

Qualitative Insights into Acne's Impact: Perspectives from Individuals in a Clinical Setting

Kainaat E Ali^{1*}, Maryum Firdous¹ & Azka Bukhari¹

Abstract

Acne Vulgaris is a common skin condition affecting people of all ages that has been found to have negative psychological consequences on individuals going through it. Considering the high prevalence of this skin condition in Pakistan, the current study aims to explore the psychological impact of acne vulgaris in the clinical population. The qualitative study was conducted at a Government Hospital, using a volunteer sampling technique to interview 5 individuals, comprising 4 females and 1 male, between the ages of 16 and 30. A semi-structured interview with pre-designed questions was used, and thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. As a result, five themes were identified from the participants' verbatim: low self-esteem, compassion discrepancy, unsolicited pieces of advice, spotlight effect, and implicit social rejection. Techniques from the domain of Positive psychology were utilized to counsel the participants in a post-interview session where they were psycho-educated and encouraged to practice positive self-affirmations, self-compassion, mindfulness, and distraction activities alongside the pharmacological treatment prescribed by their dermatologists. The findings of this qualitative study can contribute to the development of specialized therapeutic plans by mental health professionals for patients with acne vulgaris and highlight the psychological challenges faced by individuals with this condition.

Keywords: *acne vulgaris, psychological impacts, clinical population, dermatological condition, positive psychology techniques*

*Corresponding Author:

Kainaat E Ali
Psychology Department,
Muhammad Ali Jinnah
University, Karachi, Sindh,
Pakistan.

Correspondence Email:

kainaateali19@gmail.com

This work is licensed under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).



Introduction and Literature Review

Skin is the largest organ of the body that performs functions such as regulating temperature, protecting the body against injuries and harmful radiations, detecting infections, producing vitamin D, etc. Although its functions are essential to living, certain infections, hormonal imbalances, allergies, and more can lead to dermatological diseases and psychological functioning disturbances. It may be chronic, long-lasting, or acute, affecting one or more of the layers of the skin. Amongst all the other skin diseases, acne vulgaris is found to be a highly prevalent condition worldwide ("The Burden of Acne Across the World", 2021). According to a recent survey (Shehroze et al., 2021) in Pakistan, acne vulgaris was reported as the most common dermatological condition, commonly affecting 16–30-year-olds. It can be of different types, i.e., fungal, cystic, hormonal, etc., depending upon the preceding causal

¹ Department of Psychology, Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Karachi, Pakistan.

factors, which include genetic predisposition, bacterial build-up, pollution, clogged pores, and stress. Moreover, acne vulgaris may appear before puberty, at the onset of puberty, or during adulthood (Sutaria et al., 2023). Although acne vulgaris is a physical ailment, it negatively affects the psychological well-being of the individual to an extent where treatment becomes essential, both psychological and physical (Stamu-O'Brien et al., 2021). According to a narrative study, Acne Vulgaris has notable psychological impacts on individuals, and in severe cases, psychological interventions may become as essential as the dermatological treatment (Kansal et al., 2025). It can impair the social, occupational, psychological, and interpersonal functioning of the affected individuals (Fabbrocini et al., 2018).

Individuals usually report being hypervigilant in social settings to guard against ridicule and discriminatory or detrimental comments or behaviour. The anticipation of such behaviour alone induces evaluation apprehension and social anxiety, and deteriorates self-esteem (Shaikh et al., 2020; Shakir et al., 2024). The chronic self-scrutiny may also lead to a distorted body image, increasing the chances of predisposition to body dysmorphic disorder. In one study, researchers found a positive correlation between acne severity and body image-related concerns in individuals aged 15-32 (Rehman et al., 2024).

The direct impact of acne on the self-image of individuals inevitably leads to the development of mood and anxiety disorders (Dunn et al., 2011). The internalized emotional suffering manifests itself through symptoms of depression and anxiety (Kazan et al., 2024). This posits that despite being a curable skin condition, Acne Vulgaris has serious consequences on the mental health of the affected. A recent study in Pakistan supports this notion, as 14.47% of medical students in Islamabad and Rawalpindi are affected by acne vulgaris and consequent psychosocial dysfunction (Babar & Mobeen, 2019).

Considering the high prevalence of acne vulgaris worldwide and in Pakistan, this research was conducted to explore the psychological impact of acne vulgaris on the affected individual and to unveil their adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. Moreover, this qualitative study aims to assist medical professionals, especially dermatologists, to work collaboratively with mental health workers to devise specialised integrative therapeutic plans for patients with acne vulgaris with the core purpose of alleviating the psychosocial distress resulting from their skin condition. Thereby, improving their quality of life.

Material and Methods

Research Design

Qualitative research is the chosen methodology of the present study as it provides a unique opportunity to explore the intricate and personal details of an individual's experiences with acne. The phenomenological approach research design within the qualitative research was selected as it was a well-suited method to uncover the subjective perceptions, emotions, and perspectives of the participants through the semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled the researchers to collect comprehensive data and perform an in-depth analysis to derive valuable insights into the phenomenon of Acne Vulgaris through the lived experiences of the participants.

Sample

The sample comprised of five individuals (4=Female, 1=Male) aged 16-30, suffering from different types of acne, who volunteered to be interviewed for the study, through volunteer sampling, at a Government Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan.

Data Collection Tool

A protocol consisting of eight pre-designed questions for semi-structured interviews was developed. These questions covered the various aspects of individuals' social, academic, and occupational functioning, along with their current coping strategies, stigmatisation, and healing processes concerning their skin condition.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis was done using the framework of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the participants' interviews by transcribing and reviewing all raw data to identify initial patterns. In the second stage, initial codes were generated manually by assigning labels to recurring ideas within the participants' verbatim. In the third phase, related codes were merged into broader and meaningful themes. The themes were then reviewed, defined in the context of the research, and named. Finally, the report was written to present the findings and finalize the extraction of the themes systematically (Ahmed et al., 2025). Furthermore, the qualitative theory that this research followed was a phenomenological approach, enabling the researchers to understand participants' experiences through their interactions with the world around them (Cissé & Rasmussen, 2021).

Procedure

All the individuals at the dermatology OPD at Services Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan, were presented with the purpose of the study, and consent was taken. The patients who were willing to participate were interviewed by the researchers. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with pre-designed questions. After the interview information was gathered, basic counselling was provided along with educating the participants regarding their psychological well-being. Techniques of Positive Psychology and Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy were introduced to the interviewees as a mental health first-aid, which included progressive muscle relaxation techniques, meditation, self-encouraging positive affirmations, distraction techniques, practising self-compassion and self-care, and mindfulness techniques. Moreover, mental well-being resources such as support groups, mental health clinics, and tele-mental health services were also introduced to them. After the successful completion of the interviews, the information was analysed through conducting thematic analysis, from which five themes were extracted.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical guidelines put forward by the American Psychological Association (APA) were considered throughout the course of this study. Consent was obtained from both the participants and the organisation before conducting the interviews. Furthermore, the participants' confidentiality was maintained at every stage, and their permission was taken to include their verbatim responses in the research anonymously. Additionally, to safeguard the participants against the potential psychological distress during the interview, a deep breathing exercise was conducted with all of them after the interview reached its conclusion.

Clinical Vignettes

A 16-Year-Old Female

She is a student pursuing her matriculation degree in Arts. Amongst her two sisters, she is the eldest and lives in a coherent family of five. She has recently been diagnosed with hormonal acne. As her dermatologist described, it is caused by post-pubertal hormonal changes

and her oily skin. Upon asking about how the skin condition has altered her life, she revealed that she has begun feeling socially inept and inadequate. She is constantly vigilant of the people she interacts with, even though she has not experienced any discriminatory behaviour from her peers. However, her mother has been implicitly making her feel conscious of herself by pointing out her affected skin and constantly advising her to clean her face. Moreover, she mentioned her acquaintances and relatives offering unsolicited advice on trying home remedies and maintaining personal hygiene. As a result, she reported feeling uneasy looking at herself in the mirror, applying makeup, and going out with friends. If she was never diagnosed with this condition or recovered fully, she expressed that she would feel socially confident. Nonetheless, she did not mention skipping school or any other major life-altering behaviour that would hinder her academic or social functioning. She interacted with people but was frequently afraid of being negatively evaluated. Despite knowing the potential psychological impact of acne on an individual, her dermatologist did not inquire about or address any of her psychosocial complaints during the first or follow-up visits. She heartily wishes for others to look beyond their physical appearance and not conform to the unrealistic beauty standards portrayed by the society and media. She wanted to advise others to love themselves as they are.

A 22-Year-Old Female

She is a final-year student enrolled in the Bachelor's in English Program at Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan. She is an only child and expressed having a close relationship with her parents. She was first diagnosed with hormonal acne at the age of 19. Although her condition, which had surfaced because of an irregular menstrual cycle, has comparatively ameliorated, the acne has caused scarring for which she is now receiving treatment. She mentioned feeling insecure and noticed a downgrade in her self-esteem post-diagnosis. She had stopped feeling worthy enough to be loved or accepted by society. Despite the absence of marginalisation by her peers and family or potential triggers, she expressed feeling socially inadequate because of her skin condition. Her relatives have been advising her to resort to natural remedies as it is less harmful. She expressed feeling disappointed at receiving such comments as her medication is helping her recover but because of the scars, her relatives tend to continue providing unsolicited advice. Nonetheless, her parents have been taking her to the dermatologist regularly and have been supportive throughout her treatment process. Furthermore, she expressed possessing a profound interest in cosmetics and reported that she used to love applying makeup. However, due to her skin condition, she feels unable to use it anymore. If she recovers fully, she believes that she will experience an immediate boost in her self-esteem and confidence and will be able to use makeup again. Considering her apparent worries, her dermatologist had suggested counselling but she has not actively thought of opting for it. Although she mentioned being hard on herself for having acne, she dearly wishes others to love themselves beyond a skin condition. Moreover, she desired everyone to seek treatment as she did.

A 20-Year-Old Female

She is an A-level student at a private college in Karachi, Pakistan. She is the youngest among her siblings and lives in a nuclear family of five. A few years ago, she started experiencing heavy breakouts on her skin and was diagnosed with cystic acne. Since then, she has been undergoing treatment, but her condition persists. She recalls that her acne started during her late teenage years, and despite trying homemade remedies, nothing has worked.

Prior to her active acne phase, she used to be a confident person who was comfortable in her own skin. However, her self-esteem has taken a major hit due to her skin condition, making her feel insecure and avoid social situations out of fear of judgement and scrutiny from others. She mentions that she would do anything to go back to feeling good about herself and attributes every shortcoming in her life to her cystic acne. When asked how she would perceive her life if she hadn't been diagnosed with this condition, she says that she would have been happy and would have freely pursued things she currently cannot do due to feeling low about herself because of acne. She constantly swings between feeling okay one day and not the next, and she believes that her hormonal imbalance is the biggest reason behind her condition, which also contributes to her mood swings. She also reports that changes in her diet and stress are triggering factors for her breakouts. Despite her struggles, she mentions that her dermatologists haven't provided her with access to any mental health support or resources to address her psychological problems. She also faces discriminatory behaviour, with people often making her feel dirty and suggesting home remedies or ointments to clear her skin during family gatherings, which she does not want to hear. Her advice to others with similar conditions is to know that it's okay to not be perfect, and that no one is looking at them critically. She believes that everyone is beautiful just the way they are.

A 24-Year-Old Female

She is a student pursuing her master's degree in business administration and is currently seeking treatment for fungal acne, which she has been struggling with for nearly a year. It has been a few months since she started seeking treatment from a dermatologist. She is employed in a company located in an industrial area with high pollution levels, which she believes has exacerbated her condition. While she used to experience occasional acne that improved with over-the-counter acne products, fungal acne has proven to be more challenging to eliminate. The persistent nature of her condition has taken a toll on her mental health, leaving her feeling embarrassed and self-conscious about her appearance. As a result, her social functioning has been affected, and she avoids meeting friends and wears a mask all the time to hide her skin. She feels hesitant to go out in public due to the stress it causes her. She expressed that if she did not have this condition, she would have led a carefree life and would not have had to spend so much money on trying to improve her appearance. She also mentioned that fungal acne is different from regular acne, and one thing that made her condition worse was being misdiagnosed and using products that ended up harming her skin. She reported that people often think her condition is contagious, and as a result, they avoid sitting next to her or having physical interactions with her, which she finds frustrating. Despite her mental health symptoms, she did not receive any psychological help from her primary doctors. She wants to encourage others with similar conditions to seek medical help from a qualified dermatologist rather than trying to treat themselves with remedies. She also wants them to know that they are not alone in their struggle.

A 30-Year-Old Male

He is an employee at a software company and the only child of his parents. This was his third visit to the dermatology clinic. Before experiencing a full-blown breakout, he had small pimples and blemishes but never anything major. He used to dismiss his condition, thinking it was temporary and that his skin would get better eventually, but it never did. He mentioned that there is a misconception, including among himself, that acne in boys is

temporary and not something serious to worry about. However, his condition is evidence that men's acne can indeed worsen. His severe lack of confidence and dislike of his appearance have caused him constant worry about how he looks, feeling like people are always watching and judging him wherever he goes. He mentioned that if he did not have acne, his life would have been much easier. His biggest concern is being unable to communicate and interact with the opposite sex, which has greatly impacted his self-esteem, and his friends often laugh at him for it. He has spent a considerable amount of money on skincare products that have only made his condition worse. Before seeking medical help, he used to self-treat his acne with the help of Google and other sources. Due to his condition, he has been unable to find a partner for himself, and he often faces rejection because of his appearance. This has become his biggest worry, especially since he feels that he is at an age of starting his own family. He also finds himself compared to other people in his circle who are already married and living a happy life. Furthermore, he has realised that people with his condition should rely on doctors' prescriptions and not spend a lot of money on expensive skincare products. He also emphasised the importance of taking care of diet and exercising daily for overall skin health.

Findings and Discussion

Low Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is described as the positive or negative evaluation of one's own worth (Rahmania & Sari, 2024). The relationship between acne and self-esteem was a recurring issue in the research, with all participants reporting low self-esteem as a result. Many participants expressed how their skin condition had a significant impact on their sense of self-worth, leading to feelings of inadequacy, embarrassment, and self-consciousness.

For example, one female participant stated, *'My acne was the beginning of a lot of my insecurities. I was a confident person before the breakout. Now I don't feel like looking at myself in the mirror.'* Similarly, a male participant shared, *'My self-esteem has reduced so much, and I am worried about my appearance all the time. Girls don't even talk or look at me!'* These verbatim examples demonstrate the prevalence of low self-esteem among the participants, with many expressing feelings of inferiority and humiliation related to their skin condition. Gallitano and Berson (2018) found that the severity of acne significantly affects the quality of life and self-esteem, with more severe cases having a greater detrimental impact on an individual's self-image. Individuals with acne often suffer from poor self-confidence and esteem issues due to societal beauty standards and media pressure, which impose expectations on young adults to conform to likeable appearances; deviations from these expectations lead to harsh criticism and judgment that impacts their self-esteem (Akinboro et al., 2018).

Compassion Discrepancy

Another notable emerging theme was the self-compassion discrepancy, where participants reported having more compassion towards others than towards themselves. This was identified when participants were asked what advice they would give to those suffering from a similar skin condition. They shared thoughtful and heartfelt messages, for example, one female participant expressed, *'It is okay to be imperfect. No one is looking at you. You are beautiful just the way you are.'* Another participant said, *'Everyone is beautiful. Nobody cares about how you are looking.'* Despite their compassionate messages towards others, the participants were observed to be immensely self-critical about their own appearance. They

mentioned disliking looking at themselves and expressed that their lives would be easier if they did not have the skin condition. This indicates a lack of self-acceptance and a tendency to show kindness outwardly towards others while directing less of it inwardly towards themselves. Gilbert et al. (2011) proposed one argument to explain this phenomenon, suggesting that individuals who are self-critical and hold deep-rooted negative beliefs about themselves may find it challenging to adopt a self-compassionate mindset. As self-compassion requires extensive cognitive processing (Lopez et al., 2018), and is more difficult to practise than showing compassion to others.

Unsolicited Pieces of Advice

Many participants reported receiving unsolicited advice from friends and family members about their acne, which caused them to feel stressed and overwhelmed. These recommendations often included various home remedies to get rid of pimples and blemishes. As a result, individuals with acne expressed feeling more embarrassed about their appearance and socially self-conscious. One participant captured this sentiment by stating, *'People make me feel dirty. They tell me I should just wash my face more often or stop eating junk food.'*

Individuals suffering from Acne may feel guilty about their condition if they think that their diet or hygiene routines are to blame (Ip et al., 2021). This belief originates from the idea that diet and cleanliness are personal choices, and as a result, victims may feel accountable for their acne. Different repercussions on the person's emotions, self-esteem, and behaviours can result from this self-blame.

Spotlight Effect

Gilovich & Savitsky (1999) define the spotlight effect as a tendency of humans to hyperbolize the extent of being evaluated by others. This was the most predominant phenomenon, present in almost all of the participants. Even those participants who did not face any discriminatory behaviour experienced the spotlight effect, as one of them stated, *'Whenever I go out, it feels like everyone is looking at me, my acne marks and the scars.'* Another participant expressed having similar feelings, *'Everybody just seems to be looking at my face. I feel awful. Although I still go out, I feel like people are just going to judge me because of my skin.'*

Many people with acne resort to social isolation as a result of evaluation apprehension (Dréno et al., 2019). Although the participants of this study did not consider seclusion as a coping strategy, they developed an out-of-proportion fear of being evaluated by others because of their skin condition. This may potentially lead people to develop a negative self-image. Previous studies indicate a higher tendency of females to negatively evaluate themselves as a result of facial acne (Hassan et al., 2009), however, in this study, the male participant reported being equally distressed as females due to his facial acne. Timely medical treatment along with psychological intervention can prevent the individual from physical and psychological harm (Layton et al., 2021).

Implicit Social Rejection

Bullying and name-calling is a common social problem faced by individuals with acne vulgaris (Magin et al., 2008), however, social rejection is not always overt. Although not all the participants in this study experienced explicit rejection, feeling rejected by others' actions was a common theme across all. One of the participants said, *'My mother constantly points*

out that I have acne on my skin. Even on days when it is not so bad, she always reminds me that I am flawed.'

Being a victim of social rejection, another participant stated, 'People don't like to come near me. They make me feel like I have COVID. It's just so weird and sometimes humiliating too.' Social rejection can have serious consequences on the personality of an individual. A person may experience frequent and elevated anger bouts as a result of social rejection (Murray & Rhodes, 2005). Moreover, they may also feel unpleasant emotions such as hurt, jealousy, guilt, shame, etc. (Leary, 2015). The participants of this study were victims of implicit social rejection manifested in rejected marriage proposals, discriminatory attitudes of parents and peers, etc. All these experiences can further contribute to the distress of individuals with acne vulgaris, impairing their social and interpersonal functioning.

Positive Psychology Techniques

Individuals suffering from dermatological conditions go through experiences that have an immense negative impact on their psychological and emotional well-being (Finlay et al., 2020). In the current research, the participants suffering from low self-esteem and confidence that stemmed from their dermatological condition, i.e. Acne Vulgaris. In order to address these concerns, the researchers provided post-interview counselling incorporating the techniques from the field of positive psychology.

The first technique involved introducing the concept of positive self-affirmations to the participants. Acne plays a significant role in harbouring not only negative self-talk but also altering an individual's perception of themselves in a detrimental way. According to the Self-affirmation theory, humans tend to maintain a positive view of themselves, and when that view is threatened in any way, words of affirmation directed towards the self can restore their shattered self-esteem and swiftly enhance an individual's self-worth (Cascio et al., 2015). Therefore, participants were encouraged to start their day by looking at themselves in the mirror and saying the words of self-affirmations out loud as a means to counteract these negative feelings, such as "Acne does not define my worth", "My beauty is beyond my skin", "I am beautiful in every way", and "I will be more kind to myself in my journey with acne".

The participants were also instructed to utilise distraction techniques to shift their mind's focus from their skin condition and reduce anxiety. Hughes et al. (2021) in their article stated that using distraction techniques as a coping mechanism along with pharmacological treatment can yield positive outcomes in patients with Acne. However, it is worth noting that these results could only be achieved in collaboration with pharmacological and psychological treatments; solely relying on distraction techniques may lead to maladaptive coping styles.

Therefore, keeping this in mind, the researchers recommended the participants continue with their ongoing prescribed treatment from their designated dermatologists while also engaging in different activities that align with their interests such as reading, watching their favourite shows, going out for a walk, listening to music, cooking, or writing etc. This approach can lead to reduced stress levels and promote a more positive mindset in the participants.

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the participants' verbatim was the "compassion discrepancy". This term refers to their tendency to portray compassion and kindness towards those who share similar skin conditions as them, however, using depreciating words directed towards oneself. The participants were made aware of this observable pattern and educated about the importance of practising self-compassion as it can aid in boosting their

self-esteem, overcoming negative self-talk, and promoting better well-being. According to Bluth and Neff (2018), self-compassion is directly associated with positive mental health due to its nature of decreasing the risk of psychopathology by reducing self-judgement and feelings of isolation. Following that, the participants were familiarised with the concept of mindfulness. They were gently and empathetically informed about how crucial it is for them to stay grounded in their present and attend to their thoughts and feelings in a nonjudgmental manner. This was done to help them cultivate self-awareness and bring them to an acceptance of their current selves. They were taught diaphragmatic breathing, a mindful exercise to induce relaxation and lower the elevated heart rate caused by stress or anxiety.

The participants were encouraged to practise this when they felt anxious in social situations or when their acne became a source of distress in any context. Along with that, they were also instructed to practise meditation every day, starting from 5 minutes to gradually increasing the time. Additionally, Mindful eating was another technique brought to their attention, where they were encouraged to become more aware of their nutritional choices. Consequently, leading to reduced risks of consuming food that can trigger a breakout or exacerbate their skin problems.

Mindfulness-based therapy programs and interventions have proven to be successful as non-pharmacological treatments to tackle negative thoughts in individuals dealing with acne or any other skin condition (Akhouri et al., 2020). The participants were also encouraged to consider taking therapy offered by the hospital or to avail of the option of teletherapy as an additional resource.

Conclusion

Acne Vulgaris, a serious and highly prevalent dermatological condition, can have significant psychological impacts on affected individuals. These may include low self-esteem, a lack of self-compassion, unsolicited advice from friends and family, implicit social rejection, and a constant feeling of being under the spotlight and scrutiny of others. Unfortunately, many medical professionals overlook the psychological aspects of acne, putting the mental well-being of patients at risk. Healthcare providers must collaborate and address the psychological symptoms of acne and implement therapy and counselling programs to help individuals cope with their skin condition more effectively. This study emphasises the need for additional research in this area and stresses the value of providing acne sufferers with comprehensive therapy

Limitations and Recommendations

The present study has some limitations, one of which is the small sample size. The research includes participants from a single hospital in one city only. This was due to the constraints in time and resources. Consequently, the findings may not be representative of the broader target population. Moreover, the study focused exclusively on the participants suffering from Acne Vulgaris and not other skin conditions. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised across other conditions and people. Future studies can delve deeper into this topic by expanding the research scope, including a greater sample size and including the participants from different cities in Pakistan, and with various other dermatological conditions. Implications of the study.

Implications of the Study

This research has many implications that are significant and far-reaching. By highlighting the struggles and psychological impact of Acne Vulgaris on individuals, the present study can benefit healthcare professionals in understanding their patients' condition and adopting a holistic approach in their treatments. Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to designing psychosocial support programs to tailor the needs of the target population. This could be achieved by providing psychoeducation about the condition to the patients and their families and improving their overall well-being by teaching them healthy coping skills. In a broader context, this study can contribute to public health awareness and emphasize the significance of mental health support within dermatological care. Prompting the development of specialised interventions, policies, and care programs of such individuals in the current healthcare system, to enhance their quality of life and improve the overall mental health of the masses.

Acknowledgement: None.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

Funding disclosure: None to declare.

Authors Contribution: Kainaat E Ali (Conducting Interviews, writing manuscript, clinical vignettes, thematic analysis), Maryum Firdous (Main idea, concept and design, supervision, continuous reviewing and approval of the final version), Azka Bukhari (Conducting Interviews, writing manuscript, clinical vignettes, thematic analysis).

References

- Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., Ameen, B. M. M., & Khidhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine Surgery and Public Health*, 100198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>
- Akhouri, D., Madiha, M., & Akram, M. (2020). Impact of Acceptance and Mindfulness-Based Intervention as an Add-on Treatment for Skin Diseases-Acne, Eczema and Psoriasis. *International Journal of Life-sciences Scientific Research*, 6(5), 2652–2659. <https://doi.org/10.21276/ssr-ijls.2020.6.5.2>
- Akinboro, A. O., Ezejiofor, O. I., Olanrewaju, F. O., Oripelaye, M. M., Olabode, O. P., Ayodele, O. E., & Onayemi, E. O. (2018). The impact of acne and facial post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation on quality of life and self-esteem of newly admitted Nigerian undergraduates. *Clinical, Cosmetic and Investigational Dermatology*, Volume 11, 245–252. <https://doi.org/10.2147/ccid.s158129>
- Babar, O., & Mobeen, A. (2019). Prevalence and psychological impact of acne vulgaris in female undergraduate medical students of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.5722>
- Bluth, K., & Neff, K. D. (2018). New frontiers in understanding the benefits of self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 17(6), 605–608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2018.1508494>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Cascio, C. N., O'Donnell, M. B., Tinney, F. J., Lieberman, M. D., Taylor, S. E., Strecher, V. J., & Falk, E. B. (2015). Self-affirmation activates brain systems associated with self-related processing and reward and is reinforced by future orientation. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 11(4), 621–629. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsv136>
- Cissé, A., & Rasmussen, A. (2021). Qualitative methods. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 91–103). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-818697-8.00216-8>
- Dreno, B., Bordet, C., Seité, S., & Taieb, C. (2019). Acne relapses: impact on quality of life and productivity. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 33(5), 937–943. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jdv.15419>
- Dunn, L. K., O'Neill, J. L., & Feldman, S. R. (2011). Acne in adolescents: quality of life, self-esteem, mood, and psychological disorders. *Dermatology online journal*, 17(1), 1.
- Fabbrocini, G., Cacciapuoti, S., & Monfrecola, G. (2018). A Qualitative Investigation of the Impact of Acne on Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQL): development of a conceptual model. *Dermatology and Therapy*, 8(1), 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13555-018-0224-7>
- Finlay, A., Chernyshov, P. V., Aragonés, L. T., Bewley, A., Svensson, Å., Manolache, L., Marron, S., Suru, A., Sampogna, F., Salek, S., & Poot, F. (2020). Methods to improve quality of life, beyond medicines. Position statement of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology Task Force on Quality of Life and Patient Oriented Outcomes. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 35(2), 318–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jdv.16914>
- Gallitano, S. M., & Berson, D. (2018). How acne bumps cause the blues: The Influence of acne vulgaris on Self-Esteem. *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*, 4(1), 12–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijwd.2017.10.004>
- Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Matos, M., & Ravis, A. (2011). Fears of compassion: development of three self-report measures. *Psychology and psychotherapy*, 84(3), 239–255. <https://doi.org/10.1348/147608310X52651>
- Gilovich, T., & Savitsky, K. (1999). The spotlight effect and the illusion of transparency. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8(6), 165–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.0003>
- Hassan, J., Grogan, S., Clark-Carter, D., Richards, H. L., & Yates, V. M. (2009). The individual health burden of acne. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(8), 1105–1118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105309342470>
- Hughes, O., Hutchings, P. B., & Phelps, C. (2021). Stigma, social appearance anxiety and coping in men and women living with skin conditions: A mixed methods analysis. *Skin Health and Disease*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ski2.73>
- Ip, A., Müller, I., Geraghty, A. W. A., Platt, D., Little, P., & Santer, M. (2021). Views and experiences of people with acne vulgaris and healthcare professionals about treatments: systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative research. *BMJ Open*, 11(2), e041794. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-041794>
- Kansal, N. K., Bhatia, R., Rawat, V. S., Sushantika, N., Vasisht, S., & Kumar, A. (2025). Psychological Aspects of Acne vulgaris: A Narrative review. *Clinical Dermatology Review*, 9(2), 109–112. https://doi.org/10.4103/cdr.cdr_118_24

- Kazan, D., Inci, B. B., Ilchan, S., & Ozkoca, D. (2024). Evaluation of depression, self-esteem, anxiety, and Dermatological Quality of Life index in adolescent acne Patients: a Case-Control Study. *SiSli Etfal Hastanesi Tip Bulteni / the Medical Bulletin of Sisli Hospital*, 210–215. <https://doi.org/10.14744/semb.2024.38268>
- Layton, A., Thiboutot, D., & Tan, J. (2020). Reviewing the global burden of acne: how could we improve care to reduce the burden?. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 184(2), 219–225. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjd.19477>
- Leary, M. R. (2015). Emotional responses to interpersonal rejection. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 17(4), 435–441. <https://doi.org/10.31887/dcms.2015.17.4/mleary>
- López, A., Sanderman, R., Ranchor, A. V., & Schroevers, M. J. (2017). Compassion for Others and Self-Compassion: Levels, Correlates, and Relationship with Psychological Well-being. *Mindfulness*, 9(1), 325–331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0777-z>
- Magin, P., Adams, J., Heading, G., Pond, D., & Smith, W. (2008). Experiences of appearance-related teasing and bullying in skin diseases and their psychological sequelae: results of a qualitative study. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 22(3), 430–436. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2007.00547.x>
- Murray, C., & Rhodes, K. (2005). Nobody likes damaged goods: The experience of adult visible acne. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 10(2), 183–202. <https://doi.org/10.1348/135910705x26128>
- Rahmania, F. A., & Sari, E. P. (2024). Self-Esteem, Positive Experience, Negative Experience, and Life Satisfaction University Students. *Jurnal Psikologi Teori Dan Terapan*, 15(03), 256–262. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jppt.v15n03.p256-262>
- Rahmania, F. A., & Sari, E. P. (2024). Self-Esteem, Positive Experience, Negative Experience, and Life Satisfaction University Students. *Jurnal Psikologi Teori Dan Terapan*, 15(03), 256–262. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jppt.v15n03.p256-262>
- Shaikh, I. H., Qureshi, S., Das, K., Kumar, A., Washdev, & Rehman, R. U. (2020). The Impact of Acne Vulgaris on Self Esteem in Adolescent and Young Adult. *Annals of Punjab Medical College*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.29054/apmc/2020.682>
- Shakir, W., Tariq, M., Khalid, F., & Sahar, N. (2024). Self-Esteem, Social Appearance Anxiety and Quality of Life among Adolescents with Acne. *Journal of Health and Rehabilitation Research*, 4(2), 577–584. <https://doi.org/10.61919/jhrr.v4i2.896>
- Sheroze, M. W., Zaidi, S. A. H., Mehmood, B. B., Khan, E., Ali, S. A., Mazher, S., & Jamal, K. (2020). Frequency of skin diseases and associated factors in a tertiary care hospital in Karachi. *Journal of Pakistan Association of Dermatology*, 30 (3), 456-460.
- Stamu-O'Brien, C., Jafferany, M., Carniciu, S., & Abdelmaksoud, A. (2020). Psychodermatology of acne: Psychological aspects and effects of acne vulgaris. *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology*, 20(4), 1080–1083. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocd.13765>
- Sutaria, A. H., Masood, S., Saleh, H. M., & Schlessinger, J. (2023, August 17). *Acne vulgaris*. StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459173/>
- The burden of acne across the world. (2021). *British Journal of Dermatology*, 184(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjd.19728>