

## Apperance anxiety, self-compassion, dating anxiety among young adults

Subasree S \* and Soumya Simon\*

*Department of Psychology at Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.*

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### Abstract

This study reports on the inter-relationship between Achievement Attitudes (Appearance Anxiety), Social Constraints (Self-Compassion), and Goal-Directed Actions (Dating Anxiety) among a sample of 250 participants. Spearman's rank correlation as well as Mann-Whitney U tests was applied to assess the existence of correlations among these variables with gender-based differences. Moderate positive correlation was found between Appearance Anxiety and Dating Anxiety suggesting that high achievement attitudes entail more goal-directed behaviours. Linear Regression was used to study the impact among the variables. The Mann-Whitney U test did not find any differences in Appearance Anxiety, Self-Compassion, or Dating Anxiety to be statistically significant and based on gender. Thus, the non-normal distribution of variables, as ascertained by both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, legitimized the non-parametric methods. This helps to understand the dynamics between achievement attitudes, social influences, and goal-oriented behaviours in fields like psychology and behavioural sciences. These relationships should also be longitudinally explored with more confounding variables to increase the generalizability of research.

**Keywords:** Appearance Anxiety; Self-Compassion; Dating Anxiety; Young Adults

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Appearance Anxiety

Appearance anxiety is a subclinical symptom of body dysmorphic disorder, generally an over anxiety about specific physical blemishes that other people generally see as normal (1). As University students are the main consumers of most social media, they are extremely subjected to excessive attention and comparison of their appearance, and therefore the risk of appearance anxiety (2). Appearance anxiety is a good predictor and marker of world-registered body image disturbances like body dysmorphic and eating disorders (3,4).

#### 1.2. Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is one of the desirable psychological characteristics that garnered universal attention in recent times. Self-compassion has been proved to influence a variety of mental illnesses, for example, anxiety (5,6), depression (7) and stress (8). Self-compassion is conceptualized as an open, tolerant and benevolent attitude toward one's own suffering and deficiency (9). Appearance anxiety was also found to be positively correlated with the negative sense facet of self-compassion (10). Low levels of self-compassion will subsequently amplify the danger of social anxiety (11).

#### 1.3. Dating Anxiety

The speedy growth of online dating apps has radically changed the manner in which people find romantic partners. These platforms have transformed the way of making new connections, which allows young adults to find probable partners as per their desire and needs (Hamilton, 2016). Online dating sites provide greater access, and individuals are

\* Corresponding author: Subasree S

able to look for connections outside their current social networks (Frazetto, 2009). This greater accessibility can increase chances to meet someone with similar goals, interests, or values

#### 1.4. Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significant relationship between appearance anxiety and dating anxiety.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between appearance anxiety and self-compassion.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between dating anxiety and self-compassion.
- H4: There is a significant gender difference among appearance anxiety, self-compassion, dating anxiety.
- H5: Appearance anxiety has an impact on self-compassion and dating anxiety.

#### *Objectives*

- To understand the relationship between appearance anxiety and self-compassion young adults.
- To understand the relationship between appearance anxiety and dating anxiety.
- To understand the relationship between self-compassion and dating anxiety.
- To identify the impact of appearance anxiety on self-compassion and dating anxiety.
- To identify the gender difference among the appearance anxiety, self-compassion and dating anxiety.

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## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design

The research design is a quantitative method to study the relationship among appearance anxiety, self-compassion and dating anxiety and to find the gender differences between the genders.

### 2.2. Participants

As this is a comparative study between appearance anxiety, self-compassion, dating anxiety the participants were from the age criteria 18 to 25 (young adults). All the participants were Indians and is in a dating relationship.

### 2.3. Sampling

#### 2.3.1. *Sampling Technique*

Convenience Sampling

#### 2.3.2. *Inclusion Criteria*

- Individuals belonging to the age 18 to 25.
- Have been in date at least once.

#### 2.3.3. *Exclusion Criteria*

- Individuals diagnosed with any mental health disorder.
- Individuals under therapy/ medication.

### 2.4. Tools

#### 2.4.1. *Appearance anxiety*

The Appearance Anxiety Inventory comprising ten items through which we measured the appearance anxiety. The degree up to which participants reported concern in regard to their appearance was rated on a five-point Likert scale: from 1 (never) to 5 (always). So, this scale deals with the positive aspects of appearance like "I am very satisfied with my appearance, and some negative sub-scale items like "I was nervous about my appearance." So, the more is the value, the more expressed has been the appearance anxiety. Internal consistency co-efficient of the scale entered the acceptable range ( $\alpha=0.86$ ).

### 2.4.2. Dating Anxiety

There is also the Dating Anxiety Scale, examining three dimensions of anxiety about either a possible or an actual dating partner. These include the Passive Contact, the Active Intentions for Dating, and the Dating Interactions. This is a 23-item device that measures through the items anxiety dating. Active Intentions for Dating-that is, activation and anxiety at the initiation of contact which may lead to a date-for instance, " Asking a member of the opposite/same sex to go to a party with you"-Dating Interactions-that is, activation and anxiety that occur during an actual date-for instance, " Trying to make a good impression while on the date.". Active Intentions for Dating scale. For each of the eight items of the Active Intentions for Dating and the eight items of the Dating Interceptions scales, the subjects rated their experience from scale ranged from 1 = no anxiety at all to 5 = very much anxiety. Two subscales have reliability coefficients alpha of between .92 and .94 across the seven waves.

### 2.4.3. Self-Compassion

The Short Form of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Raes et al., 2011). This is a 12-item measure of each of the components of self-kindness, self-judgment, and common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over identification sample items: "When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong". Each rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ("almost never") to 5 ("almost always"). Scores for six negatively worded component items were reversed-coded and a total score was obtained subsequently as the average of all 12 items, with greater scores denoting higher levels of self-compassion. Internal consistencies were low and computation of sub-scale score is not recommended (Raes et al., 2011). The six-factor structure and a single higher-order factor was also similar. High internal consistency-Cronbach's alpha  $\geq .86$  for all samples-and a high positive correlation with the long form SCS ( $r \geq .97$  for all samples). As the table below demonstrates, it is an extremely reliable proxy for the long form SCS, especially the overall self-compassion score. Though every subscale contains just two items, subscales reliability is very poor because the correlation coefficients of the subscales ranged between .54 and .75.

## 2.5. Procedure

The data is collected from the participants through online survey through google forms ensuring that it is accessible to the participants. Clear and brief instructions is provided to the participants to provide honest response. The data is collected through the standardized tools to measure from appearance anxiety, dating anxiety and self-compassion to check for consistency, reliability of the data and to proceed for the further analysis.

## 2.6. Data Analysis

### 2.6.1. Descriptive statistics

For the collected the sum, mean, and Standard deviation was measured.

### 2.6.2. Inferential Statistics

Correlation was used to measure the relationship between appearance anxiety, self-compassion and dating anxiety. And to compare means Mann Whitney U test and Linear regression was used.

## 3. Results and discussion

**Table 1** Correlation among the Variables Appearance Anxiety, Self-Compassion, Dating Anxiety

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Appearance Anxiety	11.53	7.64	-		
2 Self Compassion	37.65	6.315	-0.31**	-	
3 Dating Anxiety	87.39	28.40	0.38**	-0.27**	-

\* $p < .001$ .

From the table, we can understand that there is a negative correlational relationship between appearance anxiety and self-compassion ( $p = -0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicating that increase in self-compassion decreases appearance anxiety and vice versa. There is a negative relationship between self-compassion and dating anxiety ( $p = -0.217$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicating that individuals with high self-compassion has low dating anxiety. There is a moderate positive correlation between appearance anxiety and dating anxiety ( $p = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicating that higher appearance anxiety is linked to higher

levels of dating anxiety. These findings align with the idea that self-compassion can act as a protective factor, reducing anxiety in social and dating situations, while appearance anxiety tends to increase discomfort and anxious feelings in dating contexts.

**Table 2** Regression Analysis among the Variables Appearance Anxiety, Self-Compassion, Dating Anxiety

Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	t	Sig.	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Self-Compassion	-0.230	.059	-0.230	-3.894	0.00	-0.235	-0.226
Dating Anxiety	0.326	.059	0.327	5.532	0.00	0.322	0.331
R	0.448						

From the table, we see that the R value is 0.448 and  $R^2$  value is 0.201, meaning that 20% of the variance in appearance anxiety is explained by the predictors: self-compassion and dating anxiety and indicating a moderate correlation between the independent variables (Self-Compassion and Dating Anxiety) and the dependent variable (Appearance Anxiety). It also indicates that there is a positive relationship with dating anxiety and negative relationship with self-compassion. Together, Self-Compassion ( $t = -3.89$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) and Dating Anxiety ( $t = 5.532$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) account for a moderate portion of the variance in Appearance Anxiety, suggesting that both factors significantly influence appearance-related concerns. These results indicate a negative predictability of self-compassion with appearance anxiety, but dating anxiety positively predicts it. Thus, highly self-compassionate patients are expected to present with less appearance anxiety, but high patients of dating anxiety can show the phenomenon of more appearance anxiety. Therefore, these results may strengthen the feasibility of the self-compassion intervention in the reduction of manifestation of the group of clients who suffer with the dating anxiety.

**Table 3** Mann-Whitney U Test

	Male		Female		z	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Appearance Anxiety	12.08	7.85	11.07	7.40	-.977	.329
Self-Compassion	37.59	6.12	37.70	6.49	-.155	.877
Dating Anxiety	88.13	27.91	86.78	28.88	-.175	.861

From table, we understand the differences between the two genders among these variables. Since the p values ( $p = 0.329$ ) in appearance anxiety, ( $p = 0.877$ ) in self-compassion and ( $p = 0.861$ ) in dating anxiety indicating that the values are above the typical significance threshold and hence we conclude that there is no statistically significant differences among the two gender groups rejecting the alternate hypothesis and accepting the null hypothesis.

The results shown that there is a positive relationship between appearance and social anxiety that is justified by mediation of self-compassion regardless of the degree of appearance anxiety among the participants would manage to find alleviation on symptomology of anxiety through self-compassion. There are 250 subjects to test achievement attitudes appearance anxiety, social constraints self-compassion, and goal directed actions dating anxiety. Applied Spearman's rank correlation; there is a moderate correlation between the total appearance anxiety and dating anxiety where increase of achievement attitude leads to corresponding increase of the goal directed actions. A moderate negative correlation was found between appearance anxiety and self-compassion that indicated that achievement orientation is inversely related to social constraint. Moreover, small negative correlation was also there between self-compassion and dating anxiety as social constraints might bring about some little delay in the directed actions of achieving goal. Besides, there was no reported gender difference on any variable and that the data is not normally distributed made a way for the application of the analysis since it is with the use of the non-parametric approach.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to find the relationship between Appearance Anxiety, Dating Anxiety and Self-Compassion and as well as the difference in genders among young adults (18 – 25 years). The results were found that there is a positive

correlation ( $r = 0.389$ ) between appearance anxiety and dating anxiety and a weak correlation ( $r = -0.319$ ) between appearance anxiety and self-compassion and ( $r = -0.271$ ) dating anxiety and self-compassion. The non-parametric alternative of t-test has shown that there is no significant differences among both the genders. The study is based on specific sample was not sufficient to generalize the findings of the study as the data is not normally distributed. The study did not focus on different aspects (socioeconomic background, educational level, etc.) that might have an impact on the study findings. The study lacks in depth conceptual understanding about the participants which could influence the results.

**Longitudinal Research:** In due course other experiments can be conducted to determine if indeed or not-as an as-of-fact relationship-causal relationships amongst Achievement Attitudes (Total AAI), Social Constraints (Total SC), and Goal-Directed Actions (Total DA) are relevant. And if indeed these changes are seen to then then research would be in the position to determine whether indeed more potent goal-directed behaviours follow an increase in achievement attitudes, or that, indeed reduced social constraints keep motivation alive in the long run.

**Development of the Intervention:** These relationships provide the basis for building specific interventions aimed at enhancing motivational success and decreasing social constraint. Interventions would be pertinent programs that had been designed to encourage intrinsic motivation and autonomy concerning the effects of performance in educational/vocational activities. Interventions would much more appropriately fall under conditions of strong motivational and self-regulated need-for example, professional training courses, classes at the university, or therapeutic environments.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors have no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest related to this study.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

Ethical considerations were prioritized by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality and minimizing harm to participants.

### *Statement of informed consent*

The written consent form was obtained from participants after providing them clear information about the study. Their privacy was protected by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected. Cultural sensitivity was considered by adapting methods to be culturally appropriate.

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