

The Relationship Between the Level of Openness and Body Arts

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Abstract. Although people are becoming more accepting of various things as society develops, when it comes to body art, people always talk about it in the same breath as sex, crime, and even drug use. Tattoo and piercing art has developed more and more styles and forms, but people are still not less prejudiced by their prevalence to de-stigmatize people's opinion of body art. This research aims to determine the relationship between one's level of openness and body arts to show that body arts is a way to express personality. The study was conducted to find whether the higher levels of openness would influence one's attitude and the extent to do body arts. Data was collected by Saucier's abbreviated version of the big five personality test and multiple choice and short answer question type about body arts. The research did not show an apparent relationship between the high level of openness and the practice of doing body arts. However, it indicates that people with high openness are more receptive to body arts.

Keywords: Openness, Body arts, Big five personality test.

1. Introduction

As the ethos of society become more open, body arts have become part of the mainstream culture of the younger generation. The most common body art people see daily is tattoos and piercings. Tattooing involves inserting colored pigments into the skin, and piercing is defined as "the insertion of needles, rings, and other objects into the flesh" [1]. Throughout the development of society, the type of tattoo styles and piercing positions became more creative. In human history, body art has long existed. Tattoos can be found on a mummy from 5000 years ago in an Italian glacier [2]. In modern times, tattooing and piercing have meaning in tribal societies [3]. For example, the ability to endure the pain of tattoos and piercings proves that teens are ready to become adults [3]. Moreover, in some tribes, the pattern and number of tattoos represent one's social status, identity, and relation with others. However, in recent decades, the meaning of body art has deviated from its original purpose. According to research about how body arts influence employment, the study shows that compared with two types of job positions, non-customer-facing jobs, such as chefs and factory workers, and customer-facing jobs, waiters or cashiers. Participants with body arts are more likely to get into non-customer-facing jobs instead of customer-facing jobs [4]. Applicants with body art are frequently rejected because the tattoo or other modification would be offensive to customers or clients or because of body modification stereotypes [5]. Before the 1800s, tattoos were restricted to groups considered aggressive and criminal tendencies, such as sailors, soldiers, bikers, and prisoners. Still, after the 1800s, more and more people got body art. Tattoos and piercings are gradually de-stigmatized and have become mainstream [2]. Body art practices seem more popular among the young generation of adults. Research conducted by Pentina and Spears about the reasons behind young adults acquiring body art claims that young adults used to get tattoos when they thought it was time to rebel or express liberation. Other young adults might want used tattoos to express their creativity and uniqueness or because of social or fashion influence from their environment. Furthermore, young adults might get tattoos for personal reasons; they want to try something new and do it on impulse. Pentina and Spears's research shows that the social understanding of body arts relates to art, deviance, and adventurousness [6]. However, those features are similar to people with a high level of openness on the big five personality scale, who are very creative, open to trying new things, focused on tackling new challenges, and happy to think about an abstract concept [7,8]. There may be a connection between body arts and openness. Research shows that tattoos and piercing people rate themselves as

more daring, creative, artistic, individualistic, and risky than non-modification people [9]. Therefore, people with high levels of openness would be able to accept the "deviance" from body arts and be willing to try this infrequent practice. Tattoos have always been a popular social topic. In many academic studies of body art, scholars are more inclined to associate body art with social behavior, such as sexual behavior, crime, sexual orientation, or drug use. Fewer studies have looked at the reasons for tattoos and their popularity from the perspective of the people themselves. This research explores how personality traits influence people's attitudes toward body art and their decision to take it. Based on the analysis above, a hypothesis can be drawn from these observations: one's openness is related to the extent of doing and attitude toward body art like tattoos and piercings.

2. Method

2.1 Research participants

Participants are adults above 18 chosen from the Chinese internet, including both females and males. Participants would complete an online survey that contains multiple choices, short-answer, and Likert-scale rated questions. During the survey collection, there is no identity authentication, and every participant is welcome to fill in the survey. Data from participants who are under 18 are excluded from the final analysis. Moreover, as the two lower lobe piercings are common, they do not follow the definition of body art in the current research. Participants with only two ear piercings would not be counted as having body modifications.

2.2 Research Survey Design

The survey is separated into three sections. The first section is about demographic information collection, and participants would fill out some of their personal information, including age range, sex, occupation, and education level. The second part of the survey would be the big five personality test, which includes 40 questions. The big five personality test is from Saucier, who abbreviates the 100 personality questions from Goldberg, testing people's personalities more efficiently [10]. During the big five personality test, participants would choose one scale from 1 = inaccurate to 5 = accurate, and 3 stands for neutral by the statement provided in the test. For example, when reading a statement such as "I always feel blue", participants can choose one scale according to their situation. The final part of the survey would be questions about body art, including questions related to the attitude to body arts or any plans of taking body arts. In this section, tattoos and piercings are viewed as a whole. The total number of tattoos and piercings is the number of body arts participants. For example, if one has five piercings and five tattoos, they have ten body arts and need to rate ten on the survey. After the data is collected, participants will be categorized into two groups: those with body modification and those without body arts. The score of the openness section of the big five tests will compare these two groups of participants to identify whether there is a difference in the level of openness between body-modification participants and non-body-modification participants. Moreover, participants' attitudes toward body arts would also be analyzed with their level of openness on the big five personality test.

3. Result

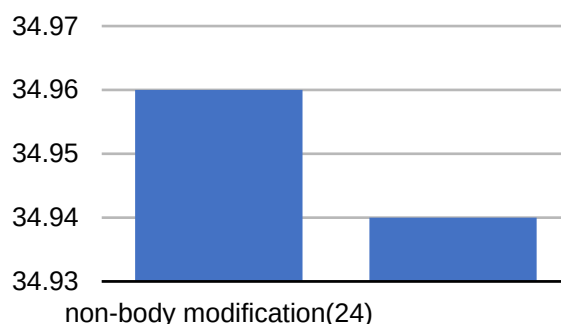


Figure 1. Average score of openness for people with body arts

In total, 39 surveys are completed. However, three were removed: one was excluded because of incorrect completion, and the other two were excluded because the participants' age needed to meet the experimental criteria. Thus, a total of 36 surveys is used for the final result analysis. From the demographic information collection, males are 41.67%, females are 52.76%, and prefer not to tell are 5.56%. The percentage of participants aged 18-24 years accounted for 52.78%, 25-34 years accounted for 8.33%, 35-44 years accounted for 13.89%, 45-54 years accounted for 19.44%, and finally, subjects older than 55 years accounted for 5.56%. Regarding the highest degree being studied or already obtained, 58.33% of the participants are studying, or the highest degree is a bachelor's degree. Only one person with less than an elementary school degree accounted for 2.78%, secondary school is 5.56%, vocational high school degree is 16.67%, and finally, the percentage of master's degree is 5.56%. Lastly, regarding employment status, full-time jobs accounted for 44.44%, part-time contained 8.33% of the participant, one person was unemployed, accounting for 2.78%, and 38.89% were students. 2.78% are retired, and the last 2.78% are individual operations. All the participants have completed the big five personality test, but only the answers related to openness are analyzed. In the Saucier abbreviation version of the personality test, there are 44 questions. Any questions related to openness are 10 in total, and 2 are reverse-scored items which denote with capital R. Each participant's level of openness is calculated by summing up the scale choice answer according to each statement. The total score of the Big Five Personality test for each participant would be compared with the answer to body art-related questions. According to figure 1, of these 36 participants, there are 12 participants got body art, including tattoos and piercings. The average score of openness from body-modification participants is 34.92. The other 24 non-body modification participants' average score is 34.96. The non-body modification group is 0.04 points higher than the body modification group from the attitude toward body art question. On the question of body arts, 3 answer choices are provided: negative, neutral, and positive, 8 participants chose a negative attitude, 19 were neutral, and the rest of 9 participants were positive. The average openness score for negative attitude participants is 33, the average for neutral is 35.10, and the average for positive attitude is 35.67 (see Figure 2). Moreover, regarding questions about plans for body arts, the average openness score for people without body arts who want to do body arts in the future is 35.5, and the score for people without body arts who do not want to get one in the future is 35 (see Figure 3).

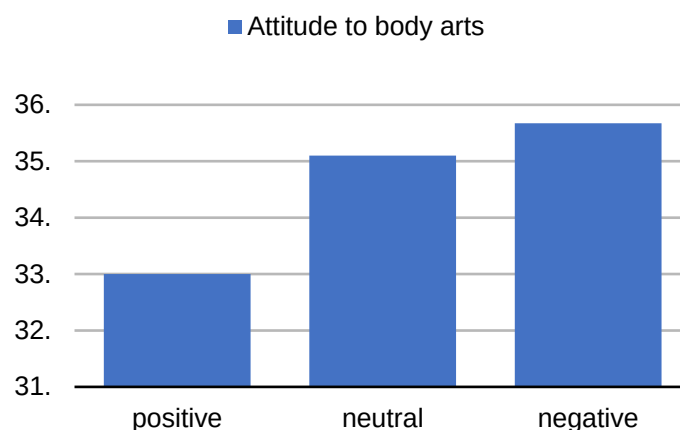


Figure 2. Attitude to body arts

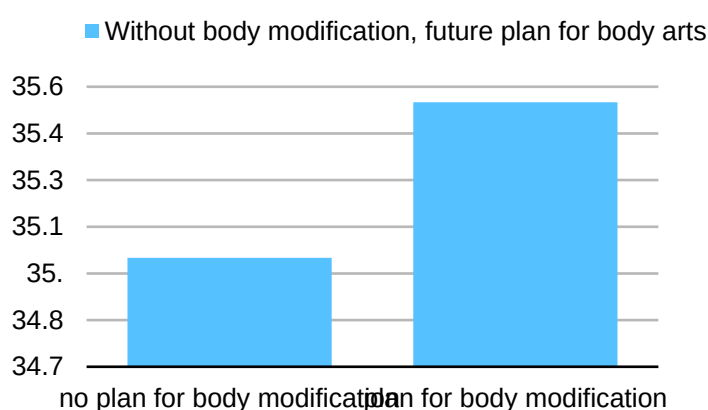


Figure 3. Future Plan for Taking Body Arts

4. Discussion

According to the result, there is no significant correlation between body arts and openness. From the first comparison between the openness score of non-body modification groups and body modification, the former is 0.04 points higher than the latter. This result deviates from the hypothesis. From the last comparison, a group without body arts and wanting to get one in the future is only 0.5 higher than participants who are without body arts and do not have plans for body arts. However, from the comparison of the attitude about body arts, there is a noticeable score difference between the negative and neutral or positive attitude groups. The average for negative attitude groups is 33, for neutral is 35.10, and for positive groups is 35.67. These three groups show a positive correlation between the positive attitude toward body arts and the level of openness. This result proves the hypothesis to some extent. Overall, the result look likes did not confirm the hypothesis. However, the hypothesis states that there is a correlational relationship between body arts and the level of openness, which means that openness is not the only cause for people to do body arts. Other factors might include culture, gender, occupation, education, etc. In this study, there is no obvious correlational relationship between body art practice and score of openness because all participants were from the same culture. All the participants came from China, which is a communist and conservative country, even though most of the people stand neutral or positive attitudes toward body arts. The body art practice still needs to be wide acceptance by the Chinese. Chinese culture did not advocate individuality. However, body art's specialty and eye-catching features disconnect one from Chinese culture. Therefore, openness and body arts are positively related but did not show in the Chinese population.

5. Conclusion

This research explores how personality traits influence people's attitudes toward body arts and their decision to take it. The study did not show an apparent relationship between higher openness and more likely to get more body arts. However, it shows that a higher level of openness is more accepting of body arts; these participants with high openness scores tend to have a positive or neutral attitude toward piercings or tattoos. However, there are some limitations in this study. Body arts and personality are correlational relationships rather than causal relationships. Therefore, openness in the personality can only be part of the cause of body art. Body art may also be accepted or taken due to other factors—for example, culture, occupation, education, etc. Furthermore, there are several aspects that can be improved in this study because of environmental limitation; the researcher only collects data from one country, China. This means the results can only represent Chinese rather than people from other cultures or countries. In addition, as Chinese culture contradicts the expression behind body art, the final result deviates from the hypothesis. Even though there are limitations in this study, it still played a role in the de-stigmatization of body art. This study shows that people's high acceptance of body art is not because they are more likely to break social norms but because this is just one of the expressions of their personality. In sum, one's openness would affect their acceptance of body arts, but the practice of doing body arts might vary from culture to culture or be affected by other factors.

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