| RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Analysis of the Causes of Appearance Anxiety of Contemporary College Students and Its Countermeasures

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| ABSTRACT

The problem of appearance anxiety is becoming more and more serious in today's society, and it has even risen to become a major focus problem that affects people's physical and mental health and social development. Among all appearance-anxious people, college students are major victims of appearance-anxiety problems. In this survey, we took college students as the survey objects and collected 101 questionnaires about appearance anxiety. We found that the main causes of college students' appearance anxiety are the single definition and pursuit of beauty in social media, the rigid requirements and halo effect in job hunting, the lack of self-confidence in the growing environment, and certain defects in appearance itself. On the basis of the analysis of the reasons, this article will propose corresponding solutions and programs to help college students relieve anxiety and promote the development of society in a positive and healthy direction.

| KEYWORDS

Appearance anxiety; social media; halo effect; personality defects; related coping measures

## 1. Introduction

Kun Yi, who stands 170 cm tall and weighs 121 pounds, is planning to maintain a diet during the holidays. She has purple yam, pumpkin, and chicken sausage for breakfast, a small bowl of buckwheat noodles, pieces of broccoli and cucumbers for lunch, half a stick of corn, an egg, and an orange for dinner. However, behind this balanced recipe is not the pursuit of good fitness but lies a deep-seated appearance anxiety that has plagued her for the past 10 years. Zhuo Zuo, another college student, is also perplexed by the worries about her body shape. Despite being aware of the potential harm to her body and the high economic cost, Zuo cannot forebear ordering unlicensed diet pills from window-shopping platforms, which takes her two months' living expenses for just a four-week supply. Driven by Zuo's pursuit of a slim body shape, which is prevalent on Chinese social media, as indicated by the internet slang "bamboo pole legs" and an "A4 waist", she has to take drastic measures.

Topics related to appearance anxiety with keywords such as "appearance anxiety," "do you have appearance anxiety," "how difficult is appearance anxiety," "how to solve appearance anxiety," and "rejecting appearance anxiety" has accumulated a total reading volume exceeding 1 billion instances on Chinese social media Weibo. Zuo and Yi's concerns about their body shapes are not uncommon among college-age students. Notably, a report published by the People's Daily in February 2021 highlights a recent survey conducted by China Youth among 2,063 college students, specifically targeting the issue of appearance anxiety. The survey reveals that a significant proportion, namely 59.03%, of college students experience a certain level of appearance anxiety. Intriguingly, within this cohort, male students exhibit a higher prevalence of severe appearance anxiety (9.09%) compared to their female counterparts (3.94%), while female students demonstrate a higher incidence of moderate anxiety (59.67%) compared to male students (37.14%). The frequent use of the term "appearance anxiety" prompts inquiries into its precise definition within the context of this prevalent social phenomenon. Therefore, exploring the factors underlying the onset of appearance anxiety,

examining its ramifications on contemporary young individuals, and formulating effective strategies for resolution thus become imperative areas of investigation (Cheng et al. 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

Little research has focused on the definition of appearance anxiety, and there lacks a consensus or a unified definition. As an internet slang, "appearance anxiety" represents a manifestation of body dysmorphic. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association reported Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) as a prevalent mental disorder characterized by an excessive concern over minor or subjectively perceived flaws in one's appearance, leading individuals to believe their appearance is unattractive, abnormal, or distorted [Chen et al. 2018]. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) indicated that individuals with body dysmorphic disorder excessively focus on self-perceived appearance defects or imperfections that are typically not observed or noticed by others (American Psychiatric Association, 2016). Consequently, considering the prevailing emphasis on appearance in today's image-driven society, "appearance anxiety" can be defined as the anxiety arising from dissatisfaction with one's self-appearance within an environment that places excessive importance on physical appearance (Fu et al., 2022).

In terms of diseases, appearance anxiety can be classified as an anxiety disorder. Most individuals experiencing appearance anxiety do not suffer from significant or noticeable appearance defects (although exceptions may exist, wherein a small portion may be triggered by actual and conspicuous appearance issues). However, people with appearance anxiety often exhibit low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with their physical appearance. In this case, appearance anxiety refers to the apprehension stemming from a lack of confidence in one's appearance and the perception of not being visually appealing. It does not rely on objectively "good" or "bad" appearances but rather encompasses the anxiety resulting from self-imposed negative evaluations and belittlement of one's own physical attributes. Such a psychological disorder often manifests as a reluctance to go out without makeup, fear of social interactions, behaving with nervousness, anxiety, unease during social engagements, or difficulty with concentrating, blushing, avoiding eye contact, etc. In severe cases, it develops an aversion to direct communication with others, which greatly hinders daily activities and can even lead to depression and other mental disorders. In this study, we aim to explore the underlying causes of appearance anxiety and verify our hypotheses through questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

## 3. Methodology

We collected first-hand information about appearance anxiety through questionnaires, design measurement scales, and in-depth interviews to conduct empirical research. Through these steps, we understand the real thoughts and feelings of people with appearance anxiety, increase the reliability and authenticity of the study, provide a more comprehensive explanation of the meaning and causes of appearance anxiety, reshape the aesthetics and values of young people in the new era, and purify the social climate.

## 4. Results and Discussion

(I) The definition and pursuit of " beauty " in social media: people generally align themselves with the beauty in the definition

In the 1920s, the renowned American political commentator Lippmann addressed the concept of the pseudo-environment in his book Public Opinion. The mass media plays a central role in constructing this pseudo-environment, yet most individuals remain unaware of the limitations inherent in this non-reflective representation. They perceive the pseudo-environment conveyed by the mass media as the objective reality for their cognition and understanding. Essentially, the social image constructed and propagated by the media shapes the impressions formed by the public, while the ideas disseminated by the media can become the prevailing social norms.

Mainstream media and academic institutions in China often embellish individuals with labels such as "the most beautiful doctoral supervisor," "beautiful academic master," or "handsome and captivating voice". These labels, often added alongside descriptions of their accomplishments, prioritize appearance over their actual efforts and achievements. For instance, one of the winners of the 2021 Bodhidharma Academy Green Orange Award, Huichan Zhao, received widespread attention and popularity during the pandemic due to her endearing dimples and resemblance to Michelle Chen, a Taiwan famous star, instead of her academic distinction. The extensive media coverage and subsequent public discussions have inadvertently shaped a media landscape that places significant emphasis on people's appearance, influencing the public's perception of the world.

Through repeated expressions and extensive discussions on social media, certain cognitive biases have emerged, such as the notion that "virtues are coupled with remarkable looks". These biases have contributed to a social perception where beauty is regarded as a form of competence. Consequently, a society norm is formed where the cognitive bias surrounding beauty impacts social judgments, namely the beauty bias (Zeng, 2021).

Due to the increasing importance of physical attractiveness in contemporary society, together with the development of social media, certain aesthetic standards, such as the presence of an oval face, large eyes, and a prominent nose bridge, have gained widespread popularity on online platforms. These standards have been embraced and emulated by numerous celebrities, internet influencers, and bloggers, thereby serving as models for cosmetic surgery. The impact of these standards extends even to the lives of ordinary individuals who strive to conform to these aesthetic paradigms through various means, including makeup application, contouring techniques, photo editing, and cosmetic enhancements. Consequently, a phenomenon has emerged wherein individuals exhibit an uncanny resemblance to one another, resulting in the proliferation of what is colloquially referred to as "internet celebrities' faces".

In contemporary social media, individuals are predominantly exposed to meticulously groomed and visually appealing individuals, thanks to the increased emphasis placed on personal appearance and the continuous progress of society. Moreover, the fiercely competitive environment prevalent in various spheres of life fosters a pervasive culture of comparison, leading individuals to perceive their own physical attributes as unremarkable when juxtaposed with others. Additionally, the timeless human inclination to pursue beauty, coupled with the media's enthusiastic promotion of highly attractive individuals and the amplification of the celebrity and internet influencer phenomena, has prompted people to prioritize physical attributes when evaluating and assessing others. It is worth noting that some individuals may have experienced ridicule due to their perceived lack of physical attractiveness in their childhood or early-life periods, which can leave long-lasting trauma and exacerbate their concerns about their own appearance and the potential for mistreatment.

In conclusion, individuals are deeply influenced by the widespread representations of beauty in television dramas, literature, and diverse online media platforms. As a result, they internalize social beauty norms, which in turn shape their perceptions and self-evaluations. Consequently, individuals frequently experience elevated levels of anxiety and depression as they perceive a significant discrepancy between their own appearance and the prevailing social beauty standards.

(II) The rigid requirements of the workplace and society on appearance and the impact of the halo effect
The Halo Effect, also known as the "Halo Error," "Preconception Effect," "Aureole Effect," "Solar Halo Effect," "Holistic Impression Effect," and "Lunar Halo Effect," was initially proposed by the esteemed American psychologist Edward L. Thorndike in the 1920s. It is a psychological phenomenon that shapes interpersonal perception, resulting in subjective impressions formed based on limited information. When people see certain nice traits in an object, they tend to generalize that other aspects of that object are also good. An illustrative example of the Halo Effect is captured in the familiar saying, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." During World War I, a study conducted in the United States asked superior officers to rate their subordinates across various dimensions, including intelligence, physical fitness, leadership abilities, and character. The officers unanimously believed that soldiers with attractive physical features and an upright posture demonstrated higher personal integrity, stronger willpower, and superior combat and shooting skills. When an individual excels in one aspect, they are often seen as possessing an overall positive "aura" or halo, which subsequently influences the perception of other qualities (Ximen, 2019).

In a highly competitive society, appearance has become a significant factor in certain professions. In the interviews with companies and organizations, women are often expected to present themselves with an elegant appearance, such as nice makeup, a well-groomed and stylish hairstyle, and appropriate attire, such as suits and black shoes. Men are advised to maintain a simple, clean-cut hairstyle, avoid bangs and middles, not hair-dyed, avoid facial hair and accessories, and ensure well-maintained nail length. These emphases on personal appearance underscore its importance as a key evaluation criterion in contemporary recruitment practices.

Certain professions even impose strict requirements regarding appearance, such as models, flight attendants, actors (especially those from prestigious acting schools), secretaries, television presenters, and government spokespersons. These occupations, to some extent, rely on physical attractiveness and maintain specific standards for height, facial features, body proportions, and physique. To summarize, there are several categories:

1. Front-desk positions in large companies, including banks and corporate reception departments, often require a minimum height of 165 cm and a slender figure.

2. The public relations and advertising industries place a strong emphasis on attractiveness, with employees expected to wear high heels and elegant suits even during periods of fatigue. Individuals with noticeable facial flaws, scars, below-standard height, or distorted body shape may face diminished competitiveness in terms of appearance and may not meet the initial application requirements.

3. Editorial positions in media organizations sometimes explicitly request applicants to include photographs along with their resumes.

4. Other industries, such as education and luxury goods marketing, also prioritize attractiveness. In recent years, the emerging field of custom jewelry has placed increased importance on physical appearance for girls receiving professional guidance. Furthermore, the demand for product managers has started to consider physical appearance and certain positions within other companies also attach significant importance to appearance due to specific corporate cultures.

In conclusion, in modern society, where there is a strong emphasis on the significance of "appearance" and the impact of the "halo effect," the demand for individuals with beauty and an attractive appearance is increasing across various job positions. Consequently, it has become a crucial factor in the assessment process for numerous employees. In an intensely competitive society where work positions are limited, and competition is fierce, candidates cannot afford to overlook any potential factor, thus validating the existence of appearance anxiety.

(III) Lack of self-confidence caused by certain milieu environments such as family, school, and society
When examining the causes of appearance anxiety, the prevailing assumption suggests that it stems from diminished self-assurance because of perceived physical imperfections. However, this perspective fails to recapture the complexity of the issue. Indeed, some individuals have a distorted cognition of their own physical appearance, influenced by multiple factors beyond the objective evaluation of their bodily attributes. While lacking overt physical deficiencies, they still possess an apprehension towards their appearance, which is often developed due to their previous life experiences that contribute to a pervasive sense of self-doubt and profound anxiety.

One salient factor affecting self-confidence is parental care. In educational psychology, the notion of "family of origin" encapsulates the encompassing milieu in which individuals are raised. When children exhibit deficient self-assurance or exhibit patterns of timidity, parental influences emerge as significant contributing factors. For instance, the consistent exhibition of uncontrolled emotions or recurrent outbursts by parents engenders an environment devoid of constructive feedback. Consequently, children are deprived of affirmations, which impedes their confidence and progressively amplifies their inclination towards timidity. During their growth, children necessitate parental affirmation, emotional warmth, and nurturing support to cultivate a robust sense of self-confidence. In instances where parental provisioning in these crucial domains is inadequate, children gradually lose faith in their own capabilities, ultimately manifesting heightened timidity and hesitancy.

Another contributing factor is the external (family or non-family) environment. Many children are left in the care of elders due to the absence of their parents. Facing bullying or teasing, these children, without the protection of parents, are unsure of how to defend themselves and easily feel helpless. This vulnerability can lead to timidity and cowardice. Moreover, the negation or rejection by others can have a significant impact. When children complete tasks with confidence, the absence of affirmation from parents depletes their pride while strengthening their feelings of inferiority. Over time, this erodes their confidence, and they become increasingly unconfident and hesitant. It is worth noting that even seemingly insignificant incidents, minor behaviors, or a single word can deeply affect a child's fragile self-esteem. Multiple factors contribute to the lack of self-confidence in children, which in turn manifests as appearance anxiety.

In conclusion, the deficiency of self-confidence within an individual's character significantly impacts children's perception and subsequently undermines their confidence in their physical appearance, ultimately leading to the manifestation of appearance anxiety. This intricate issue encompasses a multitude of interrelated factors, each playing a distinct role in the erosion of self-assurance. While the previous analysis offers a succinct overview, it is crucial to acknowledge that understanding the development of appearance anxiety necessitates a comprehensive exploration of the complex psychological dynamics at play.

(IV) The appearance itself has defects
Some people argue that the emergence of appearance anxiety is rooted in fear of being judged unfavorably based on one's physical appearance. While this is indeed one important factor, the deeper origins of appearance anxiety may lie within our minds instead of our bodies. It has long been stated that the pursuit of beauty is inherent in human nature, as individuals naturally gravitate towards aesthetically pleasing aspects while disfavoring less favorable ones. For instance, attractive individuals often become the center of attention, whereas those deemed less attractive receive little attention. Similarly, we are drawn to cute animals but tend to avoid those considered unattractive. Under the influence of this social environment and the prevailing mindset that has fostered a collective unconscious pursuit of beauty throughout history, psychologists suggest that our innate longing for beauty contributes to a sense of anxiety when we perceive ourselves as lacking in external qualities (Jiu, 2022). This, in turn, gives rise to appearance anxiety. Moreover, in society, there are individuals who possess congenital or acquired facial defects. Congenital defects may manifest as birthmarks, cleft lips, strabismus, dwarfism, and other conditions, while acquired defects can result from

scars, facial asymmetry, extensive burns, and similar circumstances. These individuals may already have a more introverted disposition, further exacerbating their feelings of inferiority due to their divergent physical appearance compared to social norms. Furthermore, social discrimination against individuals with facial defects, including limited opportunities for professional education, restricted job prospects, and exclusion from military service, imposes various limitations on their daily lives, contributing to the formation of appearance anxiety.

### 4.1 Analysis of the results of the questionnaire survey

questionnaire was used in this survey, and there were 16 questions related to appearance anxiety. The collection process took 5 days to complete, and a total of 101 questionnaires were recovered.

| anxiety level | number of people | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 1-2 ( no anxiety or little anxiety ) | 3 8 | 3 7.62 % |
| Grade 3-4 ( mild anxiety) | 4 1 | 4 0.59 % |
| Level 5-6 ( moderate anxiety) | 1 8 | 1 7.82 % |
| Grade 7-8 ( severe anxiety) | 2 | 1.98 % _ |
| Grade 9-10 ( extreme anxiety) | 2 | 1.98 % _ |
| total | 1 01 | |

surface 1Proportion of people with different anxiety levels

In this survey, a significant proportion of respondents, exceeding 90%, knew the concept of appearance anxiety. Moreover, more than half of the participants recognized themselves as suffering from personal experiences of appearance anxiety. Among the surveyed individuals, the majority reported experiencing mild anxiety (approximately 41%), followed by a substantial portion categorized as non-anxious or minimally anxious (approximately 38%). Moreover, a notable proportion reported moderate levels of anxiety (approximately 18%), with the remaining respondents categorized as having severe and extremely severe anxiety (each approximately 2%). Consequently, the collective prevalence of appearance anxiety across various degrees of severity accounted for approximately 62% of the surveyed population. These findings consolidate the existence of appearance anxiety as a prevailing social concern, underscoring its urgency as a social problem in dire need of attention. The detrimental impact of appearance anxiety extends beyond individuals' psychological well-being, as it engenders unfavorable social attitudes and undermines social progress.

| Causes of anxiety (multiple choice) | number of people | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| low self-esteem or self-confidence | 7 3 | 7 2.28 % |
| The broad needs of social working life | 3 6 | 3 5.64 % |
| Influenced by the mainstream aesthetics of society | 6 3 | 6 2.28 % |
| Influenced by the opinions and evaluations of others | 6 5 | 6 4.36 % |
| Comparison, comparison, and herd mentality | 5 7 | 5 6.44 % |
| The appearance itself is flawed | 3 8 | 3 7.62 % |
| mate selection needs | 3 1 | 3 0.69 % |
| other | 6 | 5.94 % _ |
| The number of people who effectively filled out this question | 1 01 | |

Table 2Proportion Analysis of Several Main Causes of Anxiety

From questions 7-9 and 14, it is concluded that in recent years, with the help of the social mainstream media's emphasis on the importance of appearance and the biased association of beauty with virtues, people have paid more attention to appearance. The pursuit of attractive appearances is no longer limited to people working in special professions such as stars and models but has become a requirement that individuals impose on themselves and others. In this survey, over 77% of subjects considered physical appearance as the primary factor influencing their initial impressions of others, and nearly 67% indicated that they would exhibit different behavioral reactions based on these initial impressions. They tend to display warmth toward individuals deemed attractive and show indifference toward those perceived as less attractive. Specifically, regarding the question, "Have you ever been treated differently by others or treated others differently based on their appearance?" nearly 42% of respondents reported experiencing such instances, with nearly 25% acknowledging that they would unconsciously engage in such behavior despite the fact that they are not intended. These results demonstrate that under the influence of the social environment and mainstream media, aesthetic standards have been well-defined and directionally reinforced. This compels individuals to constantly demand adherence to the latest standards from both them and others. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of the comparison mentality (feeling superior based on self-perceived attractiveness), conformity mentality (demanding conformity to popular aesthetics), and the need for validation (seeking approval by meeting others' standards) that emerge within this social atmosphere further exacerbate appearance anxiety. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the widespread and exaggerated promotion of appearance's importance by the media, coupled with people's adoption of specific aesthetic preferences, contributes to the development of appearance anxiety among individuals.

From questions 10-11 and 14, it is noteworthy that only a small proportion (less than 3%) of respondents believe that one's appearance has no impact on their work and personal life. Conversely, over 35% of participants acknowledge that appearance plays an important role. This influence can manifest in the form of workplace discrimination based on one's appearance or the failure to meet the physical requirements of certain job positions. Moreover, most (more than 76%) of subjects consider appearance to be significant in social interactions, on par with inner beauty. Furthermore, an intriguing finding reveals that almost 9% of respondents perceive attractiveness as a form of social justice. These findings underscore the increasing importance of appearance in the evaluative criterion for both work and social interactions. In fact, it has become an obligatory requirement for certain positions. Even esteemed figures like Jack Ma have encountered multiple rejections in their careers due to their perceived unattractive appearances. Within social interactions, people tend to get close to those who align with their personal aesthetic preferences. Individuals who fail to meet these standards gradually get away from their social circles. I have personally experienced this phenomenon as well. Drawing from the data and personal experiences, it is apparent that the significance of appearance in social interactions has risen to a level nearly equivalent to that of an individual's personality and abilities. Many individuals perceive attractive individuals as excelling in their work as well, driven by the pervasive halo effect commonly observed in society. This elucidates why individuals with nice appearances gain greater popularity within social contexts. Consequently, we can conclude that the demands of work and other interpersonal activities exacerbate the issue of appearance anxiety. Notably, based on these results, we conclude that this constitutes merely parts of the overall factors that potentially trigger appearance-related anxieties.

From questions 12-13, we conclude that nearly 70% of respondents experience anxiety regarding their body shape, followed by approximately 49.5% expressing anxiety about their facial features and skin. Furthermore, concerns related to inherent facial defects and defects resulting from external factors contribute to nearly 14% of appearance-related anxieties each. Among all aspects of appearance anxiety, body shape anxiety constitutes the largest proportion. As society progresses and individuals enjoy increased material wealth, the focus has shifted from mere sustenance to pursuing a higher quality and nutritious diet. Consequently, the number of individuals classified as overweight has significantly risen. This contradicts the traditional Chinese aesthetic preference for slimness, giving rise to body shape anxiety. Additionally, concerns arise from skin issues such as acne and dark circles caused by high-stress environments. Moreover, individuals may experience anxiety due to congenital facial defects (such as cleft lips, freckles, and birthmarks) or acquired facial deficiencies (burns, scars, facial asymmetry) resulting from accidents. These factors collectively contribute to contemporary anxieties surrounding appearance. Hence, it can be concluded that inherent physical defects can also contribute to the development of appearance-related anxieties, which is in alignment with hypothesis IV.

Surprisingly, 72% of respondents believe that their self-doubt and lack of confidence are the primary causes of appearance-related anxiety, surpassing the influence of social beauty standards. To consolidate this result, we conducted in-depth interviews with individuals who experience appearance-related anxiety, including a student named Ye. Despite having no visible flaws and being considered attractive, Ye displayed signs of restraint and nervousness during the interview, which we attributed to internal insecurities. When asked if self-doubt and lack of confidence were the main factors causing her appearance-related anxiety, Ye affirmed this notion. She expressed that the pressure of meeting stringent external standards and the possibility of facing external criticism could harm her emotionally and psychologically, contributing to the development of appearance-related anxiety. Similarly, other cases we observed involved individuals with average looks but a strong sense of self-assurance who did not experience appearance-related anxiety. Therefore, hypothesis III is also supported: appearance-related anxiety is fundamentally rooted in a lack of internal confidence stemming from self-doubt and an unhealthy psychological state, which manifests as external anxiety.

In summary, appearance-related anxiety is influenced by various factors, making it a complex issue that requires more studies from multiple perspectives, both internally and externally. The survey and the evidence gathered to support the idea that inherent flaws in one's appearance and the high social demands placed on physical attractiveness do play a role in the development of appearance-related anxiety. However, the most significant contributing factor to this phenomenon is the widespread lack of confidence among contemporary university students, exacerbated by the media's emphasis on physical beauty. This has led to a pervasive occurrence of appearance-related anxiety, turning it into a pressing social issue that frequently gains attention. Identifying the problem is not sufficient; the key lies in finding effective solutions to help individuals alleviate their anxiety and promote social progress and development.

| Ways to solve appearance anxiety (multiple choice) | number of people | Proportion |
| --- | --- | --- |
| make up | 6 6 | 6 5.35 % |
| Exercising early to bed and early to rise | 7 4 | 7 3.27 % |
| Study hard to improve inner | 8 1 | 8 0.2 % |
| Establish multiple aesthetic concepts | 7 2 | 7 1.29 % |
| Learn to accept your own imperfections | 7 7 | 7 6.24 % |
| seek professional help | 2 7 | 2 6.73 % |
| Cultivate self-confidence and healthy psychology | 6 7 | 6 6.34 % |
| Adjust and improve as needed | 5 4 | 5 3.47 % |
| other | 7 | 6 .93 % |
| none | 1 | 0.99 % _ |
| The number of people who effectively filled out this question | 1 01 | |

surface 3Relevant measures to solve appearance anxiety recognized by the respondents

### 4.2 Countermeasures for Appearance Anxiety
(I) Establish multiple aesthetic concepts and learn to accept and appreciate different aesthetics
One major cause of appearance anxiety is the prevalence of a standardized norm of beauty in society (such as large eyes, oval face shape, high nose bridge, etc.). However, this narrowed standard contrasts with the diverse range of appearances that individuals naturally have. Each person has their own uniqueness in terms of physical features, and it is impossible to find two individuals with identical appearances in the world. This implies that only a small fraction of people can meet the standardized beauty ideal set by society, while the majority may experience appearance-related anxiety due to their inability to conform to this uniform standard.

Hence, to address this problem, it is important for individuals to embrace a perspective of diverse aesthetic standards and challenge the prevailing uniform standard of beauty. People should learn to appreciate and accept different and new things, fostering a mindset that is open, inclusive, and innovative. Beauty is abstract and intangible; it should not be confined by specific definitions or interpretations but continuously evolve and expand as we encounter various things. It should be a term that encompasses broad inclusiveness and embraces diverse elements.

By promoting diverse aesthetic standards, not only can individuals alleviate appearance-related anxiety at their core level of thinking, but it can also cultivate a harmonious, inclusive, and positively open social atmosphere. As tolerance and acceptance increase, it can stimulate innovative thinking and contribute to the overall development and progress of society.

(II) The government orderly leads social media to promote positive energy
Overcoming appearance anxiety requires not only personal psychological adjustments but also external environmental transformations, which offer an objective framework for tackling such anxieties. To address the means of overcoming appearance-related anxiety, it is essential to delve into its fundamental causes. One objective reason behind appearance-related anxiety lies in the sway of mass media, which sets the pace by emphasizing the beauty standards of celebrities to capture attention, increase popularity, and ultimately acquire a larger audience base. Furthermore, certain self-media platforms, propelled by financial interests, deliberately propagate the significance of appearance for women, cultivating an atmosphere of anxiety and stimulating consumer spending on cosmetics and cosmetic procedures.

Through a variety of external factors, it becomes evident that in our highly interconnected society, the impact of mass media should not be underestimated. Consequently, the rational and ethical guidance and regulation of the media can effectively ameliorate unfavorable perceptions and practices concerning appearance. The following are concrete measures that relevant authorities should consider: Firstly, state-owned and official media outlets should harness their considerable influence and credibility to actively promote positive events, rectify misconceptions related to appearance, shift social focus and aspirations from mere physical attractiveness to holistic quality, and endeavor to foster individual self-confidence, enabling individuals to recognize and appreciate their own unique and exceptional forms of beauty. Moreover, the legal apparatus should enhance existing laws and regulations to constrain unethical media practices, thus providing a legal foundation for addressing such issues. Lastly, law enforcement agencies should employ necessary measures to rectify instances of malicious propaganda and instigation by unscrupulous media entities. These efforts will contribute to cultivating a healthy and constructive social ambiance that promotes a well-informed and positive understanding of appearance.

(III) Continually improve the connotation, enrich the self-connotation, and establish a confident and healthy psychology
It is often said that "beautiful appearances are dime a dozen, but an intriguing soul is a rare find." While we may be captivated by someone's outward beauty, it is the goodness and inner beauty of their character that truly resonates with our souls. What sets humanity apart is our complex emotions and heightened sensitivity, which allow us to transcend superficial attractions and delve into the innermost thoughts and feelings of others. The most profound and moving aspects of a person lie within their inner world. Some individuals possess the ability to embody the wisdom and knowledge found in books, while others display extraordinary courage and unconventional thinking. It is essential to prioritize the cultivation of our spiritual realms, as the allure of external beauty may fade with time, whereas inner beauty remains a lifelong treasure.

Apart from immersing ourselves in literature and indulging in thought-provoking films that enrich our spirits, we must also focus on nurturing our willpower and honing our execution skills to boost our mental fortitude. This contributes to the enhancement of our inner strength. In the realm of interpersonal relationships, the virtues of tolerance, magnanimity, serenity, and equanimity hold significant allure. We must resist the temptation to conform to others' expectations or be overly concerned about their opinions. Each individual is unique, possessing their own distinctive form of beauty. No person is without flaws, and it is crucial for us to understand ourselves, identify our shortcomings, and work towards correcting and refining them. Simultaneously, we must endeavor to discover and develop our strengths, embracing new experiences and challenges that enable us to flourish. Over time, we will come to realize our own remarkable superiority and cultivate an innate sense of confidence.

(IV) Strengthen exercise, regular work and rest, and appropriate improvement and adjustment
Appearance anxiety, particularly concerns about one's body shape, is highly prevalent. Obesity is a common issue nowadays, largely resulting from excessive intake of nutrients and sedentary lifestyles. To change one's body shape, the most effective and healthy approach is engaging in regular physical activity. Moderate exercise aids in calorie expenditure, fat burning, metabolism acceleration, and sculpting of the body, resulting in a more proportionate and healthier physique. This not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also boosts immunity and strength. Scientific studies also indicate that maintaining a regular sleep pattern and practicing disciplined eating habits can address certain skin imperfections. For example, going to bed before 11 PM promotes melatonin secretion, leading to improved skin tone. Additionally, reducing the consumption of sugary and highly processed foods contributes to better skin health, slower aging, and the development of a radiant complexion. Therefore, the quality of one's appearance is, to a certain extent, determined by their level of self-discipline. Adopting a disciplined lifestyle not only enhances external attractiveness but also fosters inner confidence. Lastly, for individuals with innate facial defects or irreversible appearance-related issues caused by external factors, advancements in medical technology provide options for suitable remedies and corrective measures. However, it is crucial to exercise moderation and use these techniques judiciously, focusing on genuine needs rather than succumbing to misleading influences or developing an unhealthy obsession with cosmetic procedures.

**5. Conclusion**
Through this survey, we have verified that appearance anxiety is a real and widespread issue in society, making it a prominent social concern. We have also identified rooted causes of appearance anxiety, including individuals' lack of self-confidence and the social emphasis on "looks." However, there are also secondary factors, such as rigid requirements in social settings, inherent physical flaws, negative evaluations from others in the past, and the need to start a romantic relationship. To deal with the underlying causes of anxiety, we believe it is essential to focus on self-improvement, cultivate inner well-being, enrich one's spiritual world, develop a healthy sense of confidence, and adopt a dialectical perspective towards external evaluations. Simultaneously, the government should provide organized guidance for social media promotion, emphasizing positive content and creating a positive and uplifting social atmosphere that shifts the public's focus from pursuing superficial beauty to pursuing higher quality aspects. For individuals with inherent facial defects, appropriate improvements and adjustments can be made through advanced medical technology, but it is crucial to exercise moderation and avoid excessive reliance. Furthermore, engaging in suitable physical exercise can help shape a person's physique, maintaining a regular sleep schedule can cultivate vitality, and adopting a healthy

diet can minimize skin-related issues. In summary, the emergence of appearance anxiety signifies the evolving demands of society, which are no longer unidimensional but multidimensional and comprehensive. Appearance anxiety should not impede social progress; instead, we should actively and appropriately address this issue. It provides an opportunity for individuals to identify their shortcomings and make timely improvements while also recognizing their unique qualities and fostering inner confidence. Contradictions serve as the primary driving force behind social development, and resolving such issues can contribute to social progress and promote the growth and well-being of young people both mentally and physically.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.
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