

# Physical and Social Self-Concept and Lesbianism Tendencies Among Senior Secondary School Girls in Uvwie Local Government Area (L.G.A.) Of Delta State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the influence of physical and social self-concept on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie Local Government Area (L.G.A) of Delta State, Nigeria. The ex-post facto research design was used for this study. Three research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study namely: 1. Physical self-concept does not significantly influence lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls. 2. Social self-concept does not significantly influence lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A sample of 218 senior secondary school girls was randomly selected from a population of 2,112 senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria. The Self-concept and Lesbianism Tendency Questionnaire (SLTQ) was the instrument for data collection. It was face-validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and one expert in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was established through a trial test which yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability estimate of between 0.73 and 0.85 making the instrument to be deemed reliable. The independent t-test statistical technique was the statistical tool for data analysis. Findings revealed a significant influence of physical self-concept on lesbianism tendency and a significant influence of social self-concept on lesbianism tendency among the secondary school girls who participated in the study. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that professional counsellors should play a unique role in addressing issues related to sexual orientation while also making conscious efforts toward shaping the right behaviours.

**Keywords:** Lesbianism, Sexual orientation, Physical, Social, Self-concept, Nigeria.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Lesbianism was once considered an aberration by many in Nigeria who kicked against same-sex relationships. This clearly explains why Nigerians then, widely supported the "Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act" (SSMPA), which was signed into law in January 2014. This legislation condemned married same-sex couples to 14 years imprisonment. This then showed a general dislike in Nigeria for same-sex relationships in which lesbianism is a part.

Lesbianism is a sexual relationship between two females as against the natural male-female relationship. Due to

globalisation, it was observed to be very easy for Nigerian youth to copy lesbianism and other minority sexual behaviours through social media and other trending avenues which promote the foreign culture over and above the indigenous culture. Being popularly viewed among Nigerians as abnormal behaviour, lesbianism is assumed to be associated with personality maladjustment. Azubuko (2019) asserted that sexual act between people of the same sex is an abnormal behaviour that could lead to personality maladjustment.

Counsellors, the government, teachers, and society especially the Nigerian society have made serious efforts to curtail lesbianism. Despite these efforts, there seems to be a prevalence of lesbianism among secondary school students. For instance, despite the law and public outcry against same-sex relationships, lesbianism persists in Nigeria, and increasing evidence in recent times suggests that lesbianism is being practised by many female adolescents (Uzoeshi, 2019).

Many have wondered about the reason behind the apparent increase in lesbianism tendency. Sybil (2019) has attributed causes of lesbianism to the type of relationship parents have with each other, the non-acceptance of a child's sex by the parents, different environmental conditions for children within the same family, lack of love from parents, legitimization of girls, broken homes, undue interference, and rape at a young age. These reasons notwithstanding, the strong inclination towards lesbianism tendency especially among young people remains largely unexplained. The question that bugged the researchers was whether lesbianism tendency can be influenced by physical self-concept and social self-concept.

Physical self-concept refers to an individual's perception of himself in terms of physical ability and appearance. A suggestion has been put forward that physical ability includes physical strength and endurance while appearance refers to attractiveness (Caglar, 2009). Denwigwe and Uche (2020) opined that one's self-esteem (which is an aspect of the self-concept) depends largely on the attitude of others towards him.

Duruamaku-Dim (2019) assessed self-concept and lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls in Cross

River State, using a sample of 1,368 girls, selected through a multistage sampling approach. Data collection and analysis were done through the Self-concept and Lesbianism Tendency Questionnaire and inferential statistics, respectively. Findings revealed a significantly low level of lesbianism tendency among girls, a moderate positive and significant relationship ( $r=.423$ ,  $p<.05$ ) between physical self-concept and lesbianism tendency. Seigler (2015) in a survey, discovered that the rate of lesbianism in Nigeria is very low especially after the signing of the 14 years imprisonment act for the culprits, even though he also revealed a gradual increase in the acceptance of lesbians and bisexual people in Nigeria.

Gomillion and Giuliano (2011) examined the influence of the media on gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity (GLBI) using both survey and in-depth interview approach. One hundred and twenty-six GLB survey respondents in Texas indicated that the media influenced their self-realization, coming out, physical self-concept, and current identities by providing role models and inspiration. Also, 15 interviewees (6 women and 9 men) revealed that media role models serve as sources of pride, inspiration, and comfort. The findings revealed that increasing the availability of GLB role models in the media positively influences GLB identity. A significant relationship ( $r=0.76$ ) between physical self-concept and homosexuality identity (GLB) was also established. Lynch (2005) in a study of the relationship between gay and lesbian identity development and involvement in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender organizations, using a sample of 89 undergraduate and graduates who self-identified as gay, lesbian or questioning, discovered no significant relationship between physical self-concept and level of involvement in lesbianism, gay, and transgender activities. DClinsy, Eames, and DClinsy (2016) explored the relationships between self-compassion, well-being, physical self-concept, self-esteem, pride, and attachment to two minority-specific processes, lesbianism and gay. No relationship was found between physical self-concept and attachment to lesbianism.

Social self-concept is the perception individuals hold about their society, including the norms, values, ethos, and cultural systems. It refers to the parts of one's self-concept that are subject to how one relates with others and how other people behave towards one. Vincke, Van Heeringen, Coyle, and Wilkinson (2002) investigated a group of 197 gay and lesbian youth in a longitudinal study and found that social self-concept is related to homosexual desires such that when youth's environment, such as family, friends, and confidants are aware of their sexual identity and are supportive and nurturing, gay and lesbian youth scored lower on self-concept measures. Hossain and Ferreira (2019) in their study, found a significant relationship between social self-concept and gay and lesbianism tendencies. Duruamaku-Dim (2019) revealed among others a weak, positive, and significant correlation ( $r=.289$ ,  $p<.05$  between social self-concept and lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls. The study sought to fill the gap of the dearth of research findings on this issue from Nigeria, having recommended that activities be put

in place to encourage the development of good physical and social self-concept which may result in appropriate sexual orientation. The aim of this study, therefore, was to determine whether physical and social self-concept could influence lesbianism tendencies.

#### *Statement of the problem*

The natural marital relationship has always been heterosexualism (a sexual relationship between a male and a female). However, some individuals prefer lesbianism, which is a sexual relationship between two females. Research has indicated some bad habits that are linked to lesbianism, such as the habit of smoking cocaine and the use of marijuana, alcoholism, and alcohol abuse. These habits are more prevalent among lesbians and bisexual women than heterosexual women. They are known to cause health hazards such as various forms of cancer, and poor conditions of the lungs and the hearts, which primarily cause death among women.

The researchers in this study have been perturbed about whether self-concept can influence lesbianism tendencies among secondary school girls. Therefore, the problem of this research is to investigate whether physical and social self-concepts can influence lesbianism among secondary school students in Uvwie L.G.A of Delta State, Nigeria, to proffer good recommendations.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

A theoretical framework that can inform the hypotheses about the research on physical and social self-concepts and lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A of Delta State, Nigeria is the Social Comparison Theory proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954. The basic tenet of this theory is that people evaluate their abilities and attitudes in relation to those of others in a process that plays a significant role in self-image and subjective wellbeing. Cherry (2022) cited Festinger (1954) as suggesting that people have an innate drive to evaluate themselves often in comparison to others. Social comparison simply means analyzing the self in relation to others. Festinger theorized that people engage in the comparison process as a way of establishing a benchmark by which they can make accurate evaluations of themselves. These comparisons with other people are relied on to accurately assess their own abilities, traits, and attitudes. In cases where people's comparisons are not effective, they might find themselves getting into situations that are too difficult or complex for their current skill levels.

The theory proposed three types of social comparisons: i. upward social comparison means to compare oneself with someone assumed to be better than oneself. It could be in terms of having more wealth or material possessions, higher social status, or better physical appearance; ii. downward social comparison or comparing oneself with a person judged not to be as good as oneself; and iii. lateral social comparison or comparing oneself with another who is seen to be equal.

The theory assumes traditionally that upward comparisons promote a sense of inferiority and thus are associated with negative changes in self-concept (the contrast effect). Recent research however suggests that depending on the circumstances, upward comparisons may instead promote inspiration and be associated with positive changes in self-concept (the assimilation effect).

This theory is of relevance to this study in that when individuals compare themselves to others as a way of measuring their personal development or to motivate themselves to improve, and consequently develop a more positive self-concept comparisons can be beneficial. When girls compare themselves in terms of sexual orientation to their peers, they may take to the sexual orientations of their peers like lesbianism. It means that students may assume the sexual orientations of their lesbian peers to whom they have compared themselves and feel they have better self-concepts.

### Hypotheses

1. Physical self-concept does not significantly influence lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls.
2. Social self-concept does not significantly influence lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The ex-post facto research design was employed for the study. Using the stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 218 senior secondary school girls from Uvwie Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria, was selected from a total population of 2,112 senior secondary school girls.

The instrument for data collection was the Self-concept and Lesbianism Tendency Questionnaire, comprising two sections, A and B. Section A was used to collect demographic data. In contrast, section B, with 30 items, was used to collect data on the study's variables. Each of the study's independent variables (namely physical and social self-concept) was measured with five items. The items were measured using a four-point scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) and weighted 4,3,2 and 1, respectively, for the positively worded items. The negatively worded items were weighted 1,2,3,4. A respondent was expected to have 20 as the highest score and five as the least. There does get the average score, and the following computation was done:

$$4 \times 5 + 3 \times 5 + 2 \times 5 + 1 \times 5 = 20 + 15 + 10 + 5 = 50.$$

Note that five items measured each independent variable, so  $50/5 = 10$ . Based on the assessment, the respondent with a score of 9 and below was categorized as low. While one with a score of 10 and above was categorized as high.

The face validity of the instrument was established by submitting it to two experts in measurement and evaluation

and an expert in guidance and counselling who vetted it and certified that it is face-validated for the study.

To establish the instrument's reliability, a trial test was done using 20 students drawn from two secondary schools in Uvwie L.G.A of Delta State who had similar characteristics to the study participants but were not part of the sample.

The trial test yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability estimate of between 0.73 and 0.85 for the instrument, making it deemed reliable. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of some trained research assistants. An independent t-test was used as a statistical tool for data analysis.

## III. RESULTS

Each hypothesis was restated, and the results of the data analysis were presented and interpreted.

Hypothesis 1: Physical self-concept has no significant influence on lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A of Delta State.

Independent variable: Physical self-concept (High and low)

Dependent Variable: Lesbianism tendency

Statistical tool: Independent t-test

The independent t-test was used as the statistical tool to test this hypothesis because the independent variable was physical self-concept. It was categorized into two independent groups, high and low, depending on whether the respondent's score was above or below the average score already computed. At the same time, the dependent variable, the lesbianism concept, was measured continuously. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance, and the result of this analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Independent t-test analysis of the influence of physical self-concept on lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls

Variable: Physical self-concept	N	X̄	SD	t-value Sig
High	120	16.06	6.059	
				10.776** .000
low	98	25.99	25.99	

\*\* Significant at .05 level; df=216; Mean difference=9.931.

The analysis results in Table 1 revealed that the mean score of lesbianism tendency of senior secondary school girls with high physical self-concept was 6.059. In contrast, those with low physical self-concept had a mean score of 25.99. This result implies that lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls is greater among those with low physical self-concept than those with high physical self-concept, with a mean difference of 9.93. Table 1 further revealed a p-value of .000, which is less than the .05 level of

significance at 216 degrees of freedom. Based on this, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a significant influence of physical self-concept on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Social self-concept does not significantly influence lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls.

Independent variable: social self-concept (High and low)

Dependent Variable: Lesbianism tendency

Statistical tool: Independent t-test

The independent t-test was used as the statistical tool to test this hypothesis because the independent variable, social self-concept, was categorized into two independent groups, high and low, depending on whether the respondent's score was above or below average. In contrast, the dependent variable, the lesbianism concept, was measured continuously. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance, and the result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Independent t-test analysis of the influence of social self-concept on lesbianism tendencies among senior secondary school girls

Variable: Social self- concept	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value Sig
High	109	14.86	4.364	13.537** .000
low	109	26.18	7.562	

\*\* Significant at .05 level; df=216; Mean difference=11.321.

The analysis results in Table 2 revealed that the mean score of lesbianism tendency of senior secondary school girls with high social self-concept was 14.86. In contrast, those with low social self-concept had a mean score of 26.18. This result implies that lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls is greater among those with low social self-concept than those with high social self-concept, averaging 11.32. Table 2 further revealed a p-value of .000, which is less than the .05 level of significance at 216 degrees of freedom. Based on this, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a significant influence of social self-concept on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria.

The following findings were made after the analysis of data:

1. Physical self-concept has a significant influence on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria.
2. Social self-concept has a significant influence on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result from hypothesis 1 shows that physical self-concept significantly influences lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. Girls with high physical self-concept had lower levels of lesbianism tendency than those with low physical self-concept. It is believed that one's perception of himself may affect his disposition and the things he accepts. So, a girl with a high positive physical self-concept may see herself as being too beautiful to be used by a fellow woman for sexual satisfaction. The finding from this hypothesis is in line with previous research finding that there is a significant relationship between physical self-concept and homosexual identity (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). It is also consistent with Duruamaku-Dim's (2019) finding that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between physical self-concept and lesbianism tendency. However, it is not consistent with the findings of earlier research that there is no significant relationship between physical self-concept and attachment to lesbianism (Lynch 2005, DClInPsy, Eames, and DClInPsy, 2016).

The result from hypothesis 2 revealed a significant influence of social self-concept on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State. Senior secondary school girls with high social self-concept demonstrated more favourable attitudes towards lesbianism than those with low social self-concept. This finding suggests that an individual's view of the social activities around her may affect her chances of becoming a lesbian. This finding aligns with Duruamaku-Dim's (2019) finding of a weak, positive, and significant correlation between social self-concept and lesbianism tendencies among girls in senior secondary schools in Cross River State.

#### *The counselling implication*

Findings from this study imply that their physical and social self-concepts can influence the sexual orientation of learners. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that students, predominantly female secondary school students, are encouraged to develop appropriate self-concepts that will enable them to withstand the pressure arising from sexual orientation and avoid lesbianism. The counsellors should advocate for the need to include issues on learners' sexuality in the school curriculum. Counselling for healthy self-concept and normal sexual orientation is critical. It demands that the counsellor is versed in issues about sexuality, is skilled in preventing a negative and judgmental atmosphere, and is ready to discuss issues related to lesbianism.

The counsellor should consider the peculiar feelings already developed by the lesbian, such as feeling different from others, distrust, worthlessness, fear, and embarrassment induced by myths about anti-lesbianism and negative labels on lesbianism by the society. Counsellors should be mindful that lesbians may become depressed, alcoholics, and drug addicts and may develop suicidal tendencies as they feel



alienated by society. Efforts should therefore be geared toward helping female students to avoid lesbianism tendency.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The ex-post facto research design was used to determine the influence of self-concept on lesbianism tendency among secondary school girls, and the stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 218 senior secondary school girls from Uvwie Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was the Self-concept and Lesbianism Tendency Questionnaire. The independent t-test was the statistical tool for data analysis. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is a significant influence of physical and social self-concepts on lesbianism tendency among senior secondary school girls in Uvwie L.G.A. of Delta State, Nigeria. Senior girls with low physical and social self-concepts are more likely to become lesbians than those with high physical and social self-concepts.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Counsellors should set up orientation programs and sensitization campaigns for all students through which they communicate to students the dangers of not engaging in proper sexual orientations.
2. One-on-one counselling should be used to identify female students who are already into lesbianism and intending ones to counsel them on appropriate sexual attitudes.
3. Counsellors should ensure that activities are put in place to encourage the development of good physical and social self-concept.

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