

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

November
2023

ISSUE 1

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(Masango, 2022)

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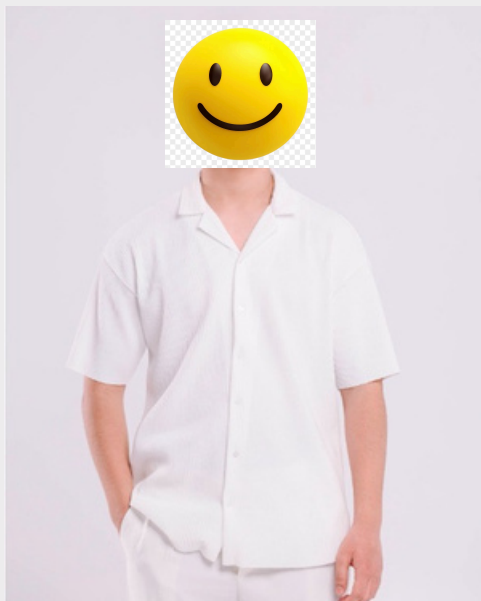
EMILY

As an enthusiast in makeup, putting on skin foundation is an essential step to present natural skin color. However, I observed people tend to choose more pale colors than their actual complexion to improve out-looking. This reflects toxic beauty standards of skin-tone worldwide, raising my interest in exploring colorism.



CHLOE

Growing up in a society where appearance matters a lot was tough, I had to make sure I looked my best before leaving home to avoid being picked on at school. This has led to me being more conscious about my appearance, ultimately affecting my body image, which will be the topic I'll discuss below.



NICK

For over a year, I have been working out and building a fitness community with 30 highschool friends. Since the first day I entered the gym, my life has changed completely. I have gained a positive outlook on life, friends, confidence, and motivation to encourage others to adopt a fitness lifestyle.



KENZIE

I've been actively going to the gym for about seven months now and have experienced first-hand how detrimental social media can be when it comes to how you view your own body and gym progress. The topic of muscle dysmorphia encapsulates this struggle, leading me to delve deeper into the topic.



LETTER FROM THE **AUTHORS**

Dear Readers,

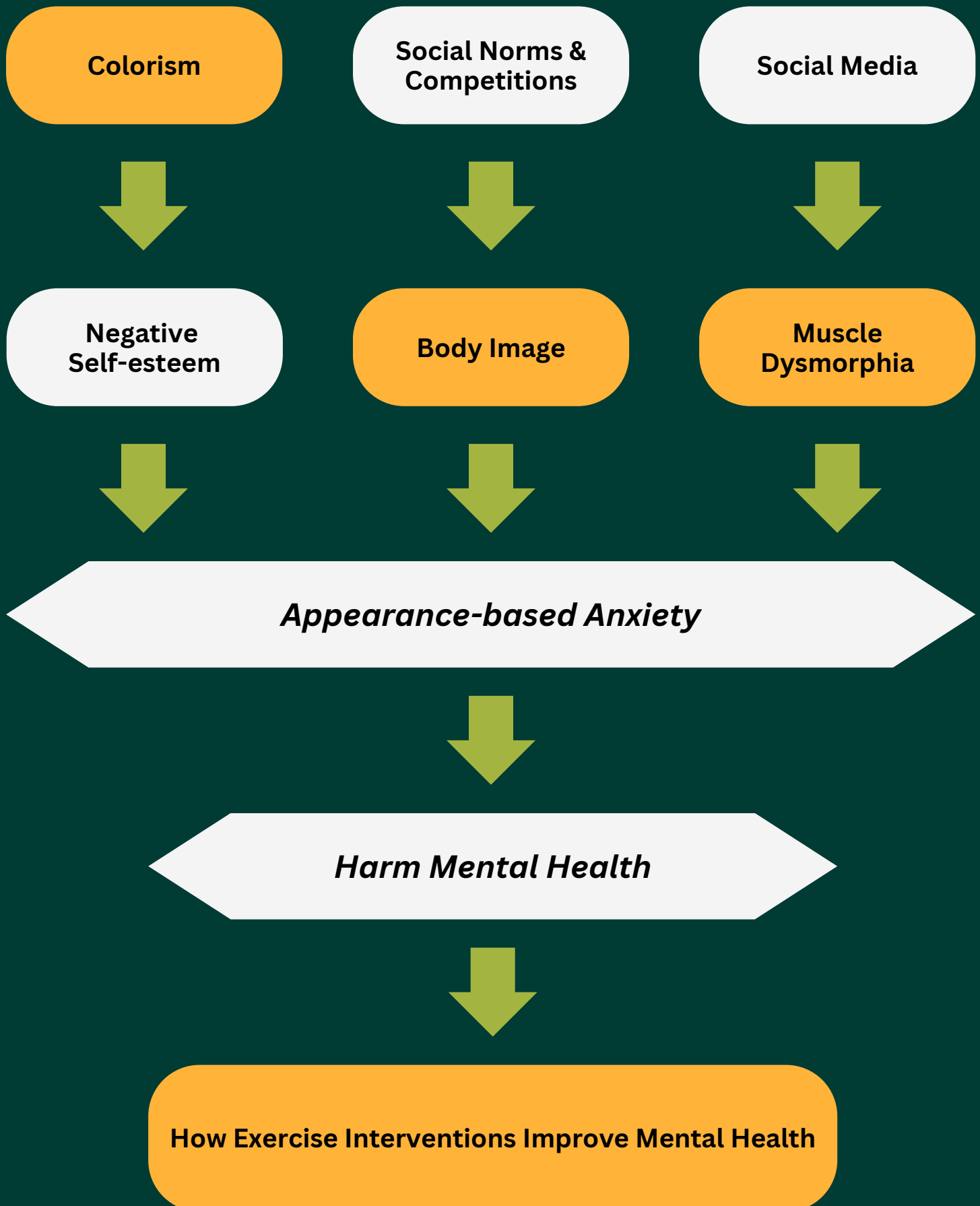
The publication of this e-magazine aims to advocate mental health on university campuses by guiding and supporting all students to overcome the stigma of appearance-based anxiety. We will highlight various factors that eventuate appearance-based anxiety and clarify specific student groups being targeted. From the cultural aspect, colorism is a skin-tone discrimination that negatively impacts the self-esteem of African-American students, subsequently creating appearance-based anxiety that harms mental health. Moreover, social norms and social competitions give rise to appearance-based anxiety among East Asian students, this cultural factor affects the self-confidence of one's body image in a harmful manner. From the digital aspect, social media enhances students' exposure to unhealthy comparisons of body image, inducing appearance-based anxiety and muscle dysmorphia among general university students. To promote mental health, exercise interventions bring the benefit of improving self-image and resolving psychological distress such as appearance-based anxiety among Chinese students. The content of this e-magazine is applicable to all members of the diversified student body in universities. Hope everyone can enjoy reading!

Best wishes,

Emily & Chloe & Kenzie & Nick

Connections between Topics

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly
60%
of Chinese
university
students are
anxious about
their
appearance.

This shocking statistic **not only highlights** the prevalence of appearance-based anxiety but **also accentuates** the urgent need for support systems within all universities to aid the mental health of all their students (Gao et al., 1, 2023).

Appearance-based anxiety is a subclinical indicator of body dysmorphic disorder, which usually manifests as excessive anxiety about the significance of certain physical defects or imperfections that are often perceived as normal by others (Levinson et al., 2013). It's essential to recognize appearance-based anxiety not merely as a trivial matter, but as an illness that can potentially be **the gateway to much more serious mental health challenges**. Due to this stigma, it is often overlooked, with many suffering university students in silence.

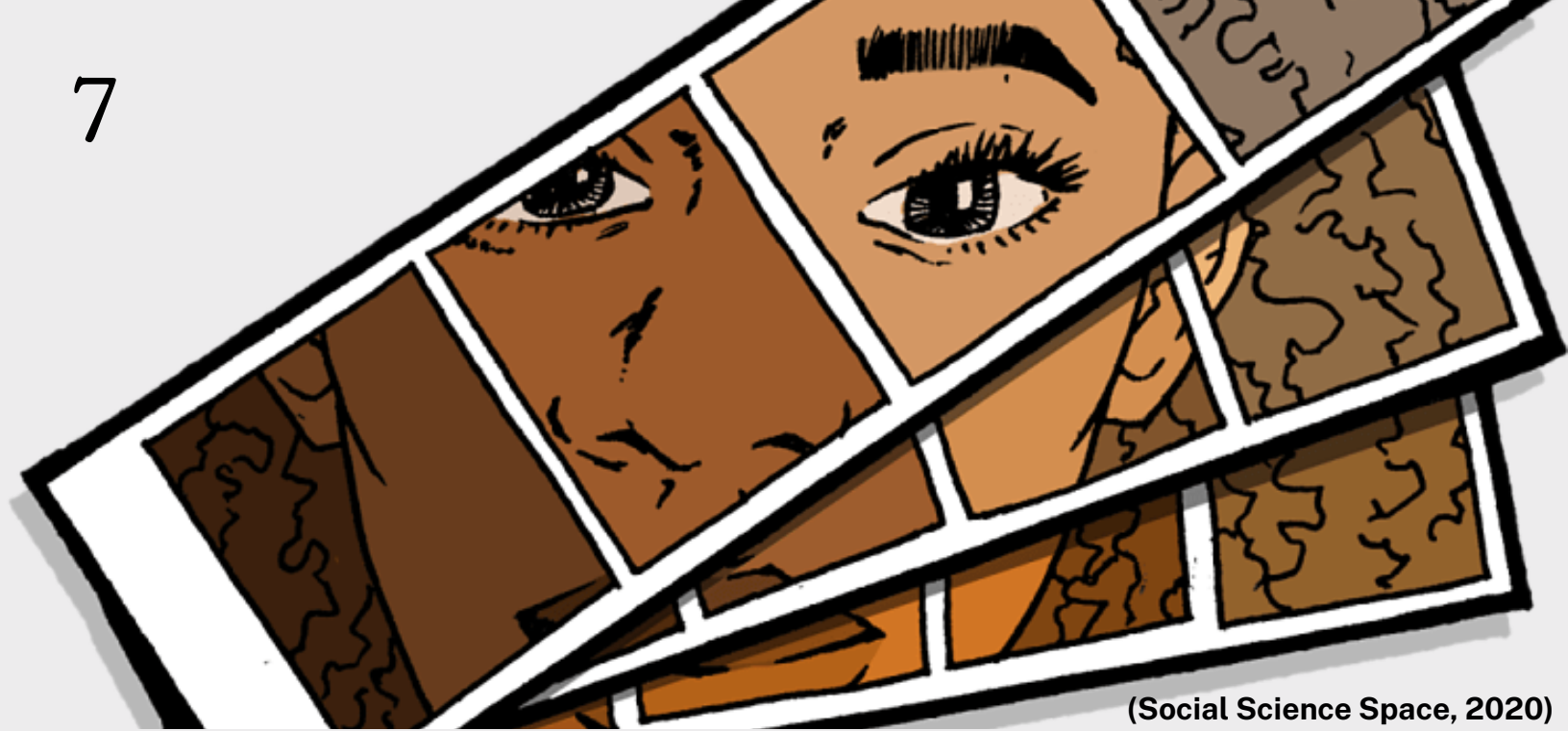
The World Health Organisation defines **mental health** as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community” (World Health Organization, 2022). **Gao et al. (2023)** also emphasized poor mental health rooted in appearance-based anxiety may influence one’s mindset, such as the feeling of inferiority or the decline of self-acceptance.

This e-magazine **aims to shed light on such an overlooked issue and challenge the stigma surrounding appearance-based anxiety**. Through an exploration of the complexities within colorism, body image, muscle dysmorphia, and how exercise interventions improve mental well-being, we look forward to both confront and navigate the intricacies of appearance-related stresses to ultimately prioritise mental well-being and foster a positive attitude toward personal appearance among **all university students** from different backgrounds.



(Chandwadkar, 2020)

Moving on to our First Topic
Colorism >>



(Social Science Space, 2020)

Colorism

HU Yuyue (Emily)



DEFINITIONS & BACKGROUND

Colorism is defined as: “Prejudice and discrimination favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). This concept originated from the historical event **Atlantic Slave Trade**, a long-distant global immigration initiated by European colonists to enslave native Africans to become their private servants (Lewis, 2023). According to the statistics, approximately 12.5 million enslaved native Africans were forced to immigrate but only 10.7 million successfully arrived in the United States (Mintz, 2019). Linking to colorism, it initially described the phenomenon of enslavers distributing more preferential indoor tasks to slaves with fairer complexions.

Unfortunately, colorism did not disappear with the ending of slavery but became a more popular and recognized standard to treat people (Nittle, 2021). Its ripple effects resulted in dark-skinned individuals and groups to live under long-term exposure to frequent discriminatory experiences. It subsequently became a factor driving appearance-based anxiety to suffer **African Americans(AA)**, one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States formed by descendants of enslaved Africans (Lynch, 2018).



(Lewis, 2023)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs



(Hopper, 2020)

CENTRAL THESIS & RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

This article aims to investigate how colorism acts as a catalyst for driving negative self-esteem in AAs and further results in appearance-based anxiety to harm their mental health.

My research perspective will be based on **the self-esteem level proposed by Maslow's hierarchy of human needs**, defined as "A healthy positive regard of oneself involving self-worth, competency, dignity, and independence" (West, 2020). Maslow's theory also emphasizes a few required external gains to gather positive self-esteem, including respect, acknowledgment of achievements, prestige, and reputation (Hopper, 2020) which makes it an authoritative standard for examining colorism's impacts on self-esteem.

With a **strong personal disagreement**, I deem colorist standards and behaviors are undoubtedly biased. This research targets **AA university students** to inform and admonish appearance-based anxiety caused by negative self-esteem will lead to inevitable damages to the mental health.

Main Factors affect AA's self-esteem:

External Discrimination from the society
Internalized Racism within AA Race

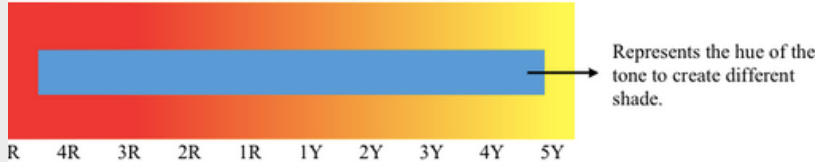
EXTERNAL DISCRIMINATION FROM THE SOCIETY

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Colorism is a causal agent of skin-tone discrimination from external voices outside of the AA race. **Stamps et al. (2022)** aimed to discover the relationship between the frequency of discriminatory experiences and perceived skin-tone among AA women. The experiment heavily relied on participants' self-reported data from completing professional surveys. Individual skin-tone was determined by the measuring scale Pantone Skin Tone guide; Responses about Individual feelings and emotions to the Rosenberg's self-esteem scale questionnaire examined one's self-esteem; The level of discrimination was measured by another two professionally designed surveys that recorded participant's personal discriminatory experiences in details and the frequency of experiencing skin-tone discrimination.

Figure 1

Red and Yellow Undertones in the Pantone Skin Tone Guide



Note. The undertones are represented by a "Y" or "R" to indicate the primary undertone and number to indicate the level of that undertone.

Pantone Skin-Tone Guide (Stamps et al., 2022)

#	Questions	1	2	3	4
1	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. **	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	I do not have much to be proud of. **	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	I certainly feel useless at times. **	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	I wish I had more respect for myself. **	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	At times I think I am no good at all. **	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

** indicate negatively loaded questions

NLSY respondents range between 39 and 47 years of age in the 2004 survey. Age is included to control for life cycle changes within this cohort (Haurin, et al., 1997). Prior research suggests

Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale Questionnaire (Finke, 2022)

The results indicated the existence of skin-tone discrimination toward AA women led by colorism, it was discovered that individuals with frequent racism experiences also perceive a darker skin-tone. Moreover, a positive correlation between negative race-based experiences and negative self-perception of skin-tone was distinguished. Thus, the study has high relevance to my research because it distinctly suggests colorism induces external skin-tone discrimination that damages AA women's self-esteem. Moreover, negative self-perception of skin-tone subsequently implies appearance-based anxiety is a consequence of negative self-esteem, falsifying the further impacts of colorism on the mental health of AA women.

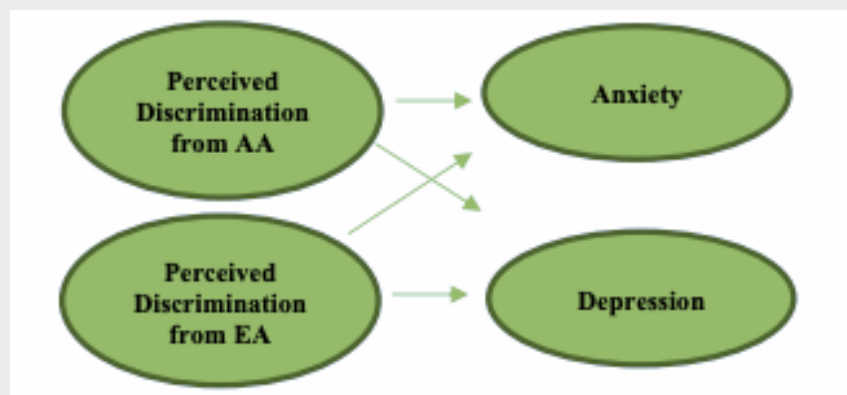
To evaluate, Stamps et al. (2022) as a very recent university-level source published on a reliable database JSTOR is highly credible. In addition, all qualitative data were gathered using professional measuring scales which minimizes inaccuracy in data collection. However, one limitation would be the study results are only applicable to AA women, meaning cannot be generalized to all AAs. Moreover, the analyzed results relied on self-reported data except for skin-tone measuring, therefore, the reliability of responses cannot be guaranteed, even though *I believe it is a shred of clear evidence directly reflecting dissatisfaction and indignant of African American women toward colorism.*



INTERNALIZED RACISM WITHIN AA RACE

Internalized racism refers to intra-group colorism discrimination within the AA race. **Alexander & Carter (2022)** aimed to investigate how internalized racism affects psychological well-being, skin-color satisfaction, and implicit skin-tone preferences of AA men and women. Similar to Stamps et al. (2022), this experiment is also highly dependent on self-reported qualitative data from each participant. Participants were devoted to completing Implicit Association Tests to examine one's skin-color satisfaction level and personal skin-tone preference, as well as another questionnaire designed by the researcher to collect data related to participants' views toward internalized racism.

The results indicated an obvious trend when internalized racism increases, both AA genders experienced less skin-color satisfaction, more frequent colorist behaviors, and more severe psychological distress such as appearance-based anxiety and depression. Furthermore, increases in the level of internalized racism triggered a positive correlation between psychological distress and perceived discrimination. Hence, the study is relevant to my research because it validated that colorism is significant in driving internalized racism within the AA community, subsequently leading to negative self-esteem and psychological distress like appearance-based anxiety.



(Results of Alexander & Carter, 2022)

In comparison to Stamps et al. (2022), Alexander & Carter (2022) also has high credibility since it is university-leveled and published by the reliable database EBSCO on date. Likewise, this study relied on a professionally designed and recognized Implicit Association test to avoid inaccurate data collection as well. Moreover, I believe both studies tended to count on the powerfulness of self-reported data in speaking about the eagerness of AA men and women to resolve appearance-based anxiety and improve self-esteem. Therefore, the most significant concern for both studies is the unreliability brought by self-reported data responses. Researcher bias is the main difference because the unprofessional questionnaire used in this study was designed by researchers which would include biased questions that are easier to seek for their ideal responses and results.

CONCLUSION & SOLUTIONS

In conclusion, two academic sources used in my research **complemented each other** to reveal the significance of colorism catalysing external discrimination and internalized racism as toxic environmental influences. **Referring to Maslow's theory**, the two factors eventuated AAs from developing negative self-esteem by encouraging disrespectful treatment against AAs, burying AAs' personal achievements, and forbidding AAs to have a decent reputation or social status. Also, **both sources justified** the occurrence of appearance-based anxiety due to negative self-esteem may further impair AA's mental health. Therefore, it is crucial to resolve colorism for improving AA's self-esteem which will subsequently reduce appearance-based anxiety that persistently suffers the mental health of AAs.

To address colorism, the anti-discrimination policy was implemented in more than 50 countries by **national governments**, to preclude unequal racial treatment in the workplace and reflected their disagreement on colorism (MIPEx, 2020). Moreover, **the global organization United Nations** officially introduced the 3rd Sustainable Development Goal to achieve 'Good Health and Wellness', thereby underlying the significance of having good mental health and delivering an opposing view towards factors like colorism that create psychological unwell (United Nations, 2018). It creates long-term educational practices on campuses to forestall colorism discrimination and raise awareness of appearance-based anxiety. They give impetus to foster self-acceptance and prioritize mental well-being among AA university students.

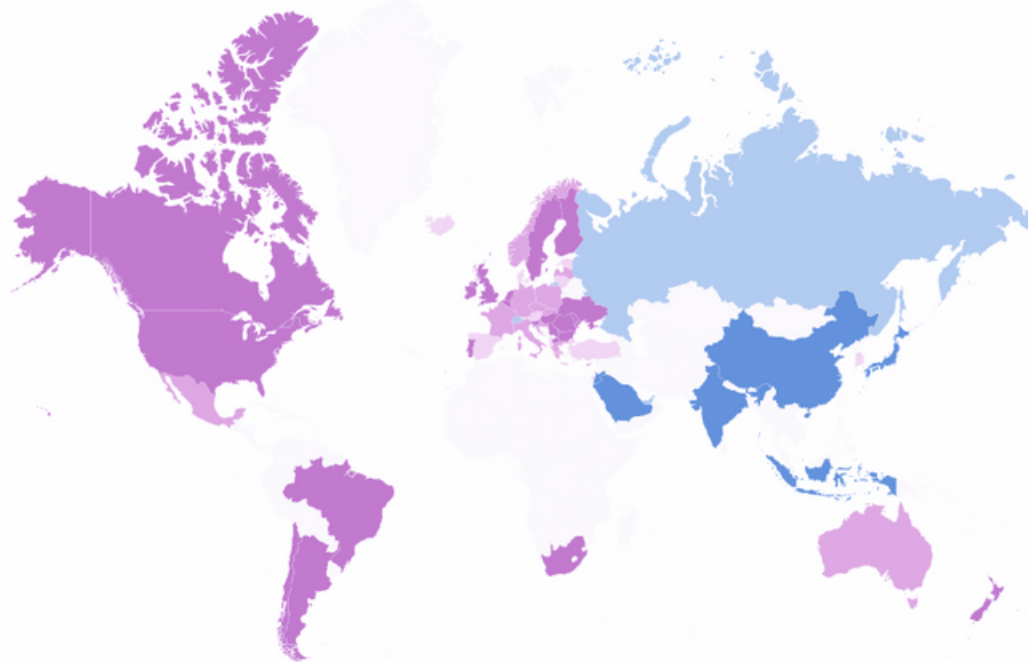
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



(United Nations, 2018)



Favourability of Anti-discrimination Policy by Country (MIPEx, 2020)



LEGEND

80-100	- Favourable
60-79	- Slightly favourable
41-59	- Halfway favourable
21-40	- Slightly unfavourable
1-20	- Unfavourable
0	- Critically unfavourable

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Body image

Factors that affect body image among East-Asian University students

Ng Hau Yi Chloe



Women having a negative body image, Manastha (2022)

Have you ever gazed into a mirror and wished for a taller nose or a thinner physique, thinking it would make you more attractive?

If so, have you resorted to extreme diets, like sugar-free or single-food diets, in pursuit of a perceived ideal? Above are examples of **detrimental activities** associated with having a **negative body image**, a prevalent mental related issue experienced by **67%** East-Asians (Kim & Lee, 2018) and it further leads to mental illnesses such as **body dysmorphia** and **appearance based anxiety**.

But what exactly is body image? It refers to one's perception of their appearance, and influences one's self-concepts like self-esteem and self-confidence (Kim & Lee, 2018; Mcleod, 2023). To address the aforementioned issues, let's understand the **underlying reasons that damage one's body image**, then develop efficient solutions that counteract these factors.



One prominent contributor to the deterioration of body image is the influence of societal norms prevalent in our society.



Girl with appearance anxiety, Hiby(2023)

These norms establish an unrealistic beauty standard, **where being under 50 kg (Zhang et al., 2018) is deemed socially fit.** In simpler terms, exceeding this weight, regardless of one's height, is viewed as being unfit by others. Consequently, even individuals who are scientifically healthy may perceive themselves as "too fat" based on these societal expectations, leading to body image concerns. This pressure to conform often drives individuals to resort to **unhealthy weight loss methods**, such as chewing or tapeworm diets, which can result in eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

It is worth noting that this definition of societal norms regarding body weight (i.e being under 50 kg) was described by a participant in Zhang's study, making it a subjective perspective. Nonetheless, this comment sheds light on the **internalization of a toxic beauty standard** prevalent in East Asian regions.

Moreover, social norms wield significant influence in the **realm of social media**, further impacting body image. A substantial **82.6%** of participants in Jung's research (2018) agree that magazines influence women's beauty ideals. This influence operates through two key mechanisms: the **tendency to compare oneself with celebrities and the messages conveyed by beauty product advertisements.** Beauty product advertisements reinforce the need for makeup to **conceal one's perceived flaws**, thereby harming self-confidence in her appearance. Besides women tend to engage in **introjection comparison**, using beauty standards portrayed on social media as a **reference point for attractiveness.** This constant comparison to **unattainable ideals** leads chips away at self-confidence (Zhang et al., 2018), ultimately affecting body image.



Furthermore, the tendency to engage in social comparison and the associated pressures profoundly impact individuals' perception of their body image.

Zhang's study (2018) introduces an **objectification theory** (figure 1), which posits that women often **internalize other's opinion** as a reflection of their physical appearance. This leads to **constant body monitoring and heightened standards** towards their own body, resulting in increased dissatisfaction with their own body and contributing to issues such as body dysmorphia and low self-esteem (Zhang et al., 2018).

Another phenomenon highlighted in Kim & Lee's study (2018) is the concept of the **social empowerment of beauty** (figure 2), which suggests that attractive women have a social advantage in accessing opportunities.

In hypercompetitive societies where opportunities are scarce, women are willing to undergo extreme measures such as risky plastic surgeries to maximize their competitiveness (Kim & Lee, 2018). This overall indicates that women **endure higher levels of social anxiety, prejudice, and inequality** based on their appearance. The strong association between physical appearance and social opportunities further intensifies women's preoccupation with their appearance, leading to a decline in body image. This especially brings forth a feeling of **indignance and self-pity** for those who do not fit the standard (Kim & Lee, 2018).

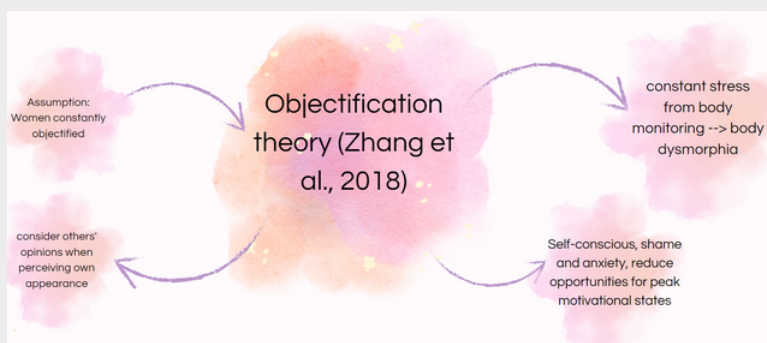


Figure 1. Objectification theory

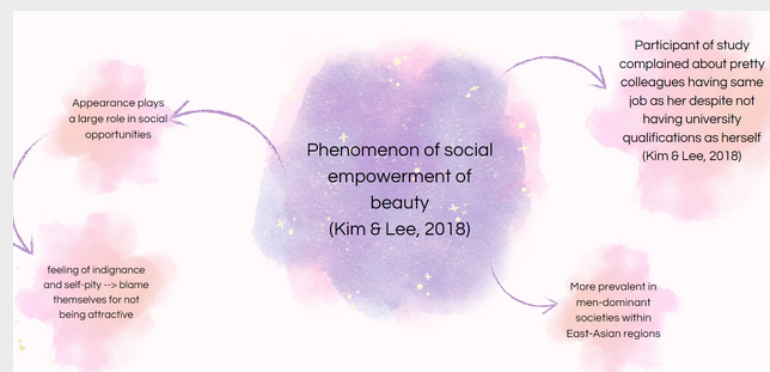


Figure 2. Social empowerment of beauty

COMPARISON BETWEEN Theories



Evaluation between Objectification theory and Social empowerment of beauty



SIMILARITIES

In both propositions, both researchers made the **assumption** that women's self-confidence is significantly impacted due to the **excessive focus on beauty in social comparisons**, ultimately harming their body image. Additionally, social comparison existing in both theories rely on society's perception of beauty, which is **influenced by local beauty standards**. The situation described in both theories can be particularly disadvantageous for those whose appearance does not align with these beauty standards, causing them unnecessary stress and self-pity, which negatively impacts their well-being.



CONTRASTS

However, both theories put focus on the psychology of **different perspectives**. While the objectification theory mentioned by Zhang emphasizes the **individual's psychological behavior** in internalizing others' comments, on the other hand, the phenomenon of "social empowerment of beauty" discussed by Kim & Lee explores **society's collective behavior** and bias towards physical appearance.

BATTLING POOR BODY IMAGE:

What can we do?



Targeting the above factors, below are suggestions to help improve the issue of a negative body image!

1 FOLLOW VERIFIED WAYS OF DIETING AND EXERCISE

One major contributing factor to negative body image is the **lack of knowledge** about healthy approaches to dieting and exercise. It is crucial to provide proper education to young adults regarding what constitutes a healthy body and the importance of gradual, sustainable weight loss rather than rapid weight reduction.

By promoting informed choices and realistic body standards, we can help prevent the perpetuation of unhealthy body image ideals and body dysmorphia.



2 FOSTER POSITIVE FEELINGS

Instead of feelings of jealousy or pity, show admiration and respect for others who have a sense of style. Encouraging a positive and uplifting mindset helps create a supportive environment where individuals can appreciate and celebrate each other's unique qualities and styles. This shift in your perspective can contribute to a healthier body image by fostering a sense of unity and empowerment.



3 ACCEPTANCE AND SELF LOVE

Although it's cliché, you should accept your appearance and embrace both your strengths and flaws. The pursuit of authenticity and self-love is a powerful concept in combating the physical and psychological stress caused by appearance anxiety and the negative societal effects of "lookism" (Jung, 2018).

By cultivating self-acceptance and self-care practices, individuals can develop a healthier relationship with their bodies and prioritize their overall well-being over unrealistic beauty ideals, improving body image.



As previously mentioned, societal norms and comparisons can significantly impact the body image of East Asian university students. This can give rise to various mental health issues, including appearance-based anxiety and body dysmorphia, ultimately leading to a decline in overall mental well-being.

To address this concern, it is crucial to raise awareness about realistic body standards and promote safe methods of beauty enhancement. Additionally, fostering positive feelings such as admiration and self-love towards one's appearance plays a vital role in mitigating the negative effects of societal pressures. By combining these efforts, can work towards creating a healthier mindset and improving the overall mental health of East Asian university students.

Despite being university sources, there are certain limitations caused by the stigmatization of mental health issues; participants in studies in sources may be hesitant or shy to answer questions truthfully in front of others, causing certain degree of inaccuracy in results.

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**By combining these efforts,
can work towards creating
a healthier mindset and
improving the overall
mental health of university
students.**

**Moving on to our Third Topic
Muscle Dysmorphia >>**



19 Muscle Dysmorphia

WU KIN MING KENZIE SCOTT

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In the era of selfies, filters, and constant digital exposure, the persistent pressure to conform to beauty standards has never been higher. With concepts of self improvement at an all time high, an increasing number of young men and women are turning to the gym in order to better themselves. Day in, day out, countless hours being spent curling dumbbells' at the university fitness center. Slowly but surely, you start to notice the progress. You get stronger, faster, better; a superior version of the person you were a month ago. However, as we navigate through the labyrinth of social media, it is crucial to shed light on an emerging issue that silently affects many of these young individuals: muscle dysmorphia.



Granet, 2022

Muscle dysmorphia is rooted in a complex interplay of psychological factors, including body image dissatisfaction, social comparison, and perfectionism. It is a growing issue in the modern, digital world, which primarily affects young men who become consumed with the idea that their bodies are inadequately muscular, typically as a result of comparison with bodies seen on social media (Imperatori et al., 2022; Rizwan et al., 2022). This obsession can lead to detrimental consequences such as excessive exercise, social isolation, and steroid abuse (Schneider et al., 2017). Many people suffering with this condition also suffer from a tainted perception of themselves. They perceive themselves as too small, weak, or unattractive, which serves as a catalyst for their obsession with muscularity. Greenberg et al. (2014) claim that individuals with muscle dysmorphia tend to overemphasize the significance of unimportant or perceived imperfections in appearance, thereby worsening these appearance related distresses.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA PARADOX



“UNHEALTHY COMPARISON”

In our interconnected world, social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping societal perceptions of beauty, which unfortunately exacerbates conditions like muscle dysmorphia. Being exposed to idealized body images on social media platforms can contribute to negative feelings about body image and cause or accentuate muscle dysmorphia symptoms. The constant exposure to carefully curated images depicting the “perfect” muscular physique can significantly affect individuals’ perceptions of themselves as they assess themselves in relation to others (Kim, 2020). Individuals end up scrutinizing themselves through a distorted lens, fostering unrealistic standards, making it challenging for them to appreciate their own personal progress and achievements. This can be referred to as “unhealthy comparison”

BREAKING THE CHAINS: ESCAPING THE SOCIAL MEDIA TRAP

One approach to mitigating the psychological effects of muscle dysmorphia is to reconsider our relationship with social media. Taking a step back from these online platforms that fuel unhealthy comparisons can be a crucial first step. What we often forget is that the images we encounter on social media represent a miniscule fraction of the population. The genetically gifted individuals whose bodies seem unattainable may themselves be suffering with muscle dysmorphia

The paradox lies in the fact that those with seemingly perfect physiques are likely the ones suffering the most. “We’ve seen bodybuilders who swore that they would at last be satisfied if only they could just do one more cycle of steroids and put on five more pounds of muscle” (Pope et al., 2000, p.230). In cases such as this, there is truly no amount of body manipulation that is ever quite enough. This acts as a reminder that what we see on social media is a curated version of reality. By disengaging with these platforms, individuals can break free from this dangerous cycle of comparison and begin to appreciate themselves and their own unique journeys.



FLIPPING THE NARRATIVE: REDEFINING COMPARISON



Comparison is a part of human nature. It is simply impossible to resist our own nature. However, this does not necessarily mean that it has to be a destructive force. Instead of measuring ourselves against these unattainable standards set by social media, let's redirect our focus inward.

Compare your present self to your past self. With this in mind, your progress and growth becomes much clearer. It can be easy to become masked in the perception of stagnation when it comes to evaluating your progress due to social media consumption on a daily basis. It is in these times where it is critical to remember that what you see on social media is often not real (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020).



“The goal is not to be better than the other man, but your previous self” - The Dalai Lama

CONCLUSION



IMPLICATIONS

It is important to note that information on this topic is still relatively limited. Although research on this topic has been increasing since 1997, there were still only a handful of investigations which focused mainly on nonclinical samples (Tod et al., 2016). Two studies conducted on muscle dysmorphia conducted by Schneider et al. (2017) and Imperatori et al. (2022) noted that data was collected using self-report measures, meaning that instead of a doctor diagnosing individuals with muscle dysmorphia in a clinical environment, individuals effectively self-diagnosed themselves with the condition. Due to this, a lack of robust figures on the prevalence of the condition remains, but this does not mean that people are not suffering from this condition. As will be stated in the following paragraphs, university campuses can play a vital role in creating environments that promote positive body image and hence, mental wellbeing.

THE PATH FORWARD: NURTURING MENTAL WELLBEING

Raising awareness about muscle dysmorphia is a key first step toward fostering mental wellbeing. Initiatives such as awareness campaigns, support groups and workshops on university campuses can provide a space where students feel safe to express their experiences and challenges openly. By encouraging open dialogue, we can break down the stigma surrounding mental health and create a community that uplifts and supports one another.

As we navigate through the intricacies of university life in this digital age, we must remember that our worth is not defined by the images we see on social media. Muscle dysmorphia and other body dysmorphic disorders thrive in the shadows, with many suffering in silence (Pope et al., 2000). By bringing this condition into the light, we empower ourselves and others to embrace our own unique journeys. By redefining our standards of comparison and focusing on personal growth, we can create a community that values authenticity over perfection, where mental wellbeing is prioritized.

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Moving on to our Last Topic
Exercise Interventions >>

Exercise Interventions

ASSYLBEKOV NURTUGAN



BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

The mental health crisis on campuses

University life brings unprecedented pressures that can undermine the mental well-being of students. With nearly a quarter of university students in China experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, or stress during their studies (Lei et al., 2016), implementing exercise interventions is crucial.

Heavy workloads, social changes, and constant time constraints can be draining, while appearance-fixation and loneliness spikes anxiety further. Amidst this turbulent landscape, many studies reveal exercise effectively buffers stress. Though often viewed as an optional health bonus by students, physical activity is powerful in promoting emotional resilience (Gu et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023).

Beyond physical gains like improved fitness, sports participation and tailored exercise interventions enhance psychological health, from mood to self-image to sociability (Liu et al., 2023).

Considering the mental health crisis on university campuses, promoting physical activity through diverse interventions should be a top priority to build well-being in university students.



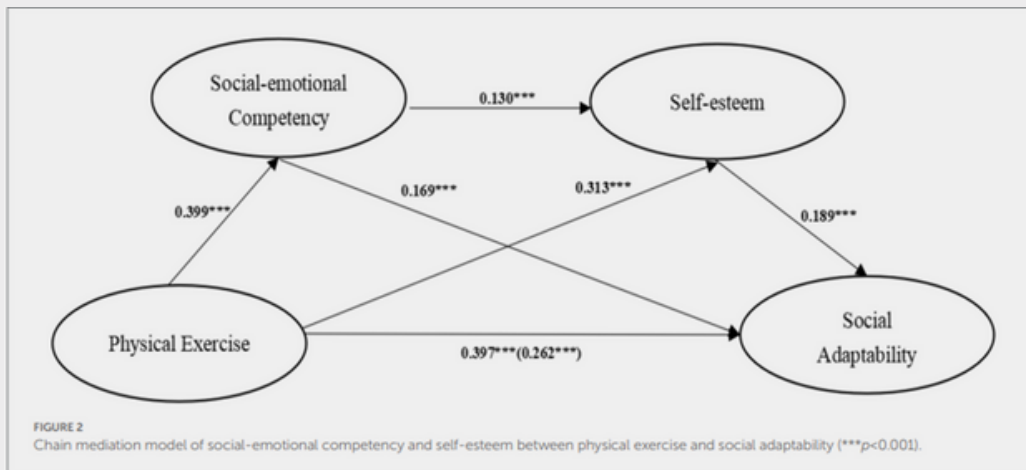
LANG1404: New assignment
ISOM2500: New assignment
MATH1003: New assignment
ACCT2010: New assignment
ACCT2010: Mid-term graded
CTDL1901: Quiz available

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Team Sports Build Self-Esteem and Sociability

Engaging in sports not only offers a physical workout but also a dynamic way for collective self-improvement. It subtly shapes our self-image and sociability. The contribution of everyone, no matter how small, feels significant. A pass that assists a goal, or a group defense that prevents one brings a sense of accomplishment. This sense of accomplishment is a building block for self-esteem. As you train and compete along with your peers, you are involved in a dialogue between actions and affirmations by sharing strategies, and victories. The sports field is an informal classroom where interpersonal skills and comradery are built. Belonging, contribution, and identity among teammates, is what promotes social health in our daily life.

Studies on Chinese university students have found regular exercise associated with higher self-esteem and body satisfaction compared to inactive peers (Shang et al., 2021). In addition, feelings of progress and physical competence that are gained from participating in sports increase appreciation of physical capabilities instead of focusing on flaws. This self-affirming mindset counters excessive self-criticism that breeds negative thoughts.



(Liu et al., 2023)

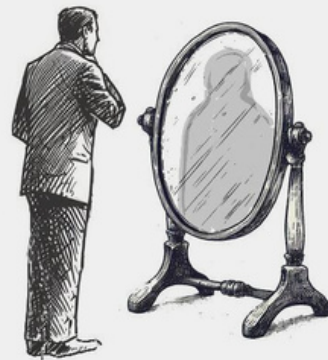
There is a mutual art to physical activity. The synchronous steps of a jogging team, the shared breaths in a yoga class, and the collective grunt in a martial arts club. As inconsequential as it may seem, this art is pivotal for a student's life. Participating in a team-based activity knits a blanket of belonging, covering the cold feeling of isolation. It has been shown that integrating physical activity in a group setting can bolster a student's sense of acceptance, self-image, sociability, and other social factors of mental health (Li et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2023).





For students, a negative self-image centered on perceived physical imperfections contributes heavily to anxiety and depression. Developmental transitions like puberty combined with appearance-fixated social media feeds exacerbate body dissatisfaction (Lei et al., 2016). However, while the research confirms the benefits of exercise on mental health, it is difficult to establish causality, as there are a multitude of external factors that have not been considered such as socio-economic status, physical impediments, gender, and age (Li et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2023). Self-reported data is also susceptible to subjective interpretation, which is detrimental when it comes to quantifying mental health issues.

On campus, exercise begets connection, and connection begets resilience. There is more strength found in numbers, be it measured in miles or shared smiles. In the clubs formed within campus walls, students find a medium to channel energy, tackle negative feelings, and forge bonds. The positive feedback loop of physical health-enhancing social well-being, and vice versa, cannot be understated.



EXERCISE INTERVENTIONS

Implementing Diverse Exercise Interventions

Exercise interventions, as explored by Yu (2023) in their research, encompass a variety of activities tailored to enhance mental well-being. These interventions include structured workout programs, sports, and aerobic exercises (Zhang et al., 2021). Integrating exercise interventions into the university curriculum is crucial in fostering a culture of mental wellbeing. The World Health Organization emphasizes the importance of physical activity for mental health, suggesting that academic institutions incorporate exercise into daily routines (World Health Organization, 2022).



Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of exercise on mental health in university students (Zhang et al., 2021). Increased levels of physical activity lower levels of psychological distress, reduce depression rates and improve overall mental health. Exercise benefits brain function by increasing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine (Bhattacharya et al., 2023)

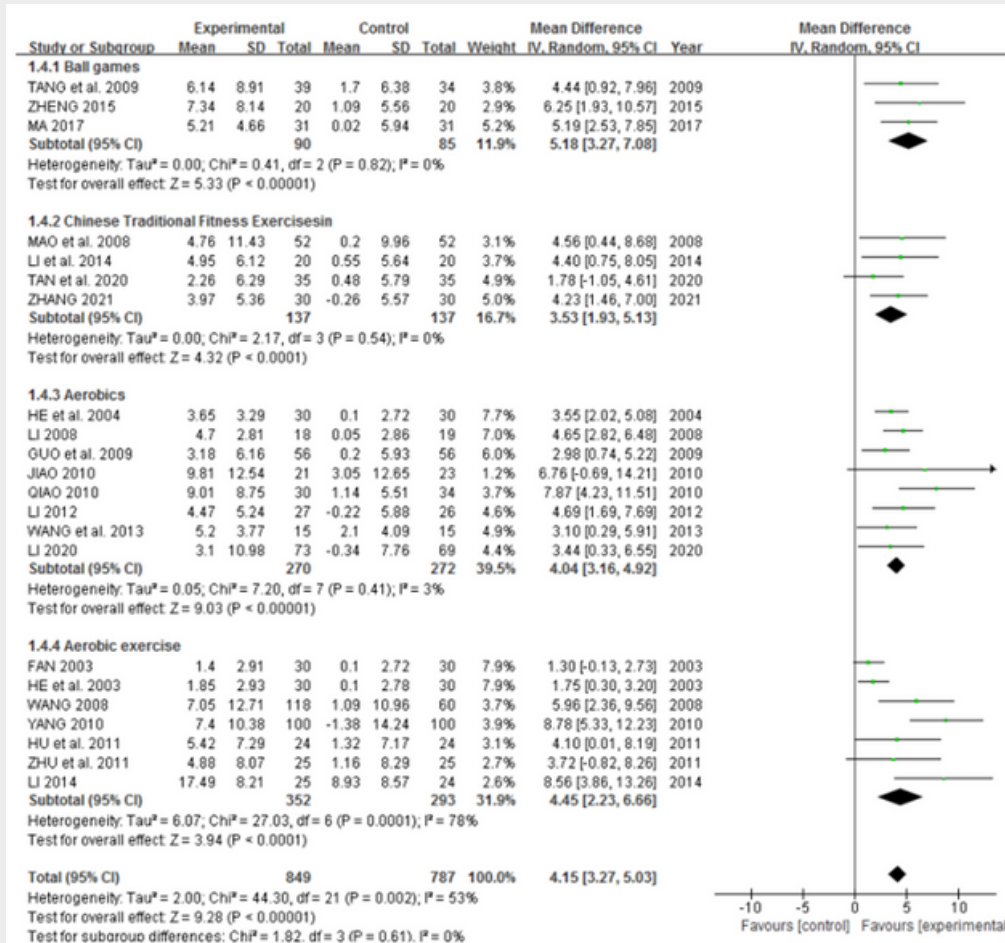


Figure 5. Subgroup analysis of the effects of different physical activity intervention methods on depression indexes of college students. Forest plot.

(Zhang et al., 2021)

However, despite the evident advantages, implementing diverse and inclusive exercise interventions poses a challenge. Some students may feel embarrassed to exercise due to body-image insecurity or physical impediments, which may hinder participation (Gu et al., 2021). To overcome these issues, universities must tailor interventions to cater to the diverse needs of university students. Students must also take action to sustain a supportive environment by organizing sports activities, advocating inclusive fitness spaces, and promoting student-led clubs (Yu, 2023).

Conclusion

From a personal perspective, I firmly believe that exercise interventions are indispensable for mental health. Regular physical activity not only enhances cognitive functioning but also provides a natural outlet for stress. Universities should embrace and prioritize exercise as a cornerstone of student well-being. It is imperative, however, to acknowledge the limitations of the studies focusing on exercise interventions. While existing research provides valuable insights, variations in methodologies, sample sizes, and participant demographics can make it difficult to establish causality. In addition, a multitude of studies have been done using self-reported data, making them susceptible to biases and inaccuracies due to subjective interpretations of mental well-being. Finally, the studies fail to consider external factors such as socioeconomic status, mental health conditions, and academic performance.

The compartmentalized view of physical health and mental health as separate gives way to a false belief that they are separate. However, exercise demonstrates the clear interconnectedness between body and mind. Exercise harnesses the power of movement to not only build fitness but also cultivate a healthy mind. Exercise is not just about what we do, but how it makes us feel. It is a crucial piece of the complex structure that is our mind, and while it may not be a perfect cure, it is important for navigating university life. The evidence is clear, studies advocate it, and students can potentially thrive from it.

But to unlock the full potential of exercise interventions for all, it is vital to advocate for inclusivity. So next time you feel stressed, don't reach for the coffee pot. Make time for physical activities, and always remember – embolden rather than discourage, include rather than exclude!

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Overall Conclusion



(Usmani, 2023)

Appearance-related anxiety is a ubiquitous concern in modern society among university students, adversely affecting various aspects of their mental health, such as self-esteem, psychological well-being, and body positivity. It brings up **a ripple effect** extending beyond the confines of the lecture halls, seeping into social relationships, body image, and overall self-esteem, leading to the deterioration of mental health. This makes it an **alarming issue that has to be resolved quickly**. Within various subcategories of colorism, body image, muscle dysmorphia, and exercise interventions, we explored the factors that lead to students having appearance-related anxiety and provided suggestions to improve their well-being.

To resolve **colorism**, a crucial step is to implement anti-discrimination policies in workplaces, which have been executed by over 50 countries. Furthermore, the United Nations believe in education plays a large role in lessening colorism discrimination which have introduced a sustainable development goal to protect minority groups such as AAs.

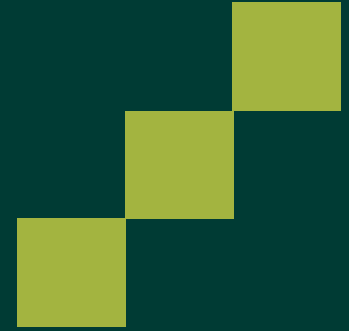
To ameliorate **body image**, an important concept to note is “authenticity”, which is the acceptance of one’s authentic self to seek healthy beauty in both inner and outer selves. It is a pivotal concept to internalize when battling against the physical and psychological stress produced by the anxiety of appearance and the negative social effects of “lookism”.

To deal with **muscle dysmorphia**, it is essential to recognize that we should not internalize images on social media and others’ comments. Instead, focus on your personal growth and uniqueness. Besides, it is vital to break down the stigma surrounding appearance-related anxiety and encourage students to speak up about their mental health to foster a supportive community. This can be achieved through methods such as awareness campaigns and support groups, where students may exchange similar stories, hence helping each other.

Lastly, **exercise interventions** contribute to ameliorating university students’ mental health and living standards, as exercise heavily influences the way we feel. It is recommended to spend at least half an hour per day exercising to maintain positive mental health. Ultimately, poor mental health is an issue often overlooked and stigmatized by university students, hence we have to advocate for the prioritization of mental wellness to prevent students from suffering in silence.

GENERAL REFERENCE LIST

(For Introduction, Overall Conclusion, and pictures in shared parts only)



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THE END

HOPE EVERYONE CAN
STAY HEALTHY