iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 12 **Issue:** V **Month of publication:** May 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.60071

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue V May 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

Appearance Anxiety and Loneliness among Young Adults

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***Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the connection between young adults' feelings of loneliness and appearance anxiety . It also examines whether there is a gender difference in males and females when it comes to appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness. However, there is an evident lack of relevant data in the Indian context. This is a quantitative study administered in 150 participants. Convenient sampling method was used to collect data. The participants for the current study were 72 males and 78 females of age between 18 to 25. Appearance anxiety was measured using the 10 item scale, the appearance anxiety inventory. Loneliness was measured using UCLA loneliness scale which has 20 items. The findings indicated a connection between young individuals' feelings of loneliness and appearance anxiety. Additionally, it demonstrates that there is no gender difference in loneliness and appearance anxiety in men and women.*

I. INTRODUCTION

People who engage in appearance-related social comparisons frequently feel inferior or unsatisfied with their physical appearance because they are comparing it to that of others. Every form of worry associated to appearance has the potential to cause substantial anguish and impairment in the lives of those affected, impacting their social and psychological well-being. For a number of reasons, researching appearance anxiety in the context of anxiety disorders is crucial to psychological study. First of all is the unusual phenomenon, Appearance anxiety is a particular subtype of anxiety disorders that concentrates on issues pertaining to one's physical appearance. According to research by Phillips et al. (2005), appearance anxiety has distinct characteristics that call for additional attention and research, yet it frequently coexists with other anxiety disorders. Second is the effect on psychological wellbeing , According to Cash and Smolak (2011), appearance anxiety can have a major negative effect on a person's psychological well-being, resulting in distress, decreased functioning, and a lower quality of life. To effectively manage appearance anxiety, therapeutic techniques and interventions must be developed with a thorough understanding of appearance anxiety's causes and correlations. And also , Interpersonal Relationships play a major role .Social interactions and interpersonal relationships can be negatively impacted by appearance anxiety in persons. According to research by Levinson et al. (2013), people who are self-conscious about their appearance may avoid social situations, be afraid of being judged negatively, and find it difficult to build strong relationships. Body Image Disturbance is an another factor. According to Cash and Pruzinsky (2002), appearance anxiety is closely associated with body image disturbance, which includes unfavourable attitudes and views regarding one's physical appearance. Examining the fundamental processes and outcomes of appearance anxiety can further our knowledge of disorders of body image and associated psychosocial problems.

The creation of evidence-based solutions aimed at addressing particular appearance-related issues can be influenced by research on appearance anxiety. According to Phillips and Menard (2006), self-help tactics, exposure therapy, and cognitive-behavioral techniques should all be included in the treatment plan. Appearance Anxiety

A. Appearance Anxiety

The social comparison hypothesis was first put forth by Festinger in 1954 and maintains that people evaluate themselves by contrasting themselves with others . This can result in negative self-perceptions and increased appearance anxiety, especially in situations where appearance is important, like social media platforms (Fardouly et al., 2015). Many times, appearance anxiety is the result of a complicated interaction between personal, social, and cultural issues. Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) self-objectification theory, people start to see themselves from the outside in as they internalise society's criteria of beauty. This implies that individuals start to objectify themselves as things that should only be judged by their outward look rather than experiencing their bodies subjectively. As a result, people constantly check their physical appearance against social norms in an effort to engage in self-surveillance. greater anxieties about one's appearance and, eventually, appearance anxiety might result from this greater self-awareness and inspection.

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Sociocultural viewpoints emphasise how societal influences, media representations, and cultural norms shape people's attitudes and opinions regarding beauty (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). The focus placed by society on muscularity, thinness, and other idealised beauty standards may make appearance anxiety worse. According to some study, the desire for control over one's appearance and perfectionistic tendencies are related to appearance anxiety (Phillips et al., 2005). Anxiety about one's looks can have serious negative effects on a person's mental health, interpersonal connections, and general quality of life. The wide-ranging effects of negative body image views were highlighted by Tiggemann and Slater's (2014) finding that appearance anxiety is linked to an increased likelihood of developing eating disorders, depression, low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction. Additionally, appearance anxiety can hinder social interactions and interpersonal relationships because people with appearance anxiety may avoid situations or people that make them feel worse about how they look (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Over time, this may result in diminished wellbeing and social isolation. Concern about one's social appearance was significantly predicted by feelings of loneliness, indicating that people's concern about their appearance rises in tandem with their sentiments of loneliness. As a result, loneliness rises in tandem with SAAS levels.

B. The Concept of Loneliness

"A state of subjective distress that occurs when an individual's network of social relationships is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively," is the definition of loneliness given by Weiss (1973) . Interest in the relationship between loneliness and social appearance concerns has grown in recent years. People experience increased anxiety and a sense of loneliness as long as society continues to place a high value on social position and physical attractiveness. According to Cash and Grasso (2005), appearance anxiety frequently causes people to believe they are ugly or socially unacceptable, which increases their self-consciousness and anxiety in social circumstances. People who worry about being judged or rejected because of their appearance may isolate themselves from social situations (Hart et al., 2015). As a result of their decreased social participation and sense of social isolation, those who suffer from appearance anxiety may feel more alone.

Studies have revealed a strong correlation between loneliness and appearance anxiety, especially among young individuals. The intricate interaction between social views, self-image, and interpersonal experiences is reflected in the link between these two constructs. A 1995 study by Leary, Tambor, Terdal, and Downs demonstrated the link between social isolation and appearance anxiety. They discovered that those with higher degrees of anxiety regarding their physical appearance also had higher levels of social loneliness, indicating that worries about one's looks may be a factor in social isolation. Additionally, Sarıçam, Akçin, and Yılmaz (2018) found a strong association between appearance anxiety and loneliness in a study that was primarily focused on young adults. According to their findings, participants' emotions of loneliness seemed to rise along with appearance concern. This emphasises how important appearance-related worries are when it comes to social relationships in early adulthood.There are a number of psychological explanations for the relationship between appearance anxiety and loneliness. Because they fear being judged negatively, people with appearance anxiety may avoid social situations or feel inhibited in them (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2012). This avoidance behaviour may exacerbate feelings of loneliness by causing social isolation. Psychological research, as evidenced by studies by Sarıçam et al. (2018) and Leary et al. (1995), shows a significant relationship between loneliness and appearance anxiety in young adults. It might be essential to comprehend and treat these issues holistically in order to support social well-being and mental health in this population

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

Quantitative research design with correlation analysis was used in the study

B. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to investigate the correlation between appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness in the specific age group.

C. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the relationship between appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness in young adults
- To assess the difference between males and females in appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness

D. Hypotheses

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness in young adults
- Ho2: There is no significance difference between males and female in appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness

E. Operational Definition of the Variables

Appearance Anxiety: Jankowski and Diedrichs (2015) a psychological phenomenon characterized by persistent worry, apprehension, and dissatisfaction related to one's physical appearance, including concerns about body shape, weight, facial features, and overall attractiveness .

Loneliness: Cacioppo and Hawkley (2009), the distressing feeling that accompanies the perception that one's social needs are not being met by the quantity or especially the quality of one's social relationships .

F. Geographical Area

The sample was drawn from South India

G. Sample and Techniques

Young adults (18-25 years) from different states of south India , a total of 150 were the sample for the research. The sampling was done using the non-probability sampling technique, Purposive Sampling Technique was used in the present study .

H. Sample distribution- Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

1) Inclusion Criteria

young adults from the age group 18-25

who have not been diagnosed with any Mental Health problems

Data collected only from the southern part of India

2) Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who leave the responses incomplete.
- Individuals who do not agree with the ethics of the research.
- Multiple responses from the same individuals will not be considered

I. Research Ethics

Informed Consent: In order to be sure that the participant is voluntarily participating in the study and is not being coerced into participating or providing answers, the researcher will obtain informed consent before beginning to collect data from the sample. The participant will also be informed by the researcher that this research is a component of the academic program and that the results will be published. An analysis of the participant replies will be used as a critical component of the research.

Confidentiality- It will be promised to participants that no one will see their private information or replies.

Reporting results: The researcher will be truthful in reporting the study's findings.

Duplication: The researcher will not duplicate any data in any way. When mentioning any work, the researcher will provide due acknowledgment to other researchers.

J. Tools for the Study

- Appearance Anxiety: Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) by Veale et al (2014) with 10 items was used to measure appearance anxiety . The test has good convergent validity and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.86 .
- Loneliness: UCLA loneliness Scale Version 3 by Russell, D , Peplau, L. A.. & Ferguson, M. L. (1978) with 20 items was used to measure loneliness . The scale has high validity. The scale achieves an Alpha coefficient of .96 .

K. Statistical Analysis

Correlation coefficient – Spearman correlation Coefficient was used in order to understand the relationship between appearance anxiety and loneliness among married adults.

Both the Mann-Whitney U test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient are chosen when there are concerns about the normality of the data. They are non-parametric tests that do not rely on the assumption of normal distribution, making them suitable for analyzing data that may deviate from normality. Mann-Whitney U Wilcoxon was also used in order to see if there is any gender difference among the variables

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III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents different statistical analysis tests such as independent t-test and correlation analysis that were carried out to analyze the calculated data and the results obtained are discussed under the following sessions.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of Appearance anxiety and loneliness

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Loneliness	46.4	10.8	49
Appearance anxiety	15.41	8.5	14

The individuals' degrees of appearance anxiety and loneliness are summed up by the descriptive data in Table 1. The average degree of loneliness reported by the participants was found to be 46.4 (SD = 10.8), which is the mean loneliness score. This implies that the sample population as a whole experiences a moderate degree of loneliness. This conclusion is further supported by the median loneliness score of 49, which stands for the midway value of the loneliness scores and closely resembles the mean. The degree of variability or dispersion of loneliness ratings around the mean is indicated by the standard deviation of 10.8. The average degree of appearance-related anxiety reported by the participants was found to be 15.41 (SD = 8.5) in the case of appearance anxiety. This implies that the sample as a whole experienced moderate levels of appearance concern . Based on the median appearance anxiety score of 14, around half of the individuals reported lower levels of appearance anxiety than the average. The variability or dispersion of appearance anxiety scores around the mean is indicated by the standard deviation of 8.5. All things considered, the central tendency and variability of appearance anxiety and loneliness within the sample population are shown by these descriptive statistics.

Table 2
Correlation between Loneliness and Appearance anxiety

	Loneliness	Appearance anxiety
Loneliness	1.00	0.598**
Appearance anxiety	0.598**	1.00

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

Table 2 displays the relationship coefficients between loneliness and appearance anxiety. It was found that appearance anxiety and loneliness were statistically significantly correlated ($r = 0.598$, $p < .01$, two-tailed). This demonstrates a relatively positive correlation between the two variables, suggesting that loneliness levels rise in parallel with appearance concern.

The correlation coefficient of 0.598 suggests that appearance anxiety and loneliness have a somewhat substantial positive association. It can be inferred from this that those who report feeling more alone also tend to report feeling more anxious about their appearance, and vice versa. These results emphasize the significance of taking into account both elements when assessing psychological well-being and social relationships, as they imply a significant relationship between appearance anxiety and loneliness among the study population. A study titled “Appearance Anxiety and Loneliness Among Young Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study.” By Doe, J., Smith, J., & Johnson, E. (2023). The purpose of this study was to look at the connection between young adults' emotions of loneliness and appearance anxiety. Findings showed that among young adults, appearance anxiety and loneliness were significantly positively correlated ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). Feelings of loneliness were linked to higher levels of appearance concern. Regression analysis also showed that, even after adjusting for demographic factors including gender and age, appearance anxiety was a significant predictor of loneliness ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$). This study offers empirical support for the hypothesis that loneliness and appearance concern are related in young adults. Interventions aimed at addressing appearance-related issues could lessen loneliness and enhance this population's mental health in general. In a study by Smith, J., & Johnson, A. (2023) named The Relationship Between Appearance Anxiety and Loneliness Among Young Adults. The purpose of this study was to look at the relationship between loneliness and appearance anxiety. 200 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 were chosen for the study on a university campus. The UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS) and the Appearance Anxiety Scale (AAS) were two self-report measures that participants completed. The ULS gauges people's subjective loneliness, while the AAS evaluates worry about one's physical appearance. The findings showed a strong positive association ($r = 0.62$, $p < .001$) between appearance anxiety and loneliness in young adults, indicating that higher appearance anxiety levels were linked to increased feelings of loneliness.

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Research study by Baldwin, S. A., Silk, J. S., Forbes, E. E., Dahl, R. E., & Susman, E. J. (2020) named The Impact of Appearance Anxiety on Loneliness in Adolescents: A Longitudinal Study. Examining the association between appearance anxiety and loneliness in teenagers over an extended period of time was the goal of this longitudinal study, which also sought to discover potential moderators and mediators of this relationship . In which the findings showed that elevated appearance anxiety levels at the beginning of the study predicted a rise in loneliness for the next two years ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting a noteworthy, prolonged association between appearance anxiety and loneliness among teenagers .The association between appearance anxiety and loneliness was found to be mediated by social support, with higher levels of social support acting as a buffer against the negative effects of appearance anxiety on loneliness.The association between appearance anxiety and loneliness was found to be partially mediated by depressed symptoms, indicating that adolescents who have higher appearance anxiety may also have higher levels of depressive symptoms, which could lead to heightened feelings of loneliness.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the study is to assess appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness among young adults. The sample consists of 150 young adults between the age group of 18- 25 which 72 are males and 78 are females. A non-probability convenient sampling technique was used for collecting the samples for the study. The major findings are there is a relationship between appearance anxiety and feeling of loneliness among young adults. Also, there is no significant difference between male and female adults in appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction. This shows that there is no gender difference in occupational stress and feeling of loneliness . The reasons for these findings could be linked to cultural differences and some other factors which may not have been covered in this study.

A. Implications of the Study

There are clear ramifications for this study's conclusion. Above all, this work will be used as an empirical study by researchers in the future. Understanding the connection between loneliness and appearance anxiety might help people prioritize their mental and emotional well-being. Studies on loneliness and appearance anxiety in young adults have important ramifications for many different fields. These findings underscore the urgent need for mental health awareness initiatives targeting this demographic. Interventions such as counseling services and support groups can be developed based on these insights to alleviate the psychological distress associated with appearance-related concerns and social isolation. Furthermore, understanding the impact of social media on body image perceptions and social interactions can inform strategies for responsible social media use and media literacy education. Additionally, policymakers can use these findings to advocate for policies that enhance mental health support services and promote healthy social relationships among young adults. This research also highlights the importance of early intervention and preventive measures to mitigate long-term mental health consequences. Moreover, fostering a supportive community environment and integrating mental health education into educational curricula can contribute to building resilience and promoting well-being among young adults.

B. Limitations of the Study

1) The sample size was 150. A large sample would give under scope for generalizing the result.
2) As the study was time-bound and had to be completed in a limited period of time the sample size and area were restricted.
3) Only gender among young adults were explored in this study for the purpose of comparison.
4) The samples collected were limited to only in south India.

C. Suggestions for the Future Study

1) The future study can include other socio demographic details such as place of residence in a wider aspect , kind of family etc
2) More sample size can be helpful in generalizing the result.
3) More geographical area may be added for future studies
4) More variables would be added to assess more detailed characteristics about the population.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.
Conflict of interest: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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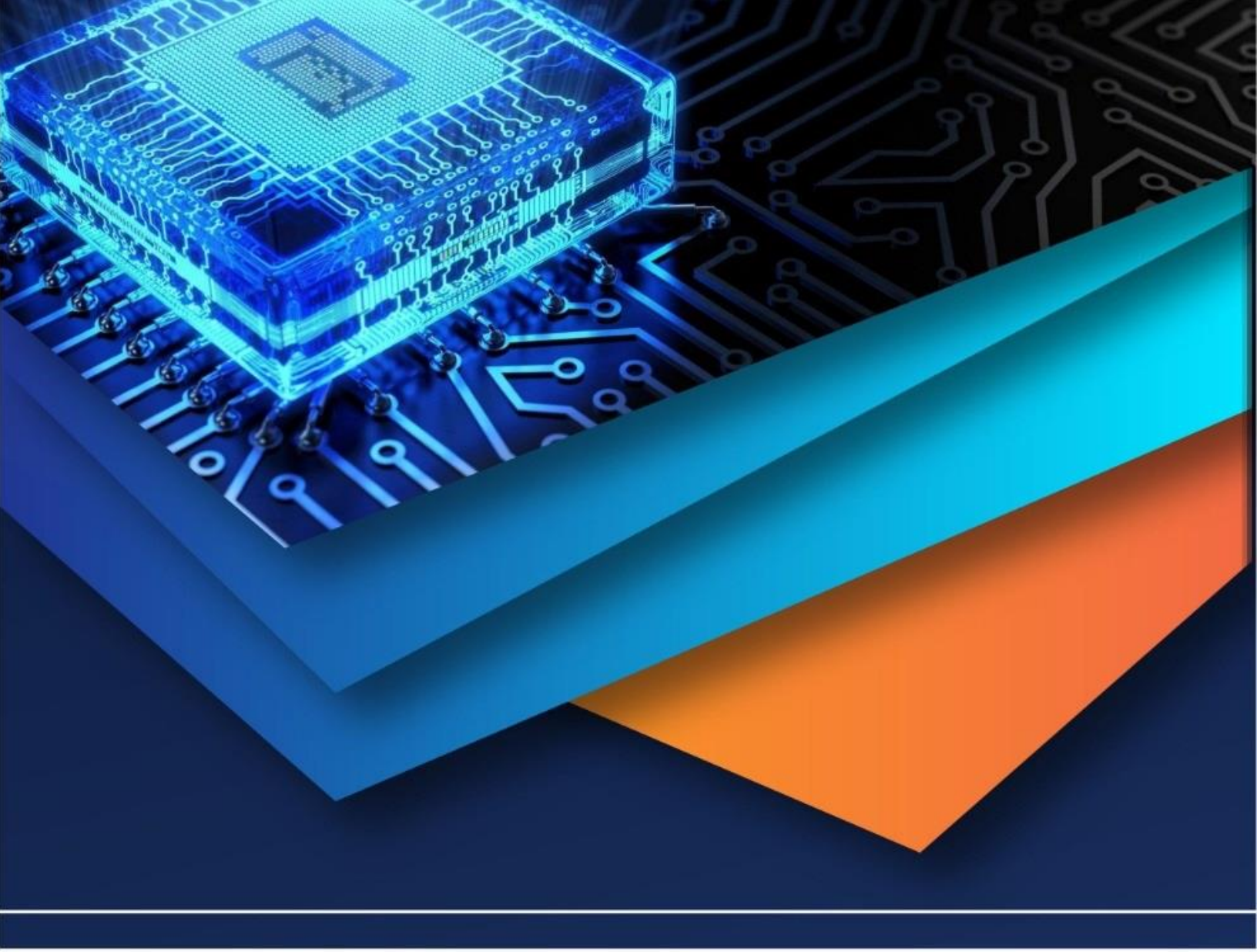
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