



**PIXELS OF PERFECTION: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN BODY IMAGE ISSUES
AND SOCIAL ANXIETY IN ONLINE DATING**

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between social anxiety and body image issues among 150 adults engaged in online dating. The results found a positive correlation ($r=0.425$) between social anxiety and body image issues across genders. Both females ($r=0.389$) and males ($r=0.454$) exhibited similar correlations. Gender comparison showed females had higher levels of social anxiety ($t=-1.5702$, $p=0.9407$) and body image issues ($t=-0.699$, $p=0.486$) than males. These findings suggest that females experience more social anxiety and body image concerns in online dating contexts. Designing or modifying online

dating platforms to promote positive body image and reduce social anxiety could benefit users, addressing the challenges highlighted in the study.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Body Image Issues, Online Dating

Introduction

As long as humans have recognised the need to form romantic connections, they also recognise that it can be challenging to locate a proper partner and that seeking assistance can occasionally be beneficial. Ancient romantic relationships stems from fortuitous meetings between individuals and purposeful involvements by outsiders, like the Jewish shadchan, who is celebrated in the show *Dancer on the Roof*, and the arranged weddings that persist in certain regions of Southeast Asia (Coontz, 2005). Finding a romantic partner is still challenging in the modern era, but the Internet has changed the tools available to address this issue (InternetWorldStats.com, 2011).

“Digital culture” refers to the internet's impact on social relationships. Technology affects every aspect of modern life, and the internet gives users access to news, events, and services. Online platforms enable remote work, e-commerce, and access to medical and educational services. As a result, society is changing, rendering certain behaviours obsolete and making new practices possible. Tinder has a large user base and is easy to use for making connections. It's known for hookups and casual dating, making it appealing for impromptu meetings and quick interactions.

Instagram has surprisingly become a hotspot for dating, especially among younger generations. Compared to typical dating apps, Instagram profiles offer a more comprehensive view of personality and interests. One can get a genuine idea of someone's interests, travel destinations, sense of humour, and pet peeves by looking through their page.

Social Anxiety

The disorder of social anxiety is a prevalent and long-lasting mental health issue that has been associated with significant challenges in work, learning, and relationships. SAD sufferers' quality of life is inferior than that of their counterparts who do not experience social anxiety. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders American Psychiatric Association (2013). Social anxiety disorder causes shyness, quietness, and withdrawal in social situations. This can lead to physical and psychological symptoms like panic, sweating, and difficulty concentrating. Those with this disorder enjoy social interaction but often avoid it out of fear of being perceived negatively (Ellison et al., 2006).

Online dating can make people anxious as they want to appear attractive and may be unsure about others' authenticity. This anxiety is driven by the fear of rejection and criticism. Socially anxious people can find it difficult to establish close relationships and may feel uncomfortable in social situations (Asher & Aderka, 2019).

Social anxiety is linked to excessive use and compulsive behaviour on the Internet, as individuals who struggle with it tend to avoid in-person interactions and replace them with online communication. In dating, any communication can be seen as a threat if the other person might reject or evaluate other negatively. A person thoughts and assessments affect the development of social anxiety (Kampmann et al., 2019).

Body Image Issues

Schilder (1935) defined body image as the “imagined picture of our psyche and body that we have formed, along with the way we think it should look.” The viewing aspect refers

to how we feel about these characteristics and how those feelings affect our behaviour, while the perceptual aspect is how we see our measurements, shape, weight, face, movement, and behaviors (Gleeson, 2006).

Body image is the perception of an individual has about their body, which includes their thoughts and emotions that can affect their behaviour. Physical growth, interactions with peers, accidents, injuries, and bodily ailments can influence a person's mental body image and make them self-conscious (Sugar, 2003).

Body image is a person's perception of their entire body beyond physical appearance, age, race, sexual orientation, and abilities. Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) identified cognitive and emotional aspects to it. Cognitive body image is self-statements and ideas about the body, while emotional body image is satisfaction with their appearance and physical sensations. Body image is a highly personal and subjective experience shaped by self-perception.

People often believe that having a “perfect” body will lead to acceptance, but it often leads to low body satisfaction. Social pressure to achieve an ideal body type can cause dissatisfaction. Women, in particular, feel pressure to have the perfect figure and tend to internalize it. Adopting socially accepted thinness standards and comparing oneself to others are significant causes of poor body image (Esnaola et al., 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To investigate a relationship between social anxiety and body image issues in adults engaging in online dating.

Research Objectives

- To study a relationship between social anxiety and body image issues in online dating.
- To study whether there is any significant difference social anxiety between males and females engaged in online dating.
- To study whether there is any significant difference in body image issues between males and females engaged in online dating.

Hypothesis

- To study whether there is any significant difference in levels of social anxiety between males and females engaged in online dating.
- To study whether there is any significant difference in social anxiety between males and females engaged in online dating.
- To study whether there is any significant difference in body image issues between males and females engaged in online dating.

Research Design

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between anxiety about social situations and body image problems in adults who use online dating services. It also seeks to determine whether there are any notable differences in social anxiety levels between male and female users of these services, as well as any in terms of body image problems. Scales are used in the quantitative research approach that is being employed. The Body Uneasiness Test (BUT)

has a subscale called “body image concerns” and a social interaction anxiety scale. For statistical analysis, the t-test and the Pearson Correlation coefficient have been employed.

Sample

There were 150 adult Indians in the sample, ages 20 to 30. There were 75 male and 75 female participants. Every participant admitted to having gone online to date. The rest of the respondents have used social networking apps and sites in the past, and over half of the population now uses dating sites or apps. The sampling methods that are employed are convenience sampling, which involves choosing participants who are available and willing to participate, random sampling, which selects samples at random, snowball sampling, which asks participants to refer their answers to others, and purposeful sampling, which chooses participants based on predetermined characteristics or criteria, like age and prior experience with online dating.

Tools

- **Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)** (Mattick & Clarke, 1998) gauges anxiety when interacting and conversing with people. The twenty items on the scale are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with 0 representing (not at all characteristic of me) and 4 (extremely characteristic of me). The score goes from 0 to 80.
- **The Body Uneasiness Test (BUT)** (Cuzzolaro et al., 2006) subscale "body image concerns" was used to measure the intermediary variable "body image concerns." Nine positively phrased items, such as "I like those clothes which hide my body" and "I would

do anything to transform some parts of my body," are included in the subscale. Each item was rated by the participants on a six-point Likert scale, where 0 meant "never" and 5 meant "always." Higher ratings correspond to more problems with body image.

Brief of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between body image problems and social anxiety among adult online daters. It also seeks to determine whether males and girls who participate in internet-based dating activities have significantly different degrees of social anxiety and body image problems. 150 Indian adults, ages 20 to 30 , made up the sample. There were 75 male and 75 female participants. The social interaction anxiety scale and the Body Feeling uneasy Test (BUT) subscale "body appearance concerns" were utilised to measure the mediator variable's "body image concerns."

Results

Table 1

t-test statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-test	p- value
Social Anxiety	Male	75	32.32	17.83	-1.5702	0.9407
	Female	75	36.64	15.81		
Body Image Issues	Male	75	24.89	12.50	-0.699	0.486
	Female	75	26.33	12.73		

The results show that with a t-value of -1.5702 and a p-value of 0.9407, the negative of t-value indicate that females have higher mean social anxiety scores than males. The results show that with a t-value of -0.699 and a p-value of 0.486, the negative of t-value indicate that males, on average, have slightly lower body image issues than females.

Table 2

Correlation between social anxiety and body image

	M	SD	SA	BII	F	M
Social Anxiety	34.48	16.93		-.425**		
					.389**	.454**
BII	25.61	12.59	-.425**			

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

M- Mean, SD- Standard Deviation, SA- Social Anxiety, BII – Body Image Issues F-Female, M- Male

There is a positive correlation between body image issues and social anxiety. Females have a noteworthy correlation of 0.389, while males have a correlation of 0.454, both statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that both males and females' body image problems rise with social anxiety.

Discussion

The study's goal was to study whether social anxiety and problems with body image in online dating are related in any way. The t-test and coefficients of Pearson correlation were calculated for the statistical evaluation of the raw data to determine which gender had an important variance in social anxiety and body image concerns.

There is a positive correlation between anxiety regarding social anxiety and body image issues, as indicated by the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.425. This implies that body image issues rise in tandem with social anxiety. N=150 people make up the participant population for this study (75 females and 75 males). There is a positive association between social anxiety and body image problems. After being analysed, the data gathered by women suggests a positive association with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.389. This demonstrates how body image problems also rise in tandem with social anxiety. At the 0.01 level, there is a substantial positive association between anxiety regarding social situations and problems with body image. The results of a similar investigation conducted with male participants likewise indicate The positive association between male body image and social anxiety is demonstrated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.454, which is positive.

The findings demonstrates that women have higher levels of social anxiety than men, with a the value of t of-1.5702 and an associated p-value of 0.9407. The findings demonstrate that men experience fewer problems with body image than women, with a the value of t of-0.699 and an associated p-value of 0.486. As a result, the social anxiety t-statistic of-1.5702 and p-value of 0.9407 show that women experience higher levels of social anxiety than men.

The *first hypothesis*, which read, “To study whether there is any significant difference in levels of social anxiety between males and females engaged in online dating” has been accepted, indicating that there is an important disparity in social anxiety levels between males and females. This suggests that social anxiety levels are higher in women than in men. Thus, for body image problems, the significance level of-0.699 and the p-value of 0.486 show that men are less likely than women to have these problems.

The *second hypothesis*, which states, “To study whether there is any significant difference in social anxiety between males and females engaged in online dating” has been

accepted because it suggests that there's is an important variance in the levels of physique image difficulties between males and females. This suggests that females experience more body image issues than males. Therefore, The Pearson correlation coefficient, which shows a positive relationship, is 0.425 between anxiety regarding social situations and body image issues.

Therefore, the *third hypothesis*, which stated, "To study whether there is any significant difference in body image issues between males and females engaged in online dating," has been accepted. This suggests that there is an important variation in body pictures issues between the males and females who engage in online dating, and it indicates a positive correlation, meaning that as social anxiousness increases, so does body image.

Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to look at the connection between body image problems and social anxiety among adult online daters.

Positive correlation was observed in our study (Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.425) between social anxiety (SA) and body image issues (BII) among 150 Indian individuals who date online. The correlation between social anxiety and body image problems among online daters is statistically noteworthy at the 0.01 level. People who are more socially anxious are also more likely to struggle with their body image.

The first hypothesis, which read, "To study whether or not there is a substantial disparity in levels of social nervousness within males and females took part in online dating," has been accepted, indicating that there is a substantial disparity in social anxiety levels between males and females. This suggests that social anxiety levels are higher in women than in men.

The second hypothesis, which states, "To study whether there is a substantial distinction in levels of concerns about body image between males and females participating in online dating," has been accepted because it suggests that there is an important variance in the levels of body image issues between males and females. This suggests that females experience more body image issues than males.

Therefore, the third hypothesis, which reads, "To study whether or not there is a substantial distinction in body image issues between the males and females involved in online dating," has been accepted. This suggests that there is an important variation in body image issues with males and females who engage in online dating, and it indicates a positive correlation, meaning that as the degree of social anxiety increases, so does body image.

These results emphasise how important it is to consider a person's psychological health when dating online, especially in the case of anxiety about social situations and problems with body image.

Limitations

It is difficult to predict the long-term effects of social networking and online dating because these platforms are always changing. The distinctive technique of visual self-presentation employed by these platforms must be taken into account when conducting studies on social anxiety and issues with body image. Research may be limited if the impact of various self-presentation styles, cultural and societal standards, and intersectional factors including ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status are not sufficiently examined. It is crucial to comprehend the behavioural effects of various psychological states, but this can be difficult because people use different platforms and have different coping mechanisms. Examining touchy topics like body image and social anxiety in the setting of online dating carries a lot of ethical consequences.

Future Implications

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to understand the causal relationships between social anxiety, body image issues, and online dating, considering diverse demographics. Examining how technology, particularly dating apps, influences mental health is crucial. Mental health professionals could develop tailored therapies, including self-compassion exercises and social skills training. Legislators could propose policies promoting positive relationships and diversity on dating platforms, reducing emphasis on physical appearance. Enhancing social support systems for those struggling with body image and social anxiety, particularly in online dating, can significantly impact overall well-being.

Is it possible to create or alter online dating platforms so that users experience less social anxiety and have a positive body image? To promote diversity and reduce dependence on traditional beauty standards, it is essential to display varied profiles that encompass different body shapes, ethnicities, and lifestyles. The platform should implement features that incentivize users to participate and enforce anti-harassment policies to make sure that the environment is safe and respectful for all users. Additionally, users should be given greater control over their profiles, and advanced filters should be used to match based on shared beliefs, interests, or personality traits. It is crucial to provide resources for mental health and encourage community dialogue. The matching algorithms should be transparent, and the platform should continuously adjust to minimize biases.

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