The Difference of the Appearance Anxiety Process between Adolescent Boys and Girls

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Abstract: Appearance anxiety is an important factor that perplexes young people at present. Based on previous studies and literature review, this paper finds that there are still few studies on external anxiety in the current academic circles, and the depth of research is only on theoretical research. Starting from the actual situation, this work takes questionnaire survey and mathematical test as research methods, designs questionnaires, distributes questionnaires, recycles questionnaires, and makes statistical analysis on the contents of questionnaires, and draws the following conclusions:1. Although the incidence of external anxiety is not as high as that of depression, social anxiety and other psychological problems, senior high school students are the high incidence group of external anxiety. If they are not given enough attention and correct guidance, they may still lead to extremely negative development results.2. The development of economy and social media in online celebrity has aggravated the psychological anxiety of "body image disorder" and played a catalytic role.

Keywords: external anxiety, High school students, Psychological problems, Educational measures

1. Introduction

Appearance anxiety is a relatively common mental disorder which begins during childhood or adolescence [1]. It refers to the negative emotions of self-confidence, dissatisfaction and disapproval of one's appearance, body shape and other body images, thus falling into a state of anxiety. Although appearance anxiety is more mentioned by people as a new term in the social media era in the current society, in fact, relevant research has been mentioned earlier. In 1935, Austrian psychoanalyst Paul Schilder introduced body image into the analysis, and proposed that if people have negative evaluation on their own body image and think that it does not meet social expectations, they will have "social body anxiety", which is actually an overall generalization of appearance anxiety from the perspective of body.

Other studies also found that appearance anxiety is significantly time consuming [2]. For example, half of appearance anxiety patients spend three hours or more a day worrying about their skin (such as wrinkles, acne, and scars), hair (for example, body hair doesn't look "right") and other parts of the body at different times. Furthermore, these repetitive behaviors are difficult to control. In Europe and

the United States, the prevalence of appearance anxiety in the general population is 0.7% to 2.3%, and the male to female ratio is about 1.3:1.0 [3]. However, there are few relevant studies done in China. Some studies have investigated the appearance anxiety status of middle school students and college students in some areas and show that the prevalence has no differences between different gender, schools, and nationalities. Importantly, the adverse impact of appearance anxiety is increasing due to neglect and incorrect treatment, especially affecting people's growth and the development of adolescents [4]. It leads to significant distress and impairment at work or school and is highly co-morbid with major depressive disorder, alcohol or substance use disorder, social anxiety disorder and often leads to suicidal tragedies [4].

With the rapid developments and changes of modern society, the development of Internet and media technology has profoundly affected the psychological development and aesthetic taste of adolescents. Therefore, it is necessary to keep track of the actual distribution of appearance anxiety [5]. We aimed to investigate the difference of the appearance anxiety process between adolescent boys and girls, which could facilitate our understanding of the etiology of this disorder.

2. Research Questions

Our goal is to explore the relations between different sex and appearance anxiety from three perspectives among adolescents. The first perspective is the cause, the second perspective is the effect, and the third perspective is the future expectation.

3. Methodology

We selected 100 subjects all from middle or high school using a convenient sampling method. A self-designed questionnaire was used to investigate the appearance anxiety of high school students through the questionnaire star website. There are 23 questions in the questionnaire, consisting questions about whether there is appearance anxiety and its severity, the duration of appearance anxiety, the possible sources of appearance anxiety, the causes of appearance anxiety, and the influence caused by appearance anxiety. This study was analyzed by SPSS statistical software package.

4. Procedure

In order to learn about more information related to our topic, we first did read research papers on Google Scholar to get a basic understanding of our topic. Then, we wrote three drafts of the survey before actually sharing it on social media. After that, we each shared the survey on different platforms such as Weixin, Tiktok, and Instagram. We invited adolescents who met the age standards to participate in the survey, and filled out the anonymous questionnaire using their electronic devices. The questionnaire star website collected all the data and we transferred the data to excel format for sorting. For the subjects who filled in the questionnaire with wrong basic information, we corrected the errors in time. After the completion of each questionnaire survey, the questionnaire data will be collated and verified. For example, if the time of completion was too short, we would assume that data is false data. In fact, if there were any data with omission, we would choose to exclude that data.

5. Analysis and Data

First, the data are sorted out and coded according to different questionnaire questions. The Arabic numerals "1-4" or other ranges are given respectively for analysis. For example, boys are coded as "1" and "2" for girls, the question of if subjects have appearance anxiety is a four-way question. Subjects were given the choice of severe, moderate, slight, or none. We coded the answer of severe as "4", moderate as "3", mild as "2", and no as "1" for analysis purposes. All questionnaire questions

with categorical answers are coded in this way. We select the appropriate statistical analysis method according to the type of variables to compare differences of appearance between adolescent boys and girls. Classified variables are described by frequency. Chi square test is used to compare willingness to change appearance of boys and girls. Continuous correction chi square test is used to compare appearance anxiety, appearance anxiety duration, frequency compared with others, confidence to overcome appearance anxiety, reasons for changing appearance (Get others praise and appreciations, gain confidence, get rid of the critical). P values are 2-sided and P < 0.05 was considered significant for all tests. All statistical calculations are performed using SPSS software, version 9.4.

6. Results

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of subjects.

	Boys（n=31)	Girls(n=69)	χ^{2*}	P^*
Appearance anxiety				
No	3 (9.7)	4 (5.8)	0.919	0.821
slight	13 (41.9)	35 (50.7)		
moderate	12 (38.7)	24 (34.8)		
severe	3 (9.7)	6 (8.7)		
Appearance anxiety duration				
Half year to 1 year	7 (22.6)	24 (34.8)	5.458	0.141
1 month to half year	1 (3.2)	6 (8.7)		
<1 month	8 (25.8)	7 (10.1)		
>1 year	15 (48.4)	32 (46.4)		
Willingness to change appearance				
No	19 (61.3)	28 (40.6)	3.683	0.055
Yes	12 (38.7)	41 (59.4)		
Frequency compared with others				
Very frequent	5 (16.1)	15 (21.7)	8.784	0.067
Very few	2 (6.4)	13 (18.8)		
few	3 (9.6)	2 (2.9)		
often	4 (12.9)	17 (24.6)		
sometimes	17 (54.8)	22 (31.8)		
Confidence to overcome appearance anxiety				
More confident	10 (32.2)	37 (53.6)	13.173	0.004
Not very confident	7 (22.5)	23 (33.3)		
Very confident	10 (32.2)	5 (7.2)		
No confidence	4 (12.9)	4 (5.8)		

χ^{2*}: Chi-square χ^2
P^*:P Value

It can be seen from table 1 that 100 subjects are included in this study, including 31 boys and 69 girls. The study found that most of the subjects (93%) suffered from appearance anxiety. Among them, 15 boys suffered from moderate to severe appearance anxiety, and 30 girls in total suffered from appearance anxiety. However, there was no significant difference in the distribution of appearance anxiety between boys and girls (P=0.821).

Comparing the duration of appearance anxiety between boys and girls, it was found that the proportion of appearance anxiety for more than one year was nearly 50% in boys and girls (48.4% for boys and 46.4% for girls). The number of people with appearance anxiety from 1 month to half a year accounted for the least, respectively (boys, 3.2%, girls, 8.7%). There was no statistically significant difference in the duration of appearance anxiety between the two sexes (P=0.141).

For willingness to change one's appearance, people might think that who would refuse a chance to better looking. however, in our research, we found that 47% of the population would reject this offer. By comparing the willingness of boys and girls to change their appearance, it is found that more than half of the girls (59.4%) hope to change their appearance if they have the opportunity and have enough money. The number of boys who want to change their appearance is relatively small (38.7%), but there is no statistical difference between boys and girls (P=0.055).

The study also found that girls were more likely to compare their appearance with others, but there was no difference in the frequency distribution of comparison between boys and girls (P=0.067).

Figure 1: Source of appearance anxiety among boys and girls. There are significant differences in comparing with people in Internet between boys and girls (P<0.05).

Figure 2 compares the sources of male self-perceived appearance anxiety. Some girls think that their appearance anxiety come from comparison with other people in the Internet, while no boys think so. Boys think that their appearance anxiety come from their lower self-confidence and lack of security, but few girls think so. The difference between boys and girls in comparison with other people on the Internet was statistically significant (*P*<0.05).

Table 2: Reasons for changing your appearance.

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	*P*
Get others praise and appreciation	2(6.45)	3(9.68)	4(12.9)	9(29.03)	4(12.9)	9(29.03)	0.500
	4(5.8)	15(21.74)	10(14.49)	11(15.94)	13(18.84)	16(23.19)	
Gain confidence	2(6.45)	1(3.23)	4(12.9)	2(6.45)	7(22.58)	15(48.39)	0.216
	1(1.45)	1(1.45)	2(2.9)	10(14.49)	18(26.09)	37(53.62)	
Get rid of the critical	9(29.03)	2(6.45)	5(16.13)	5(16.13)	3(9.68)	7(22.58)	0.090
	12(17.39)	14(20.29)	7(10.14)	3(4.35)	11(15.94)	22(31.88)	

Top row for boys, bottom row for girls.

Table 2 describes the reasons why boys and girls think they want to change their appearance. There are three main reasons: get praise and appreciation from others, self-confidence enhancement or get rid of criticism from others. The study found that more boys and girls think that they want to enhance self-confidence or get rid of criticism from others, rather than to get praise and praise from others. But there was no significant difference between boys and girls (All *P*>0.05).

7. Discussion

Everyone has a love of beauty. However, excessive attention to one's appearance may lead to psychological problems. The results of the questionnaire show that although the incidence of appearance anxiety is not as high as that of depression, social anxiety and other psychological problems, senior high school students are a high incidence group of appearance anxiety. If they do not receive enough attention and correct guidance, they may still lead to extremely negative development results [6]. The tendency of physical deformation disorder is closely related to personal personality, self-cognition and other factors, and mental health education should pay more attention to the internal factors of students [7].

The development of online Red economy and social media has aggravated the psychological anxiety of "body image disorder" and played a catalytic role. People tend to accept information passively. Most celebrities and bloggers frequently show their "beautiful face" and "good body" on social media, and the template of "cyber red body image" appears. Therefore, In the future, we should further control the network culture and prevent the influence of the network platform on the psychological state of teenagers [8].

High school students are in puberty, so they pay more attention to their appearance and behavior. When they have trouble with their appearance, they should communicate with their parents, teachers and friends in time and seek help, so as to help them establish correct concepts. Educators should guide high school students to consciously control their attention time to appearance, and control their weight in a normal range through reasonable exercise and eating habits, so as to establish appropriate cognition and evaluation of their own body appearance [9]. At the same time, it is important to help high school students understand the concept and harm of appearance anxiety, so as to play a certain

preventive role, so that they can learn to analyze their own personality, understand their own character characteristics, learn to grow, and shape a healthy psychological state in self-growth.

There are some shortcomings in this study. First, the sample size is not large enough, the statistical efficiency is not enough, and the results are not representative, so it is difficult to generalize to a large range. Second, this study is a cross-sectional survey without randomization, which leads to selection bias in this study.

8.   Conclusion

According to the results of questionnaire survey and literature analysis, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Paying too much attention to one's appearance may lead to psychological problems. Although the incidence of appearance anxiety is not as high as that of depression, social anxiety and other psychological problems, senior high school students are the high incidence group of appearance anxiety. Because senior high school students are in adolescence, they pay more attention to their appearance and behavior.

2. If high school students' appearance anxiety is not given enough attention and correct guidance, they may still lead to extremely negative development results. Educators should pay more attention to the mental health education of senior high school students, especially strengthen the education on their appearance anxiety.

3. The development of online celebrity's economy and social media has catalyzed the appearance anxiety, so the network culture should be further controlled to prevent the influence of the network platform on teenagers' psychological state.

4. When high school students are faced with appearance anxiety, they should communicate with their parents, teachers and friends in time, ask for help, and help them to establish a correct concept.

5. Educators should guide senior high school students to consciously control the attention time of their physical appearance, and control their weight within the normal range through reasonable exercise and eating habits, so as to establish proper cognition and evaluation of their physical appearance.

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