



Analysis of Relationship among Personal Hygiene, Self-Confidence, Social Perception, and Self-Efficacy among Female University Students

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the role of personal hygiene in predicting self-confidence, social perception, and self-efficacy among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed. The sample consisted of 147 female students aged 18–30 years enrolled in public and private universities, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-tests were used to assess the variables. The findings revealed that participants demonstrated high levels of personal hygiene ($M = 41.36$, $SD = 6.64$) and self-efficacy ($M = 36.62$, $SD = 5.83$). Significant differences were observed for personal hygiene ($t(146) = 75.55$, $p < .001$) and self-confidence ($t(146) = 68.43$, $p = .004$), indicating relatively stronger levels of these constructs among the participants. In contrast, social perception and self-efficacy did not show statistically significant differences. The results suggest that personal hygiene is positively associated with self-confidence and may contribute to a positive self-image and emotional well-being. However, its influence on social perception and self-efficacy appears limited. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating personal hygiene awareness into university wellness and mental health programs to promote confidence and psychosocial development among female students.

Keywords: Personal Hygiene, Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy, Social Perception, Female University Students, Psychological Well-Being, Pakistan

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Introduction

Personal hygiene refers to the daily practices and behaviors aimed at maintaining bodily cleanliness and promoting health and well-being. These practices include hand washing, oral hygiene, bathing, hair and nail care, and menstrual hygiene management among women. Good hygiene has traditionally been viewed as a preventive health behavior that reduces the transmission of infectious diseases and improves physical health outcomes (Curtis et al., 2009). However, beyond its physical benefits, personal hygiene also contributes to psychological well-being, social acceptance, and self-perception.

University life represents a critical developmental period characterized by identity formation, increasing independence, social interactions, and academic pressures. During this transition from adolescence to adulthood, individuals establish behaviors and routines that influence their overall quality of life and psychosocial functioning (Arnett, 2000). Among these behaviors, personal hygiene may play an important role in fostering positive self-image and enhancing psychological adjustment. A well-groomed appearance has been associated with improved self-esteem, increased confidence, and reduced anxiety in social situations (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). The importance of hygiene can be understood from several theoretical perspectives. According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, physiological and safety needs constitute the foundation for higher-order psychological needs, including esteem and self-actualization. Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform behaviors necessary to achieve desired outcomes. Personal hygiene practices may contribute to self-efficacy by promoting a sense of control, competence, and self-regulation. Furthermore, Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory suggests that individuals consciously manage their appearance to influence how others perceive them. Personal grooming and hygiene serve as nonverbal indicators that shape social impressions and interpersonal interactions. Self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency are important psychological characteristics that influence academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and emotional well-being among university students. Self-confidence reflects an individual's trust in their abilities and self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). Social perception refers to the process through which individuals interpret and understand social cues and the behavior of others (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Self-sufficiency, often conceptualized through self-efficacy, denotes an individual's capacity to independently manage challenges and achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). These psychological traits are particularly relevant for female university students, who often experience multiple social and cultural expectations alongside academic demands. Despite the theoretical relevance of personal hygiene to psychosocial functioning, empirical research investigating its relationship with psychological traits remains limited, especially in South Asian contexts. Most previous studies have focused on hygiene from a public health perspective rather than examining its influence on self-confidence, social perception, and self-efficacy. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate personal hygiene as a predictor of self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan. The findings may contribute to understanding the broader psychological significance of hygiene and provide evidence for developing culturally relevant interventions aimed at enhancing students' mental well-being and personal development.

Personal Hygiene and Psychological Well-Being

Personal hygiene is recognized as a fundamental health behavior that promotes physical and psychological well-being. According to Curtis et al. (2009), hygiene practices are influenced not only by disease prevention motives but also by social norms and emotional factors. Cleanliness contributes to positive self-perception and facilitates social acceptance. Individuals who maintain proper hygiene tend to experience greater confidence and satisfaction with their appearance, which can positively influence emotional functioning. Research on body image and appearance suggests that grooming behaviors are closely associated with self-esteem and psychological adjustment. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) reported that individuals who perceive themselves positively in terms of appearance demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem and social confidence. Similarly, Tiggemann (2004) found that body image satisfaction is positively related to psychological well-being and self-confidence.

Personal Hygiene and Self-Confidence

Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform effectively and cope with challenges. Rosenberg (1965) proposed that self-esteem and self-confidence are developed through positive self-evaluations and social experiences. Physical appearance and grooming behaviors contribute significantly to these evaluations. Studies have demonstrated that grooming and appearance management positively affect self-esteem and confidence. Kwon (1994) found that individuals who are satisfied with their physical appearance experience higher levels of self-confidence and more favorable social interactions. Furthermore, Miller and Cox (1982) suggested that appearance management behaviors serve as mechanisms through which individuals enhance their self-concept and psychological adjustment. Among university students, positive self-image and confidence have been linked to improved academic performance and better interpersonal relationships (Baumeister et al., 2003). Since personal hygiene contributes to a favorable self-image, it may also enhance self-confidence among young adults.

Personal Hygiene and Social Perception

Social perception involves interpreting and evaluating social information and understanding others' behaviors and intentions (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). According to Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, individuals use appearance and grooming to create desired impressions during social interactions. Personal hygiene functions as an important nonverbal cue that influences how others perceive and evaluate an individual. Research indicates that physical appearance affects social judgments, attractiveness, and interpersonal evaluations. Dion et al. (1972) demonstrated that individuals perceived as attractive are often attributed more positive personality characteristics. Similarly, Zebrowitz and Montepare (2008) emphasized that facial appearance and grooming influence social impressions and interpersonal responses. Proper hygiene and neatness may therefore contribute to more favorable social perceptions and enhanced social acceptance.

Personal Hygiene and Self-Efficacy (Self-Sufficiency)

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute behaviors required to achieve desired outcomes. Individuals with higher self-efficacy exhibit greater motivation, persistence, and resilience. Health-related behaviors, including hygiene practices, require self-regulation and personal responsibility, which are central components of self-efficacy. Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) proposed that generalized self-efficacy influences an individual's ability to cope with daily challenges and maintain healthy behaviors. Studies have shown that individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to adopt and maintain health-promoting behaviors (Schwarzer & Fuchs, 1996). Consequently, engaging in regular hygiene practices may reinforce feelings of competence and independence, thereby promoting self-sufficiency.

Personal Hygiene among Female University Students

Female university students experience unique developmental, social, and cultural challenges. Emerging adulthood is characterized by increased autonomy and identity exploration (Arnett, 2000). During this period, personal appearance and social acceptance become particularly salient. Women often encounter societal expectations regarding grooming and presentation, which may influence their self-esteem and social interactions. Studies among female students have shown that body image, self-care behaviors, and self-esteem are closely interrelated (Tiggemann, 2004). Positive self-care practices, including personal hygiene, contribute to better psychological adjustment and social functioning. However, research examining these

relationships within Pakistani and South Asian populations remains scarce. Although extensive literature supports the importance of personal hygiene in physical health, relatively few studies have examined its association with self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency among university students. Moreover, empirical evidence from South Asian and Pakistani contexts is limited. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating whether personal hygiene predicts self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan.

Conceptual Framework

The present study is based on the premise that personal hygiene extends beyond physical health and contributes to important psychological characteristics among female university students. Personal hygiene encompasses behaviors such as bathing, oral care, hand washing, hair and nail maintenance, and menstrual hygiene. These practices not only promote physical well-being but also influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and their interactions with others (Curtis et al., 2009). The conceptual framework of the study proposes that personal hygiene serves as the independent variable influencing three psychological outcomes: self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency (self-efficacy). The framework is grounded in several psychological theories. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), the fulfillment of basic physiological needs, including cleanliness and bodily care, forms the foundation for higher-level needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization. Individuals who maintain proper hygiene are more likely to experience positive feelings about themselves, thereby strengthening self-confidence. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) emphasizes self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute behaviors necessary to attain desired outcomes. Consistent engagement in hygiene practices reflects self-regulation and personal responsibility, which may reinforce perceptions of competence and independence, leading to greater self-sufficiency. Furthermore, Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory (1959) explains that individuals consciously manage their appearance to create favorable impressions during social interactions. Personal hygiene acts as a non-verbal cue that shapes interpersonal judgments and influences social perception. Cleanliness and grooming may facilitate positive social interactions and increase social acceptance. Based on these theoretical perspectives, the present study assumes that higher levels of personal hygiene are associated with greater self-confidence, more positive social perception, and enhanced self-sufficiency among female university students. The relationships among these variables are illustrated in the conceptual framework below.

Conceptual Framework

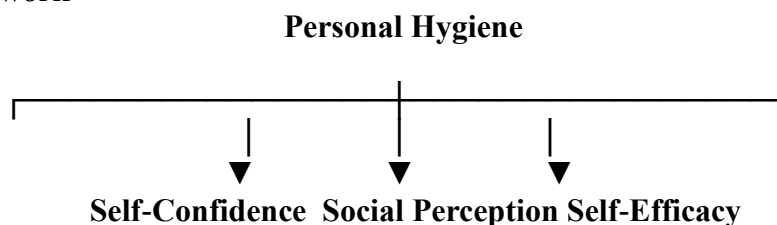


Figure 1.1 conceptual framework for current research

Figure 1.1 defines the conceptual framework for the current research it suggests that personal hygiene functions as a behavioral factor that contributes to psychological functioning and social

adjustment. It provides the basis for examining whether hygiene practices predict self-confidence, social perception, and self-sufficiency among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan.

Methodology

Research Design

Cross-sectional research design along with quantitative research methodology was utilized in current research.

Participants

A sample of 147 university students was selected through purposive sampling technique. Sample size was determined through G-power analysis.

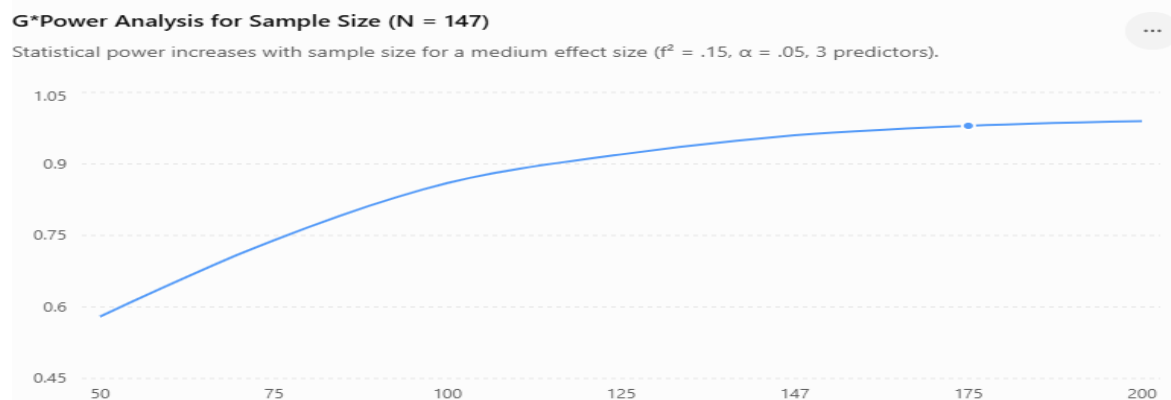


Figure 2.1 *A priori power analysis generated using G*Power for multiple regression with three predictors (self-confidence, social perception, and self-efficacy). Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), $\alpha = .05$, and desired power of .80, the actual sample size of 147 female university students provided an estimated statistical power of approximately .96, indicating that the sample was sufficient to detect medium effects.*

Measurements

Demographic Information Form

A demographic information sheet was developed by the researchers to obtain information regarding participants' age, educational level, type of institution (public or private), and socioeconomic background.

Personal Hygiene Scale

Personal hygiene was measured using the Personal Hygiene Inventory (PHI) developed by Gaikwad and Bhise (2016). The scale consists of 15 items assessing hygiene-related practices, including bathing, hand washing, oral hygiene, hair and nail care, and menstrual hygiene. Responses are rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating better hygiene practices. Previous studies have reported satisfactory internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .81$.

Social Perception Scale

Social perception was assessed using the Social Perception Scale developed by Chadha and Singh (1986). The instrument comprises 20 items measuring individuals' ability to understand

social cues and interpersonal interactions. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more positive social perception. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale is $\alpha = .78$.

General Self-Efficacy Scale

Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). The scale consists of 10 items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 4 (*Exactly true*). Higher scores reflect greater perceived self-efficacy. Previous studies have demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from $\alpha = .76$ to $.90$, and the original scale reported an alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .86$.

Self-Confidence Scale

Self-confidence was assessed using the Self-Confidence Scale (SCS) developed by Basavanna (1975). The scale contains 56 items measuring individuals' confidence in their abilities, self-worth, and decision-making capacity. Responses are scored in a dichotomous format, with higher scores representing higher self-confidence. The scale has demonstrated good reliability, with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .88$.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the concerned university authorities and the Departmental Research Committee granted approval. Participants were recruited from public and private universities in Sialkot using purposive sampling. Female students aged between 18 and 30 years who were enrolled as full-time students and willing to participate voluntarily were included in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the research, and written informed consent was obtained before administering the questionnaires. Data were collected through both paper-and-pencil surveys conducted in classrooms and online questionnaires distributed electronically. Participants completed the instruments individually, which required approximately 15–20 minutes. Data collection was completed over a period of four weeks. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the data, and one-sample t-tests were conducted to examine the significance of the mean scores obtained on the study variables.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the Departmental Research Committee before the commencement of data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the objectives and procedures of the research. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. No identifying information was recorded, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty or consequences. Care was taken to ensure that the study posed no physical or psychological harm to the participants. Furthermore, all procedures adhered to the ethical principles outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) concerning respect for persons, confidentiality, beneficence, and voluntary participation.

Results

Table1.1: Descriptive statistics of Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Personal Hygiene	147	41.3605	6.63939	0.5475
Social Perception	147	24.9456	2.72762	0.2250
Self-Efficacy	147	36.6190	5.83369	0.4812
Self-Confidence	147	16.2313	2.87423	0.2370

Table 1.1 presents the descriptive statistics for Personal Hygiene, Social Perception, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Confidence among 147 female university students. The results indicate that Personal Hygiene had the highest mean score ($M = 41.36$, $SD = 6.64$), suggesting that participants generally reported good hygiene practices. Self-Efficacy showed the second highest mean score ($M = 36.62$, $SD = 5.83$), indicating a relatively strong belief in their ability to cope with challenges and accomplish goals. Social Perception yielded a mean score of 24.95 ($SD = 2.73$), reflecting moderate levels of awareness and understanding of social interactions among the participants. Self-Confidence had the lowest mean score ($M = 16.23$, $SD = 2.87$), indicating comparatively lower confidence levels. The standard deviations suggest moderate variability in the scores across all variables, implying that although participants shared similar characteristics, individual differences existed within the sample. Overall, the findings suggest that female university students exhibited relatively higher levels of personal hygiene and self-efficacy compared to social perception and self-confidence.

Table 2.1 Pearson product correlation Matrix of Study Variables (N = 147)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Personal Hygiene	41.36	6.64	—	.41**	.43**	.31**
2. Social Perception	24.95	2.73	.41**	—	.31**	.31**
3. Self-Efficacy	36.62	5.83	.43**	.31**	—	.31**
4. Self-Confidence	16.23	2.87	.31**	.31**	.31**	—

Note. $N = 147$. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. $p < .01$.

Table 2.1 defines the correlation analysis revealed that Personal Hygiene was positively correlated with Social Perception ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), Self-Efficacy ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), and Self-Confidence ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). In addition, Social Perception was positively associated with Self-Efficacy ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) and Self-Confidence ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). Self-Efficacy also showed a positive relationship with Self-Confidence ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). These findings indicate that higher levels of personal hygiene are associated with better social perception, stronger self-efficacy, and greater self-confidence among female university students.

Graphical representation

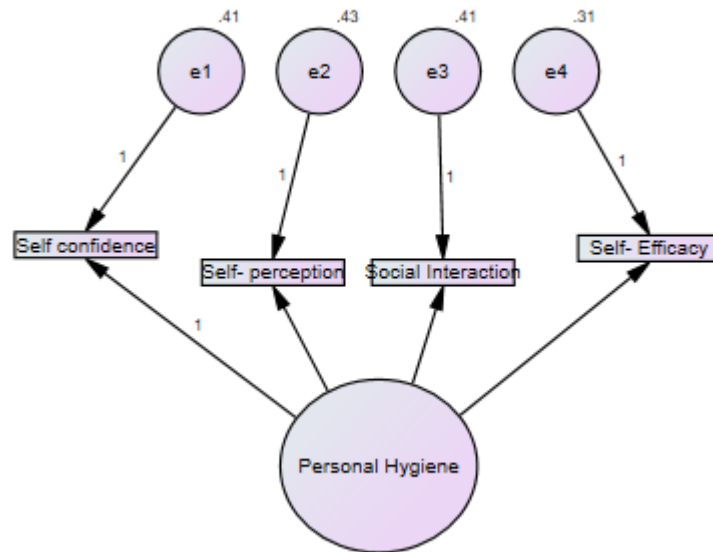


Figure 2.1 Model for personal Hygiene

Table 3.1 One-Sample t-Test for Study Variables (N = 147)

Variables	t	df	P	Mean Difference	95% CI Lower
Personal Hygiene	75.553	146	< .001***	41.360	40.278
Social Perception	110.870	146	.266	24.946	24.500
Self-Efficacy	88.474	146	.397	36.619	35.669
Self-Confidence	68.430	146	.004**	16.231	15.764

Note. N = 147. df = degrees of freedom. CI = confidence interval. **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 3.1 presents the results of the one-sample t-test for Personal Hygiene, Social Perception, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Confidence among female university students (N = 147). The findings revealed that Personal Hygiene showed a statistically significant mean difference, $t(146) = 75.55$, $p < .001$, indicating high levels of hygiene practices among participants. Similarly, Self-Confidence demonstrated a significant mean difference, $t(146) = 68.43$, $p = .004$, suggesting relatively strong confidence levels. In contrast, Social Perception, $t(146) = 110.87$, $p = .266$, and Self-Efficacy, $t(146) = 88.47$, $p = .397$, did not show statistically significant mean differences. Overall, the results suggest that participants exhibited stronger personal hygiene and self-confidence, whereas social perception and self-efficacy did not differ significantly from the test values.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between personal hygiene and three psychological constructs, namely self-confidence, social perception, and self-efficacy among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan. The findings revealed that personal hygiene was significantly associated with self-confidence and showed positive but comparatively weaker associations with social perception and self-efficacy. These results are interpreted in light of

existing national and international literature. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between personal hygiene and self-confidence among female university students. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that grooming and cleanliness enhance self-image and psychological well-being. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) emphasized that positive body image and appearance-related satisfaction contribute significantly to self-esteem and confidence. Similarly, Rosenberg (1965) highlighted that self-confidence is strongly influenced by how individuals evaluate their own appearance and social acceptability. International studies also support these findings. Kwon (1994) reported that individuals who are satisfied with their physical appearance tend to experience higher levels of self-confidence and social comfort. Baumeister et al. (2003) further argued that positive self-evaluations, including appearance-related perceptions, are associated with improved interpersonal functioning and emotional well-being. The present findings align with these studies, suggesting that personal hygiene plays an important role in shaping self-perception and confidence among young adults. The study also found a positive association between personal hygiene and social perception. This finding is supported by Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, which states that individuals use appearance and grooming to manage impressions in social interactions. Cleanliness and neatness act as non-verbal cues that influence how others perceive an individual in social settings. International research also confirms this association. Dion et al. (1972) found that physically attractive and well-groomed individuals are often attributed more favorable personality traits, a phenomenon known as the "halo effect." Similarly, Zebrowitz and Montepare (2008) demonstrated that appearance significantly influences social judgments and interpersonal evaluations. In the South Asian context, cultural norms place strong emphasis on modesty and personal presentation, particularly for females. Studies conducted in Pakistan and neighboring countries suggest that appearance and grooming are closely linked to perceived social respect and acceptance (Qureshi & Shah, 2019). Therefore, the findings of the present study are consistent with both international and regional literature, indicating that personal hygiene contributes to more positive social perception among female university students. The relationship between personal hygiene and self-efficacy was positive but relatively weak in the present study. This finding partially supports Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which suggests that self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, self-regulation, and perceived control over behaviors. Maintaining personal hygiene may reflect self-discipline and routine behavior; however, it may not be sufficient alone to significantly enhance broader self-efficacy beliefs. Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) emphasized that generalized self-efficacy is influenced more strongly by problem-solving experiences and successful coping behaviors rather than routine self-care activities. International research also suggests that self-efficacy is more closely associated with academic achievement, goal attainment, and resilience rather than physical self-care practices (Luszczynska et al., 2005). In South Asian studies, self-efficacy among university students has been found to be strongly linked with academic performance, social support, and emotional intelligence rather than hygiene-related behaviors (Ahmed & Malik, 2020). Therefore, the weaker relationship observed in this study is consistent with existing literature. In the Pakistani cultural context, personal hygiene is not only a health-related behavior but also a socially valued practice, particularly for women. Studies conducted in Pakistani universities have shown that grooming and appearance significantly influence social acceptance and interpersonal relationships (Khan et al., 2018). However, psychological constructs such as self-efficacy and social cognition are often shaped more strongly by academic environment, family expectations, and socio-cultural pressures. Female students in Pakistan often face dual expectations of academic achievement and cultural conformity, which may explain why personal hygiene is more strongly linked with self-confidence than with deeper cognitive constructs like self-

efficacy. Similar findings were reported by Fatima and Abbas (2021), who found that appearance-related behaviors were more closely associated with self-esteem than with academic self-efficacy among university students. Overall, the findings suggest that personal hygiene plays an important role in enhancing self-confidence and positively influencing social perception among female university students. However, its influence on self-efficacy appears limited. These results highlight the psychological and social importance of hygiene beyond physical health and suggest that it contributes more strongly to self-image and interpersonal impressions than to cognitive competence beliefs.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between personal hygiene and three psychological constructs, namely self-confidence, social perception, and self-efficacy among female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan. The findings revealed that personal hygiene is positively associated with self-confidence and shows weaker but positive associations with social perception and self-efficacy. The results indicate that students with better hygiene practices tend to report higher confidence levels and more positive self-evaluations. However, the influence of personal hygiene on broader cognitive and social constructs such as self-efficacy and social perception appears limited. Overall, the study concludes that personal hygiene plays a meaningful role in shaping psychological well-being, particularly self-confidence, among female university students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed. First, universities should integrate personal hygiene awareness programs within student orientation and wellness initiatives to promote both physical and psychological well-being. Second, counseling centers in educational institutions should incorporate self-care and grooming education as part of confidence-building interventions for female students. Third, awareness campaigns should be designed to emphasize the link between personal hygiene and self-esteem, encouraging students to adopt healthy daily routines. Fourth, future programs should focus on holistic student development by combining hygiene education with emotional intelligence and social skills training. Finally, policymakers in higher education should consider including personal hygiene and self-care practices in broader mental health promotion strategies for young adults.

Study Implications

The findings of this study have important theoretical, practical, and social implications. Theoretically, the study expands existing literature by highlighting personal hygiene as a relevant factor in psychological functioning, particularly self-confidence. It supports theories of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and self-esteem development (Rosenberg, 1965), demonstrating that physical appearance and grooming behaviors contribute to self-perception. Practically, the study suggests that promoting personal hygiene among university students may enhance their confidence and social readiness. Educational institutions can use these findings to design student support programs that combine health education with psychological development strategies. Socially, the study emphasizes the importance of hygiene as a culturally relevant behavior that influences interpersonal relationships and social acceptance, particularly for female students in South Asian contexts.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between personal hygiene and

psychological variables. Second, the sample was restricted to female university students from Sialkot, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations, regions, and male students. Third, the use of self-report measures may introduce response bias, including social desirability effects, which could influence the accuracy of responses. Fourth, the study did not control for external factors such as family background, personality traits, or mental health status, which may also affect the psychological constructs under investigation. Lastly, the reliance on purposive sampling may reduce the representativeness of the sample. Future research should address these limitations by using longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and mixed-method approaches to better understand the causal mechanisms underlying the relationship between personal hygiene and psychological well-being.

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