

Body Image Avoidance, Fear of Intimacy and Social Avoidance Among Young Adults

Safa Altaf Esufji¹, Naw Carolina Ashu²

¹M.Sc Psychology Student, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College Autonomous

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College Autonomous

Abstract

The study aimed to inspect the relationship between body image avoidance, fear of intimacy and social avoidance among young adults. The sample population included 200 participants (100 males, 100 females) aged between 18 to 25 years. Scales utilised for the study included the body image avoidance questionnaire (Rosen et al., 1991), fear of intimacy scale (Carol J. Descutner & Mark H. Thelen. 1991), and the social avoidance and distress scale (Watson, D. & Friend, R. 1969). Statistical analysis included Spearman correlation, linear regression and Mann Whitney U test. The results suggested a strong correlation of body image avoidance with fear of intimacy ($p < 0.05$) and social avoidance ($p < 0.05$). Regression analysis revealed strong influence of body image avoidance on fear of intimacy ($p < 0.05$) and social avoidance ($p < 0.05$). Gender difference study's findings revealed there was a significant difference in body image avoidance but not in fear of intimacy and social avoidance. Mean values predicted a higher body image avoidance and fear of intimacy level among men when compared to women. Whereas social avoidance is found to be higher among women than in men.

Keywords: Body Image Avoidance, Fear of Intimacy, Social Avoidance, Young Adults

1. Introduction

Body image is a multifaceted concept that includes judgments, feelings, behaviors, and ideas about one's physical appearance (Von Spreckelsen, et al., 2018). Misperceptions about one's body image are widespread in the general public and are at the root of a number of serious illnesses, such as bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, and body dysmorphic disorder (Sadibolova, et al., 2019; Gaudio, et al., 2014). Adopting body image ideals from their reference groups and the general public is how young individuals go through these transitional stages of personality and social development. These principles are propagated through the media along with the assumption that following them will grant one privilege and success (Halliwell & Dittmar 2004; Yamamiya, et al. 2005). Neurologists made significant attempts in the early 1900s to comprehend the phantom limb experience that the amputees had, as well as other strange kinds of body perceptions reported by patients with brain injuries. Neuropathology did undoubtedly play a major role in the early conceptions of body image. Head originally described body image as a synthesis of prior experiences stored in the cerebral sensory cortex in 1920. A biopsychosocial approach to body image was introduced by neurologist Schilder, who emphasized the necessity to look at the neurological, psychological, and societal aspects of it. The behavioral aspect of body image is widely believed to con-

sist of two patterns: body checking (e.g., frequent weighing, stomach pinching) and body image avoidance (e.g., wearing loose-fitting clothing, avoiding mirrors). Body checking refers to actions that provide access to the direct perceptual (visual or otherwise) experience of the body, whereas body image avoidance refers to any actions that reduce the likelihood, severity, or persistence of subjective body image worries.

Body Image Avoidance

Body image avoidance refers to any behavior that is done to avoid, repress, change, or remove oneself from upsetting negative ideas, feelings, or experiences associated with one's body. These upsetting psychological experiences might include negative ideas (like "I'm overweight—I look repulsive"), uncomfortable bodily sensations (like wearing tight clothing), or negative emotional reactions (like feeling guilty, ashamed, or embarrassed about one's appearance). People who shun body image to a high degree typically make attempts to get away from these experiences. In an effort to lessen or ease the uncomfortable psychological contacts, these avoidance strategies can take the form of excessive dieting, restricted eating patterns, obsessive exercise regimens, periods of binge eating, or purging (Timko, et al., 2014). A person's self-evaluation may place more weight and shape emphasis on keeping track of their body and avoidance behaviour. This concept, sometimes known as the overvaluation of weight and form, is seen as a fundamental feature of the psychopathology associated with eating disorders (Fairburn, et al., 2003). According to (Reas, et al., 2005), frequent body checking may amplify perceived defects in look or extra weight, which may hinder weight loss efforts by undervaluing the actual weight loss achievements. According to Krueger, one's body image is a representation of their identity that comes from their interior and exterior bodily experiences (King, 2018). In fact, our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behaviors toward our bodies are reflected in our body image (Yamamoto et al., 2017). Research has often indicated that parents' dissatisfaction with their bodies has the biggest influence on their same-gendered children's body image development (Damiano et al. 2015).

Fear of Intimacy

Intimate connections can be described as “feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships” (Sternberg, 1997, p. 315) and is connected to both physiological and psychological well-being (Hook, et al., 2003). Intimate relationships that are fulfilling are among the main sources of happiness and meaning in life (Freedman, 1978; Klinger, 1977). One of the most significant barriers to the development of intimacy in close relationships is the fear of intimacy (Hatfield, 1984) which refers to the inhibited ability of the individual to share thoughts and emotions of personal significance with another individual who is highly valued (Descutner and Thelen, 1991), and tends to oppose the ability to form close and intimate relationships (Doi and Thelen 1993). Fear of intimacy, in addition to social anxiety, is also linked to loneliness (Descutner & Thelen, 1991) and depression (Reis & Grenyer, 2004).

Social avoidance and distress

The behavioral inclination of people to steer clear of social situations that put their mental health at risk is known as Social Avoidance and Distress (Qi, et al., 2018). (Geist and Hamrick, 1983) in their study indicated that those with high levels of social distancing or discomfort had lower levels of self-assurance, dominance need, affiliation need, and change need. In addition to being a straightforward sign of body dissatisfaction, avoidance behaviors appear to be crucial in the persistence of body image prob-

lems (Reas & Grilo, 2004). Males reported higher levels of social avoidance and anxiety than females, according to a study by (Watson and Friend, 1969). Avoidance-related behaviors extend into the social sphere (Vocks, et al., 2018), which has an effect on how well people with eating disorders and body image issues operate in society (Krug et al., 2013).

The human body is a unique element. There is no kind or type to it. All are equally beautiful but the taboo of the society has most of us humans questioning the need to change ourselves to try 'fitting' in. Society demands a 'perfect' body, adequate height, weight and/or skin tone. Any deviations in perfection makes the individual unhealthy, or unfit to the social norms of body image. This unwanted expectation of the society can create a negative perception in an individual about themselves. This can hinder the individual's everyday living, the way they are raised as children, the social relations, confidence, and most of all perception about self.

The emerging adult population selected for this study fall under the age range of 18 to 25 years. The concept of body image is very well known to everyone yet talked about very less often. By conducting this study, the researcher aims to find if there is any relationship between how an individual perceives and avoids his/her body appearance, and does it impact the intimacy level and develop a socially avoidant behavior in them. An intensive review of literature builds an understanding towards the novelty of the variables "being combined together" that have been chosen for the proposed study. By aiming to find out the proposed objectives, the researcher intends to create an awareness regarding the crucial sensitivity of the concept of body image and how it may impact the intimacy and social behaviours as well as how these behaviours might be foreseen. The study's findings can further aid in the elaboration of the proposed topic and also be utilised in the development of interventions towards building body positivity and can also provide insight on how to approach the concept with fragility and optimism.

The study by (Li et al., 2023) examined the connection and underlying mechanisms, among a sizable sample of college students, between neuroticism and loneliness. Measures such as the Big Five Personality Scale, the Loneliness Scale, the Self-efficacy Scale, and the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale were completed by 4,600 college students in total. After a thorough analysis, the authors found that self-efficacy and social avoidance and distress (SAD) acted as mediating factors in the positive relationship between neuroticism and loneliness among college students. Additionally, sequential mediation was seen in the study, suggesting that neuroticism influences loneliness via the cascading effects of self-efficacy and, in turn, SAD.

(Waghachavare, et al., 2014) in their study used a sample size of 805 and pretested self-administered questionnaires were used. 232 (23.3%), 193 (19.4%), and 326 (32.7%) of the 805 study participants had body image anxiety, depression, and social phobia, respectively. Binary logistic regression showed that body image anxiety and social phobia were significant predictors for depression.

The study by (Cash, et al., 2005) investigated the connection between adult attachment processes, interpersonal anxiety, and body image in both genders. Standardized tests were used to examine several components of body image, social-evaluative anxiety, fear of romantic intimacy, and adult attachment using data from 125 female and 103 male college students. The findings showed a strong relationship, especially among women, between body image evaluation, investment, and affect and anxiety related to social evaluation and sexual closeness. Furthermore, for both genders, lower secure general attachment which is typified by more preoccupied general adult attachment and more anxious romantic attachment was associated with higher body image disorder.

2. Method

Statement of problem: To study the impact of body image on fear of intimacy, and social avoidance among emerging adults.

Operational definitions:

Body image avoidance: Body image avoidance refers to any behavior that is done to avoid, repress, change, or remove oneself from upsetting negative ideas, feelings, or experiences associated with one's body (Timko et al., 2014).

Fear of intimacy: Fear of intimacy is the inability of an individual to communicate with a highly valued person about thoughts and feelings that are important to them (Descutner and Thelen, 1991). It also tends to be opposed to the formation of deep and intimate relationships (Doi and Thelen, 1993).

Social avoidance and distress: The urge to spend time alone combined with a deliberate effort to avoid social interaction is termed as social avoidance (Asendorpf, 1990).

Variables:

Independent: Body image avoidance

Dependent:

1. Fear of Intimacy
2. Social Avoidance and distress

Objectives:

1. To study the significant relationship between Body Image and Fear of Intimacy
2. To study the significant relationship between Body image and Social Avoidance
3. To study the influence of Body Image on Fear of Intimacy
4. To study the influence of Body Image on Social Avoidance
5. To study the gender difference of Body Image on Fear of Intimacy
6. To study the gender difference of Body Image on Social Avoidance

Hypotheses:

- H0₁: There is no significant relationship between body image and Fear of Intimacy
H0₂: There is no significant relationship between body image and Social Avoidance
H0₃: There is no significant influence of body Image on the Fear of Intimacy
H0₄: There is no significant influence of body Image on Social Avoidance
H0₅: There is no significant gender difference of Body Image on Fear of Intimacy
H0₆: There is no significant gender difference of Body Image on Social Avoidance

Research design: Experimental research design

Sample size and sampling technique:

Sample size: 200 (100 males and 100 females)

Inclusion criteria:

1. Participants aged between 18 and 25 years.
2. Participants of the gender male and female.
3. Participants who are working or not working, and studying.
4. Participants who had/have English as their first language.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Participants below or beyond the age of 18 and 25 respectively.
2. Participants of gender apart from male and female.
3. Participants who are not studying or are not given formal education.

4. Participants who did not/do not have English as their first language.

Sampling technique: Convenient sampling method

Tools used for the study:

1. Rosen, J. C., Srebnik, D., Saltzberg, E., and Wendt, S. (1991). Development of a Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire, *Psychological Assessment*, 3, 32-37.

Reliability: Internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha- .89 and test-retest reliability coefficient-.87

Validity: The BIAQ has fair to good concurrent validity, with a low but significant correlation of .22 with body size estimation, a correlation of .78 with the Body Shape Questionnaire, and correlations of .68 and .63 with the Shape Concern and Weight Concern scales respectively.

2. Carol J. Descutner and Mark H. Thelen. (1991, June). Fear of intimacy scale. *American Psychological Association*, 3(2), 218-225.

Reliability: High internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha- .90 and test-retest reliability- .89 correlated positively with a loneliness measure; it correlated negatively with self-disclosure, social intimacy, and social desirability measures

Validity: Construct validity was established by factor analysis and significant correlations.

3. Watson, D. and Friend, R. (1969). Measurement of social-evaluation anxiety, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33, 448-457.

Reliability and validity: High reliability with its internal consistency at .94 and the test-reliability ranging from .68 and .79 for separate samples. SADS also has a high correlation rating with FNE and STAI, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, was moderately high.

Statistical techniques to be utilized:

SPSS Software (Version: 29.0)- Spearman Correlation Coefficient, Linear Regression Analysis and Mann Whitney U test

3. Results and Discussion

The current study aims to understand the impact of body image perception on fear of intimacy and social avoidance among young adults. The study includes the population of 100 males and 100 females aged between 18 to 25 years. The study focuses on the correlation between the variables, the influence of body image perception on fear of intimacy and social avoidance. It also aims to study if there is any gender difference in the body image perception, the fear of intimacy and social avoidance.

Statistical method of Spearman 's correlation coefficient was done to study the relationship between the three variables i.e., body image avoidance, fear of intimacy and social avoidance, linear regression was utilised to understand the influence of body image on the chosen three variables and Mann Whitney U test to study the gender difference.

Table 01: Spearman's Correlation Test Between Body Image Avoidance, Fear of Intimacy and Social Avoidance

			1	2	3
Spearman's Rho	(1) Body Image	Correlation coefficient	-	.561**	.422**
	(2) Fear of Intimacy		.561**	-	-

	(3) Social Avoidance		.422**	-	-

** p<0.01(2-tailed)

Table 01 show the results of the spearman correlation coefficient done to study the relationship between body image avoidance, fear of intimacy and social avoidance. The obtained rho value for the variables body image avoidance and fear of intimacy is 0.561 and the p-value obtained is <0.001 which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a strong correlation between the two variables i.e., body image avoidance and fear of intimacy hence rejecting the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between body image and fear of intimacy. In the study by (Sklar, 2009) conducted on 55 males and 58 females with an average age range of 21.6 years elucidated the results that although higher BMI was associated with increased fear of intimacy and body image avoidance, there is no increase in the level of fear of intimacy with an increase in the level of body image avoidance contradicting the current study’s findings which suggests a strong correlation between the chosen variables. Whereas (Cash, et al., 2005) in their study’s findings suggested that there is a strong association between body image evaluation, social evaluation and sexual intimacy. This finding acts in support to the current study’s findings. Although, the study’s findings suggest the existence of a significant relationship between body image avoidance and fear of intimacy among young adults, factors such demographics of age, area of residence and social influence may be one among the many reasons for a possible difference of findings in other studies.

The obtained rho value for the variables body image and social avoidance is .422 and the p value obtained is <0.001 which is found to be significant at 0.01. this indicates that there is a strong correlation between the variables body image avoidance and social avoidance hence rejecting the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between body image and social avoidance. The study “The role of body image and cognitive avoidance on social anxiety in university students” done by (Mohammadpour, F., and Mohammadi, N. 2019) on a sample size of 383 students of Shiraz University suggested that social anxiety can be predicted by cognitive avoidance and body image concern which supports the current study’s findings which identified a correlation between the chosen variables. Hence, we can state that there is a significant relationship between body image avoidance and social avoidance among young adults. Although there may be further research done that can obtain a contradicting result which can be a result of various factors including age, area of living, and other sociodemographic details.

Table 02: Linear Regression to study the Influence of Body Image Avoidance on Fear of Intimacy

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.520 ^a	0.270	0.267	20.480	0.270	73.308	1	198	<.001
Predictors: (Constant), BIAT									
Dependent Variable: FIT									

Table 02 represents the results of linear regression performed to study the influence of body image on fear of intimacy. R square value depicts the performance or variance of the dependent variable in relevance to the dependency of it on the independent variable. Based on the output, the R square value obtained here is 0.270 which is observed in percentage value. Therefore, we can say that approximately 27 percent of the independent variable which is body image has an influence on the level of the dependent variable i.e., fear of intimacy. The obtained p value is $<.001$ which is found to be lesser than 0.05 signifying a strong influence of body image on fear of intimacy therefore rejecting the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of body image on fear of intimacy. (Cash, et al., 2004) conducted a study on a sample size of 103 male and 125 female college students. Step-wise multiple linear regression was performed to understand the impact of attachment styles on body image concerns. Results elucidated that among males, three variables were shown to be relevant in explaining variances in body image i.e., the dimension of anxious romantic attachment, general attachment security, and general preoccupied attachment. Therefore, this explained 34.6% of the variation in body image and showed that male body image dysfunctionality was linked to higher levels of general adult attachment preoccupation (beta =.252), less overall adult attachment security (beta = -.226), and more anxious romantic attachment (beta =.263). On the other hand, in females, anxious romantic attachment (beta =.370) was found to be the sole attachment dimension that appeared in the equation and accounted for 13.7% of the variance in body image. While the current hypothesis aims to understand whether there exists an influence of body image on fear of intimacy or not, the above cited study by (Cash, et al., 2004) focused on otherwise. The romantic attachment style identified under their study can be seen as contradicting evidence to the current study’s findings. Furthermore, this can also be visualised as an opportunity to conduct future research to check whether the intimacy level or an attachment style can have an influence on the body image concern of an individual. This may also be considered as one of the limitations of the current study.

Table 03: Linear Regression to Study the Influence of Body Image Avoidance on Social Avoidance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.396 ^a	.156	.152	7.052	.156	36.728	1	198	<.001
Predictors: (Constant), BIAT									
Dependent Variable: SADT									

Table 03 represents the results of linear regression performed to study the influence of body image on social avoidance. R square value depicts the performance or variance of the dependent variable in relevance to the dependency of it on the independent variable. Based on the output, the R square value obtained here is .15 which is observed in percentage value. Therefore, we can say that approximately 15 percent of the independent variable which is body image has an influence on the level of the dependent variable i.e., social avoidance. The obtained p value is $<.001$ which is found to be lesser than 0.05 signifying a strong influence of body image on social avoidance therefore rejecting the null hypothesis which states that “There is no significant influence of body image on social avoidance”. In support with the above obtained result, multiple regression analysis was conducted in the study by (Mohammadpour & Mohammadi, 2019) which had a sample size of 383 students. The results indicated that both body image concern and cognitive avoidance significantly predicted social anxiety ($P < 0.005$). In particular, cogni-

tive avoidance predicted 23 percent of the variance in social anxiety, whereas body image concerns predicted 27 percent of the variance.

Table 04: Mann Whitney U Test to Study Gender Difference Between the Variables Body Image, Fear of Intimacy and Social Avoidance

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of mean ranks	U	Z	p value
Body Image Avoidance	Male	100	111.70	11170.0	3880.0	-2.738	0.006
	Female	100	89.30	8930.0			
Fear of Intimacy	Male	100	106.22	10621.50	4428.50	-1.397	0.162
	Female	100	94.79	9478.50			
Social Avoidance	Male	100	94.82	9481.50	4431.50	-1.391	0.164
	Female	100	106.19	10618.50			

Grouping variable: Gender

Table 04 shows the results obtained to study gender difference between the chosen variables using the Mann Whitney U test. The test elucidated the following results; body image obtained a p-value of 0.006 which is lesser than 0.05 hence is found to be statistically significant. Fear of intimacy elucidated a p-value of 0.162 which is greater than 0.05 hence is not statistically significant. Overall, the results suggest that there is significant gender difference in body image scores but there is no significant gender difference in fear of intimacy scores therefore partially retaining the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in body image and fear of intimacy. (Cash, et al., 2004) conducted the study “Body Image in an Interpersonal context: Adult attachment, fear of intimacy and social anxiety” on a sample size of 228 college students (103 males, 125 females). The findings of this study suggested that in both genders there is a strong association between the body image evaluation and social-evaluative anxiety. Whereas body image evaluation showed a much stronger correlation with romantic intimacy anxiety among women. In addition to this, another study “Effect of body image and self-image on women's sexual behaviors” done by (Ackard, et al., 2000) which comprised of 3,627 female participants aged between 14 to 74 years elucidated the following result; women with a satisfactory self-body image reported better sexual intimacy, comfort in undressing around their partner and pleasing their partner sexually. This finding’s emphasis on the inevitable importance of positive self-body image can be related to the current study’s findings to an extent where it can be therefore suggested that positive body image perception plays an impacting role on intimacy. This finding can be further utilized in future researches to identify if there exists any gender difference in fear of intimacy based on body image avoidance. The mean score for body image avoidance in males is 111.70(N=100) which is found to be greater than in females(N=100) which is 89.30. This suggests that males experience higher body image avoidance when compared to females. The mean score obtained for fear of intimacy in males is 106.22(N=100) which is comparatively higher than that of females which is 94.79(N=100). This sug-

gests that females experience lesser fear of intimacy in comparison to males who experience it relatively higher.

Table 04 also shows the results obtained to study the gender difference between the variables body image and social avoidance using the Mann Whitney U test. Body image score yielded a p value of 0.006, which falls below the threshold of 0.05 level, thus indicating statistical significance. Conversely, social avoidance exhibited a p value of 0.164, surpassing the 0.05 threshold and therefore is not statistically significant. Overall, the findings suggest a notable distinction in body image scores, while no significant disparity was observed in social avoidance scores. Consequently, this supports a partial retention of the null hypothesis. Mean score for body image avoidance in males(N=100) is 111.70 which is found to be higher than the mean score of females(N=100) which is 89.30 suggesting higher level of body image avoidance among males than in females. Mean score for social avoidance in males is 94. 82(N=100) whereas in females the score obtained is 106.19(N=100) suggesting a higher level of social avoidance in females than in males According to (Maphis, et al., 2013) in their study where participants were questioned about their Body Mass Index (BMI) and how they perceived their clothing size in relation to their ideal body size. Findings from this study highlighted that women and younger adults experienced higher levels of social avoidance in relevance to their body size. Although, the study's findings primarily revolved around the BMI of the participant and their social interaction or avoidance, the findings suggest the probability of women experiencing avoidance relatively more which can also be seen in the current study's findings in relevance to the body image avoidance i.e., females experienced higher level of social avoidance than males.

4. Conclusion

The present study was conducted to understand the relationship between body image, fear of intimacy and social avoidance. Spearman correlation test done elucidated findings that there is a strong correlation between body image and fear of intimacy and body image and social avoidance. Findings of linear regression test conducted to study the influence concluded that there is a strong influence of body image on fear of intimacy and social avoidance. Mann Whitney U test conducted to study gender difference concluded the findings that there is significant difference in body image but there is no significant difference in fear of intimacy or social avoidance hence partially retaining the null hypotheses. Although, mean scores revealed that males experienced higher levels of body image and fear of intimacy in contrast to females who experienced relatively lower levels. For the null hypothesis "There is no significant gender difference of body image on social avoidance" the findings concluded that females experienced higher levels of social avoidance in comparison to males although body image was relatively higher in males.

5. Implications

1. The primary implication that should be highlighted is the strong correlation of body image with fear of intimacy as well as social avoidance as this reflects the significance of body image perceptions that individuals hold about themselves that influences their ability to form close relationships and engage in social interactions. Keeping this in mind, interventions can be developed to help individuals create a more positive perception of body image and tackle the obstacles more effectively.
2. The gender difference test conducted revealed that there are gender disparities in body image, with men reporting higher levels than women. Nonetheless, there is no discernible difference in fear of in-

timacy across gender. This may imply that fear of intimacy is not gender-specific, even though body image issues may be more prominent in men. However, while having lower levels of body image issues, females exhibit higher levels of social avoidance, which highlights the complexity of social behavior and the need for interventions that are specifically designed to address gender-specific issues.

3. Lastly, the targeted population for this study is our future generation in the corporate or the working field. As much as body image is a sensitive concept it is very less talked about and hence can easily slip out of hands. This in-turn can have a huge impact on the performance of the individuals in concern. Hence, interventions to create more awareness about the necessity and intricacy of body image can be developed such as insightful workshops or role plays etc. This might altogether someday even eradicate the fear of intimacy or social avoidance and many others issues that arise in us humans.

6. Limitations

1. A greater sample size can add more value to the research findings, this can be considered as one of the major limitations of the study as the study findings cannot be generalised to the wider population.
2. Demographic of area of residence i.e., urban, semi urban and rural can be added to add on to the understanding of community influence in the population.
3. Usage of self-measures for the proposed variables may have introduced bias of social conformity, desirable response bias and/or inaccurate self-perception.
4. The study findings highlighted the gender variations in social avoidance, fear of intimacy, and body image; however, the underlying causes of these differences were not investigated thoroughly. Future studies can look into the intricate details of the factors causing gender differences in these areas.

7. Conflict of Interest: None.

8. Acknowledgement

I would firstly like to express my heartfelt gratitude to God for giving me this golden opportunity of pursuing my education, supportive parents and friends whose unwavering support has given me the strength to successfully be able to complete my research paper. I would also like to mention my heartfelt gratitude to the Department of Psychology, for their support and guidance throughout the academic years. I would like to appreciate and express gratitude to my guide for her unwavering support and for spending hours with me to critically review and make any needed corrections and for contributing largely in the success of the paper. Last but never the least, I would like to thank each and every participant for their time, patience and contribution in my study which has made it a grand success.

9. References

1. Ackard, D. M., Kearney-Cooke, A., & Peterson, C. B. (2000). Effect of body image and self-image on women's sexual behaviors. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 28(4), 422–429. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1098-108x\(200012\)28:4<422::aid-eat10>3.0.co;2-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1098-108x(200012)28:4<422::aid-eat10>3.0.co;2-1)
2. Asendorpf, J. B. (1990). Beyond social withdrawal: Shyness, unsociability, and peer avoidance. *Human Development*, 33(4–5), 250–259. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000276522>
3. Cash, T. F., Thériault, J., & Annis, N. M. (2004, February). Body Image in an Interpersonal Context: Adult Attachment, Fear of Intimacy and Social Anxiety. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 89–103. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.1.89.26987>

4. Damiano, S. R., Gregg, K. J., Spiel, E. C., McLean, S. A., Wertheim, E. H., & Paxton, S. J. (2015, April 10). Relationships between body size attitudes and body image of 4-year-old boys and girls, and attitudes of their fathers and mothers. *Journal of Eating Disorders*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-015-0048-0>
5. Descutner, C. J., & Thelen, M. H. (1991). Development and validation of a Fear-of-Intimacy Scale. *Psychological Assessment*, 3(2), 218–225. <https://doi.org/10.1037//1040-3590.3.2.218>
6. Doi, S. C., & Thelen, M. H. (1993). The Fear-of-Intimacy Scale: Replication and extension. *Psychological Assessment*, 5(3), 377–383. <https://doi.org/10.1037//1040-3590.5.3.377>
7. Fairburn, C. G., Cooper, Z., & Shafran, R. (2003, May). Cognitive behaviour therapy for eating disorders: a “transdiagnostic” theory and treatment. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 41(5), 509–528. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7967\(02\)00088-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7967(02)00088-8)
8. Ferrè, E. R., Linkenauger, S. A., Longo, M. R., & Sadibolova, R. (2019). Distortions of perceived volume and length of body parts. *Cortex; a journal devoted to the study of the nervous system and behavior*, 111, 74–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2018.10.016>
9. Freedman, J. (1978). *Happy people: What happiness is, who has it, and why*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch.
10. Gaudio, S., Brooks, S. J., & Riva, G. (2014, October 10). Nonvisual Multisensory Impairment of Body Perception in Anorexia Nervosa: A Systematic Review of Neuropsychological Studies. *PLoS ONE*, 9(10), e110087. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110087>
11. Geist, C. R., & Hamrick, T. J. (1983, September). Social avoidance and distress: Its relationship to self-confidence, and needs for affiliation, change, dominance, and deference. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 39(5), 727–730. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679\(198309\)39:5<727::aid-jclp2270390514>3.0.co;2-f](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(198309)39:5<727::aid-jclp2270390514>3.0.co;2-f)
12. Grilo, C. M., Masheb, R. M., Reas, D. L., & Wilson, G. T. (2005). Body checking and avoidance in overweight patients with binge eating disorder. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 37(4), 342–346. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.20092>
13. Halliwell, E., & Dittmar, H. (2004, February). Does Size Matter? The Impact of Model’s Body Size on Women’s Body-Focused Anxiety and Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 104–122. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.1.104.26989>
14. Hatfield, E. (1984). *The dangers of intimacy In Communication, intimacy, and close relationships*, Academic Press, 207-220.
15. Hook, M. K., Gerstein, L. H., Detterich, L., & Gridley, B. (2003, October). How Close Are We? Measuring Intimacy and Examining Gender Differences. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81(4), 462–472. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2003.tb00273.x>
16. King, I. C. C. (2018). Body image in paediatric burns: a review. *Burns & Trauma*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41038-018-0114-3>
17. Klinger, E. (1977). *Meaning and void: Inner experience and the incentive in people’s lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
18. Krug, I., Penelo, E., Fernandez-Aranda, F., Anderluh, M., Bellodi, L., Cellini, E., & Treasure, J. (2013). Low social interactions in eating disorder patients in childhood and adulthood: A multi-Centre european case control study. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 18(1), 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105311435946>
19. Li, S., Kong, K., Zhang, K., & Niu, H. (2023, April 17). The relation between college students’ neu

- roticism and loneliness: The chain mediating roles of self-efficacy, social avoidance and distress. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1124588>
20. Maphis, L. E., Martz, D. M., Bergman, S. S., Curtin, L. A., & Webb, R. M. (2013, June). Body size dissatisfaction and avoidance behavior: How gender, age, ethnicity, and relative clothing size predict what some won't try. *Body Image*, 10(3), 361–368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.02.003>
21. Mohammadpour, F., & Mohammadi, N. (2019). The role of body image and cognitive avoidance on social anxiety in university students. *Rooyesh-e-Ravanshenasi Journal*, 8(7), 173-180. <http://frooyesh.ir/article-1-1234-en.html>
22. Qi, W. G., Wang, K. T., Pincus, A. L., & Wu, L. Z. (2018, September). Interpersonal problems and acculturative stress over time among Chinese international students from mainland China and Taiwan. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 9(3), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000119>
23. Reas, D. L., & Grilo, C. M. (2004, September). Cognitive-Behavioral Assessment of Body Image Disturbances. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 10(5), 314–322. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00131746-200409000-00005>
24. Reas, D. L., Grilo, C. M., Masheb, R. M., & Wilson, G. T. (2005). Body checking and avoidance in overweight patients with binge eating disorder. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 37(4), 342–346. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.20092>
25. Reis, S., & Grenyer, B. F. (2004). Fear of Intimacy in Women: Relationship between Attachment Styles and Depressive Symptoms. *Psychopathology*, 37(6), 299–303. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000082268>
26. Sadibolova, R., Ferrè, E. R., Linkenauger, S. A., & Longo, M. R. (2019). Distortions of perceived volume and length of body parts. *Cortex; a journal devoted to the study of the nervous system and behavior*, 111, 74–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2018.10.016>
27. Sklar, E. M. (2005). The Relationship of Fear of Intimacy, Body Image Avoidance and Body Mass Index. <https://doi.org/10.25148/etd.fi08121918>
28. Spreckelsen, P. V., Glashouwer, K. A., Bennik, E. C., Wessel, I., & de Jong, P. J. (2018, June 5). Negative body image: Relationships with heightened disgust propensity, disgust sensitivity, and self-directed disgust. *PLOS ONE*, 13(6), e0198532. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198532>
29. Vocks, S., Bauer, A., & Legenbauer, T. (2018). Körperbildtherapie bei Anorexia und Bulimia nervosa. <https://doi.org/10.1026/02862-000>
30. Waghchavare, V. B., Quraishi, S. R., Dhumale, G. B., & Gore, A. D. (2014). A cross-sectional study of correlation of body image anxiety with social phobia and their association with depression in adolescents from a rural area of Sangli District in India. *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 5(12), 1626. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25709801/>
31. Watson, D., & Friend, R. (1969). Measurement of social-evaluative anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33(4), 448–457. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0027806>
32. Yamamiya, Y., Cash, T. F., Melnyk, S. E., Posavac, H. D., & Posavac, S. S. (2005, March). Women's exposure to thin-and-beautiful media images: body image effects of media-ideal internalization and impact-reduction interventions. *Body Image*, 2(1), 74–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2004.11.001>
33. Yamamotova, A., Bulant, J., Bocek, V., & Papezova, H. (2017, July). Dissatisfaction with own body makes patients with eating disorders more sensitive to pain. *Journal of Pain Research*, Volume 10, 1667–1675. <https://doi.org/10.2147/jpr.s133425>