

# Social Media Use as a Predictor of Body Image and Self-Esteem among Undergraduates in Selected Universities in Osun State

Aderonke A. Akintola

Department of Psychology, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8100121>

Received: 28 September 2024; Accepted: 07 October 2024; Published: 08 November 2024

## ABSTRACT

The resultant effect on body image and self-esteem from social media use among undergraduates is of growing concern as digital platforms become increasingly integral to daily life. There is a dearth of literature combining these variables among undergraduates in Nigeria. This study therefore sought to investigate how social media affects young adults' perceptions of their bodies and self-worth among undergraduates in Osun State. The study utilized a cross-sectional research design with data collected using self-report measurement from 400 undergraduates (Male = 127, female = 273). They were selected using multistage sampling techniques. Six hypotheses were generated and tested with simple linear regression, independent t-test and One-Way ANOVA. Results revealed that 54.8 % of the undergraduates viewed their body image favorably, while 55% had high self-esteem. Social media use significantly predicted body image perception of emerging adults and their self-esteem ( $\beta = .14, t = 2.91, p < .01$ ) ( $\beta = .13, t = 2.54, p < .01$ ), [ $R = .04, R^2 = .00$ ] respectively, suggesting that digital engagement can enhance self-view for some individuals. Gender differences were noted, with females reporting more positive body image compared to the males  $t(398) = -2.27, p < .05$ , and higher self-esteem than the males  $t(398) = -2.10, p < .05$ . It was recommended that programs such as workshops, counseling sessions, and peer support groups aimed at enhancing self-esteem through positive social interactions and self-reflection should be encouraged.

**Keywords:** Social media use, Body image, Self-esteem, Gender, Osun State Undergraduates

## INTRODUCTION

Body image is the way a person perceives, thinks and feels about their body's appearance and functionality. A person's body image is subjective, and most times doesn't entirely have to do with how the person's body actually looks. Rather, it involves the mental image the person holds of their body (size, shape, and attractiveness), and the emotions that accompany it. This mental image is in turn influenced by the societal standards of beauty, media representations of 'what beauty should look like', and personal experiences of the individual. Body image is a multidimensional construct encompassing self-perceptions and attitudes regarding one's physical appearance (Oshana, 2021). Body image is shaped by the cognitive, emotional, perceptual and behavioral domains which affect a person's mood, physical experience and environment (Toselli et al., 2023).

This explains that the concept of body image goes beyond just physical appearance. It goes further to encompass not just how a person looks physically, but also how they perceive themselves and their attitudes towards their physical appearance. These attitudes can include feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction and even the general acceptance of one's body. A positive body image is characterized by acceptance and satisfaction with one's physical appearance and it tends to leave an individual with a high self-esteem, because of belief in their worth and value. However, an individual with a negative body image, characterized by insecurity and dissatisfaction with his or her appearance, may start to experience a decline in their levels of self-esteem, viewing themselves as either totally unworthy or not worthy enough.

Jiotsa et al., (2021) stated that body image is experienced on a continuum from positive to negative. An individual with a positive body image would reflect a healthy acceptance and satisfaction with their appearance. People with negative body image feel dissatisfied with their appearance, and perceive a discrepancy between their

current appearance and ideal appearance, and, the more dissatisfied a person feels about their body, the higher their risk of experiencing low self-esteem (Quitkat et al., 2019). Xie, (2024) also concluded that having a negative perception of one's body image is shaped by an increase in media exposure, but not as impactful as the degree of exposure to appearance-specific media i.e. that a higher degree of exposure to appearance-specific media, correlates to a high impact on the way a person perceives their body image, and that this is often conveyed in a negative light (Jiotsa et al., 2021). The media persistently disseminates powerful messages about appearance that modify cultural and societal beliefs, informing individuals of how they should look and behave (Jiotsa et al., 2021; Xie, 2024).

In recent years, the rapid proliferation of social media platforms has completely transformed how images and narratives related to body ideals are disseminated. Through carefully curated posts, meticulously filtered images, and digitally altered representations of beauty, social media presents a distorted and often unattainable portrayal of the "perfect" body. This constant exposure to unrealistic standards has a profound impact on individuals, evoking a deep sense of inadequacy, dissatisfaction, and self-objectification (Gattino et al., 2023). One of the key mechanisms through which social media platforms contribute to these negative effects is by facilitating constant comparison and peer evaluation. Users are constantly bombarded with a never-ending stream of images showcasing the supposed "ideal" body, leading to an instinctive inclination to compare oneself to these images which almost always results in individuals feeling as though they fall short to the beauty standards set by social media (Winn & Cornelius 2020)). The ceaseless search for an unreachable physical ideal, which is supported by social media platforms can intensify feelings of body dissatisfaction and significantly contribute to the development of negative body image perceptions that undergraduates may have.

Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation and perception that individuals have of their worth, competence, and value. This encompasses the beliefs and feelings that a person has about themselves, and the extent to which they consider themselves capable, worthy, and deserving of love and respect from others. It is the regard that individuals have for themselves that then exerts an influence on how they permit others to treat them. According to Kendra (2023), self-esteem is defined as an individual's appraisal of his or her value. It also refers to a person's subjective judgement of his or her worth as a human being (Isserow, 2023). According to Singh (2018), since the terms are frequently used interchangeably, it is crucial to distinguish between self-esteem and the more generic term self-concept.

Baumeister (2018) opined that self-esteem is the emotional reaction people feel when they consider and assess various aspects of themselves, whereas self-concept is the entirety of cognitive beliefs people have about themselves; it is everything that is known about the self and includes things like name, race, likes, dislikes, beliefs, values, appearance descriptions, such as height and weight. Even though self-esteem and self-concept are linked, it is possible for someone to hold objectively good beliefs (such as acknowledging their skills in athletics, academics, or arts) and yet not truly like who they are (Smith & Mackie, 2021). Many researchers have studied the relationship between social media use, especially Facebook, and self-esteem, and they have found that low self-esteem is related to intense social media usage and people who have low self-esteem tend to use social media sites to increase their self-image and self-esteem (Taylor-Jackson & Moustafa, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023).

Social networking sites/social media platforms were defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a Public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007 as cited in Florida State University Libraries Guide, 2024). Some popular social media platforms include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Myspace, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Google Plus, among others (Kemp, 2023). Undergraduates, that is imagined adults between the ages of 18-29, are students pursuing their first degree at a college or university, typically leading to a bachelor's degree. These students engage in a broad range of academic coursework designed to provide foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills in various disciplines. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), undergraduate education encompasses a diversity of programs and experiences, tailored to prepare students for professional careers or advanced studies in graduate school. This educational phase usually lasts between three to four years, depending on the country and specific institution's curriculum structure. Undergraduates are amongst the population of individuals that make use of social media the most, and sometimes, in a problematic way. In order to establish

the level of attachment of undergraduates to social media, LiveScience conducted a study which involved asking selected undergraduates to give up all social media for a day. According to the study, social competence of the students is exhibited on social media and there is a continued adherence of the young population of Nigerians to online platforms for social interactions and relevance at the expense of natural physical dialogues (Adetoro & Okike, 2022).

Social media platforms have totally changed the definition of body ideals, presenting an unattainable and often distorted portrayal of beauty. Through curated posts, filtered images, and the perpetuation of unrealistic physical standards, these networking sites/platforms create a pervasive culture of comparison. Users are most times exposed to a multitude of idealised body images, leading to upward social comparisons and an increased likelihood of perceiving their bodies as falling short of these unrealistic standards. Social media platforms not only shape body image perceptions but also impact self-esteem. While social media can provide a platform for self-expression and social support, its influence on self-esteem is complex. On one hand, receiving positive feedback, validation, and likes on social media can enhance an individual's self-esteem. However, the reliance on external validation and the constant exposure to carefully curated images can also lead to a fragile sense of self-esteem that is contingent upon social media approval.

It is important to understand the intricate relationship that exists between social media use, body image, and self-esteem among undergraduates. By comprehensively examining these dynamics, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which the use of social media influences body image perceptions and self-esteem among undergraduates.

Age and gender also significantly influence body image and self-esteem, with notable differences observed across various stages of life. Research indicates that adolescents and young adults are particularly susceptible to body image concerns, often driven by societal standards and media portrayals, which can adversely affect their self-esteem (Taylor-Jackson & Moustafa, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Gender plays a crucial role, as women typically express greater levels of discontent with their bodies compared to men, due to societal pressures emphasizing thinness and appearance (Fischetti et al., 2019; Quittkat et al., 2019). However, men are increasingly experiencing body image issues, particularly related to muscularity. Additionally, older adults may experience a shift in body image and self-esteem due to age-related changes in appearance and health, although these concerns can vary significantly between genders (Tiggemann & Lynch, 2020). Overall, understanding the intersection of age and gender is essential in addressing body image and self-esteem issues effectively when considering social media use among college students.

## Statement of the Problem

As digital spaces increasingly shape societal norms and beauty standards, there is a pressing need to understand the nuanced ways in which social media may contribute to the development of distorted body image perceptions and impact the overall self-esteem of undergraduates. By delving into this multifaceted issue, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between social media use and the psychological well-being of undergraduates in selected universities in Osun state. The influence of socio-demographics like gender, and age on body image and self-esteem of these students will also be examined. Hitherto, most research in Nigeria has concentrated on the body image as a determining factor for the development of certain negative occurrences such as eating disorders without necessarily considering factors that could lead to individuals having a negative perception of their bodies in the first place. This study seeks to give more concentration to this aspect thereby filling this gap. Based on the foregoing, the following were hypothesized:

## Research Hypotheses

1. Social media use will significantly predict undergraduates' perception of body image and self-esteem in Osun State.
2. The undergraduates' perception of body image and self-esteem will be significantly predicted by their age and gender.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design and Participants

This study adopted an ex post facto cross-sectional design. In this study, the independent variable is social media use, while the dependent variables are body image and self-esteem. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 400 participants (127 males = 31.8% and 273 females = 68.3%) from a target population of 32,000 college students. Three universities were selected which were representative of Osun State universities; one federal university within the state, one owned by the state and the third was a private university. Yarmane (1967) formula for sample size determination was used to arrive at the sample size. With the multistage, the stratified sampling technique was first used to group the universities in Osun State into federal, state, and private universities. There are twelve universities in Osun state. Two of these are federal universities, two are state universities, and eight are private universities. The simple random technique by balloting was further used to select one federal university, one state university, and one private university from the group. Then, the proportionate sampling technique was adopted to determine how many undergraduates would be selected from each university. Thereafter, the simple random technique was adopted again to select three faculties from each selected university. Three faculties were selected from the thirteen faculties in federal university, three from the seven in the state owned, and three from the eight faculties in the private. Finally, the systematic sampling technique was used to select the samples from each university.

### Procedure

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained an official identification and request letter from their institution, which was addressed to the management of the selected schools. Once the necessary permissions were granted, the researcher proceeded to distribute the questionnaires to the participants. To establish rapport and ensure clarity about the research objectives, the participants were provided with general information regarding the study. Moreover, the researcher emphasised the confidentiality of the gathered information throughout the entire research process. The participants filled out the questionnaires. Across the three schools, a total of four hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed, four hundred and ten were retrieved from the respondents and four hundred questionnaires were found valid, and made use of for the research, yielding an impressive response rate of 95.24%. Finally, the filled questionnaires were subjected to thorough data analysis.

### Instrument

A two-section questionnaire was used for data collection. Demographic information (gender, age, academic level, which social media platforms used, estimated hours spent on social media per day, and to what extent access internet is had) were captured in section A and section B measured social media use by employing Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents. The SMES-A was developed and validated by Ni et al., (2020). This 11-item scale is measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "undecided," 4 = "agree," 5 = "strongly agree."), and it consists of three factors: affective engagement, behavioural engagement, and cognitive engagement. Sample items include "I often use social media to relax in the habit", "I get fulfilled from the attention and comments of others on social media", and "Compared to the real world, social media makes me feel more comfortable". It is a reliable and valid measurement for evaluating social media engagement among this demographic. The SMES-A has shown satisfactory test-retest reliability of above .68, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the three factors ranged from .45 to .52. The reliability result for this test was .79. High scores imply high socialisation with the use of social media by the respondents.

The section also contains the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults BESAA was developed by Mendelson et al., (2001). This 23-item Body-Esteem scale is measured on a five-point Likert scale (0 = "Never," 1 = "Seldom," 2 = "Sometimes," 3 = "Often," 4 = "Always."), and it assesses three aspects of body esteem in adolescents and adults: general feelings about appearance, weight satisfaction, and others' evaluation of one's body and appearance. Sample items include "Other people consider me good looking", "I'm pretty happy about the way I look", and "Weighing myself depresses me". The subscales have high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha for each ranging from .68 to .85. The test-retest reliability of each ranged from .57 to .68, with

a significance level of  $P < 0.01$ . The results showed .87 and .86 respectively. This indicates a high level of internal consistency or reliability for the scale. High score implies a positive body image and low score implies a negative body image.

The last measurement in the section was the Index of Self-Esteem (ISE) which was developed by Hudson (1982). It measures the degree, severity, or magnitude of a problem the individual has with self-esteem. The ISE consists of 25 items and results in two cutting scores. It is scored on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "None of the time," 2 = "very rarely," 3 = "A little of the time," 4 = "Some of the time," 5 = "A good part of the time," 6 = "Most of the time," 7 = "All of the time."). Sample items include "I feel ugly", "My friends think very highly of me", and "I feel like a wallflower when I go out". The first score is 30 (+/-5), and the second score is 70. The ISE has an excellent internal consistency of .90, as well as a high test-retest reliability of .60. High scores here imply high self-esteem, and low scores imply low self-esteem.

### Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS version 26). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected from the respondents. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to establish relationships among the study variables. Hypotheses one to four were tested using simple linear regression, while hypotheses five and six were tested using independent t-test.

## RESULTS

### Analysis on Prevalence

Table 1 Frequency, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation Showing the Prevalence of the Study Variables

| Study Variables  | N   | Mean   | SD    | High |      |     |      |
|------------------|-----|--------|-------|------|------|-----|------|
|                  |     |        |       | F    | %    | F   | %    |
| Body Image       | 400 | 66.57  | 14.12 | 181  | 45.3 | 219 | 54.8 |
| Self-Esteem      | 400 | 121.49 | 20.65 | 180  | 45.0 | 220 | 55.0 |
| Social Media Use | 400 | 35.42  | 35.42 | 175  | 43.8 | 225 | 56.5 |

It was observed in Table 4.2 that 54.8% of undergraduates measured high on body image, while 45.3% had low body image. It was also observed that 55.0% of undergraduates measured high on self-esteem, while 45.0% measured low on the construct. 56.3% of undergraduates measured high on social media use, while 43.8% of measured low on social media use.

### Test of Relationships

Table 4.3 Correlation Analysis Showing Relationship across the Study Variables

| Variables                     | 1      | 2    | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-------------------------------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender                     | 1      |      |       |       |       |   |   |   |
| 2. Age                        | -.19** | 1    |       |       |       |   |   |   |
| 3. Social Media Duration      | -.11*  | .13* | .18** | 1     |       |   |   |   |
| 4. Internet Accessed Duration | -.08   | .11* | .30** | .31** | 1     |   |   |   |
| 5. Social Media Use           | .03    | .02  | -.03  | .13** | .15** | 1 |   |   |

|                |      |       |      |      |      |       |       |        |
|----------------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| 6. Body Image  | .11* | .04   | -.08 | -.07 | -.01 | .14** | 1     |        |
| 7. Self-Esteem | .11* | .06   | -.00 | -.06 | -.01 | .13*  | .53** | 1      |
| <b>Mean</b>    | -    | 19.65 | -    | 6.98 | 2.37 | 35.42 | 66.57 | 121.49 |
| <b>SD</b>      | -    | 2.60  | -    | 4.62 | .64  | 7.80  | 14.12 | 20.65  |

The result indicated that social media use had a significant positive relationship with body image  $r(398) = .14, p < .01$ . This implied that when social media use increases, there tend to be an observed positive image perception. The relationship between social media use and self-esteem was also positively significant  $r(398) = .13, p < .05$ . By implication, when social media use increases, there also tends to be an increase in the individual's self-esteem. Further observations revealed a positive relationship between body image and self-esteem  $r(398) = .53, p < .01$ . This was in such a way that an increase in the positive perception of body image relates to an increase in self-esteem. Among the observed socio-demographics, it was only gender that had a significant relationship with body image  $r(398) = .11, p < .05$  and self-esteem  $r(398) = .11, p < .05$ . Females tend to display a more positive body image, while they also scored higher on measure of self-esteem compared to their male counterparts.

### Test of Hypotheses

Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Showing the Prediction of Social Media Use on Body Image

| Predictor        | $\beta$ | T      | p     | R   | R <sup>2</sup> | df     | F       |
|------------------|---------|--------|-------|-----|----------------|--------|---------|
| Social Media Use | .14     | 2.91** | < .01 | .14 | .02            | 1, 398 | 8.449** |

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01, N=400$

It was indicated that social media use predicted body image ( $\beta = .14, t = 2.91, p < .01$ ). This was with 2% variance attributed to the variance observed in body image. This implies that the more adolescents use social media, the more positive they will evaluate their body image. The result confirmed the formulated hypothesis 1 and it was accepted.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Showing the Prediction of Social Media Use on Self-esteem

| Predictor        | $\beta$ | t     | p     | R   | R <sup>2</sup> | df     | F     |
|------------------|---------|-------|-------|-----|----------------|--------|-------|
| Social Media Use | .13     | 2.54* | < .05 | .13 | .02            | 1, 398 | 6.47* |

Note: \*  $p < 0.05, N=400$

It was noted that social media use predicted self-esteem ( $\beta = .13, t = 2.54, p < .01$ ). The result was such that the self-esteem of undergraduates increases significantly with an increase in social media use. This was with a 2% variance attributed to the variance observed in self-esteem. By implication, about 98% variance in self-esteem is based on some other variables outside the one studied. The result confirmed the formulated hypothesis 2 and it was accepted.

Table 5. Independent t-test Showing Gender Differences on Body Image

| Dependent Variable | Gender | N   | Mean  | SD    | df  | t     | P     |
|--------------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Body Image         | Male   | 127 | 64.23 | 14.42 | 398 | -2.27 | < .05 |
|                    | Female | 273 | 67.65 | 13.87 |     |       |       |

It was noted in Table 5 that gender had a significant influence on body image  $t(398) = -2.27, p < .05$  such that

female undergraduates (M=67.65, SD= 12.87) had a more positive perception of their body image compared to the male undergraduates (M= 64.23, SD= 14.42).

Table 6. Independent t-test Showing Gender Differences on Self-Esteem

| Dependent Variable | Gender | N   | Mean   | SD    | df  | T     | P     |
|--------------------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Self-Esteem        | Male   | 127 | 118.31 | 20.65 | 398 | -2.10 | < .05 |
|                    | Female | 273 | 122.96 | 20.52 |     |       |       |

The result showed that gender had a significant difference in the self-esteem of undergraduate  $t(398) = -2.10, p < .05$ . This was in such a way that female undergraduates (M=122.96, SD= 20.52) measured higher on self-esteem compared to male undergraduates (M= 118.31, SD= 20.65).

## DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that social media use significantly predicts body image among adolescents, accounting for 2% of the variance. This implies a positive relationship between social media engagement and adolescents' body image perception, suggesting that the more they use social media, the more positively they evaluate their body image. This finding confirms the hypothesis and challenges the common belief that social media negatively impacts body image, indicating that it may enhance self-perception for some adolescents. In contrast, previous studies found that exposure to idealised images on social media leads to body dissatisfaction (Aparicio et al.2019; Jiotsa et al., 2021). These studies suggest that unrealistic beauty standards promoted by media result in negative body image outcomes. The divergence in findings may be due to differences in social media platforms, content consumed, or individual characteristics of the adolescents. It is possible that adolescents in the current study engage with social media in ways that promote body positivity and self-acceptance. This highlights the complexity of social media's influence on body image, suggesting that its impact can vary depending on the context and nature of use.

The hypothesis that social media use will significantly predict self-esteem among these undergraduates, was also confirmed. This result suggests that an increase in social media use corresponds to a significant increase in self-esteem among undergraduate students. The current findings support the perspective that social media use has a generally positive effect on psychological well-being, as posited by Vaingankar et al., (2022). Similarly, Orth and Robins, (2022) found that lonely individuals often use social media to seek emotional support, make friends, and experience greater satisfaction online compared to the real world. This study aligns with these findings, demonstrating that increased social media use is associated with higher self-esteem among undergraduates, suggesting that social media can provide a platform for positive reinforcement and social connections. On the other hand, the second perspective highlighted by Vahedi and Halevi, (2019) presents a contrasting view, suggesting that excessive use of social media can lead to negative outcomes such as missed classes, work troubles, deteriorating real-world relationships, and increased depression and loneliness. However, the current study's findings do not support this perspective, indicating that moderate and positive engagement with social media can enhance self-esteem and overall psychological well-being among undergraduates. In conclusion, the current study corroborates the findings of Saiphoo et al., (2019) by showing a positive relationship between social media use and self-esteem, supporting the notion that social media can have beneficial effects on psychological well-being, while not aligning with the perspective that associates social media use with negative psychological outcomes.

It was hypothesized also that gender will predict body image among the students. Specifically, female undergraduates demonstrated a more positive perception of their body image compared to male undergraduates. This disparity suggests that gender plays a crucial role in shaping body image perceptions among young adults in a university setting. These results align with a few previous research indicating that females report more positive body image compared to males, possibly influenced by societal and cultural norms, media portrayals, and peer comparisons. Conversely, quite a number of recent studies have contested these findings, suggesting that societal changes in body image norms and increasing awareness of body positivity may mitigate gender differences in body image perception, especially among younger cohorts (e.g., Swami et al., 2020). These

contrasting perspectives highlight the complex interplay of gender, social influences, and individual experiences in shaping body image perceptions among university students, necessitating further exploration in diverse cultural and demographic contexts to fully understand these dynamics.

The study found a significant gender difference in self-esteem among undergraduate students as well, showing that female undergraduates reported higher levels of self-esteem compared to male undergraduates. This result aligns with existing research that has often shown variations in self-esteem across genders, with females tending to report higher levels. Previous studies, such as those by Bleidorn et al., (2016) and Casale et al., (2020), have similarly identified higher self-esteem among female undergraduates, attributing this trend to factors such as social comparison processes, gender role expectations, and coping mechanisms. However, contrasting findings also exist; for instance, Roberts and Waters, (2019) have reported no significant gender differences in self-esteem among college students in his study, suggesting that cultural shifts and evolving social norms may influence these outcomes differently over time. Thus, while the current study underscores a significant gender disparity in self-esteem among undergraduates, it is essential to consider these varied perspectives from past research to better understand the nuanced factors at play in self-esteem differences across genders in educational settings.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between social media use, gender, body image, and self-esteem among emerging adults who are adolescents; revealing a significant positive association between social media use and body image perception among adolescents. Contrary to widespread concerns about social media's negative impact on body image, this study suggests that increased social media engagement may enhance body image perception for some adolescents, highlighting the nuanced effects of digital media on self-perception.

Furthermore, the study revealed significant gender differences in both self-esteem and body image among undergraduate students. Female students consistently reported higher levels of self-esteem and a more positive body image compared to their male peers. These findings are consistent with existing literature on gender differences in self-perception and underscore the importance of considering gender-specific factors in understanding psychological outcomes among university populations.

## Limitations to the Study

One of the primary limitations of this study is related to the generalizability of the findings. The sample consisted exclusively of undergraduates from Osun State, which may not adequately represent the diversity of social media users or cultural backgrounds across Nigeria or globally. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating these findings to broader populations or other geographical regions where social media use patterns and cultural norms may differ significantly. Future research could benefit from more diverse sampling techniques to enhance the external validity of the results.

Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-reported measures of social media use, body image, and self-esteem. Self-reporting introduces potential biases such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they perceive as socially acceptable rather than accurate reflections of their behaviours or feelings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the positive correlation between social media use and body image among adolescents with their self-esteem, the use of social media is recommended to promote healthy and mindful social media practices. Educational programs could be developed to teach these students how to curate their online experiences to foster positive self-perception.

Considering the gender differences identified in body image and self-esteem perceptions among undergraduate students, there is a need for tailored interventions. Universities could implement gender-specific support programs that address the unique challenges and influences shaping body image and self-esteem for male and female students. These programs could include targeted discussions, workshops, and mentoring opportunities aimed at empowering students to develop healthy self-perceptions regardless of gender.



Advocating for ethical media representations of body image and self-esteem in both traditional and social media platforms is crucial. Collaborations between media stakeholders, educators, and health professionals could focus on promoting realistic and diverse portrayals of body image that foster positive self-perceptions among adolescents and young adults.

**Acknowledgements:** The author gratefully acknowledges all respondents who participated in the study for sharing in their time while collecting data for the study.

**Competing Interests:** The author declares no financial disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.

## REFERENCES

1. Adetoro, 'N. & Okike, B. I., (2022) Assessing Undergraduates Social competence on Social Media in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). 6788. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6788>
2. Aichner T, Grünfelder M, Maurer O, Jegeni D. Twenty-Five Years of Social Media: A Review of Social Media Applications and Definitions from 1994 to 2019. *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw*. 2021 Apr;24(4):215-222. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2020.0134. Epub 2020 Oct 13. PMID: 33847527; PMCID: PMC8064945.
3. Aparicio-Martinez P, Perea-Moreno A. J., Martinez-Jimenez M. P., Redel-Macías M. D., Pagliari C, Vaquero-Abellan M. (2019) Social Media, Thin-Ideal, Body Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating Attitudes: An Exploratory Analysis. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2019 Oct 29;16 (21):4177. doi: 10.3390/ijerph16214177. PMID: 31671857; PMCID: PMC6861923.
4. Baumeister, R. F. (2018). Self-concept, self-esteem, and identity. In D. L. Dunn (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of social psychology* (pp. 133-157). Oxford University Press.
5. Bleidorn W., Arslan R. C, Denissen J. J, Rentfrow PJ, Gebauer J. E, Potter J & Gosling S. D. (2016) Age and gender differences in self-esteem-A cross-cultural window. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 2016 Sep;111(3):396-410. doi: 10.1037/pspp0000078. Epub 2015 Dec 21. PMID: 26692356.
6. Casale, S., Carducci, B. J. Nave, C. S. Fabio, A. D., Saklofske, D. & Stough, C. K. K (2020) Gender Differences in Self-esteem and Self-confidence. In book: *The Wiley Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences: Models and Theories*, [1] Publisher: Wiley Online Library. DOI: 10.1002/9781119547174.ch208
7. Fischetti, F., Fischetti, F., Latino, F., Latino, F., Cataldi, S., Cataldi, S., Gianpiero Greco & Greco, G. (2019) Gender differences in body image dissatisfaction: The role of physical education and sport. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise* 15(2) DOI: 10.14198/jhse.2020.152.01 License CC BY-NC-ND
8. Florida State University Libraries (2024) *Social Media Research: Social Networking Site (SNSs) A guide to conducting scholarly research on social media.* (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 1)
9. Gattino, S., Czepczor-Bernat, K., Fedi, A., Brytek-Matera. A., Boza, M., Lemoine, J. E., Sahlan, R. N., Wilson, E., De Piccoli, N. & Rollero, C. (2023) Self-Objectification and its Biological, Psychological and Social Predictors: A Cross-Cultural Study in Four European Countries and Iran. *Eur J Psychol*. 28;19(1):27-47. doi: 10.5964/ejop.6075. PMID: 37063692; PMCID: PMC10103054.
10. Hudson, W. W. (1982). *Index of Self-Esteem. The clinical measurement package: A field manual.* Chicago: Dorsey press.
11. Isserow, J. (2023) Self-Esteem: On the Form of Self-Worth Worth Having. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* <https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12434> Volume104, Issue4 Pages 686-719
12. Jiotsa, B. Naccache, B., Duval, M., Rocher, B. & Grall-Bronnec, M. (2021) Social Media Use and Body Image Disorders: Association between Frequency of Comparing One's Own Physical Appearance to That of People Being Followed on Social Media and Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2021 Mar; 18(6): 2880. Published online 2021 Mar 11. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18062880 PMCID: PMC8001450 PMID: 33799804
13. Kemp, S. (2017). Digital in 2017: Global overview. *We Are Social*. <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>
14. Kendra C. (2023) What Is Self-Esteem? Your Sense of Your Personal Worth or Value. *Developmental Psychology*. Verywellmind. MSEd

15. Mendelson B. K., Mendelson M. J., White D. R. (2001) Body-esteem scale for adolescents and adults. *J Pers Assess.* 2001 Feb;76(1):90-106. doi: 10.1207/S15327752JPA7601\_6. PMID: 11206302.
16. National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Annual report on education statistics. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2023/reporttitle>
17. Ni X, Shao X, Geng Y, Qu R, Niu G, Wang Y. (2020) Development of the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents. *Front Psychol.* 2020 Apr 28; 11:701. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00701. PMID: 32411042; PMCID: PMC7198835.
18. Orth, U., Robins R. W. (2022). Is high self-esteem beneficial? Revisiting a classic question. *American Psychologist* 77(1), 5-17.
19. Oshana, D. (2021). The Case of Grindr and Gay Men's Embodiment and Body Image Through New Media. <https://core.ac.uk/download/480267620.pdf>
20. Quittkat, H. L., Hartmann, A. S., Düsing, R., Buhlmann, U., & Vocks, S. (2019). Body Dissatisfaction, Importance of Appearance, and Body Appreciation in Men and Women Over the Lifespan. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 10, 864
21. Roberts, T.-A., & Waters, P. L. (2019). The gendered body project: Sexual and self-objectification as motivated and motivating processes. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (2nd ed., pp. 321–336). Oxford University Press.
22. Saiphoo, A. N., Dahoah Halevi, L., & Vahedi, Z. (2020). Social networking site use and self-esteem: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 153, Article 109639. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109639>
23. Singh, R. (2018). Self-esteem and traumatic stress severity in individuals from individualists and collectivists' perspectives. <https://core.ac.uk/download/186689248.pdf>
24. Smith, E. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2021). *Social psychology* (4th ed.). Psychology Press.
25. Swami V., Barron D., Todd J., Horne G. & Furnham A. (2020) Nature exposure and positive body image: (Re-)examining the mediating roles of connectedness to nature and trait mindfulness. *Body Image.* 2020 Sep; 34:201-208. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2020.06.004. Epub 2020 Jun 27. PMID: 32604023; PMCID: PMC7320863.
26. Taylor-Jackson J. & Moustafa A. A. (2020) The relationships between social media use and factors relating to depression. *The Nature of Depression.* 2021:171–82. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-817676-4.00010-9. Epub 2020 Oct 16. PMCID: PMC7562923.
27. Taylor-Jackson, J., & Moustafa, A. A. (2021). The relationships between social media use and factors relating to depression. In A. A. Moustafa (Ed.), *The nature of depression: An updated review* (pp. 171–182). Elsevier Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-817676-4.00010-9>
28. Tiggemann, M., & Lynch, J. E. (2020). Body image across the adult life span: Stability and change. *Body Image*, 32, 19-28.
29. Toselli, S., Zaccagni, L., Rinaldo, N., Mauro, M., Grigoletto, A., Maietta Latessa, P., & Marini, S. (2023). Body image perception in high school students: The relationship with gender, weight status, and physical activity. *Children (Basel, Switzerland)*, 10(1), 137. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children100100137>
30. Vahedi, Z. & Halevi L. (2019) Social Networking Site Use and Self-Esteem: A Meta-Analytic Review. Accepted for publication in: *Personality and Individual Differences*
31. Vaingankar JA, van Dam RM, Samari E, Chang S, Seow E, Chua YC, Luo N, Verma S, Subramaniam M. (2022) Social Media-Driven Routes to Positive Mental Health Among Youth: Qualitative Enquiry and Concept Mapping Study. *JMIR Pediatr Parent.* 2022 Mar 4;5(1): e32758. doi: 10.2196/32758. PMID: 35254285; PMCID: PMC8933808.
32. Winn L, Cornelius R. (2020) Self-Objectification and Cognitive Performance: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Front Psychol.* 2020 Jan 28;11:20. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00020. Erratum in: *Front Psychol.* 2020 Mar 13;11:477. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00477. PMID: 32047457; PMCID: PMC6997128.
33. Xie, Z. (2024) The Influence of Social Media on Perception of Body Image and Beauty Standards on Young People. *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* ISSN: 2960-1770, eISSN: 2960-2262 | Volume 4 ERHSS 2024
34. Yamane, T. (1967) *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harper and Row, New York
35. Zhang C., Tang L. & Liu Z. (2023) How social media usage affects psychological and subjective well-being: testing a moderated mediation model. *BMC Psychol.* 2023 Sep 22;11(1):286. doi: 10.1186/s40359-023-01311-2. PMID: 37737198; PMCID: PMC10515432.