

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM
AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

BY

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project work carried out by **EDO-OMOREGIE OSARUMEN** with matriculation number EDU2102556 in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, University of Benin, Benin City in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. ED) in Health Safety and Environmental Education.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God, for His guidance and grace, and to my beloved mother, whose love, prayers, and support have been my greatest inspiration.

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With a heart full of gratitude, the researcher gives all glory and praise to God Almighty, whose grace, wisdom, and protection have guided her throughout this academic journey. His mercy has sustained her, and His strength has carried her through every challenge that came her way. The researcher's sincere gratitude also goes to her project supervisor, Dr. Eunice Odigie, for her guidance, constructive criticisms, and valuable suggestions that helped to shape this research study.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among adolescents. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to enable systematic collection of information from adolescents within their everyday environment. The target population comprised students aged 13–19 years from selected secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area. Using a simple random sampling method, 150 respondents were selected for participation. Data were collected using a structured instrument developed by the researcher, which included sections on demographic data, types and frequency of social media use, perceived body image, measures of self-esteem, and coping mechanisms adopted by adolescents. To establish content validity, the draft instrument was critically reviewed by the project supervisor and two specialists in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education; their recommendations were incorporated prior to final administration. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the test–retest technique, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.79, which indicates acceptable consistency for the measures employed. The researcher personally administered all 150 copies of the questionnaire with assistance, and all were retrieved and used for analysis. Collected data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize respondents’ characteristics and main patterns of social media engagement.

Findings from the study revealed that social media greatly influences how adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area perceive their bodies. It makes them more conscious of their appearance and promotes unrealistic beauty standards. The study also found that adolescents feel more confident after receiving many likes and comments on their social media posts and feel bad when they get fewer likes than expected. Furthermore, fashion and beauty posts, celebrity lifestyles, and friends’ photos were identified as the most influential social media contents among adolescents. Instagram and TikTok were found to be the most engaging platforms, while chatting with friends and watching videos were the most common social media activities. The study also showed that most adolescents adopt positive coping mechanisms such as avoiding insecure accounts, reducing social media use, and following body positivity pages, while only a few engage in harmful behaviors such as skipping meals or avoiding social activities because of social media pressure. Based on these findings, it was concluded that social media has a strong influence on adolescents’ perception of body image and self-esteem. Although it can enhance confidence and social connection, it can also create pressure and unrealistic standards that affect adolescents’ mental and emotional well-being. The study therefore recommends proper guidance and education on healthy social media use among adolescents to promote a positive sense of self and body acceptance.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In the contemporary digital age, social media has become a pervasive part of everyday life, especially among adolescents who constitute one of the most active groups of users worldwide. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook have revolutionized how individuals communicate, share experiences, and perceive themselves within society. For adolescents, who are at a formative stage of identity development, social media platforms serve not only as spaces for interaction and self-expression but also as arenas for self-presentation and evaluation. This constant exposure to online interactions, comparisons, and feedback can significantly influence how young individuals perceive their physical appearance and self-worth. Social media thus acts as a psychological mirror that reflects societal standards and expectations, making it a critical factor in shaping adolescents' self-concept (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Marengo et al., 2022).

Body image refers to an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and emotions regarding their physical appearance. During adolescence, this construct becomes particularly salient because of the rapid biological, social, and emotional changes characteristic of this

developmental stage. Adolescents become increasingly aware of their bodies and how others perceive them, leading to a heightened sensitivity to appearance-related feedback and peer opinions. Within digital spaces, especially visual-based platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, idealized and often digitally altered images dominate, presenting unrealistic beauty standards. Continuous exposure to such imagery may result in the internalization of societal ideals, prompting adolescents to evaluate their worth based on external appearance rather than intrinsic qualities. Studies have shown that frequent engagement with appearance-focused content on social media correlates with greater body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, and lower body appreciation among adolescents (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Holland & Tiggemann, 2022).

Furthermore, image-editing filters and curated online personas amplify these pressures by normalizing perfection and concealing flaws. Adolescents often compare themselves to influencers and peers whose images conform to idealized beauty norms. This process of upward social comparison where individuals compare themselves to others they perceive as better or more attractive has been strongly associated with body dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms (Burnell et al., 2021; Tiggemann & Hayden, 2023). The result is a persistent discrepancy between one's perceived self and the idealized self-promoted online.

Over time, such comparison can negatively affect adolescents' emotional stability, leading to low self-confidence, preoccupation with physical flaws, and in severe cases, disordered eating behaviors.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, represents an individual's subjective evaluation of their own worth or competence. It is a fundamental aspect of psychological well-being and plays a vital role in how adolescents respond to challenges, interact socially, and maintain mental health. During adolescence, self-esteem tends to fluctuate due to developmental transitions and heightened dependence on peer validation. Social media has added a new layer to this dynamic by transforming self-presentation into a public performance measured by likes, comments, and shares. Positive feedback may provide temporary boosts in self-esteem, reinforcing feelings of acceptance and belonging. However, negative feedback, social rejection, or a lack of engagement can produce opposite effects, resulting in decreased self-esteem and self-doubt (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Appel et al., 2020).

Recent empirical evidence supports these associations. For instance, studies have shown that adolescents who spend more time engaging in appearance-based social media activities such as posting selfies or viewing photos of peers report lower levels of self-esteem and body satisfaction (Marengo et al., 2022; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2022). Similarly,

research indicates that social comparison mediates the relationship between social media use and self-esteem; in other words, it is not merely the use of social media but the way adolescents interpret and compare themselves to others that determine the psychological outcome (Barry et al., 2023). Adolescents who interpret others' online success or attractiveness as superior to their own often experience reduced self-worth, while those who use social media for connection or self-expression tend to exhibit more positive self-perceptions.

Another layer to this issue lies in the feedback loop created by social media platforms. Adolescents post images or updates seeking validation, receive feedback, and then adjust their behavior or self-presentation based on that feedback. This loop can either reinforce self-esteem through positive validation or erode it through negative feedback and unfavorable comparisons. The algorithmic design of many social media platforms prioritizing visually appealing and engagement-heavy content further reinforces exposure to idealized bodies and lifestyles, perpetuating unrealistic standards (Keles et al., 2020). The resulting psychological tension between one's real and perceived self may contribute to anxiety, depression, or feelings of inadequacy, particularly among those already struggling with self-image concerns.

The developmental nature of adolescence makes young people especially vulnerable to such influences. During this period, adolescents seek autonomy, peer recognition, and identity consolidation. Their reliance on peer approval often means that online validation quantified through likes and followers becomes a major determinant of self-worth. Studies reveal that adolescents' emotional responses to social media feedback are more intense and unstable than those of adults, making them more susceptible to fluctuations in mood and self-esteem based on online interactions (Barry et al., 2023). Consequently, repeated exposure to negative or inconsistent feedback can lead to emotional distress, social withdrawal, and a distorted sense of identity.

While social media offers undeniable advantages such as enhanced connectivity, self-expression, and access to information it simultaneously introduces psychological risks associated with comparison and validation. The paradox lies in the fact that while adolescents use social media to feel connected, they often end up feeling inadequate due to constant exposure to curated perfection. Numerous studies have identified strong correlations between frequent social media use and symptoms of low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety among adolescents (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2022). These effects are particularly pronounced

among users who engage heavily with visual content that emphasizes physical attractiveness or popularity.

In the Nigerian context, this phenomenon takes on additional complexity due to cultural and socioeconomic factors. Nigeria has experienced a rapid rise in smartphone usage and internet access, leading to increasing social media engagement among young people. The country's adolescents now participate in a global digital culture where Western ideals of beauty and success dominate. Traditional African perceptions of attractiveness often emphasizing fuller body types and natural features are gradually being replaced by globalized norms that prioritize slimness, lighter skin tones, and specific physical attributes. Research conducted among Nigerian youths indicates that exposure to such globalized beauty standards on social media contributes to greater body image dissatisfaction and increased pressure to conform to unrealistic ideals (Okafor et al., 2023; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2021).

Moreover, the intersection between globalization and local culture has created what some scholars describe as cultural dissonance a state where adolescents' perceptions of beauty are torn between traditional values and modern media ideals. This dissonance can result in confusion, reduced cultural self-esteem, and identity conflicts. Female adolescents,

in particular, may experience heightened vulnerability due to the gendered nature of beauty expectations on social media. Pressure to achieve a certain “look” can lead to overuse of beauty-enhancing applications, excessive dieting, or even consideration of cosmetic procedures, behaviors that reflect deep-rooted dissatisfaction with one’s natural body image.

The Implications of these findings extend beyond individual mental health to broader social and educational concerns. As adolescents’ self-esteem and body image are fundamental to academic motivation, social functioning, and overall well-being, understanding how social media shapes these constructs is crucial. Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, psychologists, and policymakers must recognize the dual role of social media as both a platform for connection and a potential source of psychological strain. Educational programs that promote media literacy can help adolescents critically evaluate the content they consume, distinguishing between real and curated representations. Similarly, mental health interventions should focus on building resilience, fostering self-acceptance, and encouraging healthy online behavior.

In conclusion, social media has transformed adolescent socialization, offering new opportunities for communication and self-expression but also introducing significant psychological challenges. Its impact on body image and self-esteem is complex, mediated by

factors such as social comparison, feedback sensitivity, and cultural context. For Nigerian adolescents, the convergence of global beauty standards and local cultural values creates unique pressures that warrant context-specific research and intervention. Understanding these dynamics is vital for promoting positive body image, stable self-esteem, and overall psychological well-being among young people navigating the digital world. By fostering critical awareness and encouraging balanced media engagement, society can help adolescents derive the benefits of social media while minimizing its harmful effects.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of adolescent life, shaping how young people think, feel, and relate to themselves and others. The increasing exposure of adolescents to digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Snapchat has created growing concerns regarding their mental and emotional well-being. Many adolescents are constantly comparing themselves with the idealized and filtered images they encounter online, which often leads to self-doubt, anxiety, and depression. Research indicates that exposure to appearance-focused social media is strongly linked to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem among adolescents. A comprehensive review found that frequent users of appearance-driven platforms experienced greater body dissatisfaction and reduced self-

esteem (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). Similarly, social media addiction has been shown to negatively correlate with self-esteem, with body image concerns mediating this relationship (Dobrea, Pasare, & Păsărelu, 2023). These findings suggest that social media has become a double-edged sword; while it connects people globally, it also threatens the emotional stability of adolescents who are still forming their self-concept and identity.

Beyond its psychological implications, social media has also been linked to adverse physical and behavioral consequences among adolescents. Many young individuals spend excessive hours online, leading to sedentary lifestyles and a decline in physical activity. Studies have shown that adolescents who use social media daily are less likely to report adequate sleep and more likely to be physically inactive (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Chaput, & Hamilton, 2019). Excessive screen time also contributes to health problems such as headaches, eye strain, and irregular sleep patterns among young people (Chen & Yan, 2022).

In Nigeria, it has been reported that constant late-night social media browsing disrupts adolescents' sleep schedules, resulting in fatigue and poor academic concentration (Adeniyi, Okafor, & Eze, 2021). These findings underscore the significance of examining how excessive digital engagement interferes with physical health and behavioral patterns among adolescents. Equally important is the growing concern about the social and academic

implications of social media use among adolescents. As young people increasingly rely on online platforms for communication, their capacity to develop meaningful face-to-face relationships may diminish, leading to social isolation and reduced interpersonal competence. Research shows that heavy social media users report greater social comparison tendencies, which negatively influence their social adjustment (Valkenburg, Beyens, & Pouwels, 2022).

Furthermore, excessive use of digital media has been found to contribute to poor academic performance due to constant distractions and reduced study focus (Marengo, Montag, & Sindermann, 2021). In Nigeria, frequent notifications and prolonged online interactions have been observed to disrupt students' academic concentration and motivation (Igwe, Ede, & Nwosu, 2024). Given that academic success in Nigeria remains a critical determinant of future opportunities, such distractions may hinder adolescents' intellectual development and academic achievement.

Despite growing awareness of these psychological, physical, and social challenges, research on the holistic impact of social media on adolescent development, particularly in Nigeria, remains limited. Most existing studies have examined these effects separately, without adequately exploring how they interact to influence adolescents' body image and self-esteem. It has been found that social media use significantly predicts body image

dissatisfaction among Nigerian adolescents, but self-esteem does not mediate this relationship (Ede, Igwe, & Nwosu, 2024). The situation is particularly critical in communities such as Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, where internet access is rapidly expanding, yet awareness of healthy social media use remains low. This study, therefore, seeks to address these gaps by investigating the comprehensive effects of social media on adolescents' mental, physical, and social well-being. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights that will guide parents, educators, and policymakers in promoting responsible and balanced social media use among young people.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of social media on body image perception among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area?
2. How does social media engagement influence adolescent self-esteem in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area?
3. What types of social media content or activities influence body image and self-esteem among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area?

4. What are the coping mechanisms adopted by adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among adolescents

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the influence of social media on body image perception among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area.
2. To assess the influence of social media on adolescents' self-esteem in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area
3. To identify the types of social media content or activities that mostly influences body image and self-esteem in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area.
4. To explore coping mechanisms adopted by adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns in senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area.

Significance of the Study

This study on the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among adolescents is of great significance because it provides valuable insights into the psychological and social challenges faced by young people in the digital age. As social media becomes deeply embedded in adolescents' daily lives, understanding its influence on their perception of body image and self-worth is crucial. The study will help reveal how exposure to idealized images and online comparisons affects the mental and emotional development of adolescents. Its findings will be beneficial to parents, educators, policymakers, and the adolescents themselves, as it offers guidance on promoting healthier online behavior and building resilience against negative social media influences.

The study is highly significant to parents and guardians, as it will create awareness about the subtle yet powerful effects of social media on their children's self-perception and confidence. Many parents may not fully understand how constant exposure to filtered and edited online images can lead to body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem among young users. The findings of this research will help parents recognize early signs of social media-induced distress and adopt effective monitoring strategies. It will also guide them on how to provide emotional support, open communication, and positive reinforcement

at home. By understanding the digital pressures their children face, parents and guardians will be better equipped to nurture self-acceptance and healthy self-image in adolescents.

To educators and school counselors, the study holds great importance in promoting a supportive academic environment that prioritizes students' mental health and well-being. Teachers play a critical role in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward themselves and others. The research will help educators understand how social media influences students' confidence, classroom engagement, and peer relationships. With this knowledge, schools can implement media literacy programs that teach students to critically analyze online content and differentiate between realistic and unrealistic portrayals of beauty and success. Moreover, school counselors can use the insights from this study to design counseling sessions and workshops aimed at building self-esteem, promoting body positivity, and fostering a sense of identity independent of online validation.

For adolescents themselves, the study is particularly meaningful as it encourages self-awareness and reflection on their social media use. By understanding how online platforms affect their emotions and self-perception, young people can learn to engage more consciously and responsibly. The study aims to empower adolescents to resist harmful comparisons, focus on their unique strengths, and value authenticity over online approval. It also

emphasizes the importance of balance between virtual and real-life interactions, promoting mental and emotional well-being. This awareness can help adolescents make healthier choices about the type of content they consume and share, ultimately improving their self-esteem and overall quality of life.

The research also carries significant implications for policymakers and government agencies responsible for youth development and digital regulation. The findings will provide evidence based recommendations for creating policies that protect adolescents from harmful media influences. Policymakers can use the results to establish guidelines for ethical social media use, implement stricter measures against cyberbullying and unrealistic advertising, and promote campaigns that encourage positive online behavior. Additionally, it can influence the development of national digital education frameworks that teach safe and responsible social media practices in schools. Such interventions will contribute to a more supportive digital environment that prioritizes adolescents' psychological and emotional health.

Lastly, the study will serve as a valuable reference for future researchers interested in exploring the intersection of social media, body image, and self-esteem. As digital platforms continue to evolve, ongoing research is essential to understand new trends and their effects on youth development. This study contributes to existing literature by providing

contemporary data and perspectives that reflect current social media realities. It will inspire further investigations into strategies that promote digital wellness and enhance adolescents' self-worth in an increasingly online-driven world.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among adolescents. The study is delimited to adolescents ages 13 to 19 within selected senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The study will examine the relationship between their use of social media and their perceptions of body image and levels of self-esteem. The scope is limited to social media platforms that are predominantly visual (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok), as these are most associated with appearance-related content. The study does not cover other psychological aspects such as depression or academic performance unless they directly intersect with body image and self-esteem.

Limitations of the Study

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this study, some limitations are acknowledged. First, the research is limited to a small sample drawn from selected senior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area, which may restrict

the generalizability of the findings to other regions or populations. The cultural, social, and economic differences across different areas may influence adolescents' social media usage patterns and perceptions, which are not fully captured in this study.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data obtained through questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias, exaggeration, or social desirability bias. Some participants may not provide completely honest answers, especially on sensitive issues relating to self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. In addition, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships between social media exposure and its impact on body image or self-esteem.

Lastly, the research does not account for other external factors such as parental influence, peer pressure, cultural beliefs, or exposure to traditional media that might also affect adolescents' self-image. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the role social media plays in shaping the self-perception and emotional well-being of adolescents, and it lays a foundation for further research on a broader scale.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined;

Adolescents: Individuals in the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood typically ranging from ages 13 to 19years.

Social media: Online platforms and applications (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) that allow users to create and share content or interact socially.

Body Image: One's perception, thoughts, and feelings about their physical appearance.

Self-Esteem: An individual's overall sense of personal worth and values.

Social Comparison: The act of comparing oneself to others, often observed on social media.

Influencer: A person on social media who has a large following and the power to affect the decisions or opinions of others.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter will be discussed under the following headings;

- Theoretical framework
- Conceptual framework
- Influence of social media on body image perception among adolescents
- Influence of social media on Adolescents' self esteem
- Types of social media content or activities that influence body image and self esteem among adolescents
- Coping mechanisms adopted by adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns
- Summary of literature review

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Comparison Theory (SCT), a psychological framework first proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954 to explain the human tendency to evaluate personal opinions and abilities by comparing them to others. According to Festinger

(1954), in the absence of objective benchmarks, people rely on social information to form self-evaluations, leading to continuous interpersonal comparison. These comparisons can be upward directed toward someone perceived as superior or downward directed toward someone perceived as inferior. Upward comparisons can either inspire self-improvement or trigger feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, whereas downward comparisons often produce comfort or increased self-esteem (Festinger, 1954). Over time, SCT has evolved to encompass cognitive and affective responses to comparisons, expanding from the evaluation of abilities and opinions to include social domains such as physical attractiveness, success, and lifestyle (Gerber, Wheeler, & Suls, 2018).

The central tenet of SCT lies in understanding how individuals select comparison targets, interpret comparative information, and experience psychological outcomes. According to Buunk and Ybema (1997), comparison processes are driven by motivational factors such as self-improvement, self-enhancement, and self-evaluation. The Identification Contrast Model they developed highlights that individuals can either identify with or contrast themselves against comparison targets. Identification occurs when individuals perceive similarity to the comparison other and may lead to inspiration, hope, or admiration. In contrast, when individuals emphasize their differences, they experience envy,

discouragement, or resentment. Similarly, Wayment and Taylor (1995) suggested that individuals use social comparison as a mechanism for both self-evaluation and self-protection, proposing that people seek to maintain self-worth by interpreting comparative information in a way that sustains their self-concept. The combination of these perspectives underscores that social comparison is not a uniform process but varies depending on self-concept, context, and the degree of perceived similarity between oneself and others.

The relevance of Social Comparison Theory has expanded considerably with the rise of social media, which has transformed the social environment in which adolescents develop. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook have created spaces saturated with idealized self-presentations that often emphasize appearance, lifestyle, and popularity. These environments provide abundant opportunities for upward social comparisons, especially among adolescents whose developmental stage is characterized by heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation and the need for identity formation (Valkenburg, Piotrowski, Hermanns, & de Leeuw, 2019). Adolescents spend a substantial amount of time viewing curated, filtered, and edited images, leading to the internalization of unrealistic appearance standards. Such exposure has been consistently linked with body dissatisfaction, appearance

anxiety, and diminished self-esteem (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015).

Research shows that these comparisons are often appearance-based, as adolescents use others' online images as reference points for judging their own attractiveness and worth. Holland and Tiggemann (2020) found that frequent engagement with image-centric social media is associated with lower body satisfaction and reduced well-being, particularly when adolescents engage in appearance-based comparisons. Similarly, Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, and Halliwell (2015) demonstrated that Facebook use among young women predicted greater body dissatisfaction and negative mood through appearance-related social comparison. The visually oriented and interactive nature of social media magnifies the emotional impact of these comparisons because adolescents are not passive consumers; they actively post, receive feedback, and measure their social value through likes and comments (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015).

Furthermore, the algorithmic structure of social media platforms exacerbates comparison tendencies. Algorithms prioritize content with high engagement typically posts depicting conventionally attractive individuals, luxury lifestyles, or physical fitness creating a feedback loop in which idealized images dominate users' feeds. This persistent exposure

normalizes unrealistic beauty and success standards, intensifying upward comparisons and promoting self-objectification (Tiggemann & Slater, 2020). Perloff (2021) emphasized that the internalization of such online ideals is a primary mechanism through which social media negatively influences self-perception, particularly among adolescent girls. The emphasis on visual validation fosters an appearance-oriented culture, where adolescents equate social approval with physical attractiveness or social status.

Although the majority of research in this area focuses on female adolescents, evidence suggests that male adolescents are also affected by social media-driven comparisons. Studies have shown that exposure to fitness and “fitspiration” content is associated with higher drive for muscularity, body dissatisfaction, and lower self-worth among boys (Tiggemann, Anderberg, & Brown, 2020). These findings indicate that the appearance pressures perpetuated by social media are not gender-exclusive but manifest differently according to gender norms thinness and beauty ideals for girls, and muscularity and strength ideals for boys (Holland & Tiggemann, 2017).

Social Comparison Theory also provides insight into the psychological variability among adolescents in their responses to online comparisons. Adolescents with high self-esteem and stable self-concepts tend to process comparative information more adaptively,

interpreting others' successes as motivation for self-improvement rather than as threats to self-worth (Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles, & Frampton, 2015). Conversely, those with low self-esteem are more prone to maladaptive comparison behaviors, interpreting others' achievements or attractiveness as confirmation of personal inadequacy, which leads to anxiety, depressive symptoms, or disordered eating (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). In this sense, SCT highlights that individual differences such as personality, self-concept clarity, and media literacy serve as moderators that determine whether comparisons yield positive or negative outcomes.

Recent studies continue to support these theoretical assumptions. For instance, an extensive meta-analysis by Saiphoo and Vahedi (2019) reported a significant positive relationship between social media use and body dissatisfaction, mediated by appearance-based social comparison. Likewise, Tiggemann and Slater (2020) demonstrated that adolescents who followed appearance-focused social media accounts reported lower body satisfaction and self-esteem. Additionally, Perloff (2021) found that the internalization of social media beauty ideals and engagement in appearance comparisons jointly predicted body image disturbances. These consistent findings validate the predictive power of Social Comparison Theory in explaining how adolescents' exposure to social media can influence

psychological well-being. The application of SCT to social media also underscores broader sociocultural and contextual dynamics. Cultural beauty standards, peer norms, and parental attitudes toward appearance all interact with social comparison processes to shape adolescents' self-evaluations. Valkenburg et al. (2022) emphasized that the social media environment functions as an “amplified mirror,” reflecting and magnifying societal values that link attractiveness to worthiness. Adolescents' responses are therefore influenced not only by individual tendencies to compare but also by the cultural and digital contexts in which those comparisons occur.

Ultimately, Social Comparison Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychosocial mechanisms underlying adolescents' experiences of social media. It elucidates how exposure to idealized representations can erode body satisfaction, reduce self-esteem, and promote self-objectification, particularly in those who rely heavily on external validation. However, it also suggests avenues for resilience. Encouraging media literacy, promoting self-acceptance, and providing supportive environments can buffer adolescents against the harmful effects of upward comparison. Programs that teach critical evaluation of social media content and foster realistic perceptions of body diversity can help adolescents develop healthier online habits and self-concepts (Perloff, 2021; Holland &

Tiggemann, 2020). In conclusion, Social Comparison Theory remains a vital explanatory framework for understanding how social media influences adolescents' perceptions of body image and self-esteem. The theory captures the fundamental cognitive process by which individuals evaluate themselves through others while also recognizing the contextual and technological forces that intensify comparison. By situating adolescent development within the digital ecosystem, SCT highlights the dual role of social media as both a space for connection and a potent trigger for self-evaluative distress. This framework underscores the necessity of educational and psychological interventions that address the comparative nature of online interaction, helping adolescents cultivate self-worth independent of external validation.

Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to a broad range of digital platforms and applications that allow individuals to create, share, and interact with content and each other in virtual environments. These platforms facilitate communication and collaboration through user generated content, including text, images, videos, and live interactions. Social media encompasses a wide array of websites and mobile applications such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter

(now X), YouTube, and WhatsApp. These platforms enable real time communication, community building, and access to vast informational resources (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Globally, social media's appeal lies in its ability to transcend geographical boundaries, fostering interconnected global communities. Its characteristics such as visibility, persistence, editability, and association differentiate it from traditional forms of media (boyd & Ellison, 2007). From its initial use for casual communication, social media has evolved into a powerful tool for self expression, social influence, marketing, education, political mobilization, and cultural transformation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Globally, social media usage has skyrocketed over the past decade, with more than 5 billion users worldwide as of 2024, accounting for approximately 62.3% of the world population (Kemp, 2024; DataReportal, 2024). This widespread adoption is fueled by the accessibility of smartphones, affordable internet services, and the continuous innovation of user friendly applications. Adolescents and young adults represent a significant proportion of users, with platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat dominating this demographic (Mailmodo, 2025). While social media serves as a vehicle for digital learning, entertainment, activism, and identity exploration, it also raises psychological, developmental, and social concerns, especially among adolescents. Exposure to curated and often unrealistic portrayals

of beauty, lifestyles, and success can create pressure to conform to certain ideals, potentially leading to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction (Karaman & Şimşek, 2023).

In Nigeria, social media has become an integral part of daily life, significantly influencing communication, culture, education, commerce, and politics. With a population exceeding 220 million, the country boasts tens of millions of active social media users. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube are widely used, with mobile internet being the primary access point. The widespread availability of affordable smartphones, coupled with mobile network expansion by providers such as MTN, Airtel, and Glo, has accelerated digital inclusion across urban and semi urban regions. Nigerian youth, particularly adolescents, are among the most active users of social media, using these platforms for information sharing, entertainment, education, and social networking (Akafa, Anche, & Iseko, 2024). Social media also plays a role in shaping social norms, fashion trends, body ideals, and lifestyle expectations through influencers, celebrities, and peer networks. However, despite the opportunities social media offers in Nigeria, there are growing concerns regarding its psychological and social impact on adolescents. For example, a recent Nigerian based study found that social media use positively predicted body

image dissatisfaction among young adults (Nnamchi et al., 2024). Cultural dynamics in Nigeria further complicate the influence of social media, where traditional values may conflict with the digitally propagated ideals of beauty, gender roles, and self worth. Moreover, the lack of effective regulation and digital media literacy programs leaves many adolescents vulnerable to cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and addictive usage patterns. Internet related anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO), and social pressure to maintain online appearances are increasingly reported among secondary school and university students (Onyeizu et al., 2023). These realities highlight the dual role of social media in both empowering and endangering Nigerian adolescents' psychosocial development, calling for urgent attention from educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals.

The Concept of Body Image

Body image is a multifaceted psychological construct that refers to a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their physical appearance. It encompasses how individuals see themselves and how they believe others perceive them, playing a crucial role in one's self-concept and overall mental health. The construct includes perceptual (how one estimates their body), affective (feelings about body appearance), cognitive (beliefs and

attitudes toward the body), and behavioral (actions taken in response to body perception) components. Importantly, body image is not static but evolves with personal experiences, cultural exposure, and social interactions. Negative body image, often referred to as body dissatisfaction, occurs when there is a gap between one's actual physical appearance and their internalized ideal. This dissatisfaction has been consistently associated with psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, disordered eating, and low self-esteem (Tiggemann, 2020).

Adolescence is a particularly sensitive period for body image formation due to biological changes during puberty, heightened self-consciousness, and increasing sensitivity to peer and media influence. During this developmental stage, adolescents begin to internalize cultural beauty ideals and engage in social comparisons that shape their satisfaction with their bodies (Rodgers et al., 2020). When these ideals, often emphasizing thinness for girls or muscularity for boys, do not align with actual physical traits, many adolescents experience body dissatisfaction, which may negatively affect self-worth and emotional well-being.

In the contemporary digital era, body image has become increasingly complex. While earlier generations were influenced by family, peers, and traditional media such as television

and magazines, today's adolescents encounter an additional and powerful influence: social media. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are highly visual spaces that promote appearance-focused content and curated beauty ideals. Users are not merely consumers but also creators of body-related content, making social media a space where the body becomes a social project and a symbol of self-worth. These platforms frequently promote unrealistic body standards through filters, photo editing, and influencer culture. The images presented online are often unattainable and digitally enhanced, creating narrow standards of attractiveness that foster self-criticism and comparison (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016; Bell et al., 2021). Continuous exposure to such content encourages adolescents to evaluate themselves against these ideals, leading to increased self-surveillance, appearance anxiety, and reduced self-acceptance.

Body image is also deeply connected to adolescents' self-esteem and mental health. Because physical appearance becomes a central aspect of identity formation during adolescence, perceived inadequacies in appearance can significantly lower global self-esteem. Studies consistently show that adolescents with negative body image report lower self-esteem, higher depressive symptoms, and greater risk for eating disorders (Griffiths et al., 2018). Social appearance anxiety, the fear of being judged negatively based on looks,

often accompanies body dissatisfaction and can lead to social withdrawal or engagement in risky behaviors such as excessive dieting, cosmetic surgery, or use of body-enhancing substances (Cohen et al., 2020). Among adolescent girls, body dissatisfaction has become widespread, with many expressing unhappiness with their body size or shape even when medically healthy. For adolescent boys, while the emphasis often centers on muscularity rather than thinness, failure to meet this ideal can produce similar psychological consequences. Over time, these pressures can erode emotional well-being and influence future self-confidence and interpersonal relationships.

In relation to social media's impact on body image and self-esteem among adolescents, the digital environment amplifies traditional appearance concerns. Social media provides constant exposure to idealized, often edited images and promotes appearance-based validation through likes and comments. It also facilitates continuous social comparison, which heightens appearance pressure (Fardouly et al., 2015). Nigerian adolescents are equally affected by these dynamics. The increasing popularity of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok among young Nigerians has contributed to growing preoccupation with body image, particularly among adolescent girls who internalize Western beauty ideals emphasizing lighter skin, slim waists, and curvy figures (Ugochukwu and Eze, 2022). Such

standards, which often contrast with typical Nigerian body types, create dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem. Additionally, the pursuit of social media approval leads some adolescents to engage in potentially harmful behaviors, including excessive photo editing, unhealthy dieting, and the use of skin-lightening products. Recent studies in Nigeria further confirm that frequent social media use predicts higher body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem among adolescents and young adults (Nnamchi et al., 2024; Ogunseyi et al., 2025).

Thus, body image among adolescents in the digital age reflects not only personal perception but also societal and cultural expectations amplified by social media. Understanding how these influences interact is vital for developing effective interventions that promote healthy self-concept and resilience against unrealistic beauty standards. By educating adolescents, parents, and educators about media literacy and encouraging positive body image, it becomes possible to mitigate the psychological risks associated with social media exposure.

The Concept of Self Esteem

Self-esteem refers to the overall evaluation and perception individuals hold about their own worth, abilities, and value. It includes both cognitive beliefs, such as “I am capable,” and affective experiences, such as pride, self-respect, or shame (Orth & Robins,

2014). Scholars distinguish between global self-esteem, which captures general feelings of self-worth, and domain-specific self-esteem, which involves evaluations in particular areas like appearance, academic ability, or social competence (Orth & Robins, 2014). The development of self-esteem is a continuous process shaped by childhood experiences, parental feedback, social relationships, and broader cultural influences (Brummelman & Sedikides, 2020). Adolescence is a particularly sensitive period for self-esteem development, as it coincides with identity formation, emotional changes, and increased sensitivity to peer evaluation. Research indicates that self-esteem tends to increase gradually from adolescence into adulthood and predicts positive psychological outcomes such as lower levels of depression and anxiety (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). Adolescents' self-esteem is strongly influenced by their interpersonal relationships especially peer acceptance and family support which serve as key protective factors for emotional well-being (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2016). Moreover, adolescents often engage in social comparison, especially regarding appearance and popularity, and such comparisons can undermine their sense of self-worth when they perceive themselves as not meeting social expectations (Valkenburg, Meier, & Beyens, 2022). Consequently, self-esteem development involves a dynamic interaction between personal self-perceptions and social experiences, both offline and online.

In recent years, social media has become one of the most influential environments shaping adolescents' self-esteem. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat encourage users to present idealized versions of themselves through carefully curated images and popularity metrics like likes and followers. These features amplify social comparison and feedback-seeking behaviors, which can affect adolescents' sense of self-worth. Studies show that frequent engagement with appearance-focused social media content is linked to lower body satisfaction and poorer self-esteem (Jarman, Marques, McLean, Slater, & Paxton, 2020). Similarly, a longitudinal study found that higher social network site use predicted increased body dissatisfaction and reduced self-esteem among adolescents (Tiggemann & Slater, 2015). Valkenburg et al. (2022) further observed that adolescents' self-esteem fluctuates depending on the feedback they receive online, illustrating how digital validation directly affects emotional well-being. These findings highlight that social media can serve as both a platform for self-expression and a source of psychological vulnerability.

In the African context, including Nigeria, research on social media and self-esteem is still emerging but follows similar global patterns. A study by Adeyemi and Osunde (2023) found that frequent social media use among university students in Benin City was associated with lower self-esteem. Another study conducted among Nigerian adolescents revealed that

high exposure to idealized online images significantly correlated with body dissatisfaction and reduced confidence (Ifeonu, Okafor, Onyeneje, & Emesibe, 2021). As internet access and smartphone ownership continue to grow among Nigerian youths, these findings underscore the need to promote digital literacy, critical media engagement, and supportive family communication. Such interventions can help adolescents navigate online spaces without equating their self-worth to the unrealistic portrayals they encounter on social media.

Overall, self-esteem remains a fundamental psychological construct that influences emotional health, behavior, and identity. Among adolescents, it is increasingly shaped by digital environments, where online feedback, comparison, and exposure to idealized imagery play critical roles in either strengthening or undermining their self-worth. Encouraging self-awareness, resilience, and media literacy can help adolescents maintain a stable sense of self in an era dominated by digital validation and social media exposure.

Influence of Social Media on Body Image Perception among Adolescents

Social media has become a defining feature of the contemporary adolescent experience, fundamentally transforming how young individuals interact, express themselves, and view their bodies. With billions of users worldwide and platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook gaining popularity, the influence of social media on body

image perception has become a critical subject of concern. Adolescents, in particular, are increasingly exposed to idealized images of beauty and physical appearance, which can distort their perceptions of body image and self-worth. This essay explores five major ways social media influences body image perception among adolescents: exposure to idealized beauty standards, social comparison, the role of influencers and celebrities, the use of filters and image-editing tools, and peer feedback and validation.

Firstly, one of the most significant influences of social media on body image perception is the widespread exposure to idealized beauty standards. Social media platforms are inundated with images portraying thin, muscular, or highly stylized bodies that align with prevailing Western beauty ideals. These portrayals often neglect diversity and promote unrealistic standards of attractiveness. For example, Instagram and TikTok users frequently encounter photos and videos that showcase slim female bodies and muscular male physiques, often portrayed as desirable or successful. Research shows that prolonged exposure to such content can result in internalization of these ideals, leading adolescents to adopt these standards as benchmarks for self-evaluation (Choukas-Bradley, Roberts, Maheux, & Nesi, 2022). A cross-sectional study found that among adolescents, social media use was positively correlated with body dissatisfaction, and that thin-ideal internalization significantly explained

this relationship (Vuong et al., 2021). The pressure to meet these often unattainable standards can result in negative body image, low self-esteem, and even disordered eating behaviors. The repetitive visibility of perfect bodies cultivates the belief that beauty is narrowly defined and universally valued, which distorts how adolescents perceive their own physical selves.

Secondly, social comparison plays a central role in shaping body image perception on social media platforms. Adolescents often compare their bodies to those of peers, celebrities, and influencers, which can either bolster or erode self-image depending on the outcome of these comparisons. Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) posits that individuals evaluate their own abilities and attributes by comparing themselves to others. In the context of social media, this process becomes magnified due to the accessibility and frequency of such comparisons. A meta-analysis found that exposure to upward appearance-related comparisons on social media is associated with lower body satisfaction and higher disordered eating risk (McComb, 2023). For example, a qualitative interview study with adolescent girls reported that they frequently used social media to engage in appearance-focused comparisons that exacerbated appearance concerns and body dissatisfaction (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). The interactive and algorithm-driven nature of platforms also reinforces exposure to content that aligns with users' engagement patterns, thereby perpetuating a cycle of comparison and

dissatisfaction. Adolescents who follow fitness influencers, beauty bloggers, or fashion models may repeatedly encounter idealized body images, making them more susceptible to negative self-assessments and feelings of inferiority.

Thirdly, the prominent role of social media influencers and celebrities significantly contributes to shaping adolescents' body image perceptions. Influencers often present themselves as relatable and trustworthy figures, but their curated online personas can still project idealized versions of beauty. These influencers regularly post polished images and videos showcasing their physical appearance, fashion choices, diet routines, and fitness regimens. Such content can have a profound psychological effect on impressionable adolescents who view influencers as aspirational role models. Recent literature highlights that influencer-driven appearance norms contribute to body image concerns via internalization of appearance ideals and social comparisons (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022). Adolescents may emulate these figures, adopting restrictive diets, exercise routines, or beauty practices to replicate their appearance. Moreover, the persuasive power of influencers is not limited to aesthetics; they also shape values, trends, and norms related to body image. This dynamic reinforces narrow beauty expectations and pressures adolescents to conform to these norms to gain social acceptance. Since influencers often fail to disclose their use of editing

tools, cosmetic enhancements, or brand partnerships, the images presented can be deceptive, fueling unrealistic body expectations.

Fourthly, the use of filters, photo-editing apps, and augmented reality tools represents another critical influence of social media on body image. These technological features allow users to alter their appearance instantly by smoothing skin, reshaping body parts, enhancing facial features, and applying cosmetic effects. While such tools offer creative freedom and entertainment, they also foster a culture of digital distortion, where adolescents are encouraged to edit their natural appearance before posting. Experimental research shows that exposure to manipulated Instagram photos led adolescent girls to report lower body satisfaction compared to exposure to original images (Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2016). A recent longitudinal study indicated that higher levels of appearance-related social media activity are associated with increased internalization of social media ideals and appearance comparison among adolescents, although the within-person effect on later body dissatisfaction was not consistent (Kvardová et al., 2025). These practices promote unattainable beauty standards and create a dissonance between one's real and virtual appearance, which can erode self-esteem and increase vulnerability to body image concerns.

The constant tweaking and refining of photos for online approval reinforce the belief that natural bodies are inadequate or less worthy of validation.

Finally, peer feedback and validation mechanisms, such as likes, comments, shares, and followers, serve as powerful influencers on adolescents' body image perception. Social media thrives on interactivity, and the feedback adolescents receive on their appearance-based posts can significantly affect how they feel about their bodies. Positive feedback in the form of likes and compliments may boost self-esteem temporarily, but it also reinforces the idea that self-worth is contingent upon external approval. Conversely, the absence of validation or negative comments can contribute to self-doubt, body dissatisfaction, and social anxiety. Qualitative work has shown that adolescents perceive that social media prompts them to present themselves in particular ways to receive affirmation, and fear of negative judgment may discourage them from posting unfiltered or casual images (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). Although the specific mechanisms of peer feedback are less often isolated in large-scale quantitative studies, reviews note that social media features such as comment sections, number of likes, and follower counts create a context in which appearance evaluation is publicly visible and measurable (Mazzeo et al., 2024). This gamification of

appearance through metrics alters how adolescents perceive their bodies, as they begin to evaluate their self-image based on quantifiable social media feedback.

Influence of Social Media on Adolescents' Self Esteem

Social media has transformed the way adolescents communicate, socialize, and perceive themselves, becoming an integral part of their developmental landscape. As digital natives, adolescents are deeply immersed in various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook, where they engage in identity exploration, peer validation, and self-presentation. While social media provides opportunities for connection and expression, it also poses challenges to adolescents' self-esteem, a crucial component of psychological development. Self-esteem, which refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth or value (Rosenberg, 1965), is highly sensitive during adolescence due to increased self-consciousness and peer comparison. Among the many effects of social media on self-esteem, four primary influences stand out: social comparison, feedback and validation, exposure to idealized content, and cyberbullying. Each of these factors plays a unique role in shaping how adolescents view themselves in the context of an increasingly digital world.

One of the most profound ways social media influences adolescents' self-esteem is through social comparison. Adolescents are naturally inclined to compare themselves with others as they attempt to understand their identity and social standing. According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, individuals evaluate their own abilities and worth by comparing themselves to others, particularly in the absence of objective benchmarks. Social media platforms amplify this tendency by presenting highly curated and idealized representations of peers and influencers. Research indicates that upward social comparisons, that is, comparing oneself to someone perceived as better off, are associated with lower self-esteem among adolescents (Vogel et al., 2014). Studies have shown that adolescents who frequently engage in appearance-based comparisons on social media experience greater body dissatisfaction and decreased self-worth (Fardouly et al., 2015). This dynamic is particularly concerning for adolescent girls, who are more likely to engage in appearance-related comparisons and report negative emotions when they perceive themselves as falling short of social media standards (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). The constant exposure to idealized images fosters unrealistic expectations and can lead adolescents to feel inferior, thereby eroding their self-esteem.

Another major influence of social media on adolescents' self-esteem is the pursuit and interpretation of feedback and validation. Adolescents often use social media as a tool to seek approval from their peers by posting pictures, updates, and stories with the expectation of receiving likes, comments, and shares. These metrics serve as visible indicators of social validation and can significantly impact how adolescents perceive their social worth. The need for validation during adolescence is linked to the developmental task of forming a coherent self-concept and gaining acceptance within peer groups (Erikson, 1968). When adolescents receive positive feedback on their posts, it can temporarily boost their self-esteem and reinforce their online persona. However, the absence of expected feedback or receiving negative comments can have the opposite effect, leading to feelings of rejection and low self-worth. Nesi and Prinstein (2015) found that adolescents who placed high importance on online feedback experienced fluctuations in self-esteem that mirrored the type of responses they received. This dependency on external validation can make adolescents more vulnerable to mood swings and anxiety, especially when their self-worth becomes tied to their social media popularity. Furthermore, adolescents may begin to curate their online presence excessively, filtering their content to meet perceived standards, which may distance their

digital identity from their real self, leading to internal conflict and diminished self-esteem (Michikyan et al., 2014).

A third significant influence of social media on adolescent self-esteem stems from exposure to idealized content and unrealistic portrayals of life. Many social media users, particularly influencers and celebrities, share highly edited and carefully selected highlights of their lives, showcasing wealth, beauty, success, and happiness. Adolescents consuming this content may internalize these portrayals as normal or desirable, even though they often lack context and authenticity. The interactive and visual nature of social media makes it particularly influential in this regard (Perloff, 2014). Empirical studies show that exposure to idealized body images on platforms such as Instagram is associated with body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem among adolescent girls (Pedalino et al., 2022). Similarly, adolescent boys exposed to hypermasculine or athletic ideals may experience pressure to conform to these standards, leading to body dissatisfaction and poor self-image (Kleemans et al., 2018). The internalization of these unrealistic ideals is especially harmful in areas related to body image and appearance. The curated nature of social media thus perpetuates a cycle of self-criticism and lowered self-esteem among impressionable users.

The final influence of social media on adolescent self-esteem is the prevalence of cyberbullying and online harassment. Unlike traditional bullying, which is often limited by time and space, cyberbullying can occur at any time and reach a wide audience quickly. Social media platforms, while offering anonymity and distance, can become venues for cruelty, exclusion, and ridicule. Adolescents targeted by cyberbullying often experience profound emotional distress, including feelings of worthlessness, humiliation, and depression (Kowalski et al., 2014). These negative experiences can have a direct and lasting impact on their self-esteem. Patchin and Hinduja (2020) found that adolescents who experienced frequent cyberbullying reported significantly lower levels of self-esteem and higher rates of suicidal ideation. The public nature of online harassment can also intensify its impact, as it subjects the victim to widespread judgment and social scrutiny. In some cases, the fear of cyberbullying can lead adolescents to withdraw from online interactions or limit their self-expression, further isolating them and hindering the development of a positive self-image. Moreover, adolescents who witness others being bullied online may also experience a decline in self-esteem, fearing they could be next or feeling powerless to intervene. Cyberbullying not only damages the self-esteem of its direct victims but also creates a hostile digital environment that threatens the psychological well-being of all users involved.

Types of Social Media Content or Activities that Influence Body Image and Self-Esteem among Adolescents

In contemporary society, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, and YouTube have become central spaces through which adolescents form, express, and evaluate their self-image. These platforms contain content that emphasizes appearance and beauty ideals, shaping how adolescents view their bodies and determine their self-worth. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these influences because this developmental stage is characterized by heightened sensitivity to peer opinions, identity exploration, and frequent social comparison. Although social media can provide opportunities for connection and self-expression, it often reinforces beauty standards and popularity metrics that link physical attractiveness to personal value. Among the activities that influence adolescent body image and self-esteem are exposure to idealized body types, engagement with influencers, selfie posting and feedback-seeking behaviors, use of photo filters and editing tools, and participation in appearance-focused trends. These experiences can cause adolescents to fixate on their looks, which often results in body dissatisfaction and reduced self-esteem.

1. Exposure to Idealized Body Types

This is one of the most common and powerful influences on adolescents. Social media platforms are filled with images that display thin, muscular, and flawless bodies that have often been enhanced or digitally modified. Viewing these images can distort adolescents' perceptions of beauty and lead to negative self-comparisons. Perloff (2014) found that repeated exposure to idealized social media portrayals is associated with higher body monitoring and dissatisfaction, especially among adolescent girls. Similarly, Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, and Anschutz (2018) discovered that exposure to digitally altered photos on Instagram significantly lowered body satisfaction in adolescent girls. Recent research also shows that frequent engagement with appearance-related social media content predicts greater body dissatisfaction among both boys and girls (Ryding & Kuss, 2020). Boys are not exempt from these effects; they often internalize hyper-muscular ideals that lead to dissatisfaction and compulsive exercising (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). In general, this form of content reinforces a narrow and unrealistic concept of beauty that excludes body diversity and encourages adolescents to devalue their natural appearance.

2. Celebrity and Influencer Content

Celebrity and influencer content also plays a major role in shaping adolescents' perceptions of their appearance and self-worth. Influencers frequently present highly curated images of success, attractiveness, and confidence, often edited to perfection. Adolescents tend to view these portrayals as authentic and aspirational, which increases pressure to emulate similar lifestyles and appearances. Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton, and Ridgway (2017) observed that adolescents who frequently engage with beauty and fitness influencers are more likely to internalize unrealistic beauty ideals and experience lower self-esteem. Similarly, Tiggemann, Hayden, Brown, and Veldhuis (2018) found that adolescent girls who followed beauty influencers reported higher body dissatisfaction and greater comparison tendencies. In Nigeria, online celebrity culture often promotes Western beauty ideals such as lighter skin and slim body shapes, which can create internal conflict and diminish adolescents' appreciation of their cultural identity (Uzor & Amadi, 2023). Consequently, many adolescents adopt beauty standards that feel foreign to them, leading to decreased self-acceptance.

3. Selfie Culture and Feedback-Seeking Behaviors

Selfie culture and feedback-seeking behaviors further intensify body image concerns among adolescents. Many young people post selfies as a means of self-expression and social validation, using the number of likes and comments to assess their attractiveness and social worth. This validation-seeking process reinforces the idea that appearance determines social acceptance. Chae (2017) reported that adolescents who engage frequently in selfie posting and feedback monitoring experience greater appearance-related anxiety and body dissatisfaction. McLean, Paxton, Wertheim, and Masters (2015) found that adolescents who frequently edit or filter their selfies report lower body satisfaction and greater concern about their looks. The constant need to present a perfect image online creates a divide between an adolescent's real self and their online persona, leading to feelings of inadequacy and decreased self-esteem. Over time, social feedback becomes a powerful determinant of self-worth, with negative or insufficient responses intensifying body-related insecurities.

4. Use of Beauty Filters and Editing Applications

The use of beauty filters and editing applications further amplifies appearance-related pressures. These tools enable users to modify their appearance by smoothing skin, reshaping facial features, or altering body proportions. While seemingly harmless, this practice sends

the message that one's natural appearance is insufficient. Ramphul and Mejias (2018) describe this phenomenon as "filter dysmorphia," where individuals become dissatisfied with their real appearance because it does not match their edited online image. Kleemans et al. (2018) found that girls who viewed edited selfies, even when labeled as such, showed more body dissatisfaction than those who viewed unedited photos. This indicates that even awareness of digital manipulation does not prevent negative effects. Over time, adolescents begin to internalize these unrealistic standards and may develop distorted self-perceptions that undermine their self-esteem and psychological well-being.

5. Participation in Appearance-Focused Trends and Online Communities

Participation in appearance-focused trends and online communities also plays a critical role in shaping body image. Challenges and trends such as "fitspiration," "thinspiration," and "glow-up" videos often claim to promote self-improvement but tend to emphasize physical transformation and attractiveness rather than genuine well-being. Cohen, Newton-John, and Slater (2017) found that adolescents who follow fitness-oriented social media accounts report increased body dissatisfaction and pressure to change their appearance. These online spaces often feature before-and-after transformations and weight-loss achievements that promote social comparison and feelings of inadequacy. In Nigeria, the popularity of global beauty

challenges has contributed to the use of skin-lightening products, waist trainers, and unsafe dietary supplements among adolescents who feel compelled to meet unrealistic beauty ideals (Olamide & Adebayo, 2022). Such practices may appear motivational but often lead adolescents to perceive normal physical traits as flaws, reducing self-confidence and fostering long-term dissatisfaction with their bodies.

Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Adolescents in Response to Social Media Induced Body Image Concerns

The concept of coping draws on Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress arises when individuals appraise environmental demands as exceeding their resources to cope, and coping comprises the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage the internal and external demands of that stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Applied to social media, adolescents may experience stress when exposed to idealised beauty imagery that they feel they cannot attain. Coping mechanisms adopted in this context broadly fall into two categories: adaptive (positive) coping and maladaptive (negative) coping.

Adaptive Coping Mechanisms

Adaptive coping mechanisms are constructive responses that help reduce emotional distress and promote psychological well-being.

1. Cognitive Reappraisal and Self-Acceptance

Cognitive reappraisal refers to reframing one's interpretation of social media content to reduce its emotional impact (Gross, 2015). Adolescents who engage in cognitive reappraisal may reinterpret social media posts as unrealistic, selectively curated, or digitally altered, thereby reducing harmful social comparisons. For example, an experimental study found that female adolescents who engaged in either self-compassion or cognitive reappraisal following appearance-related rumination restored their body satisfaction and appreciation back to baseline levels, whereas rumination did not. (Flouri et al., 2024). Similarly, self-acceptance fosters a positive relationship with one's body that acknowledges perceived imperfections. In that same study, self-compassion was shown to mitigate the adverse effects of appearance rumination (Flouri et al., 2024). In qualitative work, adolescents reported critically evaluating body-related content and psychologically distancing from it as a coping strategy (Mahon & Hevey, 2021). Thus, cognitive reappraisal and self-acceptance represent plausible adaptive coping strategies in the social-media body image context.

2. Engagement with Body-Positive and Supportive Online Communities

Another adaptive strategy involves adolescents seeking out body-positive online spaces that celebrate diverse body types. Although research is still emerging, qualitative evidence shows adolescents selecting positive content or unfollowing negative/idealised influencers (Mahon & Hevey, 2021). Exposure to body-positive content may improve body satisfaction, but clear longitudinal or intervention studies remain limited. In broader work on adolescent identity and well-being, one study found that friendship quality and well-being strategies contributed to a positive body image, which mediated identity development (Kadioğlu et al., 2024). While not specific to social media, this supports the notion that supportive online or offline communities may buffer negative body image through positive coping and identity processes.

3. Digital Detox and Selective Social Media Use

Reducing exposure to triggering social media content is another effective coping strategy. Although specific studies on adolescents' digital detox and body image are limited, younger-adult research indicates that restricting social media use (to 30 minutes per day for two weeks) significantly improved life satisfaction, stress, supportive relationships and reduced smartphone/social media addiction (Verduyn et al., 2023). More broadly, a scoping review of digital detox found it can mitigate anxiety, sleep disturbances and other mental health issues

(Shapira et al., 2024). These findings suggest that limiting or selectively curating social media use may help adolescents reduce exposure to appearance-focused content. Additionally, Mahon & Hevey (2021) reported that adolescents used avoidant strategies such as “unfollowing unrealistic body goal standards” or reducing social media use. This suggests that digital detox or selective exposure may function as adaptive coping by reducing distress-triggering content.

4. Social Support and Peer/Family Communication

Seeking emotional support from family, friends or mentors remains one of the most effective coping strategies in general adolescent mental-health literature. Though specific to body image/social media coping is limited, one recent study among Lebanese adolescents found that perceived social support and body appreciation mediated the relationship between childhood adversity and disordered eating symptoms (Youssef et al., 2024). This implies that social support may foster body appreciation, thereby buffering maladaptive coping. Similarly, research on adolescents with body-dysmorphic disorder found that low peer support was associated with greater social media-driven appearance comparisons (Rodriguez et al., 2024). Together, these findings underscore the importance of helping adolescents talk about their social media experiences and body image concerns within supportive networks.

5. Engagement in Offline Activities and Mindfulness Practices

Participating in offline hobbies (sports, arts, and community service) can divert attention from appearance concerns and enhance intrinsic self-worth. While direct empirical studies linking such activities to social-media-induced body image distress in adolescents are still scarce, some research in the broader body image domain supports mindfulness and self-compassion interventions: for example, the Flouri et al. (2024) study showing cognitive reappraisal/self-compassion improved body satisfaction. Mindfulness practices foster non-judgmental observation of one's thoughts, which plausibly reduces reactivity to social media triggers. As such, encouraging offline engagement and mindfulness may represent viable adaptive coping strategies in this context.

Maladaptive Coping Mechanisms

Maladaptive coping mechanisms are unhelpful responses that may temporarily reduce distress but ultimately reinforce negative emotions or behaviours.

1. Avoidance and Withdrawal

Some adolescents cope by avoiding social interactions, withdrawing from social media, or isolating themselves out of fear of judgment. While avoidance may offer short-term relief, prolonged withdrawal can lead to loneliness, reduced self-confidence, and social anxiety

(Mahon & Hevey, 2021). In their qualitative study, adolescents described “stopping using [social media as much]” or “unfollowing ...” but noted that because body-related content “was always just popping up”, avoidance had limited effect (Mahon & Hevey, 2021). Hence, avoidance without alternative adaptive strategies may be maladaptive.

2. Body Surveillance and Social Comparison

Body surveillance the habitual monitoring of one’s appearance often develops as a maladaptive coping response to repeated exposure to idealised bodies. Longitudinal and cross-sectional work has shown that appearance-ideal internalisation and appearance-based social comparisons mediate the association between appearance-focused social media use and lower body satisfaction and well-being among adolescents (Halliwel & Dittmar, 2020; Alleva et al., 2021). For example, a 2025 longitudinal study of over 2,500 adolescents found that appearance-focused activity on social media led to increased body dissatisfaction via internalisation and comparison processes. (van der Meulen et al., 2025). These mechanisms are characteristic of maladaptive coping because they reinforce negative self-evaluation rather than ameliorate it.

3. Appearance Manipulation and Image Editing

The accessibility of photo-editing and filter apps has enabled many adolescents to manipulate their appearance before posting. A 2021 study found that selfie-taking and editing among adolescents was strongly associated with body image concerns and that photo manipulation mediated that effect (Gioia et al., 2023). While image editing may provide a short boost in confidence, over time it reinforces unrealistic appearance standards and reliance on external validation.

4. Disordered Eating and Excessive Exercise

In its most extreme form, maladaptive coping manifests as disordered eating patterns (skipping meals, restrictive dieting, binge eating) or compulsive/ excessive exercise aimed at achieving perceived “ideal” body shapes. Although much of the evidence is correlational, there is mounting systematic review evidence linking social media use in adolescents with disordered eating behaviours via internalisation of appearance ideals and upward comparison (Holland & Tiggemann, 2017; Rodgers et al., 2020). More recently, a chapter in the Handbook of Adolescent Digital Media Use and Mental Health outlines how digital media contributes to body image disturbance and disordered eating in adolescents (Roberts et al.,

2022). Because these behaviours increase risk of psychological and physical harm, they clearly represent maladaptive coping.

5. Engagement in Risky Online Behaviour

Some adolescents may seek validation through risky behaviours such as posting provocative images, engaging in appearance-comparison challenges, or seeking approval via “likes” and comments. Such actions perpetuate dependency on external approval and reinforce vulnerability to online criticism or cyberbullying. While direct empirical work on this exact mechanism in adolescents is still emerging, the broader literature on social media use suggests that validation-seeking via social media is associated with poorer self-esteem and mental health (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2018). Thus, these behaviours may represent maladaptive coping by reinforcing appearance-focused distress.

Summary of Literature Review

The growing body of literature on the impact of social media on adolescents highlights an increasing concern about how digital platforms affect body image and self-esteem. Research shows that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to appearance-related comparisons due to the developmental stage they are in, marked by identity formation and heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation (Steinbeck et al., 2021). Social media platforms like

Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are saturated with highly curated images that often portray idealised and unrealistic beauty standards. These visual contents have been consistently linked with body dissatisfaction and lower self-worth, especially among adolescent girls (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Rodgers et al., 2022).

Adolescents are more likely to engage in social comparison, which, when upward, typically leads to feelings of inadequacy and a negative body image (Perloff, 2014; Tiggemann & Slater, 2020). Moreover, constant exposure to beauty influencers, filters, and photo-editing tools has intensified appearance-related pressures, increasing the internalisation of thin or muscular ideals among youths (Holland & Tiggemann, 2017). Several studies also highlight the bidirectional relationship between social media use and self-esteem. For instance, a person-specific experience-sampling study found that while the majority of adolescents experienced no or only very small immediate effects of social media use on self-esteem, a non-trivial minority (8 %) did show negative effects (van den Eijnden et al., 2021).

Conversely, adolescents with low self-esteem may seek validation through likes and comments, becoming more dependent on social feedback for self-worth (Valkenburg et al., 2022). This cycle reinforces emotional fragility, as the absence of positive engagement can exacerbate feelings of rejection and inadequacy. Gender differences have also been observed

in the literature: girls being more affected by body image concerns due to sociocultural and media-driven expectations about femininity and beauty (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Boys, while less frequently studied, are increasingly showing signs of body dissatisfaction, especially with muscularity ideals portrayed online (McCabe et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the type of content consumed significantly influences the extent of the impact. Visual platforms where appearance is central are more harmful compared to more text-based platforms. For example, appearance-focused social media use (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat) was associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction than general social media use (Fardouly et al., 2018). Peer interactions also play a critical role. Positive feedback from friends can buffer some negative effects, while teasing, bullying, or exclusion can worsen self-perception (Burnette et al., 2021). Although fewer studies focus specifically on Nigerian adolescents, emerging research suggests similar patterns in Nigeria. A study in Lagos found that 57 % of adolescents in private schools reported body image dissatisfaction and 17 % showed signs of eating-disorder risk (Olawoyin et al., 2025). Another Nigerian study found that social media use significantly predicted body image dissatisfaction among young adults (Nnamchi et al., 2024). Coping mechanisms and media literacy are also important themes in the literature. Adolescents with higher critical thinking skills or those who receive parental

and school-based guidance about media use tend to be more resilient to the negative effects of social media (McLean et al., 2022). Interventions that promote body positivity and realistic portrayals of beauty have shown promise. For example, meta-analyses of school-based media-literacy interventions report modest but significant improvements in body-image concerns and reductions in thin-ideal internalisation (Yamamiya et al., 2022). However, not all adolescents benefit equally, and those with pre-existing mental-health conditions may require targeted psychological support. In sum, the literature reveals a complex interplay between social media exposure, psychological development, cultural values, and personal vulnerabilities that shape adolescents' experiences with body image and self-worth in the digital age.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology that was used in the study under the following sub-headings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Creswell (2014), a descriptive survey design is suitable for providing a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. This

design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data efficiently from a large number of respondents, analyze relationships among variables, and generalize the findings to the wider population without manipulating any variables.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all senior secondary school students (male and female) registered in private schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The total number of senior secondary school students registered in Egor Local Government Area is 17,375 derived from 145 schools (Edo State Ministry of Education records, 2025). This figure includes both male and female students across all private senior secondary schools in the area.

Table 1: Distribution of Students across Selected Secondary Schools in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	School	Students
1	AB Education Center (Secondary)	215
2	Aideyan Memorial Academy	114
3	Apostolic Faith Schools	102
4	Asset Education Centre	121
5	Authentic Touch Secondary School	111
6	Avatar Academy (A2) School	138
7	Ayela Uwangue School	107
8	Auntie Maria College	116
9	Bamec School	120
10	Banmec Academy	108
11	Bethel Secondary School	104
12	Blessed God's Glory Intellectual Secondary School	98
13	Blessed St. Paul Memorial School	112
14	Bright Future Secondary School	109
15	Brano High School	113
16	Bravura Secondary School	106

17	Calvary Crown Academy	220
18	Classic Group of Schools	115
19	Cogent Academy	98
20	Columbia Secondary School	110
21	Continental Comprehensive Secondary School	108
22	Day Spring Secondary School	120
23	Deeper Life High School	132
24	Diligent Excellent Academy	117
25	Discovery Demonstration College	109
26	Divine Compass Schools	114
27	Divine Comprehensive College	124
28	Divine Glow Group of Schools	121
29	Divine Light Secondary School	103
30	Divine Redemption Academy	104
31	Dominion City Secondary School	118
32	Eghosa Anglican Grammar School	127
33	Edo Baptist Conference Secondary School	210
34	Edokpolo Comprehensive Institute	128
35	Efosa Secondary School	111
36	Enina Mixed Secondary School	109
37	Enis Scholars Academy	115
38	Esangbedo Comprehensive College	108

39	Evangel Sure Foundation School	118
40	Excellence Education Centre	113
41	Excellent Scholar School	99
42	Fac Educational Centre Secondary School	112
43	Faith Christian Academy	124
44	Faith Legacy Erudition School	115
45	Fame Preparatory Christian Academy Secondary School	106
46	Fame Christian Academy	115
47	Franej International High School, Benin City	208
48	Fred Peters International College	112
49	Gabmay Secondary School	119
50	God's Favour Group of Schools	120
51	God's Gift Academy	104
52	God's Gift Secondary School	106
53	God's Inspiration Secondary School	117
54	Goldmark Education Academy	115
55	Golden Touch High School	130
56	Goberts Secondary School	121
57	Great Oxford Secondary School, Egor	160
58	Great Success Academy	102
59	Greater Faith Academy	121
60	Greater Faith Secondary School	111

61	Hallmark Education Centre	120
62	Highland Secondary School	97
63	Highland British School	120
64	High Tower	124
65	HolyLand Demonstration Secondary School	115
66	Hope Group of Schools	125
67	Hopewell Secondary School	108
68	Integrity National High School	104
69	Jacksonville Academy	119
70	Jafield High School	132
71	Jenas International School	114
72	John Kelly Group of Schools	122
73	John Kelly Secondary School	119
74	Jossey Wisdom Secondary School	118
75	Jubilee Group of Schools	112
76	Jubilee School	112
77	Key to Success Education Centre	108
78	Kingdom Kids Comprehensive High School	121
79	Kings and Queens Secondary School	118
80	Leaders College	225
81	Learnwell Secondary School	123
82	Liberty Secondary School	102

83	Light and Love Education Centre	116
84	Living Group of Schools	107
85	Modest Secondary School	94
86	McMadis Comprehensive School	114
87	Meridian Education Centre	119
88	Nations Pride Education Centre	121
89	New Stars Preparatory Secondary School	118
90	Norman Edward College	106
91	Obaro Junior Secondary School	230
92	Okunbor Group of Schools	109
93	Okunbor Secondary School	112
94	Ozoya College Academy	116
95	Osasogie College, Egor	120
96	Osayi Secondary School	111
97	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Educational Centre	118
98	Oxonian Grand Academy Secondary School	115
99	Pacesetters Academy	107
100	Paradise College	118
101	Paterson Secondary School	105
102	Pioneer High School	218
103	Powerline Academy Secondary School	110
104	Praise College Benin City	114

105	Prayer House Academy	104
106	Precious Secondary School	119
107	Quality Schools	118
108	Ralph Education Centre	107
109	Redeemer Academy	121
110	Royal Academy Secondary School	103
111	Salvation Academy	109
112	Salvation Education Centre	112
113	Scholars Imperial High School	116
114	Seed of Greatness Academy	105
115	Simbridge Secondary School	120
116	Southern Academy Secondary School	114
117	Spec Foundation Education Centre	108
118	Springfield Secondary School	118
119	Standard Foundation School	104
120	Standard High School, Egor	130
121	St. Joy Secondary School	118
122	St. Mary Anglican Girls College	120
123	St. Mercy Group of Schools	115
124	St. Nicholas Scott International School	106
125	St. Thomas Basic Secondary School	122
126	Stone Bridge Academy Secondary School	124

127	Supreme High School	107
128	Swift Education Centre	109
129	Treasure Christian College	102
130	True Dreams Christian College	108
131	Udens Comprehensive Secondary School	120
132	Unicent Group of School	104
133	Unifield International School	111
134	University Preparatory Secondary School (UPSS)	225
135	Uwagboe Demonstration Secondary School	108
136	Uyi Secondary School	99
137	Vacglon Academy	117
138	Vacglon Secondary School	120
139	Wilbest School	106
140	Winfosa Education Centre	155
141	Wisdom Inspiration Schools	115
142	Wisdom Land Education Centre	118
143	Word of Faith (Ekehuan)	109
144	Worshippers School	94
145	Zigma International School	116
	TOTAL	17375

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study consisted of 150 senior secondary school students drawn from three selected secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area. This sample was considered adequate and a representative of the total population of 17,375 students. The sample size was selected using the simple random sampling technique. In this method, each student in the population was assigned an equal opportunity of being chosen and the final respondents were selected without bias. Through this approach, 50 students were randomly selected from each of the three schools, thereby giving a total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents.

Table 2: Sample size

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS SELECTED
1.	SCHOOL A	50
2.	SCHOOL B	50
3.	SCHOOL C	50
TOTAL		150

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a self-administered questionnaire, structured into five sections. Section A measures demographic Information such as age, gender and class level, Section B contained items measuring the influence of social media on body image perception, Section C addressed the influence of social media engagement on self esteem, Section D explored the types of social media content or activities that influence body image and self esteem, Section E focused on the coping mechanisms adopted by Adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns. All questions were closed- ended and designed using a 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree(5) to Strongly disagree (1), to facilitate quantitative analysis.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was reviewed and validated by the researcher's supervisor and two experts in the department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education. This step was to ensure the validity of the instrument for data collection. Their suggestions and corrections was incorporated in the final document.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, a test–retest method was adopted. This involved administering the same instrument to a group of 20 adolescents, distinct from the main study sample, on two different occasions spaced two weeks apart. The data obtained from the two administrations were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The computed coefficient in this study exceeded the recommended benchmark of 0.70, confirming that the instrument was dependable and capable of producing consistent results over time.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher administered the instrument to the respondents with the aid of research assistants after seeking permission from the school principal and giving consent form to the students. The questionnaire was completed by the respondents and personally retrieved by the researcher to ensure high return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

In analysing the data, the researcher used descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, simple percentage and mean calculations to analyse the findings from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of findings based on the data collected from respondents in relation to the research questions guiding the study. Results are presented according to demographics, body image, self-esteem, content and activities, and coping mechanisms. Tables and figures are provided, followed by analysis and discussion. A mean score of 2.5 will be taken as minimum score, so items which have mean scores above 2.5 are accepted while those which have mean scores below 2.5 are rejected.

The benchmark mean was gotten as 2.5 through the following procedures:

Where:

Strongly agree = 4

Agree = 3

Disagree = 2 Strongly disagree = 1

$$N = \frac{\text{Total response value}}{\text{Number of responses}}$$

Therefore: Benchmark mean (n) = $\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4}$

N=2.5

Presentation of Results

SECTION A: Demographic Data

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Gender Distribution of Respondents (n =150)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	46.7%
Female	80	53.3%
TOTAL	150	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 1 shows that the sample consisted of 70 males (46.7%) and 80 females (53.3%). This reflects a nearly balanced gender distribution, allowing comparisons across male and female respondents.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Age Distribution of Respondents (n=150)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
10-13	35	23.3%
14-16	70	46.7%
17-19	45	30.0%
TOTAL	150	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Most respondents were aged 14–16 years (70, 46.7%), followed by 17–19 years (45, 30%) and 10–13 years (35, 23.3%). This age distribution shows that middle adolescence forms the majority of the sample.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Class Levels of Respondents (n=150)

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSS 1	33	22.0%
SSS 2	45	30.0%
SSS 3	72	48.0%
TOTAL	150	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 3 above indicates that 22% of respondents are in SSS1, 30% are in SSS2, 48% are in SSS3. This indicates that majority of the respondents are in SSS3.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Daily Social Media Usage of Respondents (n=150)

Usage	Frequency	Percentage
<1 hour	20	13.3%
1-3 hours	64	42.7%
4-6 hours	46	30.7%
>6 hours	20	13.3%
TOTAL	150	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The majority of students (65, 43.3%) reported using social media for 1–3 hours daily, while 45 (30%) reported 4–6 hours. A smaller group (20 each, 13.3%) used social media for less than 1 hour or more than 6 hours. The data indicate that 73.3% of respondents spend at least 1–6 hours on social media daily, showing moderate-to-heavy use. Therefore, it can be concluded that majority of secondary students in Egor Local Government Area reported using social media for 1-3 hours daily.

SECTION B

Research Question 1: What is the influence of social media on body image perception among Adolescents

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of the influence of social media on body image perception among adolescents (n=150)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD	Decision
1.) Social media influences how I perceive my body.	60(40.0%)	50 (33.3%)	25(16.7%)	15(10.0%)	3.03	0.97	Accepted
2.) I compare my body to people I see on social media.	20 (13.3%)	30 (20.0%)	60 (40.0%)	40 (26.7%)	2.20	0.98	Rejected
3.) Social media makes me more conscious about my looks.	45(30.0%)	35 (23.3%)	30 (20.0%)	40 (26.7%)	2.57	1.17	Accepted
4.) I feel pressure to look like people on social media.	30 (20.0%)	40 (26.7%)	50 (33.3%)	30 (20.0%)	2.46	1.02	Rejected
5.) I believe social media promotes unrealistic body standards.	70 (46.6%)	45 (30.0%)	25 (16.7%)	10 (6.7%)	3.17	0.94	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2025. (Scoring: Mean of 2.50 and above = accepted, mean of 2.49 and below =rejected)

Table 7 above represents the influence of social media on body image perception among adolescents. It can be seen from table 7 above that majority of respondents indicated that social media influences how they perceive their body (Mean = 3.03), makes them more conscious about their looks (Mean = 2.57), and promotes unrealistic body standards (Mean = 3.17), showing that the statements above were accepted by the respondents. However, respondents did not agree that they compare their body to people on social media (Mean = 2.20) and feel pressured to look like people on social media (Mean = 2.46) showing that the both statements were rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media influences how adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area, perceives their body, make them conscious about their looks and promotes unrealistic body standards.

Research Question 2: How does social media engagement influence adolescents self-esteem?

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of influence of social media engagement on self esteem among adolescents (n=150)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD	Decision
1.) I feel more confident after getting many likes/comments on social media.	30 (20.0%)	65 (43.3%)	35 (23.3%)	20 (13.3%)	2.70	0.93	Accepted
2.) Negative comments affect my self-esteem.	20 (13.3%)	40 (26.7%)	55 (36.7%)	35 (23.3%)	2.30	0.98	Rejected
3.) I feel bad when I get fewer likes on my post than expected	25 (16.7%)	60 (40.0%)	40 (26.7%)	25 (16.7%)	2.57	0.94	Accepted
4.) I feel important when people share my posts.	15 (10.0%)	35 (23.3%)	60 (40.0%)	40 (26.7%)	2.17	0.99	Rejected
5.) Social media affects how I value myself	20 (13.3%)	45 (30.0%)	55 (36.7%)	30 (20.0%)	2.37	0.96	Rejected

Source: Field Survey 2025 (Scoring: Mean of 2.50 and above=accepted, Mean of 2.49 and below=rejected)

The table 8 above represents the influence of social media engagement on self esteem among adolescents. It can be seen from table 7 above that majority of respondents indicated that they feel more confident after getting the desired likes and comments on social media (Mean=2.70) and they feel bad when they get fewer likes on their posts(Mean =2.57), showing that the statements above were accepted by the respondents. However, respondents did not agree that negative comments affect their self esteem (Mean=2.30), they feel important when people share their posts (Mean= 2.17) and social media affect how they value themselves (Mean=2.37), showing that the statements were rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media makes adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area feel more confident after getting desired likes and comments on their posts and make them feel bad when they get fewer likes and comments on their posts.

Research Question 3: What types of social media content influence body image and self-esteem among adolescents.

Table 9a: Descriptive statistics of the types of social media contents or activities that influence body image and self esteem among adolescents (n=150, multiple responses allowed)

Category	Selections	Percentage
Fashion & beauty posts	90	29.0%
Fitness & workout videos	50	16.1%
Celebrity lifestyles	70	22.6%
Friends' photos	80	25.8%
Others	20	6.5%

Source: Field Survey 2025 (Scoring: 20% and above =accepted, 19% and below = rejected)

From table 8a above, fashion and beauty posts (29.0%), celebrity lifestyles (22.6%) and friends photos (25.8%) were the most accepted and influential. While fitness and workout videos were least accepted and influential. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most accepted and influential contents on social media among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area are Fashion and beauty posts, celebrity lifestyles and friends photos.

Table 9b: Descriptive statistics of the platforms Influencing Adolescents’ Self-Esteem (n=150, multiple responses allowed)

Platform	Selections	Percentage
Facebook	30	9.8%
Instagram	100	32.8%
TikTok	110	36.1%
Snapchat	50	16.4%
Others	15	4.9%

Source: Field Survey 2025 (scoring; 20 and above = accepted, 19 and below = rejected)

From table 8b above, Instagram (32.8%) and Tiktok (36.1) were the most accepted and influential platforms. While Facebook (9.8%), Snapchat (16.4%) and others (4.9%) were the least accepted and influential platforms. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most influential social media platforms among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area are Instagram and TikTok.

Table 9c: Descriptive statistics of the main Activities on Social Media (n=150, multiple responses allowed)

Activity	Count	Percentage
Posting pictures/videos	60	18.8%
Chatting with friends	100	31.2%
Watching videos	120	37.5%
Reading news/updates	40	12.5%

Source: Field Survey Scoring; 20 and above= accepted, 19 and below= rejected)

From table 8c above, chatting with friends (31.2%) and watching videos (37.5%) were the most accepted and influential activities on social media. While posting videos (18.8) and reading news and updates (12.5%) were the least accepted and influential. Therefore, it can be concluded that most influential social media activities among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area are chatting with friends and watching videos.

Research Question 4: What are the Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns?

Table 10: Descriptive statistics of the coping mechanisms adopted by Adolescents in response to social media-induced body image concerns (n=150)

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
1.) I avoid certain accounts that make me feel insecure.	90 (60.0%)	60 (40.0%)	150
2.) I skip meals and/or attempt to lose weight due to social media.	25 (16.7%)	125 (83.3%)	150
3.) I reduce my social media usage when I feel pressured.	70 (46.7%)	80 (53.3%)	150
4.) I avoid posting pictures unless I get approval from friends.	55 (36.7%)	95 (63.3%)	150
5.) I follow body positivity pages.	85 (56.7%)	65 (43.3%)	150
6.) I stay away from school/social activities because I feel insecure	15 (10.0%)	135 (90.0%)	150

(Source: Field Survey 2025) (Scoring: Mean of 2.50 and above= accepted, mean of 2.49 and below= rejected)

From Table 9 above, Positive coping strategies such as avoiding insecure accounts (90) and following body positivity pages (85) were common. However, 25 students admitted to skipping meals due to social media pressure. Percentages were 60% for avoiding insecure accounts, 56.7% for following body positivity pages, 36.7% for reducing usage, 36.7% for avoiding posting without approval, 16.7% for skipping meals, and 10% for withdrawal from activities. These results show that while many adolescents adopt healthy coping strategies, a minority engage in harmful behaviors. Therefore, it can be concluded that the most adopted coping mechanisms among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area are avoiding certain accounts, following body positivity pages, and reducing social media usage.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study revealed that social media has a strong influence on how adolescents perceive their body image. The results showed that most respondents agreed that social media affects how they view their bodies, makes them more conscious of their looks, and promotes unrealistic beauty standards. This finding aligns with prior research that explored the connection between social media, body image, and self-esteem among adolescents. For instance, Fardouly et al. (2020) found that exposure to idealized social media images is significantly associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction among

young people. Similarly, Marengo et al. (2021) discovered that adolescents who frequently engage with appearance-focused content on Instagram experience lower body satisfaction and a higher tendency to compare their appearances with others. Holland and Tiggemann (2019) also noted that social media platforms emphasizing photo sharing, such as Instagram, contribute more strongly to body image concerns than text-based platforms. These studies support the current findings that social media influences adolescents' perception of their body image and encourages appearance-based comparison. This shows that adolescents now rely heavily on what they see online to define what is considered attractive or acceptable. The constant exposure to images and videos of people with seemingly perfect shapes, flawless skin, and fashionable clothing has fostered a culture of comparison. Adolescents frequently compare their own appearance to these idealized representations, which affects how satisfied they feel about their bodies. As a result, many adolescents have become more focused on their physical appearance and aspire to look like the people they see online. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which emphasize visual and aesthetic presentation, tend to promote such ideals, making adolescents more self-conscious about their body image. Therefore, the study clearly shows that social media shapes how adolescents perceive themselves and influences their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their appearance.

The study also found that social media engagement has a notable influence on adolescents' self-esteem. The majority of respondents indicated that they feel more confident when they receive many likes and positive comments on their social media posts and feel less confident when reactions are fewer than expected. This finding is consistent with that of Hawes et al. (2022), who reported that adolescents' self-worth is often tied to online validation, with likes and comments serving as indicators of social acceptance. Similarly, Błachnio et al. (2021) observed that positive feedback and social approval on social media significantly affect adolescents' emotional states and self-esteem. However, not all studies agree on the direction of this effect. Meier and Schäfer (2018) found that while social media use can negatively influence self-esteem for some individuals, others may experience positive effects depending on the content they engage with and how they interpret it. Likewise, Orben and Przybylski (2019) reported that the relationship between social media use and self-esteem is relatively small and varies among adolescents, indicating that personal factors and resilience moderate the impact. These findings suggest that adolescents increasingly associate their confidence and self-worth with the level of attention they receive online. In essence, the number of likes, comments, and shares has become a form of validation and recognition. When they receive positive engagement, they feel valued; when

reactions are low, their confidence declines. This implies that social media has created a dynamic in which adolescents' self-esteem fluctuates according to online approval and feedback.

The study further revealed that specific social media content and platforms exert stronger influences on adolescents' body image and self-esteem than others. Fashion and beauty posts, celebrity lifestyles, and friends' photos were identified as the most influential types of content, as they emphasize appearance, luxury, and attractiveness, leading adolescents to engage in comparison. Instagram and TikTok were the most influential platforms, while chatting with friends and watching videos were the most popular activities. Hendrickse et al. (2019) found that exposure to beauty and lifestyle content on Instagram leads to increased appearance comparison and body dissatisfaction. Similarly, de Vries and Kühne (2021) reported that image-based platforms like Instagram and TikTok exert stronger effects on self-esteem than text-based platforms because they highlight visual attractiveness and popularity. This indicates that adolescents spend significant time consuming visual and interactive content that showcases beauty, success, and trends. Such content provides opportunities for adolescents to observe, compare, and model their behavior and appearance after people they admire. Because much of this content displays idealized or edited versions

of people's lives, adolescents are continuously exposed to unrealistic beauty standards and lifestyles, which may heighten body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem.

Additionally, the findings showed that adolescents are adopting positive coping mechanisms to manage the pressures of social media. Many respondents stated that they avoid accounts that make them feel insecure, follow body-positivity pages, and limit their social media use when they feel pressured. Cohen et al. (2020) similarly found that adolescents who adopt positive online habits such as limiting screen time, avoiding triggering content, and following body-positive accounts tend to maintain higher self-esteem and better emotional balance. However, Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018) cautioned that some body-positivity content may still inadvertently promote appearance focus, indicating that coping strategies require mindfulness and moderation. These findings suggest that adolescents are becoming increasingly aware of how social media affects their emotions and self-perception and are taking conscious steps to protect their mental well-being. By avoiding harmful content and following pages that promote self-acceptance, adolescents create a healthier online environment for themselves. Reducing social media usage also allows them to take breaks from constant comparison and regain confidence in their authentic selves. Although a small number still engage in maladaptive behaviors such as skipping meals or withdrawing

socially, most adolescents appear to be developing healthier coping habits. This suggests that adolescents are not merely passive consumers of social media but can recognize negative influences and adjust their behaviors to mitigate them.

From these findings, it can be inferred that social media has become a powerful influence in the daily lives of adolescents, shaping how they view themselves and how they interact with others. Adolescents are often caught between online ideals and real-life realities. The pressure to appear perfect and the desire for validation have led many to rely on social media as a measure of self-worth. Nonetheless, the ability of some adolescents to adopt positive coping mechanisms demonstrates that awareness and self-regulation can reduce the negative impact of social media. This means that while social media can lead to insecurity and lower self-esteem, it can also be a platform for empowerment when used wisely. Therefore, parents, educators, and policymakers should encourage healthy social media use, promote digital literacy, and foster positive online behavior. In conclusion, the findings highlight the dual nature of social media as both a tool for connection and self-expression and a source of pressure and comparison and underscore the importance of awareness, self-acceptance, and responsible use among adolescents.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has to do the summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings

Summary

This study investigated the impact of social media on adolescents' body image and self-esteem. The study was supported by Social Comparison Theory (SCT), which was originally formulated by Leon Festinger in 1954. The study was guided by four research questions, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 17,375 students gotten from 145 private secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. A sample of 150 students was drawn from three private schools using appropriate sampling techniques. Data were collected through a well-structured, closed-ended questionnaire validated by the project supervisor and two experts in the Department of Health, Safety, and Environmental Education. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test–retest method. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation.

Findings

1. The study found that social media significantly influences how adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area perceive their bodies. It makes them more conscious of their looks and promotes unrealistic body standards.
2. The findings revealed that adolescents in Egor Local Government Area feel more confident after receiving many likes and comments on social media and tend to feel bad when they get fewer likes or comments on their posts.
3. The study also found that fashion and beauty posts, celebrity lifestyles, and friends' photos were the most influential contents on social media among adolescents in Egor Local Government Area. Instagram and TikTok were identified as the most engaging platforms, while chatting with friends and watching videos were the most common social media activities.
4. The findings further showed that most adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area adopt positive coping mechanisms such as avoiding insecure accounts, reducing social media usage, and following body positivity pages. However, a few reported maladaptive behaviors such as skipping meals or avoiding social activities due to social media pressure.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that social media plays a significant role in shaping how adolescents in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area perceive their physical appearance, interact with others, and evaluate their self-worth. The study revealed that exposure to idealized online images and beauty standards heightens body consciousness among adolescents and influences their emotional wellbeing. Although many adolescents derive confidence and social connection from positive feedback on social media, others experience dissatisfaction and low self-esteem when their online validation is low.

Despite these challenges, a majority of the adolescents demonstrated awareness by adopting positive coping mechanisms such as following body positivity pages, avoiding triggering content, and regulating their screen time. This indicates that while social media can be a source of pressure, it can also serve as a platform for empowerment, self-expression, and social support when used responsibly. Therefore, a balanced and guided use of social media is crucial to ensure that adolescents gain more of its benefits while minimizing its negative influence on their body image and self-esteem.

Recommendations

1. Schools should integrate media literacy education into their curriculum to help adolescents critically evaluate online content and its impact on their body image and self-esteem.
2. Parents and guardians should monitor and guide adolescents' social media activities, encouraging open discussions about self-worth and digital wellbeing.
3. Social media platforms should promote body-positive and inclusive content, while regulating unrealistic or harmful beauty trends that could negatively influence adolescents.
4. Adolescents should be encouraged to follow content that promotes self-acceptance and personal growth rather than comparison and validation through likes or comments.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Future research could examine how the duration and frequency of social media use affect adolescents' mental health and academic performance.
2. Further studies should explore the differences in the impact of social media across gender lines among adolescents in Edo State.

3. Researchers could investigate the role of parents, teachers, and peers in moderating the effects of social media on adolescents' self-esteem and body image.
4. Future research may also compare rural and urban adolescents to determine whether social media influence varies across different environments.

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APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION,

FACULTY OF EDUCATION.

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY .

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Instructions: Please answer all questions honestly. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire is designed for academic purposes. It is structured to find out the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among adolescents . Please kindly respond sincerely to the questions. Your responses which are needed for research purposes only will be treated with high level of confidentiality. Thank you.

Yours Faithfully,

Edo-omoregie Osarumen

Section A: Demographic Data(Tick as appropriate)

1. **Gender:** [] Male [] Female
2. **Age:** [] 10–13 years [] 14–16 years [] 17–19 years
3. **Class Level:** [] SS 1 [] SS 2 [] SS 3
4. **Do you use social media?** [] Yes [] No
5. **If Yes, how many hours do you spend daily on social media?**
[] Less than 1 hour [] 1–3 hours [] 4–6 hours [] More than 6 hours

Section B: Influence of Social Media on Body Image Perception (Strongly Agree -SA, Agree- A, Disagree -D, Strongly Disagree-SD)

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
6	Social media influences how I perceive my body.				
7	I compare my body to people I see on social media.				
8	Social media makes me more conscious about my looks.				

9	I feel pressure to look like people on social media.				
10	I believe social media promotes unrealistic body standards.				

Section C: Influence of Social Media Engagement on Self-esteem (Rarely-R, Sometimes-S, Often-O, Always-A)

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
11	I feel more confident after getting many likes/comments on social media.				
12	Negative comments on social media affect my self-esteem.				
13	I feel bad when I get fewer likes on my pictures than expected.				
14	I feel important when people share my posts.				
15	Social media affects how I value myself.				

Section D : Social Media Content/Activities Influencing Body Image and Self-esteem(

Multiple Choice)

Instruction: *Tick the most appropriate answer(s).*

16. Which type of social media content affects your body image the most?

- Fashion and beauty posts
- Fitness and workout videos
- Celebrity lifestyles
- Friends' photos
- Others (please specify) _____

17. The platform that influences your self-esteem the most is:

- Facebook Instagram TikTok Snapchat Others _____

18. The main activity you engage in on social media is:

- Posting pictures/videos Chatting with friends Watching videos
- Reading news/updates

19. Which of the following makes you feel most pressured about your looks?

Celebrity images Influencers' posts Friends' posts Advertisements

20. The type of posts that make you feel confident are:

Compliments on my pictures Achievements shared online

Positive quotes/inspirations Fun moments with friends

Section E: Coping Mechanisms for Social Media-Induced Body Image Concerns

(Yes/No)

21. I avoid certain accounts that make me feel insecure.

Yes No

22. I skip meals or attempt to lose weight just to look like people I see online

Yes No

23. I reduce my social media usage when I feel pressured about my looks.

Yes No

24. I avoid posting pictures of myself unless I get approval from my friends

Yes No

25. I follow pages/accounts that promote body positivity.

Yes No

26. I stay away from school or social activities because I feel I don't look good enough.

Yes No