ORIGINAL ARTICLE

FREQUENCY OF BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION IN THE ERA OF COSMETIC PROCEDURES

Tehseen Naveed[1], Quratulain Ejaz[2], Aqsa Naheed[3], Mehwish Sultan[4]

[1,2] Assistant Professor, Dermatology, Combined Military Hospital, Peshawar, [3]Professor, Dermatology, HITEC-IMS, Taxila, [4]Senior Registrar, Psychiatry, HITEC-IMS, Taxila.

ABSTRACT

Background: The proliferation of cosmetic procedures, ranging from minimally invasive treatments to complex surgical interventions, has redefined beauty ideas and beauty norms.

Objective: To determine the frequency of body image perception in the individuals having normal skin, with no history of cosmetic procedures, and to explore the coping mechanisms utilized in the context of a growing prevalence of cosmetic interventions.

Study Design: Cross-sectional study.

Place and Duration of Study: Combined Military Hospital, Peshawar. 03 months (May 2023-August 2023).

Patients and Methods: Total 213 individuals, between 18 and 60 years of age, who had normal skin and had not undergone any cosmetic procedure, were included. Those with preexisting skin issues or a history of cosmetic procedures were excluded. Participants were asked to fill a questionnaire, including the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS), comprising 16 self-reporting items. Responses were entered on a 5-point scale. Cumulative scores ranged from 16 to 80; categorized as mild (16-32), moderate (33-48), severe (49-64) and very severe (64-80). Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS-21) was used to evaluate participants' coping strategies which was categorized into three types: Emotion-oriented, Task-oriented and Avoidant, each consisting of seven points.

Results: Mean age of participants was 27.80±8.82 years. The mean SAAS score was 37.83±16.67. A significant association was found between SAAS and employment status (p-value = 0.045). However, no significant associations were seen between SAAS score and age, gender, marital status, and education. Regarding the CISS-21 scale, 56.4% adopted a task-oriented approach, 42.6% utilized an avoidant approach and in 16.4% emotional coping was observed.

Conclusion: This research provides an insight into social appearance anxiety among normal individuals, enriching the discourse on body image and mental health in the current era of cosmetic advancements.

Key words: Coping Inventory for stressful situations (CISS-21), Cosmetic procedures, Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS).

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INTRODUCTION

In the age, marked by unprecedented advancements in cosmetic procedures and an ever-increasing emphasis on physical appearance, the concept of beauty and its societal implications have undergone a profound transformation[1]. Cosmetic enhancements, once a niche pursuit, have become more accessible and culturally pervasive than ever before. In this era of readily available cosmetic interventions, the intersection of self-perception, body image and social dynamics has come under intense scrutiny[2].

Contemporary society finds itself at the crossroads of self-image and self-worth. The proliferation of cosmetic procedures, ranging from minimally invasive treatments to complex surgical interventions has redefined beauty ideals and body norms[3]. While these procedures offer opportunities for self-expression and empowerment, they simultaneously engender an environment where appearance can be artificially crafted, leading to potential disparities in self-perception[4].

At the heart of this shifting paradigm lies the phenomenon of social appearance anxiety, a complex emotional response to societal expectations regarding one's physical appearance. This form of anxiety extends beyond clinical body dysmorphic disorder and can affect individuals across diverse demographic and cultural spectra. However, our understanding of social appearance anxiety predominantly hinges on its association with cosmetic interventions, leaving a critical gap in comprehending its prevalence and implications among those who have not chosen such procedures[5].

Zhong Y's survey of 367 female college participants unveils a significant correlation between internalizing "ideal beauty" and body image disturbance (p < 0.001). This connection highlights the influence of beauty standards on body image perceptions [6].

He Y underscores the impact of appearance anxiety on adolescents' mental health, emphasizing the role of family, education and societal influences. Recommendations focus on promoting correct values, enhancing psychological support, incorporating aesthetic education and advocating diverse aesthetics to combat appearance anxiety rooted in misguided values[7].

This study delves into a crucial aspect of this evolving landscape: the prevalence and impact of social appearance anxiety among individuals who have not undergone cosmetic procedures. As the boundaries of conventional beauty standards expand and blur, it is essential to understand how these changes affect the psyche and social interactions of individuals who have not pursued such enhancements.

While the existing literature explores social appearance anxiety in populations who have undergone cosmetic procedures, fewer studies have examined this phenomenon among individuals who have not undergone any. This research aims to bridge this gap by shedding light on the experiences, anxieties and coping mechanisms of "normal" individuals in an environment characterized by cosmetic advancements.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional, observational study was carried out at Combined Military Hospital, Peshawar, between a period from May to August 2023, encompassing attendants of the patients who visited various departments of the hospital. The sample size was determined utilizing the World Health Organization, calculator, considering a 17% prevalence rate of social appearance anxiety[8], a 95% confidence interval and a precision rate of 5%. This study included 213 individuals, between 18 and 60 years of age, who had normal skin and had never undergone any cosmetic procedures. We utilized a convenience sampling method to select our participants, excluding those with preexisting skin issues or a history of cosmetic procedures. To ensure the ethical conduct of our research, informed consent emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of responses was obtained from all participants. Moreover, the ethical approval from the institutional review board was diligently sought.

Demographic data (gender, age, marital status, employment status and education) were meticulously recorded on a structured proforma. Participants were asked to complete self-administered questionnaires, including Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)[9]. This instrument gauged the participants' level of social appearance anxiety through a validated scale.

CAPSULE SUMMARY

- This study provides insight into social appearance anxiety among normal people, highlighting the discourse of body image and mental health within the current era of cosmetic breakthroughs.

- Frequency of body image perception in normal individuals was determined and the coping mechanisms were explored.

- A significant association was found between SAAS score and employment status.

- Majority adopted a task-oriented coping strategy, emotional coping was the least employed.

Comprising 16 self-reporting items, study participants were asked to assess their anxiety levels in various scenarios where their appearances might be subject to evaluation. Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The cumulative scores from these 16 items provided a total SAAS score ranging from 16 to 80. The higher the score, the heightened level of social appearance anxiety experienced by the person: categorized as mild (16-32), moderate (33-48), severe (49-64) and very severe (65-80). To evaluate the participants' coping strategies, we employed the validated inventory, Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS-21)[10]. This inventory, offers a four-factor model for comprehending peoples' coping with the adversities of life. Coping strategies are categorized into three types: Emotion-oriented, Task-oriented and Avoidant, each consisting of seven points.

Data Analysis: SPSS version 28 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means and frequencies, were employed to present demographic data. The relationships between age, marital status, education and employment status with SAAS scores were examined using Chi-square. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

This research comprised 213 participants, aged 13-60 years, with a mean age of 27.80±8.82 years. Gender distribution was 46.4% male (n=99) and 53.5% female (n=114). The mean SAAS score was 37.83±16.67. Demographic details of the participants are shown in Table 1.

A significant association was found between SAAS score and employment status (p-value = 0.045). However, no significance was seen between SAAS score and age, gender, marital status and education as shown in Table 2.

Examining the coping strategies, using the CISS-21 scale, majority (n=120, 56.4%) adopted a task-oriented approach (2. Focus on the problem and consider how to solve it). Subsequently, 42.6% utilized an avoidant approach, choosing strategies like taking some time off from the situation (1. Take some time off and get away from the situation) and with 34.4% seeking solace by visiting a friend (7. Visit a friend). In contrast, emotional coping was the least employed, reported by only 16.4% and 17.9% for strategies like blaming oneself for the situation (3. Blame myself for having gotten into this situation) and becoming very upset (12. Become very upset) as shown in Table 3.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Variables of Participants (n=213)

Variable	Percentage n (%)
Age	
Group A=13-28 years	130 (61.03)
Group B=29-44 years	70 (23.86)
Group C=45-60 years	13 (6.10)
Gender	
Male	99 (46.4)
Female	114 (53.5)
Marital status	
Married	73 (34.2)
Unmarried	140 (65.7)
Employment status	
Employed	94 (44.13)
Housewife	14 (6.57)
Others	11 (5.16)
Student	73 (34.2)
Unemployed	21 (9.85)
Education	
Under-matric	5 (2.3)
Matric	4 (1.87)
FSC/FA	51 (23.9)
Bachelor	68 (31.9)
Masters & above	85 (39.9)

DISCUSSION

In this study, a diverse cohort of 213 participants, aged 13 to 60 with a mean age of 27.80±8.82, was examined. The sample exhibited a varied demographic composition, comprising 46.4% (n=99) males and 53.5% (n=114) females, encompassing different marital statuses, with 34.2% (n=73) married and 65.7% (n=140) unmarried. A majority of 44.13% (n=94) were employed, and 39.9% (n=85) held a Master's or a higher degree. In contrast to several prior studies that focused predominantly on university and college students, limiting the scope of their research, our study broadened its participant base, thereby enhancing the generalizability of findings and deepening our understanding of the subject.

On the academic front, other studies contributed valuable insights. Pan et al surveyed 101 college students, identifying factors that contribute to appearance anxiety, including social media's impact on ideal beauty standards, job market pressures, low self-confidence, and perceived physical flaws. They proposed solutions to help college students manage anxiety and foster positive societal development[8]. Additionally, Çepikkurt et al's research on 191 university students demonstrated a negative correlation between the "hope for perfection" and "comfort with appearance" subscales (r = -0.31; p < 0.05), as well as a positive correlation with the "expectation of negative evaluation" subscale (r = 0.16; p < 0.05). Furthermore, no

Table 2: Association of Sociodemographic Variables with Social Appearance Anxiety Score

Sociodemographic Variable	Social Appearance Anxiety Score				
	Mild n(%)	Moderate n(%)	Severe n(%)	Very severe n(%)	p-value
Age (years)					
Group A=13-28	54 (41.53)	39 (30)	28 (21.53)	9 (6.92)	0.275
Group B=29-44	29 (41.42)	26 (37.14)	9 (12.85)	6 (8.57)	
Group C=45-60	9 (69.23)	1 (7.69)	2 (15.38)	1 (7.69)	
Gender					
Female	43(37.71)	36(31.57)	26(22.80)	9(7.89)	0.214
Male	49(49.49)	30(30.30)	13(13.13)	7(7.07)	
Marital status					
Married	36(49.31)	19(26.02)	13(17.80)	5(6.84)	0.588
Unmarried	56(40.00)	47(33.57)	26(18.57)	11(7.85)	
Employment status					
Employed	49(52.12)	31(32.97)	8(8.51)	6(6.38)	0.045
Housewife	4(28.57)	5(35.71)	5(35.71)	0(0.00)	
Other	6(54.54)	2(18.18)	1(9.09)	2(18.18)	
Student	25(34.24)	22(30.13)	21(28.76)	5(6.84)	
Unemployed	8(38.09)	6(28.57)	4(19.04)	3(14.28)	
Education					
Under-matric	0(0.00)	2(40)	2(40)	1(20)	0.294
Matric	1(25)	2(50)	1(25)	0(0.00)	
FSC/FA	22(43.13)	14(27.45)	11(21.56)	4(7.84)	
Bachelor	29(42.64)	27(39.70)	10(14.70)	2(2.94)	
Masters & above	40(47.05)	21(24.74)	14(16.47)	9(10.58)	

Table 3: Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations Strategies adopted by the participants

Coping Strategies	n (%)
1. Take some time off and get away from the situation (A)	83 (42.6)
2. Focus on the problem and see how I can solve (T)	110 (56.4)
3. Blame myself for having gotten into this situation (E)	32 (16.4)
4. Treat myself to a favorite food or snack (A)	46 (23.6)
5. Feel anxious about not being able to cope (E)	36 (16.9)
6. Think about how I solved similar problems (T)	66 (33.8)
7. Visit a friend (A)	67 (34.4)
8. Determine a course of action and follow it (T)	45 (23.1)
9. Buy myself something (A)	36 (18.5)
10. Blame myself for being too emotional about the situation (E)	35 (17.9)
11. Work to understand the situation (T)	67 (34.4)
12. Become very upset (E)	35 (17.9)
13. Take corrective action immediately (T)	46 (23.6)
14. Blame myself for not knowing what to do (E)	28 (14.4)
15. Spend time with a special person (A)	56 (28.7)
16. Think about the event and learn from my mistakes (T)	60 (30.8)
17. Wish that I could change what had happened or how I felt (E)	48 (24.6)
18. Go out for a snack or meal (A)	39 (20.0)
19. Analyze my problem before reacting (T)	61 (31.3)
20. Focus on my general inadequacies (E)	45 (23.1)
21. Phone a friend (A)	51 (26.2)

significant gender-based differences in mean SAAS scores were observed in our study, which aligns with their findings[11].

Our study's mean SAAS score of 37.83±16.67 was notably close to the mean SAAS score of 31.42 reported by Aktağ. Aktağ's study, conducted in Turkey with 2383 high school students, revealed significant gender-based differences in the levels of Social Appearance Anxiety (SAA) and Leisure Time Exercise (LTE), with vocational high school students reporting higher SAA and LTE levels compared to their peers in Science and Anatolian high schools. Additionally, 12th grade students exhibited the lowest LTE levels and the highest SAA levels[12].

Our research uncovered a significant association between employment status and SAAS score (p-value = 0.045), while age, gender, marital status and education showed no noteworthy associations. Interestingly, Çepikkurt et al and Kowalski et al's work pointed to a higher prevalence of SAAS score among females compared to males[11,13]. Additionally, the study by Yang et al, focusing on high school girls in China, emphasized the role of social factors such as social comparison, conformity and social media in driving appearance anxiety, underscoring the significance of internal perceptions over actual discrimination experiences. Despite their efforts to manage this anxiety through makeup and dressing up, students often grapple with its persistence, maintaining a neutral attitude toward their appearance-related concerns[14].

Moreover, Karaoglan et al explored the interplay between social appearance anxiety, smartphone addiction, nomophobia, and depression in a study involving 473 college students, revealing substantial relationships. Notably, nomophobia was found to directly influence smartphone addiction, while social appearance anxiety impacted both smartphone addiction and nomophobia and depression played a role in shaping social appearance anxiety[15].

Furthermore, Üngüren et al's survey of 719 respondents from nine universities in Turkey shed light on the consequences of social disconnectedness, demonstrating that it leads to increased social media addiction, subsequently exacerbating social appearance anxiety and diminishing students' career aspirations in the tourism sector[16].

Lastly, regarding coping strategies in our study, the majority (56.4%) adopted a task-oriented approach, while 42.6% favored an avoidant approach and emotional coping methods were the least frequently utilized with only 16.4% and 17.9% of participants employing such strategies, consistent with the observations of Antonietti et al and Kowalski et al[17,13]. This adds valuable insights to the existing literature on the topic.

While this study aimed to provide insights into social appearance anxiety, it had inherent limitations. These included the potential for recall bias in self-reported data, the cross-sectional nature of

the study, and the use of convenience sampling, which might have limited the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminates the underexplored landscape of social appearance anxiety among individuals who have not undergone cosmetic procedures, shedding light on their experiences and coping mechanisms. The dynamic interplay of societal beauty standards and self-perception presents challenges that extend beyond clinical body dysmorphic disorder and affect diverse demographics. Understanding the nuances of social appearance anxiety in this context is essential for promoting mental well-being and self-acceptance in an ever-evolving societal framework.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Aqsa Naheed	Drafting the Article
Aqsa Naheed	Analysis and interpretation of data
Tehseen Naveed	Conception and design
Quratulain Ejaz	Acquisition of data
Mehwish Sultan	Critical revision

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