

## **BODY IMAGE RUMINATION AND SOCIAL ANXIETY IN COLLEGE GIRLS**

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### **Abstract**

*Background- Body image issues have become more common, particularly among young women, as society and the media put more pressure on them to conform to a physical ideal. Body image rumination, or thinking negatively about one's appearance and obsessively thinking about their appearance, increases the amount of time spent thinking about negative thoughts. In turn, this causes a lower quality of life and poorer mental health, and decreases the ability to function socially.*

*Aim- To examine the relationship between body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls.*

*Method- A correlational research design and convenient sampling was utilized to collect data. 110 college girls participated in this study. Tools used - The Ruminative Response Scale (RRS; Nolen-Hoeksema, Van Allemeersch, Westrum, & McCallum, 2003) and The Social Anxiety Scale-D (SAS-D; Craske, Meints, & Beaton, 2013). Participants responded to the Standardized questionnaire through google form. Data were analysed using the Jamovi software.*

*Result- The majority of the sample population of the current study experienced moderate levels of rumination regarding their body image (71.8%). A large percentage of the sample population also reported having moderate levels of social anxiety (66.4%). Analyses conducted on Pearson correlation showed a significant positive correlation between scores measuring the level of rumination regarding one's body image and social anxiety ( $r = 0.383$ ), which was found to be statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ).*

*Conclusion- This study supports the necessity of targeted interventions for college students experiencing anxiety due to body image rumination*

**Keywords:** body image rumination, body image, social anxiety, college girls

## **Introduction**

According to APA dictionary of psychology, the mental picture one forms of one's body as a whole, including its physical characteristics (body percept) and one's attitudes toward these characteristics (body concept) and also called body identity, see also body schema. Body image consists of the emotions and thoughts you hold regarding your body. Body image can vary from positive to negative experience and an individual might feel positive and negative or a mix of both at different times. Body image is shaped by internal (e.g. personality) and external (e.g. social surrounding) influence. According to APA dictionary of psychology, Obsessional thinking involving excessive, repetitive thoughts or themes that interfere with other forms of mental activity. It is a common feature of obsessive-compulsive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. Rumination refers to the continuous pondering or brooding over negative emotions and anguish, along with their sources and effects. The continual, negative nature of rumination can lead to the onset of depression or anxiety and can aggravate pre-existing issues. Social anxiety involves the experience of increased fears in social or performance situations where negative evaluation or rejection could occur (Heimberg et al., 2010). Approximately 5 to 15% of adolescents are affected by the syndrome, with higher rates observed among females than males (Kessler, Petukhova, Sampson, Zaslavsky, & Wittchen, 2012). Social anxiety disorder fear and apprehension result in avoidance that can interfere with your life. Intense stress can impact your connections, everyday habits and employment, education or other pursuits. Social anxiety disorder may be a long-lasting mental health issue, yet acquiring coping strategies through therapy and using medications can enhance your self-confidence and boost your social interaction skills.

## **Review of literature**

Many researchers were reviewed related to Body image rumination and social anxiety. The researcher found very few Indian studies. Here were some studies mentioned below:

**Abigail R. Hardy & Jean M. Lamont (2025).** Conducted the study on "Reflections on the mirror: associations among body image rumination, sleep quality and self-reported physical health. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between body image rumination and self-reported physical health and to explore whether sleep quality mediates this relationship. Research design used in the study is Quantitative, cross-sectional study using online self-report questionnaires. The sampling method was utilized in the study is "Convenience sampling through undergraduate participants and Prolific (an online research platform). The sample size is N=611 and the mean age = 28.01 years (SD=13.64). The tools used in this study is "Body image rumination scale, Self-reported general health and physical functioning measures, Sleep quality questionnaire, Demographic data including BMI and gender. The finding of this study

is body image rumination significantly predicted poorer general health and physical functioning. Poor sleep quality indicates the relationship between body image rumination and physical health. These effects remained significant even after controlling for BMI, gender and sample source.

**Forough Kolahkaj & Leila Bakhshi Soorashjani (2025).** Conducted the study on "The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Anger Rumination and Multidimensional Body-Self Relations of Female Students of the Secondary Level with Social Phobia". The aim of the study is "To examine the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) on anger rumination and body-self relations in secondary-level female students with social phobia". Research Design used in this study is "Semi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, and 60-day follow-up, including a control group". The sampling method was utilized in the study is simple random sampling (lottery method); total sample = 60 female students diagnosed with social phobia. Divided into experimental group ( $n = 30$ ) and control group ( $n = 30$ ). The tools used in this study is "Demographic questionnaire, Anger Rumination Scale, Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN). Findings of the study is ACT significantly reduced anger rumination ( $F = 21.07, p < 0.01$ ) and improved multidimensional body-self relations ( $F = 5.97, p < 0.05$ ) in the experimental group compared to the control. Positive effects were maintained at follow-up.

**Hardy & Lamont (2025)** reported body image rumination positively correlated with poorer self-reported health ( $r = 0.32, p < .01$ ), mediated by sleep quality, among young women ( $N = 611$ ), highlighting rumination's broader impact on social functioning.

**Kolahkaj & Bakhshi Soorashjani (2025)** demonstrated that reducing anger rumination through Acceptance and Commitment Therapy significantly decreased social phobia symptoms ( $F = 21.07, p < .01$ ) and improved body-self relations among female students, indicating a causal link between rumination and social anxiety.

**Seyyede Fatemeh Behboodi et. al., (2024)** conducted the study on "The mediating role of inferiority feeling and self-critical rumination in the relationship between body image shame and social anxiety in adolescent girls. The aim of the study is "To examine whether inferiority feeling and self-critical rumination mediate the relationship between body image shame and social anxiety in adolescent girls". Research design used in this study is "descriptive - correlational study using Structural Equational Modelling (SEM). The sampling method was utilized in this study is "Convenience sampling method". The tools used in the study is "Inferiority feeling inventory (IFI; Khodaday&Bahrami,2012), Self -critical rumination scale (SCRS; Smart et.al.,2014), Body image shame scale (BISS; Durate et al,2014), Social phobia inventory (SPI; Connor et.al.,2000). The findings of the study are body image shame, self-critical rumination and inferiority feeling had direct and significant effects on social anxiety. Body image shame also significantly affected self-critical rumination and inferiority feeling.

Mediating analysis confirmed that inferiority feeling and self-critical rumination significantly mediate the link between body image shame and social anxiety.

**Wenfeng et al. (2024)** conducted the study on social anxiety and problematic social media use: A systematic review and meta-analysis. The aim this study was to clarify the relationship between social anxiety and problematic social media use, given inconsistent findings in existing literature. Research design was systematic review and meta-analysis. The sampling method utilized in the study is literature-based sampling; included 53 studies with a total of 59,928 participants. The tools used in the study Meta-analysis conducted using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) software. Findings are strong positive correlation exists between social anxiety and problematic social media use. The relationship was moderated by factors like measurement tools, sex, publication year and social media platform type but not by region or age. While Western studies establish rumination as a key mechanism linking body image concerns to social anxiety, Indian research among college women remains scarce. The current study addresses this gap by examining body image rumination's specific contribution to social anxiety among Indian college girls using validated scales.

### **Need of the Study**

The concerns surrounding body image have been more common with female college students than ever before due to social media and societal pressure exposing females to unrealistic beauty ideals on a daily basis. When the concerns of body image are transformed into rumination thoughts of negative perception of the body, it can heavily affect one's mental health. Among the most common effects of the body image rumination is the development of social anxiety disorder, an intense fear of being judged or criticized by others based on the perception of physical appearance. This transitional period for females in college when identity and self-worth are being developed places them at a greater risk for developing issues with body image. The importance of addressing the relationship between rumination of body image and the development of social anxiety is central to creating the appropriate programming for females in college to receive proper mental health services, as well as raising awareness of the impact that a negative body image can have on social anxiety. This study will provide an essential understanding of the mental health risks that could be present if the college population is not proactively addressing the issue of negative thoughts regarding body image.

### **Objective of the Study**

- To identify the level of body image rumination among college girls.
- To identify the level of social anxiety among college girls.
- To identify the relationship between body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- There is no significant difference in the level of body image rumination among college girls.



- There is no significant difference in the level of social anxiety among college girls.
- There is no significant relationship between body image rumination and social anxiety.

### Methodology

Descriptive research design and survey method was used. Simple random sampling technique were used to select the participants. In this study 110 college girls aged of 18-26 were taken as samples.

### Tools

Ruminative response scale was revised by Susan Nolen-Hoeksema.et.al (2003). The Ruminative response scale was consisting of 22 items. Participants were asked to rate each item on a ranging from '1' (almost never) to 'almost always'. RRS shows the good Internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of .77 for brooding and .72 for reflection. It's also developed strong construct and convergent validity.

Social anxiety scale was developed by Craske.et.al. (2013). The SAS-D scale was consisting of 10 items. Participants were asked to rate each item on a ranging from '0' (Never) to '4' (All of the time). SSA shown good Internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha in clinical and non-clinical samples often >.85) and test-retest reliability. It's also developed convergent and discriminant validity.

### Procedure

Using the survey method, 110 college girls' response were gathered in the current study. The participants were selected using Convenient sampling technique. A consent form has been created and distributed to the participants concern the gathered data and followed by demographic variables, RRS and SAS-D. After the data collection, the scoring was done through Jamovi software for descriptive statistic and analyse the level of body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls.

### Result and Discussion

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistic of Mean, Median, Mode, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of Body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls.

Variable	No. of Samples	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Body image rumination	110	47.5	47	46	10.08	0.02	0.58
Social anxiety	110	13.81	14.5	18	7.77	0.17	-0.15

The table provides the descriptive statistic of Body image rumination among college girls. The findings of descriptive analysis of Body image rumination represents the Mean is 47.5, Median

is 47, Mode is 46, SD is 10.08, Skewness is 0.02 which represents the distribution is positively skewed and Kurtosis is 0.58 indicates that the distribution is mesokurtic. The descriptive statistic of social anxiety among college girls. The findings of descriptive analysis of social anxiety represents the Mean is 13.81, Median is 14.5, Mode is 18, SD is 7.77, Skewness is 0.17 which represents the distribution is positively skewed and Kurtosis is -0.15 indicates the distribution of is mesokurtic.

**Table 2:** Levels of body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls.

Variables	No. of samples	High	%	Moderate	%	Low	%
Body image rumination	110	17	15.45%	79	71.8%	14	12.7%
Social anxiety	110	14	12.7%	73	66.36%	23	20.9%

The level of body image rumination was calculated using Mean  $\pm$  SD. The participants who scored above 58 were classified as high level of body image rumination and the score between 38 to 57 represents moderate level, 37 & below represents low level of body image rumination. In table-2 to denotes the data regarding the level of 110 samples. 17 participants (15.45%) fell in the high level of body image rumination, 79 participants (71.8%) fell in the moderate level of body image rumination, 14 participants (12.7%) fell in the low level of body image rumination. Thus, hypothesis was rejected. There is significance in the level of body image rumination is accepted.

The social anxiety was calculated using Mean  $\pm$  SD. The participants who scored above 22 were classified as the high level of social anxiety and the score between 7 to 21 represents the Moderate level of social anxiety, 6 & below represents the Low level of social anxiety. In table-2 to denotes the data regarding the level of 110 samples. 14 samples were falls under the High level of social anxiety, 73 samples were falls under the Moderate level of social anxiety, 23 samples were falls under the Low level of social anxiety. Hence the stated hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the level of social anxiety among college girls" is rejected. To sum up, there is significance in the level of social anxiety is accepted.

**Table 3:** Correlation between the body image rumination and social anxiety among college girls

Variables	r value
Body image rumination	0.383
Social anxiety	

**Note:** Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation between body image rumination and social anxiety in the case of college girls is shown in Table 3. The findings showed a significant positive correlation between body image rumination and social anxiety ( $r = 0.383$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This positive correlation means that when there is an increase in body image rumination, there will also be in social anxiety among college girls. Hence, repeating negative thoughts one's body image is linked to the experience of more social anxiety symptoms.

## Conclusion

The current research discovered a correlation of moderate strength and statistical significance between body image rumination and social anxiety in college girls. The results suggest that the more one ruminates over the body image the greater their social anxiety. Because a correlational design was used in the research, the relationship found is a correlation rather than an association. These findings stress the necessity of dealing with unhealthy body image rumination to lessen social anxiety and to promote mental health among college women.

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