

Pressure to Look Attractive Linked to Fear of Rejection in Men and Women

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(PhysOrg.com) -- People who feel pressure to look attractive are more fearful of being rejected because of their appearance than are their peers, according to a new study by researchers at the University at Buffalo and the University of Kent.

The study of appearance-based rejection sensitivity among college students was conducted by Lora Park, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology and graduate student Ann Marie DiRaddo, of the University at Buffalo, and Rachel Calogero, Ph.D., a lecturer in psychology at the University of Kent.

It was published in the spring edition of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (Vo. 33, Issue 1), a publication of the American Psychological Association.

The researchers found that overall women showed greater sensitivity to appearance rejection than did men. This was particularly true of women who felt they needed to look attractive in order to be accepted by their peers. The study also found that men and women who had internalized media ideals of attractiveness had higher levels of appearance-based rejection sensitivity than did their peers.

No relationship was found between parents' perceptions of attractiveness and study participants' increased sensitivity to appearance-based rejection. Thus, peer and media influences, rather than parental influence, play a key role in appearance-based rejection sensitivity.

"There is a lot of research to suggest that physically attractive people are less stigmatized by others in this society, and have significant advantages in many areas of life than those who are viewed as physically unattractive," Park says.

"Our study suggests that when people feel pressure to look [attractive](#), whether from their friends or the media, they may be putting themselves at risk for experiencing negative outcomes that may limit their development and enjoyment of life in many ways."

Indeed, previous research by Park found that appearance-based rejection sensitivity is related to negative mental and physical [health outcomes](#), such as feeling unattractive, feeling badly about oneself when comparing one's appearance with others, feeling lonely and rejected when thinking about disliked aspects of one's appearance, and showing increased risk for eating disorders.

The study sample consisted of 220 (106 women, 114 men) U.S. college students ranging from 18 to 33 years of age. Participants responded to a series of questionnaires, including scales that assessed the perceived influence of peers and parents on sensitivity to appearance-based rejection, and the Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Scale-3, which assesses dimensions of media influence related to body image and appearance.

These results were found even after controlling for people's self-esteem, self-perceived attractiveness and sensitivity to rejection in general.

Although the current study focused on a predominantly young, white college-age sample, Park says future research should investigate appearance-based rejection sensitivity across diverse age and ethnic groups, in order to better understand its prevalence and to examine how it might be reduced.

Provided by University at Buffalo ([news](#) : [web](#))

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