

A Quantitative Study Investigating Whether the Internalisation of Adolescent Femininity Ideologies Predicts Depression and Anxiety in Female Adolescents

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Abstract : Female adolescents residing in a patriarchal society such as South Africa are more inclined to embrace feminine ideologies. Internalizing these ideologies may expose female adolescents to mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. This study explored whether the internalisation of adolescent femininity ideologies namely, objectified relationship with own body (ORB) and inauthentic self in relationships (ISR) predicted anxiety and depression in late female adolescents at Stellenbosch University. The sample of the study consisted of 1451 (18-24) female undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at Stellenbosch University. The mean age of the participants was 20 (SD=1.46), and most participants (39.7%) were first-year students. The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design. Data was collected through an online self-completion survey, the survey consisted of three sections, the first section asked biographical questions regarding age, gender, race and family background. The second section measured the internalisation of feminine ideologies by using the adolescent femininity ideology scale which has two subscales namely inauthentic self in relationship with others (ISR) and objectified relationship with one's own body (ORB). The ISR scale had the Cronbach Alpha of 0.76, and the ORB scale had the Cronbach Alpha of 0.83. The third section measured mental health (depression and anxiety) by using the Hopkins Symptoms 25-checklist which had the Cronbach Alpha of 0.93. Data were analysed through multiple linear regression from IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 24). The overall results of the multiple linear regression showed that The AFIS combination accounted for 14% for anxiety as measured by the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist $R^2 = .142$, $F(2, 682) = 56.431$, $p < .001$. The combination also accounted for 24% for depression as measured by the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist $R^2 = .239$, $F(2, 682) = 106.971$, $p < .0$. The findings in this study affirm the objectification and feminist theory contentions that internalising femininity ideologies (ISR and ORB) predict negative mental health in female adolescents.

Keywords : adolescents, anxiety, depression, feminine ideologies, inauthentic self, mental health, self-objectification, South Africa

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