

Self-Esteem among Women with Facial Burns: Pakistani Perspective

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Abstract

Objective: To determine any association between lower levels of self-esteem among females with facial burns and their age and marital status.

Methodology: This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted at the National Burn Care Centre, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Islamabad from Jan - Jul 2022. The data were collected from female patients who had suffered burn injuries to the face and neck area. Non-probability consecutive sampling technique was used. Inclusion criteria were females with facial burns and/or neck burns. First degree facial burns and females with comorbidities were excluded from the study.

The Urdu translated version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure low self-esteem among women with facial burns. For subgroup analysis, the patients were stratified into two age groups: Young adults (aged between 18-35 years) and adults (aged between 36-60 years). Statistical tests were employed to find out the association among facial burn and self-esteem with respect to age group and marital status.

Results: Out of 348 females, 239 (68.6%) had low self-esteem. The participants were aged between 18-50 years. The underlying causes of the facial burns among the included females were scalds (n=175), flame burns (n=114) and flash burns (n=59). 110 patients had second degree superficial burns, 201 patients had second degree deep dermal burns and 37 patients had third degree burns.

Patients in both age groups were facing a lower level of self-esteem however, there was a low count of adult women 108 (59.01%) with low self-esteem and a high count of young adult women 131 (79.3%) with low self-esteem. 75 (70.75%) married women with facial burns had low self-esteem whereas 164 (86.77%) unmarried women with facial burns suffered from low self-esteem.

Conclusion: The study found that young adult females and unmarried females were more vulnerable to develop low self-esteem. There is a need for psychological care and support for burn victims with facial involvement as their mental state is being affected.

Key words: Facial Burns, Females, Low Self-Esteem

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Introduction

The opinions of others often determine a person's self-worth. The effects of advertising on women in the fashion and beauty industries have been extensively studied. The advertising that portrays unattainable ideals of beauty has caused anxiety, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence in a lot of women.^{1,2} Burns to the face is highly common among women in Pakistan and is seen as a primary concern as most facial burns are scald or flame burns and women in Pakistan are mostly involved in kitchen chore i.e., cooking. Burns are among the foremost causes of DALYs (disability-adjusted life-

years) in the low HDI countries. Fire-related burns alone are responsible for over 300,000 mortalities every year, with more mortalities from scalds, electricity, chemical burns and other types of burns.³

Burns to the face can harm a variety of specialized organs that are essential to human function and survival, such as the mouth, nose, eyes, and ears.⁴ The apparent scar left by a burn to the face and neck has an effect on the patients' physical and mental health.⁵ Females suffering from specifically facial burn injuries may suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, post-

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traumatic stress disorder and low self-esteem levels. Mental health can cause physical and psychological issues such as mood and anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, and drug and alcohol abuse.⁶ One of the most horrifying crimes against women is acid violence, in which women's faces and bodies are exposed to acid in order to disfigure them. Though acid abuse can be conducted against either a woman or a man, earlier research showed that women were more likely to become victims of acid abuse than men.⁷ One of the key factors contributing to the stress experienced by burn victims with facial impairment is social and psychosocial disability, in which they exhibit evasive behavior and a sense of insecurity.⁸ Over the last 15 years, more burn centers emerged on the medical map of Pakistan, mostly in the public sector. However, they are still insufficient to cover the entire country and meet the demand.

This article investigated how the self-esteem of females with facial burns is being affected in Pakistan. Psychiatric problems seem highly prevalent among burn victims. These individuals may have a variety of psychological issues, including anxiety, sadness, low self-esteem, and trauma-related illnesses.⁹ Low Self-esteem is linked to depression, anxiety, and academic stress.¹⁰ The self-care nursing intervention model have also been seen to affect burn patients' self-esteem and quality of life.¹¹ As females' beauty is defined by clear skin and good facial looks, burns on the face highly affect the mental state of females especially those living in Pakistan. The most recent data show that females die from burns at slightly higher rates than males. Cooking over open flames or using intrinsically dangerous propane stoves puts women at more risk since they can cause loose garments to catch fire males.³

In Pakistan, researchers looked at how resilience, perceived stigmatization, social comfort, and coping mechanisms affected the quality of life of female burn survivors with facial disfigurement. They suggested that rehabilitation service providers and mental health specialists should concentrate on rehabilitative techniques for burn survivors in order to enhance their social comfort, help them deal with their wounds, and create a preventative strategy to help them improve their coping skills.⁸

The current study was carried out to determine any association between lower levels of self-esteem among females with facial burns and their age and marital status.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted over a period of six months at the National Burn Care Centre, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad from Jan - Jul 2022. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional

Review Board (IRB) of Shifa Tameer-i-Millat University. Written consent was taken from the participants. Non probability consecutive sampling technique was used. The data were collected from the outpatient department (OPD) for female patients with facial burns and or neck burns. First degree facial burns and female with comorbidities were excluded from the study.

The sample size was calculated by using WHO sample size calculator. Taking a confidence level of 95%, the anticipated population proportion (i.e., rate of depression in facial burn women) of 31.9%, absolute precision required (5%), the sample size was 348 participants. The Urdu translated version of the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale was used to measure the self-esteem level among the participants. This scale was translated by Rizwan et al., in 2017 and had good reliability and validity. This scale consisted of 10 items, each having a 4-point Likert response. The scale score ranged from 0-30 with 30 indicating the highest score. If a person scored fifteen or above it indicated that a person's self-esteem lies within the normal range, and if a person scored below fifteen, this meant that the person had low self-esteem.¹² Females with facial burns were approached and an interview was conducted using the Urdu translated Rosenberg self-esteem scale.

For subgroup analysis, the patients were stratified into young adults (aged between 18-35 years) and adults (aged between 36-60 years). Analysis of findings was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Chi square was done to find out the correlation between facial burn and self-esteem with age and marital status. Independent sample t-test was also computed to test the significance level between married and unmarried women and also different age groups.

Results

Out of 348 females, it was found that 239 (68.6%) had low self-esteem. Self-esteem was found normal among the remaining 109 (31.3%) females with facial burns.

The participants were aged between 18-50 years. They belonged to four different geographic regions of Pakistan. It was observed that 39.1% of the respondents were from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) whereas 10.1% were from Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) (Table I).

The underlying causes of the facial burn among the included females were scalds (n=175), flame burns (n=114) and flash burns (n=59). 110 patients had second degree superficial burns, 201 patients had

second degree deep dermal burns and 37 patients had third degree burns.

A significant difference between the two age groups was observed. This shows that patients in both age groups were facing a lower level of self-esteem, however, there was a low count of adult women 108 with low self-esteem and a high count of young adult women 131 with low self-esteem (Table I).

In comparison, both married and unmarried females with facial burns were not equally affected by low self-esteem. Low self-esteem levels were found to affect more unmarried women as compared to married women. About 75 (70.75%) married women with facial burns had low self-esteem whereas 164 (86.77%) unmarried women with facial burns suffered from low self-esteem (Table II).

Table I: Demographics Characteristics of the participants with low self-esteem (n=239)

Variables	N	%
Age		
Young adults	131	54.8
Adults	108	45.1
Marital Status		
Married	75	31.3
Unmarried	164	68.6
Province		
Punjab	86	35.9
ICT	109	45.6
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	33	13.8
AJK	11	4.6

Table II: Subgroup analysis of the patients with low Self-esteem (n=239)

Variables	Low Self-esteem		P- value
	N	%	
Unmarried	164	68.6	.000
Married	75	31.3	
Adults	108	45.18	.000
Young Adults	131	54.8	

Discussion

Burns are injuries that affect the head and neck more than 50% of the time and can be caused by fire, electricity, steam, hot substances, and chemical.¹³ According to the findings of this study young adults are affected more due to the fact that young adult females are mostly unmarried and facial burns will lower their self-esteem to assuming that they are not compatible for marriage as beauty is defined by the facial looks in our culture. As stated by several other studies young adults are more vulnerable to lower self-esteem as compared to the adults. Young adults are reported to have the

lowest levels of self-esteem, which rose throughout adulthood and peaked around the age of sixty.¹⁴

According to a study conducted at a burn facility in Karachi, a higher percentage of unmarried women were affected. Similar findings were observed in our study where, 86.77% of unmarried female participants were affected with low self-esteem. As observed, unmarried females are mostly (79.3%) in the young adult age group. They become more vulnerable due to such a traumatic injury which has adverse effects on their mental health.¹⁴ According to a national longitudinal survey, married and unmarried women both exhibited same levels of self-esteem with a mean (30.80) whereas in this study it was observed that 68.6% of unmarried women have been affected whereas 31.3% of married women have been affected by low self-esteem.¹⁵

Living in a middle-income country, unmarried women are already stigmatized to get married and when they report with facial burns they believe that no one will accept them for marriage. This lowers their self-esteem levels. In a five-year prospective study, 153 burned patients which included 31% with face burns showed that emotion and sexual function scores were consistently poorer in survivors with face injuries and the satisfaction was initially higher than that of the group without burned faces, but it declined over time.¹⁶ Other than that, beauty is defined by facial looks in our culture and facial burn injuries are time taking to recover if treated properly. Scars of injury can cause unmarried women to be more vulnerable to self-esteem. According to a study describing living with a stigma of low self-esteem and burn injuries, 38.5% of burn victims expressed low self-esteem and a moderate amount of stigma whereas the current study found that 68.6% of the patients had low self-esteem.^{17, 18}

The more someone has a positive outlook towards life, the more they tend to adopt adaptive ways of life and hence more content and psychologically healthy they are. As there is no health without mental health, the burn survivors should have adequate psychological care.

Conclusion

The study found that young adult females and unmarried females were more vulnerable to developing low self-esteem. There is a need for psychological care and support for burn victims with facial involvement as their mental state is being affected.

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