

**Assertiveness, Attractiveness and Well-Being in Young Adults ;
A Comparative Gender Based Study**

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The present study assessed attractiveness and subjective wellbeing in young adults and hypothesized that assertiveness would likely to moderate this relationship. The sample was recruited using convenient sampling (N= 143) (n =73men, n=70women) (M =20.91, SD=1.85) Urdu versions of Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984), Self-assertiveness scale (Zahid, 2002) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al, 1985) were used as assessment measures. Correlational analysis indicated that physical attractiveness was positively related to assertiveness. Moderation analysis revealed that assertiveness did not moderate the relationship between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. Gender wise analysis revealed that assertiveness and attractiveness predicted subjective well-being in women only. The findings can be used to explore attributes in different sociocultural context which might improve subjective well-being.

Keywords: assertiveness, physical attractiveness, sexual attractiveness, subjective well-being¹

Introduction

How pleasing someone appears is their physical attractiveness (Patzer, 1985); and it affects wellbeing, happiness, satisfaction, mental health, self-esteem, and assertiveness (Archer & Cash, 1985; Campbell et al., 1986; Diener et al.,1995; Dion, 1972; Garner, 2012; Gupta et al., 2015; Jackson & Houston, 1975; Plaut et al., 2009;Traci, 2012).This study was carried out to replicate influence of physical or sexual attractiveness on

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subjective wellbeing moderated by assertiveness in young adults in Pakistan.

Physical attractiveness, an intangible but vital physical quality is defined as, being attractive or beautiful to oneself or someone else. Men and women usually think about attractiveness as physical appearance (Putzer, 1985), taken as a measure of social desirability (Tanke, 1982; Fink et al., 2006). Physically attractive individuals are regarded differently, often privileged compared to less physically attractive individuals; they commonly secure better jobs, higher incomes, and more acquaintances than others; and are considered as more important than less physically attractive people (Gupta et al., 2015; Langlois et al., 2000). Physically attractive people cause a halo effect as their pleasant demeanor influences other qualities (Hendricks et al., 2014). According to Franzoi and Shields (1984) attractive appearance in males is referred as physical attractiveness and in females it corresponds as sexual attractiveness. The major difference is only the use of two different connotations for males and females, otherwise the scale measures physical appeal, facial and body features in both genders for attractiveness.

Very few people doubt contentment, satisfaction and happiness are crucial elements of life (Abramovitz & Moses, 1979). Happiness is a deep-down inner feeling, a sense of subjective wellbeing when one compares to others (Di Tella et al., 2001). Subjective wellbeing consists of affective and cognitive components, where affective component includes emotional evaluation of life events and cognitive components to desires and expectations (Diener, 1994). Peneva and Mavrodieva (2013)) and Williams (2000) referred to assertiveness as a learnt personal characteristic that promotes one's self, point of view, objectives, hardships, and strong-mindedness; however, an assertive person does not hurt, damages or violates the rights or privileges of others, and manages their aggression effectively. Assertiveness is neither aggressive nor passive. Aggressive people can disgrace and bully others, controlling them (Ridely, 2005) or become passive to agree with others not to offend them, while holding a contrary aggressive opinions.

A number of studies suggest, physical attractiveness directly affects wellbeing and mental health of people (Baraakmann, 2011) and that physically attractive individuals lead happier and satisfied lives (Archer & Cash, 1985; Dion, 1972; Gupta et al., 2015; Plaut et al., 2009). Physically attractive people are less socially nervous and deal with people and able to

communicate better (Subhani, 2012) in more confident ways than less attractive people (Fink et al., 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that physical attractiveness is positively related to life satisfaction (Traci, 2012; Garner, 2012; Diener et al., 1995) and self-esteem (Bale, 2103; Thornton & Ryckman, 1991). Garner (2012) reported, physically attractive people are more assertive; women being more than men (Campbell et al., 1986; Jackson & Houston, 1975), however the opposite was found in a Pakistani study (Taqui et al., 2006). Researchers in the literature have explored that assertiveness is clearly linked with personality traits and demographic variables including age, sex, birth order, family background (Kirst, 2011; Weigel, 2006; Rodriguez et al., 2001). Suhail and Chaudhary (2006) found different demographic variables including income, social support, and social class as significant predictors of subjective wellbeing and happiness of eastern community. Research conducted on Pakistani students by Shafiq et al (2015) found that family and social support, area of residency effects assertiveness. Similarly gender and education are significantly associated with assertiveness level among Pakistani adults (Mueen et al., 2006)

This study replicates physical or sexual attractiveness on subjective wellbeing in young adults in Pakistan and measures moderating influence of assertiveness on this relationship. The study also documents the influence of demographic variables on wellbeing.

Rationale

Keeping in view the traditional Asian culture and particularly the traditions of our country where extreme importance is given to physical qualities, principally to the physical appearance of individuals, and where there is a fair possibility that this high importance attached to the physical attractiveness phenomenon may affect the well-being and a number of other important qualities of our youth. So there is a dare need to explore how/if this very important construct affects the well-being and assertiveness of our young adults. The preset study was therefore designed to investigate how physical appearance affect the well-being of young adults and to what extent assertiveness moderate this relationship.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the relationship among physical attractiveness, assertiveness and subjective well-being.
2. To investigate the moderating effect of assertive on the relationship between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being.

3. To explore the gender differences in physical attractiveness, assertiveness and subjective well-being.

Hypothesis of the study

1. Self-perceived physical attractiveness is likely to be positively related to assertiveness and subjective well-being in young adults.
2. Assertiveness is likely to moderate the relationship between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being.
3. There would be gender wise differences in physical attractiveness, assertiveness and subjective well-being.

Methods

Participants

The sample comprised of 143 young adults, (73 men and 70 women) with age range from 18 to 25 years ($M=20.91$, $SD=1.85$). Sample size was determined by considering the rule of thumb for regression analysis by Wilson et al. (2007). Non probability convenient sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Sample was recruited from different departments of the University of the Punjab Participants were selected on the basis of body mass index Following exclusion criteria obese and physically handicapped individuals were excluded from the sample to avoid unfavorable responses

Research design

A cross sectional, correlational research design was used in the present study and the design was cross sectional to examine the role of assertiveness as moderator between self-perceived physical attractiveness and subjective well-being in young adults.

Measures

Demographic Sheet. A demographic sheet included with other psychometric tests was given to all participants that measured age, sex, marital status, education, monthly income, Body Mass Index (BMI) etc. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) BMI, "is defined as a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of the person's height in metres (kg/m^2).” For example, an adult who weighs 70 kg and whose height is 1.75 m will have a BMI of 22.9. Each participant was weighed, and their heights were measured to calculate BMI for this study. A BMI of 30 or above was classified as obese (WHO, 2006) and the individual was excluded from the study.

Body Esteem Scale (BES). The physical attractiveness subscale of Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984) was used to assess the self-

perceived physical attractiveness. Two separate sub-scales of physical attractiveness for men and sexual attractiveness for women were used. The subscale for women consisted of 13 items and 11 items subscale for men was used. Each statement was rated on 5-point scale ranging from “strong negative feeling” to “strong positive feeling”. The coefficient alpha for internal consistency was .81 to .87 for all the male sub-scales and .78 to .87 for all three female sub-scales (Franzoi & Shields, 1984). Urdu translation of the subscale done by the researchers was used in the research. The alpha reliability of the scale in the current research was .80 for men and .61 for women.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Diener et al., 1985 developed SWLS to measure wellbeing based on personal evaluation of one’s life and assess satisfaction with life as a whole. The scale does not assess satisfaction with life domains such as health or finances but allows subject to integrate and weight these domains in whatever way they choose. The scale consists of five statements that include statements like, the conditions of my life are excellent and can be responded between strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). Diener et al. (1985) report strong internal reliability (Cronbach alpha = .87) and a strong 2-month test-retest stability ($r = .82$). William and Pavot (1993) report moderate temporal stability ($r = .54$ for 4 years). Urdu version of SWLS was obtained from the original author was used (Diener et al., 1985). The internal consistency of SWLS in the present study was moderately high (Cronbach alpha = .78).

Self-assertiveness Scale (SAS). Zahid (2002) adapted SAS in Urdu, which contained 28 items. Each item could be responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘1’ strongly disagree to ‘5’ strongly agree. Items 5, 10, 15, 16, 21, 22, and 27 were reverse coded. The composite score ranged from 28 to 140 with higher score signifying greater assertiveness. The internal consistency of SAS in the present study was medium to moderately high (Cronbach alpha = .70).

Procedure

Before giving consent, participants were informed about the nature of the study, and were told that they could withdraw from the study anytime without penalty. Their personal information and data were kept confidential and anonymous. Participants were given a packet of scales with a demographic sheet, BES, SAS and SWLS were all three measures were arranged in a random order followed by the demographic sheet. The data was collected individually from each participant. The time required for completing the whole protocol was 15-20 minutes A total of 7

participants which included 2 men and 5 women were dropped out of the study because of incomplete responses. So the data reduced from 150 to 143 participants.

Results

Results were computed using IBM SPSS (Version 20). Descriptive analysis was computed for demographics. Pearson product moment analysis was used for calculating correlations. Moderation was calculated through hierarchical regression analysis.

Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for demographic variables and Physical Attractiveness, Assertiveness and Subjective Wellbeing

Variable		<i>E</i>	<i>BMI</i>	<i>PAT</i>	<i>ASS</i>	<i>SWB</i>
Age	G	.37	.03	.17*	.06	.04
Education	E		-.02	.50**	.29**	-.02
Body Mass Index	BMI			-.14	-.12	.02
Physical Attractiveness	PAT				.36‡	-.07
Assertiveness	ASS					-.15
Subjective Wellbeing	SWB					
	<i>M</i>	20.92	3.11	43.90	95.49	16.78
	<i>SD</i>	1.86	0.77	8.23	11.29	6.37

Note. Age (G), Education (E), Body Mass Index (BMI), Physical Attractiveness (PAT), Assertiveness (ASS), Subjective Wellbeing (SWB)

* $p < .05$, † $p < .01$

Pearson Product Moment correlations revealed physical attractiveness was significantly positively related to assertiveness, but not subjective well-being. Age and education also showed positive correlation with physical attractiveness and assertiveness respectively.

Table 2

Moderation through Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Predicting Subjective Wellbeing from Self Perceived Physical Attractiveness and Assertiveness

Predictors	Subjective wellbeing	
	ΔR^2	β
Step 1		
Control variables	.09	
Step 2		
Assertiveness	.01	.08
Step 3		

Physical attractiveness	.00	.07
Step 4		
Physical attractiveness x Assertiveness	.01	.26
<i>Total R²</i>	.10	
N143		

^aControl variables included gender, age, marital status, education, profession, monthly income and body mass index.

Hierarchical regression analysis was computed to investigate the moderating role of assertiveness between self-perceived physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. Demographic variables including gender, age, marital status, education, profession, monthly income and body mass index were controlled. Results revealed that assertiveness did not moderate physical attractiveness and subjective well-being.

Table 3

Gender Wise Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Predicting Subjective Wellbeing from Physical Attractiveness and Assertiveness in Men (n =73) and Women (n =70)

Predictor	Subjective wellbeing			
	Men		Women	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Step1: Control variables ^a	.12		.07	
Step 2: Assertiveness	.05	.07	.08	-.30*
Step 3: Physical attractiveness	.03	-.19	.13	.36**
Step 4: Physical attractiveness X Assertiveness	.00	.15	.02	-.43
<i>Total R²</i>	.14		.29	

^aIncluded age, marital status, education, profession, monthly income and body mass index
* $p < .05$, † $p < .01$

Since physical attractiveness was differentially measured by BES across gender, we carried out a separate hierarchical regression analysis

predicting subjective wellbeing from physical attractiveness and assertiveness in men and women. The results showed physical attractiveness and assertiveness significantly predicted subjective wellbeing for women not men. However, moderating effect of assertiveness remained not significant.

Table 4

Differences in Physical Attractiveness, Assertiveness and Subjective wellbeing in Men (n = 73) and Women (n = 70)

Variable	Men	Women	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		<i>d</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
PAT	38.90(7.77)	49.11(4.72)	9.45	.001	-12.3	8.07	1.58
ASS	93.16(12.6)	97.92(9.20)	2.57	.01	8.42	1.10	.43
SWB	17.26(6.77)	16.27(5.93)	.93	.36	1.12	3.09	.08

Note. Physical Attractiveness (PAT), Assertiveness (ASS) and Subjective wellbeing (SWB) *d* = Cohen's *d*

Gender differences in self-perceived physical attractiveness, assertiveness and subjective wellbeing were computed by using t test for independent samples. Results indicated that women perceived themselves more physically attractive as compared to men. Similarly, women were found to be more assertive as compared to men. There was no significant difference found in subjective wellbeing of men and women.

Discussion

The present study reports physical attractiveness and assertiveness influence subjective wellbeing in women but not men, which implies higher physical attractiveness and assertiveness in women raises their subjective wellbeing. Assertiveness did not moderate physical attractiveness and subjective wellbeing across all participants or separately across men and women. The findings are partially consistent with the previous literature, which suggests attractive women are more assertive than less attractive women (Jackson & Houston, 1975); however, In

percent study it was found that physically attractive women are more assertive than men. The reason could be that our society and religion give more respect and space to women as compared to men and attractive women are socially less anxious. So they can put forward their point of views easily. Jackson & Houston (1975) also revealed that attractive women are more assertive compared to unattractive women. According to the social cognitive models of behavior the amount of any behavior depends on the expected response. People expect physically attractive people to be more socially assertive (Bandura, 1986; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). This may be the reason of high assertiveness in physically attractive women.

The results of the study also indicated physical attractiveness influenced subjective wellbeing in women not men, partially confirming our prediction. Urban women are noted to be happier than rural women (Plaut et al., 2009). As the present study was conducted on urban women that's why Plaut et al. (2009) results supported our findings. Secondly, women are more likely to get beauty treatments like cosmetic surgeries to enhance their features and appearance as compared to men. One of the studies conducted in Pakistan also showed that women are more concerned about their physical appearance than men (Tauqi et al., 2008). That could be the reason that physically attractive women find themselves more satisfied.

Finally, assertiveness did not moderate physical attractiveness and subjective wellbeing unlike previous studies (Plaut et al., 2009). Being assertive increases chances for you to feel better about yourself, and gives you a sense of control in everyday situations. However, asserting yourself will not necessarily guarantee you happiness and satisfaction. Asserting yourself does not mean that you will always get what you want (University of Illinois, 2015) assertiveness didn't moderate the relationship between these two variables in Pakistani culture, like another study found that assertiveness was related to satisfaction in the urban women, but not in rural women (Plaut et al., 2009). Some findings in the literature do somehow support our results as was explained in a study that there are many other variables which also subsidize subjective wellbeing (Kausar & Haroon, 2004). So, there could have been other stronger moderating variables instead of assertiveness that moderate the relationship between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. Cultural difference might possibly be the reason that assertiveness did not emerge as moderator because assertive behavior requires the expectations from others to how they respond. Assertive is influenced by culture which

indirectly influences person's behavior and attitude. Cultural differences also influence the roles of men and women, thus differentiating the assertive behavior of men and women. In some cultures men appeared to be more assertive than women and in other cultures it is vice versa. So, we can say that cultural norms affect the role of assertiveness in different societies. (Asni & Fajri, 2015). Ames (2008) also suggested that person's behavior is shaped according to the reaction he expects from others.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that assertiveness does not moderate the relation between physical attractiveness and well-being in young adults. Furthermore, physical attractiveness and assertiveness predicted well-being in women and they find themselves more attractive and assertive as compared to men. On the other hand the demographic variables such age and education were proved to be positively correlated with physical attractiveness and assertiveness respectively.

Implications

A futuristic society in which physical attractiveness holds a dominating role is no longer fast approaching but is already upon us and actually thoroughly entrenched within us. Even for the personnel selection they completely assess your personality and attributes how you present yourself and how assertively you put forward your viewpoint. Despite people's obsession with physical attractiveness, this phenomenon has not been researched about as such in Pakistani society. Furthermore, researches in Pakistan have rarely explored the phenomenon of assertiveness and subjective wellbeing in relation to physical attractiveness which are the focus of this research.

In context of our own culture this present study can help future researchers to study more about physical attractiveness and there is a need to develop indigenous tool to study the phenomena of physical attractiveness as it influences our society and behaviors of others. Furthermore, multiple measures of physical attractiveness may be beneficial to use. These results can also encourage the youth to be assertive in their expression and try to speak assertively for their rights by keeping in view not to violate the rights of others and lead happy and healthy life.

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