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Relationship between personality and perfectionism with body image

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Abstract

The main purpose of present study is determined the relationship between big five factors of personality and perfectionism (positive and negative) with body image. 373 persons of girls student of Alzahra University in BS participated . For measuring variables in this study used NEO-Five Factor Inventory, Farsi version of the Positive and Negative Perfectionism scale (FPANPS) and Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI). To examine reliability of measures, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient were used. Analysis of the data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics including means, standard deviations, person’s correlation coefficients and regression analysis. Results showed significant positive correlation between neurotism, agreeableness and openness with body image and also significant negative relation between conscientiousness and extraversion. The result also revealed that perfectionism (positive and negative) is the significant predictor for body image. It can be concluded that from factors of personality (consciousness and agreeable) and two dimension of perfectionism can predict the body image and its factors.

Keywords: Neurotism; Extraversions; Conscientiousness; Openness; Agreeableness; Perfectionism; Body image; Introduction

1. Introduction

Self concept is composed of self assessment regarding attributes such as personality, skills abilities, occupations hobbies and physical characteristics. (Shiveston et al, 1989). Body image is a three aspect chart of body that each person has in his mind. This image is formed gradually and shows social, mental and physical position (Shilder, 1958). Other people’s viewpoints have effective role in forming this image. Prevalence of concern about body image in public association is 2% and in psychiatry association is 12% (Bellino. et al, 2006).

Some people have permanent preoccupations about physical appearance. Regardless of their normal or unmoral appearance, They report extreme fear about ugliness and unattractiveness of their appearance (Philips, Didies and Menrad, 2007). Different factors such has biological, environmental and psychological factors influence on forming body image. One of the psychological factors is perfectionism (Bardon-Cone, Cass and Ford, 2008). Perfectionism is indicated by having high level standards in all dominations of life such as biological, family and occupational aspects. They should also be satisfied with their bodies. Social perfectionism is a predictor of body dissatisfaction (Debbiel, Grammer and Schwarts , 2008). There is relationship between perfectionism and body image disturbance (Siman, Sherry, Pavl, Hewitt, Flett and Wardrop).

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The other psychological factor is personality variables (Widerman and Pryor 1991). Some findings show that body image concern has relationship with disorders such as depression, obsession, social phobia, anxiety and drug abuse (Vill and Vali, 2001).

A strong correlation between depression and body dissatisfaction has been seen in women suffered from bulimia (Keel, Mitchell, Davist, 2000). Perfectionism, self efficacy and stress predicts dieting and eating disorder (Bardone-ConeAbramson, Vohs and Joiner, 2008). Women suffer from negative body image, anorexia nervosa and eating disorders more than men do (Neighbors and Sobal, 2007).

Some researches show that 60% of girls and 30% of boys like to make some changes in their appearance in their adolescence (Neighbors and Sobal, 2007). Many of Adolescent girls and boys show concerns about their diet and their body size (Thompson, 2001). Since women pay high attention to their body image especially in their youth and adolescence, we chose the students of Alzahra University as our sample. It is worth to mention that Alzahra University is the unisex university that only accepts girls as students.

The aim of this research is survey the relationship between personality variables (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neurotism and openness), and perfectionism (negative and positive) in girls student of Alzahra university.

2. Method

2.1. Participant

Participant involve BS students of Alzahra University in 2009. All of 373 respondents completed the measures voluntary. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26.

2-2 Measures

2.2.1. NEO-FIVE Factor Inventory (Costa and McCrae, 1989)

This inventory has the most useful function in measuring the five factor personalities. Using this inventory has some advantages: answering the questions does not take a lot of time and the participants don’t feel tired to answer the questions. This inventory has 60 statements in Likert scale. Each 12 statement assess one of five big personality factors (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neurotism and openness. Scores of each factor is calculated separately and finally, five scores are attained. In this research Cronbach’s alpha for subscales: openness, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and neurotism is 0.44, 0.63, 0.76, 0.80 and 0.82 respectively.

2.2.2. Positive and negative perfectionism scale (Terry short,Owens,Slade &Dewey, 1995)

This inventory is a 40-item measure that 20 of them asses negative perfectionism and 20 others asses positive perfectionism. Its statements asses perfectionism on a five-point likert scale (minimum score: 20 and maximum score:100). In research of Hess et al. (2002) Cronbach’s alpha reported 0.84 for positive perfectionism and 0.83 for negative perfectionism. Both subscales showed adequate internal consistency: negative perfectionism $\alpha = 0.83$, positive perfectionism $\alpha = 0.76$.

2.2.3. Body image concern inventory (BICI)

Body image concern inventory (BICI) is a 19-item self report measure design to assess dysmorphic appearance concern (Littleton et al, 2005). For each item, individuals indicated how often they have the described feeling or perform the described behaviour on a five-point likert scale bounded by 1 (never) and five (always). This scale has two subscales: a) dysmorphic appearance concern, b) interference in functioning due to appearance concern. In Littleton’s research Cronbach’s alpha for the measure was 93%. Both subscales showed adequate internal consistency: dysmorphic concern $\alpha = 0.92$, interference due to appearance concerns $\alpha = 0.76$. 
In present research, Cronbach’s alpha is 0.90. for subscales dysmorphic concerns $\alpha = 0.85$, interference due to appearance concern $\alpha = 0.84$.

3. Results

The results showed that there is significant positive association between neurotism, agreeableness and openness with body image and also significant negative association between conscientiousness and extraversion with body image. The results also revealed that perfectionism (positive and negative) is the significant predictor of body image. It means that there is a significant negative association between positive perfectionism and body image. A significant positive association has also been seen between negative perfectionism.

There is a negative relationship between neurotism, openness and agreeableness with positive perfectionism and also positive relationship between neurotism and agreeableness with negative perfectionism. In addition, results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between them and negative perfectionism.

The correlation research method has been used as the research methodology. In this method, simultaneous regression technique is used. In this technique 7 predictor variables perform analysis simultaneously. Table1 shows that 32% of body image change has been predicted by performing all predictor variables.

4. Tables

Table 1. Analysis of simultaneous regression for predict body image with perfectionism and personality predictor variables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>model</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/33</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Analysis of variance for simultaneous regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>regression</td>
<td>19144/381</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2734/912</td>
<td>25/612</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>residual</td>
<td>38974/933</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>106/781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>58119/314</td>
<td>372</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Analysis of perfectionism and personality variables’ step by step regression to body image concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of regression</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative perfectionism</td>
<td>1.205</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive perfectionism</td>
<td>10.583</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>0.0287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>10.358</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>0.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>10.309</td>
<td>0.0572</td>
<td>0.327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of step by step regression shows that negative perfectionism can predict 19% of body image concern changes. In the second step with positive perfectionism factor, this percent increased to 28%. With adding consciousness, it reached to 31% in the third step. Finally, this percent increased to 32% in the forth step.
5. Discussion

The results showed that there is a significant relationship between personality and body image. It has been indicated that personality and antisocial behaviour predicts body interference such as tattoo and beauty surgery. (Natanson. et al, 2005). The Swami’s research also proved that five factor of personality are related with body size perception. The present research results confirm those results.

According to the research’s result there is a positive correlation between neurotism and agreeableness with body image concern. The characteristics of neurotism are tension, low self esteem, shyness and depression. In investigation of Stiven et al (1985) it has been indicated that depressed persons were not satisfied with their bodies and thought that their bodies have many defects. In other researches (Swami. et al, 2008) it has been attained that all five factors of personality and specially neurotism predict body image. Persons with negative body images, suffer from negative feelings such as depression, loneliness, low self esteem, negative perfectionism, preoccupation about losing weight. Agreeableness variable include altruism and kindness characteristics. Persons with these traits pay attention to others and respect them (Garusi, 2003). Since the relationship between agreeableness and body image, it can be concluded that since these persons pay attention and consider others, their bodies are also important for them because it is the only thing that others can see and they become more concern about it.

This investigation showed that perfectionism is related with body image concern. Perfectionists need to reveal their success and abilities to others. Self showing up perfectionists made them to show their appearance perfectly.


The results show that there is correlation between perfectionism (positive and negative) and personality variables. The other result also confirms that fact. For example investigation of swami and Kanda (2002) show that negative perfectionism can predict depression. Base on traits of neurotic persons such as depression, illogical thought and tension (John, 1989), (Mc cra, 1978). This result matches the present research. According to traits of positive perfectionism there are; self confidence, life satisfaction, enjoying attempting and finally positive feeling. Therefore, significant relationship of this kind of perfectionism with positive traits like extraversion, unconsciousness, is logical.

Finally it seems conducting research that survey role of family, cultural characteristic and society norms can help us interpret the concept of body image. Carrying out the prevention and intervention programs such as holding life skills’ work shop, can help young students rely on their strength point and positive traits and accept themselves. These programs can prevent body image concern.

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