

Eve Self-Objectification: A Dysfunctional Search for Self-Actualization

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Abstract: Feminine self-worth develops and expands under the influence of a wide spectrum of inspiring factors. It has been observed that these norms are interjected on the impressionable young woman's psyche since it lays itself bare unable to impose regulatory checks on itself. One such phenomenon silently corroding the female psyche is self-objectification wherein 'opinions of others' gain so much value that a young woman subconsciously objectifies herself in an attempt to appear acceptable to others. This shift from being inner-oriented to being image oriented consequently would retard the growth motives of these young women.

The present study was designed to assess self-objectification among 60 post-graduate female participants (Age 18-25) years and how it would influence their self-actualization needs. The Personal Orientation Questionnaire (POI) by R.R. Knap and E.L. Shostrom (1976) and Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) by Cooper et al. (1987) were used to assess this effect. Results point towards the significant role played by Self-objectification in context of growth motivation for young women.

Keywords: Self-Objectification, Self-Actualization, Body dissatisfaction, Image-orientation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-perceptions form the fundamental core of our interactions with the social world. They provide a foundation on which we stand to evaluate, interpret and understand others. More so this foundation itself is gradually evolving according to the nature of evaluations that we assign to ourselves. Thus with such crucial dynamics influencing the self, it becomes noteworthy to explore trends emerging from external sources that have subtly changed self-perceptions by becoming a part of inherent decision rules within the psyche. One such phenomenon that has gradually permeated up to the impressionistic mind of the contemporary young woman particularly is "Self-Objectification".

The genesis of the effect has been varyingly explored by researchers such as Dubois (1903) who opined that women in modern societies are living by looking at themselves from the eyes of others which he termed as "*double consciousness*". The chronic self-surveillance in women affects their self-perspective to the extent that they start monitoring their physical appearance from an external observational standpoint only (McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Berger, 1972; de Beauvoir, 1952). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) in their theory of Objectification explained that regular encounters of sexual-objectification coax women into taking a third-person (How do I look?) versus first-person (How do I feel?) perspective making them a victim of their own scrutiny. Females internalize harmful beliefs, thus viewing and considering themselves merely as objects to be looked at and get evaluated.

In his Silencing the Self Theory, Jack (1991) contributed to the understanding of the mechanism of self-objectification by proclaiming that cultures idealising independence and devaluing the need for intimacy lead to a self-silencing trigger in women. Self-silencing becomes the act of denying one's own needs and desires in order to sustain an intimate relationship within the society leading to the development and maintenance of a 'fake' self, ultimately leading women to a sense of devaluation.

McKinley (2000) in Objectified Body Consciousness Theory (OBC Theory) provided a speculative framework to understand the female's body experience in western societies. He proposed that cultural foundations of a female

appearance, expectations towards the physical and sexual appeal result in negative experiences for women such as constant monitoring of their appearance, body shame, unenthusiastic body esteem, restricted eating (McKinley, 1999; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). It was an attempt to explain the fact that cultural dominance has led the feminine body to be looked upon as an object which resulted in various serious repercussions and challenged her individuality (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996).

A majority of these opinions reach the young woman through a host of media both willingly and unwillingly to which she gets exposed growing up in today's Wi-Fi generation. Douglas (1994) in his research article "Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media" stated that, "Our collective history of interacting with and being shaped by the mass media has engendered in many a woman, a kind of cultural identity crisis. We are ambivalent toward femininity on the one hand and feminist on the other". Blood (2005) and Wolf (1991) have pointed out that beauty standards presented by media and society have not only damaged women's self-worth but also have pressurized them to conform to the beauty practices of femininity in the attempt to emulate the ideal descriptions of womanhood. Popular notions of size zero figure, "thin is in", "crash diets" are generally seen splattered across different media pointing towards this trend influencing a person to view him/ herself predominantly through an objectified social lens (Jost & Hamilton, 2005; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Gibbons, 1990; Bartky, 1990; Deaux & Major, 1987).

Women come to view themselves through the lens of an external observer, habitually monitoring their own appearance whether in public or private settings leading to self-objectification. Exploration in this context indicates (Chapman, 2011) that in the era of globalisation most adolescent women are constantly being exposed to the inescapable images of mass media which has attached them to the '*cult of thinness*' rather unhealthily. A research conducted by Starr (2012), gained International attention as it was the first study to show that girls as young as six identified themselves as sex objects. Starr interviewed 60 girls between ages six and nine, showing them pictures of two dolls, one doll dressed in "sexy" clothes, and the other doll wearing modest but still trendy clothes. More than two-thirds of the girls i.e., 68 percent girls said they wanted to look like the "sexy" doll, and nearly three-fourths i.e., 72 percent considered that sexy doll would be more popular than the modest looking doll.

Self-objectification results from an image-driven culture where media encourages people to see themselves as objects with immediate surroundings of an individual, friends, family and strangers alike place more main concern on the physical appearance of the woman. McCabe et al. (2007) too found that media acted as a dominant force in forming an idealized perception of body image to the extent that over 60% of women indulged in restrictive dietary practices to attain a favourable physical appearance leading to increased existence of body image distortions and dissatisfaction in females.

Body dissatisfaction and an obsession with physical looks are by products of the American capitalistic culture (Hesse-Biber & Sharlene, 1996). Theodore Levitt (1983) in his viewpoint expressed that, "the global corporation looks to the nations of the world not for how they are different but for how they are alike." Various researches have acknowledged the fact that culture too plays a considerable role in forming appearance standards which vary for men and women across societies and cultures (Grogan, 2006; Fallon, 1990). Gimlin (2002) stated that the female body is a medium of culture where a woman experiences the pressures to meet certain standards of good looks in society.

Western cultures idealises the perfect female body as thin and slender whereas non-western cultures like India give preferences to the other physical aspects as well such as fair skin, physical attractiveness and health and fertility other than body weight, shape and size (Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C., 2011; Swami et al., 2008b; Badruddoja, 2005). Key insights are further provided by results of the study by International Body Project (IBP-I), done by Swami et al. (2010) which surveyed 7,434 individuals in 10 major world regions about body weight ideals and body dissatisfaction indicated that there were significant cross-regional differences in the ideal female figure and body dissatisfaction, on the basis of socioeconomic-status (SES). Within cultures, heavier bodies were preferred in low-SES sites as compared to high-SES sites. The results showed that body dissatisfaction and desire for thinness was commonplace in high-SES settings across world regions, highlighting the need for international attention to this problem. Swami et al. (2010) in a cross-cultural survey revealed that greater exposure to westernized media was associated with preference for thinner figure and women who viewed more westernized media reported to be higher on self-objectification than women who were watching local media in eastern societies especially India.

With India emerging as one of the fastest growing economies (Highlights of economic survey of India, 2012-2013), a majority of population involved in the developmental strides in undergoing an identity transformation. India boasts of

having the largest youngest population (Provisional Population Totals, Census of India 2011). The issue of “looking developed” is hand in glove to ‘becoming developed’ since the young psyche identifies itself largely with its physical appearance and offers itself for evaluation on this account (Erikson, 1968). Sengupta, R. (2006), observed that Globalization of Indian economy has put a pressure on young Indian women to meet the standards of International beauty. The entry and successful establishment of global brand names in India in virtually all sectors of individual functioning like food, clothing, housing, education, hospitality is evidence enough of this inherent yearning to appear compatible to the international standards of living (Ebenkamp, 2006).

A research study by Dr. Rekha and Dr. Maran (2012) on 915 females above 12 years of age in Chennai (India) have found in that around 30% female respondents stated that they get influenced by advertisements for an idealized body image making them prone to body dissatisfaction. Similarly Shroff & Thompson (2006) in their research on body dissatisfaction hold beauty advertisements responsible for extending body consciousness in young women from India.

Looking back, the most imperative social change in India started at the beginning of the twentieth century when western education, secularization, liberation of women, urbanization and industrialization began to lay its impact on Indian society. The technological advancement, globalisation then had led to the emergence of an elite class which became a crucial component of modern India. This urban elite in India emphasised the secular, contemporary, liberated and trendy aspect of everyday life (Thapan 2009). Although this urban elite group embraced all that was modern in the world today, and this includes a view of the Indian woman (Thapan 2009), yet it could not completely dissociate itself from the traditional cultural background and its values. Indians live majorly in a duality of strains of tradition and modernity. Sometimes this form of living almost ensures a conflict between tradition and modernity (Sinha 1978). Bhogle (1999) in his study revealed that Indian women were likely to ground their personal identities upon their intimate relationships whereas men considered it upon their occupational choices. An average Indian woman identifies herself as a pillar of sacrifice who feels contempt with her spouse’s achievement and gives more importance to his needs and desires. Females in India as stated by Jayal (1966) in accord of Hindu epics are continuously commanded with the cultural concept of being feminine as compliant, sacrificial, enduring and tolerating and since being a part of patriarchal society she is made believed to be a possession by men.

Beyond cultural differences, self-objectification has serious consequences for every young woman succumbing to it. The negative effects associated with self-objectification are body shame, appearance anxiety, bodily self-alienation, depression, disordered eating and lowered self-esteem, poor health related behaviours and strained social relationships (Forbes et al., 2007; Forbes, Doroszewicz, Card, and Adams-Curtis, 2004). Gettman and Roberts (2004) in a sample study of 90 women participants found self-objectifying women scored significantly higher on levels of appearance anxiety. Taylor (2010) in a sample study of 331 Caucasian women showed self-silencing caused by constant scrutiny as a significant predictor of depression in women. Similarly, Kuring and Tiggerman (2004) and Fredrickson et al. (1998) in their studies found that women experiencing high levels of self-surveillance indulged into unhealthy eating and became prone to body dissatisfaction and dreadful experiences of body shame. Body shame, results when negative emotions of shame occur in an individual evaluating himself/herself to the cultural ideals and fails to live up to these (Tangney et. al., 1996, Lewis, 1992).

In sum when a woman is evaluated only as a body, she loses her individuality. The cognitive outcome of objectification thus leads targeted women to consider themselves merely as objects and not as fully functioning human beings capable of challenging their competence. Ellis & Flaherty (1992b) in their research work stated that constant objectification of women as mere objects have averted their attention from being the other influential gender. In a survey study with undergraduate women, Calogero (2013) found that women living in a culture in which they are objectified by others may in turn begin to objectify themselves which may in turn reduce their involvement in social activism. Blood (2005) added that when a woman fails to conform to the alleged standards of the ideal beauty, she is not only vulnerable of becoming an outcast from normality, desirability and femininity but also adds she is held responsible for resisting societal influences by accepting her body instead of changing it to fit the beauty ideal.

Diametrically opposite to the need for self-objectification is the need for Self-actualization. Maslow (1970) described self-actualized individuals as “more fully human” as they are guided by intrinsic values not by the quest of basic needs. Maslow opined that the Self-actualizing tendency exists in every person and described it as the highest level on the hierarchy of needs beginning with physiological, safety, belonging and self-esteem needs. Self-actualized people accept

themselves as they are and are aware of their shortcomings as well their strengths, feeling less inhibited and less likely to conform to others. They are well aware of the rules imposed by the society however they feel the freedom to resist them than most of the people (Neher, 1991). The process of self-actualization characterises more accurate judgements and perceptions, detachment from societal influences and presence of autonomy and independence in people (Wilson, 1969).

Need for self-actualization in women has revealed interesting insights into how it virtually has the capacity to transform the individual person. Khurana and Mathur (1988) in a sample study of 131 female teachers in Delhi (India) found that higher self actualization implied commitment in many areas of life such as family, community and vocational activities. Heilbrun (1968) in a research study found that women high on self-actualization were better adjusted and showed less rigidity to female stereotypes and reflected higher cognitive flexibility. Hjelle and Butterfield (1974) in their study on collegiate women participants concluded that women possessing liberal, profeminist attitudes were more self-actualized than women endorsing traditional social and cultural role attitudes.

Self-actualized women on one hand take up the traditional masculine roles along with their feminine roles to achieve a successful position in the society. They rely on their deeper understanding of themselves, do not put on any pretence and possess an efficient perception of reality thus staying far away from self-objectification. Thus it can be concluded from the nature of these two constructs that self-objectification may mar the striving for self-actualization and reduce the young woman to a mere prototype of societal expectations. In zeitgeist of our times a young girl is showered with constant inputs from various quarters of her life regarding the ideal identity she needs to establish. It becomes essential to explore how these interjected opinions about being the “perfect contemporary Indian young woman” effects her growth motives.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. Young women low on self-objectification would be significantly higher on Self-actualization value in comparison to those high on self-objectification.
2. Young women low on Self-objectification would score high on all the dimensions of POI i.e. Time competence(Tc), Inner directedness(I), Self-Actualizing value(SAV), Existentiality(Ex), Feeling reactivity(Fr), Spontaneity(S), Self-regard(Sr), Self-acceptance(Sa), Nature of man constructive(Nc), Synergy(Sy), Acceptance of Aggression(A), Capacity for intimate contact (C) as compared to women high on self-objectification.
3. Young women low on Self-objectification would have higher Time and Support ratio scores on the POI as compared to those high on Self-objectification.

II. METHODOLOGY

Sample:

Initially a pool of 120 (age ranging 18-25 years) young women were randomly selected to be serving as participants of the study. Voluntary participation was ensured with the participants being allowed complete choice in opting out at any stage of the study. This also helped in obtaining genuine information from the target population. Rapport building and informal interview with the participants was a precursor to the testing phase. Participants were students of Geography, Psychology, Mass communication, English and Pharmacy departments of Punjabi University, Patiala (India) undertaking a post-graduate course. All the participants belonged to the urban middle class sector. The screening was done on the basis of high and low scores on the Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper et al., 1987) which was considered as an apt index of self objectification. The relevance of items in the scale was predetermined in the context of the nature of variable being studied along with its cultural suitability. 30 young women were identified as falling each in the high and low self objectification categories. After screening, the participants were administered the POI by Shostrom & Knapp (1976). Scores obtained on the two inventories were then subjected to the t-test to ascertain significance of difference between the low and high self objectification groups on the measures of the POI. Also mean scores were used for comparison of ‘Time’ and ‘Support’ ratio scores of the POI for the two groups.

Description of the tools:

1. Body shape Questionnaire: - (Cooper et. al., 1987)

The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ; Cooper et al., 1987) is a self-report 34 statement scale to assess body dissatisfaction and has been considered a spectrum of cognitive-affective phenomena in body image disturbances. This

scale was designed to study body image in women with “eating disorders” and who constantly worries towards the weight and the shape of the body. The scale however is not restricted to women with eating disorders and is also concerned with women with no history of such problems. The subjects rate six items out of which they circle 1 (never) and 6 (always) to items such as “Has feeling bored made you brood about your shape”. The internal consistency index of the BSQ, obtained by means of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, was $\alpha = .97$ for girls, and $\alpha = .96$ for boys (Cooper et al., 1987). Mean item scores provide an index of body shape, with higher scores indicating more concern for body shape indicating higher Self-objectification.

2. Personal Orientation Inventory: - (Everett L. Shostrom & R.R. Knap, 1976)

The POI is a comprehensive standardized instrument specifically designed by Shostrom (1962) to measure self-actualization as conceptualized by Maslow. It is a self report measure consisting of 150 two-choice items stating both positive and negative comparative value and behavior judgments. The items of the POI are used to calculate the scores for each of the twelve POI scales i.e., Time Ratio, Support Ratio, Self-Actualising Values, Existentiality, Feeling Reactivity, Spontaneity, Self-Regard, Self-Acceptance, Nature of Man, Synergy, Acceptance of Aggression, and Capacity for Intimate Contact (Shostrom, 1962). It has been regarded as the standardized inventory for measuring an individual’s self-actualization. It is extensively used in a wide context and has been shown to be relatively stable over time (Knapp, 1990), and uninfluenced by social desirability (Shostrom, 1974; Warehime & Foulds, 1973) even cross-culturally (Knapp, Cardenas & Michael, 1978; Steilberg, 1976), validating it as a measure of actual beliefs. The reliability coefficients for the major scales of Time Competency and Inner Directedness are .71 and .77 respectively and coefficients for the other subscales range from .52 to .82.

Results and Discussion:

The main objective of the present study was to study Self-objectification in young females and assess its consequences for their need for Self-actualization. Composite scores of self-actualization were calculated for young women high and low on self-objectification and the scores were then subjected to the t-test.

TABLE NO.1: t-RATIO OF YOUNG WOMEN HIGH AND LOW ON SELF-OBJECTIFICATION FOR COMPOSITE SELF-ACTUALIZATION INDEX

Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)	Low	High	T score
	Mean	Mean	
	263.41	247.79	2.968**

Results in Table no.1 showed a statistically significant difference between the low self-objectification group as compared to high self-objectification group in possessing significantly higher self-actualization values which is in accordance to the hypothesis formulated. The implication of this finding for the current sample is that evaluation of oneself from an external barometer leaves the young girl entrapped in the vicious circle of constantly gauging her worth. Due to the lack of acceptance even from one’s own self, naturally the investment of psychic energy fails to occur in the growth motives. Breines, Crocker and Garcia (2008) in their studies found that directing attention to appearance domains and disregarding their competence domains thwarts women’s self-determination. In similar vein Roberts and Pennebaker (1995) found that Self-objectification in women lead to decreased awareness of internal states thus generating body disconnect in them.

In order to test the second hypothesis that, “Young women low on Self-objectification would score high on all the dimensions of POI scale i.e. Time competence(Tc), Inner directedness(I), Self-Actualizing value(SAV), Existentiality(Ex), Feeling reactivity(Fr), Spontaneity(S), Self-regard(Sr), Self-acceptance(Sa), Nature of man constructive (Nc), Synergy(Sy), Acceptance of Aggression(A), Capacity for intimate contact (C) as compared to women high on self-objectification”, the respective subscale scores were subjected to t-test for both the groups. t-ratios were also calculated for both the groups on all the dimensions of Personal Orientation Inventory namely, Time competence, Inner directedness, Self-actualizing value, Existentiality, Feeling reactivity, Spontaneity, Self-regard, Self-acceptance, Nature of man constructive, Synergy, Acceptance of aggression and Capacity for intimate contact which are provided in table no.2 below.

TABLE NO.2: MEANS AND t-RATIO OF HIGH AND LOW SELF-OBJECTIFICATION GROUPS ON SUBSCALES OF PERSONAL ORIENTATION INVENTORY (POI)

Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)	Low Self objectification group (N=30) Mean	High Self objectification group (N=30) Mean	t score
Time competence (Tc)	12.84	11.15	2.06**
Inner directed(I)	65.37	61.97	1.588
Self-Actualizing value(SAV)	13.47	13.62	1.612
Existentiality(Ex)	12.84	11.12	2.000*
Feeling reactivity(Fr)	12.09	11.76	0.1358
Spontaneity(S)	10.31	9.71	1.224
Self-regard(Sr)	12.53	10.97	4.875**
Self-Acceptance(Sa)	12.16	11.59	0.4161
Nature of Man constructive (Nc)	10.03	9.65	0.745
Synergy(Sy)	6	5.6	0.325
Acceptance of aggression (A)	12.91	12.68	0.2948
Capacity for intimate contact(C)	14.22	14.09	0.1477

(* $p < .05 = 1.671$, ** $p < .01 = 2.390$)

Significant differences emerged on dimensions of Time competence, Existentiality and Self-regard subscales of POI for high and low self-objectification groups. Mean values with t ratio ($t = 2.06$, $p < .01$) on Time competency scale for low Self-objectification ($M = 12.84$) group was significantly higher than mean value ($M = 11.15$) on the same scale for the high Self-objectification group at the .01 level. To apprehend the essence of these statistically significant values, it is of primary concern to first understand the nature of the constructs at hand. High scores on time competency subscale by the low self-objectification group was indicative of meaningful continuity in life, less burden associated with guilt and resentments from the past. These results convey a sense of freedom enjoyed by the low self-objectification group in leading their life and directing its course of action. Knapp (1990) regarded time competency as one of the most important contributor for achieving the highest levels of self-actualization. On the scale of Existentiality the mean value for low Self-objectification group ($M = 12.84$) was significantly higher than the mean value of young women high on Self-objectification ($M = 11.12$) at the 0.5 level of significance with t value = 2.00. Individuals low on this ability tends to hold values so rigidly that they become dogmatic and compulsive (Shostrom, 1987). Existentiality refers to indicating flexibility in the thought estimating an individual's sense of judgment and ability to compromise in the challenging situations (Kitayama et al., 1997). In light of the above results it is contended that women high on self-objectification were failing to capitalize on their decision making skills by conforming to the belief systems of the contemporary society. Additionally this was creating weak self-understanding making them more vulnerable to social typification.

Low Self-objectification group had mean values ($M = 12.53$) on the scale of Self-regard which was significantly higher at 0.1 level than the mean value of High Self-Objectification group ($M = 10.97$) with t value= 4.875. Self-regard connotes an affirmation of oneself because of one's self-worth and strength. Young girls high on self-objectification were consequently nurturing lower levels of self-regard thus underscoring their potential. Coupled along is a general perception that social norms within the Indian subculture are not encouraging of women to be assertive of their identities. Self-regards then falls prey to the need for social acceptance at any cost. Dittmar (2009) found that heightened experience of body shame and powerlessness lead to low self-regard in young women and distorted their self-perceptions, psychological well-being and social relationships with others. Alienation from one's own body also served as a link to other negative

deteriorations such as depression, eating disorders and lowered self-esteem (Holmstrom, 2004). Women indulging in Self-objectification were more likely to depict their body as a commodity meant to be flaunted by males (Bartky, 2003; Bordo, 1993). Negative social self-evaluation and social exposure brought about a need to hide, to flee from the painful gaze of others, feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness in such women according to research by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). A Published report by APA task force on the Sexualisation of Girls (2007) gave ample evidence that constant self-objectification in young women was threatening their overall physical, emotional and mental health which was leading to increased distortions in self-image, self-esteem and self-worth levels.

There was no observed significant difference on the dimensions of Inner Directedness ($t= 1.588$), Self-actualizing value ($t= 1.612$), Feeling reactivity ($t= 0.135$), Spontaneity ($t= 1.224$), Self-acceptance ($t= 0.4161$), Nature of man constructive ($t= 0.745$), Synergy with ($t= 0.325$), Acceptance of aggression ($t= 0.294$), Capacity for intimate contact ($t= 0.147$) in groups of young women high and low on self-objectification. This trend of results needs to be considered within the contextual framework of the current sample of the study. Young women by virtue of their age are still dealing with the basic needs on the Maslowian hierarchy (Maslow, 1954). The participants comprised of women in early twenties who had not yet reached the age where they have more or less achieved gratification of needs required to widen the magnitude of their existence and begin the journey of self-actualization. Maslow (1968) signified adulthood to be an important stage of ego development and emotional maturity in ways that it encaptured the heightened capacity for self-actualization (Pfaffenberger, 2005). Research studies on middle aged women by Cook-Greuter (1999) and Levinson (1978) found women lying between the age range of 35-45 as reporting higher levels of self-actualization. Westenberg and Block (1993) suggested that ego resiliency and emotional maturity were stable personality dimensions which correlated significantly with the developmental phase of adulthood. Maslow (1970) concluded that individuals at younger age could not correspond well to the complexities of life and thus were unable to reach the level of self-actualization. Levinson (1978) also suggested that mid-life offered a more panoramic view of an individual's developed aspects of personality.

Analysis of self-actualization scores was also done by estimation of Time ratio and Support Ratio scores (table no.3) which are indicative of "present orientation" and of "being independent" and "internally motivated" respectively.

TABLE NO.3 SHOWING THE TIME AND SUPPORT RATIO SCORES OF HIGH AND LOW SELF-OBJECTIFICATION GROUPS ON THE PERSONAL ORIENTATION INVENTORY

	Time Ratio (TR)	Support Ratio (SR)	Level of Actualization
Low Objectification Group	1:1	1:1.4	Non Self-Actualized
High Objectification Group	1:1	1:1.5	Non Self-Actualized

Results reveal ratio score for young women low on self-objectification and high on self-objectification as 1:1 each. The ratio falls in the non-self-actualizing range indicating low time competency which was directly linked to preoccupation with guilt's, regrets and resentments and perception of the future as comprising of idealized goals, expectations, and fears amongst both the groups. Implication of these findings can be understood in context of research by Perls et al. (1951) who suggested that individuals who live in their past and emphasize more on the future usually find it difficult to step ahead of actual reality and catch up with the events in the present, thus further robbing their ability to act spontaneously in a situation. Non-significant support ratio scores were again found in young women in both the groups i.e., low on Self-objectification scored 1:1.4 and high Self-objectification group scored 1:1.5. The participants appear to be in double mind and unsure of whether to conform to societal expectations or to act autonomously. Thus it became difficult for them to make important decisions for themselves which affected their personal journey to becoming fully functional.

The above results illustrate that young females participating in the present study whether low on self-objectification or high on self-objectification have not reached the stage of a well-developed sense of self which was available to extend itself towards healthy development. Maslow (1970, 1967) in his Theory of Human Motivation suggested that Self-actualization was the highest need of growth motivation and achievable after meeting all the basic needs and goals. As per Erickson's (1968) developmental perspective the young female participants in the study are at a stage where critical issues relevant even to the formation of a stable identity were yet to appear in their lives, thus rendering self-actualization a

farther away goal. Perls (1947) reported that Self-actualization was attained after the needs for affection, appreciation and admiration had been gratified.

III. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that the growth motives emerges only after the individual has explored the external reality as a means of contributing to personality development and then takes a plunge in the depths of his/her psyche to emerge with the gem of self-actualization. The young girls participating in the present study were still in the grasp of external pressures of conformity thus choking partially their true identity seeking. It would not be wrong to assume that until at least the developmental stages pertaining to identity formation are complete would the self-actualization motive assert its presence in the life of these young participants. Although norms of culture have varied considerably with time, yet the developing contemporary Indian urban society is evaluating females largely as “wanted” or “unwanted” on the basis of physical attractiveness. Self-objectification has been silently corroding away at the very basis of existence by rendering young women equivalent to mannequins who possess desirable proportions but are consequently devoid of “life”.

Simultaneously it becomes noteworthy that despite self-objectification appearing as a dominant influence the present study has found underpinnings of self-actualization amongst the young Indian female population, which is an encouraging sign. The rich Indian cultural ethos is still a breeding ground for the actualization of higher motives as has been through the ages. It is important for the youth to identify, be sensitive and aware of the hurdles that lie on this journey. Globalization is the need of the hour yet it is crucial for the young mind to not be swayed by its “herding tendencies”. Growth is necessary and along with it the sustenance of the identity out of which our psyche has evolved.

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