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Examining the Mediating Effect of Self-Esteem in the Relationship Between Perfectionism and Social Physique Anxiety

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Abstract

Despite extensive research on physical appearance perfectionism and social physique anxiety, the mediating role of self-esteem in this relationship, specifically in the Physical Education academic setting, remains unexplored. Therefore, the present study sought to examine this mediating effect. A total of 250 university students enrolled in the required Physical Education course participated in the study, which utilized an online survey and standardized, validated instruments to measure the key variables. The results show that students who are more dissatisfied with their body image and who hold high hopes of achieving body image perfection experience less anxiety about how their bodies are perceived by others. Moreover, high hopes for perfection are associated with higher self-esteem, which implies that striving for body image perfection and admiring physique imperfection is linked to self-confidence. Furthermore, students with lower self-esteem are more likely to experience higher levels of social physique anxiety. This means that students who do not feel good about themselves may worry that others negatively evaluate their physical appearance. In light of these findings, the indirect effect of perfectionism, specifically hope for perfection, on social physique anxiety through self-esteem was statistically significant and negative, demonstrating that increased hope for perfection contributes to increased self-esteem, which in turn leads to a reduction in social physique anxiety. Therefore, a stronger sense of self-worth serves as a protective factor against body-related anxiety, highlighting self-esteem as a critical psychological tool for resisting external pressure and body image concerns.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Self-Esteem, Social Physique Anxiety

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