

Beauty Standards and Consumer Perception: Exploring Beauty-Related Influence, Ageing Concerns, Self-Esteem and Body Appreciation

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Abstract: *The present study aimed at finding an association between beauty and cosmetic-related influence, appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem, and body appreciation among women aged 18–73 years. The approach adopted was a quantitative, correlational, comparative, and cross-sectional research design. The sample comprised 108 participants aged 18 to 72 years, classified into two equally sized groups: 18–45 years (n = 54) and 46–73 years (n = 54). The questionnaire included the researcher-developed Facial Appearance and Cosmetic Influence Scale (FACIS) and Age-Related Facial and Skin Anxiety Scale (AFSAS), along with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2). The findings suggested that both beauty and cosmetic-related influence and appearance-related ageing concerns were significantly negatively associated with self-esteem and body appreciation. Women aged 18–45 years reported higher levels of beauty and cosmetic-related influence than women aged 46–73 years. However, no significant age-group differences were observed in appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem, or body appreciation. Overall, the findings highlight associations between beauty-related social and cosmetic influences, appearance-related ageing concerns, self-evaluations, and body appreciation. The cross-sectional design and researcher-developed measures limit causal interpretation and suggest the need for further research to establish the psychometric properties of FACIS and AFSAS.*

Keywords: beauty standards, cosmetic influence, appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem, body appreciation

1. Introduction

Several sociocultural approaches propose that people may adopt appearance ideals that are valued in their culture and may then feel pressurized when believing that they do not fulfil such appearance ideals. Moreover, social comparison, or comparing one's own appearance with the appearance of others, can also be a factor. In a systematic review of the research linking social networking sites (SNSs) and body-image issues, [1] found that social networking site use was associated with body-image concerns, and that appearance comparison may be a potential mechanism underlying the association between SNS use and negative body-image outcomes. [2] conducted a meta-analysis of 83 studies involving 55,440 participants and found that higher online social comparison was associated with greater body-image difficulties and a less positive body image.

2. Literature Survey

As mentioned earlier, research in the beauty domain has also explored the extent to which women consume cosmetic products and are influenced by the people around them. [3] carried out a study that proposed the consumer's susceptibility to influence from others. Two types of influence were identified as the key types of interpersonal influence: normative influence and informational influence. Normative influence refers to the influence that makes a person susceptible to interpersonal influence, which helps gather social rewards such as approval or social acceptance. Informational influence is the tendency to be influenced by people who appear knowledgeable and good sources of information. This may include social media influencers. These are relevant to beauty/cosmetic-related consumer behaviour as individuals may consider recommendations from peers or online sources when making a decision about

skincare products.

With regard to self-appearance and body-image concerns in adulthood and later adulthood, it is known that ageing produces changes in body appearance, such as changes in facial skin, hair and body shape, some of which may be perceived negatively, particularly within cultures that privilege youth ([4]). Concerns about ageing and, in particular, about physical and appearance changes related to ageing may also arise at earlier stages of adulthood. Concerns about attractiveness and facial appearance may be relevant among younger women, while older women may also experience concerns about visible signs of ageing.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their own worth. Experiences related to appearance and body image may be relevant to this evaluation, particularly when appearance becomes connected with feelings of self-worth or social acceptance [5]. With regard to body appreciation, this is part of the Positive Body Image domain, which should be seen as a distinct construct and not simply as the opposite of body dissatisfaction [7].

The links between social media, social comparison and body image/appearance issues have been indicated in studies such as [1]. Similarly, other research has explored beauty and skincare consumption and susceptibility to social influence (e.g., [3]), while other studies have examined ageing anxiety, body image, appearance issues, and their correlates, typically among middle-aged and older adult women (e.g., [6]).

Problem Definition

The present study sought to bring these areas together by exploring beauty and cosmetic-related influence, appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem and body appreciation among women across the selected age range.

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The study also assessed whether younger and older women differed in beauty and cosmetic-related influence, appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem and body appreciation.

3. Methodology / Approach

Research Design

A quantitative, correlational, comparative, and cross-sectional design was adopted.

Population and Sample

The study was delimited to women aged 18–73 years who agreed to participate and completed the online self-report questionnaire. The final sample comprised 108 women, with participants classified into two age groups: 18–45 years and 46–73 years.

Research Instruments

Facial Appearance and Cosmetic Influence Scale (FACIS)

Beauty and cosmetic-related influence was measured using the eight-item researcher-developed Facial Appearance and Cosmetic Influence Scale (FACIS). The items assess perceived influence from peers, social media and influencers in relation to cosmetic and skincare use and appearance-related behaviour. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Age-Related Facial and Skin Anxiety Scale (AFSAS)

Appearance-Related Ageing Concerns were measured using the eight-item researcher-developed Age-Related Facial and Skin Anxiety Scale (AFSAS). The scale assesses concerns and responses relating to visible signs of facial ageing and appearance-related ageing. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; [5]), which is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem, was used to measure Self-esteem. The items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree). Negatively worded items were reverse scored before calculating the total score.

Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2)

The Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2; [7]), a 10-item measure of positive body image, was used to measure body appreciation. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), with higher scores indicating greater body appreciation.

Statistical Analysis

Internal consistency for all four scales was examined and also preliminary factorability was assessed for FACIS and AFSAS. Pearson product-moment correlations were used to test the two formal hypotheses. Further, Spearman correlations were examined as sensitivity analyses. The coefficients were consistent in direction and statistical significance with the four Pearson correlations, supporting

the robustness of the observed associations. An additional independent-group comparison was also conducted between the two age groups.

4. Results & Discussion

Participant Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

The final sample consisted of 108 women aged 18–72 years. The four study measures demonstrated good to high internal consistency.

FACIS had a mean score of 2.16 (SD = 0.82), while AFSAS had a mean of 2.37 (SD = 0.88). The mean RSES score was 21.19 (SD = 6.28), and the mean BAS-2 score was 4.08 (SD = 0.77). Because the measures use different scoring ranges, their mean values should not be interpreted as directly comparable levels across constructs.

Reliability and Preliminary Psychometric Examination

All four measures demonstrated good to high internal consistency in the present sample. FACIS showed $\alpha = .862$, AFSAS $\alpha = .907$, RSES $\alpha = .897$, and BAS-2 $\alpha = .951$. These coefficients indicate that the items within each measure were internally consistent in this sample.

Since FACIS and AFSAS were researcher-developed measures, preliminary factorability was examined before interpreting their item-level structure. The KMO statistic assesses whether the correlations among items are sufficiently compact for factor analysis, while Bartlett's test examines whether the item correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix.

The KMO values were .847 for FACIS and .863 for AFSAS, and Bartlett's tests were statistically significant for both measures, indicating that the item correlation matrices were suitable for preliminary factorability assessment. The first eigenvalue accounted for 51.6% of the variance in FACIS and 61.2% in AFSAS. These findings provide preliminary information about the internal structure of the researcher-developed measures. They should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of complete psychometric validation.

Beauty and Cosmetic-Related Influence and Self-Esteem

The relationship between beauty and cosmetic-related influence and self-esteem was examined using Pearson's correlation. Higher FACIS scores were significantly associated with lower RSES scores, $r(106) = -.348$, $p < .001$. Even though the significance was high, the magnitude of the association was moderate. This suggested that the association was a meaningful one; however, beauty/cosmetic should not be considered the sole explanation for variations in self-esteem.

Beauty and Cosmetic-Related Influence and Body Appreciation

The relationship between beauty and cosmetic-related influence and body appreciation was also examined using Pearson's correlation. FACIS and BAS-2 scores were significantly negatively correlated, $r(106) = -.371$, $p < .001$. This suggests that women who reported greater influence from beauty and cosmetic-related pressures tended to report lower body appreciation.

These results are consistent with earlier research which showed that appearance comparisons on social media are associated with poorer body-image outcomes ([8]; [1]). Recent research has also linked online social comparison with lower positive body image [2]. FACIS does not directly measure social comparison, so a direct connection cannot be assumed. However, some of the appearance-related influences captured by the scale may occur in situations where comparison and evaluation are common.

Appearance-Related Ageing Concerns and Self-Esteem

The relationship between appearance-related ageing concerns and self-esteem was examined using Pearson's correlation. AFSAS showed a significantly negative relationship with RSES, $r(106) = -0.306$, $p = 0.001$. A direct relationship was seen between women who showed greater concern about the visible signs of ageing and those with lower global self-esteem.

Much of the research done with regard to women's experience with ageing has shown the significance of the continued importance of body image and cultural views with respect to youthfulness ([4]). [6] also reported similar associations among the importance of looks/appearance, anxiety related to ageing, psychological outcomes, and behaviours driven by appearance in middle-aged women. The findings of this study extend this general view by taking a look at age-related appearance concerns and their relation to global self-esteem across a wider age group of the female population.

Appearance-Related Ageing Concerns and Body Appreciation

The relationship between appearance-related ageing concerns and body appreciation was also examined using Pearson's correlation. AFSAS was significantly negatively associated with BAS-2, $r(106) = -0.311$, $p = 0.001$. Therefore, greater concern regarding appearance-related ageing signs was associated with lower body appreciation.

The results demonstrate that a positive body image may be relevant to women's experience with regard to ageing. When the visible changes of the physique are evaluated primarily against ideal youthful appearances/looks, normal ageing maybe felt more like an appearance discrepancy. As a result of this, we see reduced appreciation and acceptance of body they have currently. The four Pearson correlations are illustrated in Figures 1–4.

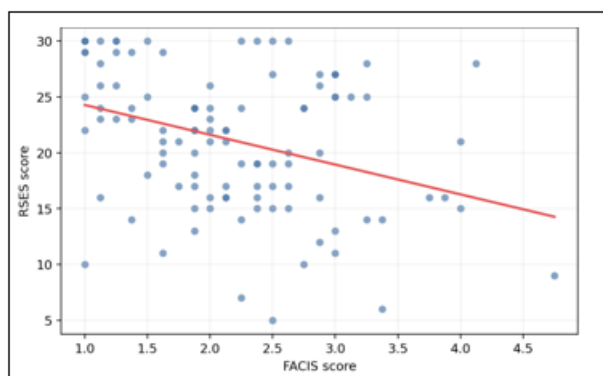


Figure 1: Scatter plot showing the relationship between FACIS and self-esteem (RSES).

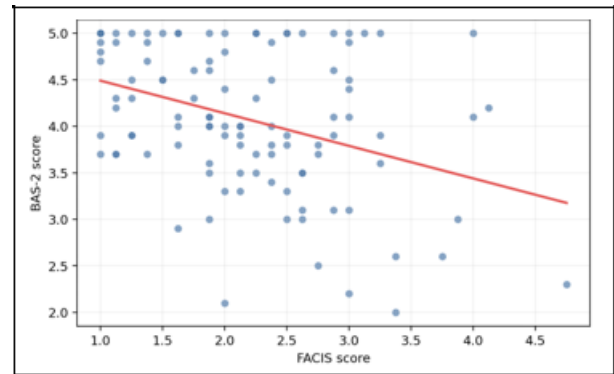


Figure 2: Scatter plot showing the relationship between FACIS and body appreciation (BAS-2).

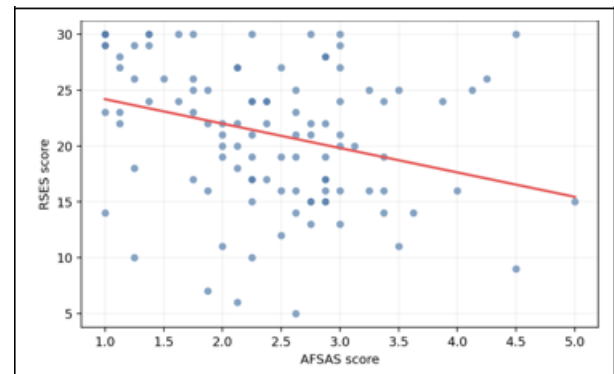


Figure 3: Scatter plot showing the relationship between AFSAS and self-esteem (RSES).

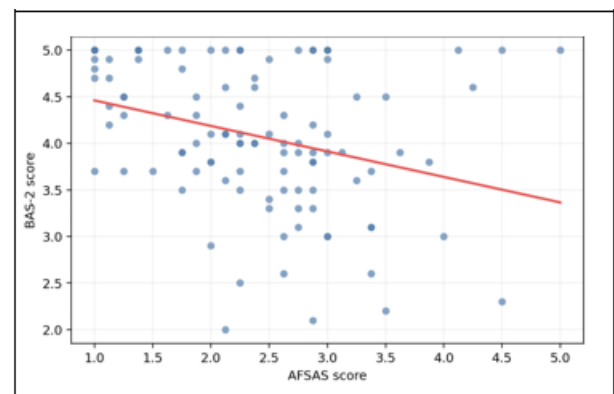


Figure 4: Scatter plot showing the relationship between AFSAS and body appreciation (BAS-2).

Age-Group Differences

Comparison of age groups provided a more specific picture of how each of the variables being studied differed between younger and older participants. Women in the 18–45 age group reported higher FACIS scores ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 0.87$) than women aged 46–73 years ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.72$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(106) = 2.51$, $p = .014$, $d = 0.48$, indicating a moderate effect size.

The age group difference in AFSAS was statistically not significant, Welch's $t(98.32) = 1.88$, $p = .063$, $d = 0.36$. Despite the younger group having a higher mean score, the evidence was insufficient to conclude any reliable differences among the two groups in appearance-related ageing concerns.

There were also no statistically significant age-group

differences in self-esteem, Welch's $t(97.14) = -1.51$, $p = .134$, $d = -0.29$, or body appreciation, Welch's $t(92.01) = -1.23$, $p = .220$, $d = -0.24$. Despite the older age groups having somewhat higher mean scores on both outcomes, the observed differences were not statistically reliable in this sample.

5. Conclusion

The present study shows significant negative associations between beauty standards and beliefs and cosmetic-related influence on both body appreciation and self-esteem. Appearance changes associated with ageing showed the same direction of association with both psychological outcomes. Therefore, both formal hypotheses were supported.

The age-group analysis revealed that women in the 18–45 age group reported significantly higher beauty and cosmetic-related influence than the women in the 46–73 group. There was no significant difference in appearance-related ageing concerns, self-esteem or body appreciation among both age-groups. Overall, the study suggests that appearance-related social and cosmetic influence and concerns about visible ageing are meaningfully connected with psychological self-evaluation and positive body image. At the same time, the results must be interpreted within the limits of a cross-sectional design, non-probability sampling, self-report measurement, and preliminary measurement development for FACIS and AFSAS. The study therefore supports an association-based interpretation and provides a basis for further research rather than a causal account of how beauty standards or ageing concerns affect psychological well-being.

6. Implications

The findings of this study provide potential relevance for the fields of counselling psychology, psychoeducation, and preventive care work in the mental health field. Counsellors can explore appearance-based social comparison, perceived peer pressure, internalized beauty standards, and beliefs concerning cosmetic use and ageing among women who present with appearance-related distress and issues. The intention is to understand how the concept of looks and appearance has become entangled with self-worth rather than assuming that the usage of cosmetics itself represents psychological difficulty.

7. Limitations and Suggestions

Since the study follows a cross-sectional design, it becomes difficult to draw conclusions about causality or temporal direction.

The sampling technique used is a non-probability sampling. This limits generalization of the findings of the study to the wider population of women.

The sample size of 108 may limit the precision and stability of estimates and the extent to which the findings can be generalised.

The principal psychological variables were assessed through self-report measures, which may be affected by response tendencies, social desirability, or common method bias.

FACIS & AFSAS are researcher-developed measures/tools. These may require detailed psychometric evaluation.

The findings of this study cannot establish that appearance-related influence causes lower self-esteem or body appreciation, as the study examined associations rather than causal pathways.

Future research should replicate FACIS and AFSAS in larger and independent samples and conduct confirmatory factor analysis to examine whether the proposed structures are replicated.

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