

SELF OBJECTIFICATION AND NEED FOR APPROVAL IN COLLEGE STUDENTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

MUSKAAN THAPLIYAL
M.A. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Guide: Dr. Shivali Sharma , Assistant professor

**AMITY INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIOURAL AND ALLIED SCIENCES
AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH
LUCKNOW CAMPUS**



ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the theoretical relation of self objectification and need for approval among college students. Western society has placed great expectations among young adults of an unstable approval seeking model where everyone is under the pressure of body consciousness and social desirability. The social and cultural oppression compels the person to squeeze into the “ideal” person which is unattainable. The expectations from people are expressed both subtly and explicitly creating more reasons to objectify students. Since the perpetuating factors continue to rise, the need for approval among the college students also grows at a high speed.

The study would conclude the prevalence of self objectification and need for approval among college students. Understanding the prevalence of self objectification and social desirability would help in understanding the insights into the reasons for such behaviour.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

SELF OBJECTIFICATION

Self objectification is a psychological term which implies that a person views themselves as a physical object first and a human being second and hence evaluates themselves based upon their appearance. The body has been profoundly ignored by the self and tends to focus more on sociocultural influence. With such social construction of schemas, the body is constructed more than the biology. Self objectification can create disruption in mental and emotional well being of a person which can lead to disruption in their life. The multiple social and cultural constructs for the body have positioned and shaped different experiences for genders. The psychological distress and morbidity has female roots which highlights that objectification has been experienced more by the women. It is evident that mostly women are more familiar with negative psychological experiences and mental health risks.

Self objectification can lead to many psychological or experiential consequences like:

- Body shaming
- Appearance and security anxiety
- Reduced concentration on mental tasks of daily life
- Low self awareness of internal bodily states
- Disordered eating
- Depression
- Decline in cognitive performance

The accumulation of such consequences of self objectification puts mental health at risk. Taking and allowing vantage points from a different party towards one's body appearance which constructs self consciousness. People start comparing themselves with others which results in diminished well being in relation to low self esteem and life satisfaction.

There are many causes of objectification. The most common cause is interpersonal communication. Accepting and believing someone else's thoughts results in putting their perspective above and dissatisfaction with physique and preoccupation with one's own physical appearance. Also media, which has become increasingly engrossing to specifically young adults, has depicted and plastered the 'ideal and epitome' of the female body as the 'focal point' of viewers.

Self objectification theory

Barbara L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts postulated objectification theory by putting females in a sociocultural context with the objective of elucidating the lived happenings and mental health risks of girls and women who experience sexual objectification. According to them, on numerous occasions women are glanced at as objects by society, with a sexual focus being placed on their bodies rather than on their abilities.

Objectifying gaze is played out in three major domains:

- Firstly, it occurs within actual interpersonal and social contact.
- Secondly, objectifying gaze also transpires in elaborated visual mediums that depicts and focuses exclusively on the bodies or their body parts.
- Thirdly, objectifying gaze infuses American culture by showcasing such visual media that limelights body and body parts and seamlessly affiliates viewers deducible sexualizing gaze.

Fredrickson and Roberts also added that behavioural changes may also occur with self-objectifying individuals such as habitual body monitoring. Individuals consistently check themselves in front of the mirrors as they believe that their outward presence would be the factor in placing their value in the society.

According to Fredrick and Roberts the psychological and experiential repercussions of self objectifying are:

- **Shame**
When people start evaluating themselves according to the to cultural and social schemas, they assess their shortcomings relative to other's perspective. Shame, ultimately, out-turns from a fusion of pessimistic self evaluation with the Potential for social exposure.
- **Anxiety**
When evaluated in a social or cultural context, it accompanies numerous events to experience anxiety. They are of basically two highlighted anxieties: Appearance anxiety and safer anxiety.
- **Depression**
Depressive episodes ranging from mild to severe are common in both men and women. Studies say that women are about twice as likely as men to become depressed.

There are multiple theories postulating the reason for the gender difference in risk for depression.

- Eating disorder

Eating habits have broadly influenced the eating pattern of people globally. Eating disorders go in two opposite ways. One of the troubled attitudes is towards the chronic dieting and restrained eating which is encouraged by the parents as well as the peers. This leads to anorexia nervosa which creates an extreme and normative discontent.

Another perspective of eating disorder is where the individual is indulged in uncontrolled episodes of overeating and lands up in the condition called bulimia nervosa. It contributes to body dissatisfaction along with, to some degree of, shame and anxiety.

NEED FOR APPROVAL

The term approval is an instance stating that something is acceptable. Need for approval is the behaviour of seeking approval from someone to gain acceptance even at the expense of their own beliefs and desires. An individual seeks approval from someone

Many college students share the trait of needing approval. To fit in with classmates, to appease parents or other authority figures, or out of a fear of failing or rejection, are just a few of the reasons why people feel the need for approval.

College students frequently find themselves in unfamiliar environments distant from their homes and childhood friends. The resultant feelings of ambiguity and uneasiness might intensify the demand for approval. In addition, a lot of college students are going through a transitional period in their lives as they try to find out who they are and what they want to accomplish with their lives, which may cause them to feel a greater need for approval and acceptance.

It is possible to have a positive or negative urge for approbation. On the one hand, it can inspire students to put in the effort necessary to succeed. On the other hand, it can cause apprehension about taking chances or experimenting, which might prevent them from realising their full potential.

Need for approval theory

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most well-known psychological theories that addresses the desire for approbation.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human wants are ranked from most fundamental at the bottom to most sophisticated at the top. Physiological requirements including those for food, water and shelter are at the bottom of the hierarchy. The desire for safety comes next. Then comes the need for love and belonging. This is then followed by need for esteem and lastly comes the urge for self actualization.

According to Maslow, the need for approval is a component of esteem need, which is at the fourth level of hierarchy, including the need for approbation or approval.

Esteem demands include the desire for both self- and other respect. According to Maslow, a basic component of human motivation is the need for people to feel valued and accepted by others.

Attachment theory, which contends that people have an innate need for close emotional connections with others, and social identity theory, which contends that people derive their sense of self-worth from the groups they belong to and the approval they receive from those groups, are two other psychological theories that address the need for approval.

Additionally, according to self determination theory, persons have a fundamental desire for relatedness, competence and autonomy all of which in some circumstances are connected to the need for approbation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Objectification is the transformation of something that is not an object into one that can be used, controlled, and understood through its physical attributes.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum identified seven characteristics that, when applied to a person, describe typical attitudes and behaviour towards objects and things and comprise objectification. The seven characteristics are instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity.

Several of the basic principles of objectification theory have received support from evidence from correlational, experimental and longitudinal studies of women conducted in North America, Australia and the United Kingdom.

First, the objectification framework has identified four subjective experiences that self-objectification and self-surveillance have been significantly linked to: higher body shame, higher appearance anxiety, less capacity for flow experiences and full absorption in tasks, and less connection with internal bodily sensations. The role of safety anxiety in relation to objectification theory has not yet been the subject of published research.

Second, three mental health concerns outlined within the objectification framework- more low mood, more disrupted sexual functioning, and more disordered eating- have been significantly correlated with self-objectification and self-surveillance.

Third, it has been demonstrated that certain subjective experiences influence the relationship between self-objectification and mental health concerns.

The internalisation of cultural beauty standards and a focus on one's body as an object for others to judge are two outcomes of this process, according to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). Self Objectification has been associated in studies of college students to low self-esteem, disordered eating, and body dissatisfaction (Betz et al., 2015).

The need for acceptance is intimately related to self-esteem, according to Leary et al. (2003) because people with poor self-esteem are more inclined to look to others for validation.

Numerous research has looked at the connection between college student's demand for approval and their tendency to objectify themselves. Self-objectification was found to be a major predictor of the need for acceptance in women but not in males in a study by szymanski et al. (2011).

Similarly, the demand for approval was found to be positively connected with self objectification in a study by Calogero and Jost (2011), but not in a study of men.

According to additional research, body shame acts as a mediator in the interaction between self-objectification and the need for approval. For instance, body shame was found to regulate the association between women's need for approval and self-objectification in a study by Daniels and Zurbriggen (2016).

CHAPTER 3

PURPOSE OF MY STUDY

To determine whether there are any variations between how men and women experience self-objectification and the need for acceptance in a college setting. The results of this study may help to clarify any gender gaps that may exist in these fields and provide light on their underlying causes.

Additionally, the study might add to the body of knowledge already available on self objectification and the need for acceptance which has mainly been geared towards females. The study may contribute to deepening our understanding of these notions and provide us a more complete picture of how they function in both genders by incorporating male participants.

The study could assist in identifying the areas that require support or intervention to encourage positive body image and self esteem which could have practical consequences for college administrators, counsellors, and educators that interact with college students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the present study is:

- To assess the role of self objectification and need for approval among college students i.e. how college students evaluate and treat themselves based upon their appearance and seek approval from their environment.
- To investigate the amount of self-objectification among college students, both male and female.
- To look into the connection between the demand for approval and self objectification in male and female college students.
- To investigate any gender disparities in the elements that influence college student's need for approbation and their tendency to objectify themselves.

HYPOTHESIS

- **Hypothesis 1:** Female college students will report higher levels of self objectification and need for approval compared to male college students.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Male college students will report higher levels of self objectification and need for approval compared to female college students.
- **Hypothesis 3:** The relationship between self objectification and need for approval will differ between male and female college students.
- **Hypothesis 4:** There will be a positive correlation between self objectification and need for approval in both male and female college students.

VARIABLES

Any component that has multiple possible values or intensities is referred to in psychology as a variable. Various aspects of human behaviour and experience are measured or described using variables. They are cornerstone of psychological research and are employed to evaluate evidence theories, examine evidence, and reach judgements.

Independent variables and dependent variables are the two primary categories of variables in psychology. An independent variable is a variable that the researcher modifies or controls to see its impact on the

dependent variable. The variable that is measured or observed in order to determine how the independent variable affects is known as the dependent variable.

Variables in this study:

- Self objectification (low body consciousness, high body consciousness)
- Need for approval (low need for approval, average need for approval and high need for approval)

SAMPLE

Quota sampling technique was used for this study where males and females were divided in two groups. Each group consisted of 50 males and 50 females. All the students were of different colleges residing in different geographical locations.

TOOLS

The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) is a self report questionnaire that measures the tendency of individuals to present themselves in a favourable light. It was developed by David Marlowe and Douglas Crowne in the 1960s and has since become one of the most widely used instruments for assessing social desirability bias.

The MCSDS consists of 33 items, each of which describes a desirable or socially acceptable behaviour or attitude. Participants are asked to indicate whether each statement is true or false about themselves.

Scoring is based on the number of items endorsed in a socially desirable direction. Higher scores indicate a greater tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner.

The scale has been used in a wide range of research contexts, including personality assessment, job selection, and clinical diagnosis.

The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) is a self-report questionnaire used to measure an individual's level of body consciousness or awareness of their own bodies as objects. It was developed by N.L. McKinley and colleagues in 1996.

The OBCS consists of items, and respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale assesses three dimensions of body consciousness:

1. Self surveillance: It refers to the extent to which individuals monitor and observe their bodies, including appearance, shape, and movements.
2. Body shame: It refers to negative emotions, such as embarrassment or disgust, associated with one's body or specific body parts.
3. Appearance control beliefs: It refers to the belief that one's appearance can be manipulated and controlled through various means, such as diet and exercise.

Higher scores on the OBCS indicate a greater level of body consciousness or objectification. The OBCS has been used in a variety of research contexts, including studies on body image, eating disorders, and physical activity.

ADMINISTRATION

Prior to the start of the data collection activity, an appropriate documentation was prepared. Along with the questions for the students, it also contained a letter of consent and the project brief.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The students were approached both personally and through references. Only students who voluntarily participated in the study and provided prior consent were invited to the meetings.

QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION

Every meeting started with a friendly greeting. The project's purpose and goals were then described. All questions had their options. Before completing marking their responses, students were instructed to feel completely at ease and devoid of any unpleasant ideas.

DATA COLLECTION

Before the responses were gathered, any questions or concerns about the tests were cleared up. There was a guarantee of information secrecy, which was upheld. Before distributing the questionnaire, the study's objectives and instrument instructions were provided. The students were informed that sharing responses would guarantee successful results.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to accomplish the study's goals, the data was analysed and compared. The research hypothesis was then evaluated using the necessary statistics.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The results were analysed and interpreted to draw the conclusions about self objectification and need for approval among the college students.

The strength, direction and significance of the correlations were considered in the interpretation process. The implications and potential insights provided by the findings were discussed within the context of existing literature and theoretical framework.

SCORING

Table 1: SHOWING THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DATA

Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score of females	101	65.00	159.00	101.2079	21.55055
Score of males	101	5.00	117.00	19.7327	11.50990
Valid N	101				

Table 2: SHOWING TABLE REPRESENTS THE RESULTS OF A ONE-SAMPLE TEST FOR COLLEGE FEMALES AND MALES

One-sample statistics

Test value= 0

t df Significance Mean diff. 95% confidence interval of the diff.

			one-sided p	Two-sided p		Lower	Upper
Score females	47.197	100	<.001	<.001	101.20792	96.9536	105.4623
Score of males	17.230	100	<.001	<.001	19.73267	17.4605	22.0049

Table 3: SHOWING STATISTICS OF BOTH SCALES FOR MALES AND FEMALES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score of Females	101	101.2079	21.55055	2.14436
Score of males	101	19.7327	11.50990	1.14528

DATA ANALYSIS

Interpretation for the scores of females in the college: The results indicate that the mean score for female students significantly differs from the test value of 0. The mean difference of 101.20792 suggests that, on average, the scores for female students are significantly greater than 0. The confidence interval (96.9536 to 105.4623) provides a range within which we can be 95% confident that the true mean difference falls.

Interpretation for the scores of males in the college: The results indicate that the mean score for male students significantly differs from the test value of 0. The mean difference of 19.73267 suggests that, on average, the scores for male students are significantly greater than 0. The confidence interval (17.4605 to 22.0049) provides a range within which we can be 95% confident that the true mean difference falls. Both female and male students show significant differences from the test value of 0, with female students having a larger mean difference compared to male students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research was conducted in order to find out the Self objectification and need for approval in college students comparing the population of boys and girls. The data analysis indicates that both male and female college students significantly differ from the test value of 0 in terms of self-objectification and the need for approval. The mean differences for both groups are statistically significant, indicating that, on average, both males and females in the study exhibit self-objectification and a need for approval. But the mean difference for female students is larger than the mean difference for male students, suggesting that female college students, on average, exhibit a higher level of self-objectification and a greater need for approval compared to male college students.

The findings underscore the importance of considering the psychological factors in addressing the addiction of self objectification and need for approval among college students.

The results of this study may become a base for the future studies or it can be used to raise awareness amongst people in order to help them in various social surroundings.

REFERENCES

1. Aubrey J.S. (2006) Effects of sexually objectifying media on self -objectification and body surveillance in undergraduates: Results of a two-year panel study. *J. Commun.* 56, 366-386. Link <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article-abstract/56/2/366/4070488?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
2. Baker A., Elnakouri A., Blanchard C. (2017). The protective role of autonomous motivation against the effects of the “muscular ideal” on men’s self-objectification, appearance schema activation, and cognitive performance. *Media Psychol.* 22, 474-500. Link https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15324834basp2601_4
3. Bogart L.M., Benotsch E. G., Pavlovic J. D. (2004). Feeling superior but threatened: The relation of narcissism to social comparison. *Basic aapl. Soc. Psychol.* 26. 35-44. Link https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15324834basp2601_4
4. Cramer, D. 1990. Disclosure of personal problems, self-esteem, and the facilitative ness of friends and lovers. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 18: 186–196. Link <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/10.1080/03069889008253571>

Appendices

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale

For each item, please circle the answer that best characterizes your attitudes or behaviors.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I rarely think about how I look.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. During the day, I think about how I look many times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Even when I can't control my weight, I think I'm an okay person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks they are born with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. A large part of being in shape is having that kind of body in the first place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I think a person can look pretty much how they want to if they are willing to work at it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I really don't think I have much control over how my body looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I think a person's weight is mostly determined by the genes they are born with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight, it's probably always going to be about the same.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I can weight what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Dare You Say What You Think? The Social-Desirability Scale

Do you say what you think, or do you tend to misrepresent your beliefs to earn the approval of others? Do you answer questions honestly, or do you say what you think other people want to hear?

Telling others what we think they want to hear is making the socially desirable response. Falling prey to social desirability may cause us to distort our beliefs and experiences in interviews or on psychological tests. The bias toward responding in socially desirable directions is also a source of error in the case study, survey, and testing methods. You can complete the Social-Desirability Scale devised by Crowne and Marlowe to gain insight into whether you have a tendency to produce socially desirable responses.

Directions: Read each item and decide whether it is true (T) or false (F) for you. Try to work rapidly and answer each question by clicking on the T or the F. Then click on Total Score to access the Scoring Key and interpret your answers.

1. T F Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.
2. T F I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
3. T F It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
4. T F I have never intensely disliked anyone.
5. T F On occasions I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
6. T F I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
7. T F I am always careful about my manner of dress.
8. T F My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
9. T F If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
10. T F On a few occasions, I have given up something because I thought too little of my ability.
11. T F I like to gossip at times.
12. T F There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
13. T F No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
14. T F I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.

15. T F There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.
16. T F I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
17. T F I always try to practice what I preach.
18. T F I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loudmouthed, obnoxious people.
19. T F I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
20. T F When I don't know something I don't mind at all admitting it.
21. T F I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
22. T F At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.
23. T F There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
24. T F I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrong-doings.
25. T F I never resent being asked to return a favor.
26. T F I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
27. T F I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
28. T F There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
29. T F I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.
30. T F I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
31. T F I have never felt that I was punished without cause.
32. T F I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.
33. T F I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

SOURCE: D. P. Crowne and D. A. Marlowe, A new scale of social desirability independent of pathology, *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 24 (1960): 351. Copyright 1960 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission.