



Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Self-Concealment and

Loneliness among Young Adults

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Project Work entitled: “Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety, Self-Concealment and Loneliness among Young Adults” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Ms. Purva Singh, Assistance Professor of Department of Psychology, D.A.V. College, Sector 10, Chandigarh, India. No part of this report has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

Young adulthood is a very crucial developmental period and it fills the gap between adolescence and independent adulthood. When an individual enters the stage of young

adulthood the individual faces many new challenges and difficulties and they have new responsibilities which they have to fulfil. Self-concealment which means concealing the personal information from others which one perceives as distressing or negative. Self-concealment is a subset of private information that can be consciously accessed and is concealed from others. Self-concealment is the opposite of self-disclosure. Self-concealment is related to depression, social anxiety, shyness and other psychological problems. Appearance is one of the main focal points of young people in virtual relations. Appearance anxiety is very common in young adults these days. Social appearance anxiety is a kind of anxiety about being negatively evaluated in terms of one's overall appearance. Social appearance anxiety is rejection in terms of physical attractiveness. Appearance anxiety influences the feelings of loneliness. Human beings are social beings, and they socially interact with their surroundings. Loneliness is a feeling arising out of absence or the perceived absence of social relationships. The research aimed to study the relationship of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. Standardized tools were used to measure social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. A total sample of 100 in the age range of 18-25 were collected. The results found out that there is a significant positive correlation between self-concealment and social appearance anxiety. Further, the results also found out there is a significant positive correlation between loneliness and social appearance anxiety and a significant positive correlation between loneliness and self-concealment. Regression analysis indicated that loneliness is a significant predictor of self-concealment. Regression analysis indicated that loneliness is a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety. Regression analysis indicated that self-concealment is a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety. These difficulties are positively associated with mental health problems and the well-being of young adults. When young adults are facing these issues it is important for them to

seek assistance, either through therapy or attending support groups, they can even use early interventions or speak with a trusted family member or a friend.

Key words: Social Appearance Anxiety, Self-Concealment, Loneliness, Young Adult

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Numerous young adults frequently struggle with feelings of isolation, self-concealment, and appearance. There are many reasons why young adults may experience loneliness. They might have just started a new job, moved away from home, or ended a romantic relationship. They may likewise feel disconnected because of social nervousness or hardships making companions. As young adults compare their lives to those of others online, social media can also contribute to the feelings of loneliness and FOMO (fear of missing out). Self-concealment or the tendency to hide aspects of oneself from others, is a problem for many young adults. This can incorporate concealing one's feelings, convictions, or character attributes because of a paranoid fear of being judged or dismissed. In romantic relationships, where partners may feel like they don't really know each other, self-concealment can be especially problematic. Concerns about body image, acne, and other physical imperfections are common concerns among young adults. These issues can be made worse by filters and unrealistic beauty standards on social media that can make people feel like they don't measure up. A negative body image and low self-esteem can result from these feelings of inadequacy, which can have a long-term effect on mental health. Overall, these difficulties may have a significant effect on the mental health and well-being of young adults. When young adults are struggling with these issues, it is essential for them to seek assistance and resources, whether through therapy, attending support groups, or speaking with a trusted friend or family member.

Self-concealment is an experience which involves thoughts, feelings, information about a person which makes them feel uncomfortable, stressful and avoid telling people about their personal information. Self-concealment is associated with negative psychological health. It is the opposite of self-disclosure. Self-concealing is a way used by introverts who are shy, quiet, and reserved. Self-concealment contributes to the predictions of anxiety, depression, and some physical symptoms. Concealed information is highly intimate, negative in valence and

it has three characteristics: it is a private subset, is consciously accessed and is concealed from others.

Appearance is the focal point in young people. Anxiety related to appearance is very common these days and is mostly in girls than boys. Social appearance anxiety is a kind of anxiety which means the person is being evaluated negatively in terms of one's overall appearance. Social appearance anxiety has its focus on specific situations where the individual fears negative evaluation from others about themselves and it is a subset of social anxiety. Social appearance anxiety is associated with the feelings of loneliness.

Human beings are people who socialize and thrive on social interactions with their surroundings. If they feel connected to their surroundings they live a better life, if not it can be harmful. Loneliness is a feeling that everyone has experienced, and every individual understands and has gone through the feeling of loneliness some time in life. Jones (1985) states that when a person's network of social relationships is smaller or less satisfying than desired, they can end up feeling lonely.

Loneliness is linked with a sense of distress, how an individual perceives themselves when they are lonely and how they evaluate their social and interpersonal relationship. Loneliness also involves the symptoms of psychological distress that are related to the absence of social relations and considered as the feeling arising out of the absence or the perceived absence of satisfying social relationships. The causes of loneliness include mental, social, or emotional factors. Loneliness is a universal human experience recognized since the dawn of time (Copel, 1988), yet it is unique for every individual (Austin, 1989). Loneliness can be seen as a negative, embarrassing condition, as painful and even dreadful (Killeen, 1998). The importance of loneliness lies not only in its potential for shedding light in basic aspects of

social relations but also in the fact that loneliness is a common and distressing problem for many people (Russell et al., 1980).

Loneliness

According to de Jong Giervald (1989), “Loneliness is defined as an unpleasant or unacceptable lack of certain social relationships”. According to Peplau and Perlman (1982), loneliness has been defined as “The aversive state experienced when a discrepancy exists between the interpersonal relationships one wishes to have, and those that one perceives they currently have”.

According to Rogers (1970, 1973), “loneliness occurs when individuals, having dropped their defences to get in touch with their inner selves, nonetheless expect rejection from others”.

“Loneliness is a psychological state characterized by a set of discomforting emotions and cognitions, such as unhappiness, pessimism, self-blame, and depression” (Anderson et al., 1994; Cacioppo and Hawkey, 2005)

“Loneliness is the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person’s network of social relationship is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively” (Perlman and Peplau, 1981).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the years there are many psychologists and sociologists who worked on the theoretical framework of loneliness. For these purposes, these speculations classified the theoretical framework of loneliness into eight categories which are: psychodynamic, phenomenological, existential-humanistic, sociological, interactionist, cognitive, privacy, and theory systems.

Eight approaches to loneliness are:

Psychodynamic Models

Psychodynamic is one of the most famous models in psychology given by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychodynamic. Freud did not work on or wrote anything on loneliness but several other psychologists who were following the tradition of psychodynamic did write on loneliness (Burton, 1961; Ferreira, 1962; Fromm-Reichmann, 1959; Leiderman, 1980; Peplau, 1955; Rubins, 1964; Sullivan, 1953; and Zilboorg, 1938).

Zilboorg (1938) was the first one to give the psychological analysis of loneliness. He gave the difference of being lonesome from being lonely. Being lonesome means normal which results from missing someone specifically whereas loneliness is an “inner worm that gnaws at the heart.” The lonely individual seldom fails to display an ill-disguised or open hatred (Zilboorg, 1938, p. 40), directed either inward or outward towards others. He further traced the origins of loneliness from infancy. The infant learns joy and of being loved from and even gets a shock of being weak from others.

Sullivan (1953) noticed the roots of adult loneliness in childhood. He gave a driving need for human intimacy. This first need arises when the infant desires to come in contact. In preadolescence, when you learn or know with whom you must exchange intimate information with. The children who lack social skills because of faulty communication with parents have difficulty in forming relationships. The inability to form relationships can lead to loneliness.

Fromm-Reichmann's (1959) gave the most seen paper of loneliness and even acknowledged the work of Sullivan and agreed with his view of loneliness. Her work was based on schizophrenics.

Psychodynamic theorists were clear in their observations of loneliness which was largely done in clinical settings. They observed loneliness as pathological.

Roger's Phenomenological Perspective

Client Centred Therapy is the most prominent phenomenological perspective which was developed by Carl Rogers. Rogers addressed the issue of loneliness (1961, 1970), his analysis

reflects “self-theory” of personality. The analysis of loneliness given by Rogers stems from his work with clinical clients. According to Rogers (1970, 1973), “loneliness occurs when individuals, having dropped their defences to get in touch with their inner selves, nonetheless expect rejection from others”. According to him, the belief that their real selves are unlovable, keeps people locked in their loneliness. When people face rejection, they feel empty.

Moore (1976) has derived the hypothesis that a discrepancy between one’s actual and idealized self should result in loneliness and Eddy’s (1961) doctoral dissertation supported this prediction. Rogers think that loneliness is because of poor adjustment and the cause of loneliness is the error in one’s self concept.

The Existential Approach

Existentialists believe that humans are ultimately alone. Nobody else can experience thoughts and feelings like human beings do. Those who accept this view often have focused on one question that is how people can live with their loneliness.

Moustakas (1961) is the leading person for this perspective. Moustakas distinguishes between loneliness anxiety and true loneliness. Loneliness anxiety is a kind of defence mechanism that distracts a person from dealing with difficult life questions and that motivates them to seek the activity with others. True loneliness means the reality of being alone and facing life's experiences alone. Existentialists motivate and help people overcome the fear of loneliness and tell them how to learn and use loneliness positively. He has a positive view of loneliness. However he knows this and never denied that loneliness is not painful but he sees it as a productive, creative condition.

Sociological Approach

Bowman (1955), Riesman (1961), and Slater (1976) are the representatives of the sociological approach to loneliness.

Bowman (1955) hypothesized three social forces leading to increased loneliness in society; 1) a decline in primary group relations; 2) an increase in family mobility; and 3) an increase in social mobility. Riesman (1961) and Slater (1976) both have associated their analysis of loneliness with the study of American character and how society fails to meet the member's needs.

Riesman and his colleagues claimed that Americans have become "other directed". Other directed individuals not only wanted to be liked, but they also kept a check on themselves and monitored interpersonal environments to know how they should behave. Diffuse anxiety is the result of other-directed people and they are mostly or over concerned with peer popularity which is never enough to satisfy.

For Slater (1976) individualism is the problem, not the other-directed people. Slater believes that all human beings want a community, dependence, and engagement. We want to trust and cooperate with others, "to show responsibility for the control of one's impulses and the direction of one's life". American society does not believe in basic needs because of the commitment to individualism, the belief that everyone should pursue their own destiny. Slater (1976) argues that individualism is rooted in the attempt to deny the reality of human interdependence. One of the major goals of technology in America is freeing an individual from the necessity of relating to, submitting to, depending upon, or controlling other people. Unfortunately, this has left the individual feel more disconnected, bored, and lonely.

The Interactionist View

Weiss (1973) is the leading person of interactionist approach. There are two reasons that his explanation of loneliness can be called as interactionist. First, he explained that loneliness is not only a function of personality factors or situational factors. In fact, loneliness is the

product of their interactive effect. Second, Weiss (1973) has written on the provisions of social relationships such as attachment, guidance, and a sense of worth. Loneliness results from a lack of social interactions and has problems in providing important social requirements. Weiss gave two kinds of loneliness: Emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness occurs when there is a lack of close and intimate relationships. The person suffering from emotional loneliness feels like separation anxiety. Social loneliness results when there is a lack of social relationships like friendships or a sense of community. Further the researcher suggested that instinct plays a part in loneliness. He also considered both the internal and external factors of loneliness.

The Cognitive Approach

Peplau and her associates are the leading lawyers of the cognitive approach of loneliness. The most important aspect of this approach is that it gives importance to cognition as a mediating factor between deficits in sociability and the experience of loneliness. Cognitive approach proposes that loneliness occurs when the individual perceives a discrepancy between two factors, the person's desired and achieved levels of social contact. In this regard, Peplau's view is akin to Sermat's (1978). This theme has been helpful in organizing the literature of loneliness and explaining findings that would otherwise be paradoxical (Perlman and Peplau, 1981). Peplau was concerned with loneliness among the normal population like Weiss was.

A Privacy Approach

Derlega and Margulis (1982) are the leading advocates of privacy approach and they use privacy and self-disclosure concepts as a way of understanding loneliness. They assumed that social relationships help the individual achieve their various goals and aims. Absence of an appropriate social partner who can help in achieving these goals can lead to loneliness. When there is lack of privacy in an interpersonal relationship this can cause loneliness. An

assumption is that the individual seeks an equilibrium between desired and achieved levels of social contact. Loneliness is caused by both the factors that are individual and environmental.

General System Theory

Flanders (1976) gave a general system theory to loneliness. The basic assumption given by this theory is that the behaviour of living organisms reflects the intermeshed influence of several levels operating simultaneously as a system. Flanders theory of loneliness is not from empirical source rather it reflects Miller's system theory. Flanders sees loneliness as painful, but he also thinks loneliness as a useful feedback mechanism that can be helpful to the individual's or society's well-being. System theory subsumes both individual and situational factors of behaviour.

Self-Concealment

Self-concealment can be operationalized as the degree to which individuals actively hide information about themselves from others, such as by avoiding certain topics or keeping secrets.

Self-concealment can be defined as the extent to which individuals experience discomfort or distress when sharing personal information with others, such as feeling anxious or embarrassed.

Self-concealment can be operationalized as the frequency with which individuals engage in behaviours that are designed to keep others from knowing certain aspects of their lives, such as lying or omitting details.

Self-concealment can be defined as the degree to which individuals believe that sharing personal information with others will result in negative consequences, such as rejection or judgment.

According to Larson and Chastain (1990), “Self-concealment is defined as the predisposition to actively conceal from others personal information that one perceives as distressing or negative”. According to Derlega and Chaikin (1977), “Self-concealment is the process of, seen here as a special instance of boundary regulation in the maintenance of privacy”.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical models that explain self-concealment are:

Self-Perception Theory

The interaction between attitudes and behaviour are typically viewed as a normal sequence that progresses from attitudes and behaviour. People have different attitudes towards different things like attitude towards work can be seen in their behaviour like a person who is working and doing over time to get the work done on time. Behaviour can lead to attitudes as well. A causal link is proposed by self-perception theory.

A social psychologist Bem (1967) first proposed the self-perception theory. Self-perception theory was an alternative given for cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a state of discomfort in which the information is not consistent with one's present attitudes or beliefs. Self-perception theory argues that by observing our own behaviour we came to know of our certain attitudes. This theory is related to self-concealment as when a person is self-concealed, he or she observes their own behaviour and they think that there is a good reason for the behaviour occurring.

Self-Determination Theory

According to self-determination theory, autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs are three basic needs that are essential for well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Autonomy means when a person's actions engage in volitional activities which are not controlled. Competence

refers to self-efficacy and optimally challenged. Relatedness is defined as when a person feels genuinely connected to others and has a sense of belongingness. Several studies have shown that when these needs are not fulfilled then a person suffers from negative psychological and physiological outcomes. Recently, researchers suggested that self-concealment leads to negative psychological well-being because it is detrimental to the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Uysal et al., 2010). Higher levels of chronic pain can be associated with concealment because of unfulfilled needs.

Inhibition Model

According to the inhibition model, not talking about certain psychological experiences is a form of active inhibition (Pennebaker, 1989). Physiological efforts are consciously made to restrain thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Physiological work acts like a low-level stressor in the long term. Research has found some support for the inhibition model (Pennebaker, 1989) and shown that disclosing traumatic experiences leads to better health, whereas inhibiting them is associated with negative health outcomes. Behavioural inhibition also accompanies the process of self-concealment.

Preoccupation Model

The preoccupation model (Lane & Wegner, 1995) is a cognitive explanation based on the thought-suppression paradigm. According to this model it requires thought suppression, which necessitates cognitive effort. Thoughts which are suppressed have the effect of the suppressed being even more working and accessible. This leads to further attempts at thoughts suppression, which results in a vicious cycle of thought suppression and thought intrusion and this cycle puts the secret keeper in a state of constant mental unrest and obsessive preoccupation that can have negative health consequences (Lane & Wegner, 1995). Some studies have supported the preoccupation model (Major & Gramzow, 1999; Smart &

Wegner, 1999). Although this model provides the cognitive explanation that how people try to conceal their thoughts, but it does not explain results in negative outcomes.

Social Appearance Anxiety

“Social Appearance Anxiety is defined as the fear that one will be negatively evaluated because of one's appearance” (Hart et al., 2008). According to Hart, Leary & Rejeski (1989), “Social appearance anxiety is defined as tension and anxiety experienced by people when they are assessed by others in terms of their physical appearance”.

“Social appearance anxiety can be defined as a constant and distinct fear that occurs when people encounter people they do not know before or when they think that other people are above their attention” (Sertelin and Mercan, 2007).

According to Dogan (2010), “Social appearance anxiety is people having a negative body perception in relation to their physical structure or appearance”.

“The social appearance anxiety is defined as experiencing fear and discomfort in interacting with others, and the anxiety of being assessed negatively and patronized by others” (Antony and Swinson, 2008).

Hart et al., (1989, 2008) defined, “Social appearance anxiety as the preoccupation for one's own bodily appearance and fear of situations in which one's own appearance (body and face shape, height and weight) might be negatively evaluated from the others.”

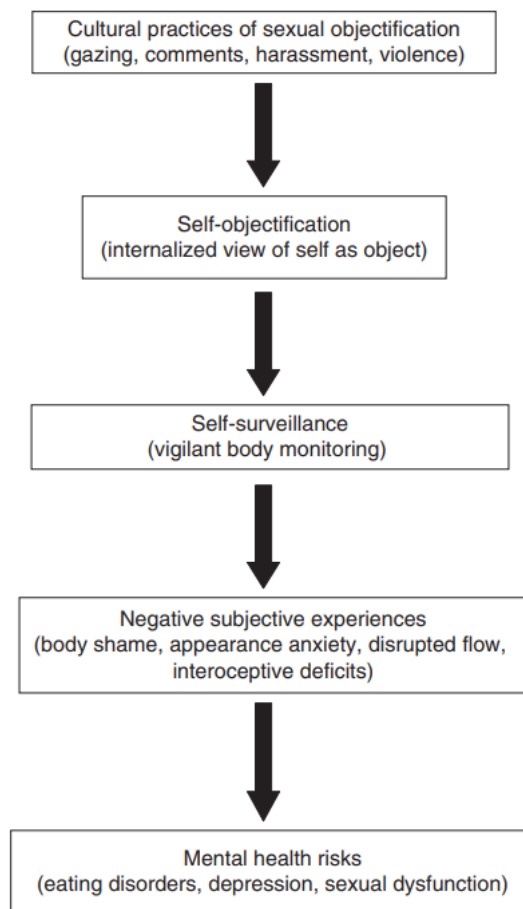
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-Objectification Theory

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) proposed a theory named self-objectification theory in which people think that they are objects instead of human beings and this theory is the result of objectification and is based on the topics like sex and gender and is related to appearances

and body image. Self-objectification is seen in both the gender that is males and females, but is commonly seen in females. Self-objectification is a psychological process in which women think that human bodies are objectified and constantly criticises their own bodies (Calogero, 2005). This study also understands the consequences women have to face in the society in which the female body is sexually objectified. When a women's body is treated as an object it is sexually objectified (an object that is for pleasure and use of others).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) describe self-objectification as a form of self-consciousness which is characterised by habitual and constant self-monitoring one's outward appearance. This theory proposes that constant monitoring of oneself accompany self-objectification which has negative impact on behavioural and experimental consequences. Internalising an observer's objectifying has increased levels of shame about one's body and increase the level of appearance anxiety. Constantly monitoring oneself of outward appearance can have negative consequences and diminished awareness of internal body states.

**Figure 1**

A Model of Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Appearance Anxiety

Appearance anxiety is one of the important aspects in a person's life. Appearance anxiety is a concept about aspects of one's physical appearance and how other people evaluate them. There are many researches done in this field on females. Recent evidences prove that men are also becoming concerned about their looks and physical appearances men are showing greater degree of negative body image than in the previous generations.

A study conducted on 71 men of college students took part in the study. In the study the hypothesis stated that appearance anxiety related inversely to physical activity participation but this association came out to be weak and was not accepted when percent body fat entered covariate in the analysis. Results indicated that appearance anxiety was the predictor of self-reported distress during a body composition evaluation however, it didn't relate to the physiological measure of anxiety (Davis, Brewer, and Weinstein 1993). Social appearance anxiety is positively correlated with measures of social anxiety and negative body image (Claes et al.,2012) and self-esteem . Social appearance anxiety includes not only physical appearances but, also overall assessments related to general appearance of an individual and it is associated with general social anxiety (White, 2008). It is observed that during the adolescence period social appearance anxiety is mostly at it's peak and it causes intense anxiety when other individual assess the individuals physical appearance (Gümüş, 2000). According to Gander and Gardiner (2010) to create a positive self-concept the individuals are expected to have a positive body image and it is the result of many factors interacting with each other including factors such as how a person is looking and getting appreciation by others is included in these factors. Social appearance anxiety is a kind of social anxiety.

When people are particular or keen about leaving a good impression on other people and they are not sure about the good impression then social anxiety is experienced (Dilbaz, 1997). People who have low self-esteem have low body image perception and when they have positive attitudes towards body image their self-esteem also increases (Oktan and Sahin, 2010). Özcan et al., (2013) conducted a study on relationship between self-esteem and social appearance anxiety in adolescence and young adults. The results found out that there was a strong relationship between self-esteem and social appearance anxiety and when self-esteem increases social appearance anxiety decreases. Levinson and Rodebaugh (2011) conducted another study and results were related to gender differences who were experiencing social appearance anxiety. The results indicated that social appearance anxiety came to higher in females than in males and a positive correlation was also seen in between social appearance anxiety and social relationships anxiety, and fear of negative assessment and neuroticism. One more study investigated the relationship between social appearance anxiety and negative body image and the results found out a positive relationship between the two variables that is social appearance anxiety and negative body image (Hart et al., 2008).

According to Koskina et al., (2011) the study conducted by them found out that bulimia nervosa is significantly higher in the social appearance anxiety scale. Social media usage has become a daily activity now, especially among adolescents and young adults. Posting pictures on social media is one of the most popular activities done on social media and by using useful tools they increase self-presentation and want to get approves by others. Exploring more on social media might lead to social comparisons and they may get concern with their appearances. The study was conducted to evaluate the unexplored predictive role of selfie-expectation and social appearance anxiety on social media usage and also wanted to study the gender differences between boys and girls. The study was conducted on a total number of 578 individuals. The results found out that boys social appearance anxiety and the expectancy that

selfies could improve their self-confidence were both the predictors of social media usage. The girls scored higher in social appearance anxiety but it didn't influence their social media usage.

Social appearance anxiety and body image are strongly related to each other (Arroyo & Brunner, 2016; Chae, 2017; Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Manago, Ward, Lemm, Reed, & Seabrook, 2015; McLean et al., 2015; Meier & Grey, 2014; Trekels, Ward, & Eggermont, 2018). When an individual gets positive comments on their profile on social media the appearance concerns tend to get decrease and they tend to increase when they face negative feedback (Valkenburg et al., 2006; Dogan & Colak, 2016). Social appearance anxiety is related to the need to create a positive and nice impression on other individuals. Social appearance anxiety is directly related to the bodily appearance (Garica, 1998; Cash and Fleming, 2002) as well as individual beliefs and perception of others participation (Leary and Kowalski, 1995).

Appearance anxiety is the key issue in women and women more often experience appearance anxiety (Cusumano and Thompson, 1997; Dakanaliset al., 2016; Jones, Vigfusdottir and Lee, 2004). Garcia (1998) stated that men and women both have same perception about physical attractiveness as the function of appearance anxiety. Korkmazer et al., (2022) conducted a study which aim was to determine the smartphone addiction in young adults and also studied the relationship between smartphone use, depression, anxiety, and social appearance anxiety. A total of 259 young adults both males and females were selected for the study. The results found out that there was a positive correlation between smartphone usage time and smartphone addiction scores. There was a positive correlation between of addiction scale with anxiety and social appearance anxiety and there was no correlation with depression.

A study investigates to determine the effects of depression and anxiety on self-esteem and social appearance anxiety. Self-esteem approves self-concept and defines a person as fully

satisfied higher the self-esteem positive the body image and low esteem is linked with negative body image. Depression symptoms in an individual can lower the self-esteem. The results of the study came out to be there is a positive correlation between self-esteem, social appearance anxiety, depression, and anxiety. Depression was a positive predictor of self-esteem and social appearance anxiety. The results also indicated that social appearance anxiety and self-esteem were positively correlated with each other (Subaşı, Budak, & Yıldız, 1970).

Self-Concealment

Self-Concealment is when an individual keeps his or her personal information or negative information hidden from others. Self-concealing is related to various kinds of negative psychological problems. Only a few studies have given the causes of self-concealment and limited research is carried out on this topic that is causes of self-concealment. Self-concealment has relationship with other physical and psychological variables. Self-concealment is also causes negative symptoms in an individual and it has also seen that self-concealment means unhealthy life to begin. According to Kelly and Achter (1995), "Self-concealment was a better predictor of perceive likelihood of seeking counselling than was psychological distress." Larson and Chastain (1990) in their study found out that self-concealment is associated with other psychological health issues such as anxiety, depression, and physical symptoms. Trauma incidences, trauma distress, trauma disclosure occur even after the incidence is controlled. Researchers also found out that self-concealment has effects on well-being and coping. People who are high on self-concealment are more prone to psychological distress and self-reported physical symptoms. A model of self- presentation or image management in which social interactions present opportunities to disclose distressing or negative personal information (Schlenker, 1980). In research there are two studies

conducted by the researchers that whether self-concealment from one partner is related to lower relationship well-being. In the first study the subjects who were in a romantic relationship completed an online survey and 165 participants were included in the study. There was a low relationship well-being, satisfaction and commitment if one partner self-conceals from the other. The results also found out that self-concealment from one partner is the predictor of lower relationship well-being. In the second study 50 couples were selected and completed daily records for 14 days. The results indicated that daily self-concealment from one partner is linked with daily relationship satisfaction, commitment and conflicts between them (Uysal et al., 2012). Studies have shown that self-concealment is studied in interpersonal contexts that is counselling (Kelly, 1998) and adolescence- parent relationships (Frijns et al., 2005). Only a few studies have notice the consequences on romantic relationships. A researcher in his cross-sectional study with married couples found out that self-concealment didn't contribute to marital satisfaction but the avoidance topic did (Finkenauer & Hazam, 2000).

A study investigated the relationship between self-concealment and suicidality among young adults. The people in the age range of 18-25 were included in the study and were given online forms to complete the survey questionnaire. The results found out that there was a significant positive relationship between self-concealment and suicidality. Seeking professional psychological help was related to negative attitudes in self-concealment. Whereas, in suicidality help seeking behaviour had no significance and further, interpersonal factors are considered important in suicide (Hogge & Blankenship, 2020). Trub (2017) conducted a study which investigates the role of adult attachment in people's self-presentation and self-concealment in both online and offline spaces. Hartman et al., (2015) conducted a study which aims at the examination of the direct and indirect influences of parenting styles on self-concealment, impaired control over drinking, alcohol use, and alcohol related problems. The

study was carried out on 419 young adults. The results of the study or the investigation showed that authoritarian parenting style (mother) was directly linked to self-concealment and authoritative parenting style (father) was associated directly with less self-concealment. Authoritarian parenting style were indirectly linked to both increased alcohol use and alcohol related problems through self-concealment and more impaired controlling over drinking. Parenting styles increases the vulnerabilities such as self-concealment, alcohol use and this can have later on problems like alcohol related problems. Larson and Chastain (1990) first distinguished between self-concealment and self-disclosure and after that said that self-concealment and self-disclosure are linked with each other self-disclosure means telling the information and on the other hand self-concealment means not telling the information and keeps secrets from other people or individual. In a later study, Larson and Chastain (1990) conducted a study in which they studied that self-concealment and self-disclosure are not opposites. The results indicated that the scores on self-concealment and self-disclosure were significantly negatively correlated and self-concealment is related to physical symptoms, depression and anxiety also but self-disclosure was not linked with them. There study also found out that self-concealment and self-disclosure are different predictors in different age groups. In adult self-concealment was more predictive than self-disclosure and had physical and psychological complaints. In adolescences when children hide something from their parents it predicted physical complaints, depressive moods and it has more degree than self-disclosure (Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002). There were empirical differences between self-concealment and self-disclosure (Kahn and Hessling, 2001). Anxiety, depression and distress were positively related to self-concealment (Larson and Chastain, 1990). There was a positive relationship between self-concealment and anxiety. They also found out that there was positive relationship between self-concealment and depression (Ichiyama et al., 1993).

DiBartolo, Li, and Frost, (2008) from their findings came to know that there was a positive relationship between self-concealment and depression. Lopez, Mitchell and Gormley (2002) investigated and found that there was a positive relationship between self-concealment and distress. Researchers also studied the relationship between self-concealment and social support and the results of the study indicated that there was a negative correlation between self-concealment and social support (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998). Kawamura and Frost (2004) conducted a study on relationship between self-concealment and perfectionism among men and women. The results indicated that self-concealment and perfectionism was significantly correlated to each other for women but for men it was negatively correlated.

Loneliness

Loneliness is a feeling that is experienced by every individual at some point in their lives and we get to experience this feeling when an individual lacks social relationships. Loneliness and being alone are two different aspects. A person can choose to be alone and live happily but loneliness is something that can hamper an individual's mental health and well-being. Loneliness can be experienced by a lot of causes like moving to a university, losing social contact, break-up from a romantic relationship and many more. Loneliness is an emotional state that is experienced by every individual in their lives and is in adolescences and young adulthood period (Jones & Carver, 1991). Loneliness depends upon the age and reaches its peak (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). Loneliness is defined as the lack of relationship with other people (Gierveld, Tilburg & Dykstra, 2006). According to Peplau and Perlman (1982) loneliness is a situation caused by an inconsistency between what people expect from relationship and what they really get. Loneliness is one dimensional (Russell, 1982; Russell et al., 1984) but Weiss (1973) stated that loneliness has two dimensions which include emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness is caused by lack of close

relationships in lives like family, spouse or partner whereas, social loneliness is when there is lack of social relationships such as a close friend or workplace friendship. Michela, Peplau and Weeks (1982) stated that there are many different causes of loneliness and one of the main causes is that people don't find themselves as physically attractive and if people don't find themselves attractive they prefer to stay alone and perceives the situations negatively.

Lee, Cadigan, and Rhew (2020) conducted a study during covid-19 pandemic in which he saw that young adults were at a high risk of loneliness and young adults were the ones who faced mental health problem during the pandemic period. He also noticed that there was an increase in depression and anxiety levels of young adults when there was an increase in loneliness. They also conducted a gender study in which loneliness increased in April and May and changes in loneliness were seen more in women with high perceived social support in January. It was seen that depression and loneliness were increasing at the time of pandemic and anxiety was not. Early intervention were used on young adults to deal with their problems during pandemic. Victor and Yang (2012) conducted a study which aims to determine the prevalence of loneliness among young adults. There are many studies done on loneliness in old age but the researchers have seen that there was less work done on loneliness with different age groups. They first studied the prevalence of loneliness among the adult population, relationship between loneliness and risk factors were also studied and then the relationship with age and each of the risk factors were studied. The results of the study indicated that poor physical health was related to loneliness in young adults. It was also seen that different kinds of factors may protect loneliness at different stages of life. Early interventions and preventive strategies were suggested for young adults who were facing issue of loneliness. Odaci and Kalkan (2010) these days internet is the most important thing and we use internet for obtaining information and establishing communication with other people. Internet makes our life much easier and it can even become problematic in youngster

life. This study aims to investigate the problematic internet use among young adults and determines correlation between internet use and loneliness and dating anxiety. The study was carried out on 493 university students. Correlation analysis, t-test, one way analysis of variance and chi-square were applied in data analysis for the data collected. The results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between problematic internet use and loneliness. The results in one way analysis of variance came out to be significant and it was seen that high level of problematic internet use varies according to length of internet use. Chi-square results show significant association between internet use and how students feel when they do not use internet or go online on social media sites. T-test was used to determine the gender differences and internet use was higher in males than females. Child and Lawton (2019) there are many variables linked together, there is association seen between social networks and loneliness or social isolation in young adults. The study investigates relationships among subjective and objective measures of personal networks with loneliness and isolation and comparing a older and younger cohort. Total 472 young adults took part in the study in the age range of 21-30 and 637 age adults were taken in the age range of 50-70. The results shows that young adults were more lonely than middle age adults and young adults also felt isolation. Individual experiences the feelings of loneliness and isolation because of their personal networks. Perceptions are important predictors of mental health and well-being (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2003), however loneliness and isolation may have negative impact on physical as well as mental health because of stress, anxiety and lack of perceived support (Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2003; Cornwell and Waite, 2009). The individuals who are socially integrated have better health outcomes (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Umberson, 1987). Researchers considers loneliness as perceived social isolation (Margetta, 2016). Social isolation means lack of social interaction and lack of people in an individual's life. Social isolation is also of subjective perception like loneliness and it is also an objective

reality measured by the quantity and quality of social interaction and social support. Pinquart and Sorensen (2001) observed that aspects of emotional social contacts are different from the feelings of loneliness. Ayalon (2012) observed direct measures of loneliness and found they provide different results on social isolation. Social isolation and loneliness are important proof that suggest that they are associated with health (Victor et al., 2000). It is also observed that loneliness affects health through psychosomatic pathways including lack of self-esteem, depression and hopelessness, or perceived social support (Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2003; Lin et al., 1979).

Barnett, Moore and Edzards (2020) investigated a study in which they stated that lower body image satisfaction is related to loneliness among young adults. The study investigates the relationship between body image and loneliness in young adults and older adults. Results of the study indicated that low level of body image satisfaction and higher levels of loneliness was seen in young adults in comparison to older adults. The relationship between body image and loneliness was stronger in young adults. There was a stigma consciousness mediating the relationship between body image and loneliness in older adults. Young adults are often seen at a high risk for loneliness (Chatterjee, 2018). Individuals can feel lonely they are even if with their family and friends, as loneliness is associated with quality of one's relationship rather than the quantity of relationship (Hawkley et al., 2003; Masi et al., 2011; Perlman and Peplau, 1982). Some of the researches state that screen time increases loneliness among young adults (Chatterjee, 2018; Twenge et al., 2018). Song et al., (2014) found out a positive relationship between face-book use and loneliness. Loneliness and face-book use has positive relationship and it has impact on individual they become shy and lack of social support predicted loneliness, whereas loneliness predicted face-book use. Social media usage leads to avoid social contact and opportunities and make them feel lonely (Kall et al., 2020; Masi et al., 2011). Researches have conducted several different ideas to explain the relationship

between inter-parental conflict and low family cohesion and adolescent adjustment. Loneliness is also linked with disruptive family environment can cause difficulty in maintain and establishing relationships in social situations (McKeown et al., 1997; Wentzel and Feldman, 1996). Loneliness is related with inter-parental conflict and decreased family closeness is linked with anxiety and stress in social situations (cf. Leadbeater et al., 1995; Wentzel and Feldman, 1996).

Lau and Kong (1999) reported that loneliness is related with self-reports of having inadequate physical appearance, low self-concept, low emotional stability and not having proper social skills. Loneliness can be experienced by males and females and are linked with decreased effectiveness in skills which are needed for social situations or interactions which are done outside the family environment (Asher et al., 1990). Schwab et al., (1998) conducted a study and reported that feelings of loneliness are there because of embarrassed social situation or being rejected during some social situation. These feeling can increase anxiety when individuals face social situations and then they do not want to face the social situations. Newcomb and Bagwell (1996) reported that people who experience loneliness distance themselves from social situation that others do.

Social Appearance Anxiety and Loneliness

Social appearance anxiety and loneliness are closely related to each other. Both social appearance anxiety and loneliness are faced by individuals and it can have negative impact on there health and well-being. A study was conducted in which the relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness was studied through survey model. A sample of 493 college students were selected for the study. T-test, f-test, simple correlation and regression analysis were applied on the data collected for the research. The results found out that there was a significant positive correlation between social appearance anxiety and loneliness.

Results also indicated that social appearance anxiety was an important predictor of loneliness (Osman & Bozgeya, 2015). A study investigated that loneliness and social appearance anxiety are related and there is a relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness along with body image dissatisfaction, and body mass index. According to the researcher social appearances anxiety plays a role in the relationship between loneliness and body image dissatisfaction. Social appearance anxiety and loneliness are both reduced together if one reduces then only the other one will reduce (Levinson, Fernandez & Rodebaugh, 2011). O'Day and Heimberg (2021) conducted a research how social media usage affects well-being. Social media usage is related to social appearance anxiety and loneliness. The finding of the results state that both social appearance anxiety and loneliness indulge in usage of social media. Loneliness is considered as the risk factor for social media usage. When an individual experience social isolation and rejection socially anxious individuals are at a high risk for feeling lonely (Cacioppo et al., 2015; Fung, Patterson and Alden, 2017; Teo, Lerrigo and Rogers, 2013). Lim et al., (2016) found that social appearance anxiety was the predictor of future loneliness. Social appearance anxiety plays an important role in loneliness. Johnson, Lavoie and Mahoney (2001) conducted a study in which family characteristics are related to personal development and social interactions. Family environments are linked with the increase feelings of loneliness which may create problems in social interactions (social appearance anxiety). The study was conducted on 124 students revealed the feelings of loneliness. Feelings of social anxiety and social interactions were also associated with loneliness.

Self-Concealment and Loneliness

Akdoğan and Çimşir (2019) conducted research to test if inferior feelings are related to happiness. While their investigation a process in which inferiority feelings are linked to self-

concealment which in turn causes happiness, which results in lack of happiness or decrease in happiness. The results of the study states that self-concealment and loneliness are the mediators of inferior feelings and happiness. The individuals whose inferior feelings are increased they have a higher score on self-concealment. If loneliness increases happiness will decrease. The results of multiple regression reveal that loneliness and inferior feelings are significant predictors of subjective happiness. Ding et al., (2016) investigated a study to evaluate the relationship between self-concealment, social anxiety, loneliness and internet addiction. The research was conducted on 312 college students. Self-concealment scale, social anxiety subscale scale of the self-consciousness scale, UCLA loneliness scale, and young internet addiction test were used in the survey. The results of the study confirms that there was a significant positive correlation between self-concealment, loneliness and internet addiction. Social anxiety and loneliness effects the relationship between self-concealment and internet addiction. Loneliness is one of the most painful experiences of human-being and the feelings of being lonely can lead to serious psychological and physical problems. Nezhad (2021) conducted research on the relationship between social and emotional loneliness, fear of negative evaluation, thought suppression, and mindfulness with mediating self-concealment in university students. 200 university students were selected for the research. Pearson correlation, path analysis and bootstrap statistical methods were used for data analysis of the research. The results of the study reveals that there was indirect effects of fear of negative evaluation with mindfulness and thought suppression. Social and emotional loneliness, mindfulness, thought suppression, self-concealment were all significant. It was also seen that mindfulness reduces social and emotional loneliness, fear of negative evaluation, thought suppression and self-concealment if the individual accepts their feelings and thoughts.

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW, AIM, OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESIS

Overview of the Study

- Numerous young adults frequently struggle with feelings of isolation, self-concealment, and appearance. There are many reasons why young adults may experience loneliness. They might have just started a new job, moved away from home, or ended a romantic relationship. As young adults compare their lives to those of others online, social media can also contribute to the feelings of loneliness and FOMO (fear of missing out). In romantic relationships, where partners may feel like they don't really know each other, self-concealment can be especially problematic.
- Self-concealment is an experience which involves thoughts, feelings, information about a person which makes them feel uncomfortable, stressful and avoid telling people about their personal information. Self-concealment is associated with negative psychological health. Self-concealing is a way used by introverts who are shy, quiet, and reserved. Self-concealment contributes to the predictions of anxiety, depression, and some physical symptoms. Concealed information is highly intimate, negative in valence and it has three characteristics: it is a private subset, is consciously accessed and is concealed from others
- Appearance is the focal point in young people. Anxiety related to appearance is very common these days and is mostly in girls than boys. Social appearance anxiety is a kind of anxiety which means the person is being evaluated negatively in terms of one's overall appearance. Social appearance anxiety has its focus on specific situations where the individual fears negative evaluation from others about themselves

and it is a subset of social anxiety. Social appearance anxiety is associated with the feelings of loneliness.

- Human beings are people who socialize and thrive on social interactions with their surroundings. If they feel connected to their surroundings they live a better life, if not it can be harmful. Loneliness is linked with a sense of distress, how an individual perceives themselves when they are lonely and how they evaluate their social and interpersonal relationship. The causes of loneliness include mental, social, or emotional factors. Loneliness is a universal human experience recognized since the dawn of time (Copel,1988), yet it is unique for every individual (Austin, 1989).
- Over the years there are many psychologists and sociologists who worked on the theoretical framework of loneliness. He gave the difference of being lonesome from being lonely. Sullivan (1953) noticed the roots of adult loneliness in childhood. According to Rogers (1970, 1973), “loneliness occurs when individuals, having dropped their defences to get in touch with their inner selves, nonetheless expect rejection from others”. According to him, the belief that their real selves are unlovable, keeps people locked in their loneliness.
- Riesman (1961) and Slater (1976) both have associated their analysis of loneliness with the study of American character and how society fails to meet the member’s needs. The Interactionist View Weiss (1973) is the leading person of interactionist approach. First, he explained that loneliness is not only a function of personality factors or situational factors. The researcher gave two kinds of loneliness, Emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Social loneliness results when there is a lack of social relationships like friendships or a sense of community. A Privacy Approach Derlega and Margulis (1982) are the leading advocates of privacy approach and they use

privacy and self-disclosure concepts as a way of understanding loneliness. An assumption is that the individual seeks an equilibrium between desired and achieved levels of social contact.

- According to Larson and Chastain (1990), self-concealment is defined as the predisposition to actively conceal from others personal information that one perceives as distressing or negative. People have different attitudes towards different things like attitude towards work can be seen in their behaviour like a person who is working and doing over time to get the work done on time. Self-perception theory was an alternative given for cognitive dissonance.
- This theory is related to self-concealment as when a person is self-concealed, he or she observes their own behaviour and they think that there is a good reason for the behaviour occurring. Recently, researchers suggested that self-concealment leads to negative psychological well-being because it is detrimental to the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Uysal et al.,). According to this model it requires thought suppression, which necessitates cognitive effort
- Social Appearance Anxiety is defined as the fear that one will be negatively evaluated because of one's appearance (Hart et al., 2008). According to Hart, Leary & Rejeski (1989), social appearance anxiety is defined as tension and anxiety experienced by people when they are assessed by others in terms of their physical appearance.
- Self-Objectification Theory Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) proposed a theory named self-objectification theory in which people think that they are objects instead of human beings and this theory is the result of objectification and is based on the topics like sex and gender and is related to appearances and body image. Self-objectification is seen in both the gender that is males and females, but is commonly seen in females.

This study also understands the consequences women have to face in the society in which the female body is sexually objectified. Constantly monitoring oneself of outward appearance can have negative consequences and diminished awareness of internal body states.

- Appearance anxiety is one of the important aspects in a person's life. Appearance anxiety is a concept about aspects of one's physical appearance and how other people evaluate them. There are many researches done in this field on females. A study conducted on 71 men of college students took part in the study. It is observed that during the adolescence period social appearance anxiety is mostly at its peak and it causes intense anxiety when other individual assess the individuals physical appearance (Gümüş, 2000).
- Social appearance anxiety is a kind of social anxiety. People who have low self-esteem have low body image perception and when they have positive attitudes towards body image their self-esteem also increases (Oktan and Sahin, 2010). The results indicated that social appearance anxiety came to higher in females than in males and a positive correlation was also seen in between social appearance anxiety and social relationships anxiety, and fear of negative assessment and neuroticism.
- Posting pictures on social media is one of the most popular activities done on social media and by using useful tools they increase self-presentation and want to get approves by others. The study was conducted to evaluate the unexplored predictive role of selfie-expectation and social appearance anxiety on social media usage and also wanted to study the gender differences between boys and girls. The study was conducted on a total number of 578 individuals. Social appearance anxiety and body image are strongly related to each other. When an individual gets positive comments

on their profile on social media the appearance concerns tend to get decrease and they tend to increase when they face negative feedback.

- Social appearance anxiety is directly related to the bodily appearance (Garica, 1998; Cash and Fleming, 2002) as well as individual beliefs and perception of others participation. A total of 259 young adults both males and females were selected for the study. There was a positive correlation between of addiction scale with anxiety and social appearance anxiety and there was no correlation with depression. A study investigates to determine the effects of depression and anxiety on self-esteem and social appearance anxiety.
- Self-concealment is when an individual keeps his or her personal information or negative information hidden from others. Self-concealment also causes negative symptoms in an individual and it has also seen that self-concealment means unhealthy life to begin. In research there are two studies conducted by the researchers that whether self-concealment from one partner is related to lower relationship well-being. In the first study the subjects who were in a romantic relationship completed an online survey and 165 participants were included in the study.
- Studies have shown that self-concealment is studied in interpersonal contexts that is counselling (Kelly, 1998) and adolescence-parent relationships (Frijns et al., 2005). A study investigated the relationship between self-concealment and suicidality among young adults. The results found out that there was a significant positive relationship between self-concealment and suicidality. Seeking professional psychological help was related to negative attitudes in self-concealment. The study was carried out on 419 young adults. Anxiety, depression and distress were positively related to self-concealment (Larson and Chastain, 1990). Lopez, Mitchell and Gormley (2002)

investigated and found that there was a positive relationship between self-concealment and distress.

- Loneliness is a feeling that is experienced by every individual at some point in their lives and we get to experience this feeling when an individual lack social relationships. Loneliness can be experienced by a lot of causes like moving to a university, losing social contact, break-up from a romantic relationship and many more. Loneliness is an emotional state that is experienced by every individual in their lives and is in adolescences and young adulthood period (Jones and Carver, 1991). Loneliness is one dimensional (Russell, 1982; Russell et al., 1984). He also noticed that there was an increase in depression and anxiety levels of young adults when there was an increase in loneliness. It was seen that depression and loneliness were increasing at the time of pandemic and anxiety was not.
- Victor and Yang (2012) conducted a study which aims to determine the prevalence of loneliness among young adults. The results of the study indicated that poor physical health was related to loneliness in young adults. Odacı and Kalkan (2010) these days internet is the most important thing and we use internet for obtaining information and establishing communication with other people. The study was carried out on 493 university students. The results in one way analysis of variance came out to be significant and it was seen that high level of problematic internet use varies according to length of internet use. Chi-square results show significant association between internet use and how students feel when they do not use internet or go online on social media sites.
- Child and Lawton (2019) there are many variables linked together, there is association seen between social networks and loneliness or social isolation in young adults. The

study investigates relationships among subjective and objective measures of personal networks with loneliness and isolation and comparing a older and younger cohort. Total 472 young adults took part in the study in the age range of 21-30 and 637 age adults were taken in the age range of 50-70. Social isolation is also of subjective perception like loneliness and it is also an objective reality measured by the quantity and quality of social interaction and social support. It is also observed that loneliness affects health through psychosomatic pathways including lack of self-esteem, depression and hopelessness, or perceived social support (Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2003; Lin et al., 1979). The study investigates the relationship between body image and loneliness in young adults and older adults.

- Social appearance anxiety and loneliness are closely related to each other. A study investigated that loneliness and social appearance anxiety are related and there is a relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness along with body image dissatisfaction, and body mass index. Loneliness is considered as the risk factor for social media usage. Johnson, Lavoie and Mahoney (2001) conducted a study in which family characteristics are related to personal development and social interactions. The study was conducted on 124 students revealed the feelings of loneliness. Feelings of social anxiety and social interactions were also associated with loneliness.
- Akdoğan and Çimşir (2019) conducted research to test if inferior feelings are related to happiness. If loneliness increases happiness will decrease. Ding et al (2016) investigated a study to evaluate the relationship between self-concealment, social anxiety, loneliness and internet addiction. The research was conducted on 312 college students. The results of the study confirms that there was a significant positive correlation between self-concealment, loneliness and internet addiction. Nezhad (2021) conducted research on the relationship between social and emotional

loneliness, fear of negative evaluation, thought suppression, and mindfulness with mediating self-concealment in university students.

Research Gap

Research gaps in this area are highlighted by review of literature. In both the Indian and Western contexts, less research has been done on social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness. Very less work has been done on the study variables social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults in respect to each other.

Keeping the above in mind, the primary goal of the investigation is to study social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. An attempt to address this gap will be made through this investigation.

Aim

The present study aims to study the correlates of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment and loneliness among young adults.

Need of study

This study covers information on young adults as young adulthood is a critical period and it bridges the gap from adolescence to independent adulthood. It is a period when individuals face challenges and have new responsibilities. Success and failure in young adulthood can set the paths that can strongly affect their lives.

Social appearance anxiety is often seen with a negative perception of their body and appearance and they often try to camouflage the body parts they dislike. The people who

experience social appearance anxiety prefer not to come in physical contact with anyone instead want to stay in and want internet exposure for communication and they find it easy to manipulate their image and overall appearance. The one who is suffering from social appearance anxiety have a strong desire to not be seen and they have a fear of rejection. Fear of rejection leads to the feeling of loneliness. Loneliness is an emotional state which is present in all age groups from adolescence to young adults and it varies with age. People who think they are less attractive often have feelings of loneliness. The feeling of loneliness often leads to many health risks such as anxiety, depression and suicide and leads to isolation. High levels of loneliness leads to high self-concealment. Self-concealment is when a person conceals them and wants their privacy and hides personal information which is negative from others. Self-concealment has three characteristics that is keeping secrets to oneself, not sharing personal negative and painful information and are often concerned about the leakage of their concealed information. Thus, the study will benefit in understanding how social appearance anxiety, self-concealment and loneliness are impacts individuals. This study will also create awareness in individuals about the issues going on these days and will help people to deal with these problems effectively.

Research Objectives

- This research aims to assess the relationship between social appearance anxiety and self-concealment.
- This research aims to assess the relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness.
- This research aims to assess the relationship between loneliness and self-concealment.
- This research aims to assess the impact of self-concealment on social appearance anxiety.

- This research aims to assess the impact of loneliness on social appearance anxiety.
- This research aims to assess the impact of loneliness on self-concealment.

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between social appearance anxiety and self-concealment?
- Is there a relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness?
- Is there a relationship between loneliness and self-concealment?
- Is there an impact of self-concealment on social appearance anxiety?
- Is there an impact of loneliness on social appearance anxiety?
- Is there an impact of loneliness on self-concealment?

Hypothesis

1. Self-concealment was expected to be significantly positively related with social appearance anxiety.
2. Loneliness was expected to be significantly positively related with social appearance anxiety.
3. Loneliness was expected to be significantly positively related with self-concealment.
4. Self-concealment is expected to have a significant impact on social appearance anxiety.
5. Loneliness is expected to have a significant impact on social appearance anxiety.
6. Loneliness is expected to have a significant impact on self-concealment.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter clarifies the research methodology to answer the hypothesis to acquire systematic information. The aim of the present study was to identify the correlates of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness. The research also aimed to study the impact of self-concealment on social appearance anxiety. The research further aimed to study the impact of loneliness on social appearance anxiety. The research also aimed to study the impact of loneliness on self-concealment. For this purpose, the sample of 100 young adults in the age range of 18-25 years were selected for the study.

Research Design

For the present investigation a quantitative approach was used. The purpose of this research is to gather primary data which means the data gathered and collected for a particular study in comparison to secondary data which means data gathered by review. The present study aims at examining the correlation among the variables used in the study.

Sample

The sample consisted of 100 young adults in the age range of 18-25 years. The samples were collected from Tri-city (Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula).

Inclusion Criteria

- The age of the respondents was 18-25.
- Those residing in urban areas were selected.
- Only respondents who gave consent were included.
- Both the gender were selected for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Those suffering from any psychopathology or undergoing treatment for psychological problems.
- problems were excluded from the sample.
- Those suffering from any other chronic illness were excluded.
- Those exhibiting any physical deformity were excluded.
- Those residing in rural areas were not selected.
- Illiterate or those having studied less than 10th standard was not included in the sample.
- The responded who refused to give informed consent.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical guidelines were put into place for the research period.

- Confidentiality of the responses and identity was assured.
- Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study.
- Informed consent was obtained.
- The dignity and well-being of the respondent was protected all the time.

Tests and Tools

The following standardized test and tools were used:

- Self-Concealment Scale (SCS) (Larson and Chastain, 1990)
- UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3 (Russell,1996)
- Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) (Veale et al., 2014)

All the tests used were standardized and had established reliability and validity. The scales administered were available in English. A semi-structured interview schedule was

administered to the participants to seek the detailed information about the critical social and demographic aspects such as name, age and gender.

Brief description of the test and tools used:

The following standardized test and tools were used:

Self-Concealment Scale (SCS): The questionnaire was developed by Larson and Chastain (1990). The scale contains 10 items. It measures self-concealment, and the responses are given on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The scores were all added up to obtain a total score. The scale contains items such as (I have an important secret that I haven't shared with anyone), (Some of my secrets have really tormented me) and so on. Larson and Chastain (1990) found the internal consistency of the self-concealment scale to be acceptable, measuring a Cronbach's alpha of .83 and a test-retest reliability of ($r=.81$) over a 4-week interval.

Following instructions were given for Self-Concealment Scale (SCS):

"Please read the statements given below carefully and answer them as honestly as possible. You will be given 5 options and you must choose any one option which you think is best suitable for you. There are no right or wrong answers, and your responses will be kept confidential."

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): The questionnaire was developed by Russell (1996). It is a brief 20-item scale. It measures one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. The responses are given on a 4-point Likert scale in which (never) is scored as 1, (rarely) is scored as 2, (sometimes) is scored as 3 and (often) is scored as 4. Some of the items are scored reversely, that is item number 1,5,6,9,10,15,16,19 and 20. At the end all the scores are summed up to obtain a total score. The measure was highly reliable, both in terms of internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranging from .89 to .94) and test-retest

reliability over a 1-year period ($r=.73$). Convergent validity for the scale was indicated by significant correlations with other measures of loneliness. Construct validity was supported by significant relations with measures of adequacy of individuals interpersonal relationships, and by correlations between loneliness and measures of health and well-being.

Following instructions were given for UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3:

“Please read each of the statements given below carefully and answer them honestly. Indicate how often each of the statements below is descriptive to you. There are no right or wrong answers.”

Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI): The questionnaire was developed by Veale et al., (2014). The scale consists of 10 items and measures the appearance anxiety of the individual over past one week, including today. The responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale which is ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (all the time). After that all the scores were added up to obtain a total score. The scale includes items such as (I compare aspects of my appearance to others), (I avoid situations or people because of my appearance) and so on. The AAI was found to have good convergent validity, with correlations of .55. Internal consistency was high, with a Cronbach's alpha of .86.

Following instructions were given for Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI):

“Please read each of the statements carefully and answer them with utmost honesty. Please check the options that best describe the way you have felt about your appearance or a specific feature over the past week, including today. There are no right or wrong answers.”

Procedure

Keeping in view the objectives and ethical considerations, following procedures was executed by the researcher:

Informed consent was obtained from the subjects before they were enrolled in the study. All the interested subjects were administered self-reports measures. The participants were requested to respond as honestly as possible according to given instructions. They were assured that the information and the results would be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. Proper standardized instructions were given to the subjects as specified in the manuals. Once they have completed their questionnaire they were thanked for their active participation in the study. Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions given in the manual. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analyses by using Statistical Product and Services Solution (SPSS) Package.

To investigate the impact of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment and loneliness the research was initiated. Review of literature was collected, and the various researchers were studied. The tools for data collection for all the variables were gathered. Next, the hypothesis was formulated, and the expected outcomes were identified. The sample of 100 young adults in the age range of 18-25 years were identified and approached for data collection. The purpose of the present study was explained in brief to all the participants and their doubts related to the questionnaire were cleared. The participants were both males and females. Upon giving the instructions to the participants, data was collected. Prior to completing the questionnaires, the participants were informed of their options to participate or not as participation is voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from the study participants of the data collection process. Participants who declined the informed consent were thanked for their interest. The data collection was done offline via hard copy of the questionnaire as well as through online google forms. The elements formed part of the data collection process a) Informed consent b) Demographic Information c) Self Concealment Scale (SCS), Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) and UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3. Participants

were required to read and give their consent before they move forward to answer the survey questionnaires. The informed consent described the study, including the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and anonymity and the right of participants to opt-out of the study at any point of time without penalty. The demographic information contains the name, age, and gender of the participant. The survey questionnaires make the remaining elements of the data. Once the desired responses were gathered, participants were thanked for their valuable response and time. The scores were compiled in the excel sheet for each variable and each participant. For the analysis of raw scores, the help of SPSS was taken. Prior to the scoring and calculation, data were checked for entry errors using frequency analysis and ensured that all discrepancies were removed. The Mean, Sd for Pearson R and Regression was also employed using SPSS to understand the relationship among predictor and criterion variables. Once the results were tabulated, the interpretation and analysis of the results was done. Further, the limitations of the study, implications of the study and recommendations for future research in the field were written.

Scoring and Statistical Analysis

Scoring for all the given tests were done as per the scoring instructions given in the manuals. The raw scores were tabulated and were subjected to various statistical analysis by using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) Package. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, statistical analysis was conducted. Mean, standard deviations, correlation and multiple regression analysis was carried out. Correlation analysis was carried out to test the relationship between the two variables. Linear regression analysis was carried out to delineate the significant predictors of the criterion variables. Before carrying out statistical tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were checked. The responses that emerged through the semi-structured interview schedule were analysed qualitatively and the results are presented in the form of tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

CHAPTER 5

RESULT

Table 1

N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Social Appearance Anxiety, Self-Concealment, and Loneliness

	Social Appearance Anxiety	Self-Concealment	Loneliness
N	100	100	100
Mean	9.37	31.9	46.9
Standard deviation	5.84	8.41	9.79

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Social Appearance Anxiety, Self-Concealment, and Loneliness

	Social Appearance Anxiety	Self-Concealment	Loneliness
Social Appearance Anxiety	—		
Self-Concealment	0.299**	—	
Loneliness	0.274**	0.530***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Linear Regression of Self-Concealment and Social Appearance Anxiety

Predictor	β	t	p	R ²	F	p
Self-Concealment	0.207	3.1	<.01	0.0892	9.6	<.01
Dependent Variable-Social Appearance Anxiety						

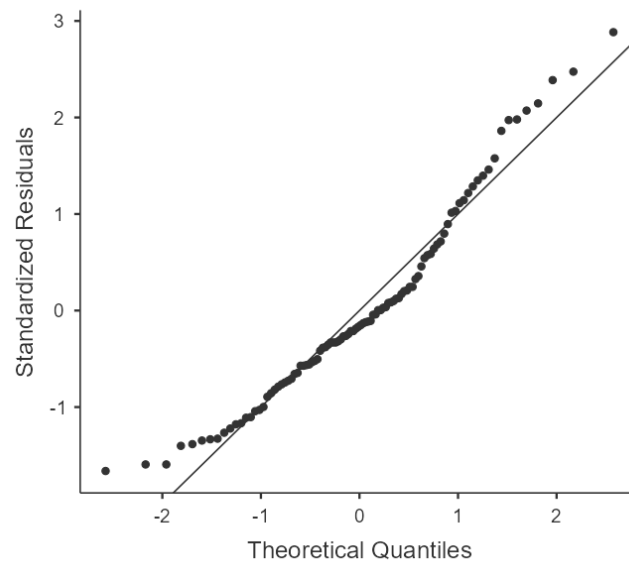
Q-Q Plot

Figure 2. Q-Q Plot shows that the points lie approximately along the regression line with few errors

Table 4*Linear Regression of Loneliness and Social Appearance Anxiety*

Predictor	β	t	p	R ²	F	p
Loneliness	0.163	2.82	<.01	0.0751	7.95	<.01
Dependent Variable-Social Appearance Anxiety						

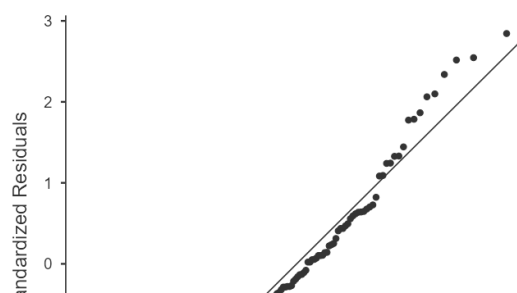
Q-Q Plot

Table 5*Linear Regression of Loneliness and Self-Concealment*

Predictor	β	t	p	R ²	F	p
Loneliness	0.456	6.19	<.001	0.281	38.3	<.001
Dependent Variable-Self-Concealment						

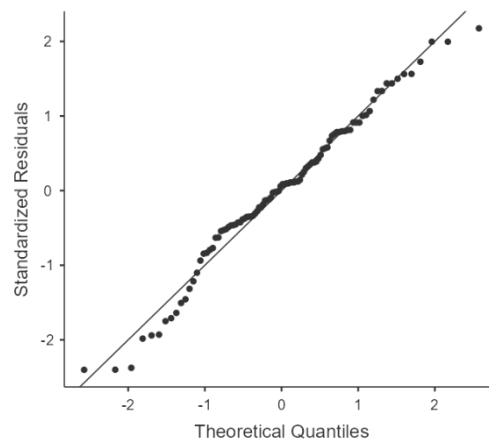
Q-Q Plot

Figure 4. Q-Q Plot shows that the points lie approximately along the regression line with few errors.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between social appearance anxiety, self-concealment and loneliness. Table 1 shows the n, mean and standard deviation of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment and loneliness. Table 2 shows that there was a significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Social Appearance Anxiety ($r=0.299$, $p<.01$). As the results indicated our first hypothesis is accepted that self-concealment was expected to be significantly positively related with social appearance anxiety. The past studies have shown that (Zhou & Wang, 2021) conducted a study on relationship between self-concealment, self-esteem, and internet addiction in college students. The study was conducted on 589 undergraduates and the results showed that self-esteem partially mediated the positive relationship between self-concealment and internet addiction. The results which came out with the help of analysis indicated that self-concealment had a significant indirect effect on self-esteem. But the present study finds a significant positive correlation between self-concealment and social appearance anxiety.

Table 2 shows that that there was a significant positive correlation between Loneliness and Social Appearance Anxiety ($r=0.274$, $p<.01$). As the results found the significant positive correlation our second hypothesis is also accepted which states that loneliness was expected to be significantly positively related with social appearance anxiety. This pattern of results is consistent with the previous literatures. Osman and Bozgeya (2015) conducted a study on the relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness on university students. The results of the study found out that there is a significant differentiation between the social appearance anxiety and loneliness according to different variables. The authors indicated a positive significant correlation between social appearance anxiety and loneliness. Kiliç and Karakuş (2016) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between social physique

anxiety, self-esteem and loneliness on university students. Correlation and regression analysis were performed for dependent groups. Data analysis was done by the program called SPSS 16.0. T test and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also applied for independent groups. Investigated study reveals that social appearance anxiety is low between university students. Significant differences were seen in comparisons between social appearance anxiety levels and gender and other variables. The results indicated that there is a negative relation between social appearance anxiety and self-esteem while there was a significant positive relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness.

Table 2 also shows that there was significant positive correlation between Loneliness and Self-Concealment ($r=0.530$, $p<.001$). As per the results our third hypothesis is also accepted which says that loneliness was expected to be significantly positively related with self-concealment. These results are consistent with the claims that Ding et al., (2016) conducted an investigation of the relationship between self-concealment, social anxiety, loneliness, and internet addiction. A sample of 312 college students were selected for the study. The results of the study showed that self-concealment, social anxiety, loneliness and internet addiction were significantly correlated with each other. Multiple regression indicated that there were three paths of self-concealment affected internet addiction.

Table 3 shows regression analysis indicated that self-concealment is a significant predictor ($\beta=0.207$, $p<.01$) of social appearance anxiety. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.0892$) showed that variation of self-concealment can explain 8.92% variation in social appearance anxiety. This model is adequately fit ($F=9.6$, $p<.01$). As per the results our fourth hypothesis is accepted which states that self-concealment is expected to have a significant impact on social appearance anxiety. Whereas past researchers have found a model tested to explain to social networks sites usage with structural equations modelling. The study investigated the relationship between self-concealment, social appearance anxiety, loneliness on SNS. The

results found out that SNS was significantly predicted directly by self-concealment and was predicted indirectly significant by social appearance anxiety and loneliness (Dogan and Çolak, 2016). But the present study shows that self-concealment is a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety.

Table 4 shows regression analysis indicated that loneliness is a significant predictor ($\beta=0.163$, $p<.01$) of social appearance anxiety. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.0751$) showed that variation of loneliness can explain 7.51% variation in social appearance anxiety. This model is adequately fit ($F=7.95$, $p<.01$). As the results indicated loneliness as the significant predictor of social appearance anxiety our fifth hypothesis is accepted which says that loneliness is expected to have a significant impact on social appearance anxiety. The present results are consistent with the previous studies. An investigation was carried out on university students. The aim of the study is the relationship between social appearance anxiety and loneliness. T test, F test, simple correlation, regression analysis has been utilised to analysis the data of the research. The results of the research indicated that there was a positive significant relation between social appearance anxiety and loneliness and regression analysis indicated that social appearance anxiety is the important indicator of loneliness (Osman and Bozgeya, 2015). Papapanou et al., (2023) conducted a study in which social appearance anxiety is a kind of anxiety which is linked with body image perception and by the use of social media, with the feelings of loneliness. This was a cross-sectional study conducted to examine the realties between social appearance anxiety, use of social media and feeling of loneliness in young adults. Data collection was done online with the help of google forms. The results found out significant positive correlation between social appearance anxiety and loneliness. Multiple regression was also carried out in which the results indicated that loneliness was predicted by social appearance anxiety. There was a significant negative correlation between social appearance anxiety and social media usage.

Table 5 shows regression analysis indicated that loneliness is a significant predictor ($\beta=0.456$, $p<.001$) of self-concealment. Coefficients of determinants ($R^2=0.281$) showed that variation of loneliness can explain 28.1% variation in self-concealment. This model is adequately fit ($F=38.3$, $p<.001$). As per the above results our sixth hypothesis is accepted which states that loneliness is expected to have a significant impact on self-concealment. The results represent the first direct demonstration of that loneliness is a significant predictor of self-concealment. Zhang et al., (2022) investigated a study which explored self-concealment on perceived social support among the youth living alone. The study was conducted on 430 young adults and results came out to be correlation between self-concealment, perceived social support, psychological needs, and self-esteem were significant. Self-concealment was a positive predictor of perceived social support and self-concealment indirectly predicted perceived social support through psychological needs. The results also showed that self-concealment of youth living alone has a predictive effect on perceived social support. The present study results represent the first direct demonstration of that loneliness is a significant predictor of self-concealment.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. Our findings highlight that there is a significant positive correlation between social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness. It is interesting that through this study we found out that self-concealment is a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety. We also found that loneliness was also a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety and loneliness was a significant predictor of self-concealment. The limitations or weakness of the research are that the sample collected was only from tri-city and was of 100 people if the sample was from all over India or from a particular state the results would be even more relevant or significant. Despite, these limitations, this research can be seen as a first step

towards integrating the relationship between social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. The research even gives that there is a significant impact of one variable on the other variable. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence in further researches. In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current finding and will be helpful.

SUMMARY

The investigation aimed at studying that young adulthood is a very crucial developmental period and it fills the gap between adolescence and independent adulthood. When an individual enters the stage of young adulthood the individual faces many new challenges and difficulties and they have new responsibilities which they had to fulfil. Self-concealment which meant concealing the personal information from others which one perceives as distressing or negative. Self-concealment were subset of private information that can be consciously accessed and is concealed from others. Self-concealment had a positive association with physical and psychological well-being. Self-concealment is the opposite of self-disclosure. Self-concealment was related to depression, social anxiety, shyness and other psychological problems. Appearance was one of the main focal points of young people in virtual relations. Appearance anxiety is very common in young adults these days. Social appearance anxiety is a kind of anxiety about being negatively evaluated in terms of one's overall appearance. Social appearance anxiety is rejection in terms of physical attractiveness. Appearance anxiety influences the feelings of loneliness. Human beings are social beings, and they socially interact with their surroundings. Loneliness is a feeling arising out of absence or the perceived absence of social relationships. The research aimed to study the relationship of social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young

adults. Standardized tools were used to measure social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness among young adults. A total sample of 100 in the age range of 18-25 were collected. The results found out that there was a significant positive correlation between self-concealment and social appearance anxiety. Further, the results also found out there was a significant positive correlation between loneliness and social appearance anxiety and a significant positive correlation between loneliness and self-concealment. Regression analysis indicated that loneliness was a significant predictor of self-concealment. Regression analysis indicated that loneliness was a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety. Regression analysis indicated that self-concealment was a significant predictor of social appearance anxiety. These difficulties were positively associated with mental health problems and the well-being of young adults. When young adults are facing these issues it is important for them to seek assistance, either through therapy or attending support groups, they can even use early interventions or speak with a trusted family member or a friend.

The psychological concepts of social appearance anxiety and self-concealment are related but distinct.

Social appearance anxiety is the dread or discomfort a person feels when they believe others are evaluating their physical appearance or body image negatively. This anxiety may cause individuals to avoid social situations and activities where their appearance may be observed or evaluated.

Self-concealment, on the other hand, is the tendency to conceal one's thoughts, emotions, or personal information from others, even those closest to them. This behaviour may be motivated by a dread of rejection or negative evaluation from others, and it can result in feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Research demonstrates that social appearance anxiety and self-concealment are related in the sense that individuals with high levels of social appearance anxiety may be more likely to engage in self-concealment as a means of avoiding potential negative evaluation from others. In turn, self-concealment may worsen social appearance anxiety by heightening feelings of isolation and insecurity.

It is essential to note, however, that not all individuals with social appearance anxiety conceal themselves, and vice versa. Moreover, factors such as poor self-esteem and a history of social rejection or trauma can contribute to both social appearance anxiety and self-concealment.

It has been discovered that self-concealment is significantly associated with feelings of loneliness. When individuals conceal aspects of their actual selves from others, they may experience a sense of isolation and disconnection.

Self-concealment can also impede the formation and maintenance of intimate relationships with others. For instance, if individuals are reluctant to share their genuine thoughts and emotions with their romantic partner, it can be difficult for their partner to comprehend them and provide emotional support, which can lead to feelings of isolation.

Additionally, self-concealment can lead to a lack of social support, as individuals may be reluctant to seek assistance or support from others. This absence of social support can exacerbate feelings of isolation and lead to a vicious cycle in which people withdraw further from social interactions and become more isolated.

Overall, research indicates that self-concealment is a strong predictor of loneliness, and that minimising self-concealment can be an essential step in enhancing social connectedness and reducing feelings of isolation.

SUGGESTIONS

Social Appearance Anxiety

Social appearance anxiety can be a difficult and distressing experience, but there are a number of strategies that may be useful in mitigating its effects. Here are some recommendations:

Challenging Negative Thoughts: Social appearance anxiety is frequently caused by negative thoughts and beliefs about oneself, such as "I'm not attractive enough" or "Everyone is judging me." Try to recognise your negative thoughts and counter them with more rational and constructive alternatives.

Practising Self Compassion: Self-compassion involves treating yourself with tenderness and compassion. Remember that everyone has faults and imperfections, and attempt to concentrate on your positive characteristics and strengths.

Gradual exposure: Gradual exposure to situations that provoke social appearance anxiety can be an effective method for boosting confidence and alleviating anxiety. Start with low-risk scenarios and progressively progress to more difficult ones.

Mindfulness And Support: Techniques of mindfulness and relaxation, such as meditation, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation, can aid in anxiety reduction and relaxation. Social appearance anxiety can be alleviated by speaking with a therapist or counsellor. They can provide coping strategies for anxiety and assist you in addressing underlying issues that may be contributing to your anxiety.

Self-Concealment: Self-concealing problems are associated with mental health and well-being issues to overcome or reduce these problems they can seek assistance or therapy or

they can speak to a trusted member of the family or a friend many problems just get solved by talking or sharing your problems.

Loneliness: The feelings of loneliness are experienced by every individual at some point in their life. These feeling of loneliness can be reduced by acknowledging one's feelings of loneliness, know when to engage or disengage from the social world, practice self-care, try peer support or to open up, taking therapies, social care, be careful when comparing yourself with others.

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