

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION AND BODY SHAME: A STUDY ABOUT APPEARANCE ANXIETY AMONG PAKISTANI STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN SPORTS

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Abstract

Objectives. *The presented study was aimed to examine self-objectification and body shaming in relation to appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports (N=300).*

Method. *The sample included students of Rawalpindi and Islamabad colleges including both sectors government and private colleges as well as both genders, male (N=150) and female college students (N=150). The self-objectification was assessed through The Surveillance subscale of Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996), appearance anxiety through Appearance Anxiety Scale brief version (Dion, Dion & Keelan, 1990) and body shame with the help of Body Shame Subscale, of Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996).*

Results. *The study found significant positive correlation between self-objectification and body shame, self-objectification and appearance anxiety. The body shame and appearance anxiety were also found to be positively related with each other. The self-objectification was also found to be predictor of body shame and appearance anxiety among the respondents.*

Conclusion. *The findings indicated a significant relationship between the study variables which provide an indication that experiencing self-objectification is directly associated with body shaming and appearance anxiety. Apart from suggesting a link among study variables in women, this study is also revealing the experience of self-objectification, appearance anxiety and body shaming among men as they have more exercise orientation for coping with the appearance anxiety and body shame.*

Keywords: *Self-objectification, Appearance Anxiety, Body Shame*

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Introduction

Socialization is a process which involves interpersonal interactions and confrontations among the individuals within a society. During this process, individuals affect and are being affected by others in various domains of life. The various impacts that a society or a culture impose upon its members are social evaluations in terms of appearance and body related concerns, through comments, evaluative gaze and gestures. It has been seen that women remained an object of evaluation in various cultures and societies. They are being treated and evaluated on some appearance related concerns which provide a base for self-evaluation by themselves regarding their physique and outlook. The interpersonal interactions are found to be a strong source of objectifying gaze either experienced by women or men. This perspective robs the inherent capacities of an individual because much focus is laid on grooming and enhancing the outlook only.

This evaluative perspective can be explained through the objectification theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) which emphasizes on socio-cultural influences in terms of psychological distress and morbidity. It has feminine roots, which highlight objectification being experienced by women, in western cultures about bodily related concerns. Among the major causes of objectification, the interpersonal interactions are the leading cause, while after them media is the second major cause. Media (print and electronic media) has focused much on depiction of female body as the objects for evaluation by the viewers in either as a whole body or as specific body parts. Hence the resultant objectifying gaze of these experiences leads to dissatisfaction with physique and preoccupation about physical appearance (Jones & Griffiths, 2015).

Self-objectification is a process by which the perspective of other's is internalized in terms of objects, which are meant for examination, assessment and evaluation by others, hence giving

the status of objectivity by putting aside the subjective aspect of a person. This internalization is directly observed through the behaviors like body surveillance and monitoring at regular basis. The wide sphere of self-objectification covers the area of sports too, in which body appearance and competence, both aspects are important for an athlete. For body appearance critical comments have been received by the individual especially by women, either from family members or from the co-players and supervisors. It has been noted that among these evaluators, team players and coaches are found to be motivating agents of self-objectification (Muscat & Long, 2008).

It seems that the evaluations by others resulting in objectification could lead to further physique related concerns like body shaming. McKinely and Hyde (1996) defined body shame as a shame experienced by an individual when the societal standards of body are not met. These standards are being placed by the society regarding ideal body, which have an association with personal growth in women, as their identity and self-definitions are highly affected by these upon attainment and failure. Body shame and eating pathology is found related in studies, as body shame could lead to eating disorders through existing discrepancy between the actual and ideal body image among women (Doran & Lewis, 2012).

The term appearance anxiety was coined firstly by Dion, Dion and Keelan (1990), as an apprehension about appearance and appearance related evaluation being done by other people. The investment of people in enhancing and grooming physical appearance to achieve the ideal cultural standards is a result of appearance anxiety. People with appearance anxiety are found to be more prone to develop psychopathology like body image issues and eating disorders (Overstreet & Quinn, 2012). The appearance related obsessions and excessive monitoring of the physique are the markers of body dissatisfaction which directly lead to body dysmorphic disorder Veale et al., (2014). Moradi and Huang (2008) explained appearance anxiety as a combination of few aspects

all relating to physical appearance like preoccupation, fears and threats. The constructs of appearance anxiety and self-objectification have been linked with each other through one similar aspect that is monitoring of self at habitual and regular level (Gapinski, Brownell, & LaFrance, 2003).

The present study is aimed to examine the impact of self-objectification which is an experience as a result of objectification of others and how it impacts the appearance anxiety and body shame of college students participating in sports. It includes both genders as female participation in sports has much increased (Bell, 2008) and females are much gazed and commented by others which impact their definition and perception of self (Reinhardt, 2015). Therefore it is examined that whether self-objectification, body shame and appearance anxiety are only confined to females or being experienced by males too. In Pakistani culture a huge body of research has focused on the experience of objectification in terms of sexual objectification through the influence of media and advertisements (Ali, 2017; Ali & Hassan, 2016; Ullah & Khan, 2014). The samples of these researches are mainly women. The present study has made an attempt to study self-objectification among the sample including both genders especially those who are participative in sports, either member of sports clubs or college teams. On the other hand, the constructs of body image (Saghir, 2017) and muscle dysmorphia (Bashir, Rehman & Zahra, 2021; Sarfraz, et al., 2020) have been a topic of research among various samples. The objectification previously was a term related to western societies in a feminist perspective but now this construct has prevailed in eastern societies in both genders with differences in intensities (Loughnan, 2015). This study attempts to understand the experience of self-objectification that provides the base for appearance anxiety as well as body shame as a major risk factor. This path will shift the examination of the constructs of body shame and appearance anxiety among various samples

through the lens of self-objectification. Another aspect of the study is that usually the fitness maintenance among the sportsmen and women is associated with better performance but through the findings of present study, the participation in sports could be regarded as the effective strategies to cope with the appearance anxiety and body shame by the respondents.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To investigate the relationship between self-objectification, body shame and appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.
- To examine the impact of self-objectification on body shame and appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.

Hypothesis

The research hypothesis of the present study are as follows:

- Self-objectification will be positively related to body shame among college students participating in sports.
- There will be a positive correlation between self-objectification and appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.
- Self-objectification will predict appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.
- Self-objectification will lead to body shame among college students participating in sports.

Null Hypothesis

- Self-objectification will be negatively related to body shame among college students participating in sports.
- There will be a negative correlation between self-objectification and appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.
- Self-objectification will not predict appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports.
- Self-objectification will not lead to body shame among college students participating in sports.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design of the study was correlational survey method in which participants of different colleges and different age groups were selected for the study.

Sample

The sample included 300 college students (n=150 males, n=150 females) participating in sports studying in different colleges, including government as well as private colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Respondents' age range was from 18 to 27 years. The sports included cricket, badminton, volley ball, basketball, lawn tennis, table tennis football, net ball, hockey, races, jumps and throws while the sports like boxing, swimming, wrestling, bowling and cycling were excluded from the sample.

Instruments

The Surveillance subscale of Objectified Body Consciousness Scale measures self-objectification through self-surveillance. Total 8 items, has 7-point Likert scale of response, which ranged from, strongly disagree to strongly agree. The negative items are 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8. The surveillance scale is a reliable instrument with alpha coefficient value of .84 (McKinley & Hyde, 1996).

Body Shame Subscale, of Objectified Body Consciousness Scale is developed by McKinley and Hyde (1996), is composed of 8 items totally, with 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The body shame scale is a reliable having alpha coefficient 87. Two items are negative 5 and 7.

Appearance Anxiety Scale Dion and Keelan (1990) developed a scale, Appearance Anxiety Scale (AAS; brief version). In the brief version of appearance anxiety scale, there are 14 items, based on 5-point Likert scale from 1=never to 5=almost always. The item number 3, 4, 6, 11, 12 and 14 are negative items. The brief version of appearance anxiety scale Cronbach alpha reliability 86, which indicated good reliability.

Procedure The questionnaires and demographic sheet were administered and inform consent was used which included information about the study, request for data provision and assurance of the confidentiality of the information provided. The data was analyzed through SPSS through analyses i.e., reliability, correlation and regression analyses and t-tests

Results

Table 1

Psychometric Properties of the Major Variables/Scales (N=300)

Variables	No of Items	<i>a</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range		Skew	Kurt
				Potential	Actual		
SS	8	.66	30.56 (7.08)	14-50	8-56	.17	-.21
BS	8	.68	29.89(8.84)	12-55	8-56	.06	-.61
AAS	14	.77	33.30(9.25)	15-60	14-70	.39	-.28

Note. SS = Surveillance Scale; AAS= Appearance Anxiety Scale, BSS= Body Shame Scale

The above table shows the descriptive i.e., reliabilities, mean, standard deviation, range for Surveillance Scale, Appearance Anxiety Scale and Body Shame Scale.

Table 2

Correlation of Study Variables (N=300)

Variables		SS	BSS	AAS
1	SS	---	.28**	.29**.
2	BSS		---	.48**
3	AAS			---

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$,

The table indicates a significant positive relationship of self-objectification with body shame and appearance anxiety.

Table 3

Simple Linear Regression showing Self-objectification as Predictor of Body Shame among college students participating in sports (N=300)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	19.04	2.17		8.75	.00
Self-Objectification	.35	.07	.28	5.11	.00

Note. B=Unstandardized coefficient, SE= Standard Error, β =Standardized Coefficient Beta

Self-objectification is found to be a significant predictor of the body shame among college students participating in sports ($\beta=.28$, $p<.05$) by adding 8% variance in body shame.

Table 4

Simple Linear Regression showing Self-Objectification as Predictor of Appearance Anxiety among college students participating in sports (N=300)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Constant	21.42	2.26		9.44	.00
Self-Objectification	.38	.07	.29	5.37	.00

Note. B=Unstandardized coefficient, SE= Standard Error, β =Standardized Coefficient Beta

Through simple linear regression self-objectification is found to be a significant predictor of the appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports ($\beta=.29$, $p<.05$) by adding 8% variance in appearance anxiety.

Table 5

Gender Differences in relation to Self-objectification, Body Shame and Appearance Anxiety among College students participating in sports (N=300).

Variables	Males (N=150)		Females (N=150)		<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	CI	
	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
SS	30.01	7.37	31.12	6.74	3.71(298)	.04	1.60	5.71
BSS	28.14	9.03	31.65	8.32	3.49(298)	.01	1.53	5.48
AAS	34.99	9.04	31.65	9.19	3.17(298)	.89	1.26	5.41

Note. SS=Surveillance Scale, AAS=Appearance Anxiety Scale, BSS=Body Shame Scale, CI = Confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit

The above table indicates significant differences among the categories of gender in relation to self-objectification ($p=.04$, $<.05$) and body shame ($p=.01$, $<.05$) while non-significant differences in appearance anxiety ($p=.89$, $>.05$) among college students participating in sports. Females are more self-objectified ($M=31.12$) than males (30.01), and have more body shame (31.65) as compared to male college students ($M=28.14$).

Discussion

The present study, examined the impact of self-objectification, on appearance anxiety and body shame among college students participating in sports. Analyses of data provided important results.

Findings of correlation analysis, provided a positive also significant correlation between self-objectification and body shame (.28**, $p<.05$) highlighting a direct link between these

variables. The research hypothesis is confirmed through results, which are in line with the findings of Claudat, Warren and Durette (2012), who found positive relationship between body shame and self-objectification. It has been noticed that body shame in men is considered to be linked with appearance concern, body surveillance, self and sexual objectification (Sanchez & Kwang, 2007).

The correlation analysis yielded a positive significant relationship of self-objectification with appearance anxiety (.29**, $p < .05$), which are similar with the findings of, Tiggemann and Slater (2001) and Vencill, Tebbe and Garos (2015).

The findings also incorporated a significantly positive relation between appearance anxiety and body shame (.48**, $p < .05$) the college students participating in sports. This association is an indication of the fact that the intensity of appearance anxiety will directly influence the intensity of body shame, as both will go in the same direction. Evans (2010) studied the role of body shame, appearance anxiety, and self-objectification, in prevalence of depression among a sample comprised of college level females, showed direct link of self-objectification with appearance anxiety (.56**) and body shame (.47**) in positive plus significant manner. Another major finding was the association between body shame and appearance anxiety in positive plus significant way (.48**).

In relation to body shame, the predicting role of self-objectification was examined the help of regression analysis. Self-objectification predicted body shame ($\beta = .28$, $p < .05$) among the college students participating in sports, by adding five percent variance. A study was held to check self-objectification among men and women in relation to restrained eating, body shame, math performance and behavioral and emotional consequences relevant to self-objectification. In two parts, the research was. According to findings included self-objectification, resulted into body

shame. This further resulted to restrain eating among men and women, both genders at equal levels (Fredrickson et al, 1998). Other researchers (Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004) examined self-objectification in relation to cognitive performance, body shame and self-esteem, among men and women. They found self-objectification to be a predicting agent in decreased self-esteem and body shame among participants. Another finding was the lower levels of body shame along with self-objectification in men participants than women. Self-objectification predicted body surveillance and body shame among athletes in another investigation being done by Ede (2010).

Through simple linear regression analysis this prediction was examined. Findings indicated the significant predicting role of self-objectification in appearance anxiety ($\beta=.29, p<.05$) by adding eight percent variance. This predicting role has been found by another study where self-objectification lead to appearance anxiety among the research sample (Tiggemann & Slater, 2001).

The significant differences were found in gender ($p=.04, >.05$) as the female college students ($M=31.12$) are more self-objectified as compared to male college students ($M=30.01$) which is in line with previous results (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004). It was noted that that female college students ($M=31.65$) as compared to male college students ($M=28.14$) have more body shame, which is consistent with previous findings (Grabe, Hyde, & Lindberg, 2007; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, & Rodin, 1992).

Limitations and Suggestions

In order to generalize the results, research sample remained confined only to Rawalpindi and Islamabad, time duration was limited and few sports were included. More reliable results could be found by increasing the sample size, extending the time duration, including more college students from cities either participating or not participating in sports and all types of sports in the study.

Implications

The study would be helpful and assist in adding literature relevant to the existing extensive knowledge regarding self-objectification, appearance anxiety and body shame. It will provide a distinct way to examine the physique related concerns through focusing on self-objectification. It is noted that the underlying impacts of interpersonal interactions especially comments related to body shapes and figures result in the form of objectification, appearance anxiety and body shame. The study will highlight the importance and implication of the impact of self-objectification that it places on appearance anxiety as well as body shame among college students participating in sports including both genders.

Conclusion

The present study summarizes the impacts of self-objectification on body shame and appearance anxiety among college students participating in sports, and found consequences of self-objectification in the form of body shame and appearance anxiety among the respondents. Although there are some limitations regarding the generalizability of the findings, yet this study provides a way to examine the link between self-objectification with body shame and appearance anxiety within Eastern societies (Pakistan). The objectifying gaze affects the social roles and

behaviors of both men and women through habitual self-monitoring and more consideration of bodily aspects.

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