

Examining Mediators of the Relation Between Self-Concept Clarity and Body Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating

Peyton Kelly

Self-concept clarity, appearance contingent self-worth, and appearance-related social comparison have been shown to be correlated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. In the current study, we examine associations between these constructs and test four mediation models for appearance contingent self-worth and appearance-related social comparison as mediators of the relationship between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Using two waves of data collection, undergraduate females ($N = 441$ at Time 1; $N = 237$ at Time 2) completed online surveys of the study's core constructs at points separated by approximately 14 months. Aligned with our hypotheses, we found significant correlations between self-concept clarity, appearance contingent self-worth, and appearance-related social comparison and eating disorder symptoms. Mediation analyses indicated that appearance contingent self-worth partially mediated the relationship between self-concept clarity and both body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Additionally, appearance-related social comparison partially mediated the relationship between self-concept clarity and body dissatisfaction and fully mediated the relationship between self-concept clarity and disordered eating. Future research should examine if these findings extend to broader demographic groups. Future work could also extend the present models to test relationship contingent self-worth and other areas of social comparison, such as eating and exercise comparisons as mediators. Clinical implications include the potential for disordered eating interventions targeting a decrease in appearance contingent self-worth or appearance-related social comparisons.

Keywords: appearance contingent self-worth, appearance-related social comparison, body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, mediation, self-concept clarity