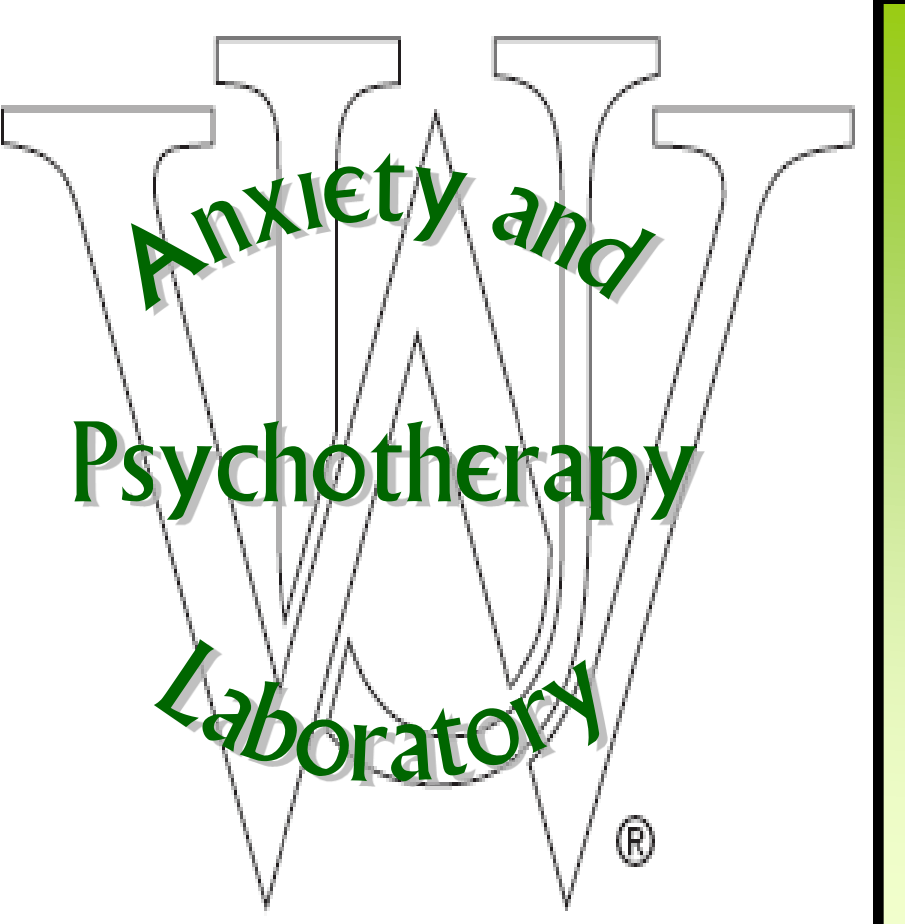# The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale: A Valid Measure of Appearance Anxiety

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Abstract

Introduction: The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008) was developed to assess fear of situations in which one's appearance may be evaluated. We sought to further evaluate its convergent and predictive validity.

Method: We assessed if the SAAS would predict anxiety before and after a body measurement manipulation. Undergraduates (n =95) filled out a packet of questionnaires and then participated in a body evaluation.

Results/Discussion: The SAAS exhibited excellent convergent and predictive validity. Our results indicate that the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale is a valid measure of appearance anxiety.

Introduction

•The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (*SAAS;* Hart et al., 2008) was developed to assess fear of situations in which one's appearance may be evaluated

•The SAAS was shown
  • To be a psychometrically valid measure of social anxiety regarding appearance
  • To be a unique predictor of social anxiety over and above negative body image measures (Hart et. al., 2008)

•Hart et al. called for further research on its convergent and predictive validity

Hypotheses

1) SAAS would predict state anxiety related to a body evaluation
2) SAAS would relate to BMI, body fat content, and current exercise
3) the SAAS would relate to self-esteem, exercise self-efficacy, and trait anxiety

Participants

•95 undergraduates
•Participants were
  •Mostly female (*n* = 62; 65%)
  •Mostly white (n = 66; 70%)
  •Mean age of about 19 (*M* = 19.34, *SD* = 1.16)

Measures

Social Appearance Anxiety Scale *(SAAS;* Hart et. al, 2008*)*
•Contains 16 items regarding anxiety about one's appearance in social situations
•Positively associated with measures of social anxiety
•Unique predictor of social anxiety over and above body image measures
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Measure (RSEM; Rosenberg; 1965)
•10-item measure of global self-esteem
Exercise Self-Efficacy Measure (ESEM)
•5-items assess exercise self-efficacy (*I am confident that I could work out/ exercise at a public gym where strangers also work out*), 4-items assess gym avoidance (*When I go to the gym I think people are judging me*), 3-items assess exercise importance (*How important is exercising as an activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle?*)
State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Bieling et al., 1998)
•7-item measure of trait anxiety
Brief State Anxiety Measure (BSAM; Berg et al., 1998)
•6-item measure of state anxiety
•Measured anxiety before and after body assessment
Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998)
•20-item measure of anxiety in social situations
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE; Leary, 1983)
•Brief version of the original FNE (Watson & Clark, 1969)
•Measures fear of being negatively evaluated
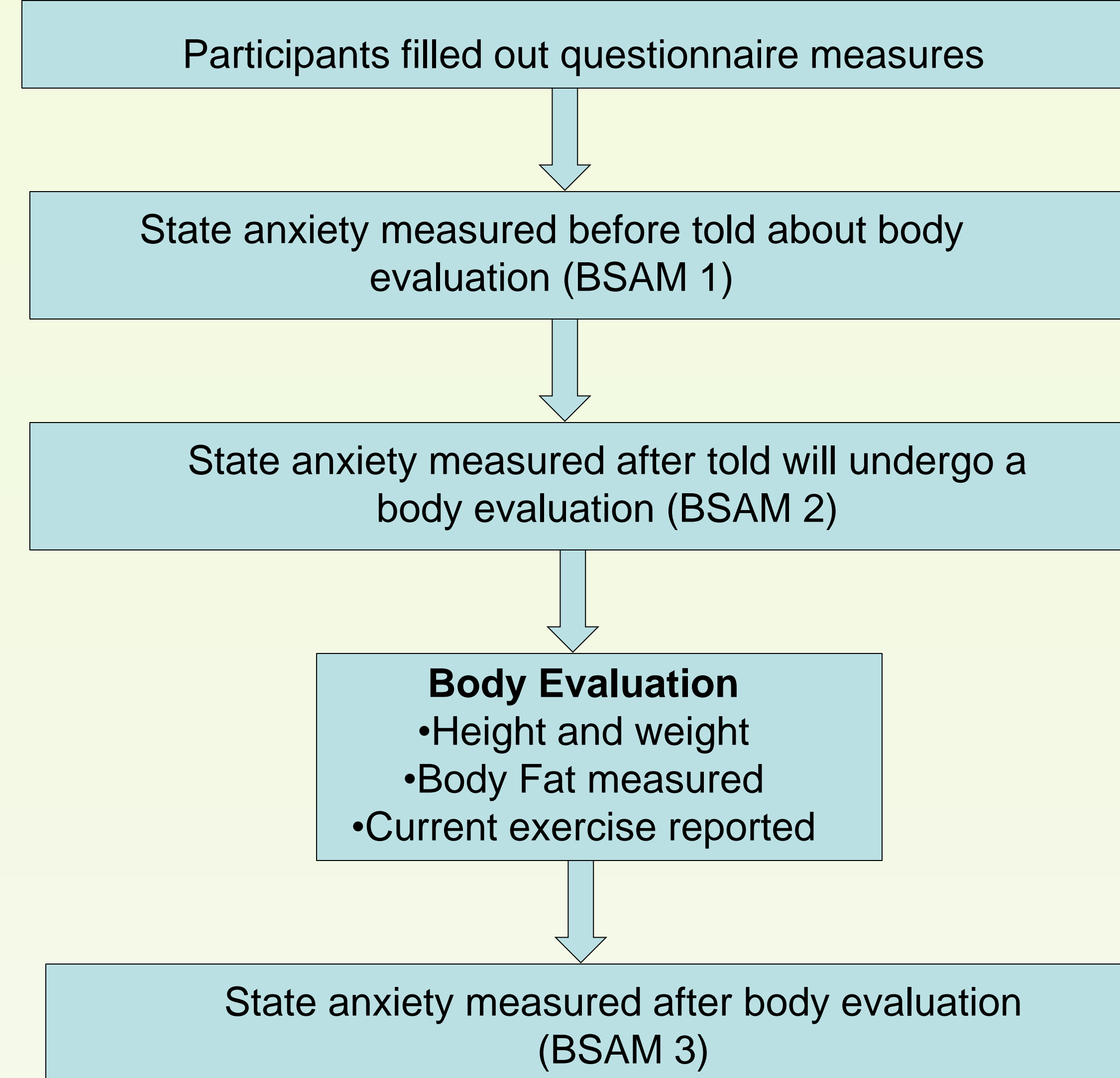**Social Phobia Scale** (SPS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998)
•20-item measure that assesses *fear of scrutiny*
Mini- International Personality Item Pool Inventory (MINI-IPIP; Donnellan et. al, 2006)
•20-item short form measure of five basic factors of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness.
•Used to measure neuroticism

Procedure

Participants filled out questionnaire measures

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State anxiety measured before told about body evaluation (BSAM 1)

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State anxiety measured after told will undergo a body evaluation (BSAM 2)

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Body Evaluation •Height and weight •Body Fat measured •Current exercise reported

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State anxiety measured after body evaluation (BSAM 3)

Results

•State anxiety measured before and after the body evaluation (BSAM 2 & 3) were combined to create a measure of state anxiety experienced from the body evaluation
•In multiple regression, the social appearance anxiety scale (part r = .28, p = .009) significantly predicted state anxiety over and above state anxiety before the task was explained (part r = .70, $p < .001$)

Table 1. The relationship between the SAAS and measures taken during body evaluation

	SAAS	BMI	Body Fat	Exercise
SAAS	.95	.12	.21*	-.45**
BMI		X	.59**	-.42**
Body Fat			X	-.35**
Exercise				X

Note. SAAS = Social Appearance Anxiety Scale; Diagonal is Cronbach's alpha. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

Results

Table 2. The relationship between the SAAS, self-esteem, exercise measures, and trait anxiety.

	SAAS	SE	ESE	GA	EI	Anx
SAAS	.95	-.46**	-.24*	.53**	-.06	.60**
SE		.86	.27*	-.31**	-.14	-.48**
ESE			.90	-.61**	.27*	-.38**
GA				.89	-.20	.47**
EI					.77	-.12
Anx						.81

Note. SAAS = Social Appearance Anxiety Scale; SE = Self-esteem; ESE = Exercise Self-Efficacy; GA = Gym Avoidance; EI = Exercise Importance; Anx = Trait Anxiety; Diagonal value is Cronbach's Alpha; * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$

•In multiple regression, the social appearance anxiety scale (part r = .27, p = .010) significantly predicted gym avoidance over and above neuroticism, fear of scrutiny, fear of negative evaluation, and social interaction anxiety

Discussion

•The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale is a valid measure of appearance anxiety
  •Predicted anxiety over a body evaluation
  •Significantly correlated with body fat and current exercise (but not BMI)
  •Significantly correlated with trait anxiety and self-esteem
•SAAS played a unique role in predicting gym avoidance
  •Appearance anxiety may cause individuals to avoid exercising
  •Could lead to health problems
•Future research should explore if this is a causal link and if exposures designed to reduce SAA decrease exercise avoidance