



Research paper

The Relationship between Body Dysmorphic Concern, Ideas of Reference and Empathy with Social Anxiety Disorder: The mediating Role of Emotional Awareness

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between body dysmorphic concern, ideas of reference, and empathy with social anxiety disorder with the mediation of emotional awareness. The method was descriptive correlational. The statistical population consisted of 346 female students, aged 16-17 years, choosing by cluster random sampling. The instruments were the Social Panic questionnaire, Dysmorphic concern, Paranoid Thought, Interpersonal Reactivity, and Emotional Awareness. The results of the path analysis indicated that the body dysmorphic concerns, ideas of reference, and empathy directly associated with social anxiety disorder, and maybe effective on social anxiety of adolescent females. Further analysis revealed a significant relationship only between ideas of reference and empathy and social anxiety disorder, mediated by emotional awareness. It is suggested to be considered in interventions related to the social anxiety of adolescents.

Keywords: Body dysmorphic concern, emotional awareness, empathy, ideas of reference, social anxiety disorder.

Introduction

People suffering from social anxiety disorder have negative social-emotional functioning. Impaired social-emotional functioning is one of the problems that can be seen in people who have body dysmorphic concerns. In people who believe their appearance could be judged, people with high dysmorphic concern demonstrate an elevated tendency to experience unwanted appearance-related intrusions (Dondzilo, et al., 2020). Body dysmorphic concerns are located on a continuum of severity where the most extreme manifestation is body dysmorphic concerns and have been related positively to ideas of reference (Senín-Calderón, et al., 2020). It is a quick cognitive process that includes the interpretation of social stimuli. These ideas of reference, often have negative possible consequences (Senín-Calderón & Rodríguez-Testal, 2019). Both of these components of cognitive models are similar to social anxiety disorder and are associated with negative emotions. Among the most important components of other disorders seen in social anxiety disorder are interpersonal relationships and the ability for empathy. One of the important assumptions in the ability to express an empathetic response is the awareness of emotions (Weissman, et al., 2020). On this basis, this research aims to investigate the relationship between body dysmorphic concern, ideas of

reference and empathy with social anxiety disorder with the role mediation of emotional awareness in adolescent girls as the people who are more likely to be involved in this disorder.

The hypotheses of the present research model include the following:

- Body dysmorphic concerns have a positive and direct effect on social anxiety disorder.
- Ideas of reference have a positive and direct effect on social anxiety disorder.
- Empathy have a direct effect on social anxiety disorder
- Body dysmorphic concerns, ideas of reference, and empathy have an indirect effect on social anxiety disorder the mediation of emotional awareness.

Method

The present study method was descriptive-correlation(Structural Equations). The statistical population consists of all students in Jovein County of Iran from 2022 to 2023. A sample consisting of 346 female students who was 16 and 17 years old. It was estimated that the statistical population was 600 students. Finally, according to the type of study, 346 students were selected as members of the final sample after removing incomplete questionnaires. The sampling method of this research was cluster random sampling. To analyze the data the path analysis model was used. by SPSS24 and AMOS 23 Software.

Tools

Social Panic Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed by Connor, et al., (2000). This 17-item scale is designed on a five-option Likert scale and the range of scores is between 0 and 68. This scale has three subscales: fear, avoidance, and physiological discomfort. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire was 0.82.

Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire: This questionnaire includes 7 items that were created by Oosthuizen, et al., (1998) in a four-option Likert scale. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.73.

Paranoid thought scales: This scale was created by Green, et al., (2008) which included 16 items. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.80.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index: This scale with 28 items and four subscales was designed by Davis (1983). Its subscales include fantasy, empathy, perspective-taking, and personal distress. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71.

Emotion Awareness Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed by Rieffe, et al., (2008) and has 6 subscales of differentiating emotions, verbal sharing of emotions, not hiding emotions, and bodily awareness of emotions, in 30 items. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.85 for the entire questionnaire.

Results

After meeting the defaults of the path analysis model, the model was implemented. The standardized path coefficients after model modification (removing the path of Ideas of reference to emotional awareness) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Direct effects of research variables in the model

Variables	Path coefficient	T value	P Value
Ideas of reference→ Social anxiety disorder	0.37	7.23	0.01
Body dysmorphic concerns→ Social anxiety disorder	0.26	5.02	0.01
Empathy→ Social anxiety disorder	0.12	2.77	0.01
Emotional awareness→ Social anxiety disorder	0.12	-2.38	0.01
Ideas of reference→ Emotional awareness	-0.12	-2.33	0.02
Empathy→ Emotional awareness	0.14	2.79	0.01

Finally, the bootstrap test was used to investigate the indirect effects of the social anxiety variable through the mediation of emotional awareness, the results of which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The results of the bootstrap test for the mediation effect

Variables	Path coefficient	bounds 0.95 Lower	bounds 0.95 Upper	P Value
Body dysmorphic concerns→ Emotional awareness→ Social anxiety disorder	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	0.02
Empathy→ Emotional awareness→ Social anxiety disorder	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	0.02

Discussion and Conclusion

In explaining the findings of the first hypothesis, it can be said both are associated with expectations of social threat and negative or incomplete self-beliefs. Also, explaining the findings of the second hypothesis, it can be said that social anxiety disorder and body dysmorphic concerns have similar cognitive maintenance factors and with dysfunctional cognitive processes and maladaptive behaviors that maintain social anxiety disorder and body dysmorphic concerns. In explaining the findings of the third hypothesis, it can be said high sensitivity and empathy, the feelings and thoughts of others cause more fear and avoidance in social and functional situations. The reactivity and sensitivity that are especially important during adolescence due to the nature and characteristics of this period. And finally, in explaining the mediating role of emotional awareness, it can be said that emotional awareness can be associated with maladaptive strategies such as rumination, suppression, understanding the situation as significantly worse than that, and blaming oneself and others, which disrupts performance and increase negative emotions and can lead to an increase in social anxiety. Among the limitations of the current research, it can be pointed out that the research tool was self-report and the research results are limited to the researched community. It is suggested to provide environments where adolescents can develop social skills and correct their views and emotions towards themselves and others.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the students who participated in this research and the director of schools in Jovein County for their help.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not for profit sectors

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared no conflict of interest.



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