

THE IMPACT OF FACIAL VITILIGO ON SOCIAL APPEARANCE ANXIETY: A CASE-CONTROL STUDY

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Vitiligo is a chronic depigmenting disorder that can lead to significant psychosocial burden, particularly when lesions involve the face. Facial vitiligo may impair social functioning and self-perception due to its high visibility; however, the relationship between facial lesion characteristics and social appearance anxiety (SAA) has not been sufficiently explored.

METHODS: (Ethics Committee Approval must be obtained and the number should be specified). In this cross-sectional case-control study included 156 adults with non-segmental facial vitiligo and 143 healthy controls matched for age, sex, and education level. Participants completed the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS) and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). Vitiligo patients additionally completed the Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) and a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for perceived disease severity. Facial lesions were anatomically classified as forehead, periorbital, perioral, or mandibular. Group comparisons, correlation analyses, subgroup analyses by lesion location, and moderation analysis (PROCESS Model 1) were performed. Ethics statement: Approval No: 2020/02-13, dated 21/02/2020

RESULTS: Patients with facial vitiligo had significantly higher SAAS scores than controls (55.20 ± 9.17 vs. 19.70 ± 8.40 ; $p < 0.001$; Cohen's $d = 4.16$). Within the vitiligo group, SAAS scores showed strong positive correlations with anxiety, depression, impaired quality of life, and perceived disease severity (all $p < 0.01$). Subgroup analysis revealed that periorbital and perioral involvement was associated with significantly higher SAA compared with forehead or mandibular lesions ($p < 0.05$). Moderation analysis demonstrated that general anxiety significantly amplified the relationship between perceived disease severity and social appearance anxiety (interaction $p < 0.01$).

CONCLUSIONS: Facial vitiligo is associated with markedly elevated social appearance anxiety, particularly when lesions affect socially expressive facial regions. General anxiety acts as an important vulnerability factor that intensifies appearance-related distress. These findings highlight the need for lesion-specific and anxiety-informed psychosocial interventions in the management of facial vitiligo.

Keywords: Body image, psychodermatology, social appearance anxiety, vitiligo