

## Association between Appearance Schemas and Personality

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Personality traits play is related to many forms of psychological distress, such as body dissatisfaction. Aim: To explore the associations between appearance schemas and personality traits. Method: 494 Portuguese university students (80.2% females, and 99.2% single), with a mean age of 20.17 years old (SD = 1.77; range: 18-20), filled in the appearance schemas inventory-revised, the NEO personality inventory (a Portuguese short version), and the composite multidimensional perfectionism scale. Results: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in appearance schemas by sex, with a significant difference being found in self-evaluation salience scores [females (M = 37.99, SD = 7.82); males (M = 35.36, SD = 6.60);  $t(489) = -3.052, p = .002$ ]. Finally, there was no significant difference in motivational salience scores, by sex [females (M = 27.67, SD = 4.84); males (M = 26.70, SD = 4.99);  $t(489) = -1.748, p = .081$ ]. Having conducted correlations separately, by sex, self-evaluation salience was positively correlated with concern over mistakes ( $r = .27$ ), doubts about actions ( $r = .35$ ), and socially prescribed perfectionism ( $r = .23$ ). moreover, for females, self-evaluation salience was positively correlated with concern over mistakes ( $r = .34$ ), personal standards ( $r = .25$ ), doubts about actions ( $r = .33$ ), parental expectations ( $r = .24$ ), parental criticism ( $r = .24$ ), organization ( $r = .11$ ), socially prescribed perfectionism ( $r = .31$ ), self-oriented perfectionism ( $r = .32$ ), and neuroticism ( $r = .33$ ). concerning motivational salience, in the total sample (not separately, by sex), this scale/dimension significantly correlated with conscientiousness ( $r = .18$ ), personal standards ( $r = .23$ ), socially prescribed perfectionism ( $r = .10$ ), and self-oriented perfectionism ( $r = .29$ ). All correlations were significant at a level of significance of 0.01 (2-tailed), except for socially prescribed perfectionism. All the other correlations (with neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, and parental criticism) were not significant. Conclusions: Females seem to value more their self-appearance than males, and, in females, the salience of appearance in life seems to be associated with maladaptive perfectionism, as well as with adaptive perfectionism. In males, the salience of appearance was only related to adaptive perfectionism. These results seem to show that males are more concerned with their own standards regarding appearance, while for females, other's standards are also relevant. In females, the level of the salience of appearance in life seems to relate to the experience of feelings, such as anxiety and depression (neuroticism). The motivation to improve appearance seemed to be particularly related, in both sexes, to adaptive perfectionism (in a general way concerning more the personal standards). Longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the causality of the results. Acknowledgment: This study was carried out under the strategic project of the Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies (CEFH) UID/FIL/00683/2019, funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT).

**Keywords :** appearance schemas, personality traits, university students, sex

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