



# Research on the influence of college students' self-appearance cognition on their willingness to have plastic surgery from the perspective of self-objectification

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**Abstract.** In the 21st century, the primary standard of almost all social behavior is to have "appearance level". The society begins to pay close attention to college students due to social interaction and job hunting. The study found that college students' "appearance anxiety" is serious, which is due to various factors such as reality and others' evaluation in the Internet. Self-object perspective regards their body as objects from the perspective of a third party, continuously monitoring their body, and creates a gap with the social ideal body shape contrast, forming the problem of appearance anxiety. In this study, through case interview and questionnaire survey, the following conclusions are drawn: (1) college students have generally low cognition of their appearance, and generally care about others' evaluation of their appearance, and the evaluation from the Internet will have a significant impact on college students' cognition of their appearance. Appearance anxiety has become a common psychological distress of college students, and affects the evaluation behavior of college students on self-appearance cognition; (2) college students have high tolerance of plastic surgery in the society, but the proportion of college students with plastic surgery intention is low; (3) college students' cognition of their own appearance will affect their willingness to have plastic surgery; (4) college students' appearance anxiety and plastic surgery intention have certain differences in gender.

**Keywords:** Self-appearance cognition; Plastic surgery willingness; Self-objectification

## 1 Introduction

With the development of economy and society, people pay more and more attention to appearance, "appearance level" has become a high-frequency word active in the public view, and plastic surgery, as a technology and means that can significantly improve appearance, has gradually attracted public attention. Some studies have found that college students' "appearance anxiety" is serious, which is due to the lack of individual confidence and various factors derived from the reality and others in the Internet. At present, college students tend to have a negative cognition of self-appearance, and the phenomenon of self-object appears in the society. "appearance anxiety" has become an

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S. Yacob et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 779, [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5\\_106](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5_106)

important social mentality problem that troubles college students. Psychological research has found that young people in their 20s<sup>[1-5]</sup>.

Due to the rapid development of modern plastic surgery industry, it is feasible and effective to improve their appearance through plastic surgery. And plastic surgery has gradually become a more and more accepted form of consumption for the general public, the plastic surgery population is becoming younger and more young<sup>[6-8]</sup>, college students expect to adjust the appearance level to close to the public aesthetic standards, in order to achieve a certain purpose. Reports show that college students value their appearance and enjoy plastic surgery, which has become a trend after the college entrance examination and during the graduation season<sup>[9-11]</sup>. This study through the college students of self appearance cognition and cosmetic will survey, trying to explore the factors affecting the college students self appearance cognition, reveal the appearance cognition and the contact between cosmetic willingness, is beneficial to help college students to correct self appearance cognition, alleviate college students appearance anxiety status, set up the correct and reasonable cosmetic concept.

## 2 Self-objectification theory

In a modern environment, Fredrickson and Roberts proposed the theory of sexual materialization, which explains that women's body is looked at, evaluated and materialized through various channels, such as media and social interaction<sup>[12]</sup>. Women who are sexually targeted are treated as objects by others for a long time, Body parts or sexual function that break away from oneself, As a pure tool or as seen as representing the individual woman herself, Leading to a female self-object orientation (self f-objectification) (e. g., Internalizes the third party's own body), Beginning to value the appearance of the body, It is not the ability attribute of the body<sup>[13]</sup>, And show habitual, persistent monitoring of their own body<sup>[14]</sup>.

From the perspective of sexual object theory, the self-objectification theory proposes a theoretical framework to explain how women's sexual object experience leads to mental health problems. Influenced by the social and cultural environment of informatization and sexual objectification, women experience sexual objectification, and slowly internalize the experience of sexual objectification, forming self-objectification. However, self-oriented women internalize sex object, habitually monitor their physical appearance from the perspective of a third party, and compare it with the social ideal body, resulting in appearance anxiety and risk factors for mental health problems. The focus of the concept of self-object is on appearance. Self-objective women habitually monitor their bodies and compare them with social ideals of appearance or popular aesthetic standards. The insurmountable gap between the actual appearance and the ideal body shape will make women produce a series of negative psychological results, and then produce serious psychological problems such as appearance anxiety.

### **3 Phenomena**

First, college students generally have a low cognition of their appearance, and they generally care about others' evaluation of their appearance, and the evaluation from the Internet will have a significant impact on college students' cognition of their appearance. Appearance anxiety has become a common psychological distress for college students, and affects the evaluation behavior of self-appearance cognition. The appearance values of college students are also influenced by traditional social concepts, employment, mate selection and other practical factors as well as media communication, and are consistent with the social value orientation and the value orientation of media related reports. In addition, men are significantly more satisfied with their appearance than girls; facial anxiety is concentrated among female college students, who basically have no appearance anxiety and plastic surgery intention.

Second, college students have a high tolerance of plastic surgery behavior in the society, but the proportion of college students who have plastic surgery intention is relatively low. Although college students generally believe that appearance is very important and have a high degree of acceptance of plastic surgery, there are still a few who are really willing to put it into practice, and only a few who have undergone plastic surgery. College students not only affirm the value of plastic surgery but also have concerns. Financial restrictions and the risk of plastic surgery are important factors affecting their plastic surgery behavior.

Third, college students' cognition of their own appearance will affect their willingness to have plastic surgery. College students with low awareness of their appearance tend to be more willing to accept plastic surgery and have a stronger desire to do it. The purpose of plastic surgery is to boost confidence, while the rest is to have good social relationships, love and job hunting. College students with a high degree of plastic surgery also have a higher willingness to undergo plastic surgery, indicating that the social environment cognition will have an impact on the value judgment of college students.

Fourth, there are certain gender differences between college students' appearance anxiety and plastic surgery willingness. Although no significant results were obtained in the empirical test, in the case interview, we strongly felt that male college students generally rated their appearance highly compared with women, had a lower degree of appearance anxiety, and the number of individuals with plastic surgery intention was very small. The interview materials also show that the phenomenon of self-object is concentrated on women, and female self-object has been widespread among college students.

### **4 Research Implications**

#### **4.1 Prevention and intervention in the self-object of female college students.**

From the above analysis, it can be seen that women's objectification attitude is very serious, and women's self-objectification has been widespread among college students. As college students contact the most media platforms and social networks, they are just

mature and are vulnerable to interference from external evaluation and trends, which guide the social environment, such as the mass media to advocate the diversity of female images; the school should educate men to respect women, so as to change the phenomenon of "materialization" and "viewing" for women, and reduce the psychological anxiety of female college students. Our country has also started the body image and eating disorders research<sup>[15]</sup>, and explore the students based on the school overweight intervention model, through the "object", "thin ideal internalization" cognitive intervention, reduce adolescent women's body is not satisfied, formed a healthy body, this kind of intervention for the prevention of junior high school girls body is not satisfied best<sup>[16]</sup>. Personally, women should be helped to develop non-appearance-related abilities, such as communication skills, critical thinking skills, and motor skills<sup>[17]</sup>. Women should learn to use critical thinking to analyze the social media spread of the super thin image<sup>[18]</sup>, from the whole view their body, especially the body ability, not just appearance, improve the relationship between body and mind, the body as a concrete, social, psychological integration, respect and accept their body<sup>[19]</sup>.

#### **4.2 Stimulate the confidence of college students and strengthen the education of the three views.**

College students believe that today's society attaches great importance to external appearance, and generally lack of self-confidence before entering the society, which is related to the fierce competition in today's job market. Holding confidence in external appearance means that college students, due to the lack of social experience, the cognition of social value is superficial, and the awareness of people's social value and development ultimately depends on their own ability, knowledge level, moral character and cultivation and other internal factors. To enhance the self-confidence of college students, we need to cultivate scientific self-concept, healthy psychology and learn self-motivation. Therefore, it is particularly important to help college students cultivate healthy talent psychology, encourage college students to learn to regulate themselves, and enhance their psychological endurance and anti-interference ability. Nowadays, the public aesthetic standards make college students' desire and behavior for plastic surgery often have a certain blindness, which affects the physical and mental health development. Therefore, ideological educators should pay attention to the popular view of appearance level, analyze the influence of aesthetic values and aesthetic standards contained in it on college students, and improve their aesthetic taste and cultivate their healthy aesthetic values through aesthetic education.

The problem of college students' self-appearance cognition reflects the problems of college students' outlook on life and values<sup>[20]</sup>. Therefore, creating a good social atmosphere, improving the level of value education and aesthetic education in colleges and universities, and cultivating the healthy psychological quality and media quality of college students can help college students to establish correct values and outlook on life, and contribute to the healthy growth and development of college students. The value education in colleges and universities is slightly powerless surrounded by the realistic environment and media communication, and the value education of college students

needs to be strengthened urgently. In the author's opinion, the value education of contemporary college students needs not only to pay attention to the influence brought by the rapid social changes, but also needs to distinguish in the specific content and methods of value guidance and education for groups with different characteristics. The values education of college students cannot be separated from social reality; meanwhile, college students should establish confidence and not regard appearance level as a standard to measure their success in life.

#### **4.3 Purify the network atmosphere and identify mixed information.**

With the rapid development of new media technology, the Internet and media platforms are fully integrated into the study and life of college students. College students with strong curiosity and curiosity almost always contact and use the Internet to obtain information. The Internet information is mixed, and the good and bad are mixed. When contemporary college students frequently contact the information released by various media through the Internet, due to insufficient social experience, it is often difficult to distinguish the authenticity of contemporary college students, which has a great negative impact on the social cognition and value judgment of college students. This survey also shows that media communication has a great impact on the appearance values of college students. In addition, under the background of the popularity of short video platforms, college students, as the main body of online social media, often publish and share their daily life, and the comments received also will gather positive and negative, positive and negative. Many college students get depressed when they receive negative comments, dislike their appearance, and even commit extreme behavior. Therefore, college students should correctly understand the production of media information transmission law and media information commonly used techniques, need to improve the Internet of all kinds of information discrimination and use ability, reduce the Internet information on their appearance of social and value judgment, so as to improve self-confidence, make the right, rational judgment, so as to avoid psychological problems such as appearance anxiety.

#### **4.4 Have a rational attitude towards plastic surgery behavior.**

Nowadays, the aesthetic values of college students are influenced by the public to some extent, and they pay great attention to improving their appearance. In view of the problem of improving appearance, the data prove that most college students just stay in weight loss, makeup and other behaviors, and college students do not accept their own plastic surgery. College students have little knowledge of cosmetic surgery, and cosmetic surgery is not yet popular in Chinese campuses; in addition, college students have low economic level to afford the high cost of cosmetic surgery. For the acceptable degree of plastic surgery, almost all students can only accept plastic surgery below grade 2. Among college students who already have plastic surgery, most students only receive micro-plastic surgery such as double eyelid surgery. It can be seen that college students are very rational in treating plastic surgery, which is also in line with the author's social expectations. However, in social reports and campus, we do not rule out some of their

appearance is very low evaluation, serious appearance anxiety or due to courtship, social or job hunting setbacks, full face, whole body plastic surgery behavior, after because of their irrational bad results. The author hopes that when dealing with plastic surgery behavior, college students should seriously consider their own conditions, consider the possible consequences, and make rational judgment and choice. For the phenomenon of plastic surgery in the society, most college students believe that they can accept the plastic surgery phenomenon of close friends or college students, but some college students feel that they cannot accept the plastic surgery of others. The author believes that in today's social background, our attitude towards plastic surgery also needs to keep pace with The Times. The pursuit of beauty is an individual right, and we need to respect and do not need to interfere with the choice of others.

## 5 Summary

There is no denying that appearance is really important in today's era, and "judge people by their appearance" often happens in life. But have an ideal life, to achieve their own life value, only rely on external appearance is obviously not enough. In the long life, "the wind is always blown away by the rain and wind", if you want to obtain growth and happiness must not only external appearance, but also have internal growth. A person's external appearance and beauty will eventually age with the passage of time, but "the belly has poetry and books from China", people's inner growth will not decrease with age and aging. In fact, there is no unified aesthetic standard in the world. There are many deficiencies in the empirical analysis of this study and the small sample size, which may be an important reason for the contradiction between some data analysis results and the interview results. As the first time for the group to carry out quantitative and qualitative research, this is a very difficult challenge for the group, but it is also an important attempt. Continuing to increase the sample thickness on this subject is also our long-term continuous goal.

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