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APPEARANCE SCHEMAS, SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement among university students. The participants were 150 university students, Baccalaureate Program (Male= 43, Females= 56). Participants ages were ranged from 18 to 26 years (Freshmen=25%, Sophomores=25%, Juniors=21% and Seniors=29%). They were administered Appearance Schemas Inventory-Revised (ASI-R), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) and Demographic Questionnaire. Cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was obtained for measuring the academic achievement of the participants. The data were collected through random sampling, Correlational research design was used, and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Independent sample t-test. The descriptive statistics included Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges and percentages. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 22 was used for data analysis. The results showed negative relationship between appearance schemas and self-esteem, whereas non-significant relationship was found between appearance schemas and academic achievement (CGPA). Appearance schemas of males were significantly different from females. The results have clear implications as the present study highlights the aspect of appearance schema related to students' self-esteem and academic achievement in modern era. This study paved the path for other researcher to work on appearance schemas and its relation to other factors. Also, Educational institutions can introduce courses on self-grooming and helping skills. Special counseling sessions can be offered for the students facing difficulties in life in terms of highly developed appearance schemas. Counselors can work on problems like time management, feelings of unworthiness when they do not like their appearance, and dissatisfaction with life because of appearance.

1. Introduction

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement among university students. Although every human being has the schemas to maintain their physical appearance but with time these schemas are overly developed in many people (Fox, 1997). That could be the result of unattainable standards of beauty set by our society and media. These individual with the greater value of appearance called appearance schematic. These schemas deals with the individuals' belief about appearance which includes their body shape, body size, weight, clothing, concern about hairs, looks, and overall perception about self-presentation and body image (Cash & Labarge, 1996).

The research done by Dove Global Beauty and Confidence (2016) has shown that at present women are highly concern about their physical appearance than in past. At present low body confidence and dissatisfaction with the physical appearance has become a global issue. A small percentage of women is satisfied with their body, in Japan 8% of women reported high confidence in their appearance, 40% in Indian, 37% of women in China, 20% of Australian women and 24% of women in U.S. reported confidence in their physical appearance (Paxton & Etcoff, 2016). The reason for such a large percentage of women being dissatisfied with their body is because society put greater emphasis on physical appearance and physical attractiveness. Media has given an ideal definition of physical attractiveness and unattained standards of beauty (Paxton & Etcoff, 2016).

The change in appearance schemas compels people for greater investment in appearance and appearance related behavior leading towards dysfunctional level. According to Dove research commission 2016, 89 percent of Australian women reported that they canceled their meetings with the friends, special event and job interviews on day they feel they are not looking good. (Cash, Melnyk &Hrabosky, 2004) Therefore, these results are evidence of alarming importance and investment of physical appearance in people's life that is restraining proper functioning of the individuals and leading towards maladaptive behaviors like low self-esteem and low task performance ability (Argyrides, Marios, Keli & Natalie, 2013).

Cash and Labarge (1996) define appearance schemas as psychological and cognitive concept of individual about their appearance, generated from social experiences. These experiences guide and organize the information processing about self and individual's concept about the appearance. Individuals with developed sense of appearance schemas are more likely to evaluate themselves in the light of their perception about their bodies (Tiggemann, 2005). Their physical self becomes an integral part of their concept about self and self-worth (Tiggemann, Hargreaves, Polivy& McFarlane, 2004). In a study conducted by Harter (1999) it was found that students who were not appearance conscious reported higher self-esteem with respect to students who were dissatisfaction with appearance (Eklund & Bianco, 2000).

Self-esteem affects our ability to adapt in our society. It provides us flexibility to change and to progress in life regardless of the fear of being rejected. Individuals with high self-esteem have greater ability to trust others and to build strong interpersonal relationships, required for life satisfaction, however they are independent and cooperative as well (Rosenberger, Schooler, Schoenback & Rosenberge , 1995). These individuals show greater ability to solve problems, attention and reasoning lead to satisfaction in life and happiness whereas low self-esteem cultivate negative self-perception, perfectionist attitude triggering dissatisfaction with life. Feeling of inferiority and rejection, Reluctant to try new things , depending on others means no self-growth effecting task performance (Lennon, Lillethum, & Buckland, 1999).

Self-esteem is defined as concept about self either positive or negative. It is evaluation of self which can be good or bad. It is the ability to understand the value of self, an emotion required to live in the society and to have worthwhile life (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem also linked with individual's view about life, task performance and dependence on others (Higbee &Dwinell, 1996).

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (as cited in Higbee &Dwinell, 1996) college attendance is affected by student's self-esteem. In their research they found positive relationship between self-esteem of students and number of classes Students attended. Further, researchers reported low academic achievement to be related with low self-esteem among students. Moreover, another study found that self-esteem to be significantly related with good interpersonal relationship, academic achievement, and strong parental attachment for adjusting in college (Freshman, Mooney, Sherman & Loprest, 1991 as cited in Higbee & Dwinell, 1996).

In 2003, Siegel reported learning disabilities to be related with lower level of self-esteem. However, low self-esteem and test anxiety were found to be related with low academic performance (Peleg, 2009). Research done on undergraduate students, showed that students who had positive view about life and life satisfaction had high self-esteem. By decreasing "have and want", accepting what one has can enhance life satisfaction and positive perception about self (We, Tsoi, & Chen, 2009).

Self-esteem and life satisfaction may predict high resilience in adults. Individuals having high self-esteem feel easier to cope with stress and have greater tendency to recover from emotional distress. It made them more satisfied with life and positive view about them self (Martinez-marti& Ruch, 2016).

1.1 Rationale

This research examined the relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement among university students. At present people are becoming more self-conscious because of the ideal appearance image portrays by our society, culture and media (Klein, 2013). People are becoming overly concerned about their appearance and appearance managing behaviors are increasing e.g. demand for branded clothes, Different haircuts and strange fashion. In other countries like America, England and Japan etc. The overwhelming appearance consciousness is affecting people's life satisfaction, relationship and social life (Fredrick, 2016). These overly developed appearance schemes are contributing in increasing the rate of cosmetic surgeries. It is causing severe psychological and physical disorders life body dysmorphic disorder and life-threatening eating disorders. In underdeveloped country like Pakistan these disorders are not much considered but this does not eliminate the effect of appearance from life (Gitimu *et al*., 2016)

This study will investigate the occurrence of overly developed appearance schemas in adolescents and young adults of Pakistan. The study will explore are these overly developed appearance schemas are related to student's life, self-evaluation and their academic performance. As less work is done on appearance schemas in Pakistan this research will be helpful for other Pakistani researcher to work on appearance schemas and its relationship with on other factors.

The present study will be helpful in highlighting new factor that are associated with students' self-concept and academic successes in modern era. It will give the estimation either there is any relationship between appearance schemas and academic achievement of students and either self-esteem is related to both the variables. Keeping results in view researcher can do large scale research on appearance schemas in Pakistan. Universities can also work on self-grooming of their students by introduce courses on self-grooming and helping skills. Universities can also offer special counseling sessions for the students facing difficulties in life because of their highly developed appearance schemas. Counselors can work on problems like tie management, handling feelings of unworthiness when they do not like their appearance, and dissatisfaction with life because of appearance.

1.2 Objectives:

- To check relationship of appearance schemas with self-esteem and academic achievement among university students.

- To examine appearance schemas of male and female students.

- To check self-esteem of male and female university students with the developed appearance schemas.

- To examine gender difference in self-esteem and academic achievement among university students.

1.3 Hypotheses

- There is a significant relationship between

appearance schemas and self-esteem among university students.

- There is a significant relationship between appearances schemas and academic achievement among university students.
- There is a significant difference in appearance schemas of males and female university students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

Correlation research design was used to find the relationship between self-esteem, appearance schemas and academic achievement. The correlation is used to find the degree of relationship between of the variables (Christensen, Johnson & Turner 2011).

2.2 Sample

The study targeted a total of 150 subjects consisting of males(n=65) and females (n=85), Baccalaureate program from university located in Lahore. The age range of participants was 19-26 years old (M= 21, SD= 1.8). Freshmen=25%; Sophomores= 25%; Junior=21%; seniors=28%. Birth order, 37% first born, 27% middle born; 30% last born; 5% only child. 68% from the sample were from nuclear family and 32% were from joint family.

2.3SampleStrategy

Random sampling was used for the collection of data. Students from baccalaureate program were taken as sample other than that no other trait and condition was applied for the selection of sample. Data were generated by adding student's university roll number on excel sheet series vice e.g. 17 series, 18 series and 19 series (That can be called batch of 2017, batch of 2018 etc.).A list of 2000 roll numbers was formed, and every fourth roll number was selected. All the three questionnaires and informed consent was sent to these Roll numbered email id's (Gmail account was already made by the university using students roll number as their username).

2.4 Measuring tools

2.4.1 Demographic Questionnaire:

Demographic Questionnaire was used to gather personal information regarding participants i.e. Age, gender, education, CGPA, birth order, family system.

2.4.2 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965) is self-reporting instrument commonly used for evaluating self-esteem of individual (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale consists of 10 items that measures evaluation of self or Global self-worth, the feelings about self either positive or negative. The 4-point Likert scale was used to answer the questions ranging from 1-4(1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Disagree, 4= strongly disagree), items like 2, 5,6,8,9 are the reverse score items, by adding the score of ten items we will get the results. The normal range for the scores is from 15 to 25, high scores indicate high self-esteem and the lower score will show low self-esteem. The scale has reliability of 0.82 to 0.85 and internal consistency of 0.77 to 0.88(Sandoval 2015).

2.4.3 Appearance Schemas Inventory-Revised:

Appearance Schemas Inventory- Revised is a self-reporting scale used to assess Appearance speculation from cognitive and psychological perspective**.** It measures the impairment of investment in appearance (Cash, Melnyk, & Hrabosky, 2004). The scale consists of twenty items which are scored by 5 points Likert scales. The scale has two parts motivational salience and self-evaluation salience. Motivational salience has 8 items assessing the individual's appearance engaging behaviors. It accesses how to an extent an individual is investing in their appearance and engaging in behaviors which are related to managing their appearance. The other part is called self-evaluation salience. It consists of 12 items which are about the beliefs individual has about one's appearance like their looks, attractiveness and self-worth. These beliefs about their looks also have impact on their personality, socialization and emotions. The high score in Appearance schema inventory indicates the individual has highly developed appearance schemas because individual is more into appearance managing behaviors and to make themselves look physically attractive. Each item will be rated by the participants on Likert scale, (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree) the scores will be computed by adding these points of Likert scale for each item. The reliability of the test was calculated by using Cronbach's alpha .90 for composite score of 20 items. The 8 items of motivational salience have reliability of .91for males and .90 for females. Reliability

for 12 itemed self-evaluation was .84 for males and .82 for females. The subscales showed high internal consistency and satisfactory reliability for both the genders (Cash, Melnyk, & Hrabosky, 2004).

2.5 Procedure

2.5.1 Pilot Study:

Prior permission was taken from university's administration for conducting research in the university. The administration was informed about the aim and procedure of the study. The written consent was obtained from all the participants and were briefed about the purpose and procedure of the study. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of their information and were assured that information will only be used for research purpose. Participants were also being told about their right to leave research at any outline time. Pilot study was conducted on 15 participants to check understandability, comprehension of language, concept and time taken for this test. Participants signed the informed consent to show their willingness to participate in this study. They were assured about the confidentiality of their information along with the right of leaving the research any time. Five to eight minutes approximately was required to fill the questionnaires. Data were formed by entering the University roll numbers of the student's series vice. For random sampling, every fourth roll number from the series was selected and sent questionnaires in the form of Google form via email. The email was sent to 2000 students out of whom first 150 questionnaires. All the incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the list and again 150 Complete questionnaires were selected to make the sample 150.

2.5.2 Main Study:

Same procedure was followed as of the pilot study.

2.6 Statistical analyses

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to find the relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement. Independent Sample *t*-test was used to analyze the gender difference of between these variables. Descriptive statistics included Mean, Standard deviation, Range and Percentage. SPSS 22 version was used, and Alpha level was set at α 0.5 in the present study.

3. Results

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (two-tailed) was conducted to examine the relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement. As shown in the table (Table 3.1) appearance schemas are strongly related to self-esteem, negative correlation was found between these two variables ($r = -.33$, $p < .00**$). In other words, individual with the overly developed appearance schemas have low self-esteem. However, results revealed weak relationship between appearance schemas and academic achievement ($r = -.13$, $p=.09$). That showed appearance schemas had no influence on academic achievement. Moreover, the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement was also non-significant ($r =.13$, $p= .10$), both variables are independent of each other

Table 3.1: Correlation analysis between Appearance schemas, Self-esteem and Academic Achievement (N=150)

Variables	ASI-R	RSES	CGPA
Appearance Schemas	1	- .33**	-.13
Self-esteem	-	1	.13
CGPA	-	-	1

Note: **p<0.01; CGPA= Academic Achievement

The independent *t*–test (Table 3.2) was conducted to compare the mean of male and female university students on appearance schemas Inventory- revised, Rosenberg self-esteem scale and academic achievement (CGAP). There is significant difference in scores of males (M = 62.78; SD= 7.12) and female students (M = 66.54; SD= 8.85) on appearance schemas inventory- revised (t (148) = -2.79, p<.00).

There is a significant difference in the means of male (M = 22.89; SD=2.65) and female students (M=21.75; SD=3.01) on Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (*t* (148) = -2.79, p<.01). Moreover, significant difference is found in the Academic achievement (CGPA) of male and female students (*t* (148) = -2.10, p< .05).

Table 3.2: An Independent sample t -test comparing male and female scores on Appearance Schema inventory- Revised, Rosenberg Self-esteem scale and CGPA of male and female students

Variables	Male		Female		*t*	
	M	SD	M	SD		
ASI-R		7.1	6.66	8.85	- 2.79	
RSES	2.6	2.1	2.07	3.01	2.14	
CGPA	0.5	0.2	3.05	0.54	- 2.10	

Note: ASI-R= Appearance Schemas Inventory- Revised; RSES= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; CGPA= Academic Achievement; M= Mean; SD= Standard deviation; Alpha level = p< 0.05

4.Discussion

The aim of this study was to find relationship between appearance schemas, self-esteem and academic achievement.

4.1 Hypothesis 1:

There is a significant relationship between appearance schemas and self-esteem among university students

The present results displayed appearance schemas were significantly related to self-esteem. They showed negative relationship, when appearance schemas are high, self-esteem is low and vice versa. The hypothesis is in line with the existing literature (Frederick, Sandhu,

Morse & Swami, 2016). People who are dissatisfied with their appearance reported low self-worth whereas people with high self-esteem considered their body as beautiful. Appearance schematic participants reported that on day they do not like their appearance they feel bad about themselves. They negatively view their body as undesirable and unattractive for others that leads to distress and excessive worry in self presentation (Jung & Lee, 2003). Their self-esteem is low on the day they do not like their clothing. They evaluate their worth with their clothing and looks. They use clothing to sustain their body pride and self-worth, their clothing plays vital role in building their confidence. Hence because of that they invest more time and energy in self grooming and appearance managing behaviors (Frith& Gleeson, 2008).

In comparison between Korean and U.S women it was shown that women with highly developed appearance schemas indulge more in appearance managing behaviors and have feelings of worthlessness. Korean women are more dissatisfied with their body than U.S. (Jung & Lee, 2006). Low self-esteem occurs because of overly developed appearance schemas cause maladaptive behaviors such as jealousy and aggression. It is strongly associated with destructive behaviors like indirect aggression (Young, 2002). Low self-esteem and overly developed appearance schemas can create complications in social relationships as well as interpersonal relationships (Frederick, Sandhu, Morse, Swami, 2016).

The similarity in findings may be explained by following reasons: Students with the low self-esteem invest more in their physical appearance because of the fear of rejection. They try to compensate their low self-esteem by looking good. For example, an overweight has the fear of social rejection because of the schemes of being not beautiful so to compensate that fear of her she will devote more time to makeup to look good, invest time and money to buy good clothes. On the other hand, participants with the high self-esteem do not fear what people will say about them (Hill, 2015). They do not rely on others' comments to prove if they are looking good or if they are competent in life. They invest moderate time on grooming their

appearance and it does not bother them much if they are looking good on or not. Furthermore, participants of research groups are of same age and probably same academic background so there could be similarity in the results (Ko & Lee, 2015).

Appearance schematic individuals develop elaborated schemas for appearance where they evaluate the self in accordance with their appearance. Low self-esteem fosters high appearance schematic behavior and low appearance schematic behaviors promote high self-esteem (Jung& Lee, 2003). Future research could be done on either low self-esteem developed elaborated sense of appearance schemas or highly developed appearance schemas cause low self-esteem.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between appearances schemas and academic achievement among university students.

The second hypothesis says academic achievement is associated with appearance schemas of participants, but no significant relationship was found between appearance schemas and academic achievement of university students. The results are contradicting with the hypothesis but are in line with the existing literature (Forman, 2006). The literature supports that academic achievement of participants are independent of their appearance and appearance related behavior. It does not have any relationship with Cumulative Grade point average (CGPA). The similarity could be explained by resemblance in education system and grading criteria of Forman Christian College and Ohio State University (Forman, 2006). The other reason for the similarity could be because of the similarity in the sample, in both studies sample was of university students of similar ages. All the participants were young adults and adolescents having aim in life for getting educated so, appearance does not have any relation with their academic success. (Marsh &Richards, 1988).

Results also showed non-significant relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem. This hypothesis is also in accord with the literature provided (Stupnisky, Renaud, Perry, Ruthing, Haynes & Clifton, 2007). Previous research also supports the result of the present study. The reason of in

accordance with the previous research could be explained by the similarity in the ages of the participant and same academic level. Both measuring tools were same, so this might have influence on the results (Moncur, 2011).

4.3 Hypothesis 3:

There is a significant deference in appearance schemas of males and female university students. Third hypothesis was about the difference in the mean score of appearance schemas of males and females. The finding reveals a significant difference in appearance schemas of male and females. Our findings are according to existing literature, women have highly developed sense of appearance as compare to man (Frederick, Sandhu, Morse & Swami, 2016). It shows that for women appearance is the third strong predictor of life satisfaction that is not the case in men. Women are highly conscious about their physical appearance. (Jung & Lee,2006). Women dislike their body more as compare to men and their life satisfaction depends upon their looks and body image (Hill 2015).

The similarities in the finding could easily be determined because beauty is being related to women. In every part of the world beauty is considered to be the essential component of women. In every culture women are expected to be attractive, this increase the pressure on women to groom themselves and indulge in the activities like applying more makeup, wearing expensive clothes and in some countries cosmetic surgeries. People learn standards of beauty from their surroundings and build schemas for appearance. Social acceptance and rejection trigger the schemas and elevated these schemas to distressing level (Ko& Lee, 2015). At present media is presenting beauty as skinny body and make up. For men standards of beauty are different, Men are encouraging to show masculine characters like muscular body. Their pride is in their wealth and muscular body. Many women reported to have plastic surgery to get the desired facial features and many men use injections and harmful powders to get muscular body. All these efforts of being beautiful and handsome is generated from self-schemas that are derived from past experiences of appearance, acceptance and presentation (Boersma &Jarry, 2013). In every study of our literature women are high in appearance schemas and one common

reason is the association of beauty with the women. The societal pressure and media urge women to evaluate their worth in accordance with their appearance.

Limitations and suggestions:

The research has some limitation and one of them is small sample size of 150 participants because of sample size finding of this research cannot be generalized. Moreover, research is done on the students of Forman Christian College who mostly belong to upper class and this could influence the results. So, the future research could be done on the middle-class students. Furthermore, research could be done on specific tasks used in the assessment of student's Academic achievement e.g. relationship of appearance schemas with class presentation, relationship could be examined with the class attendance and class participation. In future research can also be done on the factors that make people schematic and aschematic. The findings of this study will be helpful for university administration in making plans for better grooming of students. It will help counselors to keep in account appearance as a factor relate to students' self-esteem. It will also be helpful for other Pakistani researchers to explore the effect and relationship of appearance schemas with other aspects of life in Pakistani culture.

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