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Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

Body-image Dissatisfaction of Female University Students and Psychological Preparedness for Beautification than Academic Achievement in Delta State

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Abstract

The study investigated body-image dissatisfaction of female university students and psychological preparedness for beautification than academic achievement in Delta State. Body-image dissatisfaction among female university students is a pressing concern that can have far-reaching consequences on their mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance or achievement. The pressure to conform to societal beauty standards can lead to a preoccupation with physical appearance, often at the expense of academic achievement. Three research questions were raised in the study. Survey design was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprised all students in Delta State Universities namely Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor. The population of the study is 97512 students (2023/2024 academic session). The sample for this study was 1000 respondents from the study area. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 1000 undergraduate students to participate in the study. Secondly simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used to select respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Body-image Dissatisfaction and Psychological Preparedness Questionnaire (BDPPQ). Simple percentage, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as benchmark to provide answers to the research questions. From the study, it is concluded that the relationship between body-image dissatisfaction, psychological preparedness for beautification and academic achievement among university students is complex and multifaceted. Female students who prioritize beautification over academic achievement are more likely to experience body-image dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and low academic achievement. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that government and policy-makers should incorporate programs that promote positive body-image, self-esteem and mental health into the curriculum. Create safe spaces for students to discuss body-image concerns and provide resources for students struggling with body-image dissatisfaction. More so offer counselling services that address body-image concern, low self-esteem and related mental health issues.

Keywords: Body-image Dissatisfaction, Psychological Preparedness, Academic Achievement, Nigeria



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

Introduction

Globally, female students continue to experience significant challenges due to body image dissatisfaction in academic environments (Bake, 2018). Body image dissatisfaction is a subjective evaluation of an individual's physical appearance and emotions. It is a multidimensional construct that describes internal, subjective representations of physical appearance and bodily experience, as well as attitude toward the body, size, form, and beauty (Firdevs & Sevil, 2015; Tykya & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). The concept of body image was first introduced in the 1930s, emphasizing its impact on an individual's physical and emotional well-being (Grogan, 2016). Forney and Ward (2016) noted that university students are particularly susceptible to body dissatisfaction.

Students who view their bodies unfavorably in relation to culturally esteemed characteristics may experience low self-esteem, a sense of inferiority, and decreased life satisfaction. They are more prone to experiencing eating disorders, depression, and anxiety (Makwana, Parkin & Farmer, 2018). At the height of dissatisfaction, this can severely hinder social, academic, and/or occupational functioning. Given that society currently associates attractiveness with thinness, it places a premium on these attributes while strongly rejecting their counterpart, fat. Studies have indicated that women have sought to alter their bodies to conform to these norms, although the ideal of female beauty varies according to selectively adopted aesthetical standards at any given time (Mamabolo, 2019).

Body image is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond cognitive constructs to encompass attitudes and interactions with others (Ayuba, Joseph, Kimong, & Teik Ee, 2018). The widespread association of physical attractiveness with positive personal qualities has become a pervasive cultural stereotype, transcending Western culture to become a global phenomenon. The ubiquitous presence of idealized bodies in mass media, advertising, and social media exerts a profound influence on the subconscious, leading individuals to accept the notion that "what is beautiful is good," with physical attractiveness frequently linked to success. Body image can be understood as a dynamic concept that encompasses the actual, perceived, and desired size of an individual (Prabhu & D'Cunha, 2018). These notions typically emerge during early to mid-teenage years and are commonly observed to shape individuals' lifestyles.

Historically, the human body's beauty has been a subject of considerable significance. Societal norms, media, social media, and popular culture often shape perceptions of beauty, influencing how female students view themselves. Dissatisfaction with body image among female university students is a critical concern with far-reaching implications for their mental well-being, self-esteem, and academic success. The pressure to conform to societal beauty standards can result in an excessive preoccupation with physical appearance, potentially at the expense of academic achievement.

Statement to the Problem

The proliferation of unrealistic beauty standards perpetuated by social media, societal expectations, and internalized beauty ideals has led to a disturbing trend among female university students. Many prioritize beautification over academic achievement, resulting in body-image dissatisfaction, poor mental health outcomes, and compromised academic performance. This problem is further exacerbated by the cultural emphasis on physical appearance, the objectification of women's bodies, and the lack of diverse and inclusive representations of beauty. As a result, female university students are increasingly struggling with low self-esteem, negative body image, and a diminished



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

sense of self-worth.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

1. What are the factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction of female university students in Delta State?
2. What are the psychological preparedness for beautification than academic achievement of female university students in Delta State?
3. What are the strategies for promoting positive body-image and academic achievement of female university students in Delta State?

Review

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on Objectification Theory propounded by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann (1997). Objectification Theory is a framework for understanding how the sexual objectification of woman can lead to negative mental health outcomes. It posits that women are often taught to view their bodies from an observer's perspective, which can lead to a number of negative consequences. This include body monitoring which can result in anxiety, shame and a diminished awareness of internal bodily states. Objectification Theory claims that societal beauty standards and the resulting self-objectification can have negative effects on female's mental health and physical health. The theory emphasizes that internalization of societal beauty standards, leading women to view themselves as object to be evaluated and judged.

Factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction

Body image dissatisfaction typically begins in childhood, continues through adolescence, and often escalates into perilous behavioral issues, such as depression and high anxiety (Kostanski & Gullone, 2018). Physical appearance, being one of the first noticed individual traits, profoundly affects social interactions. Appearance, particularly body image, has become a crucial construct in modern societies (Tiggeman, 2011). Bryman (2016) outline factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction as follows:

1. Body comparison: body comparison was one of the major factors leading to body image dissatisfaction among female students who compared themselves with their friends or other females around them.
2. Societal beauty standards: Societal beauty standards emerged as one of the leading factors to female student's body image dissatisfaction. The students indicated that the societal beauty standard put a lot of pressure on them when it comes to its definition of beauty. According to the participant's society beauty standards, it means being slender, tall, have a flat tummy and be light in complexion. These are the unrealistic beauty standards that set by the society.
3. Social media: Social media is one of the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction among female students. The perfect body pictures they see on Facebook or Instagram contribute to their body image dissatisfaction. Social media plays a huge part in a negative body image as models or actresses are seen as perfect slender, tall, no pimples just flawless, which creates this standard of what beautiful should look like.
4. Body shaming by family and friends: Friends and family members are among the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction. Hurtful comments made by family and friends about their body image affect them more.



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

Holland & Tiggemann (2016) noted that the media perpetuates unrealistic beauty standards, contributing to body dissatisfaction. Friends and peers can exert pressure to conform to certain beauty standards. Family members may inadvertently reinforce beauty standards, leading to body dissatisfaction. Individuals may internalize societal beauty standards, leading to self-criticism and body dissatisfaction.

Psychological preparedness for beautification

Engeln, Loach, Imundo & Zola (2020) define psychological preparedness for beautification as the mental and emotional state of being prepared to dedicate time, effort, and resources to enhancing one's physical appearance. An individual's desire to beautify themselves can be influenced by media representation, societal beauty standards, and cultural norms. Those with lower self-esteem and negative body-image may be more likely to seek beautification to improve their self-perception (Duchesne, et al., 2017). According to Bake (2018), the characteristics of psychological preparedness include:

1. Beauty as a source of self-worth: Some individuals may tie their self-worth to their physical appearance, leading to a preoccupation with beautification.
2. Fear of social rejection: The fear of being rejected or ostracized by peers can drive individuals to prioritize beautification over academic achievement.
3. Perfectionism: Some individuals may strive for an unattainable beauty ideal, leading to a never-ending pursuit of beautification.
4. Resilience and adaptability: Individuals who are resilient and adaptable may be better equipped to cope with the pressures of beautification.

Strategies for promoting positive body-image and academic achievement

Wang (2019) highlights strategies for promoting positive body-image as follows:

1. Acceptance: Acceptance as the first step to coping with body image dissatisfaction, because without acknowledging that body image, dissatisfaction is an issue for you, there is no way one can start coping or dealing with it.
2. Body positivity initiatives: Implement programs that promote body positivity, self-acceptance, and self-esteem.
3. Academic support services: Provide academic support services, such as tutoring and mentoring, to help students achieve their academic goals.
4. Media literacy programs: Offer media literacy programs that help students critically evaluate the media's portrayal of beauty standards.
5. Campus resources: Provide access to campus resources, such as counseling services and health centers, to support students' mental and physical health.

Methodology

Survey design was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprised all students in Delta State Universities namely Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor. The population of the study is 97512 students (2023/2024 academic session). The sample for this study was 1000 respondents from the study area. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 1000 undergraduate students to participate in the study. Secondly simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used to select respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Body-image Dissatisfaction and Psychological Preparedness Questionnaire (BDPPQ). The instrument is divided into part A and B. Part A is concerned with personal information about the respondents. Part B solicits responses



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

on all the research questions. Each item was anchored on a four rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was administered by the researcher and two research assistants who are familiar with the study area. Simple percentage, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as benchmark to provide answers to the research questions.

Table 1: Response to factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean	Remark
	Body comparison was one of the major factors leading to body image dissatisfaction among female students who compared themselves with their friends or other females around them.	443 (44.3%)	201 (20.1%)	95 (9.5%)	261 (26.1%)	2.92	.78	Agreed
	Societal beauty standards: Societal beauty standards emerged as one of the leading factors to female student's body image dissatisfaction.	255 (25.5%)	334 (33.4%)	196 (19.6%)	215 (21.5%)	2.94	.84	Agreed
	Social media is one of the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction among female students.	251 (25.1%)	300 (30%)	200 (20%)	249 (24.9%)	3.24	.77	Agreed
	Friends and family members are among the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction.	291 (29.1%)	286 (28.6%)	222 (22.2%)	201 (20.1%)	2.88	.77	Agreed
	Individuals may internalize societal beauty standards, leading to self-criticism and body dissatisfaction.	340 (34%)	327 (32.7%)	210 (21%)	123 (12.3%)	3.02	.84	Agreed



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

Table 1 shows the factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction of female university students in Delta State. From the remark, the respondents agreed all items.

Table 2: Response to the psychological preparedness for beautification than academic achievement

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean	Remark	
	Some individuals may tie their self-worth to their physical appearance, leading to a preoccupation with beautification.	320 (32%)	400 (40%)	100 (10%)	180 (18%)	3.16	.74	Agreed	
	The fear of being rejected or ostracized by peers can drive individuals to prioritize beautification over academic achievement.	280 (28%)	220 (22%)	440 (44%)	60 (6%)	2.96	.90	Agreed	
	Some individuals may strive for an unattainable beauty ideal, leading to a never-ending pursuit of beautification.	400 (40%)	130 (13%)	110 (11%)	366 (36.6%)	2.94	.89	Agreed	
	Individuals who are resilient and adaptable may be better equipped to cope with the pressures of beautification.	290 (29%)	285 (28.5%)	195 (19.5%)	230 (23%)	2.98	.82	Agreed	
	negative body-image may be more likely to seek beautification as a means of improving their self-perception	300 (30%)	527 (52.7%)	76 (7.6%)	95 (9.5%)	2.78	.79	Agreed	

Table 2 shows the psychological preparedness for beautification than academic achievement of female university students in Delta State. From the remark, the respondents agreed on all item.



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

Table 3: Response to strategies for promoting positive body-image and academic achievement

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean	Remark
	Acceptance as the first step to coping with body image dissatisfaction	500 (50%)	170 (17%)	220 (22%)	110 (11%)	3.16	.74	Agreed
	Implement programs that promote body positivity, self-acceptance, and self-esteem.	70(7%)	290 (29%)	440 (44%)	200 (20%)	2.36	.90	Disagreed
	Provide academic support services, such as tutoring and mentoring, to help students achieve their academic goals.	80 (8%)	300 (30%)	90 (9%)	530 (53%)	2.48	.79	Disagreed
	Offer media literacy programs that help students critically evaluate the media's portrayal of beauty standards.	230 (23%)	287 (28.7%)	193 (19.3%)	290 (29%)	2.98	.82	Agreed
	Provide access to campus resources, such as counseling services and health centers, to support students' mental and physical health.	400 (40%)	100 (10%)	140 (14%)	360 (36%)	2.94	.89	Agreed

Table 3 shows the strategies for promoting positive body-image and academic achievement of female university students in Delta State. From the remark, the respondents agreed on items 1, 4 and 5 while they disagreed with items 2 and 3.

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the analyzed data showed that the factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction of female university students in Delta State. This is in line with Bryman (2016) who outline factors that contribute to body-image dissatisfaction i.e body comparison was one of the major factors leading to body image dissatisfaction among female students who compared themselves with their friends or other females around



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

them. Societal beauty standards emerged as one of the leading factors to female student's body image dissatisfaction. Social media is one of the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction among female students. Friends and family members are among the leading factors to body image dissatisfaction.

It also revealed that the psychological preparedness for beautification than academic achievement of female university students in Delta State. This is in line with Engeln, Loach, Imundo & Zola (2020) psychological preparedness for beautification refers to the mental and emotional state of being prepared to invest time, effort and resources into enhancing one's physical appearance. Media representation, societal beauty standard and cultural norms can influence an individual's desire to beautify themselves. Individuals with lower self-esteem and negative body-image may be more likely to seek beautification as a means of improving their self-perception.

More so, it showed that the strategies for promoting positive body-image and academic achievement of female university students in Delta State. This is in line with Wang (2019) who highlights strategies for promoting positive body-image acceptance as the first step to coping with body image dissatisfaction. Implement programs that promote body positivity, self-acceptance, and self-esteem. Provide academic support services, such as tutoring and mentoring, to help students achieve their academic goals. Offer media literacy programs that help students critically evaluate the media's portrayal of beauty standards. Provide access to campus resources, such as counseling services and health centers, to support students' mental and physical health.

Conclusion

From the study, it is concluded that the relationship between body-image dissatisfaction, psychological preparedness for beautification and academic achievement among university students is complex and multifaceted. Female students who prioritize beautification over academic achievement are more likely to experience body-image dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and low academic achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that:

1. Incorporate programs that promote positive body-image, self-esteem and mental health into the curriculum.
2. Create safe spaces for students to discuss body-image concerns and provide resources for students struggling with body-image dissatisfaction.
3. Offer counseling services that address body-image concern, low self-esteem and related mental health issues.
4. There should be a routine psychological assessment in order to identify female students who are already having lowered self-esteem as a result of appearance related comparison and dissatisfaction with their looks.
5. There should be an intervention based-research in which students who are having reduced self-esteem due to body image dissatisfaction and appearance related comparison would be psychologically helped. Who knows, they may have body dysmorphic disorder.



Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

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Vol. 3 No. 2 (February) (2025)

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