Relationships Between Dismorphobia Tendency and Praise Seeking, Rejection Avoidance

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In this study, we examined the relationships between dysmorphobia tendency and praise seeking, rejection avoidance, and self-oriented perfectionism. Subjects were 311 female university students. We created a model in which self-oriented perfectionism mediates the effect of praise seeking and rejection avoidance in dysmorphobia tendency. The results showed that subjects with a stronger desire for praise seeking and rejection avoidance showed more appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance. The results also show that praise seeking enhances self-oriented perfectionism, which in turn reduces appearance evaluation apprehension.

Keywords: dysmorphobia tendency, praise seeking, rejection avoidance, self-oriented perfectionism

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of adolescents who are obsessed with their physical appearance. Dysmorphic phobia has attracted attention in clinical psychology and psychiatry. Dysmorphic phobia is listed as a Body Dysmorphic Disorder under Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to Nabeta (2011), individuals with dysmorphobia worry about their “strangely ugly” appearance, despite the fact that their appearance is not objectively ugly.

Ohmura, Kojima, Nakata, and Sawamiya (2015) define dysmorphobia tendency as “the tendency toward a strong obsession with the appearance of self, which is a strong interest toward appearance in the whole body or in the parts of the body”. Ohmura et al. (2015) conducted a study with 439 female undergraduates and developed the Dysmorphobia Tendency Scale for female youth. This scale consists of five items on “appearance evaluation apprehension” and four items on “obsessive concentration on appearance”. Test-retest reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and concurrent validity were confirmed.

The appearance evaluation apprehension factor in dysmorphobia refers to obsession with physical appearance and concern about evaluation by others. Desire for praise from others is considered to underlie obsession about physical appearance. This is approval motivation. Kojima, Ohta, and Sugawara (2003) created a scale for praise seeking/rejection avoidance, which measures two directions of desire for approval. Baba and Sugawara (2000) examined the association between approval motivation and drive for thinness in female youth. Because praise seeking affects drive for thinness, losing weight improves evaluations from others. Suzuki (2006) examined the relationship between approval motivation and “adornment”, such as diet, make-up, and clothes. There was a correlation between the praise seeking and adornment. Therefore, praise seeking/rejection

avoidance is expected to affect dysmorphobia tendency.

Self-oriented perfectionism is a more focused factor related to dysmorphobia tendency. Self-oriented perfectionism refers to a tendency to seek a perfect self. Sakurai and Ohtani (1995) translated the Multidimensional perfectionism scale by Hewitt and Flett (1991) into Japanese. Tanaka and Tayama (2011) reported that self-oriented perfectionism in university students influenced Body Dysmorphic Concern. Therefore, self-oriented perfectionism is expected to influence dysmorphobia tendency.

Kobori and Tanno (2005) investigated self-oriented perfectionism. They reported that when trying to gain positive reinforcement, such as praise, perfectionist cognition and behavior are adaptive; when trying to avoid negative reinforcement, such as rejection, perfectionist cognition and behavior are maladaptive. Therefore, if praise seeking and rejection avoidance affect dysmorphobia tendency, this relationship should be mediated by perfectionism.

The present study examines whether praise seeking and rejection avoidance influence dysmorphobia tendency (appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance) via self-oriented perfectionism.

Women were used as research subjects in this study because a higher percentage of women versus men worry about their appearance (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2009), and body dysmorphic tendencies are more common in women than men (Phillips, Menard, & Fay, 2006). Moreover, female adolescents are in a crisis state due to rapid body development and sexual maturation; puberty and youth period often predict dysmorphobia (Ito, 2001). Therefore, in this study, female students completed a survey.

Method

Participants

The survey was conducted at two time-points. The first survey was conducted in September-November 2006 with 256 female university students aged 18 to 26 years ($M = 20.22$, $SD = 3.19$) at two universities located in the suburbs of Tokyo, Japan. The second survey was conducted in December 2011 with 75 female university students aged 18 to 29 years ($M = 19.43$, $SD = 1.28$) at two universities located in Tokyo and Saitama, Japan.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from psychology classes. The lecturers were contacted for permission to collect data from their students, and students were told that they were not obligated to participate. Students were also told that if they did wish to participate, their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and that their participation would not influence their grades or their interactions with the lecturer in any way. At the end of the class period, the researchers provided a short debriefing.

Measurement

Dysmorphobia Tendency Scale (Ohmura et al., 2015). The Dysmorphobia Tendency Scale developed by Ohmura et al. (2015), which consists of five items on appearance evaluation apprehension and four items on obsessive concentration on appearance, was used to assess dysmorphobia tendency. There are 9 items in total. Students respond to each item using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = "It is true," 1 = "It is not true").

Praise seeking/rejection avoidance scale (Kojima, Ohta, & Sugawara, 2003). This scale was created to measure the two directions of approval motivation (praise seeking and rejection avoidance). Praise seeking is

measured by nine items, such as “When first meeting people, I want to appeal to them with my charm”. Rejection avoidance is measured by nine items, such as “When giving my opinion, I am anxious about being opposed by everyone”. There are 18 items in total. Test-retest reliability and concurrent validity have been confirmed. Students responded to each item using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = “It is true”, 1 = “It is not true”).

Self-oriented perfectionism scale (Ohtani & Sakurai, 1995). Ohtani and Sakurai (1995) created a Japanese version of the Multidimensional perfectionism scale (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). It consists of 38 items about self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and socially-prescribed perfectionism. The self-oriented perfectionism scale (15 items) was used in this study. Reliability and concurrent validity/construct validity have been confirmed. Students responded to items using a 7-point Likert scale (7 = “It is true”, 1 = “It is not true”).

Results

The present study examined whether praise seeking and rejection avoidance influence dysmorphobia tendency (appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance) via self-oriented perfectionism. Data from 311 female university students ($M = 19.78$, $SD = 1.14$) were analyzed; no deficiencies in responses were found. The respondents were divided into two groups. Group 1 included 243 students from the first survey, and Group 2 included 68 students from the second survey.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to examine relationships between dysmorphobia tendency, praise seeking, rejection avoidance, and self-oriented perfectionism (see Table 1). There was a positive correlation between dysmorphobia tendency and praise seeking ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), and between dysmorphobia tendency and rejection avoidance ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$). There was no relationship between dysmorphobia tendency and self-oriented perfectionism ($r = 0.01$, ns).

Table 1

Correlation Coefficient Between Dysmorphobia Tendency and Two Scale

	Praise seeking	Praise seeking	Self-oriented perfectionism	Dysmorphobia tendency	Appearance evaluation apprehension
Praise seeking	0.208**				
Self-oriented perfectionism	0.409**	0.161**			
Dysmorphobia tendency	0.326**	0.460**	0.017		
Appearance evaluation apprehension	0.334**	0.509**	0.010	0.901**	
Obsessive concentration appearance	0.181**	0.199**	0.021	0.746**	0.383**

Note. ** $p < 0.01$.

There was a positive correlation between appearance evaluation apprehension, which is a hypostatic factor of dysmorphobia tendency and praise seeking ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), and between appearance evaluation apprehension and rejection avoidance ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). There was no relationship between appearance evaluation apprehension and self-oriented perfectionism ($r = 0.01$, ns). There was a positive correlation between obsessive concentration on appearance, which is a hypostatic factor of dysmorphobia tendency and praise seeking ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), and between obsessive concentration on appearance and rejection avoidance

($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$). There was no relationship between obsessive concentration on appearance and self-oriented perfectionism ($r = 0.01$, ns).

In addition, there was a positive correlation between praise seeking and self-oriented perfectionism ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), and between rejection avoidance and self-oriented perfectionism ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$).

Path Analysis

Path analysis was performed using Amos 16.0 statistical software to examine whether praise seeking and rejection avoidance influence dysmorphobia tendency (appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance) via self-oriented perfectionism.

The significant direct paths in the revised model with beta weights are depicted in Figure 1. The paths from rejection avoidance to self-oriented perfectionism were not significant. This path was removed to create a more parsimonious model. This second model was assessed in terms of overall goodness-of-fit, and then individual paths were tested for significance. Overall, the analysis indicated that the model provided an excellent fit to the data: RMSEA = 0.056; GFI = 0.995; AGFI = 0.962.

Figure 1. Final path model: Path coefficients for influence of approval motivation and self-oriented perfectionism on dysmorphobia tendency (Notes. Numbers represent standardized path coefficients; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.005$, * $p < 0.01$).

The standardized partial regression coefficients from praise seeking and rejection avoidance to appearance evaluation apprehension were direct and positive ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). There were also direct and positive path from praise seeking and rejection avoidance to obsessive concentration on appearance ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$). The path from praise seeking to appearance evaluation apprehension was negative ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.001$) and mediated by self-oriented perfectionism ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$).

Direct and positive paths from praise seeking and rejection avoidance to appearance evaluation apprehension indicate that dysmorphobia tendency which is strong obsession with the appearance, there is a

desire to try to avoid negative evaluation or to acquire a positive evaluation. The reason that the influence of the “evaluation apprehension of appearance” from approval motivation was strong is that appearance is seen from others. That is, it is considered to be the core of dysmorphobia tendency.

The path from praise seeking to appearance evaluation apprehension was negative and mediated by self-oriented perfectionism. Self-oriented perfectionism can be both adaptive and maladaptive (Saito, Sawasaki, & Konno, 2008). Previous studies (e.g., Kobori & Tanno, 2005) reported that when the goal is to acquire positive reinforcement, such as praise, perfectionist cognition, and behavior is adaptive. Therefore, strengthening of self-perfection seeking due to a desire to win praise from others is not limited to appearance. In other words, self-oriented perfectionism has a different qualitative influence on the strength of dysmorphobia tendency, as shown by the weak standard partial regression coefficient that is in the opposite direction than predicted. The path from rejection avoidance to self-oriented perfectionism was not significant. Because it is important to avoid a negative evaluation, if rejection avoidance is strong, individuals cannot afford to seek perfection.

Discussion

The present study examined whether praise seeking and rejection avoidance influence dysmorphobia tendency (appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance) via self-oriented perfectionism. The results showed that when praise seeking and rejection avoidance increased, appearance evaluation apprehension and obsessive concentration on appearance increased. Praise seeking and rejection avoidance underlie dysmorphobia tendency. Moreover, increases in praise seeking leads to an increase self-oriented perfectionism, which reduces appearance evaluation apprehension. People with a desire to acquire positive evaluations seek perfection in themselves, but if the desire to achieve perfection becomes stronger, they seek perfection in areas that are unrelated to appearance, and obsession with physical appearance weakens. This study is a first step toward clarifying the source of dysmorphobia tendency in female adolescents, but further research is required.

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