



Influence of Instagram Body Image Posts on Health Behaviour among Female Undergraduates in Enugu State

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the Influence of Instagram body image posts on health behavior among females undergraduate in Enugu state. In order to achieve this, the study raised specific objective which were to find out the level of exposure and use of instagram among female undergraduates, examine the extent female undergraduate in Enugu follow celebrities and influencers on instagram who promotes ideal sexy body image, examine the extent to which body image promoted by instagram celebrities and influencers influences personal body perception among female undergraduate and to determine the extent to which body images promoted on instagram influences health behavior of female undergraduate in Nigeria. Social comparison and Technological determinism theory was used for this study. The researcher used descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was randomly selected from the universities in Enugu and 3 universities were selected at random, which is 13,762 females. The researcher used the Wimmer and Dominick calculator to arrive at a sample size of 374. The multi stage sampling technique was used. The researcher used the questionnaire method in collecting data. This study revealed that female undergraduates are highly exposure to instagram and they follow celebrities and influencers who promote ideal sexy body image. The study further revealed that female undergraduate in Enugu State did not adopt any drastic measure like surgeries and enhancements products in other to develop a sexy female body image. The researchers therefore recommend that marketers should use women with natural bodies to promote their products.

Keywords: Instagram, Body image, health, health behavior

Introduction

Over the years, females are concerned about how their body looks (Fardouly&Vartanian, 2015). They prefer to lookslim because that is what is considered perfect as models and celebrities on social media app like Instagram portray beautiful women as slim thereby leading to females have low self-esteem and eating disorders like anorexia, nervosa or bulimia nervosa (Mitchell, Pertrie, Greenleaf & Martin 2012).

It has already been established that social media influence her audience (Macaulay, 2022) instagram being a social media app influences how its users perceive beauty. Beauty according to posts on social media is achieved when the individual is slim and curvy (Nyambura, 2020). These slim and curvy ladies like the TV host and actor Nancy Isime, Toke Makinwa, Vitoria Adeyele to mention but a few are used to influence beauty products, fashion wears e.t.c.

In our present society lots of young ladies expose themselves to lots of Instagram content which in most times create a toxic and unrealistic reflection of a perfect body image and this has affected their mental and physical health (). women are body shamed on Instagram (Menzel and Levien, 2011) and this has caused depression, lack of concentration, desperation and in some cases lack of sleep.

Frequent exposure to instagram celebrities and influencers has distorted one's idea of an ideal or attainable body. Some of these celebrities has been accused of going under the knife and photo shopping their pictures to achieve these bodies and it is becoming a norm in recent times. Due to the fact that numerous ladies see these celebrities and influencers as role models they consider them perfect and this has led young ladies to believe that they are not beautiful enough. This has also led ladies to undergo surgeries and they also undergo unhealthy food dieting. This in turn lead to underlining health issues and in the long run death.

There have been scholars like Tiggerman and Zinnivieive (2019); Macaulay (2021) and Tiggeman (2004) who explained that young ladies are exposed to instagram to a large extent and that excessive exposure to instagram has caused lower body satisfaction. However, little or no study known to the researchers has been carried out on Instagram body post has affected females' health behavior.

It is based on this backdrop that the researchers decided to find out the Influence of Instagram Body Image Posts on Health Behavior Among Female Undergraduates in Enugu State

Objectives of the Study

The general objective this study is to examine how instagram posts influences body image and health behavior among female university students. It was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To determine the level of exposure of body image post on instagram among female undergraduate in Enugu.
- ii. To determine the extent to which female undergraduate in Enugu engage celebrities and influencers on instagram who promote "ideal, sexy body image"
- iii. To find out the extent to which body images post are promoted by instagram celebrities and influencers influences personal body perception among female undergraduates in Enugu.
- iv. To determine the extent to which body images promoted on instagram influences health behavior of female undergraduates in Nigeria.

Instagram a tool for perfect body image and health implication

Instagram is a social media platform that aids in the sharing of digital pictures, finding friends and growing followers (wortham&Goel, 2013). Instagram gives users the opportunity to share videos from their mobile devices and it also permits users to use filters to get a perfect image (Aminichai-Hamburger, 2007). 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, 2016).

These influencers seem to picked based on their looks because they have certain body type that is considered a perfect body image. Body image means how people perceive, think and feel about their body

(Dittmar, 2009). 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.

Empirical Review

Women and adolescent girls go through eating patterns that are disturbing and body dissatisfactions more than men (Ata ludden, &Lally, 2007: Tiggeman, 2014). Bearman, Presnell and Martinez (2006) argued that 50% of adolescent females are not happy with their bodies which occur as early as at the age of 6 years. This occurs among people from different cultures and variations in body size (Dohnt&Tiggemann, 2006; Grabe& Hyde, 2006). A study done by Kauss, Paxton, &Alsaker (2008) showed that around 1600 adolescence girls had an increased pressure from the media regarding their body weight that led to increased feelings of body dissatisfaction as opposed to their male counterparts. According to Tiggerman&Kuring (2004) body surveillance was higher in college women than experienced in male counterparts. The studies indicated that young women are indeed especially vulnerable when it comes to body image issues and concerns and should thus continue to serve as the focus research studies looking at risk factors associated with body image concern. A recent research showed that more than 70% of women agreed strongly that media gave them the idea to lose weight, that they should exercise more to lose weight and that they should eat less to lose weight. Also, almost all women strongly disagreed that the media gave them the idea to gain weight. As a result, it can cause eating disorders and low-esteem in females (Dittmar, 2009). According to a paper published in the British journal of health psychology (2018), more than half of girls and one-third of boys' age 6 to 8 are unhappy with their body image. More than 80 percent of 10 years old are afraid of being fat. According to a paper published in Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutics (2011) by age 17, 78 percent of US girls are happy with their weight. Due to this more than half of the teen girls and about one-third of teenage boys engage in unhealthy weight loss behaviors such as focusing themselves to vomit food be ate, skipping meal or taking laxatives.

A survey of 1,500 people aged from 14 to 24 conducted by royal society for public health found that instagram celebrities had dangerous effect on instagram users. Instagram was ranked as the social media network with the most negative impacts on health behavior. Some of the respondents that suffered from low body image claimed that instagram, has "one hundred percent" of the worst effect on them. Some of them even said that they starve themselves food just to have the body image of celebrities online.

In a 2021 study of 15 to 35 years old female, the more females compared themselves to people they followed on social media, the more dissatisfied they become with their bodies. The researcher also pointed out that, if the subjects were already dissatisfied with their bodies, it could increase the drive to compare themselves to others on social media. This behavior could lead to disorder in eating, frequent weight, fluctuations, bingeing and purging. Manago, Graham, Greenfield &Salimkhan, (2008) explained that the pictures of one's own friends on social network platform may be unrealistic and idealized as well as the images of celebrities. Following this perspective, it is likely to think that the more adolescent connect on platforms such as instagram the more this exposure may effect negatively on their body esteem. This is because viewing edited and unrealistic pictures of celebrities leads to body dissatisfaction. Tiggemann (20011) found that the desire to please and the importance of being liked by others impacted appearance satisfaction levels in girls, the more girls focused on how they look; the more they will be preoccupied with their body image and have increased level of body dissatisfaction.

Groesz et al (2002) found that girls under the age of 19 were significantly more affected by slim-ideal media images as compared to those 19 and older. He said many participants attributed this exposure

not only to the media but also to peers, family pressure, school, and other environment. Dohnt and Tiggermann (2005) present particularly disturbing data that indicated that by age of six as many as 42% of girls desire a slimmer body and 43% indicates that they would use some type of diet to obtain a lower weight and slimmer body. As many of 84% of the girls reported watching “a lot of television and 69% reported that they looked at magazines, having a focus on appearance and slim models. Although many of the girls could not read but the watch music video that has great awareness of body image.

Tiggerman (2004) also believe that exposure to commercial that use slim models led to higher level of dissatisfaction with overall body image and in general affect girls in a negative manner. Tiggermann and Zinoviev (2019) showed that exposure to enhancement-free natural photos resulted in lower body dissatisfaction than exposure to standard instagram photos of the same women. Macaulay (2021) carried out a survey of 127 students conducted through Google forms from Jan 3 to Jan 5, 82% of respondents says they use social media specifically, instagram. Also from the survey 40% of the respondent’s body images are negatively affected by social media. McAndrew and Jeong, 2012; Chua and Chang, 2016). Studies suggest that girls’ body image perceptions are more strongly and negatively impacted by social media because they engage with and invest more in body-related content than boys.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Social comparison and Technological Determinism Theory.

Social comparison theory

This theory explains how individuals evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others in order to reduce uncertainty in these domains. Social comparison theory was proposed by Festinger (1954). It stipulates that formation of assessment of individuals involves comparison with others in a social setting on those characteristics deemed relevant to them. The comparisons are considered to occur with people seen as more or less accomplished in a given trait (upward and downward comparison respectively) (Berry, 2016; Ridolif et al 2011).

This theory explains that people compare themselves based on how they have evaluated their opinions. Social media has become a platform where people’s opinions are formed based on what they have seen. The popular opinion on social media is that a perfect body image is slim and curvy. This theory also revealed that comparison occurs with people seen as more or less accomplished. In the case of this study, celebrities and influencers are considered to be more accomplished and young ladies look up to them. Therefore, this theory is relevant to this study.

Technological Determinism Theory

This theory simply put the ideal that technology has important effects on our lives. The theory was established by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) an American social scientist. This theory posits that technology determines certain changes in our society and culture (Da-Costa et al 2015)

This theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it helps to explain how instagram as technological channel has shaped or influence how female individual in the society think, feel and act. There is a general mindset that instagram is a” young people social media platform” as it is mostly used and engaged by young people. Therefore it gives the notion that females on instagram following celebrities or influencers that has to do with body image are influenced. Because instagram post is all about sharing, creating and recreating contents that influences people in different ways and suits their lifestyles. This is because most females easily believes things on social media.

Research Methodology

The research design of this study is the survey research method. The research design is suitable because it provides the researcher an opportunity to communicate with the respondents. The researcher purposively selected Godfrey Okoye University to represent private schools and Enugu State University of Science and Technology to represent public schools. The population of this study is on all Instagram (users) young undergraduate females in Godfrey Okoye University (GOU) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). GOU (1,412) and ESUT (12,350). Therefore, the population of this study is 13767. The sample size for this study was determined using the wimmer and domnique online calculator at 95 percent confidence level with an error 5 percent. The sample size was 374. The researchers employed multi-stage sampling Techniques which implies two or more sampling techniques were used in this study. The researcher used the cluster sampling technique and the simple random sampling technique.

The researchers employed multi-stage sampling Techniques which implies two or more sampling techniques were used in this study. The researcher used the cluster sampling technique and the simple random sampling technique.

Stage one	Stage two	Stage three
Godfrey Okoye University	Natural and Applied Science Management and Social Sciences	Microbiology, Computer science Mass Communication, Psychology
Enugu State University of Science and Technology	Natural and Applied Science Education	Industrial Chemistry, Physics Chemistry Education, Biology Education

Sample size was further divided by the total number of my selected department

$$374 / 8 = 47$$

Each in department the researcher shared 47 questionnaires to the females. The researcher used the structured questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The instrument adopted the 4 point Likert scale.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with the presentation of analysis of data gathered after the questionnaire was administered. Out of the 374 copies of questionnaire distributed the return rate was 354 copies and was used for the analysis. All respondents used for this study were all females.

Research Question One: To what extent is the exposure and use of Instagram among female undergraduates in Enugu State?

Respondents responses on the extent they access their Instagram handle

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Many times a day	231	65.25
May be once a week	24	6.8

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At least once a day	45	12.71
Not regularly	54	15.25
Total	354	100

Source: field survey, 2022

Data above indicate that 65.25% of the respondent access theirinstagram account many times a day.

Analysing the extent of use of instagram among female undergraduates in Enugu State?

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
I have active instagram account	218	90	16	30	354	3.4	Accepted
frequently access instagram at least daily	79	215	24	36	354	2.9	Accepted
						4.8	Accepted

Source: field survey, 2022

Decision rule: if the calculated mean is equal or greater than the mean value which is 2.5, the decision rule is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than mean value the decision is rejected

Analysis: the table above indicates that as average mean value of 4.8 the respondent agrees that they have an active Instagram account and they frequently access instagram at least daily.

This implies that undergraduates in Enugu State are exposed to Instagram to a large extent.

Research Question Two: To what extent are female undergraduate in Enugu expose to celebrities and influencers on instagram who promote ideal, sexy body image?

Response of audience if they have seen celebrities or influence who promote ideal, sexy body image on instagram.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Many times a day	161	45.4
May be once a week	120	33.8
At least once a day	73	20.6
Total	354	100

Source: field survey, 2022

The analyses above reveals that respondents are exposed to celebrities and influencers on Instagram who promote ideal and sexy body image to a large extent. This was made evident when respondents indicated that they see such posts many times in a day.

Analysing the extent respondents are exposed to celebrities and influencers on Instagram who promote ideal sexy body image.

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
I follow influencers who promote ideal sexy images before they can see content on body image.	56	170	60	68	354	2.6	Accepted
I can access contents about body image from influencers and others that I do not follow	80	169	70	35	354	2.9	Accepted
I follow body image influencer on Instagram	58	246	48	2	354	3.0	Accepted
						2.8	Accepted

Source: field survey, 2022

Decision rule: if the calculated mean is equal or greater than the mean value is 2.5 the decision rule is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than mean value the decision is rejected.

Analysis: the table above indicates that the average mean value of 2.6. this implies that respondents agree that they have follow celebrities and influencers who promote ideal body sexy images before they can see contents on body image, they have access to contents about body image and they follow body image influencers on Instagram.

This implies that respondents are exposed to celebrities and influencers on Instagram who promote ideal sexy body image to a large extent.

Research Question Three: To what extent does body image promoted by instagram celebrities and influencers influence personal body perception among female undergraduate in Enugu.

Respondents responses on the most popular female body images promoted on Instagram.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Wider hips	46	12.9
Thicker laps and thighers	46	12.9
Big boobs	90	25.4
Big ass	95	26.8
Slimmer waist	40	11.2
Flat tummy	37	10.4
Total	354	100

Source: field survey, 2022

The responses, the respondent described the most popular female body image being promoted on instagram and the 2 highest percentages are 26.8 and 25.4.

This implies that most Instagram influencers promote big ass and boobs that are not naturally attained.

Analyzing the extent does body image promoted by instagram celebrities and influencers influence personal body perception among respondents.

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
I respondents are exposed to celebrities and influencers on Instagram who promote ideal sexy body image	71	183	66	30	354	2.8	Accepted
I develop a dislike for their current body image because it is different from social media content	68	193	43	50	354	2.7	Accepted
I am willing to adopt any measures that promise to help them develop body image being promoted on instagram.	78	185	36	46	354	2.7	Accepted
						2.7	Accepted

Source: field survey, 2022

Decision rule: if the calculated mean is equal or greater than the mean value is 2.5 the decision rule is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than mean value the decision is rejected.

Analysis: the table above indicates that as average mean value of 2.7 undergraduates in Enugu State do not appreciate their body and do not consider their body as appropriate this is because they accepted they dislike their body type and this is due to their exposure to Instagram influencers who promote idea body image.

This implies that body image promoted by instagram celebrities and influencers influence personal body perception among female undergraduate in Enugu to a large extent.

Research Questions 4:To what extent does body image promoted on instagram influence health behavior of female undergraduates in Enugu?

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
I have at some point adapted some measures to help me develop popular sexy female body image promoted on instagram	46	160	58	90	354	2.4	Rejected
I have at some point used sexy body enhancement cosmetic products to enhance their body image.	35	52	79	188	354	1.8	Rejected

I have at some point adapted certain physical exercise, regime to develop or enhance popular sexy female body.	80	180	41	53	354	2.8	Accepted
I have at some point adjusted their feeding/diet pattern and content to enhance sexy body image.	58	190	4	58	354	2.4	Rejected
I have at some point taken a supplement to enhance sexy body image.	45	55	95	157	354	1.9	Rejected
I have at some point thought of surgical procedures to enhance sexy body image.	36	42	90	186	354	1.7	Rejected
I have at some point used wears to create an artificial sexy body image	49	78	62	165	354	2.0	Rejected
						2.1	Rejected

Source: field survey, 2022

Decision rule: if the calculated mean is equal or greater than the mean value is 2.5 the decision rule is accepted but if the calculated mean is lower than mean value the decision is rejected

Analysis: the table above indicates that at mean value of 2.1 respondents do not under any type of measure to attain the perfect body image. This was made evident when respondents indicated that they have not undergone any type of surgeries or taken any kind of supplements or used sexy enhancement body products to get their admired sexy body type. Respondents however, indicated that they have taken series exercise to enhance their body image.

This implies that does body image promoted on instagram do not influence health behavior of female undergraduates in Enugu to a large extent. It is also important to note that respondents indicated that they have at some point adapted certain physical exercise, regime to develop or enhance popular sexy female body.

Discussion of Findings

The finding to this research question one revealed highly that the respondents has active instagram account, frequently access it many times a day, this was because instagram is a popular app, it is more engaging and influential than other platforms due to the photo sharing and video sharing. In line with the findings of Macaulay (2022) who revealed that students use social media, specifically Instagram. This study also revealed that students perception about body image are negatively affected by social media.

This study also revealed that revealed respondents are exposed to celebrities or influencers who promote ideal sexy body image on instagram, follow celebrities and influencers and follow content on body image this was because these celebrities or influencers usually post content of body image to gain the attention of female undergraduates engage in giveaways, promotions and concert to have social interaction. In line with the findings Hargreaves and Tiggeman (2004) also believe that exposure to commercial that use slim models led to higher level of dissatisfaction with overall body image and in general affect girls in a negative manner.

Furthermore, respondents wish they could develop popular body images being promoted on Instagram, develop dislike for their body image and are willing to adopt measures to develop popular body image promoted on Instagram, this was because of the influence of what they see on social media, how attractive these body images are online, peer influence, being compared by others and they are not satisfied with their body. In line with the findings of Hargreaves and Tiggeman (2004) also believe that exposure to commercial that use slim models led to higher level of dissatisfaction with overall body image and in general affect girls in a negative manner. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Tiggeman and Zinniveive (2019) who explained that exposure to Instagram models can lead to acceptance of the idea of Instagram body image and this cause lower body dissatisfaction. In agreement with the social comparison theory which explains that individuals compare themselves with people who are considered as successful people. Respondents have compared their bodies with these influencers and wish that they could develop their body like that of the influencers. Furthermore, this finding is not far from the technology determinism theory which indicated that Instagram has influenced the perception of respondents on what is considered the perfect body image.

The findings to this research question four revealed that the respondent did not adopt some measure to help them develop popular sexy female body image promoted on Instagram, or use enhancement products, adapted to physical exercise, adjust their diet pattern, take supplement, think of surgical procedures or even use wears to create artificial sexy body image. This is because some of this measure are not realistic and trustworthy and sometimes have a great side effect on own health. In line with the findings of According to a paper published in Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutics (2011) by age 17, 78 percent of US girls are happy with their weight. Due to this more than half of the teen girls and about one-third of teenage boys engage in unhealthy weight loss behaviors such as focusing themselves to vomit food they ate, skipping meal or taking laxatives. This finding is not in agreement with the findings of Ata, Ludden and Lally (2006) who revealed that ladies go through eating disorder so that they can lose weight. Furthermore, Dohnt and Tiggemann (2005) explained that ladies use diet to try and lose weight so that they can become slim.

Conclusion

Instagram as a social media app has really influenced how ladies perceive their bodies. This study reveals how powerful nature of social media. The idea of slim and sexy being an ideal body image has really affected ladies because, based on the findings of this study, majority of ladies now suffer from lower body dissatisfaction. Although this study revealed that majority of the ladies in the area of study have not engaged in activities like surgery or have eating disorder they have however tried to exercise to loose with. This implies that subconsciously, they do not appreciate their body enough leading to low self-esteem and also it can in the long run lead to some underlining health challenges like mental health disorder and physical health disorder due to botched body.

Recommendations

The following recommendations raised from the findings of this study:

1. The study recommends that Instagram influencer and beauty industry should acknowledge body dissatisfaction can be use by putting pressure on women to become thin. The situation can result to appearance management behaviors as to preserve the health of young women.
2. Furthermore, Instagram influencers and other industry professional needs to put into consideration implication by bring about hastags, linking words, phrases and messages that will help females to demonstrate their natural selves and their real beauty.

3. Marketers that deal with body products should emphasize on using model and influencer that maintain their natural bodies and has not undergone any form of surgery. This will motivate female undergraduate to maintain their health and body image and avoid physical impossible pressure as well develop body satisfaction.

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