

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM ON BODY IMAGE DISSATISFACTION AMONG FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES OF FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of social media usage and self-esteem on body image dissatisfaction among female undergraduate students of faculty of social science in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. One hundred and ninety (190) participants were randomly sampled from the university. The student's age ranged from 17-30 with a mean age of 20.43 and standard deviation of 2.22, a cross-sectional design was adopted for the study. Three instruments were used for data collection; social media engagement scale, Rosenberg's self-esteem scale and body image concern inventory. The findings showed that social media usage has a positive significant impact on body image dissatisfaction among female undergraduate students of faculty of social science in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. One practical implication of this finding is the need for the university management to organize workshops, seminars, or campaigns that focus on body positivity and self-acceptance. Encourage students to appreciate diverse body types and challenge unrealistic beauty standards. This will increase self-esteem and thereby reduce body image dissatisfaction. Suggestions for further studies were also made.

Keywords: Impact, Social media usage, Body image dissatisfaction, Self-esteem, Female Undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of women's education cannot be over emphasized. An educated woman can train and educate her family and influence a community, nation and the world. Education will enable women to make their children, husbands, and parents truly happy. Consequently, it is very important that women should be educated. On all these grounds female education is a vital necessity (Bendre, 2022). Female students face major problems such as gender discrimination, household chores, unsafe environment, poverty, early marriage, financial

problem, transportation, gender discrimination, physical harassment and many other factors (Chauhan & Kumar, 2022). Female undergraduates often face immense pressure to conform to societal standards of beauty, which can contribute to body image dissatisfaction.

Body image refers to how an individual sees their own body and how attractive they feel themselves to be. It includes a person's perception of his/her physical self and the thoughts and feelings; positive, negative or both, which result from that perception (Grogan, 2016). Body image is basically a person's subjective evaluation of their body, but it may not actually reflect the objective reality of body size and shape (Insel et al., 2023). Body image dissatisfaction can be defined as the feelings and negative attitudes a person has about their body and is usually influenced by certain factors such as the cultural norms relating to an ideal body, personal perceptions toward weight gain and body appearance. Body image dissatisfaction occurs in both male and female although it tends to be more common in females, both genders are exposed to images online which they tend to fix as their perfect and ideal body. The activities and images portrayed by celebrities and social media influencers play a huge role in shaping standards for young people as they strive to emulate their social media idols (Kalinin et al., 2021).

Students who view their bodies negatively in relation to culturally regarded features may experience low self-esteem, a sense of inferiority, and a lack of life satisfaction. They are more likely to experience eating disorders, depression, and anxiety. When levels of unhappiness are at their peak, this may seriously hinder social, academic, and/or occupational functioning. Since, being slim is currently associated with attractiveness, society values them while neglecting persons that are obese or fat (Makwana et al., 2018).

Dissatisfaction with body image during the early stages of adolescence has been related to poorer self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the way in which a person perceives himself or herself. It is a combination of self-confidence and self-respect. A person exhibits positive self-esteem in feeling that he or she can cope with daily challenges and is worthy of happiness. People with positive self-esteem have confidence in themselves, solve problems effectively without excessive worry, confront or eliminate things that cause them fear or anxiety, take appropriate risks, and nurture themselves and their relationships with others (Corbin et al., 2014).

Self-esteem is affected by how people perceive themselves to be judged by others and so how they come to judge themselves. Since some female undergraduates will always be better at something than others if they are compared, such comparisons should be avoided. Rather, as a regular part of work, lecturers are expected to encourage these students to focus on the progress each of them is making, not on whether they are better than or not as good as others (Harlen, 2006). Some authors are of the view that self-esteem is closely related to the perception of body image, particularly teen, the stage in which recognition from others is important. People who have negative appearance evaluation and low self-esteem are associated with dissatisfaction of body shape (Chan et al., 2017).

People with low self-esteem tend to feel less sure of their abilities and may doubt their decision-making process. They may not feel motivated to try novel things because they don't believe they can reach their goals. Those with low self-esteem may have issues with

relationships and expressing their needs. They may also experience low levels of confidence and feel unlovable and unworthy. People with overly high self-esteem may overestimate their skills and may feel entitled to succeed, even without the abilities to back up their belief in themselves. They may struggle with relationship issues and block themselves from self-improvement because they are so fixated on seeing themselves as perfect (Khan, 2023). However, there are certain factors like social media that seems to affect self-esteem.

Social media is interactive computer-mediated technologies that helps to build relationships and strong personalities, share and exchange of information and knowledge also to connect with world and have better social lives. Social media enables people around the globe to interconnect via internet, video call, chat, share content and many other functionalities. Social media exhaustively used by many students has major impact on user's behavioral, moral, educational change. Some female undergraduate often engage themselves in social media than real world. Social media becomes major part of their life. It has both positive and negative impact. Some of the negative causes included sleeping disorders, stress, depression and lowers the self-esteem (Talawar & Kumar, 2020).

Social media has a very strong impact on the self-esteem of individuals. Female undergraduates use these social networking sites for information, communication and building and maintain of relationships. But majority of them end up making upward and downward comparisons with themselves. The upward comparisons make them envy of themselves and their lifestyles and also feel less obliged and ungrateful for their bounties. As a result, the self-esteem of such people gets negatively affected. Social media is growing very drastically in almost every country in the world. So, it is impossible to keep people, especially students who use Facebook on a daily basis, away from social media for a very long time (Jan et al., 2017).

The injudicious usage of social media or its addiction adversely affects the mental wellbeing or psychological development of students. Self-acceptance as the basic constituent of self-esteem, necessitates more positive evaluation towards oneself. The addiction of social media generally causes upward comparison, depression, anxiety and stress etc. The satisfaction and joyfulness in the life cannot be developed or attained unless there is sufficient self-esteem to balance one's personality (Abdunnazar, 2019). At this point, it is important to note that social media affects female undergraduate self-esteem, social anxiety, and body image for several reasons. First, young adulthood is a sensitive time for identity formation, and social media may have a negative impact on they view their bodies and themselves. Second, negative body image, low self-esteem, and social anxiety can seriously affect mental health, leading to the emergence of many psychological problems.

Purpose of the Study

In a contemporary society, there are several potential factors that can contribute to body image dissatisfaction. Some common ones include societal pressures, unrealistic beauty standards portrayed in media (television advertising and programing), comparison with others, personal experiences, exposure to body related prompts, sociocultural perspective, social environment, peer groups, social comparison, social pressure and negative self-perception (Eklund & Tenenbaum, 2014). Part of the reason is that the society has always placed importance on beauty ideals, the rise of media and easy access to the internet has

exponentially amplified this phenomenon in the digital age. Young people, in particular, are constantly exposed to manipulated images and narratives depicting distorted body ideals, which have, in turn, started to define beauty standards. Social media platforms play a crucial role in perpetuating these standards (Xie, 2024).

Society is an ever-changing entity. The media is a catalyst that influences society's way of acting, thinking, lifestyles, customs, consumption, and opinions. With constant exposure, these factors are slowly internalized and thought of as need. The media has constructed idealized portrayals of beauty that have led people to believe they can attain an appearance that is not natural but constructed. This beauty ambition is unreachable and thus, will lead to several health and mental complications such as low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, anorexia, and unhappiness regardless of the individual's actual physical state (Reategui & Palmer, 2017).

Therefore, since many researchers have explored the relationship between self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction, this research empirically aims to evaluate the impact of social media usage and self-esteem on body image dissatisfaction among female undergraduates of faculty of social science in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani. To this end, this study will provide answers to the following questions: will social media usage have a significant impact on body image dissatisfaction of female undergraduates? Again, will self-esteem have a significant impact on body image dissatisfaction of female undergraduates?

Literature Review

Numerous studies have shown interests in our variables of study but we will like to limit ourselves to three theories namely self-presentation theory, sociometer theory and social comparison theory.

Self-presentation theory was presented by Erving Goffman and he stated that when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individuals helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the other will know how best to act to call forth a desired response from him (Goffman, 1959).

There are three main participants in this drama; the actor who is performing, other co-performers who Goffman often refer to as members of the team, and the audience who witness the performance. Although the individual performer relies on other members of the team (or cast) to bring off her performances successfully, the audience is perhaps the key participant for Goffman because it is from them that the individual actor hopes to gain some kind of positive approval of her performance. Therefore, social roles are built up on the basis of the repeated performance of clearly identifiable parts or routines (Ransome, 2010). The theory explains the relationship between social media usage and body image dissatisfaction. The theory suggests that individuals manage their impressions to align with social norms and expectations. On social media, this often involves presenting an idealized version of oneself,

which can exacerbate body image dissatisfaction as users compare themselves to others and strive for unattainable standards of beauty and perfection. This constant exposure to curated images can distort perceptions of reality and contribute to negative body image perceptions and dissatisfaction.

Sociometer theory suggests that humans use self-esteem to gauge the degree to which others value and accept them. (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Sociometer theory maintains that self-esteem evolved to check one's level of status and acceptance in one's social group. According to this theory, humans constantly monitor and evaluate their social interactions to determine their level of social acceptance or rejection. A person's self-esteem is sensitive to social experiences because it is like a type of monitoring system that gives feedback on degrees of social acceptance and rejection. In a nutshell, this theory suggests that self-esteem serves as a sociometer-a gauge of one's social inclusion or exclusion. Here, self-esteem fluctuates based on perceived levels of acceptance and belonging. Low self-esteem can signal social exclusion, motivating individuals to seek social connections to restore their sense of belongings (Leary, 2015). This theory offers insights into the relationship between self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction. Self-esteem is based on evaluating the self, and rating one's behaviours and qualities as positive or negative, which results in defining the self as worthy or non-worthy (Ellis, 1994).

Social comparison theory was first proposed in 1954 by psychologist Leon Festinger. This theory postulates that humans have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities. To function effectively, they need to know their own capacities and limitations, and they must be accurate in their opinions of objects and of other people. Therefore, people best serve the need for self-evaluation by measuring their attributes against direct, physical standards. When objective standards are unavailable, however, individuals compare themselves with other people. The central proposition of this theory is the similarity hypothesis, which predicts that individuals prefer to compare themselves with similar others (Wood, 1989). This theory offers insights into the relationship between social media usage and body image dissatisfaction. Social comparison is a psychological process where individuals evaluate their own abilities, opinions, and traits by comparing themselves to others.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. Social media usage will significantly impact body image dissatisfaction.
2. Self-esteem will significantly impact body image dissatisfaction.

Participants

The participants for the study were 190 female undergraduates of faculty of social sciences in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. A simple random sampling was first adopted. This was to ensure that every student was given an equal chance of being a participant. Furthermore, voluntary response sampling technique was then adopted to select the participants from the students. The student's age ranged from 17-30 years with a mean age of 20.43 years and a standard deviation of 2.22. Information on their demographics such as age and level were obtained using the questionnaire.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to gather information in this study. They include; social media engagement scale, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and body image concern inventory.

Procedure

The researchers adopted a simple random sampling technique to select the students, this is to give the students equal chance of being selected for the research. Furthermore, a voluntary response sampling was adopted because not all the students are willing to participate in the research. The aim and the nature of the study were explained to the participants, while being assured of confidentiality of their responses. Some students assisted with the distribution of the questionnaire and assistance was offered to the participants when required. The participants completed the questionnaire within 15-20 minutes. Completed questionnaire were collected immediately after they were filled by the participants. A total number of 200 questionnaires were distributed, 198 were returned while 190 were properly filled after a recheck and were used for data analysis.

Design and statistics

The design adopted for the study was cross-sectional research design. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed for the data analysis in addition to Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables

S/N	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Age	20.43	2.22	-				
2	Level of Study	2.21	1.04	.413***	-			
3	Social Media	34.17	9.55	-.060	-.013	-		
4	Self-esteem	21.55	4.490	-.019	.051	-.045	-	
5	Body Image	44.82	14.30	-.139*	-.017	.191**	-.437***	-

Note: *** $P < .001$; ** $P < .01$; * $P < .05$

Mean and standard deviation were computed for the data collected from the participants. Result of correlation indicated that age ($r = -.139$, $p < .05$), and self-esteem ($r = -.437$, $p < .001$) have negative relationship with body image dissatisfaction; while social media ($r = .191$, $p < .01$) have positive significant relationship with body image dissatisfaction; but level of study ($r = -.017$, $p > .05$) is not significantly related to body image dissatisfaction. This implies that increases in social media use increases body image dissatisfaction. Also, increase in self-esteem decreases body image dissatisfaction. Age was significantly related to level of study ($r = .413$, $p < .001$).

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting body image dissatisfaction from social media and self-esteem.

	R	R ²	R ² Δ	B	Beta(β)	T
Step 1	.15	.02	.02			
Age				-1.03	-.16*	-2.01*
Level of Study				.68	.05	.62
Step 2						
Social Media	.23**	.06**	.03**	.27	.18**	2.56**
Step 3						
Self-esteem	.49***	.24***	.19***	-1.39	-.44***	-6.82***

Note: *** $P < .001$; ** $P < .01$; * $P < .05$

Result of Hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that age ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction among the participants. Level of study ($\beta = .05$, $p > .05$) did not predict body image dissatisfaction. The demographic variables accounted for 2% non-significant change in predicting body image dissatisfaction ($R^2 = .02$, $p > .05$). Social media was included in step 2 of the equation; and it positively significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$). Hence, increases in social media use increases body image dissatisfaction. It accounted for 3% significant change as predictor of body image dissatisfaction ($R^2\Delta = .03$, $p < .01$). Self-esteem was added in step 3 of the equation; and it significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction negatively ($\beta = -.44$, $p < .05$). This means that increases in self-esteem decreases body image dissatisfaction. It accounted for 19% significant change as predictor of body image dissatisfaction ($R^2\Delta = .19$, $p < .001$).

Summary of Findings

1. Age and self-esteem have negative relationship with body image dissatisfaction; while social media usage positive significant relationship with body image dissatisfaction.
2. Age significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction.
3. Social media usage positively significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction.
4. Self-esteem negatively significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction.

Findings and implication of the study

The findings of the study have many practical implications. In the findings of the impact of social media usage on body image dissatisfaction, it revealed a positive significant impact on body image dissatisfaction. The practical implication for this finding is that students should as a matter of urgency reduce or limit their screen time and engage in more physical activities. The university management should provide engaging alternatives such as sports, clubs, workshops, and events that encourage offline socializing and skill-building. The government should also educate parents about the importance of monitoring their children's social media use, especially during crucial periods. This will in turn, reduce body image dissatisfaction.

In the second finding, self-esteem negatively significantly impact body image dissatisfaction. The practical implication of this findings is that University management should provide more efficient counselling departments where students with low self-esteem can discuss body image concerns confidentially. The university management should also organize workshops, seminars, or campaigns that focus on body positivity and self-acceptance. Encourage students

to appreciate diverse body types and challenge unrealistic beauty standards. This will increase self-esteem and thereby reduce body image dissatisfaction.

Limitations of the study

This study has obvious limitation, first and foremost, lack of finance to cover a greater sample, student's poor response to the questionnaires and also, the choice of institution was limited to one to avoid the long bureaucratic processes of obtaining permission and the financial involvement of using more than one institution.

Suggestions for Further Studies

In respect to further studies, the researchers makes the following suggestions. Future researchers should consider studying other variables such as personality traits, marital status and gender. Future researchers should carry out similar studies in other academic institution for a better generalization of findings. They should also increase the sample size.

Summary and Conclusion

It is crucial to educate female undergraduate on body image dissatisfaction and the negative impacts of social media usage. Female undergraduates are leaders of tomorrow and it is important that the school management organize workshops, lectures and conferences that will educate them that increased social media can influence body image. If we want to build healthy female undergraduates who have a healthy relationship with their bodies, the foundations need to be laid. female undergraduates should be reminded that the human body is formed by the thoughts, attitudes, feelings and beliefs that we have about our bodies and how we look. It can include one's shape, size, physical weight, and the way our body functions for one (Limme, 2014). Finally, female undergraduates need to pay attention on how they use social media.

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