

Antifat attitudes (AFA) among young women in Mexico

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In Mexico 72.5% of adults are overweight, obesity included¹. Historically a “larger figure” had positive connotations². One of the bases for AFA is culture preference for thinness³.

Objective: understand associations with a “rounder figure” in relation to:

- BMI
- weight dissatisfaction
- appearance self-esteem.

Instruments



AFA semantic differential, adjective-pairs with: (1) an obese body image, (2) a normal-weight image.

Weight dissatisfaction “how much would you like to weigh?” – measured weight.

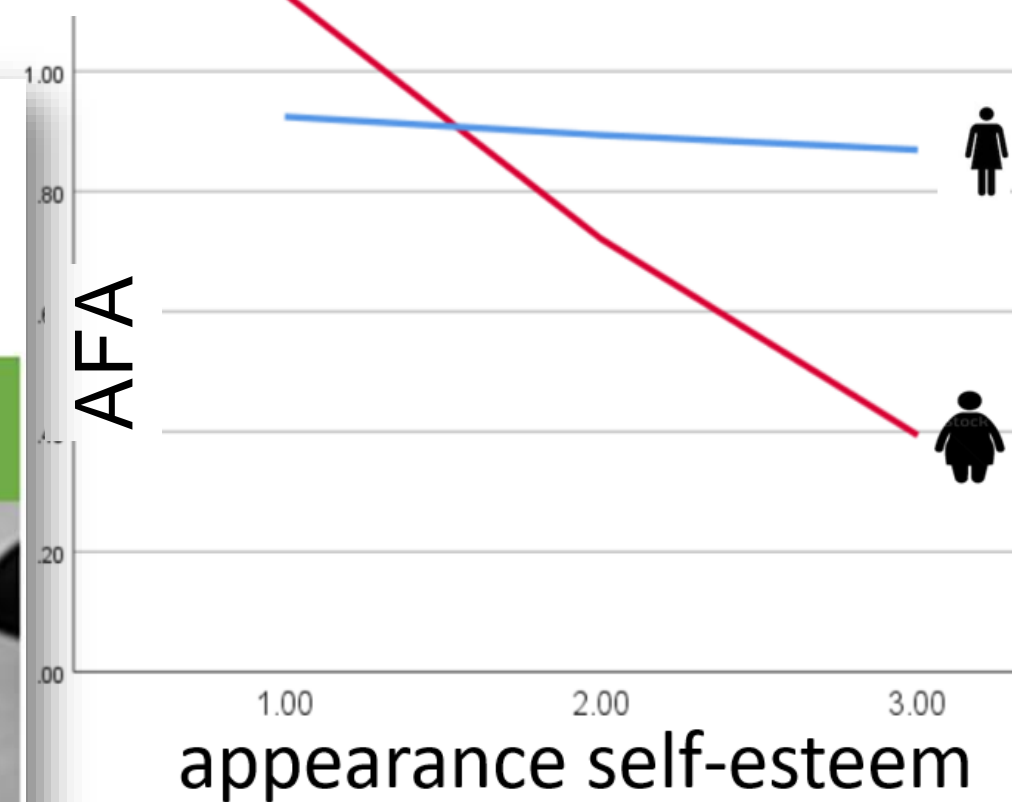
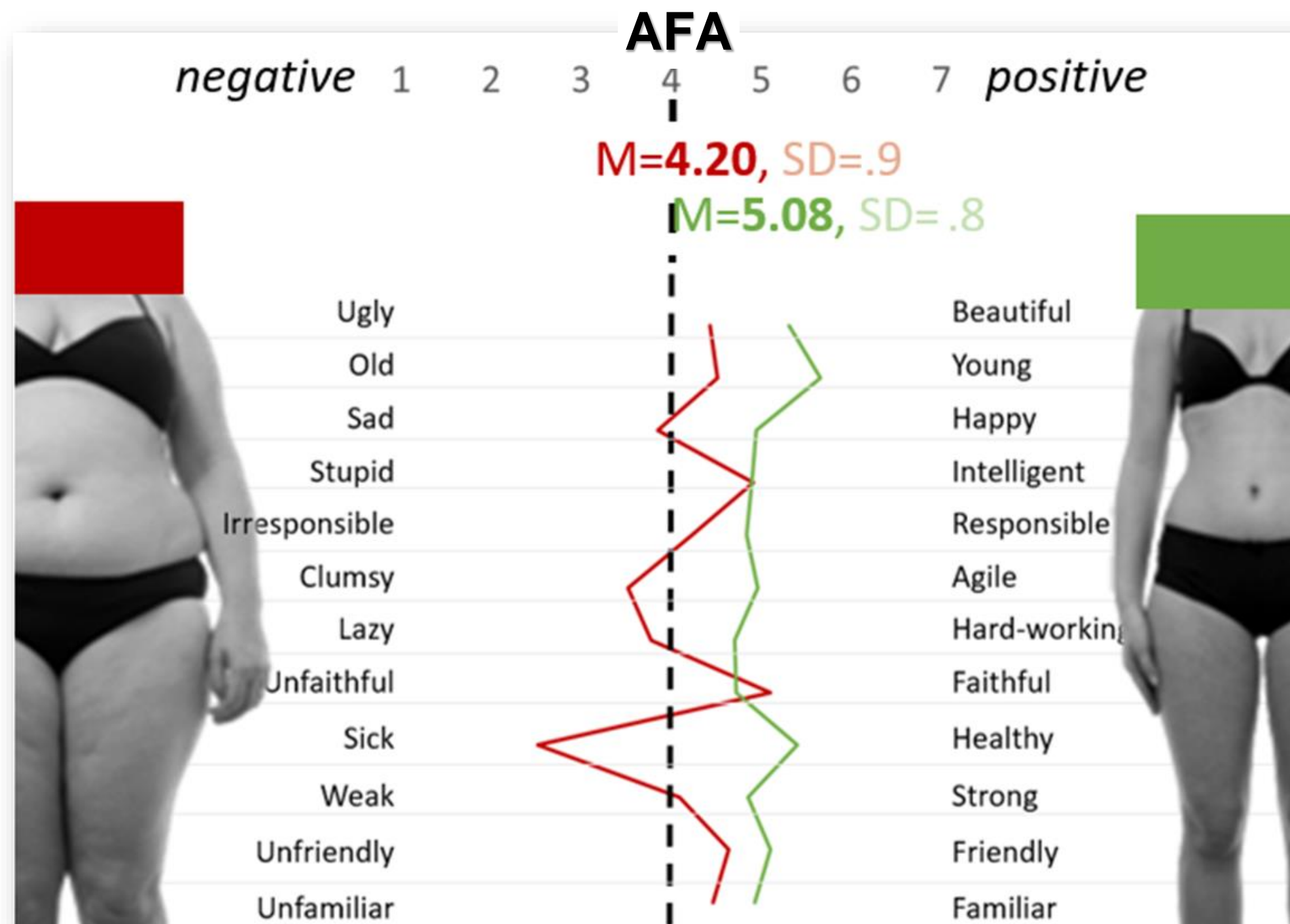
Appearance self-esteem 5-item scale from state self-esteem⁴.

Finding

The obese figure relative to normal-weight figure was perceived more negatively, except for faithfulness. There was no sig. difference for intelligence. Both BMI groups expressed similar bias & no significant differences were found between the groups, except for familiarity.

PARTICIPANTS	BMI	weight (kg) / height (m ²)		weight dissatisfaction		appearance self-esteem		
		N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
BMI 18.5-24.9		70	22	1.6	-2	4.1	3.5	0.7
BMI ≥ 25		64	29	3.7	-14	7.5	3.0	0.8

BMI moderated the relationship: between AFA & appearance self-esteem. In the group with BMI ≥ 25: the lower appearance self-esteem the higher AFA. Weight dissatisfaction was a better moderator than BMI.



BMI model: $R^2 = .066$ $F = 3.07, p = .030$
 Int. coef. = $-.377$ $t = -1.91, p = .058$
 R^2 chg = .026 $F = 3.66, p = .058$

	coef	p
BMI average	-.478	.831
BMI ≥ 25	.522	.003

Dissatisfaction model: $R^2 = .069$ $F = 3.24, p = .024$
 Int. coef. = $-.426$ $t = -2.11, p = .036$
 R^2 chg = .032 $F = 4.47, p = .036$

	coef	p
BMI average	-.552	.980
BMI ≥ 25	.448	.002

Sources:

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4. Heatherton TF., & Polivy J (1991). Development and validation of a scale for measuring state self-esteem. J Pers Soc Psychol., 60(6), 895-910.

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Background: In Mexico overweight prevalence among adults reached 72.5%, among women 75.6%. Historically Mexicans associated a “larger body figure” with abundance, protection, material wealth, strength, or in reference to women with sexual attraction. Crandall et al (2006) proposes that one of the bases for anitfat attitudes (AFA) to arise is a culture preference towards a thin figure. The objective of this study was to understand associations with a “rounder figure” in relation to BMI, weight dissatisfaction and appearance self-esteem.

Method: Weight-height data, desired weight and appearance self-esteem were obtained from 134 female students. BMIs were calculated. Weight dissatisfaction was measured as desired body weight minus measured weight. Semantic differential with 12 pairs of adjectives presented with (1) an obese body image and (2) normal-weight body image was applied to measure AFA. 5-item scale from State self-esteem scale was applied to assess appearance self-esteem. Correlations and moderation analysis were performed.

Finding: The obese figure relative to normal-weight figure was perceived more negatively, except for faithfulness & there was no significant difference for intelligence. No differences in AFA were found with respect to BMI or weight dissatisfaction. Both BMI groups expressed similar bias and no significant differences were found between the groups, except for familiarity. The group with normal BMI had significantly higher appearance self-esteem. BMI moderated the relationship between appearance self-esteem and AFA: in the group with BMI \geq 25 the lower appearance self-esteem was associated with higher AFA. Weight dissatisfaction was a better moderator than BMI.

Discussion: Despite some historical preference for a rounder figure, nowadays in Mexico an obese silhouette was perceived more negatively relative to an average-weight silhouette, closer to its perception in the USA (Bacardí-Gascón et al, 2015). Except for intelligence current findings are consistent with other studies, e.g. Puhl and Brownell (2001) reported that the overweight were perceived to lack self-discipline, be lazy, less conscientious, less competent, sloppy, disagreeable, and to think slower. Understanding AFA, and what constitutes them is key with regard to stereotyping and discrimination, and finding the adequate intervention strategies.