

Are beautiful people always more happy? The role of global self-esteem as a mediator between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being.

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Abstract

Research has shown that physical attractiveness is a major contributing factor to subjective well-being (SWB). There have also been studies that found global self-esteem to be a strong predictor of SWB. In the current study, we investigate how global self-esteem may be a key mediator in explaining the relationship between physical attractiveness and SWB. In a survey study of 92 undergraduate psychology students from a large private educational institution in Malaysia, we hypothesized that (1) There is a significant positive relationship between physical attractiveness and global self-esteem, (2) There is a significant positive relationship between global self-esteem and subjective well-being, and (3) global self-esteem will mediate the relationship between physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. In this study, we used objective measures of physical attractiveness, measuring participants' waist-to-chest and waist-to-hip ratios and also asking them to complete the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Positive And Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) & Satisfaction With Life Scale. A simple linear regression and a mediation analysis showed no significant mediational relationship. We found, however, some significant relationships between physical attractiveness and self-esteem, and also with SWB. Results from our study showed that the "what is good is beautiful" bias may not be applicable to all contexts, and that physical attractiveness is not always a predictor of individual positive affect or subjective well-being. Self-esteem, however, was shown to be a strong predictor of happiness, suggesting that Western standards of beauty and its relationship with subjective well-being may not necessarily be evident in Eastern cultural contexts. Theoretical and practical implications of this study's findings are discussed.

Keywords: Happiness, Physical Attractiveness, Self-Esteem

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