

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CREATING DECEPTION THROUGH PHOTO
EDITING APP AMONG UNIBEN FEMALE STUDENTS AND PHOTO STUDIOS
IN BENIN METROPOLIS**

BY

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AUGUST, 2025.

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**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
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BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

AUGUST, 2025.

DECLARATION

This project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin under the supervision of Mr. Sunday Ekerikevwe (FRHD). All findings and analysis in the study are product of my personal research and where the views of others are used, they are duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research was carried out by **AKINTOYE BUKOLA IFEOLUWA** in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Art (BA) degree in Mass Communication.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, for the right knowledge and understanding to complete this project. I also like to dedicate this project to my Mother, Mrs. Mojisola Akintoye for her consistent love and care and financial support she gave to me and my siblings. Her advice has been my source of inspiration all these years.

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Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better -
MAYA ANGELOU

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of deceptive photo editing among female students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and photo studios in Benin Metropolis, focusing on its extent, motivations, and psychological and social consequences. Guided by three research questions, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing questionnaires administered to UNIBEN female students and semi-structured interviews with photo studio operators to collect data. The theoretical framework integrates social comparison theory, self-presentation theory, and uses and gratifications theory to explore the psychological motivations, social dynamics, and cultural influences driving deceptive photo editing. Findings reveal that deceptive editing is prevalent, with students frequently using apps like Adobe Photoshop and Snapchat to alter appearances for social media, and studios reporting regular requests for edits like skin lightening. Motivations include conforming to societal beauty standards, seeking social media validation, and responding to peer pressure, reflecting Nigeria's cultural emphasis on attractiveness and global aesthetic trends. Psychologically, editing often leads to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, though it temporarily boosts confidence. Socially, edited photos garner positive feedback, fostering validation dependency and reducing authenticity in peer interactions. Thematic analysis highlights widespread editing, culturally specific beauty ideals, social media influence, mixed psychological impacts, and unrealistic beauty norms, with extreme editing causing identity conflict. The study underscores the complex interplay of psychological, social, and cultural factors in deceptive photo editing, offering insights for addressing its impacts on self-perception and social interactions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Word 'Photography' is coined from the Greek word 'Phos' meaning Light and 'Graphos' which means drawing or writing. Literally, Photography is referred to as a drawing or writing made with Light. Akinfeleye (1982) cited in Ogah, Obaje and Onwuamaeze (2016) defines photography as the process or technique of producing images that mirror reality. Spencer (1973) cited in Ogah et al (2016) define photography as the science, art and Practice of creating durable images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation, either chemically by means of a light sensitive material such as photographic film, or electronically by means of an image sensor. Photo Editing encompasses the process of altering or enhancing images using various softwares like Adobe Photoshop, Facetune App, Snapseed e.t.c and their tools such as retouching and brushing the skin, removing blemishes and adding special effects that won't likely be noticed.

Photo editing apps has revolutionalised the way people people present and portray themselves online. The rise of social media has given individuals the leverage on how to present oneself online as they can now easily edit and manipulate their photos to create a desired online picture. Furthermore, this phenomenon has also led to the creation of deception among Individuals, students and couples not leaving those in relationships

behind. Photo editing apps such as Adobe Photoshop, Facetune app, Snapseed and Photolab have become popular among students particularly young adults. These apps leverage users with a range of tools and filters to enhance and manipulate their images or photos. While these apps provide legitimate functions and purposes by increasing photo quality and removing blemishes, they can also be used negatively to create deception of which this study would give more light into.

Generally photographs/Images are expected to be honest and realistic. Pictures are meant to be true reflection of reality. However, the advent of photo editing apps has revolutionized these narratives we originally have about photographs. The adage that says "the way you stand or are positioned during a photography session is the way you would see yourself" is no longer true because with the aid of photo editing apps like Photoshop, Photolab or facetune app, you can alter the initial image taken by doing some actual retouching on the image taken. Moreso, the increased reliance on photo editing apps has led to concerns about deception and authenticity. Research shows that exposure to manipulated images or pictures can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety and negative body image among young adults, especially females. In Nigeria, the expansion of photo editing apps has been rapid with many especially young adults adopting these tools to improve their physical appearance. The pressure to conform to the societal beauty standards among female students is very alarming as it leaves many to deceptive photo editing practices.

Gone are the times where Relationships and marriages come to an end as a result of Infidelity but with the advent of Photo editing apps and its Influence, it is right to say that Relationships/Marriages come to an end because of the consequences of photo editing apps. Trust and honesty is the Springboard of a successful relationship and in cases where these values are lacking, the relationship is bound to come to an end. A practical Instance of the havoc caused by photo editing among couples or those in relationship is a misleading profile picture, a situation where a woman with an edited image online to make herself look beautiful and attractive met with a man who was drawn to her and they started dating, However, when they met, he discovered and realised that she was actually Older and looked nothing like the edited picture online. He felt Heartbroken and betrayed and eventually he ended the relationship because he couldn't live with the trauma of dating his mom's age mate. The relationship ended as a result of a misleading profile picture found online. This is little compared to the havoc caused by photo editing. Another instance include where a man saw a lady's picture on a friend's status and immediately fell in love with her. However, when they got talking, he was surprised to find that she had edited the image to hide the acne in her face and had also hid her weight gain because she was an obes. He felt deceived and was not certain if he wanted to continue the relationship. Edited pictures has also caused a great havoc to newlyweds as a man realised after the wedding party that his wife actually had no breast and was not in any way attractive as she had tribal marks all over her face down to her

stomach of which having found out that night couldn't take it and eventually ended the marriage. He was surprised why he didn't discover this deception earlier and this is because she was always on makeup and was always posting edited pictures. This is quite disheartening of the emotional, psychological and physical trauma caused by photo editing. These instances paint a vivid discription of the consequences of edited pictures in relationships. The impact of photo editing generally cannot be overstated especially amongst students, Couples and relationships. Photo editing can lead to building unrealistic expectations among partners and even among one's peer. Excessive photo editing can lead to friend or even partners questioning the authenticity of their partner's or friend's persona which if not properly managed and handled can end a quick rising relationship.

Photo Studios in Benin have also being said to be a major part in perpetuating deceptive photo editing practices by offering clients the services to manipulate their pictures. It is said that these services are offered based on the directives of the clients, more so, it allows the studio presents itself in a professional manner seeing that Is what makes them stand out and it also helps them attract more customers. A good example of the deception created by photo studios is a case where a Pregnant woman was misled by a maternity shoot she saw online where the model appeared to be jumping high with a smiling face, inspired by the image, she attempted to recreate the pose at home, resulting in an injury that put her unborn baby in a critical state. Unknown to her, the original

image had been edited to create the illusion of high jump. So many people are victims of deception caused by photo editing apps which can lead to low self esteem and danger even in our health. Despite the rapid growth on the practice of creating deceptive images through photo editing apps on young females, there's a knowledge gap on this topic in the Nigerian context which hasn't been explored.

Giving the potential consequences of photo editing among students, Couples, and relationships, there is an urgent need for a study that investigates and examines the impact of creating deception through photo editing apps among female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin metropolis. This study aims to investigate and examine the motivation behind photo editing, the impact of photo editing on students, photo studios, and relationships as well as the consequences caused by creating deception through photo editing apps.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rapid invention of photo editing apps has led to a significant increase in the creation and spread of deceptive images among female Students in UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin Metropolis. This consequences have been said to be quite severe on the individuals involved and the broader community. The rapid pose of adultrated pictures on internet is very alarming, a good example of the deception created by photo editing apps is a Nigeria guy who edited a picture of himself appearing as if he was in the United Kingdom, creating an illusion of some white people standing behind him in the picture

and then posted it online with the caption "UK is the best place to be". It was later confirmed that he was in Nigeria at the time he posted the picture on Facebook. This is quite severe, there's no longer truth in our actions.

The problem caused by photo editing apps is also evident especially among university students as every lady wants to belong to the group of the classy girls on campus therefore constantly expose themselves to manipulated images just to fit into the World's standard of beauty which inherently causes low self-esteem, inadequacy and insecurity about their appearances. This can be very bad because once one self-esteem is downtrodden, it becomes very hard to believe in oneself or one's potentials.

The use of photo editing apps among couples has caused drastic harm to potential partners as they begin to compare their relationships to other's curated and edited online personas, resulting in the feeling that their relationship is Lacking. A good example of social media comparison caused by photo editing is that the man in the relationship might begin to compare his wife or fiancé's face to that of another lady whose face appears to be smooth and more beautiful online, he could even compare her body shape to these persons online unknown to him that the picture posted online are mostly and usually edited, with the use of adobe photoshop, one can enlarge either the breast and butt of a woman to make it appear big, attractive and seductive, one can also remove blemishes on the face thereby making the face to appear smooth and beautiful.

Photo studios that engage in deceptive images may also suffer loss of credibility and reputation as some edited images can appear to be so bad ultimately affecting their business. These edited images can also lead to financial losses for photo studios, as clients may demand refunds if picture is excessively edited. Excessive photo editing has led to Trust issues in relationships, communication breakdown among partners, relationship dissatisfaction and mental health concerns among students, confusion between virtual reality vs reality, loss of credibility and authenticity. More and all of these are the issues and problems surrounding photo editing among students, couples and photo studios in Benin.

The creation and dissemination of deceptive images through photo editing apps have significant consequences on female students of UNIBEN, couples and photo studios in Benin Metropolis. It is therefore pertinent to address these issues in order to mitigate the negative effects of photo editing deception thereby providing valuable insights on the proper and ethical use of photo editing apps.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the extent of prevalence of deception created through these apps among female students and photo studios in Benin Metropolis
2. Find out the motivations behind the creation of deceptive images through photo editing apps among female students and photo studios

3. Ascertain the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps among female students and photo studios.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are formulated to help guide the researcher during the course of this study.

1. To what extent do female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin metropolis engage in creating deceptive images through photo editing apps?
2. What motivates female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin to create deceptive images through photo editing apps?
3. What are the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps on female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study hinges on both practical and theoretical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing group of knowledge on digital media, identity, and deception, extending perspectives to a Nigerian context. In the same vein, contributing to the existing literature on deception and relationships. Exploring the role of technology in

relationship deception, this research provides new insights into the motivations behind deception, as well as the desire for social media validation, self-esteem issues, and the need to portray a perfect curated online image (Mcquillan & Connelly, 2017). Focusing on UNIBEN female students, couples and photo studios, it improves the discourse on how photo editing intersects with gender, relationships and commerce in a postcolonial urban setting. Logically, the findings will benefit multiple stakeholders. For UNIBEN female students, it provides insights into the psychological risks of deceptive image editing, potentially informing awareness campaigns on self-esteem and authenticity. Furthermore, for couples, it points and highlights the relational implications of curated images, encouraging healthier communication. For Photo studios, photo studio operators may gain a better and deeper understanding of their responsibilities, prompting more transparent practices. Additionally, policy makers and educators in Benin metropolis can use the results to address digital literacy and mental health challenges especially among youths. Ultimately, this study aims to foster a more critical engagement with photo editing technology in Nigeria. Besides, the study will serve as a reference material to future scholars and researchers.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. Focusing on two key groups: Female students of the University of Benin, Photo studios operating within the area, and couples who are residents in the metropolis. It investigates the use of photo

editing apps available on smartphones and laptops (e.g Snapchat, Instagram, Photoshop, Facetune app, Snapseed) and other professional softwares used by photo studios (e.g Adobe Photoshop, Capture one). The investigation covers the period of 2023-2025, reflecting on contemporary trends in digital media use. While the study acknowledges broader societal influences, its primary and major focus is the impact of deceptive photo editing on self-perception, relationships, and commercial practices within this defined scope.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

It is of a truth that a research of this kind is not without some constrain. First, the study only focused on the photo studios in Benin and female students in the University of Benin thereby limiting the generalizability of the research. Getting information as regards the population of the Females in Uniben is quite tasking as the student affairs department were quite reluctant in releasing information. In addition, the attitude of respondents towards the researcher was quite not appealing as they were not willing to attend to the questionnaire right on the spot which at some points delayed the findings. Nonetheless, the information gathered is an helpful material needed for the assessment of the impact of creating deception through photo editing apps on users - young adults and photo studios in Benin.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Terms used in this study are correctly defined in order to provide broad and easy understanding and clarification of frequent terms as used in the study. It is mainly to ensure precision.

Assessment: this basically means to evaluate the course of an action.

Benin City: this is the capital of Edo state, Southern Nigeria.

Deception: This is the act of intentionally manipulating and altering actual images with the aim to mislead and deceive others into believing a lie.

Female Students of Uniben: this refers to the currently enrolled female students in Uniben

Impact: this refers to the effects or significance of something as a result of an action taken.

Photo Editing Apps: this refers to the software applications which aid or enhance photographs e.g Adobe Photoshop, Facetune App, Photolab e.t.c

Photo Studios in Benin: This refers to the business industries that provide photography services in Benin. They also offer photo editing and printing services.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

- ❖ Conceptual Review: Photography and photojournalism
- ❖ The Concept of Editing
- ❖ Editing App
- ❖ Historical Review
- ❖ Psychological and sociocultural Effects of Photo Editing on Self-presentation
- ❖ Gender Dynamics of photo editing
- ❖ Role of photo studios
- ❖ Deception through Photo Editing

- ❖ Empirical studies on photo editing and its impact
- ❖ Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual Review: Photography and Photojournalism

Photography is a multifaceted medium that serves as both an art and a tool for documentation, communication, and expression. Sontag (1977) informs that photography is an emotional engagement with time, place, self and others mediating our interaction with the world. It captures moments, constructs narratives and shapes perceptions thereby making it a powerful tool in both personal and societal contexts. In the academic sphere, photography is conceptualized as a practice that gathers geographical and cultural information, order facts and constructs imaginative geographies (Ryan & Schwartz, 2003). This dual role of photography as both a factual record and a creative endeavor is relevant to understanding its use among UNIBEN female students and photo studios.

Photojournalism, a specialized branch of photography, that involves the use of images to tell news stories, emphasizing ethics, accuracy, and narrative impact (Ogunrinde, 2021). According to Spencer (1973) in Wogu (2005) opines that photojournalism is a form of journalism that records and presents factual stories or features for publication by combination of pictures and text, with primary emphasis on the pictorial approach and presentation. Curtis (2006) defines photojournalism as the form of journalism that presents news stories primarily through the use of images, photos or pictures. Unlike general photographer, which may prioritize aesthetic appeal,

photojournalism is bouncing by a code of ethics that demands truthful representation and minimal manipulation (National Press Photographers Association, 2019). This is done so as not to lose originality and authenticity. Photojournalists are tasked with capturing events in ways that are both visually compelling and factually accurate, balancing creativity with journalistic integrity (Walgren, 2019). However, the advent of digital technologies has blurred the lines between photography and photojournalism, particularly, with the rise of photo editing apps that enables manipulation raising concerns about deception (Ogunrinde. 2021). Among UNIBEN female students, photography is often seen a tool for self-expression and social media presence, where edited images are used to construct idealized identities. Photo studios in Benin Metropolis, on the other hand, leverage photography for commercial purposes, catering to clients seeking professional portraits or event coverage. The interplay between these contexts highlights the tension between authenticity and manipulation, as both groups increasingly rely on editing apps to enhance images, sometimes at the cost of truthfulness.

Some other Key concepts in this study includes photo editing apps, deception, self-presentation, and their impacts are quite interconnected. Photo editing apps refers to digital tools such as Snapchat, Photoshop, BeautyPlus and Facetune app that allows and gives users the leverage to alter their images by enhancing and removing blemishes and imperfections or change body proportions so as to meet the qualifications of the world's beauty standard. Photo editing apps, in this context, have blurred the line between reality

and illusion as humans now gives more attention to the way they're portrayed rather than who they really are. With the advent of photo editing apps, users now have access to editing their own image with little or no cost and editing it to their own satisfaction (Mark Williams, 2024). This is one of the genesis of the various deceptions done by photo editing in the society specifically young women. The features in this app do not require any skill thereby making it easy for anyone with a smartphone or digital software to manipulate their own images at the comfort of their homes.

Deception, in this context, is the act or practice of presenting an altered image as a true representation of oneself thereby misleading viewers about one's authentic appearance or image. By changing body proportions, deception can be made e.g a lady with small hips or boobs can boost or increase the hips or boobs to their desired shape by using liquify in photoshop to expand and widen the hips. This is not projecting reality or truth rather Deceit and falsehood. In the context of this study, the use of photo editing apps can be seen as a form of deception and self-deception, as individuals create and present a false online image. Deception in photography is not a new phenomenon. Historically, they have used several techniques to manipulate and deceive their audience (Newhall, 1964). For example, during the American civil war, photographers would often stage and manipulate images to create a desired narrative (Rosenblum, 1997). The deception created through photo editing is one with great consequence.

Self-Presentation and Perception relates to how individuals view and curate their images to project and present a desired quality, which is often influenced by social expectations. In this context, self-presentation by Erving Goffman's (1959) posits that individuals attempt to manage others' impressions of them by controlling the information they present. Photo editing apps can be seen as a tool for self-presentation, allowing individuals to manipulate their online image and create deception. These concepts converge to influence perceptions of beauty, self-worth, and authenticity among UNIBEN female students and the operations of photo studios.

2.2 The Concept of Editing

Photo editing refers to the process of modifying images or pictures using digital softwares such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Lightroom, Snapseed and many others to create and enhance their visual appeal, correct imperfect or create new narratives and perspectives. Editing encompasses a range of techniques, including adjustment like modifying exposure, contrast or saturation, retouching, removing blemishes or imperfections and creative manipulation by adding effects or combining images. While editing can enhance the quality and impact of photographs, it also raises ethical questions when used to deceive viewers by altering reality. The concept of editing is rooted in the history of photography, where darkroom techniques such as dodging and burning were used to refine images (Britannica, 2025). However, digital editing has exponentially expanded the possibilities, allowing for seamless alterations that can be indistinguishable

from the original (Ogunrinde, 2021). Barthes (1980), in *Camera Lucida*, argues that photographs possess a unique indexicality—a direct connection to reality—that is compromised when images are heavily manipulated. This loss of indexicality is particularly concerning in contexts where photographs are expected to serve as evidence or documentation, such as in photojournalism or personal identity representation.

In the context of UNIBEN female students, editing is often used to conform to societal beauty standards, such as lightening skin tones, spot removal, altering body shapes, which can perpetuate unrealistic ideals and can foster body dissatisfaction. Photo studio, meanwhile, may use editing to meet client expectations, such as creating flawless portraits, which can contribute to a culture of deception when the final images no longer reflect reality. The ethical implications of editing, therefore, are central to understanding its impact on these groups.

Photo editing is not a novel phenomenon; this is because it has been around for over a century, evolving from traditional darkroom techniques to digital editing softwares and then smartphones. Its roots trace back to the advent of photography in the 19th century. Photographers in the 19th century manipulated images by using darkroom techniques such as airbrushing and double exposure to enhance aesthetics or conceal blemishes or imperfections. Early photo editing involved physical manipulation of the image on the prints or negative. The techniques of early photo editing includes scratching and etching which is used to remove blemishes or add details to the photograph; there's

also hand painting, here, colors were manually added to the white and black photos using oil paints and watercolors to give it a more realistic and artistic effect; combination printing is also a technique of early photo editing, notably used by Henry Peach Robinson, he combined multiple negatives to create a single image which then allows photographers to depict scenes that were otherwise impossible to capture in a single shot. However, these early techniques were labour- and requires skills laying the groundwork for the invention of more sophisticated photo manipulation.

The evolution of photo editing in the 20th century is said to be the pictorialist movement which treated photographs as a form of fine art and not only a means of documentation. The pictorialist movement believe that pictures should be a reflection of the photographer's vision and emotion. According to Sontag (1977) photography has always been a channel or medium of selective truth, where the photographer's original intent shapes the final outcome of the image; this is to say that the photographer is the one who determines what becomes of the image that's being taken by positioning his camera to take a specific shot While paying less attention to other part which originally is meant to be captured. It's therefore safe to say editing started right from when images are taken.

This period also saw the advent of photomontage where various images are cut and pasted to create a new image. This method was a precursor to modern digital collage techniques. As the process of photography advances so did photo editing and

manipulation methods, the darkroom which was mentioned earlier became a room of experimentation where photographers could alter the composition and exposure of their pictures to suit their style. Some key darkroom techniques include features like dodge and burning, here you can control the amount of light that gets or reaches the photographic paper. You can either lighten or darken your images. Other techniques include Retouching and solarization where the photographer can partially reverse the tone of the image creating a surreal effect. These techniques allows for a greater control over the final image thereby making it a medium of artistic expression rather than capturing reality.

The digital revolution of the late 20th century democratized photo editing through software like Adobe Photoshop, introduced in 1988 and developed by Thomas and John Knoll. The advent of Adobe Photoshop marked a significant shift from professional to amateur manipulation, broadening and increasing access to tools that could alter reality. Photoshop allows users to perform complex edits such as layering, trimming, masking, liquify and color correction with ease. Adobe photoshop became the go-to app for photographers, Graphic designers and fine artist to express their artistic prowess with any image. It not only democratise photo editing but also expanded the possibilities of what one can achieve with an image. Some key features or tools in Photoshop include Clone stamp tools, layers, content aware tool, crop, trim, remove background, filters and effects among others.

Furthermore, the rise of smartphones and photo editing apps in the 21st century also transformed this landscape (Kaplan 2014). Social media apps such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facetune launched between 2010 and 2013, introduced editing features and filters that allowed users to modify their appearance instantly and effortlessly. The proliferation of smartphones brought photo editing to the fingertips of millions of users thereby making it easy for anyone to apply filters, increase brightness and saturation, remove blemishes and imperfections just at their convenience. These tools, often marketed and displayed as creative, have blurred the line between reality and illusion thereby fostering a culture of curated self-presentation. These apps for young women, particularly university students, have become integral to social media engagement, increase in likes, comments and follows, raising questions about authenticity and deception in digital spaces, these apps are seen as a stepping stone to reaching the world's standard of beauty and high self-presentation.

Integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning is the latest frontiers of photo editing. AI powered tools have made it possible to complete complex edits within seconds. Edits that would have taken hours with the traditional softwares have now been made easy within the twinkle of an eye. Some of the advancement in AI tools include; Content-Aware Fill, AI can excellently fill in areas where contents have been removed making it easy to remove unwanted object such as the background e.t.c. another feature include Facial recognition and retouching, AI can identify facial features

such as smooth skin, brighten eyes, and also adjust facial expressions using liquify. Style transfer is also a feature in AI that allows users to apply the same artistic style of an image to another automatically without having to create a new style for another image, users could just use the same style for different images. These Innovations in photo editing has made it it easy for users to create shocking and stunning images with little or no efforts. It has blurred the line between reality and illusion.

2.3 Editing App

Photo editing apps are software tools designed for mobile devices or computers that enable users to modify images with ease and efficiency. Popular apps include Adobe Lightroom, Snapseed, Photoshop Express, and VSCO, each offering features such as filters, presets, and advanced retouching tools (StudySmarter, 2024). These apps have democratized photo editing, making it accessible to amateurs and professionals alike, and have transformed the way images are produced and consumed (Aithor, 2024).

Adobe Lightroom, for instance, is favored for its ability to organize, edit, and synchronize edits across devices, offering tools like gradient filters and lens corrections (StudySmarter, 2024). Snapseed, developed by Google, is known for its intuitive interface and professional-grade features, making it popular among mobile users (StudySmarter, 2024). These apps empower users to enhance images quickly, but their ease of use also facilitates deceptive practices, such as altering physical appearances or fabricating scenes (Ogunrinde, 2021).

Among UNIBEN female students, editing apps are widely used to create polished social media content, often to gain validation or conform to beauty ideals (ScienceDirect, 2020). Photo studios rely on these apps to streamline workflows and meet client demands for aesthetically pleasing images, sometimes prioritizing commercial appeal over authenticity. The proliferation of editing apps has thus created a paradox: while they enhance creative freedom, they also enable deceptive practices that can undermine trust in visual media.

2.4 Historical Review

The history of photo editing can be linked to photography itself. The birth of photography allows for the first time to capture real life events or scenes. French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce is said to produce the first permanent photograph in 1827 using a camera obscura. However, in 1829, Louis Daguerre formed a partnership with Joseph Niépce to improve on the process because it has some limitations. In 1839, after years of experimentation, Daguerre developed a more convenient and effective method of photography, called the daguerreotype. The daguerreotype quickly gained popularity, and with it, the need for Photo editing emerged as people sought for how to improve and make their photographs better and professional. Photojournalism took root in the 1850s, with pioneers like Carol Szathmari documenting the Crimean War through engravings based on photographs (ResearchGate, 2024). These early images, though labor-intensive

to reproduce, demonstrated photography's power to convey the realities of war and shape public perception.

The introduction of the 35mm Leica camera in 1925 and flash bulbs in 1927 marked the “golden age of photojournalism” (1920s–1950s), enabling photographers to capture spontaneous moments with greater ease (Journalism University, 2024). However, even in this era, manipulation was not uncommon; for example, during the American Civil War, photographers staged scenes to enhance dramatic effect (Britannica, 2025). The advent of digital photography in the late 1980s, coupled with Adobe Photoshop in 1990, revolutionized editing by allowing seamless alterations, raising new ethical challenges (Britannica, 2025).

A notable early instance of digital manipulation occurred in 1982, when National Geographic altered an image of the Egyptian pyramids to fit a vertical cover, sparking debates about journalistic integrity (Britannica, 2025). Such incidents led to the establishment of ethical codes to regulate digital editing in photojournalism (National Press Photographers Association, 2019). Today, the widespread use of editing apps among non-professionals, including UNIBEN students and photo studios, echoes these historical tensions, as the line between enhancement and deception becomes increasingly blurred.

2.5 Psychological and sociocultural Effects of Photo Editing on Self-presentation

In the world of photo editing lies a complex web of psychological and sociocultural implications. For many young ladies, photo editing has become an important tool for Self-presentation. However, this constant pursuit of perfection can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and inadequacy. They compare their edited photos to those of their peers or celebrities. They can't help but feel like they're not fitting and measuring up to the standard. these pressures can be overwhelming leaving young women feeling devastated and dissatisfied with their own bodies. The psychological and sociocultural implications of photo editing are profound and deep, specifically among women who are said to form a significant portion of social media users and not only social media alone, research also shows that females are large in numbers than the males in any given society. Research indicates that photo editing apps can influence body-image, self-esteem and self-objectification. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argue that self-objectification takes place or occurs when individuals internalize external standards of beauty, therefore, treating themselves as objects to be evaluated. This phenomenon in the world today, is amplified by photo editing, where users manipulate their images to conform to ideal beauty standards such as slim waists, wide hips, smooth skin, or symmetrical features. A study by Ozimek et al (2023) discovers that frequent photo editing among social media users is mostly associated with decreased self-esteem and heightened appearance anxiety always wanting to please people thereby resulting to unnecessary anxiety among people. The practice of editing_selecting flaws to "fix"_ reinforce the dissatisfaction with one's

natural look or appearance. For young women, specifically UNIBEN female students who are in a phase of identity formation_having a knowledge of who they are, this can lead to a distorted self-concept, where their unedited images look inadequate compared to their edited selves with beautifully enhanced filters. Moreover, the feedback loop of likes and comments on excited images can certify and create a dependency on external validation, therefore, eroding intrinsic self-worth.

The rapid use of photo editing apps is intertwined with sociocultural pressures, especially those related to beauty standards. In many parts of the world, eurocentric ideals fair skin, wide hips, slim bodies and beautiful facial features have dominated media representations. These standards are perpetuated by globalized social media platforms, where celebrities and influencers showcase digitally altered images. Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017), Posits that Nigerian youth, including university students, increasingly adopt these ideals, often at the expense of local cultural aesthetics. Among female students at UNIBEN, photo editing apps serve as tools to navigate these pressures. The ability to reshape facial features, lighten skin tones, enlarge burst or slim bodies aligns with societal expectations of beauty thereby creating a deceptive yet socially rewarded persona. However, this act or practice also reinforces a cycle of comparison and competition. Triggerman and Slater (2014) states that exposure to idealized boost body dissatisfaction among young women, a trend exacerbated in Benin metropolis where social media penetration is high among the youth demographic. The

widespread of these editing apps has led to a phenomenon known as cultural homogenization, where individuals once presented themselves in authentic and unique ways, but now they're conforming to dominant cultural norms. This can give a profound impact on relationships as previously mentioned in the background of this study particularly if individuals present an idealized online image that doesn't reflect their real-life experiences and relationships. The effects of photo editing can be particularly pronounced. The perpetuation of unrealistic beauty standards can have a negative impact on mental health, including increased anxiety, stress and depression. Photo editing has brought many relationships to total end as a result of distrust and disappointments in one's partner.

The effects of photo editing apps can also be felt among the photo studios in Benin metropolis. The demand for photo editing services is on the rise, as people seeks to present perfectly curated online image which has led to a shift in photo business operations. Many studios now adapt to various forms of deceptions so as to meet the demands of their clients. However, this also creates opportunities for creative and artistic expression.

2.6 Gender Dynamics of Photo Editing

Gender plays a significant role in the adoption and impact of photo editing apps with women disproportionately affected due to societal expectations around appearance. Research reveals that women are more likely to use filters and photo editing tools and to

also experience negative outcomes from their use than men (Mills & Hogue, 2019). Among UNIBEN female students, this gender disparity may be pronounced as a result of cultural norms in Nigeria that valorize physical beauty as a marker of femininity. Social media platforms such as instagram, snapchat and whatsApp amplify the visibility of idealized image, thereby creating a culture where editing is normalised for women and less for men. A great example include apps offering features like skin whitening, or body slimming are marketed to women, reinforcing the notion that female beauty requires enhancement. A study by Fadouly et al (2015) revealed that women who involve in photo editing report higher level of body dissatisfaction compared to men as they internalize comparisons with edited images of other women.

In Benin metropolis, cultural factors further shape these dynamics. Traditional Nigerian beauty ideals, such as fair and smooth skin or curvaceous figures, align with global beauty standards, placing excessive pressure on female students to edit their photos in order to fit these molds. Photo studios often cater to these gendered expectations, offering services such as skin lightening, removal of blemishes or facial and body reshaping that appeals to these women. Male students by contrast, may prefer and prioritize unedited pictures or better still minimally altered images that reflects less societal scrutiny if their appearance. Social interactions is also affected by the gendered nature of photo editing. Women who present heavily edited images risk being perceived or seen as inauthentic particularly in romantic contexts, where discrepancies between

real-life and online appearance can kill trust. Men, however, face less or no repercussions for editing, as this social value is less tied to physical perfection. This double standard reveals the unequal burden placed on female students, who navigate a landscape where editing is both a tool for empowerment and a source of vulnerability.

2.7 Role of Photo Studios

The photo studios play a dual role in the world of photo editing. Traditionally, these photo studios provided physical prints and basic retouching for events, portraits and documentation, however, their operations and role have evolved with the advent of digital tools. Many studios if not all now offer advanced editing services using softwares like Adobe Photoshop, Snapseed while catering to clients expectation including students and couples who seek edited images for social media or personal keepsakes (Adekunle, 2021). These shift has economic implications, as studios adapt to meet the demands for deceptive-driven photography. Interviews with photo studios operators reveals that female clients including university students frequently requests edits such as skin lightening, body reshaping and facial reshaping, body contouring and smooth skin as well as blemish removal amongst others. These services, while meeting with clients expectation, contribute to the normalization of deception. Unlike personal photo editing apps, studios provided professional veneer according credibility to the altered images.

This dynamic, therefore, raises concerns about the ethical responsibility of photo studios in perpetuating unrealistic standards and the potential exploitation of client's insecurities for profit. This is disheartening. This commercial practice caters to a demand fueled by social media culture where edited images are a currency of status and desirability and also given accolades.

2.8 Deception through Photo Editing

Deception created through photo editing apps is a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing deliberate and subtle forms of misrepresentation. Deception, in this context, occurs when edited images misrepresent reality, creating false impressions about one's appearance, lifestyle, or status. The edited image becomes a mask, concealing the authentic self while projecting an idealized version. This deception has broader implications. Toma and Hancock (2010) suggest that deceptive self-presentation online can strain interpersonal relationships when discrepancies between the digital and physical self are revealed. In Benin Metropolis, where photo studios amplify this trend by producing high-quality edited portraits, the gap between reality and representation widens. According to Toma et al. (2008), deceptive self-presentation involves intentional alterations to influence others' perceptions, driven by social desirability, peer expectations, or cultural ideals. It is driven by the accessibility of user-friendly apps that

allow even amateurs to achieve professional -level alterations with little effort. Hancock and Toma (2015) categorize the deception created digitally into two types: Identity-based deception, where individuals misrepresent and falsify core attributes like appearance by altering one's image or appearance at the expense of being real_reality. In identity-based deception, people especially young adults women tend to alter their appearance so as to match up with the standard of the society. For instance, a young woman with an edited image online to make herself look beautiful and attractive met with a man who was drawn to her and they started dating, However, when they met, he discovered and realised that she was actually Older and looked nothing like the edited picture online. Her true identity was hidden behind the professionally edited images. Another instance of deception includes, newly wedded couple, where the man realised after the wedding party that his wife actually had no breast and was not in any way attractive as she had tribal marks all over her face down to her stomach of which having found out that night couldn't take it and eventually ended the marriage. He was surprised why he didn't discover this deception earlier and this is because she was always on makeup and was always posting edited pictures.

These are the deceptions caused by photo editing apps. The other type of deception includes, Message -based deception, where an individual falsify one's lifestyle, claiming to be what you are not thereby creating wrong perception through deceit. In the context of photo editing, Identity-based deception is of utmost relevance as individuals or

users alters physical features to project and portray an idealized image that deviates from reality. The mechanisms of deception vary in scope and intent. This is to say there are motivations behind deceptive photos or images. Selective enhancement involves minor adjustments, such as smoothing skin, brightening images, cropping and brightening eyes which sure aligns with social norms but still distort reality. Transformative editing, on the other hand, includes drastic changes, such as reshaping facial features, widening hips, slimming waists, enlarging bust and butts or changing skin tones to match cultural ideals e.g Light skinned in Nigeria contexts). Among UNIBEN female students, transformative editing is specifically prevalent due to pressure so as to emulate global and local beauty standards such as those seen in Nollywood or international media space. Editing apps like Adobe Photoshop, BeautyPlus and Facetune offers tools that are designed for such transformation, making deception seamless and widespread.

Motivations for deception are deeply rooted in social and psychological factors. The social media creates a competitive space where young individuals seek validation through likes, comments, and followers. The desire for peer approval, romantic interest or social status drives editing behaviours. Ellison et al (2012) opines that deception in online Self-presentation is often strategic, aimed at enhancing and improving one's appeal in contexts where first impression are visual. In Benin metropolis, where social gatherings and campus events emphasize appearance, students may edit photos to meet up with expectations of beauty, success, or sophistication even if it means misrepresenting their

true selves. The consequences of deception are profound, affecting both the audience and the deceiver. For the deceiver, editing can create a cognitive dissonance between their authentic selves and edited ones, leading to identity conflicts or dependency on digital enhancements. Przybylski et al (2020) argue that habitual photo editing fosters a filtered self, where individuals struggle to accept their unedited appearance, fearing the exposure in real life interactions. This is often seen when some pictures are taken and because they are not beautiful enough, we tend not to post them or better still, it could even be deleted even after knowing the stress and effort displayed to take the pictures. Among UNIBEN female students, this may manifest as anxiety about meeting peers or partners who have seen only their edited images, particularly in romantic or professional contexts. For the audience, deception erodes trust and distorts perception. Peers who view edited images may internalize these unrealistic standards, believing that these representations are attainable, which fuels a cycle of comparison and further editing. In romantic relationships, discrepancies between edited photos and real-life appearances can lead to disappointment or skepticism, undermining intimacy. Most relationships come to total end as a result of these especially in Benin where collectivist values trust and authenticity, such deception may strain social bonds, particularly among students who are navigating peer and romantic dynamics.

The ethical implications of deception are significant. While some view minor edits as harmless self-expression, transformative editing raises questions about honesty

and accountability. In academic settings like UNIBEN, where students use photos for professional purposes (e.g., LinkedIn profiles or event promotions), deceptive images may misrepresent qualifications or credibility. Moreover, the normalization of deception through apps risks desensitizing users to ethical boundaries, creating a culture where authenticity is devalued. In the context of Benin metropolis, photo studios amplify this deception by offering professional-grade editing that is harder to detect. Unlike mobile apps, studios employ skilled photographers and software to produce polished images that align with client's desire for idealized beauty, often without disclosing the extents of alterations. This commercial practice not only perpetuates deception but also profits from it.

2.9 Empirical Studies on Photo Editing and its Impact

Several studies provide empirical insights into the impact of photo editing. McLean et al (2015) discovered that among adolescent girls, the effort invested in editing selfies correlates with body dissatisfaction and eating concerns. In the same vein, a survey by Gill (2022) revealed that 90% of young women in the UK edit their photos before posting, a trend portrayed and mirrored in other global contexts, that, including Nigeria. These findings not only highlights but suggests that photo editing is not merely a creative act but a response to internalized pressures, with tangible effects on mental health. In Nigeria, limited research specifically targets UNIBEN students or Benin

metropolis. However, a study by Ojo and Adebayo (2020) on social media use among Nigerian undergraduates highlights the prevalence of photo editing among female students, linking it to self-esteem fluctuations. Toma et al. (2008) found that 81% of online dating profiles contained inaccuracies in attributes like height and weight, suggesting a broader trend of digital deception enabled by editing tools. This deception is not merely aesthetic but can influence perceptions of authenticity and trust in social interactions.

Tiggemann et al. (2020) found that editing selfies increased facial dissatisfaction among Australian female undergraduates, a finding relevant to UNIBEN students who face similar pressures from social media. The constant comparison with edited images fosters feelings of inadequacy, as individuals internalize unattainable beauty ideals. In Nigeria, where skin tone and body shape are culturally significant, editing apps may exacerbate insecurities by promoting Eurocentric or light-skinned ideals, as noted by Kay (2021). For UNIBEN female students, the pressure to conform to these ideals is compounded by academic and social stressors. A study by Okundia (2016) on University of Benin students highlighted that social media addiction negatively impacts academic performance, suggesting that excessive engagement with editing apps could similarly affect psychological well-being. The pursuit of perfect images may lead to body dysmorphia, where students fixate on perceived flaws, further lowering self-esteem.

The research by Chua and Chang (2016) indicates that young women frequently edit selfies to enhance attractiveness, driven by social media's emphasis on visual appeal. This behavior can lead to deliberate misrepresentation, where edited images diverge significantly from actual appearances, affecting perceptions of authenticity. Among UNIBEN female students, the accessibility of smartphones and editing apps likely fuels this practice. Nigeria ranks high in social media engagement, with platforms like Instagram and TikTok shaping youth culture. A study by Adeyemi (2020) on Nigerian undergraduates found that 68% used filters or editing tools to enhance photos, suggesting that UNIBEN students may similarly prioritize curated online personas. Such practices can foster a culture of inauthenticity, as peers and viewers encounter idealized rather than genuine representations. The research by Agyeman (2022) from Ghana highlights that photo studios cater to cultural expectations of beauty, such as lighter skin or slimmer figures, which may parallel practices in Benin given shared West African aesthetic values. Deceptive photo editing is closely linked to negative psychological outcomes, particularly among young women. Meier and Gray (2014) found that exposure to edited images increases body dissatisfaction, as individuals compare themselves to unattainable ideals. For UNIBEN students, this comparison is likely intensified by Nigeria's cultural emphasis on physical appearance, where attributes like fair skin or specific body types are celebrated. Editing apps allow students to conform to these ideals temporarily, but the gap between edited and real selves can erode self-confidence.

A study by Ojedokun (2018) on Nigerian female undergraduates revealed that social media use correlates with lower self-esteem, particularly when users engage in appearance-focused activities like photo editing. UNIBEN students, navigating academic pressures and social expectations, may experience heightened insecurity when their unedited appearances fail to match their digital personas. This dissonance can contribute to mental health challenges, including anxiety over perceived imperfections. A study by Eze (2021) on Nigerian youth noted that social media amplifies Eurocentric beauty ideals, prompting edits like skin lightening, which may resonate with students seeking social acceptance. Gender plays a critical role, as women face disproportionate pressure to meet appearance standards. Okeke (2019) argues that Nigerian women are socialized to prioritize physical attractiveness, making them more likely to engage in deceptive editing to gain validation. For UNIBEN students, this pressure is compounded by peer dynamics, where edited images garner more likes and comments, reinforcing their use. Research by Hancock and Toma (2009) suggests that deceptive self-presentation online reduces trust, as viewers feel misled by discrepancies between digital and real-life appearances. In a close-knit campus like UNIBEN, such dynamics could disrupt social cohesion.

Ethically, photo studios face scrutiny for perpetuating unrealistic standards. By prioritizing client satisfaction over authenticity, they contribute to a culture where deception is normalized. A study by Wang (2023) on photo editing ethics found that professional alterations can mislead audiences, raising questions about studios'

responsibility. In Benin, where studios are integral to documenting milestones, their role in shaping beauty perceptions warrants further exploration.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

As the topic suggests, "Assessing the Impact of Creating Deception Through Photo Editing Apps Among UNIBEN Female Students and Benin Metropolis." The theoretical framework focuses on the concept of deception which is defined as the intentional and unintentional alteration of images to misrepresent reality, affecting self-presentation social perceptions, or professional outputs. Photo editing apps, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Beautyplus, and Adobe photoshop, enable and provide users the ability to alter images, often creating deceptive representations of appearance Identity or reality. These apps shape online personas, potentially fostering unrealistic beauty standards or misrepresentations that influence self-esteem and social interactions among UNIBEN female students. Photo editing is integral to professional photography, where deceptive enhancements meet client's expectations but blurs authenticity. A great theoretical study is necessary to understand how deception through photo editing apps operates in this contexts, it's motivations and consequences explaining their relevance and applicability to UNIBEN female students and Benin photo studios while connecting them to the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of photo editing apps.

The theoretical framework integrates three key theories: Social comparison, Self-presentation theory, and Uses and gratification theory. These theories address the

psychological (individual motivations) social (interpersonal dynamics) and cultural (contextual influences) aspects of deception through photo editing. These theories are supplemented by Objectification theory and Media Richness theory to explore gendered dimensions specific to female students and to examine studios in Benin, respectively.

1. **Social Comparison Theory:** Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals evaluate themselves and their worth by comparing their attributes to others, particularly in contexts of uncertainty, or competition. These comparisons can be upward_ those perceived as better, or downward_ those perceived as worse, thereby influencing self-esteem and behavior. Social media amplifies upward comparisons where students compare themselves to edited images of peers or influencers. Photo editing apps amplify appearance-based comparisons by presenting idealized, often deceptive images. Uniben female students use photo editing apps to create polished selfies for social media platforms like Instagram, where they compare their images to peers or influencers. Upward comparisons to heavily edited images (e g flawless skin, slimmed features) may foster feelings of inadequacy, prompting further editing to deceive others into perceiving a perfected self. A good example, filters that lighten skin align with Nigeria's cultural preference for fair complexions (Eze & Okeke, 2023), creating deceptive representations that reinforce colorism.

UNIBEN female students use photo editing apps to create polished selfies for social media platforms like Instagram, where they compare their images to peers or influencers. Upward comparisons to heavily edited images (e.g., flawless skin, slimmed features) may foster feelings of inadequacy, prompting further editing to “deceive” others into perceiving a perfected self. For example, filters that lighten skin align with Nigeria’s cultural preference for fair complexions (Eze & Okeke, 2023), creating deceptive representations that reinforce colorism. The deception here is not always malicious but a response to social pressures. Students may edit photos to match peer aesthetics, fearing judgement of their real images fall short, as noted in studies on selfie culture (Cohen et al, 2018). Among the photo studios in Benin metropolis, images are edited to meet client's demands for idealized portraits, comparing their output to competitor's polished work. This professional deception—enhancing skin tone or altering body shape—creates a market standard where authenticity is secondary to aesthetic appeal (Gbandi and Iyamu, 2022). Social Comparison Theory explains why deception occurs which is to close the gap between one's actual self and the idealized image of others. For students, this drives editing behaviours that misrepresent reality, and studios, it justified enhancements that align with market expectations, even if they distort truth.

2. **Self-Presentation Theory:** Self-presentation Theory propounded by Goffman (1959), opines that individuals manage impressions by strategically presenting themselves to get desired social outcomes. Digitally, photo editing apps serve as tools for crafting curated personas, often involving deception to project an idealized identity. Female students use apps like Snapchat, filters or Facetune app to present a better version of themselves online, editing out imperfections like dark spots, acne or eczema in order to gain likes or validation. This aligns with Nigeria's social media culture, where slaying _appearing flawless is a status symbol (Okoro & Nwafor, 2020). Deception occurs when edited images significantly deviate from reality, misleading viewers about appearance. The theory accounts for intentional deception. For example, altering features to attract romantic interest. Unintentional deception includes using filters normalized by peers. Both are prevalent among UNIBEN female students navigating Instagram's visual economy.

This theory also applies to studios, they employ photo editing to present their work as high-quality, using apps to enhance images beyond what cameras capture. This professional deception aligns with client expectations for glamorous outputs, such as wedding albums, where studios perform expertise through polished visuals (Frosh, 2015). Studios may also train staff, including female students as interns, to edit images deceptively e.g airbrushing skin, reinforcing industry

norms that prioritize impression over authenticity. Self-Presentation Theory illuminates the strategic motives behind photo editing. Students and studios deceive to control how others perceive them, whether to gain social capital (students) or economic advantage (studios). The theory highlights the performative nature of deception, rooted in social and professional contexts.

3. **Uses and Gratification Theory:** The U and G theory as it's fondly called was Proposed by Katz et al (1974), posits that individuals actively select media to fulfill specific needs, such as entertainment, social interaction, or identity exploration. Photo editing apps serve as media tools, with deception emerging as a byproduct of meeting these needs. Students use photo editing apps for diverse gratifications: aesthetic enhancement i.e to look attractive, social integration i.e to fit peer trends, or self-expression i.e to explore identities. Deception arises when these gratifications involve misrepresentation, such as using filters to appear thinner or fairer, aligning with studies on selfie motivations (Javornik et al., 2021). In Nigeria where social media validates status. Students may edit photos to gratify needs for popularity or belonging, deceiving followers about their true appearance to maintain relevance (Ojedokun, 2022). Studios adopt photo editing apps to gratify client needs for example, delivering idealized images and business needs while attracting customers. Deception occurs when edits create unrealistic portrayals, such as perfect skin in portraits, to satisfy clients who expect studio

photos to surpass reality (Shin et al., 2017). The theory also applies to studios' use of apps for marketing, editing promotional images to deceive potential clients about service quality, a practice noted in Nigerian SMEs (Adeyemi, 2021). Uses and Gratifications Theory explains why individuals and businesses choose deceptive editing practices which is to fulfill psychological, social, or economic needs. It frames and views deception as a functional outcome of app use, not always intentional but shaped by the desire for specific rewards.

4. **Objectification Theory** (Supplementary for Female Students) Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) developed Objectification Theory, which argues that women are socialized to view themselves as objects judged by appearance, leading to self-objectification. Photo editing apps amplify this by encouraging women to alter their bodies to meet external standards, often involving deception. Female students may internalize societal beauty ideals as fair skin, slim figures and use apps to objectify their bodies, editing features to match these standards. This deception presenting a body that doesn't exist reinforces self-objectification, lowering self-esteem when unedited reality feels inferior (Lonergan et al., 2019). In Nigeria's patriarchal context, where women's appearance is scrutinized, apps like FaceApp may exacerbate objectification, as students edit photos to appeal to male gazes or cultural norms, deceiving others about their natural selves (Eze & Okeke, 2023). The Objectification Theory highlights the gendered nature of

deceptive editing among female students, driven by societal pressures to conform. It explains why deception is more prevalent among women, as editing becomes a tool to navigate objectified identities.

5. **Media Richness Theory (Supplementary for Studios):** The Media Richness theory was Proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986). Media Richness Theory opines that communication media vary in their capacity to convey information, with richer media. for example, visual tools are better suited for complex tasks. Photo editing apps, as rich media, enable studios to communicate idealized visuals, often involving deception. Studios use apps like Adobe Photoshop Express to convey rich, detailed images that meet client expectations for perfection. Deception arises when these apps enhance images beyond reality (e.g., removing wrinkles), creating a polished but misleading product (McLean et al., 2019). The theory explains why studios prefer app-based editing over manual methods: apps' richness (e.g., instant filters, AI tools) allows rapid, high-impact alterations, aligning with Benin City's competitive photography market (Gbandi & Iyamu, 2022). Media Richness Theory therefore frames deception as a function of apps' capacity to manipulate visuals effectively. Studios leverage this richness to deceive clients about achievable outcomes, prioritizing market demands over authenticity. The above theories collectively provide robust framework for this study as social comparison theory explains the psychological drive for deception,

as students and studios edit images to match idealized benchmarks; Self-presentation theory addresses the strategic intent behind deception, highlighting how curated images serve social and professional goals; The uses and gratification theory uncovers the diverse needs driving app usage, framing deception as a functional outcome of seeking rewards; Objectification Theory adds a gendered lens, critical for understanding female students' editing behaviors in Nigeria's cultural context; Media Richness Theory illuminates studios' reliance on apps for deceptive enhancements, driven by the tools' visual power. Collectively, these theories address why deception occurs (comparisons, needs), how it is enacted (strategic editing), and who is most affected (female students, studios). They also account for Nigeria's socio-cultural dynamics, such as colorism and social media culture, making them suitable for UNIBEN and Benin City.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected. The quantitative component involves a survey targeting female students at UNIBEN to gather measurable data that quantify the prevalence, motivation and psychological/social impact of deceptive photo editing. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with photo studio operators in Benin Metropolis to explore their perspectives on the use of photo editing apps, their role in facilitating deceptive practices, and the societal implications of such practices. The mixed-methods approach is justified by the need to triangulate data, ensuring that findings from the survey are complemented by in-depth insights from interviews. This design aligns with the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study, which seeks to assess both the prevalence and consequences of photo editing deception as well as the professional perspectives of photo studio operators who may contribute to these practices. The focus on female students is supported by research highlighting their greater engagement with photo editing apps and susceptibility to appearance-related pressures, such as body

dissatisfaction and social comparison (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; McLean et al., 2019). Photo studios are included due to their role in professional editing, particularly in Nigeria, where practices like skin lightening are prevalent in beauty culture (Oloruntoba & Adejumo, 2020; Ajala & Olutayo, 2019).

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population comprises two groups:

1. **Female Students at UNIBEN:** The population of this study consists of all female students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and photo studios operators in Benin Metropolis. According to the University's record, UNIBEN has a total student population of 77,000, with 55% being females. This translates to 42,350 female students ($77,000 \times 0.55$).
2. **Photo Studios in Benin Metropolis:** An estimated 100 registered and operational photo studios, identified through local business directories and preliminary inquiries (Edo State Chamber of Commerce, 2024). These studios are key stakeholders in professional photo editing, potentially contributing to deceptive practices.

3.3 Sample Size

Okwechime (2011) describe sample size as any part of a population taken in a specific manner, and the larger the population of the study, the larger the sample size for

the study. Ndagi (1984, p.75) described it as the limited number of elements selected from a population, which is representative of that population.

To determine the sample size for female students in UNIBEN, the study uses the Taro Yamane formula, which is appropriate for calculating a representative sample from a finite population (Yamane, 1967). The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size

(N) = population size (42,350 female students

(e) = margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{42,350}{1 + 42,350 [0.05 \times 0.05]}$$

$$n = \frac{42,350}{1 + 42,350 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{42,350}{1 + 106.25}$$

$$n = \frac{42,350}{107.25}$$

$$n = 394.87$$

$$n = 395$$

Thus, the sample size is approximately 395 female students respondents. To account for potential non-responses or incomplete questionnaires, the sample size is rounded up to 400 respondents.

For the qualitative interviews, a sample of 15 photo studio operators will be selected. This number is sufficient to achieve data saturation in qualitative research, where no new themes emerge from additional interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

3.4 Sampling Technique

Survey (Female Students): A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select female students from UNIBEN. The population will be stratified by faculty (e.g., Faculty of Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, etc.) to ensure representation across different academic disciplines. Within each stratum, simple random sampling will be employed to select participants, using student registration lists obtained from faculty offices with ethical approval.

Interview (Photo Studios): Purposive sampling will be used to select photo studio operators in Benin Metropolis. Studios will be chosen based on criteria such as operational status, use of photo editing software, and willingness to participate. A preliminary mapping of studios will be conducted using local business directories and referrals to identify eligible participants.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection include Questionnaire and Interview. The questionnaire is designed to address the study's objectives and research questions, which focus on the prevalence, motivations, and psychological and social impacts of deceptive photo editing among UNIBEN female students while the interview is designed to address

photo studios in Benin metropolis. The questionnaire is divided into four sections, each aligned with the research objectives and questions:

Section A: Demographic Information

This section collects background information such as age, faculty (for students), years of operation (for studio operators), and frequency of photo editing app use. These details provide context for analyzing responses and identifying demographic patterns.

Section B: Prevalence of Deceptive Photo Editing

This section addresses the first research question: “To what extent do female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin metropolis engage in creating deceptive images through photo editing apps?” It includes questions on the frequency of photo editing app use, types of apps used (e.g., Snapchat, Instagram filters, Adobe Photoshop), and specific deceptive practices (e.g., altering skin tone, reshaping body features, modifying facial features to misrepresent appearance). The items are designed to measure the extent and nature of deceptive editing practices among respondents.

Section C: Motivations for Deceptive Photo Editing

This section corresponds to the second research question: “What motivates female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin to create deceptive images through photo editing apps?” It explores reasons behind deceptive editing, such as enhancing physical appearance, meeting societal beauty standards, gaining social media approval, or

fulfilling client demands (for studio operators). Questions are structured to identify personal, social and professional motivations.

Section D: Psychological and Social Impacts of Deceptive Photo Editing

This section aligns with the third research question: “What are the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps on female students of UNIBEN and photo studios in Benin?” It assesses the effects of deceptive editing on self-esteem, body image, social perception, trust in visual media, and interpersonal relationships. For studio operators, it also examines the impact on professional ethics and client trust.

The questionnaire uses a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree) for Sections B, C, and D to quantify respondents’ behaviors and perceptions.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 15 photo studio operators in Benin Metropolis. The interviews will be both face-to-face and online, to create a comfortable environment for participants. Each interview will last approximately 5-10 minutes and will be audio-recorded with participants’ consent for transcription and analysis.

The interview guide will cover:

- ❖ Types of photo editing services offered and software used

- ❖ Perceptions of deception in photo editing (e.g., client requests for significant alterations)
- ❖ Frequency and nature of client demands for deceptive edits (e.g., skin lightening, body reshaping)
- ❖ Awareness of the psychological and social impacts of edited photos on clients

The semi-structured format allows flexibility to probe deeper into participants' responses and explore emerging themes.

3.6 Administration of Instrument

The Administration of instrument involves the following process:

Obtaining Permission: The researcher obtained approval from the University of Benin's Research Ethics Committee and informed consent from the Benin metropolis photo studio association. Individual consent was also sought from each respondent before administering the questionnaire and interview.

Distribution of Questionnaires and Interview: Trained research assistants distributed the questionnaires to the 400 female students across various faculties during lecture-free periods to maximize participation. For the 15 photo studio operators, interviews were delivered in person at their studios, with appointments scheduled to avoid disrupting their work.

Collection of Questionnaires and interview data: Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion for students to ensure a high response rate. For

studio operators, the interviews was administered after which research assistants retrieved them. Follow-up phone calls were made to remind operators and encourage timely submission.

Data Verification: Returned questionnaires and interview answers were checked for completeness and accuracy. Incomplete or improperly filled questionnaires were excluded from the analysis to maintain data quality. The data collection process spanned four weeks to accommodate the schedules of both students and studio operators.

3.7 Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire and interview, the instrument was subjected to content and face validity checks including construct validity. Content validity was established by submitting the questionnaire and interview questions to the project supervisor to ascertain that the items were suitable. It was also given to a professional photographer. These experts reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that the items adequately cover the study's objectives and are relevant to the context of UNIBEN female students and Benin metropolis photo studios. Their feedback led to the revision of ambiguous questions and the inclusion of additional items on psychological impacts, such as body dissatisfaction. In construct validity, the use of established scales (e.g., Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) ensures that the instruments measure the intended constructs.

Face validity was confirmed by conducting a pilot test with 30 respondents (20 female students and 5 photo studio operators) who were not part of the main study. The pilot test ensured that the questions were clear, understandable, and appropriately formatted. Based on the pilot test, minor adjustments were made to the wording of some items to improve clarity and reduce misinterpretation.

3.8 Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the test-retest method was used. The questionnaire was administered to the same 30 pilot test respondents twice, with a two-week interval between administrations. The responses from both administrations were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure internal consistency. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.82 was obtained, indicating high reliability, as values above 0.7 are considered acceptable (Pallant, 2020). This result confirms that the questionnaire consistently measures the intended constructs over time.

Interview Reliability: To ensure consistency in the interview process, the researcher will undergo training in qualitative interviewing techniques. All interviews will be conducted by the same researcher to minimize interviewer bias.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The analysis will be conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies and percentages will be used to summarize demographic data, such as age, faculty, and frequency of photo editing app use. Means and standard deviations will be calculated for Likert scale responses to assess the extent of photo editing practices and their perceived impacts on deception.

Inferential Statistics: Independent t-tests will be used to compare the use of photo editing apps and their impacts between female students and photo studio operators. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) will be applied to examine differences in deceptive editing practices across faculties and age groups among female students. Pearson correlation analysis will be conducted to explore the relationship between photo editing app use and psychological outcomes, such as self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction. Multiple regression analysis will be used to determine the extent to which photo editing practices predict deceptive behaviors and their impacts on social perception and trust.

Qualitative Analysis: Responses to interview questions will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns, particularly regarding studio operators' perspectives on client demands for deceptive edits. The significance level for all statistical tests will be set at $p < 0.05$, ensuring that results are reliable and not due to chance. The findings will be presented in tables, charts, and narrative form to enhance clarity and understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data generated through the administration of questionnaire and interview guide. A total of 400 copies of

questionnaire were administered online to various respondents with all 400 copies retrieved by the researcher resulting in a 100% return rate. Therefore, this data presentation and analysis is based on this figure. The details of the questionnaire are analysed below using frequencies, percentages and tables. Thereafter, the details of the interview guide for photo studio operators.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-20 years	167	42%
21-25 years	175	43%
26-30 years	48	12%
Above 30 years	10	3%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 1 indicates that the study comprises of respondents within various age distribution. It shows that 167 respondents (42%) were between the ages of 16-20, 175 respondents (43%) are between the ages of 21-25, 48 respondents (12%) are between 26-30, while 10 respondents (3%) are 30 and above.

Table 2: Respondents based on Faculty

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Arts	98	25%
Sciences	81	20%
Social Sciences	108	27%
Education	64	16%
Others	49	12%

Total	400	100%
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows the faculty of respondents. It reveals that 98 respondents (25%) are Arts students, 81 respondents (20%) are Science students, 108 respondents (27%) are from the Social science faculty, 64 respondents (16%) are Education students, while 49 respondents (12%) are from other faculties.

Table 3: Statistic level of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
100 Level	71	18%
200 Level	89	22%
300 Level	101	25%
400 Level	85	21%
500 Level and above	54	14%%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 3 reveals the respondents level. It shows that 71 respondents (18%) are in 100 level, 89 respondents (22%) are in 200 level, and 101 respondents (25%) are in 300 level, 85 respondents (21%) are in 400 level while 54 respondents (14%) are in 500 level and above.

SECTION B: Extent of Deceptive Photo Editing

Table 4: How often do you use photo editing apps or software?

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	71	18%
Weekly	179	45%

Monthly	105	26%
Rarely	28	7%
Never	17	4%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4 reveals the extent of deceptive photo editing. 71 respondents (18%) use photo editing apps daily, 179 respondents (45%) use it weekly, 105 respondents (26%) use it monthly, and 28 respondents (7%) rarely use it, while 17 respondents (4%) never use it.

Table 5: I frequently edit my photos to change my physical appearance (e.g skin tone, body shape, facial features).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	109	27%
Agree	188	47%
Disagree	75	19%
Strongly Disagree	28	7%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 5 shows that 109 respondents (27%) strongly agree that they frequently edit photos to change physical appearance, 188 respondents (47%) agreed, and 75 respondents (19%) disagreed while 28 respondents (7%) strongly disagreed.

Table 6: I often use apps like Adobe Photoshop, Snapchat, Instagram Filters, or FaceTune to change my appearance in photos.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	120	30%
Agree	181	45%
Disagree	62	16%

Strongly Disagree	37	9%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 6 reveals the editing apps used by respondents. 120 respondents (30%) strongly agree, 181 respondents (45%) agreed, 62 respondents (16%) disagreed while 37 respondents (9%) strongly disagreed.

Table 7: Most of my photos shared on social media have been edited to alter my appearance significantly

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	177	44%
Agree	129	32%
Disagree	53	13%
Strongly Disagree	41	10%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 7 shows that 177 respondents (44%) strongly agreed that their photos were edited before posting on social media, 129 respondents (32%) agreed, and 53 respondents (13%) strongly disagreed while 41 respondents (10%) strongly disagreed.

SECTION C: MOTIVATION FOR PHOTO EDITING

Research question 2: What motivates female students of UNIBEN to create deceptive images through photo editing apps?

Table 8: I edit photos to meet societal beauty standards (e.g fair skin, slim body)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	134	35%
Agree	199	49%
Disagree	38	9%

Strongly Disagree	29	7%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 8 reveals the motives behind deceptive photo editing. 134 respondents (35%) strongly agreed, 199 respondents (49%) agreed, and 38 respondents (9%) disagreed, while 29 respondents (7%) strongly disagreed.

Table 9: I edit photos to gain more likes or comments on social media

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	223	55%
Agree	110	27%
Disagree	48	12%
Strongly Disagree	19	5%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 9 reveals the motivations behind deceptive photo editing. 223 respondents (55%) strongly agreed, 110 respondents (27%) agreed, and 48 respondents (12%) disagreed, while 19 respondents (5%) strongly disagreed.

Table 10: I feel Pressured by friends and trends to edit my photos deceptively

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	121	30%
Agree	234	58%
Disagree	28	7%
Strongly Disagree	17	4%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 10 shows that 121 respondents (30%) strongly agreed, 234 respondents (58%) agreed, and 28 respondents (7%) disagreed, while 17 respondents (4%) strongly disagreed.

Table 11: I alter my appearance in photos to feel accepted by my peers

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	133	33%
Agree	202	51%
Disagree	41	10%
Strongly Disagree	24	6%
Total	400	100%

Table 11 reveals the motivation behind deceptive photo editing. 133 respondents (33%) strongly agreed, 202 respondents (51%) agreed, and 41 respondents (10%) disagreed, while 24 respondents (6%) strongly disagreed.

SECTION D: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF DECEPTIVE PHOTO EDITING

Research Question 3: What are the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps on female students in UNIBEN?

Table 12: Editing photos deceptively lowers my self-esteem when I compare myself to the unedited images

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	141	35%
Agree	207	52%
Disagree	32	8%
Strongly Disagree	20	5%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 12 reveals the impacts of deceptive photo editing among female students. 141 respondents (35%) strongly agreed, 207 respondents (52%) agreed, and 32 respondents (8%) disagreed, while 20 respondents (5%) strongly disagreed.

Table 13: Deceptive photo editing makes me feel dissatisfied with my real appearance

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	132	33%
Agree	228	57%
Disagree	26	7%
Strongly Disagree	14	3%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

This shows the effects of deceptive photo editing. 132 respondents (33%) strongly agreed, 228 respondents (57%) agreed, and 26 respondents (7%) disagreed, while 14 respondents (3%) strongly disagreed.

Table 14: I receive more positive feedback (e.g., likes, comments) on social media when I post edited photos compared to unedited ones.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	210	53%
Agree	140	35%
Disagree	33	8%
Strongly Disagree	17	4%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

This table shows the impact of deceptive photo editing. 210 respondents (53%) strongly agreed, 140 respondents (35%) agreed, and 33 respondents (8%) disagreed, while 17 respondents (4%) strongly disagreed

Table 15: Editing my photos to change my appearance leads me to compare myself with others on social media.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	117	29%
Agree	222	56%
Disagree	35	9%

Strongly Disagree	26	6%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 15 reveals the impact of deceptive photo editing. 117 respondents (29%) strongly agreed, 222 respondents (56%) agreed, and 35 respondents (9%) disagreed, while 26 respondents (6%) strongly disagreed.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings will be presented based on the research questions posed in chapter one.

RQ 1: To what extent do female students of UNIBEN engage in creating deceptive images through photo editing apps?

This research question was aimed at determining the extent to which UNIBEN female students use photo editing apps to create deception. Based on the data gathered, it was found that 45% use photo editing apps/software frequently i.e weekly, while 47% of respondents agreed they frequently edit their physical appearance. This is supported by findings from table 4 and 5.

In table 6, respondents were asked if they often use Adobe Photoshop, Snapchat Instagram Filters and Facetune app of which 45% of respondents agreed. This shows that deceptive editing can be easily perpetuated with these apps at their finger tips as these apps do not need subscriptions to operate them. The analysis in table 7 informs that respondents often edit their photos before sharing on social media of which 44% of respondents strongly agreed. The frequent use of apps like Instagram Filters, and

Facetune reflects the accessibility of editing tools via smartphones, a factor noted by Chua and Chang (2016) as driving selfie editing among young women. Also, sharing edited photos on social media suggests that deceptive editing is integral to students' online personas, mirroring global trends where edited images dominate social media platforms (Gill, 2022).

RQ 2: What motivates female students of UNIBEN to create deceptive images through photo editing apps?

To answer this research question, tables 8, 9, 10 and 11 were used. Table 8 showed that 49% of respondents agreed that photos are edited to meet societal beauty standards, such as fair skin or slim bodies, reflecting cultural pressures. The strong agreement on social beauty standards and peer pressure as motivators aligns with social comparison, these individuals compare themselves to idealized images to meet societal expectations (Festinger, 1954; McLean et al, 2019). The emphasis on fair skin and slim bodies reflects Nigeria's cultural beauty ideals, particularly the preference for lighter skin as noted by Eze (2021). In table 9 with 55% of respondents informs that the pursuit of likes/comments corroborates Chua and Chang's (2016) finding that young women edit selfies to enhance attractiveness for social media validation, dictating desire for external affirmation, a trend amplified by Nigeria's high social media engagement (Adeyemi, 2020). The high agreement on peer pressure and acceptance in table 10 and 11 with 58% and 51% of respondents respectively supports Okeke's (2019) argument that Nigerian

women are socialized to prioritize physical attractiveness, particularly in peer-driven contexts like a university campus. These motivations suggest that deceptive editing is not merely a creative art but a response to internalized social and cultural pressures.

RQ 3: What are the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps on female students in UNIBEN?

To answer this research question, reference will be made to table 12, 13, 14 and 15. The high prevalence of low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction in table 12 and 13 with 52% and 57% of respondents respectively aligns with McLean (2015) findings that selfie editing correlates with body dissatisfaction and eating concerns among young ladies. These results also corroborates with Tiggemann et al (2020) study which inform that editing selfies increases facial dissatisfaction among Australian female undergraduates, a pattern relevant to UNIBEN students facing similar social media pressures. The significant body dissatisfaction (57%) reflect Nigeria's cultural emphasis on physical appearance, where attributes like fair skin are celebrated (Eze, 2021). Editing apps enable students to conform to these ideals temporarily as noted by Oloruntoba and Adejumo (2020). The gap between edited and real appearances contributes to the reported self-esteem issues, and gives credence to Ojedokun's finding that social media usage correlates with low self-esteem among Nigerian female undergraduates. Although, not directly measured, the high rates of self-esteem and dissatisfaction suggest potential

anxiety over perceived imperfections, as noted by Okundia (2016), and may increase the risk of body dysmorphia, where students fixate on perceived flaws and imperfections.

The strong agreement on receiving more positive feedback for edited photos with 53% of respondents in table 14 creates a social validation dependency, where students rely on likes/comments to affirm their worth, as described by Perloff (2014). This feedback loop encourages further editing, it reinforces a cycle of deceptive self-presentation, as seen in Chua and Chang (2016). The high rate of social comparison with 56% of respondents in table 15 aligns with Meier and Gray's (2014) finding that exposure to edited images increases body dissatisfaction through comparison with unattainable ideals in the Nigerian context, this comparison is intensified by cultural beauty standards, as students strive to emulate idealized images of fair skin, slim bodies and large hips. The pursuit of peer pressure in table 11 with 51% of respondents and the feedback loop suggest a culture of inauthenticity where peers encounter idealized rather than genuine representations, potentially reducing trust in social interactions as noted by Hancock and Toma (2009). This dynamic may disrupt social cohesion on a close-knit campus like UNIBEN, where peer dynamics are significant (Okeke, 2019).

4.4 Analysis of Interview

The thematic analysis of interview responses from 15 photo studio operators in Benin Metropolis. The interviews were semi-structured, using the guide provided, with five key questions in Section B designed to explore the prevalence, motivations, and

psychological/social impacts of deceptive photo editing. The responses were transcribed and coded systematically to identify patterns and themes. To ensure rigor, two coders analyzed a subset of transcripts to establish inter-coder reliability. The analysis aligns with the study's mixed-methods design, complementing the quantitative survey of 400 UNIBEN female students and is contextualized within Nigeria's beauty culture.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Interview Guide Questions and Responses

Questions Analyzed:

1. What is your role in the photo studio, and how long have you been operating in Benin Metropolis?
2. What types of photography and editing services does your studio offer?
3. What photo editing software or apps does your studio primarily use?

Response Summary:

Role and Experience: Most operators, 11 identified as studio owners or lead photographers/editors, with experience ranging from 3 to 5 years in Benin Metropolis. 3 were junior editors with 1–2 years of experience.

Services Offered: Studios commonly offer portrait photography, event photography (e.g., weddings, birthdays), and professional editing services. All 15 studios provide appearance-altering edits, such as skin lightening, body reshaping, and facial enhancements.

Software Used: Popular tools include Adobe Photoshop (mentioned by 8 operators), Lightroom (4 operators), and mobile apps like PicsArt and FaceTune (3 operators). Some studios combine multiple tools for advanced editing.

Analysis:

The background information explain the operators' expertise and context, confirming their relevance as key informants. The widespread use of professional software like Photoshop aligns with global trends in photo editing while mobile apps reflect accessibility in the Nigerian context. The focus on portrait and event photography suggests a client base likely including young women, such as UNIBEN students, seeking edits for social media or special occasions. This sets the stage for analyzing deceptive editing practices.

SECTION B: The five questions are analyzed to identify themes related to prevalence, motivations, and psychological/social impacts.

Question 1: How often do clients request edits that significantly alter their appearance, such as changing skin tone, body shape, or facial features?

Responses:

10 operators (66.7%) reported very frequent requests (daily or multiple times weekly), e.g., "Clients ask for edits like skin lightening daily, especially for Instagram photos" (Operator 3).

4 operators (26.7%) reported frequent requests (weekly), "We get such requests weekly, mostly for weddings or birthdays" (Operator 8).

1 operator (6.7%) reported occasional requests (monthly or less), a studio operators said "It's rare, mainly for professional headshots" (Operator 15).

Question 2: What is the most common type of appearance-altering edit requested by clients?

Responses:

9 operators (60%) cited skin lightening as the most common, e.g., "Clients always want brighter, flawless skin" (Operator 5).

4 operators (26.7%) cited body reshaping, e.g., "Slimming waists or enhancing curves is most common for social media" (Operator 10).

2 operators (13.3%) cited facial enhancements, e.g., "Smoothing skin or enlarging eyes is popular" (Operator 12).

Question 3: What is the most common reason clients give for requesting significant alterations to their appearance?

Responses:

8 operators (53.3%) cited meeting social media beauty standards, e.g., "Clients want to look like influencers or celebrities on Instagram" (Operator 7).

5 operators (33.3%) cited seeking social validation (likes/comments), e.g., "They want more likes and comments on their posts" (Operator 2).

2 operators (13.3%) cited peer pressure, e.g., “Clients say their friends all edit their photos, so they must too” (Operator 14).

Question 4: How do clients react emotionally (e.g., confidence, dissatisfaction) after receiving photos with significant appearance alterations?

Responses:

10 operators (66.7%) observed increased confidence/satisfaction, a photo Studio operator mentioned that “Clients are thrilled and feel more confident with their edited photos” (Operator 1).

3 operators (20%) noted dissatisfaction with real appearance, another studio operator said, “Some clients feel their real selves don’t match the edited photos” (Operator 12).

2 operators (13.3%) noted discomfort with unrecognizable edits, a studio operator said “A few clients say the photos look too fake” (Operator 9).

Question 5: How do you think deceptive photo editing in your studio affects clients’ perceptions of beauty or their social interactions on platforms like social media?

Responses:

9 operators (60%) believed editing reinforces unrealistic beauty standards, for example, “Clients aspire to unattainable beauty ideals seen online” (Operator 4).

4 operators (26.7%) noted positive social media feedback, for example, “Edited photos get more likes and compliments” (Operator 6).

2 operators (13.3%) cited pressure to maintain an idealized persona, for example, “Clients feel pressured to keep up their edited image online” (Operator 11).

Thematic Analysis Result

Based on the analysis obtained from the interview. The analysis identified five key themes, which are presented below with supporting evidence and interpretations.

Theme 1: Widespread Deceptive Editing Practices

The analysis revealed that deceptive photo editing is a pervasive practice in Benin Metropolis studios, with 93.3% (14/15) of operators reporting frequent or very frequent requests for appearance-altering edits. The high frequency, particularly for social media photos (for example, "clients ask for edits like skin lightening daily, especially for Instagram photos" Operator 3 underscores the normalization of such practices. This aligns with Nigeria’s cultural emphasis on idealized appearances, where editing is a routine part of photo production. The single operator reporting occasional request who is said to be (Operator 15) suggests a niche for minimal edits in professional contexts, but this is an exception, highlighting the dominance of deceptive editing for social media purposes.

Theme 2: Culturally Specific Beauty Ideals

The most common edit like skin lightening (60%), body reshaping (26.7%), and facial enhancements (13.3%) all reflect culturally specific beauty ideals in Nigeria. Skin

lightening, cited by 9 operators for example, "clients always want brighter, flawless skin" Operator 5, is particularly prominent, aligning with Nigeria's socio-cultural preference for lighter skin as a marker of attractiveness and status. Body reshaping and facial enhancements, while less frequent, correspond to globalized social media aesthetics, such as idealized body shapes and flawless faces seen on platforms like Instagram. This theme highlights the intersection of local and global beauty standards in shaping editing practices.

Theme 3: Social Media and Peer Influence as Motivators

Client motivations for deceptive editing are heavily influenced by social media standards (53.3%), social validation (33.3%), and peer pressure (13.3%). Operators frequently noted clients' desires to emulate influencers or celebrities (a good example is, "Clients want to look like influencers on Instagram" Operator 7. And to gain more likes/comments as mentioned by operator 2 that they want more likes and comments on their posts. These findings support social comparison theory, where individuals compare themselves to idealized online images. Peer pressure, though less dominant such as "Clients say their friends all edit their photos" Operator 14, indicates a localized social dynamic, likely relevant to young women in Benin Metropolis, including UNIBEN students.

Theme 4: Mixed Psychological Impacts

The analysis identified a spectrum of psychological impacts from deceptive editing. The majority of operators (66.7%) reported that clients experience increased confidence and satisfaction post-editing. As mentioned, "Clients are thrilled and feel more confident," Operator 1, suggesting a temporary boost in self-esteem and consistent. However, 20% noted dissatisfaction with real appearance for example, " some clients feel their real selves don't match the edited photos, Operator 12, and 13.3% observed discomfort with unrecognizable edits " A few clients say the photos look too fake, Operator 9. These negative impacts indicate risks of body dissatisfaction and identity conflict, as clients struggle with discrepancies between their real and edited selves.

Theme 5: Perpetuation of Unrealistic Beauty Norms

Deceptive editing significantly shapes clients' perceptions of beauty and social interactions. Operators (60%) reported that editing reinforces unrealistic beauty standards, for example, "clients aspire to unattainable beauty ideals seen online" Operator 4, perpetuating a cycle where idealized images set benchmarks for attractiveness. Positive social media feedback, noted by 26.7% (for example, " Edited photos get more likes and compliments, Operator 6. This creates a reinforcement loop that encourages further editing. Additionally, 13.3% of operators highlighted pressure to maintain an idealized persona. A good example is, "Clients feel pressured to keep up their edited image" Operator 11, suggesting a social impact where clients face ongoing expectations to sustain a curated online identity, potentially leading to social anxiety.

Discussion

The thematic analysis confirms that deceptive photo editing is a widespread practice in Benin Metropolis studios, driven by culturally specific beauty ideals and social media pressures. The dominance of skin lightening reflects Nigeria's socio-cultural context, where lighter skin is associated with beauty and status. While body reshaping and facial enhancements align with globalized social media aesthetics. The motivations such as social media standards, validation, and peer pressure support social comparison theory, indicating that clients edit to align with idealized online images. The mixed psychological impacts highlight a tension: while editing boosts confidence for many, dissatisfaction and discomfort suggest risks of body image issues and identity conflict. Socially, the reinforcement of unrealistic beauty norms and the feedback loop from social media interactions perpetuate editing behaviors, with studios playing a pivotal role as professional facilitators.

The findings complement the quantitative survey of UNIBEN students providing a professional perspective that enriches the mixed-methods approach. The themes align with the research objectives, offering insights into the extent, motivations, and impacts of deceptive editing. The identification of identity conflict as an impact adds a novel dimension to the literature, suggesting that extreme editing may disrupt clients' self-concept.

4.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section integrates the quantitative survey results from 400 female students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) with the qualitative findings from thematic analysis of interviews with 15 photo studio operators in Benin Metropolis, adhering to the convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS version 25 (Field, 2018), while the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify themes related to prevalence, motivations, and psychological/social impacts of deceptive photo editing. This integration addresses the research objectives; to determine the extent of deceptive photo editing, to identify motivations for such practices, and to assess their psychological and social impacts, with a particular focus on the various impacts (e.g., self-esteem, anxiety, body dissatisfaction, social comparison, beauty standards reinforcement, and social media feedback).

Both datasets agree that deceptive photo editing is a common practice. The survey highlights students' frequent use of accessible apps, while interviews show that professional studios also see high demand for similar edits, especially for social media. This suggests that editing is a normalized behavior among young women in Benin Metropolis, including UNIBEN students, driven by the ease of using smartphone apps and professional services to create idealized images.

It also confirms that the desire to meet beauty standards, gain social media validation, and fit in with peers drives deceptive editing. The survey emphasizes cultural

pressures like fair skin, while interviews highlight globalized influences like influencer aesthetics. Together, they show that students edit photos to align with both local (e.g., lighter skin) and global (e.g., slim bodies, flawless faces) ideals, fueled by social media and peer dynamics.

The dataset from both methods show a mix of positive and negative impacts. The survey emphasizes negative psychological effects like low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, while interviews highlight temporary confidence boosts but also dissatisfaction when real appearances don't match edited ones. Socially, both confirm a feedback loop where likes and comments drive further editing, reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards. The survey's focus on social comparison and the interviews' mention of pressure to maintain edited personas suggest that editing creates a culture of inauthenticity, potentially straining social trust and increasing anxiety among students.

The quantitative and qualitative findings complement each other, painting a consistent picture of deceptive photo editing among UNIBEN female students and in Benin Metropolis. The practice is widespread, enabled by accessible apps and professional studios, and driven by cultural beauty ideals (e.g., lighter skin), social media validation, and peer pressure. Psychologically, editing can boost confidence temporarily but often leads to low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and identity conflicts when real and edited selves don't align. Socially, the pursuit of likes and comparison with idealized images creates a cycle of editing, fostering inauthenticity and potentially reducing trust in

social interactions. The qualitative data adds depth by highlighting professional studios' role and the cultural specificity of edits like skin lightening, while the survey quantifies the prevalence and impacts among students. Together, they show that deceptive editing is a response to intertwined local and global pressures, with significant psychological and social consequences.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to investigate the impact of Deceptive photo editing among female students at the University of Benin and photo studios in Benin metropolis. To address this, three research questions were developed to effectively tackle the stated problem of the study.

At the end of the study, it was revealed that:

1. Deceptive photo editing is widespread in both settings. Female still frequently used apps like Adobe Photoshop, Snapchat, Instagram Filters, and Facetune to

alter their appearance, particularly for social media posts, while photo studios commonly receive requests for edits such as skin lightening, enlarged hips and. Facial enhancements.

2. The practice is driven by cultural and social pressures, including societal beauty standards favoring fair skin and slim bodies, the pursuit of social media validation through likes and comments, and peer influence, reflecting Nigeria's cultural emphasis on physical attractiveness and global aesthetic trends. Psychologically, editing often leads to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, though it can temporarily boost confidence. Socially, edited photos attract more positive feedback, fostering dependency on validation and reducing authenticity in peer interactions within UNIBEN's close-knit community.
3. The qualitative findings of the research highlights themes of pervasive editing practices, culturally specific beauty ideals, social media and peer-driven motivations, mixed psychological impacts such as confidence vs. dissatisfaction, and the reinforcement of unrealistic beauty norms. Additionally, the research confirms that extreme editing can cause identity conflict, disrupting clients' sense of self.

5.2 Conclusion

This study confirms that deceptive photo editing is a pervasive practice among UNIBEN female students and in Benin metropolis photo Studios, which is driven by

accessible technology and cultural pressures. The motivation stem from societal beauty standards, the pursuit of social media validation and peer influence reflecting both local and global ideals which is represented as lighter skin and slim bodies respectively. Whole editing may provide temporary confidence, it usually leads to negative psychological outcomes, including low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and potential identity conflicts. Socially, the the importance on positive feedback for edited images creates a cycle of inauthenticity, reducing trust on social interactions and reinforcing unrealistic beauty norms. This findings aligns with the existing literature of (Chua and Chang, 2016; McLean, 2015) but add a Nigerian context, emphasizing the role of cultural beauty ideals and the professional studio industry in perpetuating deceptive editing. This study underscores the need to address the psychological and social consequences of such practices, particularly among young women in University like UNIBEN.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate the negative impacts of deceptive photo editing and promote healthier practices among female students and photo studios in Benin.

1. **Educational Campaign on Body Positivity:** UNIBEN should organize workshops and seminars to promote body positivity and self-acceptance, emphasizing the value of natural appearances over edited images. These programs can educate students about the unrealistic nature of social media and their

psychological impacts, such as low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. However, collaboration with students organizations and counselors can help integrate these campaigns into campus activities, reaching a wider audience.

2. **Media Literacy Programs:** it's important that media literacy course and workshops should be introduced at UNIBEN to teach students how to critically evaluate social media content. These programs should highlight the prevalence of edited images and their role in shaping beauty standards, encouraging students to question idealized images and social comparison. Partnership with social media influencers is very important in order to promote authentic, unedited content, countering the pressure to conform to unrealistic standards.
3. **Regulation of photo editing practices in Studios:** Photo Studios in Benin should adopt ethical guidelines for editing, such as limiting extreme appearance-altering edits like excessive skin lightening or enlarged hips and informing clients about the potential psychological risk of unrealistic edits. Industry associations of local authorities could develop standards to encourage responsible editing practices. Studios could offer natural look packages that emphasizes normal editing, catering to clients seeking authentic representations.
4. **Mental Health Support Services:** UNIBEN should strengthen its counselling services to address body image issues, low self-esteem and ideally conflicts linked to deceptive editing. This is because young women mostly Students no longer

have confidence in their body shape and would do anything to get the desired body shape even if it requires carrying out surgeries. Counselors should be trained to recognize these signs of body dissatisfaction among young women and provide targeted support for students struggling with social media pressures. Peer support groups should be created on campus to foster discussions about self-esteem and the pressures of social media, providing a safe space for students to share experiences.

5. **Collaboration with social media platforms:** Advocate for social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat to include disclaimers or labels on heavily edited images beyond recognition, alerting viewers to potential alterations. This could reduce the pressure to emulate unattainable beauty standards and promote transparency. Platforms should be encouraged to promote campaigns that celebrate natural beauty and diversity, particularly in the Nigerian beauty context, to counter cultural preferences for lighter skin or slim bodies.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a research study to assess the impact of creating deception through photo editing apps among female students at the University of Benin and photo studios in Benin metropolis. Your honest responses are vital to the success of this study. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Akintoye Bukola Ifeoluwa
Researcher

Instructions: Please tick [✓] the appropriate box or write your response where required.

For Sections B, C, and D, use the following scale:

1 = Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Disagree (D), 4 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- ☐ 16–20 years
- ☐ 21–25 years
- ☐ 26–30 years
- ☐ Above 30 years

2. Faculty:

- ☐ Arts
- ☐ Sciences
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Others (specify): _____

3. Level:

- ☐ 100 Level
- ☐ 200 Level
- ☐ 300 Level
- ☐ 400 Level
- ☐ 500 Level and above

SECTION B: PREVALENCE OF DECEPTIVE PHOTO EDITING

Research question 1: To what extent do female students of UNIBEN engage in creating deceptive images through photo editing apps?

4. How often do you use photo editing apps or software?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

5. I frequently edit my photos to change my physical (e.g skin tone, body shape, facial features).
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
6. I often use apps like Adobe Photoshop, Snapchat, Instagram Filters, or FaceTune to change my appearance in photos.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
7. Most of my photos shared on social media have been edited to alter my appearance significantly.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

SECTION C: MOTIVATION FOR DECEPTIVE PHOTO EDITING

Research question 2: What motivates female students of UNIBEN to create deceptive images through photo editing apps?

8. I edit photos to meet societal beauty standards (e.g fair skin, slim body).
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. I edit photos to gain more likes or comments on social media
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
10. I feel Pressured by friends and trends to edit my photos deceptively
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
11. I alter my appearance in photos to feel accepted by my peers
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

SECTION D: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF DECEPTIVE PHOTO EDITING

Research Question 3: What are the psychological and social impacts of creating deception through photo editing apps on female students in UNIBEN?

12. Editing photos deceptively lowers my self-esteem when I compare myself to the unedited images
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. Deceptive photo editing makes me feel dissatisfied with my real appearance

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

14. I receive more positive feedback (e.g., likes, comments) on social media when I post edited photos compared to unedited ones.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

15. Editing my photos to change my appearance leads me to compare myself with others on social media.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

End of Questionnaire

Thank You for your time and participation!

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION (PHOTO STUDIO OPERATORS)

Section A: Background Information

1. What is your role in the photo studio, and how long have you been operating in Benin Metropolis?
2. What types of photography and editing services does your studio offer?
3. What photo editing software or apps does your studio primarily use?

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How often do clients request edits that significantly alter their appearance, such as changing skin tone, body shape, or facial features?
2. What is the most common type of appearance-altering edit requested by clients?
3. What is the most common reason clients give for requesting significant alterations to their appearance?
4. How do clients react emotionally (e.g., confidence, dissatisfaction) after receiving photos with significant appearance alterations?
5. How do you think deceptive photo editing in your studio affects clients' perceptions of beauty or their social interactions on platforms like social media?

End of Interview!

Thank you for your valuable insights. Your responses will contribute significantly to this research.

