

UNIVERSITATEA DE VEST DIN TIMIȘOARA
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM
SCIENTIARUM

Prof. univ. dr. VIREN SWAMI



Timișoara, 2025

Cuvânt
la deschiderea ceremoniei de acordare a titlului de
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
al Universității de Vest din Timișoara
domnului
Profesor VIREN SWAMI

Stimate domnule profesor Viren Swami,
Stimați membri ai comunității academice din Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara,
Dragi studenți,
Onorat auditoriu,
Doamnelor și domnilor,

Comunitatea academică a Universității de Vest din Timișoara este preocupată în mod constant de promovarea și recunoașterea meritelor științifice ale marilor personalități ale lumii și de oferirea unor modele de urmat pentru tinerele generații.

Astăzi, primim în rândul comunității UVT pe domnul profesor universitar dr. Viren Swami, cercetător și psiholog de prestigiu internațional, recunoscut pentru contribuțiile sale semnificative în domeniul imaginii corporale, al sănătății mintale și al factorilor psihologici ce influențează percepția corpului uman. Este o mare responsabilitate pentru noi și suntem onorați să vă avem, începând din acest moment, alături, în calitate de membru al comunității universitare timișorene.

O universitate comprehensivă are menirea de a oferi comunității din care face parte, pe lângă posibilitatea accesului la educație și cercetare, o înțelegere mai largă a lumii în care trăim. În perioadele istorice marcate de mutații sociale majore, acest rol devine esențial, iar Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara își asumă rolul de agoră de discuții și de membru activ al societății.

Trăim o perioadă în care viteza cu care se schimbă lumea tehnologiei și impactul acesteia asupra cotidianului pot afecta psihicul uman și pot conduce la apariția unor noi riscuri în dezvoltarea

societății. Știința trebuie să stea la baza politicilor publice, iar stereotipurile sociale trebuie să fie combătute activ. Universitatea noastră contribuie dinamic la modelarea unui discurs științific și social mai incluziv, fundamentat pe dovezi empirice și principii etice riguroase.

Evenimentul la care participăm astăzi este justificat de convergența între valorile Universității de Vest din Timișoara despre înțelegerea societății, promovarea sănătății mintale și a incluziunii, și activitatea profesorului Swami.

Stimați invitați,

Domnul profesor Viren Swami este unul dintre cei mai vizibili și apreciați reprezentanți ai comunității mondiale a psihologilor. Contribuțiile Domniei Sale la dezvoltarea studiilor academice din sfera psihologiei, mai ales în domeniile percepțiilor umane, ale imaginii corporale și ale complexelor dinamici sociale, sunt impresionante și greu de cuprins într-o prezentare succintă. Numai și contribuțiile sale la literatura de specialitate, reflectate în numeroasele articole și studii publicate, ar fi mai mult decât acoperitoare, ca bibliografie de excepție, care a permis dezvoltarea unor intervenții psihologice bazate pe dovezi, menite de exemplu să sprijine indivizii în gestionarea și depășirea unor provocări legate de imaginea de sine. Reușitele academice ale oaspetelui nostru de astăzi sunt de o amploare remarcabilă, având un impact considerabil asupra înțelegerii și intervențiilor în domeniul psihologiei imaginii corporale și al sănătății mintale.

Prin abordarea interdisciplinară și inovatoare, cercetările sale au oferit perspective aprofundate asupra interacțiunii complexe dintre percepția corporală, influențele culturale și sănătatea psihologică.

Simțul responsabilității și credința în rolul educației și al valorizării rezultatelor cercetării, l-au determinat pe dascălul și omul de știință Viren Swami să activeze ca mentor pentru noile generații de specialiști în psihologie, asigurându-le acestora un mediu dinamic și stimulant, fundamentat pe inovație, gândire critică și interdisciplinaritate.

În ceea ce privește legăturile directe cu Universitatea noastră, ele sunt multiple. Domnul Profesor Swami este un colaborator constant al Universității de Vest din Timișoara, prin implicarea sa activă în cercetările întreprinse în domeniul său de competență de colegi din universitatea noastră.

Stimați invitați, domnule professor Virem Swami,

Împărtășim aceleași valori și crezuri, considerând că societatea trebuie să fie preocupată nu doar de sănătatea fizică a membrilor ei, ci și de cea mintală, că incluziunea nu trebuie să fie doar un slogan, ci o realitate și că provocările lumii moderne, în special cele legate de imaginea de sine și de apartenența la grupurile sociale, pot fi depășite prin politici publice coerente, bazate pe cele mai noi descoperiri științifice.

Suntem mai mult decât onorați să vă avem partener în efortul nostru de a oferi studenților modele demne de urmat, decidenților o bază științifică pentru activitatea lor, iar societății o speranță în plus pentru un viitor mai incluziv.

În numele comunității noastre academice, vă mulțumesc, domnule profesor Virem Swami, pentru că ați acceptat propunerea Universității de Vest din Timișoara de a vi se acorda titlul de **Doctor Honoris Causa Socialium Scientiarum**. Am convingerea că, prin alăturarea Domniei Voastre comunității noastre academice, prestigiul Universității de Vest din Timișoara se va consolida.

Vă doresc sănătate și putere de muncă și vă doresc să continuați cu aceeași dăruire pasionantă dumneavoastră activitate.

Prof. univ. dr. Marilen-Gabriel Pirtea



Rectorul Universității de Vest din Timișoara

Address
at the opening ceremony for awarding the title of
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
of the West University of Timișoara
to Professor VIREN SWAMI

Esteemed Professor Viren Swami,

Honoured members of the academic community of the West University of Timișoara,

Dear students,

Distinguished audience,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The academic community of the West University of Timișoara is dedicated to promoting and recognizing the scientific achievements of renowned personalities of the scientific world as well as to providing role models for the younger generation.

Today, we are delighted to welcome Professor Dr. Viren Swami to our community. He is an internationally recognized researcher and psychologist, known for his significant contributions to the field of body image, mental health and psychological factors that influence the perception of the human body. It is a great responsibility for us and we are honoured to have you, from this moment on, as a member of Timișoara's higher education community.

We find ourselves in a time of rapid change in the world of technology, and its impact on our daily lives can affect the human psyche and lead to new risks in the development of society. It is important to consider how science can inform public policy, and how we can proactively address social stereotypes. Our University is committed to fostering an inclusive scientific and social discourse, based on empirical evidence and rigorous ethical principles.

Today's event is justified by the convergence between the views of the West University of Timișoara on understanding society, promoting mental health and inclusion, and Professor Swami Swami's work.

Esteemed guests,

Professor Viren Swami is one of the most visible and highly appreciated representatives of the psychology community worldwide. His contributions to the development of academic studies in the field of psychology, especially in the areas of human perceptions, body image and complex social dynamics, are impressive and difficult to summarize in a brief presentation.

It is fair to say that his contributions to the scholarly literature, as reflected in numerous published articles and studies, are noteworthy. They have contributed to the development of evidence-based psychological interventions, which have the potential to support individuals in managing and overcoming self-image challenges. The scholarly achievements of our guest today are of remarkable breadth, and have had a considerable impact on the understanding of and interventions in the field of body image psychology and mental health.

Through his interdisciplinary and innovative approach, his research has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between body perception, cultural influences and psychological health.

Viren Swami's sense of responsibility and belief in the role of education and the valorisation of research results have led him to mentor new generations of psychology specialists, providing them with a dynamic and stimulating environment based on innovation, critical thinking and interdisciplinarity.

As for direct links with our University, they are multiple. He is a highly valued and active collaborator of the West University of Timișoara, where he plays an instrumental role in the research undertaken in his field of expertise by our colleagues.

Esteemed guests, Esteemed Professor Viren Swami,

We share the same values and beliefs, including the view that society should prioritise not only the physical health of its members but also their mental well-being. We also believe that inclusion should be more than a slogan – it should be a reality. Moreover, we consider that the challenges of the modern world, particularly those related to self-image and social group membership, can be addressed through coherent public policies based on the latest scientific findings.

We are extremely grateful for your partnership in our endeavour to provide students with role models, decision-makers with a scientific basis for their work, and society with additional hope for a more inclusive future.

On behalf of our academic community, I thank you, Professor Viren Swami, for accepting the proposal of the West University of Timișoara to award you the title of Doctor Honoris Causa Socialium Scientiarum. We firmly believe that your invaluable contributions will serve to enhance the West University of Timișoara's esteemed reputation.

I wish you good health and strength for your work and I wish you to always carry on with the same dedication and passion.

Professor Marilen-Gabriel Pirtea, PhD



Rector of the West University of Timișoara

LAUDATIO
în onoarea
Distinsului profesor VIREN SWAMI
cu ocazia acordării titlului de
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
al Universității de Vest din Timișoara

Onorați membri ai comunității academice,

Distinși colegi,

Doamnelor și domnilor,

Distinse domnule profesor Viren Swami,

Astăzi, avem privilegiul de a celebra o personalitate academică excepțională, un savant ale cărui contribuții remarcabile au redefinit și modelat domeniul psihologiei contemporane. Este o mare onoare să conferim titlul de Doctor Honoris Causa Profesorului Viren Swami, un cercetător de prestigiu, un educator dedicat și un lider inspirațional, ale cărui lucrări științifice au avut un impact profund asupra înțelegerii psihologiei sociale și a imaginii corporale.

Cariera Profesorului Swami se remarcă prin angajamentul său neobosit față de cunoaștere, excelență și inovație în cercetare. Pregătirea sa academică a început la University College London, unde și-a obținut doctoratul în psihologie, fiind urmată de o carieră științifică prolifică, marcată de contribuții semnificative la dezvoltarea unor perspective inovatoare în psihologia socială și evoluționistă.

Cu un portofoliu științific impresionant, ce cuprinde peste 346 de articole de cercetare, patru cărți de autor și trei volume editate, Profesorul Swami s-a impus ca un reper fundamental în studiul imaginii corporale, al percepției atractivității fizice și al influenței factorilor sociali asupra identității individuale. Lucrările sale, traduse în numeroase limbi, nu doar că au îmbogățit literatura de specialitate, dar au avut și un impact profund asupra comunității academice internaționale, deschizând noi direcții de cercetare și contribuind la dezvoltarea unor intervenții psihologice inovatoare.

Prin rigoarea științifică, viziunea interdisciplinară și pasiunea sa incomparabilă pentru descoperire, Profesorul Viren Swami și-a consolidat statutul de lider intelectual și model inspirațional pentru generațiile viitoare de cercetători. Acordarea acestui prestigios titlu reprezintă o recunoaștere a unei cariere dedicate progresului științific și educațional, precum și un omagiu adus unei contribuții de neegalat în domeniul psihologiei sociale.

În plus, traiectoria academică a Profesorului Viren Swami se distinge printr-un volum impresionant de lucrări științifice dedicate aprofundării studiului imaginii corporale și al comportamentului alimentar. Din portofoliul său fac parte un număr impresionant de studii pe scară largă, cu participanți din până la 65 de țări la nivel global. Printr-o abordare interdisciplinară și metodologii de vârf, cercetările sale au deschis noi orizonturi în înțelegerea profundă a factorilor psihologici, sociali și culturali care modelează percepția corpului.

Lucrările sale acoperă o gamă largă de teme fundamentale, inclusiv aprecierea corpului, stima de sine și impactul mediului social, analizând în profunzime interacțiunea dintre influențele externe și construcțiile identitare individuale. Un domeniu de interes central în activitatea sa științifică este impactul rețelelor de socializare asupra imaginii corporale, prin care analizează mecanismele prin care comparațiile sociale, internalizarea idealurilor estetice și presiunile culturale modelează percepția de sine și pot contribui la anxietatea legată de imaginea corporală, în special în rândul femeilor tinere.

O caracteristică definitorie a cercetării sale este dimensiunea sa interculturală, Profesorul Swami realizând studii de referință în contexte etnice și geografice diverse, evidențiind modul în care vârsta, genul și specificitatea culturală influențează imaginea corporală și starea de bine psihologică. Până în prezent, numeroase studii de mare amploare, realizate pe participanți din până la 65 de țări, au fost incluse în lucrările sale. Această perspectivă comparativă, fundamentată pe rigoare metodologică și o viziune globală, a permis identificarea unor tipare universale, precum și a unor particularități culturale esențiale în modelarea percepției corporale.

În plus, inovația cercetărilor sale nu se limitează doar la tematică, ci și la metodologia utilizată. Prin aplicarea unor tehnici avansate, precum eșantionarea experiențială și utilizarea dispozitivelor inteligente de monitorizare, Profesorul Swami a investigat cu succes efectele în timp real ale expunerii

la medii naturale asupra stării de bine psihologice și aprecierii corporale, oferind perspective revoluționare asupra relației dintre factorii de mediu și sănătatea mintală.

Astfel, printr-o abordare interdisciplinară excepțională, metodologii avansate și o perspectivă internațională asupra fenomenului imaginii corporale, Profesorul Viren Swami a remodelat peisajul psihologiei contemporane. Contribuțiile sale depășesc granițele unui singur domeniu, având un impact profund asupra înțelegerii complexității comportamentului uman și consolidându-i statutul de pionier al psihologiei sociale moderne.

Lucrările Profesorului Viren Swami sunt publicate în numeroase reviste internaționale de prestigiu, fiind larg recunoscute pentru rigoarea metodologică, profunzimea interdisciplinară și diversitatea culturală a contextelor investigate. Acest standard de excelență academică îi confirmă poziția de figură marcantă în psihologia socială și aplicată, ale cărei contribuții redefinesc modul în care înțelegem comportamentul uman într-o lume globalizată.

Prin integrarea unor perspective inovatoare și analize comparative, cercetările Profesorului Swami nu doar că avansează cunoașterea științifică, dar oferă și un cadru conceptual solid pentru aplicații în psihologia clinică și sănătatea publică. Impactul său este resimțit atât în mediul academic, unde contribuie la formarea noilor generații de cercetători, cât și în practică, unde descoperirile sale ghidează strategii eficiente de intervenție pentru promovarea bunăstării mentale și echilibrului psihologic.

Mai mult decât atât, activitatea sa științifică se extinde dincolo de psihologie, având implicații profunde în asistența socială, unde contribuțiile sale oferă un sprijin teoretic și metodologic esențial pentru profesioniștii care lucrează cu persoane vulnerabile. Studiile sale asupra imaginii corporale, comportamentelor alimentare și sănătății mintale nu doar că îmbogățesc literatura științifică, dar și reduc distanța dintre cercetare și practică, facilitând implementarea unor intervenții psihosociale bazate pe dovezi.

Astfel, printr-o dedicare profundă față de cunoaștere și progresul științific, Profesorul Viren Swami se conturează drept un vizionar în domeniul psihologiei sociale și aplicate, ale cărui cercetări vor continua să influențeze atât comunitatea academică, cât și politicile publice menite să îmbunătățească calitatea vieții și să promoveze sănătatea mintală la nivel global.

În plus, învățământul superior românesc are o oportunitate unică de a integra semnificativ aceste contribuții științifice. Activitatea Profesorului Viren Swami reprezintă un exemplu remarcabil de excelență academică, îmbinând armonios cercetarea cu aplicabilitatea practică și oferind un model inspirațional pentru studenți și cercetători din domeniul psihologiei, asistenței sociale și domeniilor conexe. Integrarea rezultatelor cercetărilor sale în programele universitare ar putea contribui la formarea unor specialiști capabili să răspundă provocărilor societății contemporane, abordând probleme sociale, economice și psihologice complexe dintr-o perspectivă fundamentată științific.

Astfel, impactul Profesorului Viren Swami se extinde mult dincolo de sfera teoretică, influențând profund practica profesională în psihologie, asistență socială și educație. Contribuțiile sale nu doar că îmbogățesc literatura de specialitate, ci servesc și ca un model de excelență academică, capabil să inspire generații de cercetători și practicieni atât în România, cât și la nivel internațional.

În domeniul educației, cercetările Profesorului Swami constituie o resursă inestimabilă pentru formarea viitorilor profesioniști din învățământul superior, în special în psihologie și asistență socială. Prin abordarea sa riguroasă și interdisciplinară, el a evidențiat complexitatea fenomenelor psihosociale, subliniind diversitatea culturală și etnică a populațiilor și necesitatea dezvoltării unor instrumente psihometrice valide, adaptate la contexte socio-culturale variate.

Mai mult, munca sa subliniază rolul esențial al cercetării interdisciplinare și al colaborărilor internaționale, demonstrând că progresul științific autentic se bazează pe convergența multiplelor perspective și pe schimbul de expertiză între instituții academice prestigioase. Acest model de colaborare ar trebui să servească drept sursă de inspirație pentru universitățile din România, care astfel și-ar putea consolida legăturile cu comunitatea științifică globală și și-ar putea amplifica impactul asupra educației și cercetării.

Continuându-și demersurile academice, profesorul Viren Swami și-a manifestat un angajament profund față de promovarea sănătății mintale și a imaginii corporale în diverse contexte culturale și sociale. Prin dezvoltarea unor instrumente psihometrice valoroase, adaptate specificului fiecărei comunități, el a oferit un cadru științific solid care contribuie la îmbunătățirea calității vieții și la sprijinirea indivizilor în gestionarea provocărilor legate de identitate, auto-percepție și bunăstare psihologică.

Formarea profesională în universitățile din România ar putea beneficia semnificativ de integrarea acestor rezultate ale cercetării în programele academice, oferindu-le studenților nu doar acces la cele mai recente descoperiri științifice, ci și oportunitatea de a aplica aceste cunoștințe în viitoarele lor cariere. Prin abordarea sa vizionară, profesorul Viren Swami oferă un model exemplar de integrare a cercetării academice cu aplicabilitatea practică, un obiectiv esențial pentru învățământul superior modern.

Profesorul Swami este un adevărat pionier în explorarea problemelor stringente ale contemporaneității, analizând riguros impactul fenomenelor globale asupra bunăstării psihologice. Un exemplu convingător în acest sens este studiul său privind efectele pandemiei de COVID-19 asupra imaginii corporale și sănătății mintale (Swami et al., 2021), care oferă perspective valoroase pentru intervențiile în asistența socială, propunând soluții concrete pentru abordarea traumei colective cauzate de crizele de sănătate publică.

Astfel, activitatea academică și de cercetare a profesorului Viren Swami nu doar că îmbogățește domeniul psihologiei sociale, ci influențează profund dezvoltarea strategiilor de intervenție socială și educațională, având un impact substanțial asupra practicii profesionale în asistența socială și în învățământul superior din România. Contribuțiile sale reprezintă un model pentru viitorii specialiști, formând o generație de profesioniști mai bine pregătiți să implementeze soluții inovatoare în sprijinul persoanelor vulnerabile.

Dincolo de vasta sa activitate științifică, profesorul Swami se remarcă prin vocația sa puternică de mentor, inspirând nenumărați studenți și tineri cercetători care au avut privilegiul de a lucra sub îndrumarea sa. Ca profesor la Anglia Ruskin University, el și-a demonstrat angajamentul remarcabil față de avansarea psihologiei sociale, fiind implicat activ în proiecte educaționale de anvergură și promovând un mediu academic incluziv, bazat pe excelență și inovație.

Contribuția sa la progresul științific se reflectă și în intensă sa activitate editorială, activând ca recenzor pentru reviste academice de prestigiu, precum *Body Image*, *Eating and Weight Disorders* și *PLoS ONE*. Devotamentul său neobosit a facilitat dezvoltarea unor noi direcții de cercetare și a stimulat colaborări internaționale de mare amploare, consolidându-i și mai mult statutul de lider în domeniul său.

Dincolo de excelența sa academică, profesorul Swami se distinge prin implicarea sa profundă în inițiative sociale menite să creeze un impact pozitiv asupra comunității. Prin ample parteneriate internaționale, el a contribuit activ la promovarea sănătății mintale, la creșterea gradului de conștientizare privind problemele legate de imaginea corporală și la combaterea stereotipurilor de gen. Pentru aceste realizări excepționale, profesorul Swami a primit numeroase distincții academice, iar astăzi avem onoarea de a ne alătura celebrării remarcabilelor sale realizări.

Astăzi avem onoarea și privilegiul de a celebra o personalitate excepțională, un savant ale cărui contribuții remarcabile au modelat profund domeniul psihologiei contemporane. Prin cercetările sale inovatoare, dedicarea neobosită față de educație și angajamentul ferm față de progresul cunoașterii, profesorul Viren Swami și-a asigurat un loc de frunte în comunitatea științifică internațională.

Ca expresie profundă a aprecierii noastre pentru întreaga sa carieră academică și științifică, îi conferim astăzi titlul de Doctor Honoris Causa, recunoscând meritele sale deosebite și impactul semnificativ pe care l-a avut asupra înțelegerii psihologiei sociale, imaginii corporale și sănătății mintale.

Profesorul Swami este un pionier în domeniul său, aducând contribuții fundamentale la studiul imaginii corporale, comportamentului alimentar și influențelor sociale asupra auto-percepției. Printr-o abordare interdisciplinară și o viziune globală, munca sa a depășit o perspectivă strict teoretică, generând soluții aplicabile și relevante pentru bunăstarea indivizilor din diverse culturi și contexte sociale. A publicat peste 346 de articole științifice, patru cărți de referință și trei volume coordonate, fiecare reprezentând o contribuție valoroasă la patrimoniul cunoașterii academice.

Ca profesor la Anglia Ruskin University, profesorul Swami nu doar că a modelat carierele multor studenți și tineri cercetători, dar a promovat și o cultură academică bazată pe excelență, rigoare științifică și colaborare internațională. A fost un mentor inspirațional, ghidând generații de studenți spre o înțelegere mai profundă a psihologiei și încurajându-i să adopte o perspectivă critică și inovatoare asupra fenomenelor sociale și psihologice.

Mai mult decât atât, profesorul Swami și-a extins activitatea dincolo de mediul universitar, jucând un rol activ în diseminarea cunoașterii către publicul larg. Implicarea sa în inițiative sociale și educaționale, precum și eforturile sale în promovarea sănătății mintale și a unei imagini corporale

pozitive, reflectă vocația sa autentică pentru îmbunătățirea societății. Prin cercetările sale asupra impactului rețelelor sociale asupra auto-percepției, studiile privind efectele pandemiei asupra sănătății mintale și propunerile inovatoare de intervenție bazate pe auto-compasiune, profesorul Swami a demonstrat că știința poate fi un instrument vital pentru îmbunătățirea calității vieții și sprijinirea persoanelor vulnerabile.

Astăzi, recunoaștem contribuțiile sale excepționale și rolul său incontestabil în avansarea psihologiei sociale. Modelul său de cercetare și angajamentul său academic constituie un standard exemplar pentru mediul academic din România, unde colaborările internaționale, interdisciplinaritatea și aplicabilitatea practică a rezultatelor științifice devin din ce în ce mai esențiale.

Stimate domnule profesor Viren Swami,

Prin munca dumneavoastră neobosită, pasiunea pentru cunoaștere și angajamentul profund față de educație și știință, ați demonstrat că sunteți un adevărat pilon al psihologiei moderne. Distincția pe care v-o acordăm astăzi este un simbol al respectului și admirației noastre pentru cariera dumneavoastră extraordinară.

Avem onoarea de a vă avea astăzi alături de noi și de a vă conferi acest titlu prestigios, ca recunoaștere a unei cariere dedicate excelenței academice și progresului științific.

Vă felicităm cu această ocazie remarcabilă și vă mulțumim pentru inspirația pe care ne-o oferiți în continuare!

Cu cea mai înaltă considerație și admirație.

COMISIA DE EVALUARE ȘI DE ELABORARE A LAUDATIO

Președinte:

Prof. univ. dr. Marilen Gabriel PIRTEA, *Rectorul Universității de Vest din Timișoara*

Membri:

Prof. univ. dr. Anton TRĂILESCU, *Președintele Senatului Universității de Vest din Timișoara*

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Prof. univ. dr. Maria Nicoleta TURLIUC, *Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași*

Prof. univ. dr. Mona VINTILĂ, *Departamentul de Psihologie, Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara*

Conf. univ. dr. Claudiu T. ARIEȘAN, *Magister Caeremoniae al Universității de Vest din Timișoara*

LAUDATIO
in honor of
Distinguished Professor VIREN SWAMI
upon awarding the title of
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
of the West University of Timișoara

*Honoured members of the academic community,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished Professor Viren Swami,*

Today, we are privileged to celebrate an exceptional academic figure, a scholar whose remarkable contributions have redefined and shaped the field of contemporary psychology. It is a great honour to award the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon Professor Viren Swami, a distinguished researcher, a dedicated educator, and an inspirational leader whose scientific work has had a profound impact on our understanding of social psychology and body image.

Professor Swami's career is marked by his unwavering commitment to knowledge, excellence, and innovation in research. His academic journey began at University College London, where he obtained his PhD in psychology, marking the start of a prolific scientific career characterized by significant contributions to the development of innovative perspectives in social and evolutionary psychology.

With an impressive scientific portfolio that includes over 346 research articles, four authored books, and three edited volumes, Professor Swami has established himself as a fundamental pillar in the study of body image, the perception of physical attractiveness, and the influence of social factors on individual identity. His works, translated into numerous languages, have not only enriched the scholarly literature but have also had a profound impact on the international academic community, opening new research directions and contributing to the development of innovative psychological

interventions.

Through scientific rigor, an interdisciplinary vision, and an unparalleled passion for discovery, Professor Viren Swami has solidified his status as an intellectual leader and an inspirational role model for future generations of researchers. The awarding of this prestigious title represents a recognition of a career dedicated to scientific and educational progress, as well as a tribute to an unmatched contribution to the field of social psychology.

Furthermore, Professor Viren Swami's academic trajectory is distinguished by an extensive body of research dedicated to the in-depth study of body image and eating behaviour. Through an interdisciplinary approach and cutting-edge methodologies, his research has opened new horizons in the profound understanding of the psychological, social, and cultural factors that shape body perception.

His work covers a wide range of fundamental topics, including body appreciation, self-esteem, and the impact of the social environment, thoroughly examining the interaction between external influences and individual identity constructions. A key area of interest in his scientific activity is the impact of social media on body image, analysing the mechanisms through which social comparisons, the internalization of aesthetic ideals, and cultural pressures shape self-perception and can contribute to body-related anxiety, particularly among young women.

A defining feature of his research is its intercultural dimension, as Professor Swami has conducted landmark studies in diverse ethnic and geographical contexts, highlighting how age, gender, and cultural specificity influence body image and psychological well-being. Numerous large scale studies on subjects from up to 65 countries have been included in his work so far. This comparative perspective, grounded in methodological rigor and a global outlook, has enabled the identification of universal patterns as well as essential cultural particularities in shaping body perception.

Additionally, his research is innovative not only in its themes but also in its methodology. By employing advanced techniques, such as experience sampling and the use of wearable devices, Professor Swami has successfully investigated the real-time effects of exposure to natural environments on psychological well-being and body appreciation, offering ground-breaking insights into the relationship between environmental factors and mental health.

Thus, through an exceptional interdisciplinary approach, advanced methodologies, and an international perspective on the phenomenon of body image, Professor Viren Swami has reshaped the landscape of contemporary psychology. His contributions transcend the boundaries of a single field, profoundly impacting our understanding of the complexity of human behaviour, solidifying his status as a pioneer of modern social psychology.

Professor Viren Swami's works are published in numerous prestigious international journals, widely recognized for their methodological rigor, interdisciplinary depth, and the cultural diversity of the investigated contexts. This standard of academic excellence confirms his position as a leading figure in social and applied psychology, his contributions redefine our understanding of human behaviour in a globalized world.

By integrating innovative perspectives and comparative analyses, Professor Swami's research not only advances scientific knowledge but also provides a robust conceptual framework for applications in clinical psychology and public health. His impact is felt both in academia, where he contributes to shaping new generations of researchers, and in practice, where his findings guide effective intervention strategies for promoting mental well-being and psychological balance.

Moreover, his scientific work extends beyond psychology, having profound implications for social work, where his contributions offer essential theoretical and methodological support for professionals assisting vulnerable individuals. His studies on body image, eating behaviours, and mental health not only enrich the scientific literature but also bridge the gap between research and practice, facilitating the implementation of evidence-based psychosocial interventions.

Thus, through a deep dedication to knowledge and scientific progress, Professor Viren Swami emerges as a visionary in social and applied psychology, whose research will continue to influence both the academic community and public policies aimed at improving quality of life and promoting mental health worldwide.

Furthermore, Romanian higher education has a unique opportunity to significantly integrate these scientific contributions. Professor Viren Swami's work stands as a remarkable example of academic excellence, seamlessly merging research with practical applicability, offering an inspiring model for students and researchers in psychology, social work, and related fields. Incorporating his research findings into university curricula could contribute to training specialists capable of

addressing the challenges of contemporary society, tackling complex social, economic, and psychological issues from a scientifically grounded perspective.

Thus, Professor Viren Swami's impact extends far beyond the theoretical sphere, profoundly influencing professional practice in psychology, social work, and education. His contributions not only enrich the specialized literature but also serve as a model of academic excellence, capable of inspiring generations of researchers and practitioners in Romania and beyond.

In the field of education, Professor Swami's research constitutes an invaluable resource for the training of future higher education professionals, particularly in psychology and social work. Through his rigorous and interdisciplinary approach, he has highlighted the complexity of psychosocial phenomena, emphasizing the cultural and ethnic diversity of populations and the necessity of developing valid psychometric tools adapted to diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Moreover, his work emphasizes the essential role of interdisciplinary research and international collaborations, demonstrating that authentic scientific progress is rooted in the convergence of multiple perspectives and the exchange of expertise among prestigious academic institutions. This model of collaboration should serve as a source of inspiration for Romanian universities, which could thus strengthen their ties with the global scientific community and amplify their impact on education and research.

Continuing his academic endeavours, Professor Viren Swami has shown a deep commitment to promoting mental health and body image across various cultural and social contexts. By developing valuable psychometric instruments tailored to the specificities of each community, he has provided a solid scientific framework that contributes to improving quality of life and supporting individuals in managing challenges related to identity, self-perception, and psychological well-being.

Professional training in Romanian universities could significantly benefit from integrating these research findings into academic curricula, offering students not only access to the latest scientific discoveries but also the opportunity to apply this knowledge in their future careers. Through his visionary approach, Professor Viren Swami sets an exemplary model of integrating academic research with practical applicability, an essential goal for modern higher education.

Professor Swami is a true pioneer in exploring pressing contemporary issues, rigorously

analysing the impact of global phenomena on psychological well-being. A compelling example of this is his study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on body image and mental health (Swami et al., 2021), which provides valuable insights for social work interventions, offering concrete solutions for addressing the collective trauma caused by public health crises.

Thus, Professor Viren Swami's academic and research activities not only enrich the field of social psychology but also deeply influence the development of social and educational intervention strategies, having a substantial impact on professional practice in social work and higher education in Romania. His contributions serve as a model for future specialists, shaping a generation of professionals who are better equipped to implement innovative solutions in support of vulnerable individuals.

Beyond his extensive scientific work, Professor Swami stands out for his strong vocation as a mentor, inspiring countless students and young researchers who have had the privilege of working under his guidance. As a professor at Anglia Ruskin University, he has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the advancement of social psychology, being actively involved in major educational projects and fostering an inclusive academic environment based on excellence and innovation.

His contribution to scientific progress is also reflected in his intensive editorial work, serving as a reviewer for prestigious academic journals, such as *Body Image*, *Eating and Weight Disorders*, and *PLoS ONE*. His tireless dedication has facilitated the development of new research directions and stimulated large-scale international collaborations, further solidifying his status as a leader in his field.

Beyond his academic excellence, Professor Swami is distinguished by his profound involvement in social initiatives aimed at creating a positive impact on the community. Through extensive international partnerships, he has actively contributed to promoting mental health, raising awareness about body image issues, and combating gender stereotypes. For these exceptional achievements, Professor Swami has received numerous academic distinctions, and today, we have the honour of joining in the celebration of his remarkable accomplishments.

Today, we have the honour and privilege of celebrating an exceptional figure, a scholar whose remarkable contributions have profoundly shaped the field of contemporary psychology. Through his innovative research, tireless dedication to education, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of knowledge, Professor Viren Swami has secured a leading place in the international

scientific community.

As a profound expression of our appreciation for his entire academic and scientific career, we award him today the title of Doctor Honoris Causa, recognizing his outstanding merits and the significant impact he has had on the understanding of social psychology, body image, and mental health.

Professor Swami is a pioneer in his field, making fundamental contributions to the study of body image, eating behaviour, and the social influences on self-perception. With an interdisciplinary approach and a global vision, his work has gone beyond a strictly theoretical perspective, generating applicable and relevant solutions for the well-being of individuals across various cultures and social contexts. He has published over 346 scientific articles, four landmark books, and three edited volumes, each representing a valuable contribution to the body of academic knowledge.

As a professor at Anglia Ruskin University, Professor Swami has not only shaped the careers of numerous students and young researchers, but he has also promoted an academic culture based on excellence, scientific rigor, and international collaboration. He has been an inspirational mentor, guiding generations of students toward a deeper understanding of psychology and encouraging them to adopt a critical and innovative perspective on social and psychological phenomena.

Furthermore, Professor Swami has extended his work beyond the university environment, playing an active role in disseminating knowledge to the wider public. His involvement in social and educational initiatives, as well as his efforts in promoting mental health and a positive body image, reflect his authentic vocation for the betterment of society. Through his research on the impact of social media on self-perception, his studies on the effects of the pandemic on mental health, and his innovative intervention proposals based on self-compassion, Professor Swami has demonstrated that science can be a vital tool in improving quality of life and supporting vulnerable individuals.

Today, we recognize his exceptional contributions and his undeniable role in advancing social psychology. His research model and academic engagement serve as an exemplary standard for the Romanian academic environment, where international collaborations, interdisciplinarity, and the practical applicability of scientific results are becoming increasingly essential.

Dear Professor Viren Swami, through your relentless work, passion for knowledge, and deep

commitment to education and science, you have proven yourself to be a true pillar of modern psychology. The distinction we grant you today is a symbol of our respect and admiration for your extraordinary career. We are honoured to have you here with us today and to award you this prestigious title, as a recognition of a career dedicated to academic excellence and scientific progress.

We congratulate you on this remarkable occasion and thank you for the inspiration you continue to offer!

With the highest respect and admiration.

EVALUATION AND DRAFTING OF THE *LAUDATIO* COMMITTEE

Chairman:

Professor Marilen Gabriel PIRTEA, PhD, *Rector of the West University of Timișoara*

Members:

Professor Anton TRĂILESCU, PhD, *President of the Senate of the West University of Timișoara*

Associate Professor Mădălin BUNOIU, PhD, *Vice-Rector for Research, West University of Timișoara*

Associate Professor Marius LUPȘA MATICHESCU, PhD, *Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, West University of Timișoara*

Professor Delia VÎRGĂ, PhD, *Director of the Psychology Department, West University of Timișoara*

Professor Cosmin GOIAN, PhD, *Director of the Social Assistance Department, West University of Timișoara*

Professor Maria Nicoleta TURLIUC, PhD, *„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași*

Professor Mona VINTILĂ, PhD, *Psychology Department, West University of Timișoara*

Associate Professor Claudiu T. ARIEȘAN, PhD, *Magister Caeremoniae of the West University of Timișoara*

Cuvântul de acceptare
al domnului Profesor VIREN SWAMI
cu ocazia acordării titlului de
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
al Universității de Vest din Timișoara

*Exelența Voastră, Domnule Rector al Universității de Vest din Timișoara,
Profesor Universitar Dr. Marilen Gabriel Pirtea,
Onorabile Domnule Prorector, Profesor Universitar Mădălin Bunoiu,
Stimate Domnule Decan al Facultății de Sociologie și Psihologie, Profesor
Universitar Marius Matichescu,
Membri ai Senatului și ai Consiliului de Administrație,
Membri ai comunității academice a Universității de Vest din Timișoara,
Dragi colegi și prieteni,*

Este de la sine înțeles că sunt profund recunoscător și mă simt deosebit de onorat să primesc titlul de Doctor Honoris Causa din partea Universității de Vest din Timișoara.

Practica acordării titlurilor onorifice are o istorie îndelungată, datând cel puțin din secolul al XV-lea, când Universitatea din Oxford i-a conferit o astfel de distincție lui Lionel Woodville, devenit ulterior Episcop de Salisbury. De atunci și până în prezent, într-o formă modernă, aceste titluri sunt menite să onoreze contribuțiile unei persoane într-un domeniu specific sau la nivelul societății în ansamblu. Prin acest gest, fie că este pe deplin justificat sau nu, celebrăm individul și realizările sale.

Însă, atunci când celebrăm realizările individuale, există un risc real de a minimiza, de a trece cu vederea sau chiar de a ignora modul în care comunitățile mai largi susțin și fac posibile aceste realizări. În cazul meu, tot ceea ce am reușit să realizez a fost posibil doar datorită sprijinului, angajamentului și forței comunităților academice – și a indivizilor care le compun – din care fac parte. Acceptând acest titlu onorific, îmi doresc să aduc în lumină și să onorez aceste comunități mai largi.

Un astfel de grup, care merită o recunoaștere mult mai mare decât cea care îmi este acordată mie astăzi, este comunitatea academică a Universității de Vest din Timișoara. Legătura mea cu această universitate a început în 2006, când am început să colaborez cu doamna Prof. Univ. Dr. Mona Vintilă. A fost, poate, o întâlnire întâmplătoare – amândoi eram interesați, la acea vreme, de modul în care identitățile culturale influențează rezultatele psihologice și am contribuit separat la un mic proiect de cercetare.

Relația noastră profesională s-a dezvoltat semnificativ de-a lungul ultimelor două decenii. Astăzi, colaborez frecvent cu doamna Prof. Vintilă în numeroase proiecte, având ca element comun un obiectiv clar: promovarea unei mai bune stări de bine psihologice pentru diverse populații, atât în România, cât și dincolo de granițele ei. Aceste proiecte implică acum și mulți alți colegi și studenți ai Universității de Vest din Timișoara. Prin acceptarea acestui titlu onorific, doresc să recunosc și să onorez toți acești oameni, alături de care am avut plăcerea și privilegiul de a lucra de-a lungul anilor.

Sper ca acest titlu onorific să reprezinte o oportunitate de a consolida relația mea de colaborare cu colegii de la Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara. Prin îmbinarea cunoștințelor noastre academice și a abilităților de cercetare, avem multe de oferit unii altora și, totodată, de câștigat în atingerea obiectivelor noastre comune. Iar prin aprofundarea și extinderea acestei colaborări, vom putea răspunde mai bine întrebărilor de importanță practică pentru societatea în ansamblu, atât în România, cât și la nivel internațional. A fost o onoare să colaborez cu instituția dumneavoastră și îmi doresc sincer ca acest titlu onorific să marcheze un moment important în evoluția parteneriatului nostru.

Sunt mândru că am parcurs acest drum alături de colegii de la Universitatea dumneavoastră, o instituție care continuă să se consolideze ca un centru de excelență în educație și cercetare. Și, acceptând acest titlu onorific, doresc să onorez și să aduc un omagiu colegilor de la Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara, în special doamnei Prof. Vintilă. Sper, din toată inima, ca parteneriatele noastre de cercetare să continue să se dezvolte și să se maturizeze în anii ce urmează.

Expunerea la medii naturale contribuie la dezvoltarea unei imagini corporale pozitive: o scurtă analiză a literaturii de specialitate

Viren Swami¹⁻²

¹School of Psychology, Sport, and Sensory Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

²Centre for Psychological Medicine, Perdana University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

Cercetătorii, specialiștii și decidenții politici se confruntă tot mai frecvent cu impactul negativ al problemelor legate de imaginea corporală în rândul populațiilor din întreaga lume. O modalitate eficientă și accesibilă financiar pentru promovarea unei imagini corporale mai sănătoase este reprezentată de interacțiunea cu mediile naturale. Tot mai multe studii demonstrează că petrecerea timpului în natură, interacțiunea cu aceasta sau chiar simpla expunere vizuală la medii naturale contribuie semnificativ la dezvoltarea unei imagini corporale mai pozitive. În această analiză narativă sunt prezentate diferite categorii de dovezi științifice care susțin asocierea dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală pozitivă (medieri, cercetări transversale, experimentale și cvasi-experimentale, comparative, prospective, de tip experience sampling, precum și studii calitative). În urma acestei sinteze, se poate concluziona că există motive întemeiate pentru a fi optimiști în privința potențialului pe care îl are interacțiunea cu natura în promovarea unei imagini corporale sănătoase în rândul diverselor categorii de populație.

1. Introducere

Mediul natural se referă la caracteristicile fizice, elementele din jur și procesele naturale care prezintă puține sau niciun fel de dovezi aparente ale intervenției umane (Hartig et al., 2014). Aceste medii pot varia de la „natura urbană” (de exemplu, grădini, parcuri, terenuri alocate pentru cultivare) până la natura sălbatică (păduri, jungle, deșerturi) și sunt distincte de mediile construite, care includ spațiile transformate fundamental prin activitatea umană (de exemplu, orașe, localități, infrastructură). Un volum considerabil de cercetări, descris și sintetizat în diverse analize de

specialitate (de exemplu, Barragan-Jason et al., 2023; Cuijpers et al., 2023), arată că expunerea la mediile naturale este asociată pozitiv cu o gamă largă de beneficii pentru sănătatea fizică și mentală.

În ultimii ani, cercetătorii au extins acest domeniu de studiu pentru a include și efectele asupra imaginii corporale, definită ca o „experiență psihologică complexă și multidimensională a corporalității” (Cash, 2004, p. 1). Aceasta include auto-percepțiile și atitudinile legate de propriul corp, precum gânduri, convingeri, emoții și comportamente (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Deși, inițial, cercetările privind imaginea corporală s-au concentrat preponderent pe aspectele negative (cum ar fi nemulțumirea față de propriul corp sau anxietatea legată de aspectul fizic), în ultimele două decenii a apărut un interes crescut pentru experiențele asociate imaginii corporale pozitive. Tylka (2018, p. 9) definește această perspectivă ca un „sentiment general de iubire și respect față de propriul corp”, care include aprecierea corpului și a funcțiilor sale, acceptarea acestuia în ciuda imperfecțiunilor și adoptarea unor comportamente de protecție a imaginii corporale (cum ar fi mândria față de propriul corp și valorizarea acestuia). În prezent, imaginea corporală negativă și cea pozitivă sunt conceptualizate ca fiind relaționate, dar plasate pe continuumuri distincte ale imaginii corporale (Tylka, 2018).

Deși asocierea dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală a fost discutată încă din anii 1990 (Arnold, 1994; Mitten, 1992), abia în ultimul deceniu a început să se contureze un corp solid de dovezi științifice în acest domeniu. Cercetările care explorează această asociere sunt acum din ce în ce mai variate, atât din perspectiva metodologiei utilizate, a eșantioanelor studiate, a distribuției geografice, cât și a dimensiunilor specifice ale imaginii corporale analizate (Swami, 2020a). Pe măsură ce acest domeniu de cercetare se maturizează, devine necesară o evaluare critică a dovezilor acumulate și a semnificațiilor acestora. Acesta este, așadar, obiectivul general al prezentei analize. Mai exact, această lucrare își propune să determine dacă și în ce măsură diferitele forme de expunere la natură sunt asociate cu aspecte specifice ale imaginii corporale.

2. Revizuirea rezultatelor cercetărilor

2.1. Studii transversale

Studiile transversale analizează, de obicei, corelația dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală ca trăsătură (adică, dimensiuni ale imaginii corporale măsurate ca fiind relativ stabile și constante în timp). Mai multe cercetări au utilizat această metodologie, însă toate au fost realizate în țările din emisfera nordică și majoritatea s-au concentrat pe indicatorii imaginii corporale pozitive.

De exemplu, patru studii efectuate pe eșantioane formate în principal din adulți din Regatul Unit (Swami, Barron et al., 2016, N = 399; Swami, Barron et al., 2019, N = 454; Swami, Barron et al., 2020, N = 398; Swami, Robinson et al., 2022, N = 397) au raportat că o expunere mai frecventă la natură, auto-raportată de participanți, este asociată semnificativ cu un nivel mai ridicat de apreciere a propriului corp. În toate studiile, intensitatea acestei asocieri a fost, în general, puternică ($r_s \sim .30$). În plus, Swami, Barron și colaboratorii (2019) au descoperit că expunerea mai frecventă la natură este asociată semnificativ și cu o apreciere mai mare a funcționalității corpului (o altă dimensiune a imaginii corporale pozitive), cu un efect de magnitudine ridicată ($r \sim .50$).

În afara Regatului Unit, doar două studii au investigat relația dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală pozitivă. Primul, realizat pe un eșantion de adulți din Lituania (N = 924), a constatat că o expunere mai frecventă la natură este asociată moderat și semnificativ cu o apreciere mai mare a corpului ($r = .23$; Baceviciene et al., 2021). Al doilea studiu, realizat pe un eșantion de adulți norvegieni (N = 360), a constatat că o frecvență mai mare a activităților fizice desfășurate în medii naturale este asociată moderat și semnificativ cu o apreciere mai ridicată a corpului ($r = .21$; Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2022).

Pe de altă parte, doar câteva studii au analizat relația dintre expunerea la natură și indicatorii imaginii corporale negative. De exemplu, într-un eșantion restrâns format în principal din femei cu vârsta de peste 40 de ani din SUA (N = 17) care au participat la o scurtă experiență de aventură în sălbăticie, Mitten și Woodruff (2010, p. 323) au raportat că o „activitate aventuroasă în mediul natural” a fost asociată cu o percepție mai pozitivă a atractivității fizice auto-evaluate ($r = .45$), precum și cu un nivel mai scăzut de nemulțumire față de diverse părți ale corpului ($r = .60$). Pe de altă parte, Swami, Barron și colaboratorii (2016) au descoperit că expunerea auto-raportată la natură

nu a fost semnificativ asociată cu internalizarea idealului subțire în rândul femeilor ($n = 199$) și nici cu internalizarea idealului de muscularitate în rândul bărbaților ($n = 200$).

2.1.1. Mediatori.

Mai multe studii au investigat dacă anumite variabile psihologice mediază relația directă dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală. Până în prezent, literatura de specialitate a identificat trei astfel de variabile mediatoare semnificative.

În primul rând, două studii realizate pe adulți din Regatul Unit (Swami, Barron et al., 2016, 2020) și un studiu pe adulți din Lituania (Baceviciene et al., 2021) au constatat că sentimentul de conexiune cu natura (adică senzația de unitate și armonie cu natura) mediază relația dintre expunerea la natură și aprecierea propriului corp. Un studiu anterior, realizat pe un eșantion format în principal din adulți din Regatul Unit ($N = 380$), a raportat rezultate similare, indicând o asociere semnificativă între conexiunea cu natura și aprecierea corporală ($r_s = .32$ până la $.49$; Swami, von Nordheim et al., 2016; vezi și Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2022).

Un alt factor mediator identificat este auto-compasiunea, definită ca abilitatea de a fi binevoitor și înțelegător față de sine în momente de dificultate sau eșec. Un studiu realizat pe adulți din Regatul Unit a raportat că două dimensiuni ale auto-compasiunii – bunătatea față de sine și sentimentul de apartenență la umanitate – mediază semnificativ relația dintre expunerea la natură și imaginea corporală pozitivă (Swami, Barron et al., 2019).

În schimb, același studiu (Swami, Barron et al., 2019) a constatat că atenția conștientă (*mindfulness*), o altă dimensiune a auto-compasiunii, nu mediază semnificativ această relație. Acest rezultat a fost confirmat ulterior de un alt studiu, care a arătat că *mindfulness* ca trăsătură nu acționează ca mediator al relației dintre expunerea la natură și aprecierea corporală (Swami, Barron et al., 2020). În schimb, acest studiu a evidențiat un efect de mediere serială, în care expunerea la natură era asociată cu un nivel mai ridicat de atenție conștientă, care, la rândul său, influența aprecierea corporală prin intermediul conexiunii cu natura.

În cele din urmă, într-un studiu realizat pe un eșantion de adulți din Regatul Unit ($N = 401$), Swami, Robinson et al. (2022) au constatat că stilul pozitiv de coping rațional (o strategie adaptativă

de reglare emoțională în fața provocărilor legate de imaginea corporală) a mediat semnificativ relația dintre expunerea la natură și aprecierea corporală.

În ansamblu, aceste studii sugerează că, deși există o legătură directă între expunerea la natură și aprecierea propriului corp, această relație este, de asemenea, influențată de mai mulți factori psihologici intermediari.

2.2. Diferențe între grupuri

Studiile care analizează diferențele între grupuri compară, de obicei, rezultatele legate de imaginea corporală între persoanele care au o expunere constantă la medii naturale și cele care au o expunere limitată.

Într-un studiu anterior, West-Smith (1997) a raportat că femeile din SUA care participau regulat la activități în aer liber (cel puțin o dată pe lună în anul anterior colectării datelor; $N = 86$) prezentau un nivel semnificativ mai scăzut de nemulțumire față de diverse părți ale corpului, comparativ cu cele care nu erau angajate în astfel de activități.

De asemenea, Mitten și D'Amore (2018) au constatat că studentele unui colegiu de arte liberale din SUA, unde învățarea experiențială prin aventură și cursurile desfășurate pe teren erau accentuate, au obținut scoruri mai ridicate la Body Cathexis Scale decât un grup de control nespecificat, deși nu a fost efectuat un test inferențial pentru confirmarea diferenței.

În cele din urmă, Swami (2020b) a raportat că persoanele din Regatul Unit care practicau grădinaritul ($n = 84$) au obținut scoruri semnificativ mai mari în ceea ce privește aprecierea corporală ($d = 0.51$), aprecierea funcționalității corpului ($d = 0.52$) și mândria față de propriul corp ($d = 0.54$) în comparație cu un eșantion de persoane care nu practicau grădinaritul ($n = 81$).

2.3. Studii experimentale sau cvasi-experimentale

Studiile experimentale și cvasi-experimentale care analizează impactul expunerii la natură asupra imaginii corporale utilizează diverse metode de cercetare. În general, acestea examinează măsura în care expunerea la medii naturale reale sau simulate contribuie la îmbunătățirea imaginii corporale ca stare (adică imaginea corporală evaluată ca un construct tranzitoriu).

Un studiu realizat de Swami, Barron și colaboratorii (2018, Studiul 4) a analizat impactul unei plimbări de 30-45 de minute într-un spațiu verde asupra imaginii corporale ca stare. Rezultatele au arătat că adulții din Regatul Unit ($n = 82$), au raportat o îmbunătățire semnificativă a aprecierii corporale după plimbare, comparativ cu nivelul inițial ($d = 0.61$). În schimb, participanții care au făcut o plimbare de durată similară într-un mediu urban de densitate medie ($n = 81$) au raportat o scădere a aprecierii corporale ca stare ($d = 0.44$). Un alt studiu, realizat de Menzel și colaboratorii (2020), a constatat că bărbații germani ($N = 21$) s-au perceput ca fiind mai atractivi fizic după o plimbare într-un mediu natural, dar nu și după o plimbare într-un spațiu construit.

Două studii similare, realizate în Polonia, au analizat impactul plimbărilor în natură asupra imaginii corporale ca stare. În primul studiu, Czepczor-Bernat și colaboratorii (2022) au descoperit că femeile ($N = 87$) care au făcut o plimbare de 40 de minute într-o pădure seculară acoperită de zăpadă au raportat o creștere semnificativă a aprecierii corporale ca stare după plimbare, comparativ cu nivelul inițial ($d = 0.56$). Studiul a mai arătat că auto-compasiunea a moderat această relație – participanții cu un nivel mai ridicat de auto-compasiune au înregistrat îmbunătățiri mai mari ale imaginii corporale ca stare. În al doilea studiu, Czepczor-Bernat și colaboratorii (2024) au examinat efectul plimbărilor asupra copiilor ($n = 80$) și au constatat că cei care au mers printr-un parc amenajat au raportat o creștere semnificativă a imaginii corporale ca stare după plimbare ($d = 0.35$). În schimb, copiii care au mers printr-un spațiu construit ($n = 81$) nu au prezentat nicio schimbare semnificativă în aprecierea corporală ca stare ($d = 0.04$).

În studiile de mai sus, participanții au fost implicați în plimbări ca parte a designului experimental. Alte studii au investigat impactul imaginii corporale în rândul persoanelor care au petrecut timp în natură din proprie inițiativă. Swami, Barron și colaboratorii (2018, Studiul 5) au descoperit că adulții din Regatul Unit ($N = 102$), care au petrecut timp într-un parc amenajat au raportat un nivel semnificativ mai ridicat al imaginii corporale ca stare la ieșirea din parc, comparativ cu momentul intrării ($d = 0.30$). Totuși, durata petrecută în parc nu a fost asociată semnificativ cu modificările imaginii corporale ca stare.

Într-un alt studiu, Swami, Mohd. Khatib și colaboratorii (2020, Studiul 1) au analizat adulți care au vizitat grădini botanice din România ($n = 140$) și Spania ($n = 161$). Participanții din ambele locații au raportat o apreciere corporală ca stare semnificativ mai crescută la ieșire, comparativ cu

momentul intrării ($ds = 0.52$ și 0.68 , respectiv). În plus, durata vizitei a fost semnificativ asociată cu îmbunătățiri ale imaginii corporale ca stare doar în eșantionul din Spania ($r = .33$).

Într-un al doilea studiu realizat în Malaezia, Swami, Mohd. Khatib și colaboratorii (2020, Studiul 2) au analizat un eșantion format în principal din adulți malaezieni care au petrecut timp fie într-o rezervație forestieră ($n = 351$), fie pe o plajă ($n = 351$). În ambele cazuri, participanții au raportat o apreciere corporală ca stare semnificativ mai ridicată la ieșire, comparativ cu momentul intrării ($ds = 0.66$ și 0.99 , respectiv). De această dată, durata vizitei a fost semnificativ asociată cu îmbunătățiri mai mari ale imaginii corporale ca stare, atât în rezervația forestieră ($r = .15$), cât și pe plajă ($r = .35$).

2.3.1. Medii naturale simulate.

În timp ce studiile menționate anterior au analizat impactul expunerii la medii naturale reale, mai multe cercetări au evaluat efectele naturii simulate. Astfel, în trei studii realizate pe adulți din Regatul Unit, Swami, Barron și colaboratorii (2018, Studii 1-3; $Ns = 124, 104$ și 43) au raportat că expunerea la imagini cu peisaje naturale, dar nu la imagini cu medii construite, a îmbunătățit semnificativ satisfacția corporală ca stare ($d = 0.27$) și aprecierea corporală ca stare ($ds = 0.26$ și 0.40).

Un studiu ulterior realizat de Rygal și Swami (2021) a expus un eșantion de adulți din Regatul Unit ($N = 168$) la imagini cu spații verzi (*greenspaces*), spații albastre (*bluespaces*, adică peisaje acvatice) sau medii construite. Rezultatele au arătat că expunerea la imagini cu peisaje naturale a îmbunătățit semnificativ aprecierea corporală ca stare, în timp ce imaginile cu medii construite nu au avut același efect. Mai mult, impactul imaginilor care conțineau spații albastre ($d = 0.64$) a fost mai puternic decât al celor care conțineau spații verzi ($d = 0.36$).

Alte studii au analizat efectul expunerii la filme 2D scurte, în loc de imagini statice. Două cercetări au demonstrat că vizionarea unui scurtmetraj filmat din perspectiva subiectivă a unei plimbări într-un mediu natural a îmbunătățit semnificativ aprecierea corporală ca stare, comparativ cu vizionarea unui film similar realizat într-un mediu construit. Aceste efecte au fost observate atât în rândul studenților (Swami, Pickering et al., 2018; $N = 36$; $d = 0.66$), cât și în rândul adulților mai în vârstă (Swami, 2020c; $N = 243$; $d = 0.42$) din Regatul Unit.

Totuși, o posibilă limitare a utilizării imaginilor și filmelor 2D este faptul că acestea nu reușesc să redea pe deplin mediile naturale în ceea ce privește scara și profunzimea peisajului, senzația de imersiune și implicarea mai multor simțuri. Dezvoltările recente în tehnologia realității virtuale (VR) oferă oportunități de a depăși aceste limitări, permițând o experiență mai captivantă în medii naturale simulate. În acest sens, un studiu a constatat că expunerea la un film panoramic preînregistrat la 360° cu un peisaj natural a îmbunătățit semnificativ aprecierea corporală ca stare într-un eșantion de adulți germanofoni (Swami et al., 2024; $d = 0.52$). Cu toate acestea, studiul a arătat că utilizarea filmului la 360° nu a fost mai eficientă în îmbunătățirea aprecierii corporale ca stare decât utilizarea unui film 2D sau a unor imagini statice care prezentau același peisaj natural. Este posibil ca lipsa sunetului din materialele utilizate în acest studiu să fi redus impactul filmului la 360°.

2.3.2. Studii prospective.

Două studii suplimentare au utilizat un design experimental, însă au evaluat schimbările prospective în imaginea corporală ca trăsătură.

Primul studiu a analizat modificările multidimensionale ale imaginii corporale pe parcursul a două săptămâni, într-un eșantion format din 28 de viitori profesori de educație fizică, participanți la un curs de educație în aer liber desfășurat în timpul verii, în SUA (Hovey et al., 2016). Rezultatele au indicat îmbunătățiri ale mediilor scorurilor la mai multe subscale ale Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ), inclusiv evaluarea aspectului fizic, orientarea către aspectul fizic, evaluarea sănătății și orientarea către boală. Totuși, nu a fost realizat niciun test inferențial pentru confirmarea semnificației acestor modificări.

Al doilea studiu a investigat modificările stimei de sine legate de corp într-un eșantion de 67 de studenți la sport care au participat la două tabere intensive de 8 zile, axate pe activități în aer liber (de exemplu, orientare, drumeții, ciclism montan) în Germania (Gatzemann et al., 2008). Rezultatele au arătat că, în comparație cu un grup de control care nu a participat la astfel de activități ($n = 48$), grupul experimental a înregistrat o creștere semnificativă a stimei de sine legate de corp de la momentul inițial până la finalul experimentului.

2.4. Studii bazate pe eșantionarea experienței

În studiile de eșantionare a experienței, participanții sunt solicitați să completeze scurte chestionare în mai multe momente ale zilei, selectate semi-aleatoriu, pe o anumită perioadă de timp. Această metodologie permite cercetătorilor să analizeze schimbările intra-individuale ale imaginii corporale ca stare în funcție de expunerea la natură.

Un studiu a utilizat această metodă pe un eșantion de 107 adulți din Austria, care au fost rugați să raporteze, de trei ori pe zi, timp de 30 de zile, nivelul satisfacției față de greutatea corporală, forma corpului și aspectul fizic, precum și starea de fericire și caracteristicile mediului în care se aflau (Stieger et al., 2022). Analizele au arătat că prezența într-un mediu natural a fost asociată semnificativ cu un nivel mai ridicat de satisfacție față de greutatea corporală, forma corpului și aspectul fizic, precum și cu o stare de fericire mai mare, comparativ cu timpul petrecut în interior, într-un mediu construit.

Studiul a mai constatat că, deși prezența în spațiile albastre (de exemplu, lângă apă) era semnificativ asociată cu o satisfacție mai mare față de greutatea corporală, doar prezența în păduri și pajiști era corelată semnificativ cu o satisfacție mai ridicată față de forma corpului. Pe de altă parte, petrecerea timpului în păduri, pajiști, munți și spații albastre a fost asociată semnificativ cu o satisfacție mai mare față de aspectul fizic.

2.5. Studii calitative

În studiile calitative, cercetătorii colectează date descriptive prin întrebări deschise sau interviuri, pentru a înțelege percepția indivizilor asupra lumii sociale, inclusiv atitudinile, convingerile și experiențele acestora. Două studii realizate pe femei din SUA au analizat tematic răspunsurile la întrebări deschise (Mitten & D'Amore, 2018; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010), concluzionând că activitățile în aer liber au influențat percepțiile asupra atractivității fizice și au redus gândurile negative legate de corp. Cu toate acestea, ambele studii au oferit doar detalii sumare despre metodologie (de exemplu, nu au menționat atingerea saturației datelor și au furnizat puține informații despre recrutarea și selecția participanților) și despre rezultate (de exemplu, au inclus citate, dar fără analize aprofundate).

Un alt studiu calitativ, bazat pe o abordare fenomenologică, a implicat 13 absolvente ale programului **GirlVentures** – o organizație non-profit din SUA care oferă activități de aventură în aer liber. Participantele au completat chestionare cu întrebări deschise despre impactul programului asupra imaginii corporale și au luat parte la interviuri de grup (Barr-Wilson & Roberts, 2016). Studiul a constatat că participarea la **GirlVentures** – și mai ales interacțiunea cu mediul natural – a avut un impact pozitiv asupra imaginii corporale și a încrederii în propriul corp, efectele persistând posibil și la trei ani după finalizarea programului.

Un alt studiu calitativ anterior a analizat influența conexiunii cu natura asupra imaginii corporale la 12 femei din SUA. Concluziile au indicat că petrecerea timpului în medii naturale le-a ajutat pe participante să se distanțeze de presiunile socioculturale care promovează idealuri restrictive de frumusețe și control asupra corpului (Hennigan, 2010). De asemenea, interacțiunea cu natura a favorizat o experiență mai profundă a corporalității, inclusiv o relație pozitivă cu propriul corp, un confort sporit și o grijă de sine mai intuitivă, toate acestea contribuind la o imagine corporală mai sănătoasă.

Într-un alt studiu calitativ, Alleva și colaboratorii (2023) au intervievat 25 de femei din Canada care aveau anumite trăsături sau afecțiuni ce le făceau să se abată de la normele societale privind aspectul fizic și care au reușit să își transforme imaginea corporală negativă într-una pozitivă. Unele participante au relatat că au simțit o conexiune profundă cu natura, ceea ce le-a ajutat să își perceapă corpurile ca parte din „ceva mai vast și în mod inherent demn de iubire și respect” (Alleva et al., 2023, p. 165).

În cele din urmă, Transgrud și colaboratorii (2020) au intervievat opt participanți din Norvegia, pasionați de *friluftsliv* (termen norvegian care desemnează activitățile recreative în aer liber) și care aveau experiențe legate de bulimie nervoasă și/sau tulburări de alimentație compulsivă. Participanții au fost intervievați de două ori: prima dată printr-un interviu nestructurat desfășurat în timpul unei plimbări în natură, iar a doua oară printr-un interviu semi-structurat, într-un cadru stabilit. Rezultatele au arătat că petrecerea timpului în natură și distanțarea de viața urbană au oferit participanților o stare de liniște și calm, favorizând o implicare mai profundă a simțurilor. De asemenea, interacțiunea cu natura a fost percepută ca o experiență corporală autentică – senzația solului sub picioare i-a ajutat pe participanți să fie mai prezenți și mai conștienți de corpul lor, permițându-le pur și simplu „să fie”. Totodată, natura le-a oferit oportunități de a-și asculta propriul

corp și de a se concentra mai mult pe funcționalitatea acestuia, în loc să se concentreze pe aspectul exterior.

Un al doilea studiu realizat pe același eșantion de participanți a descoperit, de asemenea, că *friluftsliv* a reprezentat un mediu important pentru recâștigarea controlului asupra procesului de recuperare după o tulburare alimentară (Transgrud et al., 2022).

3. Concluzii

În prezent, există numeroase dovezi științifice care arată că expunerea la natură este asociată în mod constant cu beneficii pentru imaginea corporală. Aceste cercetări sunt diverse din punct de vedere metodologic și acoperă un număr tot mai mare de regiuni geografice, însă persistă o serie de probleme metodologice, psihometrice și conceptuale care influențează acest domeniu de studiu.

Dacă intervențiile bazate pe natură, menite să sprijine o imagine corporală sănătoasă, vor fi adoptate și implementate pe scară largă, va fi necesar să se abordeze aceste limitări existente în literatură. Cu toate acestea, există motive întemeiate pentru a considera că expunerea la natură poate fi valorificată în sprijinul unei imagini corporale mai sănătoase la nivel individual, comunitar și populațional.

Deși mai sunt multe aspecte de explorat, dovezile analizate aici sugerează că atât cercetătorii, cât și practicienii au motive să privească cu optimism potențialul naturii de a influența pozitiv imaginea corporală.

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Acceptance speech of
Professor VIREN SWAMI
on the occasion of receiving the title of
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA SOCIALIUM SCIENTIARUM
of the West University of Timișoara

Rector of the West University of Timișoara, University Professor Dr. Marilen Gabriel Pirtea,
Vice-Rector, University Professor Madalin Bunoiu,
Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, University Professor Marius Matichescu,
Members of the Senate and Board of Directors,
Members of the academic community of the West University of Timișoara,
Colleagues and friends,

It goes without saying that I am deeply grateful and feel very privileged to be receiving this Doctor Honoris Causa from the West University of Timișoara.

The practice of conferring honorary degrees has a very long history, dating back at least to the fifteenth century when the University of Oxford made such an award to Lionel Woodville, later the Bishop of Salisbury. Ever since, and especially in its contemporary form, honorary degrees are meant to honour an individual's contributions to a specific field or to broader society. In so doing, we – rightly or wrongly – celebrate the individual and their accomplishments.

But when we celebrate individual accomplishments, we run the very real risk of

downplaying, rendering invisible, even ignoring the ways in which broader communities support and make possible those individual achievements. In my own case, whatever I have achieved was only possible because of the support, commitment, and strength of the academic communities – and the individuals that comprise them – to which I belong. In accepting this honorary doctorate, I

hope to shine a light on – and honour – those broader communities.

One such group, deserving of much greater recognition than anything you direct my way, is the academic community at the West University of Timișoara. My connection with your university began in 2006, when I began collaborating with University Professor Dr. Mona Vintilă. It was perhaps a fortuitous coming together – we were both at the time interested in the ways that cultural identities shape psychological outcomes, and contributed separately to a small research project.

But our working relationship has flourished over the past two decades. Professor Vintilă and I now regularly work together on many different projects, which have at their heart a common theme: promoting better psychological well-being for diverse populations in and beyond Romania. These projects now regularly also involve many other colleagues and students at the West University of Timișoara. In accepting this honorary doctorate, I wish to recognise and honour all of these individuals, whom I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with over many years.

It is my hope that this honorary doctorate will serve as an opportunity to reinforce my working relationship with colleagues at the West University of Timișoara. By combining our academic knowledge and research skills, we both have much to complement – and benefit from – each other in attaining our respective goals. And in cementing and further developing our collaboration, we will be better able to answer questions of practical need for wider society, both here in Romania and elsewhere. It has been an honour to work with your institution and it is my sincere hope that this honorary doctorate serves as an important milestone for our continuing collaboration.

I am proud to have undertaken this long journey with colleagues at your university, an institution that continues to go from strength to strength as a place of learning and research. And, in accepting this honorary doctorate, I wish to honour and pay tribute to colleagues here at the West University of Timișoara, especially Professor Vintilă. It is my sincere hope that our collaborations continue to deepen and mature over the coming years.

Nature Exposure Promotes More Positive Body Image: A Brief Review of the Literature

Viren Swami¹⁻²

¹School of Psychology, Sport, and Sensory Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

²Centre for Psychological Medicine, Perdana University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

Researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers are having to deal with the negative impact of body image concerns in populations globally. One cost-effective way of promoting healthier body image outcomes is through exposure to natural environments. A growing body of research has shown that spending time in, interacting with, and even just looking at natural environments can promote healthier body image outcomes. In this narrative review, I consider the different forms of evidence documenting an association between nature exposure and body image (i.e., cross-sectional and mediational, experimental and quasi-experimental, comparative, prospective, experience sampling, and qualitative research). Based on this review, I conclude that there are reasons to be hopeful that nature exposure can be leveraged to promote healthier body image outcomes in diverse populations.

1. Introduction

The *natural environment* refers to physical features, surroundings, and processes with little or no apparent evidence of human intervention (Hartig et al., 2014). Such environments can range from “urban nature” (e.g., gardens, parks, allotments) to wild nature (e.g., forests, jungles, and deserts), and are distinguished from *built environments*, which refer to surroundings that have been fundamentally transformed by human activity (e.g., cities, towns, infrastructure). There is now an extensive body of evidence – described and summarised in various reviews (e.g., Barragan-Jason et al., 2023; Cuijpers et al., 2023) – demonstrating that exposure to natural environments is positively

associated with a wide range of physical and mental health outcomes.

Over the past several years, researchers have extended this body of work to include a focus on outcomes related to *body image*, which can be described as a “multifaceted psychological experience of embodiment” (Cash, 2004, p. 1), encompassing one’s body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes, including thoughts, beliefs, affect, and behaviours (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Although body image research was historically concerned with negative indices and facets (e.g., body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety), the past two decades have seen a shift toward research that centres experiences of *positive body image*, which Tylka (2018, p. 9) defined as an “overarching love and respect for the body” that includes appreciation of the body and its functions, acceptance of the body despite its imperfections, and body-protective behaviours (e.g., body appreciation, body pride). In current thinking, negative and positive body image are conceptualised as related, but occupying distinct body image continuums (Tylka, 2018).

Although an association between nature exposure and body image had been discussed as early as the 1990s (Arnold, 1994; Mitten, 1992), it is only in the past decade that a sustained body of evidence has emerged. The body of work documenting an association between nature exposure and body image is now diverse in terms of study methodology, sampling, geographic distribution, and the specific facets of body image that are examined (Swami, 2020a). As this research begins to mature, it would be useful to take stock and shine a critical light on the accumulated evidence and their meaning(s). This, then, is the general aim of the present review. Specifically, this review is primarily focused on determining whether, and the extent to which, forms of nature exposure are associated with body image outcomes.

2. Reviewing the Evidence

2.1. Cross-Sectional Studies

Cross-sectional studies typically examine the correlation between nature exposure and trait body image (i.e., body image constructs measured as relatively consistent and stable dimensions). Several studies have utilised this methodology, but all have been conducted in the Global North and most have focused on indices of positive body image. For instance, four studies conducted with

mainly white adults in the U.K. (Swami, Barron et al., 2016, $N = 399$; Swami, Barron et al., 2019, $N = 454$; Swami, Barron et al., 2020, $N = 398$; Swami, Robinson et al., 2022, $N = 397$) have reported that greater self-reported nature exposure is significantly associated with higher body appreciation. Across studies, the strength of the reported association has tended to be large ($r_s \sim .30$). In addition, Swami, Barron et al. (2019) reported that greater self-reported nature exposure was significantly associated with greater functionality appreciation (another facet of positive body image), with a very large effect size ($r \sim .50$).

Outside the U.K., only two studies have examined associations between nature exposure and positive body image. First, in a sample of Lithuanian adults ($N = 924$), Baceviciene and colleagues (2021) reported that greater self-reported nature exposure was significantly and moderately associated with higher body appreciation ($r = .23$). Second, in a sample of Norwegian adults ($N = 360$), Sundgot-Borgen et al. (2022) found that greater frequency of physical activity in natural environments was significantly and moderately associated with higher body appreciation ($r = .21$). Conversely, only a small handful of studies have assessed associations between nature exposure and indices of negative body image. Thus, in a small sample of mainly white women over the age of 40 years ($N = 17$) from the U.S. who had completed a short wilderness adventure, Mitten and Woodruff (2010, p. 323) reported that greater “outdoor adventure experience” was associated with higher self-rated physical attractiveness ($r = .45$), as well as lower dissatisfaction with various parts of the body ($r = .60$). On the other hand, Swami, Barron and colleagues (2016) reported that self-reported nature exposure was not significantly associated with internalisation of a thin ideal in women ($n = 199$), nor internalisation of a muscular ideal in men ($n = 200$).

2.1.1. Mediators. Several studies have examined whether additional constructs mediate the direct link between nature exposure and body image outcomes. Three constructs have been identified in the existing literature as significant mediators. First, two studies with U.K. adults (Swami, Barron et al., 2016, 2020) and one with Lithuanian adults (Baceviciene et al., 2021) have found that *connectedness to nature* (i.e., a sense of oneness with nature) mediates the relationship between nature exposure and body appreciation. An earlier study similarly reported that, in a sample of mainly white sample from the U.K. ($N = 380$), connectedness to nature was significantly associated with greater body appreciation ($r_s = .32$ to $.49$; Swami, von Nordheim et al., 2016; see also Sundgot-Borgen et al., 2022). Another construct that has been found to mediate the relationship between nature exposure and body image outcomes is *self-compassion* (i.e., the ability to be kind and helpful to one’s self at

times of error or despair). One study with U.K. adults reported that two facets of self-compassion – self-kindness and common humanity – significantly mediated the relationship between nature exposure and positive body image (Swami, Barron et al., 2019).

Conversely, Swami, Barron et al. (2019) also found that a third facet of self-compassion – mindfulness – was not a significant mediator of the relationship between nature exposure and body appreciation, a result supported by a subsequent study showing that trait mindfulness did not significantly act as a mediator of the same relationship (Swami, Barron et al., 2020). Instead, Swami, Barron et al. (2020) found evidence of a serial mediation, wherein nature exposure was associated greater mindful awareness, which in turn was related to body appreciation via connectedness to nature. Finally, in a study involving mainly white U.K. adults ($N = 401$), Swami, Robinson et al. (2022) reported that the association between nature exposure and body appreciation was significantly mediated by *positive rational coping* (i.e., an adaptive affect regulation style when exposed to body image challenges). Taken together, these studies suggest that, while there may be a direct link between nature exposure and body appreciation, this association is also mediated by several constructs.

2.2. Between-Group Differences

Studies assessing between-group differences typically compare body image outcomes between individuals who have sustained exposure to natural environments and those who have limited nature exposure. In one early study, West-Smith (1997) reported that U.S. women who were regularly active in outdoor adventures (at least monthly in the year prior to data collection; $N = 86$) reported significantly lower dissatisfaction with body parts compared to those who were not active in outdoor adventures. Likewise, Mitten and D’Amore (2018) reported that women at a liberal arts college in the U.S. with an emphasis on adventure education and field-based courses had higher Body Cathexis Scale scores than an unspecified control group, although again no inferential test was conducted. Finally, Swami (2020b) reported that allotment gardeners in the U.K. ($n = 84$) had significantly higher scores on measures of body appreciation ($d = 0.51$), functionality appreciation ($d = 0.52$), and body pride ($d = 0.54$) than a sample of non-gardeners ($n = 81$).

2.3. Experimental or Quasi-Experimental Studies

Experimental or quasi-experimental studies examining the impact of nature exposure on body image are diverse in study design, but generally assess the extent to which exposure to real or

simulated natural environments promotes improvements to state body image (i.e., body image measured as a transient construct). In terms of exposure to real natural environments, Swami, Barron et al. (2018, Study 4) reported that mainly white U.K. adults who ($n = 82$) who went on a 30-45 min. walk in a greenspace reported a significant improvement in state body appreciation scores (pre- vs. post-walk; $d = 0.61$), whereas participants ($n = 81$) who went for a walk of a similar duration in a medium-density urban environment reported a decrease in state body appreciation scores (pre- vs. post-walk; $d = 0.44$). In another study, Menzel et al. (2020) found that German men ($N = 21$) rated themselves as more physically attractive following a walk in a natural environment, but not a built environment.

Two studies using a similar design – where participants take part in a walk in a natural environment – have been conducted in Poland. In the first study, Czepczor-Bernat et al. (2022) reported that women ($N = 87$) who went on a 40 min. walk in a snow-covered ancient woodland reported significantly higher state body appreciation post-walk (compared to pre-walk; $d = 0.56$). This study also found that self-compassion moderated improvements in state body appreciation, such that those with higher self-compassion experienced larger improvements to state body appreciation. In the second study, Czepczor-Bernat and colleagues (2024) reported that children ($n = 80$) who went for a walk in a designed greenspace (i.e., a park) reported significantly higher state body appreciation post-walk compared to pre-walk ($d = 0.35$), whereas children who went for a walk in a built environment ($n = 81$) experienced no change in state body appreciation ($d = 0.04$).

In each of the studies above, participants were asked to go on walks as part of the experimental design. Other studies have assessed body image outcomes in individuals who voluntarily spent time in natural environments. Thus, Swami, Barron et al. (2018, Study 5) reported that mainly white adults ($N = 102$) who had spent time in a designed greenspace in the U.K. had significantly higher state body appreciation when they exited the greenspace compared to scores at entry ($d = 0.30$). These authors also reported that changes in state body appreciation were not significantly associated with the amount of time spent in the greenspace. In another study, Swami, Mohd. Khatib and colleagues (2020, Study 1) reported that adults who visited botanic gardens in Romania ($n = 140$) and Spain ($n = 161$) reported significantly higher state body appreciation at exit compared to entry ($ds = 0.52$ and 0.68 , respectively). In this study, visit duration was significantly associated with improvements to state body appreciation only in the Spanish sample ($r = .33$). In a second study conducted in Malaysia, Swami, Mohd. Khatib and colleagues (2020, Study 2) reported that mainly Malay adults who spent

time in a forest reserve ($n = 351$) or at a beach ($n = 351$) had significantly higher state body appreciation at exit compared to entry ($ds = 0.66$ and 0.99 , respectively). Visit duration was significantly associated with larger improvements to state body appreciation in both the forest reserve and beach ($rs = .15$ and $.35$, respectively).

2.3.1. Simulated nature. While the aforementioned studies have examined the impact of exposure to real natural environments, several studies have assessed the impact of simulated nature. Thus, across three studies with U.K. adults, Swami, Barron et al. (2018, Studies 1-3; $Ns = 124, 104$, and 43) reported that exposure to images of natural environments, but not images of built environments, significantly improved state body satisfaction ($d = 0.27$) and state body appreciation ($ds = 0.26$ and 0.40). A follow-up study by Rygal and Swami (2021) exposed U.K. adults to images of greenspaces, bluespaces, or built environments ($N = 168$). This study found that exposure to the images of the natural environments, but not the built environment, significantly improved state body appreciation scores, with the bluespace images having a stronger effect ($d = 0.64$) compared to the greenspace images ($d = 0.36$). Other studies have examined the impact of short 2-dimensional (2D) films, rather than images. Thus, two studies have shown that exposure to a brief film of a first-person walk in a natural environment, but not a similar film of a walk in a built environment, significantly improved state body appreciation in samples of university students (Swami, Pickering et al., 2018; $N = 36$; $d = .66$) and older adults (Swami, 2020c; $N = 243$; $d = 0.42$) from the U.K.

One possible concern with the use of images and 2D film, however, is that they may not fully represent or simulate natural environments in terms of the scope and scale of settings, transporting individuals “away” from their physical surroundings, and engaging multiple sensory modalities. Developments in virtual reality (VR) technology offer opportunities to overcome some of these limitations by allowing for greater immersion in a simulated natural environment. Thus, one study found that exposure to a pre-recorded 360° immersive (or panoramic) film of a natural environment significantly improved state body appreciation in a sample of German-speaking adults (Swami et al., 2024; $d = 0.52$). However, this study also found that the use of 360° film was not any more effective at improving state body appreciation than the use of a 2D film or static images depicting the same natural environment. It is possible, however, that the omission of sound from the stimuli used in this study may have dampened the effects of the 360° film.

2.3.2. Prospective studies. Two additional studies have used an experimental design but

assessed prospective changes to trait body image. The first examined changes in trait multidimensional body image across a 2-week period in a sample of 28 physical education teacher candidates participating in a summer outdoor education course in the U.S. (Hovey et al., 2016). This study found improvements in mean scores on several MBSRQ subscales (appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, health evaluation, and illness orientation) over the 2-week period, although no inferential test was conducted. The second study examined changes to body-related self-esteem in a sample of 67 sports students taking part in two compact camps involving outdoor activities (e.g., orienteering, hiking, mountain biking) over an 8-day period in Germany (Gatzemann et al., 2008). This study found that, compared to a control group who did not take part in any outdoor activities ($n = 48$), the experimental group showed greater body-related self-esteem from pre- to post-test.

2.4. Experience Sampling Studies

In experience sampling studies, participants are prompted to complete brief surveys on multiple, semi-random occasions throughout the day over a period of time, allowing researchers to study intra-individual changes in state body image as a function of nature exposure. One study used this methodology with 107 adults from Austria, who were asked to report their state body image (body weight, body shape, and physical appearance satisfaction), state happiness, and features of the surrounding environment at three random time-points each day for a period of 30 days (Stieger et al., 2022). Analyses showed that being in natural environments was significantly associated with higher scores on state body weight satisfaction, body shape satisfaction, and satisfaction with one's physical appearance, as well as higher state happiness, compared to being indoors in a built environment. This study also found that, while being in bluespaces was significantly associated with higher body weight satisfaction, only being in woodlands and grasslands was significantly associated with higher body shape satisfaction. On the other hand, being in woodlands and grasslands, mountains, and bluespaces were all significantly associated with higher physical appearance satisfaction.

2.5. Qualitative Studies

In qualitative studies, researchers typically gather descriptive data through open-ended questions or interviews to gain an understanding of individuals' social reality, including their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Two studies with U.S. women have thematically analysed responses to open-ended questions (Mitten & D'Amore, 2018; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010), with the

authors concluding that outdoor activities altered beliefs about physical attractiveness and mitigated negative body-related cognitions. However, both studies presented only cursory details about the study methodology (e.g., no information about data saturation, little or no information about participant recruitment and selection) and results (e.g., quotations in the absence of meaningful analyses). Another qualitative study based on phenomenological inquiry involved 13 U.S. high-school aged GirlVentures (a non-profit organisation providing outdoor adventure activities) alumni, who were presented with open-ended questionnaires about the impact of the programme on their body image and also took part in focus group interviews (Barr-Wilson & Roberts, 2016). This study found that participation in GirlVentures – and the natural environment specifically – positively shaped participants’ body image and body confidence, with effects possibly persisting three years post-participation.

An earlier qualitative study examined the impact of connection to nature on body image in 12 U.S. women and concluded that spending time in natural settings helped participants to distance themselves from sociocultural contexts that encouraged body-work and restrictive appearance ideals (Hennigan, 2010). Additionally, spending time in natural environments helped participants to experience greater embodiment, including positive body connections and comfort and attuned self-care, which in turn promoted healthier body image. In another qualitative study, Alleva and colleagues (2023) conducted interviews with 25 Canadian women who had a condition or characteristics causing their bodies to deviate from societal norms and who overcame negative body image to develop positive body image. Some participants in this study experienced meaningful connection to nature, which helped them to view their bodies as part of “something bigger and inherently worthy of love and respect” (Alleva et al., 2023, p. 165).

Finally, Transgrud and colleagues (2020) conducted interviews with eight participants in Norway who had an interest in nature and *friluftsliv* (Norwegian for outdoor pursuits or recreation) and with experiences of bulimia nervosa and/or binge-eating disorders. Participants were interviewed twice, the first an unstructured walking interview in nature and the second a sit-down, semi-structured interview. The results indicated that being in nature and being away from urban life allowed participants to feel peaceful and calm, which in turn allowed for a fuller engagement of the senses. Being in nature was also experienced as embodying – feeling nature underfoot allowed participants to be present and mindful – and allowed participants to “just be”. Just as importantly, being in nature provided participants with opportunities to listen to their bodies and to focus on how their bodies

were functioning rather than on their physical appearance. A second study with the same sample of participants additionally found that *friluftsliv* provided important arenas for participants to reclaim control over their recovery from disordered eating (Transgrud et al., 2022).

3. Conclusion

There is now a broad base of evidence showing that nature exposure is reliably associated with body image outcomes. This body of evidence is diverse in terms of methodology and is growing in terms of its geographic foci, but there remain a number of methodological, psychometric, and conceptual issues that affect this body of work. If nature-based therapies that promote healthier body image are to become widely accepted and implemented, they will need to address concerns with this literature. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to think that nature exposure can be leveraged to support healthier body image outcomes for individuals, communities, and populations. There is yet much work to be done, but the evidence reviewed here suggests that there are good reasons for researchers and practitioners to be hopeful.

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VIREN SWAMI

EDUCAȚIE

Septembrie 2002- Noiembrie 2005	Doctorat în Psihologie, Universitatea College London Teză doctorală: „Psihologia evoluționistă și studiul atractivității fizice umane”
Septembrie 1999- Iulie 2002	Licență în Psihologie (1st Class Honours), Universitatea College London Premii: Dean’s List, Facultatea de Științe ale Vieții

EXPERIENȚA PROFESIONALĂ

Octombrie 2015- Prezent	Profesor de Psihologie Socială, Universitatea Anglia Ruskin Editor Asociat: <i>Body Image</i> (2010-2020), <i>PLoS ONE</i> (2018-2022), <i>Malaysian Journal of Psychology and Counselling</i> (2018-ongoing), <i>Perdana International Journal of Health Sciences</i> (2022-ongoing) Membru în comisiile editoriale: <i>Body Image</i> (2007-2010; 2021-prezent), <i>Eating and Weight Disorders</i> (2019-prezent), <i>Healthcare</i> (2022-2024), <i>Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology</i> (2024-prezent) Membru în comisiile consultative: <i>F1000 Social Psychology</i> (2021-2023), <i>Routledge Open</i> (2023-prezent) Membru în consiliul de guvernare: Asian Psychological Association (2017-2020) Membru în consiliul de administrație: One Tenth Human (2021-)
Aprilie 2017- Prezent	Director și Profesor Adjunct, Centrul pentru Medicină Psihologică, Universitatea Perdana
August 2010- Septembrie 2015	Conferențiar universitar în Psihologie, Universitatea Westminster Coordonator de modul: Introducere în Psihologia Socială și Dezvoltării
Martie 2008- Iulie 2010	Lector Universitar Senior în Psihologie, Universitatea Westminster Coordonator de modul: Psihologia Sănătății
Septembrie 2007- Februarie 2008	Lector Universitar în Psihologie, Universitatea of Westminster Coordonator de modul: Psihologia Sănătății
August 2006- August 2007	Cercetător post-doctoral, Universitatea Liverpool

GRANTURI SELECTATE

Iunie 2024- Mai 2027	Horizon Europe, £2,999,757 Titlul proiectului: Community-centred language REVitalisation powered by heritage-ledstorytelling and digital innoVation in Europe (Cercetător asociat)
Ianuarie- Iunie 2022	KEEP+ (with Consciously Digital), £64,127 Titlul proiectului: Designing a measure of digital well-being for use in industry (Director de proiect)
Iulie 2021- August2026	Perdana University, £317,612 Titlul Proiectului: Maintenance Grant for the Perdana University Centre for Psychological Medicine (Unic responsabil de proiect)
Aprilie 2017 -Iunie 2021	Perdana University, £373,626 Titlul proiectului: Creation of the Perdana University Centre for Psychological Medicine (Unic responsabil de proiect)
Ianuarie 2011- Octombrie 2011	Higher Education Innovative Fund 4, £38,066 Titlul proiectului: Development of interactive lesson plans to promote positive body image (Cercetător asociat)
Iulie 2010- Iunie 2011	Empire Research Grant, £73,500 Titlul proiectului: Willingness to buy ethical fashion (Director de proiect)

REZUMAT BIBLIOGRAFIC

h-index	90 (i10-index = 320)
Publicații	4 cărți scrise integral, 3 volume coordonate, 346 articole în reviste științifice evaluate prin peer-review, 44 capitole în volume colective

EDUCATION

September 2002- November 2005	PhD Psychology, University College London Doctoral thesis: “Evolutionary psychology and the study of human physical attractiveness”
September 1999- July 2002	BSc Psychology (1st Class Honours), University College London Awards: Dean’s List, Faculty of Life Sciences

EMPLOYMENT

October 2015-Present	Professor of Social Psychology, Anglia Ruskin University Associate editorships: <i>Body Image</i> (2010-2020), <i>PLoS ONE</i> (2018-2022), <i>Malaysian Journal of Psychology and Counselling</i> (2018-ongoing), <i>Perdana International Journal of Health Sciences</i> (2022-ongoing) Editorial boards: <i>Body Image</i> (2007-2010; 2021-ongoing), <i>Eating and Weight Disorders</i> (2019-ongoing), <i>Healthcare</i> (2022-2024), <i>Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology</i> (2024-ongoing) Advisory boards: <i>F1000 Social Psychology</i> (2021-2023), <i>Routledge Open</i> (2023-ongoing)Board of Governors: Asian Psychological Association (2017-2020) Board of Trustees: One Tenth Human (2021-)
April 2017-Present	Director and Adjunct Professor, Centre for Psychological Medicine, PerdanaUniversity
August 2010- September 2015	Reader in Psychology, University of Westminster Module leadership: Introduction to Social and Developmental Psychology
March 2008- July 2010	Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Westminster Module leadership: Health Psychology
September 2007- February 2008	Lecturer in Psychology, University of Westminster Module leadership: Health Psychology
August 2006- August 2007	Post-Doctoral Research Associate, University of Liverpool

SELECTED GRANTS

June 2024- May2027	Horizon Europe, £2,999,757 Project title: Community-centred language REVIitalisation powered by heritage-ledstorytelling and digital innoVation in Europe (Co-Investigator)
January-June 2022	KEEP+ (with Consciously Digital), £64,127 Project title: Designing a measure of digital well-being for use in industry (PrincipalInvestigator)

July 2021- August 2026	Perdana University, £317,612 Project title: Maintenance Grant for the Perdana University Centre for Psychological Medicine (Sole Investigator)
April 2017- June 2021	Perdana University, £373,626 Project title: Creation of the Perdana University Centre for Psychological Medicine (Sole Investigator)
January 2011- October 2011	Higher Education Innovative Fund 4, £38,066 Project title: Development of interactive lesson plans to promote positive body image (Co-Investigator)
July 2010- June 2011	Empire Research Grant, £73,500 Project title: Willingness to buy ethical fashion (Principal Investigator)

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

h-index	90 (i10-index = 320)
Publications	4 authored books, 3 edited books, 346 peer-reviewed journal articles, 44 book chapters

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ARTICOLE ÎN CURS DE EVALUARE SAU PREGĂTIRE/ARTICLES UNDER REVIEW OR IN PREPARATION

- Craddock, N., Chan, J., & Swami, V. (submitted). Racial discrimination and body appreciation: Testing direct and, via coping strategies, indirect links in racialised minority adults from the United Kingdom. *Body Image*.
- Garbutt, J., Galeazzi, F., & Swami, V. (submitted). Using virtual reality to enable emotional engagement around knife crime in young people from the United Kingdom. *Virtual Reality*.
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