

IMPACT OF SELF-COMPASSION AND APPEARANCE-ANXIETY ON BODY-IMAGE SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG FEMALES

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Abstract: Rooted in psychological frameworks of self-perception and emotional regulation, the present study aimed to examine the influence of appearance anxiety and self-compassion on body image satisfaction among young adult females. The sample consisted of 160 young Indian women between the ages of 18 to 25, residing in the Delhi-NCR region. A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants who completed the Body Image Satisfaction Rating Scale (Lindgren & Pauly, 1975), the Appearance Anxiety Inventory (Veale, 2014), and the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003). A multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive strength of the variables. The model accounted for 45% of the variance in Body Image Satisfaction ($R^2 = .45$, $F(2,159) = 19.99$, $p < .001$). The results indicated that Appearance Anxiety was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.194$, $p < .05$), while Self-Compassion emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .337$, $p < .001$). These findings align with previous literature, suggesting that heightened concern over appearance is associated with reduced body satisfaction, whereas greater self-compassion is linked to improved body image. The study highlights the importance of integrating self-compassion-based approaches and anxiety-reduction techniques into mental health interventions to enhance young women's well-being and body satisfaction.

Keywords: Self-Compassion, Appearance Anxiety, Body Image Satisfaction, Young Adults.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current cultural climate, the internal perception of one's body plays a significant role in shaping mental health, especially among young women. Body image satisfaction, defined as the subjective evaluation of one's own physical appearance, is increasingly being shaped not just by one's bodily characteristics, but by emotional and psychological processes like self-compassion and appearance anxiety. Self-compassion, as described by Neff (2003), reflects how individuals respond to personal suffering with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity. It encourages individuals to approach personal flaws or imperfections with acceptance, instead of harsh judgment. On the other hand, appearance anxiety, a form of

social anxiety, is rooted in the fear of being negatively judged based on physical appearance. This persistent worry can affect how one views oneself, often leading to dissatisfaction, avoidance behaviors, and diminished self-worth. The influence of these psychological constructs is not limited to superficial dissatisfaction but often connects to deeper meta-cognitive processes such as emotional regulation, self-worth, and self-perception. Individuals with high levels of appearance anxiety tend to internalize societal beauty standards, especially those reinforced by digital media and peer environments. In contrast, self-compassion acts as an internal buffer, allowing individuals to maintain self-worth even when faced with failure or appearance-related distress. Thus, in the context of self-evaluation, these two factors

can be considered key determinants of how young adults perceive their physical selves and develop their self-image.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous studies have supported the importance of self-compassion in maintaining emotional well-being. Neff and Vonk (2009) demonstrated that self-compassion is uniquely associated with positive emotional states like contentment, optimism, and life satisfaction, and inversely related to negative emotions such as anxiety and shame. Similarly, Braun et al. (2016) reviewed evidence from multiple studies showing that self-compassion consistently reduces body image concerns and eating pathology, highlighting its role as a protective psychological trait. These studies emphasize that individuals who practice self-compassion are more likely to maintain a stable and accepting view of themselves, regardless of external evaluation. Conversely, research into appearance anxiety has revealed how concerns related to physical appearance can significantly disrupt one's emotional and social functioning. Adams et al. (2017) found that individuals whose self-worth is dependent on appearance often show higher levels of anxiety and lower self-esteem, particularly when exposed to environments that emphasize physical perfection. Caner et al. (2022) also observed that excessive use of social media among adolescents, combined with appearance-focused content, leads to increased appearance anxiety and a greater likelihood of emotional distress. Several scholars have also drawn attention to the role of cultural and social pressures in shaping

body image. For instance, Merino (2024) examined the effects of global beauty ideals, often promoted through online platforms, on body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. His review emphasized that cultural standards and digital exposure intersect to influence the way individuals evaluate themselves. Gembeck et al. (2017) further noted that adolescents exposed to appearance-based teasing and early physical maturation are especially vulnerable to heightened appearance anxiety and diminished self-regard. In terms of intervention and coping, studies suggest that fostering self-compassion may offer a counterbalance to the negative effects of appearance-based anxiety. Hevron et al. (2024) conducted an experimental study with adolescent girls and found that self-compassion writing exercises helped restore body appreciation after moments of appearance-related rumination. These findings suggest that emotional tools such as self-kindness and mindfulness can positively influence body perception and mental resilience.

Despite these insights, limited research has examined the combined impact of appearance anxiety and self-compassion on body image satisfaction within the Indian context. Most existing studies have been conducted in Western societies, where the cultural framework and media influence differ significantly from the realities experienced by Indian young women. As Indian youth increasingly engage with global media while navigating traditional societal norms, their body image is shaped by a unique blend of influences. Yet, there is a lack of focused

research exploring how these internal psychological variables operate in this specific socio-cultural landscape. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how self-compassion and appearance anxiety influence body image satisfaction among young adult females in India. The focus on these intrapersonal variables allows for a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind body dissatisfaction and offers potential pathways for interventions that prioritize emotional resilience and positive self-regard. In examining these links, this study also attempts to bridge the existing research gap and contribute to culturally relevant mental health strategies.

3. RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to explore the effect of self-compassion and appearance anxiety on body image satisfaction among young adult females. The study was conducted on a sample of 160 young women, all within the age range of 18 to 25 years, residing in Delhi-NCR. Participants were required to have basic fluency in English in order to understand and respond to the questionnaires. Individuals outside the specified age range, unfamiliar with English, or residing outside Delhi-NCR were excluded from the study. The data collection method followed a purposive sampling technique. The sample was selected on the basis of accessibility and relevance to the research criteria. Participants were approached through both online platforms (including social media and academic networks) and offline means. A

rapport was established with the participants by explaining the purpose of the study, emphasizing the confidentiality of their responses, and obtaining informed consent. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and no monetary or material incentives were offered.

The study was conducted using a structured survey format. Data were collected using Google Forms, which included standardized psychological tools. Participants were instructed to respond honestly, with reassurance that there were no right or wrong answers. The tools used for data collection included: the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003), the Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) developed by Veale (2014), and the Body Image Satisfaction Scale, adapted from the original Body Image Questionnaire by Lindgren and Pauly (1975). These tools were chosen based on their relevance to the psychological constructs being examined and their established reliability in prior studies. Each participant completed all three scales in a single sitting, which took approximately 15–20 minutes. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their time and contribution to the study. Their responses were securely recorded for further analysis. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS version 29) to identify the strength and nature of the relationships between the variables under study.

The present study followed a quantitative approach and used a multiple linear regression design to examine the

relationship between the selected variables. To analyze how self-compassion and appearance anxiety together influenced body image satisfaction, multiple linear regression was used. This method made it possible to understand how much the two predictors, when considered together, explained the variation in the outcome. All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS software (version 29).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of the data was done using SPSS version 29. Multiple linear regression was computed to predict the significant relationship between the variables.

Table 1

Regression coefficients of self-compassion and appearance anxiety on body image satisfaction.

Variables	β	SE	t	p
Constant	-2.77	4.88	.57	.671
Self-Compassion	1.36	.31	4.33	.000**
Appearance-Anxiety	-.24	.09	2.49	.014*

The findings revealed that self-compassion had a significant positive relationship with body image satisfaction ($\beta = 1.36, p < .001$). This indicates that individuals who exhibit higher levels of self-compassion tend to report greater satisfaction with their body image. This supports previous research that suggests individuals who are kinder and more accepting toward themselves are more

likely to perceive their physical appearance positively. The ability to treat oneself with warmth and understanding, especially during times of perceived inadequacy, appears to foster a more favorable view of the self, including one's body. In contrast, appearance anxiety was found to be a significant negative predictor of body image satisfaction ($\beta = -0.24, p < .05$). This suggests that individuals with heightened anxiety concerning their physical appearance are more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their body. The fear of negative evaluation, often driven by internalized beauty standards and social comparisons, contributes to a distorted self-image and reduced body satisfaction. These findings align with previous studies highlighting the detrimental effects of appearance-based anxieties on emotional and psychological well-being (Cash & Smolak, 2011; Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2016). Altogether, the regression model explained approximately 45% of the variance in body image satisfaction, which is statistically significant. While both predictors were significant, self-compassion demonstrated a stronger influence compared to appearance anxiety. This implies that fostering a compassionate inner dialogue may play a more powerful role in enhancing one's satisfaction with body image than simply reducing anxiety about appearance.

In summary, the results of the study underscore the importance of self-compassion as a psychological resource that enhances body image satisfaction, and appearance anxiety as a factor that detracts from it. These findings highlight the need for interventions that build self-compassion as a protective factor while addressing the harmful impacts of appearance anxiety. Developing self-kindness, mindful acceptance, and reducing self-critical thoughts may serve as effective

strategies in improving body image, especially in populations vulnerable to external appearance pressures (Neff, 2003; Albertson, Neff, & Dill-Shackleford, 2015; Ferreira et al., 2013).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Self-Compassion, Appearance Anxiety, and Body Image Satisfaction among young adult females. The findings highlighted that higher levels of Self-Compassion were associated with greater Body Image Satisfaction, whereas increased Appearance Anxiety was linked to lower satisfaction with body image. This indicates the crucial role of Self-Compassion in promoting a healthier and more accepting self-perception, while also recognizing the negative impact that Appearance Anxiety can have on one's self-worth. The results underline the psychological importance of cultivating kindness towards the self and reducing appearance-based fears in order to enhance overall well-being. Acknowledging these internal processes, the study emphasizes the need for emotional resilience and self-acceptance, especially among young women navigating modern appearance pressures. Creating awareness and fostering these traits may contribute to improved mental health and body image satisfaction.

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