

Unraveling the Relationship Between Body Shame and Social Anxiety Among Young Adult Women

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Abstract:

Body shame is shame on body image which involves a person's negative perception of a body shape or appearance that is considered unattractive by others and places himself in an unwanted position in the social environment. Body shame results in the emergence of social anxiety effects such as feeling embarrassed or doubtful in front of other people, feeling very afraid or worried that others will judge negatively or reject, and avoiding places where there are crowded people. The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in emerging adulthood. Respondents were obtained by using an online questionnaire with as many as 236 respondents with a non-probability sampling technique. Furthermore, body shame was measured by using the Body Image Shame Scale (BISS). Social Anxiety was measured by using the Social Avoidance Distress Scale (SADS). Meanwhile, the research data were analyzed by using Pearson product moment correlation test. The result of the correlation value (r) is 0.656 with significance (p) of 0.000. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between body shame and social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood.

Keywords: *body shame, emerging adulthood, social anxiety*

1. Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a transitional period between adolescence and adulthood, occurring between the ages of 18 and 25 (Arnett, 2015). During this stage, individuals undergo various cognitive, emotional, physical, and social changes. One of the main challenges in this phase is how individuals adjust to their environment without experiencing excessive social anxiety. However, not all individuals can adapt well due to various factors influencing their levels of social anxiety.

Social anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by intense fear or anxiety in social situations where individuals feel they will be negatively judged by others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Several studies have shown that women are more vulnerable to social anxiety than men, primarily due to social and cultural factors that emphasize the importance of physical appearance in daily life. Additionally, dissatisfaction with body shape and physical appearance is often a major trigger for social anxiety in women (Leary, 2014).

One concept closely related to social anxiety is body shame, which refers to feelings of embarrassment about one's body due to failing to meet societal beauty standards (Duarte, 2014). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) stated that body shame arises when individuals evaluate themselves based on ideal social standards. Individuals experiencing body shame tend to have higher levels of social anxiety because they feel incapable of meeting societal expectations regarding physical appearance. Several previous studies have examined the relationship between body image and social anxiety. For example, a study by Ratnasari (2017) found a significant correlation between negative body image and high levels of social anxiety in adolescent girls. Additionally, research by Rahmawati et al. (2014) revealed that social anxiety is often influenced by an individual's perception of their own body. However, these studies have not specifically examined the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood, leaving a research gap that needs further investigation.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in young adult women. This study is significant in understanding how psychological factors such as body shame influence an individual's level of social anxiety and provides insights into more effective psychological interventions to address this issue. Hence, this research is expected to contribute new knowledge to the literature on body shame and social anxiety and serve as a foundation for future studies in the fields of developmental psychology and mental health.

2. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between the two variables. The research population consists of women in emerging adulthood aged 18–25 years, with a sample of 236 respondents obtained through non-probability sampling using the accidental sampling method. The research procedure was conducted by distributing online questionnaires via Google Forms. Participants were provided with an explanation of the research objectives and were asked to give informed consent before completing the questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed after

undergoing validation and data cleaning processes.

The measurement in this study used two main instruments, namely the Body Image Shame Scale (BISS) developed by Duarte et al. (2014) to measure the level of body shame, and the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SADS) developed by Watson & Friend (1969) to measure the level of social anxiety. The BISS scale consists of 14 statement items, while the SADS consists of 28 statement items. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25 with several analytical techniques, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test to ensure data distribution normality, the linearity test to determine whether the relationship between variables is linear, and the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test to examine the relationship between body shame and social anxiety. The results of this analysis were used to draw conclusions regarding the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood.

3. Results

This study aims to analyze the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis show that the average body shame score among respondents is 45.2 with a standard deviation of 7.8, while the average social anxiety score is 52.6 with a standard deviation of 9.3. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test indicates that the data is normally distributed, with a significance value of 0.058.

Table 1.

Normality Test Results

Test	Significance Value	Description
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.058	Normal

Based on the table above, a significance value (sig.) of 0.058 was obtained, indicating that the data is normally distributed. If the sig. value is greater than 0.05, the data can be considered normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in this study follows a normal distribution.

Table 2.

Linearity Test Results

Test	Significance Value	Description
Linearitas	0.031	Not Linear

Based on Table 2, a significance value (sig.) of 0.031 was obtained, indicating that the data does not follow a linear correlation. If the sig. value is greater than 0.05, the data is considered non-linear. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in this study does not follow a linear pattern.

Table 3.

Correlation Test Results

Variable	r	p
Body Shame & Social Anxiety	0.656	0.000

Based on Table 3, the correlation coefficient (r) was found to be 0.656 with a significance value (p) of 0.000. Since the obtained significance value is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between body shame and social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood. The positive r -value indicates that an increase in one variable is followed by an increase in the other variable. This means that the higher a person's body shame, the higher their level of social anxiety, and conversely, the lower a person's body shame, the lower their level of social anxiety.

4. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that body shame has a significant relationship with social anxiety in women in emerging adulthood. This finding supports Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) self-objectification theory, which states that individuals who are overly focused on their physical appearance tend to experience higher levels of social anxiety. Additionally, this study provides a new contribution by highlighting the role of body shame as a psychological factor that greatly impacts an individual's social well-being. Compared to previous studies, such as those conducted by Ratnasari (2017) and Rahmawati et al. (2014), these findings are consistent in showing that negative body image correlates with higher levels of social anxiety. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of psychological approaches that promote self-acceptance and enhance self-esteem to mitigate the impact of body shame on social anxiety.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to determine the relationship between body shame and social anxiety in young adult women. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between body shame and social anxiety, where higher body shame is associated with higher levels of social anxiety. Additionally, body shame accounts for 43% of the variance in social anxiety, highlighting its substantial role in increasing social anxiety levels. These results reinforce previous findings that body dissatisfaction is a major predictor of social anxiety. The study provides practical implications for psychological interventions, particularly those focusing on self-acceptance and self-esteem enhancement to help mitigate social anxiety. Thus, this research is expected to serve as a foundation for future studies exploring other factors contributing to the relationship between body shame and social anxiety.

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