychology, Vanita Vishram Women's University, Surat, India

Abstract: The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between body image concern and social interaction anxiety among college going students. The sample consisted of 60 participants (40 female and 20 male) between the age group of 18 to 25 Surat city. The participants were College going students. The tools used for data collection were Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) (Littleton, et al, 2005) and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) (Mattick & Clarke, 1998). The data was collected via Google forms and analysis of data was done by Pearson's correlation coefficient method by using SPSS software. The analysis of data indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between Body Image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety which is 0.424 ($p=0.01$).

Keywords: Body image concern, college student, Pearson's correlation coefficient, social interaction anxiety.

1. Introduction

The research aims to study the relationship between body image concern and social interactions anxiety in college going students. In the past decade there has been an increase in the number of individuals having social anxiety between the age group of 18 to 24 (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020) and also there is an increase in body dissatisfaction especially in females (Aparicio-Martinez, et.al, 2019).

The Austrian psychiatrist Paul Ferdinand Schilder (1886–1940) first proposed the concept of body image as a psychological phenomenon in 1935, saying that the mental images that people have of their own bodies explain how their bodies are introduced to them (Deshmukh, et. al, 2017) According to Cash and Pruzinsky (2004), “Body Image can be seen as perceptions and attitudes one holds towards one’s own body” (Cash and Pruzinsky, 2004).

In the formation of body image society plays a vital role. As society changes one can see trends in changes in the meaning of the ideal body. Earlier the ideal female figure from prehistoric sculptures or Renaissance paintings depicts beautiful women as chubby or obese but now that is changed into the ideal body of female to be extremely slender whereas in male having muscular body is considered as ideal body. The individual strives to achieve this perceived societal body image

to fit into society (Bojorquez & Unikel, 2012).

Finding differences between people’s evaluation of their bodies and their ideal body image that led to negative views of the body leads to body dissatisfaction. (Grogan, 2008 as cited in Lennon & Johnson,2021) This negative body perceptions can lead to undesirable change into psychological as well as behaviour issues such as disordered eating, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. (McCabe & Ricciardelli,2004 as cited in Lennon & Johnson,2021). According to studies of children and adolescents, 35%-81% of girls are unhappy with their bodies. This is the case for 16%-55% of boys. This means that while girls are more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies, boys are also affected (Hosseini & Padhy,2022).

Body image does not develop in a closed room. A person’s body image can be influenced by the media, peers, and family members. They can persuade people, even at a young age, that there is an ideal body. That body image is frequently unnatural. The fashion and beauty industries also set an unhealthy example by promoting a very limited range of body types as acceptable or desirable in their products and advertisements. Discrimination based on race, size, ability, gender, sexual orientation, or age is also a factor. Daily implicit attitudes at school, work, and in society can make people feel like they don’t measure up or are lacking in some way (White & Brazier, 2022) due to this negative evaluation of one's body is associated with social interaction anxiety. From a cross-sectional study of 80 Thai undergraduates participants by Yada Pawijit and his colleagues in 2019 to study the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and social anxiety. The result shows the association between body image dissatisfaction and social anxiety was mediated by fear of negative evaluation (Pawijit, et.al, 2019). Due to fear of negative evaluation the person gets anxious in social interaction. Dawson and Gettyes define Social Interaction as “it is a process by which men interpenetrate the minds of each other” (Helves-Hayes,1994). According to Merrill, “Social-interaction is the general process whereby two or more persons are in a meaningful contact, as a result of which their behavior is modified however slightly”(Hintz& Miller,1995).

*Corresponding author: dhyaniavashi@gmail.com

According to the APA (2022), “anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry. They may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat” (APA, 2022) but in this research paper this feeling is only specified for social interaction. Feeling anxious in giving presentations or meeting new people is very common but if this feeling is persistent for every social interaction it can lead to disturbance in individual day to day life.

Earlier it has been seen that females have high expectations to meet ideal body image but from the recent studies it is seen that it is also there in males. From the study of Sanjeevini Dixit and Nadeem Luqman (2018) there is a correlation found between both the gender for body image and social anxiety. It shows both genders have an equal chance in feeling anxious due to negative body image. People become anxious and worried about interacting with the world as a result of their perceived body image concern (Dixit & Luqman, 2018).

From the study of Morteza Tarkhan, Mina Esmaeilpour and Taher Tizdast in 2013 in the university of Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon Branch of 240 girls students by random sampling method to investigate the relationship between the social anxiety, social self-efficacy and body image in the girl students. The results show the significant correlation between body image and social anxiety ($r = 0.587$). The youngsters become involved in a type of ambivalence and social anxiety as a result of being under pressure from the standpoint of occupational and educational positions, as well as many other tensions, or, at times, individuals avoid or fear due to placement in social situations due to negative body image (Tarkhan, et.al, 2013).

From the study of Shofiana Eva Ratnasari, Israh Pratiwi, Hayyu Wildannisa in 2021 to study a relationship between body image and social anxiety in adolescents’ women shows the negative relationship between body image and social anxiety in adolescent girls with an r value of -0.165 , ($p = 0.005 < 0.05$) and body image shows a contribution to the emergence of social anxiety by 2.7%. The individual who has social anxiety will tend to be anxious and uncomfortable when dealing with other people, which is accompanied by feelings of shame, fear, because they think something bad will happen. Due to which they are anxious in social interacting with other people (Ratnasari, Pratiwi & Wildannisa, 2021).

From the past study it can be seen that there is a relation between body image concern and social interactions anxiety but the population of Gujarat specifically of Surat is never taken. In this study the population of Surat college going students is taken between the age group of 18-25 years.

2. Methodology

A. Objective

To find the relationship between Body Image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety.

B. Sample

In this research, the sample consists of 60 college going students from Surat city between the age group of 18 to 25 years. The Google form is used to collect data. The convenience and snowball sampling method is used for data collection.

C. Inclusive Criteria

- Individuals between age range 18 to 25 years
- Individuals residing in Surat city
- College going students only
- Individuals with Literacy in the English language

D. Exclusive Criteria

- Individuals below 18 years of age or above 25 years
- Individuals residing outside Surat city

E. Hypothesis

There will be statistically significant relationship between Body Image Concern and Social Interactions Anxiety among college going students

F. Tools Used

The two tests were used in data collection which are:

1) The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI)

The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) is a 19-item self-report measure designed to assess dysmorphic appearance concern (Littleton et al., 2005). For each item, individuals indicated how often they have the described feeling or perform the described behavior on a 5-point Likert scale bounded by 1 (never) and 5 (always). Cronbach’s alpha for the measure in a college sample was 0.93. Reliability, validity, and internal Consistency (Cronbach’s alpha’s $[\alpha]$ range from 0.91 to 0.94) of the English-language version are good (Littleton and Breikopf, 2008; Littleton et al., 2005; Luca et al., 2011).

2) Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)

The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) is a self-report scale consisting of 20 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all characteristic of me” to “extremely characteristic of me.” Items are self-statements describing reactions to social interactions in dyads or groups developed by Mattick and Clarke (1998). The coefficient of internal consistency is between 0.88–0.93 and test-retest reliability is 0.92 (Mattick and Clarke, 1998). The SIAS scores were most strongly correlated with measures of social interactional anxiety (Heimberg et al., 1992).

G. Procedure

In order to collect the data, a Google form was made and circulated among college going individuals. The form consisted of 4 parts: Informed consent, demographic information, psychological assessments and debriefing used in the study. Basic information about the study was already mentioned in the forms and email address of the researcher was provided in case the participants had questions regarding the study. Demographic information including name, age, year of college, gender and city collected. The two tests used the first is Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) and the other is Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS). There were separate

Table 1
Descriptive analysis of body image concern and social interaction anxiety

	N	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Std. Error
Body Image Concern	60	39.98	2.023	15.667	245.440	1.070	.309
Social Interaction Anxiety	60	34.25	2.219	17.191	295.547	.085	.309

Table 2
Correlation coefficient of body image concern and social interaction anxiety

		Body Image Concern	Social Interaction Anxiety
Body Image Concern	Pearson Correlation	1	.424**
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		.001
Social Interaction Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.424**	1
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	.001	.001
	N	60	60

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

instructions for each test which were provided prior to the starting of each test. It was made sure that the participants' information was kept confidential. The aim of the study and information about the psychological assessments used were provided under the column of debriefing at the end of the questionnaire. It was made sure that all the ethics like sharing of results, debriefing, withdrawal from the study etc. were followed. The statistical tool which is used was Karl Pearson correlation to find a relationship between two variables using SPSS software and analysis of results.

H. Ethics

- Informed consent of all participants was taken.
- Participants had the right to withdraw from the research anytime.
- The participants' data was kept confidential.

3. Results and Interpretation

To fulfill the objectives of the present research both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In this Pearson correlation Coefficient as a statistical tool was used. In addition to these descriptive statistics were also used to understand the nature of the data.

The descriptive statistics shows that the mean of body image concern is 39.98 and social interaction anxiety is 34.25 of the total 60 participants. The standard deviation is 15.667 and 17.191 of body image concern and social interaction anxiety respectively. The skewness of data is 1.070 of body image concern and 0.085 of social interaction anxiety.

The Positive correlation was found between Body image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety was 0.424 (p=0.01) which is two tailed.

H1: There will be statistically significant relationship between body image concern and social interactions anxiety in college going students.

The Hypothesis of this research states that there will be a statistically significant relationship between body image concern and social interactions anxiety in college going students. For this purpose, correlation coefficient was used. After analysis statistically significant correlation was found between both the variables. The results show that there will be

a positive correlation which is 0.424 (p=0.01) between body image concern and social interactions anxiety. This shows that body image concern increases in individuals is associated with increase in social interaction anxiety.

According to Carl Rogers (1959) there are two types of self: one is the ideal self which one wants to be and another one is the real self which one really has. If there is incongruence between real self and ideal self which can lead into developed anxiety (Breth Hathaway, 2017). Due to increased body image concern, it shows the person perceives oneself away from their ideal self-due to there is incongruence associated with developing the feeling of anxiety in which they avoid social interaction because they feel embarrassed due to their body. From the study of Dixit and Luqman of 2018, they also find the positive correlation between Body Image Concern and Social Anxiety among youth due to their perceived body image concern they get anxious and worried in facing the world (Dixit & Luqman, 2018). Also, from the study of Yada Pawijit and his colleagues in 2019 shows the association between body image dissatisfaction and social anxiety was mediated by fear of negative evaluation (Pawijit, et. al, 2019).

Due to negative body image people have low self-acceptance and are not able to accept themselves (Cai, et. al, 2021). They feel they are not good enough due to which they get anxious in social gatherings because due to low self-acceptance they feel others will not accept them into the group and to save them from rejection they started to avoid social Interaction. From the study of Mashalpourfard, 2018 find that the feeling of inferiority from others is associated with developing social anxiety (Mashalpourfard, 2018).

Thus, it shows that our alternate hypothesis is accepted which means there is a statistically significant relationship between body image concern and social interactions anxiety.

4. Conclusion

In the light of literature review and present data collected it can be said that there is positive correlation between body image concern and social interaction anxiety which show if an individual who has higher body image concern may develop social interactions anxiety. From the study of Ashley Gerada in 2020, the result show that low body image individual are likely

to experience the anxiety in social interaction (Gerada,2020)

From this research, it will help mental health practitioners in addressing the issue of anxiety which develops in social set up and also making people understand in accepting their body and help them in evaluating their body image concerns properly.

A. Limitations

- The body image concern is not the only factor which is associated with social interaction anxiety there are several factor-like genetics, self-esteem or self confidence
- The sample is collected through the convenience sampling method.
- The sample size is limited.
- The ratio of female and male is 6:4 due to which it cannot be generalised on both genders.

B. Future Implications

- The future researchers can measure regression to see how much impact can body image concern have on social interactions anxiety.
- By studying other extraneous variables like self-esteem or self-acceptance it will help researchers in better understanding about the relationship between Body Image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety.
- The future research can also study gender differences in body image concern and social interaction anxiety by comparative research.
- The other age group can be studied in future to generalize the relationship between Body Image Concern and Social Interaction Anxiety in all age groups.

References

- [1] Aparicio-Martinez, P., Perea-Moreno, A. J., Martinez-Jimenez, M. P., Redel-Macias, M. D., Pagliari, C., & Vaquero-Abellan, M. (2019). Social Media, Thin-Ideal, Body Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating Attitudes: An Exploratory Analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(21), 4177.
- [2] American Psychological Association (2022). Anxiety. <https://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety>
- [3] Bojorquez I and Unikel C. (2012) Body Image and Social Class. In: Thomas F. Cash, editor. *Encyclopedia of Body Image and Human Appearance*, Vol 1. SanDiego: Academic Press; 2012. pp. 153–159.
- [4] Cash, T. F., & Pruzinsky, T. (2004). *Body image: A handbook of theory, research, and clinical practice*. New York: Guilford Press.
- [5] Cai, Z., Gui, Y., Wang, D., Yang, H., Mao, P., & Wang, Z. (2021). Body Image Dissatisfaction and Impulse Buying: A Moderated Mediation Model. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 653559.
- [6] Deshmukh, V. R., & Kulkarni, A. A. (2017). Body Image and its Relation with Body Mass Index among Indian Adolescents. *Indian pediatrics*, 54(12), 1025–1028.
- [7] Dixit SS, Luqman N (2018) Body Image, Social Anxiety and Psychological Distress among Young Adults. *J Psychol Clin Psychiatry* 9(1): 00513.
- [8] Gerada, A. (2020). *The Longitudinal Association Between Body Image Dissatisfaction, Social Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Adolescents* [Ph.D. Thesis], University of Ottawa.
- [9] Heimberg, R. G., Mueller, G. P., Holt, C. S., Hope, D. A., & Liebowitz, M. R. (1992). Assessment of anxiety in social interaction and being observed by others: The social interaction anxiety scale and the Social Phobia Scale. *Behavior Therapy*, 23(1), 53-73
- [10] Helmes-Hayes, R. C. (1994). *Canadian Sociology's First Textbook: C. A. Dawson and W. E. Gettys's "An Introduction to Sociology (1929)." The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 19(4), 461–497.
- [11] Hintz, R. A., & Miller, D. E. (1995). Openings Revisited: The Foundations of Social Interaction. *Symbolic Interaction*, 18(3), 355–369.
- [12] Hosseini SA, Padhy RK. (2022) Body Image Distortion. In: *StatPearls*. StatPearls Publishing; Treasure Island (FL).
- [13] Jefferies P, Ungar M (2020) Social anxiety in young people: A prevalence study in seven countries. *PLOS ONE* 15(9): e0239133.
- [14] Ko, Nayeong. (2010). The role of body shame, social appearance anxiety, and body checking behavior on body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors: a cross-cultural study in German and Korea.
- [15] Lennon, S.J., Johnson, K.K.P. (2020) Men and muscularity research: a review. *Fash Text* 8, 20.
- [16] Littleton, H., Axsom, D & Pury, C. (2005). Development of the Body Image Concern Inventory. *Behaviour research and therapy*. 43. 229-41.
- [17] Mashalpourfard, M. (2018). Relationship of social anxiety, body image perception and depression with bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa in youth. *Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health*, 20(2), 138-147.
- [18] Mattick, R. P., & Clarke, J. C. (1998). *Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)* [Database record]. *APA PsycTests*.
- [19] Pawijit, Y., Likhitsuwan, W., Ludington, J. & Pisitsungkagarn, K. (2019). Looks can be deceiving: body image dissatisfaction relates to social anxiety through fear of negative evaluation. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 31(4), 20170031.
- [20] Ratnasari, S., Pratiwi, I. & Wildannisa, H. (2021): Relationship between body image and social anxiety in adolescent women. *Eu. J. Psychol. Res.*, 8(1):65-72
- [21] Regis, J. M. O., Ramos-Cerqueira, A. T. A., Lima, M. C. P., & Torres, A. R. (2018). Social anxiety symptoms and body image dissatisfaction in medical students: Prevalence and correlates. *Jornal Brasileiro de Psiquiatria*, 67(2), 65–73.
- [22] Tarkhan, M., Ismaeilpoor, M., Tizdast, T (2013). A study of the relationship between social anxiety, social self-efficacy and body image in the girl students of the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon Branch. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, Česká Republika, 2, Nov. 2013.
- [23] Werner, K. H., Jazaieri, H., Goldin, P. R., Ziv, M., Heimberg, R. G., & Gross, J. J. (2012). Self-compassion and social anxiety disorder. *Anxiety, stress, and coping*, 25(5), 543–558.
- [24] White MA, Brazier Y. (2022, August 14), "What is Body Image? ", *Medical News Today*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/249190#negative-body-image>