Parenting Styles and Social Media Use as Correlates of Body-Image Insecurity Among Adolescents in Cross River State

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship of parenting styles, social media use and body-image insecurity among secondary school adolescents in Cross River State. Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study as two research questions and two hypotheses were presented to guide the study. The independent variables include parenting styles and social media use while the dependent variable is body-image insecurity. Data were collected using Adolescent Body Image Security Status Questionnaire (ABISSQ) after the establishment of its psychometric properties. A sample size of three hundred and eighty-six (386) students from 11,702 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) in Cross River State were selected for the study. Multiple Regression Analysis and Simple Regression Analysis were used to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results from the study revealed that parenting styles and social media use had significant contribution in predicting body-image security status of adolescents in Cross River State. In view of this, it was recommended among others that adolescents should wisely apportion time to the use of social media and actively seek knowledge-inspiring contents instead of dwelling on contents that could harm their body-image security status.
Keywords: Parenting styles, Social Media use, Adolescents, Body-Image Insecurity

Introduction

More than ever, adolescents are being constantly exposed to a barrage of ideals as presented by the society on the standard of what it means to be beautiful or handsome. As a result of this, the adolescents that are not well guided develop misconception of who they are thereby, negatively impacting on their self-esteem. These ideals, as depicted by the society, is largely propagated through social media, and it is gradually becoming an albatross in its influence on adolescents. Adolescence, as described by United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF (2011) is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood which is divided into early adolescence (from 10 to 14 years old) and late adolescence (from 15 to 19 years old). This period is characterized by significant physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes that impact on adolescent's growth. These changes often pose as challenge in how they develop and perceive their body-image (Tort-Nasarre, Pollina-Pocallet, Ferrer Suquet, Ortega Bravo, Vilafranca Cartagena & Artigues-Barbera, 2023). Stanley Hall (1904) described this stage as a period of storm and stress. A period of storm because adolescents at this stage experience a decreased level of self-control; and a period of stress because of the increased sensitivity the adolescents experience. Some of the experiences that characterize the storm and stress include, conflict with parental authority as they seek greater independence and autonomy, mood disruption which is as a result of hormonal changes and psychological distress resulting from uncontrollable shifts in emotion as well as physical manifestation of biological changes in their bodies (Emerson & Roundy, 2023). The resultant effect of these changes, which is often more prominent and abrupt during adolescence tends to position them to either accept or reject their maturing body by either engaging in self-care or dangerous behaviours. In other words, they may either develop a sense of security in who they really are or feel insecure based on how they perceive their body-image.

Achumba, Igbomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) conceptualized security to mean protection against all forms of harm, which include physical, economic and psychological while insecurity on the other hand according to Hassan, (2014) is a negative feeling involving fear, anxiety and uncertainty among others. When adolescents feel uncertain or anxious about how they perceive themselves, the result may be frustration or feeling of insecurity. Insecurity is a threat to learning, and as Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs theory puts it, the need for security is ranked second, in the most basic need of man after the physiological needs. Therefore, an adolescent whose perception of their body-image is positive will experience a secure body-image. However, if the adolescent has a negative perception of their body-image by experiencing anxiety or unhappiness with the way they feel, then, they can be said to experience body-image insecurity. This is because the need for safety is complex and provides for the following elements which include certainty, stability, support, care and freedom from fear, anxiety and so forth (Hopper, 2020).

What then is body-image? Body-image refers to the subjective image that individuals have of their own body, irrespective of its actual appearance. It is a complex and multidimensional construct that comprises an individual's personal identity which encompasses thoughts, beliefs and feelings about their own body, as well as evaluations and behaviours they display in comparison with others (Momene, Esteves, Griffith, Macia, Herrero, Olave & Iruarrizaga, 2023). According to Grogan (2016), body-image is described as the internal representation that someone has of their

external appearance which encompasses self-perceptions related to the body and personal attitudes including thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviours. It is a phenomenon that encompasses different components. Body-image insecurity is a state of feeling uncertain or dissatisfied with one's own physical appearance. This means that, a person is not confident or comfortable in their own skin and may have negative thoughts and feelings about their body. This insecurity often arises from societal pressures that promote certain "ideal" beauty standard with the internalized beliefs about what is considered attractive or desirable. It can lead to low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and a range of negative emotions such as shame, embarrassment, and self-consciousness. This is why, having a distorted body-image predisposes an individual to suffering from body-image insecurity. Be that as it may, body-image insecurity is influenced by different factors including social agents like family influences, societal stereotypes and beliefs including those of the people around a person as well as one's own beliefs. This explains why in some countries like South Korea, cosmetic surgery industry has become endemic in the systemic culture of that society. The increase in the cosmetic surgery industry in South Korea is a major pointer to body-image insecurity in that country, making lots of young ones desire to go any length in getting the procedure done even with its attendant risks. In our society here, particularly in Lagos and Abuja where cosmetic surgery business is being gradually established, many youngsters, especially those in tertiary institutions or working-class youths save up money to undergo procedures like Brazillian Butt Lift (BBL) in order to improve or augment the look of their buttocks by transferring fat from other parts of the body through liposuction to their buttocks. The hashtag for instance of BBL has around six billion views on TikTok, which proves just how much interest there is in both the documentation of the surgery process as well as memes related to it (seduction cosmetic centre, 2024).

Among the social agents adolescents interact with, parents tend to have the strongest influence in how they think, feel and perceive themselves in comparison to the "idle" beauty standard. The influence of parents could make or mar the way adolescents perceive themselves. Parents have different styles in raising their children. Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined parenting styles as a constellation of parents' attitudes and behaviours toward children and an emotional climate in which the parents' behaviours are expressed. As we are aware, adolescence is a critical developmental period that requires parents and youths to renegotiate their relationships (Laursen & Collins, 2009). Therefore, effective engagement of parenting is important for well-adjusted, emotional stable and body-image secure adolescents. Baumrind suggested that there is a close relationship between the type of parenting style and children's behavioural outcome. This is corroborated by Rosenberg (1989) who revealed that the quality of relationship adolescents experience, play a major role in their psychosocial development. Different parenting styles can lead to different child developmental outcomes. Based on extensive observations, interviews and analyses, Baumrind identified three parenting styles which she classified as Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive. However, Maccoby and Martin (1983) as cited in Li (2023) were the ones who expanded these three-parenting styles model using a two-dimensional framework. They added a fourth style by expanding Baumrind's permissive parenting style into two: Permissive (also known as Indulgent parenting style) and Neglectful (also known as Uninvolved parenting Style). These four parenting styles are sometimes referred to as the Diana Baumrind / Maccoby & Martin Parenting Styles. For the purpose of this work, the researcher shall be working within the confines of Diana Baumrind's three parenting styles.

The Authoritative Parenting Style is a parenting approach to child-rearing that combines warmth, sensitivity, and the setting of limits. Although, this style of parenting involves high expectations from their child for achievement and maturity, however, this parenting style demonstrate warmth and responsiveness. The Authoritarian Parenting is a parenting style that is characterized by high levels of demand and control coupled with low levels of warmth and responsiveness. It is an extremely strict form of parenting. This style is low in parental responsiveness and high in parental demandingness. Authoritarian parents are not very emotional or affectionate. They are critical of their children if they ever fail to meet their expectations. Permissive parenting style which is also known as indulgent parenting is defined as the style of parenting that is characterized by a high degree of responsiveness and low level of demandingness (Mutunga, Guantai & Mbirirhi, 2023). In this style of parenting, parents tend to demonstrate high extent of nurturance and little degree of maturity hassles from the children. Low degrees of control and interaction with the children is also an inherent trait of permissive parenting. This type of parenting approach does little to educate the children to be responsibly independent as the children are allowed to experiment by allowing them to take charge of their decision while parents act more as friends. These children are permitted to do as they wish and are allowed to make decisions even when they are mentally and emotionally ready.

Apart from parenting styles, the social media poses a major influence on how adolescents perceive themselves in the light of their body-image. In a study conducted by Thomas & Kotian (2023) on the influence of the media and celebrities on body-image. The researchers in this investigation observed that smartphone and other internet supported gadgets have brought us very close to the glamour industry. The intentional representation that the entertainment industry does, according to them, is to show-off only the beautiful, most attractive and "perfect" faces and bodies by dedicating enormous sums of money in investing into this depiction. What is hidden from us is an army of professionals to help them look the way they look. There are people to design them clothes suitable to their body-type and clothe them, apply flawless makeup to conceal defects in every visible area of their bodies and on top of it, another professional to capture and edit those perfect videos and photos that are seen. The celebrities have the money to afford the best dietician, cook and fitness trainer so that they fit into the bodily statistics given to them by the industry. This unfortunately is not obvious to the social media user who begins to develop negative about their own person.

As a result of this, government across different levels have initiated programmes to ameliorate the scourge of body-image insecurity among young people including adolescents. Unfortunately, inspite of these interventions, the plague of body-image insecurity among adolescents in Cross River State seems to be unabated. It is feared that if this worrisome situation is not properly addressed, the much-anticipated educational outcome and well-rounded development of adolescents in secondary schools will be a mirage. It is on the basis of this, that the researchers seek to investigate and address the questions on whether parenting styles and social media use correlate with body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

Specifically, the study aimed to determine how:

i.   Parenting styles predict body-image insecurity among secondary school adolescents in Cross River State.

ii.   Social media use predicts body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools.

Research questions

Specific questions that guided this study are:

i.   How does parenting styles predict body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools?
ii.   To what extent does social media involvement predict body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools?

Methods

Research design adopted for this study is the correlational survey research design. This design enabled the researchers to examine the relationships between or among two or more variables in a single group which can occur at several levels. This design aims to describe the relationship among the variables of interest and to focus more specifically on the nature and predictive power of such relationship (Devi, Devi, Pradhan, Giri, Lepcha & Basnet, 2022). This study made use of questionnaire to collect data. The use of questionnaire to collect data has the advantage of covering extensive amount of information and to obtain data from a large number of people within a limited amount of time. For this study, the population is large and from it, a representative sample was drawn.

Population

The population for this study comprised adolescents in all the public secondary schools in Cross River State. As at the time of this study, there was a total of about 11,702 students in Senior Secondary 2 (SS2) in public secondary schools in the state as obtained from the Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Secondary Education Board, Calabar in 2023. The SS2 class was used for the study because students in SS2 class are all assumed to have attained adolescence. Also, in order to obtain an adequate representation of adolescents for the study, the researcher needed to use adolescents who are currently enrolled in schools, particularly, the public secondary schools because many of the enrolled students are catered for by guardians who may not necessarily be their biological parents. As a result, they may not have access to the most conducive home support that may support positive body-image security status.

Sample and sampling technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used for this study. Stratified random sampling technique is a type of probability sampling technique that involves the partitioning of a population into strata (groups) based on certain characteristics that is known for every sampling unit in the population, and then selecting samples independently from each stratum. The basis of stratification

was to ensure the inclusion of schools in the Education Zones thereby giving members of all Education Zones equal opportunity to be selected into the sample. It also ensured that both the male and female students' population had equal chances of being included in the study. Taro Yamane's sample size determination formula that was discovered in 1967 was adopted to select the sample (both number of schools and number of students). The sample of 386 students representing 3.3% of the study population was selected out of which 183 were males while 203 were females. The sample of schools was 169, representing 58% of number of schools.

Adolescent Body-Image Security Status Questionnaire (ABISSQ)

The ABISSQ is a self-report questionnaire developed to measure the perception adolescents have of themselves across different levels of measure. Following an extensive review of literature, along with expert opinions from scholars with relevant experience, a total of 60 items for the questionnaire was finally included as against the initial 75 items that was earlier developed. The wordings of each item were meant to allow respondents to indicate, by ticking, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the items. The modified Likert scale ranged from 1 to 4 with the following response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Validity Procedure

In order to establish the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was presented to experts in the Educational Psychology unit for its construct validity. It was also presented to experts in the Measurement & Evaluation unit, Faculty of Educational Foundations Studies, University of Calabar for its face validity after its construction. Construct validity refers to the degree to which a variable, test, questionnaire or instrument measure those theoretical concepts that the researcher hopes to measure. Face validity of the research instrument is a preliminary and subjective evaluation meant to ensure that the instrument appears to measure what it is intended to measure on the surface. Unlike construct validation, which focuses on the underlying theoretical constructs, face validation is concerned with the superficial aspects of the instrument.

Pilot testing

For the pilot testing of the ABISSQ, the researcher conducted a pilot test on a small but similar population group in order to address any potential issues that may arise from the research instrument. The purpose of a pilot test is to majorly increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire. The number of respondents used for the pilot study was 40, representing approximately 10% of the study sample that was used for the main study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The reliability coefficients of the instrument using the Cronbach's alpha to test for the internal consistency in order to assess the reliability of the measuring instrument. A test-retest reliability analysis was conducted by administering the survey to a subset of participants at two different time points. The purpose of this was to help establish the stability of the responses over time.

Ethical consideration

The research adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from the school authority and from the respondents who were provided detailed information about the purpose of the study, the use of data to be collected and the rights of the participant to withdraw

at any time they felt to do so. The study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Ethical documentation along with informed consent forms and IBR approval were meticulously maintained for transparency and replicability.

Data collection procedure

With the permission of the schools' principals, copies of the questionnaire were physically distributed throughout the sampled school and among students in the sampled class (SS2). The importance of the exercise and the value of responding honestly were explained to the respondents. Four trained research assistants helped to collate the questionnaire. The administered and completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents for analysis.

Data analysis procedure

Following the collection, the questionnaires were sorted and counted. It was discovered that 356 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, suggesting a return rate of about 92%. An initial assessment was done to check for incomplete responses / missing data. Three of the 356 returned copies had vague responses. The three copies were discarded to avoid missing data during the coding and analysis process. Therefore, the number of correctly filled copies of questionnaires analyzed were 353. In scoring the responses, 1, 2, 3 and 4 points were allocated to responses indicating strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively for positively worded items. However, negatively worded items were scored in reverse order for all response options. The scored on all the items in corresponding sub-scales were added to obtain continuous data. Multiple regression analysis and Simple regression analysis were used for the hypotheses testing at .05 alpha level.

> Hypothesis 1: Parenting style does not significantly predict body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools.
> Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of sex type on body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Based on hypothesis 1 as stated above, the result of the analysis is presented below:

TABLE 1
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for the prediction of adolescent body-image insecurity using parenting style

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	4874.418	4	1073.400	13.334*	.000
Residual	30671.399	381	80.502		
Total	34964.997	385			

Variables	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	47.581	3.083		15.435	.000

Anxious-avoidant attachment	.271	.233	.060	1.165	.245
Secure attachment	.578	.231	.124	2.499*	.013
Anxious-ambivalent attachment	1.363	.237	.297	5.755*	.000
Disorganized attachment	.470	.216	-.112	-2.176*	.030

*p < .05

R = .350

Adjusted R Square = .114

Std Error of the Estimate = 8.972

Results in Table 1 show that the calculated F-ratio of 20.627 is greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.83 at .05 level of significance using 382 and 3 degrees of freedom. This means that, jointly, the three sub-variables of parenting style significantly predict body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools. Results for relative effects of the predictors show that permissive parenting style (t=7.013) contributed more to the prediction than other variables, followed by authoritative parenting style (t=2.535) and lastly by authoritarian parenting style (t=0.294). The coefficient of determination (adjusted R Square) was >133. This indicates that 13.3% of the variation in adolescent body-image insecurity resulted from the effect of the three independent sub-variables of the study while the remaining 86.7% of the variation (1-R Square) resulted from variables extraneous to the study. Based on the level of significance of the F-ratio, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

TABLE 2

Summary of Simple Regression Analysis for the prediction of adolescent body-image insecurity using social media involvement

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	864.305	1	864.305	9.733	.000
Residual	34100.692	384	88.804		
Total	34964.997	385			

Variables	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig

(Constant)	54.777	3.314		16.531*	.000
Social media involvement	.607	.195	.157	3.120*	.000

*p < .05

R = .157

R Square = .025

Std Error of the Estimate = 9.424

Results in Table 2 show that the calculated F-ratio of 9.733 is greater than the critical F-ratio of 6.70 at .05 level of significance using 384 and 1 degree of freedom. This means that Social media involvement significantly predict body-image insecurity among adolescents in secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (adjusted R Square) was .022. This indicates that only 2.2% of the variation in adolescent body-image insecurity resulted from the effect of the independent variable of the study while the remaining 97.8% of the variation (1-R Square) resulted from variables extraneous to the study. Based on the level of significance of the F-ratio, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

Research findings from hypothesis 1 revealed that jointly, parenting styles significantly predicted body-image insecurity among secondary school adolescents in Cross River State. However, the relative individual effect of the sub-variables show that permissive parenting style had the highest contribution in predicting adolescent body-image insecurity. This was followed by authoritative parenting style and lastly, the authoritarian parenting style.

From the findings, the permissive parenting style made the highest contribution in predicting adolescent body-image insecurity. Studies have found that permissive parenting has negative effects on children, some of which are linked to mental health concerns like anxiety and depression, as well as social isolation and somatic complaints. Children of permissive parents may exhibit negative behaviours at school such as being delinquent. This is so because, since they have little structure at home, they may respond negatively when teachers enforce rules and limits. For instance, Obamakinde et al. (2019) study on parenting styles and socio-demographic dynamics associated with mental health of in-school adolescents in Ibadan revealed that, when compared to adolescents raised with other parenting styles, adolescents who perceived fathers as less demanding (permissive parenting), experienced emotional and peer problems. However, the study surprisingly revealed that authoritarian parenting style had the lowest contribution in predicting adolescent body-image insecurity. This finding is also consistent with the works of Li et al. (2023) which revealed that punitive education and fathers' overprotection (permissive parenting characteristic) might be risk factors for children's mental health. From the study, authoritarian parenting style made the least contribution in predicting adolescent body-image insecurity. This finding is supported by the works of Yadav et al. (2021) who revealed that authoritarian parenting

style is most suitable for the development of emotional intelligence in comparison to authoritative and permissive parenting styles.

Findings from Hypothesis 2 revealed that a significant but weak positive influence exists between social media involvement and adolescent body-image insecurity. The finding that there is a weak positive influence of social media involvement on adolescent body-image suggests that the social media involvements can impact on adolescent body-image security status but other factors may be more significant in determining adolescent body-image insecurity. The finding of this study is in agreement with that of Jiotsa et al. (2021) which suggests that there is an association between comparing one's own physical appearance to that of people they follow on social media. This means that, widespread use of social media in adolescents and young adults could increase body image insecurity thereby, rendering them more vulnerable to behavioural adjustment and learning. Findings from Sultan (2021) suggests that the greater the time spent on social media, the greater the negative impact it has on body-image perception among female students.

Conclusion

Body-image is a subjective image that individuals have of their own body, irrespective of its actual appearance. It is a complex and multidimensional construct that comprises an individual's personal identity which encompasses thoughts, beliefs and feelings about their own body as well as evaluations and behaviours such as reviews and comparisons. However, parenting styles and involvement with social media play significant roles in the body-image security status of adolescents, all of which influence how adolescents adjust socially in their environment. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that these independent variables significantly contribute to predict body-image insecurity among secondary school adolescents in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1.   Parents should be sensitized through different forums, particularly during PTA meetings on the magnitude of influence they wield over their children and as such, they should ensure they foster emotionally warm and responsive home atmosphere where a high sense of worth is entrenched in the psyche of their adolescent children. This is needed in order to help them develop a healthy perception of their body-image, no matter what the societal ideal beauty standard may present to them.

2.   Adolescents should wisely apportion time to the use of social media and actively seek knowledge inspiring contents instead of dwelling on contents that could harm their body-image security status.

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