EFFECT OF PERCEIVED BODY IMAGE, SELF ESTEEM, EXPECTED PERFORMANCE, SELF ASSESSMENT AND ANXIETY ON PERFORMANCE IN GROUP DISCUSSION IN A REAL SELECTION SITUATION

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(The present study investigates Physical appearance, self esteem, the idea of one's body image as factors influencing the individual's social acceptance popularity in group and even success in interview or job. The performance of the participants in the discussion was measured by raters. At the end of the discussion, the self assessment about the performance in group discussion was obtained. It was obtained that only anxiety score was negatively correlated with the rating given by raters whereas self assessment was positively related.   *—Editors*)

Introduction : Physical appearance or physical attractiveness often positively influences individual's social acceptance, popularity, persuasive power and even job success. It regulates to a considerable extend the behaviour pattern of the individual as well as that of others in the society in different phases of life.

Studies have been carried out by Bersheid, Dion, Walster et al (1971, 1972) and it was observed that physical attractiveness or a favourable perception of one's body image was one of the most important factors determining social acceptance in a group of young people. Rossen and Ross (1968), Secord and Jourard (1953), White and Wash (1965), etc. found that attitudes had been integrally related to an individual's self-concept and self-esteem. Cohen (1968), Combs, Avila & Purkey (1973) etc. observed that self-esteem was an important factor in influencing perception, learning, level of aspirations, failure in school, athletic performance, even intelligence and industrial productivity. A study was conducted by King and Mannster (1977) with 98 female undergraduates to find out the effect of body image, self-esteem expectation and self assessment on actual success in a job interview for the post of school teachers. It was observed that :

(a) Body satisfaction correlated significantly with self-esteem.

(b) Expectations of success correlated significantly with body satisfaction and self-esteem.

(c) Significant positive correlation existed between self-esteem and self assessment.

(d) There was no relation between body satisfaction and self ratings. Actual performance was significantly related to expectation of success only.

(e) Self-esteem correlated significantly with self ratings. However, body satisfaction and self ratings were not correlated.

This study was organised in a simulated job interview for the post of a school teacher where physical appearance was not perceived to be of much significance in comparison to other attributes.

The present study was based on a similar problem and was carried on under a different environmental and cultural set up. In this investigation the emphasis was to study the relationship of the perceived body image and other measures of self esteem with the behavioural pattern of the subjects in a group situation. An additional variable dealing with anxiety (free floating type) was introduced. It was expected that a satisfactory perception of one's body image would give an individual more confidence in facing the situation and consequently would reduce the anxiety related to performance. Intention was to analyse the effects of each of the variables independently and that of their interactions on the subject's performance in the group discussion specifically conducted for recruitment for some jobs.

The variables considered were as follows :

(i) Anxiety-anxiety level being measured here was primarily the free-floating manifest anxiety level whether it be situationally determined or relatively independent of the immediate situation.

(ii) Perceived body image

(iii) Self-esteem

(iv) Expectations (about performance in the Group Discussion)

(v) Self assessment (about his own performance in the Group Discussion after it is over)

The hypotheses to be tested were as follows :

(i) Individuals satisfied with their physical appearance, would have higher expectation of their own performance in the Group Discussion and would evaluate their performance more highly than those who were dissatisfied with their own appearance. As a result greater self-confidence would be generated which would lead to a better performance. It means that the moderating effect of perceived body appearance on expectations of performance, self-assessment and actual performance would be positive,

(ii) Individual with a favourable perception of their body image would have a lower level of anxiety regarding their performance.

(iii) Self-esteem would be directly proportional to the perceived body image, expectation of performance, self-assessments and actual performance.

Method :

Subjects :

Subjects were 260 male and 28 female candidates who had applied for the post of Traffic Assistants in an Airlines Corporation and who were appearing in a group discussion for selection purposes. The candidates were graduates and some had one or two years' of work experience. The age range was 20-25 years.

Instruments :

IPAT Anxiety Scale :

It was used to measure the free floating manifest anxiety of the subjects. The scale consists of 40 questions measuring five parameters viz., (a) Lack of self-sentiment development, (b) Ego weakness, (c) Suspiciousness Paranoid type insecurity, (d) Guilt proneness, (e) Frustration tension, Id pressure. These part scores are added to obtain the total score. The total score is then converted into sten grades based on the norms available in the manual.

Performance Expectation :

This was based on the subject's responses to a questionnaire specially designed for this study. The subjects indicated their expected performance in the Group Discussion before it started. There were three questions and the responses for two were to be indicated on five point scale.

Perceived Body Image and Self-esteem :

Here, questions are related to physical and non-physical attributes of the subjects and they marked their responses on a 3-point scale. This questionnaire was also constructed for this study. Height questions pertaining to physical appearance were scored separately to obtain measure of the perceived body image while the score from the rest 12 questions formed a measure of self-esteem.

Self Assessment :

At the end of the Group Discussion, the subject was asked to assess his own performance in the Group Discussion on a five-point scale with

respect to six dimensions viz., Address, Articulation, Logic, Breadth of Knowledge, Participation and Coordination. A brief definition of the dimensions was provided at the beginning to help the subject form a clear concept about the dimensions.

Examiner's rating :

During the Group Discussion three examiners observed the participants and rated them on a five point scale which was behaviourally anchored, on the six dimensions mentioned above. After the exercises were completed, the independent ratings of the three examiners were added together to obtain consolidated ratings for each participant on those traits.

Procedure :

Before the candidates participated in the Group Discussion they were told that the data being collected from them through the questionnaires were only for research purposes and these would not have any effect on the result of the selection. This was done to elicit free and frank responses from the subjects. Prior to the Group Discussion, the participants completed the anxiety scale and questionnaire on perceived body image and self esteem. As stated earlier during the Group Discussion the performance of each participant was rated independently by three examiners. At the end of the Group Discussion, the participant assessed himself regarding the dimensions on which they were being rated by the three raters,

Results :

Correlation coefficients between Anxiety score, Self expectation, Body image, self esteem, Self assessment and Performance assessment are presented in Table 1.

TABLE-1

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG DIFFERENT VARIABLES

	Anxiety	*Body Image*	*Self Esteem*	*Self Score*
Performance	-·29**	—	—	·38**
Anxiety	—	—	--·14*	- ·14*
Expectation	—	·39**	·45**	·21**
Body Image	—	—	·58**	·15*
Self Esteem	—	—	—	·17**

* Significant at the 5% level

** Significant at the 1% level

Anxiety correlated negatively with all other variables except the Self expectation, which was however insignificant. Anxiety reduced the level of performance as indicated by the significant negative correlation between anxiety score with performance ratings (--29).

Expectation of success was positively related with both Body image (-39**) and Self esteem (-45**). The result corroborates with what was observed by King and Manastir (1977). The perception about Body image correlated highly (-58**) with Self esteem. This also supports the observation of King & Manastir. Significant positive correlation not of very high order (-17**) existed between self-esteem performance (-38**).

So, on the whole it can be said that the results obtained here did not corroborate exactly with those of the study conducted by King and Manastir (1977) with 98 female undergraduates. There were variations in certain points.

In order to have a better picture of the moderating effects of the variables on the performance in Group Discussion, the candidates were divided into High (25%), Average (50%) and Low (25%) on the basis of the variables like Anxiety, Expectation, Body image, Self esteem and Self score. Then the average of the performance ratings for each group was calculated and the values are presented in Table 2. Table 3 presents the significant t-values calculated in this connection.

TABLE-2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF RATINGS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION IN HIGH, AVERAGE AND LOW GROUPS

(segregated on the basis of scores on different variables)

Variables	Means and S.D of Ratings for Group Discussion								
	Low			Average			High		
N = 260	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	N
Anxiety	13.17	4.36	63	13.32	3.89	129	11.87	4.42	68
Expectation	11.34	6.19	41	13.41	4.24	144	13.29	4.52	75
Body Image	12.72	4.27	61	13.04	4.81	133	13.85	3.98	66
Self Esteem	11.96	4.58	77	14.30	4.30	100	13.41	4.27	83
Self Score	11.29	3.38	69	13.65	4.16	130	15.31	4.51	61

TABLE-3
T-VALUES INDICATING SIGNIFICANT MEAN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH, AVERAGE AND LOW GROUPS FORMED ON THE BASIS OF SCORE DISTRIBUTIONS OF DIFFERENT VARIABLES

Variables	High × Average		Average × Low		High × Low	
Anxiety	2·26*	d·f 195	2·89*	d·f 190	4·29**	d·f 195
Self Score	3·07**	d·f 189	4·37**	d·f 197	5·74**	d·f 128
Expectation	–		2·03*	d·f 183	–	
Self Esteem	--		3·49**	d·f 175	2·07*	d·f 158

* Significant at the 5% level
** Significant at the 1% level

Of the five variables only Body image had no significant effect on Performance. Expectation of success had a little positive effect on the performance as that of the Self esteem. Only Anxiety had significant negative effect whereas Self score had significant positive one.

Next, the group was divided into Male and Female categories and the intercorrelations among the variables were calculated but in Female category consisting of 29 cases only, none of the correlations was significant except the correlation Self esteem and Self score (·52**). While in Male group correlations more or less of same order were observed between the variables and hence it may be said that the female subjects behaved in a different way than the Male subjects. So, the next steps of analysis were carried on with the male group only.

Now, how far these four variables viz., Anxiety, Self expectation, Body image and Self esteem could predict the performance of the subjects in the Group Discussion, regression equation was developed by using step down procedure. The maximum correlation (negative) was obtained with Anxiety score and obtained correlation r was as high as ·29 which was significant. Further inclusion of the variables was not recommended as the increase in Multiple R due to addition of other variables was found to be insignificant. The regression equation obtained is as follows :

Estimated performance = Y = 16·56 — ·14 X_1

where X_1 = Anxiety score.

It shows that high level anxiety hampers the performance considerably where other variables viz., Self expectation, Body image, Self esteem have nothing to contribute.

Conclusion :

The idea of one's own body image, self esteem, expected performance and anxiety were all measured of a group of 260 candidates of which 29 were females before conducting a Group Discussion to measure certain personality traits. At the end of Group Discussion the self assessment about performance in Group Discussion was obtained. It was observed that only Anxiety was negatively correlated with performance whereas self assessment was positively related. Other variables had no effect.

The behavioural patterns of the females was different from that of males. Analysing the result of the male group it was observed that perception about Body image, Self esteem, Expectation about performance had no significant effect on performance. Only anxiety negatively affected the performance ratings.

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