



Empirical Articles

Influence of Personality Traits in Self-Evaluative Salience, Motivational Salience and Self-Consciousness of Appearance

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study was to understand the possible influence of personality traits on the importance and significance of perception of body image and self-awareness of appearance in individuals.

Method: 214 online recruited subjects between the ages of 17 and 64 years answered to a socio-demographic questionnaire, the Portuguese version of the instruments NEO-FFI (NEO-Five Factor Inventory), ASI-R (The Appearance Schemas Inventory – Revised) and DAS-24 (Derriford Appearance Scale – short).

Results: It was found that age, Neuroticism and Agreeableness dimensions significantly influence an individual's investment in body image and self-awareness of appearance. Sexual orientations differed with regard to Self-Evaluative Salience and Self-Consciousness of Appearance.

Conclusion: The performed analysis showed that neuroticism and agreeableness are related to Self-Evaluative Salience and Self-Consciousness of Appearance.

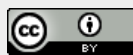
Keywords: Big-Five factors, Self-Evaluative Salience, Motivational Salience, Self-Consciousness of Appearance

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Introduction

There is often the assumption that personality and intelligence are indicated by the individual's appearance. For example, a physical appearance that deviates from the norm is often associated with features of intellectual disabilities (Maddern, Cadogan, & Emerson, 2006).

There are several theories developed in an attempt to classify the diversity evident in human morphology (Falvey, 2012). For example, physiognomy studies the head and face in order to determine the characteristics of personality where the size, shape, and arrangement of lines and details have a meaning, creating a general sketch of the personality of the individual (McNeil, 1973). Jones, Kramer, and Ward (2012) refer to evidence of associations between personality traits and facial appearance.

Fontaine (2000) argues that defining personality becomes a dangerous task, and may lead to misconceptions through external effects that mistake personality with reputation (Allport, 1966); a complete theory of personality is lacking (Lima & Simões, 2000).

Cash (2004) mentions that the body image develops based on personal experiences, physical characteristics, culture, and personality attributes. However, appearance is dynamic and changes throughout life, being influenced by genetics, nutrition, health, illness, medical, and surgical interventions (Allport, 1966; Harris, 1997). Each individual possessed a representation of how she/he appears, and a representation of what she/he thinks others think of us (Fontaine, 2000). Harris (1997) claims that there are two distinct views of what constitutes a different appearance: the individual himself and who observes.

The physical characteristics, personality attributes, interpersonal and cultural experiences influence the development of schemas and body image attitudes (Cash, 1997). Rumsey and Harcourt (2004) argue that beliefs influence the way we perceive and body image influences the way people think and feel about themselves.

The social representation of the body may be related to beauty and physical appearance as synonyms of power in interpersonal relationships. It is semantically close to the perspective that relates the body to a vehicle of subjectivity and personality (Secchi, Camargo, & Bertolo, 2009). The face is strongly associated with the personality of the individual and when there is a change in the face (after a trauma), there are strong feelings of depersonalization (Brill, Clarke, Veale, & Butler, 2006).

Several studies have pointed to personality as a key feature influencing responses to personal and social events, when the individual is confronted with changes to their appearance (De Sousa, 2010; Gonçalves, Echevarria-Guanilo, de Carvalho, Miasso, & Rossi, 2011; Islam, Hooi, & Hoffman, 2009; Thambyrajah, Herold, Altman, & Llewellyn, 2010; Thombs et al., 2008).

Studies mention that there is an influence of personality traits on self-perception of appearance, for example, associations between neuroticism and a tendency to experience negative emotional states can influence a more negative body image (Swami et al., 2013); personality attributes influence body image (Cash, 2004); the acceptance of submitting to plastic surgery is associated with personality factors, where conscientiousness positively influences the social attitudes towards plastic surgery (Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic, Bridges, & Furnham, 2009); Warner and Sugarman (1986) mention that facial appearance can be a communication channel that provides information on a number of dimensions of personality. So, the aim of this study was to understand which dimensions of personality influence the perception of body image.

Method

Participants

The questionnaires used in the present study were organized and made available online through Google Docs platform, in which all questions were mandatory. The dissemination of the study was performed through a contact by email to several public and private entities, personal contacts, and social networks (and for convenience, it was asked to Portuguese participants to forward the questionnaire to their network of contacts).

Two hundred and fourteen subjects participated in this study. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. The mean age was 30.67 years ($SD = 9.24$), equally distributed by gender.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants (N = 214)

Characteristic	%
Gender	
Men	50.0
Women	50.0
Sexual orientation	
Heterosexual	44.9
Bisexual	14.5
Homosexual	40.7
Residence	
Large urban	38.3
Small urban environment	45.8
Large rural areas	8.4
Small rural environment	7.5
Educational qualifications	
0 years to 4 years	0.5
Up to 9 years	3.7
Up to 12 years	21.0
Bachelor	7.0
Undergraduate	46.3
Master	19.6
PhD	1.9
Marital status	
Single	66.8
Married	12.6
Widow	0.5
Divorced	7.0
Cohabiting	13.1

When asked how much the participants were concerned with their appearance (nothing, little, indifferent, moderate, too much), 63.1% mentioned being moderately worried and 25.2% reported to worry too much about their appearance.

Instruments

NEO-Five Factor Inventory

The Portuguese version of the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1989; Magalhães et al., 2014) is composed of 60 items, with a Likert-type response format with 5 response options (1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree*) which allows us to obtain a reliable version of the domains of the five factors model with good values of internal consistency for the dimensions: Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .81$), Neuroticism ($\alpha = .81$), Extroversion ($\alpha = .75$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = .72$) and Openness ($\alpha = .71$).

Appearance Schemes Inventory-Revised

The Portuguese version of the Appearance Schemes Inventory-Revised (ASI-R; [Cash, Melnyk, & Hrabosky, 2004](#); [Nazaré, Moreira, & Canavarro, 2010](#)) is composed of 20 items answered in a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). It comprises two factors (Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience) and intends to evaluate the schematic investment in appearance ([Cash, 2004](#)). The Portuguese version of the instrument ([Nazaré et al., 2010](#)) presents an internal consistency identical to the original version ($\alpha = .89$).

Derriford Appearance Scale – 24

The Portuguese version of the Derriford Appearance Scale – 24 (DAS-24; [Moreira & Canavarro, 2007](#); [Carr, Moss, & Harris, 2005](#)) is composed of 24 items (0 = *N/A [not applicable]*, 1 = *Nothing*, 2 = *Mildly*; 3 = *Moderately*; 4 = *Extremely* and 1 = *Never/Almost never*, 2 = *Sometimes*, 3 = *Frequently* and 4 = *Almost always*) and 6 additional items assess self-consciousness about appearance and describe the existence of some aspect of appearance that concern the individual. The psychometric study of the Portuguese version ([Mendes, Figueiras, Moreira, & Moss, 2016](#)) presents good internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$).

Statistical Analyses

It is intended with the bivariate correlations to verify if the variables Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience relate to the dimensions of the NEO-FFI.

Multiple linear regressions allow obtaining a parsimonious model that could predict the Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience from the independent variables (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness).

We have used the Durbin-Watson statistic to evaluate the assumption of independence and VIF (< 5) to diagnose the multicollinearity ([Marôco, 2010](#)). A p -value of 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

The effect of type of sexual orientation on the levels of Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative and Motivational Salience was evaluated with an ANOVA for each of the dependent variables, followed by *post-hoc* Tuckey HSD test for $\alpha = .05$.

Multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA) was performed to assess whether schematic investment in appearance described by individuals had a statistically significant effect on self-consciousness about appearance. There are no missing values.

Results

As shown in [Table 2](#), there are significant positive correlation between Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience, and two of the NEO-FFI dimensions (Neuroticism and Agreeableness); there is a significant positive correlation between Motivational Salience and Conscientiousness. The variables Neuroticism, Self-Consciousness of Appearance and Self-Evaluative Salience showed significant negative correlations with age.

Multiple linear regression identified Neuroticism and Agreeableness as significant predictors of Self-Consciousness of Appearance and Self-Evaluative Salience ([Table 3](#)). Neuroticism presented greater power for explaining the

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations Between Age, Big Five Personality Factors, Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	–	-.21**	.05	.09	-.13	-.05	-.26**	-.16*	-.10
2. N		–	-.01	.03	.23**	-.09	.45**	.41**	.14*
3. E			–	.31**	.07	.21**	-.09	.09	-.01
4. O				–	.30**	.23**	-.02	.11	.12
5. A					–	.02	.24**	.27**	.24**
6. C						–	-.08	.07	.19**
7. SCA							–	.49**	.10
8. SES								–	.35**
9. MS									–
<i>M</i>	30.67	36.20	40.41	35.91	37.09	41.58	40.10	37.55	24.90
<i>SD</i>	9.24	4.79	3.79	3.48	4.24	3.24	12.83	4.91	2.66

Note. N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness; SCA = Self-Consciousness of Appearance; SES = Self-Evaluative Salience; MS = Motivational Salience; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

relation of Self-Consciousness of Appearance and Self-Evaluative Salience. Independent variables can explain 21.5% of the variation found in Self-Consciousness of Appearance and 19.6% of the variation in Self-Evaluative Salience.

Table 3

Multiple Linear Regressions With Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience as the Dependent Variables

Dependent and predictor variable	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>R</i> ²
Self-Consciousness of Appearance					12.68 (5,208)	.22
Neuroticism	1.11	.41	6.58	<.001		
Extraversion	-0.25	-.07	-1.11	.27		
Openness	-0.19	-.05	-0.77	.44		
Agreeableness	0.49	.16	2.49	.014		
Conscientiousness	-0.08	-.02	-0.32	.75		
Self-Evaluative Salience					11.37 (5,208)	.20
Neuroticism	0.39	.39	5.96	<.001		
Extraversion	0.08	.06	0.94	.35		
Openness	0.01	.01	0.14	.89		
Agreeableness	0.20	.18	2.64	.009		
Conscientiousness	0.12	.08	1.24	.22		
Motivational Salience					4.93 (5,208)	.08
Neuroticism	0.06	.106	1.568	.118		
Extraversion	-0.06	-.078	-1.117	.265		
Openness	0.03	.038	.518	.605		
Agreeableness	0.13	.205	2.910	.004		
Conscientiousness	0.16	.199	2.901	.004		

We observed a statistically significant effect of the type of sexual orientation on the levels of Self-Consciousness of Appearance and Self-Evaluative Salience (Table 4). The Tuckey's HSD test (Table 5) allows us to observe the significant differences between heterosexuals/bisexuals and heterosexuals/homosexuals, no differences were found between homosexuals/bisexuals.

Table 4

Differences in Relation to Variables Self-Consciousness of Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience, Between Participants With Different Sexual Orientations

Sexual Orientation	N	M	SD	ANOVA	
				F (df)	p
Self-Consciousness of Appearance				7.22 (2,211)	.001
Heterosexuals	96	36.85	10.89		
Bisexuals	31	45.87	13.86		
Homosexuals	97	41.62	13.56		
Self-Evaluative Salience				5.10 (2,211)	.007
Heterosexuals	96	36.40	4.87		
Bisexuals	31	38.93	3.71		
Homosexuals	97	38.32	5.10		
Motivational Salience				0.97 (2,211)	.381
Heterosexuals	96	24.62	2.67		
Bisexuals	31	25.03	2.56		
Homosexuals	97	25.16	2.66		

Table 5

Tuckey's HSD Test (95% CI)

Sexual Orientation		$M_{\text{Group 1}} - M_{\text{Group 2}}$	p
Group 1	Group 2		
Self-Consciousness of Appearance			
Heterosexual	Bisexual	-9.02	.002
Heterosexual	Homosexual	-4.77	.028
Bisexual	Homosexual	4.25	.236
Self-Evaluative Salience			
Heterosexual	Bisexual	-2.53	.032
Heterosexual	Homosexual	-1.92	.021
Bisexual	Homosexual	0.61	.816
Motivational Salience			
Heterosexual	Bisexual	-0.41	.739
Heterosexual	Homosexual	-0.54	.363
Bisexual	Homosexual	-0.13	.971

The levels of concern with the appearance described by the participants were related to Self-Evaluative Salience ($F(5,208) = 7.257$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .149$; $\pi = .999$) and Motivational Salience ($F(5,208) = 8.360$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 =$

.167; $\pi = 1$). According to the post-hoc Tukey's HSD test, statistically significant differences occurred between levels of concern (Table 6).

Table 6

Concern Levels With the Appearance - Tuckey's HSD Test (95% CI)

Concern Level	Self-Evaluative Salience			
	Little	Moderately	Very much	Too much
Little		-3.77	-6.61***	-9.85***
Moderately			-2.83**	-6.07*
Very much				-3.24
Too much				
Concern Level	Motivational Salience			
	Little	Moderately	Very much	Too much
Little		-.87	-2.63**	-5.04**
Moderately			-1.76***	-4.17**
Very much				-2.41
Too much				

Note. Values are differences between the means of Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience, respectively, for participants with different levels of concern.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

This study found no statistically significant differences between the variables socio-economic status, marital status, residence, and gender regarding Self-Consciousness Appearance, Self-Evaluative Salience and Motivational Salience.

Discussion

Most personality theorists assume that personality develops, in a large part, within the social environment in which the individual takes the qualities promoted by the environment in which it operates (McCrae & Costa, 2006).

Through a descriptive analysis of socio-demographic characteristics, we can see that most of the participants live in urban areas (84.1%) are single (66.8%) and mostly has a top-level education (67.8%). Through the question "how much you care about your appearance?", it was found that most participants cared moderately with their appearance. These data are in line with the concern with the appearance described by Rumsey and Hardcourt (2012) who mention numerous records of dissatisfaction with the body in youths and adults of all ages.

Although the correlation is weak, age presented a linear relationship with Self-Consciousness of Appearance ($r = -.27$; $p < .01$) and Self-Evaluative Salience ($r = -.16$; $p < .05$). Slevic and Tiggemann (2010) mention that there is a great concern about the appearance in young and middle-aged individuals. A study mentions that there were greater concerns about the appearance at ages of less than 20 years old and a minor concern about the appearance after 30 years of age (Ansari, Clausen, Mabhala, & Stock, 2010). The Appearance Research Centre demystifies the myth that older people worry less about appearance, having discovered evidence that many elderly people have high levels of concern about appearance (Clarke, Thompson, Jenkinson, Rumsey, & Newell, 2014).

There was a significant relationship between Neuroticism, Self-Consciousness of Appearance and the Self-Evaluative Salience. The relationship between these variables can be in the constitution of each one of them. Neuroticism was associated with concerns and feelings of incompetence, excessive wishes and needs, and emotional decompensation (Lima & Simões, 1997); the Self-Consciousness of Appearance was associated with the concerns and behaviours in relation to the global body self-awareness (Carr, Moss, & Harris, 2005), and Self-Evaluative Salience was associated with various manifestations of psychopathology (Nazaré et al., 2010).

A study of Swami et al. (2013) mention that neuroticism was significantly associated with body image and the examination of the body, potentially leading to creation of a negative body image. These authors argue that individual differences and the personality of the individual are associated with the components of assessment of body image. This relationship can be associated with the dynamic development of personality traits into adult life, which is related to a decrease in neuroticism and an increase of Agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness, being the least consistent extraversion (Wright, Pincus, & Lenzenweger, 2011). Swami and collaborators (2013) point that neuroticism is associated with a negative assessment of the self-appearance and dissatisfaction with facial appearance, low appreciation of the body and a high discrepancy between ideal and actual weight.

According to Wortman, Lucas, and Donnellan (2012), personality traits reach maturity in adult age, but are not fixed on a particular point of adult life. On the other hand, the personality traits associated with health behaviours can be modified by specific changes in behaviour which become automatic over time (Magidson, Roberts, Collado-Rodriguez, & Lejuez, 2014). The personality traits may influence the self-perception of health and whether individuals feel younger or older than their chronological age. Relations between the self-assessment of health, personality traits and subjective age vary according to the chronological age (Stephan, Demulier, & Terracciano, 2012). It should be noted that there are significant associations between body dissatisfaction, influences of media, celebrity worship and the five factors of personality (Swami, Taylor, & Carvalho, 2011).

There were statistically significant differences between sexual orientation and self-awareness of appearance and self-evaluative salience. These differences can be related to the fact that gays are particularly vulnerable to dissatisfaction with their bodies (Jankowski, Diedrichs, & Halliwell, 2014). Jankowski, Fawkner, Slater, and Tiggemann (2014) verified that the magazines aimed at gay men have more "appearance potent" male photos than the magazines aimed at heterosexual men by presenting more images of men with an ideal appearance.

Overall, the authors believe that this work contributes for a better understanding of which personality traits act as predictors of self-perception of the individual, failing to reveal statistically relevant effects of most socio-demographic variables.

Competing Interests

One of the authors (MJF) is a member of the Editorial Board, but played no editorial role for this particular article or intervened in any form in the peer review procedure.

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