

# Influence of Instagram on Body Image and Self- Esteem among Female Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates

Chiazor Anthonia Chiaghana, Chinelo Ebele Uchendu and Ifeoma Rita Obi

Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The thrust of this study was to ascertain the influence of social media especially Instagram on body image and self-esteem among Female Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates. This study was designed as quantitative research which necessitated the use of a survey method and sample size of 393 was arrived at through Slovin sampling technique from a total population of 22,117 female students. A stratified sampling method was further used to determine the exact number of female respondents from each department. A structured questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. 346 questionnaires were recovered while the collected data were quantitatively analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics presented in tables. Situated within the context of Social Comparison theory and Cultivation Analysis theory, the study found out that UNIZIK female undergraduates are heavily exposed to social media which causes them to cultivate an illusionary perception of reality based on the most repetitive content on body image. It also found out that female students compare their body image to the body image of female celebrities portrayed on social media. This comparison has led to a decrease in the self- esteem of female students. The study recommends that there should be a social media literacy campaign on positivity of body image and self esteem among people especially young females. It also recommends that an awareness program where students would be guided about self esteem, self- recognition and self-confidence, should be created.

**Keywords:** Instagram, Body image, Self esteem, Female undergraduates.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become an integral part of our lives, with Instagram leading the way as one of the most popular and influential platforms. Instagram has transformed the way we perceive and interact with ourselves and others, particularly in terms of body image and self-esteem (Marlo, 2019). It has become a powerful tool for communication, self-expression, and social connection, captivating millions of users worldwide. With its emphasis on visually appealing content, Instagram has not only transformed the way we share our lives but has also played a significant role in shaping body image perceptions and self-esteem among its users, particularly university undergraduates.

Body image researchers attempt to understand Adolescents concerns about their physical appearance and bodies. Body image refers to feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and associated behaviours relating to an individual's body (Kristina, Gattario, Frisen, 2019). Body image interventions need to target not only matters related to physical appearance but also adolescents' general sense of belonging, agency, and empowerment (Kristina et al, 2019).

The study of body image and self-esteem sparks significant discussion across various demographics. Body image, a multifaceted concept, revolves around an individual's perception, thoughts, and emotions regarding their physical appearance, encompassing how they view themselves and the emotional significance attached to it. This perception is influenced by societal standards, cultural norms, media and social media portrayals, personal experiences, and psychological well-being.

John Luhmann (2019) defines body image as the assessment of both positive and negative emotions towards one's own body and its characteristics. On the other hand, self-esteem refers to the evaluation of an individual's beliefs and attitudes about themselves, which tend to be deeply ingrained and resistant to change. Self-esteem is the evaluation of an individual's beliefs and attitude. Self-esteem is based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves which can be difficult to change.

Historically, through exposure to print media imagery as well as through broadcasting medium like television, advertising, videos, movies and even the internet, mass media communication has contributed to the body standards for women. Recently, social media has become a huge part of everyday life for most, particularly for young people. This is due to on-going advancements in technology in the last five decades. There are approximately 3.5 billion social media users worldwide. Social media continues to grow, and it is now the primary source of news, communication, and information (Lemus 2021). Moreover, in 2017, Instagram increased from 150 million to 500 million daily active users worldwide in 2019 (Mohsin, 2020). Social media continues to become part of individuals' daily lives to quickly retrieve information, communicate with family or peers, and see the newest fashion trends (Mohsin, 2020). Currently, social media has an influence on body standards of women, with Instagram taking the lead. The growing use of social media sites like Instagram has led to increased comparison and competition between females, and as a result, increased prevalence of negative body image, body dysmorphia, and low self-esteem in women (Lemus 2021). Females are on a daily basis confronted with the traditional and stereotypical ideals of beauty standards such as being light skin, thin body sized, having a curly hair texture, pink lips among others (Ikechukwu, Chizurumoke, 2021).

This ideal dictates that women should have a slim feminine build, a tiny waist, low body fat and big bum. Campos (2020) explains that in keeping with social expectations, young women are dissatisfied with how they look, and feel pressured to modify their pictures to appear flawless and attract more followers. The constant exposure to Instagram pictures distorts the idea of an attainable body and this leads young people to go to any length to get the kind of bodies they see oblivious of the fact that some might be manipulated. Stephen and Perara (2019) showed that young women were highly influenced by model images on what they perceive to be attractive. In this day and time, women are not just influenced by body images of models but are mostly influenced by the body image of celebrities, because society portrays these celebrities to possess the "societal perfect body".

Body image plays a crucial role in an individual's overall well-being and mental health. Given the harmful consequences of body image concerns in terms of mental and physical health, their global burden is high (Rodgers, Katherine, P. Campos, and Carvalho 2023).

A positive body image can enhance self-esteem, self-confidence, and promote a healthy body image perception. On the other hand, a negative body image can lead to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health issues. Because women participate in social media activities more frequently than men do, research has shown that they may be at a higher risk of encountering problems such as body image dissatisfaction and eating disorder symptomology (Taylor, 2019).



Fig 1



Fig 2

The above photographs on Fig 1 and Fig 2 are the images of Instagram celebrities whose names will be withheld for the purpose of this study. The first pictures on the left are their ideal body image before they became female celebrities. While the pictures on the right are their current body image that was gotten from a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL). This BBL was done immediately they became celebrities.

### Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary digital age, social media platforms have become integral to daily life, with Instagram

being one of the most popular among them. With its visually driven content, Instagram has a substantial impact on its users, especially females. The platform's focus on aesthetics and visual appeal can potentially influence users' perceptions of beauty standards, body image, and self-worth. Despite its widespread use, there is growing concern about the negative implications of Instagram on body image and self-esteem among females. Constant exposure to curated, edited, and often unrealistic portrayals of beauty can lead to harmful comparisons and dissatisfaction with one's own body. This can, in turn, affect mental health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Instagram usage links to the increasing comparison and competition between females that can have multiple negative impacts such as low self-esteem and body dysphoria (Lemus, 2021). They often compare their bodies and associate their self worth with the celebrities on Instagram, who possess the so called perceived societal perfect body.

Most of these teenagers and young women are no longer confident in their bodies as they now go extra miles just to achieve this so called perceived societal body. Some now take drugs that are not medically prescribed just to increase or reduce a part of their body. Some are comfortable risking their lives by going under the knives. They go through surgical procedures such as Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) and liposuction just to increase or reduce a part of their body to fit into the societal perfect body. "Lagos-based plastic surgeon, Dr. David Egbeogu, has warned that complications from butt enhancement can lead to death, particularly if conducted by a "quack", punch newspaper (20th February 2022.). This is a problem because a lot of women carelessly lose their lives to unqualified medical professionals. Some, who cannot afford to pay for a professional Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL), now engage in despicable acts just to meet up with society and what they see on Instagram. Some develop strange illnesses as a result of unapproved harmful intake of these drugs. Some other woman, have disrupted their eating habit just to have the "thin-thick ideal" thereby causing harm to their bodies.

Females are more likely to develop eating disorders, low self-esteem, and body distortions due to the content they are viewing on Instagram (Lemus, 2021). Most women now alter their skin colour to achieve a lighter skin which can cause skin diseases and skin cancer, especially when harmful products are used. While some, especially university undergraduates now feel inferior and have a belief that they cannot attain certain height of greatness in life without possessing this societal perfect body. Against this backdrop, the investigation on the influence of Instagram on body image and self-esteem among female undergraduates becomes imperative.

### **Objective of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of Instagram on female body image and its effect on their self esteem. The specific objectives seek to investigate:

1. To determine the rate at which Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates use Instagram.
2. To find out the extent in which female celebrities body image are portrayed via Instagram.
3. To determine the influence of Instagram on female body image among Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates.
4. To find out the effects of Instagram's influence on body image and self esteem on Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the foregoing objectives, the following research questions were formulated to proffer solutions to the problem of this study.

1. To what extent do Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates use Instagram?
2. To what extent do female celebrities body image portrayed via Instagram?

3. Does instagram have an influence on female body image of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates?
4. Does the influence of instagram on body image affect the self esteem of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Body Image an Overview

Body image encompasses a multifaceted construct that explores the emergence of mental assessments relating to one's body, including size, shape, and appearance (Marlo 2019, cited Perloff, 2014). Body image researchers attempt to understand adolescents' concerns about their physical appearance and bodies. This refers to how individuals see their body and their feelings concerning their body. According to NEDC (2022), there are 4 aspects of body image;

**Perceptual body image:** This is how one sees their body. This is not always a correct representation of how an individual looks.

**Affective body image:** This is the way individuals feel about their body. It relates to the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction you feel about your shape, weight, and individual body parts. It is also an emotional reaction to one's own body ranging from positive feelings like pride and confidence to negative emotions like shame and disgust.

**Cognitive body image:** This is the way individuals think about their body. This can lead to preoccupation with body shape and weight. It is also the perception of one's physical capabilities, including strength, coordination and agility.

**Behavioural body image:** This encompasses behaviours an individual engage as a result of their body image. When a person is dissatisfied with the way they look, they may isolate themselves because they feel bad about their appearance or employ destructive behaviours as a means to change appearance. Dietary habits is an aspect of behavioural body image, which includes eating pattern influenced by body image concerns, such as restrictive diets or binge eating. Also engagement in physical activities driven by the desire to change or maintain body shape.

The development of body image occurs early in a child's life, usually between the ages of 4 and 6 years of age, around the time of preschool (Cash & Smolak, 2019). Smolak (2019) explained that 4 to 6-year-old girls oftentimes participate in social comparison and exhibit signs of overweight bias, which can plant the seeds for early experiences with body dissatisfaction. If this type of disposition is acquired, girls in elementary school from the ages of 6 to 12 are at risk for experiencing sociocultural, psychological, and physiological issues, associated with negative body image.

### Social Media

Social media is an electronic communication that includes blogging, social networking sites that users create online to share ideas, information, and other content like personal messages to their community (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Social media refers to an online interaction-based type of media that allows users to participate in a vast space with numerous people. It makes it possible for individuals to communicate in various modes; either one-on-one with another user through a private conversation, or with mass amounts of people through various interactive modes (Jiao, Yang, & Xu, 2019). There are unique characteristics that social media possesses, when compared to other types of media, including "information openness, participation, interaction, sharing and connectedness" (Jiao, Yang, & Xu, 2019, p. 1096).

Turban, Strauss, and Lai (2020) explained that social media is an advantageous tool that allows users to cooperatively view content, while sharing various opinions. Furthermore, they noted that personal or business relationships can be cultivated through the social media platform, which aids in the delivery of information and various opinions. Because of the new type of connectedness that social media provides, as compared to previous forms of mass media, it is of central importance to the study of body image (Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, & Hoving, 2019). While research has shown that social media is beneficial to public health campaigns that initiate positive behavioural changes (Jurgen, 2019). The instant availability and powerful influence of this medium can present complications as well (Klein, 2020). Some of the most popular social media websites and apps include “Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest” (Perloff, 2021, p. 365), which allow users to instantly communicate with one other, share information with friends, family members, and followers; and offer feedback in the forms of “likes,” “loves,” “re-tweets,” and “re-shares.”

Interactivity is one of the main qualities through which social media technology differs from traditional media. Sunder and Limperos (2022) explained that social media users are both communicators and receivers; oftentimes, with both roles being played concurrently. They noted that these dual roles allow previously-passive recipients of media the opportunity to participate in a new position as communicator, which enhances self-esteem and strengthens autonomy.

The rising popularity of social media use (SMU) has garnered attention over the last several years, with many concerned about the effects it may have on mental health, particularly in adolescents and young adults (Karim, Oyewande, Abdalla, Chaudhry, Ehsanullah, & Khan, 2020). Although social media may indeed be an accessible medium for greater connectivity, resources, and creativity, many studies have documented that youths who are heavy or frequent users of social media tend to have more body image concerns (Ryding & Kuss, 2020). Most experimental social media research on body image has involved implementing social media literacy programs among adolescent girls (Bell, Taylor, Paddock, & Bates, 2022).

Stronge et al. (2019) utilized a cross-sectional study using 6,883 women and 4,134 men to find links between Facebook usage and body dissatisfaction between men and women. Their results showed that Facebook users reported significantly lower body dissatisfaction for both men and women than non users. Moreover, their results indicated that middle-aged women who used Facebook reported significantly lower body dissatisfaction.

## **Instagram**

Instagram is a free social media platform for sharing photos and videos with your followers. It is a popular way to connect with brands, celebrities, and friends. Ivy & Schwartz, (2019) stated that Instagram is an application that is mobile-based which enables its users to take pictures and use various editing tools on the application to change how the images appear, these are then shared instantly with various media sites. Instagram was launched in 2010, it grew gradually and had about a 100 million users in 2013 with over 4 billion pictures uploaded on the platform at the same time. Currently, a lot of individuals are attracted to Instagram than other social networking sites or platforms. Aside the fact that Instagram is a photo-based site; Instagram has an array of features, from short-form videos to reels to live streaming and private messaging. It also has an algorithm that allows users monitor their accounts, keep track of their account through the insight which shows the number of engagement which includes; likes comments and numbers of reach. Instagram users with public profiles can post photographs and videos by using a hashtag (#), which enables other users to see the photographs (Sheldon and Bryant, 2019) and eventually become followers. The pictures can be edited by users before being posted, which allows them to edit colours, resolutions or their body shape (Sheldon and Bryant, 2019).

Due to the nature of the app, users with large number of followers or celebrities are given opportunities to

influence for companies or to influence for products (Gorgan, 2019). These influencers seem to be pick based on their looks because they have certain body type that is considered a perfect body image (Benjamin, Nnenna, Kaosi, 2022). The increased use of Instagram has increased competition and is associated with body image dissatisfaction, especially in women (Lemus, 2021). Users therefore suggestively, want to have the kind of body image portrayed by Instagram influencers regardless of the health implications. According to Lawer (2022) body image plays a crucial role in ones' health. This scholar explained that due to low body appreciation one can have mental and physical illnesses and in extreme cases death.

Anixiadis, Wertheim, Rodgers, & Caruana, 2019) used an experimental design to examine the impact of young females exposed to body-focused images of thin Western ideal images compared to non-body-focused Instagram style photos.

### **Social Media Impact on Body Image**

Due to the rise of social media sites, researchers are investigating the negative impacts this may have on individuals (Lemus, 2021). Ivy (2019) quoted Grogan (2008) defined body image as the way a person feels, their perception and thoughts regarding their body. To gauge body image, the society has come up with set of standards that do not always correspond to how individuals perceive their body (Ivy, 2019). Overtime, there have been different body ideals that create or set standards for most desired body image. Many years ago, art works and sculptures had thickset silhouette portraying the ideal body of that time (Ivy, 2019). Currently, some of the standards of ideal body image are mostly being showcased and celebrated online with "likes" on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) including being thin, curvy and even having a proportionate body (Waksman, Loomes, Mountford & Tchanturia, 2019). Women on social media are more likely to idealize pictures of their peers and compare themselves. Social media images affect women more than men, including comparison (Hogue & Mills, 2019).

In a study carried out by Paxton, Knauss & Alsaker (2008), showed that around 1600 adolescent girls had an increased pressure from the social media regarding their body weight that led to increased feelings of body dissatisfaction as opposed to their male counterparts. According to Tiggemann (2020), body surveillance was higher in college women than experienced in their male counterparts. The above study showed that young women are vulnerable and have so much concern when it comes to body image issues. Nonetheless, researchers are now paying attention at social media influence on young women's body image.

Body image can be influenced either negatively or positively which would have an effect on one's self esteem. Social media platforms like instagram can influence the body image of individuals especially women through the kind of body image it promotes. Instagram is a photo-sharing social media, and considerable research has shown that it can negatively impact women's body image and mood (Cohen et al., 2017). There are about 400 million users actively on Instagram, and nearly 80 million photographs are shared every day (Hendrickse et al., 2019). It's become an especially popular way to connect with brands, celebrities, and friends. Most of the celebrities on instagram promote ill gotten bodies or medically constructed bodies. They most times take harmful unprescribed drugs to either increase a part or decrease a part of their body. On some other cases these celebrities involve themselves in Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) or liposuction to increase their buttocks, just to gain society's attention. A Brazilian butt lift (BBL) is a surgery where a doctor transfers fat from your belly, hips, lower back, or thighs to your buttocks. The result is more of an hourglass-shaped figure, with larger buttocks. Liposuction is a plastic surgery procedure that removes extra fat from the body. In the last years, there has been an increase in plastic surgery in the United States, and there are 11 million surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures (Sharp, Tiggemann, & Mattiske, 2019). Moreover, of the procedures, 91% were performed on women between the ages of 35–50 years old (Sharp et al., 2019). One of the factors that contributed to motivating women to have cosmetic surgery is body dissatisfaction. Some of the top cosmetic surgeries' women are getting done are breast augmentation, liposuction, and abdominoplasty (Sharp et al., 2019). These ill gotten bodies are usually celebrated with

thousands of likes and comments, endorsements from beauty industries that also promote the use of harmful drugs to increase body parts.

Ivy (2019) study examined how social media and precisely Instagram influences body image among female university students. The study targeted 347 female students in school of journalism and mass communication at the university Nairobi where a sample size of 183 was reached. It was established that majority of the young women in universities believe that there is a particular body frame that is promoted within the Instagram application as well as by instagram influencers within the Kenyan society which is contralto the idealized standard of beauty propagated in the western nations.

Celebrities on instagram tag their success to their body hence making a lot of young women feel they cannot be successful without possessing theses bodies that are being celebrated online. Through the use of this social media platform, instagram, a lot of women have been pressured to also take these drugs that cause harm to their health or go under the knives to achieve this hourglass body that is celebrated online. Most times, women lose their lives in the process. (Egbeogu, 2022), A Lagos-based plastic surgeon, has warned that complications from butt enhancement can lead to death, particularly if conducted by a “quack”.

A significant finding in a study showed exposure to the paired Instagram versus reality image and the authentic images resulted in an increase in body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2019). Social media content has reported increasing body dissatisfaction among women and mood (Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2017)

Body dissatisfaction that occurs as a result of social media influence on body image leads to eating disorder. Lemus (2021), cited, American Psychiatric Association, (2013).

Body dissatisfaction also leads to body dysmorphic disorder. Body dysmorphic disorder is defined as “obsessive thoughts that some aspect of one’s appearance is flawed and also warrants many time-consuming rituals such as constantly comparing and mirror gazing” (Himanshu, Kaur, & Singla, 2020). Some other behaviours that can link with this disorder include skin picking, excessive grooming, mirror-gazing, and mental acts that include constant comparison that causes distress and impairment. Dysmorphic disorder, includes symptoms in which the individual perceives themselves as ugly, abnormal, deformed, and only focuses on their flaws. Moreover, the individual can have concerns ranging from drastically seeing themselves as a “monster” to “I am ugly, unattractive,” (Lemus, 2021). Also, some individuals may only focus on one body part, while others can have many body concerns. They commonly include skin problems like acne, hair being either too thin or too much, or the shape and size of their noses, shape and size of their body. An increase in social media and screen time can indicate one factor in declining body image (Himanshu, et al. 2020)

In a study by Himanshu et al. (2020), they sampled 186 adolescents ranging in age from 16–18 years old, including 47.48% male participants and 52.15% female participants, to determine body dysmorphia among this age group using a cross-sectional study. Their results showed female participants to be more dissatisfied with their bodies in comparison to male participants. The female participant’s area of concern included being fat, complexion, and height. Results indicated body dysmorphia on the rise among this sample, which can be linked to social media usage.

### **Social Media Impact on Self Esteem**

In Zhang, Yu, Zhang, Guo, & Chen, (2020), defined self-esteem as a sociometer of belonging in the interpersonal relationship. He explained that an individual accepted by members of their social groups establishes the individual’s survival and mating success. Individuals whom their social groups reject suffer from depression, anxiety, and low satisfaction with their life leading to low self-esteem. In contrast to those



accepted, members of a group perceive higher security of survival, high value in mating, and more satisfaction with their lives, resulting in higher self-esteem (Zhang et al., 2020). Woods and Scott (2019) stated that social media use had been linked to individual self-esteem. For example, if an individual receives negative feedback on their online profile, their self-esteem decreases. Moreover, more frequent use of social media sites like Facebook can be linked to lower self-esteem due to upward social comparison (Woods & Scott, 2019).

Low self-esteem can lead to negative mental health which results to sleep problems and anxiety. A lot of women try to gain validation on their social media platforms, like Instagram. This validation can come in form of likes, comments, followers, engagements. For instance, Instagram allows users have access to the insight of their accounts which give details on numbers of new followers, number of likes a post gets, number of accounts reached in the last 30 days, number of shares a post gets. Low number of followers, negative comments, low number of likes and poor engagement could make one feel they are less of what the society wants and can decrease their self-esteem and in most cases leads to depression.

Lemus (2021) carried out a study on the effects of Instagram usage on females. The focus of the quantitative study was whether Instagram usage negatively affected the self-esteem and body image of females aged 18–45. Participants included 150 females aged 18–45 years old with an active Instagram account. Willing participants filled out an anonymous online survey using Qualtrics. It was hypothesized that Instagram usage would affect the self-esteem and body image of participants; however, the research showed that the amount of time spent on Instagram was not correlated to self-esteem and body image. It did demonstrate that there was a correlation between Instagram usage and a negative impact on self-esteem and body image.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on Social Comparison Theory and Cultivation Analysis Theory.

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Social comparison theory was first proposed in 1954 by Leon Festinger. This theory suggested that people have an innate drive to evaluate themselves, often in comparison to others. Hence, they seek the opinion of others to test for adequacy and validation. This theory is related to the current study through the connection between social media and comparison because social media allows for students to put themselves on a platform, open to criticism and approval, which has the potential of influencing their body image and self-esteem. Social comparison theory stated that individuals either compare themselves to other individuals in a positive or negative way, through either upward or downward comparison (Juliet, 2022). In an upward comparison, the self-esteem of the individual can be boosted when making comparisons with others they consider to be less fortunate. On the flip side, there is a decrease in self-esteem when compared with individuals that represent the ideal standard (Jegede, et al 2021).

The theory is germane to this study in the sense that the dominance of the thin -thick body and light skin beauty ideals on social media (Instagram) results in negative practices and attitudes among young females and this tend to lead these females to make comparisons with the images they are exposed to. Instagram which is a mobile application for sharing photos and videos on the platform, has the capacity of influencing young females in body comparison than other applications like twitter. Jegede, et al 2021, asserts that most of these hyper-idealized bodies on Instagram are as a result of some editing and fine-tuning which explains why most females will associate negative feelings when comparing their own body as they are comparing it to an unrealistic and unattainable standard.

### **Cultivation Analysis Theory**

The cultivation analysis theory states that heavy exposure to media causes individuals to develop or cultivate

an illusory perception of reality based on the most repetitive and consistent messages of a particular medium (Godsgift, 2022). This theory applies to social media, because of its unique pervasive nature. This theory explains that an individual who consumes a lot of time on social media may create a picture of reality that does not conform to actual life. The cultivation theory states that the more often an individual is exposed to images of society's ideal body, the less they are going to realize that those images are unrealistic. We are constantly being exposed to the media and constantly being told of the most accepted way to look (Godsgift, 2022).

This applies to many other social media users as they constantly come across images of different women who possess the thin-thick ideal, which are a tiny waist and a bigger butt. These users are constantly made to believe that these women are perfectly happy, perfectly healthy and they possess the perfect societal body. In reality, most women especially young women have refused to accept that these images seen online are not accurate representation of real women and successful women. They have refused to accept that most of these images are photoshopped and photoshop can transform an individual's entire look. They have also refused to accept that most of these women including female celebrities that are celebrated online for possessing these societal bodies through unauthorized body enhancement are unhealthy because these enhancements are harmful and cause diseases to the body.

Young women who are deeply engrossed with these images fail to see the harmful effects of these products because social media portray these celebrities as happy and living their best lives with the images they upload. This makes young women compare their bodies with this unhealthy body images or almost unattainable body which in turn leads to one having body dissatisfaction and low self esteem. This theory indicates that social media is the most pervasive and constant learning system in modern society. The repeated exposure to the same message will have an effective on the audience attitude and value.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study is survey design. The population of the study is only female undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria. The population consists of about 22,117 students (source: Academic Planning Unit). A sample size of 393 was determined using Slovin sampling technique.

The Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. At the first stage, five (5) out of the fourteen (14) faculties were selected. The selection was made using simple random procedure. Using a table of random numbers, the following faculties were selected: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Biosciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Management Sciences and Faculty of Social Sciences.

At the second stage, two departments from each of the five faculties were selected making it a total of ten (10) departments. Using stratified sampling, the number of female respondents was selected from each department. In the process of collecting the required data for the study, questionnaire was administered to female undergraduate students of the various departments. Out of the 393 questionnaires distributed, 346 questionnaires were recovered. Data gathered were presented and analyzed using SPSS 19 data analysis software.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Findings from this study were drawn from data obtained from 346 female respondents from the 10 departments in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria.

### **Demographic Data**

On gender status, 346 respondents representing 100% were females. This is because the study is basically on

female students in the university. In terms of age of the respondents, 16% of respondents were between 16 and 20 years, 58% were between 21 and 24 years, while 26% of respondents were 25 years and above. This shows that the majority of the respondents fell between 21 and 24 years. On educational level of the respondents, 9% of respondents were in 100 level, 20% were in 200 level, 43% were in 300 level while 28% were in 400 level. This indicates that majority of respondents were in 300 level of their study.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates use instagram?

Table 1

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you have social media account?	Yes	326	94%
	No	20	6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Are you an active social media user?	Yes	306	88%
	No	40	12%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
How often do you use social media platforms daily?	1 - 2 times	14	4%
	3 - 4 times	42	12%
	5 - 6 times	80	23%
	Above 7 times	200	58%
	No answer	10	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Which of the following forms of social media do you use?	Instagram	190	55%
	Facebook	30	9%
	WhatsApp	70	20%
	TikTok	46	13%
	Others	10	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses to table 1 above show that majority of the respondents have social media accounts (94%). On the frequency of reading, 88% of respondents are active social media users, while 12% are not active social media users. Thus, majority of the respondents are active social media users. 4% of respondents said that they use social media platforms 1-2 times daily, 12% use theirs 3-4 times daily, 26% use theirs 5-6 times daily, 55% use theirs 7 times daily. However, 3% gave no answer to the question.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do female celebrities body image portrayed via instagram?

Table 2

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How often do you come across posts by female celebrities on Instagram?	Very often	160	46%
	Often	60	17%
	Sometimes	66	20%
	Rarely	50	14%
	Never	10	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

How do you perceive the body images of female celebrities on Instagram?	Very positive	190	55%
	Positive	30	9%
	Neutral	70	20%
	Negative	46	13%
	Very negative	10	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
To what extent do you think female celebrities on Instagram present realistic body images?	Very realistic	58	17%
	Realistic	40	12%
	Neutral	16	4%
	Unrealistic	138	40%
	Very unrealistic	94	27%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses on table 2 show that majority of the respondents come across female celebrities post on instagram (46%). Also the frequency 55% of respondents said that their perception on the body image on instagram is very positive. 40% of the respondents said that the body image that female celebrities present on instagram is unrealistic.

**Research Question 3:** Does instagram have an influence on female body image of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates?

Table 3

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you like the kind of body image you possess?	Yes	148	43%
	No	198	57%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Have you ever compared your body image to the images of female celebrities shown on Instagram?	Yes	288	83%
	No	58	17%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Have you ever wished you had their kind of body?	Yes	288	83%
	No	58	17%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Have you ever taken body enhancement to increase or decrease a part of your body?	Yes	208	60%
	No	138	40%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Have you ever done Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) or Liposuction?	Yes	50	14
	No	296	86
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
If yes, were you influenced by Instagram or other forms of social media female celebrities?	Yes	50	14%
	No	296	86%
<b>Total</b>		<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

43% of respondents are comfortable with the kind of body image they possess while 57% of respondents are not comfortable with the kind of body image they possess. 83% of female respondents have wished they had

the kind of body image of female celebrities shown on Instagram, while 17% of female respondents do not wish they have the kind of body image of female celebrities shown on Instagram. On the frequency of reading, 60% of female respondents have taken body enhancement to increase or decrease a part of their body, while 40% of female respondents have not taken body enhancement to increase or decrease a part of their body.

14% of female respondents said that they have done BBL or Liposuction while 86% of female respondents have never done BBL or Liposuction. Hence, majority of Female Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates have never done BBL or Liposuction. Also 14% of female respondents who have done BBL or Liposuction were influenced by social media female celebrities while 86% of female respondents who have not done BBL or Liposuction have not been influenced by social media female celebrities.

**Research Question 4:** Does the influence of instagram on body image affect the self esteem of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates?

Table 4

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Has your body image ever affected your self esteem?	Yes	252	73%
	No	94	27%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Do you have a high self esteem or low self esteem towards your body?	High self esteem	158	46%
	Low self esteem	188	54%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Has your self esteem ever pushed you to altering or enhancing a part of your body?	Yes	236	68%
	No	110	32%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Do you think female instagram celebrities that alter/enhance their bodies have high self esteem?	Yes	158	46%
	No	188	54%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

73% of female respondents said that their self esteem have been affected by their body image while the self esteem of 27% of female respondents have not been affected by their body image. 46% of female respondents have high self esteem towards their body while 54% of female respondents have low self esteem towards their body. Thus, majority of Female Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates have low self esteem towards their body.

68% of female respondents said that they have altered or enhanced a part of their body as a result of the kind of self esteem they possess towards their bodies. While 32% of female respondents have not allowed their self esteem push them towards altering or enhancing a part of their body. Hence, majority of Female Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates have allowed their self esteem push them towards altering or enhancing a part of their body. 46% of female respondents think that female instagram celebrities that alter /enhance their bodies have high self esteem. While 54% of female respondents think that female instagram celebrities that alter /enhance their bodies have low self esteem.

**Analysis of Research Questions**

**The first research question seeks to find out the extent Nnamdi Azikiwe female undergraduates use instagram** From the analysis in table 1, it shows that 94% make use of social media, 55% of the respondents make use of instagram and 58% of the respondents said that they use social media 7 times daily. Thus, the penetration of instagram among female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University is

moderately high.

**The second research question sought to find out the extent female celebrities body images are portrayed via instagram.** Data in table 2 indicate that the majority of the respondents 46% have compared their body images to the body image of female celebrities shown on instagram. This implies that female celebrity body image is highly portrayed on Instagram. 40% of the respondents said that the body image that female celebrities present on instagram is unrealistic. Thus majority of the respondents see the body image of female celebrities posts via instagram as very unrealistic.

**The third research question sought to discover the influence of instagram on female body image of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates.** Data in Table 3 shows that 83% of respondents have wished they had the kind of body portrayed by female celebrities on Instagram, Also 60% of the respondents said that they have taken body enhancement to either increase or decrease a part of their body, while 86% would consider getting a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) or a liposuction if they had the money. Thus, instagram has significant high influence on the female body image of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates.

**The fourth research question sought to find out the whether the influence of Instagram on body image affect the self-esteem of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates.**

Data in Table 4 shows that 73% of respondents self esteem is affected by their body image, 54% of female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University have low self esteem towards their body image, while 68% of respondents have been pushed by their self esteem to alter or enhance a part of their body. Thus, the influence of instagram on body image crucially affects the self-esteem of Nnamdi Azikiwe University female undergraduates.

## **DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The first findings of this study showed that female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University have a relatively high exposure to social media, especially instagram. This exposure has a negative impact on these female respondents. These findings align with Ivy (2019) study which examined how social media and precisely Instagram influences body image among female university students. These findings can be linked to the Cultivation Analysis Theory, which explains that an individual who consumes a lot of time on social media may create a picture of reality that does not conform to actual life.

The second and third findings indicate that participants are highly influenced by the body images of female celebrities portrayed via instagram. This influence is a negative influence because 83% of female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University have compared and wished they had the kind of body portrayed by these female celebrities. This is a tenant of the Social comparison theory and it is a downward comparison. This influence has also made a good number of respondents take body enhancement which majority of the time has side effects, just to enhance their body to fit into or look close to what these female celebrities possess. A large number of respondents, 86%, confirmed that they would consider getting a BBL surgery or Liposuction if they had the money. This is as a result of the negative influence of the female celebrities body image portrayed via Instagram.

The fourth finding shows that this instagram influence has a negative influence on not just the body image of female undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, but also their self esteem. 73% of respondents agreed that their self esteem has been affected, 54 % confirmed they currently have low self esteem towards their bodies. This aligns with the study carried out by Lemus (2021) on the effects of instagram usage on females. The focus of the quantitative study of Lemus showed that instagram usage negatively affected the self-esteem and body image of females aged 18-45.

## Recommendations

1. An awareness program where students would be guided about self esteem, self recognition and self confidence, should be created.
2. There should be a social media literacy campaign on positivity of body image and self esteem among people especially young females.
3. There should be regulations that restrict the sales of body enhancement products and also body enhancement surgery such as BBL and liposuction should be bound.
4. There should be a regulation that ensures that female celebrities promote only positive and gainful content instead of promoting ill gotten bodies.

## Conclusions

From this study, it is concluded most young adults are exposed to social media platforms especially Instagram. Also, they are influenced by instagram and this influence most of the times have a negative impact on how they perceive their body image. This negative influence does not only affect how they view their body image but also has an effect on their self esteem which is a negative effect.

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