

The Influence of Weight Locus of Control on Physical Appearance Comparison Among Working Women: A Study of Demographic and Behavioral Factors.

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ABSTRACT

Background: the association of weight locus of control and physical appearance comparison in relation to working women. It seeks to determine how body image concerns are affected by either internal or external control over weight, especially in the work place. The findings give an insight into facilitating healthier self-perceptions and weight management practices among employed women.

Objectives: To investigate the correlation between weight locus of control and physical appearance comparison among working women.

Study Design: A descriptive cross-sectional study

Place and Duration of Study. Department of Psychiatry Rawalpindi Medical University Rawalpindi, Pakistan from Jan 2024 to Jan 2025

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 150 working women in Rawalpindi. The Dieting Belief Scale (DBS) and Physical Appearance Comparison Revised Scale (PACRS) were used to collect the data. Non-probability convenient sampling was used to choose the sample. Pearson correlation, regression analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA were used to analyze data and measure links and demographic differences.

Results: The average age among the participants was 34.6 years with a standard deviation of 4.5 years. Substantial dissimilarity existed ($p < 0.05$) between women who practiced and those who did not practice exercises. Females of the fitness-oriented group were also reported to have lower physical appearance comparison scores ($p = 0.02$) which implies that there was a correlation between internal control over weight and low comparison scores among women.

Conclusion: the adverse correlation of internal weight locus of control and physical appearance comparison. Frequent exercise and body image perfection through fitness objectives may help working women to achieve self-control and enhance body image satisfaction, leading to healthier self-perceptions and behaviors..

Keywords: Weight locus, body image, working women, appearance comparison.

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical appearance is much stressed, and people tend to compare themselves with other people in terms of appearance. Such comparisons may influence many areas of everyday life, such as self-esteem, emotional state, and health behaviors. The effects of physical appearance comparisons on working women can be especially strong due to the numerous roles and duties they have to handle. Working women encounter different problems, including the necessity to balance between work and personal life, society, time, etc., which may impact their body image and self-concept (Weight locus of control is the belief that a person is in full control of his or her weight, or is mostly controlled by other elements, e.g. by genetics, living conditions, social pressure, etc., 1966). An external locus of control suggests that external forces influence weight-related.

consequences whereas an internal locus of control indicates that weight is determined by their diet, exercise, and lifestyle (Stotland and Zuroff, 1990). Past Research indicated that a person with an internal locus of control about their weight is more willing to adhere to healthy weight management behaviors (dieting, exercise, pursuing more healthful eating habits) (Lenny et al., 2012; Voelker et al., 2015). Conversely, the construct of the external locus can result in feelings of helplessness, poor self-control, body dissatisfaction, and unhealthy behaviors (Anastasiou et al., 2015). The physical appearance comparison concept can be defined as the inclination of the individuals towards comparison of body or physical appearance with that of other people (Schaefer and Thompson, 2014). This comparison can be either an upward or a downward comparison (having oneself compared to a person thought to be more attractive or healthier and having oneself compared to a person thought to be less attractive or unhealthy). Compared to downward comparisons, upward comparisons have been associated with body dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem, and adverse emotional consequences, though they can also produce a feeling of relief (Tiggemann and Slater, 2013). Such comparisons can be deemed as potentially vulnerable to working women, especially at work where physical appearance tends to shape social relations and any workplace opportunities (Jhaveri et al., 2016; Lenny et al., 2012). The findings mostly indicate that females who possess an internal locus of control are more satisfied with their bodies and are less likely to compare their physical appearance with others. Nonetheless, Research on working women in particular is still scarce. The cultural aspects, social norms, and work-related needs and pressures of the Pakistani setting can play a major role in determining how women engage with their self-regulation of body image and weight. The cultural expectation to meet idealized beauty standards can further increase worries about physical appearance, particularly in the context of working women balancing work and personal life in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and the proposed study aims to reveal this relationship. It investigates the connection between an internal locus of control and a reduced number of physical appearance comparisons and increased body image satisfaction. It also addresses how demographic factors, which include exercise habits, fitness goals, employment type, and job experience influence these relationships. The knowledge of these dynamics will aid in the development of programs to enhance the health, body image and wellbeing of working women in the work place

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out on 150 working women in Rawalpindi. Non-probability convenient sampling was used to select the participants. Two validated scales, the Dieting Belief Scale (DBS) to assess weight locus of control and the Physical Appearance Comparison Revised Scale (PACRS) to assess the tendency to compare own physical appearance with others, were used to collect data. Demographic data including age, occupation, fitness levels, and work experience were also requested of the participants. To test the relationships between the variables in the study, Pearson correlation, regression analysis and ANOVA were performed.

Inclusion criteria: Young working females between the ages of 18-45 years, full-time employees with a work experience of at least two years, and who are residents of Rawalpindi.

Exclusion criteria: Women who are pregnant or lactating, those who are physically or mentally handicapped, and women who are not working full time were ruled out of the study.

Results:

The average age of the participants was 34.6 years (SD = 4.5), and the age range was 18-45 years. The descriptive statistics of the scales revealed that when working women exercised regularly they had more internal weight locus of control (M = 60.52, SD = 7.50) than working women who did not exercise (M = 58.15, SD = 6.37). Moreover, physical appearance comparison tendencies were less among women who had fitness goals (M = 27.61, SD = 6.61) than women who did not have any fitness goals (M = 29.56, SD = 7.51). The regression outcome showed that weight locus of control was a significant predictor of comparison of physical appearance (b = -0.26, p < 0.001). The ANOVA tests revealed that there were significant differences in weight locus of control by occupation with teachers scoring higher on internal locus of control (F = 1.73, p < 0.05). Generally, the research concluded that women with routinely exercised and established fitness objectives were better at managing their weight and they were less prone to physical appearance comparisons.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Scales Used in the Study (N = 150)

Scale	M	S.D	Range	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dieting Belief Scale (DBS)	60.52	7.50	16-96	0.72	1.71	3.66
Physical Appearance Comparison Revised Scale (PACRS)	27.61	6.61	11-55	0.75	0.014	-0.55

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Between Weight Locus of Control (WLOC) and Physical Appearance Comparison (PAC)

Variables	WLOC	PAC
Weight Locus of Control (WLOC)	1	-0.39**
Physical Appearance Comparison (PAC)	-0.39**	1

Table 3: Regression Analysis for Weight Locus of Control (WLOC) and Physical Appearance Comparison (PAC)

Variable	B	S.E	t	p	95% CI
Constant	56.29				
WLOC	-0.27	0.704	-3.76	0.000	-0.424, -0.132

Table 4: Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Weight Locus of Control (WLOC) and Physical Appearance Comparison (PAC) Based on Exercise

Exercise Status	M (WLOC)	S.D (WLOC)	M (PAC)	S.D (PAC)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
With Exercise (n=90)	60.52	7.50	25.05	6.73	-2.07	0.03	0.3
Without Exercise (n=60)	58.15	6.37	28.14	7.55			

2. DISCUSSION:

This research investigated the association between weight locus of control (WLOC) and physical appearance comparison (PAC) with physical appearance in working women in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The findings showed that there is a large negative relation between an internal WLOC and physical appearance comparison, which supports the hypothesis that women who feel that they have more control on their weight conditions are less likely to compare their appearance with others. The analysis of the effect of exercise and fitness objectives, profession and job experience on WLOC and PAC also help understand that these variables negatively affect body image and weight-related behaviors in working females. According to studies by Lenny et al. (2012) and Voelker et al. (2015), people who have an internal WLOC experience weight management behaviors like exercise and diet, resulting in a better body image and reduced body comparisons. One of the most important results of the present research is the influence of exercise on the development of an inner WLOC because the person is empowered to change depending on the efforts and not on the external factors. The more active women indicated greater levels of internal WLOC, and less likely to compare their physical appearances. This conclusion coincides with Study by Lee and Kim (2019), who showed that women who exercise display more beliefs in internalized weight control, which consequently results in healthier body image. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that exercise increases physical appearance and psychological health (Zamani et al., 2016). The non-exercisers however, gave more reports about external WLOC and more appearance comparison in their perceptions, which also supports the notion that external factors including the pressure of society tends to prevail in their self-image. Another crucial aspect investigated in this study was the establishment of fitness goals. Women with fitness aspirations had an increased likelihood of having an internal WLOC and had fewer physical appearance comparisons. This observation is consistent with Schwing and Becker (2021), who concluded that having specific and attainable fitness objectives makes a person have a sense of control of their body, which affects positive body image. Attainment of fitness goals gives a real feeling of accomplishment and elevated self-esteem as well as less comparison with others. By comparison, people with no fitness intentions tended to make more appearance comparisons, indicating that having a sense of purpose in their fitness commitment may decrease physical appearance insecurity. The research also found that WLOC and PAC differed by profession. Internal WLOC was reported the highest by the teachers, then the bankers, with the highest levels of physical appearance comparison by nurses. This can be attributed to the kind of professions that they have. Teachers may be able to use a structured daily routine, which could help them to maintain better health habits and weight

control. The latter is aligned with Patel and Kumar (2019), who observed that working in a structured environment allows employees to lead healthier lifestyles and feel more in control. Contrary to this, due to job stress, extended shifts, and irregular working hours, nurses might have problems with the regularity of weight control, which can increase both the external WLOC and the frequency of appearance comparisons (Green & Roberts, 2018). Conversely, bankers are also characterized by high stress levels, long working hours, and poor eating habits that can contribute to an externalized WLOC and increase the risk of body dissatisfaction (Johnson, 2019). Job experience also proved to be influential in WLOC and PAC formation. Females who had a better experience at work had better internal WLOC and fewer appearance comparisons. Patel and Kumar (2018) support this observation and conclude that the longer the overall job tenure, the higher the self-confidence and control, which result in a better body image. Greater experience in the workplace could make women feel safer in their jobs and better able to adapt to stress, which leads to higher satisfaction with their body images and lower comparison with appearance. On the other hand, this research finding is consistent with the research conducted by the other authors on this topic of weight locus of control and physical appearance comparison as well as adds to the findings of this study by identifying the specific situation of working women in Pakistan, where cultural pressures and employment issues might drive body image concerns. This paper shows the need to advocate internal WLOC and building positive body image of working women. In summary, the interventions to improve the health status of working women, eventually resulting in greater health outcomes and job performance can be developed by encouraging exercise, setting fitness goals and physical appearance comparison. It indicates that negative body image and appearance comparisons can be improved when an internal WLOC is encouraged by means of exercising, fitness aspirations, and job-related encouragement. The findings add to the existing research on weight management and body image and imply effective solutions to enhance the health of working women.

3. CONCLUSION:

This study highlights the negative association between internal weight locus of control and physical appearance comparison in working women. Regular exercise and fitness goals promote better self-control and body image satisfaction, reducing appearance comparisons. The findings emphasize the importance of internal control for improving overall well-being among working women.

4. LIMITATIONS:

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which cannot establish causality. Additionally, the sample was drawn from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, limiting generalizability to other regions. The study also relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response biases.

Future Findings:

Future Study could explore longitudinal designs to better understand causal relationships. Additionally, studies involving diverse populations and settings, including different cultural contexts, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing body image and weight locus of control in working women.

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Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Authors Contributions

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Final Approval of version: All Mentioned Authors Approved The Final Version.

All authors contributed significantly to the study's conception, data collection, analysis,

Manuscript writing, and final approval of the manuscript as per ICMJE criteria.

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