

Prevalence of Social Anxiety in Medical College Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social appearance anxiety is a growing problem that is negatively evaluated by others, characterized by a severe, ongoing fear of embarrassing or humiliating circumstances in social or performance settings. This has led to a poor living standards, significant deterioration in societal conduct and work performance. Concern of receiving unfavorable comments about a person's looks especially among students is a particular circumstantial dread that has gotten minimal scientific attention. **Aim:** Aim was to assess the prevalence of severity of anxiety caused due to body consciousness and compare the severity of it, in males and females. **Methodology:** It is a cross-sectional prospective analytical study, done at tertiary teaching hospital for 6 months. Students from 1st year onwards were contacted and they were briefed about the aims and objectives of the proposed study. All of the subjects who were recruited for the study were given the opportunity to assent after being informed of its goals and methodology. Students participating in the study were asked to fill up the Social Appearance Anxiety scale, The scale was scored according to the test booklet and the analysis was done. **Results:** Prevalence of anxiety regarding one's looks in public was found to be significant in 250 medical students. Average scores of 40.1 and 32.4 of social appearance anxiety scores were found in females and males respectively. **Conclusion:** The prevalence of social appearance anxiety among medical students was observed to be more in females.

Keywords: Social appearance anxiety; psychiatric comorbidity; quality of life, Medical students.

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Introduction

Social appearance anxiety is a growing problem which concerns receiving unfavorable judgement from others as a result of one's physical looks, particularly body type. A substantial and ongoing dread of public presentation circumstances where shame or indignity could happen is the hallmark of social anxiety disorder. This has led to a poor living standards, significant deterioration in societal conduct and work performance. Patients with Social appearance anxiety face a major challenge while having a Formal

interaction, informal interaction, assertion and being observed by others. Concern of receiving unfavorable comments about a person's looks especially among students is a particular circumstantial dread that has gotten minimal scientific attention.

Social physical anxiety is a subset of social appearance anxiety and results from having a poor perception of one's own physical attributes. Self-esteem was defined by Guindon. He defines self-esteem broadly as the sensation of acceptability and deservingness. The notion of self is attributed to attitudinal evaluation components of the

emotional side which has been implicated by the individual by the extent of one's insight over his/her own abilities, their social outlook and the inference they receive from the environment and feeling of success and their body image. The construction of one's body image is multifaceted with emotion, thinking, and behavior. People are driven to leave a positive first impression about them by being overly concerned about their social appearance; this has led to an increase in the levels of unrest regarding their outer appearance is being judges. Research on social anxiety related to looks is scarce. The reliability and validity of research using the Social Appearance Anxiety (SAA) Scale in various specimen are generally the topics of current research, hence we used the SAA Scale for evaluation if the distress that is being implicated by the negative self-evaluation and how the body image of one's self is affecting their thoughts and affecting their lives. This scale has never been used in medical students for evaluation [1-3].

Materials and Methods

A analytical prospective cross-sectional research was done in a teaching institute in a suburban area to find prevalence of social appearance anxiety among medical students during a period of six months. Clearance from Ethics Committee of Institute was taken prior to beginning of research.

Study sample size was calculated on presumption of 16.5% prevalence of social anxiety in the study population, based on previous study. Using this benchmark and with a 95% confidence limit of 5%; the sample size was 212.

Sampling Type

Purposive

Sample

250 students

Inclusion Criteria

- Medical students of the age group 18-24.
- Cooperative and consenting for the study

Exclusion Criteria

- Known history of psychiatric illness on treatment.

Tools

Sociodemographic and clinical correlates Performa

A self-made sociodemographic Performa was made which included information about gender, age, family type, financial status along with some details and personal habits.

The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)

The SAAS is employed to measure anxiety over

circumstances in which one's whole appearance, including though not restricted to physical form, is assessed. The items for the SAAS were selected after a review of the most recent measures of body dysmorphic disorder, unhappiness with one's appearance, and social anxiety. The composition of the items was selected to match common social anxiety measures [4].

Procedure

Students from 1st year onwards were contacted and they were briefed about the aims and objectives of the proposed study. Clearance from Ethics Committee of Institute was taken prior to beginning of research. All of the subjects who were recruited for the study were given the opportunity to assent after being informed of its goals and methodology. Students participating in the study were asked to fill up the SAA scale, The scale scored according to test booklet and the rest was tabulated and analysis carried out.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS. The Chi-square test was used to compare frequency data, while the student's T-test was used to evaluate continuous data and Ordinal data by Wilcoxon test.

Results

The prevalence of anxiety regarding outer looks in public was observed to be significantly high among 250 medical students. An average score of 40.1 and 32.4 of social appearance anxiety scores were found in females and males respectively. The difference was statistically significant (Mann Whitney U=5382.5; P<0.000).

Table 1: Scores on the Social Anxiety Scale obtained by male and female medical students

SAS	Mean (SD)	p value
Male (n=109)	32.43 (10.99)	0.000
Female (n=142)	40.1 (14.98)	

Discussion

The research was done in a teaching institute in western Maharashtra. Following the fulfilment of the inclusion and exclusion requirements, 250 students of age 18 to 25 were chosen as participants. The SAAS is employed to measure anxiety over circumstances in which one's whole appearance, including though not restricted to physical form, is assessed. The items for the SAAS were selected after a review of the most recent measures of body dysmorphic disorder,

unhappiness with one's appearance, and social anxiety. The composition of the items was selected to match common social anxiety measures. The composition of the items was selected to match common social anxiety measures. The mean value of public appearance anxiety among the male students (n=109) was 32.43 and standard deviation of 10.99 was calculated. The average value of Social appearance anxiety among the female students (n=141) was found to be 40.1 with a standard deviation of 14.98. From this observation we could conclude that more female students compared to the male students suffer social appearance anxiety.

Two studies by Oktan & Aahin and Shroff & Thompson figured a strong inverse relationship between low self-esteem and unfavourable body image [5,6]. Results from the previous studies have shown that youngsters with elevated levels of social anxiety may also have low levels of self-esteem. Conversely, the two conditions might occur. As obvious, our results line up with the body of research. Teenage girls and boys' interest in their bodies increases as a result of seeing thin women and bulky males on television and online. Teenagers not possessing ideal physique consequently experience high levels of anxiety about their looks and a resulting decline in their self-esteem [7-9].

Limitation

There are several restrictions that must be understood despite the fact that this research was conducted on a sizable sample and that a valid and reliable measurement instrument was employed. The pupils' concern about their looks in public was assessed using the self-report method. As a result, opinions about the students' social anxiety are based solely on their perspectives and not those of their teachers, guardians, or peers. The sample was drawn from a single centre.

Conclusion

The prevalence of social appearance anxiety was higher in female compared to male medical students.

Conflict of Interest:	All authors declare no COI
Ethics:	There is no ethical violation as it is based on voluntary anonymous interviews
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