

The Influence of Self-attention on College Students' Appearance Perfectionism and the Mediating Role of Fear of Negative Evaluation

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Abstract: In order to explore the effect of self-attention on appearance perfectionism of college students and the mechanism of fear of negative evaluation, 267 college students were tested with self-attention Scale, Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale and Appearance Perfectionism Scale. The results show that: (1) self-attention of college students has a significant predictive effect on appearance perfectionism; (2) The mediating effect of fear of negative evaluation on self-attention and appearance perfectionism was established; Specifically, self-attention influences appearance perfectionism through the mediating effect of fear of negative evaluation.

1. Introduction

With the development and improvement of the economic level, the young generation, who have grown up in care and love and have greatly met their material needs, pay more attention to their own spiritual world and have a high level of self-attention. At the same time, more and more people pay more attention to appearance and participate in the fitness and weight loss army. Coupled with the endless media "the most beautiful eyes", "the most beautiful shoulder and neck" and other beauty topics, such an atmosphere will stimulate the pursuit of perfect appearance psychology, especially as the main audience of idol online media college students. Once they pay too much attention to the appearance of perfect or not, then we will be particularly sensitive to the evaluation of imperfections, and fall into the panic of negative evaluation, resulting in cognitive disharmony.

The word "appearance" carries physical information, such as body shape and appearance, which is an indispensable carrier of social function transmission in the whole process of social environment evolution [1]. For example, people tend to choose partners with higher levels of physical appearance, and will attach positive personality labels to those with higher levels of physical appearance [2]. Research on perfectionism has always been an important part in the field of mental health research, and many studies show that perfectionism is the root cause of many psychological disorders such as eating disorders [3]. Although the initial researchers characterized perfectionism as single-dimensional, the later researchers concluded that perfectionism is multi-dimensional [4]. Yang Hongfei et al. divided perfectionism into general perfectionism and special perfectionism including the appearance aspect [5]. Appearance perfectionism consists of two dimensions: the pursuit of appearance perfection and the fear of appearance imperfection;

appearance perfectionists tend to set high standards for themselves in terms of appearance, and measure their self-worth by whether they meet their own standards [6]. Ingram defines self-focused attention (SFA) as an individual's cognition of more aspects of their physical feelings, emotions and cognition[7]. Trapnell and Campbell view self-attention as a tendency to pay attention to intrinsic aspects of themselves[8]. Due to different levels of self-attention, it can both promote psychological regulation and hinder individual development. Yang Xiaodong and Luo Yuejia believe that the self-attention is the individual's awareness of the information related to the self, such as their own appearance, thoughts, emotions and other aspects[9].

Negative evaluation fear is "fear of others' evaluation, disturbed by bad evaluation, and maintaining an expectation that others will evaluate oneself badly" [10]. Under the condition of self-attention, individuals will activate a series of hypotheses about the negative image of self, and he will believe that others' views of self will be consistent with their own negative image assumptions, and then will be in a state of panic[11]. The existing results indicate a significant positive correlation between appearance perfectionism and negative evaluation fear[12]. Chen Guowei and others proposed that negative appearance perfectionism will pay attention to collect negative comments to avoid possible threats. Individuals who are worried about not being beautiful

will regard the people around them as their own audience, and these audiences are responsible for feedback on their appearance, while negative evaluation fears and high expectations will lead individuals to have a low representation of appearance, resulting in anxiety and other negative effects. Sexual emotions will strengthen the individual's anxiety about being unattractive, prompting the individual to pursue the perfect appearance more urgently.

Self-attention refers to a cognitive process in which attention is focused on information related to the self rather than the external environment. It is divided into subject self-awareness and object self-awareness. Mirror, listening to self-recordings), it will trigger a state of object self-awareness, and the individual's perception of the gap between the actual self-state and the relevant standard deepens with the increase of the time the individual is in the object-self state [13]. Ickes et al. Tested the hypothesis that self-focus leads to self-criticism [14]. Gaydukevych and Kocovski's research also shows that self-attention will increase the individual's self-reflection, and the negative experience will also deepen, and then change the positive evaluation of oneself [15]. Therefore, the longer the individual is in the object ego state, that is, the higher the level of self-attention, the easier it is to cause the individual to reflect on the gap between the ego state and the target level. Influenced by the level of self-focus. But there are no studies on the effects of self-focus on appearance perfectionism. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-attention and appearance perfectionism, and the mediating role of fear of negative evaluations between the two.

2. Research methods

2.1 Subjects

For college students, 284 questionnaires were distributed by convenient sampling method, and 267 were valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 94.01%. Among them, 90 students were boys (33.70%) and 177 girls (66.30%): 69 seniors (25.0%), 76 junior students (28.50%), 80 sophomores (30.00%) and 42 freshmen (15.70%). Participants were aged between 18 and 26 years old ($M = 21.20$; $SD = 1.720$).

2.2 Research tools

2.2.1 Self-attention Scale

The Self-Attention Scale is a self-attention and self-reporting scale compiled by Xiao Shi. There are 17 items in the questionnaire, which are divided into four dimensions: sociophysiological perception, social psychological perception, individual physiological perception and individual psychological perception. Likert was scored at 5 points. A higher score indicates a higher level of self-attention. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire met the measurement requirements. The total score of the scale accumulates all items, the higher the score, the more self-attention [16]. The α coefficient of this scale in this study was 0.723. Confirmatory factors analysis indicated that $\chi^2 / df = 1.775$, GFI = 0.918, IFI = 0.900, and RMSEA = 0.054.

2.2.2 The Fear of Enegative Evaluation Scale

The fear of enegative evaluation's level was measured by the Brief Negative Evaluation Fear Scale (BFNES). The scale is a single-dimensional self-evaluation scale, including 12 items, including 8 positive scoring, 4 reverse scoring, Likert 5 scoring method, from 1 to 5 represents from completely not conform to fully meet, the questionnaire Cronbach α coefficient of 0.85, good reliability, factor analysis results prove that this questionnaire has good validity, can be used in measurement. The α coefficient of this scale in this study was 0.741. Conconfirmatory factors showed that $\chi^2 / df = 1.414$, GFI = 0.956, IFI = 0.954, and RMSEA = 0.039.

2.2.3 Appearance perfectionism Scale

Using the Appearance Perfectionism Scale (APS) compiled by Yang [6], it is divided into two dimensions: hope for perfection and worry about imperfection. Worry about not being beautiful includes 5 items, and pursuit of perfection includes 8 items, using a 5-point Likert scale. Point scoring method, the higher the score, the higher the level of appearance perfectionism, and the reliability and validity both meet the measurement requirements. The alpha coefficient of this scale in this study was 0.763. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that $\chi^2/df=1.996$, GFI=0.933, IFI=0.901, RMSEA=0.061.

2.3 Statistical Methods

SPSS 26.0 was used to complete the confirmatory factors analysis, description statistics, reliability analysis, correlation and regression, and the non-parameter-strap technique was Boot-parameter method.

3. Results

3.1 Common method deviation

Harman's single factor was used to test for common method deviation. The results showed that there were 14 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor could explain 15.658% of the variance, which was less than the 40% criterion proposed by Podsakoff et al. [17]. This indicates that there is no serious common method bias in the data of this study.

3.2 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

In this study, self-attention was significantly positively associated with negative evaluation fear,

appearance perfectionism, and negative evaluation fear was significantly positively associated with appearance perfectionism (shown in Table 1).

Table 1: The correlation of each variable

variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Self-attention	3.351	0.491	1		
2. Fear of negative evaluation	3.284	0.587	0.301**	1	
3. Appearance perfectionism	3.235	0.593	0.509**	0.443**	1

Note: M is the mean, and SD is the standard deviation; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $P < 0.001$.

3.3 Regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, self-attention, and appearance perfectionism

Regression analysis was used to determine the quantitative changes between variables and the degree of influence, as shown in Table 2, self-attention positively predicts outward perfectionism, The regression coefficient was 0.465 ($p < 0.001$), the 25.6% variation of appearance perfectionism can be explained by self-attention, it shows a significant positive correlation between independent variable self-attention and dependent variable appearance perfectionism; Self-attention positively predicts the fear of negative evaluation, the regression coefficient was 0.252 ($p < 0.001$), its interpretation of the negative evaluation fear prediction was 7%, it indicates a significant positive correlation between independent variable self-attention and intermediary variable negative evaluation fear; Negative appraisal fear is a significant positive predictor of appearance perfectionism, the regression coefficient was 0.432 ($p < 0.001$), the 18.2% variation of appearance perfectionism can be explained by negative appraisal fear, this suggests that the mediating variable-negative evaluation fear has a significant positive correlation with the dependent variable-appearance perfectionism.

Table 2: Regression analysis among the various variables

argument	dependent variable	β	standard β	t	F	R	adjust R^2
1. Self-attention	Fear of negative evaluation	0.252	0.272	4.593	21.092***	0.272	0.070
2. Self-attention	Appearance perfectionism	0.465	0.509	9.624	92.627***	0.509	0.256
3. Fear of negative evaluation	Appearance perfectionism	0.432	0.430	7.751	60.071***	0.430	0.182

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$.

3.4 Analysis of the mediating role of the fear of negative evaluation

Using Bootstrap sampling test to study the mediation effect, the sampling times are 5000 times, and the results show that the direct effect of self-focus on appearance perfectionism is significant ($t = 7.946$, $p < 0.001$), the direct effect value was 0.493; the direct effect of negative evaluation fear on appearance perfectionism is significant ($t = 5.139$, $p < 0.001$), the effect value was 0.315; The indirect effect of self-attention on fear on appearance perfectionism was $0.315 \times 0.364 = 0.115$, Its 95% confidence interval of [0.059, 0.182], excluding the number 0, Therefore, the mediating effect

of negative evaluation fear in the influence of self-focus on appearance perfectionism is established. Self-focus will first affect negative evaluation fear, and then affect appearance perfectionism through negative evaluation fear, the direct effect of self-focus on appearance perfectionism accounted for 81%, and the mediating effect of negative evaluation fear on appearance perfectionism was also included in 19%. The specific effect values of each pathway are shown in Table 3, Figure 1.

Table 3: Analysis of intermediary effect and effect quantity

Way	Effect value	T	Effect quantity	The 95%CI lower limit	The 95%CI upper limit
Self-attention → Fear of negative evaluation (a)	0.364	5.139**			
Fear of negative evaluation → Appearance Perfectionism (b)	0.315	6.123**			
Self-attention → Appearance perfectionism (c')	0.493	7.946**	81%		
Self-attention → Fear of negative evaluation → Appearance perfectionism (ab)	0.115		19%	0.059	0.182

Note: * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01, *** P < 0.001.

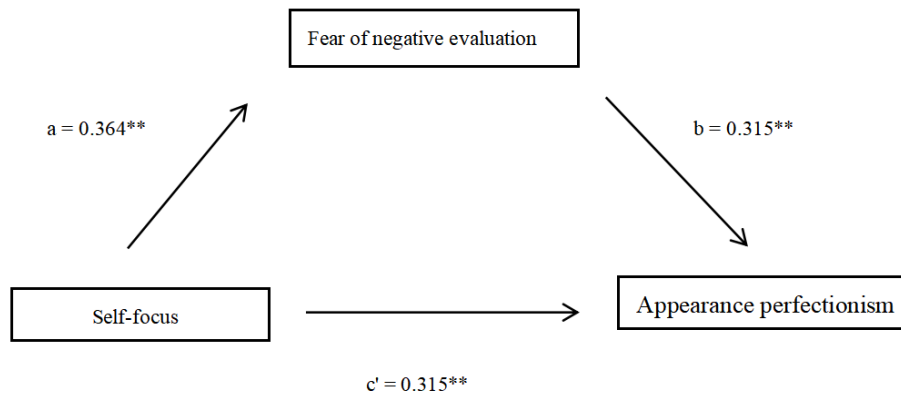


Figure 1: Mediating role of fear of negative evaluation between self-focus and appearance perfectionism

4. Discussion

Different cultural backgrounds have different influences on people's pursuit of appearance and image. "Thinness" is a sign of a good image in the modern cultural background. More and more people set strict standards for themselves in terms of body shape. High standards can further lead to negative perceptions of appearance [18]. And the appearance of adults since puberty development has stability and irreversibility [19]. This conflicts with the strong pursuit of appearance perfection and the hope that appearance completely meets the current aesthetic standards, which means that the strict and unrealistic standards set by appearance perfectionists result in the pursuit of perfection, which in turn leads to a series of related issues. Psychological problems related to appearance,

orphysical problems caused by pathological dieting behaviors and other unscientific weight control behaviors. This paper aims to investigate the effect of self-focus on appearance perfectionism, and to further reveal whether fear of negative evaluation has a mediating effect between the two. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between self-attention and appearance perfectionism, thus giving mental health workers an additional entry point in related work. It can also keep abreast of current college students' self-attention and appearance pursuit status, which can timely prevent college students from having psychological problems.

4.1 Correlation analysis

This study found that there was a significant positive correlation between self-attention and appearance perfectionism ($p < 0.01$), and the higher the degree of self-attention of college students, the higher the degree of appearance perfectionism. The hypothesis is true. At present, there is no domestic research on the direct relationship between self-attention and appearance perfectionism, so the results of this study play a good complementary role to the previous studies. The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between self-attention and fear of negative evaluation ($p < 0.01$), that is the higher level of self-attention, the higher level of negative evaluation fear is. This is consistent with previous studies, including Li, Lu Guizhi and Li showed that self-attention can positively predict negative evaluation of fear[20]. The self-attention model of psychopathology shows that individuals with higher self-attention shift their attention when the self-concept is threatened to negative self-related information[21]. There is a significant positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation and appearance perfectionism ($p < 0.01$). Higher Fear of negative evaluation of individuals usually set certain standards for their appearance, behavior, ect, and assume that others will evaluate them against this standard. Then you will be fear that you will be judged negatively for failing to meet this standard ,and lead to a series of avoidance and withdrawal behavioral responses. Such a reaction can lead to a real negative evaluation, which in turn increases the individual's fear[22]. Hewitt's study found that women's self-dissatisfaction with their bodies was significantly related to socially oriented perfectionism. Social-oriented perfectionism is when individuals perceive what others' demands on him or herself and tries to live up to those standards, in order to avoid being disappointed by others[23]. Miyaping classifies appearance perfectionism as social-oriented perfectionism, so negative evaluation, as a major form of expression of others 'demands, will affect the individual's setting of physical standards[5]. This may be related to the worry about imperfect dimension of appearance perfectionism, because about the negative evaluation of appearance for worry about not beautiful individual is a big threat, so the more negative evaluation will produce fear uneasy feelings of individuals, the more negative evaluation about appearance and more strive to pursue perfect appearance to eliminate the negative evaluation of others.

4.2 Test of mediation effect

Hypothesis 2 of this study was verified, that is, the mediating effect test showed that self-attention had an impact on appearance perfectionism through the mediating effect of fear of negative evaluation. Self-attention was significantly positively associated with fear of negative evaluation, and can positively predict fear of negative evaluation ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$). Second, fear of negative evaluation can positively predict appearance perfectionism ($\beta = 0.315$, $p < 0.001$). Higher degree of self concern individuals will form for self attention bias, because once individuals excessively focus their attention on stimuli related to their own appearance, then they will become a "susceptible population" with attention bias towards appearance. Such self-attention bias will lead to individual's susceptibility to threats in the situation, and then negative emotions such as fear of

negative evaluation will appear. In order to eliminate the fear of negative evaluation, then the individual will strive for a more perfect appearance. But appearance perfectionism sets up too idealistic and unreasonable goals. However, once individuals cannot achieve their own goals, pay excessive attention to the appearance but can not reach the standard, and can not narrow the gap between the real appearance and the ideal appearance, it will aggravate the worry about imperfection, and strengthen the individual appearance perfectionism.

4.3 Lack of research and outlook

There are still some shortcomings in this study, which need to be improved by further research. First, the number of samples in this study is small, so it is necessary to further expand the number of samples to increase the persuasion. Second, the three variables in this study have little correlation with each other, so the literature support is a little weak. Third, this study does not divide the dimension of self-attention but directly studies it as a whole. Future research could explore whether different types of self-attention have different effects on appearance perfectionism, and then get more targeted results and put forward specific conclusions.

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