The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale: A Valid Measure of Appearance Anxiety
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Abstract

Introduction: The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008) was developed to assess fear of situations in which one’s appearance may be evaluated. We sought to further evaluate its convergent and predictive validity.

Method: We assessed if the SAAS would predict anxiety before and after a body measurement manipulation. Undergraduates (n = 95) filled out a packet of questionnaires and then participated in a body evaluation.

Results/Discussion: The SAAS exhibited excellent convergent and predictive validity. Our results indicate that the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale is a valid measure of appearance anxiety.

Introduction

• The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008) was developed to assess fear of situations in which one’s appearance may be evaluated

• The SAAS was shown
  • To be a psychometrically valid measure of social anxiety regarding appearance
  • To be a unique predictor of social anxiety over and above negative body image measures (Hart et. al., 2008)
  • Hart et al. called for further research on its convergent and predictive validity

Hypotheses

1) SAAS would predict state anxiety related to a body evaluation
2) SAAS would relate to BMI, body fat content, and current exercise
3) the SAAS would relate to self-esteem, exercise self-efficacy, and trait anxiety

Participants

• 95 undergraduates
• Participants were
  • Mostly female (n = 62; 65%)
  • Mostly white (n = 66; 70%)
  • Mean age of about 19 (M = 19.34, SD = 1.16)

Measures

Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008)
• Contains 16 items regarding anxiety about one’s appearance in social situations
• Positively associated with measures of social anxiety
• Unique predictor of social anxiety over and above body image measures

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Measure (RSEM; Rosenberg, 1965)
• 10-item measure of global self-esteem

Exercise Self-Efficacy Measure (ESEM)
• 5-items assess exercise self-efficacy (I am confident that I could work out/exercise at a public gym where strangers also work out), 4-items assess gym avoidance (When I go to the gym I think people are judging me), 3-items assess exercise importance (How important is exercising as an activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle?)

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Buing et al., 1998)
• 7-item measure of trait anxiety

Brief State Anxiety Measure (BSAM; Berg et al., 1998)
• 6-item measure of state anxiety
• Measured anxiety before and after body assessment

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998)
• 20-item measure of anxiety in social situations

Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE; Leary, 1983)
• Brief version of the original FNE (Watson & Clark, 1969)
• Measures fear of being negatively evaluated

Social Phobia Scale (SPS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998)
• 20-item measure that assesses fear of scrutiny

Mini-International Personality Item Pool Inventory (MINI-IPI; Dondorp et al., 2006)
• 20-item short form measure of five basic factors of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness.
• Used to measure neuroticism

Results

• State anxiety measured before and after the body evaluation (BSAM 2 & 3) were combined to create a measure of state anxiety experienced from the body evaluation

In multiple regression, the social appearance anxiety scale (part r = .27, p = .010) significantly predicted gym avoidance over and above neuroticism, fear of scrutiny, fear of negative evaluation, and social interaction anxiety

Discussion

• The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale is a valid measure of appearance anxiety

• Predicted anxiety over a body evaluation
• Significantly correlated with body fat and current exercise (but not BMI)
• Significantly correlated with trait anxiety and self-esteem

• SAAS played a unique role in predicting gym avoidance
• Appearance anxiety may cause individuals to avoid exercising
• Could lead to health problems

Future research should explore if this is a causal link and if exposures designed to reduce SAA decrease exercise avoidance

Table 1. The relationship between the SAAS and measures taken during body evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAAS</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Body Fat</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>-.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>-.42**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Note. SAAS = Social Appearance Anxiety Scale; Diagonal is Cronbach’s alpha; * = p < .05; ** = p < .001